

Montana Academy Foundation MISSION

Starting from the premise that No Child Makes it Alone, the Montana Academy Foundation intends:

- (1) To promote better understanding of psychological development and more effective treatment for disrupted, delayed maturation in adolescence—by funding research and promoting efforts to develop more effective therapies;
- (2) To support broad professional and lay discussion and to provide public education about adolescent development, its disruptions, and related problems;
- (3) To provide crisis financial assistance for students who demonstrate progress in maturation at Montana Academy, but whose parents have unexpectedly run out of resources prior to their completion of the program and graduation.

Montana Academy Foundation (MAF) is a 501 (c) 3 non-profit corporation incorporated in Montana. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent of the law.

Giving to

Montana Academy Foundation

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Montana Academy Foundation
28 West California Street
Kalispell, MT 59901

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Our Rising Profile

There are many gratifying aspects to service on the Board of the Montana Academy Foundation. First, there is the pleasure of serving with such a great group of directors. Each of our volunteer directors brings such a wealth of experience and enthusiasm to their duties that our time spent together is always exhilarating and a tremendous learning experience. Second, our mission always feels relevant and worthwhile. Most of us have experienced firsthand the challenges of parenting a child in need of more maturity, and the struggles of deciding to seek the assistance of Montana Academy, coping with a child in residence there and dealing with the brave new world that follows graduation from MA. If we can assist others who find themselves in the same predicament, both directly through the MA experience and elsewhere, then our time is well spent.

Most recently, we have begun to experience the excitement of seeing the wisdom of the founders of MA being recognized and adopted by the larger world.

The popular media and numerous experts have seized on the notion that true success is more likely attributable to “grit” and resilience than it is to native intelligence or

the fortunes of birth. Those who are able to develop these crucial attributes of maturity have a bright future, and

those who do not are likely to struggle. John McKinnon and John Santa have preached this gospel for well over a decade, but sometimes new ideas take a while to take hold. Fortunately, as the “maturity movement” is gaining traction, John McKinnon and others from the MA community have gained an important seat at the table to advance these ideas into the broader world.

As detailed in John’s update on the MAMA and its adoption by the Kalispell public high schools, we have supported a significant opportunity to test the efficacy of the MAMA in a regular high school setting. The MAMA is proving to be an effective tool in this setting. The Kalispell schools are delighted with the results and are adopting the use of this tool as part of their standard school-wide assessment toolkit. This is a very exciting and encouraging development!



Tom Kellerman
*President, Montana Academy
Foundation, Board of Directors*

Our Rising Profile *continued*

At the same time, John has been actively engaged in a dialogue with other leaders in the study of maturity-based approaches to adolescent development. This dialogue is accelerating. This fall John will travel to England to take part in a “Positive Education Summit” with several of the leaders of this movement from the US and the UK. The message is starting to get out, but it will be a long process. It is gratifying that our community has something to add to this important discussion.

Message from the Founders

Editor’s Note: The Founders of Montana Academy distributed this letter below to the parents of current student and alumni. We are reproducing here in case you missed it.

Dear Friends,

We write with pleasure to announce that Dennis J. Hartzell has accepted with enthusiasm our equally-enthusiastic offer of the key operational leadership job at Montana Academy—as Head of School. He will move from San Francisco with his wife, Sheila, and start in mid-October.

This is a new central leadership role at MA, but not a novel idea. Some years ago we embarked upon a step-wise plan (a) for the Academy’s reluctantly-aging founders gradually to shift their operational burdens to more agile shoulders; and (b) to sustain MA’s unique academic and clinical culture by promoting “from within.” Over the years we appointed young leaders and gradually delegated authority for operations to them. And so when they meet Wednesday mornings around Rosemary’s table, they represent the entire Academy: school, program, clinical care, physical plant, business office, admissions and the Sky houses. After this progress, it only remains for us to relinquish the gavel—to a Head of School.

Dennis will pick up that gavel in October. To his new key role he brings a remarkable skill set and deep experience: as co-founder and associate head of The Bay School, a first-rate academic prep school in San Francisco; as an accomplished teacher and passionate coach; as a dad to twin boys, now young adults; and, not least, as an MA parent. One of his splendid sons is a proud recent MA graduate. We trust you will agree: he brings a remarkable resume to

The Foundation has been proud to support these efforts. A central part of our mission statement is to support the advancement of the level of knowledge about adolescent maturity and to assist in dispersing this knowledge to the wider world. This would not be possible without your continued encouragement and financial support of the Foundation. 🌿

this formidable, but rewarding task. No doubt Dennis Hartzell will lead with the competence of an experienced teacher and administrator, but he also brings the empathic understanding of an MA parent.

This innovation will shift our roles, but we expect to stay involved for years to come. We are the board of directors, after all. But more than simply serving as the Board we intend to have a continued presence at Montana Academy making certain that our vision remains true as we gradually turn operational responsibility over to our talented and loyal staff. Our goal is to maintain a presence and share our clinical and educational experience while allowing the Leadership team to manage the school. We will continue to man prominent clinical outposts: e.g., John

McKinnon has again become Medical Director and consults (since Dr. Dennis Malinak’s retirement) for students in need of medication; Rosemary will remain Admissions Director; and John and Carol Santa will continue to help with admission interviews and consultations with teachers and therapists. It has always been our plan that we continue to be involved with students and parents and consultants for years to come.

