



# The ByLine

SPRING 2023



**North Star**  
Planning for the  
next 60 years

# TO ASPIRE IS TO BE

Integrity ♣ Scholarship ♣

Respect ♣ Personal Best

LAKE RIDGE ACADEMY  
Renewable Energy Solutions  
Designed By Our Students

2022-2023

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# Mission

Our mission is to send into a changing world confident young people of integrity who think critically and creatively while embracing the joy of lifelong learning.

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**On Cover:** Two Lower School students learning about the life cycle of a butterfly.

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**On Page Two:** A photo of the historic barn, as part of Aspiration Acres.



A LETTER FROM THE  
HEAD OF SCHOOL  
**MITCH WHITE**

## Dear Lake Ridge Academy Friends,

Happy Birthday!

That may seem like an unusual way to open a letter of the *ByLine*, but this year marks Lake Ridge Academy's 60th anniversary and that milestone has put me in a celebratory mood. As I celebrate my 5th year as your Head of School, I am energized by the depth and breadth of support Lake Ridge enjoys. From our newest Kindergarten students to the many generational families that have been involved in Lake Ridge since our founding, your support brings joy and enthusiasm to our school that motivates me as we look forward.

Our campus has been humming with activity this year, with more activities, events, and programming than at any time during my headship. If you haven't been on campus recently, I hope you can visit and see some of our new improvements, including the crushed limestone path in the west woods, our climbing wall, treehouse, sledding hill, maple-sugaring shack, and Aspiration Acres (which includes a chicken coop, water garden, barn and silo). Some student favorites we have already enjoyed this year include TGWBIS ("Thank Goodness We're Back In School"), Year-of-Service-Kickoff-Day, Senior Challenge, our first Royals Run (5K), Community Building Days, Fall Family Day and Soccer Under the Lights, Middle School Movie Night, the Thanksgiving student-alumni basketball game, *Elf The Musical*, and Holiday Project. Some of these events are long-standing traditions (this year marks the 35th Holiday Project) and some like the Royals Run are brand new.

I hope you will come to visit and if you do, please stop in and see me. I also hope you will consider joining me at our Gala next year – we were able to return downtown for this year's Casino Royale-themed event, and it felt great to be back in the swing of things. At the Gala, we announced the establishment of the Institute for Business and Entrepreneurship. That weekend we also inducted Andy Milluzi ('08), Ben and Brenda Norton, and Teresa Jenkins Fowler into the Hall of Fame.

In closing, I want to thank you for being involved with Lake Ridge Academy. We could not continue to thrive without the support of alumni, parents, former parents, and friends. I thank you on behalf of our students, teachers and staff, and myself.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mitch".

Mitch White  
Head of School

# Campus Highlights

## ROYALS SOCIETY AND ASPIRATION ACRES EVENT

On August 9, 2022, Lake Ridge Academy welcomed donors from the Royals Giving Society and Aspiration Acres donors to campus, highlighting the newest addition to campus. Guests mingled, had a chance to tour the historic barn and silo, enjoyed food and beverages from A Taste of Excellence, and even had the opportunity to hold a chicken! We're thankful for our donors whose philanthropic support allows the school to continue to provide a world-class education for our students.



# Campus Highlights

## THANK GOODNESS WE ARE BACK IN SCHOOL (TGW BIS)

Our Upper School House System (Dante, Locke, Da Vinci, Newton) participated in TGWBIS Olympics on August 26. The houses battled it out through fierce competition in capture the flag, kickball, Pictionary, dodgeball, a scavenger hunt, and ended with tug of war. After a long day of competition, Locke House was named the champion.



## YEAR OF SERVICE KICK-OFF DAY (YOSKOD)

On September 14, our students, faculty, staff, and parents volunteered their time for the 13th Annual Day of Service. The Day of Service builds a sense of community while giving students a chance to learn about the importance of service and our responsibility to make our planet cleaner and safer. Our projects benefit the communities around us and use the buddy approach, in which the Upper School students work side-by-side with our K-5 students to make a difference while building meaningful and lasting relationships.

The students helped clean up six areas in Oberlin, Elyria, Cleveland, North Ridgeville, and LaGrange. Our students traveled to several area parks in Lorain County to clean the grounds and learn about plants, animals, and resources in their natural settings. Volunteer site locations have included Carlisle Nature Center, Cascade Park, South Central Park, Garfield Elementary Community Garden, Oberlin's George Jones Farm-City Fresh, Edgewater Beach, and Lakeview Park.

Other teams worked on campus beautification projects.



# Campus Highlights

## ROYALS RUN 5K – SPONSORED BY JIMMY JOHNS

On October 1, to kick off Fall Family Day, the Advancement office held its first annual “Royals Run” – an on-campus 5K race that featured our new crushed limestone path! We welcomed over 110 runners and walkers. Thank you to the following sponsors who made this event possible: Jimmy Johns, Animal Clinic Northview, Blue Ridge Farm, Benita K. Chernyk, Ph.D., LLC, Jack and Marilyn Gibel, Mayor Jack and Deborah Bradley, Southpark Mall, and Young Explorers School. Congratulations to our top finishers!

**Top Overall Male Finisher:** Christopher Moff '30

**Top Overall Female Finisher:** Margie Shea-Turner

**Top Female Finishers:** Lillian Shmois '27, Reese Hykes '28, Kathryn Krueger '27, Jelena Cheng '23, Paige Higgins, Anna Kosempa, Janel Norton, Julia Bilz Sertich '01, Kari Sommer Halko '01, Michelle Stomieroski, Latrina Lallo, Linda Howard, Pamela Tomososki, Betty-Ann Studzinski, Mary Lynn Sertich, Gail Sommer, and Nena Moskwa

**Top Male Finishers:** Braden Oakes '27, Will Ruhe '30, Arjun Gupta '28, Cody Mott, Drew Lindenberger, Ethan Mott, Greg Norton '06, Donald Bittala, William Calkins, Chris Ebenger, Jason Tedor, Michael Prill, Doug Michelsen, David Traul, Mario Sertich, and Cole Fauver '79







## FALL FAMILY DAY

Directly after the Royals Run, the LRA Parents Association hosted our annual Fall Family Day. The “Under the Big Top” themed event sold out at 250 children! We welcomed children and families of all ages from the LRA and surrounding communities to our beautiful campus. Children enjoyed pumpkin painting, cookie decorating, games, balloons and bubbles, airbrush tattoos, and more. The PA partnered with one of the Upper School houses, Dante House, to create a kid-friendly Trick or Treat Trail through the campus woods. We look forward to hosting the event again in the fall.

Thank you to all involved and the support of the surrounding communities.

