

# What's Happening at Little Keswick School



Bringing Students' Unique Potential to Light Since 1963

FALL 2010

## TRANSITION CEREMONY SPEECH

JUNE 10, 2010

Every year we invite a former student to speak before our parents, sons and faculty. This was the opening line June 11, 2010 at our Transition Ceremony.

My name is Paul Schneider, of Wayland, Massachusetts, Little Keswick transition class of 2005, Eagle Hill School class of 2008, and Brandeis University class of 2012. So far so good. I was extremely honored when Terry Columbus emailed me a couple of months ago and invited me to share a few words today about my experience before, during, and after my time at Little Keswick. While my



2-year stay was certainly very challenging, it led me to a path with successes neither my family nor I could ever have imagined before. Like the residents of Lake Wobegon, all parents want their children to be, "above average." Nice analogy. They want the "normality" that assures them that their kids do not get made fun of, that they will get at least a B on every piece of homework. They want their children not to be the ones that need extra help learning how to read or write. Most

importantly, parents want their kids to have friends - to be part of a community. But life doesn't always work out that way - this idea of a "normal" childhood was not to be ours. Even though I was considered an extremely bright and curious kid, I felt frustrated and angry most of the time. In addition, I began to feel different - I was a "sp-ed." The feeling of failure was constant. It became really hard for me to go to school. I hated school and felt more and more alone and depressed. When I overheard my family

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and teachers saying they didn't think I would graduate from high school, this only deepened my feelings of despair. Fortunately, my parents could see that whatever my potential, it wasn't going to be realized in the local public school and I was able to attend private schools that specialized in kids with learning differences. I am very grateful that my parents found an unusual place in Virginia called The Little Keswick School and took the unbelievable step of sending me - at age 12 - hundreds of miles away from home.

At LKS I learned how to take responsibility for myself, my learning, and my behavior. Teachers helped me focus on the subject matter, made it interesting and gave me strategies for learning instead of telling me to “get over myself.” With Dr. Thomson, the subject matter was me and how I dealt with the world. He really helped me to turn my negative stubbornness into positive because I refused to give up on my dreams. I began to learn how to advocate for myself and for what I needed. I learned about empathy. I learned that I was capable. Learning was no longer a punishment - it was fun! I learned that I could learn. I found ways to adjust to life as both a student and as a friend. Support from staff and family, along with a better understanding of my disorders made it easier to find strategies for success. Once I had a taste of success, I became determined not to fail.

After living with 30 students—all

boys—for two years, I was starting at a school with 150 students, half of whom were not boys. I entered this new environment with the fear that I would be overwhelmed by the bigger size, the increased work load, and the less structured environment (where it was okay to read newspapers and have military posters on the walls). However, I was able to stay afloat and succeed with the skills I had learned at Little Keswick. We studied how there are many different kinds of intelligences and ways of absorbing information. I believe that the experiences I had at LKS allowed me to understand how to be part of a learning, and caring community. The lessons I learned about support and empathy made it possible to transfer these skills from the role models at LKS to the next learning community at Eagle Hill. Playing goalie for the soccer team at EHS also helped me feel connected to my teammates and respected by them too. And YES, I actually had a date for my senior prom. In 2008 I was accepted at Brandeis University. In 6 years I had gone from people not being sure I would make it through high school to attending one of the most academically demanding colleges in the country. It was exciting. Once again I was on my way to a new school, a new environment, and a new challenge. I had been accepted as a midyear student which meant starting classes in January, and I used the extra time off learning to be an Emergency Medical Technician. I trained over the summer and spent my fall working



as an EMT for a local ambulance company. In January 2009 I began my college experience, again very scared that I would not be able to handle the academic workload. After all, part of getting into such a competitive school is surviving in such a competitive school! But, with the skills in self advocating I learned here at Little Keswick and developed further at EHS, I was able to get the help I needed from professors and advisors to succeed. Even with all this on my plate I still seem to have time for a social life and extracurricular activities. I am a member of the club rugby team and even took gold in the intramural soccer tournament. I am also an active member of BEMCo, Brandeis's student run and student staffed Emergency Medical Service. I have recently been upgraded to crew chief which means that I am the person in charge of patient care, delegating tasks to members of the crew, as well as teaching them. *Great way to give back!* It makes me very

proud that I am one of the youngest to be promoted to that rank. I have just finished my sophomore year and have moved into an apartment near campus. It has been a combination of my intellectual curiosity, my unique kind of intelligence, a very supportive family and my sense of personal determination that have helped me get to a place no one thought I could, back in the 4th grade. I am looking forward to the next adventure in my life. Thank you all and good luck!

