

# The OWL

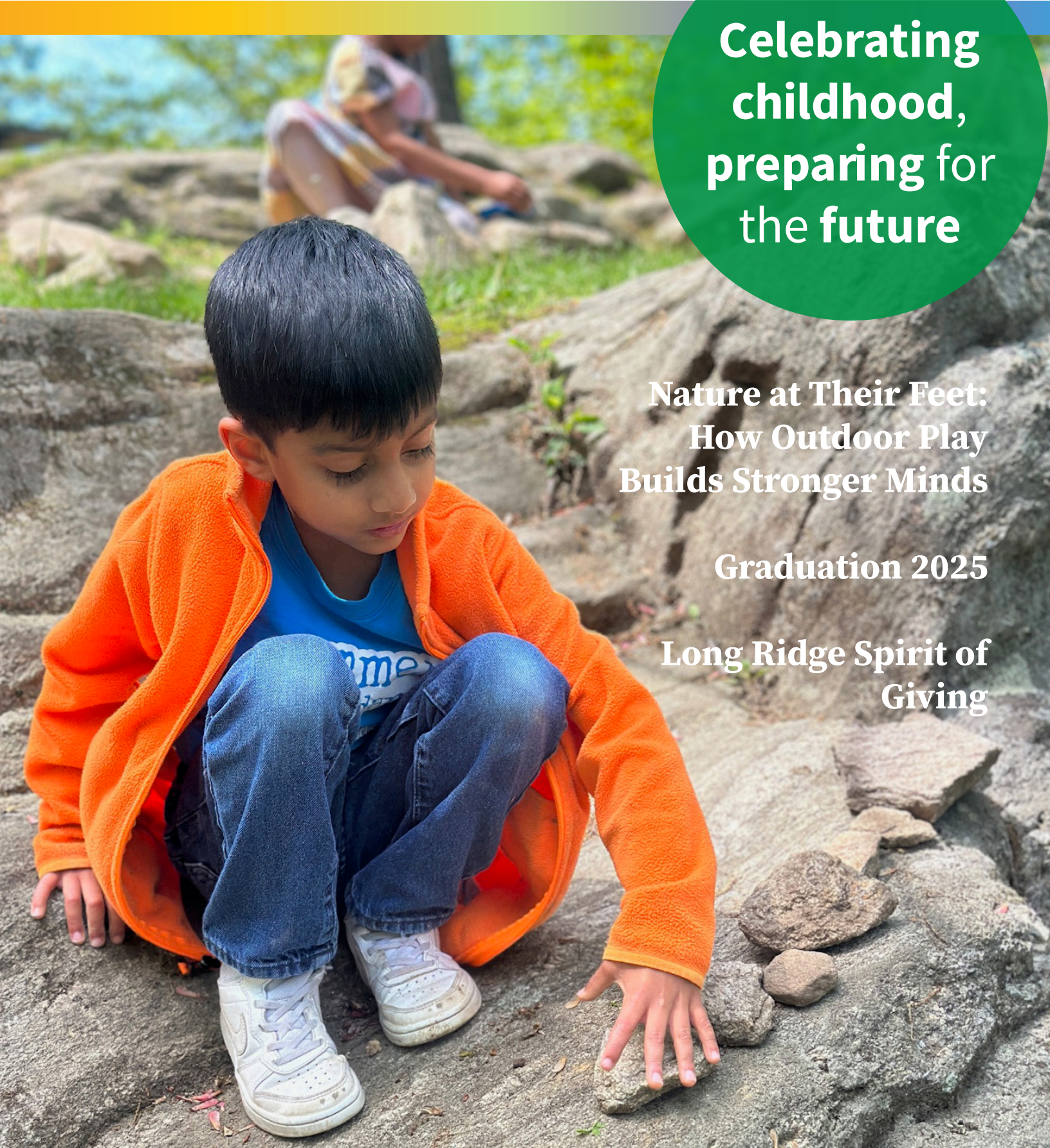
2024–2025 School Magazine & Annual Report

**Celebrating  
childhood,  
preparing for  
the future**

**Nature at Their Feet:  
How Outdoor Play  
Builds Stronger Minds**

**Graduation 2025**

**Long Ridge Spirit of  
Giving**





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Contents

- 1 Letter from the Head of School
- 3 Why The Long Ridge School
- 4 Letter from the President of the Board
- 5 Board of Trustees, 2024–2025
- 6 Class of 2025
- 12 Nature at Their Feet: How Outdoor Play Builds Stronger Minds
- 14 K-1 Explores the Outdoors
- 16 Play, Curiosity, and the Great Outdoors: Lucia Wiggers’ ‘11 Memories
- 17 Long Ridge Brothers Summit Mt. Kilimanjaro
- 18 Roots in Imagination, a Career in Conservation
- 19 Exploring the World: Nadia Kucher’s Journey from Long Ridge to Medical School
- 20 From Long Ridge to the Stage: A Shared Journey in Sound
- 24 Starting Fresh: Developing Holistic Math Learners
- 25 K-1 Collaboration with Artist in Residence Kit Hughes
- 26 Parents Group
- 28 Thank You to Our Volunteers
- 30 Financial Breakdown
- 31 Thank You to Our Donors
- 33 Spring Celebration Party & Auction
- 36 The Power of Giving
- 38 Remembering Susan Seiler
- 39 Faculty and Staff News
- 40 Alumni News
- 41 Class Notes
- 45 Stay Connected

Letter from the Head of School

Dear Long Ridge Community,

Each fall, as the leaves turn and our campus glows in gold and amber, I’m reminded of how naturally the outdoors is woven into who we are—into our learning, our values, and our community. At Long Ridge, time outdoors isn’t an add-on to learning—it’s part of who we are.

In this issue of The Owl, we celebrate that connection—the way curiosity grows when feet are muddy, minds are open, and hearts are full of wonder. You’ll read how our K–1 students become scientists, artists, and storytellers during afternoons in the woods. You’ll see how outdoor play literally builds stronger minds in Nature at Their Feet, and how those early experiences continue to shape our alumni—from Nadia’s curiosity that carried her to medical school, to Lucia’s work in sustainability and climate advocacy, to Zoe’s career in wildlife conservation.

We also honor the life and legacy of beloved teacher Susan Seiler, who embodied the warmth, patience, and deep respect for childhood that define Long Ridge. Her presence lives on in every song sung, every story shared, and every child who feels safe and loved in our classrooms.

Across these pages, you’ll find that while times change, our values remain steady: curiosity, creativity, kindness, and a sense of belonging—to each other and to the natural world around us. Whether on stage, in the lab, or among the trees, our students and alumni remind us that learning is most powerful when it’s rooted in joy.

With gratitude,  
**Carissa Lewis**



**Curiosity grows when feet are muddy, minds are open, and hearts are full of wonder.**





# WhyThe Long Ridge School

At The Long Ridge School, our teachers, parents, and children collaborate to develop a lifelong love of learning in our students. The only independent school in the region focused exclusively on early childhood and elementary education, our students excel through inquiry-based, personalized learning in a joyful, safe environment. Long Ridge's expansive, 14-acre wooded campus is home to a close-knit, inclusive community, where students of all backgrounds take their first steps toward becoming compassionate global citizens. Through an always-evolving progressive approach, our teachers nurture each student's strengths and interests, build confidence and leadership skills, and foster academic, social, and emotional development—and future success.

## Statement of Purpose

The Long Ridge School is a diverse community of learners where children are respected as individuals with innate curiosity. We believe children flourish in a small, caring, and academically challenging environment where learning is an active and joyful experience. We help children develop the skills, motivation, and values to become successful students, responsible people, and lifelong learners.

## We Believe

**Children** should be **valued** for their **uniqueness, ideas,** and **talents.**

**Children** achieve their **highest potential** in a **challenging** academic **environment** that **addresses** each child's **social** and **emotional** **development.**

**Children** learn in **different ways** and at **different rates.**

**Children** should be **active participants** in their own **learning;** we **encourage** **children** to **explore,** **experience,** and **investigate** as part of the educational process.

The **natural range** of **abilities** and levels of **development** typical of **young children** are **best accommodated** in **multi-age groups.**

**Children** learn best in an **engaging** **environment** where **themes** are **relevant** and **meaningful.**

**Interdisciplinary studies** promote a **deep understanding** and **mastery** of the **skills** and **concepts** expected at each grade level.

**Children** thrive in a **rich learning environment** that **includes visual** and **performing arts,** **science, technology,** **world languages,** and **physical education.**

Celebrating  
childhood,  
preparing for  
the future



# Letter from the **President of the Board**

Dear Long Ridge Community,

One of the many things I love about The Long Ridge School is its phenomenal sense of community. It's not that we are all the same—rather, it's that we celebrate how our differences deepen our shared understanding of what truly matters. We are united in our commitment to nurturing and supporting our children, fostering a love of learning, and cultivating self-awareness. These shared values are what bind us together.

All of us—teachers, staff, parents, children, and the wider community—contribute to making Long Ridge a place that embraces individuality while fostering a deep sense of belonging. It's a space where each person feels seen, valued, and connected in a way that makes us whole.

As we begin this edition of The Owl, I must start with my deepest gratitude to one of our most precious resources: our teachers. Their spirit, conviction, and dedication make it possible for our children to look forward to school each day, where they experience rich and fulfilling days. I'm also deeply thankful for our staff, who ensure that the operations and environment of our school support growth and connection. To our parents—thank you for choosing Long Ridge and for your commitment to independent education. And to our children, who are the heart of this community—you are the essence of The Long Ridge School.

I also want to thank our donors, particularly in this fiscally challenging environment. Because of your generosity, we exceeded our fundraising goals, reaching 139% of our Annual Fund Goal. With 156 donors, we've seen firsthand the power of collective giving—every contribution, large or small, makes a difference. We're equally proud of our volunteers, including our Board of Trustees and 37 additional community members, who helped make our events successful and meaningful.

Over the past year, the Board of Trustees has undertaken several important initiatives. We've launched a strategic planning process to shape a long-term vision for Long Ridge that will guide us through this generation and into the next. We've established a sustainable path for facilities maintenance and enhancement to support our infrastructure. We've remained true to our principles of inclusivity and belonging while expanding both our student body and faculty, ensuring that our enrollment strategy aligns with our purpose.

As we navigate these sometimes bewildering and chaotic times, I am continually grateful for the courageous and steadfast leadership of Carissa, our Head of School, and her team. Under her leadership, The Long Ridge School successfully addressed all major recommendations from the 2023 CAIS Accreditation Report and, as a result, retained accreditation.

