

Photo by Lydia Varcoe-Wolfson

An Atheist Grapples with Meeting for Worship

By Evan Sweitzer '20, Guest Contributor

Editor's Note: The opinions expressed in this piece don't necessarily reflect, and aren't necessarily endorsed, by Focus, Friends' Central School, or its students, staff, and faculty. Focus strives to provide a platform for community members to express their views on issues and policies within Friends' Central. If you have an opinion you'd like to express, visit fcsfocus.org/submit, and perhaps it will be published in the next issue of Focus.

Friends' Central School is a Quaker institution, and the values of that great tradition strengthen and define our community. This presents a challenge, however: with a student body that is less than five percent Quaker and a community that celebrates diversity—including diversity of religion and non-religion—does embracing Quaker values require embracing Quaker religious philosophy?

As a student who proudly identifies as an atheist with a strong value system (that is, a “humanist”), I ask that the readers of *Focus* consider my experience.

There is a lot that I like about Meeting for Worship. The reflective silence. The powerful personal messages.

The sense of community. Sometimes I come out refreshed. But I sometimes perceive in Meeting for Worship a message that I know is not intended: the message that Quaker religion is the only path to Quaker values. In the presentation at the beginning of the school year, for example, the faculty seemed to urge us to “Listen for the light of God. If it doesn't work for you, keep waiting; keep searching. Have patience.” While probably intended to encourage us not to rush the process, this unintentionally sent the message that if God is not with us, we should wait; it did not leave open the possibility of reaching the same insights without God. **(COTD. on next page)**

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Dr. Slaughter stands proudly, just days after earning her terminal degree (Sevag Yepoyan)

An Inspiring Interview with Dr. Slaughter

By: Max Marinelli '22, Reporter

For my last *FOCUS* article of the year, I chose to interview Dr. Rachel Slaughter. Many of us may know our learning specialist as “Mrs. Slaughter,” but her recent change of title reflects the significant milestone she reached earlier this spring: completing her doctoral dissertation and receiving the hard-earned degree of Doctor of Education, Ed.D. I wanted to find out exactly how the process to get one’s doctorate works. We students should know just how much work it takes to earn a doctorate degree. Dr. Slaughter has been in the classroom for 28 years now, and a learning specialist for six years. She is finishing up her third year at FCS and said that the experience has been nothing but positive.

Dr. Slaughter informed me that, all in all, it usually takes three years to earn an educational doctorate, consisting of a two-year course load and then another year of writing and research. However, if you begin to add up the four years it takes to get a bachelor’s degree and the three years it takes to earn a masters, and then these three years of doctoral study, the process takes ten years of commitment. A lot of people end up giving up just a few credits short of their doctorate degree or before having to write their dissertation. If you didn’t already know, I will tell you; this is a 200-page dissertation. Dr. Slaughter explained, “The university isn’t very supportive of people trying to get their doctorates. I rewrote the entire paper eight times over, at least eight times! All because the university basically told me, ‘this stinks,’ at the beginning. I didn’t give up, though.” This massive dissertation is all on top of a content analysis of 43 books in which she had to analyze every page of every book, which took countless hours.

I personally was astounded at just how much hard work and dedication was needed to follow through with this whole process. Curious, I asked exactly why Dr. Slaughter chose to stick through it all, and she revealed, “I decided to keep going forward for fear of embarrassment, but mainly because I had already gotten so far that giving up didn’t really seem like an option.”

Before I departed, I decided to ask one final question: “What would you like to say to students who may want to go on to advanced education beyond their bachelor’s?” Dr. Slaughter immediately brought up a pretty strong message for the future 11th graders out there. Although she laughs when students complain about the 11th grade research paper, she is full of compassion and wisdom for future students: “If you can get through the ten-page paper with a good demeanor, you can write the [doctoral] dissertation no problem. If you love your topic, the work doesn’t feel like work at all.” That last sentence really speaks to me. It’s extremely inspiring that someone can have so much passion for a topic that, even though she was forced to write hundreds of pages, she pulled through it all, practically with a smile on her face. We should all learn something about hard work and dedication from Dr. Slaughter, but also that work doesn’t have to be just that, it can be fun. On behalf of *FOCUS*, I would like to congratulate Dr. Rachel Slaughter on all of her hard work and dedication. The rest of the FCS community would also surely like to congratulate her, as this is an incredible process.

