Above: Our newest alumni, the senior class of 2016. Read remarks from guest speaker Bob Harvey on pages 11 and 12.
**Post Oak Alumni Updates**

**‘80s**

**ALISON WONG**

Alison Wong, who was a Lower and Upper Elementary student at Post Oak in the ‘80s, is a jury consultant with Salmons Consulting. Alison’s work involves helping trial teams shape, test, and refine their litigation strategy in high-stakes civil disputes. To do this, she relies on her background in sociology and psychology, as well as her past experience as a trial lawyer. She attributes much of her affinity and aptitude for this interdisciplinary field to the skills she learned at Post Oak, such as working collaboratively with others, having an open and flexible mind when facing challenges, and being relentlessly curious about new people and ideas.

Most of all, Alison is enjoying her current role as a Post Oak parent. Her children are 6 and 4 years old, and both attend the school. As often as she can, Alison volunteers with the Post Oak Parents’ Association (POPA), which enables her to keep her cherished memories of her own Post Oak experience close at hand.

**‘90s**

**DARRYL DE VERA**

8th grade class of 1990

After Post Oak, Darryll went to St. Thomas University. After college, he went on to dental school at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. He is currently working as a dentist at Dental Smiles, a Houston area dental group. Darryll and his wife, Laura, were married in 2010 and have two young sons. When they were considering schools for their eldest son, they toured several other Montessori schools, but found that Post Oak was the best fit for their family. They love how the mission of the school complements their parenting goals and enjoy being a part of the Post Oak parent community. They are looking forward to the transition from Young Children’s Community to Primary in the fall.

**CAROLINE SHARP**

8th grade class of 1997

Caroline graduated with honors from NYU, Tisch School of the Arts with a BFA in theatre. She also studied at the Atlantic Theater Company Acting School and the Atlantic Theater Company, LA Conservatory. She has appeared in both film and television roles including films such as *Caught*, *Time Served* and *The Other Side of Dark*. Caroline also performs in theatrical productions with various companies in Los Angeles. In April and May, she played the role of Hero in *The Devil’s Bride* (with Theatre Unleashed), a sequel to Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*. Caroline is also the co-host of a web series called *Angel City Sirens* which is a “punk rock tea party video series examining the way women’s stories are told.” She resides in Los Angeles with her husband and their two rescue cats. She describes herself as someone who “can sail a yacht, fix a flat in a ball gown, and sing any song in the style of Julie Andrews.”

**BEAU POPE**

8th grade class of 1998

After Post Oak, Beau went on to Bellaire High School before training to become a master electrician. Around 2011, Beau, who is also a musician, was trying to promote an album he was working on. He wanted to create an image he could reproduce around town that was related to the album. This sparked an interest in stencil art that Beau describes as being “like a virus” in how it grew. He began with grayscale portraits, but has since expanded into pieces that include bold colors and familiar pop culture images.

After about a year, Beau’s wife Jessica became inspired to experiment in this medium. Today they work collaboratively on their artwork. Beau describes the balance in their work as one between the masculine and the feminine. They hand cut each stencil and apply the paint in layers, waiting for each to dry before adding the next. Beau says the art form is a “patience game” and knowledge of color theory is vital to creating an

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impactful image. Every year, the Popes show their artwork at various events in Houston including The Annual Star Wars Art Festival. They also curate an annual show entitled Strictly Stencils at East End Studio Gallery, which features other stencil artists. Their next show will be in mid-November of 2016. For more information on their work check out their website www.popeswithpaint.com.

While at Post Oak, Beau enjoyed playing basketball and has fond memories of Coach Mark Tucker. He also remembers the time he spent in the Middle School doing volunteer work at organizations such as Casa de Esperanza, The House of Hope, and the Capital Area Food Bank. He appreciated the opportunity to devote time to others through service to the community.

ARTHUR CHIANG
Attended Lower Elementary, 1999

Arthur graduated from the University of Houston in 2012 with a BS in psychology and biology and a minor in chemistry. Upon graduation, he became a math teacher at the middle and high school levels in HISD and with Harmony schools. Arthur stays busy in the summers as well. He worked as a camp counselor in New Hampshire at Camp Ramapo, a camp for students with autism and other disabilities. He also put his fluency in Mandarin and Spanish to use as an enumerator for the U.S. Census Bureau in 2010. Arthur has a strong commitment to volunteer service as well. He has volunteered at the AIDS Foundation of Houston since 2011. Since 2007, he has served as a psychotherapy facilitator for the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill.

