

TA NEWS



A NEWSLETTER FOR PARENTS, ALUMNI, AND FRIENDS OF TAKOMA ACADEMY.

From the Principal's Desk

Principals Column

Dear Alumni, Parents, and Friends,
This year has been a very exciting one at Takoma Academy. I'm honored to serve as your first-year principal.

As I write this column, we are in the final phases of our Middle States accreditation process. We've learned a lot through our self-study and accreditation committee visit in late March and look forward to the committee's final report. Thank you to all parents, staff, and friends who have participated in this process.

We've made very significant progress on completing our STEM project, as we are raising \$250,000 to create two STEM labs, which will help us create a more robust STEM program, led by Shaun Robinson '89, our STEM coordinator. One of the labs will be an Innovation Lab, which will encourage our students to discover and test emerging technologies, such as 3D printers.

We have raised \$185,000 toward our goal, so we have \$65,000 remaining. Thank you to all who have given to TA this school year, including to support the STEM Lab initiative, as well as those who have given toward our Bathroom Renovation Project, as well as Worthy Student Fund and other initiatives.

In addition to being a Mathematics teacher who became an administrator, I am a TA parent, and I want nothing but the best for our students, since I believe they deserve it.

This school year, we've formed our



Alumni Association Committee, headed by *Ron Braithwaite '93*. Other members of the committee are *Jason Banks '88, Wally Carson '92, RaShawna (Green) Young '92, Kayla Hall '13, Naeem Newman '91, Coach Bob Paulson '75, Celeste Philip '93, and Valarie Westney '13*. They've played a key role in organizing our Alumni Weekend for April 20-23, and I appreciate their efforts. I hope that you

can join us for Alumni Weekend. At the end of this spring, we will be saying goodbye to Mrs. Camps, Spanish teacher, who is completing her ninth year teaching at TA. Her husband received a pastoral assignment in Florida. She will be missed.

Our graduation weekend is taking place in June 3-5, and we are looking forward to honoring our Class of 2023 at that time.

Thank you for your prayers and support of our school through sharing your time, talent, and treasures.

Mrs. Yasmine Julien

Mission Statement

Takoma Academy is a Seventh-day Adventist high school welcoming all races, cultures, and religions; leading young people to Jesus Christ, providing excellence in academics and a commitment to service.



Staff

Alumna writes memoir about her adoption

A project that *Denise Tolbert Defoe*, LCSW '99 reluctantly undertook – writing a memoir about her adoption – has exceeded anything she could imagine.

She had known from a young age that her parents had adopted you when she was an infant. Since Denise had a happy childhood and upbringing, the thought of searching for her birth family seemed distance and unappealing.

“I put it to the side,” Denise said.

When she attended Takoma Academy for high school, however, she became more interesting in learning about her family background, particularly after taking a class about heritage and lineage. Her parents had kept records, which was helpful, once she had received encouragement from “helping professionals” at Oakwood University to write about her adoption.

During the process of putting her adoption story together, Denise expressed a range of emotions, such as grief and anger, toward her biological mother. She had also felt the pain of loss and abandonment. Over time, however, Denise learned to “put myself in her shoes,” to understand what her mother went through, living as a young person in California and eventually becoming pregnant before being incarcerated.

“It was a blessing for me,” she said of her birth mother placing her for adoption. “I shifted my attitude,” through healing and therapy to one of forgiveness, she said.

She has been married to David Defoe, a pastor in the Alleghany East Conference. They are parents to one daughter, Dayna. She received new impetus to write her adoption once Denise became a mother.

“Do it for your child,” some told her, in



encouraging her to write a book-length manuscript.

Through her search for her mother, she found that she had been born and raised in San Diego and that her mother and her birth sister had died in 1989, and that Denise had a brother. She met other family members and saw how their lives were so different than hers. She found that her first 28 days as a newborn were spent in a hospital, before she entered foster care.

She began writing her manuscript in

January 2018 and completed it by December. Editing took an additional four months, completed in April 2019, followed by publication of *They Chose Me: An Adoption Story*, in April 2019. She usually began each chapter with a chapter title before writing the narrative, which helped her organize her thoughts.

Her book had been used in college courses and in adoption support groups. While they were not many in-person readings or book signings available during the pandemic, she has appeared on dozens of podcasts. She occasionally receives royalty checks, based on the book's sales. People who have read the book have complimented her and thanked her for writing her story, which they can relate to.

“The most important part is my daughter knew more about me,” she said. Her daughter enjoyed reading the book.

“When I look back, I can't believe I wrote a book,” she said.