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Meeting for Worship

(COTD. From Front Cover)

It’s tempting to internalize this religious standard, to get frustrated that something is not connecting inside me. It’s tempting to believe that I cannot connect with our shared values because I cannot connect with the religious message.

But while asking Meeting for Worship to make room for my humanist voice, I also respect the voices of people who do arrive at our shared values through religion. The solution is to welcome people to celebrate their individual paths, without suggesting that one path is better than another.

I encourage the Friends’ Central community to acknowledge that Quaker religious philosophy is only one path to the Quaker values that we all share. I know that I am not a failure because I find my values outside of religion. I belong here, and you do too; we hold the values of Quakerism.

Meeting for Worship should speak to all of us, offering a Quaker religious path to students who choose it, but also nourishing students who choose other paths. Our paths are different ways of getting to the same place. Quaker values are the hallmark of a Friends’ Central student; Quaker religious philosophy is not.

Spencer Thorne, Artist inFOCUS: Filmmaker/Artist/Swimmer Extraordinaire

By: Julian Duvivier '22, Reporter

What is creativity? What drives unique artistic expression? For artist and aspiring filmmaker Spencer Thorne '22, creativity is about expressing his love for the world. Spencer has been drawing since he was quite young, and his style encapsulates a childhood of inspiration. Manga and Anime are inseparable from his art, a style that arose from watching *Howl's Moving Castle*, *Spirited Away*, and other films by Hayao Miyazaki. While Spencer's work demonstrates these stylistic influences, he has clearly made it his own in both his technique and subject matter.

Spencer's art encompasses many mediums: pencils, traditional ink pens, fine-tipped Copic markers, watercolors, and digital mediums. The subject of this art is life and the many aspects of Spencer's world that he wants to express. He

phrases it well, saying, "My inspiration comes from manga, but also from the movies that I watch or things that I see on TV. Sometimes I'll just be drawing a scene from a film, but often I draw things that mean something to me, anxiety or Canada or Catholicism or music *[sic]* like the Gorillaz." For Spencer, inspiration is a spontaneous process, and his art is often an impromptu portrait of his thoughts. From 2-D, the lead of his favorite virtual band The Gorillaz, to Eleven from *Stranger Things*, Spencer draws what he knows and loves.

In film, Spencer's most dedicated pursuit, he is either working on or incubating numerous short and long-term ideas. Describing a short film that is currently in progress, he says, "Without giving too much away, It's basically a live-action short film franchise that I will release on YouTube. It represents anxiety as a physical entity and is a mix of two-dimensional animation and live action." He follows this up, saying, "When anxiety hits my character the most, it transforms into a world of 2D animation, trippy animation that I really enjoy." Spencer seems particularly excited for

this project as an exploration of himself and the art that he loves.

Spencer, as an audience member, has developed an appreciation for horror films. However, Spencer the filmmaker wishes to explore many paths. As he shares, "It's tricky. I do like horror and think it's my favorite genre; however, as a filmmaker, you have to see everything because you can't be a filmmaker by just watching a single genre." Yet, when looking towards future projects,

Spencer's mind remains set on horror. He enthuses, "I really like messing with people's heads through film. I really like scaring an audience, and I love them *[sic]* being confused and frightened at the same time."

Spencer feels that certain



recent movies have failed to capture this, and he wishes to bring originality to the genre. In this vein, he has an idea for an eventual film, a Catholic horror film that he describes as "a psychological thriller/horror film about someone who doesn't know that they are in purgatory and has to figure it out." He sees purgatory as the "state worse than hell because you are confused and can't enter heaven," which is an intriguing setting for such a film.