*Paul's story resonated with all of our parents and their sons. He instilled a feeling of hope with all whom remain at LKS as well as with the transitioning group. We are so proud of these boys who will be attending the following schools: Prairie Grove High School, AR, Berkshire School, MA, Kimball Union, NH, Forman School, CT, Sacramento Waldorf School, CA, Marvel wood School, CT, Eagle hill School, MA, The Learning Clinic, CT and Bridges Academy, CA. 🌲*

## WHAT LKS HAS MEANT TO ME...

*By: 2009 - 2010 Transitioning Students*

*Benjamin R.*

"LKS has meant good relationships, good times, and a better future. There is no school anything like this one in the world."

*Campbell A.*

"LKS has meant a lot of hard work, a lot of new skills, new places to go, new places to see, and new people to meet. LKS also means two years of "having fun being a kid"."

*Ti L.*

"Little Keswick meant a lot to me and made a very big impact on my life because I was here for four years. Four years is a very long time going from 11 to 15 years old. During this time, your education drastically changes and you're going from learning how to make a volcano to just starting to



*(See "TRANSITIONING STUDENTS" page 4)*

## "TRANSITIONING STUDENTS" *(continued from page 3)*

learn how to drive or even get a part-time job. A part of why Little Keswick meant a lot was that before I came here I rarely ever got to hang out with boys my age and learn about pop culture. I also learned woodworking, how to play football, and caught a fish for the first time."

*Luke S.*

"LKS is a place to work on goals. Two words to describe LKS would be hard work."

*Frank F.*

"It is hard to say in a quote, but it's changed my life."

*Jake M.*

"It was extremely helpful to meet my academic and personal needs. LKS helped me build my confidence in everything I'm doing whether in peer interactions or sport games. The school also supported me to believe I CAN, do not give up. If you have a goal, push yourself to meet it. If the goal is not in grasp, try to get to it in the future. Finally, the school taught me to look at the big picture in ways I haven't and to use my skills I learned to benefit myself in the future."

*Landon A.*

"LKS has meant a lot to me by helping me in athletics and especially school time. It helped me when I was frustrated and learning how to cook and clean up the dishes. Just helping me reach my goals this past two years. I appreciate all the staff who has helped me to reach my goals and

just helping to keep me from getting frustrated."



*Jake E.*

"To me, Little Keswick has meant change, a change for the better. LKS has helped me change into a person that is positive, is a leader, and can consistently interact with others without causing frustration and annoyance between myself and them. LKS has helped me to become someone extremely social and fun to be around."

*Ian H.*

"LKS has meant a great deal to me. I feel as if this school has helped me very much in a short amount of time. It wasn't very fun at first and I hated it a good amount of my time here, but now I pretty much just look back and appreciate the work they put me through. I think that being here has also made my relationship with my parents and brother a lot stronger and more enjoyable. I really look forward to the future."

*Gabriel E.*

"LKS meant a second chance and a memorable journey." 🌲

# FISHING WITH CAPTAIN CRABBE

By Stewart Stevens

Thanks to the kind donation of a past parent and their son's love of fishing, upper level students at LKS enjoyed a day of charter fishing in the Chesapeake Bay.

The alarm went off at 4:30 a.m. Too early for most of us to even consider starting a Saturday, but that was the time staff got up to get the fishing trip to the Chesapeake Bay underway. Students were roused from their slumber at 5:00 a.m. Some were quick with excitement while others took a moment or two to shake off the sleepiness. By 6:30 a.m. the three vehicles loaded with students, staff, food, and coolers headed out to a small town located on the Northern Neck peninsula of Virginia, called Heathsville for some giant Rockfish fishing.

