

THE CURRENT

AN ALUMNI PUBLICATION OF THE MISSISSIPPI SCHOOL FOR MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE FOUNDATION DEC. 2017 ISSUE 4



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#8 Public High School

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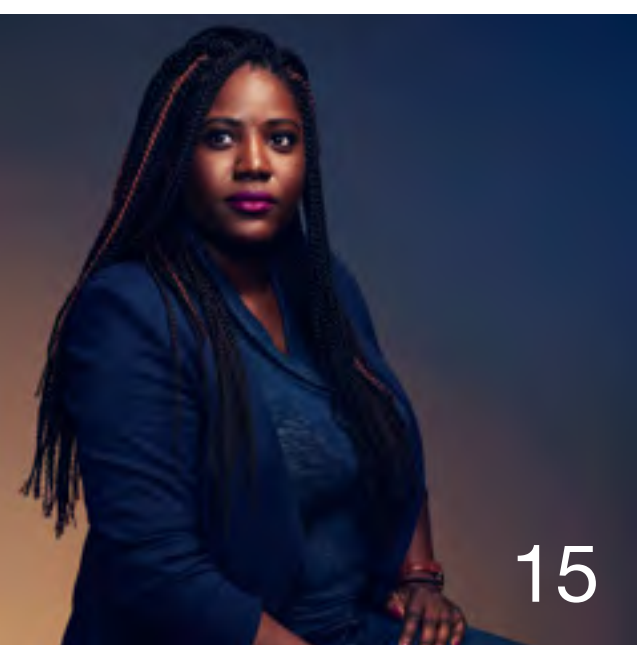
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MAKING WAVES

- 5 KATE MEDLEY, C/O 1999
STORIES WORTH TELLING
- 11 DR. SACOBY WILSON, C/O 1993
THE FIRST AND SECOND LIVES OF...
- 15 DR. ELIZABETH WAYNE, C/O 2005
ON THE WAY TO TED
- 19 LUNDY MARSHALL, C/O 2009
A MISS. TRAINED BEHAVIOR ANALYST
- 21 CARLY SNEED, C/O 2016
FROM MISS. TO CHINA

CURRENT FEATURES

- 3 ALUMNI NEWS
- 23 THE DELTA CHINESE
- 26 NOT YOUR ORDINARY SUMMER CAMP
- 29 ON THE PASSING OF 3 LEGENDS AND MEMORIALS
- 31 EMMA RICHARDSON, FOUNDING FACULTY MEMBER
- 38 SCHOOL UPDATE
- 43 ALUMNI WEEKEND



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Greetings MSMS Alumni, parents and friends! I am excited to present to you the 4th annual edition of *The Current* on behalf of the MSMS Foundation. As always, this is a collaborative project, and we are truly grateful for everyone who has donated their time and effort into bringing this wonderful magazine to life.

This is my 3rd year serving as the director of operations for the MSMS Foundation. I have witnessed tremendous growth in this short period of time, and am confident in the continuation of this momentum going forward. It is your commitment to giving back to MSMS that has helped the Foundation further its mission to help support the school and students, faculty and staff. Your dedicated responses to our campaigns and attentiveness to the growing needs of the school are a driving force in helping MSMS continue to be an opportunity for excellence.

Our goal is to ensure that you stay informed and engaged through the Foundation and we have several ways of keeping you updated. We are working to keep our supporters up to date through our quarterly e-newsletters, alumni events, social media and this magazine. My personal favorite is sharing the #TBT (Throwback Thursday) posts on the Foundation's Facebook page. I love seeing the comments from alumni under a photo of them during their time as an MSMS student. It truly is a treat.

Going forward, we encourage you to continue being an active part of the MSMS Family. Whether your contribution is volunteering your time or donating to a campaign, you are an important part of MSMS's future. We need alumni, parents and all of our supporters to be active advocates for MSMS. The best way to do this is to stay engaged through one of our channels of communication (social media, e-newsletters, alumni events, etc). In the meantime, please enjoy catching up with some familiar faces, hearing the latest happenings and maybe take a stroll down memory lane with this edition of *The Current*.

Thank you,

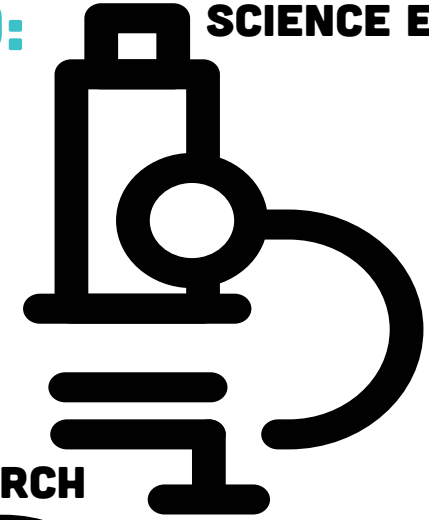
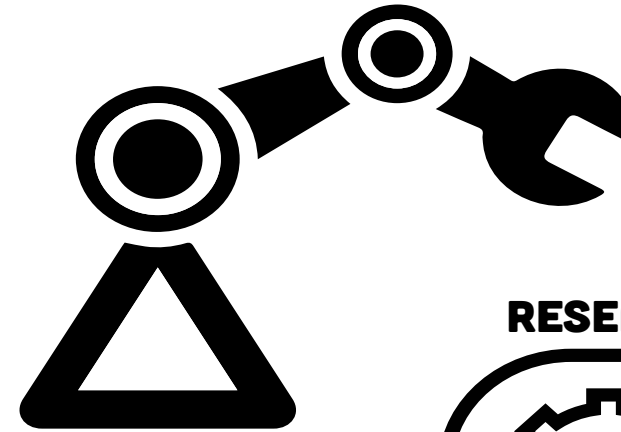
Kassie Brooks



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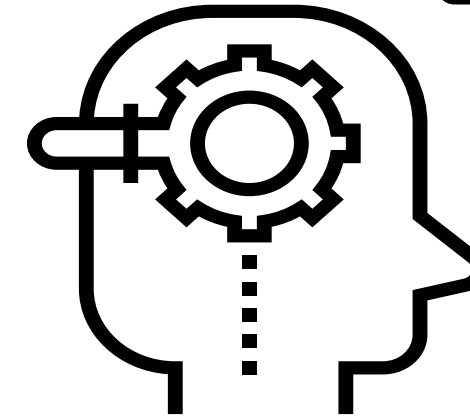
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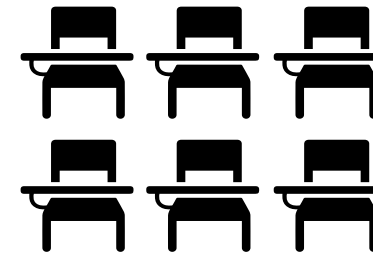
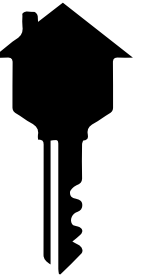


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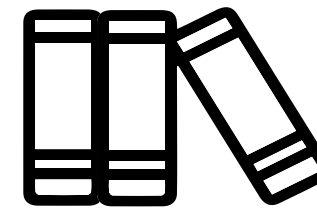
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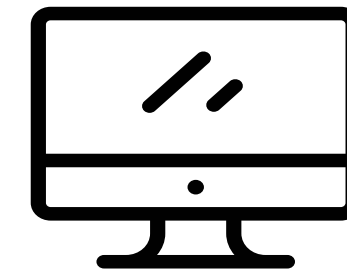
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MESSAGE FROM THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



MSMSAA President Kimberly Thames Padeletti '02 is promoting "A Lifelong Journey with MSMS" in her talks on her travels to different regions this year. "As MSMS alumni we are a truly unique network," notes Padeletti, a Houston-based chemical engineer with BHP Billiton.

"We have an amazing group of professionals from Mississippi that fought their way through MSMS and to the top of their industries. We are not only fighters, but we have incredible diversity in terms of people and skill sets."

MENTOR PROGRAM.

She also plans to focus on building ways for alumni to connect with the class of 2017 as formal mentors and in panel discussions. "The mentorship program is an excellent example of one of the many benefits of our alumni network, not only for recent MSMS grads struggling to get summer internships or finding a career path, but also for mid-career alumni who may want some management experience as a formal mentor or for a seasoned professional that wants to give back," she explains. MSMSAA has initially provided mentors for outgoing and incoming seniors with someone in the field in which they would like to practice. "We envision that this will not be something that is too time intensive for the mentor/mentee. One email or phone exchange per quarter and one in person meeting per year, if possible."

If you are interested in becoming a mentor, hosting a regional meetup (in particular for Memphis, Tuscaloosa, or Huntsville) or providing any feedback on MSMSAA, please contact Kim at kim.padeletti@gmail.com.



MEETUPS.

MSMSAA also has plans to increase overall engagement within the alumni population and to assist in making new connections and collaborating through sharing advice, ideas, resources and experiences by region. Our MSMS alumni from the class of 1990 to the class of 2017 cover professionals in every industry and in every region. Since Padeletti started in the role, MSMSAA has held meetups in Boston, the Mississippi Gulf Coast, Houston, Jackson, Washington, DC and Portland. With more meetups planned in places like Chicago, Atlanta and Hattiesburg. "My hope is that alumni will greatly benefit from these local in-person networking meetups while also raising some funds for our alma mater."



meetups.

 /groups/MSMSAlumni

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www.msmsaa.org





Stories

WORTH TELLING

Kate Medley
class of 1999



By Sarah Sapp, c/o 1999

When you ask children what they want to be when they grow up, you can count on getting a lot of doctor, teacher, astronaut, fire fighter and police officer responses. If you asked 10-year-old Kate Medley in what profession she would land, her answer was simple—Editor-in-Chief of the New York Times.

Although she has yet to assume that particular role, you can still find plenty of her work in the renowned publication as a contributing photojournalist to the NYT since 2005. While her career in storytelling continues to lead her on adventures across the globe as a photojournalist and documentarian, her own story started in Jackson, Mississippi.

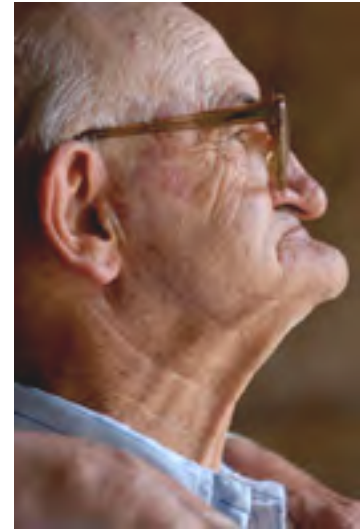
“My interest in journalism started early,” said Medley. “We always had newspapers at the kitchen table growing up, and journalists’ names were spoken with a reverent tone. The summer after I finished high school, I enrolled in a photography class at Millsaps College. On several occasions that summer, my dad would take me out driving around the rural areas northwest of Jackson. ‘Just tell me when to stop,’ he’d say. We mostly stopped when I saw people sitting on the porch or doing something in the front yard. It was my first experience using a camera as a passkey to learn about the lives of others. I was hooked.”

