

# McLean School Newsletter

SCHOOL NEWS, INFORMATION & EVENTS

SUMMER | 2025

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## Windows, Mirrors, and the Power of Connection

*A message from Barry Davis on trust, collaboration, and supporting every child's journey*

Educating a child—especially one with learning challenges—is not something schools or families can do alone. It's a shared mission, rooted in trust, communication, and care. One of the greatest strengths of McLean is the partnership we share with you.

We are fortunate to have an engaged and supportive parent community. Whether it's through your volunteerism, a conversation at drop-off, a thoughtful email to a teacher, or your presence at an event, your involvement matters deeply. You help us understand each child more fully, and your advocacy strengthens our entire community.

As we begin our journey this year, I invite you to stay connected—ask questions, share insights, attend our Community Education Series, or just stop by for a chat. The more we collaborate and learn from one another, the better equipped we are to serve our children and community. Earlier this summer at our Administrative Leadership Retreat, our facilitator, Tim Fish, shared the following prompt, and we were asked to complete the sentence.

*"When I am \_\_\_\_\_, help me \_\_\_\_\_, so I can \_\_\_\_\_."*

Most responses reflected the importance of existing in a trusting environment, one where people felt safe and able to be their authentic and vulnerable selves, and one that encouraged growth through partnership. In my own reflection, I realized that all members of our community could benefit from an exercise like this.

Rudine Sims Bishop, in her work on the "Windows and Mirrors" framework, helps us to appreciate diverse perspectives. Windows allow us to see into the lives and experiences of others, and Mirrors reflect our own identities and experiences while reinforcing our sense of self and belonging.

Here are just a few thoughts shared by parents and faculty. I hope you will consider completing this sentence

and helping to strengthen our partnership through mutual understanding and appreciation of all of our windows and mirrors.

*"When I am unsure how to support my child, help me understand the School's approach so I can partner effectively."*

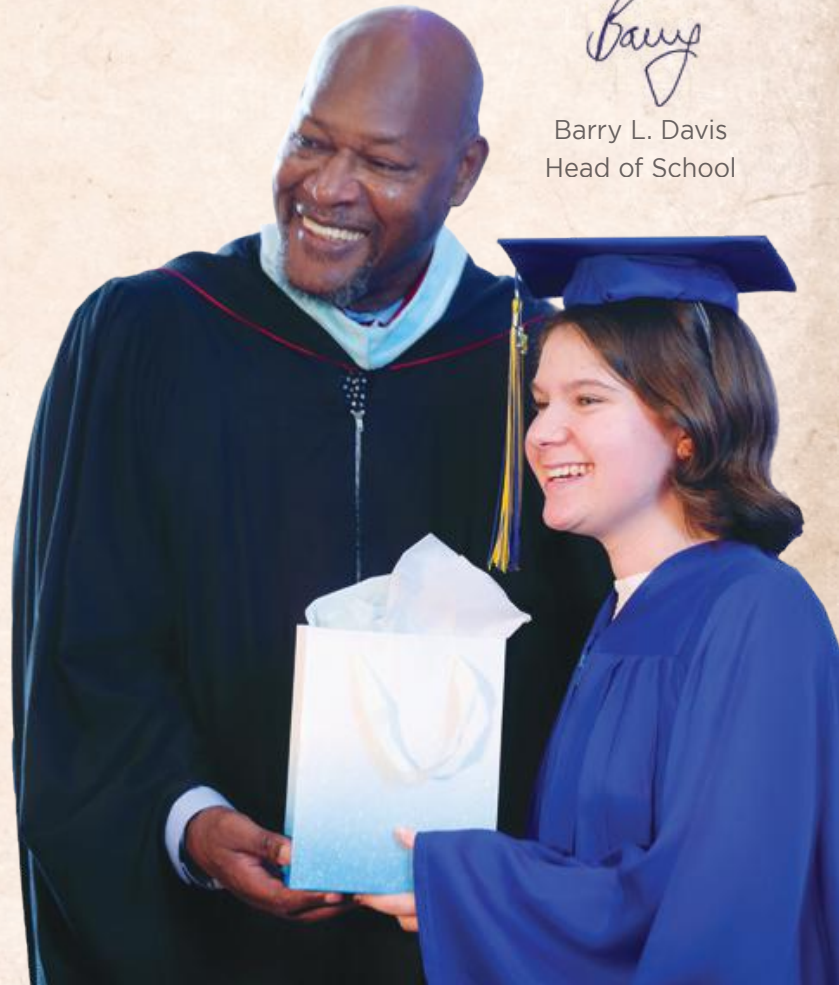
*"When I am unsure how to reach a student, help me collaborate meaningfully so I can meet their needs."*