That is our news. We hope you will share our enthusiasm for the contributions that we are confident Dennis Hartzell will make. We will be glad to know what you think.

Sincerely yours,

John Santa, PhD
Carol Santa, PhD

John McKinnon, MD
Rosemary McKinnon, MSW

Coming on Board at Montana Academy

Dennis Hartzell, Head of School

Editor's Note: On October 15, 2013, Dennis Hartzell joined the Montana Academy staff as Head of School, with responsibility for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the therapeutic, academic, and programmatic dimensions of school life. This new position, created by the founders, is the next step in a management transition begun over a year ago. The founders will continue to function as the Board of Montana Academy in support of Dennis and the Leadership Team. When I asked Dennis if he would share his thoughts on this new role, he sent along the following piece.

"I join you with hand and heart."

(From a letter written by William Clark to Meriwether Lewis, July 4, 1803, accepting Lewis' offer of co-command of the Corps of Discovery, the U.S. Army's official name for the Lewis and



Clark Expedition. Taken from Donald Jackson's *Letters of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, 2nd ed., Univ. of Illinois Press, 1978, vol. I, p. 113.)

In mid-September, 1805, the Corps of Discovery was in serious trouble. Under the joint command of Captains Lewis and Clark, the 32 men, one woman, and one infant who comprised the Corps of Discovery were freezing, lost, and nearing starvation.

Their transit west across Lolo Pass, not far south from today's Montana Academy, had become the darkest and most challenging segment of their three-year journey round-trip from St. Louis to the Pacific Coast. A freak blizzard and sustained frigid temperatures, combined with treacherous terrain, turned what they had expected to be a four or five day crossing of the Bitterroot Mountains into a desperate struggle for survival.

The extraordinary leadership skills of Lewis and Clark sustained the entire party through 12 harrowing days. They emerged at last onto the Weipe Prairie, where friendly bands of Nez Percé Indians provided food and horses. The Corps of Discovery moved into the vast watershed of the Columbia River and on November 5, 1805 reached the Pacific. ("Ocean in view! O! the joy," read Clark's journal entry for that day.) They would spend that winter camped near the present-day city of Astoria, OR. By

late-September, 1806, the expedition would be back in St. Louis, having completed one of the greatest journeys of exploration and discovery of all time.

In May, 2011, my son, Zach, joined the community at Montana Academy, beginning his own extraordinary journey of self-exploration and self-discovery. The Lewis and Clark Expedition travelled over thousands of miles of uncharted territory. The members of the Corps of Discovery confronted dangers ranging from encounters with grizzlies (not to mention war-like Sioux and Blackfeet) to the daunting vagaries of weather and landscape. They took on the mysteries of half a continent and prevailed through a combination of courage, discipline, and grit.

Over the past two years, Zach and his schoolmates have pursued their internal journeys on the limited geography of Lost Prairie Ranch. This contraction of physical space has promoted in them an intense focus on their inner selves, allowing them to confront the challenges that had thrown their lives, and the lives of their families, into terrifying disarray. Confronted not by grizzlies but by the challenges of understanding their true, authentic natures, they have experienced all of the turmoil and anguish that goes along with that process. And they have found, over time, the very courage, discipline, and grit they need to illuminate the mysteries of their inner lives.

Zach joined eleven classmates in graduating from Montana Academy on May 10th. He will begin his college career this year at Whitman College. We have been re-united as a family of four for the first time in more than two years. These are good things.

Of the many parallels that I see between the members of the Corps of Discovery and the kids at MA, one stands out. I learned very early in our experience with MA that there are many Lewises and many Clarks at work on the ranch and in the Sky Houses. Everywhere you turn at Montana Academy, you find another adult who truly gets it about young people in distress. This fact alone makes the opportunity to join the MA community powerfully compelling. To serve as Montana Academy's Head of School offers the chance to work with exceptional individuals who transform kids' lives. Can there be a greater privilege than this?

Once you cross the cattle-guard and enter the world of the ranch, it takes almost no time to sense that here is a deeply healthy, engaging place for teenagers. When you have been in schools as long as I have, you also know that

Coming on Board at Montana Academy . . . *continued*

such an environment can only be created and sustained by dedicated, compassionate, and competent adults who structure each individual kid's experience, day by day, month after month. You can feel the special bond that exists between the students who live at the ranch and the staff who work there. You see and hear evidence of this bond everywhere. At the breakfast (or lunch or dinner) table. In the classroom. On the playing fields. In the studios and rehearsal spaces. On the paths from the dormitories to the library or to the stables. In team meetings, clan meetings, therapy sessions.

On my very first visit to Montana Academy, months before Zach arrived, I was immediately struck by the ease and

the mutual awareness that defined the relations between the adults and the kids. In all of my emotional rawness at having recently sent Zach off to wilderness therapy, I had no idea what to expect on Lost Prairie. The reassuring, straight-forward gazes of the students that I met on my tour of the campus startled me at first. Their openness of manner conveyed a courtesy and kindness that I experienced as deeply moving and deeply reassuring. I still remember those moments with amazement and gratitude.