Capital Model United Nations at Washington Adventist University March 2023

TA alumnus helping build WAU Honors College

These days, young people heading off to college are getting the consistent message from their parents and many educators: specialize in a practical major that is in-demand from prospective employers.

Dr. Jonathan Scriven, Ph.D. '89 finds himself headed in the opposite direction, as he seeks to build up an elite undergraduate program.

Scriven, the associate director of the Honors College at Washington Adventist University in Takoma Park and a political science professor, is promoting an interdisciplinary form of college education. Instead of Freshman Composition, also known as English 101, for example, the 55 students in the Honors College, take Honors Rhetoric, a three-credit course that combines written and oral argumentation and enables them to bypass having to take both ENG 101 and COMM 105 as graduation requirements.

"We're working on the Field of Dreams model," said Dr. Brad Haas, Ph.D., the director of the Honors College, referring to the 1989 American sports fantasy film which had the saying, "If you build it, they will come."

Haas drew his longtime friend Scriven back to the United States in January 2020 to work at WAU, after Scriven and his family had spent 13 years living and studying in Nice, the city located along the French Riviera. Scriven and his wife had decided to move to Nice in 2007 to help their three children become fluent in French and experience living abroad. What was intended as a two- or three-year adventure turned into a 13-year one, and the Scrivens found themselves loving France. Scriven taught History, Geography, and Economics in English at a school serving middle school, high school and early college students in Nice, and he also earned a doctorate



in International Relations in Geneva, the city in the Swiss Alps, after earlier receiving a Master of Arts in Teaching in History from Johns Hopkins University in 1997-1998.

Scriven and Haas are trying to use the university's proximity to the nation's capital to draw students to WAU through the Honors College. Not only are they attracting WAU students who are majoring in Biology and Music, two popular majors at WAU, but they are also drawing students who are studying Business, Nursing, Political Science, and Psychology, among other disciplines.

For admission into the program, students need a 3.5 GPA and a minimum SAT score. While still small, the Honors College, which was upgraded from being an academic program in 2015-2016 and then given oversight over WAU's History and Political Science programs, is attracting student-athletes from sports such as Basketball, Cross Country, Soccer, and Volleyball. Scriven is also proud that all WAU class officers for the Classes of 2023 and 2024 at WAU are in the Honors College, in addition to a majority of WAU's student ambassadors.

"Our program is attracting a particular kind of student," Scriven said, one who is disciplined, hard-working, and creative.

WAU recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the University of Baltimore Law School, so that Pre-Law students in the Honors College who gain admission into the law school could combine their senior undergraduate year with the first year of law school, thus saving them \$10,000 or more in tuition and living expenses.

Scriven's love for political science was first inculcated by his parents, who insisted that he first read the front-page headlines for the daily newspaper delivered at their house before he could read the sports section. Mark Faehner, Bob Albright, and Tom Ballard, his History teachers at TA, helped to sate his growing appetite for learning about history, government, and political science.

"Tom Ballard changed how I thought of government," said Scriven, while admitting that basketball, baseball, and hockey continued to draw his teenaged attention away from classroom studies.

He studied for two years at Newbold College of High Education before matriculating with a degree in History and Economics from Andrews University. While not aspiring to be a teacher, he found himself teaching at Shenandoah Valley Academy and then from instructing History at TA from 2001-2003.

Inspired by the House of Representatives candidacy of Chris Van Hollen, Scriven served as Van Hollen's Takoma Park volunteer canvasser before Van Hollen defeated Mark Shriver in the Democratic primary and then unseated incumbent Connie Morella in November 2002. During this process, Scriven recruited 33 young people, including many TA students to assist him with canvassing the liberal enclave of Takoma Park for Van Hollen votes.

Alumna helps patients make lifestyle changes

The COVID-19 pandemic turned life over for many people, in some cases causing death and long-term health problems, while other Americans struggled with social isolation and mental health challenges.

For *Karen Adams Laing '83*, the pandemic was a challenge that she has used to propel herself to increase her work as a healthcare professional who focuses on helping people change their lifestyles for the better.

During a time when chronic health ailments like diabetes and obesity seem to be increasing exponentially, almost inevitably leading to heart disease, she believes that preventative healthcare through lifestyle change can have tremendous positive impacts. Earlier in her career - including her previous work as an intensive care unit nurse at Washington Hospital Center – she “fell in love with my cardiac patients,” but the work was very tedious, as many doctors and nurses find. In recent years, she has invested in education and training and taken professional risks to reposition herself.

“I wanted to get to patients before they got to that point,” of having a heart attack or some life-threatening event, she explained.

