



# M o s a i c

Newsletter of the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School

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Photo by Amy Inglis

The chance to create positive connections among children at different ends of their school journey was a delight for all.

## Connections that Count: Middle Schoolers Visit Early Childhood

*by Christine Inglis, Nursery Teacher*

Whenever students from the grade school come across the road to visit us in the Early Childhood building, it always brings back my own memories of attending a Waldorf High School in England for grades 11 and 12. Until then I had attended public schools in the U.S. that were, in my experience, mostly large and impersonal. What a difference I encountered in the Waldorf school! I immediately fell in love with the Waldorf approach and spent my free periods helping out in the kindergarten. Years later—as a student in a Waldorf Teacher Training program in England at a conference for twelfth-graders from British Waldorf schools—a high-school senior approached me and told me that she had fond memories of my weekly visits to her kindergarten class so many years before!

To me, these kinds of positive connections are invaluable, and I am grateful that our school is able to provide opportunities

for the grade school and very youngest children to benefit from interacting with each other, just as I did. This spring, our eighth-grade students worked on a story that they performed in Spanish for the little ones as a puppet show. Sometimes the children and teachers in early childhood make their way over to “the big school” to enjoy the wonderful class plays performed in the grade school auditorium. Whenever the “big children” from the grades pass us by—perhaps cross-country skiing, or on a scavenger hunt in the woods, or to play baseball or soccer on the field behind our playground—it is an occasion for the littler children to gaze in rapt attention. And they adore watching the older children at the May Day festivities, looking forward to the time when they will become the Maypole dancers! The grade school students also notice and appreciate their little neighbors.

This past February, the early childhood classes enjoyed a series of

visits from our seventh-grade students. The seventh graders, who made these visits as part of their study block on health, nutrition and human development, wrote reports on their experience as part of their studies. The little ones were delighted to have a big boy or girl visiting, and one seventh-grade student remarked, “As I walked into the Rose Room, the first thing that I noticed was the amazed eyes of the children looking up at me with admiration.” For many of the middle schoolers, visiting in the early childhood classrooms took them back to the time when they were students here. Wrote one student, “As I knock on the door of the nursery room, a sweet voice tells me to enter. The room is a soft cream, decorated with pale blue silks, crocheted snowflakes, and little bearded gnomes playing in drifts of wool...the play kitchen, the tiny chairs, the bathroom that makes me look like a giant, and the smell of bread dough bring back memories.” Another said, “Immediately when you walk into the Star Room you have a sense of peacefulness and calm surroundings.”

Seventh-graders commented on the soft and gentle voices of the teachers. One student wrote, “[The teachers] speak calmly to the children. Sometimes they sing the words to the children, keeping them calm. Nothing is said or done that could frighten the children, since anything that is said is observed by a child.” Another wrote, “Throughout the morning [the teacher] sang and spoke warmly to the children. They listened eagerly to what she had to say, and were very happy if they were picked to be her special helper.” Another common theme noted by the visitors was the imaginative play of the children: “The children have amazing imaginations that they show through their ‘make believe’ games. They imitate stories like Little Red Riding Hood or make a house out of blocks and silks.” Another said, “The children made a little house and played in it. They also made little airports for their

toy planes. Some of them drove around on little cars and trucks. Others played with dolls.” Or, “The boys and girls ran around the room, playing in the kitchen, coloring pictures, and dressing up.” And another commented, “The children are almost always moving, skipping, climbing, laughing or building. Games are played in a circle like passing or tossing a soft ball.”

The fledgling teens observed how the young children worked diligently on cutting apples or preparing bread for the snack and then washed their boards and cleaned up afterwards. One noted, “While kneading the bread dough, the children used their little fingers to make different shapes.” Our visitors also noticed the artistic activities: “Children can take part in drawing activities together at the big table and draw maybe things that they have observed in nature,” said one. Another remarked, “Colorful scenes appeared on their pages as they drew. I could tell that in the future, the main lesson books of these boys and girls would be full of beautiful work.” One seventh grader ended her essay as follows, “I wish I could have gone to a place like this for kindergarten. Instead I was asked how to spell lipstick [while sitting] in [a] metal desk and asked where Greenland is. It is very different in [Waldorf] early childhood, to be able to explore the mind in such a different way than that. It is a great foundation to start your life with.”

It is heartening that our middle school students have such an appreciation for our approach to early childhood education. When they say it is a great foundation to start life with, I couldn’t agree more. Their careful observations and thoughtful insights are another testimony to the value of this education, and their experiences visiting the children in early childhood are sure to serve them in the future, whether as teachers, parents, coaches, doctors, or other caring members of their community.



The young children welcomed their middle school visitors with enthusiasm.

photo by Amy Inglis

# A Milestone for Iolani and Our School: Our First Second-Generation Graduate

by Janie LaBrasca, Development Director

The seed of our school was lovingly planted more than 30 years ago, long enough for deep roots to have taken a firm hold in the earth, and long enough for our very first graduates to begin beaming with pride as their own children complete eighth grade. Iolani Sommer de-Ris, class of 2009 with teacher Andrew Sansone, holds the distinct honor of being the very first second-generation Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School graduate. In the first generation is her mom, Fiona Sommer de-Ris (class of 1987, with teacher Peter Elliston), who also has a daughter, Mareika, in the class of 2012. To highlight this important milestone, we asked Iolani and Fiona to share some thoughts on their Waldorf school experience.