A proud product of Jackson Public Schools, Medley attended Murrah High School until a friend of hers from home, Rebekah Page, went to MSMS and convinced her to apply and ultimately attend from 1997-1999.

Like many MSMS Alumni, Medley found inspiration in Carl Butler’s history classes and his encouragement to bring history to life through Tales from the Crypt, Pilgrimage and field trips to historical places. “Many of us who grow up in Mississippi tend to wrestle with our roots and the history of this place, and I think that’s a good and productive thing. Folks like Mr. Butler encouraged that kind of introspection and understanding.”

After earning her Bachelor of Arts in photojournalism from the University of Montana and completing a fellowship in visual journalism from the Pointer Institute in 2004, Medley pursued her master’s in Southern Studies from the University of Mississippi.

“As I was passing back through Mississippi in the summer of 2005, I decided to start on a documentary project I’d been kicking around for some time, making portraits of the major players in the Civil Rights Movement—those who fought for greater civil rights and those who fought against them,” said Medley. “As a result of this, I started making photos of Edgar Ray Killen in his home in the weeks leading up to his trial for the murder of the three civil rights workers in Neshoba County. When the trial began, I was asked to cover it for the New York Times.



“My experience in getting to know Mr. Killen and then covering his trial only made plain to me how much I had yet to learn about my Mississippi home and, specifically, the Civil Rights Movement,” said Medley. “The Center for Southern Studies graciously welcomed me into their fold at the last minute that fall. My Master’s thesis project was a continuation of the work I began with Mr. Killen—a series of interviews with the people who were opposed to the Civil Rights Movement, in an attempt to understand – some 40 years later – what was motivating them in the 60s and how they’ve come to feel about it since.”

Medley expanded her study and documentation of the Civil Rights Movement with her next venture, Counter Histories. She pitched the Southern Foodways Alliance, an institute of the Center for Southern Studies at UM, on a film series to document the lunch counter protests of the 1960s as a micro-movement within the Civil Rights Movement. Leading up to the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act, she and a team of filmmakers set out to document five of these lunch counter sit-ins across the country, including Jackson, Mississippi; Nashville, Tennessee; Rock Hill, South Carolina; Durham, North Carolina; and Cambridge, Maryland, recording as many first person narratives as possible. The full project is available online at counterhistories.com

...that’s when storytelling work began to really feel like a responsibility.

“When I started documenting the major players in the Civil Rights Movement, that’s when storytelling work began to really feel like a responsibility” said Medley. “Someone like Virginia William—an African-American woman living here in Durham, North Carolina, who sat down at a segregated ice cream counter in 1957 and subsequently got arrested for her protest—until recently, her story was not documented in any meaningful way. Similarly, when I sat down to do oral histories and photographs with Tut Patterson and William Simmons, the men who birthed the White Citizens’ Council, I was documenting a part of Mississippi history that was – at that time and in that way – thus far unrecorded. As is particularly apparent now, we see recurrent themes throughout our nation’s history, and for this reason it’s vital that we document and study that history.”

She has produced six documentary films and 22 projects combining oral history and photography with SFA and continues to serve as board member of SFA Content Board.

“I never could have imagined focusing one’s study and documentary work on food culture, but I was lucky to stumble upon the work of the Southern Foodways Alliance during my tenure at the Center for Southern Studies,” said Medley. “John T. Edge and the SFA team have been incredibly influential in my career trajectory, encouraging and making it possible for me to study the intersection of food and civil rights.”

After college, Medley looked for professional opportunities with organizations she felt a connection to and ultimately pitched her skills to Whole Foods Market (WFM) for a position that didn’t exist yet—documentary storyteller. From 2007-2017, Medley developed and executed media projects with the purpose of strengthening storytelling initiatives around local growers and complementing brand marketing initiatives. She served as art director for WFM regional teams and international freelance teams on media creation, building a domestic and international network of more than 75 photography and videography freelancers. She developed audiences and distribution channels, both in-stores and online. With the public’s demand for knowing more about where their food comes from on the rise, Medley’s contributions to WFM content marketing became critical to the brand’s success.





From documenting the annual sheep round-up in Iceland to joining Alaskan fisher people on their annual wild sockeye salmon run, Medley's career with WFM took her all over the map. "I spent a week in northern Peru filming the scallop and tilapia industries, Costa Rica for bananas and pineapples, Yucatan Peninsula for red fish, Montana and Idaho for beef, California for chicken and then up and down the East Coast documenting farmers, ranchers, fisher people, soap makers, cracker producers...literally, anyone who was selling us product."

After 10 years with WFM, Medley decided to turn her passion and experience into her own business.

"The Whole Foods gig was a great job for me especially in my 20s. I was traveling all the time, meeting interesting characters, shooting every day. I was refining my craft while also seeing the inner workings of a Fortune 500 company. A few years ago, I became increasingly interested in the business side of the equation, so I recently struck out on my own to flex the entrepreneurial muscle and see what happens."

Her firm is called Nutgraf—an old journalism term that is a contraction of nutshell and paragraph, which indicates the concise point of the story, or the heart of the matter. "With Nutgraf, I aim to do storytelling work for good causes, campaigns and companies," said Medley. "It's a small creative agency, heavy in video storytelling. Alongside some non-profit projects, we're currently doing work for the University of North Carolina, JP Morgan Chase Foundation and Whole Foods Market."

In her new venture, Medley hopes to work with the change-makers of the South. "I'm both intrigued by and devoted to this region. Our storytelling potential

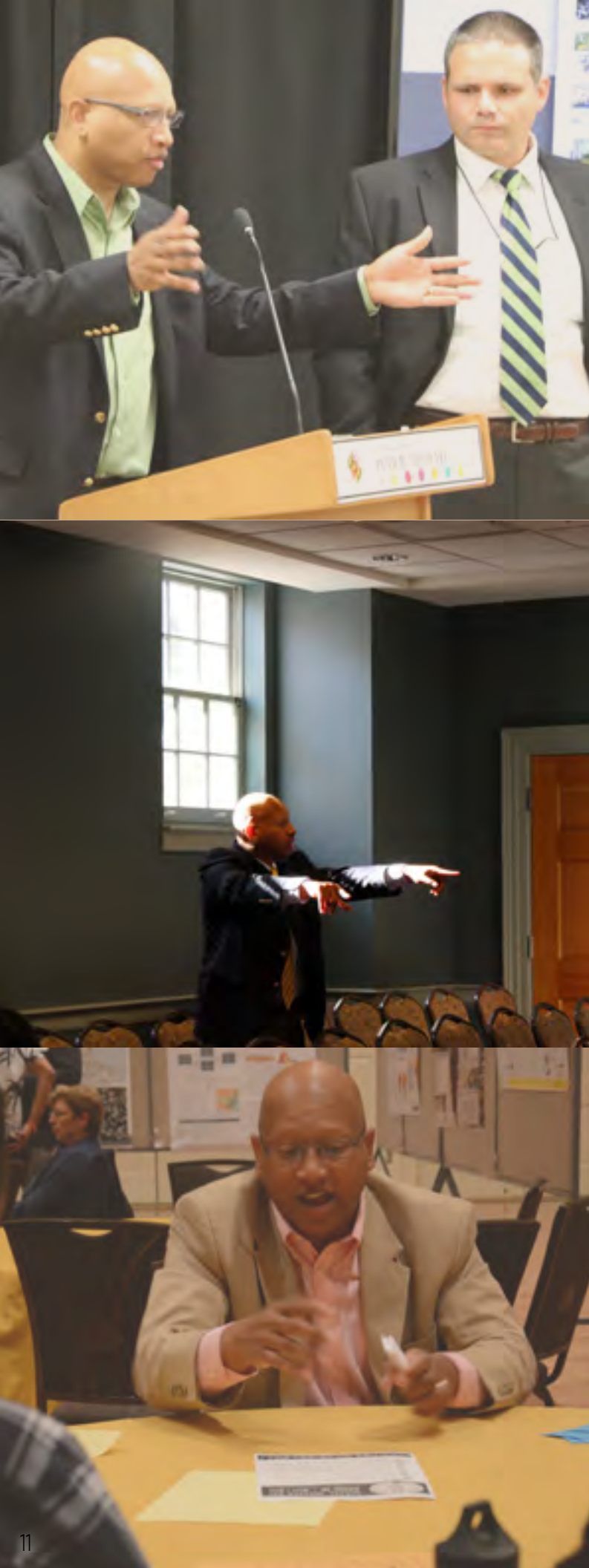
in the South is off the charts, and our opportunity for progress is immense. Through my work with Nutgraf, I'll continue tapping into and amplifying that."

Medley has learned a lot through her 15 years of professional storytelling. "Regardless of who you're talking to, in what region of the world, on what topic, people like to share their story and people like to be listened to," said Medley. "We all have this in common. The most common question I got asked about my Master's thesis was, 'How do you get these white supremacists to talk to you?' The answer is, 'I ask, and then I listen.' That's it. It works almost every time."

"...Our storytelling potential in the South is off the charts, and our opportunity for progress is immense."

Kate's work can be found on her website www.katemedley.com. ■





The first and second lives of

DR. SACOBY WILSON: PROFESSOR, SCIENTIST, LEADER

*class
of
1993*

By Crystal Lauderdale, c/o 2000

Dr. Sacoby Wilson divides life into two parts. The second part begins after high school and includes college, work and family. It's the part that comprises the bulk of one's life. The part in which dreams are either realized or they are not, purposes are either fulfilled or they are not, success is either attained or it is not. The first part is to equip one for all that.

"MSMS was part of my first life," Wilson says. "In a way, it prepared me for my life now."

Wilson, who graduated from MSMS in 1993, is now an associate professor at the University of Maryland's Institute for Applied Environmental Health. His research focuses on communities that have been impacted by environmental hazards and pollution. Working directly with citizens, he helps them collect environmental data to solve health problems and address injustice.

"My goal is to use science to bring voice to the voiceless and hope to the hopeless... It's really about empowering folks through science."

"My goal is to use science to bring voice to the voiceless and hope to the hopeless," Wilson says. "It's really about empowering folks through science."

