



Fireside

A MAGAZINE FOR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS OF BROWNELL TALBOT COLLEGE PREPARATORY SCHOOL



**Always Leading,
Always Learning**
more on page 5

**Gala Gives
Back**
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**1918 Spanish
Flu Pandemic**
more on page 22



Notes from Worthington Hall

In the last issue of *Fireside*, I introduced Brownell Talbot's new strategic plan, which charged the school with reimagining the Brownell Talbot experience in order to ensure our students can and will survive in a rapidly changing world. What we did not know then was how quickly we would need to reimagine and restructure almost every facet of life at BT. By early March it was apparent that bold decisions and innovative teaching methods were required to finish out the school year and give our students an educational advantage, not just for a future uncertain world, but an immediate one.

The past several months have tested our mettle and allowed us to look at every challenge as an opportunity. This issue of the magazine highlights many of the ways in which we responded to those challenges to achieve amazing results like:

- Creating a world-class distance learning program in less than a week (page 5).

- Moving up our annual gala and holding it completely in a virtual format (page 9).
- Accelerating the strategic plan's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiative to more quickly realize the school's vision (page 7).

As we head into a new school year with many of the same uncertainties schools faced in the spring, BT is well positioned to lead the way in providing exceptional education, even under unprecedented circumstances. We have our masks on and our minds focused as we adapt the Brownell Talbot experience to meet our students' current and future needs.

Kristi N. Gibbs

Kristi N. Gibbs, Ed.D.

Head of School

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Fireside is published for alumni, parents, and friends of Brownell Talbot College Preparatory School. Send story ideas and comments to Brownell Talbot, attn: Renae Mackender, 400 N. Happy Hollow Blvd., Omaha, NE 68132; email renae.mackender@brownell.edu.

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Note: All stories and photos in this edition were produced before masks were considered imperative to slowing the spread of COVID-19. Brownell Talbot supports the use of masks.



WHAT'S HAPPENING — ON CAMPUS? —



1. Bringing Smiles to Early Years Students at Home

Upper School House members made it their mission to ensure BT's Early Years students still had a cross divisional experience this spring. During social distancing, House members visited Early Years students' homes and decorated their driveways with personalized chalk messages.

2. A Perfect Season (Almost)

BT's first grade boys basketball team were on their way to achieving a perfect season, having gone undefeated in the JCC league, when their tournament was canceled amid pandemic concerns and social distancing measures.

3. Getty Museum Challenge

Students in grades 2-6 got into the online challenge posed by the Getty Museum to recreate a work of art with materials at home. With help from her mom, Mari Loya, x'29, mastered *The Two Fridas* by Frida Kahlo. Check out the rest of the recreations at brownell.edu/gettychallenge.

4. No Stage, No Problem

The BT Theatre Department officially knows no limits, having performed the spring play, *Gathering Grimm*, in its entirety from the comfort of the actors' and crew members' own homes. Costumes were created from personal closets, and "set" designs were crowdsourced images from the BT community. Watch the show on Brownell Talbot's YouTube page.



Brianna Liu, '20



Emalie Wightman, '20



5. Two Seniors Commit to Play Intercollegiate Sports

Brianna Liu, '20, will play tennis for the University of Chicago. Emalie Wightman, '20, will play golf for Nebraska Wesleyan University.

6. We Are BT - Even at a Distance

As part of the effort to support BT families during the pandemic, the profits from the sale of We Are BT shirts went to the relief fund in support of Raiders facing unexpected financial hardship. The shirts featured the name of every student, teacher, and staff member and served as a keepsake for the spring 2020 semester.

7. Good Food for a Good Cause

Campus closing due to social distancing measures meant there was a lot of food from BT's kitchen and concessions stand that would go to waste. The facilities team spent the first few days following the campus closure in March gathering the food and delivering it to BT's community partner Youth Emergency Services for use at their Shelter and Maternity Group Home.

8. Distance Learning Spirit Week

BT marked its second full week of distance learning with a socially distanced spirit week! Themes included Superheroes, Tacky Tuesday, Crazy Hat and Hair, Jersey Day, and Raider Spirit.

March 18, 2020

Always *Leading,*

On March 6, 2020, BT students and faculty departed campus headed for various spring break destinations. In Omaha, and across the country, early preparedness planning in response to a new coronavirus was in its early stages. Head of School Kristi Gibbs had convened a committee of faculty and staff members to evaluate potential scenarios, plan for each, and establish how the school would make decisions to implement social distancing or possibly close campus. On March 6, the school was dealing with “what ifs.” Less than a week later, with cases of COVID-19 on the rise and families returning from spring break destinations that had suddenly appeared on watchlists, closing campus became a complicated reality.

The “what if” planning that had taken place in the weeks prior ultimately saved the school essential time when pivoting to distance learning. Initially, the school closed campus on a week-by-week basis, but soon a pandemic was declared and any hope of conducting in-person classes ended with a state-wide mandate that Nebraska schools remain closed through May.

What probably felt like an impossible situation for many larger schools was not so difficult for BT. In addition to planning, BT’s size and the willingness of faculty and staff to adapt quickly resulted in only two days of “down time” for students. By the Wednesday following spring break, school resumed through synchronous and asynchronous methods.

“We benefited from our relationships with international schools around the world who started the journey to distance learning earlier than we had to,” said Assistant Head of School Jason Smith. “We were able to capitalize on their experiences. So, BT’s distance learning ‘version 1’ was composed of insights from version 3 or 4 distance learning plans from other schools who had already refined and implemented their processes.”

BT’s approach to distance learning had two key tenets: keeping students engaged and maintaining the level of rigor and support students needed in a digital learning environment.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Without traditional face-to-face, in-person instruction, the school did not want to lose the personal connection that BT is known for. Lower School students had weekly social sessions with classmates and Middle and Upper School continued to have advisory and House, respectively. Additionally, Middle and Upper School faculty had open office hours to connect with students and parents.