**Sponsors:** Handel's Ice Cream Avon, Cleveland City Dance, Trucoat Painting Plus

**Vendors:** Bomber's Snow Cups and Lemonade and Giovanni's Pizza

**Donors:** Petitti Garden Center, Blowing Oak Bakes, Horizon ATA, Hess' Airbrushing, and several LRA families

**Participants:** BIG FUN Circus, Designer Face Painting & Balloons, Ingitas Balloon Twisting and Face Painting, Magic by Jay, Elie Magic, and Dante House at LRA



## SENIOR CHALLENGE

This year, the senior class was able to continue a 30+ year tradition of heading to West Virginia for Senior Challenge! The students went white water rafting and camped out in the wilderness. Shelby Bennett '23, Student Body President, said, “We got so much closer as a class; everyone was able to laugh with each other and have a good time. I will always remember this trip (especially when we crossed the West Virginia-Ohio border and Mr. Smith had Cole sing “Take Me Home, Country Roads”).



## SOCCER UNDER THE LIGHTS

To end an incredibly busy day, another annual tradition, "Soccer Under the Lights," took place. Our Upper School Coed Soccer Team faced off against Cornerstone Christian Academy. The bleachers were filled with enthusiastic Royals Fans and we ended the evening with a 4-1 win! This event has become the marquee athletic event of the fall! Thank you to our three graduating seniors, Sam Calcut '23, Sebastian “Guppy” Lagasse '23, and Joseph Niu '23, on leading the team this year.

# Campus Highlights

## MODEL UNITED NATIONS

Model United Nations, sponsored by the Cleveland Council of World Affairs (CCWA), has been a popular club at Lake Ridge Academy for years. Students, usually in delegations of two, are assigned a country on one of a number of United Nations committees. In preparation, each delegation must submit a position paper addressing the two issues established for each committee by CCWA. Over the course of the two-day conference, students work toward passing resolutions that address the issues on their committee. Committee chairs choose the top two or three delegations, a standout delegate, and recognize the outstanding position paper. Given that, at Lake Ridge, MUN only meets one day at lunch during each cycle, the students are to be commended for the work they do on their own.

They always represent the school admirably. Our students won several awards, including:

### Honorable Mention - World Health Organization

Abby Bryne '25 and Judy Sun '25

### Honorable Mention - United Nations Development Program

Nora Ostrica '24 and Hailey Shebak '23

### Excellent - Special Committee on Decolonization

Shelby Bennett '23 and Juno Brooks '23

### Superior - United Nations Climate Change Conference

Mankeerat Rataul '23 and Mark Sferra '25



## Jr Model United Nations Conference at John Carroll University

In total we took 32 students representing 18 delegations to the conference. Here are all the awards we took home this year:

### EXCELLENT DELEGATION (2nd place)

Arielle Kluth '28 and Reese Hykes '28

### SUPERIOR DELEGATION (1st place)

Lauren Traul '28 and Rhianna Siscu '27

### GAVEL AWARD for best overall delegate in each committee.

This is the highest honor any delegate can earn. In total we took home not one, not two, but THREE GAVELS!

Arjun Gupta '28    Lena Foltin '28    Braden Oakes '27

In total, Lake Ridge took home HALF the total awards for best delegate, the most by far of any school!

## MIDDLE SCHOOL MOVIE NIGHT

On October 14, our Middle School students and families were invited to a potluck dinner and showing of *Spiderman: No Way Home* on campus. Over 30 families attended and this event was coordinated by Kate Dake (Benjamin '28) and Mona Thompson (Benjamin '30 and Jack '28). "It was a wonderful evening, under the stars, building community in the Middle School." - Tim Unger, Director of the Middle School





# HALL of FAME

On November 18, we welcomed Andrew Milluzzi '08, Teresa Jenkins Fowler, and Ben and Brenda Norton into the Lake Ridge Academy Hall of Fame by celebrating them during an intimate dinner with their families at Veranda Bar and Bistro.





The Wilfred Hemmer Headmaster Award is presented in the name of Wilfred Hemmer and honors a deserving Lake Ridge Academy faculty member (past or present).

The Donald W. Kaatz '70 Alumni Award is presented to alumni for their longstanding dedication to their alma mater and recognizes leaders in our alumni body whose professional accomplishments and service to Lake Ridge Academy are exemplary. The Founders Award honors three people, Scribner Fauver, Herbert Kaatz, and Charles Small, whose vision was to create an independent school to serve West Side students and their families.

## FOUNDERS AWARD Brenda and Ben Norton

Brenda and Ben Norton were inducted into the 2022 Class of the Lake Ridge Academy Hall of Fame. The couple was presented with The Founders Award for their devoted volunteer service and leadership, transformational philanthropic influence in our community, and long standing advocacy of the school.

Ben first became affiliated with Lake Ridge when his brothers, Brad '86 and Brent '89, enrolled in the early '80s. Ben's parents, Ben and Jane Norton, were active parents at Lake Ridge and Brad and Brent were involved in sports and clubs.

In January 2004, Ben and Brenda were invited to attend a LRA Open House by Dave Koethe. Having recently moved to Avon, they realized LRA was only 4.6 miles away so they should check it out. Ben remembered his brothers' positive experiences at LRA also, both academically and athletically. They showed up on a snowy January day with 4-year-old Gretchen, 2-year-old Katie, and 5-month-old Benjy in the middle of a blizzard. They had a great visit, and loved the kindergarten classroom with reading nooks, play kitchen and dress-up corner, the sledding hill (Gretchen's favorite), and Miss Dillon.

Ben and Brenda realized that the small classroom size (12:1) was a perfect fit for Gretchen. They made the decision to enroll her in the class of 2017 (which seemed impossibly far off in 2004!). Katie and Benjy followed in 2007 and 2009.

Ben and Brenda have so many LRA memories over their 18 years there. Lower School French plays, Lower School concerts with Miss Shaw and the kids jumping off the stage to dance around the crowd, Lower School Family Fun Nights, Middle School Musicals with sometimes reluctant kids who nevertheless learned to appreciate how difficult it is to put on a play or musical (forever altering their perspective), the ups and downs of being in a House in Upper School, the many club choices in Upper School (Knitting Club, Board Game Club). In Upper School Gretchen was in the chorus in all of the musicals and Katie had lead or supporting roles in all of the plays and musicals. Academically, Ben and Brenda credit Mr. Harris in the Lower School for setting a higher bar for all three Norton kids, Mr. Pagano in the Middle School for challenging both their reading materials and his expectations in a Socratic classroom (preparing



them for Miss Jenkins in the 9th grade and Dr. Mo) and all of the Upper School teachers as the kids went on their separate academic paths. Special kudos to Keon Gregory for putting Gretchen and Katie on their collegiate paths and coaching Benjy in cross country, a sport he continues at Wittenberg University.