From the beginning of his first life Wilson knew he wanted to be a scientist. It started with paleontology. At five years old, he could name every dinosaur. His favorite was triceratops. (It still is, in fact.) His parents always encouraged him to read, discover and learn more. Wilson's scientific interests became more personal at the age of seven when he developed alopecia, a condition affecting about two percent of the U.S. population that results in hair loss across some or all areas of one's body. He originally had alopecia areata but now has a version of alopecia totalis.

"One of the reasons I wanted to go into science was to understand why this was happening to me." Wilson says.

His unwavering interest in science and problem solving, combined with a lack of challenging coursework at his hometown high school and a competitive nudge from his friend Malcolm Carstafhnur, inspired Wilson to apply to MSMS.

"My focus was always on education, science and making sure I was the best candidate for getting into the best undergraduate school of my choice and ultimately the best grad school," Wilson said. "I saw [MSMS] as the right opportunity to give me a stronger foundation in the sciences."

Both Wilson and Carstafhnur were accepted. They entered their junior year at the still-new residential magnet.

MSMS was challenging for Wilson, and not just academically. High school is a socially trying period for many teens, but Wilson found that being a person of color and having a health condition with prominently visible indicators, amplified those trials. He experienced racially charged confrontations with a few classmates. He got suspended. He also received his first failing grade. It was in an English course. Overall, the experience wasn't smooth, and it was far from easy. The academics, however, made it worthwhile.

"I'm not a quitter," Wilson says. "I always try to overcome challenges."

With that mindset and a focus on his future, Wilson tackled his schoolwork head on. Determined never to make an "F" again, he worked hard the rest of the semester to maintain the highest average in his English class. In all subject areas he embraced the in-depth, advanced courses that set MSMS apart, including participating in *Tales from the Crypt* and history teacher Carl Butler's statewide architecture tour.

"I'm a scientist, but I love history. I love architecture.

I love literature because of MSMS," Wilson says. He credits having a strong foundation in language arts with improving his college essays and research reports moving forward.

In one of Wilson's favorite MSMS courses, he had the opportunity to explore aquatic ecology and participate in a group project studying the local lock-and-dam systems. He and his fellow group members had their research paper published in a peer review journal, a remarkable achievement for students at the high school level and one that Wilson says gave him a more competitive edge when applying to college. Now, as an educator, he encourages his own students to pursue internships, conduct research and get published as early and often as possible.

"One of the benefits of MSMS is ... the fact that you're taking AP courses, rigorous physics courses, the same level of courses that college students are taking," Wilson said. "So when you get to college you're prepared, and you can do more advanced work."

Inspired by his first taste of research and results at MSMS and ready to fulfill his lifelong dream of becoming a scientist, Wilson applied to some of the nation's top programs including Vanderbilt, Georgia Tech, Rice, Michigan, Morehouse, Tuskegee and George Washington. In total, he applied to 14 undergraduate programs and was accepted to 13. He chose to begin his second life at Alabama A&M, a Historically Black College and University (HBCU).

"...I did really well because of the rigor and the difficulty and the way I was challenged by my professors at MSMS."

"When I went to Alabama A&M, I was really prepared for it," Wilson said. "I did really well because of the rigor and the difficulty and the way I was challenged by my professors at MSMS."

Wilson graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in biology and ecotoxicology and a minor in environmental science. When it came to graduate school, he only had eyes for one: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Looking back, Wilson would not recommend anyone take the bold risk of applying to only one graduate program. "Apply to at least three or four," he says. For him though, it all worked out. Wilson says he felt confident in his application to UNC Chapel Hill because of the strong research foundation he built, beginning at MSMS.

Now, holding both a master's degree and doctorate in Environmental Health Sciences from UNC Chapel Hill, Wilson has published 60 papers in peer-reviewed journals and also contributed to four books. He's been cited nearly 740 times, according to Google Scholar, and he's been the recipient or co-recipient of more than 25 research grants totaling nearly \$8 million dollars. He's delivered more than 80 refereed presentations, talks and keynotes, and he's participated in countless non-refereed conferences and events. He has also mentored nearly 75 scholars during his career including postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, undergraduates and high school students. He is particularly proud of leading of over 15 undergraduate and graduate students in community-engaged environmental health research this past summer.

Wilson is currently seeking new funding from National Institutes of Health to address exposure of children to indoor contaminants including pesticides, lead, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) in childcare settings and development of a citizen science monitoring campaign to study and address air quality problems near the port in North Charleston, South Carolina. At the time of interview, he had just returned from a working vacation, was preparing to give legal testimony on behalf of an environmentally impacted community that coming Wednesday and was getting ready for a workshop on the environmental and social determinants of bed bugs that Thursday and Friday. He was also preparing for a U.S. Environmental Protection

"In many ways, STEM could be the economic future for the state of Mississippi...If you invest in MSMS, you invest in the state's economy."

Agency training program in Biloxi the following month. He hopes that last opportunity opens more doors for him to help people in his home state. Wilson's daughters - ages two and seven - recently made up a rap song about their dad called, *The Work Don't Stop.*

"What can I say?" Wilson says. "I like to stay busy."

Wilson is loving his second life.

"My wife is great. My kids are great. I've got tenure, and I'm doing the work I love," he says.

Perseverance, hard work and top-notch educational opportunities helped Wilson realize his dreams, achieve success and assist others as both an expert and an educator. He wants more people to have the same chance at success, and he's a staunch advocate for improving STEM education at all levels. There's a lot of untapped talent across the country, Wilson asserts, and he believes that's due to a lack of funding, and enough qualified STEM educators and programs.

"We need to make the programs, the mission, the principles and the vision of MSMS available to all students, across all age ranges," he says. "MSMS should be the flagship, the gold standard for educational programming in the state of Mississippi."

Having worked directly with communities in need of more scientists, mathematicians, engineers and technologists to solve problems and improve living conditions, Wilson knows that job opportunities in STEM abound.

"In many ways, STEM could be the economic future for the state of Mississippi," he says. "If you invest in MSMS, you invest in the state's economy." ■



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ON THE WAY TO TED

class
of 2005

By Lamees El-Sadek, c/o 2007

Sometimes, your very existence is an act of activism.

A photo of Dr. Elizabeth Wayne's grandmother hangs on the walls of Crystal Springs Middle School (CSMS). Although when Elizabeth's grandmother taught science there, CSMS was called the William H. Hotlzclaw School, the city's segregated school for black students.

Dr. Elizabeth Wayne is an ivy-league trained black woman physicist, who is in the research fight against cancer. Before attending MSMS, Liz had already lived in four cities, but considers home to be in Crystal Springs, a rural town about 30 miles south of Jackson. While the town's education system remains nearly as racially segregated as it existed prior to the Brown v. Board of Education desegregation ruling, Liz is a walking reminder of the hidden figures throughout the state.

Liz, a 2005 MSMS graduate, received a bachelor's degree

in physics from the University of Pennsylvania and both her Master of Science and Doctor of Philosophy in Biomedical Engineering degrees from Cornell University. Currently, she is a University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill postdoctoral researcher, studying how to control immune cell function in cancer utilizing nanotechnology. As Liz describes it, "your immune cells are like the emergency response vehicles in your body. I use nanotechnology to equip immune cells with therapeutic drugs such that when the immune cells arrive at the site of the tumor, they also have extra help. It's a smart way of thinking of drug delivery."

In January 2017, Liz was selected as an internationally-recognized *TED Fellow*, one of only 14 other movers, doers and shakers selected from around the world. Presenting *The Best Delivery Vehicle Has Already*

Been Made: Your Immune Cells, at this year's TED conference in Vancouver, Canada, Liz stood alongside other change agents, including Damon Davis, a filmmaker whose award-winning documentary *Whose Streets?* tells the story of Ferguson, Missouri, and Michael Brown's death.

The prestigious *TED* conference selects fellows who demonstrate an extraordinary potential to positively affect the world. As the program states, "in addition to impressive accomplishment, fine character and a good heart are two very important traits we look for in every potential TED Fellow. More than anything, this focus on character has defined the success of the *TED Fellows* program." Liz was selected for her cancer nanotechnology research, as well as her efforts to promote women in leadership and higher education through her podcast *PhDivas* (<https://soundcloud.com/phdivas>).

The following is an excerpt of an interview with this trailblazing MSMS alumna:

What motivated you to attend MSMS?

Someone came to my school to talk about MSMS. I read that the course catalog offered real physics classes. See, I had this dream of studying physics ever since I was 11, but there were no physics classes at my school. So, at age 15, when presented with the opportunity, I jumped for it. I wasn't afraid of leaving home. I had already been in four different school districts by that point. I got made fun of so much that I remembered thinking "how could this be any worse?"

How do you think MSMS has impacted your trajectory?

I think I would have been successful no matter what, but MSMS helped me become powerful. I would not have had the mathematical preparation to excel in my physics and engineering if it weren't for MSMS. MSMS was and still is, even after all my degrees, the safest, most nurturing and engaging learning environment I have ever been in. It was a place where learning for learning's sake was still valued and rewarded. Those years prepared me for all the things I would experience in the future. I built confidence in my academic abilities. I wish I would have had more time at MSMS. I felt okay being a nerd (there were so many other nerds at MSMS that I actually thought I seemed cool!).

What do you think the role of MSMS is in Mississippi?

This is a very emotion-filled question, as well as a very practical one for me. Any sense of state pride I feel is because of my MSMS education. I consider going back to live in Mississippi, because of what I gained at MSMS. MSMS was this opportunity equalizing ground that was sorely needed. No other high school in the state could say that it had students from every ethnic, gender and class background sitting in the same classroom, let alone living on the same street. MSMS creates ambassadors for Mississippi.

As a black woman from Mississippi, what has it been like to study and work in a STEM profession?

This is a tricky question, because I experience this all at once and yet there are unique ways in which each and every aspect of these identities makes a difference. STEM has a work culture, and it is not one that is used to accommodating a woman or a black person or a black woman in its culture. When people envision a scientist, they don't envision me. When you're the only woman in the classroom and the professors keep saying, "and we're all guys so you know what that's like..." When you are not the mainstream perception of what people expect a STEM person to be, you end up exerting energy towards assimilating that you could have been using to get your work done. You either devote time to advocacy and education (telling you why they can't just touch your hair or your body without permission or why it is hurtful to say the only black person in the room must be a thief) or you keep your silence and watch your sanity degrade. It's like asking someone to choose between water or oxygen and people make these decisions daily. It is invisible and thankless.

What is your professional goal?

I want to be everything. I want to be a professor. I want to turn my research into a product that gets used in the clinic. I want to write a book. I want to influence policy.

What is your dream?

My dream is for Mississippi to be a place where people go for technology innovation. I see Mississippi as an oasis of talent and opportunity. I see the best in Mississippi, and I want everyone else to see that too.

What motivated you to get into your specific field?