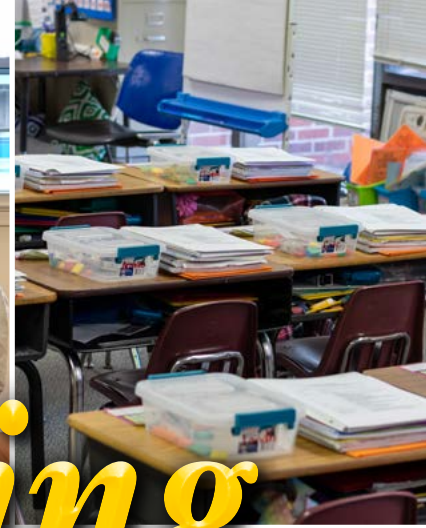
RIGOR AND SUPPORT

It was not uncommon to hear of other schools making distance learning optional. Many stopped grading and introducing new material. BT did not want to lower its standards or expectations, believing that the faculty, staff, families, and students could persevere through the most challenging times. BT faculty continued to grade, assess, and instruct on new material. This was coupled



“Distance learning challenged me to think outside the box for some of my traditional lessons. I added activities into videos, read stories, included photos of locations in France, and even reimagined some of our classroom games into digital versions. The success of anything I created was entirely dependent on the students who fully embraced each new activity and way of learning. No matter what was asked of them, they rose to the occasion - from sixth graders recording videos of themselves giving weather reports to Early Years students identifying colors in their garden, the students worked hard to use French in new ways.”

- Kayla Heimerman, French teacher



Always Learning

with greater flexibility and support for students, recognizing the new learning format would affect each student differently. Faculty also made a concerted effort to stay connected with one another so they could identify trends in students' behavior and intervene if the student was struggling, whether it was academically, socially, or mentally. Additionally, every family received at least one phone call, often times more, during distance learning so the school could hear parents' perspectives on how it was going and how their children were progressing.

Struggles were unavoidable. Students were asked to push forward and maintain motivation and interest in school while others around them had essentially started summer two months early. There were power outages and bandwidth issues that occasionally frustrated not just the students, but faculty and staff alike. Ultimately, the hardest part to overcome was the loss of interaction.

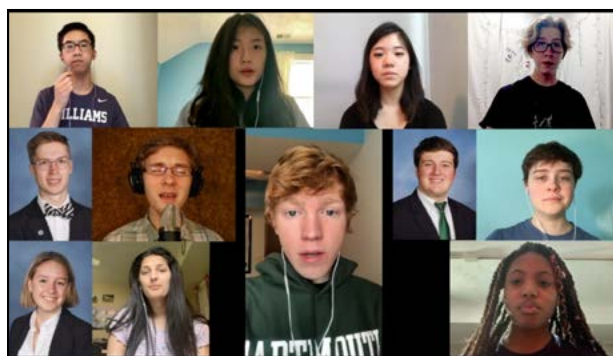
"BT is such a strong community and during a normal school year, we see each other a lot. We missed out on hugs and high fives, lunches at the picnic tables, and cheering on our students from the stands," said Smith. "We connected a lot online, whether for class or just social Zoom meetings, but really there's no substitute for an impromptu friendly chat in circle drive."

Ultimately, BT's distance learning program succeeded in so many ways. The school continued all coursework including in classes such as PE, art, science labs, music, and library. Annual events like the spring sports pep rally, Celebrate Your Senior lunch, and the Activities Banquet went off without a hitch. New talents were discovered, with many students contributing music videos, stop motion art, and tv parodies for the BT community's enjoyment. It was a year unlike any other that brought about unique learning experiences and set up the 2020-2021 school year for success!

"Pirate Radio's recent music video of Augustana's *Boston* was unique because it's one thing to individually record and edit together something the students have previously rehearsed and performed in person, but that song was entirely learned and rehearsed remotely. Once the students individually recorded the first verse and chorus, we discovered a problem: it took over an hour to combine and line up the audio just to hear the first draft of those 60 seconds, and I would then have to upload and post that in order for students to hear what they had just sung. That timeline was not sustainable.

Thankfully, when I discovered Soundtrap, a cloud-based collaborative recording studio software, it went much quicker. With the guide track uploaded for them to sing along to, everyone's individual recordings were already in one place, lined up with each other, and everyone could hear everything combined together just seconds after finishing their own recording.

In addition to experiencing new technology, distance learning created an opportunity to teach real-world music skills that are better learned individually,



not in our normal group setting. Recording studio techniques like how to 'punch in' to re-record improvements to specific moments without having to sing the whole song again, managing microphone distance for higher and lower notes, and using audio editing to clean up coordination issues that usually solve themselves naturally when people are singing live together."

- J.R. Gould, Fine Arts Department chair and music teacher

Check out Parate Radio's performance of *Boston* on BT's YouTube page.

When the COVID-19 pandemic began earlier this year, one would have thought it would be *the* defining event of 2020. However, on May 25, 2020, Minneapolis police officers killed George Floyd, sparking protests all over the world against systemic racism and social injustice and compelling much-needed conversations and action regarding the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice.

Although Brownell Talbot has long prided itself on being a welcoming environment for the diverse backgrounds, upbringings, and interests of our community, the school sought to formalize its commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion with the creation of the school's 2019-2023 strategic plan, introducing its Culture of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative in October 2019.

The initiative led to the creation of two committees, one at the Board of Trustees level and one composed of BT's faculty and staff. The Board committee's role is to develop policies that create a path forward in becoming a community leader in diversity, equity, and inclusion. The faculty and staff committee focuses on identifying and prioritizing actions the school can take to make immediate and long-term changes that move BT toward this goal.



Culture of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiative

Become a community leader in diversity and inclusion by having an appreciation for empathy and fostering collaboration between people of diverse backgrounds, thought, and connections.

Learn more about BT's strategic plan at brownell.edu/the-plan.

BT'S COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

While the May protests did not prompt BT's commitment to diversity, they did accelerate the school's timeline for some of the related tasks. Working together, the two committees have identified the following actions for the 2020-2021 school year:

- **Complete the BT community-wide Assessment of Inclusivity and Multiculturalism.**

The assessment is created and conducted by the National Association of Independent Schools and consists of two components: focus groups and an online survey. It is designed to elicit feedback on the school's climate and culture and provide data to help BT establish measurable goals.

- **Improve BT's hiring practices.**

BT has partnered with similar independent schools to identify best practices to source diverse candidates, identify and mitigate existing biases of hiring committee members, and formalize the interview process to ensure it is equitable.

- **Conduct a policies and programs diversity audit.**

The goal of the diversity audit is to uncover hidden biases that may exist in the language and traditions of the school and recommend changes to create a more inclusive environment. BT will also conduct a diversity audit of its curriculum in conjunction with the school's existing Standards of Excellence curriculum review cycle, which ensures a thorough review of two to three subjects a year (more information on the Standards of Excellence curriculum review cycle can be found on brownell.edu).

- **Diversify the school's suppliers.**

The school will actively seek out historically underutilized businesses to develop meaningful, mutually beneficial relationships with diverse members of the Omaha community.