Fiona began at GBRSS in 1978, when we were still known as The Pumpkin Hollow School, and her family's association with a Rudolf Steiner education dates back even further, since Fiona's parents and grandparents were active in Eurythmy and Waldorf Education in Germany and the United States. As Fiona's life took her to Europe for high school, back 'home' to the Berkshires to start a family, and then through an anthroposophical training in social therapy, she met the many challenges along the way with courage, enthusiasm and a sense of purpose borne from those formative years. It was clear to her that she wanted to provide this same solid life foundation for her own children.

Iolani is a remarkable athlete, and shares her mother's appreciation for Waldorf education. She enjoys the relationship with her teacher because, as she says, "it grows from first grade to eighth grade." When asked if she will go on to a Waldorf high school, she is leaning on her mother and father (Hartmuth Sommer-de Ris) to guide her. Like her mother, she believes that wherever



Second-generation graduate Iolani Sommer de-Ris with her mother Fiona Sommer de-Ris.

she lands she will thrive, because her education thus far has given her "a deeper level of understanding of myself."

Fiona acknowledges that much has changed since she graduated from GBRSS twenty-two years ago, in those pioneering days when the school was just 16 years young. Much more was demanded of the parent body, she says. Fiona's fondest memories are of sunlit classrooms, happy, hardworking teachers, parents car-pooling in rusty cars and, of course, volunteer "elves" preparing for the Annual Handcraft Fair months in advance (some things never change). Fiona views the school as a "living, breathing entity" that has grown and evolved to meet the needs of our

time and today's students. "I believe it is deeply important that parents continue to work in support of, and have faith in, this education and its curriculum, which provides such stability and nourishment for children," she says.

Today 26 children of alumni are currently enrolled in GBRSS, and the "second generation" continues to grow. It seems that their parents, having once found a home in Waldorf education, know that they want to give this same gift to their child. Thank you, Fiona, for your deep commitment to GBRSS and Waldorf education. And congratulations, Iolani, on all of your accomplishments; we wish you continued success wherever you may go!

## Mosaic

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# Sixth Grader Mohee Nordoff Wins Essay Contest

by Kathi Weinstein, Enrollment Director

Judges of the 23rd Annual “Real Women” Essay Contest were as moved as I was by the imagery created by Mohee Nordoff, one of our sixth grade students (see his essay below). Through his vivid prose, Mohee brings to life the trials and determination of Julia Butterfly Hill, who sat in a redwood tree for 783 days as an act of protest against destruction of the redwood forests of California.

The creative writing competition held this past winter was a project of the Massachusetts Department of Education

and various sponsoring organizations to stimulate students and teachers in Berkshire County to explore the richness and diversity of the lives of “ordinary” women, past and present. Mohee was awarded a prize for the sixth and seventh grade category.

The essay was judged on its ability to, through effective use of descriptive language, raise awareness of “real women” role models who have made a difference in society. Correct punctuation, spelling, grammar, and neatness were also factors

considered in judging the submissions.

Accompanied by his parents, his entire class, and many class parents, Mohee received his award at a ceremony held on March 25 at Berkshire Community College. Guest speaker Laurie Norton Moffatt, CEO of the Norman Rockwell Museum, is also an alumni parent of GBRSS (her daughter, Leigh, is a 2007 graduate).

Please join the GBRSS faculty and staff in congratulating Mohee for this noteworthy commendation.

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## My Heroine, Julia Butterfly Hill

by Mohee Nordoff, Sixth-grade Student

The storm was raging. At 180 feet off the ground, in a 200 foot tree, on a six-by-eight platform, Julia was thrown across the floor. She clung to Luna, the redwood, for dear life. Lightning



Julia Butterfly Hill in her beloved redwood, Luna.

flashed. The crack-boom of thunder was deafening. The wind howled. The platform shook. Rain, sleet and hail poured down on the tiny structure held together by rope, nails and duct tape. Wind threw the platform into the air.

Julia Butterfly Hill is a woman who, through love, care and passion, was able to overcome overwhelming odds and bring new light to environmental problems for millions of people around the globe.

Julia was born in 1974 inside the back of a bakery truck on February 18th in Mount Vernon, Missouri. Her family traveled around the country with her father, a preacher, in a 32 foot camper. As a child, she was home schooled until ten years old, when Julia’s parents settled in Arkansas and she went to public school.

At the age of 22, Julia had a serious car accident when she was rear-ended by a drunk driver. The impact of her head hitting the wheel gave Julia a severe brain injury. After months of intense rehabilitation she began to think normally again. She came to believe that the left side of her brain had been damaged because instead of seeing the world mathematically, she now saw the world in all of its color and beauty. Her entire view of the world shifted forever and she resolved to have a purpose in her life.

After rehabilitation, her travels took her to the redwood forest in California where she fell to her knees and cried in awe of

their beauty and power. Afterwards she learned that 97 percent of that forest had been destroyed by Pacific Lumber. Julia finally awakened to her purpose, to save the redwoods. She joined Earth First!, an environmental activist organization involved in protecting redwoods. The activists called for a Tree Sit as a last resort to stop the loggers from cutting a 200 foot tree named Luna. Julia eagerly volunteered.

Over time Julia developed a loving, meaningful bond with Luna that couldn't be broken. Luna's voice spoke strongly within her, bringing her joy and courage.

Life in Luna was not always peaceful. Weathering storms and the cold of winter, Julia even got frostbite. She often joked that

she had patriotic toes (they went from red to white to blue). At 180 feet off the ground, loggers harassed Julia from below by yelling and swearing at her to get her down from the tree. She rarely got any sleep; the bright lights and blaring horns continued nightly.

Finally, on December 18th 1999, an agreement was signed to protect Luna and a 200 foot buffer zone around her. Julia finally came down after 738 days.