May the summer months bring you time for connection, discovery, and rest.

In partnership,



Barry L. Davis  
Head of School





# Introducing New Head of Upper School Kristen Vogel

***“Any decision that’s good for children is a good decision”***

*With over three decades across independent and public school settings, Kristen Vogel brings a range of experience to her new role as Head of McLean’s Upper School. Her approach is informed by insights gained in and out of the classroom as a teacher, curriculum director, assistant principal, high school principal, and superintendent. Known for her students-first, relational approach to education—and fearlessness in the face of a challenge (she’s an accomplished mountaineer!)—Kristen shares what inspired her return to independent schools and what she looks forward to in the fall.*

## Why McLean?

Who I am as an educator was formed in independent schools, in particular, understanding the importance of relationship building. This is something independent schools tend to be really good at and recognize its impact on student success. This was obvious to me when I was getting to know McLean, the adults here really know their students, who they are as people and as learners. They know their passions, what they need, and how to best support them. In a lot of schools, it’s less about the children and more about the adults, but not here. And when you’re student-centered, everything you do is in their best interest. This has been my compass my entire career. Administrators have to make multiple decisions a day, but any decision that’s good for children is a good decision, and I can sleep at night.

## First and Lasting Impressions

From the moment I was introduced to McLean it was very clear to me that this is a school that walks the talk, which is rare. Everyone I met was warm, friendly, funny, and engaged. It was the first time in an interview that I was asked about me as a person, not just about my experience. Which makes sense since it is part and parcel of what you bring to the work, but again, unfortunately, not typical in a hiring process. So I was immediately intrigued and then, in addition, everything resonated with my experience: the

strengths-based Abilites Model®; Restorative Justice and the importance of repair and perspective-taking; supporting students with a range of learning needs by meeting them where they are; and, of course, the overall emphasis on relationships and connection. I knew this was a school community I wanted to be part of.

## Challenges and Opportunities

There’s a lot happening in the world politically, socially, and economically that makes being an educator challenging. It makes being a human challenging! But that’s part of the job: providing students with multiple opportunities to think differently about situations, and to develop their own thinking. McLean has always been about welcoming people who think and learn in a variety of ways, so this is not new; it’s just about staying connected to our values and continuing to create space for expression and exploration of ideas. My job will be supporting teachers in doing that important work to create a safe community of learners and a culture of belonging.

## Who Knew?

If you had told me back when I was a teenager that one day I’d be an Upper School Administrator working with this age group, I would never believe it—I hated high school! But my 18-year-old self was very different from even my 22-year-old self who chose to study education. If you stay open to things, a

lot can happen for the better. For me, the turning point was having smaller classes and professors who really loved what they were teaching and seeing connections in different areas of study. My understanding of art helped me better understand history which helped me appreciate the role of religion in developing societies, and so on. I am really interested in an interdisciplinary approach to education; learning is more meaningful—and easier—when you are able to see and make connections across subjects.