Outside of art, Spencer is an accomplished competitive swimmer for Friends' Central Aquatics. He makes clear that while he appreciates swimming, he feels that it has inhibited his artistic output: "It can be tricky to manage, especially with school. Sometimes it feels like swimming and school get in the way of my creative pursuits." The swimmer/student/artist recognizes the importance of all of his responsibilities. At the end of the day, though, film and drawing remain Spencer's true callings. Spencer is clearly zealous about entering the film industry after he finishes high school, and we can all look forward to his future successes.

To see Spencer's artwork, go to Page 8.

Back to the Past

By: Katia Campos '22, Reporter

For this article, *FOCUS* reporters went around and asked for some details about teachers' past lives when they were in high school.

FOCUS reporters asked many teachers to share some inspirational and enlightening stories from their high school years. The common theme is that, at one point, our teachers here at FCS thought a lot like students do now.

One of our Intro to Art teachers, Ms. Deirdre Murphy, recalls what she was like during her youth, "I have to say that I am much the same, an extrovert and introvert. Extrovert in that I really enjoy my friends and family but the artist in me needs solo time to make my art and reflect. I was most likely more rebellious in self expression through my art making."

Ms. Murphy looks back to spending a year in Japan studying art: "At 17, I graduated high school and moved to Japan through a Rotary Scholarship. I was scared, and the night before had second thoughts about going. I could hardly speak Japanese. I didn't know the families that I would be living with. There were no cell phones, and I knew I would miss my family and friends. In hindsight this 'gap year' was the best experience for me and sent me on my current path. In fact, I am still working Japanese motifs into my artwork, and I am able to say hello to the Japanese families on the FCS campus." The common fear of going to an entirely new place in general is relatable. The goal is that we learn, live, adapt and have fun!



Mr. Gruber as a teen

As other teachers looked back, our music teacher and instrumental conductor, Mr. Carl Bradley, read through his journals and realized that not much has changed since his high school years. "I was just reading an old journal and was surprised that my young self as just and idealist and romantic as I am today." While being idealistic, Mr. Bradley *does* admit that he took a few slips on the road to growing up, preparing for the worst. He shares, "I wrote a musical while I was a senior and skipped several classes to get it going. At the time I was hiding from my Lit teacher because I was afraid she was going to fail me. Of course, nothing happened, but at the time, I was preparing to plead my case with my mom."

It feels like most teachers here were very good students. Would you be surprised if you were to find out how enthusiastic Mr. Gruber was in theater and art? At the same time, however, there was a bit of a rebellious spirit residing in our Mr. Gruber. "I was a good student, especially in French and Behavioral Science courses. I really loved the theatre and acting. I was more to the quiet side, but also a bit rebellious – I liked to push up against edges, and I loved to travel, any time, any place," he explained.

Once, when Mr. Gruber was about 16 or 17, he went on a trip with a friend to Sicily. "We were near the water and saw a boat with many people lined up to board. We asked someone where it was going, and they said, 'Tunisia.' I knew nothing of the place except that it was on the coast of North Africa.



