

## Letter from the Head of School

**S**eventeen years ago this month, I waited on pins and needles to hear whether my daughter Brooks had been accepted into the next year's kindergarten class at Friends School. I knew it was the right school for us. I sensed something unique about these people—something strong and grounded, caring and smart. As a mom, I did my homework and researched school options carefully. From the very start, Friends School of Minnesota has been my first and only fully positive choice for my children. Fortunately, there was a spot for Brooks, and our relationship with this very special school began.

Brooks started at Friends School 16 years ago. That same year I joined the School Committee and later became clerk. I have served as the Conflict Resolution Program Director and later as a teacher and administrator. When Brooks was in second grade, her sister Ruth was born. So as Brooks entered eighth grade, Ruth started kindergarten. Sixteen years as a parent, staff mem-

### **20 YEARS** *Special anniversary issue*



*Looking back on the  
founding of Friends School  
of Minnesota with  
Raquel Wood*

*20 years of conflict  
resolution*

*From the archives*

*Thoughts from alum parents*

ber, and community member has provided me rich memories and strong convictions about Friends School, and my family has benefited tremendously from the skills, knowledge, and values of a Friends education.

I attended the conflict resolution training for parents when Brooks was in kindergarten. Like most other parents, I felt deeply committed to providing my child with a peaceful

alternative to solving conflict. As our nation started "Desert Storm," I became even more determined that my daughter learn alternatives to violence. Still, when I went to the training at school, I was pretty sure conflict resolution wouldn't work at our house. I let myself off the hook because I was, at the time, a single parent. You can't do conferences without a third person, right? I felt relieved! However, I learned I was wrong. Brooks slowly and gently introduced me to the process of listening—really listening—and communicating clearly about things that are bothering us. She taught me about making solutions. We practiced, in our way, the communication process Brooks used at school. Later, when Brooks was in high school, I was tremendously grateful for the experience we had solving relatively mundane issues like bedtime, or what chores were fair. And recently, Brooks shared with me her surprise at how hard it is for the people she lives with to talk to each other about stuff that

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*At FSM, a project like History Day really shows what progressive, Quaker education can do. Students take on challenging topics, apply themselves, ask their own questions, engage in the learning, and create impressive and varied ways to show what they learned.*

is bothering them. In her house, she is the facilitator of conflict resolution.

The depth of the learning my children experience at Friends School of Minnesota constantly amazes me. Ruth, who is currently in seventh grade, recently completed a research project for History Day. From the day the assignment was first discussed in class, she was ignited to learn. She chose to study conscientious objectors during World War II, and began her project navigating books from the University library. She interviewed a conscientious objector. Ruth chose to do a performance showing what she learned, and wrote a script that incorporated several characters over different time periods. What amazes me about this process is that each seventh and eighth grade student was equally engaged in his or her own research. All chose fascinating topics, and all shared their learning in different ways. At FSM, a project like History Day really shows what progressive, Quaker education can do. Students take on challenging topics, apply themselves, ask their own questions, engage in the learning, and create impressive and varied ways to show what they learned.

I can think of so many examples of ways Friends School has taught my children—and Tim and me—skills

and knowledge. I think the aspect of Friends School we each treasure most, though, are the values and the community in which the values are practiced and conveyed. Beginning and ending each meeting in silence, supporting families through a death, or celebrating a birth, planting seeds and putting plants in the ground, helping students who struggle with learning disabilities, celebrating the success of all students at graduation—there are thousands of ways values and community are part of FSM.

We have been so fortunate to be part of a community that supports us, and lets us make mistakes to learn from. I have felt especially supported in my new role as Head of School. I know I have so much to learn, and that there are many things I don't even know enough to know I am not doing! In all the newness and awkwardness of this new position, the community has always felt incredibly supportive to me. The Quaker process and principles that ground and guide the school also ground and guide me. I am very grateful for the support I have received, and I will continue to strive to apply the learning, skills, and love from 16 years at FSM to the work of the future.

In peace,  
Lili Herbert

## Welcome, Melanie Spewock!



Melanie is FSM's new Summer Program and Extended Day Director! Melanie can be reached at [melanies@fsmn.org](mailto:melanies@fsmn.org)

## Friends Circle

The *Friends Circle* is published two times per year by Friends School of Minnesota, located at 1365 Englewood Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104-1902. 651-917-0636.

### Postmaster:

Send address changes and subscription correspondence to Friends School of Minnesota.