The group arrived early to Captain Crabbe's Fishing Charter at 9:30 a.m. The marina looked more like a summer retreat than a fishing center. Captain Danny Crabbe was a very polite and matter of fact gentleman. His first mate Doug was a young man with a calm and precise demeanor. In no time they had the Little Keswick fishermen under way, and with no shortage of answers to the many questions that were asked by all.

Captain Crabbe's boat the Kit II, was a 30 plus foot fishing trawler with a cabin, ample shaded seating, and a large open fishing deck. There was plenty of room to spread out on the boat. Doug rigged up nine rods and two "dummy lines" with large "umbrella" rigs and wild looking jigs. The lines were run off of the boat in a manner to simulate a school of bait fish.

Once out to the fishing grounds we began trolling for giant Rockfish.

It took about an hour for the first fish to hit. Doug yelled "fish on!" Robert K.S. was the top of the order and strapped into a fighting belt and began to wrestle the fish from the bay. Several minutes later he had landed a 35 inch Rockfish. Robert beamed and was congratulated by the other students. Then Doug yelled again and Gabriel was up to the challenge. Gabriel wrestled his fish up to the back of the boat and Doug helped him land it into the cooler. Gabriel was brimming with excitement! Everyone was certain that we were going to catch Rockfish all day long. But fishing is called fishing and not catching and the next fish took four hours to hit. Jake E. was sure that he would not catch a fish, but he was the next in the line up. He got his chance and landed a huge 32 inch Rockfish.

The group wanted to stay out longer but the seas were beginning to get rough so we headed for the dock. Once inside the harbor, Robert, Gabriel, and Jake took pictures with their fish and the group. Doug filleted the three giant Rockfish and the group prepared themselves for departure. It didn't really matter that only three guys got to reel in fish. The group was happy to have been able to spend the day together fishing with Captain Crabbe and his first mate Doug. 🌲



# TIMBER WOLVES - SCOUTS REACH FOR NEW HEIGHTS

By Rick Perry

This summer has been a busy season for the scouts of Troop 139. We had several new scouts join, others advance in rank, and all had fun. We would like to welcome Myles H., Chris H., and Carlos Z. to our troop and we look forward to their contribution to the group. Next, we would like to recognize Chris B., Erik B., Ben G., Hugh M., David S., Jackson S., Robbie R., Josh T., and Noah W. to the rank of Tenderfoot Scout. We would also like to recognize Huntley B. who successfully completed requirements for the rank of Star Scout. Additionally, Huntley completed four merit badges this summer: Citizenship in the Nation, Communications, Personal Fitness, and Fire Safety.

The scouts also elected new leaders to office with great pride I would like to present to you the Summer- Fall youth leadership team:

Josh T. – Senior Patrol Leader  
Ben G. – Asst Senior Patrol Leader  
Erik B. – Asst Senior Patrol Leader  
Noah W. – Patrol Leader  
Jackson S. – Patrol Leader  
Robbie R. – Quarter Master  
Huntley B. – Troop Instructor

This summer scouts participated in a campout and our next campout will be to George Washington National Forest. The scouts will work on their Fishing Merit Badge and climb the "Priest" to experience one of Virginia's highest peaks and most spectacular overlooks. 🌲



## SPOTLIGHT ON STAFF

Patrick Weaver joined Little Keswick this year as a counselor in the Yellow House, our independent living program. Patrick has a Bachelor of Science from Houghton College and worked as an

Assistant Outdoor Education Director in Pennsylvania before moving to Virginia. Patrick also taught English in Northern Iraq. Patrick is an avid backpacker, plays the piano and guitar and enjoys woodworking. 🌲

## MT. RAINIER

By Patrick Weaver

Many who have climbed Mt. Rainier have described the climb as 90 percent mental, and the other 10 percent being mostly mental. Your mind tells you that the mountain is too high, and the summit is too far away. This can be true in life. Sometimes we must concentrate on taking one step at a time toward our goals. The thought of reaching the



goal may seem so far away that it is hard to even imagine accomplishing it. During these times we must remember the importance of taking one step at a time. Each step gets us closer to our goal.

