



The Washington Eagle

The Frederick Gunn School Highlanders Center for Citizenship and Just Democracy

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2023-2024

The Charm of Small Towns

Karl Hammer

Ever since the start of the global pandemic, large cities have seen a population decline, with many of their inhabitants deciding to leave. Whether it be unaffordability, high crime, long commutes due to traffic, pollution, and loss of belonging and charm, the reasons are plenty. As the population disperses from large cities, small towns once again are becoming the epicenter of American cultural life, where families and citizens congregate to support common interests and human flourishing.

Other than the generic arguments about the economy, there is a key takeaway as to what makes small towns tick. It is vital to protect the longevity of small towns through the creation of a strong sense of community. No matter if this is achieved through some cultural event where the town periodically gathers, Church, or volunteering, building a sense of belonging and identity makes those living in the town feel at home. A strong sense of community is even more critical when there are economic struggles

that hurt inhabitants. When citizens interact with each other, build relationships, and work for each other, their quality of life increases. By creating a strong connection to others, inhabitants may feel like they must do something to help, seeing that they have a larger stake in the town. Instead of abandoning the ship, it makes citizens decide to stay and struggle through with others, which has a soothing effect.

James Fallows of The Atlantic magazine has

consistently celebrated the virtues of small-town life in the United States. In his book *Small Towns: A Journey into the Heart of America*, Fallows emphasizes the close-knit communities and genuine connections that thrive in smaller settings. He sees small towns as bastions of authentic American experiences, where a strong sense of community fosters resilience, cooperation, and a shared identity. Fallows often highlights the unique character of these places, where neighbors know each other, local traditions are upheld, and the simplicity of life offers a respite from the frenetic pace of larger urban centers. Through his perspective, small towns become not only geographical locations but repositories of values that contribute to the rich tapestry of American life.

Across the United States, small towns are in no shortage. With the advent of ever-increasing urban sprawl, small towns have never become more relevant. As more and more people leave large cities, it becomes more important to ask questions regarding the sustainability of small towns and the security of their future.

Small towns are currently defined by a population not exceeding 5,000-10,000. While not necessarily required, many small towns provide most services for their citizens. Small towns are known to be suburban, although houses are often very dispersed. The reason for this is that historically, most small towns were settled as farming communities that tended to large plots of farmland to sustain their communities. If certain fundamentals are tended to, many of the problems that face larger towns and cities will not be of such a great magnitude in small towns.



Do You Like Change? Washington Montessori Shifts Schedule

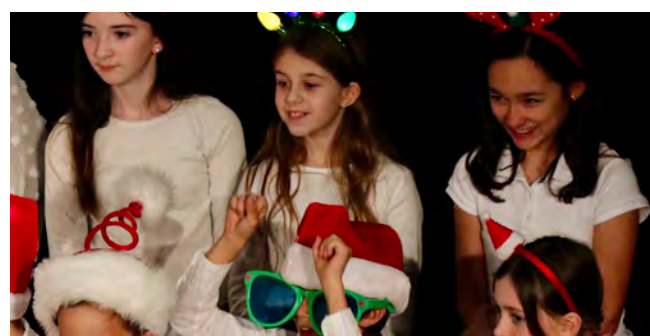
Hollis Hartnett

This year at Washington Montessori in middle school, the Friday schedule changed a lot. I asked what people thought about it and here's what Faye, a 7th grader, had to say. "No, I don't like it because we have to eat lunch with our Immersions, I am not a fan of that. I liked invitation lunches on Fridays much better."

In the '23-'24 academic year, the Friday schedule changed a lot from past years. In past years, the 8th graders would have two classes, one before Immersion and one during, which means they would miss part of it. This year, all grades have shorter Immersion, less recess, and lunch during Immersion. This year, there is an Immersion that you are assigned to for one unit during the year. This Immersion is writing. 7th grader Sarah shared these thoughts. "I like that it's thought provoking and we get to spend time with friends while writing good stories."

As a member of the Washington Montessori middle school, I think it is important that students should have a say in the schedule. I think that recess is beneficial because it allows students to get their energy out before class and spend time with friends they may not have classes with. Many students do not like that recess is shorter on Fridays because it feels like less of a break. Going outside usually feels refreshing but on Fridays it just feels forced.

At Washington Montessori we are taught to speak what we think is right, and if we think we need a change. So, I asked some students what they would change in the Friday schedule. "I would like two classes in the morning, then advisor group, then Immersion until lunch and recess, and after that Specials," said 8th grader Narolyn. 7th grader Holden also thought some changes in the schedule were in order. "Have a long block advisor so we can do jobs, one class then immersion then lunch then recess then specials. Basically just the old schedule."



One way we share our opinions is during community meetings on Tuesdays and during our first class every day. I am looking forward to raising awareness about this issue so Fridays can be a happy and productive school day.

Continued on A5 and A6

Active Engagement with Youth Commons

Ryan Ryu

In recent years, the United States has witnessed an inspiring surge in youth activism, especially among Generation Z. Empowered by a digital age that fosters global connections and driven by a fervent desire for change, young activists have emerged as powerful advocates across various social, political, and environmental causes. Social media platforms have played a pivotal role, amplifying their voices and facilitating unprecedented levels of organization. This shift signifies a departure from traditional activism methods as today's youth navigate the complexities of a rapidly changing world, demanding attention to issues ranging from climate change to social justice.

Youth activism, a driving force for societal change, brings fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to the forefront. The significance of young activists cannot be overstated, as they challenge established norms, question authority, and inspire meaningful conversations. Actively participating in civic discourse, the youth contribute to creating a more inclusive and responsive society, often serving as catalysts for policy changes that might have otherwise been overlooked. As torchbearers of the future, youth activists play a vital role in shaping a world reflective of their values and aspirations.

However, while the nation has experienced a surge in youth activism, the same cannot be said for some regions, including Connecticut. Despite the vibrant and diverse population in the state, there appears to be a noticeable lack of youth engagement in activism. This could be attributed to factors such as limited awareness, educational gaps, or a perceived disconnect between the issues affecting the community and the younger generation. Addressing this gap is crucial for fostering a sense of civic responsibility among Connecticut's youth, ensuring active involvement in shaping the future, and contributing to the broader narrative of societal progress. Initiatives aimed at promoting youth activism and providing platforms for expression are essential for bridging this gap and harnessing the untapped potential within the state's younger population.