Her healthcare career, of course, started with the foundation laid in her secondary education. At Takoma Academy, she enjoyed her classes, although she struggled in Physics. After graduation, she studied at Columbia Union College and then University of Maryland College Park before earning her bachelor’s in nursing from University of Maryland Baltimore County.

For seven years, she has part-time as a nurse for Bon Secours in Richmond, Va., providing telehealth services. She is working with Bon Secours to launch



a virtual cardio rehabilitation program soon.

She received a Master’s in Health Promotion Management at Marymount University in Arlington, Va. Studying for a doctorate in nursing at the University of South Florida. Her intellectual curiosity has led her to contribute to a nursing textbook.

“I’ve always been a questioner,” she said. I would say to myself, “How does this work?” She remembered taking Mr. James Hamilton’s class at TA and learning the effects on ice of putting it

into a jug and as it melts, whether its volume increases.

In recent years, she has become a health and wellness coach, now providing her services completely virtual after adopting a hybrid approach before COVID-19, which can allow her to reach a broader group of people. She is a certified Holistic Nurse and a board-certified health and wellness nurse. She joined the American College of Lifestyle Medicine in 2018. “I found my tribe,” she said of this affiliation.

She worked with a vendor who coached her on how to effectively build her clientele using Facebook. Although she sees the benefits of holistic medicine, she clarified that she is “not anti-medication.”

For seven years, she and her husband of 31 years, 18-year old daughter, and 16-year old son have lived in sunny Florida. Her TA class, meanwhile, is celebrating their 40th anniversary at Alumni Weekend (April 21-23), and she appreciates the relationships she has formed with her classmates.



National Society of Black Engineers - TA Chapter hosted a Ten80 racing challenge, with Charles Herbert Flowers High School and FIRE (CMIT South) participating in February 2023

Development Corner

Bill Murray

The 2022-2023 school year, which began July 1, 2022, has been a year of blessings for Takoma Academy, in part because of the progress the school is making in a few key initiatives.

Bathroom Renovation: Under the direction of our first-year principal, Mrs. Yasmine Julien, continuing the work under her predecessor, Mr. Keith Beckett, who is serving as vice principal, we have raised more than \$50,000 (116 donations) toward our \$60,000 goal to renovate the boys and girls bathrooms, located near the gymnasium. In fact, as of this writing, we have begun work on the boys bathroom renovation.

STEM Laboratories: Mr. Shaun Robinson '89, our Science teacher, is spearheading the initiative to create two Science laboratories at TA: a General Science Lab (in Room #16) and an Innovation/STEM Lab (in Room #17). The latter will include the ability for TA students to study robotics, 3D printing, and graphics design.

Through Mr. Robinson and Mrs. Julien's hard work, we have raised more than \$184,000 toward the \$250,000 goal for this project, which includes furniture, materials, flooring, equipment, setup, and other costs. Adventist Health has led the way, giving \$100,000, while Mercy Medical Center of Baltimore has donated \$50,000, the Potomac Conference of the Seventh day Adventists has given \$20,000, and Medical Group Foundation, Inc., affiliated with the Malin family, has given \$12,000.

Worthy Student Fund: We have raised \$36,766.00 this school year toward our Worthy Student Fund to assist families in need of financial assistance to pay TA tuition.

Agape Annual Fund: Donors have given \$6,400.00 year to date toward the Agape Annual Fund. In addition,



we anticipate receiving \$10,000 by July through our auto donation program.

Athletics Program: We have raised more than \$7,500.00 through nine donations to support our Athletics program.

Faminu Bayless Johnson Fitness Room: We have raised \$768.00 this school year through five donations to memorialize three members of the Class of 1993 through the Faminu Bayless Johnson Fitness Room.

Music Program: We have received \$2,575.00 this school year to support our Music program, which is under the direction of Mrs. Lulu Mupfumbu, our Music teacher.

One can make a donation to support TA by donating online at www.ta.edu/donate or by filling out a check to "Takoma Academy" and enclosing it in the reply envelope that was inserted in this newsletter.

Please feel free to contact me at 240-418-5427 or bmurray@ta.edu if you have any questions or concerns.

Bill Murray is a fundraising consultant working in TA's Development Office.

TAKOMA ACADEMY

ALUMNI Weekend

April 20-23, 2023

Still Standing
Honoring classes ending in 3's and 8's

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TA Senior makes most of internship opportunities

Simone Scott '23 is one busy young lady.