From time to time, I yearn for a place in the Corps of Discovery. I know: this is a historical impossibility. But starting in October, maybe I can prove worthy of the next best thing. 🐾

Maturity Research Update—Aug 2013

John A. McKinnon, MD



In October 2012, when I last reported the latest, we had just completed the data set for an initial study of maturity in two nearby public high schools. With remarkable collaboration from the Superintendents of School District 5, administrative push from both principals and conceptual drive from

leading department heads at Glacier and Flathead High Schools, we trained raters and assembled together a large, intriguing data set: teacher MAMA-III maturity ratings (May 2012) and year-end ancillary data (GPAs, Missed Days, Disciplinary Referrals, and Number of Activities) for all 700 freshmen. When I wrote at year's end I already sensed that we share a deep interest in the development of young adult character, and that we had arrived at what Bogey called "the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

The 2012 data were remarkable. We had demonstrated that when public school teachers had the structural opportunity and took the trouble to know their students well in "freshman academies," which both high schools had developed, they could rate academic and personal "approaches" to the challenges of adolescence—and so could gauge what we have come to call "maturity" of character. Factor Analysis suggested two very distinctive

sub-scales (Planfulness and Moral Reasoning), and some blurring between two other clusters that we conceptualized under Modesty (v grandiosity) and Empathy (v obliviousness), and which seem closely related.

Because we asked at least three teachers of different subjects to rate each student (they did >2,000 MAMA-III ratings in two days), we demonstrated solid inter-rater reliability (CCI among all raters in MAMATOTAL scores = 0.884). Taking one teacher discipline (one rating per student), the English teacher demonstrated a remarkable internal consistency and coherence, both in the MAMA's total score and in subscale scores (Cronbach's alpha > 0.90). MAMATOT maturity correlated directly with GPA (0.662) and inversely with Missed Days (-0.420) and # Disciplinary Referrals (-0.529). All these correlations support the fundamental immaturity hypothesis, i.e., that academic performance, school self-discipline, and interpersonal diplomacy are functions of mature character development. Of interest, the sub-scale most strongly correlated with GPA and with Disciplinary Referrals was Planfulness—a confirmation with a clinical observation at MA, i.e., that among those students who move from the ranch to town, those who do best at Sky House are those who already demonstrate a capacity for clear goals and plans, and who can anticipate the consequences of their present actions.

In the fall, we decided together to follow that freshman class with annual ratings—to trace the natural history of character maturation and its relation to academic and interpersonal performance in two public high schools. We hoped to develop an intervention, helped by our clinical experience at MA, to try to enhance character maturation and so improve academic performance in a public school setting. In another feat of deft high school management, the principals at both public high schools (PHS) pulled off yet another major rating effort—and the 2013 PHS data set has now been cleaned up, ancillary data from the high school offices added, and all sent again to Professor Kevin Delucchi at UC (San Francisco). This year, we followed up on last year's frosh ratings by doing all the sophomores in both high schools, and we also did this year's freshmen. We already had inter-rater reliability data, so this time we asked only the English teachers to rate the freshmen and only the Western Civ teachers to rate sophomores. In sum, we collected one-teacher MAMA-III rating for ~700 freshmen and ~700 sophomores. Professor Delucchi has his work cut out for him in the coming weeks, as we particularly try to determine whether frosh MAMA-III ratings “predict” sophomore academic performance.

Here I acknowledge the indispensable support provided by the MA Foundation, which has encouraged me, surely, but also pays for consultation with Professor Delucchi from UC (San Francisco), and has provided honoraria for all teacher participants in both 2012 and 2013 PHS studies—and for our 2011 PHS pilot project, too, which began this MA-PHS collaboration. Here I also applaud the splendid addition of Linda Solomon to our group. In the fall she joined MA as an Administrative Assistant, but also became our Research Assistant. She collects other MA data, including our recently successful One-Year Follow-up, organizes Parent Exit Interviews, and helps John Santa and Nick with their NATSAP data collection at enrollment and graduation. She assembled and cleaned up the huge PHS data-set we just sent off. I am delighted again to have the consultation and collaboration of Professor Kevin Delucchi at UC (San Francisco), thanks to the MA Foundation. I should add that we have been helped recently with expert advice from Professor James Robbins of U Arkansas Medical Center, a

pediatric psychiatric epidemiologist, whose particular expertise has been in gauging treatment outcomes in adolescent programs. His is a specialty I can hardly pronounce and had not run across before, but I recognized immediately, as you will when you think about it, that his is precisely the expertise we have needed! This has become quite a team.