'00s

SARA LLANSA
Sara attended Post Oak during her Elementary years. She graduated from Brown University in 2012 with degrees in both education and international relations. While at Brown, Sara participated in a study abroad Middlebury program in Valdivia, Chile at La Universidad Austral de Chile, doing advanced anthropology coursework. She also took part in study abroad programs, allowing her to work as a volunteer in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and El Salvador.

In July of 2014, Sara began working as an academic program manager for EMERGE, a program that prepares talented HISD students from underserved communities to successfully attend and graduate from Ivy League and other top-tiered colleges/universities. She has since been promoted to a senior manager position in 2015 and in May was named as a director at EMERGE.

Sara also serves as the alumni interviewing and co-coordinator for the Brown Alumni Association in the Houston area.

NEVA GOHEL
8th grade class of 2007

Neva just moved back to Houston after graduating from Colorado College in May. While there, she studied environmental policy and enjoyed all the outdoor activities the Rocky Mountains have to offer such as hiking and skiing. She also studied abroad for two years at the University of Capetown, in South Africa. She is currently working at an environmental consulting firm to develop and market a sustainability program focusing on measuring water and energy consumption.

Neva attended Post Oak from 1st to 8th grade. She loved the hands-on activities of her Elementary classes, especially the pin maps. She appreciated her Middle School experiences at Blackwood, as learning about environmental sustainability at an early age impacted her course of study and her career choices. She feels that a quality she shares with her Post Oak classmates in their career paths is that they have a strong desire to enjoy the work that they do. In the future, Neva is planning to pursue a master's degree.

LOU POSADA
8th grade class of 2008

I graduated in May of 2016 from the University of Texas at Austin with a degree in chemical engineering and a focus in biomedical engineering. In November of 2014, I was accepted into the Texas 4000 2016 team here at the University of Texas at Austin. Texas 4000 for Cancer is a student leadership organization that raises funds for cancer research and culminates in a 4,500+ mile, 70-day bike ride from Austin, Texas to Anchorage, Alaska; the world’s longest charity bike ride. The funds are primarily donated to M.D. Anderson Cancer Center and the remaining funds are donated to other research labs on campus that are also conducting cancer
research. In order to participate in the summer ride from Texas to Alaska, each team member is required to raise at least $4,500; approximately $1 for every mile ridden. Rather than doing the bare minimum I’ve decided to raise the bar to $20,000. If you would like to learn more about why I ride or to donate, here is a link to my rider profile on the Texas 4000 page: (http://tinyurl.com/lucianot4k).

Texas 4000 is more than just a charity ride to Alaska; it is about sharing our stories and experiences with our fellow human beings. It is during these precious and particularly special moments where we can each share our hopes and dreams; our failures and successes. That in itself provides a sort of therapy for those that have experienced the loss or even to provide hope for those that are fighting cancer right now.

As part of the ride, each rider can dedicate a day or multiple days of the ride to an individual currently battling or to someone who has lost their life to cancer. Please reach out to me to share your, a friend’s, or family member’s story; I would be honored to ride for them and to dedicate a day to them on my journey to Alaska. Feel free to spread the word to any family members, friends, coworkers, or anyone you know. I really believe that this battle with cancer can be won if we all fight as one!

NIKHIL SCHNEIDER
8th grade class of 2008
Nikhil Schneider attended Post Oak from 5th grade through 8th grade. For the last four years he has been an Honors College student at The University of Houston. He will graduate in December 2016 with a BS degree in environmental science and a minor in energy and sustainability. For the past two years, Nikhil has worked in the department of campus recreating (outdoor adventure) and in the office of sustainability. He also served as an energy ambassador for the university.

GABY POSADA
8th grade class of 2009
I attended The Post Oak School for ten years from 1999–2009. I started out in primary and graduated the eighth grade. One of my favorite things about Post Oak is the freedom that students get to walk around their classrooms and to choose their seating from a very young age. Being allowed to walk around my classroom is a stark contrast from the classrooms that my friends outside of Post Oak studied in. I have noticed this difference even more after studying in a public institution for the past three years. I am currently a fourth year student at the University of Texas at Austin double majoring in English and women and gender studies! I plan on attending law school after taking two years succeeding my undergraduate career to work in the field of public interest law. I hope to be an attorney who focuses on gender and racial discrimination and immigration. Last summer I interned with The Prison Justice League, which is a non-profit that focuses on fighting for Texas prisoner rights. While being a full time student during the school year, I have also been a law clerk at a law firm in downtown Austin, Texas and this summer I am interning at the William Wayne Justice Center for Public Interest Rights and the Mithhoff Pro Bono Program at Texas Law.