## Looking Forward

I’d love to build on the work McLean is already doing: maintaining consistent and high expectations for students and ourselves; the role of restorative justice in community building; further embedding diversity, equity, and inclusion in our day to day work; and supporting faculty in having, and seeking, what they need to be their best for the students. Also, being in a classroom again and with the students is something I’m really excited about. I love this age group, I love that they are still young but also maturing right in front of you. They can be self-focused but also incredibly kind and self-assured. I think it will be important to remind ourselves that, regardless of their mature appearance, our students are still children and we are the grown-ups tasked with guiding and supporting them. They’re going to be goofy at times—and honestly, we can be, too!



## Five Things Kristen Vogel Can't Live Without

1

### Family.

"My husband and I have been married 33 years and have two grown daughters. My oldest is getting married in September!"

2

### Friends.

"I have a small group of very good friends, all from different parts of my life, who mean a lot to me."

3

### A good shoe.

"I have a sign that says 'Cinderella is proof that a new pair of shoes can change your life.' It's true!"

4

### Oceans.

"The perspective you get standing on a shoreline is pretty remarkable."

5

### Mountains.

"I grew up going to the White Mountains and I've hiked 41 of the 48 4,000-footers in New Hampshire, three 4,000-footers in Vermont, a couple in Maine, the highest peak in New York. One of my favorite quotes is from a mountaineer who climbed the Matterhorn: 'Getting to the top is optional, getting down is mandatory.' I think it's a good metaphor for life, particularly for young people. That while ambition is important, equally important is having good sense in pursuit of your goals." ■



## Introducing New Head of Middle School Kymberli Rivers

**"My North Star is to be the educator I wish I'd had"**

*Kymberli Rivers is a dynamic educational leader with deep expertise in academic administration, faculty development, and student-centered instruction.*

*Throughout her career, Kymberli has been known for the ability to coach educators, elevate faculty collaboration, and create inclusive learning environments that foster growth for both students and staff. Her leadership style is a thoughtful blend of strategic vision, pedagogical innovation, and an unwavering commitment to student success and educator empowerment, and she is excited to share all this—and more—with the McLean School community as our new Head of Middle School.*

### Time to Align

When I heard about the position at McLean, I was at a point where I was seeking to better align my personal and professional passions. I was very intentional and clear about the kind of learning environment I wanted to support. A recruiter I knew reached out to say, "There's a school looking to hire an administrator and they are using the same word you've been using in your search," and the word was unicorn. That unique person or situation that's hard to come by. Naturally, I was intrigued and wanted to learn more, and I was like, oh, this place is exceptional: the language they use, the way they interact, their approach to education. It was real, and it was the exact alignment I was after. And that includes living in an area with four seasons, which is something I'm really looking forward to!

### The Magic of Middle School

This is a special age group because Middle Schoolers have a foot in both worlds. They are very

much still children and are okay with embracing that and the joy that goes with it; they don't take themselves too seriously and aren't afraid to take risks. At the same time, they are discovering their passions and points of view. It's such an important time developmentally, and as the adults supporting them, it's our job to remove the barriers to this exploration and lean into "yes, you can" and "let's work through this together."

### Pedagogy (and parenting)

It's a lot like when a child is learning to walk, and when they stumble, they look to the grown-ups for an appropriate response. My experience as an educator is very much intertwined with my experience as a parent; each informs the other and makes me better in both areas. My daughter just graduated from college, but when she was in Middle School, she had one teacher in particular who championed her ability in math, and I saw how that

*Continued on page 4.*

## continued... Head of Middle School, Kymberli Rivers

belief and confidence shaped her. If I can be the person who can remind a student or a teacher that they are capable, and I can help them bring their dreams to fruition, I'm happy. That's absolutely what McLean is about: believing in students so they believe in themselves.

### The Power of Words

As a student myself, I had the opposite experience. I can think of very few teachers who made an effort to light me up and were positive in any particular way. I had a high school guidance counselor tell me that I shouldn't waste my time thinking about a four-year university. One college and Master's degree later, I'm like, what was that about? My North Star is to be the educator that I wish I'd had—the cheerleader, the motivator, the person who sees children with no judgment. The person who seeks to find a student's strengths, even if they don't, and to call it out and name it, help them see it and internalize it, and orchestrate opportunities for them to be successful. I think the road would have been a lot less bumpy for me if I'd had that in school. This is my leadership approach, as well: to find out from teachers who they want to be as educators and then figure out what they need to make it happen and support them through it.