All three Norton kids participated in athletics at LRA in Middle and Upper School. The Norton kids loved competing as Royals thanks to the support of Ms. Haendiges, Mr. Edgar, Mr. Barker, Mr. Smith, Mr. Gregory, Mr. Wright and Ms. Szwagolak.

When asked to write about their relationship to Lake Ridge, the Nortons shared that they became involved right away thanks to Chann Spellman, whose daughter Sophie '17 was in kindergarten with Gretchen. Brenda joined the Auction Committee and the Parents Association and Ben joined the Board, positions they continued throughout their time at LRA and the present. Brenda co-chaired the Auction four times and held many leadership positions in the PA, much of the time as Treasurer, and Ben served as Secretary, Treasurer and Vice-Chair of the Board.

Outside of LRA, Ben is President and CEO of Buckeye Community Bank, Lorain County's only local bank. He has served on the boards of many local nonprofits. Brenda is on the board of The Women's Fund and The Stocker Foundation, serves on two committees at the Community Foundation of Lorain County and is co-chair of the Rock-a-Bye Ball to support Blessing House, Lorain County's children's crisis care center.

They are extremely proud of their children's accomplishments and credit the education they received at LRA for much of their success. Gretchen '17 received her Master's in Nonprofit Organization from CWRU in 2022, Katie '20 is in her third year at Colorado College majoring in anthropology and Benjy '22 is a freshman at Wittenberg University majoring in economics and finance with a minor in mathematics while also running on the cross country and track teams.

Ben and Brenda continue to support Lake Ridge Academy by serving as co-chairs of the 60th Anniversary Campaign Committee. They are honored to receive this award and humbled to share it with those who received it before them, many whom they count as friends.

## DONALD W. KAATZ '70 ALUMNI AWARD Andrew Milluzzi '08

Andrew Jesse Milluzzi '08 was inducted into the 2022 Class of the Lake Ridge Academy Hall of Fame. He was presented with The Donald W. Kaatz '70 Alumni Award for his outstanding alumni leadership, generosity, and lifelong devotion to his alma mater.

Andrew began as a kindergarten student. Over his 13 years as a student at Lake Ridge, Andrew was involved in activities across campus. From founding a campus-wide rocketry club while in middle school to rigging lights and sound for high school drama productions, he seemed to always be on campus. He took pride in the campus community and saw Lake Ridge as an extension of his family.

Andrew always had a passion for engineering and his senior year led LRA to victory at a robotics competition at Case Western Reserve University. After graduating in 2008, Andrew attended Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology where in just four years he earned two bachelor's degrees: Software Engineering and Computer Engineering. He continued his education at the University of Florida where he earned a masters in 2013 and in 2017, a doctorate in Electrical and Computer Engineering.



Today, Andrew works as a Senior Ride Control Systems Engineer for Walt Disney Imagineering, designing attractions for Disney Parks around the world. In addition, he is an avid volunteer and mentor for FIRST Robotics teams, including those at Lake Ridge. While he may be in Florida, Andrew makes it a point to provide feedback and meet with the Lake Ridge FIRST Tech Challenge team as they have quickly become both a regional and state contender.

Lake Ridge Academy holds a special place in Andrew's heart. While he has remained connected with the school since graduating,

he is particularly impressed with the growth of the engineering program and makerspace. Andrew states, "Lake Ridge is a very special place. It offers opportunities and a community that is truly unique. It taught me to think critically and enjoy learning. As a student, I'm not sure I understood how lucky I was to have a caring community, faculty who would go out of their way to ensure my success, and a culture of integrity. I now understand how lucky I was to attend Lake Ridge and I want to make sure those opportunities and more continue for years to come."

*\*Andrew's parents, Frank and Joan Milluzzi, accepted Andrew's award on his behalf.*

## WILFRED HEMMER HEADMASTER AWARD Teresa Jenkins Fowler

Teresa retired in 2020 at the end of her 40th year at Lake Ridge Academy. In her tenure at LRA she wore many hats: English teacher, Department Chair, Theater Director, Mock Trial coach, Student Senate advisor, and Yearbook sponsor, just to name a few. Her favorite role, however, was mother to two lifers, Donald '01 and Thommy '04 Butchko.

Teresa had several accomplishments in her forty years. First and foremost, Teresa was known for her passion for teaching, particularly in teaching students both how to master basic skills and, more importantly, how to think for themselves. Both as teacher and Department Chair, Teresa worked to provide a safe environment where students could take risks, express their opinions, empathize with diverse points of views, and understand how to discern biased, weak sources from persuasive ones. Teresa also worked to pass on to her students a passion for Shakespeare. To accomplish this, each summer for ten years she studied Shakespeare at Oberlin College, and in 2015, she was awarded a prestigious scholarship to study with the actors and directors of the Globe Theater in London. As a result, her Shakespeare in Performance proved to be one of the most popular electives year to year, and the class continues to this day in the capable hands of the talented Kristy Rodriguez.

Teresa has many fond memories outside the classroom as well:

- As Yearbook sponsor she moved the students from paper to more efficient and cost-saving digital submissions.
- As director of the fall play, Teresa exposed students to playwrights ranging from her beloved Shakespeare to Woody Allen. Her last



production, *David and Lisa*, was adjudicated by outside judges who chose the play to be performed at the State Thespian Society.

- That same year, as Mock Trial coach, Teresa had the thrill of watching the LRA Blue Team win States and perform at the National Tournament, but in truth, her biggest rushes came in seeing young Mock Trialers each year blossom to become empowered, poised, critical-thinking advocates.

- As Student Senate sponsor, Teresa is particularly proud of how over the years the organization went from seeing themselves as a mere "Christmas Dance Committee" to becoming a full-fledged governing power that serves as a liaison between the students and the administration. Over the past four decades, the Senate has fostered significant changes in the life of the school and has led their peers into becoming a more responsible and empowered student body.
- As an LRA parent, Teresa's favorite role, she saw her children appreciated, empowered, and at times kicked in the pants to become the successful, good people they are today.

After forty years, Teresa ended her career struggling to learn all new skills in an effort to teach remotely during COVID-19 isolation. However, now fully vaccinated and boosted, Teresa is enjoying retirement, learning French, taking dance lessons, dabbling in theater, and best of all, spending time with her family. You will probably see her from time to time at LRA as the proud grandmother of first-grader Alice Butchko, which promises to be her most exciting role yet!