"As a school community, we understand and hold firmly to the belief that it is our responsibility to take an active role in helping break the cycle of injustice that creates and maintains inequities for so many. It is difficult, necessary work that BT is engaged in as part of truly living our mission of knowing, inspiring, and challenging every student, every mind, every heart."

-Dr. Kristi Gibbs, Head of School

The Drive to Make a Difference. Period.

Last fall, Gillmore House Dean Jessi Ryan was having one of those fitful nights of sleep where thoughts wander to unexpected places. She had recently been discussing a potential service project for Gillmore House. The original idea put forth, collecting board games for Completely Kids, had fallen through, and Ryan knew the students' hearts just weren't in it.

"I wanted the girls to find a project they were truly passionate about," Ryan said.

It occurred to her that every member of Gillmore House, regardless of background and upbringing, had one very important thing in common with girls around the world: a monthly period. But for some girls, a period means missing school, spending money on period products instead of food, and living with undue embarrassment over something that is 100% natural and common in half the population.

When Ryan brought the idea of a period product drive for Omaha's Youth Emergency Services to House leaders Emma Garfoot, '20, and Jade Segur, '20, they were excited. Together, and with the rest of the House members, they decided to add a second component to the product drive, an awareness campaign that

would aim to normalize talking about periods and shed light on the impacts of period poverty.

"It felt like such a taboo topic. I'm sure even teachers have had to hide a pad up their sleeve on the way to the bathroom," Garfoot said. "We felt we had to make it easier to talk about it if we wanted people to participate in the drive."

To help kick off the drive, Gillmore House invited Sarah Lorsung Tvrdik to speak to the female Houses. Tvrdik co-owned Hello Holiday boutique in Dundee until its closing in 2019 and was instrumental in running their "Girls Support Girls. Period." menstrual product drive from 2016 to 2018. Her talk inspired Gillmore House to expand their period product drive to include a larger portion of the BT community, encouraging all parents, faculty, staff, and friends of BT to participate.

Soon, Gillmore House had created an Amazon wish list and was advertising the drive through the school's social media and newsletters. Garfoot and Segur were invited to speak during a February BTPA meeting. And they accomplished their goals for presenting the topic of period poverty at Chapel and to all Houses and advisories, visiting classrooms on multiple occasions to share facts and encourage participation in the product drive.

Ultimately, the drive raised 357 period products, blowing their initial goal of 200 out of the water. While Gillmore House was proud of that accomplishment, it was the outreach they conducted that really drove home how important raising awareness about period poverty is.

"It created a lot of opportunities for the girls in our House to have deeper conversations about topics that we normally would not have felt comfortable sharing with one another," said Segur. "I think we became a lot closer because of it."

And it wasn't just the girls who became more comfortable with the topic.

"I remember having one boy come up to me carrying a bag full of products to donate, and he was shocked. He said, 'you have to buy these every month? It's so expensive!'" Garfoot shared.

In what was one of the most meaningful moments of the drive for Mrs. Ryan, her sons, John, '28, and Jacob, '29, asked her about the products that were piling up in her classroom. It created an opportunity to have a thoughtful conversation with them about why girls get periods and what the products are for.

"They didn't laugh or act awkwardly about it. And then when we were at the store, they felt comfortable going over and picking up a package of pads and asking, 'do we need to get more for the drive?'"

At the end of Tvrdik's presentation, she challenged Gillmore House to fill the spot left vacant by Hello Holiday, leading a period product drive for the city of Omaha. Ryan, Garfoot, and Segur all feel Gillmore House is up to the challenge.

"I am so proud of how accepted and successful the drive was," Segur said. "I hope it continues. It will do amazing things for girls at YES and for the BT community."

PERIOD POVERTY BY THE NUMBERS

\$5,850 to \$11,700 - average amount women spend in their lifetime on feminine hygiene products.

450 - times the average woman has her period in her lifetime.

1 in 4 women struggled to purchase period products within the past year due to lack of income.

1 in 5 low income women report missing work, school, or similar events due to lack of access to period supplies.

If a girl misses school every time she has her period, she is set **145 days behind** her fellow male students.



Gala Gives Back



The spirit of the BT community shined brightly this year for the school's annual fundraiser, proving that Brownell Talbot, 68132 would be a gala unlike any other. Gala, a treasured Brownell Talbot tradition dating back to 1982, for the first time became an all-virtual event and was held in April, three weeks earlier than its original May date. Although there was no gala tent, no live musical performances or reflections from students, and no toasts to another wonderful school year with table guests, many of the traditional elements of gala were still intact - robust silent and live auctions and various raise the paddle opportunities. New this year was the

establishment of an emergency tuition relief fund designed to offer immediate support to current BT families who were seeking unplanned assistance due to the COVID-19 crisis. The generosity of the BT community raised \$45,000 in honor of this fundraising priority.

Due to these unprecedented times, BT saw that there was a financial need in our local community as well. Twenty percent of gala's silent auction proceeds were donated to four Omaha nonprofits serving on the frontlines of the pandemic. This giveback translated into \$2,500 gifts to Completely Kids, Dundee-Memorial Park Association's Merchants Relief Fund, Foodbank for the Heartland, and Youth Emergency Services. Including these nonprofits allowed BT to stand shoulder to shoulder with neighborhood partners as they addressed a rapidly growing need. It also started a spark for good as the school saw other nonprofits follow suit with similar giveback approaches.

THANK YOU TO OUR PRESENTING SPONSORS

Visionary Sponsors and Underwriters

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The Lori and David Scott Foundation

