

# Countryside Trees



NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE SCHOOL ALUMNI

Spring 2016

## Letter from the Head



Stephanie Harman

Dear Friends,

Greetings from everyone here at Countryside School! It has been a fantastic year. I have truly enjoyed getting to know the Countryside community and have come to feel at home at my new school. It

has been delightful meeting so many of the Countryside alumni.

As we bid goodbye to the 2015-2016 school year, we must also say goodbye to our faculty and staff members who have so greatly enriched our lives at Countryside. **Lois Wilken, Janet Brickey, Holly Burns, Heidi Mulderink, and Jennifer Goran** will be honored at a farewell celebration on **Thursday, May 19** from 3:30-5 pm in the Multi-Purpose Room. We will celebrate these outstanding and beloved teachers for their years of service to our students and community. PLEASE make plans to stop by!

I recently had the pleasure of spending a couple of days in Chicago with our 8th grade students. We attended a Cubs' game, saw a show of the Blue Man Group, and had a

wonderful architectural boat tour on the Chicago River. I truly enjoyed spending time with these fantastic children. I encourage you to come out and see them in action as they perform the musical, *Into the Woods*, on **Monday, May 23rd** at 7pm on the Cathie Webber Stage. The show is sure to be a hit!

I also invite and encourage anybody who is able to come to **Graduation**, which will be held on **Wednesday, May 25** at 7:00 pm on the Cathie Webber Stage. Please look out for any Countryside alumni who are attending your school in the fall. It always helps to see a familiar and friendly face in the halls when you're starting out.

I look forward to seeing you all at our **Homecoming Picnic** in the fall. Be sure to mark your calendars for **Saturday, September 10th** at 5pm!

Warm regards,  
Stephanie Harman

## Featured Performance



Our combined choruses sang the National Anthem at the Illinois v. Wisconsin men's basketball game at the State Farm Center in January. See their performance here:

<http://bit.ly/1UCWo4g>

## Honors and Awards

- CHORUS SINGS NATIONAL ANTHEM FOR U OF I MEN'S BASKETBALL GAME
- TWO STUDENTS PLAY CARNEGIE HALL THIS SPRING
- STUDENTS RANK 1ST IN ILLINOIS & 17TH IN THE NATION IN VOCABULARY BOWL

## Inside this issue:

Q&A WITH NEW HEAD	2
GREAT SCHOOL NEWS	3
ALUMNI CHICAGO REUNION	7
RETIRING FACULTY	10
ALUMNI ASSOCIATION	12
COLLEGE BOUND	15
MARK YOUR CALENDARS	16

## Farewell Reception

Join us to say farewell to our retiring faculty and staff -

Mrs. Brickey, Mrs. Burns,  
Mrs. Goran, Ms. Mulderink, and  
Mrs. Wilken

**Thursday, May 19**

3:30 p.m. - 5 p.m. at the school

# Countryside Trees

## Q & A with New Head of School Stephanie Harman



Mrs. Harman helps celebrate a birthday.

Stephanie Harman discusses her first year as our new Head of School:

### Coming from an independent school in Ohio, what surprised you the most about Countryside?

For such a young school, there is a rich sense of tradition here at Countryside! From the classroom simulations, to the spirited school song, from the first day of school countdown, to the Middle School Camp Out, I am pleased to see a legacy of tradition here coupled with a culture of innovation.

### What have you enjoyed most about living in Champaign-Urbana?

I absolutely love the Champaign-Urbana community. The people here are so friendly! My family enjoys attending the Champaign and Urbana Farmer's Markets. We love the various parks, the public artwork is amazing, and you cannot beat the beautiful sunsets. In addition, I genuinely love living in a college town again. I lived in Ann Arbor for a number of years and didn't realize how much I missed the college town vibe until I moved here.

### What aspirations do you have for the future of Countryside?

Countryside is truly living its mission of *joy in learning, excellence in education*, each and every day! I see joyful learning happening in classrooms on a daily basis. I aspire to lead in such a way that maintains this focus on whole-child, joyful learning. More specifically, I would love for our students to get more connected with the local community. Getting our children out into the real-world to

work on problems they care about is a great way to foster passion for learning as well as bring attention to our wonderful school. In addition, I would love to take more advantage of our beautiful outdoor campus. Children love learning in the outdoors, and I can envision many exciting hands-on projects here on Countryside's campus.

A big dream of mine is to be able to bring a Countryside education to the youngest members of the Champaign-Urbana area by starting a preschool. Our philosophy of education translates perfectly into a preschool environment and I would love to be able to expand in that direction.