In other recent news, the Pine River Institute Study, which has used the MAMA-II as part of a multi-year, sophisticated treatment outcome study, continues north of Toronto. In April 2013, whose travel costs were supported by the MA Foundation, Nathaan Demers, a psychology grad student at U Denver (and onetime MA team leader), collected concurrently from our therapists' a complete set of MAMA-III ratings for all MA students at the ranch and Sky Houses and from our students a complete set of Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (adolescent) data, which is the basis for a PsyD thesis he is in the process of writing—to compare the MAMA-III with the “immaturity” subscale (IMM) of the MMPI-A. And, at long last, our first academic MAMA paper (reporting MAMA-p pilot data from some years ago) was published (Hong, N., et al) in the somewhat-slow-to-get-to-press *Journal of Therapeutic Schools and Programs*. With a little help from Professor Robbins and Professor Delucchi, I am at work on a second paper, which will bring together all the results, including the currently-in-progress PHS 2013 data, to do with the MAMA-III. It is my hope that, once this is done and has been accepted for publication in a refereed journal, we will move to make the MAMA more widely available for others to use in research and program evaluation. 🌸



STUDENT VOICES

Editor's Note: The professionals at Montana Academy are unique in their ability to communicate to parents about the hurdles and progress of the teens at the Academy. Yet the inner thoughts and feelings of the students actually experiencing changes and of the graduates who are now navigating the real world can provide insights to all on the impact of the program. We are, therefore, adding a column to SkyLines called Student Voices. In each addition, we will include an essay from a current MA student and a former MA student. We believe you will be moved and inspired by these essays.

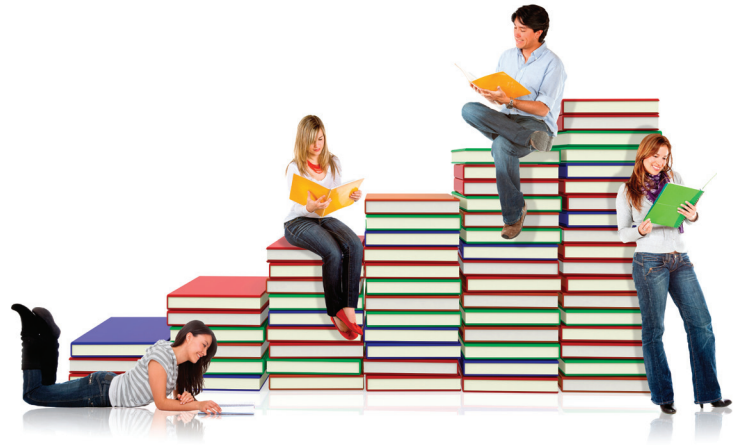
ONCE YOU LEARN

By: Katherine "Katie" Hitt

"Bike trip?" I asked, praying that my ears had deceived me. Along with eight of my closest friends, I was going to be riding for forty-nine miles on the trails of Idaho. This news would not evoke sheer terror for the average American who learned how to ride a bike at the age of six or seven. I, however, avoided the process throughout my childhood due to fear. Every time I thought of bicycles, I pictured myself crashing on to the unforgiving pavement and returning home covered in blood, tears streaming down my face. This vision still haunted me when I finally learned how to ride a bike in middle school, and I hadn't touched one since. A three-day biking trip was a nightmare come true.

When we arrived in Idaho and prepared to embark on the first trail, my anxiety struck like an electric shock. My body was tense and my mind was racing as I did my best to keep the horrific images out of my head. "Is everyone ready?" asked the guide of our trip. I then put on my helmet, took a deep breath, and mounted my bike. Quieting my fear and embracing the moment, I started to pedal. In those first moments on the trail, I was surprised by the peace I felt within myself. The feeling of my feet working the pedals to make the bike move forward empowered me, and I felt a rush of confidence.

A couple miles into the trail, our group halted in front of massive tunnel. When I was confronted with this obstacle, my thoughts quickly reverted back to my childlike fears and insecurities. I shrunk in front of the opening of the tunnel, likening it to the jaws of a monster eager to devour me. My friends could read my expression loud and clear. "You got it, Katie. Just do it," one of my friends encouraged.



She was right. At that moment, I realized that I was no longer a little girl afraid of bikes. I was a young woman, confronted with an opportunity to defy my own judgments and expectations.

Upon entering, I realized that there is a type of darkness that exists only inside of a tunnel. With nowhere to go, the sounds of laughter and singing bounced off the walls and made me feel safe despite the ominous atmosphere. My hair whipped my face and the cold chapped my lips, but I felt utterly exhilarated. I pedaled faster and faster until I forgot what I was doing and where I was, and then, I raised my head. Miles ahead, I saw a tiny gold light. I took a second to appreciate the moment. I had straddled one of my biggest fears and rode it into the abyss, and now the reward was clear. Things could only get better. I was ready to ride a bike, to be self-sufficient, to face my future. They say that once you learn, you never forget. They couldn't be more right.