It should not be underestimated how important exposure is to one's outlook. I wanted to study high energy physics. However, my first internship was in biophysics, studying the rate of cell membrane fusion. It changed my whole trajectory, from looking at the stars to looking at the human body. I am motivated by solving problems using physics. I've let my curiosity lead me all the way from building microscopes to using those microscopes to see how cancer spreads in the body to developing therapies that can stop cancer spreading (and hopefully being able to visualize that process in a microscope).



What's some of the most important advice you would like to share with MSMS students?

When I was younger, being eager and motivated and brave were my biggest assets. In fact, before I had any degrees or awards, it was all I had. If I truly knew how difficult and sometimes lonely my journey would be, I don't know if I would have done it. I would have been too afraid to take that first step. So my advice is, hold on to your enthusiasm because it will get you through the darkest places of your life. Lastly, dare to dream and have the audacity to pursue those dreams.

What was it like being a TED Fellow?

AMAZING! I am so honored to be a TED Fellow. It's like entering a new, awesome family. There is so much support and encouragement. I feel like anything is possible. It makes me want to work even harder.

Can you share a little bit about home?

Once, while volunteering at the public library, I alphabetized every single book in the building, catching a few that had likely been missing for years. I submitted my college application on an old computer in that library. It was well after closing time, but the application site had crashed twice and it was the last day to submit. In that library is also where I discovered the special theory of relativity and started memorizing the periodic table of elements. This small town in Mississippi helped me discover physics, helped me get into college and gave me my first place in the world that I called home.■

TED2017 | The Future You

TED Fellows Talks Session 2: <https://tedlive.ted.com/webcasts/2017/session/261>



A MISSISSIPPI-TRAINED BEHAVIOR ANALYST

By Owen McGuire c/o 2005

class of 2009

“This stuff is really, really cool.”

– PARKER LUNDY

That is Parker Lundy’s succinct summary of the research he conducts in Hattiesburg, Miss. Parker has spent his educational career researching and learning about autism and other development disabilities, specifically how communication and teaching methods can have an impact.

Parker is a member of the 2009 graduating class of MSMS. He attended the University of Southern Mississippi, where he earned a BA in Psychology in 2013. After finishing undergrad at USM, Parker worked for over a year at the South Mississippi State Hospital in Purvis, a facility that focuses on behavioral health for patients with mental illness.

In 2015, just before Parker started working on his Master’s degree at USM, Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant signed a bill requiring autism and similar disabilities to be covered by insurance for children. This opened more opportunities in the state to care for and study autism, including the formation of a program to train Applied Behavior Analysts.

“The *Applied Behavior Analysis* program is beneficial because we are the first class of behavior analysts who were trained in Mississippi,” Parker said. “There are maybe 30 in the whole state.”

As a member of the program’s first cohort, Parker continues learning with on-the-job experience and more education. He has just begun a school psychology doctoral program this year at USM.

A lot of his work and research takes place in students’ classrooms. Parker prides himself and his fellow researchers

on taking a scientific approach to their work.

“Children who are not on a standard curriculum path will have an individualized education program (IEP),” Parker explained. “If we have three students who have similar IEP goals, we will consider a methodology we can use, then compare the effectiveness of each component of the methodology to find the best approach for each student and other students with similar IEP goals.”

“THE CULTURE AT MSMS IS ALWAYS INSPIRING YOU, CHALLENGING YOU, HELPING YOU THINK ABOUT SOMETHING DIFFERENTLY,” PARKER SAID. “THEY REALLY INSTILL A ‘THIS MATTERS!’ KIND OF APPROACH. IT FEELS LIKE SCIENTIST TRAINING.”

Taking this approach may be time-consuming, but it yields productive results.

“We had a few kids we were teaching letters, and other kids we were teaching colors, and we compared different correction procedures. With this information, we can write up a protocol based on the work we did, give it to the teacher, and say, ‘Do exactly this with this certain student.’”

While a scientific approach is normal with fields like chemistry and physics, some people need time to warm up when the approach is

used with students.

“Even if you do not understand what we are doing, you can see that it really does work. This is a science. We are not just in here doing something that we think will work.”

Regardless of the perception, the proof is in the outcomes.

“The results are empirically based, and it helps both the teacher and the students,” said Parker. “It is so awesome to see that.”

Parker credits his appreciation of the scientific approach to his time at MSMS. He says the school has a way of getting you into the scientific mindset.

“The culture at MSMS is always inspiring you, challenging you, helping you think about something differently,” Parker said. “They really instill a ‘This matters!’ kind of approach. It feels like scientist training.”

For Parker, it is not just what he learned in the labs and classrooms of Hooper Academic Building. He says the entire

atmosphere of the school impacted his approach to his current work.

“It is inspirational when you are around other people who understand what you are saying and who are motivating you to be more technical in the way you talk about these things,” said Parker. “It is not just how to engage in scientific practices, but how to talk about it.

“Every professor was so good in that way, too,” he added. “Having that modeled for me by teachers at a young age, I could not quantify the positive impact that had on me.”

When Governor Bryant signed the bill for insurance to cover autism and other developmental disabilities, Mississippi became the 40th state to pass such legislation. Parker says he is honored to be part of ongoing behavior research in Mississippi.

“While I was working in the state hospital in Purvis, I kept thinking, ‘What are the opportunities and possibilities here in Mississippi?’ What good is it if I cannot apply my research in the place where I am most familiar?”

Thanks to Parker and the other members of his program, Mississippi’s students with autism and similar developmental disabilities will begin to benefit from this research. ■

From MISSISSIPPI to China



Globe image courtesy of Jade Fenster at Ballery and Co.

By Joy Carino, c/o 2016



Carly Sneed, native of Pontotoc, Mississippi and MSMS graduate in the Class of 2016, has got to be the craziest college freshman of 2016-17. Earlier this year, Sneed spent four months immersed in the language and culture of China, specifically Harbin, a town famous for its Snow and Ice Festival, located in northeastern China near the Russian border.

Sneed's interest in China stemmed from her interest in environmental policy, which in turn began during childhood. She used to watch *Planet Green* "religiously" and her father is a champion of recycling. Her Twitter bio (@SneedCarly) proclaims, "global warming is real." She is now a sophomore at the University of Mississippi, recipient of the *Sally Barksdale Honors College* full-scholarship, and member of the Croft International Studies Institute double majoring in Chinese and international studies. She is even considering minoring in economics. Sneed was also accepted to Ole Miss's *Chinese Flagship* program, a five-year intensive Chinese program that prepares students to become language proficient on a

professional level.

"China, a country that, compared to Europe and America, has only recently industrialized has to use unique strategies to try and reduce its greenhouse gas emissions while still supporting a developing economy. In this regard, China's government has really stepped up their game in recent years, and I think the path China takes in the next few years will set a precedent for developing countries and environmental reform."

This past spring, Sneed participated in *CET Harbin*, an intensive academic program where applicants are recommended to have at least two years of Chinese classes. The students are placed with a Chinese roommate at the Harbin Institute of Technology and were required to agree to a language pledge. "We could only speak English when calling home to family or at the doctor's office. If we were caught speaking English three times, we were kicked out and sent home."

Sneed states that *CET Harbin* is known as one of the toughest Chinese language programs; furthermore, she relates, "I was under qualified for the program, by absolutely any metric except the ones used to get me in... However, due to the intensive nature of Chinese Flagship at Ole Miss, I technically had enough credits to meet the prerequisites, even though I had only studied Chinese for a few months." The other



students in the program were upperclassmen and postgraduates who had studied Chinese for years and had been to China multiple times already. In contrast, she was 18, abroad for the first time and had only studied Chinese for a few months.

Despite being underqualified, Sneed thanks MSMS for the experience and inspiration to apply for the program in the first place and push herself to keep up her GPA. "Even before I arrived in China, I already knew that I would have to work extra hard to keep up, and I really think it's because of MSMS that I had the guts (arrogance, maybe, as well) to go anyway. At MSMS I had taken classes way above my level and over packed my schedule almost every semester, and I always made it through because I told myself I had to. I used that mentality in China as well."

During the program, Sneed took two comprehensive Chinese

language classes. One of her classes was one-on-one, where she worked with a teacher to create her own curriculum. Sneed chose Chinese history from the fall of the Qing Dynasty to the current time, focusing specifically on Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms. "It was my most challenging class, with weekly essays and twice weekly presentations and two research projects

"...That's something else I learned at MSMS; people are going to care a lot more about what you can prove you know more than what your report card shows."

which included a mini thesis presentation. It was a class that pushed me to my absolute edges, and I loved it. I wish every language learner could experience a class like that."

Her experience was more than simply academically enriching; she gained a comfort in a new home and new friends, and she made connections with people from all over the

globe. "Harbin had large populations of Russians, North Koreans and South Koreans. One of my best friends was Algerian. A Chilean girl worked at a cafe near my dorm. It was always so interesting to connect with other foreigners while we all used Chinese instead of our native languages. It showed how Chinese can connect you to others in more ways than you'd ever expect."

From Mississippi to China during only her first year in college, Sneed took definite risks, but she is thankful for the payoff and grateful for her experience at MSMS which helped her do so. "I'm glad I bit off more than I can chew. I knew going in that I was risking a lot (like my GPA) by taking classes I was so under qualified for, but I also knew that my Chinese would improve fastest with this option. That's something else I learned at MSMS; people are going to care a lot more about what you can prove you know more than what your report card shows." ■



When I first arrived in Harbin, I had resigned myself to never having friends due to the fact that we weren't allowed even a little English. But after just a month, me and my roommate procrastinated our homework by gossiping over K-pop together. The rewarding moments came as I talked to a Chinese grad student about politics while we ate in a dingy Mexican restaurant. Rewarding moments came when I walked into my favorite cafe and Bubu, the owner, asked about my day and started making my order before I could decide which worn leather booth I wanted to make my home for the afternoon. The most rewarding aspect was finding a home in the language and the city, finding corners of that big, cold city that felt at times more familiar than Oxford. I really miss Harbin, if you can't tell.

THE DELTA CHINESE



Field image courtesy of Rick Dobbs at UNREAL

By: Lanie Anderson c/o 2010

The Mississippi Delta has a culture of its own within Mississippi and often conjures up images of the blues, cotton fields and flat land for miles. For many Chinese-American alumni from the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science, the Delta is a complex region of the state where many sub-cultures are represented, including their own.

Many Mississippians are unaware of the Delta's Chinese-American presence, but Chinese Americans have a long history and rich heritage. The first Chinese



Americans arrived in the Delta during Reconstruction after farmers recruited them in an effort to replace black freedmen who had worked in the Delta's fields. Chinese Americans quickly recognized the economic disadvantages of working for farmers and identified another need in the Delta's communities: grocery stores.