Please attend **Graduation - Wednesday, May 25** at 7 p.m. as we honor these students who are joining our ranks as alumni/alumnae:

Samantha Bateman	Milton Academy (Milton, MA)
Lean Beuoy	Central
Jennifer Chen	Centennial
Veronica Chistaya	St. Thomas More
Raja Choi	Centennial
Nicholas Gunn	Central
Olivia Gunn	Central
Luke Hartmann	Central
Kayla Israel	Centennial
David Kanfer	Central
Ginny Kirby	Centennial
Eli Lo	Central
Esha Mehta	Centennial
Claire Wang	Pineview (Osprey, FL)
Angela Xu	Centennial
Adam Youssef	Centennial

Congratulations to these students who will be matriculating as subfreshmen at University Laboratory High School next year:

Maher Adoni	Lauren Lumetta
Nabeel Bashir	Lucas Wood
Zachary Donnini	May Yang
Edward Kong	

We also say farewell to our 7th graders who attended Countryside since Kindergarten and are moving away. We will miss you.

John Rogers	Wilmette, IL
Charlotte Smith	Denver, CO

## Great News from the Past Year

Both of our Odyssey of the Mind teams competed at State. One team won the coveted OMER Award. Our other team took 1st place and will compete at the World Finals this month. This is the **11th consecutive year** we have competed at World Finals.

Two students played at Carnegie Hall - 7th grader Edward performed a cello piece in March and 1st grader DJ performed a piano piece in April - both through the American Protégé competitions. In addition, DJ will perform again at Carnegie Hall in June after winning the *Golden Era of Romantic Music International Competition*.

Over 60 Countryside students and family members participated in the U of I Day of Service – the service project to pack over 149,000 meals for the Eastern Illinois Foodbank at Memorial Stadium.

Countryside swept the Best Presentation category at the U of I Engineering Open House Middle School Design Contest. In addition, 6th grader Jared won Most Unique Design for his vertical axis windmill.

American Legion Post 24 performed a Flag Retirement Ceremony to retire about a dozen flags at our all-school assembly.

Ten Countryside students and alumni danced in Champaign-Urbana Ballet's *The Nutcracker* at Krannert Center.

8th grader Claire won Best in Show at the U of I's Insect Fear Film Festival Art Contest. Nine of our students received awards!

### Director of Teaching & Learning

We are pleased to welcome **Minsoo Park** into the Countryside community as our new Director of Teaching & Learning. This position was created to address our educational technology needs as well as to help move pedagogical and curricular goals forward. This year we launched a one-to-one iPad initiative in the Middle School as well as adopted Google Apps for Education school wide. In the fall we will be deploying our new learning management system, Alma. We are all excited for the expertise and inspiration that Minsoo brings to Countryside.

Countryside placed 1st in Illinois and 17th in the Nation for Vocabulary Bowl in February.

Countryside placed 2nd at ChessFest 2016. Ten students won trophies or ribbons.

7th grader Zoë competed in IEA Regional horse show in jumping & equitation on the flat.

The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency's Poster, Poetry & Prose Contest honored 5th grader Sanaia and 4th grader Shawn as Top Award Winners for their posters. Fifth grader Benjamin received Special Recognition, and 5th graders Grace, Ryan and 4th grader Charlotte won Honorable Mention.

For the 5th year in a row, several families gathered as Team Countryside to run in the Illinois Marathon 5k.

### New Director of Alumni Relations

**Kristin Feddersen** is your new Director of Alumni Relations. She also has been Countryside's Director of Communications for the past nine years and is the parent of two alumnae - Taylor (2012) and Lauren (2015).

Please email her with updates about what you are doing or go to our website (under the Alumni tab) to submit an "Update My Information" form.

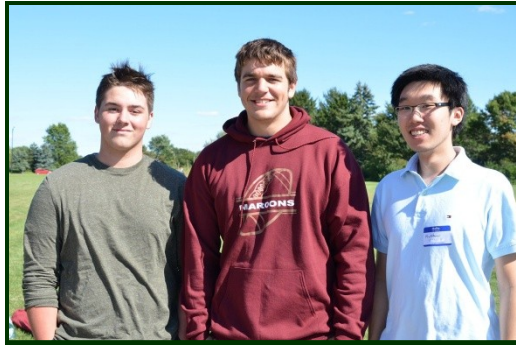
Contact Kristin at [feddersen@countrysideschool.org](mailto:feddersen@countrysideschool.org).





