

Scattergood Friends School and Farm
Head of School Report to Iowa Yearly Meeting Conservative
July 2015

I write deeply inspired by the collective spirit that I sensed during the school's celebration of its 125th birthday last month. We enjoyed excellent attendance with over 200 people on hand over the four days. Scattergood alumni and staff represented each decade since the school's re-opening in 1944. While many of us missed individuals who could not be present, they were often mentioned and remembered by their peers, their students, and their teachers during those days. I was particularly moved by how much conversation took place between folks from different decades as they shared what being here meant to them and their families. In these conversations and in Meeting for Worship common threads were expressed:

Each person has value in this community.

It is through community that we accomplish things that we cannot accomplish alone.

Quaker testimonies underpin all that we do here.

Together these elements change young lives in ways that students find their authentic selves.

There is much to celebrate at this school, and students are at the heart of this celebration. I think of the many students this past year who have matured by leaps and bounds intellectually and socially. I can name these students. I can describe their gifts to others and the obstacles they've faced. I'm spiritually nurtured by loving them at their best and at their worst. What a privilege it is to be present with them! Discovery of oneself is a magical event in adolescence and is at the heart of a changed life. Adolescents leave their child-identity behind and, like butterflies emerging from a cocoon, seek to understand their new orientation to the world. I am honored to carry forward the leadership of the school and nurture and witness these transformations in this 125th year of the school's life.

Accreditation Scattergood received acceptance of its progress report on recommendations made during the accreditation visit by the Independent Schools Association of Central States (ISACS) in 2012, and I'm able to announce that the school remains in good standing as a fully accredited college preparatory program. The report addresses every aspect of school program and operations: teaching and learning, staffing, budget and finance, facilities and grounds, risk management, and the quality of student life. ISACS asks us to shine the light on ourselves and examine how authentically we practice our mission. Its standards we follow are the same for some of the most prestigious college preparatory programs in the Midwest. Members of the Iowa State Department of Education have noted the rigorous nature of the ISACS standards and process, and Scattergood is legally recognized by the state as an independently accredited school. This allows the school to operate legitimately according to its mission and without many of the state-mandated dictates for curriculum and assessment. Thanks go to Christine Ashley for her spurring of school improvement initiatives in response to the recommendations. The affirmation of our accreditation is one

of the many parting gifts from her tenure here. And thanks go to the staff in these years who designed and implemented these improvements.

Graduation in June was again a joyous affair with students, their families, and family friends on hand to celebrate the graduation of 12 individuals: **Adam Hanson, Anna Zakelj, Brais Sotelo, Collins Ntwali, Elias Lillienfeld, Grace Friedman, Jaci Tentinger, Jake Edwards, Madison Laurie, Marcus Pettus, Shawn Mahoney, and Socrates Bassuk**. And two juniors were recognized for their contribution to the school: **Sydney Dodson** received the Art Award and **Wubetu Shimelash** received the Berquist Award.

Enrollment remains our key concern. We have remained at an average of 41 students for the third year running. In light of this I began to make changes in January by drafting a new annual budget with Alicia Streeter, our Director of Admissions. She begins her third year with an increased budget tied to a detailed plan. With the School Committee's support we began this spring to use a budget of \$20,000 –up from \$8,500 ---to better carry out our recruitment efforts. This level of funding still falls below the standard for funding of recruitment, and our hope is that as enrollment grows we will incrementally increase the percentage of our budget to this end in future years. The funds will improve our visibility in venues where students and parents look for school options. We will target visits to locales where the gap is largest between openings in good schools and the number of families looking for good schools. Through visits to middle schools and school placement consultants we will focus on finding students who are the best fit as this is the most effective way to increase retention and recruitment.

More fundamentally, enrollment will improve if we more clearly distinguish ourselves in a very competitive market. Families have a myriad number of choices for education of adolescents. This is a fundamental condition that Scattergood has struggled under for a number of decades, and the internet makes the awareness of choices even greater. We will distinguish ourselves by doing what we do best and telling that story: teach on the farm and live in community grounded in the Quaker testimonies. The farm teaches us on so many levels. It feeds us, it challenges us to live with and not in ignorance of natural patterns and anomalies. It teaches ecology, anatomy, chemistry, history, literature, nutrition, meteorology, systems thinking, and practical arts. It teaches that we are accountable to not only each human but to the Earth for our well-being. It makes for a more authentic life, and in doing so we discover and affirm our true selves. In doing so, we will not stray from our college preparatory mission. Rather we will more clearly articulate how a farm experience uniquely prepares students for active and rigorous inquiry, independent thinking, resiliency and hard work—all essential habits for successful college work. Staff continue to meet regularly to discuss if and how essential content knowledge, mathematical skills, and writing skills are addressed and developed.