From Mondays through Thursdays, she attends Takoma Academy, where she holds down a 4.0 GPA average. She hustles into her car by 1:15 p.m. or so those days and drives to Bowie, where she works an internship with a family practice doctor, Dr. Ariel J. Warden-Jarrett, M.D. She also clocks in about 20 hours a week in her part-time job at Starbucks.

As if that was not enough, in the days of March as Winter gave way to Spring, Simone was preparing to start an operating room internship in White Oak Medical Center. So if you want to interview her, Zoom is your best bet.

She was weighing her college choices, with a final decision due by May 1 between three HBCUs: her first choice, North Carolina A&T, University of Maryland Eastern Shore, and Morgan State University. She likes North Carolina A&T's Biology Department. She would like to complete her undergraduate degree in three years, which is possible, since she will enter with at least 12 Advanced Placement credits.

Clearly, she's putting some miles on her tires while also picking up some life-changing lessons and also starting to exercise progressive degrees of



independence, which is important to many American teenagers.

At Starbucks, for example, she is learning a great deal from company training and practices about customer service and how to smoothly take customer orders and serve drinks efficiently, given the different means through which Starbucks fulfills them and the many variations in orders.

Since Winter Break 2022, she has been shadowing Dr. Warden-Jarrett, learning how the doctor engages in conversation with her patients and builds trust and relationships with them, while giving them medical care.

Dr. Warden-Jarrett is giving her tips about undergraduate education, for example, telling her that the name and reputation of an undergrad institution

is not necessarily a deal-breaker for getting into a good medical school, particularly if Simone tests well on the MCAT. Such relationships and mentorships are important to a young person such as Simone, who would be the first in her family to receive a college degree.

At TA, she's enjoyed taking AP Biology with *Mr. Shaun Robinson '89*, where she has learned about cellular respiration, how the body produces energy. She's studied bodily functions, such as how we breathe and sweat. She has learned about childbirth.

When she entered TA as a freshman in 2018, she was familiar with Adventist education, having graduated from Dupont Adventist, but she was reserved at first, and it took her time to make friends, even though she had two cousins, *Brooke Scott '23* and *Kyla Scott '20* at the school. Initially, growing up in Southeast Washington, she had to learn to fend for herself, which in a way helped her to become more independent and motivated.

Over time, she has come to appreciate how TA tries to recognize its students and make them feel valued. She enjoyed serving as cheer captain for two years.

She is looking forward to her class graduation, in addition to Junior/Senior Prom and plans to make a lot of time this summer to hang out with her friends, before heading off to college.



National Honor Society Induction March 2023

Rest in Peace

Chris Butler '78

Michael Dobbel '87

Earl Lawrence

Shirley June Small Hall '53

Jean Sunderland Murphy '44

Retiree stays busy with church activities

Ardis Dick Stenbakken '58 retired in 2004, but she has stayed busy.

She and her husband, a retired Army chaplain, settled in Loveland, Col., with a view of the Rockies from their yard. They attend Campion Seventh-day Adventist Church, an 800-member congregation where she teaches a Sabbath School class and heads of Family Life and Women's ministries and coordinates the church's communications.

Her Sabbath School class has 30 to 35 regular members, many of whom are retirees. She has learned to engage her class better over time through asking questions about the Bible, including "What are your observations?" "What do you see in there?"

Through her study of the Bible and teaching the class, she has developed a richer understanding of the cultures that produced the Bible. For example, she learned that in Acts of the Apostles, when Paul writes in *1 Corinthians 14* about women being silent in church that the apostle was



balancing the role that women played at that time in Jewish communities, where it was common to cover themselves, as well as in Greek and Roman-influenced communities.

About a dozen years ago, a member of the class appealed for help with financial needs. Sensing that there could be more financial assistance needed from time to time, Stenbakken appealed to her pastor to establish an account at Campion SDA to provide assistance to church members.

"We've helped students go on missionary trips," she said. "We've helped people with bills, including hospital bills." Even though she has only made one announcement about the fund to her class over the years, she estimates that members have given \$50,000-\$100,000 over the years to assist those needing assistance.

Recalling her two years education at TA, Stenbakken said she had to pay her way through school, like many of her classmates. She worked at the Washington Sanitarium, rising at 4 a.m. many days, and she credits the school's teachers and staff with helping her recover from losing her brother, who had drowned in the Columbia Union College pool.

She came to know her classmates well and by her senior year, Stenbakken was elected vice president of the class.

The Stenbakkers have two married, adult children and four grandchildren, including two who are students at Spencerville Adventist Academy.



Maryland Music Education Association Convention - Baltimore - March 2023

Takoma Academy
8120 Carroll Avenue
Takoma Park, MD 20912



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Student Council Leadership Retreat February 2023

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