Continued on A4

The Washington Eagle



Dearest Readers,

After a much needed period of wintering, The Washington Eagle has returned and we are ready to take on our role once more! We have received your feedback and incorporated it into this newest edition, and we hope that this cycle will continue so we can improve our mission of providing authentic, local news to the community. We are joyous to say that our interactions in the town have been nothing but understanding and kind. This type of project has never been undertaken in our community before, and we would like to thank all those friends and contributors who have made it possible for us to continue our mission.

Over the holidays, we have conceived a few new ideas for our organization. In this age, partnerships provide so many opportunities for conversation and understanding, and we've created connections with other institutions to that end. If you'd like to explore one of these relationships, please turn to pages A5-A6 in this edition. There, you will find the Washington Montessori page, where we have displayed the work created by our collaboration with WMS' young journalists. These students have put enormous effort into their pieces, and we are beyond impressed and inspired by their drive. We believe that newspapers have the potential to provide not just stories, but inspiration to younger generations, and we hope for this to be the first of many educational endeavors we join as we forge connections in the beautiful community of Washington.

Moving forward, the power of local journalism cannot be underestimated. In an age where tabloidization and national-scale media are king, the small community often suffers unobserved. The division our nation experiences today is dangerous on many levels, and it is the duty of every citizen to combat it however we may, but we at The Washington Eagle believe wholeheartedly that the method matters. The threat of a news vacuum can be fought with all means necessary but unless those defenses are well-strategized, the threat will only grow larger and stronger. Our objective of a purposeful resurgence in local journalism is to allow the Washington community to have a solid base of stories that tie us all together, and we invite all of you to join us on this journey.

On the right of this page, you will find our official email address, this is the beginning of our digital hub for communication and connection. We would like to deeply encourage article contributions from local organizations and individuals, and if you have feedback, let us know! There's an event we can cover? An organization to partner with? An individual who deserves recognition? We welcome your unfettered thoughts as well - maybe a joke or saying, or a prompt on sustainability or other issues. Just shoot us an email and we'll follow your stories.

We truly hope you enjoy the people, lessons, and stories brought to you in this edition.

Sincerely,
The Washington Eagle Team

How to Reach Us...

Email: WashingtonEagle@FrederickGunn.org

Social Media to be released soon

The Washington Eagle Team

Bart McMann - Director of the CJD at Gunn

Karl Hammer - Junior at Gunn

Bridie Mae Bolger - Senior at Gunn

Ryan (Hyun-jun) Ryu - Junior at Gunn

Paige Jackson - Senior at Gunn

Daisy Moriarty - Junior at Gunn

Peter Murphy - Senior at Gunn

Martha Ewing - Sophomore at Gunn

Matis Molina-Ricard - Senior at Gunn

Bobby Liberatos - Senior at Gunn

Mairin Hoffman - Junior at Gunn



Questions for Kim DeYoung A Conversation with a Life Coach Karl Hammer

Is it possible to always make the right decision? On January 9th, The Gunn Memorial Library and Museum hosted the opening night of the Choice Clarity Workshop, a four-week atelier led by Life Coach Kim DeYoung. DeYoung has already brought this workshop to a number of libraries in Western Connecticut, thus Gunn Memorial was excited to offer her course this winter.

With the help of her expertise, participants from all backgrounds learned about the basics of decision-making and aligning one's values with them, to enable total perspicacity when making decisions.

DeYoung has always felt her skillset was that of a coach. DeYoung opted to leave her corporate job to pursue her dream of helping people gain the confidence and the clarity to make the right decisions thirty years ago when the idea of a coaching career began to emerge.

Life Coaching, or "Conversations with Choice," as DeYoung describes, is the art of supporting individuals so they can achieve their goals in their professional or personal lives. "Often in decision making, there are some things that hold us back and some things that cause excitement." DeYoung shares important advice with students as well. Students need to have greater intentionality when it comes to their choices. "Any choice requires understanding why it matters." DeYoung wants students to always question whether their choice has a purpose and if there is a

learning aspect to it. She calls on students to always be conscious of their decisions and always yearning to learn. "There is no such thing as a wrong choice," she states. Instead, she believes bad decisions are simply good lessons to learn from.

All of what DeYoung teaches can be found in her book, *The Book of Choice*, which can be found on her website KimDeYoung.com, Amazon, or at the Hickory Stick Bookshop in Washington Depot. For more information about programming and events at the Gunn Memorial Library & Museum, visit www.gunnlibrary.org.



The Washington Eagle



Model United Nations Comes to Washington

Martha Ewing

Winterim is an experiential educational period between the Thanksgiving and Winter breaks at the Frederick Gunn School where students can explore a range of opportunities implementing a project and place-based learning pedagogy. This year, students were able to choose between twenty-four different courses, ranging from digital marketing to cookie baking, and even various trips abroad. One of these courses was named, "How to Run a Model United Nations Conference" and was led by the Director of Center for Citizenship and Just Democracy along with Bridie Bolger '24 and Marley Austell-Kennedy '25.

This was one of the first occasions in which a Winterim class was taught by students, and it proved to be a massive success. During the class, the students learned how to organize and host a MUN conference, in the Tisch Library, that took place on December 8-9. Over forty students from both Rumsey Hall School and Washington Montessori School attended the event.

Bridie Bolger (Co Secretary-General) describes the MUN experience in an interview for the Washington Eagle paper. "The vision Marley and I had going into it was

to model a Gunn event after NAIMUN in Georgetown. We thought about the resources and morals of our school, and aimed to host something that could impact young people the way we were by our shared Model UN experiences. The fruition was bitter-sweet after putting so much into it, but see-



ing the delegates debate and draft resolutions for global-level issues was so inspirational. If you think about it, it's totally possible that they may come up with a solution we haven't thought of yet. Today's youth are so special, and the experience of giving them a space to explore politics and crisis-reasoning was truly amazing, and we hope this will become an enduring tradition at Gunn!"