THE LAKE RIDGE ACADEMY

# CASINO ROYALE

AUCTION GALA



Lake Ridge Academy's Auction Gala is a longstanding tradition that dates back to the school's earliest days. Parents, alumni, faculty, staff, and friends of the school gather each year to celebrate our students and faculty.

The 2022 Lake Ridge Academy Casino Royale, sponsored by the Obid Family, was a memorable evening of casino games, socializing with friends, and supporting the school by participating in the live & silent auctions, raffles, games, and more!

Auction Co-Chairs Ashley Doolos, Michael Sertich '01, Anca Obid, and the auction committee planned an amazing experience for guests that began the moment they arrived at the Ritz-Carlton Cleveland. Upon arrival, guests were greeted by student volunteers and entered the cocktail reception space. Guests mingled and sipped the signature cocktail, "The Wickens," while playing casino games and taking photos on the step and repeat, and had the opportunity to roll dice to win a 2023 Porsche! After the cocktail reception, guests entered the ballroom and were greeted by beautiful floral arrangements generously donated by Jennifer Kegyes, and casino-themed centerpieces. Throughout the night, guests had the opportunity to bid on incredible packages that ultimately supported the school as well as support our Gift from the Heart Project: an entrepreneurship certificate program, information literacy and reading for pleasure as well as an on-campus coffee shop and spirit store.

This memorable evening concluded with guests enjoying the James Bond theme afterparty and the party did not end until after 2:00 AM! Thank you again to our wonderful sponsors, volunteers, and guests who made this event an incredible success.





# Advancement

## GIFT FROM THE HEART

### Entrepreneurship Certificate Program, Information Literacy & Reading for Pleasure, and a Coffee Shop/Spirit Store

#### Entrepreneurship Certificate Program

Donald Bittala, a Lake Ridge Academy faculty member, is currently working on building the Institute for Business and Entrepreneurship with the generous support of teams of faculty, staff, alumni, and students from across the spectrum of Lake Ridge Academy. The program will take on the honor of being the Upper School's fifth Center of Excellence. Upper School students will have the opportunity to elect to join the institute through an application process at a later date. The program will have four key aspects including:



1

#### Real-world applications

All students working through this program will learn practical skills they can take into the world and apply.

2

#### Extra push for college

We will help students earn college credit and be college ready throughout this program.

3

#### One Lake Ridge

While this is an Upper School program, our goal is to make connections between all three divisions, thus allowing for cross-grade learning. We also see this program reaching students of all backgrounds, not just the business student but also the art major, science aficionado, or musical virtuoso!

4

#### Connecting people

Businesses don't grow in a vacuum nor do our students! We will build internships and networking opportunities into this program so that students graduate with a full resume and mentor list that can help them as they grow their businesses or move on in the professional world.



#### Information Literacy & Reading for Pleasure

The Upper School Library will be reenvisioned and will be focused on comfortable, flexible seating to encourage students to read during their free periods and downtime. Funds will be used to curate books for the Middle and Upper Schools. Funds will also be used to purchase digital licenses for periodicals, journals, and local and national news sources such as the *Wall Street Journal* and *The Economist*.

#### The Lake Ridge Academy Spirit Store and Coffee Shop

We have two amazing opportunities coming to campus during the 2023-24 school year. The Coffee Shop and Spirit Shop will be a heavy focus this first year of our program as we perfect these businesses, and moving forward, our Institute will be responsible for managing these on-campus businesses. Both businesses will be located within the CRC (Community Resource Center). Construction will begin over the summer.

The **Chloe Geiselman Scholarship Fund** was established in 1992 for Lower School students by Chris Geiselman and Greta Leshner in memory of their daughter, Chloe. It is an endowed scholarship which means that it supports students in perpetuity. It is unique as it is currently our only Lower School scholarship and each year, our FIT & Scholarship Committee meets to determine the recipient of the scholarship. Chloe's siblings, **Graham '02** and **Clare '06**, are both Lake Ridge lifers.





# School News

## THANKSGIVING GAMES

On November 25, our Lake Ridge Academy Alumni faced off against our current LRA basketball team. It was a wonderful afternoon, filled with memories, cheering from the sidelines, and an opportunity to connect our alumni basketball players with our current players. Thank you to all who attended!

**Alumni Players:**

Kusha Tavakoli '02, Rob Temkiewicz '02, Mark Hancock '05, Noah Helton '16, Niko Ortiz '16, Andrew Szabo '17, Bryce Leroy '18, Matt South '20, Ryan Rosu '20, Ted DeMarco '22, Anthony Kubec '22



# School News

## ELF THE MUSICAL

If the best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all to hear, then Lake Ridge Academy had to be the happiest place in Northeast Ohio with December's mainstage theater production of *Elf The Musical*.

The story of Buddy the Elf, a human raised by Santa's elves after he crawled into Santa's bag as a baby, follows him as an adult looking for his long-lost family in NYC—his father, Walter (Jacob Robertson '24), Emily (Natalie McMahon '23), and Michael (Sabrina Wisniewski '24). His search for belonging combines pratfalls and quips with a glimmer of romance when he meets Jovie (Maya Al-Haddad '23). A company of 23 Upper School students played the adult company of NYC shoppers, workers, and sightseers, while 27 Lower School students set the scene as North Pole elves and children in Central Park. Thirty-two Upper School students contributed to the technical aspects of the show. A grand total of 83 students delivered a large, insanely joyful production.

For Director of Theatre Kristy Rodriguez, this production was certainly the right place, the right time choice. "This school year marks the first for the class of '23 without mitigation measures in the Upper School," she says. "I can't think of a better way to celebrate than to come together with Lower Schoolers to produce a show about the joy of believing in humanity and belonging."





## HOLIDAY PROJECT

Holiday Project is a yearly tradition that dates back more than 30 years. This important project is especially special as it gives students K-12 a chance to work together while supporting Christ Lutheran Church and its food pantry. The Lower School is responsible for collecting coins and food while the Middle School students collect coins and jackets. Coins collected were used to purchase gift cards for families to use at a local grocery store. The Upper School is responsible for collecting cans, which has been a friendly house competition dubbed "Can Wars." This year, the Upper School collected over 15,000 cans!

Lake Ridge packed three large food boxes for each family, and the remainder of the cans stocked the pantry's shelves. Middle School students also purchased and wrapped gifts for children. We were able to support 37 families and 83 children this year.

On the Friday before winter break, the school was abuzz with energy as the Middle Schoolers wrapped presents. Upper School and Lower School students traveled to different stations of food sorting/packing, face painting, dancing, singing, crafts, and card making for residents of O'Neill Healthcare. It's an important way for our Lake Ridge community to give back, especially around the holidays.