‘10s
SARAH AL-SHAIK
8th grade class of 2010
Sarah is going into her junior year at St. Edward’s University in Austin, Texas. She is majoring in global studies with a focus on the Middle East. She is enjoying her college experience so far and looks forward to the next two years. She’s been thinking a lot about what she’d like to do after her four years at St. Edward’s, including toying with the idea of pursuing a graduate degree in broadcast journalism. While Sarah is uncertain about it right now, she hopes that through upcoming internships and studying abroad this spring in Amman, Jordan, that she will get closer to knowing onto which path she would like to embark.

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AVERY PETERS  
8th grade class of 2010
Avery graduated summa cum laude from Episcopal High School in 2014. She currently attends the University of Richmond and is majoring in both political science and leadership. Next year, she will be participating in a study abroad program in Morocco. This summer she was happy to welcome a visit from her family to Washington D.C., where she is spending the summer interning with the U.S. State Department’s Greening Diplomacy Initiative (GDI). According to the State Department website, the GDI “was launched by former Secretary Clinton on April 22, 2009 to improve the environmental performance and sustainability of the State Department’s world-wide facilities and operations. The initiative develops and implements department-wide policies and actions to reduce the State Department’s environmental footprint and costs; placing the environment at the forefront of our foreign policy agenda.”

ELISE PETERS  
8th grade class of 2011
Elise attended Post Oak from 2004 until 2011. She went to Kinkaid where she participated in Dance Company and the French Honor Society. She ranked in the top five in the National French Contest. She was also accomplished in the art of printmaking, receiving the Golden Key award (scholastic art competition) and received a perfect score at the VASE art competition. Elise just finished her first year at Barnard College. She loves the adventure of living in New York and is writing a blog about her experiences there. Elise is considering English as a major. She is home in Houston this summer, relaxing and spending time with friends and family.

DEVINA SCHNEIDER  
8th grade class of 2011
Devina Schneider attended Post Oak from 2nd grade through 8th grade. She is a student of wildlife biology at Texas State University. Devina is a scholarship athlete competing in cross country, indoor track, and outdoor track. In the fall of her freshman year she earned the distinction of Sun Belt Conference Women’s Athlete of the Week for her performance in cross country.

JAHNAVI SCHNEIDER  
8th grade class of 2011
Jahnavi Schneider attended Post Oak from 2nd grade through 8th grade. Jahnavi recently completed her freshman year as an Honors College student at The University of Houston majoring in biotechnology. She is a scholarship athlete competing in cross country, indoor track, and outdoor track. This summer, Jahnavi is living in a tent and has a job doing back-country trail maintenance in the Durango, Colorado area.

DEVIN GOHEL  
8th grade class of 2012
Devin attended The Post Oak School from the ages of 2 until 14. After Post Oak he went on to Episcopal High School. Devin graduated in May and was accepted to the University of Michigan, where he plans to study computer science in the fall of 2017. Before Devin heads off to college, he is taking a gap year. During this time he will travel to India for three months to do a home stay, as well as service work. When he returns, Devin would like to take a cooking/culinary arts class and

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some photography courses. He enjoys photographing landscapes as well as urban photography, including experimenting with stop action light photography of automobile headlights and tail lights at Houston intersections and highways.

One of Devin's favorite memories of being at Post Oak is all the hours he spent in the butterfly garden. He remembers fondly all he learned about the life cycle of butterflies from his Primary teacher, Mirani Smith. He described how amazing it was to watch the butterflies float away when they released them in the garden after emerging from their chrysalises.

This summer, Devin is serving as a part-time intern at Post Oak, providing support to our technology department. He credits his Post Oak Montessori education with his sense of sequential organization, spirit of independence, and his social graces and manners. He appreciates how having a large block of uninterrupted work time contributed to his concentration and focus. He also described that having the freedom to choose his work empowered the development of his interests in a variety of areas.

**TENILLE TUBBS**

8th grade class of 2012

Tenille went to high school at St. John's and was an active member of her school community. Tenille served as the cocaptain for the girls' basketball team and also played lacrosse, winning two state championships while on the team. She also spent several summers interning in the medical field, including with an orthopedic surgeon and a cardiologist. She participated in the National Youth and Leadership Envision Medical program, which provides students a “chance to gain real-world medical career experience and explore professional opportunities in the expanding fields of medicine and health care.” Tenille received a full academic scholarship to Washington University in St. Louis. While she is still contemplating which major she will pursue, she is looking forward to heading off to college at the end of August.

**GRACE ARMSTRONG**

12th grade class of 2016

Grace will attend Barnard College in New York where she plans to major in psychology.

