That’s what Megan Routbort said at last week’s Alumni Night. Megan was remembering her trepidation, auditioning for her first role in a high school play. There were dozens of students trying out for parts, most of them upperclassmen, and she was feeling very much like the freshman she is: for a moment, intimidated. But then she realized, “I can do this. I went to Post Oak.” That statement should be added to our Portrait of a Graduate because of the courage, confidence, and resilience it reveals. By the way, she got the part.

Thirteen alumni answered the call to return to their Post Oak roots and speak to an audience of 100 current and prospective parents, faculty, and staff. Sam Geer (class of 2002), who flew in from Los Angeles, led off the evening with a personal statement before joining the panel. After Post Oak, Sam attended Episcopal High School and the
University of Southern California, graduating summa cum laude from the School of Cinematic Arts. Sam is currently writing a screen play with fellow Post Oak alum, William Wawro; working on films such as Terrence Malick's *Tree of Life*; supplementing his income by working at the Apple Store; and because community service has been important to him since his Post Oak days, doing volunteer work with 826LA, a non-profit tutoring center for kids ages 7 to 18. Sam traces his career path back to Post Oak, where his nascent interest in drawing and cartooning was not discouraged, but on the contrary, was recognized and celebrated.

Sam's story reminded me of a book a Post Oak parent gave me this week. “Learn to be; learn to do; learn to know,” is chapter one of *Unschooling Rules.* “Learning to be” focuses on helping someone understand who they are and who they want to be. This type of learning answers such questions as: ‘What do I love doing?’ ‘What is my dream?’ ‘What gives me energy?’ ‘What are my unique strengths?’ Post Oak helped Sam learn to be. Conventional schools focus almost exclusively on learning to know, and by their rigid structures and directive style, actively deflect focus from learning to be. As another Post Oak grad said on another occasion, “Post Oak helped me find my inner voice... (My private high school) squashed it.”

Another lesson in learning to be came from one of Sam’s Post Oak classmates, Ben Jawdat, who also attended Alumni Night. Ben graduated magna cum laude in physics from Emory University with the intention of entering medical school. At the very moment that he was completing his application to take the MCAT exam, Ben was struck by the realization that becoming a doctor was really not his dream; perhaps he was unconsciously emulating his father, who is a physician. In that moment Ben decided to continue the study of physics and is now a Ph.D. student at the University of Houston’s Texas Center for Superconductivity (TcSUH). Reflecting on that decision, Ben said, “One thing I took away from Montessori education is not being afraid to try something new, and not being afraid to follow your dreams.”

This does not mean that Post Oak ignores learning to know; the learning that dominates conventional schools. In fact, when asked if they could identify what was different about Post Oak grads when compared to classmates in their subsequent schools, several panelists spoke of their motivation to learn. Most classmates, they said, were more focused on test scores than they were on the learning itself. At first, this was absolutely puzzling to Post Oak grads. As Ben said, “Post Oak students want to learn the material. We wanted to study for the exams. We were still excited about the material and after the exam happened we didn’t erase everything from our memory. Post Oak students really have a deep desire to learn.”

And what about the third type of learning, learning to do? In describing the challenges he and William Wawro face in developing...
their screenplay and getting their careers off the ground in a highly competitive industry, Sam Geer said, “We are Post Oak grads, which is just another way of saying we are fiercely independent, outside-the-box thinkers who learn by doing.”

A final note: the evening’s Bearkats Award (just minted by this author) goes to Tom Harvey, a senior at St. John’s School. Tom is a student government leader (last year’s junior class president) and an athlete (he played football four years at SJS and is the captain of the swim team this year). Tom still wears his Post Oak Bearkats shirt with pride, remembering soccer and basketball played under Coach Tucker here at Post Oak.

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THE ALUMNI PANELISTS AND A SNAPSHOT OF WHAT THEY ARE UP TO:

Benjamin Brenner (2011) – A freshman at Carnegie Vanguard HS

Daniel Brenner (2011) – A freshman at St. John’s School

Joshua Brenner (2009) – A junior at St. John’s School

Jeffrey Davis (2008) – A senior at Episcopal High School

Sam Geer (2002) – Graduated cum laude from Episcopal High School; commended National Merit Scholar; graduated summa cum laude from the University of Southern California (School of Cinematic Arts); received the Director’s Scholarship at USC; recently interned on the film Beginners, directed by Mike Mills starring Ewan McGregor; works at Apple Inc. in Santa Monica, CA; volunteers with 826LA

Tom Harvey (2008) – A senior at St. John’s School where he served as... continued on page 4
sophomore class representative, junior class president, and now senior vice head prefect; a member of the football team and a swim team captain; a finalist for the history department award in 2010; interned on Ellen Cohen’s campaign for Houston City Council District C last summer

Ben Jawdat (2002) – Graduated from Episcopal High School; completed and defended an honors thesis and graduated magna cum laude in physics from Emory in the spring of 2010; doctoral student in physics at University of Houston / research assistant at Texas Center for Superconductivity at the University of Houston (TcSUH)

