In this second edition of the Confluence, we are very excited to continue to showcase some of the amazing people who make Two Rivers a remarkable community - from a founding teacher to an 8th grader who is starring in the June production of Beauty and the Beast, Jr.

Also, the final day to buy tickets to the Framing the Future Gala is April 7. This year, we feature student performances, a live painting of Charles Young, and must-have auction delights!

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Framing the Future Gala
  Join us April 14, 2023, 6:30-10 PM at Dock5 (1309 5th St NE).

- Middle School Musical
  Performances will be June 8 and June 9 at 6 PM
  Young Elementary Community Room

- Young - Ribbon Cutting and Community Planting Day for RiverSmart Project
  Join us April 26 at 1:30 PM
  Contact Khizer Husain at khusain@tworiverspcs.org for more information.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

- Board Spotlight - John Phillips
- Family Spotlight - Lina Assad Cates
- Student Spotlight - Devin Partin
- Alum Spotlight - Isabel Rebora
- Staff Spotlight - Carolina Riveros-Ruenes

www.tworiverspcs.org
Why do you serve on the Board of Trustees? What aspect of the mission most resonates with you? What makes Two Rivers special?
I serve on the board because I am inspired by the impact Two Rivers has made in the community and with its growing alumni. That Two Rivers strives to form students to have a balanced conscience that supports their ability to be just, compassionate and equitable role models. What makes Two Rivers special is that it unleashes a power within its parents, teachers and students to do and be more. The community spirit is so joyful!

How long have you been on the board? What is your committee assignment?
2 years, Development Committee

What's your day job?
Store Director for Target

Can you share a fun fact about yourself?
While visiting Egypt for an interreligious dialogue studies, I was able to sleep on Mount Sinai in order to watch the sunrise the next day.
When did you join the Two Rivers community? What attracted you to it?
We joined the Two Rivers community in 2016 when my now 4th grader started Preschool. We were drawn to the school’s core values, EL curriculum, and focus on inclusion and social/emotional learning. Since we live in the neighborhood, being able to walk to school was a perk too.

Over the years you have taken on so many roles in the Parent School Association (PSA), Share Your DC, Gala Planning Team, and others! Can you talk a little about the work you have help lift?
I’ve had fun learning and connecting with our community in every setting and role I’ve had. I’ve served as the PSA’s Community Service Committee Chair since 2017. In this role, I helped start and continue traditions like Sock-tober, the PBJ Challenge, Adopt-a-Block trash cleanups, Sharing the Love with Seniors, and more. I had the honor of participating in a Share Your DC cohort a few years ago and then helped facilitate its most recent iteration. In the past, I have also volunteered as a room parent, which is a great way to support and celebrate our wonderful teachers. Leading up to past Framing the Future Galas, I used to help students create artwork that was sold during the silent auction. This year I’m trying something new and assisting with the venue decor. Spoiler alert: it’s going to be chic ;).

What animates your service? What do you enjoy about this service?
I love meeting and collaborating with other members of the Two Rivers community. Service has been an important value of mine for as long as I can remember, so leading the Community Service Committee helps hold me accountable and encourages me to put my beliefs into action. I’m motivated by connecting with others to address challenges in our city, like poverty, isolation, and pollution, in creative and joyful ways. Our kids aren’t the only ones having experiential fun!

What have you learned about yourself or others in the TR community through this?
The most important lesson that I’ve learned is that “we are crew”. The school takes many people coming together in big and small ways to create a thriving community. It’s such a beautiful experience to be a part of this diverse team. More specifically, the way that I grew during the Share Your DC program is hard to put into words. It was the kind of challenging, tearjerking, healing experience that transforms you and propels you to keep growing as a human and as a parent.

How can folks get involved with Two Rivers? What if they don’t have a lot of time?
A great place to start is by reaching out to the PSA! There are MANY different ways to get involved that accommodate various schedules, time commitments, and resources. If you don’t have a lot of time, you can start by attending one event. [At 4th St] there are monthly Family Engagement zoom meetings that all Two Rivers families are invited to attend. If you have a specific skill or strength to share with the school community, the PSA wants to know about it. And now for the shameless plug: since I’m stepping down from my role as Community Service Chair at the end of this school year, I’m looking for volunteers to take the reins. I can’t wait to see the new ideas that others bring to the role and the creative ways that our school community can serve the greater DC community in the future!
How long have you been at Two Rivers, and what are you really proud of?