**RIANE BELGAU**

12th grade class of 2016

Riane Belgau is moving to New York City to attend Parsons The New School for Design. She is excited to be living in the heart of Manhattan and to begin her classes in August. In fact, she visited New York for four days in June to visit the campus and register for classes. Riane was excited to discover that her Post Oak experience aligns well with a school as progressive as Parsons. The seminar and inquiry-based format of her courses (including Space and Time, Community, and Urban Living) is consistent with her Montessori background. She thinks the IB classes at Post Oak gave her an edge in some of liberal arts subjects as well. Riane looks forward to discovering where her interest in design will lead her. She wants to begin by exploring design in a broad sense that includes rooms, space, emotion, etc. She plans on spending time with her family this summer and finding a job.

**KIRBY BIRK**

12th grade class of 2016

Kirby Birk will attend Southwestern University in the fall. This summer Kirby is volunteering at Amazing Place, a day program for participants with memory issues such as Alzheimer's and dementia. Kirby learned about Amazing Place during ServicePalooza, a service work project for Post Oak High School and Middle School students. This is Kirby's second summer volunteering for Amazing Place. She is working alongside other Houston area teenagers to raise funds for the organization and hopes to become a named donor. She also spent some time this summer volunteering at Post Oak in our development department.

Kirby will be majoring in kinesiology with a minor in business while at Southwestern. She plans to continue her education after college in order to become a physical therapist. Kirby's interest in business was inspired by the economics class she took.
while at Post Oak. She says that her high school experience changed her because she started out as a quiet student when she was in 9th grade. However, the Post Oak culture of encouraging students to speak up and create the culture of the school led her to become highly involved in the life of the school. Kirby headed up the prom committee and was chosen by her peers to be the student speaker at the High School Commencement in May. Kirby says that she especially enjoyed the Odyssey trips the school takes at the beginning of each year. She loved everyone being together on a fun adventure.

**RAINS BROWNING**
12th grade class of 2016
Rains will attend Southwestern University in Georgetown, Texas this August. He plans on majoring in pre-law and political science. While at Post Oak, Rains demonstrated enthusiastic leadership and sportsmanship as a member of the Bearkats flag football, basketball, and soccer teams. In the 2016–2017 seasons, the Bearkats finished second in the TCSAAL-PSL Regional Championship in flag football, won the basketball regional championship, and placed second in soccer. Rains was also the first recipient of the High School Bearkat Heart Award. He is proud of the contributions he made to the High School Bearkats program. In a speech he gave at the end of the season he said, “I would encourage anybody at this school to continue with sports, as something truly special is developing. Encourage each other, especially younger kids coming up because it will build on the legacy of sports at the school.”

**ALEX DONNENBERG**
12th grade class of 2016
Alex will attend the University of Southern California, where he plans to study math and economics. He is spending the remainder of the summer relaxing, enjoying time with friends and family, and getting ready for college.

**ARI FLETCHER-BAI**
12th grade class of 2016
Ari will attend Trinity University and plans to major in psychology/sociology.

**SHIRAZ GHAURI**
12th grade class of 2016
Shiraz looks forward to attending Babson College in the fall. He was a member of the EV Car Conversion group over the course of several J and A-Term sessions. He plans on majoring in finance.

**GRACE LANGENKAMP**
12th grade class of 2016
Grace is spending the summer working as a nanny for several families and spending time with her own family before heading off to Trinity University in August. She plans on majoring in biology and following a pre-med path. She says that she is not intimidated by the years of school ahead of her, as many others are, because she loves being in school and enjoys learning.

**JOHN MELLINGER**
12th grade class of 2016
In June, John attended orientation at the University of Texas at Austin, where he will be studying mechanical engineering in the fall. He feels he has the tools to be successful in UT’s rigorous engineering program and is looking forward to this new endeavor. While at Post Oak, John was a member of the EV Car Conversion team. This summer John will spend most of his time in Park City, Utah hiking, biking, and spending time with friends.

**MEGAN RAHLFS**
12th grade class of 2016
In June, Megan travelled to China for two weeks, seeing sights such as the Silk Market in Beijing, Tiananmen Square, and the Great Wall of China. One of the highlights of Megan’s Post Oak experience was the opportunities for travel including the Odyssey trips, retreats, and J/A-Term trips. She enjoyed getting to know her classmates and teachers while traveling and valued the chance to experience geographical and cultural landscapes that were completely different than what she knew growing up in Houston. The A-Term trip to Jamaica was an especially fond memory for her because she loved being immersed in the culture and participating in the service work.