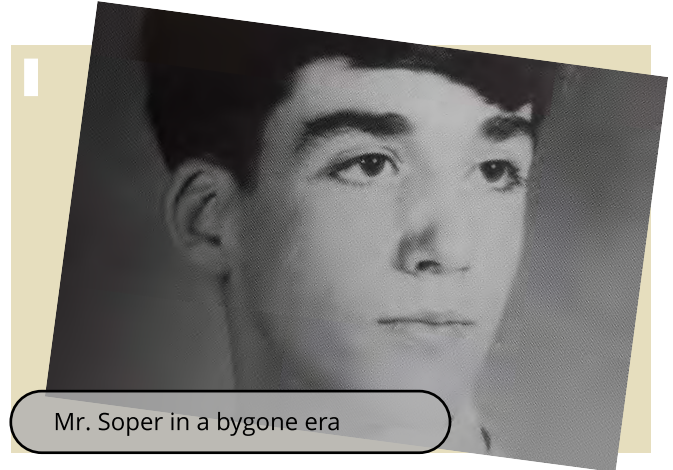
Mr. Bradley in his younger days

FCS Teachers Look Back to Teen Years

So, we got on the boat and crossed the Mediterranean. We arrived on a day that was a national holiday-no currency, everything closed and just kind of jumped in. It turned out to be amazing-wandered in souks of Tunis, saw Roman ruins in Carthage, visited where Paul Klee lived and painted in a tiny town. That's kind of who I was," Says Mr. Gruber, "always wanted to jump into the unknown, put myself in totally unfamiliar places and situations."

Our Spanish teacher Betsy Katzman recalls their past as well. "I am far more friendly and less aggressively opinionated. I have always been studious, and I have always been intellectually rebellious. I never take an answer for true just because someone says so," says Betsy. They recall other lessons as well: "Hardest for me was not getting certain big things I applied for in high school: being a prefect senior year and my top choices for college. I wasn't secure in who I was or what I wanted, so I just wanted everything."

Some teachers remember being quite shy too. That shyness didn't stop them from doing whatever it was that they loved to do the most, though. This was the case for both Ms. Dickerson and Mr. Soper. Ms. Dickerson vividly remembers being very shy in her high school years: "I was nerdy in high school. I took honors and AP classes and read a lot. I was also a swimmer and a runner and thrower on the track team.



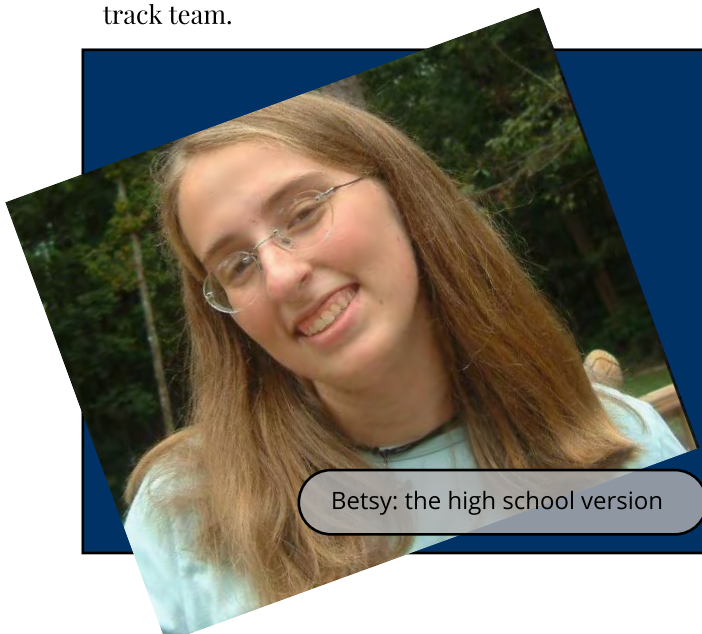
Mr. Soper in a bygone era

Something that might surprise some of my students is that I was very shy, especially when it came to public speaking. When I was a sophomore, my history class did a mock trial, and my teacher assigned me the role of the lawyer. I tried to get out of it, but he wouldn't give me a different role. When I got on stage and tried to give my opening argument, I burst into tears. That's how shy I was. I learned to be less shy, but not until college."

Mr. Soper also recalls some of that shyness. What these two stories have in common though is that shyness does not stop what makes you special. Mr. Soper recalls, "I was quiet and almost never spoke in class, but I played Varsity soccer and participated on the set crew for theater, so I had a pretty broad friend group populated by musicians and actors, athletes and misfit geeks. Most of us were pretty awkward, a little socially immature and insecure. My group of close friends were gamers, not video gamers, but tabletop gamers. We played D&D (Dungeons and Dragons), most weekends at one of their houses. It's a hobby I still enjoy today, and I even play sometimes with those same friends I had then. I was also deeply religious, being raised Catholic, and this is something that still informs my life, though I don't practice Catholicism anymore, and haven't for some time."

