



# The Hiland Hall School

## NEWSLETTER

Fall 2020

Dear Friends,

This fall we have been open for on-site education Monday through Thursday with distance learning on Friday, all the while abiding by pretty rigorous protocols for health and safety. This includes mandatory mask wearing, lots of hand washing, sanitizing and maintaining social distance. The children have been marvelous in maintaining these standards while cheerfully going about their business of learning. We have also been spending a lot of time outdoors. It's been interesting to listen to teachers reflect on how making these changes to routine and curriculum may well carry forward beyond the pandemic.

Our Outdoor Classroom project is still going strong! And, it has taken some thoughtful turns. After an initial push to get students outside as much as possible, the facilities committee, in concert with teachers, realized that we should pause and take time for thorough planning in creating a learning space that will serve the school for years to come. We are able to work outside while this planning happens thanks to the generous lending of a BIG tent by friends of our school. We have had great success with early fundraising efforts and may need to do more, but for now we are healthy, productive and using this unique challenge to make our future strong.

- Meg Cottam, Director



Big tent installation crew



Mariposa from North Group Spanish study

### Staff News

Last spring, after 15 years, we said goodbye to Nancy Nardone, our part time teacher, former parent and valued colleague. Nancy is devoting all her energies to her pottery business.

We feel fortunate to welcome Peg Howes to our teaching staff. Peg is no stranger to our school or teaching philosophy. Here is some of how Peg describes herself.

*As a Bennington College student, I thought I would be an anthropologist and spent time with indigenous people in the Andes of Colombia and Ecuador. I decided this was not my path, but the anthropologist's skills of observation served me well in my life as a teacher. My first serious adult job was as director of an adult education program. I learned a lot through hard experience. One day a friend persuaded me to take a graduate course at Prospect School Center for Teaching and Learning. This was a watershed moment in my life. I am delighted to be joining the Hiland Hall learning community. It feels a bit like coming home.*





**Middle School News from Brennan**

In addition to the End of Day Story (*Fever, 1793*) which I read aloud, Middle School is reading *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor as our first Book Club reader. This title deals with racism in 1930s Mississippi, as it is set during the Great Depression and Jim Crow era. My goal with the Book Club is to foster conversation on interesting and important topics. I mentioned to students before we began that I am alright with them using audio books if they find the Book Club title challenging, as we do have a wide range of reading levels in the class. We discussed as a group how this book can be tricky to read, due to dialect, themes, and sentence structure. For students wishing to listen or read along with somebody, I suggested using the videos a woman named [Morgan Myers](#) shares via YouTube. Morgan does a good job of stopping at words she doesn't know and looking them up, which illustrates how I'd like students to address the "word of the day" portion of their Current Event and Reading Reflection homework. I also think she provides a presence and voice that is important for our students to hear.

**Self Portraits**



Skylar, age 9



Marlo, age 11



Trace, age 10



Carter, age 9



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## Classroom notes from Quena

What a beautiful fall we are having. At school we have been ever more aware of the changes in the season as we are outdoors much more frequently than before! We are outdoors for Activity Time, snack, lunch, and stretching, and are regularly having lessons outdoors under the tent. The Elementary Group has also begun our place based land stewardship strand which I plan to continue throughout this year. Last week I introduced “Sit Spots” to the group, a core nature connection routine where each child selects a place in our outdoor space where they can return to regularly to observe and experience the natural world. The Wilderness Awareness School’s *Coyote’s Guide to Connecting with Nature*, defines Sit Spots as the “one place in the natural world that you visit all the time and get to know as your best friend. Let this be a place where you learn to sit still-alone, often, and quietly-before you playfully explore beyond.”

We have also been “playfully exploring beyond” and taking hikes along the Robert Frost trail adjacent to our property. We’ve identified field, forest, and wetlands habitats, discussed methods for identifying trees by their leaf shapes, kept a running log of signs of fall, and found a queen ant. We are looking forward to more afternoons spent honing our natural science skills outdoors!



students working in the back field



*“This is a map of the world. The prehistoric world.”*

Writing and Drawing – Malcolm, age 6

*“When I was in my sitting spot I heard bees buzzing. I also possibly heard something stepping. I heard birds chirping and honking like a seagull...”*

Friday reflection by Matthew, age 10



On the Robert Frost Trail



Painting by Zoë, age 11



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## End of Year and Graduation 2020

Despite COVID-19 restrictions, teachers creatively and positively made our end of year celebration and graduation ceremonies uplifting and memorable.

Families gathered at *Hathaway's Drive-In Theatre* for a socially distanced big screen movie highlighting our year of learning.



And in July, family members of seniors joined together in our back field to honor our 2020 graduates. We are so grateful for the extraordinary efforts of a family group member whose expertise in video editing and sound systems helped to make each of these special events a great success.



The big screen



Family group members

## Graduation speech highlights

*I know I always say this, but I also always mean it. It feels so good to be here, again, looking at you and remembering all the other times. Probably you are tired of hearing how different everything is, because we all know it is, right? And I know it looks different, but in the fundamentals this event is not different. We are here as a community to pause for a moment to honor the four students who are graduating, and to think for a bit about the meaning of what they have accomplished, and perhaps for you to think about what you might accomplish as well. – Jessica*



'Instead of a handshake' awarding of diplomas

## More from our graduates

*This was not the end to the year I wanted or expected. I don't think any of us wanted the school year to end with a major pandemic stopping us from seeing, hugging, being with each other. I want to thank my friends for putting up with my quirky weirdness not just during quarantine but since I met you. And that is why when I think of Hiland Hall, I think of Friends, Family and Home... - Grace Barber*

*Now that I'm heading into high school, I think that Hiland Hall was a great place for me to reach out and grab hold of some of my potentials... Our teachers study us, and learn how to teach us in a way that fits us best.... - Gianna Faltskog*

*I've been at Hiland Hall for nine years, so there are a lot of things I could talk about. I could talk about all of my Independent Studies, and everything I've learned from them, or I could talk about my memories from North Group, and what I took with me from those experiences, or I could talk about all the funny and inspiring things that happen in Middle School every day. But I want to talk about the three words that I think about when I think about my time at Hiland Hall. ...support...discovery...a sense of independence... - Lily Hutcheson*

*My favorite part of Hiland Hall was being able to work, learn, and play with students of all ages both during the school day and (outside)... - Kelly Taylor*



Gianna, Grace, Kelly and Lily

## RAFFLE 2020

Local artist and ceramic sculptor extraordinaire, **Stanley Rosen**, has donated a piece for our raffle! You can find out more and buy tickets (sales are limited to 100) on our website – [hilandhallschool.org](http://hilandhallschool.org). All tickets sales will help to defray costs related to our COVID-19 safety precautions.