



Among Friends

Reflections from our Head of School.

Steve de Beer

friendsschoolboulder.org

December 5, 2013

Revitalization Among the Roses and Aspen



Christie and Paul Stanford biking in Portland

Each year, Friends' School gives two awards from the Polly T. Donald Enrichment Fund.

My predecessor, Polly Donald, Friends' Head of School for seventeen years, believes that an individual's personal growth inevitably enriches those with whom he or she comes into contact. In her name, the school created the Polly T. Donald

Enrichment Fund, which aims to revitalize, inspire and support the personal growth of Friends' faculty and staff.

Polly's thinking is that, by being revitalized and inspired, the teacher or staff member will, in turn, enrich the Friends' School community at large. Among other qualifications, award recipients must demonstrate a commitment to the children, families and mission of the school.

This year the award winners were elementary math specialist Erika Norman and preschool teacher Christie Stanford. Each received a cash award so they could pursue a passion and feel inspired.

Each year, we ask our award winners to share their experiences with our community. Here are Erika's and Christie's own words:

Erika:

When I applied for the PTD enrichment fund last spring, my hope was to go to Anderson Ranch in Aspen and spend a week learning how to turn wood into bowls. In the process, I hoped to connect with my father and grandfather who are and were incredible wood craftsmen.

I wanted to spend some real time creating something solid, something besides ideas or words, something that my kids could touch and hold, like the dining room table and bed that my father made for my husband and me.

I also wanted to do something that would help my mind slow down in the process of creation. What I got was so much more than that. For a solid week I worked with five other novice wood turners picking up pieces of logs, choosing ones that seemed "special" to us for some



Math teacher Erika Norman

Friends School in Boulder, CO



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Steve de Beer, Head of School



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Steve de Beer served as head of school at [Friends School](#) in Boulder, Colorado from 2011 until June 2018. He is now head of school at Westside School in Seattle, WA. He blogs regularly about school and education. Originally from West Sussex, England, he was a theater director and elementary school teacher for over 20 years. Steve chaired the annual conference of the Association of Colorado Independent Schools for six years and served on a professional review committee for Making Caring Common, a project of Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. He speaks nationally on social emotional curriculum. Steve has been published in the [Denver Post](#), [5280 Magazine](#) and [Boulder County Business Report](#). In 2015, Friends' School was the only school in Colorado to be selected as one of the [Top 50 private schools in the country](#).

reason, but mostly just taking a piece of a fallen tree, maple, cottonwood, aspen and cutting it down to fit on our lathe.

Then, out of an ordinary log, beauty was formed. A chunk of wood is put on the lathe and starts to spin. Sharp tools and scrapers remove the bark, and a form begins to emerge. Ribbons of wood fly and cover the floor, your hair, and all the parts of the lathe. If the wood is wet, there is a rich, earthy smell that mixes with the hum of the lathe to create an overwhelming sensory experience.



One of Erika's beautiful creations

I began to see what was hiding inside this chunk of tree. There are designs and patterns, colors you never see from the outside, and a form that was hiding and waiting to be discovered. Whether my bowls got to a final stage, or cracked along the way, every time I was amazed by the beauty that was hiding in what looked like an ordinary log. For the first time I think I really understood my father's love for his craft, and the power of creating something tangible with our hands.

This gift gave me time to connect, think, create, marvel, and explore. It was an experience that I will forever be

grateful to Friends' for providing.

- Erika Norman

And Christie:

This past summer I was awarded a PTD grant and decided to take a trip to Portland, Oregon to do some biking. I was super excited about this opportunity to explore another biking community with my husband, Paul.

How I came to love biking was a bit of a lemons to lemonade moment. As many of you know, I had a mastectomy in November, 2012. This treatment was my only option as I had gone through chemotherapy and radiation treatment at the same site eleven years earlier. In any event, all went well with the treatment over Thanksgiving week but then I was stuck recovering without the opportunity to go on my usual early morning run. I have a running group of neighborhood "mom friends" with whom I have spent the last 15 years running in the early morning hours. We have supported each other and solved many of the world's problems even before the sun rises. My surgery left me unable to run for one month! What was I going to do? Fortunately, I convinced my surgeon to allow me to try spinning and that was the beginning of my love of biking!



Christie and Paul in the Rose Test Gardens

Paul and I decided to try biking in Portland, Oregon because we knew it was a bike friendly city. We rented bikes and decided to bike the Columbia River Gorge. We hired a touring company and spent the first day of our biking adventure exploring Portland. It was amazing as there are bike lanes and the cars don't seem to care if you are in front of them at a stop sign...they wait patiently for you to go! We biked all around town and over the many bridges in the city.

The second day it was raining and we were scheduled to bike the Gorge. Our

Bed and Breakfast hosts said we should go as the weather is often completely different by the Gorge. I wasn't so sure as it was raining hard in Portland! We ventured off and had a spectacular day of riding. We biked to eleven waterfalls including Bridal Veil Falls. It was easy riding and an absolutely beautiful day. Our final biking day we rode to the Rose Test Gardens. The bike shop suggested we hop on the train with our bikes and ride to the garden parking lot. We were determined to show how tough we were so we rode the whole way. It was a steep uphill ride but we did it! And look how gorgeous the roses were in the garden. This was where we got our only view of Mt. Hood-beautiful!



[Read Boulder County Business Report's January 2012 article on Friends School and Steve's role as Head of School.](#)

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Friends School



Friends School Mission

Friends School is a supportive, dynamic community committed to educating the whole child – head, hand, and heart – and to training exceptional teachers for tomorrow's classrooms. We provide a strong academic foundation while developing creative expression and nurturing a passion for learning. Our students gain a deep understanding of themselves and are inspired to act with compassion and integrity.

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One marvelous part of our trip was our Bed and Breakfast stay in the Portland White House. We picked this accommodation because when we got married we stayed in the "White House" in London for one night on our honeymoon 25 years earlier! The Portland B & B was hands down more magnificent. It was built in 1911 and had antiques throughout. We ate breakfast at a white linen table that was probably 20 feet long! Plus, they gave us fresh baked "house special" cookies every night! Paul and I ate these scrumptious cookies and didn't bother asking if they were vegan or not!

Our time in Portland reflects the supportive, loving, generous, fabulous, and family of community I have here at Friends' School. I feel so fortunate to have taught here for so many years and to have made many lifelong friends. Thank you for supporting Friends' School in so many ways including the Polly T. Donald Fund.

- Christie Stanford



Thank you to everyone who supported the PTD Fund from 2010-2011 where your legacy lives on in the experiences of our staff, and all that they bring to our children.

If you are interested in donating to the Polly T. Donald Enrichment Fund, please [follow this link](#) or contact our Director of Development, [Caroline Landry](#).

Posted by [Steve de Beer](#) at 11:39 AM



Labels: [PTD Fund](#), [staff stories](#)

1 comment:

Caroline Landry said...

What beautiful experiences these two amazing women were able to have! Thank you to Polly and everyone who was a part of creating this fund.

[December 9, 2013 at 1:48 PM](#)

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Friends School is an independent elementary and preschool in Boulder, Colorado. It is a school that challenges students and teachers to reach their full potential through academic excellence, creative expression, and social responsibility. It has small, collaborative classrooms, exceptional teachers, a connected parent community, and a highly regarded teacher preparation program. Students learn respect for themselves, others, and our world. Learn more at www.friendsschoolboulder.org