

Retirees Leave Lasting Mark at Blake

Pat Arnold

In 1972, more than 100 hopefuls applied to become the next second grade teacher at Highcroft Country Day School. But the applicant of choice those 36 years ago was Pat Arnold, a teacher who has since gone on to touch the lives of 700-plus Highcroft students and their families.

In each of these students lives the knowledge gleaned from an ever-developing second-grade curriculum, which Arnold has taught for decades and includes lessons on Japanese culture and language, monarch butterflies, and, Arnold's particular passion, whales. Throughout her career, Arnold has made a point of learning as much as she can and sharing her experiences with her students. She has traveled to Japan with Highcroft's Japanese teacher, Muro Sensei. She and colleague Lori Thoraldson spent time in Mexico to see the wintering grounds of the monarch butterfly. And, one of her favorite experiences was studying marine life at the University of California-Irvine as part of a sabbatical in 1982.

Arnold calls these dwindling days of her Blake teaching career "an emotional roller coaster." While her early retirement means she will have the time and energy to do the things she loves, such as travel, garden, read and do more volunteer work with the WCA Foundation (a grant-making organization that gives funds to non-profits that seek to improve conditions for women and children), she will miss the daily interaction with her colleagues and the children.

"The Highcroft campus has such a wonderfully supportive atmosphere. Of course I will miss the children. They bring such joy to each day. They find wonder in the simplest of things, and they have such delightful humor. It's such fun to teach them and to laugh with them."



*Blake faculty retiring at the end of the 2007-2008 school year:
(Back row, L to R) Jan Woolman, Tom Bretl, Deanna Preiss, Lee Woolman.
(Front row, L to R) Carol Lundholm, Pat Arnold, Dottie Bjork.*

Dottie Bjork

Before coming to Blake 28 years ago, Middle School math teacher Dottie Bjork traveled extensively. She has been all over the United States, having spent time everywhere except Alaska and Tennessee, and has traveled all over Europe. Even with all of the places she has had the good fortune to visit, she says that one of her favorite places to be is at Blake on the first day of school and on Parent Curriculum Night.

"The first day of school with the sea of new faces and the excitement of the students is wonderful," says Bjork. "On curriculum night I meet the parents of my students and by that time, I individually know each child." Bjork's students know that she views each of them as special and unique individuals.

What students and parents alike immediately learn about Bjork is that she is a patient, gentle and kind teacher whose door is always open. An invitation to call any time or for parents to come sit in while she teaches one of her regular or accelerated algebra classes is always extended. Students know that Bjork's classroom is a safe environment where math skills are honed and where students are welcome to stop by for any reason.

In her retirement, Bjork plans to pursue her many interests — flower gardening, walking, reading, Italian

cooking, interior decorating and continuing to offer private tutoring. She also wants to spend more time with her husband, Dick, and daughter, Ashley '05, who is a junior at St. Olaf College. Bjork hopes to make more frequent trips to visit family in New York, and who knows, she just might plan a trip Alaska or Tennessee.

As she retires, Bjork says she would like to “thank all my present and former colleagues and students, parents, administrators and staff for their kindness, support and caring ways these past 28 years.”

Tom Bretl

On a dark, clear night during a School retreat, Upper School math and science teacher Tom Bretl joined his students as they lay in a field looking up at the stars and invited them to take a look through his telescope. After teaching at Blake for the past 23 years, Bretl says that such “individual teachable moments” with his students are one of the things he will miss the most.

For the past two years, Bretl has been teaching Upper School calculus, data analysis and astronomy, but he started his career at Blake in a much different role. In 1985, Bretl was hired as Blake’s first kindergarten through grade 12 computer coordinator. After 10 years in this position, his efforts turned division specific when he became the Upper School computer resource person and taught geometry, pre-calculus, astronomy and physics classes. During this time he also became involved with grade reporting and scheduling and was the “official” Upper School class scheduler.

Beyond Bretl’s various official Blake responsibilities, he is also an accomplished writer of computer software programs. Lower School Blake students still use a number of his programs and Upper School faculty recently played his “Driving in Circles” game during a teacher workshop. Several of his free software programs can be downloaded at <http://homepage.mac.com/tcbretl/Downloads/Menu48.html>.

Through the years, Bretl’s family has joined him in building a strong connection to the Blake community. His wife, Donna, has taken on various School data base projects and all of his children are Blake graduates — Tim '95, Sarah '98 and Dan '03. In his retirement, Bretl plans to become involved in volunteer activities related to his interests, travel, enjoy some of his hobbies – biking, hiking, kayaking, photography and computer programming – and spend time with his son Tim’s first

child, and Bretl’s first grandchild, Catherine, who was born in March of this year.