### Seen and Celebrated

There's a lot I'm excited about for McLean, including continuing the very clear celebration of diversity. Out loud, authentic, whole-person diversity. And I appreciate that it's not just allowed here but encouraged, expected, and celebrated. Anything I can do to continue that effort, I will. And I'm excited to show up as a whole

person, too! It's not easy these days, and it will take courage to stay that course. The work will be to not get distracted by the noise but also to not disconnect from it because while McLean could be a beautiful oasis of diversity, our students and families—and we—all still live in the world. So, rather than ignore what's going on around us, we want to empower our community, equip them to handle the hard, and work together with parents in supporting their children. Middle School is also a time when students may begin to separate from their family's belief systems. So bringing courage, clarity, and compassion to our work as trusted partners is going to be key.

### Something(s) that Might Surprise You

People meet me and think, "She's obviously an extrovert," because I'm not shy, and I'm bubbly and energetic, but the truth is that, at my core, I'm an introvert—I recharge through reflection and take time every day to do yoga, journaling, and meditation. My daughter Kaylen and I talk every day, and my cell phone ringtone for her is from *The Family Guy*, which catches people off guard sometimes! I also love sci-fi, fantasy, and superheroes. I even created a class once called Superheroes, Monsters, and Villains of Literature, Television, and Film. These were my most reluctant readers, and they read as much as, or more than, my AP students! Which is something McLean knows: if you take what children are interested in and inspired by and use that as a gateway to learning, anything is possible. ■

## Mustang Golf Open

On Monday, April 28, members of the McLean School community — including parents, alums, the Golf Team, and friends — took a well-deserved day off to enjoy the Mustang Golf Open at Blue Mash Golf Course. Chaired by McLean parents, **Jeremy Dresner** and **Jason Wilcox**, the all-inclusive outing featured lunch, range balls, and 18 holes of scramble-format golf, complete with McLean golf swag and exciting prizes. Participants signed up solo or with friends and were placed on balanced teams based on handicap, making it a fun and relaxed experience for golfers of all levels. The day wrapped up with a lively after party and Awards Ceremony at Blue Mash, all in support of McLean School. **Save the date for next year - May 30, 2026!** ■





# Alum Profile

## Sarah Serenyi '19

### Unearthing Potential

When Sarah Serenyi toured McLean as a prospective third grader, she knew immediately that it was the school for her. “Everyone was so welcoming, and the individual attention students got from their teachers stood out to me,” she says. “I knew that was something I wanted, too.”

She found it easy to make friends and also found career inspiration in her Middle and Upper School Latin classes and school trips to Rome and Greece. “My teachers incorporated various aspects of history into the learning, and that really got me interested in archeology,” says Sarah who went on to Dickinson College, graduating in May 2023.

Interestingly, Sarah says, what first drew her to Dickinson was the school’s astronomy program—“I’ve always been interested in outer space and alien life!”—but she quickly found the subject’s emphasis on physics a little daunting and by the middle of sophomore year had declared her major in archeology and minor in classical studies. “I didn’t want to do just math for a living, or just writing,” she says. “Archeology is the perfect mix of both.”

In her junior year, Sarah spent a semester abroad in Italy, handling ancient artifacts and studying catalogue systems at the American Academy of Rome. She returned to the city for the summer after college graduation to work at The Field School, cleaning and cataloguing bones and remains from earlier efforts as well as excavations of her own.

Today, Sarah works at St. Mary’s College of Maryland, where she alternates between the field and the lab, processing materials and records for projects including the Rappahannock Indigenous Cultural Landscape Survey. The days are long and exhausting, but she wouldn’t change a thing. “I love digging in the dirt, and piecing together history,” she says. This fall, she’ll attend graduate school at Indiana University of Pennsylvania to pursue a master’s degree in applied archeology.