Jennie Kamin (2004) – Graduated from Emery/Weiner School where she was class president; a senior at Tulane University majoring in political science and communications

Rachael Levy (2011) – A freshman at Kinkaid High School; first semester honor roll; placed into honors classes (test required); member of Kinkaid Cooks for the Community


Emily Paul (2011) – A freshman at Kinkaid High School

Megan Routbort (2011) – A freshman at St. John’s School

Alison Wong – Graduated from St. John’s School and Southwestern University with a major in psychology & sociology; graduated from The University of Texas School of Law; worked as a trial lawyer in the office of the Texas attorney general; currently a trial consultant and the director of the Houston office of DecisionQuest

continued from page 3
The Moon Maiden: Three Weeks and Counting!

Final preparations for the opera are in full swing and the date is approaching fast. Cast and crew rehearsals are ongoing and the set is being finalized. Everyone is getting very excited about the upcoming performance!

Don’t forget to order your T-shirts for $15 each. The deadline has been extended until Monday, January 16. You won’t want to miss having one of these unique shirts including beautiful student artwork. There is a link on our website homepage and forms available at the front desk. Shirts will be distributed during Opera Week.

Volunteers will be needed during Opera Week (January 30–February 3). If you have time available to help as needed during this very busy week, please contact Tanya Gee. We could use as many volunteers as possible to help with last-minute preparations and we welcome you to get involved. The POPA workday on Wednesday, February 1 will be dedicated to the opera and we would love to see you there.

Tickets for the performance are $15 per person and are available for purchase online now and at the front desk by January 20. Tickets purchased at the theater cost $20. All family and friends are invited to attend the performance at the beautiful Dunham Theater on the campus of Houston Baptist University.

This theater offers a beautiful stage, wonderful acoustics, and ample seating for all. The curtain goes up Friday, February 3 at 7:00 pm.

Many people have been involved in helping with all aspects of the opera planning and preparation. Parents, staff, and students have made it possible to meet the challenges of the condensed opera schedule and we wish to thank you in advance for all the talent that has been demonstrated. Special thanks go out to our Opera Co-Chairs Jane Greenberg and Tanya Gee for their dedication and vision (not to mention the countless hours spent preparing for this wonderful Post Oak tradition). It’s almost show time. We look forward to seeing you there.

—Amy Kirchner, Marketing
1. Painting with two hands requires deep concentration.
2. Single digit addition with the strip board.
3. Tracing shapes with the metal insets.
4. Working with the decimal system.
5. Building fine motor skills.
6. Opera rehearsals with visiting soprano Ana Trevino-Godfrey.
7. Opera crew member at work.
8. Identifying squares and a cube with the five chain.
9. At the start of a subtraction tower.
10. Scrabble in Spanish.
11. Learning how to factor quadratic equations using algebra tiles.
Think science class is only textbooks and test tubes?

*Think again.*

**High School Open House**

**Wednesday, January 25 at 7:00 pm**

to be held in the Paleontology Hall of our Museum District partner

**The Houston Museum of Natural Science**

5555 Hermann Park Dr at the corner of Caroline

Complimentary parking available
Spelling Success at the Post Oak Bee

The Post Oak Upper Elementary Spelling Bee took place Friday, January 6. After more than 10 rounds, a grade five student in Laura Roark’s class won the bee by spelling the word “miscellaneous,” and a grade six student from Errol Pinto’s class was the runner up. will continue on to represent Post Oak in the Houston PBS Spelling Bee, which is the qualifying bee for 42 Texas counties leading up to the Scripps National Spelling Bee.

Excerpt from John Long’s note sent to faculty and staff:

Bravo! To all of you, bravo! Yesterday was a memorable, extraordinary day because of the street flooding. It put demands on each of us individually and on all of us collectively. As I have come to expect, all of us came through with flying colors. For most of the children, it was business as usual...even if routines were modified. That speaks volumes about the sense of calm and the optimistic strength of classroom teachers and assistants, and the resulting trust that inspires in the children. For the entire admin team, and for faculty who pitched in when their duties with the children were done, thank you for identifying every detail that needed attending to, and doing it—with grace and a spirit of collaboration and helpfulness.

I heard many comments from grateful parents about how well the entire situation was managed by the school.
Braes Interfaith Ministries Thanks

Dear Ms. Long, Students and Parents,

On behalf of Braes Interfaith Ministries I would like to thank each of you for the many food items, toiletries, baby food, baby diapers and formula which you brought to our pantry on December 12th. Your support is amazing and it was made even more special when a large group of your students and teachers helped with the unloading and storing. This time of the year brings a larger number of clients seeking our help and it is caring people such as each of you, working together with our coalition congregations, that makes it possible for us to carry out our mission. Together, we are making a difference.