Greenville, Mississippi, was a popular spot for Chinese grocery stores when Jessica Chu's

parents opened Robert's Grocery in the late 1970s. The store had a reputation for Chinese takeout favorites such as fried rice, pepper steak and egg rolls.

Chu is a 2011 alumna of MSMS currently studying to be a physician's assistant at the University of Texas' Southwestern Medical School in Dallas. She has fond memories of her parents' store, such as "stacking the cokes" – restocking the refrigerators with drinks – after it closed with her sisters.

"I remember my mother teaching me multiplication on the back of cigarette cartons and learning to count change when I was seven years old," Chu said. "My favorite times as a kid were going to the grocery store with my mom every morning to stock up on inventory and hit up the good sales... Growing up in the store gave me such a fun and unique childhood."



L: Chu's father, Robert Chu holds her in his arms in their family grocery store. R: Chu poses for a picture at church with her grandmother she calls "Popo."



Fang traveled five years ago to his father's hometown in China to visit family.

The possibility of opening grocery stores or operating established stores alongside family was not the only economic attraction to the Delta for Chinese Americans. Its fertile landscape has always provided job opportunities for people in agricultural sciences; this was the case for Kenneth Fang's father, a scientist in agricultural research.

A 2010 alumnus of MSMS, Fang was born in China but spent his formative years in Greenville. His father's family lived in a rural area of China with little money, and Fang's father was determined to go to college. After pursuing postdoctoral work in California, he took a job as the lead researcher for a cottonseed company called Delta & Pine Land. The family moved to Greenville when Fang was six years old.

In 2014, Fang earned his undergraduate degree in economics from Yale University and currently studies business at Stanford University in California. Fang and Chu agreed that their parents' hard work and determination had a great impact on their academic pursuits.

"This is a common theme throughout a lot of immigrant families in America and Mississippi," Fang said. "If the parents did leave China and immigrate, it was difficult to do, and they worked really hard. I think that motivation and drive pass down to the next generation, which they definitely have with me. I don't ever want to take anything for granted."

Chinese-American alumni of MSMS had different experiences in their homes. Some of their parents spoke Mandarin or Cantonese at home or were very intentional about remembering and celebrating their Chinese culture. Other parents encouraged their children to assimilate into the broader cultures of America and the Delta, or they blended American and Chinese traditions.



Fang smiles for a photo from his recent trip to Myanmar



L: Kameron Chow (far left) and other students from MSMS wear their Ole Miss apparel for College Reveal Day. R: Kameron Chow (far right) and other friends attend the Blue Letter Banquet for MSMS.

This is true for Kameron Chow, a 2016 alumnus of MSMS studying pre-pharmacy at the University of Mississippi. Chow grew up in Cleveland. He recalls some Chinese traditions such as attending red egg parties, where a Chinese-American family would celebrate an infant's one-month birthday, or receiving white envelopes at funerals with candy and a small coin in them.

"My parents taught me as much as possible about my Chinese heritage," Chow said. "But I'm going to say what my mom told me that her grandfather told her: 'You are an American. You are a Chinese American. You need to learn how to be like an American.' We kept some traditions, but we kept a lot of the American traditions instead of Chinese traditions, or we blended them together."

The demographics in the Delta largely consist of white and black Americans, and a number of Chinese Americans describe feelings of displacement while growing up in the region.

Michelle Zeng, a 2012 MSMS alumna who studied

industrial labor relations at Cornell University, did not think about race a lot when she lived in California, which had a large Asian-American population. When she was 10 years old, her family moved to Greenville, Mississippi, and Zeng began to notice the socioeconomic and racial divides that existed in the Delta.

"I was very comfortable with my identity, and I didn't really consider race until I moved to the Delta," Zeng said. "I was a child still trying to discover my personality and identity, and there was no one to really base that off of because, when you're growing up, you look to other kids who look like you, but I didn't really have that modeled."

Zeng looked to Fang and other Asian-American students in Greenville to see what decisions they made. Fang remembers the late Dr. Charles Brown's description of MSMS as "the most diverse block in all of Mississippi" during his tour as a sophomore in high school. He and Zeng praise MSMS for the community they found among Asian Americans as well as other staff and students. ■



Michelle Zeng (front center) and other girls smile for the camera at MSMS' dorm.



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NOT YOUR ORDINARY SUMMER CAMP

By: Joy Carino c/o 2016



(Above): Braeden Foldenauer and MSMS Campers

"I ALWAYS KNEW THAT MSMS CHANGED MY LIFE, BUT CAMP REVEALED THE EXTENT ITS IMPACT HAS," SAID HAYDEN STOKELY, AN MSMS SENIOR IN THE CLASS OF 2018.



This past June, Hayden was a camp counselor in MSMS's annual Summer Enrichment Camp, held during the second two weeks of June. Campers, counselors and MSMS teachers all can attest to the wonderful experiences they've had on the MSMS campus, even during the summer.

The MSMS Enrichment Camps provide an amazingly fun, intellectually challenging, lifechanging week for rising 7-8th graders and rising 9-10th graders. It is a wonderful experience for the campers to join the tight-knit community of MSMS faculty, alumni and students. MSMS teachers hold classes such as *The Science of Harry Potter*, *The Math of Flight*, or *Life in a Drop of Water*. Students can even take programming classes in *Python*, or learn how to produce various media, from photography to news footage.

While on summer break, MSMS alumni and MSMS students return to back to their alma mater. Madison Wardlaw, class of 2016, a sophomore at Grinnell College, served as a counselor for two years; this year she served as the camp assistant director. "I decided to apply to become a camp counselor because I thought it would be a good opportunity to give back. MSMS has given me a lot, academically, and I feel like every child in Mississippi is deserving of the opportunities that I have received from this institution."

Camp would not be able to run as

smoothly as it does without the help of camp counselors. Camp counselors spend a week or two in the MSMS dorms with the students, befriending them but enforcing rules like "light's out," of course. Braeden Foldenauer, class of 2017 and rising freshman at Harvard University, states, "It was a really interesting experiencing MSMS as someone in charge of minors. I gained a lot of sympathy for the ResLife and staff because I soon discovered how stressful it can be to look after a group of students."

Within that crazy week, campers from all over the state (and the country even) become friends. Dustin Dunaway, class of 2017 and freshman at Yale University, was a camper himself, and he recalls meeting his best friend, Tyler Hartman, at camp. They went on to room together for two years as MSMS students. Both Dunaway and Hartman served as camp counselors as well. Wardlaw relates, "My favorite part about camp is getting to know the campers. When they come, we definitely think of them as kids, but when talking to them, they exude so much positivity and maturity... Most importantly, all of these children have their own stories that help to make camp such an enriching learning experience."

The counselors can all attest to the impact camp has had on them and the students. Dunaway first heard about camp from his 7-8th grade science teacher, Kristy Cline

Brannon (class of 2005), who "highly encouraged me to attend the camp so I could 'just try it out.'" Furthermore, he said, "Attending the camp and meeting Mrs. Zarandona...convinced me that MSMS was where I belong, a place where everyone asks questions and Mrs. Z had all the answers."

In addition to math and science classes, the camp also encourages leadership skills. From leadership activities in the evenings to the blindfolded water balloon toss on Field Day, the students learn and apply the four pillars of MSMS: scholarship, creativity, community and service. Teachers and counselors lead leadership activities in the evenings, such as wild photo scavenger hunts, building structures out of marshmallows and noodles and more. Michael McDonald, class of 2014 and senior at the University of Southern Mississippi says, "My absolute favorite part about camp would have to be the point from which my campers transition from being shy and quiet in the beginning to blossoming into sophisticated young leaders."

Hayden Stokely continues, "My favorite part about camp is seeing the campers succeed at challenges, whether those are complicated puzzles in group activities or creative tasks at hand. Most attend camp having effortlessly excelled in school, and [at camp] they suddenly face their first real difficulty solving problems."

To parents considering sending your child to camp, don't hesitate. The magic of camp never ceases to amaze and inspire. Foldenauer sums up his experience: "Overall, it was an incredible experience serving as a counselor. I took pride in serving the school, bonded with the students, and enjoyed reminiscing my two years at MSMS with the other counselors. I believe everyone walked away taking something important with them from this program." Even students from out of state have benefited from camp, as there have been campers from North Carolina and even Washington D.C. ■

*"I keep coming back because I love this camp. Not only do we get to watch the kids thrive, but I feel like this camp has also helped me grow and mature as well. It has given me the opportunity to handle real responsibilities, continue to learn from my former teachers and envision myself in leadership positions where I can continue to give back to the students of Mississippi."
- Madison Wardlaw*

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Michael D. Goggans, c/o 1991, MSMS Foundation Past President

On the Passing of Three Legends

Every year we lose people who are important to our community, but this year, three particularly prominent figures passed. The MSMS Foundation and MSMS would not be where they are today were it not for the contributions of Charles Brown, Wayne Bryan and Dr. Bob Gilbert. Having served on the Foundation Board for 16 years, I have worked with these extraordinary men and been witness to their love and dedication to our school.

Mr. Brown was an integral part of the school in its formative early years, advocating to establish the school, then joining the school as Director for Academic Affairs in 1990. When the school needed his help, he again returned in 2002. In 2008, he returned a third time, first as Director for School Advancement and then for a very successful term as Executive Director of the School. Mr. Brown helped guide the school

through economically difficult times and was critical to the school's survival during budget cuts. In addition to prudent management of the school, he had a charm that put everyone at ease and a chuckle of a laugh that lit up a room. Many alumni, including myself, can tell stories of how his reassuring and engaging demeanor helped them succeed at MSMS and beyond.

Wayne Bryan was a zealous advocate for MSMS. He was never afraid to argue for what he believed in and always fought for the best interests of MSMS and its students. Mr. Bryan stayed engaged with the school at a level most Board members cannot. He was on campus virtually every week and was constantly looking for new ways to help students. Mr. Bryan instituted the first internship program, matching MSMS students with Mississippi State University programs. Always willing to do anything that was asked of him, Mr. Bryan was a passionate supporter of both the school and the Foundation.

Dr. Bob Gilbert was truly a steady hand for the Foundation. During his long tenure, Dr. Bob never missed a meeting. He took particular pleasure in carefully selecting scholarship recipients and administering those scholarships. A more kind and gentlemanly soul, I do not think you will find. Drawing on his unparalleled experiences, Dr. Bob gave sage advice and helped guide the Foundation in its early years. I was heartbroken when Dr. Bob told me he was retiring from the Board. Others took on his roles, but no one could replace his presence.

These three men helped make MSMS what it is today. I cannot sufficiently praise them for their tireless efforts on behalf of our students. They will be greatly missed.