Chairing the Board of Trustees has been a deeply rewarding and humbling experience. More than ever, I believe that children will lead us into the future. It is our responsibility to continue to nurture, support, and value them—and to provide an environment where they can flourish. In doing so, they sustain us all.

Thanks to you all.

Kisha Mitchell Richards

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We thank Anne Mengden for her nine years, Lisa Mitchell for her three years, Mac Caputo for his three years, and Maureen Chiodo for her two years of dedicated service as they step down from the Board.

The Board welcomes Cormac Bluestone (Dad to Vivi, 2nd, and Hugh, K), Robert Nelson, (Dad to Mary, 2nd, and Anna, K), and Aaron P. Miller, alumni class of 2009.





Graduation 2025

Graduation at The Long Ridge School is a special, community-wide celebration of our fifth graders. The ceremony is filled with long-standing LRS traditions, including class singing and bell ensemble performances at the direction of our music teacher, Faith Glassman. Throughout the spring semester, fifth-grade students prepare for graduation by writing a speech about their time at LRS and what it meant to them. Hearing the fifth graders deliver their speeches is a highlight of the ceremony.

Life After Long Ridge

As they take their next steps into middle school, we know they are more than ready for the challenges and opportunities ahead. Our graduates will continue their educational journeys at a variety of top independent

and public schools, where their curiosity, creativity, and strong sense of self will serve them well. We are so proud of them and can’t wait to see all they will accomplish!

Students at The Long Ridge School are actively recruited by the best middle schools in the area and beyond!

**This year’s graduates were accepted at the following area independent schools:**

Greenwich Catholic, The Harvey School, King School, and St. Luke’s School

**We wish the class of 2025 all the best. Please come visit soon, and often. You will all always be a part of The Long Ridge School.**



Students choose to share a performance or presentation. These presentations are accomplishments and passions they have developed in their elementary years. Their choice reflects a unique talent, interest, or experience they would like to share. Each year, LRS fifth graders dazzle the community with these special moments, and 2025 was no exception.



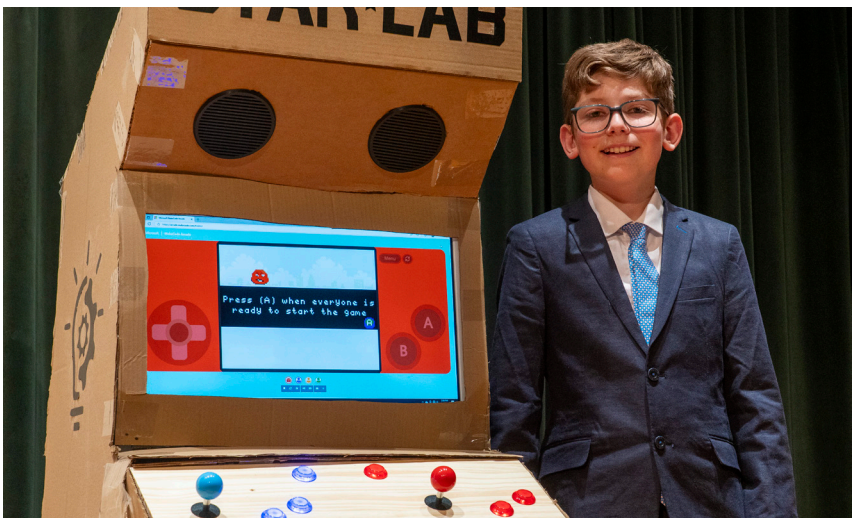
Damon shared a video chronicling his joy of baseball. His video presentation allowed the audience to learn how he became passionate about the game from an early age.



Among Nate’s many interests is music. He chose to play the drums for the LRS audience and definitely helped rock the house for graduation!



Jake, an avid programmer and coder, created and designed a video game. In addition to programming the game, he built an impressive arcade-style cabinet, just like you would find in a classic arcade.



During his time at Long Ridge, Angler learned how to knit and crochet. He shared how he developed this interest and showcased his many original creations, including a basketball, an XL tote bag, and a giant paintbrush.



The game of chess is a central part of how Cody spends his free time. He is an accomplished, award-winning player, and he shared his journey throughout his elementary school life.





“I am going to miss having two teachers in one classroom, which is just one part that makes Long Ridge so special. Even though I have only been here for two years, I have built many strong relationships with my teachers, and I value their friendship, kindness and helpful nature.”—Damon



“Long Ridge School is a supportive school that has always been a fun and exciting place to learn for the last three years. I have had great relationships with all of the teachers. They care a lot about me. One of my favorite parts of LRS is the math projects that we do. Creating projects sometimes makes me forget that I’m even doing math at all... This is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the amazing opportunities at Long Ridge School.”—Nate

“Long Ridge has given me a lot of great experiences in the classroom. I have also been able to grow outside of the classroom... I feel that Long Ridge School has prepared me well for my next step into middle school. All the projects I have done have helped me become more creative... Thank you, Long Ridge School for supporting me for the past five years!”—Jake



“My creativity helped me start the Turtle Club, which would combine nature and adventure. This club brought everyone together. What was really special about this was that students from all grades could participate. We spend a lot of recess time learning how to make forts stronger and better... Thank you, Long Ridge for everything you have done for me.”—Angler

“I am going to remember LRS as many things: a creative school, a school that suits me well, and the first school that I have graduated from. At LRS every child’s creativity can bloom... While I wish that I could be at LRS forever, I know that I am ready to move on to middle school.”—Cody





# Nature at Their Feet: How Outdoor Play Builds Stronger Minds by Carisssa Lewis

I love recess duty. Not just because it gives me thirty minutes outdoors during my workday, but because it’s a front-row seat to children’s unfiltered creativity, problem-solving, and joy.

Recently, I watched a group of students attempt to build a fort using branches and stones they had gathered from our wooded playground. One particularly large branch kept slipping from the tree they wanted to lean it against. After several failed attempts, one child suggested bracing it with heavy rocks. Two classmates rolled a boulder together, using sticks as levers to maneuver it over roots and uneven ground. Fingers could have been pinched, the branch could have toppled, yet they persisted. Through teamwork, trial and error, and sheer determination, the wall of their fort took shape.

As I watched, I was struck by the complexity of what was happening: balance, coordination, planning, risk management, and negotiation. It reminded me of research I once read about the neurological benefits of older adults walking or hiking on uneven terrain. It is more than just physical exercise—it also stimulates the brain in a way that smooth surfaces do not. What might the same kind of movement and mental engagement do for young, growing brains?

“Every careful step over a root or boulder is strengthening the brain’s ability to focus, plan, and adapt.”

## The Demands of Natural Terrain: A Workout for the Brain

Unlike flat, manufactured playground surfaces, our natural landscape is full of surprises. Roots, rocks, and inclines constantly shift the ground under children’s feet, demanding focus and adaptability. To navigate it, children call upon:

- **Balance and coordination**
- **Visual-motor integration**
- **Continuous decision-making**

Neuroscience suggests these are the very skills that strengthen the prefrontal cortex, home of executive function—the brain’s ability to plan, focus, and adapt. In other words, every careful step over a root or maneuver with a branch is more than play: it’s practice in flexible thinking.

A study in *Frontiers in Psychology* (Stevenson et al., 2019) found that children who took just a 30-minute walk in a natural environment performed better on attention tasks than those who walked in an urban setting. Similarly, another study (Ulset et al., 2017) showed that preschoolers who spent more time outdoors had stronger attention skills and fewer inattention–hyperactivity symptoms later in childhood.



## The Body–Brain Connection: Sensory Systems at Work

Natural play also engages two lesser-known but critical sensory systems:

- **The vestibular system**, which controls balance and movement
- **The proprioceptive system**, which helps children sense where their bodies are in space

When children leap from a rock, crouch to collect pebbles, or roll a heavy stone with friends, these systems are being refined. The benefits extend beyond motor development: occupational therapists note that strong vestibular and proprioceptive systems support classroom behaviors such as sitting still, writing clearly, and sustaining focus.

Research echoes this. Fjortoft (2004) found that children who played in natural environments showed significant gains in balance and coordination compared to those in conventional playgrounds. Li et al. (2022) further showed that early exposure to nature predicts stronger sensory processing in young adulthood, underscoring how these early experiences leave a lasting imprint.

## Emotional and Academic Benefits of Outdoor Learning

Spending time in nature also reduces stress, boosts mood, and increases attention. Children are calmer, more resilient, and better able to focus after time outdoors. In fact, children diagnosed with ADHD show improved concentration after time in green environments, even more than after indoor play or walks in urban settings.

A landmark study published in *Environment and Behavior* (2004) found that children with attention deficits were able to focus significantly better after spending time in natural settings compared to built environments.

At Long Ridge, the benefits are visible: children return from recess more focused and happy. Their imaginative play, storytelling, and social problem-solving skills grow alongside their physical development.

## Conclusion: The Outdoors Is Not an Extra

In a world where schedules are packed and digital devices compete for every moment of attention, nature isn’t just a nice-to-have—it’s essential. For young learners, the outdoors is a classroom, a brain gym, and a space of wonder.

Our natural playground is more than a place to burn off energy. It’s a catalyst for cognitive growth, emotional resilience, and joyful learning. At Long Ridge, nature is at their feet—and their brains are all the better for it.

“The outdoors is not an extra—it’s essential.”

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# K-1 Explores the Outdoors by Sara Welter



In their boots and outdoor gear, the children become scientists, explorers, artists, and storytellers. Sometimes we collaborate with other classes or specialist teachers, expanding the experience even further. You might find us collecting natural materials for an art project, making instruments in the woods, observing animal habitats with tools from Niina’s science room, or listening to a story under the trees. Nature becomes our classroom, and the learning possibilities are endless.

This weekly time in the woods is a treasured part of our routine. It brings joy, wonder, and connection, while also supporting meaningful learning across subjects. For both children and teachers, these outdoor adventures are among the most memorable and valuable moments of the week.

At Long Ridge, we deeply value the outdoors as an important part of our learning community. Our 14-acre campus provides more than just space for beautiful playgrounds. Beyond the open fields and down winding trails, children discover an enchanted woodland filled with trees, streams, bridges, rocks to climb, and treasures from nature. If you are lucky, you might even spot frogs near the water’s edge.

Each week, the K-1 class spends our afternoon immersed in this outdoor space. We believe that free play, exploration, and time in nature are essential to a child’s growth. These experiences allow children to ask questions, build friendships through shared adventure, take healthy risks, and get messy in the best ways. With the freedom to explore and follow their curiosity, students develop creativity, confidence, and problem-solving skills.



