

BB&N Link Newsletter

May 2009

Spotlight Article

BB&N Community Rallies Around Zack McLeod '10

As most everyone in the BB&N community knows, early last September, junior Zack McLeod suffered a traumatic brain injury known as a left acute subdural hematoma.

Since that time, Zack has been engaged in the long and grueling journey toward recovery—a journey in which he is joined by his parents, Pat and Tammy; sister Chelsea '08; brothers Nate '13 and Soren; and a legion of supporters, teammates, classmates, and friends throughout BB&N and the world.

We know that many of you already follow Zack's progress on the websites that are dedicated to supporting his recovery (www.caringbridge.org/visit/zackmcleod) and www.zacharymcleod.com).

But we wanted to take the opportunity here in *The Link* to update everyone in the BB&N parent community about Zack's progress during these past eight months.

Julia Nelson '09, executive editor of the Upper School's *Vanguard* newspaper, has graciously allowed us to reprint her excellent article about Zack, which was originally printed in *The Vanguard*'s March 12, 2009 issue.

First, though, we'd like to pass along a note of gratitude to the BB&N community, written by Zack's parents, Pat and Tammy McLeod:

The love and support of the BB&N community has come to us from every imaginable angle this year. We don't know how we could possibly feel more loved, supported and cared for by you. Thank you so much for pressing into our lives. We especially thank you for loving Zack, but we want you to know that our whole family has been the recipient of your enduring love and concern, and we just want you to know how thankful we are for you.

Sincerely,

Pat & Tammy McLeod

Junior Zack McLeod continues to recover from brain injuries

By Julia Nelson '09 (originally printed in March 12, 2009 issue of *The Vanguard*)

This past fall, sophomore Zack McLeod suffered a subdural hematoma, which is a traumatic brain injury caused by blood clotting under the outer casing of the brain called the dura. He collapsed on Nichols Field and was airlifted to Boston Medical Center, where doctors performed an emergency craniotomy, a surgery that involves the removal of a portion of the skullcap and excess blood to relieve pressure on the brain.

Zack's parents, Pat and Tammy McLeod, greatly appreciated the quick response of the BB&N community. Says Mrs. McLeod, "We were overwhelmed by the generosity of the [school]. Coaches and friends got Zack swift medical attention, contacted us, greeted us at the hospital, and stayed with us for hours."

His initial condition was very poor. "Six months ago, after being airlifted to the hospital, a nurse informed a group of people waiting outside of the emergency room that it wasn't looking good for Zack," recalls Mrs. McLeod. "Doctors told us before taking him in for surgery that he could die. For those first few days his life was in the balance."

She adds, "[The doctors] could not rule out death, but they also assured us that full recovery was a possibility as they had seen some amazing recoveries, especially with young people."

Mr. McLeod remembers the uncertainty of the situation, remarking, "There were a lot of touch and go moments for the first couple of days after Zack's immediate injury."

During this time, members of the BB&N community helped to support the family. According to Mrs. McLeod, "Students, teachers, parents, and coaches created murals, sent Caringbridge [blog] posts, cards, and emails, wrote poems, recorded music, sent gifts, accompanied us to doctor appointments, visited in the hospital, helped financially, and told stories about how their lives, the lives of their families and the BB&N community as a whole was affected positively by Zack's life."

Mrs. McLeod recalls several faculty visitors: "[Zack's football coach, John] Papas, stopped in to see Zack every weekday the first five weeks and paid Zack many visits at Spaulding [Rehabilitation Center] these last four months. After Zack increased his strength at Spaulding, Former Russian Teacher Armen Dedekian came weekly to review Russian with Zack, and Middle School Math Teacher Kathy Dorkin did the same for math.

To reach out to the McLeods, Suzanne Panico P '09, '11 created a website on which football families could sign up to bring the family meals, groceries, and flowers.

Says Mrs. McLeod, "After two months, the website was sent to the whole BB&N community, so for all six months of intensive care and hospital rehab, we had three meals a week and weekly groceries delivered to us."

Zack's condition remained poor throughout weeks following his injury. "Five weeks later," says Mr. McLeod, "after two brain surgeries and a couple of lung surgeries for pneumonia, Zack was wheeled on a stretcher into a rehab hospital. He had a large crater on the left side of his head where his cranium had been removed and placed into his abdomen. He was a gaunt 110 pounds, could not walk, stand, sit, or even roll over by himself. He couldn't speak, eat, or drink. He received all fluid through a feeding tube that was directly connected through his belly into his stomach."

Despite his weakened state, Zack continued to inspire and encourage his family. "During that time I can remember being hit with a lot of decisions," remembers Mr. McLeod, "and one thing that I often found myself doing during that time when I faced those decisions was to consider what Zack would have done if he were in [my] situation."

He continues, "That question always brought a clear answer; I knew Zack would do the most selfless thing he could do to express his love to those present before him. I found that incredibly comforting."

Mrs. McLeod relates a moment just nine days after the injury: “As we were about to leave the hospital, I began to sing Zack one of his favorite songs. All of a sudden, Zack started singing with me. It was incredible. It was so moving watching him try with all his heart to get those words out that I could hardly continue singing myself.”

“This was for both Pat and me one of the greatest highlights of these last six months,” she adds.

His health has vastly improved since his injury: “Four and one half months later, Zack walked out of [Spaulding] with his skullcap back on his head, having regained all the weight he lost, speaking words and occasionally short sentences, and eating on his own—albeit slowly,” says Mr. McLeod.