While in high school, Megan grew to be an accomplished polo athlete. She and her father participated in her polo club’s summer league. When she attends SMU in the fall, Megan will continue to play on the university team. She is keeping her options open when deciding her course of study, but her interest in math is a foundation for a possible major in engineering. Megan plans on spending time with friends and family this summer.
News from Summer School

by Miriam Winton,
Auxiliary Programs Director

In the midst of major construction and renovation here on the Bissonnet Campus, our scaled down summer program continues to hum along busily and safely on the east side of the building. The youngest children in YCC are enjoying days of exploration and discovery in the full-day room. Meeting new friends from the half-day environments and living in community with them provides the entire group with abundant opportunities to practice and refine social skills. Water play on Fridays is a weekly highlight.

Two Primary classrooms are in full swing this summer. One is a Spanish immersion class in which the teacher and assistant speak Spanish with the children for the entire day and the other class is in English. Both classes are a mix of children from our six regular Primary classes. There is much excitement as the children acclimate to new routines, different (but similar) environments, and establish new friendships. The warm summer days allow for lots of garden time and outdoor work. Harvesting basil and lavender is a favorite activity. Each week culminates with a wet and water-filled Splash Day on Friday with sprinklers and wading pools.

For the twelfth consecutive summer, we are offering our Transition class to introduce rising first graders to the Lower Elementary classroom and give them the opportunity to meet new classmates. This summer’s theme is “Ocean Life” and each student is making a contribution to a class mural.

We celebrated the Fourth of July with our annual parade on Friday, July 1. This year the children paraded around our athletic field! Following the parade, watermelon and popsicles were enjoyed by all in attendance. We look forward to resuming summer camp classes at the Lower and Upper Elementary levels next year.
Construction Update

It may be hot outside here in Houston, but everything’s cool inside the High School. Construction at the Museum District Campus is wrapping up as signs are mounted, floors are swept, and sidewalks are poured. Let’s celebrate! Mark your calendar for Wednesday, October 5 from 4 to 7 p.m. to join in the fun at the campus Grand Opening festivities!

The Bissonnet Campus construction is rolling along as old walls are coming down and new walls go up. Each week sees more progress towards creating the new classrooms, Parenting Center, and black box theatre/music space. It’s beginning to look a lot like a new school year everywhere you go!

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EMILY RANDALL
12th grade class of 2016

Emily will attend The College of Wooster, a liberal arts college in Wooster, Ohio. She returned from a road trip with her family to Ohio at the end of June. She is excited about moving to a new place and living in a small town. While Emily attended Post Oak, she spent many hours commuting to and from Webster, so the idea of on-campus living and a short drive anywhere in town or out into the country pleases her. Her three-year-long internship with the paleontology department of the Houston Museum of Natural Science inspired an interest in uncovering physical pieces of the past. In the fall, Emily will continue her exploration as she begins classes in both archaeology and environmental geology. This summer, she is going on a camping trip to visit the parks of the Arkansas National forest and Diamond State Park.

Emily enjoyed spending her high school years in the heart of the Houston Museum District. She was often inspired by the art exhibits and museums nearby. She also loved when learning about a particular topic, it was often possible to see a relevant exhibit or visit a related organization nearby.

IRIS STRINGER-GRAEVE
12th grade class of 2016

Iris will attend Austin College in the fall, with plans to study marine biology.

ADAM WYGANT
12th grade class of 2016

Adam will attend the University of Houston in the fall and plans on majoring in history.

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Did we miss you? If you have alumni news to share, please contact tamarabasham@postoakschool.org or visit the link on our website.
High School Graduation

Below is former Post Oak Board Chair Bob Harvey’s speech to the class of 2016 at their commencement in May, as well as former Head of School John Long’s introduction.

JOHN LONG’S INTRODUCTION

Bob Harvey is an amazing man and one of the unsung heroes of Post Oak’s High School story. He was chair of the Post Oak board of trustees six years ago—before any of you graduating seniors were enrolled, before Mr. Moudry had recruited a single faculty member, in fact, before Mr. Moudry had even thought about Houston. It was the period when the board was considering whether Post Oak was ready, willing and able to take on the task of creating a high school.

Bob Harvey was there when we were searching for high school locations—all seven possible building sites we considered, including the Zombie Hospital which we toured wearing hard hats and carrying flashlights in the middle of the day.

Bob and Vicki have three children who went through Post Oak. Bob is such a loyal grad of Texas A&M that I’m convinced he chose which business school to attend because Harvard crimson is a close match to Aggie Maroon.

After completing his term as chair of the Post Oak board of trustees, Bob became president and CEO of the Greater Houston Partnership, Houston’s most influential business organization.

Without Bob Harvey’s leadership, the High School at Post Oak would not exist today. It is my honor and pleasure to present Robert Harvey.