The committees the class ran were very interesting. They were specifically designed to simulate real-world issues while maintaining a healthy and enjoyable atmosphere. The conference was 100% crisis, and our three committees were Star Wars: Clone War Era, Cyberterrorism in the Modern Age, and

conflict, but transcribed to the situation involving Earthling colonists and Martian natives fighting over land that is significant to both groups for similar reasons.

The conference invited members of WMS and Rumsey Hall School to the Tisch library. Bolger was impressed with the commitment and enthusiasm from the middle school participants. "I was really worried the kids wouldn't be comfortable with the social aspect of Model UN, because you really need to put yourself out there if you want to get anything done, but I was so humbled by their courage and sharp minds. My role during the conference as a Secretary-General was to address problems that arose without the kids (or the chairs) noticing so the event seemed to go smoothly. I also stopped by each committee room periodically to check if the daisies needed anything or had questions on parliamentary procedure. Each time I walked into a room, I was met with fierce debate and the chattering of deals being made, it was truly amazing."

Planetary Negotiations: 2180. The Star Wars committee simulated the politics of territorial disputes and alliances (similar to Sudetenland and the world wars). Cyberterrorism was the most real as it simulated hijackings in the aviation industry and had delegates address the forces that move behind committees like money, class, and power. Planetary negotiations was designed to simulate the Israel-Palestine

The Troutbeck Symposium

Ava Veroneau

Academic research conferences for high school students have multiplied across New England recently. These conferences allow young adults to collaborate, research, and present findings alongside their peers. These high-powered students put in months of effort to receive invaluable input from their peers and educators. The exciting and cutting-edge findings from their academic studies have helped encourage high school educators to continue to innovate and expand their experiential educational offerings. Two academic conferences in northwest CT have led the way: The Rooted Research Conference and the Troutbeck Symposium.

Over the past few years, The Frederick Gunn School has hosted the Rooted Research Conference. This conference allowed students from Gunn and surrounding schools to come together and share place-based historical research. The Gunn Scholars endowed program was established in 2002 and participation is by application only. All the work done by the Gunn Scholars Program is added to the Paula and George Krinsky Archives and Special Collections in the Tisch Family Library at the Frederick Gunn School. Each student's work allows for the growth and enrichment of the school's history and creates opportunities for further studies. Moira Conlan, director of the Gunn Scholars program and the Rooted Research Conference, thoroughly enjoys organizing and planning the conference. "It's about the feel. Students feel pride when they can contribute their findings to topics long beyond their time." Her mission with the Rooted Research Conference is to "allow our students to dig deep and share their findings with others at the school and inspire other young adults." Similarly in Amenia, New York, Troutbeck holds a similar conference known as the Troutbeck Symposium. "This conference is a student-led collaboration that works to uncover local history through student-authorized documentaries, art exhibitions, and conversations," said Sascha Lewis, Director of Culture and Commerce at Troutbeck in an interview with The Eagle. The Symposium hosts 150 local art students from regional, public, independent, middle, and high schools working on a year-long project. Each of their pieces consists of months of historical research related to Troutbeck and the significant role the Spingarn Family played in the Civil Rights movement and the Harlem Renaissance. The Troutbeck Symposium also reveals stories of lesser-known activists and regenerates significant but untold stories and narratives from the region relating to the BIPOC community. In the past, they have proudly welcomed Pulitzer Prize-winning author Dr. David Blight, Artist Nona Faustine, Silas Munro of Polymode Studio, and author Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries. This year, it will be hosted on April 28th and 29th.

These conferences work to inspire young adults all across New England and spark interest in the history of the towns around them. They provide a platform for young individuals to network with others and gain knowledge about the places around them, all while having an uplifting experience, personal growth, and character development.

Washington Voices - Kathleen Roche at FGS

Daisy Moriarty

Kathleen Roche is the Student Support Coordinator at The Frederick Gunn School, where her primary duty is to coordinate appointments and meetings for students. Impressively, Mrs. Roche is also a restaurant server at The Mayflower Inn. She has also been very involved in the performing arts through theater, and is an integral member of the Washington community. Her kindness and helpfulness contribute to the amazing sense of community in town.

Before coming to work at The Frederick Gunn School during the 2022-2023 school year, Mrs. Roche had worked as a paraprofessional for nine years, where she worked with students who have special needs. Before this, she worked in finance for twenty-five years and worked as a substitute teacher. While working in finance, Mrs. Roche completed her Associate's Degree in Accounting, and got a Bachelors of Science in Business Management and Communication. Though her degrees were business related, she was still able to use these degrees to get started in education as a paraprofessional.

In high school, Mrs. Roche spent her Saturdays studying acting at the American Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York City. "Going to acting school helped with everything in my life," she explained. She highlighted how her experience studying acting has helped her in her professional life, especially when presenting to a large audience. She has continued to perform throughout her adult life, and though she has not performed since the pandemic, she has really enjoyed performing at the community theater in Woodbury. In a series of one act plays a few years ago, Mrs. Roche played Hecate the crazy witch, and soon after that she performed in Company the Musical.

Mrs. Roche has many different passions, but her biggest passion is her family. She has two daughters: a twenty-three-year old who just graduated college, and a twenty-one year old. Her older daughter works at the Mayflower, though she works days while Mrs. Roche works nights. Fortunately, because they both work at the Mayflower, they hang out with some of the same people. "I'm sixty, she's twenty-two, and there're all these people that we really enjoy working with at the Mayflower," Mrs. Roche revealed excitedly. "I have to love what I do, or I couldn't do it, crazy hours like I do. I love talking to guests, I love telling them about the history of the school mixed with the Mayflower because the history is connected. I love the area; telling people about things they could do. I love making people's experiences more special, I just have so much fun with that."

Mrs. Roche does a wonderful job of connecting with the people around her, including the students and faculty at The Frederick Gunn School, guests and visitors at the Mayflower Inn, and the people she encounters daily in the Washington area.



Philanthropy with Judea Garden

Bobby Liberatos

Judea Garden is helping in every way possible to make sure people are food secure in Washington and surrounding towns. Judea Garden grows all the food they supply from their location at Macricostas Preserve. They then deliver the fresh produce to community partners who can distribute it to people in need. The volunteer-based group has been going on strong for sixteen years now.