After reminiscing about the past, *FOCUS* reporters asked the teachers had they any words to share with the students. Teachers gladly obliged. "Life is beautiful! As you get older you realise not that you have changed but that you stand more revealed. Cultivate your love and wonder. Take care of your young self. Your older self will thank you," says Mr. Bradley.

"I appreciate the moment of feeling 'I have a path before me that my own actions and choices can create and influence, but I'm not fully sure what that is yet' and also feeling like



Betsy: the high school version

Fairwell to Departing Teachers

Adios to Betsy Katzmman

My first impression of Betsy was a little odd. I came from a school in the city and Betsy was on of the first teachers at FCS I encountered. They were a bit country for me. Not to say they were not over-the-top friendly, just not my type of people. But through deep conversations and spending more time with them than probably any other teacher of mine, I quickly learned that we weren't all that different. Working day-to-day with Betsy became normal, because there would often be times I chose to work in their room just as a quiet space to get things done.

I found that Betsy brought a new perspective to the school, being non-binary as well as born and raised in the South. It shined a new light on some of the things we would have rather neglected to talk about due to being a school on the Main Line. Also, Betsy would always be willing to have tough conversations and talk through topics that may not necessarily have a definitive answer. That was important to me because in the past I have brought up some tough topics that other teachers may have not been willing to have an in-depth conversation about, but Betsy was there and open to it, always.

TO BETSY: Enjoy the other side of the desk. Even if it doesn't seem to be good in any given moment, focus on the idea that as long as you do something in the long run that genuinely brings you happiness, it is all worth it in the end. Also, find every little joy in every single day. It makes life a lot better.

–An appreciative anonymous student

Betsy, “Betsaru” Katzmman,

You've brought such joy to our school over the past three years. You have immersed yourself in so many aspects of community life, and have become an integral part of many activities on campus. You have a special, rare trait that allows you to connect with seemingly any person. You are always willing to listen, and have worked tirelessly to ensure that your students' experiences, both inside and outside of the classroom, have been positive. Perhaps best of all, you've always been around to offer a smile or genuine hello.

Muchas Gracias,

Betsy Katzmman.

We will miss you.

–Juliano



Betsy Katzmman wearing glasses and a smile (Linkden)



Goodbye to Ms. Murphy

By: Ms. Hilary Takiff-Weiss, Guest Contributor

Ms. Murphy, a talented artist as well as a skilled and dedicated teacher, brought a lot to FCS this year and will be sorely missed. Personally passionate about the visual arts, Ms. Murphy has a contagious enthusiasm for her subject matter. She not only drew students in within the classroom, but her influence extended beyond these same walls to bring art to the rest of our community throughout Shallcross, from tape murals that energized stairwells to strong work on display in our gallery from her many classes. She pushes every student to reach their potential, whether taking drawing for the first time or applying to college art programs. Despite being part-time, she also involved herself in the sustainability committee this year and was always willing to help students who stopped by, even if they were not enrolled in one of her courses. We will miss Ms. Murphy sorely next year, but know that our loss is Lehigh University's gain. She plans to stay connected with FCS, possibly returning as a visiting artist or hosting an FCS-only artist talk for the show she will have at Esther Klein Gallery next year, which I know I am looking forward to attending. Please join me in saying thank you and good luck before we all depart for the summer.

FOCUS Thanks Departing Staff



Mr. Rosenbaum on a macaroni day in 2015 (Twitter)

