



Soaring

February 2016

Celebrating 70 Years of Community

You are Part of the GCS Story...

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By Lisa Stafford, Assistant Director

Part two of a three-part series

Groton Community School officially opened its doors to young children and families on September 24, 1945, and so we continue to bask in the celebratory glow of our 70th anniversary. Classrooms have engaged in many anniversary activities, creating a "GCS 70!" banner, and gathering for a 70th "Birthday Party" complete with songs, cheers and birthday cake! Although we have been here on Boston Road for 31 years, we initially began teaching children at the First Parish Church on Main Street. Later, our school was relocated down the road to Grotonwood (1978-1981), and then to the Prescott School building in downtown Groton.

In December 1983, when the Groton Dunstable School District needed their space back, GCS needed a new home. A mad flurry of activity followed. Property inquiries were made and plans drawn in February, permits acquired by April, there was an official groundbreaking in June, and then footings, foundation, septic, plumbing, framing and flooring, as well as construction and installation of playground equipment were all accomplished just in time for a September 28th moving in day. Finally, we had an official opening on October 2, 1984. The participants in this whirlwind effort were appropriately named "The Dream-scapers," for bringing what was just

a dream a few short months earlier to reality! Especially noteworthy were the efforts of President Emeritus Gary Garmon, President Sharon DiMinico, and President Emeritus Peter Myette during the building and early years of our "new" building. Peter recalls the huge number of volunteers who participated and provided materials to the school at cost. He remembered how, before the days of cell phones, he was on a pay phone at the hospital while his wife was in labor, trying to coordinate the completion of walls and walkways that first October. He shared, "You donate and volunteer because you believe in the cause for your children, but never imagine having grandchildren, or that your grandson will be enjoying the fruits of your labor 31 years later!" We are delighted that Peter's grandson Charlie is now enrolled in preschool.

Today, in our 71st year, we have new dreams for Groton Community School! Our building has serious space constraints, and we dream of classroom enhancements and storage, much needed conference space for teachers, a larger multipurpose room to welcome the community, and a children's library and technology center to support literacy and learning in all curriculum areas. When we see what was accomplished by the Dream-scapers - from drawing up plans to welcoming children - in just seven short months, we realize that dreams can come true! Stay tuned, as we plan for the next 70 years in our Groton Community School history!



Look Who's Soaring Now! *Molly Kalter*

Molly Kalter (age 25) will always treasure her time at Groton Community School. It inspired her career path today!

Molly is currently an educator at Applewild School in Fitchburg, Massachusetts, where she is the Director of the Extended Day Program as well as the fourth grade Assistant Teacher. A fond memory from GCS served as the inspiration for her Common Application essay, which she believes influenced her acceptance into Middlebury College. She vividly remembers her first few moments of preschool, walking into a room and sitting in a circle with the other children and her first teacher, Jolene Zukauskas. When Jolene began strumming her guitar to "Hakuna Matata," Molly was so overcome with the music and the joy of her new school that she stood right up in the middle of the circle and danced along! "That warm welcome and instant fun inspired

me to just be myself and to jump at life's exciting opportunities," Molly recalls.

Molly is the daughter of GCS Assistant Director Lisa Stafford. She attended preschool at GCS for two years as well as the GCS Kindergarten Program, again with Jolene. Later, she volunteered at GCS during school year and Camp Kaleidoscope summer programs as a teenager. "GCS lessons in creativity and self-confidence, along with the school's wonderful teachers and enriching educational experiences, helped foster my lifelong passion for learning," she says. This love of learning was a key part of Molly's aspiration to become an Elementary School teacher, and she plans to attend graduate school for further education in the future. In addition to studying Psychology and Elementary Education in college, Molly performed in many musicals and presented a senior thesis in Psychology on self-affirmation. Her



Molly Kalter, then and now

main hobbies now include cooking, reading, doting on her two cats, knitting, and most recently, playing the ukulele. She is absolutely thrilled to be marrying her best friend, Rocco Laurano, this April!

Mother and Son Share a Love for GCS

One of the special things about celebrating 70 years at GCS is reconnecting with alumni from different generations. Every child who has attended our school is woven into the fabric of GCS. At this point in our history, we increasingly hear stories of families where parent and child, or even grandparent and grandchild, are alumni!

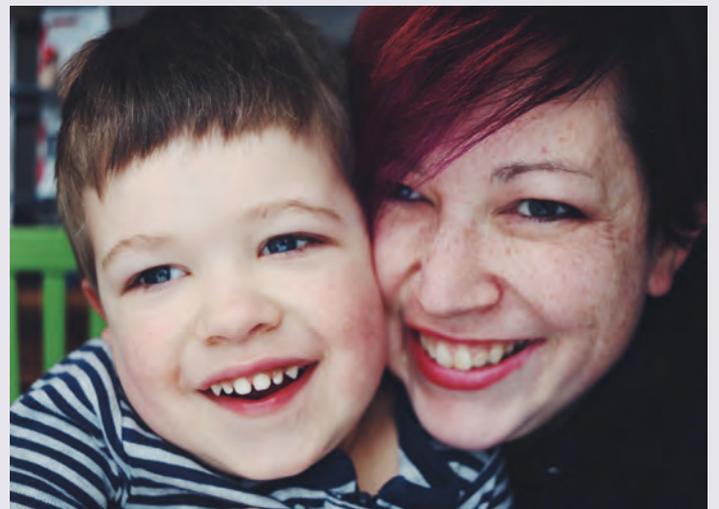
Erin Chapman attended GCS from 1987 – 1989 and is an alum of Linda's Kindergarten class; her son Harrison (age 4) is now in the Preschool program in Shelley's classroom. Erin is a photographer who loves spending time with her children and documenting their childhood through pictures.