CHARLES BROWN, former Executive Director



Charles Brown, a pillar of education in Mississippi, was originally from Meridian, Mississippi. His 30-year career as an educator began as a math teacher in Pascagoula, Mississippi. He served as a principal in many Mississippi school districts including Yazoo, Hattiesburg and Gautier, and as Director of Education for the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians. His association with MSMS spanned three tenures and multiple roles. He served as Director of Academic Affairs, Director of School Advancement and finally Executive Director for the Mississippi School of Mathematics and Science. A Mississippi Army National Guard Veteran, he was an individual who was always ready to help those in need. He is remembered fondly by many MSMS Alumni as a guiding light and a helping hand in difficult times. He passed away in May of 2017.

WAYNE BRYAN, former member of the MSMS Foundation Board and parent



Allen Wayne Bryan, Sr., of Columbus, Mississippi, was a graduate of S. D. Lee High School. He held a B.A. degree in history, an M.A. in history and an M.Ed. in guidance and counseling from Mississippi State University. Following an interest in chemistry from his Mississippi State days, Mr. Bryan was a strong advocate of STEM education in Mississippi. He organized local science fairs and educational opportunities for Golden Triangle students. He was a major supporter of MSMS, serving on the MSMS Foundation Board for over a decade and heading multiple committees. Mr. Bryan also served on the federal Bi-Racial Committee for the Columbus Municipal School District and the Eka Nobel Community Awareness Panel. He passed away at the age of 73 in July 2017.

DR. ROBERT "BOB" GILBERT, former member of the MSMS Foundation Board



Originally from Kissimmee, Florida, Dr. Gilbert held both a bachelor's and master's degrees from the University of Florida and a Ph.D from Florida State. He served in World War II, where he fought in the Battle of the Bulge and was awarded two bronze stars. He also taught at the Army's War College during the Korean War and left the military with the rank of Lt. Colonel. Dr. Gilbert was a beloved sociology teacher for more than 30 years at the Mississippi University for Women. A true community leader, he was actively involved in numerous civic and religious organizations. Among his other accomplishments, he was a cornerstone of the MSMS Foundation Board, where he chaired the Scholarship Committee, taking great pleasure in awarding and administering numerous scholarships. He was kind, thoughtful, dapper and always a pleasure to be around. He passed away at the age of 102 in August 2017.

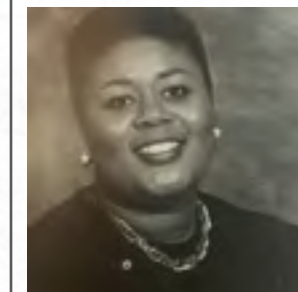
KIMBERLY SNYDER HARDY, MSMS Alumna Class of 1993



Kim Snyder Hardy, Class of '93, lost her battle with cancer in September 2017. Kim had an exuberance for life that was unparalleled and a generous, kind spirit who loved people. She loved reading and writing and followed that passion into the English classroom

at Starkville High School. She credited MSMS with cultivating a passion for literature. Kim always said her greatest accomplishment was her family- husband, Ryan and children, Max and Lily (pictured). Although gone too soon, Kim leaves an indelible mark on all who knew her and all her loved her.

BRENDA JONES, former Admissions Director



Brenda Faye Jones was originally from Batesville, Mississippi. She was a 1978 graduate of Panola High School. She served as MSMS Admissions Director, among other positions, from 1992 to 2000. One of her contributions to Mississippi was the MSMS Project 500. Over

several years, this summer enrichment program sought to introduce African American students to math, science and the arts as well as introduce them to MSMS. The program helped increase the numbers of African American students at MSMS in the late 1990s. She passed away in April 2017.

Emma Richardson

FOUNDING FACULTY MEMBER

By: Theo Hummer c/o 1995

Exceptionally bright, exceptionally motivated, exceptionally hard working—that’s how Emma Richardson characterizes the MSMS students she has been working with for all 30 years of the school’s existence. “The pace is fast for my students and for me,” she says. “My students expect me to know whereof I speak, and I have to work hard to keep ahead of them. I would never want to step into my MSMS classroom unprepared to teach. MSMS students do their homework!”

– Mrs. Richardson has been a powerful force in shaping MSMS’s vigorous academic culture right from the beginning. –

Mrs. Richardson has been a powerful force in shaping MSMS’s vigorous academic culture right from the beginning. “When Johnny Franklin convened the 12 original faculty members around a table on July 5, 1988, we had no curriculum, no course catalog, no student or faculty handbook, no textbooks, no schedule. We made something from nothing,” and that’s an accomplishment of which she is justly proud.

It’s also an experience for which she is grateful.

In 1988, Mrs. Richardson had already taught for 11 years at a large public school in North Carolina, and she was happy there. But when her husband Tom told her he was considering a job “on the campus where Eudora Welty had been a student, located in the town where Tennessee Williams was born, I couldn’t believe it. Of course I was all in!”

On her first trip to Columbus, her husband’s new colleagues introduced her to Mr. Franklin. He had already hired math and science

faculty and was in the process of recruiting humanities teachers; he interviewed Mrs. Richardson on the spot. It was a providential case of right place, right time.

And Mrs. Richardson was clearly the right person, perceiving that “the analytical skills necessary for responding to a literary text are not unlike the analytical skills necessary in investigating a problem in science”; she points to the correspondences between the scientific method and the parts of



Photo courtesy of Chris Jenkins.

– She sees her role as helping students understand how language works and how it can be manipulated at the levels both of text and of subtext.–

an academic essay. In her experience, “most of our MSMS students have been lifelong and enthusiastic readers, like the exchange of ideas, and appreciate theoretical possibilities.”

Further, the residential aspect of MSMS allows students to continue the conversation beyond class discussions: in the cafeteria, in the residence

halls, on bus rides during field trips. “Students learn from each other in this residential setting,” Mrs. Richardson points out, “and they help each other learn.”

She sees her role as helping students understand how language works and how it can be manipulated at the levels both of text and of subtext. Citing the

Tennessee Williams character who declares, “We are all sentenced to solitary confinement within our own skins,” Mrs. Richardson describes her task as helping students stretch their visions beyond that imprisonment. “Now perhaps more than ever,” she muses, “we need to read and respond to—to quote literary critic Stephen Greenblatt—‘generous works of art that serve to arouse, organize and enhance’ our ‘ability to enter into the experience of another.’”

Mrs. Richardson loves working with her literature and creative writing students in classes, in small groups and especially one-on-one. “A lot of my time,” she says, “is spent working individually with students, helping them with their writing, especially with the crafting of their college-application essays. I love getting to know my students—getting to



Photo courtesy of Rachel Brady, c/o 2018

know their hopes and dreams for their futures. Everybody has a story, and it’s important for students to be able to tell their stories to college-admissions committees.” Beyond the immediate goal of getting students into college, Mrs. Richardson also hopes that learning to tell their stories will help students reflect on their identities and “situate

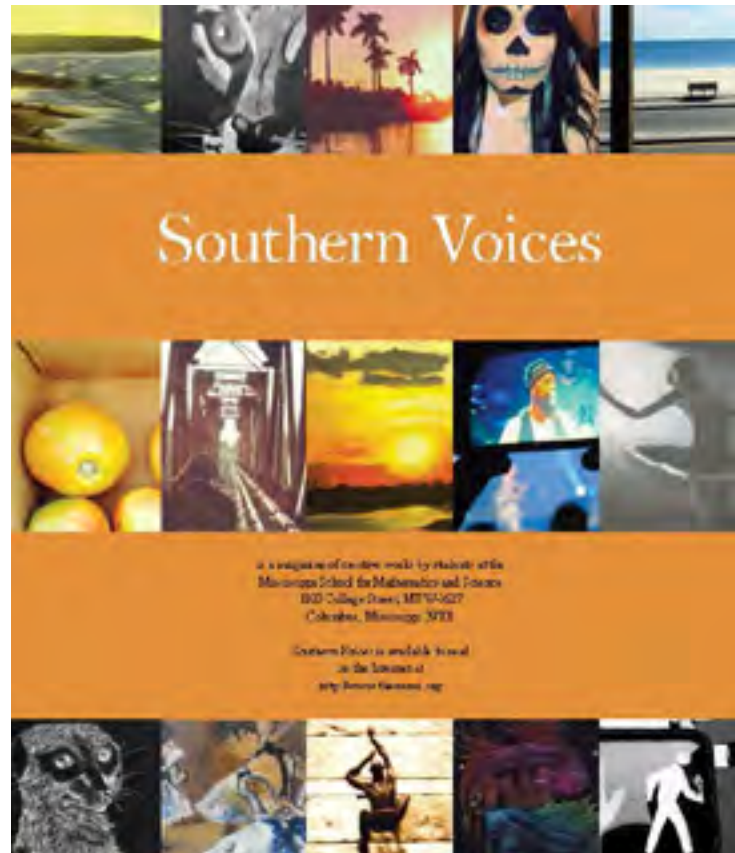
themselves in space.”

MSMS’s institutional structure supports such personally-tailored, dynamic teaching. “All of us faculty at MSMS,” Mrs. Richardson notes, “are able to devote time to preparation for classes and to work individually with students because our schedule and relatively low class sizes allow for those things.

We are blessedly free from much education paperwork that for many teachers across the state takes up precious time and seems often to be an end in itself.”

Such uncluttered scheduling offers MSMS teachers time to find, organize and guide students through enriching opportunities. This spring, for example, Mrs. Richardson’s creative writing students wrote and recorded vignettes for *Rural Voices Radio*, a project of Mississippi Public Broadcasting and the Mississippi Thinking/Writing Institute. They participated in the social-justice-oriented *Write for Mississippi* project and published essays and poems online in *The Atlantic* after visits to MSMS by *The Atlantic* writers James and Deb Fallows. “All those ‘extra things’ outside the classroom,” Mrs. Richardson notes, “depend on ample planning and execution time.”





Supportive administrators are also crucial. Mrs. Richardson values “the freedom I and other faculty have in devising new courses and in making curricular decisions with a great deal of autonomy. MSMS’s administrators over the years have been enthusiastic advocates of the work faculty members

accomplish with students; they support our efforts and they celebrate our achievements. They have confidence in our faculty to be good stewards of our professional time and resources. That freedom allows faculty, I believe, to be creative and even more committed to the tasks at hand.”

Mrs. Richardson has also been grateful to MSMS administrators through the years for fully funding the publication of *Southern Voices*, the literary magazine her creative writing students have published every year since MSMS’s first. The Spring 2018 issue will be the thirtieth edition of *Southern Voices*; digital

copies going back to 1998 are available on the MSMS website. *Southern Voices* has evolved from the slender 28-page 1989 black and white issue to its present form: 48 pages featuring a color cover and eight full-color pages of excellent student art collected with the help of art teacher Angie Jones. “I’ve never been

told to scale back,” Mrs. Richardson says, “or to think about eliminating the print publication. That affirmation—even in lean financial years—means a lot to me as a teacher and to the students.”