The start of Judea Garden coincided with the start of the Great Recession. During these tough economic times, the purchasing power of money had declined. It was tougher than ever for community organizations to buy food for people in need. Judea Garden rose to meet this challenge. Its ability to farm its own food cut out crucial costs. At first the Garden was located at St. John's Church but it soon proved to be too much for the church. Luckily a permanent home was found with the help of the Steep Rock Association in the Macricostas Preserve. One of the people who spearheaded the initiative was Denise Arturi.

Now employed at the Steep Rock Association, Denise is the point person for the Garden and has been with them since the start. Judea Garden is a mostly volunteer based organization with Denise as one of the only permanent employees. There are two interns hired in the summer but beside that everything else is done out of the generosity of community members. Denise stresses that no specific skills are needed. "We encourage volunteers to come with the desire to help out any way they can," she says. "You don't necessarily need to be a master gardener." If you don't like getting your hands dirty, Denise notes that volunteers can also drive to send out food to pantries in Washington and New Milford. "Volunteering is an easy experience to do and it is fulfilling."

Judea Garden has been recognized in the community for its work as well. In 2021 Ms. Arturi accepted the Friend of the Green Award on behalf of the organization. When the time came for a speech of thanks, Ms. Arturi made sure to acknowledge the many who have helped Judea Garden endure for so long. "Every year volunteers of all ages...make it happen. They are Judea Garden."

For more information email denise.arturi@steeprockassoc.org or call Denise Arturi at (860) 868-9131.

Help Families in Your Community

Tom Moore (Annie C. Courtney Foundation)

The Annie C. Courtney Foundation is actively looking for caregivers for children and teenagers in CT foster care. By caring for a child, you help the child and family heal while enriching your own life. "I cannot believe I get to do this job," states one CT licensed caregiver. "The satisfaction I get is seeing the kids I care for start to blossom. I love seeing a child's self-confidence grow. The most amazing thing is when a child starts to feel safe and secure, and you can see the worry and stress melt way."

Won't you consider opening your heart and your home to a child or youth? We urgently need care providers for children of all ages, particularly those on the autism spectrum as well as teenagers and sibling groups.



When you provide this care to children, you are supported with a vast array of resources. Foster families receive assistance with medical and dental care, and a daily stipend to cover the costs associated with caring for a child. Social workers visit regularly to provide support to families and the children under their care. Additional services are provided for kids who need them.

"I missed having children in my home," maintains another foster mom. "I love being a 'mom' again. And I find it so rewarding to have been a part of the kids' lives when they needed it most. I miss them when they leave but I always try to stay connected with them and their families after they move on." Foster families are encouraged to maintain ongoing relationships with children and their families – relationships that continue long past the day a child leaves your home. It is one of the many rewards associated with being a foster parent.

If you enjoy fostering children's strengths and dreams; fostering stability and resilience; fostering empathy and caring in children and youth...this may be the best decision, you'll ever make.

The primary goal of foster care is to provide a nurturing home for children while their biological families develop and enhance the skills needed to get their children safely home. These skills will also sustain their family long after reunification. Foster parents don't just foster children, they foster biological families, too, and offer support and encouragement to parents and children as they become healthy and whole again.

Information meetings take less than 2 hours and are conducted 2-3 times per week on the Zoom platform.

For more information or to register for an information meeting, contact Annie C Courtney Foundation at 475-235-2184. Annie C works in partnership with the Department of Children and Families to find foster parents for over 3,000 children in CT foster care. Please check the Annie C website for more information on foster care, kinship care and adoption: www.anniec.org.

Common Ground with Jane Whitney

Paige Jackson

On Sunday, January 7th, Common Ground visited The Frederick Gunn School campus for the filming of their first episode of the new year: Youth Activism: Tomorrow's Protest Today, which featured a panel of young female activists, including Deja Foxx, Aalayah Eastmond, Hadley Duvall, and Danielle Butcher Franz.

This episode focused on the issues of the future and what can be done to help right now. Deja Foxx is a 23-year-old activist striving to protect women's reproductive rights and comprehensive health care. She began her journey at 15 when she became homeless, and since then, she has graduated from Columbia University and worked alongside Kamala Harris in her presidential campaign. Danielle Butcher Franz takes a controversial role in the activism world; calling herself a conservative environmentalist. As a young woman from rural Minnesota, Franz aims to protect wildlife and our beautiful environment. Hadley Duvall became known in 2022 after sharing the story of her pregnancy at age 12 due to being raped by her stepfather. Duvall is continuously pushing for women's rights to pregnancy prevention and abortion as a se-

nior in college at Midway University in Kentucky. Aalayah Eastmond became involved in activism after she survived the Parkland massacre in 2018 as a high school student. Since then, Eastmond has graduated from Trinity Washington University with a degree in Criminal Justice and is currently working in DC on many activist organizations.



Prompted by Common Ground host Jane Whitney, the panelists had a vibrant discussion on each woman's experience and how their lives became centered around activism. This episode differed from previous episodes of the season because Common Ground offered a Q&A for Frederick Gunn students and other audience members after the show.

Many of the students lined up behind the microphone to ask panelists various questions about the show or their experiences. Common Ground's interns helped to organize the Q&A with the help of Mr. McMann. Students asked questions about what it is like becoming an activist, how the panelists handle negative feedback, and what it is like to disagree with

loved ones over political issues. "It was inspiring to see people close to my age being given a platform to further civic change," commented intern Marley Kennedy. "I liked the chance to connect with them on a personal level through the Q&A."

The next episode of *Common Ground*, *Reality*

Bites Back: America's Trip Down Fantasy Lane, was filmed in the Thomas S. Perakos Arts and Community Center on January 21st.





Youth Commons Continued

Ryan Ryu

In response to the lack of youth activism opportunities, a new youth-led organization, Youth Commons, emerged, rooted in Washington, CT. Described as a dynamic and inclusive youth organization committed to fostering unity and harmony among the younger generation, Youth Commons has a mission to bridge societal divides by advocating open-mindedness, embracing diversity, and upholding core values. Led by young individuals passionate about politics and the common good, Youth Commons serves as a platform where the next generation collaboratively tackles extreme polarization in the United States through youth activism.