BOB HARVEY’S SPEECH

Good evening trustees; members of the Post Oak administration, faculty, and staff; parents, family members, and friends; and, most importantly, members of The Post Oak School class of 2016.

I am very pleased, and honored, to be the speaker at this the first graduation ceremony of The Post Oak School. Thank you, John, for giving me this opportunity. And what a day this is!

You know, we weren’t completely sure you graduates would show up! I don’t mean for tonight’s ceremony—I mean four years ago when the High School opened. It was almost seven years ago when Post Oak parents first indicated they wanted a High School. Of course, the parents didn’t say that their children would necessarily attend; simply that they, the parents, wanted the option. And when we spoke to the Middle School and Upper Elementary students, we got a similar reaction—great idea, but they couldn’t say if they would attend, either. After all, many of them had been thinking about other high school options for years, never dreaming there would be a Post Oak High School.

So, to make a long story short: after a great deal of discussion, research, modeling, and soul searching, we decided we should move forward. We felt it was the right thing to do for The Post Oak School and the right thing to do for Houston. But, as you would expect from Post Oak, we decided to aim high. Already considered the best Montessori school in Houston and one of the best in the nation, we set out to build the best Montessori high school yet established. We would pattern it after a Montessori high school that had just opened in Cleveland. We’d build partnerships with the museums, universities, and institutions in the Houston museum district. We’d pursue IB certification in time for the first junior class. And we wouldn’t limit our recruiting to the students at Post Oak—we’d reach out across the city to students who were interested in the kind of rich, experiential education that Post Oak and Montessori stand for.

Of course, the real go/no-go decision point came with the effort to recruit James Moudry, who had co-founded the Cleveland Montessori High School program. So here we were, hiring someone to direct a program that didn’t have a campus or a building, didn’t have a faculty or a curriculum, and, most importantly, didn’t have a student body. James, and Sarah, I’m still not sure what possessed you to come. But I’m so glad you did.

Well, as they say, the rest is history. James came. The property was purchased. The building was refurbished. A great faculty was hired. The curriculum was developed.

But most importantly, you all came. You and your parents took the risk. And over four years, you have shaped and built the program. You have established the relationships with neighboring institutions and showed each of them what you could contribute. And, as of this fall, you have

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helped attract over 70 students to follow in your footsteps. The 13 of you have left your mark on this school.

So let me stop here and say thank you, sincerely, to the graduates and their parents of the inaugural graduating class of The Post Oak School. We are really glad you came.

Now, a graduation speech wouldn’t be a grad speech without giving you some advice. You may not realize it tonight, and you may not realize it for a few weeks or months, but high school graduation really is a big deal. As everyone over 30 will tell you, tonight is the figurative, if not literal, end of an era for each of you. As much opportunity as you have had to shape your education, your activities, and your interests at Post Oak—and as much exposure as you have had to the world—you are about to have much, much more.

When I graduated from a very large public high school on the west side of Houston 43 years ago, I had never volunteered for anything, run for anything, or done much of anything outside the classroom. So I headed off to A&M, which my father had attended. I joined the Corps, because my best friend was joining the Corps. I majored in mechanical engineering, because I was good at math. None of this reflected any deep thought on my part. But during my freshman year, I ran for VP of a small technical society and I enjoyed the role. At the end of my sophomore year, I ran for student senate and won a seat. I applied for Corps Staff, the small group of cadets that oversee the Corps. At the end of my junior year, I applied for and was named Corps Commander, the first Corps Commander in the University’s history to not be under contract to the military. When I realized I couldn’t graduate in four years, I stayed a fifth year and ran for student body president. When I graduated, I worked briefly in a political campaign for a faculty member running for congress, Phil Gramm. And then I called someone I knew at Amoco Production to see if they had any jobs yet to offer. He said they did, if I could be in Odessa, Texas on Monday. A year later I was transferred to Houston, received my acceptance to Harvard Business School, and married my wife, Vicki! All three occurred in the fourth week of May, 1979. In fact, tonight is our 37th anniversary.

So the point of all of that is that things began to move very quickly for me. Opportunities opened up, and I took them. There were missteps along the way, but they too were learning experiences. Let me tell you, I learned a lot when I posted a 0.0 GPA my first semester as Student Body President and had to call my parents and say “don’t bother to come up for graduation!” But my advice to you is simple:

- Be open to opportunities.
- Cast your net far and wide.
- Say yes, more often than no—particularly if the request comes from someone who knows you.
- Push beyond your comfort zone to find your true limits.

The point is: How else will you learn what you truly love? How else will you know where you really shine? It’s at that intersection between passion and aptitude—what you love and where you shine—where you will ultimately find happiness and success, and make a difference.