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# FSM Humanities: Putting the Mission into Action

By Gretchen Hovan

When I was looking for work in Minnesota three years ago, I was first attracted to Friends School because of its mission statement: “Friends School of Minnesota prepares children to embrace life, learning and community, with hope, skill, understanding and creativity. We are committed to the Quaker values of peace, justice, simplicity and integrity.” The mission put into words much of my own belief about what I wanted to do with the students I taught. In my first year at Friends School I thought a lot about what this mission statement meant, and I paid careful attention to how the other teachers tried to make it a reality.

In the spring of 2005, then Middle School Director Lili Herbert, humanities teacher Amy Lyga and I sat down to take a look at our Humanities curriculum and to consider what topics we wanted to focus on in our work. We looked at:

- all that the middle school had taught since its founding,
- national and state curricula,
- recommendations from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the National Council of Social Studies (NCSS),
- what other progressive schools were teaching, and
- our own mission statement.

Based on all of our research, we knew that we wanted to restructure the curriculum so that our students could dig deeply into a topic and so that their reading and writing could align more closely with their Humanities topics. However, we also wanted to make sure that, in a true progressive education approach,



there was room for us to follow the students’ interests and questions. This is when we realized that our mission statement gave us the answer on how to achieve all of this. We used the four values (peace, justice, simplicity and integrity) to organize the years of Humanities education. Within these years, middle school students would focus on guiding questions that would help them to explore the meaning of these Quaker values through their lives, the Humanities topics and their reading.

For example, this year the 5th and 6th grades are in the Justice Year. Within this year, we are studying Minnesota history and focusing on the genre of historical fiction. Our approach to Minnesota history is guided by our exploration of the idea of justice. Students are thinking through their work with these guiding questions: How do people decide what is just? How do societies organize themselves to be just?

The students began by learning about the people who were in Minnesota first—primarily the Dakota and Ojibwe. They learned about their lifestyles and how they

used the land. They learned about how they interacted with each other and about how the fur trade increased old conflicts and led to new ones. We looked at treaties. The students started by thinking about their own lives and what kinds of qualities a fair decision has for them today. Then we looked at particular treaties and thought about each group involved: what was good for them, what was bad and was the overall decision fair.

As we discussed the statehood of Minnesota and the Dakota Civil War, we continued to think about our idea of fairness and added in the historical pieces, too. Was it fair for the people of the time, given what they knew and believed? Was there a decision that would have felt fair to all? Why or why not? After our study of the Civil War, students will choose the next justice issues that they would like to study in our Minnesota history unit.

In addition to this work, students considered those same guiding questions as they read book group books and books they read on their own. We reflected on these questions in relation to the students’ experiences during the school year and in the students’ writing pieces. The guiding questions give us freedom to explore many different topics, but to still keep connecting back to a central theme. This gives the students a framework for their learning and helps them to make connections among all that they are learning. But more importantly, the questions help the students to really think about justice, and they guarantee that we keep our beautiful mission statement in the center of our teaching.

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# Third and Fourth Graders Learn about Quaker Studies and the SPICE Values

## *Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community and Equality*

### **A little about George Fox**

By Annie, 4th grade

George Fox was born in July 1624 and died January 13, 1691. He was the founder of the Quakers. In the 1600s in England, there was a lot of confusing religions.

George Fox had many quotes that had to do with SPICE.

“The lord showed me, so that I did see clearly, that he did not dwell in temples, which men had commanded and set up, but in his people’s hearts...his people were his temples and he dwelt in them.”

This one I thought meant that George Fox believed God did not come to churches or temples. He thought he lived in you and me.

“When the lord sent me forth into the world, he forbid me to put my hat off to any, high or low.” I thought he was talking about equality, that no one was to be treated higher or think that the other was lower than him or her.

“I saw also that there was an ocean of darkness and death but an infinite ocean of light and love, which flowed over the ocean of darkness.” This one I never really figured out, but I could feel it was meaningful. Some quotes are like that!

### **Meeting for Worship**

By Andy and Abby, 3rd and 4th grade

This is a meeting for worship where the school comes every Wednesday. Kids sit for 20 minutes in silence to think about the query and speak if something comes to mind. But people have to wait until either a teacher or class says the query. The query is something special like an idea or a thought for people to think about.



First grader Lia looks up at Spice the rabbit, the Jungle’s new pet. The children named Spice after the Quaker values.

### **SPICE**

by Sam L., 4th grade

Simplicity means not being greedy.

Peace means no war and don’t kill.

Integrity means tell the truth. Stand up for what you believe in.

Community means work together and help each, be nice to each other and be friendly to each other. Invite others to play with you.

Equality means equalness between white people and black people. If someone is rich, treat them the same as someone who is poor.

