



Soaring

June 2016

YOU Make the Difference...

Celebrating Adelaide

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From left: Diane Torrey, Linda Kosinski, Phillip Torrey, Agnes Torrey, Linda (Luca) Tarpey, Gerard Tarpey, and Jolene Zukauskas.

Celebrating GCS Heroes

Grateful Families and Friends Generously Support Adelaide Luca Giving Society

Members of Adelaide (Torrey) Luca's family gathered at school in May with several of the inaugural donors to the Adelaide Luca Giving Society. The Society was launched in September 2014 in honor of one of our earliest educators, "Miss Adelaide", and membership is granted each year to donors who make a gift of \$1,000 or more to support the GCS Annual Fund.

Adelaide was an elegant, intelligent, and eloquent woman, with a keen memory of the children she taught throughout the years, and a warm and welcoming heart for the GCS children who visited her at her home. It is fitting that the Trustees formed a "giving society" in honor of Adelaide, one of the most generous people GCS has known.

Retired teacher, Jolene Zukauskas, spoke at the event and retold a few favorite stories about visiting Adelaide and her husband Aldo with her former GCS kindergarten classes. She also reminded us that Adelaide was fond of saying that "there are no

'random' acts of kindness." Kindness, Adelaide would argue, is thoughtful and intentional. This is a lesson that is being instilled in the young children of Groton Community School to this day, and is truly the most appropriate legacy for Adelaide.

During the breakfast event, a tribute plaque was unveiled, bearing the names of Society members for 2015 and 2016. Through May 15, 2016, the Society has grown to fifteen members.

Gifts to the annual fund are critical in helping Groton Community School meet daily needs. The GCS Annual Fund generates unrestricted financial support for current programs and activities not covered by tuition.

There is still time to join the Adelaide Luca Giving Society, as gifts for the current year are being accepted through August 31, 2016. To make a gift to GCS in any amount, visit our website and click on "Donate".



Did You Know?

Visit our new website at www.GrotonCommunitySchool.org, where you can quickly get the latest school updates and information. And, happily, it's easy to support the GCS Annual Fund – you simply click on the "Donate" button to make a gift by credit card or sign up to become a monthly donor!

Celebrating 70 Years – Building and Growing Together!

By Lisa Stafford, Assistant Director

Part three of a three-part series

From a one room schoolhouse, to our official 1945 opening, to groundbreaking at the current site in 1984, dedicated members of our GCS community have rolled up their sleeves, digging in and planting seeds of excellence for each generation.

An example is the construction of our outdoor “Playscape”, which creates a connection to nature, fosters physical development, and enhances sensory-rich, outdoor learning experiences. These were goals set in brainstorming sessions with our Playscape committee, staff, children and designer Rusty Keeler in 2002. Elements we still enjoy today – playhouses modeling Groton Architecture, a rubberized trike track, oversized sand area and water log,

wetlands observation area, soccer green space, swings, shade trellis, and children’s weather station - were created, along with our marimba and thunder drum, and multiple garden areas. Our Memory Garden continues to be a special place to honor loved ones and classroom pets that we have lost, as well as a gathering place for “Kindness, Peace, and Love Day” (September 11th) and Memorial Day remembrances.

As we reflect on 70+ years we are grateful for all the hardworking families, staff, and volunteers who have made our school such a longstanding and well-loved fixture in the community. We were so fortunate to come full circle with one of our earliest educators, Adelaide (Torrey) Luca, in

2008. Our Kindergarten Classes formed a beautiful friendship, visiting Adelaide and her husband Aldo, to share in songs, laughter, and memories before her passing in 2014. Adelaide recollected how the children learned to share, take turns, “live together” and “be good citizens”, which is very much in keeping with today’s “Peace” and “Bucket Filing” curricula at GCS.

Today, we have alumni shaping the future of the school as Trustees, as well as children of alumni now attending. By stirring a passion for learning in young children, building a caring community, and growing the next generation of good citizens to carry on these same fundamental values, we honor our past as well as enriching our future.

Forward Motion Builds Momentum

This year has been a momentous one for Groton Community School. We celebrated our platinum anniversary, reflecting on an incredible 70-year history of teaching young children with a curriculum always anchored in the core values of peace, kindness and caring for others. At the same time, the energy and enthusiasm for the future of GCS is growing quickly as the momentum of **Forward Motion** builds.

During the school’s long history, there has never been an undertaking like **Forward Motion: Building and Growing Our Future Together**. This exciting project will bring about a new era for Groton Community School with the renovation and expansion of the facilities. In addition to bricks-and-mortar enhancements, the campaign will raise funds to support student financial aid and to create an endowment for the recruitment, professional development, and retention of exceptional teachers.

The Campaign Steering Committee has been working quietly for the past year in preparation for a public campaign launch during the next school year, and hope to target construction for 2017.

While in this “quiet phase”, we are finalizing project details, spreading the word among our closest supporters, and making plans to visit with you, our loyal friends, to include you in this exciting endeavor. There will be many ways to get involved in **Forward Motion**, and your investment in Groton Community School is key to the campaign’s success.

Forward Motion emphasizes the school’s commitment to remain the pre-eminent Early Childhood Education provider in the greater Groton community. The expanded and renovated facilities, as well as the endowment to support exceptional teaching, will serve to transform the first school



experience for the next generation of GCS children.

