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**September 2008**

## Our Children, Ourselves

*By Head of School John Gulla*

“... and I had the first inkling then of what I know now from experience — that not only are our parents buried cryptically inside each of us, but we are buried just as cryptically inside each of them, and that we may look in either direction to see the secrets of our children and ourselves.”

— Ethan Canin, “America America”

Welcome to the 2008–09 academic year at Blake, our 108th year opening our doors in the late summer on a new school year. The above quotation from this contemporary American author’s recently published work about ambition, family, class and politics in 20th century America, reminded me of the inescapable lesson all of us as parents learn in this singular adventure called parenthood. It is a lesson each of us learns in our own imperfect way. We have the opportunity for great and lasting influence on who our children become but that influence is, to our astonishment and chagrin, limited. Our children will not always choose to become who we would want them to become. We don’t love our children any less as a result of this limitation of our influence and, in fact, it may be that uncontrollable spark of individuality that most endears our children to us.

The reason the Canin line so arrested me when I read it this summer was the reciprocal nature of this influence. Throughout the novel he develops this theme — the maturation of our own worldview occasioned by our experience as parents — how our own children shape and mold us just as we have shaped and molded our parents. We, as parents, are fundamentally changed by our children. Toward the very end of this sprawling multi-generational tale, the narrator reflects back on his earlier life from middle age. He wrote, “What have I learned? The old verities, mostly: that love for our children is what sustains us; ...” This is the central covenant of a school with parents. Next to family we think we, as a school, can and should be one of the most significant and lasting influences in the young lives of our students but we, too, recognize and are occasionally frustrated by the limits of our own influence. However, it is our love for this work and for the children with whom we work that sustains us.



**Head of School John Gulla**

I welcome most of you back to Blake. Others I welcome for the first time. To 180 new students and their families and to 26 new faculty and staff members just beginning their work with us, I’m pleased to have you as a part of this extraordinary community.

Now in the third year of our five-year strategic plan, Blake: 2010, we’ll continue to focus our efforts on academic excellence, a preeminent faculty, thoughtful integration of the tools of technology in our work, our aspirations for a pluralistic community, our development of world citizenship and promotion of service, and sound fiscal management of the School’s resources. Drawing on this last point in our six-goal strategic plan, I acknowledge the considerable sacrifice families make to send their children to Blake. This is especially true for many of our families during difficult economic downturns. Soaring gas and food prices, and market uncertainties have made this a very difficult economic period for many of our families. Through prudent management of the School’s resources at all levels, we strive to control costs and tuition without sacrificing the quality of your child’s experience with us.

In addition to our continued attention to these above mentioned overarching, strategic, school-wide goals, this year, you can expect to hear of our exploration of how we assess student progress and communicate this

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## From the Head of School

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progress to you and others outside of school.

We will continue our work on mapping the Blake curriculum, implementing a new model of faculty compensation, and continuing the refinement of our PK-12 academic department chair structure.

I expect this fall the Blake Board of Trustees will approve a long-term master plan for the physical facilities and grounds on the Hopkins campus.

We'll continue to examine our financial aid program and, as always, we'll do our best to earn the trust you place in us by enrolling your children in this school.

Here's to a great year!

## Parent News Online

We wanted to remind families that Parent News is now available both in print and on Blake's web site. If you wish to no longer receive it in the paper format and want to access it solely online, just let us know. For those of you who signed up last April to receive it electronically, you should have already received an e-mail with the link to this September issue. If you have questions, please e-mail: [cmclane@blakeschool.org](mailto:cmclane@blakeschool.org).

## Blake Connections: Establishing Relationships Between Students and Professionals

During the 2007-08 school year, Blake Connections continued to establish relationships between students and professionals in the Blake community, including parents and alumni. Without exception, students who were engaged in internships raved about their experiences. Similarly, the feedback we have received from our internship sponsors has been equally positive. Every 2007-08 internship sponsor has expressed a willingness to sponsor one or more Blake student interns in future years. The internships covered a variety of fields, from the arts at the Minnesota Opera to the medical practices of orthopedists, and from various legal endeavors to scientific research at Medtronic. Many thanks go to all of our valued sponsors. If any parents or alumni would be interested in offering an internship or providing a shadow experience of any length, please e-mail [blakeconnections@blakeschool.org](mailto:blakeconnections@blakeschool.org) or call Dion Crushshon at (952) 988-3782.