Today, Julia lives in Humboldt, California. She devotes her life to empowering the individual to believe in himself and his ability to make a difference for Mother Earth.

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## Preparation for Life

*by Marilyn D. Ruppert, Faculty Administrator*



As we are about to graduate another eighth grade class, I am reminded of questions I hear often throughout the year—from both prospective and current parents. These questions, in one form or another, are, “Where do our students go after they leave our school, and how do they fare? Are they academically prepared? How will they perform if they

transfer to another school or, later on, in the world of higher education?” These are areas of primary interest to us, as well. We want our students to be ready for life after GBRSS, and to have a confident and successful experience in high school, college and beyond.

Although our methodology and processes may be different from many traditional educational practices, we share the common goal that our students be well-prepared academically. At the same time, we also prepare students in a much broader and deeper way for the spectrum of challenges they will meet. The secure foundation set in our early childhood program, and the lower school's development of a wide range of capacities in children that include, but are not limited to, academic abilities, solidly prepare students for any traditional school setting and for other life-learning opportunities.

For instance, one of our graduates recently earned an extraordinary trip to Antarctica with his high school after participating in a very competitive selection process. We often see former students on the honor rolls of their high schools and delight in hearing professors sing the praises of our graduates. Many GBRSS students go on to highly competitive high schools such as Hotchkiss, Miss Hall's, and Salisbury School, as well

as to esteemed universities such as Columbia, Wesleyan and Vassar. Students at GBRSS receive an academic foundation that will enable them to go wherever their innate abilities and interests take them—but we are selling our education short to stop here.

Our rich and varied curriculum gives students opportunities throughout the years to not only discover their academic and artistic proclivities, but also to develop skills in other areas that allow them to achieve an inner sense of balance and well-roundedness. A number of positive qualities are often attributed to Waldorf graduates by those who encounter them later in life: Waldorf graduates demonstrate a refreshing level of intellectual curiosity, as well as an integration and breadth of perspective. They are known to be independent and clear thinkers who carry their ideas into practice and are able to work respectfully and effectively with other people. Some educators have remarked upon the high level of moral integrity often demonstrated by Waldorf graduates, an attribute that results in the application of high ethical principles in their personal and professional lives.

We strive to prepare students to be free, confident and successful—and to contribute positively to society. We wish for them to be happy and deeply satisfied with their lives. The answers to the questions about how our students fare are multidimensional, but perhaps the simplest and most accurate answer is, “They shine.”

Our heartfelt congratulations to the class of 2009! May they shine, wherever they go, and whatever they do. We are confident that they have been given the scaffolding needed to support them in following their dreams, holding fast to their ideals, and working through the maze of life with intelligence, purpose and joy.

# The Great Barrington Waldorf High School

## Senior Profiles, Class of 2009

The Great Barrington Waldorf High School, completing its seventh year, celebrates its third graduating class, the Great Class of 2009. You may read a bit about each of our graduates below.

Our school is an offshoot of GBRSS that takes Waldorf education into high school, and is one of about three dozen such schools in the U.S. You could say that the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School and we are one school in spirit and two schools legally and financially. Our high school prepares students for college and for life with: honors-level academic work; fine practical and performing arts (we hope you saw our sold-out production of “The Tempest” in March); and responsible work, physical education, and service to the community.

Conor Gallagher will attend Vassar

College, NY, next year, where he was admitted early decision. He will play baseball—he has been captain of the Mt. Everett baseball team this year—and he plans to major in economics. He also has an interest in law enforcement and interned this spring with the Pittsfield Police Department.

Michael Graeff has enlisted in the U.S. Army, following a long-time interest. He will complete basic training at Ft. Benning, GA, and will follow this with Airborne and then Ranger training. This spring he interned at Clark and Green Architects in Great Barrington, pursuing another great interest in drawing and design.

Mistral Louw plans to spend a year working, traveling, and sailing before attending St. John’s College in Santa Fe, NM. This spring, she interned in the

tea-tasting room at Harney & Sons Tea Company in Salisbury, CT, enjoying conversations with visitors from around the world.

Ari Meyerowitz plans to spend a year traveling and working for WWOOF (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms) in Germany and France. After he returns to the U.S., he plans to attend Hunter College, NY. This spring he interned at the Walter J. Koladza Airport in Great Barrington, attending flight school and learning airplane mechanics.

Eliot Stier will attend Chapman University, CA, where he plans to major in economics. He also has an interest in zoology. He interned this spring with David Grace, a cinematographer for DG Media, a Ventura, CA, company that produces commercials and hip-hop videos.



From left: Michael Graeff, Conor Gallagher, Mistral Louw, Eliot Stier, and Ari Meyerowitz at Hermit Island, Maine, last fall.