Within the vibrant landscape of Youth Commons, the project procedure unfolds as a dynamic process designed to empower members and foster collective engagement. To initiate this journey, members are encouraged to take the Political Stances Quiz for Teens—an insightful tool unveiling individual perspectives, tracing the roots of biases, and highlighting potential areas for evolving stances. This self-awareness sets the stage for a collective vote, where diverse viewpoints within the organization shape the agenda collectively.

The project advances through two rounds of discussions, each serving a unique purpose. The first round extends an open invitation, welcoming non-members into the dialogue, ensuring a broad spectrum of opinions to enrich the discourse. The second round, reserved for internal discussions among members, allows for a deeper exploration of ideas, refining the collective vision of Youth Commons. The culmination of these discussions manifests in drafting a resolution—a compelling call for action that captures the essence of the collective stance. This resolution undergoes a meticulous editing process before being submitted and introduced to local or nationwide representatives, becoming a tangible manifestation of Youth Commons' commitment to driving positive change through informed and united advocacy.

Beyond the procedural framework, Youth Commons strongly emphasizes programming aimed at honing essential skills. From impromptu speaking to persuasive speech, members are equipped with tools to articulate their ideas effectively. Rule 3, a cornerstone of communication, is explored for its effectiveness, ensuring that members can navigate discussions with clarity and impact. The programming extends to the intricacies of government workings, unraveling the mysteries of Congress and shedding light on the art of lobbying. A comprehensive understanding of these elements empowers Youth Commons members to navigate the political landscape with confidence and insight.

Youth Commons holds the potential to empower the community in profound ways. By providing a platform for expression, this

youth-led organization enables individuals to engage in civic discourse and address pressing concerns actively. Encouraging collaboration through initiatives and projects sparks a sense of collective responsibility among its members, empowering the community to confront issues head-on and fostering a spirit of activism that resonates beyond its chapters. As Youth Commons gains traction, its impact on community empowerment will become a testament to youth activism's transformative power in shaping the societal progress narrative.

Youth Commons extends its reach through chapters, creating a network of passionate individuals committed to its mission. There are chapters in Connecticut and Massachusetts, including the very first chapter at The Frederick Gunn School. Several more chapters are expected to open in the near future in the northeast region and Seoul, South Korea. These chapters serve as localized hubs where youth activists collaborate on initiatives tailored to their specific community needs.

The vision of Youth Commons transcends geographical boundaries. Envisioning a future where the energy and passion of the youth bridge societal divides, the organization promotes a more inclusive and harmonious society. Chapters across states and even overseas gather virtually for joint meetings and forums to exchange perspectives and solutions. Through its chapters and overarching vision, Youth Commons emerges as a beacon of hope, lighting the way for youth beyond Connecticut to shape the future of their communities through active, impactful activism.

To join this dynamic movement and be a part of the transformative journey, visit youthcommons.org and discover how you can actively engage, collaborate, and amplify your voice for a brighter future. Your involvement matters, and Youth Commons is the platform where your passion meets purpose.



Gunn Student Runs STEM Program for Local Youth

Peter Murphy

The world's ever-changing interests continue to sweep through the town of Washington Connecticut, as the uprising in youths' extracurricular activities is expanding. One of the many activities kids are doing in Washington Connecticut right now is robotics. The Gunn Memorial Library, always at the forefront of innovative programming with its "eagle-eyed view" of the educational landscape, will host an introductory robotics workshop on February 17th called "STEM Lego Explorers." While the library will be generously hosting the event, the leader of the event currently resides in Gunn House right down the street at The Frederick Gunn School, where he's been mastering his Lego Robotics craft for the last few years.

Now, while many students will spend their Sundays sleeping in and enjoying their last day of the weekend before school starts again, senior Alejandro Zafra found that he wanted to do more with his time during this day of proclaimed rest. Alejandro, a native of Madrid, Spain, developed his passion for robotics at a young age. During an interview with The Washington Eagle, Zafra had the opportunity to talk about his experience with robotics. "I've been teaching every Sunday since October of 2023. Our group has met around 6 times since then. The people who participate are mostly faculty kids from Gunn. All ages are welcome." Alejandro is not a mere amateur robotics teacher as he has awards to prove his dedication to the activity. Alejandro expanded on his expertise by saying, "I was a champion at the World Robot Olympia and I've been a part of Robotics for 7 years. I won the championship in March of 2022. I participated with a friend to win regionals and then went to nationals with him. We got second in nationals and since then I have loved teaching robotics to younger students" Two of Alejandro's students, Nathan Fisher and Jack Konik, were having a blast during their time at robotics as well. Nathan described his experience so far at the robotics workshop with exuberance. "We built this robot called the Colossus, and it has spinning gears that flip over the other bots! We love coming to this class each Sunday, it's so much fun!"

Word spread quickly about Alejandro's robotics workshops at Gunn. The leadership at Gunn Memorial heard of the great work happening there and reached out to Mr. Zafra's representatives to organize a robotics session at Gunn Memorial's junior library. The Gunn Memorial Library's junior librarian, Linda Morse, elaborated on her excitement about the event coming up this February 17th. Linda is thrilled to invite Alejandro to the junior library and emphasized how his expertise is a force for good for our community. "We are so excited he's coming and doing this. We've never had a program like this before. I know robots and Legos are popular, so it will really excite the kids." When asked about how robotics will help kids pursue their passions, Linda insightfully shared, "Kids are very creative. It's nice that they are going to see the hardware Alejandro brings. This will offer a hands-on learning experience and the kids are going to appreciate it. It's also nice that we have someone who truly knows what they are doing. If he does well, we might have to keep inviting him back every weekend!"

Robotics are an incredibly enjoyable way to have fun with friends and improve STEM skills. It's a fantastic activity that melds teamwork and creativity. Alejandro's lessons will not only teach the children of Washington Connecticut coding techniques and proper robot etiquette, but it will also educate them in teamwork strategies and comradery. Alejandro has been able to spread his message of teamwork through robotics every Sunday at Gunn, and soon the kids of Washington will join in the fun come February!