I started at Two Rivers in the first grade and now I'm in 8th. I'm proud that I've been able to maintain good grades and actually learn instead of just trying to put answers on the paper. I'm also proud of the fact that I was an athlete, and I was able to balance my academic schedule and my athletic schedule. I'm proud [to be in the] musical.

Congratulations on being in our fantastic volleyball team and for landing a lead role in the musical! How did you get excited about the musical?

I've always loved theater. I've always loved being able to copy lines from a movie or a TV show or a commercial. So when I heard that Beauty and the Beast - one of my favorite Disney movies of all time - was our musical, I decided why not [audition]? I did my best for the tryouts.

What would you say are things that you've learned about yourself in your Two Rivers career?

I've learned that I have to have patience as far as my work pace because sometimes I just want to be by myself. Independent. Just go through it fast. No stopping, none of that.

And I had to learn organization. I can't just continue to just push myself harder and harder and harder every day. I have to learn when to work and when to take a break for myself so I don't get overwhelmed.

Sounds like a particular Scholarly Habit really sings to your heart!

I know myself! You have to know how you learn and how you're able to interact with other people before you're able to try to help other people. And I feel like this school really, really teaches us to work with other people and try to help each other out. But you can't really do that if you don't know how to help yourself.
What do you think makes Two Rivers special?

Two Rivers has a different structure than other schools. So while other schools just focus on grades and work, here it's about the standards and about the actual learning. So instead of just giving out A's, and giving out B's and C's and F's, Two Rivers gives us a chance to really stop and evaluate how we're learning and how we can improve before getting the final letter.

Transitioning to middle school is a big deal for many students. What advice would you have for rising sixth graders?

Get to know your teachers and your classmates. Don't try to mimic what other people are already doing. Be yourself and really get to know yourself in sixth grade so that later you don't have to figure it out. Just take your sixth grade year to get a feel for things.

I appreciate that! Two Rivers’ My High School Search (MHSS) program helps students research, apply, and matriculate into best-fit high schools that offer “rich and varied options.” Can you tell me how you approached your high school search?

I approached MHSS by really telling myself that you are what they want, you're what they need - not the other way around. Nobody's better than you. Nobody outmatches you. You got it. It's fine. You gotta have confidence in that aspect.

Love it. What's a fun fact that folks might not know about you?

I actually like to read and write outside of school. [It helps] calm myself down.
You've been a member of the Two Rivers community since you were in preschool! What about Two Rivers still stays with you and helps you live your life today?

Community meets and crew and how important it is to have a loving, supportive group of people around me. I also think a lot about our grilled cheese project in 6th or 7th grade. It was a fun, interactive assignment to teach us about revenue and profit. As I go into teaching, this assignment and many others that I had at TR will always stick with me and inspire me to make learning as fun as possible.

During school you ignited a fondness for math and visual arts. How did the My High School Search program help you find a high school home where you could further these passions?

I remember creating detailed pro and con lists about each school during my high school search program, which helped me decide which school I wanted to attend. Then after making that decision, my high school search program helped prep me for interviews and prepare my portfolio so I could get into the school I wanted.

Tell us about Duke Ellington School of Performing Arts. Did you feel prepared? Was the school experience what you had hoped for?

I felt very prepared both academically and artistically. It was everything I had hoped for. I got to push my artistic skills and do what I love every day.

You are in college now: Depaul University in Chicago majoring in secondary math education and minoring in art. Incredible! What are your hopes and dreams for college and beyond?

I hope to get my masters in secondary math education in the next two years and then go straight into teaching at a middle school. I also plan to continue painting and selling my work on the side.
You have quite a long history at Two Rivers! How did you land here?

We moved to the area in March [2004]. I didn't realize that DC had universal Pre-K, which was not a thing in Miami. I had a pre-K child and we saw a little flier at Eastern Market. I remember thinking, “Oh, I'm gonna find out about this school.” And long story short, Camila got second on that waiting list.