Conor Gallagher



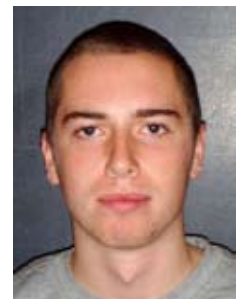
Michael Graeff



Mistral Louw



Ari Meyerowitz

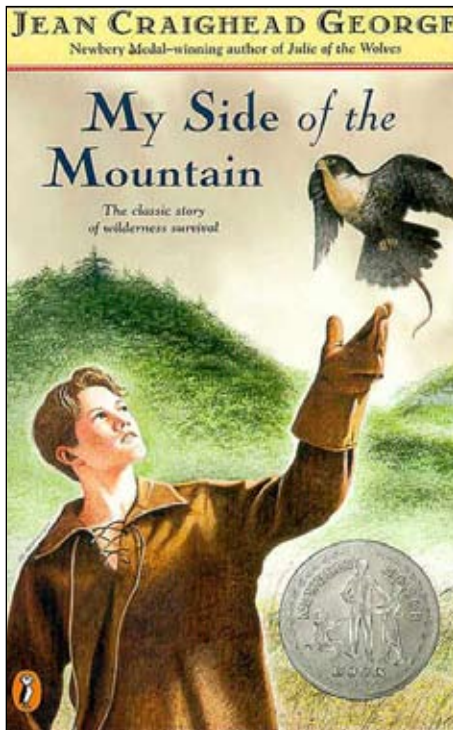


Eliot Stier

# Children's Book Review:

## *My Side of the Mountain* by Jean Craighead George

by Alison Abrams, GBRSS parent



See-sawing temperatures, bird songs, and the urge to draw in fresh air call me to the woods to experience spring in

its natural glory. And in those woods, I recall childhood fantasies of living in the treetops or in my own forest shelter. Author Jean Craighead George conjures up such naturalist adventure fantasies in her compelling book, *My Side of the Mountain*. As she says in the book's introduction, "Almost everyone I know has dreamed at some time of running away to a distant mountain or island, castle or sailing ship, to live there in beauty and peace. Few of us make it however."

Whether or not we've tried our hand at surviving in the wilderness, we can join Sam Gribbley, the 12-year-old boy in *My Side of the Mountain*, on his mountaintop adventure, where he makes his home in a hemlock tree. In springtime, the boy leaves the city and his family behind and—with only his wits, determination and the company of assorted forest friends—creates a

secluded, self-sufficient forest life.

Before launching on his adventure, Sam brushes up on survival skills at his local library. Then he heads to the Catskills with only a penknife, ax and ball of cord. George's use of the first-person perspective quickly draws the reader into Sam's world, leaving us holding our breath as the protagonist, to no avail, attempts to start his first fire with flint and steel to warm up and cook a freshly caught trout. Sam's determination prevails, nonetheless, and within a few days he is adept at lighting fires to cook his fresh take from newfound fishing spots, and at whittling a variety of fish hooks. The book continues to give us a window on the daily rhythms Sam creates in the forests and offers precise descriptions for catching a snapping turtle for soup, foraging for tender forest and meadow plants, and befriending his best friend and hunting partner, Frightful, a baby peregrine falcon.

*My Side of the Mountain* is the first book in a trilogy by Jean Craighead George that chronicles Sam Gribbley's Catskills adventures. It is followed by *The Far Side of the Mountain* and *Frightful's Mountain* where it's the adventures of Sam's raptor companion that create the momentum in the book. Whether read individually or as a whole, this series captures a child's desire to launch out on his own, empathize with all of nature's wonders, and feel the pride of creating one's world. It is an excellent choice for children 10 and up, or for a family read-aloud.

## Congratulations, GBRSS Class of 2009!

A joyful congratulations goes to our eighth graders, who will be honored at a graduation ceremony on Saturday, June 6, at 10:30 a.m. in the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School auditorium. We wish you much happiness and success in all your future endeavors. A hearty thank you, too, to class teacher Andrew Sansone, who—following this eight-year shared journey through the grades with the class of 2009—looks forward to a year of travel, study and family time during his upcoming sabbatical.

## Onward and Upward!

The Great Barrington Waldorf High School celebrates its class of 2009 at a graduation ceremony on Sunday, June 7, at 10:30 a.m. at Simon's Rock College. Warm congratulations to the seniors on their accomplishments and future adventures.



# Little Rabbit Finds Spring

By Somer Serpe, Nursery Teacher

*One of the fundamental elements of a Waldorf early childhood program is rhythm—not only the daily and weekly rhythms of the classroom, but also the seasonal rhythms of the year. The cyclical elements of the natural world are deeply reassuring and grounding to the young child, and familiarity with them fosters a lifelong connection with the earth and its gifts, nurturing the child’s innate capacity for wonder, reverence, awe and caring. These rhythms are emphasized through song, stories, artistic activities, nature walks and play.*

*After a long, cold winter, the nursery children in the Robin’s Nest classroom delighted in hearing about Little Rabbit’s discovery of spring—and in making their own remarkable discoveries in the play garden.*

The snow had melted from the mountains and there was a warm breeze blowing. The little rabbit poked his head out of his hole.

“Mother,” he said, “the world is no longer white and the air smells like wet earth.”

“Ah,” said the Little Rabbit’s mother. “Spring has come.”

“What is spring, mother?” asked Little Rabbit.

“My little one,” said Mother. “You may go out into the world, and then you will find spring.”

So the little rabbit went out into the sunshine and hopped down the country lane. Hippety hop. Hippety hop. He soon came to a patch of fresh spring grass and the blades were the most beautiful green. Little Rabbit nibbled a little and, since the grass was so sweet and so tender, he nibbled a little bit more. Then off he hopped towards the forest.

All of a sudden Little Rabbit pricked up his ears. He could hear the most beautiful music. He looked up and there was a mother bird singing near her nest of eggs high in the tree.

“Oh, Mother Bird,” said the little rabbit. “You do make beautiful music.”

“Thank you, Little Rabbit,” said Mother Bird. “I have just built a nest and laid my eggs. I am singing with joy, for my baby birds will soon hatch.”

“That is good news,” said Little Rabbit, and he hopped

along towards a field. Hippety hop. Hippety hop.