Book Drive over the Holidays

Daisy Moriarty

In December, Grace Harlow and Daisy Moriarty organized a Holiday Book Drive for FISH of Torrington, a homeless shelter in Torrington, Connecticut. To do this, they set up boxes in three locations: The Gunn Memorial Library, Martys Cafe, and outside of The Frederick Gunn School's cafeteria. This book drive was a result of the Winterim class "Love of Reading" in which students had to present a final project at the end of their two-week class. Daisy spent the majority of class time calling different businesses in the Washington and New Preston area, while Grace emailed other businesses to see if they would be willing to hang posters advertising the book drive in their stores. Many businesses were happy to hang the posters, including Favorite, the Washington Liquor store, ASAP Art, Stella Rose Boutique and Consignment, The Depot Dog, Eckert Fine Art, Washington Market, Plain Goods, Stars Hollow Yarn, Ro by Frencha Design, Pillar Bllac, Washington Art Gallery, and The 202 Tavern.

The girls made boxes for the three book drive locations, and used their leader, Kori Rimany's Venmo to accept donations which they would later use to buy new books for the youth at FISH of Torrington. They were grateful to receive donations from members of The Frederick Gunn School community, family members, and some of Ms. Rimany's candle customers. They raised over \$360 in total, and used the money to buy books at Honeybee Books in New Milford and Hickory Stick Bookshop in Washington Depot. Some books they bought included *Strega Nona*, books from the Cam Jansen series, *Paper Towns*, and *James and the Giant Peach*.

Daisy and Grace decided to wrap the books as "a blind date with a book", something that Daisy had done when she was younger, and that Grace had seen online. "A blind date with a book" is when a book is wrapped so that the potential reader cannot see its cover. Grace and Daisy wrote clues as to what kind of book it was on the wrapping paper. The clues included quotes from the book, the book's genre, the suggested age to read the book, and the names of books that the wrapped book's readers also enjoyed. This way, the young people at FISH of Torrington would have some choice of what books they were given, while still getting to be surprised and unwrap their present.

There were many books donated through the book collection boxes, and a puzzle and cassette tape were donated too. The donated books were from a variety of genres, including history, memoirs, and novels. Grace and Daisy checked the books to see if they were like-new, and if they were, they were wrapped like the books they bought at the bookstores were, as "blind dates with a book." If the books were more than gently used, they were not wrapped, but they were still donated to FISH of Torrington so they could be used for purposes other than the Holiday book exchange, where the books wrapped as "blind dates with a book" would be used. Overall, Daisy and Grace bought 55 books using the money that was donated, and 82 books were directly donated through their book drive boxes.

The Washington Eagle



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Washington Montessori School Young Journalists

WMS

The Journey of a Hero

Melanie Cabrera

A very big project that's taken a lot of time. Will it be finished on time is the question? At the Washington Montessori School the seventh graders participate in a year long project called the Hero's Journey. At the end of the year these seventh graders have to present their struggles and challenges to a Council of Elders. During the year they learn more about themselves and the transition from childhood to adulthood. Some students are given freedom when it comes to their Hero's Journey project. They kick off this project with a week outside of school spent together in a place known as Camp Hazen. After this, students are expected to have started what they want to pursue. The year long project can vary from bike building, sewing, ASL, service projects, etc.! Although the students are given freedom they're expected to meet with an ally. An ally is someone the seventh graders rely on for support and answers.

The council of elders sounds scary but it's actually a great experience that you feel great after doing. Eighth graders from last year report that "The council of elders are actually very kind and the presentation feels more like a conversation. They'll help you out if you get stuck in your presentation."

This class might seem useless to some but as a seventh grader this is very important to me and many other seventh graders. One seventh grader this year is helping a disabled neighbor every few days and this is what she has to say about it. "The hero's journey makes me feel great because I get to do something good without asking for a price so it's just humanity at its purest." This gives children the opportunity to learn a new skill that could potentially help them in the future. This program is important because the students are given the freedom to choose their own path and what they want to do without restrictions. They get to choose something that's important to them. Instead of doing what the teachers or adults say, the students get support from the school to do something personal to them that makes them feel special.



Gosh, it's Time for the Expert Project!

Narolyn Alcantara de la Rosa

Countless sleepless nights, too many energy drinks and two chapters done. The Expert Project in Washington Montessori is an excruciating yet extremely rewarding project. The Expert entails a minimum ten page paper about a topic pertaining to science. The paper includes an introduction, three chapters (which are typically three pages long), then a conclusion. After drafts, the final paper is complete then the 8th graders need to make a slideshow, condensing all the information learned to a short seven minute presentation. The final presentation is named Expert symposium and it is the last academic presentation students do at Washington Montessori School. The Expert Project is notorious for being challenging, but the question remains, "What do the students really think about it?"

A common theme among Expert Project students is that it is challenging, but overall fun. A 8th grade student named Emery, who is currently working on Expert remarks, "It's very stressful, but it's a fun way to learn about a new topic." This was an extremely popular opinion. Tallulah, another 8th grader advises, "Working hard is really important, so do something that you know you can write a lot about." Since Expert is an incredibly long paper, you need to do something that allows you to find a lot of information that will not repeat itself over and over again. For years, Expert has been a topic that people have dreaded in 8th grade, but in reality it is not as bad as it is made out to be.

Personally, in Expert I have found procrastination makes everything at least 10x harder. As a 6th grader I remember being absolutely terrified of the time I would have to write ten pages for a school project. Now that I am here I find myself saying, "It's not so bad." Although I have most definitely had to stay up late and work especially hard on this. I believe this project prepares you for high school, as my teacher, Tom said, "It's really a heavy lift for middle school students, it is supposed to be challenging, it is supposed to push people beyond what normally happens in middle school, as hard as it is generally when people have finished it they feel great about what they have accomplished and go to high school really understanding the research process. They are prepared for the demands of a high school curriculum." I believe that I will be properly prepared and I will be happy I did the project when I am standing up at the board sharing my hours of research with parents, community members, and classmates.

WMS Specials

Walker Dunbar

On Wednesday and Friday afternoons WMS students go to their specials. The specials at WMS are Drumming, Guitar, Physical Education, 3D Art, and Painting/Drawing. What are teachers' and students' opinions on these specials and why are they important to the school's culture?

The specials are times at school when students do some semi-academic activities. During Art students either paint and draw or make things out of wood and clay. During Music students prepare for concerts or they just do activities including drumming or guitar. During Physical Education, students participate in physical activities such as games or team sports.