He adds, “He is still a little wobbly with respect to his balance, but [a few] night[s] ago he made his first basketball shot in six months. He got into a swimming pool, went down a water slide, [and] sucked down a little extra water, but loved it. He lifted weights, used a rowing machine and stationary bicycle—his right side gave up before his spirit did—and afterward pounded a few whopper juniors and fries at Burger King with his family.”

Throughout this process, Zack’s personality has remained unchanged. In the eyes of his mother, “His relationship with God and others seems to be the same, as does his sense of humor and his ability to connect with people.”

Zack is currently attending the May Institute, a residential traumatic brain injury school. Although he hopes to return to BB&N, he now must concentrate on regaining basic skills and functions.

“At the May Institute,” says Mrs. McLeod, “Zack will progress in his physical recovery and activities of daily living, and will work on areas of memory, attention, and communication.” Although Zack recognizes everyone from before his injury and much of his academic learning is intact, his short-term memory has not yet returned, and his speech is limited to several words or short sentences.

She continues, “He goes to school from 8:45 AM to 3:45 PM and does physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and classroom education. After school, he goes to his home in Abington. He lives with five other guys his age, and many incredible staff help him with new strategies for things that used to come easily.”

“It seems like Zack enjoys school,” adds Mrs. McLeod. “The students and staff are consistently cheerful and positive. Despite all of these things, when we asked Zack what he thinks of the school, he typed in response, ‘I want to go back to BB&N.’”

It is uncertain how long Zack will stay at the May Institute. He may live at the school for several years.

According to his father, the best way to support Zack is to stay in touch. He says, “Stay in [Zack’s] life! Learn to relate to him with his current limitations, in particular his inability to talk and his inability to store and recall short-term memories.”

“Expect to feel a little awkward trying to connect with or communicate with him the way you did in the past,” he continues. “Be assured that deep inside he wants to tell you that he loves you or he wants to ask you questions or he just wants to encourage you. You will see this in his eyes.”

Mr. McLeod adds, “He loves hearing from people and will love ongoing attempts to stay connected to him. Just keep greeting him when you see him and let him know that you are thinking of him.”

“It means a lot to me that Zack’s friends are not forgetting him. I appreciate people coming to see him and texting him,” agrees Mrs. McLeod.

Zack will be returning to his home in Cambridge for many weekends, and his family looks forward to hosting visitors.

Shortly after that issue went to press, a 3-on-3 basketball tournament was held at the Nicholas Athletic Center on March 8th to raise funds to assist Zack’s recovery effort. At the tournament, football coach John Papas cited a statistic in which doctors say that most people who suffer a brain injury lose their friends within a year. “This will not happen with Zack!” said Papas, who called Zack a “Knight for Life!” In a brief ceremony in the gym, Coach Papas and the football captains presented Zack with his championship ring commemorating the Knights’ undefeated, bowl-winning season.

Features

Inside The Classroom:

Finding the "Russian Soul" with Willa Chamberlain

Lilting Russian folk songs are seldom heard wafting through the halls of the Upper School, but in Russian teacher Willa Chamberlain’s world it’s not such an oddity. Gathered in the Chorale room are eleven Russian exchange students, visitors from Moscow School 1232, singing in chorus with their BB&N counterparts.

The spirit of BB&N’s 20-year collaboration with Moscow School 1232 is never more evident than when watching the students together, in this case working on a song that BB&N students will perform at a farewell dinner closing their upcoming visit to Moscow in mid-June.

“Russian students love to sing ...they are passionate and wonderful people,” says Chamberlain. “This is a great way for the kids to interact and work on their Russian at the same time.”

The song, *Katjusha*, tells of a young girl’s excursion to a fog shrouded river, and as Chamberlain prompts her students to translate the verses into English, the Russian students urge them along, sharing the laughter at their accents and occasional stumbles. Although the words are unfamiliar, the emotional feel in the music is unmistakable—a stark piano and rich chorus of voices evoking what Chamberlain calls “the Russian soul.”

“When students leave my classroom, I want them to have advanced, or at least intermediate, oral and written proficiency of Russian,” Chamberlain says. “And I would like them to have a basic understanding of Russian history and culture and to have an understanding of the ‘Russian soul.’”

That’s no easy assignment, but it’s one that Chamberlain has relished since she began teaching at BB&N six years ago, continuing a deep Russian tradition at the School begun in 1953 by former Russian teacher George Deptula, and nurtured along by former Russian teacher Armen Dedekian before her.

The School boasts one of the oldest high school Russian programs in the country, and the annual exchange program with Moscow School 1232 serves as the culmination of a year's worth of hard work and learning.

“The Exchange students spent two weeks in Boston this April...staying with BB&N families for the entire two weeks, with the exception of one night which the Russian students spend in NYC,” explains Chamberlain. “Twelve American students will then stay with the person whom they hosted when we all go to Moscow in June.”

Fresh back from their trip to New York, the Russian students all sport “I Love NY” tee shirts or clothing, and Chamberlain uses their big city adventure as an opportunity to work on some grammar back in the classroom. The Russian students must speak to BB&N students about the differences between the cities in each other's languages.

“Moscow is a more historical city, not so much skyscrapers,” says Ekaterina Asekritova, pausing to translate the Russian to English in her head. “New York is more modern, less spread out.”

Later in the class the students square off in an around-the-world grammar game. Chamberlain holds up drawings she has made of vocabulary items and students must name them before the person next to them does—American students in Russian, and vice-versa.

Perhaps the visitors have a slight edge having studied English since 2nd grade, but the home court advantage makes the game remarkably even.

