



Among Friends

Reflections from our Head of School.

Steve de Beer

friendsschoolboulder.org

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Thank You Letters



Meg Hansen with her sons Jack and Michael,
both Friends' School alumni students

It's a few days before Thanksgiving and we are getting ready to enjoy Special Friends' Day here at Friends'. It's a time for our elementary students to invite grandparents and other special people to our school to share a big part of their lives with their guests. We are looking forward to a wonderful day.

You might wonder, given our year-long focus on The Gratitude Project, if I will take this opportunity to reflect on the importance of Thanksgiving. Although I try to live life with

gratitude, especially at this time of year, I will not be sharing my thoughts on Thanksgiving here. Instead I'm going to share with you two letters written by my Friends' School colleagues.

Many of you know about, and many of you gave generously to, the Polly T. Donald Enrichment Fund. Earlier this year, the school granted awards so that two of our staff members could receive the gift of revitalization. My predecessor, Polly Donald, believes that an individual's personal growth inevitably enriches those s/he comes in contact with.

What follows are thank you letters from our Literacy Specialist Tricia Callahan and our Director of Communications Meg Hansen. I wish you and your family a joyous, restful, and gratitude-filled Thanksgiving.

Dear Friends,

Receiving the Polly T. Donald Enrichment Fund award this year was such a wonderful gift! I had been toying with the idea of taking tennis lessons for years. This summer I spent many hours on the roof of the Lakeshore Athletic Club joyfully volleying, lobbing, serving, etc. in the 100 degree heat. I'm proud to say that I quickly moved from a level 100 to a 200. I'm also proud to say that I teach at a school where personal growth is generously supported.

Thank You!
Tricia Callahan

Dear Friends' School community ,

This summer I was honored to have been one of the first award recipients of the Polly T. Donald Enrichment Fund. Polly created this wonderful opportunity for staff to “revitalize, inspire and support personal growth”. Through the generous donations of numerous

Friends School in Boulder, CO



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Steve de Beer, Head of School



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[Steve de Beer](#) served as head of school at [Friends School](#) in Boulder, Colorado from 2011 until June 2018. He is now head of school at Westside School in Seattle, WA. He blogs regularly about school and education. Originally from West Sussex, England, he was a theater director and elementary school teacher for over 20 years. Steve chaired the annual conference of the Association of Colorado Independent Schools for six years and served on a professional review committee for Making Caring Common, a project of Harvard University's Graduate School of Education. He speaks nationally on social emotional curriculum. Steve has been published in the [Denver Post](#), [5280 Magazine](#) and [Boulder County Business Report](#). In 2015, Friends' School was the only school in Colorado to be selected as one of the [Top 50 private schools in the country](#).

donors, I was able to take the road trip of a lifetime with my two sons, Michael and Jack. For ten days we drove through the Tetons, Yellowstone, and Montana, experiencing the breath taking beauty of these two phenomenal National Parks, and so much more.

We planned and packed, spent numerous hours on VRBO finding just the right places to stay, bought paper maps and guide books (yes, paper), researched all the great places I'd remembered as a kid and wanted to share with my children, hoping they'd be as inspired as I was every time I visited these magical places. As I planned for the trip, however, I was skeptical of the only guideline of our trip: No electronics – no phones, iPads, laptops, Kindles, iPods, not even an Etch-a-sketch. My own cell phone would remain in the glovebox, only to be used for emergencies (of which we had none) and navigation backup to the paper maps (which worked quite well still).

Three days into the trip, I asked Michael (nearly 16 at the time), “Do you miss your computer?” His reply caught me off guard: “No. Lately, my laptop and phone have only meant stress to me. It’s so nice to not be reminded of it.” I realized then that because most of our kids are always “plugged in”, they don’t have a lot of down time and they need it. Desperately. Sometimes we need to create that for them. Sometimes we need to do that for ourselves, as well. I am guilty of living a life so hectic that I don’t stop often enough to smell the roses right in front of me.

Without our devices, my boys and I looked out the windows, saw the scenery and discovered new towns and places. We had real conversations and lots of laughter and connected on all those things we used to talk about before Apple infiltrated our home. They built fires, roasted marshmallows, and told ghost stories; fished, played in the Yellowstone River right outside cabin, slurped Huckleberry milkshakes from the Victor Emporium, hiked, and canoed. We celebrated the first day of summer on our trip, eating at the old lunch counter at Jackson Lake Lodge where my dad had taken me as a child. Nothing had changed...the Tetons were still as ominous and glorious as ever. The lodges, signs, rangers, even the animals all seemed to have stood still in time. The new trees, now almost 24 years old, were gradually catching up to the charcoal remains of the 1988 fire.



moose, marmots, bears, buffalo, powerful geysers, colorful Grand Prismatic Pool, bubbling mud pots, spectacular Morning Glory Pool. We were smelling life’s roses... enormous bouquets of them.



[Read Boulder County Business Report's January 2012 article on Friends School and Steve's role as Head of School.](#)

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Friends School



Friends School Mission

Friends School is a supportive, dynamic community committed to educating the whole child – head, hand, and heart – and to training exceptional teachers for tomorrow’s classrooms. We provide a strong academic foundation while developing creative expression and nurturing a passion for learning. Our students gain a deep understanding of themselves and are inspired to act with compassion and integrity.

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I applied for the PTD Enrichment Fund with the intention to spend quality time with my children and to create lasting, happy memories for our family. I got this and so much more. The award allowed me to unplug from our hectic lives and focus on the two most important people in my life. I will forever be grateful to have had this opportunity. Thank you for your contribution to the fund and for making this trip possible for my children and me.

In gratitude and Happy Thanksgiving,

Meg Hansen

Posted by [Steve de Beer](#) at 3:26 PM



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Friends School is an independent elementary and preschool in Boulder, Colorado. It is a school that challenges students and teachers to reach their full potential through academic excellence, creative expression, and social responsibility. It has small, collaborative classrooms, exceptional teachers, a connected parent community, and a highly regarded teacher preparation program. Students learn respect for themselves, others, and our world. Learn more at [**www.friendsschoolboulder.org**](http://www.friendsschoolboulder.org)