Now I have a request for you. You all have been engaged in a program that emphasizes curiosity, resilience, and intellect. In your four years at Post Oak, you have been encouraged to question, to seek the evidence, to weigh the arguments, to go deep, and ultimately, to seek the truth. Most importantly, perhaps, you’ve been immersed in a program that places knowledge in the context of the human experience—that recognizes a common humanity, even as it embraces the diversity of beliefs, cultures, and experiences in the world around us. And that is where I need your help. We need your help.

We live in a complex world. In my role as President of the Greater Houston Partnership, I see first hand both the strengths and weaknesses of our community here in Houston. I see a strong metro economy, equal in size to the nation of Norway. I see an opportunity city, that continues to grow faster than any other U.S. city outside of New York. I see a Medical Center unrivaled anywhere in the world. I could go on and on with the superlatives.

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But I also see a city with low educational attainment. Where only one in five young people (20%) completes any form of post-secondary credential by age 25, be it a baccalaureate degree, an associate degree, or even a technical certificate.

I see a large number of kids who enter kindergarten unable to recognize the letters of the alphabet, much less read or write their name. Kids who likely won’t be reading at the end of third grade, and will therefore be four times more likely to drop out of high school. In other words, kids who by accident of birth have virtually no path to success. I could cite similar disparities in our criminal justice system and our health delivery system.

We have to address these issues in a reasoned way. Not, in my view, by attacking the wealthy or destroying the engines of our society that create livelihoods and opportunity. But also not by disparaging the poor, or certain ethnic groups, or certain religions, or gays or the transgendered.

We desperately need wise people to look deeper into the issues and the proposed solutions. People who appreciate the benefits of a free society, on the one hand, but who won’t accept the status quo, on the other.

So my request is that you use the skills you’ve gained at The Post Oak School to be the leaders who help shape a more enlightened future for Houston, for Texas, and for the world.

What can you do—what can the 13 of you do? You can be the people of influence, the reasoned voices, the leaders. You can take the qualities you’ve developed in your homes and at Post Oak and apply them to the problems and issues of this world.

So you see, we didn’t create Post Oak’s High School because the parents wanted it or even because you wanted it. We built it because we need what this program can produce—enlightened and engaged adults who can change the world.

We need you.

Good luck. And God bless.

Visit the school’s YouTube channel to watch the video from the class of 2016’s graduation and more: youtu.be/QfFAteW6s1k
A Record Breaker for the Post Oak Fund!

by Christina Kopanidis-Cantu, Development Director

It was a record breaking year for the Post Oak Fund with a total of $337,000 raised for the school!

Our thanks go to every Post Oak family who participated.

Under the direction of Annual Fund Chairs, Lucinda and Javier Loya, our class captains educated parents in each class on the importance of this annual effort and participation soared to 94%, well above the National Association of Independent School’s average participation rate of 64%.

Annual Fund gifts support the school in a variety of ways. This year, in addition to supporting increased financial aid, teacher professional development, and technology upgrades, your contributions went toward purchasing a new 55-passenger school bus and significant upgrades to our gym: new lighting, protective padding on the walls, and a revamped sports closet to allow for easy accessibility of all equipment.

Post Oak Fund contributions make Post Oak a better school. Thank you for your generous support. 

Houston Montessori Institute Training

The Museum District Campus is buzzing with activity this summer. Beside the completion of the new High School building, the Houston Montessori Institute’s AMI Primary Training Course is underway at the Post Oak Middle School building. The trainees are completing the second part of their training this summer under the Director of Training, Coral Ruiz. After completing expected coursework and passing written and oral exams, the Class of 2017 will graduate next July.

Thank you!

- $337,000 raised
- 94% parent participation
- 13 classes reached 100% parent participation
Summer Babies

This June, Primary teacher Rebecca Duran gave birth to daughter, who weighed 7 pounds, 12 ounces and measured 21.25 inches. And Lower Elementary teacher Anita Taj Mahmood welcomed daughter, who arrived after 25 hours of labor weighing 7 pounds and measuring 20 inches. Moms and babies are healthy and happy.

Post Oak loves babies! If you've welcomed a new family member and have a photo to share, please email our communications coordinator at elaineschweizer@postoakschool.org.

Welcome Back Items
Online Soon

Visit our website the beginning of August for links to the:

• Family Handbook
• Monthly Calendar
• Orientation Schedule
• ASEP brochure
• Grandparents' & Friends' Days invitation order form
• and more!!!

www.postoakschool.org/postoak/Welcome_Back.asp

Watch your mailbox toward the end of July for the School Calendar and the Family Handbook Quickview.

