As fundraiser nears goal, renovation yet to begin

BY REED RODDY-JOHNSON ’23
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Burke’s ongoing capital campaign is nearing its goal. In 2018, Burke’s 50th year, Head of School Damian Jones announced the Stand with Burke Campaign. The campaign is dedicated to raising a total of $6 million, $4 million of which would be going to a complete renovation of Hobbes (the old building) and the remaining $2 million going towards the Annual Fund, which includes supporting faculty and staff salaries and financial aid. As of December 31, 2019, the campaign had raised $5.5 million. “December 31 is a really big time of year that people make their gifts,” said Jennifer Rawlings, Director of Development and Alumni Relations. “We’re feeling really good about that. It feels like the end is in sight and achievable, but it is harder at this point.” She explained, “You go for the biggest gifts you can at the beginning. Now we’re raising smaller gifts than we were initially asking for. That last 500,000 is gonna come in smaller increments and it’s gonna come a little slower.”

The money has been coming from various places in the school community. The majority comes from current parents, but almost $2 million has come from past parents. “I think that’s really different about Burke, that past families are giving at such a high level,” Rawlings said. “We’ve even had a sliver come from our alumni. We’re not coaching these kids [to donate]; that’s not how we run the school, but it’s just a super special thing that people are willing to donate to things they or their kids will never benefit from.”

While official progress stands at $5.5 million, not all of that money is usable now. Some people made pledges that they would donate certain amounts of money throughout the next couple of years. With that in mind, construction isn’t intended to start until 2022. “We began the campaign with a shared understanding of the way we wanted to manage the construction,” Jones said. “Until this project is fully paid for, [we won’t start building].”

Jones also said that in preparation for the bigger construction plans for the basement, the school has been incrementally renovating classrooms and offices over the past couple of years.

The rest of the money is going towards enhancing faculty salaries, professional development and financial aid. “Being an independent school is cost prohibitive,” Jones said. “$40,000+ tuition means that some people can’t afford to come here, and we need to ensure that we have access to the financial resources to make it possible for them not only to come here, but to stay here.”

Rawlings expressed optimism that the campaign would reach completion soon, saying, “We’re in the last year of campaigning, and so our goal is to, by the summer, have raised $6 million dollars total in cash and pledges.”

Opinion: Why marches shrink, and what now?

BY ANYA WELLER ’22
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The first Women’s March took place on January 21, 2017. Attendance skyrocketed past the predicted numbers, and the movement became the biggest single-day march in history. On January 18, 2020, the fourth annual march took place, commemorating the 2017 march and taking another stand for women’s rights. The attendance this year was significant lower. So how did the Women’s March, which describes itself as a march designed “to harness the political power of diverse women and their communities,” go from 4.6 million people to attendance in only the thousands four years later?

It was not just about the lack of publicity of the march, but for an abundance of political reasons. According to Elez Beresin-Scher ’20, leader of Burke’s FemCo (Feminist Cooperative), the drop in attendance was perhaps due to getting further and further from Trump’s election, causing there to be less drive and motivation to participate in protests and other political movements.

Beresin-Scher also referred to many accusations of antisemitism within the organization’s administration and poor decisions these organizers have made, such as not inviting Black Lives Matter back to speak at the Women’s March in Los Angeles this year.

As we move further from the 2017 march, there seems to be more and more division and less and less motivation to create change. To address this shift, we must evaluate what drove the 4.6 million marchers to participate on that rainy day in January 2017. When interviewing various young marchers this year, they all mentioned being drawn toward the March due to the empowerment it provided, sparked by the collective helplessness and urgency to make drastic change – a feeling seemingly apparent nationwide. The March was accessible, providing a pedestal to make change for the people who are doubted the most: young people.

Since then, there has been a dramatic decline in attendance. But does this trend remain consistent within a teen population such as Burke’s? To answer this question, students took part in an optional survey that asked them whether they participated in the 2017 Women’s March, following up with a question regarding their participation in the 2020 March. Out of 46 respondents, 63% attended the 2017 March, yet none attended the 2020 March.

