



Soaring

June 2020

YOU Make the Difference...

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GCS Pivots to Help Our Children Soar

When we first started thinking about this issue of *Soaring*, I had no idea that we would soon be in the middle of a global pandemic. I could have never imagined that school building would have to be closed for the balance of the school year.

I will tell you that it has been nothing short of remarkable to watch how every member of the GCS family has stepped up during this crisis. Our school families have been flexible, many making donations and continuing to pay their tuition during distanced learning to ensure that GCS thrives. The Board of Directors has continued to be active and supportive with Teacher Appreciation events, along with fundraising explorations. The children have demonstrated so much resiliency. They remain excited to engage with their teachers and with each other via Zoom and other forms of virtual learning and physical distancing. And the incredible staff has risen to the challenge and quickly adapted to an online learning format. It is impressive to see how this talented group of educational professionals has been able to quickly change their teaching style, to continue to meet our school's mission and the needs of our GCS children and families.

Look inside for a peek at one of our virtual classrooms with Deb Penney and you will see exactly what I mean!

GCS certainly looks different right now, but it is the same strong, kind and giving community it always has been. Sunnier days are surely ahead of us. While we are still awaiting final licensing confirmation for moving forward, we are scheduled to open with a very small group of summer campers in our Summer Program at the start of July.

And until we can all be together again, I hope you are able to take advantage of time together and wish you and your family much joy, laughter, safety, and good health.

Linda

Linda Kosinski, Director
Groton Community School



This June, GCS children decorated rocks, and thought how they could make the world better.

Did You Know?

Did you know that this fall, Groton Community School will be opening our door to welcome children and families to a new school year for the 75th time! We are so excited to be celebrating this incredible milestone, in serving our community!

A Peek Inside Our Virtual Classroom

The M-W-F Yellow Room with Debbie Penney

On a recent Monday, a group of 3 and 4-year-old children chatted excitedly with their friends and favorite teacher, Debbie Penney. They were happy to be together and excited to learn new things. Debbie opened the class with a song and then said “good morning” to each child by name. The “Helper of the Day” assisted with delivering the morning message, then Debbie led the group in observing plants and butterflies. It was a typical morning at Groton Community School, except nothing was typical about it. This class was meeting via Zoom, and all the friends were home because of COVID-19.

Debbie spends a considerable amount of time planning interesting lessons and activities for the children while they are away from traditional classes. She works to ensure that the robust list of weekly activities is meaningful, engaging, and age-appropriate. She has even had parents as guest teachers, hosting an exercise class, touring a farm, or playing music.

“So much of what we do as early childhood teachers revolves around the face-to-face interaction, the connections we build with the children, and those they build with each other. Being out of school is very difficult for them,” shared Debbie. Pivoting

from in-person classes to an online platform was no small feat. “As soon as the closure started I learned all about how to conduct a Zoom meeting.

I wanted to be able to connect with the children right away and help reassure them. They needed to know that we are ok, that their class pets are ok, and that we will see one another again.”

For the youngest children in our community, the government mandated closure of school was confusing and traumatic. A crucial part of the GCS response has been to help our young friends understand the current world-wide situation. To achieve that, Debbie turned to a very special puppet friend, Rosie.

“Rosie had a lot of questions about why she couldn’t see her friends or go to school, and what would happen if she got sick. I was able to talk with Rosie about ways to stay healthy, and help Rosie to identify some of the positive things about being home with your family right now. Like having more time to do something that you usually don’t get to do.” You can watch Debbie and Rosie’s inspiring and comforting chat on our GCS social media (<https://youtu.be/yevLQunCV64>).

The entire GCS family has been deeply affected by the pandemic. For the children in the M-W-F Yellow PM Class at least,

it is apparent that they appreciate the opportunity to connect with Debbie and each other, even virtually. As their Monday class time together drew to a close, some friends chatted about making a playdate “when the virus goes away.” And Debbie reminded the children, as she always does, “in a world where you can be anything, be kind.” It seems like pretty great advice for all of us, especially now.



Debbie and Rosie

YOU can help GCS Soar

To say that these past months have been challenging is an understatement. Though the more things change, the one thing we have learned is that Groton Community School is more than a building. It is a state of mind.

The connections that bind us are critical in helping all of us navigate this crisis. Most notably, they help support the young children in our community through these trying times.

Your support today will help ensure that our GCS children come back to the staff they know and love. If you are in a position

to make a gift to help GCS weather the storm, it would be genuinely appreciated. Now, more than ever, your donation to the Annual Fund will support all that we hold dear about Groton Community School.

It's easy to make a gift at www.grotoncommunityschool.org/donate or mail your check to us at 110 Boston Road, Groton, MA 01450. Whichever way you choose to give, no matter the amount, please know how grateful we are for your kindness and generosity.