Carol Lundholm

In the fall of 1974 Carol Godfrey, now Lundholm, became Blake’s Middle School librarian. She joined Blake at the time of the merger and her first assignment was the incredibly difficult job of organizing the mountains of books from the merged schools to create a new middle school library and card catalogue.

Over the next 34 years, Lundholm would take on many other large tasks and see many more changes. When she started at Blake, the library was separate from the audio/visual area and non-printed reference materials were stored on film for use on overheads. Today, students visit Lundholm in the media center where they use computers to access Blake’s resource materials and can search other off-campus databases.

In addition to her work as Blake’s Middle School librarian, Lundholm, along with former Blake English teacher Roxy Forbes, and former Blake parent Marialice Harwood, started the community service “Adopt-A-Family” homeroom holiday shopping program and created a program to deliver cookies to Blake’s support staff. “I worked closely with my good friend and mentor of 18 years, Roxy Forbes. She was so wise and was such an upbeat and positive person. My friendship with her is one of the most cherished gifts I will take with me from Blake.”

In her retirement, Lundholm says she will continue to do private tutoring, teach study skills classes through local school districts, and do community work at English Rose Suites.

A family commitment to Blake, which began with a tentative two-year contract in the fall of 1933, ended in June when Lundholm turned in her keys. Her career spans more than 41 years of dedicated service to education and her retirement ends a legacy of 75 years of Lundholms at Blake. Lundholm’s husband, Bob '54, and his sister, Karen “Katie” '57 are both graduates of the school. Bob taught art and English at Blake from 1969 to 1977. It was at Blake where he met Carol and they were married in 1984. Bob and Katie’s father, Harold Lundholm, taught math at Blake from 1933 to 1972 and Harold’s wife, Dorothy, was an all-purpose Blake substitute teacher and more for 39 years. Bob and Katie’s uncle, Fridolf “Bid” Lundholm also taught math from 1950 to 1975 and then worked in

the athletic department from 1975 to 2000.

Deanna Preiss

Not all teachers appreciate the nicknames their students bestow upon them, but Lower School learning specialist Deanna Preiss counts the moment she discovered her moniker among the best memories of her 23-year career at Blake.

“During my first year at Blake, my room was down a long hall,” Preiss explains. “I had a group of fifth grade boys for a spelling group. They were late and came running down the hall whispering, ‘Hurry, we’ll be late for the device.’ I asked what did they mean, ‘the device.’ They sheepishly said, ‘Oh, we call you Mrs. Preiss, The Learning Device.’ And so that name has stuck all these years!”

Perhaps Lower School Director Beth Hower puts Preiss’s role a bit more eloquently — if slightly less succinctly. “Supporting the heart and the mind of the learner is a hallmark of Deanna’s teaching,” Hower says. “The parents of Deanna’s students are also beneficiaries of this nurturing approach. She teaches them about their children’s learning challenges while continually demonstrating a deep belief in the students’ capabilities.”

But no matter how one puts it, the Blake community has clearly benefited from the care and expertise that Preiss has brought to her work since 1986, when she was recommended to her current job by Adele Hersey, the wife of then-Head of School David Hersey. Hersey and Preiss were colleagues in the Minnetonka public school district when Blake kindergarten teacher Peg Neff asked Hersey if she knew of any qualified learning specialists to fill an opening at the School.

While she will miss her Blake colleagues and students, Preiss says she is looking forward to the flexibility her retirement will afford. She plans to spend more time with family and to investigate an “encore career” that will utilize her talents.

No doubt Mrs. Preiss, The Learning Device will have a lasting impact on all those she has helped and will continue to help in the future!

Jan Woolman

As Blake approached its centennial anniversary in 2000, Head of School John Gulla asked Upper School social studies teacher Jan Woolman if she would author the history of The Blake School and its predecessor schools. The resulting book, “Expecting Good Things of All” is a rich and comprehensive text, and its author is very much a part of the impressive history she so skillfully laid out for others to read and enjoy.

Woolman’s own history with the School began in July 1969 when Northrop Collegiate School principal Janet Gray offered her a social studies teaching position. Since then, Woolman has devoted herself fully to her students as well as to her fellow teachers. In addition to being the School’s resident historian, Woolman has also served as the Upper School social studies department chair and for years was co-director of the Otis Environmental Author Program with her husband, Lee Woolman.

After all she has done as a valued member of the School community, it is no surprise that Woolman has difficulty naming just one favorite memory. Rather she explains, “What underlies all the great memories is a steady sense of being supported and appreciated by all elements of the Blake community — colleagues, administrators, students, parents.”