## Homecoming and Reunion 2008 Save the Dates: September 25-27

Catch the School spirit at the Homecoming and Reunion festivities taking place Thursday, Sept. 25 through Saturday, Sept. 27. A schedule of Saturday's Homecoming events is listed below. For more details on the entire Reunion schedule, please visit Blake's web site at [www.blakeschool.org](http://www.blakeschool.org). Click on the Alumni section where you will find the Reunion link. If you have any questions regarding Homecoming or Reunion, please contact Becky Ankeny, director of alumni and parent relations, at (952) 988-3433.

### Friday, Sept. 26 (Blake/Hopkins campus)

5:30 p.m. Varsity football game vs. Minnehaha Academy

### Saturday, Sept. 27 (Blake/Hopkins campus)

10:30 a.m. Girls' & Boys' JV soccer vs. Minnehaha Academy  
Girls' JV volleyball vs. Minnehaha Academy  
Girls' & Boys' C soccer vs. Minnehaha Academy

11:30 a.m.

Noon

2 p.m.

#### Picnic lunch and children's activities

Boys' varsity soccer vs. Minnehaha Academy  
Girls' varsity volleyball vs. Minnehaha Academy  
Girls' varsity soccer vs. Minnehaha Academy  
Alumna Athlete of the Year Award presented at girls' varsity soccer half time

*Please consult the Blake web site for the Middle School athletic schedule.*

## You Are Invited to Attend Your Parent Party

*Sponsored by The Blake School Parent Association Hospitality Committee*

Please come and get acquainted with the parents of your child's classmates at these casual grade-level get-togethers for Blake parents. Taher Inc., our excellent food service provider, will continue to cater the Parent Parties for fifth to twelfth grades. Beverage service will be provided for grades pre-kindergarten through fourth with parents providing appetizers and desserts. Individual invitations will be sent out for each party and please don't forget to R.S.V.P. There is no agenda. Just come and have a great time!

**All parent parties take place on Saturdays from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Grade</u>	<u>Location</u>
Oct. 4	6	PCR
Oct. 11	Pre-K/Kindergarten (Blake) Pre-K/Kindergarten (Highcroft)	PCR Highcroft Foyer
Nov. 8	10 and 11	PCR
Nov. 15	3 and 4 (Blake) 3 and 4 (Highcroft)	PCR Highcroft Foyer
Jan. 24	1 and 2 (Blake) 1 and 2 (Highcroft)	PCR Highcroft Foyer
Jan. 31	9	PCR
Feb. 7	7 and 8	PCR
April 11	12	PCR
April 18	5 (Blake & Highcroft)	PCR

# Blake Welcomes New Department Chairs and Center for Diversity Directors

## Department Chairs

### Charles Ellenbogen

Charles Ellenbogen is Blake's new PK-12 department chair for language arts. He comes to us from Harding High School in Saint Paul where he was the English department chair. Ellenbogen has also previously taught in Baltimore and London. His background includes overseeing the international baccalaureate English program at Harding as well as teaching at the middle school level and pursuing his own writing. His work is published in a number of magazines, English journals and blogs. He has a passion for teaching as well as discussing curriculum, censorship and the writing process.



**PK-12 Language Arts Department Chair Charles Ellenbogen**



**PK-12 Math Department Chair Ina Loobeek**

### Ina Loobeek

Ina Loobeek joins Blake as the new PK-12 department chair for math. Loobeek most recently worked as a curriculum consultant at Nova Classic Academy in Saint Paul. She has extensive experience in building curriculum and working with teachers. Prior to Nova, she served as head of the math department at Family Academy Charter School, was a substitute math teacher at The International School of Minnesota, a calculus instructor at the University of Chicago, and a mathematician/network analyst for BBN Communications Corporation and the Academy for Interscience Methodology.