# North Star

The North Star is a fixed point in the sky around which all other stars revolve. It keeps its place, holding steady, while everything else in the universe moves in relation to it. Throughout recorded history, people have used the North Star for navigation, relying on its steadfastness to guide journeys and help them return home. This powerful image has provided a basis for our school-wide work for the last year, as we reaffirm the guiding lights of Lake Ridge Academy. Through a process that engaged employees, families, students, and the larger community, we have created a North Star document that clearly articulates what sets Lake Ridge apart as the premier K-12 school on the West Side of Cleveland.



## The Process

Just over a year ago, work on this initiative began, bringing together input from across LRA to craft a cohesive statement that would guide our work into the future. Renowned author and educational consultant, Grant Lichtman, was retained to engage the varied constituencies in a process designed to bring clarity to what makes Lake Ridge Academy remarkable. This kicked off with a full-day workshop in February of 2022 where we collaborated to “Dream Big!” The perspectives and ideas from this day were collected, reviewed, and the first draft of our North Star document was brought to life.

Over the summer of 2022, the language was tested and refined. Before returning to prepare for the launch of a new school year in August, a group of over 25 staff members convened for the Be the Change institute, a two-day experience during which projects that embody the ideals of the draft North Star were developed, prototyped, and presented. Some examples of the transformational ideas that came to life that week are a re-imagined House system that develops over a child’s K-12 experience, a new look at responsive academic feedback through un-grading practices, an easy access resource library for students seeking to better understand their mental health, and a renewed commitment to our natural world curriculum including Forest Friday experiences to bring learning outside in intentional ways. Many of the projects that first were explored during the Be the Change institute have continued to evolve through this school year and have set foundations for future work across the school.

As the 2022-2023 school year launched, the language of the Elements of Our North Star became more solid. More people reviewed it and saw how it is realized in every aspect of life at Lake Ridge. Individuals from across the community joined teams to dive deep into each of the three major elements. These teams have been engaging all year to find examples, within LRA and beyond, of high-quality implementation of these concepts. Each team designed a workshop for the faculty and staff to continue developing a shared vision of these ideals and the specific behaviors that bring them to life. These workshops are the next steps in the ongoing work of aligning our shared work to this guiding North Star.

## Elements of Our North Star

While each of the elements of our North Star represents one aspect of an extraordinary K-12 school experience, it is in their intersection that the true power of a Lake Ridge Academy education resides. No aspect of this work takes place in isolation and, while each element may look different across a child’s developmental trajectory, they are relevant throughout a lifetime. The overarching elements – Leading with Relationships, Exceptional Educational Outcomes, Wellness and Belonging – are supported by language that intentionally grounds the ideas in practice. Together, this language reflects the complexity of these concepts.

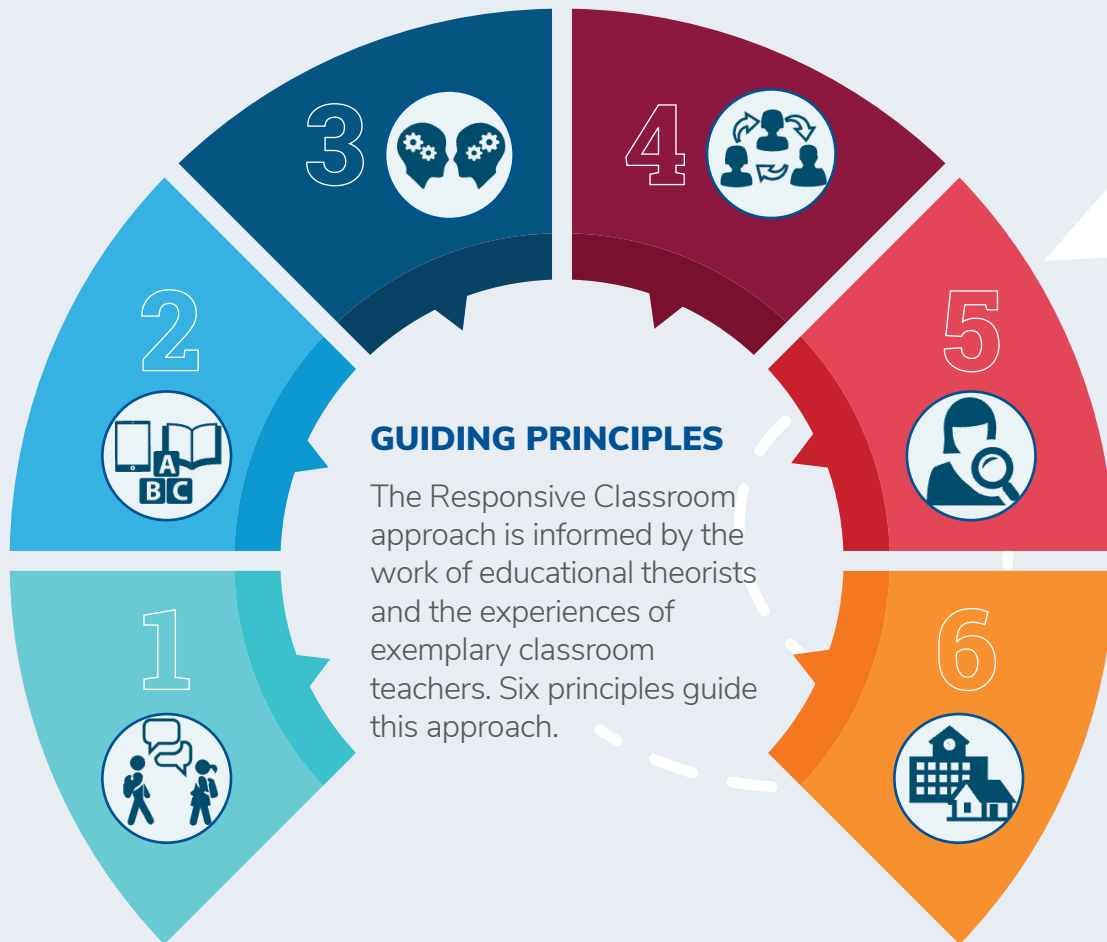
**Leading with Relationships** emphasizes the power of our community to craft meaningful and abiding relationships. This component strives to articulate the range of relationships a Lake Ridge Academy community member engages in. They include developing friendships, mentorships, and teams with other students to the power of a relationship with the environment as students enjoy 93 acres of hands-on learning. Building positive and varied relationships equips students to navigate a future where they see themselves in the context of a complex world.