Katie Weitz, PhD and Tim Wilson

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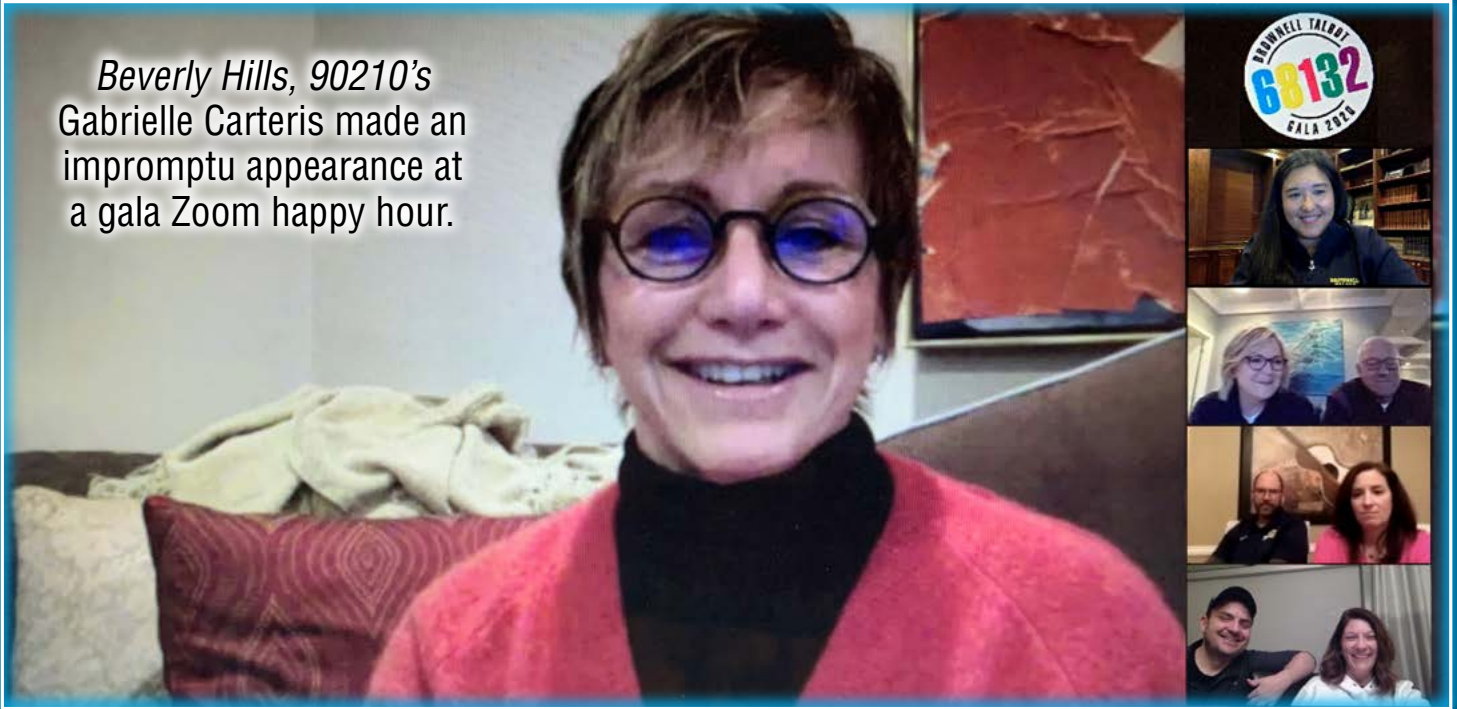
Oxide Design Co.



Visit brownell.edu/gala to view the gala program video and an inspiring speech from Emma Garfoot, '20.

SUPPORTING OUR MISSION

Beverly Hills, 90210's
Gabrielle Carteris made an
impromptu appearance at
a gala Zoom happy hour.



From April 10 to May 9, BT's incredible community of donors and supporters raised their virtual paddles, bid on items, purchased raffle tickets, and made donations to the school with scholarships, emergency tuition relief, faculty and staff enrichment, and the fine arts at the top of their priorities. Donors dug deep to support students to help create a successful gala that was critical to both the school's immediate and future needs.

The Brownell Talbot community's collective generosity resulted in \$975,000 raised in the name of BT students, faculty and staff, and school. While BT is experiencing a level of need it hasn't known

before, it is also experiencing a level of generosity that supersedes anyone's expectations.

Thank you to the Gala Steering Committee, led by Gala Chairs Deb and Jim Dodd (Jack, x'24, and Sammy, '27) and Sue and Rick Thaden (Lauren, '17, Grace, '20, and Katherine, '23). Their devotion to the school and willingness to dig in and lead when it mattered most is something for the record books. This is equally true of this year's Honorary Chairs Liz and Larry Mazzotta (Drew, '07, and Rachel, '16). The Mazzotta family's longstanding commitment to furthering BT's mission is truly inspiring.

Saying Thank You in a Big Way

When Jack Harvey, '07, bid on and won the 1991 BMW 325i Convertible during gala's live auction, he had big plans for the car. While spending the summer cruising with the top down on this neo-classic car sounded enticing, Harvey had something else in mind: saying thank you to an incredible teacher who treated him with grace and kindness. According to Harvey, while still a student at BT, he borrowed speech teacher Chris Hamel's car and regrettably returned it with a damaged transmission. At the time, Harvey promised Hamel that he would make it up to him one day. And that's exactly what he did, gifting the BMW to Hamel in order to say thank you in a big way.



**SUPPORTING OUR
MISSION**

WE'RE ALL IN!

BT Fund Breaks Participation Records



BT Fund Smashes Records The 2019-2020 BT Fund broke both fundraising and participation records as the BT community took the “All in for BT” mantra to heart. Donors who care deeply about the school saw the need and answered the call as the school made a strong case for support. Funding a school year takes above and beyond giving, and if the 2019-2020 annual appeal taught us anything, it is that BT families, alumni, faculty and staff, and the Board of Trustees continue to be generous and motivated donors!

BT FUND BY THE NUMBERS



\$332,344 RAISED

100% Faculty and Staff Participation	100% Board of Trustee Participation	84% Parent Participation
\$735 Average Gift Size	129 Donors increased the amount of the gift from the previous year	

To be amongst the first to support the 2020-2021 appeal, visit brownell.edu/btfund or complete the giving envelope included with the magazine.

Grade and House Competitions

This year the school introduced the BT FUN Wheel to the grade and House participation challenge. When grades and Houses reached participation milestones, they were rewarded with out of uniform days and had a chance to spin the wheel for a variety of prizes. Popeye’s Chicken sandwiches, popcorn and pajamas, and donuts with Dr. Gibbs were amongst the most popular items.

Congratulations to the following grades and Houses for reaching these participation milestones:

FOREST ROOM	100%
Wildlife Room	93%
Wildflowers	86%
Kindergarten	74%
Grade 1	96%
Grade 2	90%
GRADE 3	100%
GRADE 4	100%
Grade 5	81%
Grade 6	95%
Grade 7	90%
Grade 8	66%
Abbott	77%
Butterfield	77%
Clarkson	78%
DAKE	100%
GILLMORE	100%
HERMANN	100%
HITCHCOCK	100%
Hoyt	92%
INGALLS	100%
PATRICK	100%
SARATOGA	100%
WORTHINGTON	100%



SUPPORTING OUR MISSION



Sandy Melilli

NATURE CURRICULUM

ENDOWMENT FUND

During this spring's All School Chapel in May, Brownell Talbot surprised Sandy Melilli, BT's Early Years director and teacher, with the announcement that an endowed fund has been created in her name. During Melilli's 20 years at BT, she was an avid supporter and driving force behind nature education and nature curriculum integration at the school. In addition to making nature learning and play a key component of early education at BT, she was instrumental in the creation of the Kotula Family Nature Classroom, bi-annual Nature Night events, and the BT garden.



