

The Voyage

Paul Cuffee School 🚩 A Maritime Charter School for Providence Youth 🚩 Spring/Summer 2014 🚩 Vol. 12 Issue 1

PCS'S CLASS OF 2014 WAS ADMITTED TO...



Assumption College
Community College of Rhode Island
College of Mt. St. Vincent
Emmanuel College
Ferrum College
Franklin Pierce University
Guilford College
Ithaca College
Johnson & Wales University
Lasell College
Lynn University
Mass College of Pharmacy (MCPHS)
Merrimack College
New England College
New England Tech
Newbury College
PACE University
Providence College
Regis College
Rhode Island College
Rivier University
Roger Williams University
Salve Regina University
Southern New Hampshire University
St. John's University
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth
University of Hartford
University of New England
University of New Haven
University of Rhode Island
Western New England University
Wheaton College
Whelock College

Reaching the Finish Line *by Megan Thoma*



Infiniti Allen receiving her diploma from Upper School Principal Ms. Coustan and Interim Head of School Ms. Randle

LAST SEPTEMBER, Ms. Coustan, principal of the Upper School, welcomed the rising seniors and told them that she expected every single one of them to graduate in June 2014 and then proceeded to remind them exactly what was required to do so. It was evident that this group of intelligent, dynamic, and caring individuals had a strong desire to succeed, and with the help and guidance of the faculty and staff, they would be prepared to not only get into, but to develop the skill set to *stay* in college.

Senior year was the final stretch of a race that started three years prior when these 60 students entered the brand new Paul Cuffee Upper School. Like most teenagers, the class of 2014 had a variety of interests and diverse attitudes towards school.

This school year though, all of the skills and habits of a learner that the seniors have been taught since their freshman year were tested. Every single one of the seniors stepped up to the challenge of rigorous academic pursuits.

In Mr. Quirk's World History class, students looked at the beginning of civilizations before digging into world religions. Dr. Mitchell put the students through the rigors of pre-calculus and calculus while Mr. Beck's financial math class introduced students to a variety of real-world scenarios including starting a business and investing in the stock market. In Ms. Thoma's English class, it was "college" from day one. Every unit was modeled after a college course: students received syllabi, learned how to use online periodical databases, and *(continued on page 2)*



*Voices of the Class of 2014,
Kehinde Oladosu and Giandra Rivas*

mastered online course management systems used by just about every university in the country.

In addition to their classes, seniors spent the fall researching and applying to colleges. Before the applications were even in the mail, students began working on their Senior Projects. The Senior Project required them to flex every academic muscle they had developed at Cuffee. Using the scientific process, students designed an essential question, did extensive research, and then designed an action component to further their (and the community's) understanding of their question. The culmination of their work was Senior Exhibition Night, an event attended by over 200 people. Presentation boards lined the halls, students answered thoughtful questions, and a handful of honors students gave longer presentations, sometimes to standing-room-only crowds!

The demands of senior year did not let up; in May, the seniors put the finishing touches on their portfolios, a project they had been working on since their first day at Cuffee. The highlight of the portfolio process was the roundtables where each senior had the opportunity to present their work, journey, and growth to a panel of staff, family, and community members. Students articulated their personal transformation while at Cuffee and the panelists had the opportunity to congratulate the students on their successes, thank them for the contributions they made to the school, and give them advice for the future.

On June 10th, when the seniors finally graduated, it was not the finish line but simply the medal podium for a race that had been won again and again this year with every "4" on a challenging assignment, every college acceptance letter, and every hug, thank you, and word of encouragement that epitomized what our community has become over the last four years.

The Class of 2014 is ready for any challenge placed in front of them - ready to grow, learn, and thrive and, most importantly, ready to change the world for the better. 🏆

Ms. Thoma is a teacher at Paul Cuffee and has had the class of 2014 in both 10th grade Humanities and 12th grade English.



*Ernesto Peña being congratulated
by PCS Business Manager, Jon Conklin*

*"I am grateful to
have been a small
part of their journey,
and I wish them the
best as they lace up
their shoes for their
next big adventure."*

Megan Thoma, PCS Teacher



Paul Cuffee graduate Omogbolahan Oladosu celebrates with his family

The Paul Cuffee Community Pauses During Graduation to Remember Founders Anne & David Burnham

Adapted from Russell Carey's,
President of the Board of Trustees,
graduation remarks (10 June 2014)



Founding Board President David Burnham with his wife Anne

WE CELEBRATE THE INDIVIDUAL achievement of our graduating seniors, as well as the community commitment that created and sustained this wonderful school.

While all members of the Paul Cuffee community contributed to realizing the dream that is our school, two individuals deserve special recognition. David and Anne Burnham were among the earliest dreamers. Dave was the founding President of the Board of Trustees, and through his tireless effort and boundless enthusiasm, he willed this school into being. He guided and mentored many of us over many years, and the values of the school reflect who he was as an educator and a man. His wife Anne was a partner to Dave every step of the way, and

the school we know and love today simply would not exist without them.

On June 4th, Anne passed away. Early the next morning Dave did as well. The shock of their passing so close together is softened ever so slightly by knowing that after 62 years of loving marriage they were only apart for a few hours.

We know that Dave and Anne are very proud of every member of this graduating class. They are very much with us in spirit tonight. They changed the lives of many people, and we are grateful for their service and their example. 🙏

🌀 *Because we knew you, we have been changed for good.* 🌀



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ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: John C. Taveras

"I flicked the light switch. Nothing happened. It was then that I realized after all the struggles and suffering that my family had faced, the worst had arrived. The electricity had been shut off."

So began John Taveras' college essay, a narrative describing a defining moment in his life. He relates that when he was 12, his mother lost her job and the family spiraled into debt. Filled with pain and humiliation, he slowly accepted their circumstances and began focusing on his future, vowing to build a better life in time for his own family.

At age 13 John got his first job as a camp staffer, learning maintenance, cooking, and safety skills. He paid the electric bill with his first month's salary. He learned perseverance, responsibility, and the value of hard work, both in and out of school.

One of the few in the Class of 2014 to have been with Paul Cuffee School since its inception, John joined the kindergarten class of 2001 where he learned his letters and numbers in



John Taveras, Class of 2014

a leased building on John Street. As the school grew, so did John.

Now, a high honors graduate of Paul Cuffee School, John will be attending URI in the fall, studying Business Administration and Management. In fact, he has already begun, spending part of the summer in URI's Talent Development program.

His life-lessons from Cuffee?

"The academic skills that Paul Cuffee has taught me will serve me well, but they're not the most important skills I've been taught. Paul Cuffee has taught me to be confident and a role model for others. I was taught to lead by example not just by words. To be confident in myself is one thing, but to be able to encourage confidence in others is a skill not too many people have in this world. Paul Cuffee School has given it to me. And I am grateful." 🙏