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## Long.Ridge.School

Calling all Long Ridge alumni! We’re working on the next edition of The Owl, and it’s all about something that’s always been at the heart of Long Ridge: the joy of being outside. We want to hear your memories of outdoor adventures at Long Ridge—big or small! Let’s celebrate the magic of learning in nature.



### Helen Culpepper ‘13

Hey LRS! I live in Downtown LA these days, so experiencing the natural world is definitely difficult. However, the love of paleontology nurtured by Anne and other teachers during my nine years at LRS continues to inspire in me a strong appreciation for the environment. It’s the whole reason why I’m now going into edu-tainment and am now verified as a dinosaur-obsessed content creator! I’ll attach a pic of me with my giant Eurypterid plushy named Glorph, referencing a group of animals often called “sea scorpions” from the Silurian. I’m from the class of 2013 by the way... boy, it’s been a while, but to this day I look back on my time at LRS, adventuring through the wilderness, learning from teachers who genuinely loved me, I get a tear in my eye and inspiration for the future. You all have made me into the human being I am today, and for that, I’ll be forever grateful.



### Leonardo Ferraro ‘20

One outdoor memory that I can share from LRS is the snow days when we would go snowboarding as a grade (really sledding, but I liked to stand on the sled!) and seeing the entire recess area full of snow, as well as the trees surrounding the school. That memory adds a lot of nostalgia to my life, especially since we don’t have much of that snow, tree stuff here in Ecuador.



### Aran Basu ‘18

When I wasn’t enjoying recess on the playground, I found my love for the outdoors playing mini golf, walking in the woods, and exploring wildlife on campus. Being outdoors at LRS was the best experience for fun and learning!



### Oliver Kreeger ‘17

What I would say is that LRS was so vital in fostering my love for nature in all forms. I still will sometimes mentally hum the “animals need water, people need it to” when I have a glass, and I cherish the plenty more nature songs from morning meetings so much - that all is the stuff which stays with me forever. A huge part of LRS’s magic for me was and is that I never had any doubt that the faculty cared tremendously - and that always showed brightly in our learning about and with nature. I couldn’t have asked for anything better, truly. That is to say nothing of the amazing grounds and especially the playground!! I would talk about the rock shops, but I’ve already far surpassed a one-liner.



### Arya Mitre ‘19

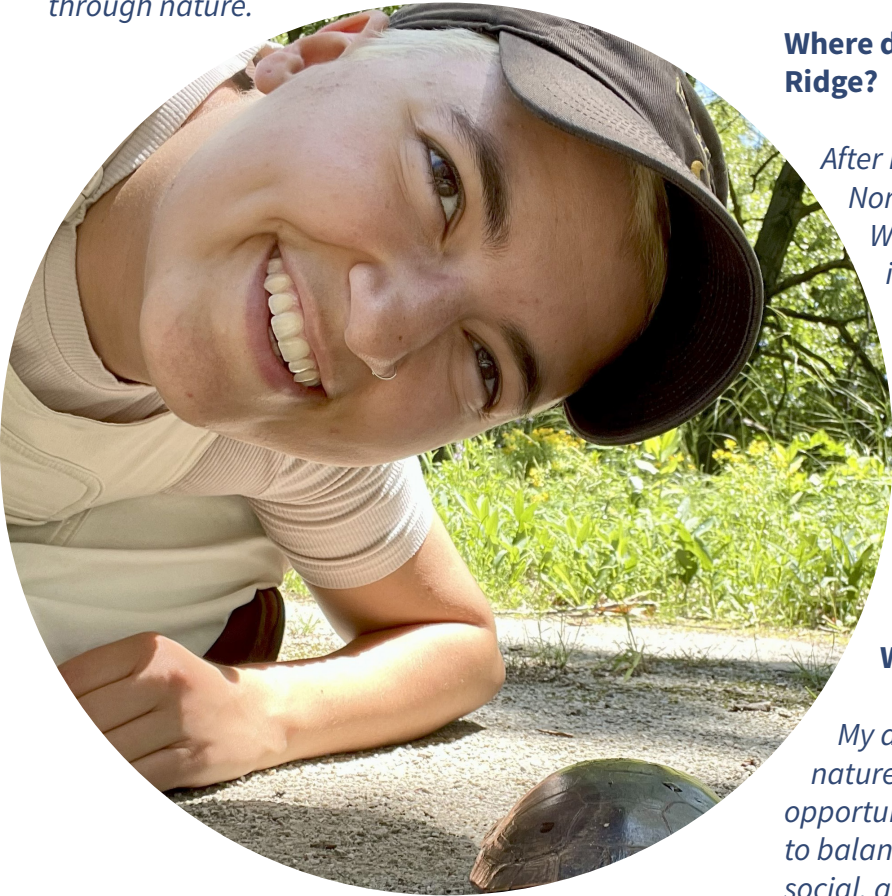
One memory that really stands out is from when we went to Mianus River Park and tried fishing for crawfish. I remember fooling around and not paying attention—I nearly got swept away by the current! Looking back, it was one of my favorite field trips and a really fun way to spend time with friends outside of school.



# Play, Curiosity, and the Great Outdoors: Lucia Wiggers’ ‘11 Memories

**What are some of your favorite memories of time spent outdoors at Long Ridge?**

*Recess at Long Ridge was a magical and formative part of my childhood. It was an opportunity for discovery, freedom, and adventure, and an extension of our beloved classrooms. Our playground (surely the best one on the planet!) was not just in the woods; it was the woods—and the curiosity and accessibility of the outdoors I shared with my friends and teachers made nature synonymous with joy. I remember trading rocks in rock shops, using acorn caps as whistles, admiring the little green inchworms that floated down from shiny threads in the trees, sifting and resifting sand, heaping piles of tree pollen, and engaging in friendly snowball fights (when the grownups weren’t looking!) Each new season brought new opportunities for sensory exploration, curious play, and connection with the LRS community through nature.*



Lucia Wiggers works at RENEW Wisconsin and lives in Chicago, IL. She graduated from Williams College, majored in Geosciences.

**Did Long Ridge help spark your interest in nature, science, or the environment?**

*Long Ridge absolutely sparked my interest in nature, science, and the environment. Anne Mengden is one of the best teachers I have ever had, and she opened my eyes to the natural world and the joys of exploring it in every lesson and field trip. I remember exploring ecology through sprouting seeds and dissecting owl pellets, physics through simple machines and paper airplanes, and geology through identifying rocks and minerals. She helped spark my passion for interdisciplinary learning by seamlessly weaving together art and science when we spun, dyed, and wove yarn, and when we made clay models of each layer of the earth. I will always remember our field trips spent wading in ponds looking at juvenile insects in nets, and how Anne welcomed and cared for my pet turtle, Pickle, in the science classroom.*

**Where did you go after graduating from Long Ridge?**

*After LRS, I went to the Montessori Middle School in Norwalk, St. Luke’s School in New Canaan, and Williams College in Massachusetts. I majored in Geosciences with concentrations in Environmental Studies and Maritime Studies. These disciplines presented unforgettable opportunities for field trips, research, and interdisciplinary exploration, and taught me that understanding humanity’s relationship with the natural world is just as important, if not more so, than understanding the natural world itself.*

**What are you up to now?**

*My academic interest in the intersections of nature and society led me to pursue professional opportunities in sustainability, a field that seeks to balance economic, (continued to page 22) social, and environmental needs for generations to come. My education and interactions with communities experiencing environmental racism and disproportionate effects of climate change inspired*

# Long Ridge Brothers Summit Mt. Kilimanjaro

This summer, Om (Class of 2017) and Dév (Class of 2020) achieved an extraordinary feat: on July 13, 2025, they successfully summited Mt. Kilimanjaro, the highest lone-standing peak in the world and the tallest mountain in Africa, rising 19,341 feet (5895 m) above sea level.

Trekking with a group of 12, Om and Dév pushed through tough terrains, strong winds, and frigid nights. As the climb grew steeper, the nights grew colder, and the air became thinner. The treks became longer and tougher. They supported one another step by step—pole pole (“slowly slowly” in Swahili). After a grueling nine-hour climb from their final camp at 4900m, they reached the summit at 5:45 AM. It was, in their words, “an unbelievable moment of excitement.”

Moments later, Om and Dév made their long walk down, reaching camp 16 hours later. Their climb was not just about reaching the top, but about the lessons along the way: grit, courage, gratitude, and the power of teamwork. After nine days on the mountain, they returned with deep appreciation for each other, their group, the guides, and the mountain itself.



On day 4, Dév (left) and Om (right) Shrikam on ascent from an acclimatization stop at 4600m in front of a Giant Groundsel Tree (Endemic to Mt. Kilimanjaro)

Reflecting on the experience, Dev traced the roots of his love for exploration back to The Long Ridge School:

*“When I joined the 2’s program at Long Ridge, I first discovered nature’s playground. From raking fall leaves to sledding in winter and birding with Gretchen in spring, we explored nature through different mediums every day. I always looked forward to PE and recess. These were times to socialize, run around, play gaga ball, and other games. Field trips wading through the Mianus River and exploring the Long Island Sound were among my favorite excursions. I fondly remember days when my brother Om and I worked and built teepees in the forest and traded rocks with friends at our Rock Shop. I was fascinated with the ability of string to create strong ties able to hold up large logs, as well as the nuances of each unique piece of rock we traded. Looking back, I realize that Rock Shop sparked my love of entrepreneurship, problem-solving, and hands-on creativity. Truly, there is no place like Long Ridge. It is a (continued to page 22)*



On July 13, 2025, Om and Dév Shrikam stood atop Mt. Kilimanjaro in 10 °F temperature plus windchill.



# Roots in Imagination, a Career in Conservation

by Zoe Lewis '12

I was lucky enough to attend Long Ridge School for fourth and fifth grade, and even luckier to be Carissa’s daughter! Before I was a student, I still got to come to campus and enjoy many of the things that make Long Ridge special: the beautiful grounds, comfy library, and the cool science room!

As a kid, all I wanted to do was be outside. Outdoors, anything felt possible! My backyard became the stage for endless adventures: climbing trees, creating “potions” from natural elements, and pretending I was surviving in the wilderness alone (or with friends). When my mom brought me to Long Ridge, I found even more to explore. I felt right at home having new adventures on the playground, discovering magical creatures, catching frogs in the creek, and making “pancakes” from acorns.