Woolman says her retirement “seems like the natural thing to do and I am grateful that I am enjoying teaching as much now as I ever have,” she says. But Woolman certainly has outside-of-the-classroom activities that she enjoys, and in the very near future she will likely be found reading, walking, biking, seeing films, going to

art exhibits, playing bridge, gardening, traveling and spending more time with her and Lee’s grandson, Ghulam.

Woolman also looks forward to devoting her time to political work, other volunteer activities and hopes to do more writing. Already familiar with her talent in this area, the Blake community will undoubtedly be on the lookout for more from this compelling author.

Farewell and Good Luck

The following are Blake faculty members and staff who left either during or at the end of the 2007–08 school year.

Thank you for your service and keep in touch!

Jeff Alden-Pope

Sherry Felker

Mary Lincoln

Dale Melom

Kelley Nelson

Alison Phillips

Muhammad Ramadan

Leslie Robinett

Gillian Schoonover '65

Nat Wagner

Lee Woolman

After 37 years of teaching English, Lee Woolman has accumulated quite a list of activities he plans to pursue upon his retirement. Topping the list is “being the best grandpa I can be for my grandson, Ghulam,” which is followed by having friends over for dinner, going to film festivals around the country, reading, seeing plays, attending concerts, taking more cooking classes, learning about the Japanese art aesthetic and attending lectures.

Perhaps the best part of his activity-filled retirement is the fact that he’ll be sharing it with his wife and fellow Blake retiree, Jan Woolman, for whom he has the utmost respect and admiration. “I have been incredibly fortunate to work with Jan all these years, the best permanent mentor I can imagine,” says Woolman, who began teaching at the Northrop Collegiate School in 1971, when newly named principal Barbara Stock asked if he’d like to take over her ninth grade English classes and later named him the new English department chair of the merged schools.

Throughout the years, Woolman would take on projects, both in and out of the classroom, that have contributed tremendously to the good of the School and Blake’s students. Early in his career, Woolman participated in the many ad hoc meetings aimed at keeping the Upper School on the Northrop campus and the Northrop salary schedule during the merger process. For several years he taught “an amazingly intellectual” interdisciplinary course, *Discovering Change*, with fellow teachers John Crosby and Dan Danielson. In the 1980s, he and Jan were hired by the Minnesota Association of Independent School Principals to run a new teacher orientation program. The couple also teamed up as the first coordinators of the Otis Environmental Authors Program at Blake. And he and social studies teacher Randy Roberts began the *World Literature/World Culture* curriculum, with the computer help of fellow retiree Tom Bretl.

As a busy career leads directly into a busy retirement, Woolman says that he will most miss his empathetic fellow faculty, but lucky for him, he will have his most valued colleague by his side.

Grants & Sabbaticals 2008**Donaldson Sabbatical**

The Frank Donaldson Faculty Development Sabbatical Program provides support for Blake faculty members who wish to undertake and present significant sabbatical projects. Recipients are selected by the Blake Sabbatical Review Committee based on seniority, past achievements and potential benefit to the School, the community and the applicant. Each sabbatical concludes with a presentation of the recipient’s project. This year’s recipient is:

Carol Tombers, Lower School Blake campus art, will live in Latin America for one semester to learn about art and study painters in Columbia, Chile, Mexico and Cuba.

Hersey Summer Sabbatical

Blake’s Board of Trustees established the Hersey Summer Sabbatical Program in honor of former president of The Blake Schools David Hersey, who felt that teachers were often limited by finances from pursuing major academic or intellectual growth. Each year up to three summer sabbaticals are awarded to faculty members who represent the high level of teaching effectiveness at Blake. The hope is that these sabbaticals will allow the recipient to develop an interest that without the award would be difficult to pursue. The term sabbatical is used here in the broadest sense and includes, but is not limited to, academic work, curriculum study and travel.

This year’s recipient is:

Bob Teslow, Upper School visual arts, plans to travel to Napa, Calif., to attend Oxbow School Summer Studio Art Workshop.

Plank Fund for Teachers Grant

Established through a gift from former Blake Trustee Raymond Plank ’40, the Plank Faculty Challenge Grants are intended to inspire and support teachers in their efforts to become better educators and people. This year’s recipients are:

David Burton, Lower School Blake campus second grade, will be traveling to Sierra Leone with a group of Blake students and parents to volunteer in rebuilding three villages.

Bill Colburn ’88, Upper School art, will travel to southern France for an art teacher workshop and to visit the museums of Paris.

Jim Spector, Upper School art, plans to travel to Japan to explore history and cultural roots of the Japanese visual aesthetic.

Woody Woodward, Lower School Highcroft campus music, will explore Norwegian heritage and retrace the life, times and music of composer Edvard Grieg.

Faculty Applause



Jon Halpern, Lower School counselor, co-authored a DVD and guidebook series called "More Time to Teach: Responding to Student Behavior."

