



SPRING 2023 | VOL 2

Fox & Tree

A Newsletter for Friends of Wissahickon Charter School

A Note from Dean Kristi WCS Chief Executive Officer

Wissahickon Charter has formed many valuable partnerships over the years (if you are reading this, you are probably one of them!). Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting our friends at The Morris Arboretum, who have been one of our most enduring partners. We owe this partnership in large part to Liza Hawley, a former WCS Board Member and Morris' Visitor Education Coordinator (though she is soon to retire! Congrats, Liza!) The Morris Arboretum is an important resource for many in our city, but especially so for Wissahickon. The arboretum and Liza have supported us in numerous ways over the years, from hosting field trips to donating passes to our annual silent auction. They have even offered free summer camp opportunities to our students, kids who would have never had such an opportunity otherwise.

I've been fortunate to reciprocate this support somewhat by providing an annual seminar to Morris' "volunteers in training," a committed batch of individuals who donate their time to guiding various groups at the arboretum. While many are already experts in areas of horticulture and conservation, they often seek advice on how they can engage students in environmental learning. I share some of the tools we use in our own classrooms here at Wissahickon like how to keep students focused and excited, how to speak to kids without talking down to them, how to ask open-ended questions, and how to make individual connections.

I was so impressed by the volunteers' enthusiasm to learn and to be the best possible ambassadors to the arboretum. And I am confident that that enthusiasm and care has been passed on to the communities of students who have visited the arboretum this Spring - including our own Fourth Graders, pictured below!

Thank you, Morris Arboretum!

Dean Kristi



We Love Morris Arboretum!



Kristi Littell, CEO
littell@wissahickoncharter.org

Jane Walsh, Dir. of Development
j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org

Board of Trustees

Justin DiBerardinis, Chair
Rachel Loeper, Vice Chair
Charles Case, Treasurer
John Wylie, Secretary
Rekyiah Abdul-Zahir
Allora Buckshon
Anthony Coughlin
Erich Holland
Shauna Mace
Samantha Mathews
Ohenewaa White-Ra

www.wissahickoncharter.org

Fernhill Campus
4700 G Wissahickon Ave
Philadelphia, PA 19144

Awbury Campus
815 E Washington Lane
Philadelphia, PA 19138

**"We Take Care of the Earth
That Takes Care of Us"**



Employees Turned Parents (Part II)

At WCS, we prioritize partnerships with parents as part of our mission, so we are particularly proud to have numerous employees who are also WCS parents! In fact, there were so many parent employees, with so many nice things to say about WCS, that we turned this article, first featured in our Winter Fox & Tree, into a two-parter! We hope you enjoy Part II here!

Ishmell Bradley: Director of Technology

WCS Director of Technology Ishmell Bradley says it was a "no brainer" to send his children to Wissahickon. "There were so many reasons to support sending my kids here and nothing that supported them going elsewhere. WCS would provide a safe, quality education for them WITH services that you definitely wouldn't get anywhere else." Mr. Ish is responsible for handling all issues related to technology at Wissahickon and enjoys being able to support teachers and students in the building. When asked about what makes WCS unique, Mr Ish cites the learning spaces in the building. "A lot of work goes into planning those spaces and children get to come into a space where they feel seen."

Nicole Gourdine, MS Science Teacher

For Fernhill science teacher Nicole Gourdine, seeing the inner workings of WCS helped inform her decision to send her daughter here. "There were so many reasons to send her to WCS: the love, the accountability, the structure. She receives amazing opportunities here, while being offered room to grow. And as a parent, I receive wonderful feedback about how she is growing." Ms. Gourdine knows that the coursework she provides to her students is rigorous, but she loves to see them achieving their goals: "We are really invested in our students academically AND from a social-emotional perspective. We offer so many opportunities to help students get to where they need to be no matter where they are when they come to us."



Science Teacher Nicole Gourdine and Daughter Kaley

School Librarian Says Walk for Health, Planet

The following article was featured in the "Fernhill Healthy Fox," a student led newspaper focusing on "all things health." Participating students came from our Fernhill Campus' 5th and 7th Grades. Coach B., Fernhill's Health and Physical Education Teacher, and Mrs. Wright, Fernhill's Discovery Teacher, served as the newspaper's faculty advisors.