Together with the academic program, this school remains a healthy and rich environment for individuals to come of age. In this environment, adults keep students in the light of the testimonies enumerated in *Faith and Practice* so that students may for themselves discern their own true nature. This happens not just in the Meeting House; I witness it in the art studios, in classrooms, labs, in the dorms, the kitchen, the farm, and the prairie. In this sea of choices for families, we must stick to our best qualities and promote their value.

Finances: Low enrollment continues to place stress on the school's finances. Despite this we end this year with a significantly smaller deficit than last year. Working with the School

Committee, we have a budget for the coming year that reduces administrative payroll, responds to yet another increase in medical insurance for staff, and takes advantage of new contracts for property insurance and fuel that provide close to \$30,000 in savings. Thanks go to Amanda Paul for the negotiation of these contracts. Thanks also go to Amanda for her maintenance and preparation of school accounts for our most recent and successful audit, which took place in the fall of 2014. We are grateful for the increased support from the School Foundation for both operating and capital budgets in this coming year. The budget for this coming year projects a modest surplus if we reach our target of 45 students enrolled.

Master Planning: A significant moment of clarity emerged last fall working with the School Committee in its vision for capital improvements. Rather than focus on what building to erect, the perspective shifted to making the school more environmentally sustainable. Thinking has now turned to retrofitting existing structures (including the boy's dormitory) instead of replacing them and to installing more efficient heating/cooling systems. We also pursued a large and exciting project this year to build a solar farm that would make the school a net producer of electricity. Given the enrollment situation and the size of investment needed, these large-scale initiatives are now taking a back seat to smaller capital projects that can directly address our recruitment of students while remaining in line with our vision of sustainability. Together with staff and the School Committee I am developing two specific proposals to consider this fall before moving forward with fundraising. Our intent is not to abandon the larger initiatives. We continue to explore how we can realize them in the not too distant future.

Development and Advancement: This year's Annual Fund goal of \$275,000 was surpassed. 350 individuals contributed-- a significant increase in participation compared to previous years. Special thanks go to current Scattergood parents who increased their participation. Together with Christine Ashley, Jody Caldwell, and Scattergood parent Amy Eilers, we launched an active parent association that has met monthly via conference call. The 125th celebration netted a modest surplus that went to the Annual Fund total. More importantly, many younger alumni expressed their pleasure at re-connecting with the school during their visit and they are motivated to help the school build an active alumni network. Jody and I look forward to advancing this initiative this year and to bring back Family Camps.

Staff Transitions: **Christine Ashley** and **Mark Shanahan** are now in the eastern U.S. pursuing new opportunities. There have been a number of celebrations to thank them in their transition, including a tribute at the 125th Reunion. Their daughter **Sophie Shanahan** remains at Scattergood as our Health Office Coordinator and as a girl's dorm sponsor. **Louis Herbst** will continue supervision of the academic program and expand his role as Assistant Head of School. **Catherine From** expands her role to become the school's Director of Residential Life. **Amanda Paul** completes her fifth year as the school's Business Manager and will take work at the University of Iowa next month. Her attention to the school's business and human resources operations during these years has been tremendous. **Tim Schulte** is our new Facilities Director. He combines a teaching degree with extensive experience as facilities and grounds manager of the Wesley Foundation in Iowa City and of the Ashokan Field Campus in New York. **Dana Foster** has laid down the duties of Livestock Manager and will coordinate our new farm intensive for first-year students and teaching Freshman Seminar. **Neal Shaffer '14** is extending his residency as a Friend and doing tech support, planning, and budgeting before he leaves for St. Olaf in mid-August. **Melanie**

Krupa has taken an offer at Kirkwood that will preclude her ability to continue at Scattergood. We will miss her excellent work with our ELL students. **Hain Kate Moon** is our new Chemistry and Physics instructor. She is a recent graduate of the University of Iowa with a degree in Science Education with specialization in Chemistry. As a Korean-American, she also looks forward to teaching students Korean language and culture as a project class. **Bruce Whiteman** will return this year as a Poet in Residence. A published poet and former faculty at Grinnell College and McGill University, Bruce will teach two classes, tutor individual students, and of course nurture our campus poetry culture. Last and certainly not least, we are grateful to the many unpaid volunteers who have helped us and will continue their service to the school. Particular thanks go to **Nan Fawcett '63** for her help in the health office and the kitchen, to **Amy Eilers**, parent of Sean '16 for her leadership of the Scattergood Parent Association, and to **Leslie Schiller**, parent of Charlotte '14 and Gifford '19, with her consultation in development operations and strategy.