

## Welcome to the NEST! Animas High is Home at Last on Permanent Campus



Blue skies and sunshine over the new nest at 22 Osprey Way situated on the Southeast corner of the Fort Lewis College campus.

By Desmond Tsosie and Rosie LeCompte

Perched next to Fort Lewis College, overlooking the Animas Valley, our new building is a gift to be shared with generations of Ospreys. Students are already filling the hallways with projects and art pieces, making Animas High School not only a place of education, but a gallery, a studio, and a new home.

The dreams of founder Jesse Hutt, developed around her dining room table in 2005, are finally becoming a reality. “[The other founders and I] hoped to create an environment that encourages curiosity and creativity, collaboration, learning authentically; the sky is the limit, and it is now up to the students to do what they do,” Jesse expressed. “I want it to be known as a school of innovation and welcoming environment that can grow so more students that are interested can come here.”



AHS Founders Gisele Pansze and Jesse Hutt celebrate the moment that has been long in the making and enjoy the sunset view from the new campus.

“It’s amazing,” stated journalism teacher Jessica McCallum. “I have so many words and yet I struggle to find the ones to describe how important this feels. I feel like we graduated into our own identity finally, we’ve been forming and trying to progress in education and we’ve never had the best space to do it, and now we finally do! This is game-changing. My ability to do my job has been transformed by this space.”

“It’s been a long time coming,” current Board President Jeff King recalled. “It took a lot of hard work from a lot of people, not only current folks, but also from previous folks, including the most committed Head of School Sean Woytek, who pushed this project forward. And we are equally as fortunate to have Rebecca Ruland as our new Head of School to take it forward.”

The planning and creation of this building was a huge collaboration, involving teachers, students, parents, board members, and founders. Since public schools can’t take on debt, Animas formed a separate organization, the Animas High School Building Corporation, to take out loans and fund the project. The board applied for and obtained the Colorado BEST grant, which covered 75% of the total cost. Animas was awarded \$13.8 million of the \$20 million needed for building as a whole. The rest of the funding came from private donations and a bond passed by Durango 9-R. The board hired Anderson Mason Dale Architects to design the building, and then they found a general contractor and started planning. Teachers and staff were deeply involved in planning the building’s layout and design features, and students also offered their input.

Recently departed chemistry teacher Steve Smith

was a key member of the team that made this building a reality, serving on the Building Corporation for a few years. “The energy and excitement in the school in the last few weeks has been infectious, and has been felt by everyone who set foot in our hallways. As someone who has helped work on the project of securing this permanent campus, I feel relief, gratitude, and joy,” Steve shared. “Now all of the efforts that went towards finding this permanent home can instead be devoted to AHS’ primary mission of providing transformational educational experiences.”

“Moving into this new space, and a new chapter in Animas history, is incredibly exciting, “but also [it’s important] that we remember our roots,” reflected long-time board member Tom Morrissey, who has been a part of the AHS journey as long as just about anyone. He reminisced about the journey that started in a strip mall, sharing, “I remember spending weekends climbing up in the suspended ceilings of the Chinese restaurant

*Story continued on page 4*



Students have room to eat and lounge in the new Commons space as they enjoy the views of Smelter Mountain and Durango below.

# A Word from the Editor

Though a few things may have been lost or shuffled around, the Ospreys have successfully migrated to the “campus in the sky.” And after rain, shine, and snow days, believe it or not, readers, the *Animas Quill* is finally back in print! (Follow us on Instagram @ahsquillmedia, where we never left!)

It seems our new building was just the start of many great things. All around us, we see the scaffolding of new ideas rising into the sky. Concepts once confined to blueprints are becoming realized as we speak. Even as we celebrate our progress, however, it's important to remember our history and roots. As you walk through the door in the morning, remember that this situation was made possible through the hard work of many dedicated teachers, parents, and students. Our founders had a vision for better living and education, and it's our duty to make sure that vision lives on. We keep it alive by daring to think outside the box, to step up, create, and inspire.

We also must not forget that the land we stand on wasn't given up freely (see the Land Acknowledgement at the bottom of this page). The history of our campus—and our country—is spattered with blood and injustice. While it is impossible for us to right the wrongs of the past, we can and must make choices that lead to a better world going forward. Our school can be a safe place for every student in need, and we can play our part in moving toward an equal and educated society.