**Exceptional Educational Outcomes** upholds Lake Ridge Academy’s commitment to assuring that students have the knowledge and skills to find success in their future endeavors. This commitment to providing learning experiences of the highest quality while attending to each child’s learning journey and the context of the changing world works in partnership with the other elements. These high academic standards provide a foundation upon which students soar.

**Wellness and Belonging** is an element of our North Star that articulates Lake Ridge Academy’s commitment to assuring that everyone is seen as an individual. The unique strengths, perspectives, and experiences brought to the community add to the overall richness of everyone’s experience. This element also emphasizes holistic well-being as an important aspect of a thriving school community.

Together these three elements guide practice at every level of the organization, providing a sense of clarity and cohesion as Lake Ridge Academy prepares for the next 60 years!

## RESPONSIVE CLASSROOM



### Principle 1

Teaching social and emotional skills is as important as teaching academic content.



### Principle 2

How we teach is as important as what we teach.



### Principle 3

Great cognitive growth occurs through social interaction



### Principle 4

How we work together as adults to create a safe, joyful, and inclusive school environment is as important as our individual contribution or competence.



### Principle 5

What we know and believe about our students – individually, culturally, developmentally – informs our expectations, reactions, and attitudes about those students.



### Principle 6

Partnering with families – knowing them and valuing their contributions – is as important as knowing the children we teach.

# MIND, BRAIN, & EDUCATION

## Science Introduced Through Neuroteach

The Lower and Middle School faculty recently completed division-specific training courses in Responsive Classroom. From Responsive Classroom, the approach is described as a set of well-designed practices intended to create safe, joyful, and engaging classrooms and school communities. The emphasis is on helping students develop their academic, social, and emotional skills in a learning environment that is developmentally responsive to their strengths and needs.

Moreover, the Core Belief of Responsive Classroom is: In order to be successful in and out of school, students need to learn a set of social and emotional competencies – cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control – and a set of academic competencies – academic mindset, perseverance, learning strategies, and academic behaviors.

The Responsive Classroom approach has been embraced by the Lower School for more than twenty years. This expansion into the Middle School presents unprecedented opportunities to our school community. It is the largest commitment of professional development time and funding in years and gives our faculty a unified lens through which to view curriculum, instruction, community, and most importantly, our students.

Faculty spent four days working by division with a facilitator to explore the approach and the many resources provided by Responsive Classroom. Notably, the sessions themselves were taught using the very techniques being championed, so faculty found themselves engaging in Meetings, Interactive Learning Structures, Brain Breaks, and Energizers. These were all designed to support their learning and promote connections within the faculty community. This served as a wonderful opportunity to “learn it by living it,” allowing teachers to more authentically translate their learning into their classrooms.

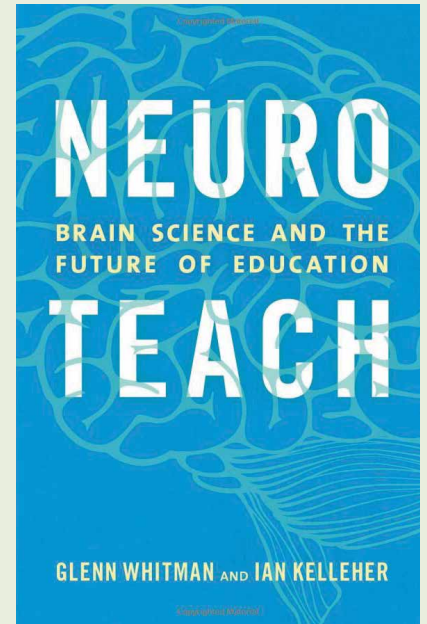
For many Lower School faculty, this was an energizing refresher to Responsive Classroom techniques. For some, it was a brand-new experience. For Middle School faculty, this was an exciting opportunity to create a common language and experiences that will support student learning and connection in all areas. For all faculty who participated in the training, this was the next step in our collective growth, to the benefit of our students as we find ways to implement what we learned.

For more information, visit  
<https://www.responsiveclassroom.org/>

United with a purpose of creating shared understandings and a common teaching language, the Upper School faculty began their journey of exploring the latest in mind, brain, and education science by reading *Neuroteach* last summer. This book, written by fellow independent school teachers, presents research in cognitive psychology (mind), neuroscience (brain), and pedagogy (education) in ways that are accessible to teachers, providing a guide

to deploy more research-informed strategies to teach and assess students. The Upper School faculty spent an entire day in August, several fall semester faculty meetings, and other professional development days to review and reflect on how they leverage these best practices to better serve students. The research and strategies reach all disciplines, and it has created pathways for faculty to have informed conversations about student learning.

Mrs. Russell has leaned into the Mind, Brain, and Education approach and has adopted an Ungrading approach to her US History and AP Psychology classes. During the first semester, students completed a variety of assignments and assessments, all with a focus on narrative feedback versus a numeric or letter grade. Students measured their knowledge of course objectives at the start of each unit and again when the unit ended. Retakes and rewrites were built into class time in order to improve all students' performance. Rubrics marked by peers, Mrs. Russell and the students themselves helped identify areas of achievement and needs for further growth. Students were continuously encouraged to view mistakes as necessary for growth and goal-setting. Mrs. Russell met with each student in mini-conferences 2-3 times during the course of the semester. In December, all students engaged in portfolio construction that highlighted each individual's progress, achievement, and areas of need. Portfolios were self-assessed by each student and Mrs. Russell and then discussed in conferences during class time and exam week. Only then was a letter grade mutually determined and agreed upon. Mrs. Russell is extremely proud of her students' growth in skills and knowledge. She looks forward to continuing with this research-based and evidence-based approach to teaching second semester!



# Faculty and Alumni Updates

## Faculty Updates:

### Megan (Esch) Santiago '09

Megan married her husband, Jon, on October 21, and then went on an amazing honeymoon to Saint Lucia!

### Michelle (Waltz) Williams

Michelle got married on October 9, and they traveled to Medellín, Colombia over winter break!

### Valerie Grossman

Valerie is excited to have the opportunity to exhibit one of her own pieces at the National Council on Education of Ceramic Arts in March. The show is curated by the Cleveland Institute of Art with other alumni and faculty.

