



# Falk

Laboratory School

## Quarterly Alumni Newsletter Issue 1



### Discovering the Meaning of Public Art

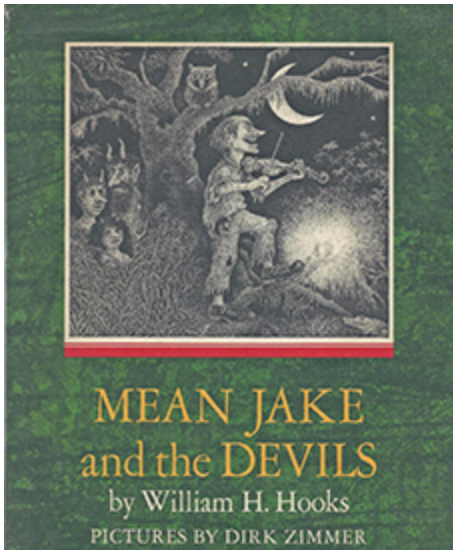
In September, Falk fifth-graders and Middle School puppeteers joined in "Little Amal Walks Across America," a large-scale public art project aimed at highlighting the plight of refugees. [Read more and see images of the special day.](#)



## Sharing the State of the School

Falk's director, Dr. Jill Sarada, gave an address to members of the Falk community with updates on pressing concerns such as enrollment, teacher retention, diversity, and ongoing research efforts at the school, including curricular changes such as the move toward structured literacy.

You can [listen to Dr. Sarada's address](#) and [learn more about the topics covered](#) in her presentation.



## Falk's Magic Words

What does it mean to “snap into a story?” [Listen as we sit down with Falk librarian Benoni Outerbridge](#) to learn the origin and meaning of Falk's “magic words.”

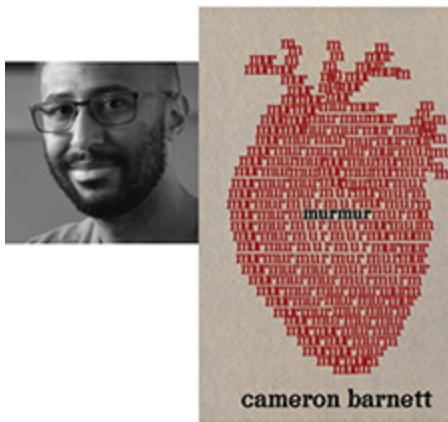


## En Avant Debuts

In case you missed it, Falk launched [En Avant](#), its first alumni magazine. We're sure you'll be delighted by the many colorful photos of daily life at Falk, the in-depth articles on Falk's continuing innovations in teaching and research, and the updates from Falk alumni.

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## ALUMNI FEATURE: CAMERON BARNETT



Falk Laboratory School Middle School Language Arts teacher **Cameron Barnett**—a Falk alum—recently published his second collection of poetry, *Murmur*, with Pittsburgh-based Autumn House Press.

Listen to [an interview with Mr. Barnett](#), and hear him [read two poems](#) from the new collection.

Mr. Barnett was also featured in several news outlets upon the publication of *Murmur*: [WESA](#), [Pittsburgh City Paper](#) and [NEXT Pittsburgh](#).

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## ALUMNI UPDATES



**Alec Karakatsanis** (Class of 1997) [received the 2023 New Frontier Award from the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.](#) In its citation of Karakatsanis, the Presidential Library and Museum noted “his work advancing pretrial justice across the nation, which has led local and state jurisdictions to shift their approach to incarceration and end wealth-based detention policies.”

**Cecelia Klein** writes:

“I attended Falk as a junior nursery student back in the early 1940s and continued through the fourth grade. At that point, my parents moved out to Churchill Borough and put me in a public school, starting in the fall of 1948. My name at the time was Cecelia Jane Ford. My father received his doctorate in English at Pitt in 1942 where he had also been lecturing, and we lived right there on Breckenridge Street, which has since been renamed Brackenridge. I loved the school and have only fond memories of it.

“At present, I live in Los Angeles, having moved here in 1976 to take up a teaching position at UCLA (I have a BA and MA from Oberlin College and a PhD From Columbia University). My field is Pre-Columbian art history, which covers pre-contact Middle and South America, and my specialty is Aztec art (although I have most recently written on Mayan art). I retired from teaching in 2011 but continue to do research and write. A number of my former graduate students now teach at major colleges and universities across the nation.

“Because I was trained at Columbia to also teach Oceanic, Native American, and African art history, several of my former students are Oceanists and Native North Americanists. I think my interest in ‘non-Western’ (or what in the 1960s was called ‘primitive’) art probably dates back to my years at Falk.”

**Ted Preisser (Class of 1962)** writes:

“While I was certainly not a model student during my eight years at Falk, what I learned in those eight years got me through college at UMass-Amherst and grad school at Pitt. I married my lovely wife in 1973, and I went to work in Iran in 1974, Saudi Arabia in 1980, and back to Saudi Arabia twice more. We had a son in 1979 and a daughter in 1983. I have a granddaughter named Ziva, who is 5, and was born in Hamburg, Germany. She’s adorable! My chosen profession was Training (adult education), and I worked in that field around the world until I retired in 2013, in Denver. I wrote a novel in 2014 set in Saudi Arabia, and now I spend my time reading, writing essays on LinkedIn, and blowing the blues on my blues harp. I loved Falk.”