Specials at WMS are important to the students because they are a good chance to get out of class and use a different part of their brain. Specials are also a good time to hang out with friends and be creative. In Art, some of the students' favorite projects that they have made in Art are clay christmas cookies, comic strips, a vase, and an initialized heart. In Phys Ed, some of the students' favorite activities are volleyball because "it's fun and everyone is supportive," matball because "it's fun," and hideout because "there's lots of rolls."

Personally, I love the concept of specials and I'm happy that WMS has them. Specials at WMS are an important part of the students' days.



Holiday in the Depot

Joe Hernandez

Holiday in the Depot is filled with festive outfits and holiday cheer. During Holiday In the Depot, WMS chorus students sang during the concert. In Holiday in the Depot, they sang "Carol of the Bells," "Hanukkah Hayom," "Merry Christmas," "Jingle Bells," "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer," and "Santa Claus is Coming to Town." A few of the top favorite songs sung by the chorus are "Carol of the Bells," "Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer," and "Hanukkah Hayom."

Holiday in the Depot was held on Friday, December 8th, 2023, and was a very popular event for Washington citizens and students at local schools. There were many places selling things for the holiday. They sold food such as donuts, hot chocolate, and gummy bears which were much enjoyed by the chorus members and parents at the event.

Holiday in the Depot is important to the Washington community because it brought everybody together during the holiday season. It also meant a lot to the WMS chorus because they had spent months rehearsing for Holiday in the Depot. The WMS chorus came in an hour every Wednesday to practice the many songs they had sung on Holiday in the Depot. It was a big commitment that the chorus students had to make for Holiday in the Depot to happen, and they appreciated having the support of the community.

In addition, please enjoy the following quotes from WMS students on Holiday in the Depot (Photo on A6)

"It was fun, and it was cool to be in with all the other chorus kids" - Julliete

"Even Santa Claus showed up that's how popular it is" -Holden Neminski

The Washington Eagle



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Young Journalists

A6

WMS

After-School Activities at WMS

Amelia Ruppel

At the Washington Montessori School we have many after school activities. Our school has numerous activities for different seasons during the school year. For smaller kids in the lower elementary we have: pottery, soccer, basketball, and rock climbing. One of our newest after school activities for the lower elementary students is fencing. Lower elementary sports do not travel and have away games.

Some of our Upper elementary students' after-school activities are: study hall, co-ed soccer with 5th and 6th, co-ed basketball, tennis, and pottery. Upper elementary has a chance to travel with sports as well as the 6th graders. They will be traveling to their competitors' schools or their competitors will be traveling to our school for games.

Some of our middle school after-school activities are: soccer, basketball, tennis, art lab, theater, outdoor club, study hall, and ski team. All of our middle school sport activities travel to away games. Tennis is in the spring. Soccer and outdoor clubs are in the fall. Basketball, Theatre, and Ski Team are in the winter, and Art Lab and Study Hall are all year round. To engage in these activities, there will be an email sent out asking if your child would like to participate in any of these activities.

For this article, I interviewed Amelia Reighard. She has been going to this school for about ten years, and her thoughts on the after school activities are that they are fun and exciting. They give students more to experience and to learn about the school, and students are encouraged to try something new. "Ski Team gives me lots of opportunities to improve on techniques for skiing and gives me more bonding time to get to know my friends and other people from different grades." Amelia has been on the Ski team, participated in theater, study hall, and she thinks that she will do soccer in the future. She likes WMS' middle school activities the best. Some activities that I do at WMS are: Soccer, Ski Team, Tennis, Study Hall, and Art Lab.



**WASHINGTON
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The Washington Eagle team would like to extend special gratitude to Washington Montessori for partnering with us. Our work with these students has been truly inspiring, and we can think of no better group to leave our community to!



Pizza by Polar Bears?

Juliette Demming

Is being an entrepreneur important as a teen? We think yes at WMS. Microeconomics, a popular class at Washington Montessori School happens on Wednesdays for our 6th and 7th graders. The idea of Microeconomics is for students to learn how to run a business and the challenges that come with it.

The first 2 sessions are run by the 7th graders. As of now the 7ths have learned how to manage the business called Polar Pizza. During Polar Pizza, the 7th graders prepare and deliver pizza. At the end of the quarter we met with Anne Fenton, Chief Financial & Operating Officer. She has been keeping track of our profits. From the most recent quarter we had an 18.90% assumed profit of \$909.22. These profits go to our class trips such as the Boston trip in the spring. The adult running this wonderful class is science and math teacher Lauren Casey.

I interviewed two 7th graders. Both of the two enjoy giving the pizza out and seeing the smiles on the young children's faces. "I really do love seeing the smiles on their faces, all incredibly happy waiting for their food," said Harper Hawley. When asked if she thought the experience might come in handy later in life, Melanie Cabrera responded, "Yes because it gives me a peek through what stressful work environments are which can give me a tolerance to it later on in my years."





Gunn's Lizzie in the Washington Community

Martha Ewing

Nestled among the rustic and rolling slopes of the Litchfield Hills, a futuristic glass building has become a recent addition to the Washington community. Beginning in the fall of 2022, the construction process took just over a year to complete, with a dynamic result that has cast ripples around The Frederick Gunn School and the town of Washington. The Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch Center for Innovation and Active Citizenship is no doubt an architectural marvel, but what is its role in Washington, and why is it significant to the town's identity and culture?

Donated to The Frederick Gunn School by Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch, this \$25 million edifice has left its imprint on the town already. It is officially the largest building in Washington, Connecticut, spanning 24,000 square feet. The Lizzie, a name fondly donned by students before the building had even been constructed, has already had a huge impact on campus life and academics at the school. All the STEM and Citizenship and Just Democracy classes that were previously held in the Memorial Athletic Center, or in the Tisch Schoolhouse, have now been moved to the sleek, lofty, and modern classrooms in The Lizzie, much to the delight of students and faculty alike. The building is located right in the heart of the bustling campus, looking over the historic quad, meaning it has, by nature, centralized the campus and brought students closer together, than they had been when classes were spread out on both sides of Route 47. Overall, the innovative design and presence of The Lizzie has given The Frederick Gunn School's campus a new energy and momentum, coming in handy during the bleaker winter months.