# Countryside Trees

## Homecoming 2015



**Above left:** Toby Antonsen, Dylan Gunn, Matthew Zhang



**Above right:** Carolyn Cai, Ally Choi, Kate Ferreira, Taylor Feddersen

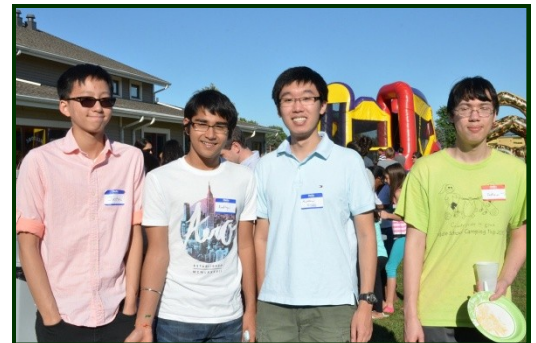
**Below right:** Justin Wang, Aaditya Mehta, Matthew Zhang, Justin Lumetta

**HOMECOMING**  
**2016**  
SATURDAY,  
SEPTEMBER 10  
AT THE  
SCHOOL

### We love seeing returning alumni!

Join us for next year's  
Homecoming/family picnic for fun,  
food and games - including cotton  
candy and inflatables.

Come back to see your former teachers  
and reunite with friends!



**Above left:** Justin Wang, Maddie Brown

**Above right:** Gauri Shankar, Aditi Mehta, Grace Qiu



**Countryside School** - Like us on Facebook for updates and event info.

Follow us on Twitter **@CSideAlumni**

Alumni page on our website - **[www.countrysideschool.org](http://www.countrysideschool.org)** - Check out alumni news & photos and update your contact information. To view photos and videos of school events, request an alumni username and password from Kristin Feddersen, Alumni Relations, **[feddersen@countrysideschool.org](mailto:feddersen@countrysideschool.org)**.

## Roundtables with Alumni

### Hannah Gottlieb-Graham, (2008)



Hannah Gottlieb-Graham is a rising senior at Sarah Lawrence College, and studied art history abroad this year at Oxford University. At Sarah Lawrence, she has been passionately and successfully weaving together a career that involves fashion, art, and dance.

At Oxford this year, she furthered her studies of art history through her work with scholar Jane Garnett. Hannah has specifically studied art and gender and contemporary women sculptors, and is currently writing a thesis on *Metamorphosis: Titian 2012*, a recent collaboration between the National Gallery and the Royal Ballet, in which choreographers and visual artists created ballets and set designs together. Hannah has worked with archivists at the National Gallery and the Royal Ballet, and she spends much time researching and seeing art in London.

She stopped by in September to answer questions from students. Some sage advice from Hannah: be as assertive as possible with finding what you want to do; big cities take some getting used to - don't give up right away; and trust your gut and follow your instincts. She says at Countryside she learned to love learning and greatly appreciates the "out of the chair" creative environment that fostered her imagination.

Alumni interested in NYC, fashion, art, and dance can contact her at [hgottlieb@gm.slc.edu](mailto:hgottlieb@gm.slc.edu).

### Ben Taylor (2007)

Ben earned a degree in computer science with a minor in mathematics from Michigan State University in 2015. He spent last summer as a software engineering intern at Amazon in Seattle, and was awarded a President's Fellowship at Georgia Tech to pursue a PhD in computer science. Ben's research interests include compiler optimization, approximate computing, and multicore scaling.

Ben spoke with a room full of aspiring engineers and scientists - who asked many questions about how he became interested in coding, working at Amazon, and of course, what it was like at Countryside when he was here. Some lucky 3rd graders also received some expert help on their code.org projects that day! Thanks, Ben!



Ben Taylor helping some 3rd graders with their code.org projects.

### Devin Richardson (2002)

Devin engaged a room full of students in a touching discussion about social work - from its meaning to the many varied career paths it can take.

The middle schoolers asked some challenging questions: What is the most difficult part of social work? (That you can't help people who don't want to be helped.) What are the most proud parts of Devin's work? (Getting to create resources for her coworkers to educate them on mental health.) And Devin even shared some favorite Countryside memories.

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THIS  
NEWSLETTER  
IS IN COLOR  
BY EMAIL &  
ON OUR  
WEBSITE!

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# Countryside Trees

## Alum Updates

*Graduation year listed is "affiliated class year" - the year a student graduated (or would have graduated had he or she remained at CS).*

### Daniel Slichter (1996)

Daniel received an AB in physics from Harvard (2004), then an MA (2007) and PhD (2011) in physics from UC Berkeley. He is living in Boulder, CO, with his wife Yolanda and children Trevor and Isabela, working as a physicist at NIST, a government research lab. He is doing atomic physics research related to quantum computing and next-generation atomic clocks. Daniel is more than happy to be a resource for other Countryside alumni who are interested in scientific careers. He can be reached at [dslichter@gmail.com](mailto:dslichter@gmail.com).

### Erika Kuehn (1996)

Erika is now a tailor in TV and film, working on a show called *Limitless*. Previously she was a wardrobe assistant for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre. She has been living in Brooklyn for the past nine years.

Three students were named National Merit Scholars for 2016: **Lyle Regenwetter** and **Monica Pardeshi** (both 2012) and **Katherine Tender** (2013).