Mrs. Richardson’s MSMS career has also been elevated by her “gifted, hard-working colleagues in the English Department (I’m thinking of Jack Carter, Jean Chamberlain, Tom Poston, Barbara Holland, Scott Curtis and Thomas Easterling) and from the entire faculty. Golly,” she says, “they’re an impressive bunch. I’ve learned from and been inspired by them.”

Mrs. Richardson has collaborated with those impressive colleagues on a number of valuable initiatives. For example,

late-1990s MSMS graduates will remember Mississippi Crossroads, the interdisciplinary course Mrs. Richardson teamed up with Carl Butler to develop and teach. A literature and history combination designed in part to fulfill the state’s Mississippi history graduation requirement, Mississippi Crossroads included field trips all over the state—from Corinth to Natchez to the Delta to the Gulf Coast. “I’m grateful,” Mrs. Richardson says, “for being able to learn about my adopted state along with students.”

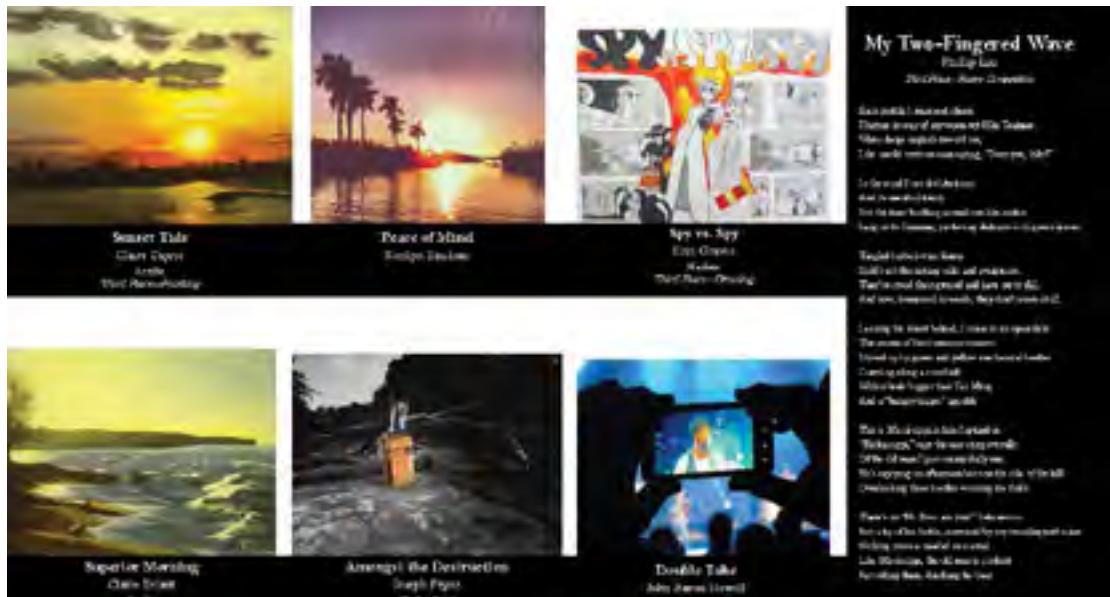
For another example, Mrs. Richardson joined Linda Bridges and Ileana Johnson as teachers in the first fiber optic-based distance learning scheme in Mississippi, the

Mississippi FiberNet 2000 pilot project. This joint effort by MSMS, the State Department of Education, Mississippi Educational Television, South Central Bell and high schools in Clarksdale, Corinth, Philadelphia and West Point offered specialized courses to students in those rural, small-town high schools. “I got to know even more students and teachers from across Mississippi,” Mrs. Richardson says, “and grew to have great admiration and respect for them.”

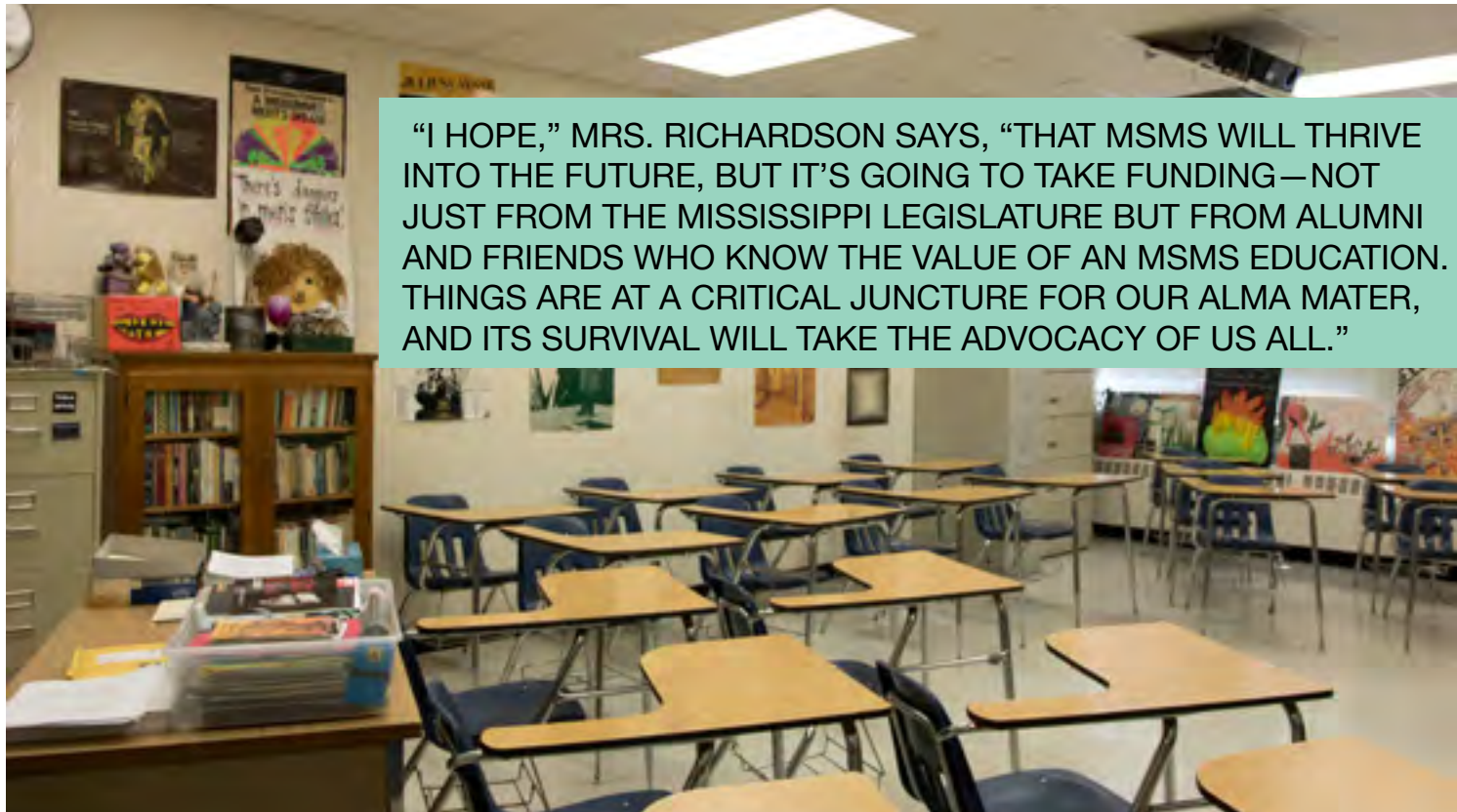
For a third example, in 1998 Mrs. Richardson and her English colleague Jack Carter worked with administrators and faculty at MUW to offer the first dual-credit classes at MSMS. Since then, the dual-credit program has

expanded. Now qualified MSMS students can earn up to 12 hours of English credit, as well as credit in additional subject areas, through the W.

Not only is Mrs. Richardson a veteran MSMS teacher, but she’s also the parent of two MSMS alumni: Cameron Richardson (1997) and Thomas Richardson (2004). “I am so grateful—and proud—that both our children attended MSMS,” she says. “The fact that each received a full undergraduate scholarship (Cameron to Davidson College and Thomas to Millsaps College) is directly attributable to their experiences at MSMS—in academics, in leadership opportunities, in sports and other extracurricular activities.”



“...MSMS’s administrators over the years have been enthusiastic advocates of the work faculty members accomplish with students; they support our efforts and they celebrate our achievements.”



“I HOPE,” MRS. RICHARDSON SAYS, “THAT MSMS WILL THRIVE INTO THE FUTURE, BUT IT’S GOING TO TAKE FUNDING—NOT JUST FROM THE MISSISSIPPI LEGISLATURE BUT FROM ALUMNI AND FRIENDS WHO KNOW THE VALUE OF AN MSMS EDUCATION. THINGS ARE AT A CRITICAL JUNCTURE FOR OUR ALMA MATER, AND ITS SURVIVAL WILL TAKE THE ADVOCACY OF US ALL.”

“I like to think that those graduates have seen good teaching modeled at MSMS and that they are changing our world for the better one student at a time.”



Photo courtesy of Chris Jenkins.

Mrs. Richardson has a lot to be proud of in her career at MSMS, but she is particularly gratified by the many MSMS alumni who have become educators themselves. “I like to think that those graduates have seen good teaching modeled at MSMS and that they are changing our world for the better one student at a time.”

“There’ll come a time, I know, when I’ll retire,” Mrs. Richardson concedes, “and I know I’ll spend a lot of time reading as many books as I like for as long as I like. But I hope I can continue teaching at MSMS for as long as I am effective. I wake up every day looking forward to going to school, to seeing students in Hooper 107.” She cites MSMS as the best thing

that has happened to her professionally, and surmises that it’s also been the best thing to happen to thousands of students in the past 30 years.

“It’s enabled them to pursue their dreams, to enhance their futures,” she says. The special classroom dynamic that has been consistent throughout MSMS’s lifespan is that between eager, hard-working students and energetic, well-prepared teachers. “I hope,” Mrs. Richardson says, “that MSMS will thrive into the future, but it’s going to take funding—not just from the Mississippi Legislature but from alumni and friends who know the value of an MSMS education. Things are at a critical juncture for our alma mater, and its survival will take the advocacy of us all.” ■

 Instagram humansofmsms



Mary Ellen Owings is a member of the Class of 2018 from Columbus, Mississippi

Humans of MSMS is a photojournalism project on Instagram sponsored by Mrs. Richardson and developed by Mary Ellen Owings, a current senior from Columbus, Miss. “My goal for the project is to tell the stories of students, teachers and clubs or organizations at the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science,” says Owings. “This involves taking

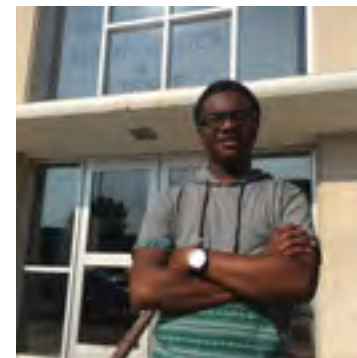
their photograph and interviewing them about what MSMS has done in their lives - interesting experiences, a summer program, or maybe some research they have done.”