There in the field the little rabbit saw a wave of crocuses, golden like the sun. Little Rabbit stopped and sniffed the beautiful flowers. Oh, how sweet they smelled! Off he then hopped towards home.

When the little rabbit saw his mother, he was so excited. “Mother, Mother,” he said. “I just saw the most beautiful flowers, golden like the sun. And Mother Bird was singing so joyfully, for her babies soon will hatch. And the new spring grass is so fresh and sweet!”

“Ah, little one,” said Little Rabbit’s mother, “You have found spring.”



# Sun Sense

by Trice Atchison, Parent-Child Teacher

*“The morning sun shines warm and bright,  
Calling everyone into the light...”*

The early childhood faculty recently discussed a shared concern about sun exposure in young children. In looking into the topic, we discovered research that indicates that most children experience between 50 and 80 percent of their lifetime sun exposure before age 18. Therefore, it is important to protect children from dangerous levels of exposure and to teach children lifetime habits that will protect their healthy skin. We recommend the following sensible precautions:

- A sunhat with a wide brim all around is especially protective, as are other styles that include neck coverage in back, but any cap that has a brim that faces forward and covers the face is beneficial. A number of on-line companies, such as FlapHappy.com, SunGrubbies.com, WildDill.com, LL Bean and Land’s End, among many others, have a selection of logo-free children’s sunhats in various styles. Matrushka toy store on Main Street in Great Barrington has a wide-brimmed style available.
- The American Academy of Pediatrics makes these suggestions regarding clothing for protection from the sun: “When possible, dress yourself and your [children] in cool, comfortable clothing that covers the body, like lightweight cotton pants, long-sleeved shirts,\* and hats. Select clothes made with a tight weave—they protect better than clothes with a looser weave. If you’re not sure how tight a fabric’s weave is, hold it up to see how much light shines through. The less light, the better.” (\*Note that even a T-shirt offers considerably more coverage for the shoulders than do spaghetti straps or sleeveless clothing).
- While sunscreens are often recommended, many contain chemicals that may react with the skin in harmful ways. Some research suggests that toxic ingredients often used in sunscreens are carcinogenic and get absorbed through the skin and enter the bloodstream. These chemicals can also cause allergic

skin reactions. Some ingredients may relate to hormonal disruptions in children. Several suggestions for safer brands include: A number of chemical-free options available at the Berkshire Co-op Market and other local outlets; Fallene COTZ (for “contains only titanium and zinc”) available at Amazon.com; Badger, available at www.EarthTurns.com; and UVNatural, available at dermatologistRx.com; among other on-line sources. (Note that protective hats and clothing are still needed with sunscreen.)

Among the potentially harmful chemicals are: Benzophenone, Disodium EDTA and Padimate O.

- If you use sunscreen on your child, please apply it before school. If your child has a particular sensitivity and needs to have it reapplied later in the day, please let your child’s teacher know.
- Good nutrition promotes healthy skin, and nutritional deficiencies leave the skin more vulnerable to sun damage. Antioxidant-rich foods, such as berries and carrots, are beneficial.
- We are exploring ways to create more shade in our early childhood play gardens, and we encourage the children to play in shady areas when the sun is intense.

Enjoy the sunny days of spring and summer, safely and sensibly.



Mrs. Kuzia agrees that sunhats make good sense.



# Alumni News

Prospective families exploring GBRSS often ask about what our graduates are up to. We encourage alumni and their parents to communicate with us about milestones, achievements and news. To find out what our graduates are doing, or to update us about your alumni news, visit our website, [rudolfsteinerschool.org](http://rudolfsteinerschool.org), and click on the alumni link. The link also describes our recently established alumni scholarship fund, ways to volunteer at GBRSS, and how to make a donation to the school. As a first step in updating you on our alums, here is some news on graduates who are the children of GBRSS faculty and staff.

**Alexander Zay** (Class of 1982, with class teachers Jill Johnson and Torin Finser) currently is a project manager at an environmental company. He received a BS in geology from the University of Massachusetts in 1990 after attending Hawthorne Valley and Monument Mountain high schools. Alexander is married to Anna Blau Zay, who teaches at the Kimberton Waldorf High School. They live near Philadelphia with their four children.

**Melissa (Kuzia) Martocchio** (Class of 1983, Joseph Savage) attended Monument Mountain Valley High School, and then went on to Roanoke College, where she received a BA in English literature. Until recently she worked in corporate communications for Fidelity Investments and currently cares full-time for her two young children.

**Rebekah (Carr) Crouch** (Class of 1984, Jean Zay), formerly Walsh/Knox, attended the former Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner High School and Mount Everett Regional High School, and graduated from the University of Hartford in 1992 with a major in politics, government and international relations and a minor in German. She worked for 10 years at non-profits in Philadelphia, Boston and Kent, CT, and is currently parenting her

toddler son. She is a volunteer with the United Nations Association of Northwest Connecticut on a scholarship fundraiser.

**Peter Zay** (Class of 1985, Pamela Giles/Richard Giles) is a professional cellist, a member of the Hartford Symphony Orchestra, and performs with other groups in Boston and throughout New England. He earned a bachelor's in cello performance from Hartt School of Music in 1993 and a master's from the Manhattan School of Music in 1995. Peter attended the GBRSS High School and Monument Mountain High School, graduating in 1989. He lives in Natick with his wife Anastasia and their toddler daughter Sofia.

**Brooke Redpath** (Class of 1986, Christopher Belski/Sblendorio) attended Monument Mountain Valley High School and Clark University, where she earned BAs in music performance and philosophy. In 2007 Brooke purchased the Waldorf toy store, Matrushka, in Great Barrington. She lives in Great Barrington with her husband Bob and children Cecilia, Madeleine and Quinn, who attend GBRSS.