During my first week as a student, I made best friends after being welcomed into an imaginary world woven among the rocks and behind the trees of the playground. The nature threaded throughout the playground was enchanting in itself and only fueled our imaginations.



Zoe performing a prescribed burn to support the growth of native plants and maintain the habitat.

Interacting with the natural world is invaluable, and at Long Ridge, it was a priority, not just on the playground but in the classroom as well. We often wrote or did math outside under the trees or on the grassy hills. Science field trips took us into the woods and onto the water, where we studied the force of streams on the land or searched for signs of healthy ecosystems in both fresh and saltwater. As a faculty kid, I also got to wander the campus more freely, sometimes encountering deer, foxes, turtles, or turkeys in the woods beyond the fields. It was a truly formative time that deepened my love of the outdoors.

That love has never left me. I earned my bachelor’s degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Biology, and today I work as a Fish and Wildlife Technician for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. My work focuses on managing waterfowl species, protecting wildlife habitats, and supporting public access to state lands. Interacting with the natural world has always been a central part of my life, first as a child, then as a student, and now in my career.



As a waterfowl technician, banding ducks and geese is an important part of Zoe’s work.

# Exploring the World: Nadia Kucher’s Journey from Long Ridge to Medical School

For Nadia Kucher (’14), some of the most enduring memories of The Long Ridge School are not from inside the classroom but from the time spent outdoors. From sledding down the big field to building snow forts and caterpillar “habitats,” her childhood was marked by constant exploration of the natural world.

*“Every year we played in the snow, picked flowers, and examined cool leaves. LRS inspired a curiosity in my surroundings, and it all became something I loved.”*

That sense of curiosity has stayed with her. Even now, as a first-year medical student at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, Nadia continues to make time for hiking, kayaking, skiing, and traveling to places of natural beauty, such as Banff and Glacier Bay. She traces this passion directly back to her years at Long Ridge.

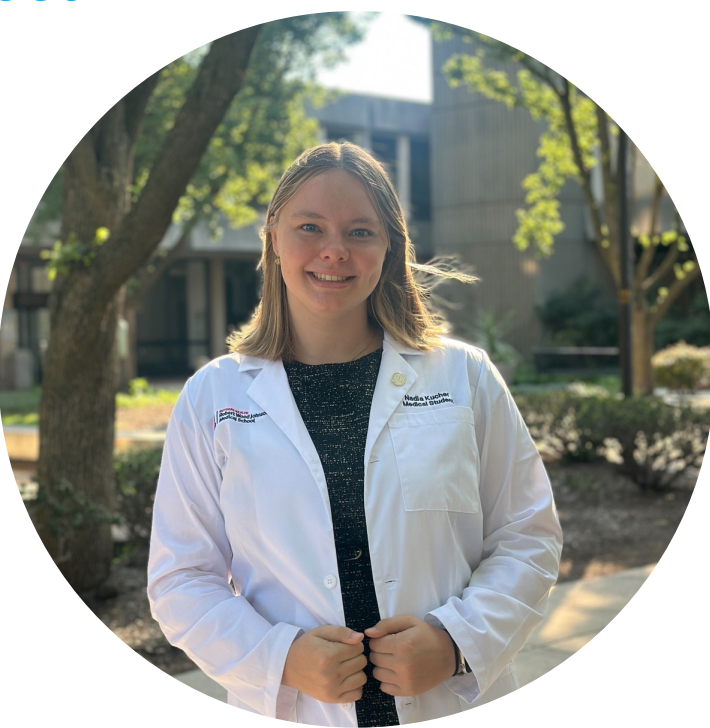
## Love of Learning, Love of Nature

Nadia’s family valued science and learning, and she loved coming to school! She enjoyed her time both in and outside of the classroom, and Long Ridge gave her the freedom to explore. “There weren’t fences separating us from the woods. We were encouraged to find anthills and compare maple leaves,” she recalls. Those experiences nurtured a love of discovery that has shaped her path ever since.

Before beginning college at NYU, Nadia tested herself on a two-month Outward Bound leadership expedition in the lakes of Minnesota and Wisconsin. Long days of hiking and paddling were challenging, but moments of calm in nature reminded her why she loved being outside. “It all really stemmed at LRS, where I was fostered to be curious about my surroundings, and to love experiencing them.”

## Beyond Long Ridge

After graduating from Long Ridge in 2014, Nadia attended Whitby and King School, later majoring in Biochemistry at NYU. Today, she is pursuing her



Nadia Kucher ’14 now a first year student at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School, still finds time for hiking, kayaking, and skiing.

dream of becoming a physician, with plans to specialize in orthopedic surgery. “I want to help others reignite their love of movement and the outdoors,” she explains.

## Lasting Lessons

What stands out most to Nadia is how Long Ridge made learning joyful and personal. She recalls being pulled aside in second grade for multiplication challenges and knitting in class during fourth-grade read-alouds with full encouragement from her teachers.

*“While many schools would have said no, LRS said yes — and even gave materials so the whole class could knit. That spirit of encouragement has stayed with me.”*

Her advice to today’s students? “Be curious. Explore the beautiful world around you. It’s more exciting than whatever is on the internet!”



# From Long Ridge to the Stage: A Shared Journey in Sound

by Carissa Lewis

### Alumni Spotlight: Miles DeSantis '17

**Years at LRS:** 2010–2017

**After LRS:** Whitby, AITE, now NYU (Sound Design major; minor in Business, Entertainment & Media Technologies)

**Career Highlights:**

- Sound Designer, National Puppetry Conference at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center (24 shows in one week)
- Stephen Sondheim Award: Achievement in Sound Design
- Reached 100,000 subscribers on his YouTube Channel: Music by Bebop, where he remixes popular music

**Favorite LRS Memory:** Choir club — performing Hamilton and an a cappella Star Wars medley

**What LRS Taught Him:** “Long Ridge built a mindset of optimism and bravery in the face of challenge.”

### Alumni Spotlight: Mark Bennett '78

**Years at LRS:** 1970–1978

**After LRS:** Westhill HS, Hollywood Hills HS, Vassar College, NEC graduate study

**Current Role:** Associate Arts Professor & Head of Sound Design Training, NYU Tisch School of the Arts; Broadway/Off-Broadway composer & sound designer; Tony Award Nominator

**Career Highlights:** Multiple awards and features in the NYT, Daily News, and American Theatre Magazine

**Favorite LRS Influence:** Music teacher Penny Bott, whose encouragement launched his career in piano and composition

**What LRS Taught Him:** “Encouragement and support allowed us to take risks we might not have taken elsewhere.”

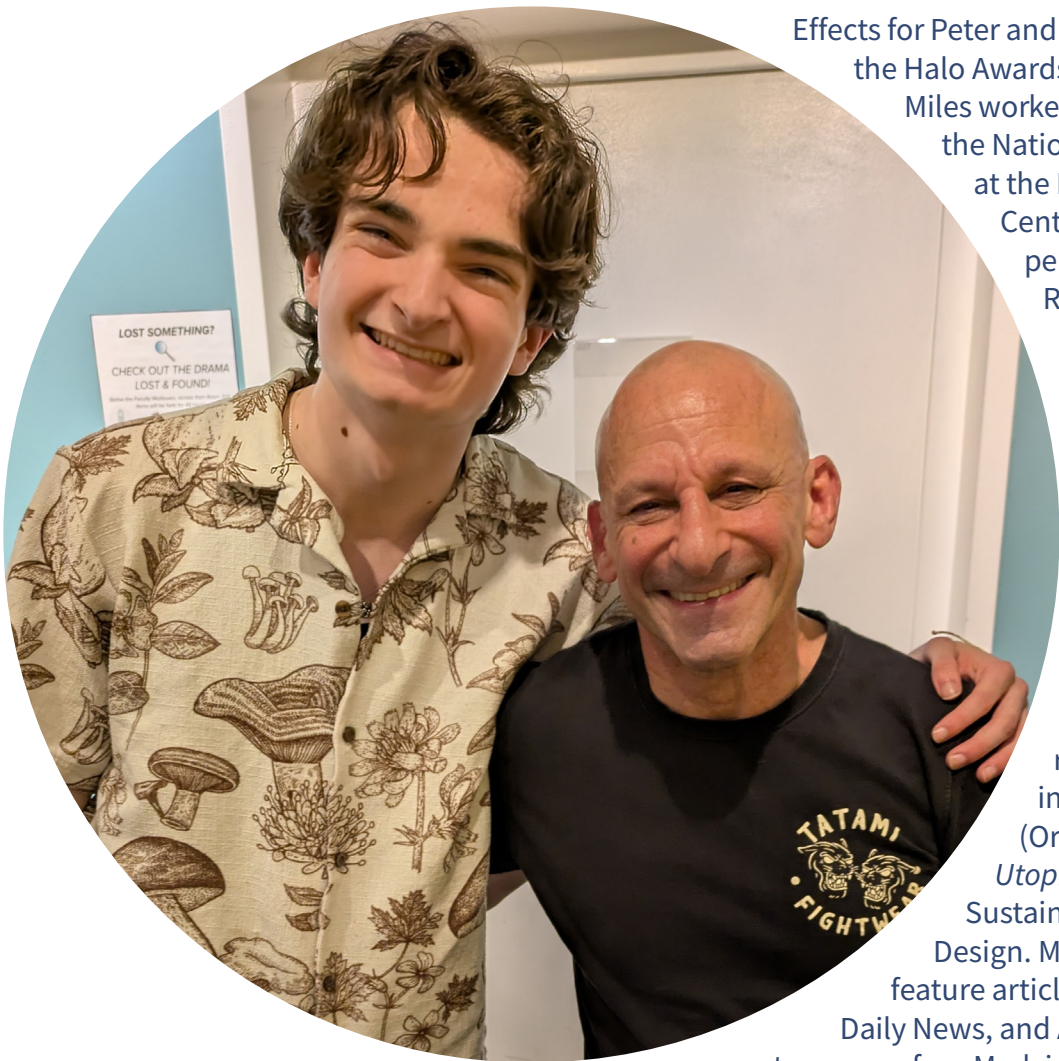
This summer, I had the unique pleasure of bringing together two Long Ridge School alumni, Miles DeSantis ('17) and Mark Bennett ('78), for a Zoom conversation. The two first connected a couple of years ago when Miles was exploring colleges and discovered that Mark, a seasoned sound design professional and composer, had walked the same Long Ridge halls nearly 40 years earlier.