*Ellenbogen and Loobeek will be joining Blake's other department chairs: Deana Jaeschke Clapp, Rie Gilsdorf, Rand Harrington, Marilyn Kelley, Roberto Lazo, Jim Lindsay, Kevin O'Connor and Kris Rosenberg.*

*Introductions cont. on page 6*

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Blake Today is a special supplement published in the Parent News throughout the year and includes student and staff applause news and updates.

Please submit information and photographs to Cathy McLane, marketing and communications director, (952) 988-3434 or [cmclane@blakeschool.org](mailto:cmclane@blakeschool.org).

## faculty profile



### Stacy Swearingen

*By Linda Pobuda*

Stacy Swearingen's sixth grade Blake Middle School students should know that their teacher practices what she teaches. As a teacher and a fiction writer, Swearingen is "invested in the whole experience" of helping students during the academic year to develop into passionate readers, engaged writers and continuous learners. She then uses the same lessons during the summer months to return to her own fiction writing.

Swearingen grew up in Denver, Colo. and always knew she would be a teacher. During her undergraduate years at Colorado State University, she took a detour into urban planning and landscape architecture until a professor spotted her teaching talent and encouraged her to pursue teaching professionally. Although he imagined Swearingen remaining in the design field, she decided to couple her lifelong interests in books and writing with teaching. She completed a master's of art degree in English literature at Colorado University in Boulder and has taught English in independent schools for 14 years, arriving at Blake in 2005.

As a teacher and parent of two Blake students, Swearingen is inspired by Blake's "love of learning" philosophy and is delighted to have the resources and flexibility to foster the natural curiosity of students. "It is my job to tap into the interests, ideas and imagination" of students in the classroom. "I try to balance conceptual learning with writing conventions and skills, so nothing gets in the way of them expressing their ideas," describes Swearingen. Her teaching techniques offer variety and predictability to students. She likes to see every 50-minute period include time for homework review and study habits, while she varies lesson plans using small groups, white board exercises and Moodle links.

"There are so many great but simple moments" that reward Swearingen in the classroom. Whether it is seeing students understand a difficult concept, overcome frustration, send notes of appreciation or demonstrate organization in their end-of-the-year essay, these are her reasons for teaching.

Outside of the classroom, Swearingen enjoys walking her dog on nature trails, going to sporting events, getting together with friends and reading books. She counts among her favorite authors, Barbara Kingsolver, Mark Halprin and Lorrie Moore.

The key for this active teacher, mother and friend seems to be balance. She describes her greatest achievement as being "in progress — growing a teaching career and family at the same time — it defines what I do every day."

# 2008–09 Security at Blake

Welcome back to school!

As always, security at Blake is one of our highest priorities. We wanted to take this opportunity to remind everyone of several of the key security measures we have in place and that we need YOUR help to enforce them. Focal points continue to be entryways, parking areas and classroom security.

Please:

- DO NOT share any of the access codes for the entryways!
- DO be sure to always sign in at the main office and get a visitor's badge.
- DO NOT talk on your cell phone while in the carpool lane or picking up/dropping off students.
- DO observe the speed limits on all campuses, and be sure to follow the instructions of security staff during drop-off and pick-up times.

Reminder: Blake, as other schools, has a variety of updated emergency plans, which set forth procedures and responsibilities by campus, for prevention, preparation, communication and responding to various emergencies. Over the course of the year, the School conducts a number of drills specific to severe weather, fire evacuation and lockdowns to ensure students and staff know what to do in the event of an emergency. If you have questions about any of these procedures, please contact your division office.

If you have any comments or questions, please don't hesitate to speak with your division director, or Ken Nivala at (952) 988-3450.