So Long to Mr. Rosenbaum

By: Julian Brenman '20, Editor-in-Chief

Many families choose a school for their child based on the quality of the teachers, while some cite athletic programming or location as their reason for selection. Yet, here at FCS, I've heard more than a few students proudly exclaim that the feature of our community that really "sealed the deal" when they came to our school was our fantastic cafeteria. While it's true that the large room on the first floor of Shallcross has always provided delectable culinary masterpieces, the truly charistic aspect of our Dining Hall is how, for virtually every teen or adult on campus, it serves as a joyful and relaxing refuge from the hustle and bustle of our classrooms and gymnasias. This unique and cheerful atmosphere didn't magically appear from outer space. The longstanding success of our cafeteria is due in large part to our dedicated Director of Dining Services, Mr. Chris Rosenbaum. For nearly three decades, Mr. Rosenbaum has given his time, energy, and leadership to our school. He has been instrumental in instituting a multitude of innovative food programs, and perhaps most notably, played a substantial role in supervising the milestone 2018 renovation of Shallcross Hall. Mr. Rosenbaum, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts (and stomachs) for your kind service to our community. You will be missed by all, but your legacy will be savored here for years to come.

Thank You to Mr. Darfler

By: Dylan Mitchell, Guest Writer and Former Reporter

I've had a lot of teachers at FCS, but there are very few, if any, who can quite match up to the amount of influence that Michael Darfler has had on me. I'm sure a lot of people know that my friends and I frequently hang around the MakerSpace as our normal meeting point. What some of you might not have known, however, is that we have actually started a company called Fyuri Studios. We are currently working on our first game: a digital card game called Struggle for Gera. This only is possible because of how Michael made the MakerSpace so accessible to us and even worked with us to get the whole operation off the ground in many instances. The MakerSpace is where people go to make things. Of course, it's so obvious, and I shouldn't have to say it, but it's true, and sometimes the depth of that is lost behind its simplicity. As I've gone through high school, I've spent a lot of my time down there, and I've seen the extent of what can happen. Classes and individuals alike utilize the space to achieve their creative goals, and the MakerSpace even has its own form of a community at times, drawing in fascinated like-minded individuals such as myself who are entranced with the unique outlet that such a location provides.

The merit of the MakerSpace, however, is about more than just the place. I'm sure that all of us have seen Michael around, helping students or teaching classes or doing whatever else he decides to do. The MakerSpace would have just been a place without him, but his constantly helpful and genuinely invested presence always made it feel to me like a bit more than that. For the past years, Michael Darfler has been as much of a part of the MakerSpace as the very space itself, and although I won't be at the school next year to see it without him, I can only hope that his successor will bring at least a fraction of the energy and positivity to the space that he always has, and I hope that the MakerSpace continues to be the amazing place that I've always seen it to be for at least a few more people.

From myself (Dylan), Naim, Kai, Dave, Max, and the rest of the school,

Thank you, Michael. Best of luck to you in the future!



Mr. Darfler finishes his last MakerSpace project (Sevag Yepoyan)

"Back to the Past" from Page 5

"there are things that I can't really control that may be really important of what happens in my life." I think that's still true for me today, but I really felt it strongly when I was in high school," Mr. Gruber says.

"It is a temporary stage of your life, though when you are in it, you can feel like it will go on forever. You will grow up and your life will extend far beyond this place and the experiences you have here. As important as those experiences are, they will be a collection of memories. This is something the seniors are feeling now, how this place simply can't contain them anymore. They are ready to move on, some desperate to do so, not just because they don't want to do the homework anymore, but because they've grown beyond it. One day, you will, too. So, try to make the most of your time here, every day. Try to see every experience, even the difficult ones, in terms of its opportunity." Mr. Soper voices.

Betsy says, "Trust yourself, it's ok to explore, you don't have to be perfect, intentionally pursue things where you can make mistakes."

Time is a precious thing never to be wasted. At the same time, we should preserve it with small things like taking photos, making home videos, and having fun with friends. These teachers, at one point, were teenagers too. They once felt a little fear when entering a new school. They felt their share of angst and love for weird mixtapes, too. It just goes to show we are all the same on the inside, each mixed with a different flavoring or spice.

This has been quite the year in *FOCUS*! Below you'll see a photo from the staff excursion in the fall at which we planted trees to give back to the earth in recognition of the trees that have been killed in order to produce our publication. If YOU have interest in joining *FOCUS* next year, e-mail focus@friendscentral.org!