So, Ospreys, welcome to a new issue, a new home, and a new era! The gifts we've been given are nothing small, and I trust that our creative, driven community will put them to very good use.



Quill Chief Za Barrett loves the campus in the sky. Take it in, kids!

# Roses and Thorns

## Roses



*The natural light and stunning views streaming in through our plethora of beautiful new windows.*



*Osprey Week is back and soon! Can't wait to get out in the world with our peers and teachers for some good times.*



*The hallways filling up with student art, the sound of music, and the busy hum of project-based life in the new nest.*

## Thorns



*New attendance policy makes us want to skip 4th period and run to McDonald's for a 10 piece McNugget.*



*The bad decisions of a few bringing the heat down on us all. RIP bathroom doors...*



*Every moment brings seniors closer to the void of an unknown future. I'm not crying. You're crying.*

# World News Haikus

Riri and baby  
Showing the world how it's done  
Who won the sports game?

Downed unknown object  
Government keeps it quiet  
UFO or not?

Noxious cloud of sludge  
Railroad says it's all okay  
Do we believe them?

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# Dear Homegurl

Dear Homegurl,

I've been having these bizarre dreams lately about the entire population turning into me, everyone with my face, my voice, and my personality: 7 billion me's, all with my colossal appetite! In the dream, the world runs out of cheese balls, then chicken nuggets, and within a week there is no more food left. But we're all still very hungry, and I start to eat myself, well the self I am sitting next to, and I taste pretty damn good. The world is a bloodbath of cannibalistic me's munching on each other and enjoying it. I've had this dream every day for the past week and every time it ends with getting eaten by another me and waking up screaming. I need to know what this means so I can work through my issues and go back to dreaming about cats. PLEASE HELP!!

-cheeseballsaregr8

Dear cheeseballsaregr8,

It sounds like grippy socks and padded rooms are in your future. For now, hang on to the sanity you have left and don't worry! There are cheese balls in the loony bin; I know how much we love them.

Peace and Blessin's, <3 Homegurl

Dear Homegurl,

How do I get a famous person to fall in love with me? I need Austin Butler in my life this very second. He's so dreamy, and his voice is soooooo hot. Maybe I should be asking Jessica for advice on pulling famous people cuz you know.... Matthew McConaughey..... but I thought perhaps you had the answers I needed.

-austinbutler4eva

Dear austinbutler4eva,

I agree, I had to go to the expert. Unfortunately, Jessica pleaded the 5th, so the mystery remains.

Peace and Blessin's, <3 Homegurl

*The Animas Quill* strives to be an exceptional and relevant source of news and student perspectives, connecting the Ospreys of Animas High School to each other, to the Four Corners community, and to the world beyond.



*The Animas Quill* acknowledges the land that Animas High School is situated upon is the ancestral land and territory of the Nuuchiu (Ute) people who were forcibly removed by the United States Government. We also acknowledge that this land is connected to the communal and ceremonial spaces of the Jicarilla Abache (Apache), Pueblos of New Mexico, Hopi Sinom (Hopi), and Diné (Navajo) Nations. It is important to acknowledge this setting because the narratives of the lands in this region have long been told from dominant perspectives, without full recognition of the original land stewards who continue to inhabit and connect with this land. Thank you for your attention and respect in acknowledging this important legacy.

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# STEM Starcast

By Kyle Edmondson: *Mathlete, Comedian, Cancer/Leo cusp*



## Cancer

Your petty and vindictive nature will bear fruit as those who have wronged you will find themselves caught between the twin pin-cers of justice and retribution. Attempts to coerce and belittle you will reflect harmlessly off of your impenetrable shell. As the tides of conflict roll in and out, you will remain safely ensconced in your tidepool of serenity, secure in the knowledge of your antagonists' impending destruction. Be guided by this mantra: a single marker lost is a tragedy, a missing class set is a statistic.



## Virgo

The veil of amenable demeanor that you are known for has been pierced, revealing you as the duplicitous serpent hawking forbidden fruits that you are. Debts owed for recent forays into petty larceny will be paid back in full with interest, yet you will never free yourself of the accompanying stain to your legacy and soul. Your methodology of coercion well illustrates why I like the Quill, but I do not like the Quillspreys. You Quillspreys are so unlike your Quill.