**Gwendolyn (Carr) Grace** (Class of 1987, Peter Elliston) graduated from the Berkshire School in 1991 and from Wheaton College in 1995. Gwendolyn and her husband Christopher live in Sheffield, MA, with their children, Charles, Lillie and Sophia, who all currently attend GBRSS and James, who will soon join our nursery.

**Zephyr Belski** (Class of 1990, Torin Finser) graduated from Hawthorne Valley High School in 1994 and then went on to Adelphi University in New York where he received a BA in graphic arts. He is an engineer/troubleshooter for Humanscale Corporation in New Jersey, which manufactures ergonomic office furniture. He is passionate about sports car racing and is a driver and instructor.

Leo Sblendorio (Class of 1992, Carol

Kelly) graduated from Hawthorne Valley High School in 1996. He attended the San Francisco School of Circus Arts and was a trapeze artist and instructor from 2000 to 2008. He currently works at a spa in Santa Cruz, California, and is a bicycle mechanic. Leo and his partner Hannah Ahren have a son Indio, born in 2008.

**Melissa Belski** (Class of 1994, Erna Faulkner) graduated from Monument Mountain Valley High School in 1998. She earned both a BA and MA in education at Hofstra University in New York, and is a fifth-grade teacher at Clearstream Public School in Valley Stream, New York. She is engaged to be married in September 2009 to lawyer Matt Rodriquez.

**Gabriel Giles** (Class of 1995, Christopher Belski/Sblendorio) graduated from Hawthorne Valley High School in 1999 and is currently a waste water engineer and project manager for Aecom Water, NYC. He received a BS and an MS in civil engineering from Columbia University after receiving a BA from Oberlin College.

**Michaela Kuzia** (Class of 1996, Craig Giddens) graduated from Hawthorne Valley High School in 2000 and attended Tallahassee Community College where she received her associate degree in liberal arts. She then attended Berklee College of Music where she received a BA in music. She is currently pursuing a career as a singer and songwriter.

**Claire Eurich** (Class of 1998, Bob Norris) resides during the winter in Melaque, Jalisco, Mexico and summers in Egremont, Massachusetts. She and her sister are co-owners of Stepping Lightly in Your Garden, a gardening and landscaping business. Claire attended Hawthorne Valley High School where she participated in Nicaragua service trips and in a Spanish language immersion program in Costa Rica.

**Susanna Giles** is a candidate for a master's

degree in music from Indiana State University, spring 2010. She received a master's in cello performance from Arizona State University in 2009, an artist's diploma from SUNY Purchase in 2006, and a bachelor's in music from Oberlin College in 2005. She was a 2002 graduate of Hawthorne Valley High School.

**Ben Palmer** graduated from Northeastern University in 2007 with a BA in communications. He has joined the Peace Corps and is stationed in Ecuador, where he will work on community sustainability.

**Abigail Kuzia** (Class of 2000, Rick Shrum) graduated from Regis College in May 2008 with a BA in communications and is a product writer for Retail Convergence in Boston. Abigail graduated from Monument Mountain Valley High School in 2004.

**Jonah Thomas** graduated from Julliard School of Music in May 2008 with a bachelor's in cello performance. He is currently studying composition with Dr. Laurence Lasser at Julliard School and pursuing studies locally in both cello and piano. He is looking forward to studying composition in Paris for the month of July, as well as attending Apple Hill Chamber Session in New Hampshire this June.

**Warren Palmer** graduated from Eckerd College in 2008 with a BA degree in international relations. He is the proud father of Colten Watanabi Palmer, born July 2008.

**Davin Eurich** (Class of 2001, Pamela Giles) earned a BA, magna cum laude, in international and global studies from University of the Pacific after attending Berkshire Community College. She attended high school at Berkshire Country Day School and Monument Mountain, spending a semester abroad in Costa Rica in a Spanish language immersion program. She co-owns Stepping Lightly in Your Garden with her sister Claire.

**Amelia Giles** is currently waiting to hear about her graduate acceptances. She is a 2009 candidate for a bachelor of music from Manhattan School of Music. She attended Hawthorne Valley High School and Simon's Rock College.

**Emma Franco-Toner** (Class of 2002, Jean Zay/Stephen Sagarin) is studying cultural anthropology and art history at UMASS Boston. This summer she plans to go on an archeological dig in Balise and will return to UMASS in the fall as a class mentor in anthropology. In January 2010 she plans to attend the University of Arizona in Flagstaff to become better acquainted with the Mexican and Pueblo southwest cultures.

**John Palmer** is a junior at Brevard College in Brevard, North Carolina, majoring in Wilderness Leadership. Recently he has climbed some 18,000 peaks in Mexico and plans to work for a second summer at Deerhill Expeditions in Colorado where he will lead groups in hiking and paddling. John graduated in 2006 from Hawthorne Valley High School.

**Mat Inglis** (Class of 2003, Tracey Brennan) attended the Great Barrington Waldorf High School and Okemo Mountain School concurrently while training in competitive snowboarding. Mat moved to Lake Tahoe, Nevada, for his senior year of high school to compete in snowboarding, and completed his high school with Oak Meadow in 2007. He is currently working in the travel industry; snowboarding and filming; designing websites; and is on the dean's list at Penn Foster College where he is earning a degree in graphic design.

**Andrew Sagarin** is attending Syracuse University, Newhouse School of Journalism. He is studying newspaper and magazine journalism and writing for the "Daily Orange" newspaper and other campus publications. Andrew graduated from the Great Barrington Waldorf High School in 2007.