The most important thing I have learned in life is the power to accept my faults, learn from my mistakes and lead with the knowledge I gain in doing so. At my therapeutic boarding school my maturation has closely followed the serenity prayer; "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference". I have learned to accept my anxiety and issues, change how I deal with these aspects of myself, and better those around me with what I find in doing so. 🌸

REFLECTIONS: A COLLEGE ESSAY

By: *Anonymous*

When I first arrived here at Montana Academy I was scared of whom I had become and unsure of who I really was and wanted to be; however, now I can confidently say that I have successfully accepted, found and now take pride in who I truly am. My transformation can be particularly categorized by an event in which I was placed in a leadership position during a time when I was set on not growing up. When consumed by this artificial attachment, I get a lazy conscience. For a few months I played this out by relying on the girls on my team that were more senior than I to pick up my slack so that I could continue to sit in my stagnant state. Fortunately, I was slapped in the face by the reality of the hole I had dug myself into when they graduated and I was left senior student of my team. I needed to become Residential Assistant (RA) and in doing so had many responsibilities and expectations in addition to a strong presence. When I started as RA, I let myself slip up and dabble in my old patterns. But in learning and working to change how I dealt with my emotions and relationships, I persevered and became an amazing leader. I realized that in giving up my old self, instead of having nothing, when I let myself reach out, lead and prove that I was adequate and capable, I had something so very beautiful that no one could ever take it away from me.

My weekend dorm parent told me the other day about how she recently asked a family friend, a man about 93 years old, what his advice was for a young person embarking on an independent life, and his words were as follows:

“Happiness does not come from anyone but you. Because of this, you can take it with you wherever you go.”

My time as RA has proven that I have the want and capability to be a happy, strong leader, even if my life has been, and will continue to have its ups and downs. Wherever I go, what I have within me; the maturity, confidence and determination to do what is right, will assist me with the opportunities and challenges in my future. 🌿



LIFE AND DEATH

By: *Diego Martrin*

Life and Death

I can relate to Keats on many things,
Most prominent of which is fear of death,
Yet also I fear life, and what it brings,
Till Mother Nature takes my final breath.
To make the most of life I need to leave,
And live with Nature, not society
For all my sins she will grant a reprieve,
And let me rest in shadows of her trees.
Romanticism has it figured right,
The key to happiness is found in love
And if love's lost, then day fades into night,
As angels' songs cease sounding from above.
If nature can cure each and every plight,
Then let me live among the deer and doves.

My poem, entitled “Life and Death”, shows multiple connections to Romanticism and the work of John Keats. The first such connection is apparent when I specifically mention my ability to relate to Keats’ fear of death, as expressed in his poem, “When I Have Fears That I May Cease to Be.” The following quote from my poem shows a direct correlation between my approach to Romanticism and that of Keats, “I can relate to Keats on many things, most prominent of which is fear of death.” My fear of death comes from a fear of the unknown. Because I am not fully sold on either God and heaven or science and eternal nothingness (a concept I cannot even begin to fathom, which therefore brings even more anxiety to the table), I am deeply afraid of death and what it might bring. I would likely do anything in my power to save myself from death and the possibility of losing everything that I love about life, or everything that I hate. I then go on to a more introspective approach, touching on my love of nature and the retreat it allows me from the stresses and anxieties of everyday life. Life is very difficult for many, including me. My intense fear of judgment at the hands of my peers has led me to develop a mask that allows me to please as many people as I can and fit in as best I can among people that I may not otherwise relate to. The constant upkeep of this mask, however, leads to a very stressful lifestyle. I constantly feel like I am performing for others, even when I am alone. I am never truly comfortable, only afraid that someone might be watching me critically or talking about me behind my back. This paranoia and borderline narcissism leads me to feel constantly uncomfortable and anxious. Therefore, I am almost as afraid of life as I am of death. “Yet also I fear life, and what it brings, Till Mother

LIFE AND DEATH by Diego Martrin . . . *continued*

Nature takes my final breath. To make the most of life I need to leave, And live with Nature, not society.” This shows that the only way I could truly be happy would be in the presence of not humans, but nature. Growing up, my father always took me on hikes in the wilderness of Maryland or Virginia, and also the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. On these hikes, I was freed from the oppression of people around me, and allowed to look upon nature’s beauty without distraction. I learned the names of trees and animals, and gained a new appreciation for the quiet that my Dad and I are still so fond of. This love of nature is present throughout many pieces of literature from the Romantic period. Another reason I am uncomfortable

with myself comes from a deep-seeded sense of guilt for all the people I have wronged in my past. Luckily, nature does not hold a grudge, as far as I know. As long as I can live in peace and harmony with my natural surroundings, I will not need to worry about accidentally hurting someone’s feelings, or putting my needs above others because I am simply too afraid of being sad. Therefore, the view that I express in my poem is one of regret at my past mistakes, yet hope for a future in which I can leave all that anxiety behind and immerse myself in nature. This view can be found and reflected in the views of prominent Romantic poets such as John Keats, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and George Gordon, Lord Byron. 🌸

PARENT VOICES

Two fathers at the May 2013 graduation chose the same literary example – Homer’s The Odyssey – as a way to express their thoughts on the journey traveled and the journey yet to come. Here are the musings of one of those parents.

THE HERO’S JOURNEY

By: Alexander Troy, Father of Rachel Troy

You, the graduating class of Montana Academy are my heroes. You have accomplished something that deserves the word “heroic.” Please don’t be skeptical or surprised. I know we live in a time of hyperbole and sloppy speech. I do not mean heroic the way it is commonly used now, to describe someone with a great jump shot. I mean it in the sense of this definition, which I got from Bing’s on-line dictionary: “a remarkably brave person, one who shows strong character.”