Congratulations to Lower School counselor **Jon Halpern** whose DVD and guidebook series "More Time to Teach: Responding to Student Behavior" is receiving favorable reviews from peers nationwide. These school-based titles, which Halpern co-authored with behavioral coach and psychologist Jeff Fink, offer teacher response models to address disruptive student behavior in elementary and secondary classrooms. The set includes text guides that provide practice and participant feedback.



Middle School Latin teacher Alita Shenk

Congratulations to Upper and Middle School Latin teacher **Alita Shenk** who was selected to participate in this summer's Klingenstein program.

Upper School English teacher **Mike Bazzett**

was on sabbatical this past school year and was busy writing — and getting published! Some of his poetry appears in the June edition of *Rattle*, a literary journal. He also had a short article in the Winter 2008 issue of *Independent School Magazine*, as a part of their Cool Books Project, "Reading and Writing in the 21st Century." In it he profiles Kazuo Ishiguro's "Never Let Me Go." Bazzett will have three poems published in a journal called *Weber: The Contemporary West*. The work will be available both in print and online at <http://weberstudies.weber.edu>. Finally, a collection of his work was named a finalist for the Lipman Chapbook Prize, awarded by the literary

journal *Flyway*, which is published by Iowa State University. Stay tuned, Mr. Bazzett informs us that other projects are percolating!

Upper School science teacher **Steve Kaback**, Middle School science teachers **Bruce Jones**, **Maelene Krig** and **Lynne Macziewski** and PK–12 Science Department Chair **Rand Harrington** attended the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) meeting in Boston. **Harrington** and **Kaback** gave a talk on implementing the Video Motion Project in introductory physics courses, and **Krig** and **Macziewski** gave a presentation and workshop on Blake's eighth grade Minnehaha Creek water study project. Both talks were very well attended and received rave reviews from the attendees.

Nan Peterson, PK–12 service learning director, was an honored guest at a Six Billion Paths to Peace service and peace celebration in New York City this March. A beautiful garden and path were set up to represent a path to peace in Times Square, and on the reader boards high above Times Square, 110 photos of Blake students active in service were looped all day. The idea was to show that even in one of the world's busiest cities, a peaceful moment is possible. Thousands of people walked the path to peace and saw Blake students high in the sky. That evening, Peterson was an honored guest at a Six Billion Paths to Peace celebration because of her service work at Blake. In addition to this honor, Peterson was invited to the Na Lai Aloha Foundation in Honolulu to talk about service at Blake. She returned to Hawaii in May as one of 30 honored guests at the Lantern Floating Peace Celebration, a Buddhist celebration attracting 35,000 participants.

This spring, **Upper School Advanced Drawing teacher Bill Colburn '88** was awarded the Minnesota Department of Education Service Learning Best Practice Award for the service connections he helped create between his students and members of Vail Place, an adult rehabilitative mental health services facility. The class portrait project, *Art As Gift*, has student artists first study mental illness and then visit Vail Place

to talk with the members and draw their portraits. This year the portraits were given to the members, and the framed finished art is now displayed in the Vail Place Hopkins location. Vail Place also hosted an afternoon art opening that included talks given by members, students and Colburn. Blake's Advanced Drawing students include **Kelsey Becker '09**, **Max Burton '09**, **Margaret Chute '09**, **Solveig Ellingboe '08**, **Jeremiah Ellison '08**, **Tarik Hindi '08**, **Jamie McLaughlin '08**, **Caroline Ricard '10**, **Alison Rich '09**, **Ande Saunders '09**, **Maddie Swanson '09** and **Liza Winton '09**.

Joanne Esser, Lower School Blake campus pre-kindergarten teacher, recently received a fellowship award for Earthwatch Institute, whose time-critical

mission is to carry out conservation field research and match fellows with field experiences that will contribute to his or her personal and professional growth. Esser is participating in a Bahamian Reef survey from June 28 to July 5. The Esther A. and Joseph Kingenstein Fund provide funding for this experience.

Sara Kyle, associate director of College Counseling, has been awarded The Distinguished Service Award from the

Minnesota Association for College Counseling. Kyle was recognized at the Tri-State Conference (for the College Counseling Associations of Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa) in May. The award is "given in recognition of significant contributions to the Minnesota Association for College Admission Counseling, to recognize leadership, committee work, and selfless devotion to MN-ACAC, its programs, and members for over a decade."

This summer, **Michèle Cassavante**, Upper School French teacher, and **Mary Ellen Kasak-Saxler**, former Blake teacher, will present "Podcasting: A Technological Wonder for Proficiency" at the American Association of Teachers of French annual conference in Liège, Belgium. At the conference they will share meaningful ways to integrate technology in the language classroom that puts language proficiency objectives first.



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