## Pisces

No matter how quickly you look, you will be unable to dodge the fish of vengeance which is already headed your way. Your alleged avian expertise will be of no consolation as you face the head winds of an ichthyo-terror heretofore unseen by mortal men. The moral arc of the universe is long, and much like the parabolic arc of dodgfish, bends towards justice. So it was written, so it must be done.



## Everyone Else...

This isn't about you. You are, as they say, out of your element.



Besides, don't you know horoscopes are meaningless?



# Ospreys Overheard

"I have the mafia and Jesus on speed dial."  
"Corn dogs are against all my religions. Except the religion where my mom has a corn dog stand, and I sell corn dogs out of the back of her van."  
"Water is for weaklings. And amphibians."  
"... And that's how I learned not to mess with a drunk guy riding a bear."  
"I am the 10th zoomiest in the region. So like in the top of the quarter zoomiest in the state."

# Opinion: Our Voices Instead of Corporate Money

By Toby Philipp

On January 17, Greta Thunberg – who was just 15 years old when she began her climate activism – was apprehended by German police for protesting the expansion of a coal mine in the region of North Rhine Westphalia. Greta is currently one of the best examples of how social movements can impact our societies and how we the people shape them. We studied the subject of social movements in my 11th grade humanities class, and it got me thinking about how I as a person can create meaningful change within our society.

In order to understand how we can create meaningful change, we must realize the forces up against it. Every year, politicians in Congress accept millions of dollars in legal bribes from corporations to effectively curb any legislation that could slow the effects of climate change. This is achieved by heavy lobbying campaigns and PACs (Political Action Committees). Ultimately, these are legal resources corporations have to ensure that their interests are protected. Members of Congress are also able to trade stocks in companies that are affected by their decisions. This inevitably creates bias based on personal interests.

Notable companies that contribute through PACs are Koch Industries, Exxon Mobil, Chevron, Shell, BP, and API. These companies contribute millions to various politicians every year – primarily Republicans. This is a major issue because it allows oil companies to control major elements in the federal government – including the dismissal of climate policy that could save the planet.

These large sums of money allow oil corporations to control our politicians with the snap of their fingers. It's a mutually beneficial agreement. Big oil protects their profits, and these Congresspeople – who are not always concerned about the planet – fund their own campaigns and stay in power. We, the people, need to stop allowing our politicians to get away with this; if we do not, we will not have one. As Greta Thunberg likes to remind us, we have reached a point of existential crisis when it comes to climate.

Insider trading in Congress also poses a major threat to the planet and our democracy. Insider trading has always been a point of contention in Congress; there has been an effort to combat this with fines, though these are mostly minor, sometimes just a few hundred dollars. Politicians regularly fail to disclose investments made by them, and their direct families. This is blatant disregard for the STOCK Act (2012), and should be widely recognized as a criminal act.

According to the *New York Times*, just last year 97 significant politicians invested in companies which their administration had influence in. Not all of the trades made were in oil stock, though they were most definitely all problematic. Insider trading in Congress is a blatant abuse of a position which isn't designed to make large sums of money in the first place. The act

should be punishable with large fines, or jail time.

With all of these factors in mind, a question arises: how can we create a social movement to counter these things? It is difficult because there is so much power involved which can make it feel intimidating. The good news is, the blueprint is already there for us to do something about it and some people – such as Greta Thunberg – already are. Here are some ways you, yes you, can do something about these things:

*Civic Engagement:* Call your state representative! Tell them that you support legislation banning insider trading, and tell them to fight against catastrophic climate change along with their colleagues – and to stop taking bribes from oil corporations. Educate your peers, tell them to do the same. A politician's main goal is reelection. If the people do not elect you, who will?

*Build on the Successes of Others:* The Sunrise Movement – as one of the bigger names in fighting for climate change legislation – call themselves the "Climate Revolution", and they have good reason for it. One of their movements is the "Wide Awake" movement, where associates of the organization will stand outside of a said politician's house at night to keep them awake with large amounts of noise. The politicians kept awake usually denied some form of climate legislation – or didn't make an effort to create any – even with demand from the people. The Sunrise Movement keeps them awake until they make an effort for change. You can do the same.

*Organize and Educate:* Use social media to spread messages, and to make your voice heard. Get a group together: the more people, the better. Protest in your streets, and demand action. Show your politicians that you aren't alone in the demand for change, to stop climate change. If that is not your style, go do what the Sunrise people did – violence is not the answer. Knowing what we now know can make one feel that change will not be achieved. I am here to tell you that it can, and it can be done today! So go out, find a group of like minded people, and go contribute to the climate revolution.