What began as a simple call across generations quickly became something more: a testament to the enduring spirit of The Long Ridge School. Despite the decades between them, their journeys share striking similarities—encouragement from teachers, the freedom to explore ideas, and the courage to take creative risks.

**Early Inspiration at Long Ridge**

For Mark, the spark came from music teacher Penny Bott, who eventually agreed to take him on as a young piano student after his persistent requests. That relationship not only nurtured his musical abilities but also ignited a career that would carry him to Broadway, Off-Broadway, and eventually to his current role as Associate Arts Professor and Head of Sound Design Training at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts. Mark recalls that Long Ridge provided him with the rare freedom to write musicals in middle school and the support to see them performed, a formative experience that taught him that his ideas could take shape in the world.

Miles, now entering his second year at NYU’s Sound Design program, remembers a similar encouragement to follow his passions. Whether it was experimenting with stop-motion animation, building elaborate “Rock Shop” forts on the playground, or joining Choir to perform Hamilton and an a cappella rendition of Star Wars, Miles recalls that LRS offered space to explore, experiment, and even fail. “One of the most significant things I took from Long Ridge,” Miles reflects, “was learning how to fail the right way—not as an ending, but as an opportunity to grow and try again.”



Left to Right: Miles DeSantis, Class of 2017 and Mark Bennett, Class of 1978, at New York University Tisch School of the Arts

**A Culture of Encouragement**

Both alumni spoke of the school’s culture of encouragement, where teachers and peers alike valued creativity, collaboration, and kindness. Mark remembers the thrill of whole-school activities, from Capture the Flag to staging courtroom simulations, always fueled by faculty who said “yes” to student ideas. Miles echoed that sentiment, crediting Long Ridge with preparing him “in a way that nowhere else ever could have” for the collaborative, trial-and-error world of theater design.

**Achievements Beyond Long Ridge**

That foundation has carried both Miles and Mark into remarkable careers. Miles has already earned recognition for his sound design. In 2023, he received the Stephen Sondheim Award for Achievement in Sound Design for his work on The Prom at Stamford High School. Miles was also awarded Best Special

Effects for Peter and the Star Catcher as part of the Halo Awards by Seven Angels Theatre. Miles worked as the Sound Designer for the National Puppetry Conference at the Eugene O’Neill Theater Center, where he designed for 24 performances in just one week. Recently, he reached 100,000 subscribers to his YouTube channel, Music by Bebop, where he remixes popular music.

Mark’s long career includes composing, designing, and directing sound for productions across the globe, including Broadway and Off-Broadway. He has received multiple awards, including a Drama Desk (Original Music, *The Coast of Utopia*) and an Obie Award for Sustained Excellence of Sound Design. Mark has also appeared in feature articles in the New York Times, Daily News, and American Theatre Magazine, to name a few. Mark is also serving a three-year term as a Tony Award Nominator.

**A Legacy That Lasts**

What unites these two alumni is not just their chosen field, but the way they trace its roots back to the same place. Mark describes Long Ridge as a school where “encouragement and support allowed us to take risks we might not have taken elsewhere.” Miles agrees: “Long Ridge built a mindset of optimism and bravery in the face of challenge that many who didn’t experience LRS struggle with.”

Their journeys remind us that while the world beyond Long Ridge changes, the values instilled here remain timeless. Whether in the 1970s, 2010s, or today, students are given room to create, space to fail, and encouragement to try again, qualities that not only shape careers but lives.



Continued from page 16 Play, Curiosity, and the Great Outdoors

me to explore the world of climate resilience and equity. I now work in renewable energy advocacy, where I help nonprofit, mission-driven organizations access resources to install solar arrays that will lower their energy bills and increase energy sovereignty in their communities. I do this through storytelling, education, and collaboration-- skills I first explored at Long Ridge that I look forward to cultivating throughout my life.

Do you have any outdoor hobbies or interests?

Being in nature is how I recharge and ground myself when life feels hectic. The outdoors remind me who I am and what I am capable of! I love gardening, hiking, camping, climbing, and sailing. Most of all, I love teaching and practicing yoga outside, where I can inspire others to connect with their minds, bodies, spirits, and the beautiful planet we call home. When I am not working or doing yoga, I lead a local climate policy advocacy group where I empower everyday

people to understand pressing climate issues and take action to fight for our rights to clean air, water, and energy.

How did your time at Long Ridge help shape who you are today?

Long Ridge taught me compassion, creativity, and play. It taught me to be kind and gentle to myself and others, and that there is so much good in the world. I am endlessly grateful for the people, land, plants and animals that make Long Ridge what it is, and even more grateful for my parents for choosing to send me to such a magical school. I carry the gifts Long Ridge gave me everywhere I go, and am certain to generously share them along the way.

Continued from page 17 - Long Ridge Brothers Summit Mt. Kilimanjaro



special place where I learned to appreciate the world around me and made lifelong friendships.”

Aditi, their mom, believes that Long Ridge has been instrumental and foundational in nurturing her boys for success in every walk of life. “I see them take their love of learning, confident sense of self, and kindness wherever they go. Forever grateful to LRS!” Om and Dev’s achievement on Mt. Kilimanjaro is a testament to the spirit of adventure, resilience, and curiosity nurtured at LRS.

Photo taken at sunrise between the Summit and Stella Point on the way down from the summit at 5800M.





# Starting Fresh: Developing Holistic Math Learners

by Aman Bernardo

At Long Ridge School, our pedagogy emphasizes supporting the whole child in every way that we teach. Our students are motivated to take risks and embrace challenges as curious lifelong learners. We keep this at the forefront of mind when we are met with opportunities to revise our curriculum.

## A New Initiative

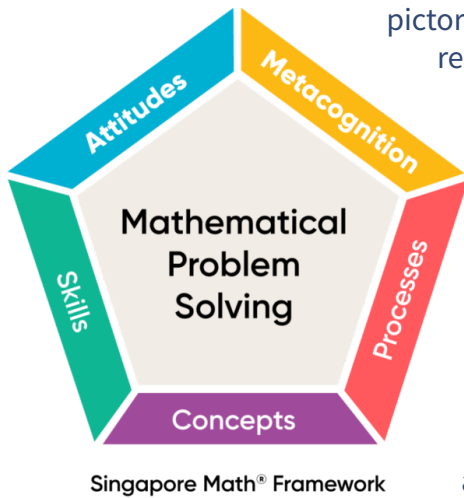
Towards the end of last year, faculty reflected on the Bridges math program and considered ways to better support our learners by enhancing confidence and promoting deeper understanding. As a result of this process, we decided to adopt *Math in Focus*, a Singapore research-based curriculum, this year.

## How has math instruction changed?

In order to help students feel more successful and confident in math, there is a greater focus on both the how and why of math. Math is about understanding how concepts and numbers are related, being able to reason, and generalizing skills across many problems.

## Why use a Singapore program?

The Singapore-based math program has been adopted by many schools as a holistic approach that advances academic achievement and is aligned with students’ natural development throughout a school year. Math in Focus sets students up for success by making content accessible with the progression from concrete → pictorial → abstract modeling and encouraging students to think critically. As a result, students are more confident in problem-solving and are mastering content much more effectively.



*Math in Focus* sets students up for success by making content accessible with the progression from concrete → pictorial → abstract modeling and encouraging students to think. Additionally, the sequence of lessons is intentionally coordinated with students’ natural development throughout a school year as they deepen foundational knowledge.

As we evaluate *Math in Focus* thus far into the school year, students and teachers have shared they are energized about the new curriculum. Stronger resources and comprehensive curriculum design has enabled

teachers to feel more successful with meeting students’ needs and students to feel more successful with acquiring new material. We look forward to the continued momentum that reinforces all that Long Ridge is: a special place where children are the center of learning.



# K-1 Collaboration with Artist in Residence Kit Hughes



One of the watercolors from Kit Hughes’s book “Katie Kittery and her 13 Cats”

The K–1 class continued their collaboration with Kit Hughes, The Long Ridge School’s Artist in Residence, as she shared her creative process of writing and illustrating her new children’s book titled *Katie Kittery and Her 13 Cats*.

This special project took place throughout the 2024–2025 school year and gave students a wonderful opportunity to explore what it means to be both an author and an illustrator—dreaming, designing, and bringing their ideas to life on the page. The collaboration with Kit aligned perfectly with the class’s social studies theme of author-illustrators, allowing children to experience firsthand what it means to both write and illustrate their own stories.

Kit’s diverse background in art history, teaching, and creating professional artwork allowed her to approach this children’s book with a unique perspective. Not only did Kit share her love for art, but she also guided the next generation of young artists by showing them how their creativity can

shape a story. Together, students played a special role in illustrating some of the pages that will be featured.

Inspired by the enchanting setting Kit envisioned, the children tapped into their imaginations to design their dream homes—magical places they’d love to live.

As a result of one of Kit’s characters dressing for rainy, stormy weather, students explored how the weather influences what we wear. Each child selected a season and painted a character thoughtfully dressed to match the climate.



The children were also invited to draw themselves with an animal of their choice—whether it’s a beloved pet, a favorite creature, or one dreamed up from imagination.

Through this process, Kit inspired students to see themselves as true storytellers—using both words and images to express their ideas. This

collaboration reflects The Long Ridge School’s belief in nurturing imagination, teamwork, and storytelling!

Next time you are on campus, be sure to ask for a copy to read.







## The Long Ridge School Parents Group

**2024–2025**

### Co-Chair

Evin Maione  
Michael Maione  
Meredith Oram

### Class Parents

#### Beginners

Sara Brown  
Molly Wright

#### Nursery

Richard Santiago  
Samantha Klemm

#### K-1

Payal Dharamsey  
Elizbeth Blasio

#### 2-3

Hayate Boujid  
Elizabeth Yates

#### 4-5

Nicole Vigue  
Blake Giffin



At Long Ridge, all parents are automatically members of the Parents Group. As our founder Harriet Rowland said, Long Ridge is a place where “loving-kindness prevails,” and that spirit extends to every part of our community. We welcome all families to be part of our inclusive network of parents, teachers, and students who deeply value education and work together to build a strong foundation for each child’s future.



The goals of the Parents Group are to support the School, encourage parent participation, promote communication and school spirit, enrich the student experience, and coordinate volunteers for fundraising and community events.

We kicked off the year with one of our favorite traditions—the Ice Cream Social—where new and returning families came together for a sweet afternoon of fun and connection. Other highlights included apple picking, family movie night, family dinner nights, the holiday cookie swap, and the all-school picnic. Our K–5 students proudly sang the national anthem at a Bridgeport Islanders hockey game, and we introduced a new favorite: Pasta and Bingo Night!