This endowment fund means nature curriculum at all levels of the school will remain a funded priority. Yearly earnings from the endowed fund will support the continued implementation of nature curriculum and professional development related to nature education for teachers as well as provide classroom resources for nature learning and play.

NEBRASKA WILDFLOWER GIVING LEVELS

BLAZING STAR \$20,000
\$1,000 for every year of service

PRIMROSE \$15,000
\$750 for every year of service

APRICOT MALLOW \$10,000
\$500 for every year of service

CONEFLOWER \$5,000
\$250 for every year of service

POPPY MALLOW \$2,000
\$100 for every year of service

PRAIRIE PHLOX \$200
\$10 for every year of service

LARKSPUR \$20
\$1 for every year of service



"Everyone gains benefits from spending time outdoors, but a child's connection is even stronger. It's been shown that time spent outdoors improves cognitive function, focus, and physical strength. It also connects children to the real world in a way that nothing else does." - *Sandy Melilli*

If you would like to support the Sandy Melilli Nature Curriculum Endowment Fund and honor Melilli's 20 years of service with a charitable gift, please contact Executive Director of Advancement Shannon Gilroy at 402.556.3774 or shannon.gilroy@brownell.edu or visit brownell.edu/sandy.

SUPPORTING OUR
MISSION

Recognizing BT's Retirees

The Class of 2020 were not the only ones “graduating” from Brownell Talbot this past May. Early Years director and teacher Sandy Melilli and Middle School science teacher Rob Schindler culminated their teaching careers in distance learning.



Sandy Melilli

“Thank you for everything that you have done for Ben and all the kids. And congratulations on your retirement! Your legacy will live on at BT! Best of luck and enjoy!”



“You were a good teacher to have and are nice! You cheered me up when I got hurt. I’ll miss your stories and smiles. I’ll always remember you were fun and taught me how to read.”
- Lia Saxena, '33

“Mrs. Melilli, our first memories at BT are of Anika in your class. When she came to your JK class from Bright Horizons, I noticed a complete change in her behavior on the very first day! We will miss you. All the very best to you and your family.”
- The Aroras



Rob Schindler

“Mr. Schindler, you always put a smile on my face in class. You told the best jokes (I really love the BC joke). Thank you for being the best science teacher and I wish you well!”
- Janeilya Davis, '22



“You are one of the best teachers I’ve ever had. You made learning fun when you wanted to throw people out of the window. We are all going to miss you!”
- Corinne Van Winkle, '26

“We all are going to miss you SO MUCH and I hope you come and visit :) My middle school experience would not be the same without your witty humor, weird discussion Friday, fun times in advisory, guitar solos about the heart, Veggie Tales, and your passion for teaching.”
- Cami Kotouc, '22



The BT community is thankful to our retiring faculty for their years of service and many contributions to the school. Please join us in wishing them the best!

Visit brownell.edu/farewell to add your appreciation to their comment walls and visit the school’s Facebook page to view special tribute videos to Sandy Melilli and Rob Schindler for their dedication and impact on so many lives!

WELCOME BT'S NEWEST BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEMBERS

Following the end of an historic school year, coupled with the knowledge that education has been forever changed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the school is grateful to have the following individuals join BT's Board of Trustees. Their addition to the Board will help to better position the school as the premier education experience in Omaha and beyond. They will be key in implementing the strategic plan for the coming year as well as helping to set priorities and policies for the future. Please welcome our newest members!



Gale Etherton, M.D., FACP

Associate Professor of Medicine, Department of Internal Medicine, University of Nebraska Medical Center

Etherton's background is in academic medicine at the graduate and post-graduate level. She has experience at multiple academic institutions developing new academic programs and new curriculum. She is a BT parent to Ciaran, '20, and Cillian, '26, Rochling.



Jerry Reimer

Principal, Urban Village Development

Reimer is the founder and CEO of Omaha-based apartment development and property management company Urban Waters, as well as the co-founder of Urban Village Development. He is a BT parent to Ashton, '19, Sophie, '23, and Beckham, x'26, Reimer.



Shikhar Saxena, M.D., x'99

Founder and CEO, Milan Laser Hair Removal

In 2012, Saxena and his business partner purchased Milan Laser. Over the past eight years, they have taken the initial location and four employees to 74 locations (all corporate-owned) with nearly 500 employees. Saxena attended grade school at BT and is a BT parent to Sonu, '27, Shaan, '29, Sai, '31, and Lia, '33, Saxena.



Corrie Shumaker, CFA

General Director, Corporate Finance & Investment Management and Assistant Treasurer, Union Pacific Corporation

Shumaker has distinguished herself in finance and investment at Union Pacific since she began with the company in 2003. In her current role, she develops strategies, policies, and plans for the company's capital structure, cash allocation, and financing initiatives. She is also responsible for the oversight and management of the company's pension fund and thrift plan. Shumaker is the mother to Madelyn Shumaker, who attended BT before her passing in 2015.

BT's new board members will provide diverse views and expertise that will further the school's mission of knowing, inspiring, and challenging every student, mind, and heart.

BT has the deepest appreciation for outgoing Board members, Chip Vrana and Robert Wagner, who contributed significantly to the success of the school. We thank them for everything they have done to support BT students and their families during their Board terms!

BT's Send-Off to Summer

The 2019-2020 school year was full of twists, turns, challenges, and successes. Through it all, the BT community banded together and found ways to provide a premier education in a distance learning environment, celebrate students, faculty, and staff, and ensure the Brownell Talbot experience persisted. The Class of 2020 Celebration and Summer Send-Off Parade marked the end of this unique year and gave the community a chance to come together at an appropriate social distance to recognize seniors and the culmination of their BT careers. The event also provided an opportunity for all students, their families, faculty, and staff to say farewell for the summer.