This concept became real for me as I embarked on an adventure to summit the highest glaciated peak in the continental US. Mt. Rainier towers at 14,411 feet and it is full of dangers including huge crevasses, falling rock, the risk of avalanches, and the constant threat of falling and sliding off the mountain.

My journey began on a Sunday morning from Paradise Camp which sits just below Mt. Rainier at about 5,400 feet. My older brother, 2 friends, 7 strangers, 3 guides and I were to attempt the summit together. It was about 50 degrees and wet; a cloud had settled over the entire mountain. Our goal for the day: reach Camp Muir, the base camp, which sits at approximately 10,000 feet.

Soon after beginning our hike, we were trekking through the Muir Snowfield, a steep, permanent field of snow, ice, and rock outcroppings. No amount of preparation could prepare us for the difficulties we were to face in the high altitude with 15 foot visibility. Oxygen deprived and with muscles aching, we struggled to take each step towards our destination. Five long hours later we reached a cold, snowy Camp Muir, but our hardest stretch was yet to come.

We spent Monday at Camp Muir preparing our gear and our minds for our 1:00 a.m. summit attempt.

The gear included an ice axe, helmet, climbing harness, rope, crampons on our boots to give us traction in the snow, gators to cover our lower legs and keep our feet dry, many articles of warm clothing, and most importantly, a camera to capture the awe-inspiring views we would encounter along the way.

We were awakened around midnight, strapped on our gear, secured ourselves to a rope, put and our headlamps, and marched forward. The day was long, and hard. We faced huge crevasses, traversed the edges of extreme slopes, endless ascents on sketchy terrain, and a constant mental battle to keep our energy-drained legs moving. As the sun rose over the horizon, our goal was within reach. Shortly after sunrise our entire team had accomplished what we had come to do. We were standing on what felt like the top of the world.

This experience has taught me that it is important to make challenging goals for ourselves. This is true for each student at Little Keswick School. Even though it can be easy to let our goals be drowned out by fatigue or fear it is essential to keep taking steps to move forward. Each student will have challenging obstacles to face but I am confident that each can successfully summit their own mountain. 🌲



Please send your questions or comments to:

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# INGENUITY AND HARD WORK AT THE BIG WATER FEST

By Jim Maloy

The end of the summer session once again was celebrated by students and staff at the Little Keswick School Swim Relays and Paddle Boat Regatta. The weather was perfect! The event took place on Wednesday, August 4th in a cloud of green and white balloons and a feeling of great mutual accomplishment. The combination of ingenuity and craftsmanship produced a fleet of interesting and sea worthy boats. The result of the consistent effort and high level of attention given to swimming improvement throughout the spring and summer was on display in the relay competitions and in the final record breaking performance by eight of our students. The highlights of the day were the great sportsmanship and the genuine camaraderie between teammates and competitors.

In the initial portion of the swimming relays each of the three teams won at least one blue ribbon. In the final event of the meet the relay the team of Peter A., Carlos Z.,

Jackson S., Erik B., Huntley B., Chris B., Noah W. and Austin M. broke the previous record for the four times two lengths freestyle swim by seventeen seconds. The previous record by the 2009 team was two minutes and thirty seconds. The 2010 team swam the event in two minutes and twenty seconds. All the students and staff members were cheering loudly for all of the participants throughout the day. Congratulations to the swimmers and thanks to all the fans for coming out. A special appreciation was extended to Matt M. who helped with the setup, served as the master of ceremonies and presented the ribbons.

Pontoon boats, double hulled boats, low riding boats, barges, and a lot of designing, cutting, gluing, sanding and painting resulted in the most interesting boat race in the memories of most attendees. Surprises and some disappointments were experienced by many as the paddles turned but, all in all, it was a wonderful display of talent and joy. 🌲



**IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER**  
**Parents' Weekend Oct 15-17, 2010**

Little Keswick School  
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