**Katie Sagarin** (Class of 2004, Christopher

Sblendorio) graduated from Miss Hall's School, Pittsfield, MA, in May 2008. She attends McGill University, Faculty of Science, is studying biology, and loves living in Montreal.

**Amy Inglis** (Class of 2004, Christopher Sblendorio) graduated maxima cum laude in 2008 from Miss Hall's School, where she received numerous awards, including The Berkshire Scholarship; Purchase Prize in Photography; National Latin Exam Silver Medal; the Sylvia "Rusty" Shethar Everdell Athletic Prize for her achievements in volleyball and soccer; and the Lee Auchincloss Link Art Scholar Award, among other honors. She is currently a freshman at Florida Southern College.

**Luca Piccin** (Class of 2006, Mark Eurich) attends Monument Mountain Regional High School, where he is a member of the National Honor Society and Student Government. He is a Student Advisor to the Principal and plays viola with the Western District Orchestra. Luca was named to the National Society of High School Scholars and was nominated for the National Youth Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C. He is also involved with Project Sprout.

**Leah Pitman** attended Hawthorne Valley High School and is currently a freshman at Bard College at Simon's Rock, Great Barrington.

**Joshua Weinstein** (Class of 2007, Nancy Franco) is in his second year at Salisbury School, CT, where he is a member of the Salisbury Gospel Choir. On the varsity crew team, Josh rows in the first boat and participated in world indoor rowing championships in Boston in February, ranking number 7 in his category. He was nominated by Salisbury School and attended the National Youth Leadership Conference (NYLC) in Washington, D.C., this spring.

**Alexander Pitman** (Class of 2008, Erika Jensen/Rick Shrum) is currently a ninth-grade student at the Great Barrington Waldorf High School.

# Everyone, Everyday Can Make a Difference!

by Janie LaBrasca, Development Director

Never has it been easier, almost effortless, to support our school in myriad ways. All of the giving options described here require minimum work on your part, and no output of extra cash.

Just by taking a moment to buy some Scrip before doing your regular shopping, choosing Internet options that support our school, recycling print cartridges, or directing your Big Y points to GBRSS, each of us can do a little bit to support this valuable education. It all adds up in the end. Here's how to participate:

## **Scrip**

Scrip is an easy way to contribute to the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School that doesn't cost you a penny. Big Y, Guido's, the Berkshire Co-op Market, Body & Soul and Matrushka are local merchants who accept Scrip at the same dollar value you would spend at the store. Each store then donates a percentage of what you purchased back to the school. To buy SCRIP, please call Janie LaBrasca, (413) 528-4015, ext. 104, or email her at [development@gbsss.org](mailto:development@gbsss.org). Scrip has three buying options: monthly, bi-monthly or on-the-fly. It's easy! So, remember, before you shop buy SCRIP, it pays! Last year Scrip raised over \$11,000 for the school. Since you have to shop anyway....

## **Good Search**

Goodbye, GOOGLE, and hello, Good Search. You can now find everything and anything you need online through this new option. When you use Good Search instead of your old search engine, such as Google or Yahoo, GBRSS earns a penny per search. It adds up—just by doing what we do anyway! Make Goodsearch your homepage, and tell everyone in your office about it. Here's all it takes:

Step 1. Go to [www.goodsearch.com](http://www.goodsearch.com).

Step 2. Fill in your information and make Good Search your home page and sole search engine.

Step 3. Enter GBRSS as your charity of choice.

## **Good Shop**

Good things happen when you shop at [www.goodshop.com](http://www.goodshop.com). Each time you shop at any online stores through the Good Shop website, GBRSS earns points that equal cash. One family booked hotel rooms through Good Shop, and the school will be receiving 3 percent of this purchase back from Hotels.com. Please check out the businesses connected to this cause—such as Hertz, iTunes, Applestore, Travelocity and HomeDepot, to name a few. There are many more to choose from!

## **Schoolpop**

How does Schoolpop work? When you shop online at participating Schoolpop stores and catalogs, you can register your email address, credit and/or ATM/debit cards. Among the

hundreds of participating merchants are: HearthSong (which provides the school with a 7.5 percent rebate); LLBean (which gives \$3 per purchase); and Land's End (offering a 2.5 percent rebate). Register online at [www.schoolpop.com](http://www.schoolpop.com), or call the development office for more information. When registering, our organization identification number is 0144379. By taking a moment to register with Schoolpop, you can help us meet our fundraising goals!

## **Recycle Printer Cartridges with eCycle**

Here's another no-cost way to support GBRSS. Send in or drop off your empty inkjet and toner printer cartridges and earn the school money. eCycle Group assists nonprofit groups in their fundraising efforts by recycling. Hundreds of millions of dollars are lost annually because empty cartridges are discarded in landfills rather than sold to remanufacturers. They need our cartridges and are willing to pay anywhere from fifty cents up to three dollars per cartridge. Recycle and reinforce your commitment to your community and the environment.

## **Big Y Points**

The Educational Express Program, sponsored by Big Y, is an innovative program that will help our school obtain wonderful educational supplies completely free. In the past, we have received sports equipment, circus props, art supplies and science equipment. If you have a Big Y card, all you need to do is go to [www.bigy.com](http://www.bigy.com), and follow the instructions, or you can register at any Big Y store. If you do not already have a Big Y card, go to the customer service desk at the market and they will help you. Anyone can do this—your neighbor, your sister, your business; they just need to have the points directed to the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School.