The same reasons for the lack of attendance translate from America’s population to the Burke population, as many of their explanations for not attending the 2020 March centered on the lack of publicity surrounding the march, the antisemitism controversy, and the common belief that marching is “trite and pointless.” Beresin-Scher also touched on this, noting that she doesn’t believe the Women’s March and its organizers have “achieved much change, which is what we need.”

If marching is pointless, what can be done? What does America need for an inclusive, equitable future? This starts in our small communities, like Burke. As a school, Burke can continue to stand for things such as diversity and equality. However, they must do a better job of making sure this mission truly occurs throughout every single student and staff member’s experience.
Middle school mainstay Monica Miracky reflects on 40 years

BY JEN CHIANCONE ’21
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Monica Miracky came to work at Burke as an English teacher in 1980, only 12 years after the official founding of the school. Forty years later, Miracky now serves as the Head of the Middle School and the Assistant Head of School for Program for Burke.

However, Burke was completely different from what Miracky was used to. She was looking for English teaching jobs in the DC area when she found Burke. She got job offers from Burke and Immaculata Catholic School, but the Catholic school reminded Miracky of her own high school life.

“Immaculata was going to make me enforce the dress code and to enforce that you walk on a certain side of the stairways. It was very rigid. It was like the high school I came out of, and I knew I didn’t like,” Miracky said. “It was obvious to me that Burke was the best fit for me. Since I stayed here for 40 years, that must have been true.”

Miracky grew up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin with devout Catholic parents. She spent her childhood going to various Catholic schools in Milwaukee before later moving to Minneapolis to finish high school. Miracky ended up in DC when she began graduate school at Georgetown University. In DC, Miracky had various jobs before coming to Burke.

“I did a lot of waitressing and stuff like that. When I was in graduate school, although my tuition was paid from a fellowship, I had to pay living expenses,” Miracky said. “So I worked in the animal lab of the Neurology department, and my job was to clean the rodents’ cages, and they all had big tumors because the lab was doing cancer research.

Miracky began at Burke as an 8th grade English and AP English teacher. However, it wasn’t long before she took over as Head of Middle School for Burke.

“I was working closely with the person who ran the middle school. She was one of my mentors,” Miracky said. “I was not ready at all to lead the middle school, but I did the best I could.”

Miracky’s responsibilities at Burke developed further when she created and applied for the role of Assistant Head of School for Program. She got the job and for almost 10 years has been both the Assistant Head of School for Program and Head of Middle School. During her time at Burke, Miracky has seen first-hand the changes that took place in the school.

“Burke is definitely different, but not in its core values and not in its spirit,” Miracky said. “All the changes that take place in Burke all serve its mission. It still puts kids at the center of their own education.”

Miracky finds that these aspects of Burke, the aspects that have stayed constant throughout her time here, are among the best things about the school. However, Miracky also finds that her interactions with kids are another part of her job that she deeply values.

“I have always loved being around kids,” she said. “I love what kids bring to our community and to a classroom. My own ideas and my own thinking have changed because of my interactions with kids.”

Miracky plans to continue advising and engaging in the Burke community after she leaves, as well as volunteering with kids outside of Burke.

“I’m planning to explore and find a good volunteer situation that puts me in contact with kids. Something that will keep me connected to my neighborhood and my community and keep me in connection with kids.” Miracky said.

After leaving Burke, Miracky also wants to spend her time reading, traveling, and writing. She also hopes to get physically stronger so that she can continue skiing and staying active. For Burke’s future, Miracky hopes to see Burke continuing to be a joyful, committed, passionate, and intellectually focused school.

“It has been a joy and an honor for me to work at Burke. It’s strange these days for a person to stay at the same job for 40 years. And I feel really lucky that I was able to do it and it was obviously such a good fit. It’s been a joy and a delight. Not every day has been a joy and a delight but something in every day has been,” Miracky said about her time here.

