

Head of School Report
Scattergood Friends School and Farm
July 2016

Dear Friends,

No school operates in a vacuum (even one intended to educate students independent of "early knowledge of, or contact with, the evils of the world,"). Scattergood's story has always been one dependent on energy within and without to sustain it in pursuit of its mission. This past school year has been my second as Head of Scattergood Friends School and Farm and my first in oversight of both external and internal operations. While I felt comfortable with the overall well-being of the community within the school grounds this year, having given it my fullest attention in the two years prior, the challenge to reach out to the many constituents who support the school from the outside has been significant and rewarding. Needless to say, both internal and external work has consumed a tremendous amount of energy. I keep marveling at how I continue. I am able to draw from something very deeply grounded that is neither within nor around me in any way that I can clearly define. This is perhaps my spiritual calling: like a large tree's presence, indistinct, without feeling, elusive to my senses, and yet powerfully and quietly present.

This Past Year's Themes and Accomplishments

Twelve students graduated June 5th as the **Class of 2016** this year with letters of admission to colleges and universities: **Grace Barrett, Emmet Bassuk, Jordan Connor, Sydney Dodson, Elijah Davis, Graciella Osborne, Laszlo Reed, Coriander Shapiro, Wubetu Shimelash, Haley Voss, Orianna Voss, and Zijun Yi.**

Isaac Chen '17 was named our Berquist Scholar and **Jassana Baizel '17** was named our Fine Arts Scholar for this coming year and each received \$500 scholarships for school tuition as well.

Programmatically, students engaged in a number of new experiences this year: a fully-integrated and interdisciplinary classroom on the farm during the entire first quarter for newly enrolled students in 9th and 10th grades, courses on dystopian societies and the poetry of war, and an intensive workshop with architects to forward design elements and a site location for a farm classroom. Agricultural research culminated in three projects presented to the Iowa State Science Fair with one receiving an award by Arizona State University for research in sustainable agriculture.

Seniors remodeled the student lounge in the lower main during the week to themselves in May, while other students went off campus to canoe the Ozarks, cycle to Iowa farms and provide volunteer labor and camp, and work on a farm that promotes international rural development in Michigan.

May Term classes were again held after the conclusion of the fourth quarter, with student inspired inquiries into game theory and design, pollinator garden construction, design and building magical structures, animal psychology, and gender and sexuality.

Strategic planning has been the other critical element of this past year's work. Beginning on November 2015 the School Committee and I developed a coherent vision to respond to the dual imperatives of increasing enrollment and financial support. Put simply, we understand that the school's continuance depends on what is most unique and valuable about Scattergood: the farm's integration into the program and the school community's sustenance. By more clearly differentiating the school's program and assets in an increasingly competitive admissions market, Scattergood has a great deal to offer and grow. The effort is summarized in a document adopted by the School Committee, "*Scattergood School and Farm Strategic Plan: 2016- 2019.*"

Outreach

Iowa's Legislature and Governor enacted a law in May that will require Scattergood to be certified by the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) for maintenance of its residential program for minors. Scattergood worked closely and productively with its local State Representative Bobby Kauffman (R) and Senator Bob Dvorsky (D) to advocate for legislation that places no burden that changes the school's mission and ability to operate sustainably. To Rep. Kauffman's credit, Scattergood was prominently presented as an example of excellent practice in its educational and residential mission, highlighted by public testimony by **Ruth Hampton '85, Dan Treadway '75**, and me in the State Legislature. State officials, the press, and the public were in attendance. I also published a letter to the editor to the *West Branch Times* expressing Scattergood's support, saying that no school should be without transparent care for minors. Scattergood has been invited by Iowa DHS to participate and comment in draft regulations for the law's implementation, and work began this summer.

My wife Amy and I made several visits to monthly and yearly meetings in this past year to worship with members and attenders, alumni and alumni parents. They included: **Penn Valley (KS), Omaha (NE), Des Moines, Paullina, and West Branch**, and IYMC's Mid-Year Meeting in **Bear Creek**. We also spent time in worship and visiting with **Northern Yearly Meeting** and **Illinois Yearly Meeting** during their annual gatherings. In each location we shared news of Scattergood, and I have given thanks to each for their support of Scattergood. I also joined Scattergood staff **Sam Taylor, Alicia Taylor**, and student **Gifford Pollock '18** at **Friends General Conference** annual gathering, in which we presented the school's farm related work in a workshop on Quaker schools. I also travelled to Philadelphia and met with heads of other Quaker schools at a **Friends Council of Education** conference, and **Phil Henderson '60** introduced me to three additional friends of Scattergood.

To close this part of the report, it has been a busy summer: Camps in art and farm exploration for children and an adult workshop on dyeing with natural plants took place. 160 people came to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Great Peace March which highlighted the quest for global nuclear disarmament. **Irving Treadway**, himself a marcher back then, cooked meals from the farm. Irving also cooked for the wedding of **Laura Yeats '06**, daughter of **Deb Dakin** and **Bob Yeats**, to **Brett Armfield**, and for the wedding of Scattergood staff members **Sam and Alicia Taylor**.