## Homemade Soup for the Soul!

The faculty of the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School is deeply grateful for the steady supply of warm and delicious soups, breads and treats that parents made for us all year—on Tuesdays for early childhood and on Thursdays for the grades teachers. We continue to feel nourished on many levels by this caring gesture. Special thanks to Leslie Bissaillon and to Hurish and Tori Pajeski for coordinating the faculty soup program.



# SAVE THE DATE ALUMNI REUNION AUGUST 8, 2009

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Look for Reunion Updates  
[www.rudolfsteinerschool.org](http://www.rudolfsteinerschool.org)

Be sure to go online and join the Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School alumni Facebook group. Let us know where you are and you can see where everyone else is. You can also email Janie LaBrasca at [development@gbrss.org](mailto:development@gbrss.org) for more information.



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## GBRSS Mission

*The Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School strives to lead children to a balanced development of clear and precise thinking, a rich and healthy emotional life, and a developed power of will. This will allow children to worthily apply their thoughts, feelings and actions to practical challenges in the world.*

*To achieve this goal each teacher works artistically with a curriculum that integrates the arts, humanities and sciences in a manner compatible with human developmental stages as explained by Rudolf Steiner. An understanding of these developmental requirements helps teachers form lessons that enliven students' imaginations and enhance their ability to establish moral relationships to the world.*

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[The following is a paid advertisement for Paul Paisley Dairy Farm.]

## Fresh Milk from Milk House Jerseys and Swiss: It Doesn't Get Any Better

If you tell dairy farmer Paul Paisley that he does amazing work, he is likely to respond by saying that it is the cows that are the stars. Here is a farmer who clearly loves his animals; one look at the cows and the way he interacts with them is enough to see that there is something special going on. Paul grew up in northeast England and as lad worked for a local dairy.

Paul is licensed to sell raw cow's milk by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. His milk, tested on a regular basis, consistently earns some of the best results in the state. This takes dedication and knowledge, both of which are the foundation of the small operation.

The two things that Paul is most passionate about are that his milk remains in the community and that it remains unpasteurized and unprocessed. According to the Weston Price Foundation's Campaign for Real Milk, "Today's [processed] milk is accused of causing everything from allergies to heart disease to cancer, but when Americans could buy Real Milk, these diseases were rare." Studied show that raw milk may in fact be beneficial where pasteurized forms seem to make most conditions worse.\*

If you ask Paul what his niche is, the answer is local, for local products are the freshest, the least fuel dependent, and keep the community thriving. Ninety percent of his herd's diet is from the beautiful pastures they graze in, nestled in the tranquil Alford valley. The hay fed to the herd in winter is grown and cut in Alford, and the fresh grain they feed on in winter is also grown locally.

Paul will tell you in a heartbeat that if one of his animals were sick, he would administer medications as needed. But the animals

are so clean, well-fed, and lovingly milked that he has never had an animal need antibiotics. And, of course, adding the hormone rBST is out of the question. If you were to happen by the barn after morning milking, there you would see the cows getting brushed and their tails being washed to the music of Mozart, two barn cats curled up on a bale of hay, and Sam, a rescued dog abandoned in NYC, happy now with her life on the farm.

Paul's milk is sold directly to families in the community who are members of the Milk House Jerseys and Swiss Milk Club, and it's bottled and delivered within an hour of milking time. Although Massachusetts law states that raw milk cannot be sold in stores, milk-buying clubs are allowed. Pick-up is available at the Berkshire Co-op Market in Great Barrington; however, the Co-op does not collect any money for the milk and members pay the club directly on a monthly basis.

The Milk House Jerseys and Swiss Milk Club has been supplying milk to its members for a year and a half, and membership continues to grow. Currently, Paul supplies approximately 45 families with milk, but has enough for 200 families. So, if you are interested in superb tasting milk, naturally loaded with probiotics, calcium, vitamins and protein, and want to reduce your footprint and knit yourself into the community in a grassroots way—give us a call. Learn firsthand what all the rave reviews of this creamy, delicious milk are about. For information, contact Raya Ariella at: (413) 528-3341 or [raya\\_ariella@yahoo.com](mailto:raya_ariella@yahoo.com)

\**New Scientist* 1991; 129(1759):17, retrieved on 5/26/2009 from [http://www.realmilk.com/heart\\_disease.html](http://www.realmilk.com/heart_disease.html).

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# Outstanding In Their Field



*Richard S. Jackson Jr., Melissa Jacobs, Maureen McFarland, Tom Trifon, Elizabeth Greene, Patrice Melluzzo, Joseph Carini, Dorian Held, David Walker-Price, Dale Abrams, (not pictured: Dawn Farley, Jonathan B. Hankin, Anne Wallach)*

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# Living History

History sprang to life for our fifth graders this school year as they completed an in-depth “tour” of ancient cultures—from ancient India and Persia, to Mesopotamia and Egypt—ending with a study of ancient Greece. Throughout this journey, the students were given opportunities to gain vivid impressions of the contributions of these various cultures—by reading translations of poetry, trying their own hand at ancient arts and crafts (such as creating their own Egyptian-style drawings on parchment paper and carving reliefs in plaster) and

performing the play, “Demeter and Persephone.” Perhaps the most vivid impression is left by the students’ recreation of a Greek Olympiad with other Waldorf schools around the area, a pentathlon with javelin and discus throwing, broad jumps, running and wrestling. The Olympiad, held at GBRSS on Friday, May 22, gave the students a chance to enter fully into another time and place, and into the psyche of an ancient people, a feat requiring a certain inner flexibility that will serve them well in the coming years.



photos by Susan Lacombe

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