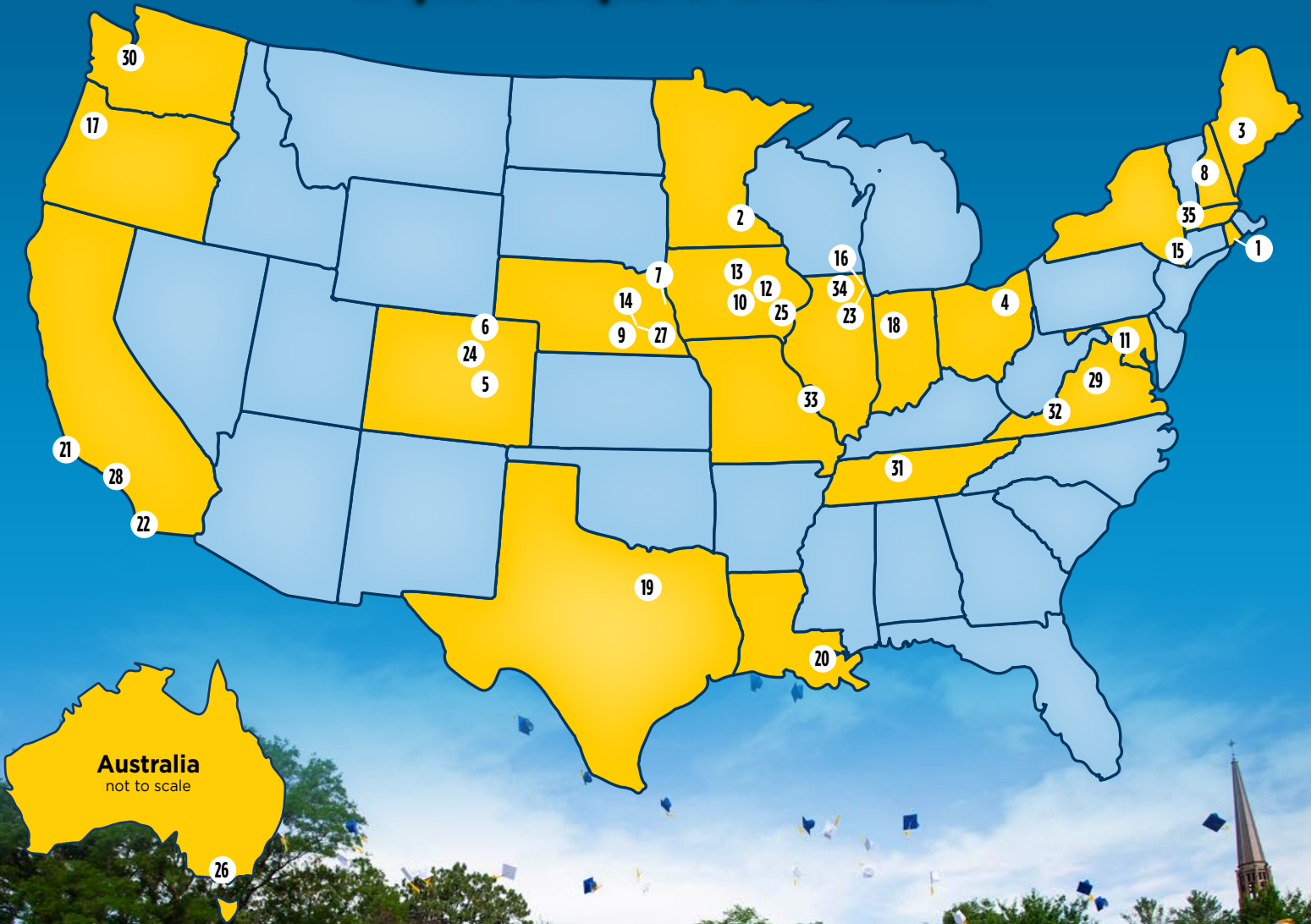
The event included a processional walk of graduates and their families beginning in lower circle drive, up Happy Hollow Boulevard to Underwood Avenue, then through upper circle drive where faculty and staff were parked to wave and cheer on students. The Class of 2020 then walked through the courtyard back to lower circle drive. Once the processional walk was complete, the rest of the BT community drove through both lots to see faculty and staff and to cheer on the Class of 2020. The event proved to be an exuberant demonstration of the strength of the BT community!





CLASS OF 2020 COLLEGE MATRICULATION

Are there any Raiders coming
to your campus or alma mater?



NEW
BEGINNINGS

An Unconventional School Year Ends with an Unconventional Baccalaureate and Commencement

On Saturday, June 27, 2020, faculty, staff, and a limited number of family members witnessed the commencement, at an appropriate social distance, of the Class of 2020 on Skutt Field. As the school year ended in May, it was uncertain when the ceremony might take place and how it would look. The relaxing of Nebraska's directed health

measures in early June presented an opportunity to recognize the Class of 2020 and their achievements in person with a limited audience. Although the rest of the BT community was not able to attend, the event was recorded and is available for viewing on BT's Facebook page.

1. Brown University
2. Carleton College
3. Colby College
4. The College of Wooster
5. Colorado College
6. Colorado State University-Fort Collins
7. Creighton University
8. Dartmouth College
9. Doane University
10. Drake University
11. Georgetown University
12. Grinnell College
13. Iowa State University
14. Nebraska Wesleyan University
15. New York University
16. Northwestern University
17. Oregon State University
18. Purdue University
19. Texas Christian University
20. Tulane University
21. University of California-Santa Barbara
22. University of California, San Diego
23. University of Chicago
24. University of Colorado at Boulder
25. University of Iowa
26. The University of Melbourne
27. University of Nebraska-Lincoln
28. University of Southern California
29. University of Virginia
30. University of Washington, Seattle
31. Vanderbilt University
32. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
33. Washington University in St Louis
34. Wheaton College
35. Williams College



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Amy (Razaghifar) Trickey, Class of 2005



I am a registered nurse in the operating room for Kaiser Permanente in San Diego, CA. It's an interesting place to work in the middle of a pandemic!

How has the pandemic changed your work life?

As a team we have gone through extensive training for donning and doffing personal protective equipment for contact/droplet/airborne precautions. We have also changed our workflow for assisting anesthesia during induction and extubation for COVID positive patients. On a personal level, it has confirmed my belief that there is nothing more important than your health and the health of the people you love.

What led you to this career?

In college I lived with a few girls who were taking pre-nursing courses, and I thought it would be fun to do!

How did BT help prepare you for what you are doing now?

The teachers and curriculum at BT do an excellent job at preparing

students for a higher level of education. And not only did the schoolwork make transitioning into college easy, but the overall atmosphere of professionalism, respect, and courtesy that they instill in students gave me an advantage above others when it came time for interviews and interacting with patients.

What BT teacher had the biggest impact on you?

I consider Mr. Larsen to be one of the reasons I am the confident and happy individual I am today. He taught me quite a few life lessons that have stayed with me a long time. I also know Coach Shannon Peterson helped develop my sense of teamwork, commitment, and being an overall tough individual.