*Acts of Civil Disobedience:* I am not telling you to break the law here. But remember what Thoreau said: "Let your life be a counter-friction to stop the machine." Take it for what you will. Perhaps we should all read Greta Thunberg's new book and get on board with dedicating our activism to ensuring that our planet has a future, whatever it takes.

to run computer wires. Thinking back on those memories, never in my wildest dreams could [I] have imagined that we would be where we are today.” Our school has come so far—from the humble but beloved space in the North Main strip mall, to our functional-but-crumbling Twin Buttes trailers that could barely contain our student art and projects, to this beautiful campus, a grand beginning to our latest chapter. We are so lucky to be a part of this historic event!

“I’ve been in all three buildings,” shared math teacher and Class of 2015 alumnus Ande Lloyd. “Having been with Animas since I was a student, you kinda always see the full potential of this school, but it has always been hard to show this potential. But now with this new building, I feel like we can really show outward into the community the cool stuff we do here.”

Dean of Enrollment Libby Cowles agreed that visitors will be amazed by what Animas High School has to offer, especially now that we have such a fine place to showcase it. “We recently had two families visiting who were sent off with student ambassadors to do a tour of this building. In the old building, we had to do this song and dance show to be able to convince these families to consider us as a reliable source of education. Now here we get to finally prove we really are an amazing school! It feels amazing!” Libby exclaimed.

When you enter through our door, the first thing you will see is our community donation tree. This beautiful symbolic tree is a representation of the school’s growth and the support of the community to empower Osprey students to grow and soar. Through this tree we acknowledge the potential of the students that fill these halls, and also the growth that would not have been possible without the contributions of so many stakeholders over the years..

Students are thriving in this new space. While stroll-



Most Ospreys talk about the windows and the expansive views when asked what they love about the new facility.



Ospreys spread out for the first NEST meeting in the new building. The two-story design makes gathering as a community easier than ever and allows for versatile uses such as events, exhibitions, performances, and community meetings.



Sophomore Math students Alex Larson, Wells Wait, and Kira Lemley enjoy the expansive access to whiteboard walls that the new building offers.

ing through the halls, you will be greeted by students smiling, collaborating, and working on projects while sometimes engaging in Animas-style shenanigans. You will be greeted by people excited to learn, not just students wanting to get through the day.

Junior Ariana Silva shared her excitement about being here finally: “I love the new building! There are a lot of things I like about it, such as the garage doors! I think that is a really neat aspect of our building; it opens up for a lot more opportunities for our projects. I love all of the windows as well. We never have to turn the lights on, that’s how big they are and how much light they bring in. The new building is very inspiring. I actually have the motivation to get work done and be more productive.”

Like Ariana, all students and teachers adore the windows. Almost everyone you ask identifies that their favorite part of the new building are the huge windows, the expansive views, and the natural light. The music and art rooms face southwest and have some of the best views of Durango and its surrounding landscape, a fact that is certain to foster inspiration in our creative artists. But truly, every room has its own special views, and all are flooded with light during the school day, a palpable difference from our previous facility. “The new building is even more than I could have imagined. I feel so grateful to have this absolutely gorgeous new space,” long-time office manager Bridget Stowers remarked.

“I’m super excited, we finally have a chance to live in

a space that exemplifies what we've always wanted to do," shared Dean of Students Dave Farkas. He has been thrilled for the change in our environment, though one of the most important changes for Dave isn't just the change in scenery, but the space students now have to work. He added, "I love to see that students are all over the place working on projects!"

From almost the second we moved in, we have seen exhibitions and projects come to life in the new nest. Animas students are already getting to work to create the best community for the new building, starting to fill the beautifully designed display spaces with equally beautiful gifts of art and music.

Junior Shea Davis thinks this could go even further. "I am hoping that we will be able to decorate the new building and give it the Animas feeling. I want it to become cozy and warm when we walk in. I would also like to see more cross-grade communication and such."

Other students share the desire to make this new space feel like home. "I think I'd like to see some more personalization with the classrooms. We're still Animas High School and we should have a time to make it our own," said junior Mia Macon. "I am happy with how close everything is and how many opportunities we have. Being so close to Fort Lewis College and in town will definitely give us more success."