Sarah credits McLean with helping her gain comfort and confidence in public speaking and self-advocacy, which have benefited her both personally and professionally. “I was the student head of the Service League, which



really helped,” she says. “Every week I’d have to get up in front of groups of people, sometimes the whole Upper School, and talk about our activities. It helped to be excited about the work we were doing, but also that McLean was a safe space to go outside my comfort zone.”

When she’s not focused on archeological digs and documentation, Sarah enjoys cooking and, more recently, crochet—“a great stress reliever!” And while her work is very much about the past, she also has her eye on the future: in 10 years, Sarah says she’d love to be working out in the field, maybe running her own projects or volunteer digs overseas. “My dream, though, is to one day do something in the area of astroarchaeology, which looks at how ancient peoples used astronomy in their daily lives, including their artwork, architecture, and religious life,” she says. And whether she pursues work in that realm or not, there’s no doubt that, for Sarah, the sky’s the limit. ■



# Graduation

The Class of 2025 Graduation Ceremony was a memorable celebration of achievement, resilience, and community spirit. Held on a beautiful bright morning, the event brought together students, families, alums, and faculty to honor the hard work and accomplishments of this outstanding graduating class. A highlight of the ceremony was the keynote address by Rick Klein, Vice President and Washington, DC Bureau Chief for ABC News (and a McLean parent!) who encouraged graduates to lead with integrity, stay curious, and embrace the challenges ahead. Congratulations to these Awardees: Valedictorian, **Daniel Klein**; Class Speaker and Board of Trustees Leadership Award, **Quinn McNally**; Lifer, **Jack Hill**; and Head of School Award, **Makayla (Jayden) Smith**.

Congratulations also to the outstanding faculty and staff members - Dr. Gina Dominick and Danilo Espinoza, who were honored with the prestigious Ham Bishop Award this year! This award recognizes individuals who consistently go above and beyond in their dedication, leadership, and service to our school community. Their unwavering commitment to students, tireless efforts behind the scenes, and positive impact on campus life embody the very best of our values. We are incredibly grateful for their passion and proud to celebrate their well-deserved recognition. ■







# Departmental Honors

## Athletics

Nate Joseph & Caitlin Folliard '26

## English

George Polis

## History

Jacob Mallory

## Literature

Aidan McNally

## Mathematics

Aidan McNally & Skyler Wolff

## Performing Arts

Simon Bacher & Declan Connaughton - *Instrumental*

Juliet Josselyn - *Theatrical Arts - Drama*

Daniel Klein - *Theatrical Arts - Technical*

Colin Brannan - *The Brenda C. Crawley Choral Award*

## Science

Juliet Josselyn

## The Gross Family Prize in Computer Education

Sagan Larson-Rabin

## Visual Arts

Quinn McNally

## World Languages

Kaitlyn Fisher - *American Sign Language*

Kelly O'Brien - *Latin*

Gabriel Adum & Louis Diamond - *Spanish*

## Head of Upper School Award

Gabriel Adum

## The Michael H. Saxenian Award For Environmental Activism

Brooks Rand

## Academic Resilience Award

Reid Gregorio

## Heart of the Herd Award

Rewa Diaz-Asper, Isabella Chalfant '26

Katherine Mackall '26

## UPCOMING EVENTS

*Save the Dates!*

**August 29**

Opening of School

**September 2**

Classes Begin

**September 20**

Fall Parent Social

**September 28**

Classes 2005 & 2015 Alum Reunions

**October 18**

Fall Family Walk & Day of Service

**October 24 & 25**

Grades 9-12 Fall Theater Performance

**November 15**

Annual Celebration

**November 19**

Grandparent Educational Speaker

**November 21 & 22**

Grades 5-8 Fall Theater Performance

**November 23**

Friendsgiving

**December 6**

Family Bingo

**January 10**

Alum Social

**January 24**

Mustang Chili Cook Off

[mcleanschool.org/events](http://mcleanschool.org/events)