What advice would you give to current BT students?

Nothing good comes easy. And I do believe in the classic cheesy quote, "love what you do and you'll never work a day in your life."

Last book you read?

I read up to five books a day... children's books! With 3-and 5-year-olds, there is no time for adult material!

What's on your bucket list?

Traveling more with my children and husband. There's no destination as important to me as who I'm with. And with two very little children, taking them to the places they enjoy are the best.

What is something you learned in the last week?

The best thing you can give your children is your time.



ALUMNI ON CAMPUS



Class of 2020 Celebration

Alumni joined their siblings and families on campus for the Class of 2020 Celebration and Summer Send-Off Parade.

- 1** Libby Garfoot, '18, with sister Emma, '20, and their parents.
- 2** Ben Porter, '18, with sister Cegan, '20, and their parents.
- 3** Conner Crosby, '19, with brother Colten, '20, and their parents.

Sophomore Career Panel Speakers

- 4** Wellesley Michael, '14, and Kelly Crowell, x'96, participated in career panel discussions with BT sophomores. Michael and Crowell joined BT parents and staff from

a variety of different career fields to speak about their career trajectories, the education and experience necessary in their fields, and career insight.

Third Grade Guest Speaker

Wellesley Michael, '14, spoke to the third grade sharing her expertise about campaigning with students. In addition to her work in marketing, Michael is working as a director of digital engagement this campaign season.

Theatre Production

Jessie Curry, '14, and Sean Gardner, '17, helped with film editing and Gabe Schatz, '14, helped with some music for the school's production of *Gathering Grimm*.

Gala Videos

The following alumni contributed a video clip of themselves either performing music or sharing the impact the fine arts program at BT had on them. These videos were shared on the alumni Facebook page to promote support of gala: Jamie Gould, x'19, Chris Ames, '12, Austin Taylor, '14, Leigh Anne McLaughlin, '09, Emily Kerr, '07, Gabe Schatz, '14, Katie Weigand, '15, Maya Mathews, '17, Geoff Kuhn, '12, and Grace Bydalek, '14.

ALUMNI NEWS AND NOTES

NEWS

The Alumni News and Notes section of *Fireside* celebrates your recent accomplishments. Share information about births, weddings, anniversaries, career moves, retirements, and life-changing experiences! We publish alumni submissions and any other news we receive from friends, employers, and media sources.

Elizabeth (Davis) Meyers, '52, proudly reports she has three grandsons and one granddaughter. Her grandchildren are a lawyer, a PhD in geology, and business and accounting majors in college.

Lannie (Burrill) McNichols, '52, was recognized this past fall by the Dundee-Memorial Park Neighborhood Association for her extraordinary contributions to the neighborhood. Her name is etched on a plaque located by the Streetcar Memorial on the corner of Happy Hollow Boulevard and Underwood Avenue. Lannie shared, "after many years in our house, we have finally managed downsizing and moved into independent living in a lovely apartment with a great porch at The Arboretum in Omaha. During our first snow (during Easter week) we sat on the porch and laughed that it wasn't our problem anymore. It's a great life!" You can read more about Lannie in the March 2020 Dundee Memorial Park newsletter found at: dundee-memorialpark.org/news.

Rick Ortega, '69, and his wife, Sheila, welcomed their first grandchild, Olivia Lynn Ortega, on February 20. She is doing well, but because she was born with a rare genetic condition - Maple Syrup Urine Disease (MSUD) - she needs twice-weekly blood draws to detect what would be life-threatening accumulations of leucine in the brain and other organs. The up side is that Rick's son, Aaron, and his wife, Kelly, are moving to Philadelphia to be closer to expert medical care and both sets of grandparents. "Sheila is thrilled with the prospect of being close by, because with the COVID-19 restrictions, we have been able to enjoy Olivia only by Facetime and videos," Rick writes. On the professional front, Rick's architecture firm, Heritage Design Collaborative, received Preservation Pennsylvania's 2020 Preservation Planning Award for its restoration work on President Buchanan's Wheatland home in Lancaster County.

Tim Fowler, '82, who is the information analysis center field science and technology advisor to STRATCOM/NORTHCOM, was asked to support the White House COVID-19 Task Force in finding solutions and connecting resources.

Stephanie (Davis) Egan, '92, and Matt Egan were married on September 14, 2019, just outside of Jackson Hole, Wyoming.

J.J. Kortan, '02, was named business development manager for Lueder Construction in March 2020.

Grant Perry, '07, obtained an MBA at Southern Methodist University and celebrated his ninth year working at Sabre Holdings, which is a publicly traded technology company based out of Dallas, Texas. Recently, he was promoted to chief of staff for one of their technology departments and is responsible for handling the day-day operations and helping manage internal/external executive relationships. Grant is happily married to wife, Sarah, since the fall of 2017.

Kelsey Ryan-Simkins, '10, and husband Michael welcomed Asher James on March 5, 2020.

Ian Suiter, '10, graduated from the University of Nebraska Medical Center school in May and began his residency in Omaha this summer.

Zach Ehresman, '12, graduated from the University of Nebraska Medical Center school in May and began his residency in Omaha this summer.

JB Davis, '13, graduated from Creighton University School of Law on May 16, 2020.

Jessie Curry, '14, is the company manager and a performer for Magical Moments Parties and Events. When schools in the area transitioned to distance learning, their performers made live videos for free on their Facebook page. Different characters read stories, sang songs, and did crafts so kids had something to do and watch. They also made fabric masks for those in need and called them "Magical Masks."

Cheyenne Hanson, '16, completed all four years of schooling at Midland University and played basketball all four years. Now that she has graduated she is headed to the law enforcement academy with the intention of working for the Douglas County Sheriff's Department. She is nearly finished with the publication of her first book, *Hidden Scars*, and plans on "continuing to live life simply and to the fullest I can."

Susan Stein, Ph.D., spent the last 12 years working on a book that has been published by The University of Nebraska Press. Her book *On Distant Service: The Life of the First U.S. Foreign Service Officer to Be Assassinated* can be found on nebraskapress.unl.edu.

Stein taught English at Brownell Talbot from 1973 to 1983 and was also longtime chair of the English Department. Two of her children graduated from BT, Edward J. Stein, '82, and Margaret D. Stein, '84. Her son Paul attended BT through eighth grade.