“My hope for this school is that it continues to attract wonderful students and families that are so different from one another and terrific teachers who enjoy the company of young people.”

As SGA raises money, student DJs raise the roof

BY ISABEL GOTTLIEB-NEMO ’21
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Burke’s first-ever winter formal, held on January 24, introduced new twists like inviting other schools, holding the dance in the atrium, and featuring Max Streitwieser ’20 and Etienne Jackson-Jones ’20.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017 eliminated the personal and dependency deduction, and SGA Co-Presidents Nathan Weisbrod ’21 and April Watts ’21 announced at a subsequent assembly that the event raised over $1000.

Streitwieser’s initial interest in DJing began with creating dance music in 7th grade. “I listened to and followed a lot of DJs [and] producers and started to watch their live festival sets on YouTube,” he said. “I wanted to give it a shot, even if the furthest I got was just DJing in my room. I ordered a DJ controller online about a year ago and learned by practicing and watching YouTube tutorials.”

In order to save the cost of hiring a DJ and bring an energetic sense of community to the dance, Streitwieser approached SGA about possibly DJing the event. Jackson-Jones then reached out to him to ask if they could do it together, and they began preparing. “I created a few different playlists with songs that I thought would be well-received at the dance,” Streitwieser said. “Etienne made a really good playlist too, [which] we ended up using primarily.”

The music seemed to go over well, and the dance was “good for a Burke function,” according to Jonah LeCompte ’21. LeCompte added, “It was really cool to see Max and Etienne DJ.”

In addition to DJing, Streitwieser has his first single as a producer coming out on February 14. He is also working on a pop/dance project with Oren Strobel ’20. Streitwieser said, “I feel like I’ve recently been able to make some productions that I’m happy with and proud of, so I can’t wait to finally share them.” He and Strobel are currently looking for vocalists to finish the songs and release them.

Streitwieser was happy to get a chance to do something musical in the Burke community, saying “The amount of energy in the room was incredible and many people seemed to be having a great time. I’ve wanted to DJ at Burke for a long time, so I’m glad the perfect opportunity came along.”
Teachers show support for retiring Miracky

BY MADELEINE LAMPIETTI ’24
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Teachers Ginger Attarian and Amy Cataldo decided to shave their heads in order to stand in solidarity with Head of Middle School Monica Miracky in her fight through cancer.

Attarian initially had the idea and shared it with other teachers including Cataldo, who decided to do it as well. They decided that this was the best way to demonstrate the care and love they have for Miracky, since it enables them to let her and everyone else know that they stand with her.

Attarian, who has known Miracky for 23 years, explained that her reasoning behind this idea came after she was thinking about how she could display her love and care for Miracky during this hard time. She said, “When Monica announced to me that she was retiring and that her cancer had come back in ways that would require treatment that would involve losing her hair again, I just thought, ‘this wonderful colleague, incredible teacher, who I’ll miss immensely, who I care about deeply, what could I do to show her that I’m with her?’”

In an email, Miracky said, “I was so surprised and touched when Ginger and Amy walked into my office one Monday morning and bared their bald heads, but now... I’m moved even more and incredibly grateful to have such fiercely supportive colleagues.”

Cataldo, who's known Miracky for 19 years, explained how the act of shaving their heads was to stand in solidarity not only with Miracky but also the wider community of people fighting cancer. “Mostly it’s with Monica, but really to show support for anyone struggling with cancer. It’s a hard road and just to give everybody a little boost if they need it,” she said.

Miracky appreciated this as well. “I love the broader statement Ginger and Amy are making, too. So many family members, friends, and total strangers battle difficult diseases like cancer,” she said.

Attarian and Cataldo weren’t sure whether they’d shave again when their hair grows back. “I originally thought no way, but there’s a certain freedom with having no hair ... it’s been cooler than I thought,” said Attarian.

Cataldo expressed that big actions aren’t only the ways people can support Miracky and others struggling through cancer. “I think being kind, being thoughtful, and just taking time out of your day to say hi – just those little moments, those little thoughts, those little actions can have a really big impact.”