## **Safety Reminder/ Hopkins Campus:**

During the fall (and spring) athletes in grades seven through twelve (and sometimes, sports or playground fans that are even younger) are crossing back and forth from the lower fields to the school buildings between 3:15 and 6 p.m. frequently and unpredictably. It is imperative that drivers arriving or leaving campus during these times use extreme caution as they enter or exit the campus. Small, distracted students WILL pop out from behind parked SUVs and emerge suddenly onto the road. If a driver is going too fast and/or is distracted by being on a cell phone, he/she WILL NOT be able to stop. To prevent a tragedy, we must all take the preventative measure of traveling very slowly and limiting cell phone use during these times. Thank you for your help ensuring the safety of all students.

## blake feature

# Celtic Knots, Broccoli and Cézanne

By Ruth O'Neill

As the school year begins, you are determined to stay involved. You attend parent meetings and conferences. You talk to your child, but do dinner conversations already sound something like this?

**Parent:** "How was school?"  
**Student:** "Fine."  
**Parent:** "Anything interesting happen today?"  
**Student:** "Not really."

If your child relays information to you on a need-to-know basis only, do not despair. The walls in the halls will soon speak volumes, even if your child will not. Student work is popping up everywhere as proof that students make new discoveries in the classroom every day. Wonderful displays of their work at the Upper School illustrate how traditional subjects like history, English, science, math and art no longer are artificially divided into separate folders of thought. Remember when creativity was defined as "thinking outside the box?" Recently I asked my ninth grader if she was familiar with that expression. She looked at me, genuinely puzzled, and asked "What box?"

What box, indeed? While cross-discipline learning is not necessarily new, the ease, speed and complexity of interconnected thinking certainly is. Already freshmen and sophomores are learning the concept of "perspective." They will evaluate how perspective changes literature and how it shapes social conflict, and they will do so within accurate, historical context. Juniors and seniors are studying math concepts found in architecture, art, music and nature through the lens of original works by Aristotle, Ptolemy, Diophantus and Newton. Jeff Johnson '09 and Sam Maritz '09 recently explored the fusion of art and math in "Discrete Systems: The Art of Math," an elective taught by Upper School math teacher Paul Vetscher.

"I am a math guy," said Johnson, "but other students in this class definitely had more of an artist's take on this class. Each day we discussed a new topic, but the theme was always perspective. Mr. Vetscher helped us see how figuring out a problem requires putting both your body and your mind in the right position to 'see' the answer," continued Johnson. For example, one day we knotted up a large rope. We then tried to figure out how to untie it. We looked at the rope from different physical locations, but what was most helpful was to think of the knots as a series of loops to be unlooped."

Maritz was equally enthusiastic about the discoveries he made. For the class final, each student created an artistic piece based on the visual component of a mathematic idea. "We took math concepts that we have learned over the years, and then used them to create interesting art. I was really intrigued by the Celtic knot, so I made the knot to see how I could transform it into a three-dimensional object."

So that is why artwork hangs outside the math rooms. Artwork helps students understand how knot theory is used in DNA analysis, how paper folding can help model plant growth, and how naturally occurring wonders like clouds, coastlines and mountains are much more than just imperfect cones, cylinders and spheres.

Rest assured, your child is learning the forms and formulas you learned in school, but then he or she is questioning, embracing, rejecting, modifying, turning and applying those ideas in ways not even imagined when we were in high school.

French artist and post-impressionist painter Paul Cézanne once wrote in a 1905 letter to another post-impressionist painter Emile Bernard, "The Louvre is the book in which we learn to read. We must not, however, be satisfied with retaining the beautiful formulas of our illustrious predecessors. Let us go forth to study beautiful nature, let us try to free our minds from them, let us strive to express ourselves according to our personal temperament. Time and reflection, moreover, modify little by little our vision, and at last comprehension comes to us."

Next time you sit down to dinner, ask your teenager if there is a mathematical formula for broccoli. The answer just might astound you.

# New Trustees on Board

The Blake School is pleased to welcome four new members to the Board of Trustees. Their terms begin this fall.



## Randall Barry '86

Randall and his wife, Sara, have two children at Blake — Peter '19 and Catherine '21. Randall is a realtor with Coldwell Banker Burnet and he and his family live in Minneapolis. Prior to working in real estate, he was in restaurant management with Pluto's in San Francisco, Left at Albuquerque in Palo Alto and Caribou Coffee in Minneapolis. Randall has been a member of the Blake Alumni Association for the past four years and is a youth hockey and soccer coach with the Minneapolis Park Board.