Staffing

Six individuals have moved or are moving on to new chapters in life after service to the school: **Jody Caldwell**, Development; **David Cohen**, Geometry; **Louis Herbst**, Assistant Head; **Jenn Herbst**, Art Teacher and Business Clerk; **Kate Moon**, Chemistry and Physics teacher; and **Stephanie Sheikholeslami**, Social Studies, Dorm Sponsorship, and Cook. Each gave countless untold hours and made their stamps on the educational and community life of all students and staff. A full report of their contributions would extend several pages to tell how much their hearts and spirits were shared with us in their extended efforts. Each truly deserves our heart and spirit-felt thanks.

We welcomed **Karen Huff** in November who cooks lunches and dinners in tandem with **Irving Treadway**. **Andrew Orrego-Lindstad** joined us in March as our new Director of Development. **Claire Tanager (néé Palmerini) '10**, Physics and Chemistry and Dorm Sponsor, begins in August, and **Gabriela Delgadillo** was named the school's next Assistant Head of School in oversight of the school's academic and residential programs. Gabriela joins me in the school's leadership into the days and years ahead.

We must include here appreciation for the services in kind by **Linn Stone '67**, who returned to mend student and staff garments with her sewing machine during a short residency, and poet/scholar in residence **Bruce Whiteman**, who taught courses in the first and third quarters.

Enrollment, Budget, Giving, and Major Capital Improvements and Needs

The school had 35 students enrolled at the beginning of the year and finished the year with 37 enrolled. One student left for personal reasons very shortly after school began. Another was asked to leave at the end of May this year. We accepted three mid-year transfers, and each has been successfully integrated into the school and each returning this fall. The school continues to receive several requests for applications. These are carefully screened to ensure that students are without significant behavioral or emotional concerns. Holding the line on quality over quantity is an ongoing challenge for the school on a return path to financially healthy enrollment.

Enrollment fell short of what was budgeted for tuition income. The annual fund campaign also fell short, and so the school has operated with restricted cash flows and a sizeable projected deficit throughout this year. By controlling expenses, not cutting value, and receiving cash influxes from the Scattergood School Foundation and our bank's line of credit, the fiscal year ended with a significantly reduced deficit from its earlier projection. The school is not in arrears with any of its accounts with vendors and creditors. Looking forward, the situation calls for an additional \$109,000 to be raised in contributions in each of the next three to four years as the school continues gradual growth in enrollment to a more sustainable enrollment level of 50 or more.. In this coming year, we have budgeted more conservatively for 35 students while expecting increases in contributions to restore the school's fiscal stability. Of special note: increases in health insurance premiums for full-time staff—a critical benefit this school provides—is the school's most significant source of fiscal pressure. Special thanks go again to the School Foundation Trustees for their ongoing support and engagement in the process.

Capital improvements this year include rehabilitation of the duplex staff residence exteriors and interiors including the installation of a solar powered water heater using repurposed panels donated by **Don Laughlin**, the replacement of the Science building boiler, replacement of the Main lobby flooring, and a significant campus internet and intranet upgrade to the student and staff community.

Looking Ahead

Scattergood begins year-one of its re-accreditation cycle in 2016-17. A detailed survey will be issued this coming year to all constituencies to gather information in preparation for its next self-study. Furthering and developing the strategic initiative towards a strategic portfolio will be the other critical item on the agenda with a concomitant campaign for financial support from friends and alumni.

We will continue to attend to social issues in our community this year. Students and staff are highly engaged with responding to maturing understandings of gender identity. Iowa law is very clear that schools must provide full access to individuals regardless of their gender identity in bathrooms and athletic programs. It is less clear in residential settings. Scattergood is nonetheless moving forward in this direction towards fuller integration. The dormitories are no longer named by gender but as East and West, and the school is now giving close and deliberate study of the George School's substantive work in this realm (described in the May issue of *Friends Journal*).

News of inappropriate and abusive interactions between adults and minors in educational institutions in Iowa and elsewhere are evident to Scattergood. It is time again to review and improve our standards and practices. I will lead staff and community reviews and conversations about respectful and professional interactions beginning next month in orientations and will continue this upcoming year to apprise myself of the work being done in other residential programs around the country to improve our practices and keep them to a healthy level of attention.

Concluding remarks

And so I come full circle and close this letter with deep and sincere thanks to the Yearly Meeting and its many constituents for their continued support of the school. We must change our mindsets to respond to current challenges. Nonetheless, I remain committed to Scattergood's spiritual underpinning: the school remains indeed in the care of this Yearly Meeting. And it gives me strength in this labor. I hope that the Yearly Meeting continues in kind in commitment to supporting life-changing experiences by adolescents engaged in study, work, and spiritual worship on this, our patch of the planet.

Respectfully submitted,
Thomas Weber, Head of School