Tribute to John Long

Did you miss the big party for former Head of School John Long?

Check out the tribute page for videos, photos, and more: www.postoakschool.org/postoak/long-tribute.asp.

MMUN Grant
Available

Is your Upper Elementary or Middle School student enrolling in Montessori Model United Nations (MMUN) for the fall? Did you know there is a grant available to qualified applicants?

Please contact teachers Maya and Errol Pinto for information relating to the grant provided by former Post Oak family, the Greens.
Let’s Dance!

by Sophia, Middle School student

Dancing has been my main interest for about five years now, and although I have taken classes at a few places, I found that Houston City Dance is the best for me. At City Dance you get to know all of the teachers, and you take classes with different people. Class placement is on skill, rather than age. Unlike other places, classes are small. I have some classes with three people, some with five, and some with twelve, and I get so much attention. My teachers help me, see that I am dancing correctly, and make sure I know what I’m doing. The studio offers tap, jazz, ballet, and modern classes as well as summer intensives. There are groups such as the Ensemble, Junior Ensemble, Five Seven, and professional company at the studio. We also have recitals such as the Land of Southern Sweets (a jazzy version of the Nutcracker), and themed shows along with many casual demonstrations. Classes usually work on routines to improve memory and give the students something to practice.

I started dancing just for fun like a lot of girls. But then I started to get serious about it and taking more classes! I like the challenge of learning all the routines and being in the performances which you have to audition for! It's also cool that the teachers like the same music as the kids do so we often dance to music you hear on the radio! I love that. I think everyone does because we have dancers from 2 to 72!. •

If you're interested in joining and other Post Oak families, contact Jenny.

Young Leader

Congrats to High School student Andrew who completed the Young Leaders Institute program at the Asia Society Texas. His mother, Michelle, reports that his group won for best presentation, which was “pretty cool considering he didn’t even know there was a competition to ‘win.' It was a great opportunity for him and a meaningful experience.” •

All about the Heart

Are you on Facebook? If not, you may have missed senior Brayden’s visit on Great Day Houston in June. Brayden has been interning with a local cardiothoracic surgeon at Memorial Hermann’s Heart and Vascular Institute. He writes: “We’ve been working on a project focused on educating layman audiences about heart disease. Our first animation for the project has finally wrapped, and our small team has started a YouTube channel to support that effort.” •
### CALENDAR

#### AUGUST 14–20

| Mon 8/15 | Teachers & assistants return for in-service week |

#### AUGUST 21–27

| Mon 8/22 | Teacher in-service (no students attend) |
| Tue 8/23 | All Middle School & High School students begin 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. |
| W 8/24–Fri 8/26 | Middle School to the Retreat at Artesian Lakes |
| Thu 8/25 | High School parent orientation & welcome 7 p.m. |
| Fri 8/26 | YCC walk through 9–11 a.m. Primary walk through 9–11 a.m. |

#### AUGUST 28–SEPTEMBER 3

For a full list of this week’s activities, please see the School Calendar to be mailed at the end of July

| Mon 8/29 | PHE begins |
| Tue 8/30 | Middle School parent orientation & welcome 7 p.m. |

### NOTICE BOARD

**Shopping for Back to School?**

There’s an easy way to help raise money for our school—when you go shopping! Whether buying groceries at Randalls, or gifts and school supplies at Target, your purchases can benefit Post Oak! Grandparents, alumni, and friends are all welcome to participate in the programs. **We truly appreciate all your support! Happy shopping!**


### MUSEUM DISTRICT Campus

**Save the Date**

Oct. 5
4–7 p.m.

**FOOD, MUSIC, & FUN**

GRAND OPENING

To avoid the school’s email communications arriving in your junk mail folder, please add info@postoakschool.org to your safe sender list or address book/contacts.

### ABOUT THE POST

The Post appears every first Monday of the month during 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 to Communications Coordinator Elaine Schweizer (elaineschweizer@postoakschool.org) by 5:00 p.m. on the Monday one week prior to publication.

The Post Oak School was founded in 1963 and accredited by both the International Baccalaureate® Programme (IBO) and the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS)

**Bissonnet Campus:** 4600 Bissonnet St., Bellaire, TX 77401 • Tel.: 713-661-6688 • Fax: 713-661-4959
**Museum District Campus:** 1010 Autrey St., Houston, TX 77006 • Tel.: 832-538-1988 • Fax: 832-538-1926

[www.postoakschool.org](http://www.postoakschool.org) | [facebook.com/thepostoakschool](http://facebook.com/thepostoakschool)

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