### Rachel Walsh (1997)

Rachel received her Ph.D. from UC-Berkeley in integrated biology May 2015. She is working for the California Academy of the Sciences, Science from Scientists, and as a staff researcher for UC-Berkeley.

### Alyssa Green/Emily Walsh (1999)

Alyssa is working as an investigative analyst at Rolling Bay, LLC, in the Washington, DC area. She is also working on a master's degree in forensic and legal psychology.

**James Vaughn** (2013) won the Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition and performed as a soloist with the orchestra.

**Alex Shilts** (2015) qualified for swimming at State in three events (as a high school freshman) and broke a 14 year old school record in the 100 yard butterfly!

ALUMNI &  
ALUMNI  
PARENTS:  
SHARE YOUR  
E-MAIL  
ADDRESS  
WITH US!

## CSA Happenings

Countryside School Association sponsored several events for the school including teacher appreciation lunches, family work day, and book fairs. Highlights of the year's events included Homecoming/Fall Picnic; the always-enjoyable Winter Ice Skating Party; and a wonderful Trivia Night for adults paired with a Kids' Social at I-Power Gymnastics.

At our monthly all-school assemblies, CSA awarded a trophy to the classroom that had collected the most box tops for the month. In addition CSA founded the Countryside Boosters athletics program.

CSA also coordinated Countryside gear sales, the all-school pizza party, and the end of the year gathering in the park.

Thank you, CSA volunteers!



## Drop In Day: Centennial Alumni

**Back row:** Sophie Brown, Sarah Windelborn, Lauren Feddersen, Alex Shilts, Kashyap Joshi, Aditi Mehta, Julian White

**Front row:** Mary Ann Ha, Aaditya Mehta, Mariah Winterbottom



### Chicago Alumni Reunion



**Above:** Sarah Jones, Hillary Proctor, Anna File, Brian Eckstein, Shaunak Ahuja, Rachel Kaplan

The inaugural Chicago reunion took place at the hip Old Town Social in Chicago on the evening of March 5th. Shaunak Ahuja, Brian Eckstein, Anna File, Sarah Jones, Rachel Kaplan, and Hillary Proctor made the evening enjoyable! Special guests 1st grade teacher Stacy Kirby and former Head of School Cathie Webber also made appearances via Facetime.



### Drop In Day: Uni Alumni

**Above:** Sam Hotchkiss, Maddie Brown, Justin Wang, Robert Stavins, Sophia Liu, Emi Brown, Christina Wu, Grant Hoey, Sasha Rushing, Ethan Muchnick

**Left:** Mallika Luthar, Raya Gandhi, Ms. Stambaugh, Anupam Sharma

# Countryside Trees

## Q&A with Alumni

### Shaunak Ahuja, Class of 2001



I graduated Countryside in 2001, Centennial in 2005, and UIUC (Accountancy) in 2009.

#### What is AutoScout?

We are a group of UIUC-affiliated Computer Science Researchers

applying our automated algorithms to the analysis of sports video. In other words, we are developing software that automatically understands sports video. **Website:**

[www.autoscoutinc.com](http://www.autoscoutinc.com)

#### How did you come up with this idea and how long have you been working on it?

I came up with the idea and have been working on it since graduating UIUC in Spring 2009.

#### What do you envision for yourself with this business and for the future of AutoScout?

I'd like to grow the business to all levels of all sports. Ultimately, I hope for AutoScout to become a sports division for a larger parent company analyzing video in other sectors, e.g. retail, commercial, security.

#### What do you love about owning your own business and do you have any advice for alumni who dream of starting their own businesses?

There are many reasons why I love owning my own business. Ultimately, it comes down to the fact that it's extremely stimulating; no two days are seemingly the same. On any given day I might be working with lawyers, doing financial projections, coding, conducting interviews, setting up HR policies, sales presentations, meeting world famous athletes and players, and more. It might sound cliché, but love what you do.

When you love what you do, you find yourself going the extra mile more often than not. When you go the extra mile, others around you respond very positively.

**Any other passions you are currently pursuing in life?** I enjoy running and am training for several summer races, but I don't get as much free time as I used to.

If you are an alumni or student thinking of starting your own business, please feel free to contact Shaunak at [shaunakahuja@gmail.com](mailto:shaunakahuja@gmail.com)

### David Jacobson, Class of 1996

I went to Countryside for 7th grade, with some great memories of Larry McMillan and Karen Kovacs. I graduated from UNI in 2000, and spent a gap year in Israel at a Jewish learning center. I then went to Columbia University and graduated with a B.A in history in 2006. After Columbia, I worked at a non-governmental organization in Berlin and then spent a year at U.S. foreign policy think tank in D.C. I graduated from NYU Law School in 2010, and have spent the past several years working as a litigator at Proskauer Rose LLP in NYC. On the personal side, I am married with a son.