Animas is working hard to develop strong relationships with Fort Lewis College. Fostering these connections was a major theme of the remarks of FLC



Several exhibitions have already begun to fill the space with art and beautiful work, such as the junior Social Movements event in January. The building has many design features for curating and displaying student work.



AHS now enjoys some of the best views of Durango at any hour of the day.

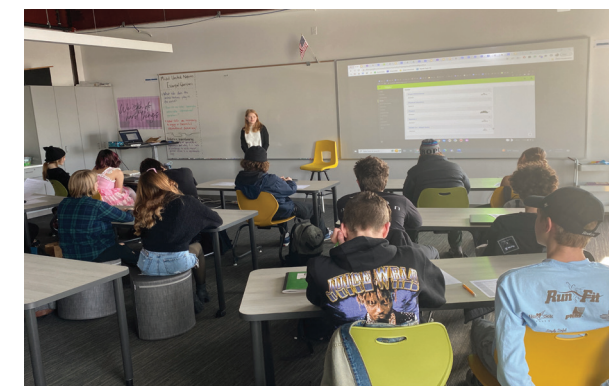
President Dr. Tom Stritikus, who delivered the first speech at the Ribbon Cutting. "Part of the Fort Lewis College vision is students at the center and putting knowledge into action," he reminded the audience. "Students at the core is part of the shared vision between Fort Lewis and Animas." He spoke excitedly about the potential for future collaboration between the students and faculty of the two institutions, an excitement shared by the AHS community. (See "Skyhawk Teacher Education" story on Page 7 to learn more about the beginnings of this collaboration!)

Sophomore Cassidy Hayden voiced similar excitement from a student's perspective during her speech at the Ribbon Cutting event: "The new building comes with some new opportunities... Along with insane views, [our proximity to FLC] also gives us the chance to do Concurrent Enrollment. In the next two years, I'm hoping to take classes at the Fort and understand what college is like. Conveniently enough, we're also a college prep school, and it's pretty easy to prepare with a college right next door."

This dream, this goal has been reached. This story of hard work, creativity, and dedication will always be remembered, and this accomplishment will go down in AHS history and be celebrated for decades to come. The Animas community is beyond excited to see what comes next for us in this new phenomenal space built in one of the most beautiful places on Earth. As current physics teacher Julian Springer put it, "The roof has been raised, literally, and now the sky's the limit for Ospreys to soar and reach their full potential."



Student musicians Mia Macon, Natalie Obleton, Desmond Tsoie, Eila Lance, and Julian Dugas fill the new Commons space with music during the first of countless performances to come. The music program, led by Jesse Ogle (far left) and other instructors from the IAM Music Institute, is set up for success in the new building. In addition to acquiring more instruments through a grant, the new facility has several breakout rooms and recording spaces for student bands to use.



Sophomore Tara Whitney gives a presentation to her peers in Sara Price's Humanities class. The new classrooms are fully equipped with state-of-the-art technology and thoughtfully-chosen furnishings.

# You Can't Build a Nest Without TWIGS: AHS Parents Transcend Typical PTA

By Cadance Schmidt and Avery Stevenson

As most of us remember all too well, the COVID years left groups and communities feeling disconnected and disjointed, and the AHS community was no exception. Emerging from the pandemic, many felt a deep desire to reconnect, and not just our students and teachers, but our families as well.

Family engagement has always been a core value for Libby Cowles, Dean of Enrollment and Community Outreach and parent to two Ospreys. “Right from the beginning, our school’s success has always depended on our families—from their decision to try something different by enrolling their kids, to supporting us through their time and talents,” she shared. “Ideally, a school is a community where everyone feels included and plays an important role. Helping families connect to each other and to the school not only supports students, it also helps our whole school community thrive.”

During the spring of 2022 after successfully collaborating to help meet the lofty \$150,000 fundraising goal for the new building, the Capital Campaign Parent Committee expressed an enthusiastic interest in springboarding their foundational work into a family engagement group. From this enthusiasm, TWIGS was born.

The AHS tradition of extending our own bird and nest metaphors informed the acronym. Twigs are necessary to establish a strong foundation for any nest; the acronym stands for “Together We Inspire Great



AHS “TWIGS” (L to R): Matt Jones, Peter May-Ostendorp, Libby Cowles, Melissa Paxton, William Holden, Mariah May-Ostendorp, Kate Brunner, Stacy Reuille-Dupont, Mary Jones, and Maren Bicknell gather for Happy Hour to forge community connections and rally support around all things Animas High School.