I would drop her off at school in Ms. Carmen and Ms. Kai’s class. We used to have to fill out a parent questionnaire about how can you volunteer at the school, and it asked some questions about your past. So Jessica [founding executive director] found out that I was a teacher. She would come to me at drop off and be like, “Hey, we're hiring.” I was like, no, I am done with teaching. I taught for three years, almost four years in Miami - taught high school. And I was really burnt out. I don’t know if I can do this again. And I told [Jessica] no, at least three times. And she's like, “Yeah, but just bring me your resume. And I was like, “No. Okay. Fine. And I was like, ‘Here's my resume, but, really I'm not interested.’”

[Jessica said], “Well, come in for an interview.” [So I came in] and it was just like such a lovely community. [I] felt home here. And so I was like, all right, well I'm gonna give it a try. And I taught Spanish, I want to say September or October [of the very first year of the school.] We went from preschool through second grade only. I had never taught that age group, so it was a big shift for me. It was fun though.

You were teaching Spanish?

Yes, Spanish. So I brought in my guitar. We used to sing a lot of songs. It was a lot about playing and singing songs, and I would bring my guitar and try to engage them… I feel like there was so much trust placed in me in that position. I felt so much responsibility to do a good job.

You are a founding Two Rivers teacher. What makes Two Rivers, Two Rivers?

To me at the core is that we're all learners and we're all continuing to grow. This is the 19th year for me, and every year I grow and every year I stretch, and keep evolving.

And I think that goes for our kids. I know we've had a rough couple years, but ideally that applies to everyone in our network. We're all learners and we're all working really hard to grow and push and figure out. Where is our influence? What is it that we can grow and make a difference and make things better?
You've been in the sixth grade seat for a while. What would you tell a fifth grader who asked you how to prepare for next year?

I think sixth grade is a time where social dynamics switch, change, and seem erratic. So being secure in what matters to you is a really good thing to think about before you come to sixth grade. How do you show up in places where sometimes you're going to be with different people and you might want to fit in with people and how do you navigate the social dynamics of that? Our strongest and most successful students are very grounded in who they are and are secure in that, and are valued for that. I think that that is actually something that makes our middle school really distinct: our kids are much more likely to be secure in who they are.

Yes, sometimes we try on different hats to try to see where we fit in or what feels true to us. It's an age of exploration. Be secure in what at the core matters to you as a human because I think that that is going to be tested, frankly, in your middle school years and in your high school years.

Second, be curious about learning. Ask questions. Why is this interesting? Why is this not interesting? I think curiosity in all aspects of your middle school life is going to serve you really well.

And of course, read. Read a ton, please.

Parents, the thing that happens in middle school is that you see these big kids; they look like big people. In sixth grade they start little, but by the time they get to seventh grade, they look like big people, but they're still growing, developing children. I think that they do not need us to let go. [As a parent] I wanted them to be independent. But they need a lot of support. They need a lot of support socially, emotionally, and they need a lot of support academically. They just need a lot of support, period. So I think it's not time for parents to step back. Even though students may look like grownup people that can handle their stuff, they cannot. It can be scary, but we're here to be the team for your child. And I think that that's helpful.
It's time for the 19th Annual FRAMING THE FUTURE Gala! We are delighted to announce this year’s local artists who will paint live at our event: @jacklab.art and @yayadagr8est.

Jack Labadie is a visual artist rooted in the fine arts, specifically human portraiture. He will create a portrait of Young Elementary School's namesake, Brigadier General Charles Young.

Makyah Scott is a Two Rivers alum who has been painting and drawing since her first year of high school at Duke Ellington School of the Arts. Her work is typically known for its experimental use of colors and portraits.

We are so excited to have these fantastic artists join our celebration, and we thank them for supporting our mission! You can bid on their pieces on the day of our event. So check out their accounts and give them a follow.

Our students have officially started their spring expeditions, and we wanted to highlight a few of them from the 2G, 4G, and 6G teams!

Check out our Instagram @tworiverspcs to read all about the amazing things they have been learning.
Congratulations to our Lady Sharks, who won the middle school basketball Championship vs. the DCI Dragons!

We are so proud of their hard work and dedication!

Two Rivers held its annual Latin dance competition! The competition is a tradition at Two Rivers and brings deep learning, creativity, connection, and, most importantly, joy to our entire community. Our students had been practicing and preparing to show off their moves on the dance floor as they danced to bachata and merengue.

Congratulations to each and every one who participated, and shout out to our parents and community members who came out to support!