If there are any alumni or students who wish to discuss careers in foreign relations, gap year projects, or law careers, they can contact me at: [dmi2001@gmail.com](mailto:dmi2001@gmail.com).



David with his wife Lauren and son Jack

**ALUMNI:**  
PLEASE SEND US  
YOUR UPDATES.  
WE'D LOVE TO  
FEATURE YOU.



## Q&A with Alumni

### Daniel Borup, Class of 2005

At Stanford, I'm studying experimental fluid mechanics. My thesis topic is the development of a method for measuring particle concentration in turbulent flows using MRI (magnetic resonance imaging). The initial motivation for the project was the study of dust sucked into aircraft engines, but potential applications are wide-ranging and include inhalation of particles into the human airway or sediment transport in river or ocean flows.

After graduating I'm not sure what I'd like to do yet. It's a tough decision between academia (post-doc and then a professorship) or going into industry--either research for a big company or something more entrepreneurial, if that option presents itself. All of those are intriguing options with their own benefits and possible drawbacks, so it's certainly not an easy decision! However, I still have around three years remaining to decide.

As far as Countryside goes, I have a number of great memories. I met my closest group of friends in

middle school at Countryside and still visit them every time I'm in the Midwest. I'm also pretty involved in choral and solo singing these days, so I certainly have

strong memories of the various P.E. shows and musicals we put on over the years. The fun group atmosphere of those shows, plus things like chess club and the basketball and soccer teams were great. My friends and I have so many fun stories from those years that make for great reminiscing.

As far as things I still use, the mathematical foundations I learned at Countryside are absolutely important for me every day as I needed those to build up enough mathematical knowledge for advanced study

in engineering. I use algebra many, many times per day on most days. More generally, I find that I still greatly enjoy learning about all sorts of things, and I'm sure having a challenging and rewarding school experience is a big part of why I've become a life-long learner.

You are invited to connect with Daniel on LinkedIn if you have any questions or if you have similar aspirations.

### Countryside Is Turning 25

We will celebrate our 25<sup>th</sup> year throughout 2017-2018, starting with a birthday party on May 7, 2017, the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first meeting about starting Countryside.

Stay tuned for more information about celebratory events during the year, including a major event next spring.

We are collecting historical information about the school, as well as any stories you have about the early days. If you would like to contribute any information, or assist with plans, please contact me.

Judy Kaplan  
25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee Chair  
[kaplan@countrysideschool.org](mailto:kaplan@countrysideschool.org)



### Holocaust Project: Middle School social studies

The News-Gazette featured some of our middle schoolers discussing their Holocaust art and poetry project.

The students viewed primary sources including firsthand accounts via videos hosted on the National Holocaust Museum and Memorial's website. They wrote down words and phrases that resonated with them and then crafted poems and artwork using those notes.

The poetry and images were turned into an online book which can be seen here:

[https://issuu.com/countrysidemorton/docs/the\\_holocaust\\_and\\_art](https://issuu.com/countrysidemorton/docs/the_holocaust_and_art)

See the article here: <http://bit.ly/1YaFjhi>

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**GRADUATION**  
WEDNESDAY,  
MAY 25,  
7 P.M.

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# Countryside Trees

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## Retiring Faculty and Staff Updates

### Janet Brickey - 4th Grade



Mrs. Brickey with Maddie Brown at Turkey Run in 2008

Thank you for allowing me to be a part of your lives while you or your students were passing ever so quickly through the 4/5 class. I loved every day that I spent in our 4/5 classroom watching your students grow and learn.

The memories that I will cherish most are those rare and beautiful moments with your students as they watched the baby chicks hatch, hiked the rugged and beloved Trail #3 at Turkey Run, or mastered the 6-division circle construction while studying geometry. I will never forget the snow runs, planting bulbs and gourds, or seeing a young deer run across our soccer field in the early morning light. Countryside has been my home away from home where miracles sometimes happen like the day that hail miraculously appeared during a science class about weather. Students ducked outside and scooped up handfuls of small hailstones asking how did you make that happen?

I have gained invaluable insight into education and life in general while working with my amazing co-teachers Sharon Henson, Kathy Eckstein, Lois Wilken, and Maya Payne. I will always remember each of them with fondness and gratitude. I am truly a better person by meeting Cathie Webber and being embraced by her love and vision for Countryside.

My future plans include teaching in Saipan and traveling with my husband to nearby Pacific and Southeast Asia destinations. It is very sad for me to leave Countryside. I will miss each student whether he or she is loud and outgoing or quiet and reserved. I will miss the Countryside staff and the wonderful families that so willingly give of themselves to support their children who are the reason that Countryside exists.

### Holly Burns - Chinese



Mrs. Burns making Hot Pot

For more than three years I've had the privilege of serving the great students and staff at Countryside School. I'm so thankful for this opportunity and excellent environment to help foster learning for all, including me. It has been a wonderful blessing to be a part of the Countryside family. I am very proud of the students' tremendous efforts in our Chinese class. It is always a joy to see their enthusiasm and creativity. I truly appreciate all the support from both students and parents!