### **S.P.I.C.E.**

by Tessa, 3rd grade

Silent

Sitting in meeting for worship silently

Meditating without a sound

Listening to other peaceful people

Wordlessly holding people in the light

Loud

Holding up signs with such force

It almost stops war

Shouting out what you believe in

Yelling at people to stop treating different people differently

Eternal

Having the long toy section in Target go on forever

When you only buy what you need

Working together as one simple loving community

Never giving up on your wonderful spicy life.

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# Martin Luther King Celebration

Friends School of Minnesota's 2008 Martin Luther King Celebration brought together the music and cultural traditions of Indonesia with stories of conflict resolution, told with shadow puppets.

Parents John and Ferry Banks shared both their gamelan orchestra and their knowledge, working with school staff and students to bring off an amazing performance.



**Above:** Second grader Evelyn plays the bonang, part of the gamelan orchestra.



**Above, left:** Third grader Julian holds his mallet in preparation for playing on the gamelan.



**Right:** Ferry Banks (left side of photo) leads the third and fourth grade in a traditional Indonesian dance.

# The Founding of Friends School of Minnesota



Raquel Wood (far left) with the Friends School faculty and staff of 1991: Tamsyn Alixander, Karen Utter, Gaylyn Bicking, and Russell Packard.

by Raquel K. Wood

During the alternative school movement of the 1970s and 1980s there was much talk about starting a Friends school in this area. In January 1986, two other people and I invited persons who had expressed interest to a meeting in March to consider the question: "Should we work toward the establishment of a Friends school?" Informal discussion preceded the meeting, and by the time we met, many of the 25 who attended already

felt committed to moving ahead.

The motives were varied. Some people were alienated from the kind of schooling they had experienced and wished for something different for their children. Other parents had older children who had struggled in other schools and hoped to be part of a movement that would provide a humanistic alternative. Several teachers with the group hoped a Friends school could provide more latitude for creative teaching. Others were individuals who had attended or been parents of children in Friends

schools elsewhere and understood their value. Many people understood Friends' education as one outgrowth of the Quaker tradition of Seeking Truth.

For many years I had been ambivalent about setting up a private school, knowing from personal experience that "separate" in the case of private schools can mean "privilege." I attended a private progressive elementary school and later, a Friends college, and subsequently taught in a Friends elementary school. But in 1978 a disillusioning experience as

*Our original goal of opening the school in September 1987  
had to be pushed back a year.*

the spokesperson for a group of concerned public schools parents caused me to reconsider the role of private education. Soon after this I accepted an invitation to serve a term on the Scattergood Friends School's School Committee. During my ten years' service there our daughter attended and graduated from Scattergood, thus adding "parent" to other experiences I had had with Quaker education.

Through participation in the summer of 1984 in a workshop entitled "Imagining a World Without Weapons," I came to understand that in order to change society, we needed to change the institutions which sustain it. We needed, as Gandhi said, "to be the change we want to see." I began to view a Friends school as an extension of the peace movement, in which I had been involved for years. The workshop was the catalyst for my commitment to help start a Friends school. My experience on the Scattergood board gave me the confidence that this goal was achievable.

At that first meeting in March 1986, we established several task force groups to obtain information about the legal requirements to be a school, to develop a statement of philosophy, to develop financial projections of short and long term funding needs, and to establish a steering committee to coordinate and guide the work as it evolved. I took on the tasks of learning about the experiences of other newly established Friends schools, developing a community of support through networking and publishing a newsletter to keep interested persons and the Friends community at large informed

of our progress.

Our original goal of opening the school in September 1987 had to be pushed back a year. As we solved many immediate challenges we found many new challenges ahead. Peter Brown undertook the needed legal work and gave leadership to the strategic planning for governance. He was the first clerk of the first School Committee. Deb Pullin, D. Perry Kidder, Kris Hilgendorf Cusick and Marie Vandembark were members of the Steering Committee. Other interested persons were added to the new committees, formed as needs emerged: Personnel, Curriculum, Location, Fundraising and Nominations.

One of the many responsibilities of the Steering Committee was to arrange for visits to other new alternative schools as a way of educating ourselves, learning from others and seeing experiments in action. A particularly memorable visit in 1987 to Prairie Creek School near Northfield, then in its first year, gave us many new ideas and much encouragement. At that time we were introduced to Joanne Esser, a teacher there, who has since been a valued member of the staff and School Committee at Friends School.

Our planning activities broadened. During our early planning we had a number of events attracting 25 to 30 people, including children, for opportunities to share our visions of what we wanted Friends School to be. Dhaivyd Hilgendorf was part of that process. Jane Schallert attended these early events, served on the Fundraising Committee and became

a parent volunteer and valued staff member. Our first logo was developed from such a meeting (*you can see the logo on page 9*). Friends For a Non-Violent World helpfully loaned us their address and meeting space. Presentations soliciting support were made to various Friends Meetings.

