FROM THE HEADMASTER

Dear Members of the Westminster Community,

The martlet is such an interesting school mascot, its legend so inspiring when associated with our core values and mission. As we know, the martlet is a footless bird, always in flight, except in the chapel, which is the one place it rests. In fact, on the shield with five martlets — attributed to Edward the Confessor — over the north entrance to Andrews Memorial Chapel, you will notice that the martlet is represented with feet.

On its own, this element of the martlet’s story inspires, considering the centrality of our chapel program and the John Hay Society to Westminster School’s history and culture, especially with the increasing importance of reflection and spirituality in the context of our tumultuous world. Even further, the mythology accompanying this tireless bird emphasizes the importance of earning your place in the world and not relying on advantage or privilege. This interpretation of the hard-working martlet with a home in the chapel complements nicely our motto of Grit & Grace and our ongoing commitment to civic engagement, community service and partnership.

As highlighted in this edition of the Bulletin, Westminster began a partnership with Horizons National, a network of summer enrichment learning programs for low-income children. Horizons at Westminster draws on our school’s long-standing commitment to greater Hartford, including a summer SPHERE program on campus in the 1970s and 1980s, and, more recently, the Westminster in Hartford (formerly WCLP) programs, including volunteer work at Loaves and Fishes soup kitchen, spring break service in Hartford, Bridge to Hartford Westminster initiatives, afterschool tutoring and Summer Academy at Westminster.

Our campus located in the Farmington Valley, proximate to Hartford, affords wonderfully gratifying opportunities for service, whether through community service days, such as experienced by members of the Class of 2018 during commencement week, when they fanned across Hartford County volunteering their time to all sorts of worthy causes, or through more sustained partnership relationships, such as that cultivated with Covenant Preparatory School, an independent, tuition-free, middle school at the intersection of Asylum and Farmington avenues in Hartford for young men from underserved communities. And reaching out even farther, Westminster held a Hope On The Hill 5K trail run, walk and kids’ fun run in April to raise money for pediatric cancer research at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston.

This commitment to service extends as well to our work program. Yes, students today continue to take turns serving family-style lunch, cleaning dishes and fulfilling various campus tasks, in the process sharing the work necessary to support our school community. In my view, students learn lifelong lessons as they attend to the spaces in which they live and support the people with whom they share a community.

Today, as well, we teach a civic engagement and civil discourse curriculum to all Fourth Formers. This required program encourages students to reflect on their worldview and their responsibility to the community at large. Students meet weekly in sections through the fall term. In the winter term, the program focuses on speech writing and public speaking with each student preparing and presenting two short speeches; the second speech serves as each student’s entry into a public speaking contest, and the speeches deemed best qualify students to compete in front of the entire Fourth Form during one evening each spring. Reflecting upon a personal ethic and then developing the skills to articulate that ethic are lessons that will enrich a lifetime.

Simply put, the spirit of our Martlet mascot together with our distinguishing ethos of Grit & Grace continues to inform our school mission. As at all great schools, our students learn many academic lessons, but at Westminster School, the lessons they learn outside of the classroom not only complement their classroom experience, they provide a foundation for meaningful, fulfilling lives, where our alumni make a difference for so many others.

I hope that you enjoy the stories featured in this fall’s edition of the Bulletin. Martlets Soar Together!

William V.N. Philip P'06, '09
Headmaster