“At BB&N Russian is offered starting in ninth grade, but any student on any campus who wants to learn Russian can come to me, and we will get them started,” says Chamberlain. “When BB&N Russian students graduate, they speak the language well enough manage well in Russia...they usually enter third or second year Russian in college.”

Growing up in Iowa, Chamberlain studied all the languages her high school offered (French, Spanish, German), and even started Russian at the University of Iowa while still in high school. Chamberlain went on to study in Europe for two years before receiving her Ph.D. in Slavic Literature at Yale Graduate School.

While Chamberlain's teaching credentials are impressive, she prefers to focus on her students, speaking of alumni/ae who have gone on to be Russian ambassadors and State Department officials, and of her current students.

“Two of our sophomores, Zavier Morse, '11 and Matthew Cuddy '11, have been granted a U.S. State Department scholarship to study Russian in the towns of Gotchina and Kazan this summer for seven weeks...the competition for this scholarship is fierce, and we are very proud,” says Chamberlain.

Although she wasn't raised in Cambridge, Chamberlain had a B&BN connection from the start—her father grew up in Boston and graduated from Browne & Nichols in 1949. Now back at the school where he started, her life-long passion for language has found a happy home.

“It is a real treat to share my passion for language and for Russian culture in particular with the students. I am sure that if I were here as a high schooler at BB&N, I would think ‘I've died and gone to heaven.’”

To hear a clip of BB&N and Russian students singing *Katjusha*, [click here](#).

Friday, May 8
Celebrating Our Community:
A BB&N Evening for Financial Aid

Please join BB&N parents, alumni/ae, past parents, grandparents, faculty, staff, and friends on **Friday, May 8**, for our All-School “**Celebrating Our Community: A BB&N Evening for Financial Aid.**”

Beginning at 6:00 p.m. at the Nicholas Athletic Center, this festive evening will celebrate our school community and support BB&N’s financial aid program—a hallmark of the BB&N educational experience throughout our history.

Featured speaker [Paul S. Grogan](#), P ’08, President and CEO of The Boston Foundation, will share his thoughts about the importance of diversity, supported by a strong financial aid program, to ensure that our students are educated in an environment that reflects the world they will enter when they graduate. Also speaking will be Joelinda Coichy '07 and David J. Thompson '85.

[CLICK HERE](#) for more details and to RSVP online or to make a gift to support BB&N's Financial Aid Program.

And for another fun way to support Financial Aid, check out the School’s first ever online auction.

Ever dreamed of being so close to the action on the basketball court that all you can hear is the swish of the ball as it touches nothing but the net? Or taking a private, one-hour squash lesson with nationally ranked player and University Club pro Chris Spahr? Or dining at the newest restaurant in Cambridge?

Then you won't want to miss BB&N's Online Auction for Financial Aid where you'll find something to fit every budget and taste, so check back often as new items are being added daily.

Bidding is open now—to get a jump on the competition, [CLICK HERE](#) or on the auction logo to the right. All proceeds will benefit financial aid. For more information about the auction contact auction@bbns.org.

We hope to see you there!

US and LS Students ‘Catapult’ their Science Knowledge to the Next Level

Although Anthony Moccia ’10 admits being a teacher is much harder than it looks, he definitely enjoyed the challenge at a recent Family Science Saturday where he and several of his Upper School peers worked with LS students and families to build catapults.

“It was actually a lot of fun—the kids were very excited and appreciative for all of our help. At first I was a bit unsure as to how it would be working with kids in between the ages of 4-9, but all in all it was great,” Moccia said. “The kids were so excited to be building catapults that all they could think about was launching the collage of balls that came with the set. The best part of the day for them was when we all went outside to use the catapults.”

During the building process, the Upper School students asked the LS students questions about the different scientific concepts involved in catapult construction and operation before taking the kids outside to the field where they practiced using their catapults with different size and weight

balls. Some Upper School students also set up contests and games for the Lower Schoolers involving the catapults.

“Lower School kids of all ages participated in the event and they were a pleasure to work with—they were really interested in the project and asked insightful questions,” said Jessica Brodsky ’10. “The parents were also great and got involved in the project. Overall, it was a fabulous experience and a great chance for the Upper School and Lower School students to bond.”

Lower School Science teacher and FSS organizer Caitlin Drechsler said everyone involved had a great time and really enjoyed the project.

“The US students did a wonderful job of making the experience both educational and fun for the younger students,” she said. “Also, everyone had a great time catapulting objects across the Lower School field together!”

FSS Organizer and US Science Department Chair Dr. Leah Cataldo mentioned how the Upper School volunteers patiently guided their younger schoolmates through the activity, and specifically pointed out how their involvement is integral to the success of this event.

“The Upper School students were naturals at teaching their younger schoolmates about the design and inner workings of the catapult they built,” Cataldo said. “The Upper Schoolers were also wonderful helping the younger students come up with ideas and ways to explore launching different small objects using their new catapults when we moved onto the field outside to try them out. Caitlin [Drechsler] and I are so pleased with the success of this event which brings our campuses together for one of the several FSS offerings that she coordinates at the Lower School.”