Early in 1988 we began to develop outreach materials and plan for open house events. We raised \$15,000 (half our goal) prior to opening. In the spring, after a considerable site search led by D. Perry Kidder, we finalized the plans to open Friends School in the basement of the educational wing of the St. James Episcopal Church on Minnehaha Parkway in Minneapolis.

In June 1988, we hired Gaylyn Bicking to complete basic furnishing of the school and to collect curriculum materials. We also hired Marie Vandembark to develop office procedures, recruit and enroll students and ultimately to be our first office manager. Our first School Committee began to meet in July 1988. Our plan to hire a director was postponed until there was more secure funding. We opened the school in September 1988 with eleven students, one full-time teacher, a half-time office manager and lots of volunteer support from parents and other devoted people. Those few of us who are still around are very pleased to see how our little, energetic school has grown and matured from that fragile beginning, taking its place as a model school in the Twin Cities educational community.

# 20 Years of Conflict Resolution

By Gaylyn Bicking

One of the defining elements of Friends School of Minnesota is our conflict resolution program. As the first teacher in FSM's 20-year history, I remember the first conference I facilitated back in 1988. It was between two 6-year-old boys.

They weren't getting along well. I served them a cup of tea and we sat down and talked about the problem. They came to an agreement and we went on with the school day. That conference occurred because there was a need. If children are fighting and unhappy, little learning can take place. We no longer serve tea during conferences, but children still have the opportunity every day to sit down with an adult and work through problems.

We have shared our conflict resolution program through summer institutes and by traveling to schools throughout the country. In 1995, we received grants from the Emma B. Howe Foundation and the Jay and Rose Phillips Foundation. With the grants we were able to produce *I-to-I*, a video about our program. We also worked closely with two public schools in Minnesota to help them set up and maintain conflict resolution programs.

Over the past 20 years at Friends School, I've watched children grow. It always amazes me how working through conflict at school has affected children throughout their lives. About ten years ago there were two girls around the ages of 10 and 11. They seemed to ask for a conference every other day. They didn't seem to



We no longer serve tea during conferences, but children still have the opportunity every day to sit down with an adult and work through problems.

get along at all. I remember suggesting that it might be best if they no longer remained friends, that they keep their distance from each other. They seemed to take my suggestion. About five years after these girls left Friends School, I ran into one of their mothers. I asked about her daughter. Her daughter was doing fine in high school. To my surprise the mother also shared that her daughter was still good friends with her Friends School classmate, the girl that she was always in conflict with. Obviously these girls understood more about friendship and how to resolve conflict than I did.

At Friends School of Minnesota, children are empowered to think for themselves. We adults listen to them respectfully and help them reach their own conclusions. When there is a problem, such as teasing or trouble sharing materials in the classroom, the children ask for a group gathering. They brainstorm solutions. Some of their solutions might be unrealistic. There is no one solution that magically fixes the



problem. This is not important. What is important is the children themselves identify the problem. The children learn to communicate in ways that are respectful, direct, and open. We have much to learn from these Friends School children, many of whom are now young adults. As our mission statement so simply puts it, "Friends School of Minnesota prepares children to embrace life, learning, and community with hope, skill, understanding and creativity."

# From the Archives

By Wendy Lutter

In celebration of Friends School of Minnesota's 20th anniversary, I wanted to find out more about the history of our wonderful school. I went on a trip down FSM's memory lane, looking through boxes of archives beginning in 1986 when the idea of a Friends School of Minnesota first emerged. The notes are handwritten or typewritten with no sign of a computer in sight. The papers are yellowed and tattered, but the activities meticulously document the thought and love that went into creating the school.

*In July 1986, a group of Quakers and people involved in the peace movement gathered to discuss their visions for a Friends School in Minnesota. The following are notes from their meeting, which became the foundation of the school.*

## Quaker emphasis

- No pledge of allegiance
- Belief that Light will guide us
- Each person encouraged to seek spirit in self
- Not ridicule people who don't believe as we do
- Simplicity
- Encourage social responsibility, peace and justice, social consciousness



## Physical Environment

- Home
- Lots of sunshine
- Located near nature area, easy walking distance, near water
- Teachers feeling free to go outside the building to teach

## Curriculum Philosophy

- Teachers/parents involved in planning curriculum
- Relevant curriculum to life, to relationships