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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

## Calling All Class of 2020 Graduates (and Their Parents)

We're pleased to invite the Class of 2020 back to Falk Lab School for a reunion to be held on **Sunday, June 2** from **2:30 to 5 p.m.**

We ask that 2020 graduates and their parents or caregivers [RSVP and complete the Alumni Survey by May 10](#)—and be sure to indicate your T-shirt size!

We can't wait to welcome you back to Falk and celebrate your accomplishments.

Please contact Laurie Hess, manager of constituent relations, with questions at 412-624-7301 or [ldh31@pitt.edu](mailto:ldh31@pitt.edu).

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## FOCUS ON GIVING

### Announcing the Falk Laboratory School Parents and Caregivers Endowed Fund for Enrichment

Fanny Edel Falk Laboratory School is pleased to announce the establishment of the Falk Laboratory School Parents and Caregivers Endowed Fund for Enrichment (FLEFE) through an anonymous gift of nearly \$136,000.

The new endowed fund will allow the school to enhance the educational experiences of students and provide opportunities for development to the school's faculty and staff, now and for many years into the future.

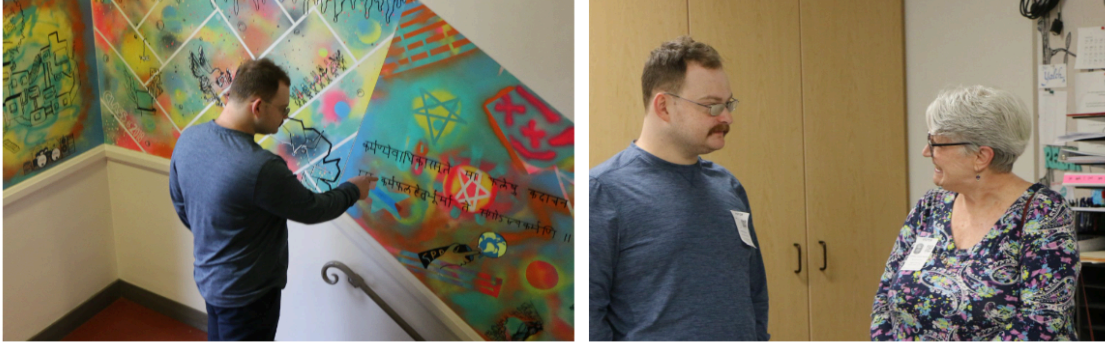
While the Endowed Fund for Enrichment is new, the monies establishing the fund date back more than 60 years, to the establishment of The Falk School Fund by the Falk School Parent-Teacher Association (PTA) in 1962. The PTA (which has since been replaced by the Falk Parent Organization) created the Fund to enhance Falk's educational program and operations. The Fund was used for non-operating expenses not included in the budget, with examples ranging from partial support of the WonderLab to the Imagination Playground blocks now found on the rooftop terrace, along with guest speakers and even a ping pong table.

"This fund honors the contributions of Falk families from as far back as 1962, which will continue to support Falk students present and future," says Dr. Jill Sarada, director of Falk Laboratory School.

Read more about the Falk Laboratory School Parents and Caregivers Endowed Fund for Enrichment [on our website](#).

## Growing Giving

For **Jacob Lerman (Falk Class of 2012)**, returning to visit Falk Laboratory School in the fall of 2023 was a powerful experience.



In addition to walking the same halls he last passed through more than a decade earlier, Jacob had the chance to reconnect with Social Studies teacher Greg Wittig and Science teacher Eileen Coughlin, both of whom had made a lasting impression on him.

But the most powerful reconnection Jacob made was with Donna Priore, Falk's longtime educator who retired in 2020. The two had worked closely during Jacob's time at Falk, and it was her personal interest in Jacob and others that led to the establishment of the Donna Priore Fund to provide enduring support for training faculty and staff on topics relating to teaching students with special needs.

The Lerman family are among Falk's longest and most consistent contributors. It was Terry, Jacob's father, who in 2009 introduced Falk to the untapped potential of corporate giving through Pennsylvania's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) and Opportunity Scholarship Tax Credit (OSTC) programs. These programs allow Pennsylvania companies to make gifts to Falk and reduce their tax burden in the process.

Since Falk began participating in the EITC and OSTC programs in 2009, annual gifts have grown from \$23,000 to \$160,000.

"We hope to grow it more each year," says Laurie Hess, Falk's manager of constituent relations.

[Read more about the Lerman family](#) and their gifts to Falk.

**To learn more about the benefits of charitable giving**, contact Laurie Hess, manager of constituent relations, at [ldh31@pitt.edu](mailto:ldh31@pitt.edu) or 412-624-7301.

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## IN MEMORIAM

Nancy Richter Brzeski, a member of Falk's graduating class of 1938, passed away on December 17, 2023.

An enthusiastic lifelong supporter of Falk and a talented artist, she donated

her painting “Fear Not, Choose Love” (pictured below) that still hangs in the yoga studio.

Nancy shared some of her fond memories of Falk on [her website](#). Read her entries [on Falk](#) and [her role as Alice](#) in Falk’s production of “Alice in Wonderland.”



## STAY IN TOUCH!

We’d love to feature your update in a future issue of the newsletter, or in the next En Avant magazine. Click on the button below to submit your up-to-date contact information or email us at [enavante@pitt.edu](mailto:enavante@pitt.edu).

[Update Your Contact Info](#)

You can also connect with us on our social media pages through the links below.

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