### Lois Wilken - MS Math & Odyssey

When my family moved to Champaign 17 years ago, I could never have imagined what a wonderful experience being involved at Countryside School would become. It was exciting to be part of the building addition, expansion of the Middle School, and addition of our beautiful gym and stage. I have appreciated the value that Countryside families place on education and the

**FAREWELL  
RECEPTION  
THURSDAY,  
MAY 19  
3:30-5 P.M.**

wonderful support and help from our Countryside parents; from generously sending in pies for Pi day to helping transport students and their materials to Odyssey competitions.



What an exceptional staff to work with, be inspired by, play with, and be associated with! By subbing in every class and job sharing in the 4/5 classroom, I observed firsthand the

nurturing, caring, creativity, and professionalism that abounds with the entire staff at Countryside. The staff and teachers have inspired, encouraged, and challenged me to become a better teacher. I have been blessed by the friendships that I have developed working at Countryside.

I enjoyed developing activities and simulations to challenge students who found math easy and working to make math easier and applicable for those students who found math more challenging. Nothing is more rewarding for a math teacher than observing that "aha" moment when a student fully realizes the math skill that you have been presenting. I will miss those "aha" moments and watching the amazing creativity and talent of our students.

What an Odyssey it has been! (Pun intended.) Odyssey of the Mind is a team problem-solving competition. This program was started at Countryside 11 years ago, and in that time, I have had 17 teams and over 100 students qualify to attend the international competition, the Odyssey of the Mind World Finals. I have loved every exhausting, frustrating, exhilarating, and creative moment of being involved in the Odyssey of the Mind program. I have been

thoroughly amazed by the creative ideas of our students.

I have enjoyed getting to better know my Odyssey students and observing their many talents. There are so many memories: teaching our German buddy team how to play baseball; hilarious responses while practicing spontaneous problems; watching students learn disco moves to incorporate into a choreography; observing quick-thinking and composed students quickly repair their set as the heat literally melted the glue holding it together; the many creative and funny skits, and of course winning a 2nd place trophy at the 2008 Odyssey of the Mind World Finals. I hope to continue being involved in the Odyssey program on the judging side of the competition.

## Heidi Mulderink - Development



A bushel of thanks,  
to this joyful crew.  
An honest pleasure  
learning about you!

Countryside Comets  
and Countryside pride  
remember your roots,  
when you hit your stride.

Students still learning  
in this prairie home,  
and they need your help  
wherever you roam.

Best of luck to each and every one of you!

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THIS  
NEWSLETTER  
IS IN COLOR  
BY EMAIL &  
ON OUR  
WEBSITE!

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# Countryside Trees

## Getting to Know Your Alumni Association Executive Board

Several alumnae have been hard at work this year for Countryside. What have they been doing? Establishing an Alumni Association! Why? Other than all being passionate advocates for Countryside, your officers, Devin, Meredith, Hilary, and Jenny created a vision statement to answer this very question:

"Our vision is to keep alumni tied to their roots by building traditions that reconnect individuals and their families with Countryside and each other. We will facilitate networking opportunities, foster alumni leadership, and promote a spirit of unity and loyalty in support of Countryside's mission."

In addition to the vision, they are creating bylaws and helping to schedule and plan future reunions. Do you want to get involved? They are looking for alumni representatives from each class. Please read below for more information on these officers and how you can get involved at Countryside!

### Meredith (Albrecht) Botnik (1996)

Email: [meredith@wx5ab.net](mailto:meredith@wx5ab.net)



**Living in:**  
Denver, CO

**College:** U.S. Naval Academy, 2004, BS in aerospace engineering; Air Force Institute of Technology, 2005, MS in aeronautical engineering

**Important people in my life:** My family and my husband Aaron, and our three dogs (Ghost, Denali, and Lulu) and two cats (Gremlin and Ninja)

**My passions:** To fund my various hobbies and interests, I work as an analyst. Outside of my day job, I'm an avid hiker and a triathlete, and enjoy just kicking back in the

Colorado backcountry with Aaron and the dogs. I'm actually also really into quilting.

### Why I'm helping out with our Alumni

**Association:** I don't think I'd be where I am today if it hadn't been for my experience at Countryside. I was only there for a year and a half, but it made a world of difference in my education and helped me achieve some pretty lofty goals. Because of this, I'm thrilled to be able to give back to the school and help it to become an even better place for current and future students.

**Favorite teacher:** I have to pick just one? Seriously, I loved Larry, Mrs. Kovacs, and Mrs. Webber. They all had different styles, but each pushed me way out of my comfort zone and encouraged me to reach my full potential.