### Middle School Faculty

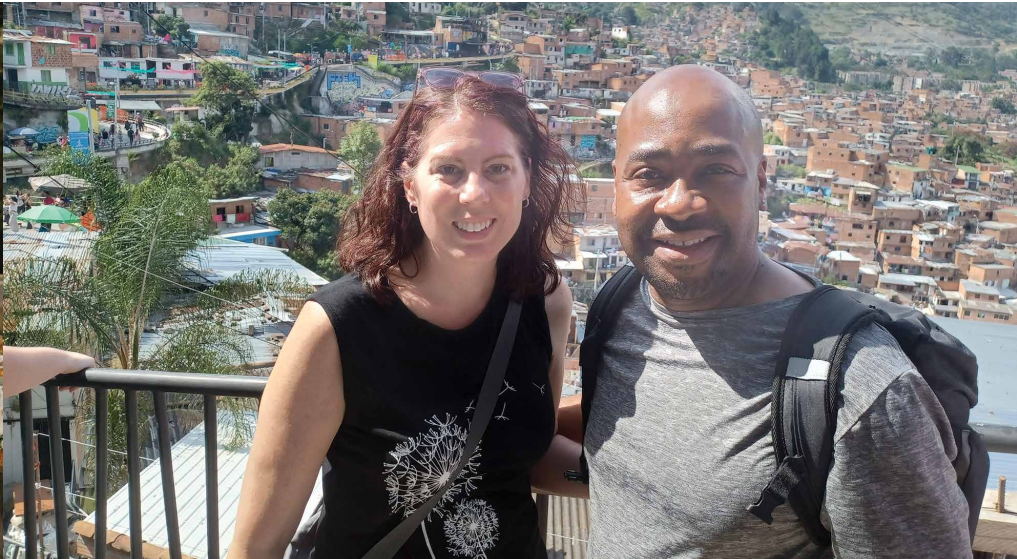
Middle School Faculty volunteered their time in January and built beds for a local non-profit organization named Good Knights. It was a wonderful opportunity to give back to the community in Lorain County.



Megan '09 and Jon Santiago



The Williams Couple



Michelle and her new husband on vacation in Colombia.



Middle school faculty members at Good Knights.







Kwame Anku '90 receiving his award



Kouri Akagi '07 speaking to our Lower School students last fall

## Alumni Updates:

The LRA **Class of 1973** is celebrating its 50th reunion on September 2-3, 2023. The Class of 1973 is inviting alumni from the Classes of 1970 through 1976 to join us for a picnic lunch on Sunday, September 3rd. If you are interested in attending, please email us for details at: LRAClassOf1973@gmail.com. We hope you can join us!

### Gay Zoldesy '90

Gay has been busy over the past few years and has been recognized for her incredible work. In 2020, she received the ACTFL / Cengage Postsecondary Award for Excellence in Foreign Language Instruction Using Technology with IALLT. In 2021, she received the Ole and Lucy Flaatt Distinguished Teaching Award at Concordia College. In 2022, she was named a "chevalier" (a knight) of the Ordre des Palmes académiques by the French government as well as receiving the Rueul and Alma Wijje Distinguished Professorship Award at Concordia College.

**Kwame Anku '90** received the "Entrepreneur of 2022" award by the Sacramento Chamber of Commerce. It was the first time in the 128-year history of the organization that the award has ever been given. Kwame is the CEO and Chairman of the Black Star Fund, an early-stage innovation fund.

**Andrew Milluzzi '08** works for the Imagineering Department at Walt Disney. Within this role, he has the responsibility for designing roller coasters as well as working with other divisions of Disney. His work has even been featured in Magic of Disney's Animal Kingdom, a show on Disney+.

### Kouri Akagi '07

Kouri is a Brigade Psychologist for the U.S. Army and is currently stationed in Europe. In October, Kouri walked the halls of Lake Ridge Academy, reminiscing about his time here, and even popped into a few classes and the Lower School Assembly to speak!

## In Memory

### Nan Gregory, 93,

passed away on September 29, 2022. Nan was an instrumental part of Lake Ridge Academy and wore many hats



throughout her time at Lake Ridge. She was the mother of Steve '72, a trustee on the Board of Directors, the Mothers Association President, and a Leadership Circle member. She and her husband, George Gregory, were not only incredibly philanthropic but also spent countless hours as volunteers to ensure Lake Ridge continued to grow and thrive.

Nan was an avid sailor and shared her love of the sport by starting the Vermilion Boat Club Jr. Sailing Program in college, founding the Off-Shore Sailing and Boat Brokerage, and participating as a lifetime member of the Cleveland Yachting Club. In addition to the many ways that Nan supported Lake Ridge, she was the past President of the Fairview Park Hospital Auxiliary Board as well as the Erie Nature Center Women's Board. Nan was a founding member of Main Street Vermilion and actively fundraised for the betterment of her community.

# In Memory

## Christine Weiss Pfeil



**Christine Weiss Pfeil, 70**, of Rocky River, OH ended her battle with cancer at AMES Family Hospice on February 10th, 2023. Born to Betty and Richard Weiss in Fairview, OH in '52, Chris spent her youth climbing trees, practicing bird calls ("who-cooks-for-you, who-cooks-for-you-all"), and identifying plants in the wild ravine next to her home. Graduating with honors from the inaugural class of Lake Ridge Academy ('70), she obtained her BA in Biology from Sweet Briar College where she was elected to Phi Beta Kappa ('74), and then completed coursework for her Masters in Environmental Studies at the University of Michigan ('77). She and her twin sister, Cathy, spent their junior year abroad at St. Andrews in Scotland where they were both members of the rifle team. In 1980, she wed David Pfeil (deceased '97) at the Rocky River United Methodist Church.

Her early childhood penchant for digging in the dirt fostered a lifelong curiosity about non-human neighbors. With playful and captivating delivery, she shared her sense of wonder through a 40+ year career in environmental education, inviting generations to get to

know and value their backyard wildlife, water and weather systems, native history, and the connectedness of our shared ecosystems (Cleveland Metroparks, Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Lake Erie Nature and Science Center). Her dedication to this mission extended outside the classroom to gathering specimens for the CMNH collections, causing quite the gamble as to whether the family freezer would yield ice cream, or frozen finches. When she wasn't dispelling rumors about snake scales being slimy (more similar to a basketball actually), or converting her audience's recoil from the opossum into amazement (they are North America's ONLY marsupial, and mammal with the most teeth - can you guess how many?) she contributed her time and talents through volunteer efforts.

Serving as President of the CMNH Women's Committee, sitting on the Board at Lake Ridge Academy, leading the LRA Parent Association, participating in the Rocky River Green Team, and most recently acting as Treasurer for the Cleveland Yachting Club Wet Hens group, her impact on many local institutions and the community at large remains vast. As the lead of Lake Ridge Academy's Auction Committee, she ensured that a single-humped Dromedary camel native to North Africa (not a two-humped Bactrian camel native to Asia) showed up to the Egyptian themed auction. She modeled how small, sustainable actions over time add up to big, valuable outcomes, as evidenced by decades of cannibalizing cereal boxes for the 'Box Tops for Education' fundraising program which, in part, earned her LRA's Alumni Hall of Fame Award. Normal people might join a volunteer beach clean up, or tree planting event, but Chris unflinchingly used her DIY energy to provide a solution for a localized need, and established her own annual nature volunteering opportunity at Elmwood Park. Gathering friends, neighbors, colleagues, and eventually turning it over to Rocky River High School's biology class, Chris developed a yearly Garlic Mustard Pull which successfully eradicated the invasive

species that is both inedible to local fauna, and lastingly destructive of the soil's pH.