Keeping You Up to Date

Legendary Author Visits Middle School

Lois Lowry, a living literary legend and one of the most acclaimed authors in the young-adolescent universe, paid a rare school visit on April 17 when she dropped in on 80 Sparks Street to talk with Middle School students, sign books, and share lunch with a few deserving students. Ms. Lowry, author of many books, including *Number the Stars* and *The Giver* (both of which won the prestigious Newbery Medal), began her visit by telling students in the Big Room that she had not traveled far to get there—in fact, she lives a mere few blocks away in Cambridge. The audience was enraptured by Lowry’s multimedia presentation, which included fascinating biographical details (her father was an Army officer who served as General Douglas McArthur’s dentist); a discussion of the importance of tone (her first draft of *A Summer to Die* was too lighthearted); an amusing visual tour of foreign editions of her books (the Chinese version of *The Giver* features an illustration of a downhill skier, despite the fact that the book mentions skiing not even once); and an engaging lesson on the fact that story ideas can spring from anywhere (even a drowsy walk to a nearby mailbox, into which was very nearly deposited a decidedly messy and mistaken package).

After her talk, Lowry fielded questions from the audience, then signed books for the thrilled students (such as Taylor Richard, pictured above). To wrap up the visit, Lowry shared lunch

with nine very deserving students—led by Caroline Baldwin (93 hours!)— who had earned the honor because they were the leading bibliophiles in the Middle School’s month-long “Spring Into Reading” readathon, which raised funds for the One Laptop Per Child Foundation.

1948 Alumnus Exhibits Art at Upper School Gallery

Duncan Smith ’48 began building mobiles after graduating high school and now, more than 50 years later, Smith is back at the hobby he loves so much. The former exhibition and gallery designer for the Boston Museum of Fine Arts visited with BB&N students last month to talk about his mobiles which were being displayed in the Upper School gallery. Smith spoke about the fragile engineering necessary in making a mobile not only beautiful, but also functional as a hanging object. He also answered questions about his 30-plus year career in the museum world as a designer.

“The fun I’ve had in my life as a designer is trying to help people make that leap of mind from one place to the other,” said Smith, citing a men’s urinal as an example. “This urinal was a beautiful piece of crockery—but people who saw it had trouble making their mind take the leap of seeing it as art rather than a urinal.”

As a self-professed museum omnivore, Smith shared some of his top choices for hidden gems amongst New England museums. [Click here](#) for the list.

Deadline Extended for 2009-10 Transportation Options

We remind BB&N parents that five different bus routes have been scheduled for next year. The routes for the 2009-10 year are (click on a route for more detail):

[Wellesley/Newton Route](#)

[Concord to Cambridge Route](#)

[Braintree to Brookline Route](#)

[Beacon Hill Route](#)

[Winchester to Belmont Route](#)

The deadline for signing up for any of these bus routes has been extended to Friday, May 8. Please [Click Here](#) to access the registration form. Please note that a final decision on what routes/stops to run will be based on registration. If we do not receive enough riders, we may have to cancel some routes. If you have any questions, contact Laurie Bean, transportation coordinator, at laurie_bean@bbns.org or 617-800-2739.

Maypole Tradition Continues

Lower School students celebrated the start of spring with Maypole, a tradition that dates back to The Buckingham School. The annual event featured two ribbon dances by the fifth grade, a Cambodian coconut dance by the third grade, and an Indian Stick dance by the fourth grade. In BB&N tradition, the ceremony closed with the entire audience joining hands in a giant line dance, *The Galopede*.

Four Senior Football Players Named to All-State Scholar Athlete Team

This spring, four BB&N senior football players were named to the National Football Foundation All-State Scholar-Athlete football team. They are Mike DiChiara (attending Cornell next year), Steve Grassa (Columbia), Xander Frantz (Columbia) and Philippe Panico (Yale).

The National High School Scholar Athlete Awards, arguably the most competitive high school academic-football honor in the country, are presented by The National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame to the top student-athletes from around the country who have exemplified the term “scholar-athlete” by succeeding in academics, football, and citizenship during their high school careers.

“The National Football Foundation Scholar Athlete Award is the most prestigious award a senior football player in Massachusetts can win,” said Head Coach John Papas. “For BB&N to have four out of the 22 players chosen for this award is truly a great honor. It is a credit to the players, their parents, the BB&N teachers and their BB&N teammates as well. As their head football coach, I am beaming with pride.”

Rofman '93 Helps BB&N Celebrate 20 Years of Russian Exchange Program

BB&N welcomed an esteemed alumna back to the School last month during a dinner to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Russian exchange program. Hundreds of alumni/ae and guests turned out to hear Amy Rofman '93 speak, as well as to catch up with old friends and former Russian teacher Armen Dedekian.

The former chief of bilateral relations with Russia in the U.S. Department of State's Office of Russian Affairs, Rofman now covers political affairs involving Europe in the Department of State's anti-human trafficking office.

Rofman herself participated in BB&N's Russian exchange program in 1991, just before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Rofman—who credits Mr. Dedekian and former teacher Mr. Deptula for inspiring her career in international public service—spoke about her experience in the State Department and about relations between Russia and the United States.

BB&N and MFA Continue Longstanding Collaboration

Students, faculty, and parents gathered at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts on Sunday, April 19, to enjoy a gallery of student artwork inspired by pieces at the MFA. This year marked the 16th anniversary of BB&N's collaboration with the MFA and featured Lower School students proudly showing off the artwork they have created and explaining how it corresponds to their other studies. Middle School students demonstrated their sculpture work and Upper School students exhibited their own art—paintings, photographs and ceramics—in addition to guiding tours through different museum galleries. [Click Here](#) to view a photo gallery of BB&N at the MFA Day 2009.

Lucky O'Leprechaun Author Visits Morse Building

Author Jana Dillon recently visited Kindergarten, Beginner, and Grade 1 students to share her experiences as a children's book author. Dillon is the author of many books, including her Lucky

O'Leprechaun series, which weaves life lessons into lively stories accompanied by her own watercolor paintings.