Let me tell you about the gift I gave Rachel just before she went to Montana. I gave her a copy of *The Odyssey*, a book I hope you have all read or will read. I wasn’t thinking about heroes. I had a simpler message in mind when I gave Rae the book-and she gave me a look.

There is no character in western literature as determined to return home as Odysseus, the hero of the story. (You might know him by his Latin name, Ulysses.). Nothing can stop him from returning home, not shipwrecks or sea monsters, not one-eyed giants or angry gods.

“You’ll come home, Rachel, “I said, “just like Odysseus.” (I’m going to put aside months of Montana Academy parent-child training to pause and say: “told you so, Rae.”) But, as Dale and I got deeper into the MA program I saw

that the Odyssey was fitting in a more important way, because, like Odysseus, everyone who graduates from MA takes the hero’s journey.

The scholar Joseph Campbell told us every hero – you or Odysseus – follows the same story line. There are five parts to the journey. See if you recognize them:

Responding to a call to action: Something has to change.
Answer the call by going on a journey to a far off land. Odysseus went to the Underworld, which is a hell of a lot easier to get to than Marion. Many more direct flights. Once there the hero gets help from a semi-divine, radiant being. If you’ve read the Odyssey you’re thinking of Athena, who is always watching out for Odysseus. But I have Sara Boilen in mind, who shepherds team 4 so lovingly.

Slaying a monster.

Graduates, perhaps you are wondering, what monster did I confront? The answer is no one believes in the mythological monsters Odysseus defeated. But we all believe in our own demons, the weaknesses and flaws that lurk in our nature and which can suddenly spring out like striking cobra. Most people run from their demons as fast as they can. Or use drugs or alcohol or lies to hide from them. Most people are not heroes.

You faced them, you grappled with them, and you defeated them. And you will continue to do so, for the struggle never stops. That’s heroic.

Bringing a Gift.

Joseph Campbell also said the hero brings back a gift – a

THE HERO'S JOURNEY by Alexander Troy . . . *continued*

boon he called it – to his people. You have done that too. Dale and I are always validating each other's feelings. We are better listeners because of this experience. Thank you all for that.

So you're probably wondering: I'm a hero. Odysseus is a hero. Who is the greater hero?

Let's imagine Odysseus applying to Montana Academy. Picture him in that office upstairs in the lodge – the parents know which room I mean. We all sat down with the school leaders there. We thought we were interviewing them when they were interviewing us.

Carol Santa says in her gentle way: "Odysseus, why do you think you're here?" Odysseus, sheepishly: "I'm a pathological liar, a killer, and I like to burn down cities."

Rosemary (after an awkward silence) "Perhaps you need

a bit of time in a wilderness program." Dr. Malinak said: "I'd like to start you immediately on Abilify, Xanax, and a strong sedative."

You see my point. You've done what the greatest hero of Greece could not.

I will close with a quote from Marian Anderson, another hero, the opera singer who persevered in the face of cruel prejudice. After becoming the first African-American to sing at the Metropolitan Opera, she wrote: "Sometimes you're overwhelmed when a thing comes, and you do not realize the magnitude of the affair at that moment. When you get away from it, you wonder, did it really happen to you?"

Graduates, it really did happen to you. You did it.

SAVOR IT TODAY, BUT OWN IT ALWAYS 🌿

BOOK IN REVIEW

Audrey Carlson, MAF Board Member and Alumni Parent

LETTER'S FROM LOST PRAIRIE

By: Rosemary McKinnon

Photography: Candace Gaudiani

In *Letters From Lost Prairie* you will find both the Montana that you know and the Montana that you may not know, but certainly you will hope that this is the Montana that your teens have come to love and appreciate. With her calm, thoughtful, compassionate, and intelligent communication with Montana Academy parents, Rosemary McKinnon paints the landscape of the Ranch on Lost Prairie Road, describes the community that provides nourishment to the distressed hearts and souls of our troubled teens, and shows us what the outside world may bring our teens as they leave this structured, supportive, and healing environment. The Ranch, the Lost Prairie, the Montana that most MA parents come to know is the busy, bustling place of Parent Workshops and short visits with our teens as they mend and grow during their stay. Rosemary's Letters tell us much about the quiet, natural, learning and growing side of the place and of the experience.

While my son was at Montana Academy, I had the opportunity to drive the back road through Paradise Valley and Lost Trail Ranch on the way to Marion. Rosemary



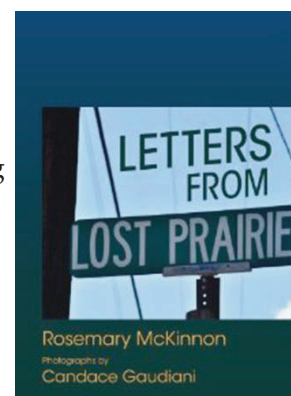
Rosemary McKinnon, MD

speaks of this beautiful, quiet country full of wildlife that surrounds Montana Academy. She sets the scene for families to imagine how their teens are living their lives so far away from home.

While my son was at Montana Academy, I participated in phone calls and Workshops. I met therapists, teachers, team leaders, teammates, friends but I did not sit in my son's team's sessions nor in clan meetings nor in grief groups. Rosemary's Letters gives a glimpse at the therapeutic side of the Ranch that families might not ever see.