We also brought back Moms Night Out and Dads Night Out, which gave parents a chance to relax, connect, and build friendships within the school community.

We are so grateful to all the families who contributed to Teacher Appreciation Day—it meant so much to our faculty and staff to enjoy a delicious lunch together, thanks to you. Parents also helped lead meaningful community service efforts, including a Lower Fairfield County food drive and creating craft kits for the Ronald McDonald House in New Haven, hosted at Joe’s Family Coffee House, owned by Long Ridge parents Susan Krissel and Steven Jones.

And finally, we wrapped up the year with a joyful End-of-Year Playdate on the last day of school—what a wonderful way to celebrate the year and welcome summer!

Thank you to all the parents who volunteered their time, energy, and heart throughout the year. You are such an important part of what makes Long Ridge so special.



**Thank you, Long Ridge Parents Group, for all you do!**





# Thank You to Our Volunteers

As we look back on the incredible events of 2024-25, we are filled with gratitude for each and every one of you. We are so grateful for your time, energy, and dedication. Your support has made every event possible, bringing our community together and making it stronger than ever. We simply couldn't do it without you. Thank you for being an essential part of our success—we appreciate you more than words can say!

## Events and Opportunities

- Admissions Ambassadors**  
**All-School Picnic**  
**Annual Fund**  
**Annual Spring Party & Auction**  
**Apple Picking**  
**Beginning & End-of-Year Playdate**  
**Dads Night Out**  
**Grandparents & Special Friends Day**  
**Family Dinners**  
**Family Movie Night**  
**Lower Fairfield County Food Bank Drive**
- Holiday Cookie Swap**  
**Ice Cream Social**  
**Library Help**  
**Moms Night Out**  
**Parent Group Chairs**  
**Pasta & Bingo Night**  
**Room Parents**  
**Ronald McDonald House Kits**  
**Teacher Appreciation Day**  
**Yearbook**



## Volunteers

- Indrani Bagchi  
Cormac Bluestone  
Hayate Boujid  
Sara Brown  
Sabrina Buckwalter  
Lisé-Kate Campbell  
John Cooper  
Payal Dharamsey  
Tavia Dolbec  
Julie Elezaj  
Blake Giffin  
Sabrina Buckwalter
- Rachel Gigliotti  
Abby and Scott Handelman  
Adam Japha  
Nicole Japha  
Liz Keane  
Mariann Kis-Balogh  
Sam Klemm  
Susan Krissel and Steven Jones  
Nicole Vigue and Rishi Kumar  
Ewa Mazur  
Lisa McConnell  
Evelyn Myers
- Ken Myers  
Sarah Nelson  
Luisa Gloria Noriega  
Renuka Patil  
Erika Preyer  
Rachel Shupin  
Emily Wilcox  
Molly Wright  
Guliya Wu  
Elizabeth Yates



Spring Community Service Project at Honey Joe's Family Coffeehouse

## Become a Long Ridge Volunteer

Volunteering is a great way to meet other members of the community and to strengthen our school.

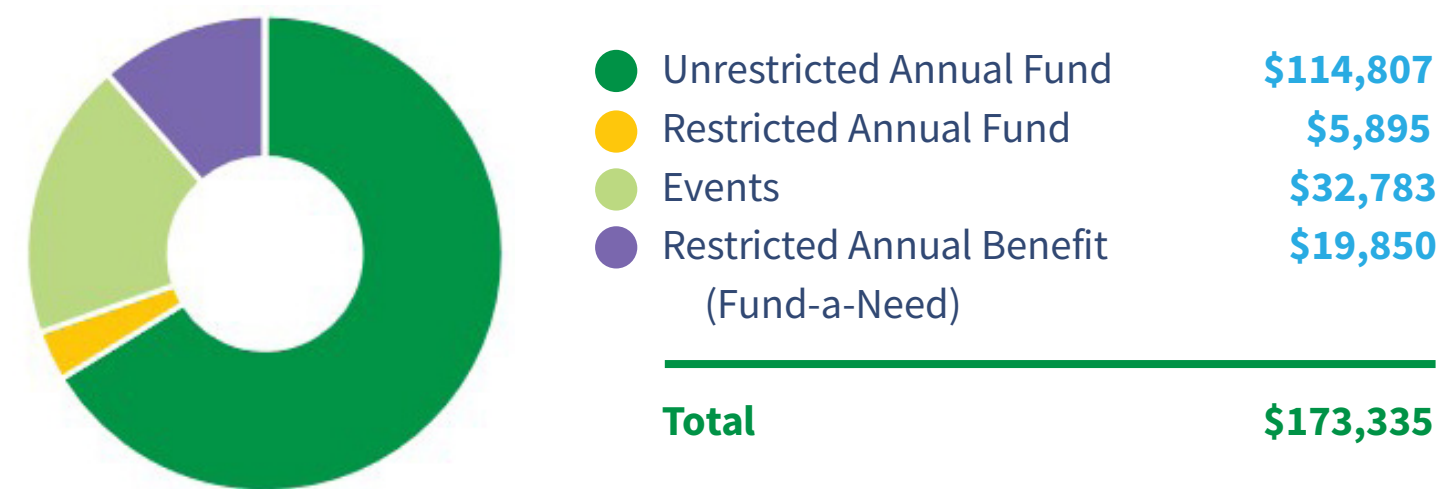
Each year, parents and alumni families volunteer their time to The Long Ridge School. These dedicated members of the community help in many ways, from volunteering in the classroom, serving as Class Parents, Co-chairs of the Annual Fund, Co-chairs of the Annual Auction, and many family events.

Please contact us at [development@LongRidgeSchool.org](mailto:development@LongRidgeSchool.org) or by calling 203.322.7693

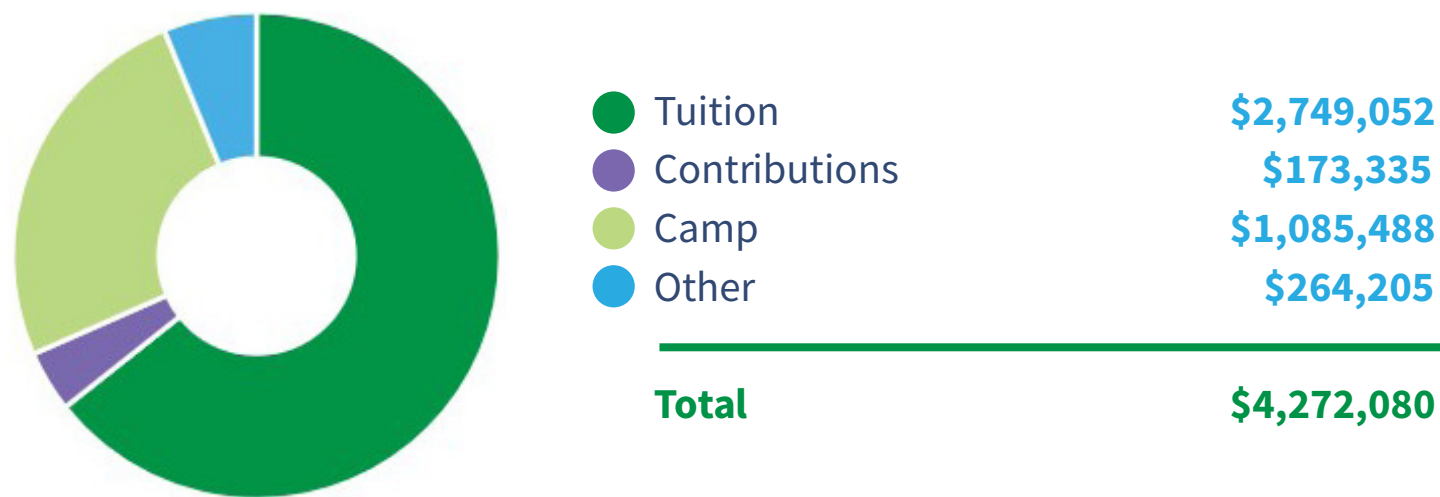


# Financial Breakdown

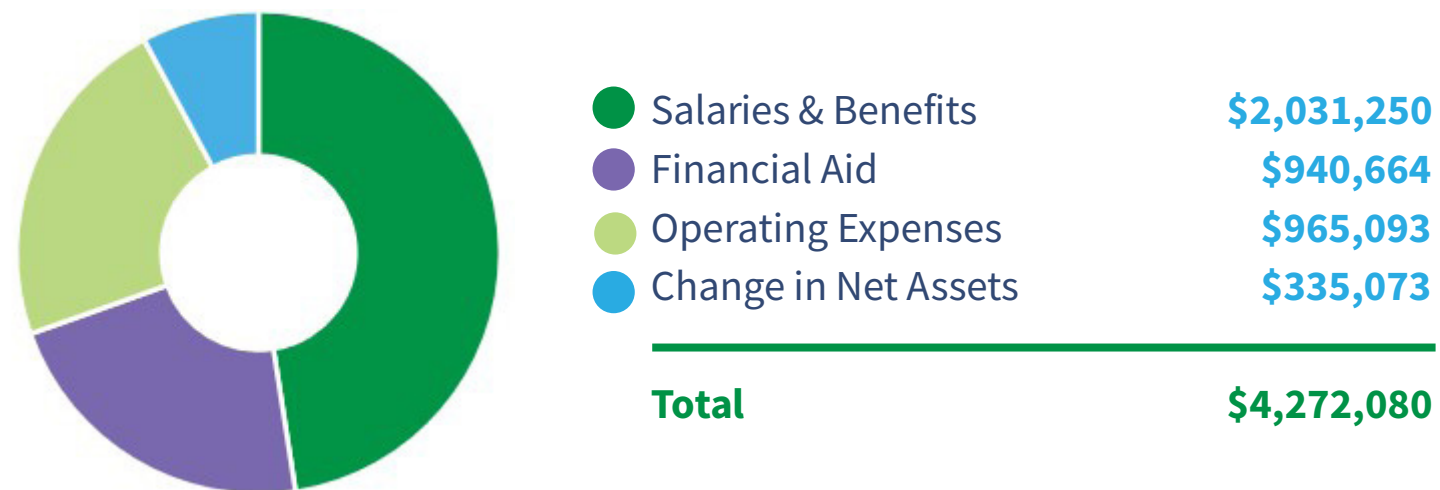
## Contributions



## Income



## Expenses



\* based on unaudited financial results

# Thank You to Our Donors

We would like to thank all of our donors, including anonymous supporters, for their generous contributions.