Dillon read her latest book, *Lucky O'Leprechaun In School* and demonstrated some of her drawing and story-telling techniques to the students. Her visit was made possible by the Maureen Baker Fund.

Lower School Goes Green in Recycling Relay Race

New Wing students at the Lower School helped to celebrate Earth Day this year with a special activity. Four teams competed in a recycling relay race in which participants sprinted the length of a field to retrieve plastic, cardboard, and aluminum materials, and then sort them into appropriate recyclable piles. Once the piles had been sorted, each team built art pieces out of the recyclables. Designed by the teaching interns at BB&N's Teacher Training Institute, the event was a fun and healthy way to raise recycling awareness among Lower School students.

Dramatic Renovation on Tap for Beginner Classrooms

Plans have been approved for a dramatic renovation of Beginner classrooms in the first floor of the Lower School's Morse Building this summer. These enhanced facilities will be completed in time to support the shift this fall to a full-day program for our youngest BB&N students. The new classrooms will be opened up in a way that allows for some exciting new learning opportunities, such as a 168-square-foot "big blocks & dramatic play" area, art ateliers, and even a shared kitchen that will serve as a springboard for learning about things such as counting and measuring.

"I am very excited about the full-day program that our Beginner teachers and LS Director Sue Scarborough have put together, and how the architects have responded to our needs," says Head of School Rebecca T. Upham. "This will be a great space for our youngest learners and their teachers!"

[Click Here](#) to see the plans for how these new Beginner classrooms will look.

Fifty States Celebrated at Lower School

The Lower School gym transformed into a forum of knowledge as fifth graders relayed facts about the fifty states while proudly presenting their festive displays during the annual State Fair in March. As a culmination of their colonial studies curriculum, fifth graders researched a specific U.S. state and then created a fun, interactive display complete with games and original prizes related to their state.

Scrabble Success!

BB&N's Middle School and Lower School Scrabble teams made strong showings in the School Scrabble National Championship held in Providence, R.I., in late April, and even brought home some hardware to show for it. The MS team, featuring 7th grade twins Evagelia and Katerina Toffoloni, averaged 346 points per game and finished in 12th place out of 102 teams. The LS team, featuring 6th graders Nikoletta Toffoloni and Sophie Kaufman, finished in 67th place. The

MS team also won an Honorable Mention Award as well as the Sportsmanship Award for the entire tournament.

“Coach Mark Fidler, (US Math teacher), should be recognized for his dedication and coaching throughout the year,” says Mr. Joseph Toffoloni, father of three of the competitors.

Pictured above, clockwise from bottom left, are Katerina Toffoloni, Evagelia Toffoloni, Coach Mark Fidler, Sophie Kaufman, and Nikoletta Toffoloni.

Upper School Comes Together at ArtsBash

Upper School students and faculty decked out Renaissance Hall recently to throw the School’s 12th ArtsBash. The celebration included musical performances, Henna tattooing, student-done caricatures, food, and much more.

“It’s a nice relaxed way for a lot of people (and a lot of different *kinds* of people, I’ve noticed) to come together and have a good time in an informal way—it’s unique in this respect,” says Painting and Drawing teacher John Norton. “There’s something for everyone and it’s friendly and inclusive in spirit. It captures the spirit of creativity and personal expression which is at the heart of the arts.”

In addition to past favorites such as the One-Stroke-Painting-Brush-Off contest, and homemade popcorn, this year featured the usual personal touches that make the event so memorable. Philosophy teacher Brian Staveley could be seen high atop the old pine tree on campus where he helped to string student-made Tibetan prayer flags across the courtyard, and Music teacher Joseph Horning was a blur as usual, coordinating the many different student performances throughout the day.

First Grade Murals Spice Up Lower School

Lower School art teacher I’man Solomon’s first grade class has helped to beautify the Lower School campus this spring with colorful handmade murals.

Campus Voices

Lower School Sue Scarborough Director, Lower School

It was just about this time last year when I was writing to new sixth grade families about the program changes we were contemplating for the 2008-2009 school year. We were looking for a way to bridge the transition from grade six to seven, providing a “step up” for the oldest members of our community, while keeping those parts of our elementary program that supported their developmental stage. Well, what a difference a year makes!

It is invigorating to look back on this year to see how the quality and scope of our program has grown. With longer class periods, three passionate homeroom teachers who each focus on teaching one subject (Language Arts, Social Studies and Math), and specialists who diversify

and enhance the program, students become immersed in each subject area, eager to learn as much as possible each day. The energy in the sixth grade is electric and contagious!

As Lower School Director, I see two very exciting advantages that have emerged from our program evolution. First, sixth grade teachers are connecting with Middle School colleagues on a regular basis, which helps to create a stronger collaboration, curricular and otherwise between sixth and seventh grade. Second, teachers are taking more time to share about student progress and strategize ways to enhance student success. Both of these advantages help us to get to know our students well on several different levels.

Yes, a year can bring a lot of change. It could only have happened with the vision, dedication, and spirit of the members of the sixth grade team of teachers, who were willing to try a new idea and take the risk that has so broadened the experience of our students. I can only imagine what I will be able to write about next year, as we continue to build upon the strides we have already made.

Stay tuned, because at the other end of the spectrum, our Beginners are about to embark on a year of change, too, as they move to an all-day program amidst two wonderfully renovated classrooms (click here for news about this renovation). This much I can guarantee – there will be plenty of exciting news to report from the Lower School over the coming year!