While my son was at Montana Academy, I watched him mature and grow strong enough to handle the challenges that were going to be ahead of him. What I could not see, was the very hard work that he did on his own every day and the support that he received to prepare him for his future. Rosemary's Letters can help families begin to think about how to reinforce the lessons that they will learn and how to prepare for what the outside world will bring.

Not long ago I received an email from a parent in my area who had recently dropped her teen off at Montana Academy. With her teen so far away, she was looking for



BOOK IN REVIEW *Letter's From Lost Prairie . . . continued*

ways to connect with other MA parents so that she would know more about what was happening at the Ranch, what to expect, what to hope for. At the time, I had not yet read Rosemary's book, but now in recommending Letters From Lost Prairie I feel that I can share with her a much wider,

richer, truer view of life on the Ranch, in the community and the hopes for her child's future. I hope that this teen, like so many others, will come to appreciate and love the Montana that Rosemary McKinnon has revealed to us.



GETTING THE WORD OUT

Rhonda B. Friedman, ScD, MAF Board Member and Alumni Parent

Historically, the MA Foundation has embraced three goals. Over the years the board has put parents' generous gifts to use in support of research on adolescent immaturity—an enterprise that, in recent years, has become central. Second, the foundation has provided financial assistance, by means of loans or grants, stretched by limited resources, to families who, despite good intentions and reasonable plans, found themselves unexpectedly in financial crises. The foundation has succeeded, with equal support from MA, in making sure that no student who starts treatment at MA leaves solely because of a financial reversal. And third, the foundation has supported public education—about “adolescent development, its disruptions, and related problems.”

In the last few SkyLines, we have summarized the research the foundation has supported—particularly the development of the MAMA (Montana Adolescent Maturity Assessment), a metric to gauge relative maturity and immaturity and to track clinical change. No more needs to be said here, except that the Foundation will surely continue to support refinement of the instrument and its wider application in various school settings. Clearly the board believes that scientific substantiation of the clinical observations of therapists and teachers at Montana Academy is a required step in educating clinicians across the nation, who treat our children.

We may not have communicated equally well, as yet, how important we think public education must be. To communicate research and clinical and personal evidence only within our own MA community is not sufficient—and risks merely preaching to the choir. For this reason, the MA Foundation also supports dissemination of relevant information—an activity we think is likely to grow. Over the years, the foundation has found ways to support papers, lectures, and conference participation by MA faculty—so as to get the word out. In the past few years, for example, the foundation has variously contributed to:

MA Staff presentations (John Santa, Nick Hong, Tim Corson, Sara Boilen, John McKinnon, including keynote speeches, at annual meetings of the Independent Educational Consultants Association (IECA) and the

National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs (NATSAP).

John McKinnon's visit to the Pine River Institute, north of Toronto, to talk to PRI staff and parents, and help PRI incorporate a pilot version of the MAMA in its outcome studies.



John McKinnon's lectures to Department of Psychiatry Grand Rounds at Harvard and UC (San Francisco); his lecture at Middlebury College, organized by the Department of Psychology; his lecture to the California Society of Addiction Medicine (CSAM); his lecture to the Honors College at University of Mississippi; his talk to Denver University's Social Work students; his lecture at the Drew School, organized by the Bay Area High Schools Parent Coalition; his lectures on adolescent development and immaturity teachers at Flathead and Glacier High schools in the Flathead Valley of Montana; and his lecture on the campus of Johns Hopkins—as the introduction to a conference organized by IMP (see next page).

MA Staff and board participation in a Baltimore conference sponsored by Incentive Mentoring Program (IMP) to explore ways to broaden IMP's approach and to incorporate the concepts of immaturity in their work with inner city youth; and staff and board participation in a follow-up, in Montana, to that Baltimore Convention—a “Montana Conversation”—sponsored by MA Foundation and MA, which gathered for two days of discussions the principal leaders and researchers from Pine River Institute (Canada), IMP (Baltimore), and the Princeton Center for Leadership Training (New Jersey), and Glacier and Flathead High Schools.

In October 2013, the Foundation will again support John McKinnon's travels—this time to speak to the first “Positive Education Summit” organized by Professor Martin Seligman (U Penn) and James O'Shaughnessy (Floreat Education, UK), which will open at 10 Downing

GETTING THE WORD OUT . . . *continued*

Street and take place at Wellington College, London—whose 25 delegates will arrive from Cambridge University, the University of London and University of Birmingham in the UK; from Adelaide and Victoria, Australia; from Singapore; Shanghai, China; from Mexico; and from various universities and organizations in the United States.

These presentations are beginning to gain attention. Parents and school administrators alike are beginning to understand that curricula and teachers are not enough to guarantee academic success. Parents realize (and some clinicians are following their lead) that treating symptoms in troubled adolescents fails to address the cause of the problem. Dr. Angela Duckworth (who will speak a few hours before John McKinnon at the UK “Summit”) has suggested that “character-is-identity,” and that “grit” (perseverance) is a key to success—although Professor Duckworth acknowledges on her website that “nobody is sure how to teach it.” The KIPP schools (whose founder, David Levin, will speak beside John McKinnon in parallel talks in London) have adopted this approach—and created a second report card to reflect teachers’ appraisals

of “character” development. And recently, Paul Tough popularized grit and other positive thinking concepts in his book, *How Children Succeed*. Dr. Martin Seligman, who directs the Center for Positive Psychology at University of Pennsylvania, co-edited a compendium, *Character Strengths and Virtues*, which links success and happiness to “virtues,” which are aspects of character.