**Favorite memory:** I have so many good memories of Countryside, but hands down my favorite was when I was in 8th grade and got to help the K/1's with their space exploration unit. Building the space shuttle mock up, building and launching a model rocket, and just getting to share my love of all things space with the younger students was amazing.

### Jenny Bartlett (1997)

Email: [jennifera.bartlett@gmail.com](mailto:jennifera.bartlett@gmail.com)



**Living in:**  
New York, NY

**College:** Illinois Wesleyan University, 2005, B.S. in Biology; University of Illinois, 2008, M.S. in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences

**Important to me:** My inspirational kids Alex (4) & Isabelle (2)

**My passion:** I'm currently staying home to

**ALUMNI:  
VOLUNTEER  
TO BE A  
CLASS REP**

raise my two kids. I spend my days teaching and learning from the brightest most inquisitive minds I've ever met. They challenge me physically, mentally, and emotionally and encourage me to always keep exploring and learning. I'm fulfilling one of the goals I set when I was a student at Countryside, to mentor young children and share in their love for discovery.

**What inspired you to be an officer of the Alumni Association?** I was previously a Board Member for five years before I moved to New York, including seeing the evolution of the new gym and performing arts center from brainstorming sessions to groundbreaking. I really missed being directly involved in the school when I moved and was eager for another opportunity to stay in touch with an institution that had such an impact on my life.

**Favorite teacher:** This is not an easy question as I had several excellent teachers. Nevertheless, I have to give so much credit and love to my original teacher, Ms. Karen Kovacs, who was there with me from day one of the very first middle school. She continued to be there every step of the way as I navigated my four years at Countryside, helping shape me into a confident, creative, critical thinker. Using a unique combination of intelligence, humor, and more patience than anyone I've ever met, Ms. Kovacs inspired me to push limits of my abilities academically, physically, and socially. Without her mentorship and her unshakable faith in each student's potential, Countryside's middle school would never have met with such success.

**Favorite memory:** The first year of middle school was an amalgam of teacher and student designed curriculum. Ms. Kovacs would frequently give us challenge projects with few guidelines and plenty of raw materials. This particular challenge was to create a one minute timer. Working in teams, we had free choice of materials from a floor to ceiling shelving unit of broken office machines, glasses, old appliances, and all sorts of knickknacks. My teammate Erika and I were determined to fix up a dilapidated

coffee machine and figure out how much water was needed to drip through for precisely one minute.

What began as a serious consideration of 6th grade math and engineering skills, quickly degenerated into puddles of water all over the floor and a fit of giggles that lasted the rest of the day. I have never laughed so much in my entire life. Erika and I refused to believe we could fail, and our only solution was a completely unreasonable amount of duct tape which ultimately failed to stem the leaks.

## Hilary Phillips (2001)

**Email:** To contact Hilary, address the email to her at [alumni@countrysideschool.org](mailto:alumni@countrysideschool.org) and it will be forwarded.

**Living in:** Chicago, Illinois



### College:

University of Illinois, 2009, French Commercial Studies

**Passions:** My family, traveling the world, trying new things, and my job at Edelman - I love the agency

environment, exciting pace and how much creativity is encouraged!

### Why I'm helping out with our Alumni

**Association:** Looking forward to connecting alumni with each other!

**Favorite Teacher:** Chris Lukeman who felt more like our cool older aunt than a teacher - she taught us to dance, sing, attempt to play sports and would listen to all our crazy stories. She encouraged us to follow our passions and loved her students like family - a small group of us even attended and sang at her wedding!

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# Countryside Trees

## Getting to Know Your Alumni Association Executive Board

### Devin (Richardson) Lietz (2002)

Email: [devinirene17@gmail.com](mailto:devinirene17@gmail.com)

Living in: Illinois

**College:** University of Illinois, Bachelors in Human Development and Family Studies, 2010; Masters of Social Work, 2011

**Important people in my life:** my husband, parents, extended family and friends.

**My passions:** I am a clinical social worker. I like my job because I get to help people enrich and improve their own lives. In a past life, so to speak, I was also a dance instructor and choreographer. I still try to stay involved in the arts community and also enjoy cooking big meals, and am interested in interior decorating and fashion design!



### Why I'm helping out with our Alumni

**Association:** I have a true affinity for all things Countryside - I was pretty much raised there! Anything I can do to make sure that Countryside's community is strong and vibrant is a real pleasure. I know how important the wonderful community of parents, learners and alumni is for instilling "Joy in Learning."

**Favorite teacher:** Mrs. Kirby. She was my kindergarten teacher (yes, she taught kindergarten back then!) and really helped foster my love of learning right from the start. She taught me that kindness is a key component to learning anything: academic or otherwise. She especially taught me to be kind to *myself* when I was learning something new, and I still remind myself of this today.