**The Amazing Artwork of Spencer Thorne:**

Blue & Gray Day 2019: The Fun Captured in Photos!

By: Sevag Yepoyan '20, Reporter



Senior Prank 2019: Students and Dean React

By: Vicky Liu '20, Reporter

In light of the wave of emotions surrounding the recent senior prank (which, as a refresher, involved a small group of seniors entering the Fannie Cox Center late at night the day before their last day on campus to move all of the classroom chairs in the entire building into the atrium and restrooms, as well as putting a flock of balloons in the atrium), *FOCUS* reached out to various members of our community to hear their opinions. Read them below:

"I think [the prank] was a little overboard [and] was inconvenient for others. I also heard that the seniors promised the administration that they weren't gonna have a prank, but they actually did. I think that's problematic. Other than that, I think it's good to have a senior prank, as long as everybody is moderately okay with it." - Jack Li '20

"It's kinda [sic] unfair for the people who didn't know they had to clean up. They had no way of knowing. I understand that. For the most part, it was a disturbance and wasn't that funny. It was funny that it happened. In the end, it was a disturbance for a lot of people. I could see a lot of people getting upset." --- Naim Saleem '19

FOCUS also reached out to Mr. MacFarlane, our Dean of Students. He shared three main thoughts:

"We do understand how senior classes seem to feel pressure to perform this ritual (and 'senior skip day' too) as part of an apparent tradition so as not to seem 'lame.' Also, I know seniors are not at all wanting to inconvenience us or make us feel unappreciated. Often, they try even to give us a heads-up or include us in the planning in some way. No matter what the intentions are, though, these typically do inconvenience many of us and lead to some temporary bruised feelings, which then become compounded on the students' side because they are frustrated or disappointed at our 'overreaction, surprised that we don't 'get it' or aren't willing to give them the benefit of the doubt in some way. There are pranks that can feel more gentle and funny. [Once] the seniors cooked breakfast for everybody. It doesn't really seem like a prank [but it was] a nice gesture. They surprised us in a nice way rather than a hassle."

