

Happy New Year!

I hope you had an absolutely wonderful winter break, as I did. My three children were in Chestertown for Christmas and we spent lots of family time eating our traditional Christmas foods and cookies, working a jigsaw puzzle, staying up late talking and laughing by the fire, watching movies and reading. The house was quiet by New Year's as our children returned to their apartments and jobs near and far. Although our time together now is more limited, it is amazing to have your grown children as your friends.

At the top of my winter break reading list was a collection of essays released in October by poet Mary Oliver entitled *Upstream*. I am a huge fan of Oliver's poetry. *American Primitive* won the Pulitzer Prize in 1984. Her recent book, *Felicity* - a collection of love poems - was given to me by a dear friend, herself a writer, and her artist husband as a gift for my Installation. For me, *Upstream* was the perfect inspiration I needed during this winter break. Oliver illustrates for us the importance of creativity, her insatiable curiosity for the natural world and the great responsibility she feels, handed to her by writers before her, to observe thoughtfully and record her passions. She encourages us to keep moving upstream - to lose ourselves in the beauty of nature and to find time for the creativity that lives inside each of us. "I could not be a poet without the natural world," she said, "someone else could. But not me. For me the door to the woods is the door to the temple."

What better place to appreciate nature than on our own beautiful Kent School campus on the bank of the Chester River. Many of you know that I helped with Before School Care during the fall. While I loved getting to know our students this way, I also loved seeing the sun rise over the river from the Library. The view is breathtaking and it is an incredible way to begin each day. Our setting is certainly picturesque and does not need any beautification, yet I am excited to share that during the next three months we will begin work on a rain garden and outdoor classroom on the playground side of the gym which will not only mitigate water runoff from the gym roof but will be a teaching garden and reflective space for all students. The grading and site work will take place in advance of Osprey Day on March 31 when the entire community is invited to share in the planting of the garden. Please mark your calendar. Details will follow.

Maintaining our unique and special learning environment is a high priority of the School. Over winter break several projects were completed. In the M. V. "Mike" Williams Gymnasium, the speaker system and lighting in the gym were repaired including several light sockets which needed to be replaced in advance of the start of the basketball season. We want to be sure to shine a bright light on our girls and boys basketball teams during games! In addition, a window in the Art Room was replaced and new gravel was added to fix a pothole in our neighbor's driveway as well as the employee parking lot.

January marks the end of the second quarter and our 8th Grade students will take exams this month. Some may be taking exams for the very first time. Taking exams is an important skill for our students to practice as we prepare them for secondary school. You can help your sons and

daughters at home during exams by creating an organized, bright and quiet study space, making sure they get a good night's sleep before a test, giving them a good breakfast to fuel their brains and helping them stay positive about the experience. Also, a reminder that 7th and 8th Grade students may leave Before Care in the Library at 8:00 a.m. to do work, research or catch up with friends beginning today.

January also signals the beginning of a new year, and while I am not one for resolutions, I have already decided that 2017 will be a JOY-filled year. Essayist, poet and lecturer Ralph Waldo Emerson said it best:

Write it on your heart that every day is the best day in the year.

Warmly,

Nancy Mugele
Head of School