Special thanks to Cormac Bluestone, Scott Handelman and Rishi Kumar, Co-Chairs and Adaobi Odili, Alumni Parent Chair.

- Annual Fund Unrestricted
- Annual Fund Restricted
- In Kind
- Corporate Matching Gift

## Individual Donors

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- Anonymous (1)
- Samantha and Aaron Brown

### Great Gray Owls, \$5,000–\$9,999

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- Rebecca and Peter Nichols
- Shanti and Kyde Sharp
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### Hawk Owls, \$1,000–\$2,499

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- Jamie Anzellotti Hein and Ken Hein
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- Shue-Chen Wu •

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**Participation Rates**

**Current Families**

<b>Beginners</b>	<b>46%</b>
<b>Nursery</b>	<b>88%</b>
<b>K-1 Class</b>	<b>84%</b>
<b>2-3 Class</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>4-5 Class</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>81%</b>

**Other**

<b>Staff &amp; Faculty</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Board of Trustees</b>	<b>100%</b>



**Spring Celebration Party & Auction Moroccan Nights**

The Arts and Athletic Center was transformed into a vibrant Moroccan marketplace for this year’s Spring Celebration Party and Auction. Guests enjoyed an unforgettable evening featuring belly dancing, authentic Moroccan cuisine, and lively bidding.

The event raised an impressive \$51,791, including \$18,850 dedicated to the purchase of new spinning playground equipment.

Special thanks to our amazing Co-Chairs—Hayate Boujid, Lizbeth Blasio, Sabrina Buckwalter, and Mariann Kis-Balogh—and to the many volunteers whose hard work made the night truly spectacular.

And of course, a heartfelt thank-you to Rishi Kumar, our auctioneer extraordinaire, for entertaining the crowd while helping raise critical funds for the School.

**Auction Donors and Supporters**

- Unrestricted
- Fund-a-Need

**Thank you to the many auction donors and supporters**

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  - Indrani Bagchi and Devapriya Mallick • •
  - Aman Bernadro •
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  - Hayate and Mourad Boujid •
  - Samantha and Aaron Brown • •
  - Sara and Justin Brown •
  - Shauna Bryant •
  - Sabrina Buckwalter •
  - Lisé-Kate and Marc Campbell •
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  - Faith Glassman •
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The Adventure Park  
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The Glass House New Canaan  
Total Wine & More  
Triple Threat Academy CT  
Twin Rinks  
Urban Air Adventure Park - Orange  
Venture Studios  
Wagon Wheel Fine Wines & Spirits  
Wilton Revity3 formerly Fit Body Boot Camp





# The Power of Giving

With our unique focus on nursery and elementary education—and with the support of our generous donors—The Long Ridge School empowers and challenges students from all walks of life to excel through progressive, inquiry-based learning. All of our resources go towards the youngest learners; our teachers, parents, alumni, and grandparents come together to invest in our students’ academic, social, and emotional growth.

Our thematic, interdisciplinary curriculum offers hands-on, experiential learning—encouraging our students to think creatively and engage deeply—cultivating not just knowledge, but also a lasting affinity for the process of discovery.

Across our expansive, idyllic campus, all members of the Long Ridge community work together in a warm, joyful environment to guide children toward becoming compassionate global citizens. We nurture each child’s strengths and interests—instilling confidence and leadership skills, and collaboratively fostering the foundation for a fulfilling future.

The Board of Trustees is committed to keeping tuition as affordable as possible. Tuition alone does not cover the cost of educating each child - one way to support the operating gap is to make a tax-deductible gift to the Annual Fund. Every gift , no matter the size, enhances the LRS experience. Our donors are integral to realizing a shared vision: providing needed funds to increase the diversity of our student body, enabling us to attract and retain the best teachers, and ensuring that Long Ridge can continue to provide the formative education that students and alumni have valued for over 80 years.

We can’t do it without you!

## Ways to Give

**Checks**—Made payable to The Long Ridge School, sent using the provided return envelope.

**Credit Card**—Made via our secure website <https://longridgeschool.org/giving/give-online/>.

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Older students foster a sense of community and a shared love of reading



# In Memoriam

## Remembering Susan Seiler

### Nursery and Beginners Teacher, 1990-2024

Remembering our beloved teacher, Susan Seiler, will not be difficult to do. She was a passionate educator who left her mark on generations of colleagues, friends, and students. For more than 35 years, Susan dedicated herself to the youngest learners at The Long Ridge School, where she nurtured curiosity, empathy, and kindness in hundreds of children.

She was kind, warm, and gentle, with unending patience. That’s not to say she couldn’t be feisty at times—as any passionate person can be—for she cared deeply. Her care and commitment extended to her students’ families as well, offering support with grace and understanding. As her longtime colleague Leslie Hammond shared, *“Susan went out of her way to help young parents and, when they asked, she gave them helpful advice with a calming voice and always a smile.”*

Born and raised in Stamford, Connecticut, Susan was the daughter of Betty and Max Baron and the third of six children in a lively household. She raised her three sons—Jonathan, Sam, and Michael (Long Ridge ’98)—with love and joy, taking pride in watching her family grow. Her genuine good nature, ease, and radiant smile live on in her children and grandchildren.

At Long Ridge, Susan embodied the heart of early childhood education. Former Assistant Head of School, Robin Redniss reflected, *“A child’s first school experience can significantly influence their lifelong attitude toward learning and education. Susan was the ideal teacher to guide young minds into this new world of experiences, friendship, and exploration. With her gentle demeanor, she created an environment of security and joy.”*

Her colleagues remember her classroom as a place of warmth, music, and timeless traditions. Marietta Morelli recalled, *“Susan had a great appreciation for the many traditions in her classroom, like making popcorn with her students after reading The Popcorn Book by Frank Asch, and singing some of her favorite*



*vintage songs—High Hopes comes to mind.”* She added, *“Susan adored our school and truly valued her lifelong relationships with so many colleagues. She was a strong and patient educator who arrived each morning to greet her preschoolers with the love and warmth they needed to start their day.”*

Rebecca Fass shared that *“Susan made every child feel included and welcome.”* She also remembered her quiet humor and appreciation for the funny things children said—like when her granddaughter announced she would name her sibling “Ice Cream.”

Ruth Qadrud-Din noted that Susan’s gifts extended well beyond the nursery. *“She was exceptional with the very young,”* she said, *“but she also remained interested in and helped older children at LRS as a gifted tutor to fourth and fifth graders.”*

Susan’s teaching and kindness reached beyond her classroom, touching not only her students and their families but also her colleagues. As Marty Ann Kerner shared, *“Susan was a wonderful friend and mentor. It was my connection with her and her support for me that brought me into the Long Ridge family. I learned so much from her about working with young children and about our school’s values and motto: ‘We’re all friends at Long Ridge School.’”*

Families, too, remember her grace and impact. *“She was a warm, calming presence with a genuine soul,”*

wrote alum parent Danielle Wearing. *“All these years later, our family remembers her fondly and is grateful for the positive impact she had on our lives.”*

Outside the classroom, Susan was most content in nature—walking in the woods, enjoying quiet moments by the water, and cherishing the simple pleasures of life with her partner, Frank Thomas. Her greatest joy was time spent with her eight grandchildren, who knew her as a steady source of love and laughter.

As Kris Bria beautifully said, *“Susan was a beloved member of two large families—her own, and her Long Ridge family.”*

To honor Susan’s life and carry forward her light, the Seiler family has created a fund to support The Long Ridge School’s early childhood programs, which she so deeply influenced. Contributions will fund musical outdoor instruments, reflecting her love of children and nature in a joyful, lasting way. If you’d like to contribute, please go online at [www.longridgeschool.org/giving/susanseiler/](http://www.longridgeschool.org/giving/susanseiler/).



## Faculty and Staff News

To further support math teaching and learning, **Aman Bernardo** (4-5) has taken on the new role of Math Coordinator. In this capacity, she will coach teachers in implementing the new program and offer guidance in differentiation. Aman recently participated in a *Deep Dive into the World of Building Thinking Classrooms* with Sarah Schaefer and Peter Liljedahl.



We are thrilled to welcome **Lily Carnicelli** to the K-1 classroom. Lily holds a Master of Arts in Elementary Education and recently completed the associate teacher program at Greenwich Country Day School. Her calm energy helps children feel grounded and cared for, while her creativity and thoughtful approach to planning make learning both joyful and meaningful. Lily has already become a wonderful collaborator and a valued member of the Lower School team.

**Rosie Glassman**, a Long Ridge alumna, officially joins the Beginners faculty this year after serving as a beloved substitute and leave replacement. Rosie has been a constant presence on campus, teaching private piano and drum lessons, performing with the All School Performance Band, and helping make graduation day run seamlessly each year. Her warmth, creativity, and deep connection to Long Ridge shine through in all she does. Rosie is also a touring musician who brings her love of rhythm and music into the classroom.



We welcome **Zeb Huber** to Nursery West. Zeb holds a Master’s in Early Childhood Education and joins us from Washington, D.C., where he taught in independent early childhood programs. Zeb brings a passion for play-based learning, child-centered teaching, and building strong, caring relationships with his students. We are delighted to welcome him—not only to Long Ridge, but also to Connecticut!

**Tina Miller** joins Melanie Chiari in Nursery East, bringing eight years of experience from First Presbyterian Preschool in New Canaan. Tina has a gentle, grounded presence and a strong understanding of early childhood development. She fosters curiosity and independence through play and exploration, creating a classroom environment where our youngest learners feel both nurtured and empowered.





# Alumni News

## 3rd Mini Reunion Held for Classes ‘24, ‘23, & ‘22

Alumni from the Classes of 2022-2024 gathered for a fun-filled mini reunion at Bowlero Norwalk last December. The event brought former classmates together to reconnect, share memories, and enjoy a night of bowling and socializing. It was a great opportunity to catch up and rekindle friendships. We look forward to next December’s event for classes from 2023-2025.



Left to right: Y. Richards ‘24, F. Sharp ‘24, J. Chiodo ‘24, M. Zarrella ‘24, B. Chiodo ‘22, D. Black ‘24, C. Black ‘22, J. DeMaio ‘22, C. Mitchell ‘24, C. Dulski ‘22, C. Dragan ‘24, J. Sharp ‘22, D. McConnell ‘24, L. Danc ‘22, K. Joseph, ‘23.

## First Mini Reunion for Classes ‘21, & ‘20, ‘19, ‘18

On June 1, our high school alums returned for a mini-reunion filled with mini golf, lunch, laughs, and a walk down memory lane. Once a Long Ridger, always a Long Ridger!