He is a past member of the Middlebury College Alumni Board and past president of the Twin Cities Middlebury Alumni Chapter. Randall is a 1986 Blake alumnus and earned his bachelor's degree with departmental honors in art history from Middlebury College. "I feel very privileged to represent the interests of the entire Blake alumni community on the Board of Trustees as the new alumni representative," Randall says. "As a parent of two Lower School Blake students, I am also excited to contribute to the work of the Board from a parent perspective as well. Our School has faced many great challenges in the past and I hope to provide the same leadership and fortitude as those who have come before me in facing the challenges that will confront us."

## Forrest Burke '80

Forrest has four children — Diana '09, William '14, Emma '18 and Bella '19. Diana, Emma and Bella attend school at Blake and William is a student at Benilde-St. Margaret's. Forrest and his wife, Renee, reside in Orono. He has been the president of Public Sector for UnitedHealthcare since February of this year. Forrest joined UnitedHealthcare in 2005 as general counsel. Prior to this work, he was a partner at the law firm of Dorsey & Whitney LLP.



He is currently a trustee of the Walker Art Center and formerly served as trustee/director for Summit Academy. Forrest is a 1980 Blake alumnus. He received his bachelor's degree from Colgate University and his Juris Doctor degree from the University of Pennsylvania Law School. "I am thrilled to join the Blake Board of Trustees," Forrest says. "The Blake educational and cultural experience has nurtured three generations of life-long learners in our family. I look forward to building on Blake's tradition of excellence for generations of students to come."

## Lockie Markusen



Lockie and her husband, Steve, have five children at Blake — Max '08, Jack '10, Carrie '12, Charlie '15 and Tripp '19. Their oldest child, Max, graduated from Blake this spring and attends Colgate University. Since 1994, Lockie has been a dedicated volunteer, giving numerous hours to Blake. She recently ended a two-year term as the second vice president of the Parent Association where she oversaw all fund-raising activities and is the liaison for the School's junior and senior internship program, Blake Connections. She has

also served as a Blake Classic co-chair, the Middle School Magazine Drive chair, a room representative eight times, and as the Middle School social chair, to name a few. She currently is on the board of The Landscape Plant Development Center in Chaska and the Brenton Arboretum in Iowa. She also is a past board secretary and has chaired numerous committees for the Greater Minneapolis Crisis Nursery, worked as a CARE partner volunteer for pediatric bone marrow transplant patients at the Children's Cancer Research Foundation, and has been a member of the Junior League Minneapolis since 1989. Her previous work experience is in database software sales/account management, and in real estate. Lockie has a bachelor's degree in biology from the University of Colorado, Denver and a bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Colorado, Boulder. "I am looking forward to serving on Blake's Board of Trustees. The values outlined in Blake's mission statement have been an important part of our family life for 14 years," Lockie says. "Serving as a Trustee of this exceptional School will be a privilege and I hope to bring value to the process of carrying our high educational standards into the future."

## Roger Sit

Roger and his wife, Michele, have three children and reside in Edina. Their daughter, Rachel '15, is a student at Blake and their sons, David '10 and Michael '11 attend Edina High School. Roger is the president and co-CEO of Sit Investment Associates, Inc., a firm founded by his father 27 years ago. Before joining Sit Investment Associates, he was a vice president at Goldman, Sachs & Co. in New York City. Prior to working on Wall Street, Roger was a captain in the United States Air Force working at Headquarters Space Division. He is a past trustee of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. Roger earned a bachelor's degree from the United States Air Force Academy, a master's degree in systems technology from the University of Southern California, and a master's of business administration degree from Harvard University. Roger says, "I look forward to serving as a Trustee and helping The Blake School to continue to be a premier educational institution."