Students.” The group is driven by the goal of helping families feel connected to the school and each other, as reflected in their official mission: “To create meaningful connections among AHS families so that we can collectively provide social, educational and financial support for Animas High School.”

“When your kids are in elementary and middle school, you see people bringing in cupcakes all the time and chaperoning field trips and helping out with science fair, but this tends to taper off when your kids get to high school,” expressed AHS parent and passionate TWIG member Melissa Paxton. Melissa is part of a subgroup of the TWIGS that have dubbed themselves “buds” and act as steering committee of sorts, planning events and activities for the larger parent community. “We are sort of like the PTA, but more fun! While financial support is a small piece of the program, it truly is to get the parents involved with their high school students.”

Libby believes that “giving parents an opportunity to get to know other parents, makes them feel like they have a community.” A main focus for the TWIGS group has become to create a space to build camaraderie and dialogue around parenting teens. Libby continued, “The more you are involved in your kids’ education, the better support you’re offering, the more you connect with other adults who are parenting teens, the less lonely you feel. Parenting teens is not always easy.” By giving parents a place to ask questions and get to know one another, it allows them to feel included and secure with the environment their child is in.

AHS parent and active “bud” Maren Bicknell connects to these sentiments, sharing: “I feel raising children takes a village and TWIGS has been a great way to connect with other parents and build a community to support my child. Also, being part of TWIGS helps me get to know teachers and staff and I feel this fosters a better team approach in educating and raising teenagers.”

Language from the TWIGS website elaborates on their mission: “At the foundation of every beautiful Osprey getting ready to soar is an intricate woven nest of twigs, creating a safe and secure environment. Even though our students are learning to be fabulously independent humans, that support is still essential to their success. As AHS is not your typical high school, TWIGS is not your typical PTA. We are creating a fun, social environment where families can connect, support our students and staff, and be a part of the AHS community at large.”

So far, the TWIGS are creating this environment through a range of activities from coffee chats and happy hours to book clubs and guided hikes. Parents and involved community members offer up their skills and expertises to facilitate activities and initiatives, such as an upcoming yoga series and a teen mental health workshop. They are also developing ways to achieve the “support our students and staff” part of their mission by coordinating parent volunteers, teacher appreciation efforts, family outreach and continued fundraising.

To learn more and check out upcoming events, or to get involved with TWIGS, please visit <https://animastwigs.weebly.com>.



TWIG parent Sheryl Bidart gathers messages of gratitude for teachers to be read out loud at the Teacher Appreciation Lunch before Xmas break.

# Skyhawk Teacher Education Students Learn the Way of the Ospreys

By Za Barrett

Many of us have recently noticed the Fort Lewis College students wandering our halls and helping out in our classes. Rest assured, they aren't retaking high school! They are students in Dr. Beth Dorman's ED 450 class, an upper-level education course focused on secondary teaching methods and assessment strategies. They are completing practicum hours and designing guest lessons with the goal of becoming secondary and K-12 teachers themselves.

A veteran in the field of expeditionary learning, their professor Beth Dorman has had a strong connection to Animas for almost ten years. Several of her former students—including Madi Neukirch, Cameron Elder, Julian Springer, and Jessica McCallum—have since become well-loved Animas teachers. In fact, as part of her curriculum this semester, Beth shared that “we have adapted Jessica's peer observation template that she developed when she was in graduate school over at the college, [as] one of my students!”

Beth is thrilled to give her students the chance to personally experience project-based learning at AHS. “Animas helps my students see an outside-of-the-box, non-traditional view of education that I personally think all education should reflect,” she commented. “Most of them have been in traditional schools for their entire schooling. I see it as part of my goal and role to expand their mental models of what education can look like and what teaching can look like.”

Before he came to Animas, aspiring history teacher Jonah D'Antonio recounted, “I'd never really seen any project-based learning, anything. My high school was very much lecture based, it was all tests.” But in project-based learning, he remarked, “You're learning for this one project, but you're learning so many differ-

ent things.” Jonah remembered that his own high school history class lacked that openness, and hopes to bring more colorful projects into his future classroom. “I want to make [class] more interesting, more creative. I want there to be more variance in the work that the students are doing, so that I don't get burnt out and they don't get burnt out.”