The Forward Motion Project is Back in Action

Thanks to the generous donors who have made this possible, the construction phase of the **Forward Motion** project is well underway. It certainly has not been a typical construction timeline. After partial demolition of the existing building, and foundations for new portions of the building were complete, underground utilities, framing of classrooms, of offices, and bathrooms were also progressing. Unfortunately, we did have to stop construction in accordance with Governor Baker's April 1st mandate, and so work paused at the site. Thankfully the Governor lifted the restriction on our project as of May 18th and our General Contractor immediately restarted work with all new required safety protocols in place on site.



Inside, the HVAC, plumbing, and electrical subcontractors have recommenced their work. Water and gas service infrastructure is complete, and site preparations are underway to complete the remaining utility connections. Now that the steel is complete at the entries and Community Room, the large structural roof panels have been installed, and roofing is underway. As the framers finish up the interior framing at the north end of the building, the exterior finishes will also begin, giving a real glimpse of the building's overall aesthetic.

Everyone in the GCS family is looking forward to realizing the first phase of long-imagined improvements to our school. These include updated classrooms, a Children's Library and Technology Center, a welcoming reception area, and meeting spaces for teachers and families. This newly renovated, state of the art space will be ready to welcome GCS children during the 2020-21 school year. We will be sure to update you when we finalize our move in date!

Because of the generosity of hundreds of donors – current and past families, alumni, staff, and community members - Groton Community School is undergoing this fantastic transformation.

However, this spring we were forced to cancel two large community fundraisers due to COVID-19, and *we still need your support. Please invest in the children of our community and help make this dream a reality for GCS!*

Why I Give

Donor Spotlight – Lorrie Morgan

Lorrie Morgan has been a part of the GCS family for over twenty years. She and her husband first heard about GCS from a neighbor while waiting at the bus stop with their kindergarten-aged son, Nicholas, when they moved to Groton in 1997. Her younger son, Christopher, attended GCS for three years, including Kindergarten. Lorrie was an active GCS parent right away, serving on the Board of Directors for four years. She was delighted to join the staff officially as part-time Bookkeeper in 2005.



Lorrie Morgan

"GCS is an institution in the community, and it has always met or exceeded my expectations," Lorrie shared. "A school doesn't become excellent by accident; it takes real dedication and a lot of hard work."

Lorrie credits GCS for her son's confidence and inner strength. "Christopher had trouble separating in the beginning, but after his three years at GCS, he walked away as a different child, with an underlying self-confidence. He knew he could do things and take care of himself, and as a parent, I will always be grateful for that."

As a GCS donor, Lorrie knows that her gifts are used to deliver an exceptional first school experience to every child. "It feels terrific to support the school in its mission to work with families to prepare children to lead happy, successful lives."

As one of the school's most loyal supporters, Lorrie has donated to the GCS Annual Fund every year since its inception in 2012! She says that she is motivated to give to the Annual Fund to support the children and staff. Additionally, Lorrie and her husband Jon have pledged to the current **Forward Motion Campaign**.

"Most people who find out that I donated to **Forward Motion** get curious about the details, which I love. It gives me the chance to talk about the significant need for the project and encourage others to donate as well.

"Being a staff member, I knew first-hand how tight space was at 110 Boston Road. The building really needed to be renovated and expanded to serve the community's children. Having the opportunity to be part of the group that makes it possible for GCS to develop a state-of-the-art school that will last for many years to come justifies any gift in my mind."

Having been involved on all different sides of the school, Lorrie adds, "GCS becomes a part of you. It is a great place to work and has always has been a little ray of sunshine in the community. It is just an excellent place to be, and to support."



110 Boston Road, Route 119
Groton, MA 01450

Look Who's Soaring Now! *Jillian Onishi*

Jillian Onishi attended GCS from 2001 to 2002 and was in the Pink Room with Emily and Shelley. The highlight of that school year was the completion of the GCS Playscape, which was very popular with Jillian and her friends. Her family was very involved making that project happen! She attended Camp Kaleidoscope for many summers. And she has great memories of dancing in the Big Room, playing with Terri and Jennie, and running around outside with her friend Caroline and her little sister Amelia.

"I enjoyed building with Legos, blocks, and train sets, and loved the STEM curriculum at GCS! Beginning in middle school, I knew that I would love to do hands-on work someday. I dreamed of becoming a physical therapist or a marine biologist until I developed a strong appreciation for math and chemistry in high school," Jillian shared.

"I attended Worcester Polytechnic Institute and graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering in May 2019."

Jillian recently started a critical defense industry position at General Dynamics Electric Boat in Groton, CT, as a Systems Engineer. "In this position, I have gained a new appreciation for submarines and the large-scale production process. I have even had the opportunity to walk through a submarine, as well as attend a christening!"

When Jillian isn't working hard or hanging out with her friends, she can be found in Warwick, RI, at the Central Rock Gym. Jillian discovered her love for rock climbing in college and now enjoys pushing herself to achieve new route grade levels and hopes to explore more climbing and hiking outside in Connecticut.



*Jillian, now
and then!*



Helping Children Soar