## Thank You to Retiring Board Members

As they retire from the Board, Blake recognizes the following Trustees for their commitment to and support of the School: Kent Adams '81, Sandy Donaldson, Dave Floren, Kathy Martin and Margie Nelson. Thank you!

# Blake's Convocation and Legacy Day 2008

One of the first major events of the year is only a few short weeks away: Legacy & Convocation Day 2008!



Blake's third annual Convocation & Legacy Day will be on Friday, Sept. 26, 2008 (the day before Homecoming), bringing members of Blake's community, past and present, together in common purpose — strengthening commitments to lifelong learning, community service and world citizenship. This event will take place on the Blake campus in Hopkins. Students, teachers, staff, alumni and parent volunteers (more than 2,000 people in all!) will come together on Friday to celebrate, connect and give back. (For photos of last year's event, visit Blake's online 2007-08 photo album.)

The day will begin with Blake's convocation ceremony (to be held in the Gordy Aamoth Jr. Memorial Stadium if weather permits, or the gym, if inclement) then each legacy group — the same groups as last year — will come together to work on one of three service activities (see right) to create a number of items to be donated or provided back to the greater community. Lunch will be a legacy-family affair and provided for all participants. The event will end with a final gathering in the stadium (or gym), to celebrate the day, the connections made, and to learn a few Homecoming cheers.

A special note to our parents: Please know all are invited to the Convocation ceremony Friday morning, and to join in for an hour — or the day — as a volunteer for the Legacy Day activities. With this being said, if rain forces us inside, spectator space for Convocation is minimal; be forewarned. Students and staff will have seating priority.

For more information, be sure to watch Blake's web site. If you have any questions or suggestions, or would like to help, please feel free to contact any member of the planning committee below.

#### Convocation and Legacy Day Planning Committee:

Activity Chairs – see Projects & Activities; Marc Bogursky (US); Elizabeth Hastings (MS); Ann Bellin (LS); Stacey Stahl (Operations); Nan Peterson (Service); Becky Ankeny (Alumni); Cathy McLane (Communications); Cheryl Appeldorn (Volunteer Coordinator); Scott Flemming/Learning-Works (Recess); Brenda Broucek & Amy Ouradnik (Reflection notebooks); Ken Nivala (Buildings & Grounds/Security)

### Blake's Web Site: Refreshed and Redesigned

Be sure to check out Blake's web site which has been given a whole new look. The latest and greatest in Blake news, links to class pages, athletic schedules and updates, and more, are all at your fingertips. Visit [www.blakeschool.org](http://www.blakeschool.org) today.

## Legacy Day Projects & Activities

### FLEECE BLANKET PROJECT

*Activity Chair:* Paula Riggi

*Project Description:*  
Legacy groups will construct a number of fleece blankets to be donated to service organizations for the people they serve.



### HUNGER: IN OUR BACKYARD

*Activity Chair:* Karin Jacobs

*Project Description:*  
This service project will complement the School's ongoing efforts around hunger by addressing the needs of the local community.

### HUNGER: AROUND THE WORLD

(Feeding Children International)

*Activity Chair:* Maureen Rudd

*Project Description:*  
Legacy groups will partner with Kids Against Hunger to package and distribute food where there is starvation and hunger, worldwide.

## New Department Chairs and Center for Diversity Directors ... Continued from page 3

### Diversity Directors

#### Donna Albro

Donna Albro is Blake's new PK-12 co-director of diversity planning. In this part-time position, Albro will continue Blake's work around social justice and equity. Albro most recently worked as director of peer education in human relations at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in New York. She also has previous experience working in various administrative positions at colleges and universities in California, Oregon, Missouri and Pennsylvania.

#### Nils Heymann

Nils Heymann joins Blake as the PK-12 co-director for diversity planning. Heymann has extensive experience working in communities that are committed to fighting oppression in all forms. He has worked with the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and has overseen diversity training in a number of national venues. Heymann is currently working toward a graduate degree in leadership and administration at the University of St. Thomas and is serving as an advisor to master students at Capella University. Prior to his work at St. Thomas and with Capella, he was the diversity coordinator at Benilde-St. Margaret's School.