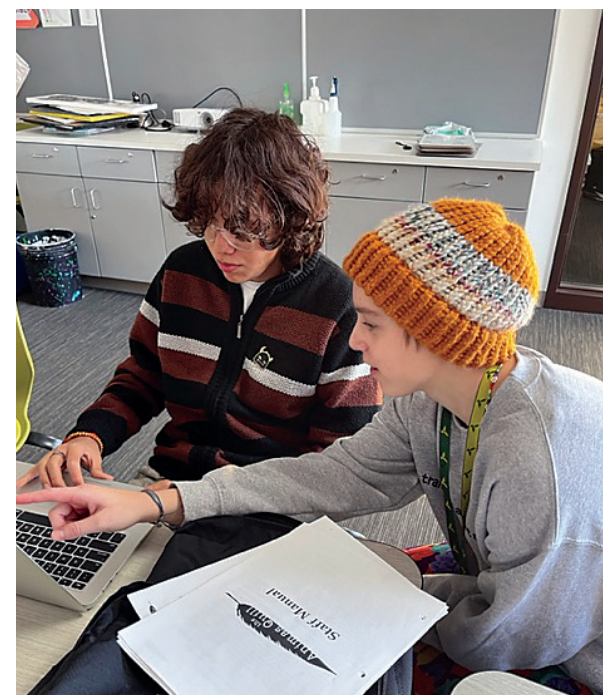


FLC Teacher Education students Hannah Duckett and Singaawen Boggess observe Kyle Edmondson's Caribbean History and Politics class.

While stepping into a new environment can be nerve-racking, Ospreys have made these Skyhawk teacher candidates feel right at home. “The respect we get from students and faculty...is stunning,” reflected aspiring art teacher August Cox. Although Beth's class just started their time here, August already feels that “I'm really looking forward to coming back, being here next semester.”

Already, the teachers-to-be have been engaged with classes and individual students. As Beth puts it, the “goal is to get them as involved as possible, and not just

be a fly on the wall.” Aspiring math teacher Antonio Acuna recalled, “I've been able to make a lot of connections with students...helping them during lunch with their math problems, just being able to pinpoint where they're having struggles, and just get them better understanding the concepts.”



Aspiring Art teacher August Cox gives feedback to Desmond Tsois about his redesign of the Quill's new website during Jessica McCallum's Journalism class.

Beth's students also marveled at the support they've received from Animas teachers. “[Teachers] want us there and they want us learning to teach, and that's not something you [usually] see in a [traditional] public high school [without a formal partnership like this],” August speculated.

Many of the Teacher Ed students have been inspired by the Ospreys' independence and drive. “Students can do way more than we give them credit for,” aspiring math teacher Rachel Farley observed. “If you give them a hard problem, like the Problem of the Week, they think about things really critically, and they come to the conclusion on their own without having to be told.”

“The passion I've realized I've had for teaching...it's been fully realized while teaching here,” August shared. “I'm getting to interact with students who are passionate about their learning, and that is heartwarming.”

Beth has nothing but excitement about the future of this FLC-Animas partnership. “[This collaboration] has exceeded my expectations so much already in these four weeks. I get back to my office after being here and I am just buzzing, and I can't stop talking because I'm so excited!” Being at the school, she says, gives her a fresh perspective on teaching: “I feel like being here also keeps me accountable to keep my practice emerging and growing, because I'm so inspired by the teachers here.”

This partnership gives everyone hope that, moving forward, our two learning communities will continue to edify and inspire each other, soaring together to reach new heights.



FLC Theatre Education student Oliver Kennedy leads AHS thespians in improv exercises in Joy Kilpatrick's VAM Theatre class.

# The Wind Beneath our Wings: New HOS Leads AHS Culture of Change

By Za Barrett and Cyrus Holt

From traveling the world with the Peace Corps to building her own charter school, new Head of School Rebecca Ruland has a storied past and an impressive resume. Most importantly, however, she possesses a powerful desire to make the world—and our school—a better place, and the capability to make change happen.

Rebecca first became an educator through work with the Peace Corps. Always a learner, she set out to look at the world from many different perspectives. “I knew that I wanted to engage with different cultures,” she recalled. “Cultures didn’t even have to be geographical, they could be different age groups...just anything that’s different from me, because it helps me learn.”