Enter the MAMA. It is our hope that this index of maturity/immaturity will find its place as a way in which “grit” and over virtues of “character” can be measured. If the index can sort out attributes of character lacking in teens, then perhaps it can provide a map for systematic efforts to improve character, as teenagers mature. Much work needs to be done to determine if this is, in fact, plausible. In the meantime, the foundation will support a broad sharing of the dramatic clinical experience of the MA community at Lost Prairie. We hope that, in time, maturity and adolescent success will come to be associated, even synonymous, in academic psychological literature, in conversations in school cafeterias, in clinicians’ offices, and in the homes of families across the country. 🌿

PHIL JONES - MONTANA TREASURE

Phil Jones has been a fixture at Montana Academy since we opened our doors in June 1997. We were casting around for an English teacher at the very moment when Phil and Connie were returning home from Japan after teaching in South Asian and Far Eastern international schools for 14 years. Their son, Scott, was ready to start college and their daughter, Vera, was ready for 3rd grade. They had been raised largely abroad and it was time for them to return and put down roots in their home state. Both Phil and Connie were raised on the east side of Montana and attended University of Montana. Remarkably they had built a small home down Lost Prairie Road in Pleasant Valley and were using this pied-a-terre to explore options for teaching in Montana. I doubt very much that when we hired Phil, and a couple of years later Connie, that any of us could have imagined that this would be such a long lived and successful collaboration.

It is hard to imagine Montana Academy without the Jones. Phil was responsible for introducing order and consistency into the classroom setting. While the therapeutic program was enduring its growing pains Phil was a steady presence and maintained academic discipline and standards. He has gone on to teach writing and grammar, British literature, World history and literature and AP English in a regular rotation over the years and he went back to school to acquire a principal’s license so that he could become the

school principal that we needed.

I invariably enjoy taking visitors into Phil’s classroom. There is always something interesting going on there. Phil draws deeply on his own wide cultural experience whether in Pakistan, Japan or Korea. He brings in films and artifacts from his home beside Lake McGregor where I have been astonished to find ancient relics from the early Indus civilization alongside beautiful Afghani tribal rugs, together with Korean masks and Japanese transoms. Sometimes Connie joins the class to perform a Japanese tea ceremony or a classical ikebana flower arrangement. Most of all Phil succeeds in engaging his students, no matter in which class, in serious discussion about ideas relevant to various religious and cultural groups as well as to the motivation and drive intrinsic to individual characters in literature. He is able to help students to grasp the big picture ideas in world history whether he is discussing the Sufi tradition in Persian literature or the rise of Cro-Magnon man. Similarly he engages students in understanding what influences character formation and the many variations of destiny that ensue. Most recently I stepped in to listen to a discussion of Herman Hess’s *Siddhartha* where students teased apart the influence of the Hindu tradition and the individual temptations that shaped this extraordinary character. I often hear these bright students beginning to use literature to address their



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PHIL JONES . . . *continued*

own burgeoning understanding of personal influences on their own lives and the ways in which their own values are being shaped. Here, in Phil's classroom, the strands of education and therapy often meet, although this meeting is rarely made explicit.

Phil is a master teacher and he is guided by several principles which help unmotivated and under performing students get down to work. He takes time to develop a personal and trusting student-teacher relationship. He adheres to a clear, consistent and predictable set of structural and assessment guidelines, which anxious students find to be reassuring. He puts emphasis on a class notebook portfolio that lays out the expectations for each class and represents the student's commitment to the course as well as being the repository of all written work. One of our students stated it this way, "It is not enough in Phil's class to just express your ability to understand, you also must produce something that demonstrates your understanding and then you have to organize it!" And Phil does check regularly on these notebooks. There is great emphasis on written work. Phil's assignments contain flexibility and freedom of choice, which allow for creativity and acceptance of different interpretations and approaches to the topics of study, but each project must adhere to strict guidelines and will be graded according to these. Each

project must also include a visual aid that taps into the creative-kinesthetic aspect of learning, which is a strong component of many students' learning styles. Each student must both write and talk about the visual aid and why they have created it to bring their ideas to fruition.

Many Montana Academy students come with a long history of anxiety and difficulty in organizing and producing written work. Phil works diligently with each student in his afternoon tutorials to help them to manage their anxiety about completing major projects. One student expressed Phil's support in this way, "After talking over my anxieties with Phil, I started to see the writing assignment guidelines and expectations to be confidence building because it gave me structure to work with." Slowly but surely our bright but floundering students take hold, with Phil's steady support, and begin to commit their ideas to paper in a way which will eventually carry them on to college and for the rest of their lives. Once launched they often return to tell us all how much they appreciate his help and how well they feel set up for the academic demands of college. 🐾