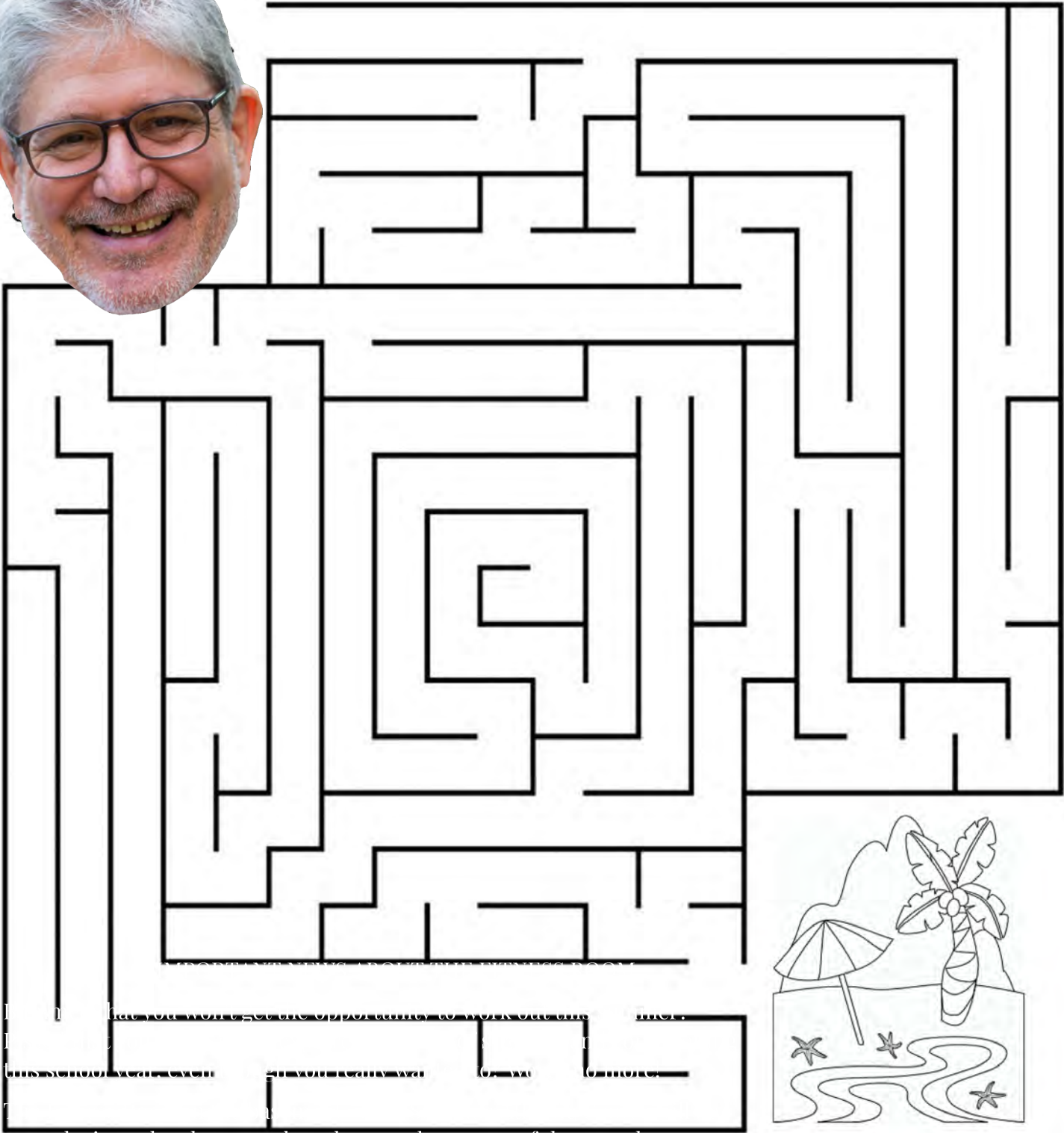
IMPORTANT NEWS ABOUT THE FITNESS ROOM

Bummed that you won't get the opportunity to work out this summer?
Bitter about the fact that you didn't get to explore the world of strength and conditioning this school year, even though you really wanted to?
Well, *FOCUS* readers, worry no more!

The Fitness Room in the basement of the Shimada Athletic Center will be open during select hours and weeks over the course of the next three months. Namely, from 7:30am to 9:30am and then again from 3:30pm to 5:30pm throughout the month of June. Contact Coach Nick if you are interested in exercising with him over the summer, or take a jog down to Shimada!



Can YOU Help Miguel Find His Way to the Beach?



In response to the slur written on the artwork of three Middle School students', we quote from our school philosophy:

We intentionally seek a wide spectrum of diversity in our School community. We respect unreservedly that diversity and strive to enhance and support it. Diversity influences how we teach, learn, and communicate. It enriches the community and furthers understanding that each human life is intrinsically valuable and interrelated, one with another.

Also, from the Diversity and Inclusivity section of our website, we quote:

Friends' Central School is committed to building and maintaining an inclusive and diverse community. All constituencies – faculty, staff, students, administrators, parents, trustees, and alumni/ae – are responsible for an awareness of and ongoing dialogue around equity issues of race and ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, privilege, religion, physical ability, and family structure.

Our commitment is based on Quaker testimony and practice in which we honor each perspective and life experience. Through an intentional curriculum and differentiated methods of teaching, we seek to empower and engage all traditionally marginalized groups. Our community as a whole benefits when we listen and involve a broader range of voices.

We stand by these statements and join our Middle School community as we all begin the process of healing.

Regards,

Mrs. Beth D. Johnson '77	Mr. William Kennedy	Mr. Thomas MacFarlane	Mrs. Heather P. Tomes
<i>Principal</i>	<i>Assistant Principal</i>	<i>Dean of Students</i>	<i>Student Affairs Coordinator + Counselor</i>