Left to right: A. Marques ‘21, W. DeSantis ‘21, N. Meehan ‘21, M. Arpino ‘20, C. Lewis, O. Black ‘20, K. Bria, A. Mitra ‘19, K. Falco, A. Basu ‘18, D. Delgado ‘18.

# Class Notes

\* = Honorary alumni who left before graduation

## Class of 1997

**Katie Jamieson** married Eric Weakland in Las Vegas on February 11, 2025. They live in Seattle, WA.

## Class of 1998

**Meg Loughran** is engaged to Rob Martinez. She served as a bridesmaid at her brother’s, **JP ‘08**, wedding, and performed “The Way You Look Tonight” for the couple’s first dance.



## Class of 1999

**Nicholas Theuerkauf** married Josephine Slater on December 2, 2023, in Paris. They soon moved from London, UK to Milan, Italy on January 2, 2024. He became father to son Frederic Theuerkauf on February 25, 2025.

## Class of 2000

**Ryann Tookes** and her husband, Robert, joyfully welcomed their daughter, Rosalind (“Rosie”), in November.

## Class of 2002

**Andrew Jamieson** started a new position as Associate Director of Annual Giving at Lycée Français

de New York in June. He is pursuing an MS in Non-Profit Management at Columbia University School of Professional Studies.

**Merrilee Weston-Walls** and Dustin Walls welcomed son, Archer Barnett Walls, on September 30. Merrilee is Senior Director, Annuity IT Delivery at Brighthouse Financial. The family lives in Charlotte, NC.

## Class of 2004

**Julia Harris** became engaged to Scott Rosica this spring. Their wedding is planned for May 23, 2026.

## Class of 2005

**Nick Morelli** received a PhD in Clinical Psychology in a joint doctoral program at SDSU/UCSD.



## Class of 2006

**Carlo Genovese** started a new position as Senior Manager, Partnership Insights & Strategy, at the U.S. Soccer Federation in Atlanta.

## Class of 2007

**Giovanni Menacho** married AnaYenzi in Greenwich on March 28, 2025. The couple resides in Stamford. Giovanni is a Logistics and Customs Coordinator at VERBIO North America in Stamford.



## Class of 2008

**JP Loughran** was married on October 19, 2024, to Maggie McDermott, whom he met while they were students at Georgetown University. The ceremony took place at The Church of the Resurrection in Rye, New York, followed by a reception at The Tokeneke Club in Darien, Connecticut. His sister **Meg '98**, served as a bridesmaid and performed “The Way You Look Tonight” for the couple’s first dance. After honeymooning in Italy, they relocated from Washington, D.C., to NYC and most recently moved to Rowayton, CT.



## Class of 2009

The Long Ridge School’s Board of Trustees welcomes **Aaron Miller** to the Board. He is the Special Assistant to the Mayor for the City of Stamford, Connecticut & Arts and Culture Program Manager. He is also a Board Member at Full Court Peace, Norwalk, Connecticut.

## Class of 2013

**Sasha Kucher** is pursuing a Master’s in Mathematics Secondary Education at Sacred Heart University. He is completing a teaching residency at Trumbull High School.

## Class of 2014

**Rebecca Bailey** graduated Summa Cum Laude with Honors Distinction from Northeastern University, earning a Bachelor of Science in Behavioral Neuroscience and a minor in English. She is

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—Alumni Relations at **Alumni@LongRidgeSchool.org**

especially appreciative of her co-op experiences at Harvard Health Publishing and Verve Therapeutics, which helped shape her into an eager member of the scientific community and a collaborative team player. A research internship at the Marcus Institute for Aging Research during her final semester further strengthened her commitment to improving lives through scientific innovation. Following graduation, she joined the Marcus Institute for Aging Research at Hebrew Senior Life as a Research Assistant, contributing to a clinical trial exploring the effects of non-invasive brain stimulation on memory and mobility in older adults with mild dementia.

**Nadia Kucher** graduated from New York University with a bachelor’s degree in Biochemistry. During her time at NYU, she was honored with the Dean’s Award for Leadership and was a recipient of the Morris and Clara Gratz Memorial Award. She will be pursuing her medical degree at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School at Rutgers University.

**Benjamin O’Brien** graduated from the University of Michigan with a B.A. in History & Spanish.

**Sophie Pigott** University of St Andrews, International Relations and Social Anthropology graduate with experience in marketing, event management, and research. Passionate about environmentalism, environmental law, and sustainability. Research

Intern at Purple Plover Consulting.

**Amrit Samra** graduated from Boston University’s College of Arts and Sciences with a major in Political Science and a minor in Public Policy Analysis. While at BU, she served as Vice President of Public Relations for Phi Alpha Delta Law Fraternity, International, and pursued her passion for dance as a choreographer, dancer, and secretary for BU’s Vibes Dance Team.

**Luca Segalla** graduated from Kenyon College this spring with a degree in History. He is living in Ghana, where he plans to stay until around March, working with the Appiah-Kubi Foundation, led by Dr. Appiah-Kubi of Ohio State University. The foundation runs several programs that provide free medical assistance. Luca is helping start an afterschool sports program in the hopes of giving young kids, specifically girls, more opportunities in schooling and careers.

**Alexy Theuerkauf** is studying for a Bachelor of Science in “Technology and Management” at the Technische Universitaet Muenchen (TU Munich, Germany).

**Jenna Volpitta** graduated from the University of Pittsburgh. Jenna has served as a volunteer firefighter in Pound Ridge and recently took the NYC Firefighter exam.

## Class of 2016

**Sara Volpitta\*** is continuing her studies at the University of Vermont. Sarah is studying Political Science with a minor in Economics, and she is a member of the debate team.

## Class of 2018

**Aran Basu** graduating from Hackley and will attend Brown University in the fall, where he will study History and Music.

## Mini Reunion

**LRS Classes 2019-2022  
who are in High School  
Sunday, May 31, 2026  
LRS Campus**

**Daniela Delgado** graduated from Hopkins School. Daniela will attend Boston College in the fall, concentrating on International Relations with a specialization in Politics or Diplomacy.

**Finn O’Connell** graduated from Cary Academy (NC); and will attend North Carolina State University, where he will major in electrical engineering.

**Skyler Reading** graduated from Wilton High School, where she was the Student Body President (Executive Board), National Honor Society (Treasurer), Tri-M Music Honor Society, Spanish Honor Society, Varsity Lacrosse and Indoor Track & Field (Captain). Skyler is attending Harvard University.

**Sienna Sittol** graduated from Westhill High School and is attending UCONN.

**Stephan Volpitta** graduated from the Harvey School. He is a freshman at Fairfield University.

**Zach Louizos\*** graduated from King and is attending Columbia University in the fall majoring in Drama and Theatre Arts. He also won a CT Halo Award for Best Lead Actor in a Classical Musical for his portrayal of Jean Valjean from *Les Miserables*. And just completed a run for June as SpongeBob SquarePants in *SpongeBob the Musical* at Curtain Call. And as he likes to say, it all started at LRS where he played an Oompah Loompah in his very first play!



## Class of 2020

**Leonardo Ferraro**, a student at Academia Cotopaxi American International School in Ecuador, won Best Actor at the school's 2025 Film Festival for his role in *The Nihilist*. The film, which Leo also edited, earned Best Movie. The festival is designed to showcase students' hidden talents in acting, directing, and filmmaking. In *The Nihilist*, Leo portrayed a man whose mental and physical struggles spiral downward until he ultimately finds freedom from the captivity of his own mind.

## Class of 2022

**Adam Balogh** graduated Saxe Middle School and will attend New Canaan High School.

**Lilly Danc** is continuing her high school education at St. Luke's School.

**Jackson DeMaio** is continuing his high school education at St. Luke's School.

**Charlie Dulski** graduated from middle school at King School and is continuing his high school education there where he plays football, basketball, and baseball.

**Lola Fayomi** graduated middle school at GCDS. Lola was a student ambassador for multiple programs, and participated in multiple service activities with the GCDS Center for Good. She traveled with her class to Barcelona and Paris in June. She was on the A team for basketball and volleyball this year and plans to continue both in High School next year, already participating in varsity basketball workouts this summer. She is still singing and acting and enjoyed participating in the musical, *Alice in Wonderland*, this year. She is excited to be moving up to the high school campus next year.

**James Sharp** Congratulations for being King's Middle School Vice President.

**Archer Cowan\*** went to LRS for K-1 and then moved

## Mini Reunion

### LRS Classes 2023-2025

### who are in Middle School

### Friday, December 12, 2025

### Bowlero Norwalk

to California. He is now entering the 9th grade at Davinci Charter Academy. This summer, he went on a two-week excursion with Adventure Treks to explore Northern California (he loves the outdoors here), and then started his second season on River City Rowing. His parents write that "Long Ridge gave him a fabulous start, so thank you!"

## Class of 2024

**Jonny Chiodo** will complete middle school at Hopkins School, New Haven.

**Emilia Leveque** participated in the St. Luke's middle school play, *Matilda*, and has been immersed in her second year of pointe training at the New England Academy of Dance. This summer she'll be sailing at Norwalk Yacht Club, in the adventure sailing program, handling Lasers, Ideals and Sunfish, then traveling to Italy & France with family.

## Class of 2025

**Cody Wu** was featured in Bedford & New Canaan Magazine's 18 Under 18 for his chess achievements.



Life After Long Ridge: 4-5 parents and 5th grade students attended a panel discussion featuring alumni Emilia Leveque '24 (St. Luke's School), Floyd Sharp '24 (King School), and Yves Richards '24 (Brunswick School), who shared their middle school experiences and reflections on the transition after Long Ridge. Carissa Lewis and Kelly Falco provided thoughtful moderation, information, and guidance.

## We Want to Hear from You!

We invite you to reconnect with your Long Ridge family, discover what's new, share your stories, and learn how you can help ensure that our students continue to have a deeply meaningful, formative education—one that builds for each child a foundation for a fulfilling future.

Please submit your news and updates to Kris Bria, Alumni Relations at [Alumni@LongRidgeSchool.org](mailto:Alumni@LongRidgeSchool.org) or online at [www.LongRidgeSchool.org/alumni](http://www.LongRidgeSchool.org/alumni).

**Want to become a class ambassador to help gather news and updates for your graduation year?** Please email [Alumni@LongRidgeSchool.org](mailto:Alumni@LongRidgeSchool.org) notes of interest.

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