Ultimately, Rebecca remembers, it was “ignorance” that drove her to her odyssey. “I did all the things you’re supposed to do. Check. Finished high school, didn’t care about it, got a B average because somebody said I had to, check, check, check. Went to college, didn’t know what I wanted to do in college, check, check, check. But then, I remember around the age of 22, I was like, ‘Okay, so who am I? I’ve done all the stuff I’m supposed to do, what do I really want?...What I realized is how little I knew. I grew up in a relatively small community in Colorado without a lot of exposure to anything but that culture. And so I thought, well, I just wanna throw myself in situations that I don’t know and swim. That’s how I learn. My learning style is basically: jump in and swim.’”

Time after time, Rebecca has done just that; whenever a new challenge comes her way, she fearlessly takes the plunge. “It doesn’t always or even ever look like what you think it’s going to look like,” she mused. “You go wherever they send you.” Before she went there for the Peace Corps, she remembered, “I’d never even heard of Namibia.”

Many times, she found herself in vulnerable situations abroad—“not knowing a language, hitchhiking, not having a car...” and yet, she remarks, “I have never been treated with such graciousness...I learned how to trust people in different situations.” These experiences deeply impacted her outlook on life. “It’s really a deep sense of knowing and learning, when you put yourself in situations where you don’t know anything and then you’re given the generosity of humanity.”

When Rebecca noticed that her child wasn’t gaining anything valuable from her education, she took another leap of faith and decided to give the students in her



Rebecca Ruland is Animas High School's fourth Head of School.

community a better option. “My kid was coming home really disengaged with school and just talking about tests, and anytime you’d say, what did you learn, what are you excited about, there was nothing...I always feel there’s a better way to do things, and I’m always interested in how to do that.” So she asked herself, “How do we do this better or differently, for my kid and for all kids?”

Two Rivers Community School was Rebecca’s answer to that question. She founded the small charter school alongside a group of dedicated parents and educators, in much the same way that Animas was born. “The mission is similar to Animas(s) in terms of project-based learning, but it also has a really strong emphasis on second language acquisition,” Rebecca described. “It’s like all the best of all the worlds in education in a public school. Not to say it’s perfect, but we tried our best.” The school still thrives today in Glenwood Springs. Its mission, according to the website, “is to be an exemplary K-8 school founded upon the belief in academic rigor, curricular relevance, and authentic relationships.”

Even after she left Two Rivers, Rebecca knew her “journey wasn’t done with project-based learning.” She ended up at Animas High after a Bonanza that faculty interviewer Jessica McCallum describes as stunningly clarifying. “By the end of Rebecca’s Bonanza day,” she remembered, “I was already conceiving of her as my new leader. I knew in my heart that she was the one we needed at this point in our history. When I saw her interacting with students at her Bonanza, I knew that she understood the importance we put on student voice and student leadership. That ethic has become abundantly clear in her time with us as well...That’s what I’m looking for in an Animas High School leader. A person who puts the students at the center and really elevates their ideas.”

Like an Osprey does, Rebecca once again dove right into her new situation, determined to be the strong, empathic leader our school needed. Ospreys, of course, are never short of great ideas. In listening and responding to them, Rebecca is constantly impressed with Osprey determination and ingenuity. “When you talk to staff and students here, people will tell you what they want, and it’s the same,” Rebecca described. “We want to have really great relationships with people here, and feel trust, we want to do great things with project-based learning, we want to use this educational opportunity for something more than just the average.”

She has been an invaluable force towards unity and growth. “We have a bunch of talented individuals, both as staff and as students, and so my role is to really look at all the parts and pieces and blend those talents, and try to facilitate the direction. So I always listen for the pockets of energy among groups of people, like what are their motivations, what are their wishes, and then how does that fit with what we’re ultimately trying to do as an institution here?” She likens her role to guiding a raft down a river. “I don’t feel like I need to be standing in front with a torch saying, ‘this way!’ but I need to kinda stand in the back and try to get everybody flowing in the direction that they really do want to flow.”

Rebecca believes our new space is only the beginning of what we can achieve, fertile ground where seeds can grow. “When you’re in a place for proper inspiration,” she said, “it changes the mood a lot.” She looks forward to helping Ospreys reach new heights.

“In the end,” she stated, “it’s all about teaching and learning, and when you have access to the right players, there’s no end to what’s possible.”



Rebecca calls a truce in her snowball fight with freshpeople Hutch Victor and Paxton Horn on a sunny Friday at the new nest.