Our services include food, clothing, and when available, financial assistance with rent and utilities. We also have an annual School Supply Program where our clients’ children receive those items requested by HISD for the opening of the school year.

Again, thank you for caring and sharing and may you and your families have a happy and blessed New Year.

Sincerely,

Eloy E. Montez, LMSW
Executive Director

DATE CHANGE

Mark your calendars!
The Upper and Middle School History Fair has moved to March 8.

Bearkats
Basketball Games

January 17, 31
February 7, 21, 28

All games begin at 4:15 pm in the Post Oak gym.
Becoming a Love & Logic® Parent

Welcome parents, grandparents, and childcare personnel!

This parenting course series is designed to give you practical skills that can be used immediately.

**Wednesday evenings** 6:30–8:00 pm
January 18, 25, February 8, 15, 22, 29, March 7
Cost: $235 per couple for 7 classes, includes workbook (Free to those having a Certificate of Completion from Phylis’ prior classes) Drop-in fees can be arranged.

**Thursday mornings** 9:10–10:30 am
January 19, 26, February 9, 16, 23, March 8, 22
Cost: $20 per person for the series (includes workbook)

To register, call School Counselor Phylis Tomlinson at 713-661-6688 ext. 176.

- Do you want to learn some fun and effective communication tools for parents?
- Are you interested in teaching your child social and emotional intelligence?
- Are you tired of yelling at your children?
- Do you know how to develop problem solving skills in your child?
- Have you said "NO!" more than three times today?
Then this is the class for you!

**REDIRECTING CHILDREN’S BEHAVIOR**
The Gentle Art of Parenting

This is a positive, powerful, informative, and fun training course which will give you a complete system for handling every situation in which adults interact with children, from infancy to adolescence. www.deborah-fry.com

**Jan. 31, Feb 7, 14, 21, 28, March 6** (6 Tues. evenings)
6:30 to 9:00 pm
Cost: $235 per person, $335 per couple
(Includes book, workbook and 15 hours of class time)

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Coffee with the Elementary Director

January 18, 2012
9:00–10:00 am
Topic: Lesson Presentation

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Dad’s Poker Club Night

The BBVA Compass Bank Building
Penthouse, 2001 Kirby Drive

Thursday, January 19
doors open 7:30 pm
Space is limited
RSVP
# Calendar

For more, visit [www.postoakschool.org](http://www.postoakschool.org)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>JANUARY 15–21</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mon</strong> 1/16</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLK Jr. Day (school closed)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tue</strong> 1/17</td>
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<td>Bearkats Basketball in the Post Oak gym 4:15 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wed</strong> 1/18</td>
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<td>Coffee with the Elementary Director 9:00–10:00 am</td>
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<td>Becoming a Love and Logic Parent series begins 6:30–8:00 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thu</strong> 1/19</td>
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<tr>
<td>Becoming a Love and Logic Parent series begins 9:10–10:30 am</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dad’s Club Poker Night 7:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Fri</strong> 1/20</td>
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<tr>
<td>No Weekly Post this week</td>
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<tr>
<th>JANUARY 22–28</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mon</strong> 1/23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chinese Lunar New Year</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Wed</strong> 1/25</td>
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<tr>
<td>High School Open House at HMNS (see ad) (Change from calendar) 7:00–8:30 pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thu</strong> 1/26</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Parent Education Meeting 6:00–7:00 pm</td>
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# Green Tip of the Week

Recycling matters...

1. It keeps waste out of landfills.
2. It creates jobs.
3. It means more revenues for state and local governments.

Did you know the recycling rate in Texas is only 18% while some states reach 75%?

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# Notice Board

## What Do You Think?

The spring environmental lecture is approaching and we’re gathering ideas for topics: farmer’s markets, eating local, growing organically, or... Any suggestions on a speaker? Would you prefer to watch a film? What interests you? Send an email to Kathryn Murphy at kathrynmurphy@postoakschool.org and let us know.

## Primary Parent Education Meeting:

### How Language Happens

January 26 6:00–7:00 pm*

Indirect and direct preparations for writing and reading

Presenters: the Primary Teachers

Childcare available for Primary and Elementary children

(*note: time differs from original calendar listing)

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# About the Weekly Post

The Weekly Post appears on most Fridays of the regular school year. You can receive a printed copy from your oldest child, or a PDF version online.

Submit letters, articles, or photos in electronic form by 5:00 pm on the Tuesday before publication to Communications Coordinator Elaine Schweizer (elaineschweizer@postoakschool.org). If publication is on a Thursday due to school closure on Friday, then the deadline is 5:00 pm on the preceding Monday.

All photos in The Weekly Post are by Elaine Schweizer unless otherwise noted.

The Post Oak School was founded in 1963 and accredited by both the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS) 4600 Bissonnet, Bellaire, Texas 77401 • Telephone: 713-661-6688 • Fax: 713-661-4959 • [www.postoakschool.org](http://www.postoakschool.org)