“I originally saw *Humans of MSMS* as something that would be good for me to do as Senior Class Historian this year, as the best way to record these stories and share them with those outside of MSMS,” added Owings. “I thought that this could open people up to the opportunities that MSMS gives and how amazing the people within the school are. Not only did I want to share the stories of MSMS people within the school, but I wanted to give the outside community a better idea of what we have going on here.”

Follow humansofmsms on Instagram!
A great window into the lives of the people currently at MSMS and their involvements.



Keely Brewer: Class of 2018 from Hattiesburg, Mississippi.



Carey Williams: Class of 2018 from Lexington, Mississippi.

Other Ways to Connect

www.themsms.org

Visit the official MSMS website to stay informed about upcoming events, student and faculty accomplishments and outreach opportunities. Follow MSMS on social media.



<http://www.msmsaa.org/>

Join the MSMS Alumni Association. Keep up to date on alumni news and events. While there, follow the MSMS Alumni Association on social media.



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School Update

By: Office of Advancement & Admissions

RANKED NATIONALLY:

#1 Public High School Faculty

#8 Public High School

For nearly 30 years, the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science has served as an incubator for some of the brightest minds in Mississippi. This unique public high school has a proven record of creating the types of innovators, thinkers and problem solvers the state and world need for the 21st century economy. Recently, MSMS received a national ranking of #8 best public high school; it is no surprise to our students and alumni that the MSMS faculty was named the #1 public high school faculty in the country.

As industry becomes increasingly high-tech and employees with advanced skill sets are needed, MSMS plays a crucial role in the STEM workforce pipeline. While emphasizing STEM coursework, MSMS ensures the well-rounded development of scholars through the additional emphasis on entrepreneurial education, creative/critical thinking, collaboration, leadership and problem-solving.

Alumni returning to campus today would see many familiar sights and faces from their years at MSMS. The addition of new resources and talented faculty and staff enrich the MSMS community. The unique culture of this place, however, remains. MSMS is proud to continue its charge of challenging and nurturing the gifts and talents of bright learners from all corners of the state.

Outreach

MSMS prides itself on improving not just the lives of current students, but in making a positive impact throughout the entire state. While our outreach activities are often exemplified by our distance learning programs, the heart of MSMS lies in our very own backyard, so to speak.

The Student Environmental Awareness League (S.E.A.L.) can be found at Stennis Lock and Dam picking up trash, or volunteering for *Operation Ukraine* washing buckets for hours so that families in Haiti will have clean water containers. They may also chide you if you toss a plastic water bottle in a non-recyclable bin.

Our *Science Carnival* opens its doors to local schools in an effort to teach younger children about science in new and interesting ways. The informal setting coupled with the accessibility of our students, allows younger children to open up and explore in a hands-on environment that can reshape the way they think about science. The excitement and childlike wonder of being able to experience science in a way that is more than just words on a page is what makes our *Science Carnival* so successful and a true example of MSMS students giving back to the community.

Sights and Sounds, led by Dawn



Barham, showcases the musical stylings of our diversely talented group of students. Every year, she loads up a bus and the instrument van and travels either to the northern or southern regions of Mississippi (alternating every year), on a three-day performance tour. Barham explains “it is a culmination of the student’s study of the historical significance of the area’s role in the development of indigenous American music, the Civil Rights Movement and the connection between the two.” The students get to perform at schools, retirement facilities and civic events for the communities they visit. In between their busy tour schedule, they visit museums, historical markers and other sites of significance as it applies to the program. To really experience what Mississippi is to American music, their repertoire includes spirituals, blues, jazz, soul, country and, of course, rock and roll.

These are by no means an exhaustive list of the outstanding outreach activities MSMS is engaged in. Each year, MSMS continues to focus on new ways to improve student interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics throughout the entire state of Mississippi. These strategies include student engagement efforts, teacher training seminars and community activism.

Photo courtesy of Rachel Brady, MSMS student, Class of 2018

Innovation

Part of the MSMS Mission is “meeting the individual needs of gifted and talented students through providing innovative learning experiences.” In order to maintain relevancy and live out its commitment to continuous improvement, MSMS must demonstrate its worth to the entire state of Mississippi. To do so, MSMS focused on becoming a leader in the areas of engineering, entrepreneurship and research.

“The MSMS Engineering Club encourages students to use different tools, machinery and technology. This teaches our members to be innovative and think outside the box just like today’s engineers,” said Daniel Smothers, President of the MSMS Engineering Club. The club is coming up with innovative ways to handle the recent budget cuts that affected MSMS by designing and manufacturing furniture to be used in the academic and residential buildings. Currently, there are plans to have the first in-house competition among the student body for the most creative engineering project. Ultimately, MSMS would like to hire a full-time engineering faculty member so students can bring life to the projects they envision.

During the 2016-2017 school year, the *MSMS Entrepreneurship Program* was launched. Through the class, students learn the fundamentals of how to start their own business. For the 2017-2018 school year, MSMS is excited to announce the *MSMS-Regions Business Plan Competition*. This is meant to encourage students to expand on and improve a business plan, with a chance to win thousands of dollars in prize money from Regions Bank. The program shows that working for someone else is not the only path to take. Owning a business can



open up so many possibilities, too.

“In my mind, the program is meant to encourage MSMS students to use their skills, talents and creativity to pursue entrepreneurship in the future,” said Dr. Kayla Hester, head of the *MSMS Entrepreneur Program*. “Entrepreneurs are vital to our national economy, and especially to the development of the state of Mississippi.”

Over twenty-five years ago MSMS started the *Research Internship Program*. Under the guidance of research professionals at universities across the state, MSMS students conduct actual independent research as juniors and seniors in high school. One can equate the work and research to that of a graduate assistant at a college or university.

“I was learning techniques and getting a feel of how research is undertaken, from working through data and looking at all the different results ... and also some necessary background on how to be a careful scientist,” said MSMS Class of 2013 alumnus, Lucas Ferguson.

Ferguson is one of only 36 students – and the only one from Mississippi – awarded the prestigious *Gates Cambridge Scholarship*. This is the most generous international scholarship awarded by the University of Cambridge. His continued research is based off his initial independent research started at MSMS.

By sparking student creativity through these innovative programs, MSMS students are given the opportunity to do extraordinary things. MSMS continues to ensure the academic excellence that will enable students to continue to make a difference in the future of Mississippi in the growing global society.

Leadership

Faculty at MSMS participate in a variety of leadership opportunities in their specific fields of expertise including curriculum review committees, professional associations and a wealth of state and national conferences. It is not unusual for MSMS faculty to be recognized for their innovative approaches, remarkable research and profound scholarship. This year, we want to highlight just a few of our renowned faculty members for their outstanding leadership in these key areas.

2017 was a very exciting year for MSMS, as U.S. history teacher, Chuck Yarborough, was selected by the Mississippi Department of Education as the first alternative to the *Teacher of the Year*. This incredible honor was awarded for Yarborough's creative and interactive teaching methods that have made him one of MSMS's favorite characters.

Lori Pierce, who teaches German, French and Latin at MSMS, was selected by the American Association of Teachers

of German to participate in a seminar on best practices in STEM education held by the Herder Institute at the University of Leipzig in Germany. She was also named the *Mississippi World Language Teacher of the Year* and was a finalist for the *Teacher of the Year* for the Southern Conference of Language Teaching. Additionally, Margaret Mary Henry, Russian teacher here at MSMS, was selected to participate in a Russian pedagogy program entitled *STARTALK* through the University of Maryland's National Foreign Language Center in collaboration with Middlebury College and the U.S. Department of Defense.

In keeping with MSMS's focus on STEM education, Lauren Zarandona received the *Presidential Award for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching*, sponsored in part by the National Science Foundation (NSF). This incredible honor recognizes outstanding K-12 educators in the areas of science and mathematics who have distinguished themselves both inside



Whether it is on the tennis court, at the chess board, or the blackboard MSMS students continue to excel as the next generation of Mississippi's leaders.



and outside the classroom. In addition to the award itself, Zarandona received a trip to Washington, D.C. to attend the awards ceremony and a \$10,000 grant from the NSF. Similarly, Heath Stevens, Academic Counselor at MSMS, received the 2017 *Educator Award for Mississippi* from the National Center for Women & Information Technology. This honor was awarded to educators who emphasize gender equity in computing and technology and encourage young women to pursue educational opportunities in these vital fields.

Shae Koenigsberger was selected as a 2017 state-level finalist for the 2017 *Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching*. She is currently a national level finalist for the state of Mississippi. The national award winner will be announced during the 2018-19 school year.

In addition to faculty leadership in the key area of scholarship, MSMS students are academic leaders in their own right. The 2017 graduating class yielded 12 *National Merit* finalists, 3

QuestBridge Scholarship winners and 3 *Rural Medical Scholars*. Additionally, MSMS had 12 *STAR* students that were recognized for academic excellence and ACT test achievement. Andy Zhao was recognized as the *Top All-Star* student for the state of Mississippi after achieving a perfect 36 on the ACT.

In other areas, MSMS students went on to win first place at the 2017 *Mississippi Scholastic Chess Association* and were named *Mississippi Class 3A State Champions* in tennis.

Emma Richardson's Creative Writing I & II students had the unique opportunity to share their own prose vignette or poems as part of the *Mississippi Public Broadcasting Rural Voices Radio* program, which was aired across eight Mississippi public radio stations. These same students also participated in *Write for Mississippi*, a creative writing workshop focused on the prompt, "what can we do for our country?", led by fiction writer Michael Farris Smith. MSMS students submitted their pieces for inclusion in a publication of the same title. ■



ALUMNI WEEKEND 2017





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7 Supernight Hattiesburg, MS					13 MSMS Alumni Weekend begins
14 Supernight Pascagoula, MS		18 Request for application review volunteers	24 MSMS Application Review begins	24 MSMS Application Interview	28 MSMS Class of 2020 Orientation
16 Supernight Bay St. Louis, MS		31 MSMS Capitol Day (Volunteers appreciated)			