"I truly liked going to school and I actually remember quite a bit from that time, like feeling that the Big Room was really big!" Erin recently told us. "I have fond memories of seeing the chicks hatch, and of Water Fun day. I also recall having a fondness

for the fancy costume jewelry in my classroom, and of hiding it in my overalls to bring it home," laughed Erin. "Of course I brought it all back!"

We were curious to hear Erin's thoughts about how the school has changed. "It really hasn't, and that's a good thing! The big playground, which Harrison loves, wasn't here. But that happy feeling I got as soon as I walked in is just the same. When it came time to choose a place for Harrison to have his first ever experience being cared for by someone else, I visited a few places. And I knew when I came through the GCS front door that this was the right place for him."

"When I pick Harrison up he is eager to tell



his 'Shelley and Patty stories,'" continued Erin. "Just like I did, Harrison is learning independence, and how to socialize with other young children. I am hoping to send my daughter Raegan (16 months) to the toddler program next year."

If you have a multi-generational GCS story, we would love to hear it! Simply call us at 978-448-6179 or email us at LKosinski@GrotonCommunitySchool.org

A Word from Our Director

With its roots firmly planted in the community for more than seven decades, Groton Community School (GCS) has welcomed and served young children and their families from Groton and surrounding communities. Seventy years ago Adelaide (Torrey) Luca, one of the first teachers and directors of GCS, imagined a future for our community based on the fundamental values of teaching children kindness and caring for others, community awareness, and good citizenship.



The Trustees of GCS know that the future of our community will be stronger and brighter if we continue to offer children a preeminent Early Childhood Education experience steeped in these fundamental values. To continue to make a true difference in the future of our community, the trustees have recruited a Campaign Steering Committee consisting of a group of teachers, parents, donors, alumni, Board members, and trustees. This group of loyal community members are working to lay the foundation for a fundraising effort that will help create an enhanced space where young children thrive and experience the kindness, caring, and good citizenship that we hold dear. We will look to you for your ideas, opinions, and support as we move forward so that we may reach our dreams for the community and continue on the mission that was so eloquently set by Adelaide (Torrey) Luca. At the end of the day, this is what the power of community is all about: friends, family, and supporters coming together to achieve a common goal.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Linda".

Linda Kosinski
Director



A Peek inside Our Classrooms

By Shelley Grove

Children are natural experimenters and explorers from a very young age. They are fascinated by how things work. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (S.T.E.M.) are front and center in our curriculum. We especially enjoyed our "Transportation and Winter Fun" theme. Winter weather conditions just "scream" science concepts, and what better way to connect with transportation than to demonstrate how we deal with ice on the roads. The children were familiar with the concept, as it can be difficult to enjoy outdoor time with the playground covered in ice. We decided to freeze a tray of water and experiment with a matchbox car using traditional remedies of sand and salt. The sand slowed the car down and prevented slipping, as did the salt, and we discovered that salt has the power to melt the ice, creating a bumpy surface similar to the sanded surface.

Since the children demonstrate their engineering skills daily as they play with vehicles, ramps and tracks, we introduced the concept of "simple machines." Simple machines - "non-motorized

devices that change the direction or magnitude of a force" - fall under the technology category. They are things that help make work easier. To enhance our transportation unit, we investigated the inclined plane and the wheel and axle with the children. This discussion led us to a math activity in which we collected different vehicles from the classroom, classified them according to color and type, and counted their wheels and axles.

After reading *Freight Train*, and scrutinizing the locomotive with its wheels and gears, we took technology to another level by viewing online videos of real steam locomotives working. It was fascinating! We then decided to create "name trains," a language arts/math activity to help children gain confidence forming the letters of their name and working on math concepts. Children counted the number of letters in their name, chose an engine shape and caboose, and determined how many cars they would need in between, before writing and sequencing their letters. As a group, we graphed the number of letters in everyone's names. We learn on the go in preschool!

Groton Community School

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Community Members Rally Behind Alumnus Challenge

In honor of Groton Community School's 70th year, members of the school's fundraising committee set out to grow the GCS annual fund by 70 new donors. "The annual fund provides important revenue for the school, supporting the teachers and programs that directly serve our young children. As the cost to providing a robust early childhood experience exceeds what is covered by tuition, it is the annual fund that fills that gap" shared Christine Cline, Co-chair of the Development Committee.

When community member, GCS Trustee and alumnus Steve Webber heard about our goal to increase our donors to the annual fund by 70 this year, he was delighted to lend a hand. Steve and his wife Nancy generously created a \$5,000 matching fund, designed to encourage new, and increased,



donations to the annual fund. Thanks to the Webbers' generosity, GCS is nearing its goal, with over 60 new donors supporting the annual fund this year so far! Would you

like to help GCS reach this goal in honor of its 70th year? It's easy to donate to the annual fund. Visit our website at www.grotoncommunityschool.org/get-involved/gcs-annual-fund for more information.

Did You Know?

There may be an easy way to double your gift to the Groton Community School Annual Fund! Many employers will match part, or even all, of your donation to a qualifying organization such as GCS. Check with your Human Resources department, or visit your employer's website to find out if they have a matching gift program.

Helping Children Soar