Middle School

Mary Dolbear

Director, Middle School

It has been a whirlwind year filled with highlights, and there are four weeks still to go.... While it's impossible to capture everything, I have asked three of my faculty members to share a window into some of the amazing activities happening here on Sparks Street.

On April 1, 2009, KNBC (Knights Broadcasting Club), Buckingham Browne & Nichols Middle School's multimedia broadcasting club that had been meeting once a week since early January, officially launched their website: www.knbc2009.wordpress.com. The launch included a special snack and a presentation at break that involved navigating through and exploring various student projects on the site.

Our goal here at KNBC is to showcase some of the great work going on around 80 Sparks Street, much of which is our own, and to also provide a forum for information and exchange about issues important to our designers and to the rest of the community. We have built the site to host our multimedia projects. Along with short films and audio commentaries, we will produce audio and video podcasts, texts, articles, and student photography.

Presently, students are working on producing their own commercials about the place of iPods in study hall, and we plan to complete one other project before year's end, along with keeping up the Weekly Wrap-Up.

--Rachel Jamison KNBC founder & advisor, English teacher, 8th grade advisor, coach

*In keeping with the theme of school spirit and having fun, the Middle School introduced its first **Middle School Spirit Day** last year as a way to promote Middle School athletics. After finding a date that has most or all of our Middle School teams playing at home, we work with the Middle School Parent Athletic Liaison to coordinate parental support for the event, and off we go....*

*This year's MS Spirit Day is **Friday, May 15th**. During the day, the students dress up to show school spirit, teams create posters and prepare a skit or song to share in a mini-pep rally at the end of the day. We encourage all the kids and faculty to come out to all the games, and once a team is finished playing, the students can go and cheer on other teams. The games are followed by a reception at the Nicholas Athletic Center and all the teams can hang out for a while and dream of one day playing on the fields for the Upper School teams.*

--Angus Means, MS Athletic Liaison, math teacher, coach, 7th grade advisory leader

Hmm, you may wonder what exactly does an academic technology specialist do...? In my new role at the Middle School, I have the pleasure of working directly with faculty. I provide technology leadership, direction and support to teachers and students with an emphasis on the integration of technology into the campus curriculum. It has been a great year for me. I have enjoyed working and getting to know teachers and all the kids at the Middle School. I continue to be impressed with the thoughtful and creative ways teachers are thinking about technology and its use in the classroom.

Also new at the Middle School is ATAG (Academic Technology Advisory Group). A group of teachers get together twice a month to explore the role of new and emerging technologies to support and reinforce the curriculum. Topics we've explored this year include building the collaborative classroom with blogs, wikis, and other web 2.0 tools, and teaching with multimedia – creating authentic projects with audio and video tools.

[Click here](#) for a sampling of other amazing projects that MS students have worked on this year.

--Svetlana Grinshpan, Middle School Academic Technology Specialist

Upper School

Jack Knapp

Director, Upper School

The key words in real estate are reputed to be “location, location, location.” It occurs to me that the same could be said of education. When talking with prospective members of the faculty, I frequently say with great enthusiasm that if you set out to choose the ideal location for an independent school, not only in Massachusetts but in the whole country, it would be within a mile or two of the location of Buckingham Browne & Nichols.

During the admissions season, I had the truth of this statement driven home when we took groups of prospective students and their parents on a boat ride down the Charles to MIT and back. In preparation for this, I did some research on our relationships with truly local institutions: Harvard, Boston College, MIT, and Northeastern; the hospitals and science laboratories; the seats of government on Beacon Hill; the Museum of Fine Arts; the charity organizations in Cambridge; the excitement and vibrancy of Harvard Square on a daily basis, etc., etc. The list of realized and potential connections is amazing, a dramatic, striking example of ways in which we can supplement and enrich the curriculum with an ease not available to other schools. One of my jobs, of course, is to make access to this smorgasbord of riches as easy as possible for our students.

So, the next time we think to ourselves about how difficult parking is or how inconvenient it is to cross from one side of the road to the other, we should also remember the striking advantages our location provides.

All School

Rebecca T. Upham
Head of School

In the eight years that I've been head of school at Buckingham Browne & Nichols, I have never been prouder of the strength and resilience of the BB&N community, which has banded together this year around a variety of difficult challenges. In this brief window of relative sanity that April provides—we're full to the brim for next year with newly admitted students, college crazy season has wrapped up for our seniors, and the headlong rush toward year's end has yet to gain a full head of steam—I want to share with you an update on topics that I've brought to your attention earlier in the year, as well as an overview of several slices of life at BB&N which illustrate a School community whose collective mind, heart, and spirit are thriving.

A Community Comes Together

I recently heard someone say that difficult times lend clarity. That certainly has been the case throughout BB&N, and especially the Upper School community, during these past eight months—a school year defined largely by a terrifying situation that occurred on its very first weekend. On Friday evening, September 5, junior Zack McLeod collapsed during a football scrimmage and was airlifted to Boston Medical Center, where he underwent emergency surgery. It was soon determined that Zack had suffered a serious brain injury known as a left acute subdural hematoma.

I do not exaggerate when I describe Zack as one of the most beloved students at BB&N—an intelligent young man, a fine athlete, and a kind soul known for always lending a helping hand, whether to AIDS orphans in South Africa or to a befuddled freshman wandering through the Upper School's hallways. For most of this year, Zack has been absent—physically, at least—from the Upper School community he loves so much and which loves him in return. Yet, I feel as if Zack's compassionate nature somehow has been transferred to the entire US community this year. I admire the football team and Coach John Papas—not so much for their undefeated, bowl-winning season, impressive as it was—but more so for the ways in which these boys became young men in their yearlong mission of supporting and lifting up their fallen teammate. The same applies to the whole Upper School this year, really. I think about the “Stay Strong” t-shirts that have been a mainstay on campus, the Doodle link set up by BB&N parents to help keep the McLeod family well-fed during these trying times, the 3-on-3 basketball tournament in March that brought hundreds of people to the Nicholas Athletic Center to support Zack's recovery, and I think about Zack returning to BB&N to watch his football team beat Lawrence Academy for the championship or to enjoy a performance of *Babes in Arms*.