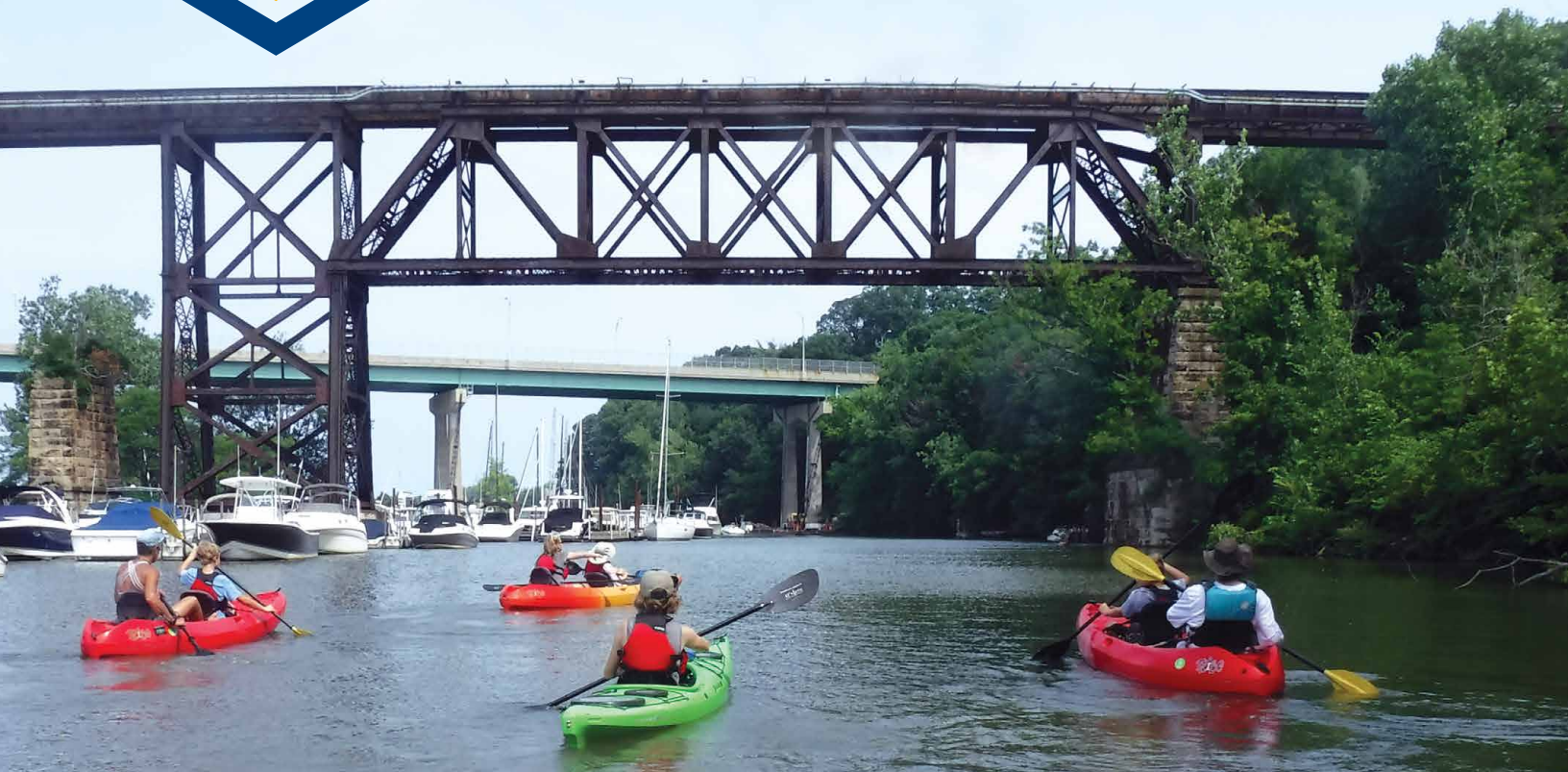
That's nothing to say of the many shelter dogs she adopted, cats she rehomed from the woods, injured animals she rescued to rehab (including a 40lb snapping turtle), marksmanship awards won, innumerable sailing trophies earned, and deep friendships made throughout her 70 year journey. She was the kind of person who could fix everything (even installing her own hot water heater), habitually bought display-sized boxes of Malley's Chocolate to share, and traveled everywhere with a frisbee, just in case. She fit comfortably into any conversation, and contributed her all to each encounter. As her mother regularly recounts, 'Chris starts conversations with strangers in elevators... who does that?' Whether known as the skipper of Idleweiss, Baron and Ginger's person, or the neighbor who could support any animal rescue mission, Chris's quick wit, encyclopedic knowledge, generosity and capability will be sorely missed. She is survived by her children, Lee (Coreen Weintraub) Pfeil, and Carrie (Adam Taylor) Pfeil of Oakland, CA, her mother Betty Weiss of Westlake, OH, and sisters Cathy Thompson of Winchester, VA, and Wendy (Gilbert) Smith of Durham, NC. She'll be missed by dear nieces, in-laws, and many close cousins once and twice removed.

Chris's legacy can be celebrated through sustainable behavior change: reduce consumption of plastic, recycle, turn off the lights when the room is empty, lower the thermostat overnight during winter, employ organic lawn care companies, eat less, or no meat, plant landscaping that supports native biodiversity, participate in the local Green Team, or find your own small, sustainable action that leads to big outcomes. Memorial donations may be made to the Lake Erie Nature and Science Center. Details of her summer celebration of life will be posted at [ChrisPfeil.com](http://ChrisPfeil.com). Think of her when the cardinal sings its first song of spring.



# JOIN US! JUNE 5 – JULY 14

## 2023 SUMMER PROGRAMS



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**SAVE THE DATE!  
JUNE 5TH**



**LAKE RIDGE ACADEMY**

**GOLF  
OUTING**



***NEW LOCATION! Red Tail Golf Club***

4400 Lear Nagle Road / Avon, OH 44011

11:00 a.m. - Registration

1:00 p.m. - Shotgun start

For sponsorship and tickets  
please scan the QR code.