But how will The Lizzie be a part of the Washington Community? The school doesn't plan on keeping this architectural feat to itself; for example, students in the Civic Journalism and Media Making class have plans to open the doors of The Lizzie to the community

some weekends for a collaborative, open newsroom. This way, students can connect with members of the Washington community, and work together on articles and pieces for the recently revived Washington Eagle newspaper. "We would love to open up a workshop during class or Saturday mornings where citizen journalists in town can collaborate with our students and contribute articles to the Eagle," added Bart McMann, faculty member at Gunn. Hopefully, the Lizzie will foster civic engagement and innovation, in alignment with The Frederick Gunn School's values.

The Lizzie and Jonathan Tisch Center for Innovation and Active Citizenship, though only recently opened, has already had a tremendous impact on the Frederick Gunn School's culture. The school hopes it will have similar effects on Washington and its surrounding areas, with the goal to provide members of the community with the resources and setting they need in order to be active citizens.



A Review of *The Pantry*

Matis Molina-Ricard

In the Washington Depot, The Pantry has served great food for over forty years. It was opened in 1977 by Nancy and Micheal Ackerman but after over a decade of working for them, Keith Bisciotti and Zoe Velush-Rogers have now taken over the restaurant and continue to serve great food. The Pantry in Washington, Connecticut, blends the charm of a local grocery store with a fine dining restaurant. The aroma of freshly picked produce and homemade pastries welcomes customers as they walk through the door. The Pantry stands out for its dedication to sourcing high-quality, local ingredients. The fresh produce selection shows a commitment to promoting local farming and highlighting the finest that Washington has to offer. The cheese and charcuterie section at The Pantry is a cheese lover's dream, containing a great selection that includes both foreign and local cheeses. Not to be overlooked is the bakery section, which is a delight for anybody with a sweet tooth. The aroma of freshly baked pastries and bread draws customers to discover a selection of delicious treats such as chocolate croissants, blueberry scones, or even some strawberry muffins. When I had the chance to stop by last week, I ordered a Pastrami Reuben sandwich with grilled swiss cheese and an amazing thousand island dressing. Served on perfectly toasted white bread with melted cheese, the sandwich was great and I would definitely recommend it to anyone who does visit.

The Pantry is a must-go place for anyone looking for a delicious food experience. The store has a cozy atmosphere and is a pleasant place to spend lunchtime when exploring the area. The Pantry store in Washington, Connecticut is essentially any foodie's dream come true. It's all about fine cuisine and locally sourced goods. The smell of freshly harvested produce and savory baked foods fills the air as soon as you come through the door. It is a place that guarantees to delight and excite, regardless of whether you want to just shop for some groceries, cookware, or stop by for a meal. Without a doubt, it's a Washington eatery worth looking into!

Gunn Museum Welcomes New Director

Mairin Hoffman

The Gunn Museum is a local historical museum near The Frederick Gunn School in Washington, Connecticut. It is housed in a 1781 residence overlooking the historic Washington Green. The museum shows the history of the truly fascinating town, giving in-depth information of the town during important times in history like the Civil War. The museum aims to "collect, preserve, interpret and share the objects and stories which illuminate the history of Washington, Connecticut." The current exhibit succeeds in its mission as the vivid, well-researched displays give a visitor an exceptional overview of this land from Native American times to the present.

The museum depicts the wide range of history of the town by having stunning displays showing real artifacts that people have donated. This includes arrowheads dating back to the Native Americans, various clothing items, and many historic items that are captivating to see. The museum attracts many people interested in history and has opportunities for students to work. Frederick Gunn student Layla Copen '24 works an internship at the museum and does various independent projects. "I have always loved history, specifically the AP United States History course, and many things at this museum connect to what I have learned. First, I read and catalogued 19th-century correspondence letters. Most recently I have scanned 20th-century yearbooks." I had the opportunity to visit the museum. I was welcomed by the associate director of the museum, Susan Ruppert, who showed me around and was extremely passionate about each piece of history in the museum and the goal of the museum itself.

The Gunn Museum recently announced a new director, Amy Campanaro, and is extremely excited about this new leadership. Amy comes from a regional history museum in New York State, and her family decided to move to Connecticut and she wanted a job closer to home. She has been a consistent visitor to Washington and was thrilled when she saw the job opportunity for the Gunn Museum. "When I saw the job posting for the Gunn Museum, I felt like it was fate." Right now, at the museum, she is working on an exciting new program called Cooking Through Time Cookbook Club. "This will be a bimonthly cookbook club highlighting recipes and cookbooks from yesteryear. The program combines history and food as we will discuss the history behind the recipes and food fads while sharing our experiences and creations with fellow members." Along with this, she has exciting plans for the future. "Future plans include making the archives more accessible for visitors and researchers, and we are fortunate to have received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to help with this project."

The Gunn Museum is just one of the many resources that Washington has to offer for residents and visitors and is truly one of the most engaging. Seeing the history of this town helps residents gain an appreciation for the hard work of the ancestors of this land and teaches people information they may not know. If you have time, visit the Gunn Museum because you can learn so much from just one stroll.

Gunn Library Reading Challenge

Paige Jackson

Every summer and winter, the Gunn Memorial Library hosts reading challenges for both children and adults. The Adult Winter Reading Challenge is a fun, light-hearted, and motivating challenge for adults in and around Washington, Connecticut to participate in from January to March. I, journalist and editor for the Washington Eagle, visited the library this past week to speak to Executive Director Audra MacLaren.

MacLaren has been working at the Gunn Memorial Library for three years now and part of her job is to help to coordinate all events within the library, including reading challenges. She explained that the intention of the challenge is to expand the reading preferences of library members and increase visits to the library. Anyone can pay a visit to the library to pick up a bingo card for the reading challenge and usually around 60 members of the community participate in each challenge.

"So we set this up usually every winter, both for the kids and the adults, and it's a way to encourage people to challenge themselves to read in a fun way, and to maybe bring new people to the library," MacLaren explained. "For every challenge that they do, we give them a ticket for a chance to win a small prize."

MacLaren, as well as the other wonderful members of the staff, encourage everyone in the area to pay a visit to the library and check out all the events and resources they have to offer!