Most of all, I think often about Zack and his family as they proceed with incredible strength and courage on the journey toward recovery, one that will likely continue for months and years to come. I encourage members of the BB&N community to stay connected with Zack and his family during this journey—a good way to do this is through the following websites that are

dedicated to supporting Zack and his recovery: www.caringbridge.org/visit/zackmcleod and www.zacharymcleod.com.

Campus News

Every April at the Upper School, the tenor of the campus tends to be driven by the envelopes and website postings arriving from college admissions offices. This year, the news has been strikingly good for our seniors. This development has provided welcome warmth to the faculty and me, particularly after a winter marked by turned-down thermostats in our buildings—an initiative spearheaded by the student-run Environmental Club, which is adamant about finding ways to reduce the School’s carbon footprint. Other highlights this year have included the annual Arts Bash, a “BB&N at its best” event that pulls the whole Upper School together and truly captures the spirit of creativity and personal expression that is so omnipresent at the School. Another memorable moment was a November assembly in which six students shared their “Family Stories”—traditions and cultures that are important in their lives.

Behind the scenes, it’s been a prolific year as well. A school does not stay great by standing still. Faculty, staff, and administrators schoolwide have wrapped their arms around a host of important initiatives including the implementation of recommendations from the Achievement Study, a comprehensive self-study of how effectively the School is carrying out its educational mission (part of the NEASC reaccreditation process), and a thoughtful reconfiguration of the Upper School science curriculum which will take effect this fall.

At the Middle School this year, a signature program has been the attentive and insightful way that the entire community has tackled the issue of adolescent bullying. Implemented throughout the past year as part of the School’s advisory program and its co-curriculum, the unit on bullying, differences, and kindness stitched together a variety of approaches—from reading and discussing *The Misfits*, to creating a bulletin board that was filled with index cards bearing hurtful names which students have been called in their lives. The conversations and discussions sparked by this board were truly something to witness. I think of it as the BB&N Middle School at its finest—giving young adolescents a safe haven to wrestle with the big ideas and sometimes messy realities of the world that awaits them in high school and beyond.

The Lower School year has been highlighted by the outstanding debut of the newly restructured 6th Grade program. Among the many benefits is the fact that our sixth graders are now learning every subject in the curriculum under the tutelage of a teacher who is a subject area specialist. We have also been busy this year setting the stage for exciting changes to the other bookend program at the Lower School—Beginners. Starting this September, beginner students will move from a half-day to a full-day program. It’s a shift that will improve the pace and sequencing of activities for our youngest BB&Ners and will also open the door to a host of other appealing opportunities, including more creativity in program delivery, richer social experiences, and plenty of physical activity and rest. This summer, we will dramatically reconfigure the Morse Building to better support the full-day Beginner experience. It has been thrilling to see the architectural plans which will see the classrooms get opened up to include a “big blocks” area, art ateliers, and even a shared kitchen that will serve as a springboard for a wealth of learning opportunities, such as counting and measuring.

Economic Downturn

Although these campus highlights point to the great, upbeat places that schools can be, by no means has BB&N been immune to the economic tumult that has rocked the region, the country,

and the world these past eight months. Many focus first on the balance sheet, but the part that concerns me even more is the human side of the story. Consider that, as I write this letter, 20 current BB&N families (comprising 30 students) have already alerted us that they will need financial assistance for the first time. This is a big increase over past years, illustrating quite vividly the rifts that so many of our families are surely experiencing in these times. And children are the quiet carriers of this economic stress. Our counselors have seen an uptick in family tension issues among Upper and Middle School students. Our Lower School psychologist has noticed recently that “money” and “finances” have become part of the conversation among LS students in ways that never used to occur. A week ago, an Upper School parent told me that her son had approached her the night before to ask with concern whether his good friend would be able to return to BB&N in the fall.

Certainly, questions such as that one reinforce why BB&N’s board of trustees has demonstrated such a strong commitment toward meeting the existent and emerging needs of our current families. In addition, we know that financial aid requests from our applicant families this year increased by 25 percent. Even more sobering is the environment in which we must meet this growing need. Year to date through January 31, BB&N’s endowment has lost 20.3 percent, and we expect these figures to slip even further before they start tracking upward again. (Although, if one wants to take a glass-half- full viewpoint, our numbers are at least not as dire as the 30-40 percent decrease many endowments have already reported for the same period.)

So, how will we meet this demand? We have taken significant steps to address the financial situation that faces us. In the fall, we cut discretionary budgets by 20 percent, which saved us 2 percent of the School’s overall operating budget. These reductions will carry forward into the coming budget year as well. We have frozen top-level administrative salaries. And we have dramatically scaled back capital expenditures for next year—areas such as technology and maintenance improvements will receive very little funding. But just because these are difficult times does not mean that BB&N won’t continue to grow and flourish. Funding for our core program remains very much intact, we will still be able to reward our faculty and staff with a 2 percent salary increase, and, thanks to advance planning, we are able to fund high-priority projects such as the upgrade of the facilities for the beginner program.