Stay tuned for an invitation from the steering committee to become involved in **Forward Motion**.

Members of the Steering Committee include: Kathleen Barron, Dan Barton, Christine Cline, John Conner, Tom Horsman, Betsy Kehoe, Steve Lane, Beth Lindstrom, Debbie MacDonald, Terri Martin, Andy Merritt, Rob Moore, David Moulton, Debbie Penney, Lisa Stafford, Steve Webber, and Jolene Zukauskas, along with GCS Director Linda Kosinski and development consultant Jodi-Joy O’Keefe.

A Word from Our Director

There is no limit to the resources that sing the praise of a quality pre-school experience, with plenty of research to back up the claims.



A young child's first school experience has a significant impact on future educational, social, and career success. However, it has become evident that the impact isn't simply on the children. Investments in Early Childhood Education benefit entire communities.

A June 2015 article from the Urban Child Institute (www.UrbanChildInstitute.org) notes that, "Investments in high quality childcare and early education do more than help just children. They also benefit taxpayers and strengthen the economy. Experts agree, investing in early childhood helps ensure future economic success of society-at-large. Our community needs a skilled and productive workforce to attract the kind of jobs that will sustain a strong economy...investing in early childhood programs is necessary for communities to become globally competitive."

It strikes me, as Groton Community School prepares to undertake a campaign making its first renovation and expansion in thirty years possible, how important that word – community – is in our name. Contrary to a popular phrase, what happens at GCS doesn't stay at GCS. The children who come to this school take all they learn back into their community and society. They will become the leaders, entrepreneurs, teachers, investors, scientists, good citizens, and much more, with achievements that ripple throughout their communities.

We excitedly look towards the next chapter in the GCS story, knowing that together, we can create a brighter future.

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

Linda Kosinski
Director



A Peek Inside Our Classrooms

By Shelley Grove,
Head Teacher in the Blue Room

After years in the making, we are lucky to now have a greenhouse at GCS. This opens up so many opportunities for growing and learning about nature in a new environment! We live in a rural area where we are a part of many life cycles beginning with the change of season. We are exposed to changes in temperature, landscape, wildlife behavior and outdoor activities that coincide with this nature cycle. Children have a strong affinity for nature and gardening connects them directly with the natural world. In our newest "outdoor" classroom, our approach to learning about another important life cycle (from seed to plant to garden or table) has extended and exciting possibilities.

Plants need the same things as children do to thrive: sun, water, nutrients, love and care! We learned that in our region, it is not warm enough to start seeds outdoors until late spring, but some plants can be started indoors. In our classroom, we started an herb garden, which allows us to experience each step and learn how to take care of a plant from the start. The children filled a wooden box with soil, sowed the seeds, watered the seedlings,

observed, and measured growth. In order to experience faster success, we also grew some micro-greens (beets and kale). Within a week, the children were exploring new foods.. Children are more likely to taste greens and other vegetables that they have grown from seed and nurtured themselves. The next step was planning our outdoor garden. We decided on a "sensory garden," to stimulate all the senses. Using our mobile grow-light cart, we started cherry tomato, cucumber and watermelon coleus plants indoors, and then moved them to the greenhouse to continue the process of caring, observing, and measuring growth.

This is only the beginning of new experiences to tie in a wide array of disciplines, including natural and social sciences, math, language arts, visual arts and nutrition. It is also exciting to use the greenhouse for our weekly science experiment and story time! Children in our GCS classrooms will all benefit from growing possibilities and our newest gathering spot. Most importantly, the children can learn to grow and take care of plants that we eat—from seed to garden to table—sustainability!

Groton Community School

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Look Who's Soaring Now! *Ford Fitzkee*

Ford Fitzkee attended GCS from 1985-87. The building was brand new then! The son of GCS teacher Jennie Fitzkee, Ford followed in his father's footsteps with a career in the U.S. Navy.

Now Ford is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and active duty Officer in the U.S. Navy as part of the VFA-211 Checkmates, an FA 18 Super Hornet Squadron.

Ford has special memories of the hands-on learning with sand and water during his years at GCS. He also recalls playing with other children, and the class guinea pig! Ford reminisces, "GCS was a caring environment, where values about how to treat people were instilled in us at a tender age. I remember that environment being fostered at GCS and it has carried through later years in life for me."

"The experiences and activities at GCS were both part of building my values and interests. They made me who I am today."

One of Ford's hobbies is woodworking, mostly using hand tools to create period reproduction furniture. He attributes his love for the craft both to his parents' fondness for collecting antiques, and to the seeds planted while he attended GCS. "My teacher, Susan, always had puzzles started when I arrived, and she encouraged me by telling me I could do this, and that we could find the piece together. I was always building with the blocks, and still love to work with my hands".

In their free time, Ford and his wife Moira are busy raising three children, ages 4, 6, and 8 in their home in Virginia.



Ford Fitzkee, then and now!

Do you know a GCS alum who is soaring?
Contact us at alumni@grotoncommunityschool.org
to share a personal story or nominate someone you
know to be featured in our "Look Who's Soaring
Now" article.

Helping Children Soar