School librarian Ms. Kourtney Gavin said she walks every day to help keep her body active. It gives her an opportunity to clear her head and stay healthy, she told sixth-grade Fernhill Healthy Fox reporters recently.

"When I'm walking with my friends or family, it helps bring the walls down and opens up opportunities for talking," she said. "It's a great way to connect with your friends and family."



Illustration by WCS Student Sarah Minott

Walking offers many health benefits, including building stronger muscles and putting you in a better mood, according to the American Heart Association. Health experts advise that children should be active at least 60 minutes a day. Walking can help kids reach this daily goal, says the American Heart Association.

Aside from helping people stay healthy, walking also benefits the environment. When people walk instead of drive, they need less gas for their cars or trucks. That reduces the amount of harmful gases that cars release into the atmosphere, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Ms. Kourtney says that she walks whenever she can. She will take a quick walk around the school during her breaks which helps her relieve stress, she said. When the weather is nice, she will go outside during the school day. When she has more time, she will walk for more than an hour. She will take the trails at Wissahickon Park and Germantown area.

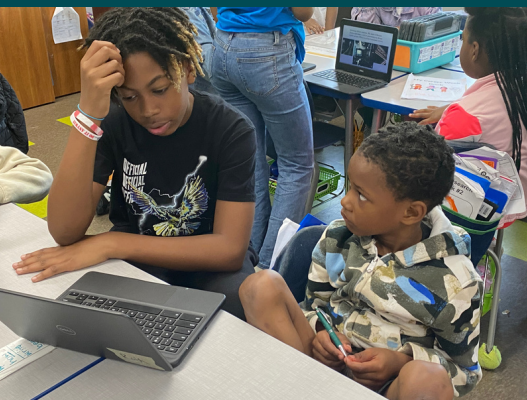
"When I am in the woods, I feel happy," she said. Ms. Kourtney also said she enjoys walking because it makes her feel like she is doing a little something to help the environment.

The next time you see Ms. Kourtney walking the halls of the school, say "hi" or join in on the healthy fun. "I highly recommend walking because it's good for your health and you can enjoy nature while connecting with friends."

—By Fernhill Healthy Fox reporters

#beautifulthingshappenatawbury

As we approach the last few weeks of school -- a challenging time for students and teachers alike! -- staff at our Awbury Campus are collectively working to see the glass "half full." They started a hashtag campaign where, at any moment in the day, when a staffer experiences a moment that brings them joy or inspires them, they share it to the staff email list. Moments have included student mentoring sessions, "Character Day" in Room 212, and serendipitous surprises -- look verry closely at the middle picture to see what we mean! Wissahickon is such a beautiful school!




Eyes to the Future: Wissahickon Career Day

At Wissahickon, we are always urging our students to look forward and examine how they will make their mark on the world. This year, at our Fernhill Campus, our two guidance counselors further propelled this thinking with our first annual "Career Day." Individuals from many varied backgrounds came in to share their stories and advice with students, providing them with insight on pursuing their dreams and opening their eyes to new possibilities. Many students even dressed up as their "dream job"! It was a day filled with joy, gratitude, and inspiration for students and participants alike.

There are many opportunities throughout the year to share your experiences – career or otherwise – with our students, who love welcoming visitors to their classrooms. If you would like to donate your time and wisdom, please reach out to Director of Development Jane Walsh at j.walsh@wissahickoncharter.org.



Pictured from top left: Radio Anchor Jay Scott Smith interviews 3rd graders, FS Investments' Head of Impact Michael Newmuis speaks as part of a panel to middle schoolers, future Philadelphia 76ers Players, Dr. Jasmine Santos poses with two future docs, Dog Trainer Lindsey Smith has her support pup perform some tricks, two middle school students dressed as their career inspiration (their teacher, Mr. Lattimore!), a future astronaut, our afternoon group of Career Day Speakers.

 **THANK YOU** to everyone who attended our 2023 Spring Benefit & Silent Auction! We look forward to sharing event pictures and fundraising outcomes in our 2023 Annual Report, coming out at the end of the summer!