**Favorite memory:** We had an Ellis Island simulation when I was in 4/5 and I got REALLY into it because some of my ancestors had come through Ellis Island many decades ago. My "character" in the simulation had

three kids she was trying to get through immigration in addition to herself, so I took it upon myself to bring in dolls for props. I took it very seriously, and I'm happy to report that not one of the dolls got deported.

### Share with Our Students

Our students love to hear what our alumni are up to - your career, your passion, or your hobbies.

If you are planning to be back in Champaign-Urbana, contact Kristin, and she will set up time for you to visit a group of students here so you can share your interests and experiences with us. We can set up an informal roundtable discussion, a presentation, or chat with a specific class.

Contact Kristin Feddersen, Alumni Relations at [feddersen@countrysideschool.org](mailto:feddersen@countrysideschool.org).

8TH GRADE  
MUSICAL  
"INTO THE  
WOODS"  
MONDAY,  
MAY 23  
7 P.M.

## Alumnus Performs Concert



Alumnus and trumpeter **James Vaughan** (2013) performed a concert at Countryside in April. Accompanied by his mom, Ann, at the piano, they performed a wonderful set including favorites "Let It Go", two pieces from Miyazaki films ("Totoro" and "Castle in the Sky"), and "The Pink Panther Theme." Thanks for coming back to share your love of music and to perform at Countryside!



## College Bound 2016

Congratulations to our alumni headed to the following colleges, universities, and post high school plans:

William Ahlgren	Illinois - engineering
Anna Benson	Illinois Tech - computer science
Maddie Brown	Miami University (Ohio) - media & culture and economics
Carolyn Cai	Illinois - civil engineering
Ally Choi	Illinois - biochemistry
Grace Chariya	Illinois - stage management
Mac Dressman	Georgetown University - international relations
Taylor Feddersen	University of Michigan - engineering
Kate Ferreira	Illinois - mechanical engineering
Carter Huff	joining the Army
Louis Kim	Illinois - electrical engineering
David Ko	Illinois - biology (premed)
Kenny Miller	Miami University (Ohio) - biology and premedical studies
Arad Mor	University of Florida - psychology
Madeleine Nelson	Washington University (St. Louis) - biology
Monica Pardeshi	Carnegie Mellon University - computer science
Keisha Patel	New York University - biochemistry
Andrew Piester	Purdue University - industrial design
Abby Poteshman	University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) - math
Lyle Regenwetter	Illinois - mechanical engineering
Omri Schwartz	Illinois - theater lighting design
Aisha Soliman	University of Arkansas - biology (premed)
Robert Stavins	Illinois - mechanical engineering
Trevor Vallese	Illinois - journalism
Sushrut Vani	Illinois - computer science
Justin Wang	Johns Hopkins University - biomedical engineering
Alex Wells	Rhodes College (Memphis) - neuroscience

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IF YOU DID **NOT**  
RECEIVE THIS BY  
EMAIL, WE DO  
**NOT** HAVE  
YOUR EMAIL  
ADDRESS.

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If you are headed to college and are NOT listed, we have not been notified where you are going to school. Please let us know! [alumni@countrysideschool.org](mailto:alumni@countrysideschool.org)

## Alumni Association

We are forming an Alumni Association and have the Executive Board in place. Would you like to get involved? Volunteer to be a **Class Representative!** In this position you will help us in the vital role of finding alumni in your class, sending important school news their way, and having input on Alumni Association discussions. We still need reps for several classes.

If you are interested, contact Kristin Feddersen at [feddersen@countrysideschool.org](mailto:feddersen@countrysideschool.org).



# Countryside School

Joy in Learning, Excellence in Education

NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE SCHOOL ALUMNI

Countryside School  
4301 W. Kirby Avenue  
Champaign, IL 61822  
217/355-1253  
E-mail: [alumni@countrysideschool.org](mailto:alumni@countrysideschool.org)

**We don't want to lose contact!**

Please send us your email address:  
[alumni@countrysideschool.org](mailto:alumni@countrysideschool.org)

## We Need Your Pennant

We LOVE displaying pennants from all our alums' colleges and universities. Although we have about 67 on display, we are still missing several. Drop us an e-mail if you can provide us with a pennant (12" x 30") or to ask if we have it already!

[alumni@countrysideschool.org](mailto:alumni@countrysideschool.org)



## Mark your calendars:

Farewell Reception retiring teachers and staff

8th grade musical *Into the Woods*

Graduation (and alumni photos)

Alumni Reunion (tentatively scheduled for June 4) has been cancelled.

Homecoming 2016/Fall Picnic

Alumni Reunion Event

Thursday, May 19

3:30 - 5 p.m.

Monday, May 23

7 p.m.

Wednesday, May 25

7 p.m.

Saturday, September 10

5 - 7 p.m.

To be announced