Another way we will meet the need is through philanthropic support. The unflagging generosity of the BB&N community never ceases to amaze me—we are so gratified by the contributions we have continued to receive in support of the School’s educational mission, particularly in this challenging economic climate. Boy, do we need that momentum to keep rolling on! Especially now, as the focus of BB&N’s Opening Minds Campaign shifts to supporting financial aid at the School. I invite you to join us on Friday, May 8 for a special evening called Celebrating Our Community, which will support the financial aid program and the huge part it has played, and continues to play, in creating the exceptional educational experience that you all know so well. ([Click here to read more about the event, or to register.](#))

Update on October 2008 Outreach Regarding Washburn Era

Lastly, I want to bring you up to date on progress we have made in respect to my October 2008 letter regarding abuse committed by Edward Washburn, the establishment of a process to help any alumni/ae adversely impacted by the events of the Washburn era, and a series of action steps that I proposed to help ensure the safest possible environment at BB&N now and in the future. As I noted in October, these initiatives are all very much works in progress and we expect to be working on this for some time.

In respect to our goal of fostering a healing process that will benefit the entire BB&N community, you will recall that we set up a referral system which can be contacted anonymously by any member of our alumni/ae community seeking assistance for emotional injury arising out of experiences relating to Ted Washburn. This service remains very much in place and can be accessed at any time through my October letter, which resides on the alumni/ae page of the School website. ([Click here to access the letter.](#))

In the area of concrete steps moving forward, our quest to create a permanent, confidential reporting system for abuse or neglect has not yet turned up a suitable third-party provider. We have been quite intrigued by one company that features a web-based reporting system. However, their school-based experience to date has been solely with colleges. We are exploring whether their software system can be adapted to accommodate the goals and needs of a preK-12 environment. If not, we will likely implement a more conventional “hot line” service.

We have hosted two sessions with child abuse experts for our professionals. In February, Jetta Bernier from the Massachusetts Citizens for Children worked with critical response personnel (counselors, psychologists, nurses, campus directors, and the dean of students). In November, pediatrician and national expert Eli Newberger led a workshop for our Lower School faculty on child abuse prevention. He also reviewed the Lower School’s new health curriculum, which he found to be comprehensive, developmentally appropriate, and a positive step forward for LS students.

A faculty committee has met with me and BB&N’s consulting psychiatrist to offer recommendations on how the School can best foster optimal communication and openness among faculty, administration, and students in reporting and responding to potential abuse. Among the issues that were discussed at our first meeting included the importance of faculty training around this topic and the need to ensure that any policies or processes which may get established are supple enough to work well at each of our three campuses. Another area that merits careful attention is a revisiting of School rules and guidelines for appropriate student-faculty interaction, particularly in light of the ever-growing use of social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace. I look forward to meeting again with this committee before the end of the School year to continue this dialogue.

Last week, the Upper School Student Council shared with the Dean of Students and me their views about improving communication channels at the School. Their suggestions include identifying to students the faculty/staff who are available to respond to student concerns around the issue of inappropriate faculty behavior, and organizing workshops for students on the topic of abuse, not specifically related to BB&N. All of this is very good grist for the mill as the faculty, deans, counselors, and I continue to discuss these issues in the months to come. By the end of the first term in the 2009-10 academic year, I will post to the School website an update about developments on these action steps.

I wish you all a terrific spring and I look forward to seeing many of you in the coming weeks at closing ceremonies, graduation, and Strawberry Night.

Giving Update

www.bbns.org/donate

As the school year begins to come to a close, we invite all families who have not yet made a commitment to the 2008-2009 Annual Fund, to consider doing so at this time. It is easier than ever to support BB&N by visiting our website at www.bbns.org/donate. To date, we have reached 64% of our goal of \$2,450,000. Our team of volunteer Annual Fund Parent Solicitors, led by Building and Grade Captains across all campuses, is to be commended for their work and the dedication they have displayed throughout the year with outreach efforts by phone, email and in person. We are extraordinarily grateful to each of them and celebrate what they have accomplished on behalf of BB&N.

Given the turbulent economy, the Annual Fund has grown in its relevance as a critical component designated to fill the “GAP” between tuition and the actual cost of a BB&N education. Additionally, the school is currently experiencing a spike in Financial Aid needs from existing families and is committed to its resolution. Your gift will help to underpin this, as well as the broad spectrum of the academic program, arts, athletics, and faculty support. Overall parent participation is hovering at 69%. We are striving to reach 100% participation in all grades. All gifts, of any size are greatly appreciated and necessary if we are to achieve the goal that we seek and need. Individual grade percentages are as follows:

Parent Annual Fund Participation by Grade (as of May 1, 2009)

Parent Participation	Grade
64 %	B
72%	K
76%	1st
64%	2nd
61%	3rd
59%	4th
60%	5th
90%	6th
59%	7th
65%	8th
73%	9th
61%	10th
78%	11th

We are grateful to all who have supported the Annual Fund to date. This continues to be a challenging year and we know that many families have deferred their support until this late date as a result of the turbulent economy. We hope that as we approach our fiscal year end of June 30, 2009, we can count on your needed support and achieve our goal.

Gifts may be made online at www.bbns.org/donate, or mailed directly to:

Buckingham Browne & Nichols School, 80 Gerry's Landing Road, Cambridge, MA 02138-9796. If you have any questions regarding the Annual Fund or wish to make a gift of securities, kindly contact Jo-Ann Lovejoy, Director of Annual Giving: 617-800-2723 or jo-ann_lovejoy@bbns.org