## Teaching/learning styles and environment

- Place where children can grow, not be molded
- Meet needs of child, not molding kid to school
- Variety of learning styles
- Appropriate use of technology
- Children take responsibility for organizing some activities
- Children shouldn't have to sit at desks for long time
- Children encouraged to pursue their own interests of the time

- Slower paced
- Lack of fear of asking questions
- Get children to ask questions
- Children teaching each other
- Nurturing whole person
- Atmosphere of "culminated open-mindedness"

## Community

- Parental involvement
- No principal's office
- More cooperation and problem solving
- International and multi-ethnic focus
- Loving community
- Caring community of children
- Magical place

*1987 Minutes of support from meeting houses*

Twin Cities Friends Meeting is happy to recognize the establishment of the Minnesota Friends School. We look forward to watching it grow from the visions of its founders to real places where children receive education based on Friends' values. We are glad to send this minute of support with our prayers for its success.

Minneapolis Friends Meeting sends its greetings and recognition to those committed Friends who are involved in the large task of founding a Minnesota school based on Quaker beliefs. We look forward to the successful completion of the early phases of this effort.

# Reflections from Parents of Alums

**M**y daughter Kate (FSM class of 2000) hasn't been a student at the school for almost eight years and the only time I am in the building these days is on odd Wednesday evenings for plant sale buying meetings. But time and distance haven't changed my gratitude for the kind of education that FSM offers. I absolutely believe that my daughter is a better person because of her time at Friends School of Minnesota.

Let me give you some examples. Kate holds a leadership position at her college. She was selected for that position in part because she was recognized as someone who brought a uniquely constructive approach to resolving conflict within the organization. Sound familiar? Every semester I am amazed at the closeness of her relationships with the majority of her professors, and then I remember: she learned to expect that at Friends School. Friends School gave her a strong sense of herself and a deep ethical base, which were a beacon in the tough years of high school.

—Toria Erhart

**A** Friends School of Minnesota parent once said to me, "It stays with them." Then feeling that perhaps I didn't fully understand, she took me by the shoulders and shook me. "It stays with them," she repeated. Six years later I think I finally understand.

Our daughters Jen and Elsie graduated with the class of 2002 and today we can see their Friends School education in almost every aspect of their lives. Compared to their friends who did not go to FSM, they are



Friends School of Minnesota's two locations—then and now

more politically aware, more open minded, more respectful of opinions that differ from their own. They care about the people around them, and feel a responsibility to make the world a better place.

Elsie and Jen both look back on the years they spent at the school as the happiest years of their lives. To be able to make the middle school

years not just endurable but enjoyable is the miracle of Friends School of Minnesota. Our girls found in FSM a safe haven, where the teachers loved teaching and the students felt cared for. Students were equal members of the school community, with rights and responsibilities.

—Dottie Uhlman and Bob Winston

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## Mixed media animals by 3rd and 4th Graders



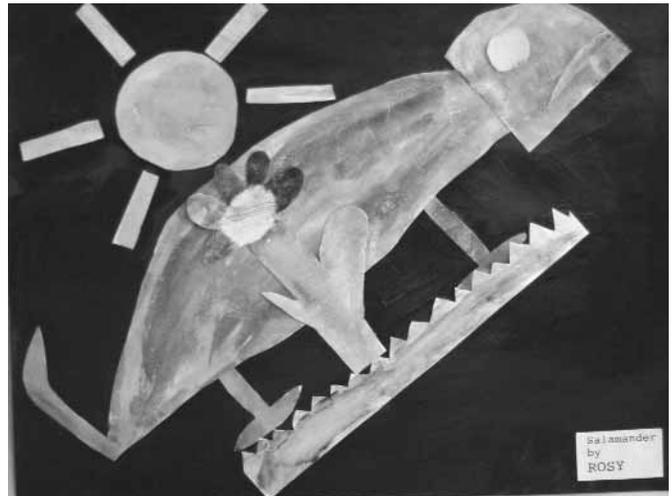
Cardinal by Hannah



Eagle by Elena



Raccoon by Simran



Chameleon by Rosy



Skunk by Lizzie



Leopard by Sam

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# Calendar

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FSM Choir in May Day Parade    May 4

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Plant Sale at the  
State Fairgrounds                    May 9–11

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Annual Meeting at FSM, 7 p.m.    May 20

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After School Music Concert  
at Sundin Hall, 7 p.m.                May 21

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Drama Club performance            May 23

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Last day of school                      June 5

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Graduation                                June 8

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Create Somthing Great  
Summer Day Camp    June 23–August 8

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Back to School Picnic                 August 28

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First Day of School                      September 2

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The Class of 2008

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