IN MEMORIAM

ALUMNI

Margo (Shaffer) Wood, '62; Survived by sister Martha (Shaffer) Ullerich, '59.
D. April 18, 2020

Barbara (Sharpe) McKee, '54; Survived by sisters Debbie (Sharpe) Flood, '57, and Lowell (Sharpe) McMullin, '52.
D. March 8, 2020

Cory (Cook) Louks, '50; Cory is survived by her four children: John, x'73; Susan, x'76; Whitney, '79; and Anne, x'83. Cory also served as the Friends Association representative to the school's Board of Trustees from 1975-1978.
D. February 7, 2020

Michael "Mike" Covalciuc, '69
D. February 4, 2020

Joyce (DeMers) Jallen, '50
D. June 8, 2019

Eleanor (Williams) Steffen, '51
D. January 6, 2018

FRIENDS

John McCartney;
Survived by son John McCartney, '08
D. March 8, 2020

Sanford "Sandy" Kasner;
Survived by son Tom Kasner, '84
D. March 25, 2020

LET'S CONNECT!

Feeling social?

Follow us on Instagram
[@BrownellTalbotSchool](https://www.instagram.com/BrownellTalbotSchool) and on
Facebook [@BrownellTalbotAlumni](https://www.facebook.com/BrownellTalbotAlumni)

Looking to network?

Join the Brownell Talbot
College Preparatory School Alumni
group on LinkedIn.

New contact information?

Is your mail going to your
parents' address? It's time to update the
school at brownell.edu/hello.

Help us connect with lost alumni.

Visit brownell.edu/lost-alumni

The classes of 1980-1985 are postponing their October, 2020 reunion.
Mark your calendar for October 1-3, 2021!

A Page in Time

The Spanish Flu Pandemic

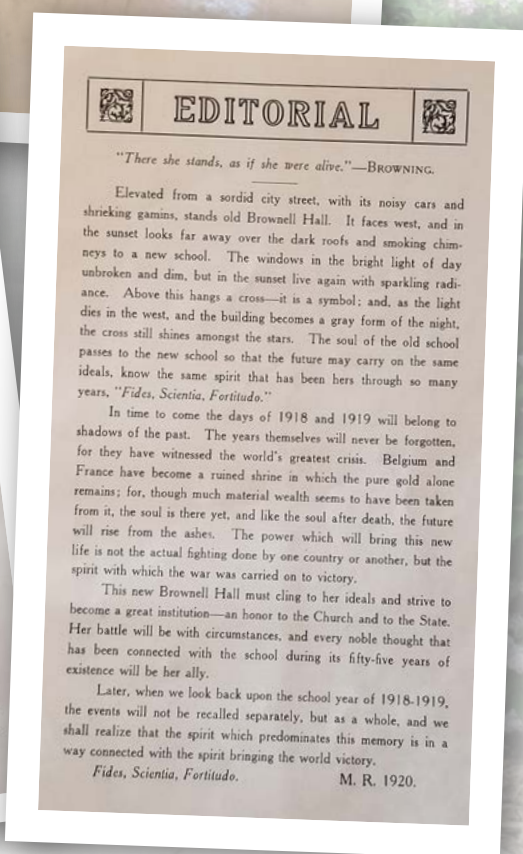
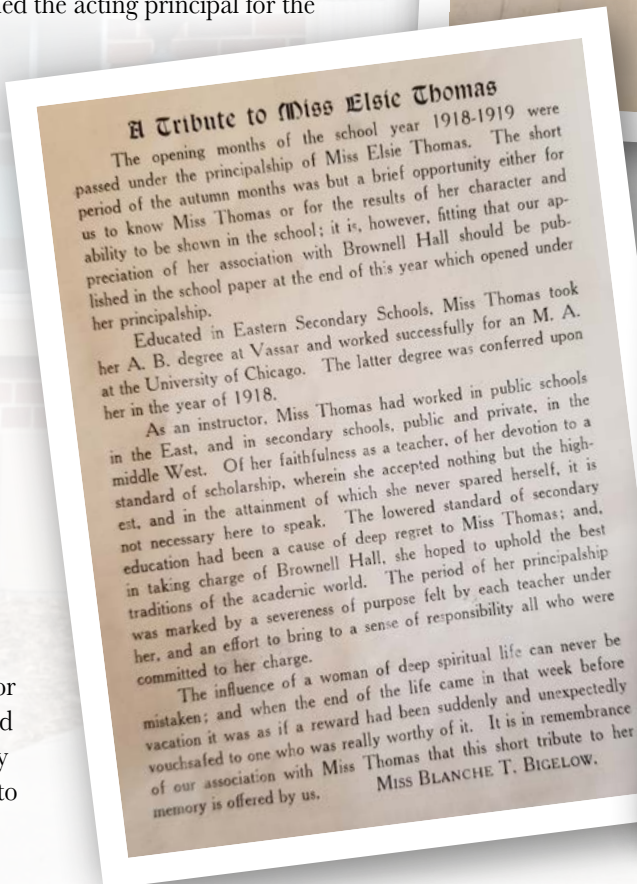
Although it has had a huge impact on our daily lives and the 2019-2020 school year, the COVID-19 pandemic is not the first pandemic the school has lived through. In the fall of 1918, World War I was coming to an end while the flu epidemic of 1918 was just beginning. The school trustees had been fundraising for a new building but the war caused them to abandon their efforts.

According to an article in the *Omaha World-Herald*, Mrs. Arthur Chittenden Smith, Mrs. Ward Burgess, and Mrs. Richard Drake, took over operation of Brownell Hall in 1918 and moved the school to private homes at the 28th and Howard/Jones Streets area. Two homes were used for classrooms while another home was used for the dormitory.

In the fall of 1918, Miss Elsie Thomas became principal of the school, following Miss Euphemia Johnson who served in that role from 1911-1918. Miss Thomas died in the flu epidemic of 1918, on December 19. She is buried in the family plot in Dayton, Ohio. Miss Blanche Bigelow was named the acting principal for the remainder of the school year.

Miss Thomas' family shared the following excerpt from a letter written to her siblings: "26 November 1918 - Dear Brother and Sister, This letter is late I am afraid because Mother left it for me to read and say yes to. We do hope you will have a very thankful day Thursday. Do keep well and pray for the poor people who are suffering so here in our country and abroad. Love to you all, Sister Elsie Thomas, 560 South 28th St., Omaha, Nebraska."

Many thanks to Elsie's family for information and her picture and to the 150th anniversary history committee for their research into the school's early years.



If you are interested in helping the alumni office identify and organize photographs or assist with other archive projects, please contact Renae Mackender at renae.mackender@brownell.edu or 402.556.3772.



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