Miracky agreed, saying “When we come together as a community to stand by their sides, we emphasize the power for [the] good of our shared humanity.”

Sophomores get used to new Leadership program

BY SCOTT SUN ’20
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Burke’s 10th grade has been experiencing a new look leadership program, centered around mandatory participation and curriculum integration.

Stacy Smith, Burke’s Director of Leadership Development, has revamped the program for the new school year. Explaining her reasoning, Smith said, “[Burke’s administration] wants more streamlining and to get more people involved. Usually, it is 50 percent or 60 percent of a class [that] would participate in the leadership program.” Smith also explained how the new leadership program cooperates with a pre-existing part of the 10th-grade curriculum. “So the 10th graders started with Soapbox, which is public speaking ... but also finding what matters to you. Then, you are going to use your leadership skills to try to solve this problem.”

Tenth graders had mixed opinions of the new look mandatory program before their retreat on December 13. Xiyaoyao (Yao Yao) Di ’22 said that she agreed with the change. She anticipated that a mandatory retreat would give students the opportunity to relax during the intense workload throughout the school year. She also said that she would still join a leadership program even if it were an application-based program. As another piece of reasoning, she offered, “I could also make more friends during the retreat.” On the other hand, Amelie Groeschel ’22 claimed that requiring all students to become part of the leadership program would not be the most ideal solution. Groeschel said, “It should just be a student’s choice because it also shows something about the student if they choose to take part in a program like that.”

Smith reiterated her position while downplaying student complaints. “As part of being a sophomore at Burke, they will participate in civic activism in the civic leadership retreat,” she said. “I know there are going to be one or two [students] who are not passionate about the program... However, they are outliers.”

At the retreat, students split into small groups and partnered up to select a social cause they find important. Over the course of the year, they will do research and interview someone who works in that field, then create a final project to share with the Burke community. Smith stressed that she believes this is an important part of the experience. “It is integral to their 10th-grade curriculum,” she said. “It’s a graduation requirement that they do this interview.”

In follow-up interviews, both Groeschel and Di admitted that they had a good time during the retreat and learned several beneficial leadership skills. However, Smith pointed out that the change in this year will not be the ultimate product of the leadership program. She plans to keep adjusting Burke’s entire leadership program to be more in line with Burke’s mission and trying to teach Burke students the updated leadership skills, since “many [Burke graduates] are out there changing the world for the better.”

Note: Editor-in-Chief Jeremy Green ’21 is a 10th Grade Leadership Mentor and contributed to this article.

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PUZZLE: Mixed Doubles

Each clue in this puzzle is part of a pair, either across or down. Both clues in every pair lead to the same word, and the numbers of the pairs add to find where the word goes. For example, “1. Air Circulator” and “17. Team Supporter” would be “Fan,” and its number would be 18.

**Across**
1. The “Piña Colada” song, participle
2. Getting away
3. Pondered
4. Eat hungrily
5. Golf grass
6. Place for a charger
7. Timepieces
8. Make-up base
9. Periods of keeping guard
10. Mirrored
11. Winter accessory
12. Establishment
13. Means of expression
14. Means of expression
15. Scarf
16. Watches
17. Green
18. Can the WiFi smell fear?
19. Outlet
20. Watch out!
21. Field
22. Mirrors
23. Stop a baseball with a spike, some superglue, and a go-getter attitude!
24. Compound preposition
25. Kitchen ledge

**Down**
1. Commit an alley crime
2. Presidential advisers
3. Instagram message of appreciation
4. Proclaim a preposition?
5. Like a bed
6. Attracted to
7. Coffee container
8. Burke rival
9. The ground, after a heavy snow
10. Place for dishes
11. Oppose
12. Compound preposition
13. Stop a baseball
14. Kitchen ledge
15. Reflected
16. Escaping
17. Bronze
18. Into
19. Outlet
20. A golf club, a football, or a baseball?
21. Field
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**Answer Key**

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