



Dear Renbrook Community,

With a month to go in the 2023-2024 fundraising year, I am thrilled to share that we are closing in on \$10 million committed to *Take Flight*. Throughout the course of this year, students and faculty have benefited from completed projects including the renovated Challenge Course, Gengras Family Field, and Manafort Family Plaza. Phase 1 of our campus energy upgrade is complete, with a full campus LED light replacement, making our spaces more energy efficient and paving the way for further improvements in our sustainability efforts. The next phase is in the engineering and design stage and will likely commence this summer. With work projected to begin on the reimagined library next year, faculty from preschool through eighth grade have been formulating Renbrook's Inquiry Model, a uniquely Renbrook approach to student-centered learning that aligns current and future projects through inquiry-based learning.

It's an exciting time for Renbrook, and we are grateful for all our supporters. For this issue of *From the Flight Deck*, we spoke with two *Take Flight* donors. Current grandparent, parent of alumna, former faculty spouse, and former member of the faculty, Katie Nixon, has chosen to support the endowment by starting a fund in honor of her late husband and Renbrook legend Bill Nixon. Heather Viets '94, an alumna, former corporator, and current trustee, has committed to the most pressing needs of the campaign with an unrestricted gift. We thank Katie and Heather for their support and are honored to share their stories here.

We continue to raise funds for all three campaign priorities and invite every member of Renbrook's community to be part of this mission. To learn more about *Take Flight* and how you can help empower our people, enhance our programs, and transform our place, please contact Director of Alumni & Development Cara Woods at cwoods@renbrook.org.

Sincerely,

Matt Sigrist
Head of School

CAMPAIGN EVENTS



Renbrook Takes Flight: New York City



Barrie Kreinik '00, Nitin Sacheti, Mike Klett '98, Denaka Perry '97, and Gerard McGeary '97 at an alumni event in New York City

In January, alumni and parents of alumni joined Head of School Matt Sigrist, Lower School Head Julie Schlossinger, Grandparent Group Co-Chairs Dawn and Pierre Boulanger, and Alumni & Development staff for happy hour at The Smith in NoMad. Attendees reunited with old friends, shared Renbrook memories, made new connections, met current leaders of the school, played some Renbrook trivia, and heard key *Take Flight* updates. Special thanks goes to Sarah Marks '06 for her leadership in galvanizing alumni to participate in record numbers.

Renbrook Takes Flight: Vero Beach



Paul Bourdeau P'02 '05, Doug Marshall '52 P'86 '92, Ellyn Marshall P'86 '92, Bruce Albro P'92 '95, Bill Cranshaw P'05 '09, Janet Duchaine P'03, Matt Sigrist, Jonathan Fauver P'03, Melanie Cranshaw P'05 '09, Joanne Bourdeau P'02 '05, and Cara Woods at a reception in Vero Beach

In February, alumni and parents of alumni joined Head of School Matt Sigrist and Director of Alumni & Development Cara Woods for a reception hosted by Former Board Chair Bruce Albro and Lee Albro P'92 '95 at the Quail Valley River Club. Amid lively conversations and joyful reunions, the highlight of the evening was an informal Q&A session with Matt, where attendees learned about the latest school developments and the priorities of the *Take Flight* Campaign.

CAMPAIGN PROGRESS



RAISED TO DATE
\$9,939,802

REMAINDER TO GOAL
\$2,060,198

GOAL: \$12 Million

\$0 \$2M \$4M \$6M \$8M \$10M \$12M

DONOR SPOTLIGHT



KATIE NIXON

Katie Nixon grew up in a family that believed the key to happiness was doing service for other people. As a child, she learned the lesson her parents modeled. Now, as a parent herself, and a grandparent, she knows it to be true.

Katie's daughter is a Renbrook alumna and a member of the Upper School faculty. Katie's grandson is a Renbrook preschooler. Her husband, the late Bill Nixon, taught in the Upper School Science department for 27 years. And Katie? Well, what hasn't she done? She taught first grade, led the Admissions team, served as a corporator, and is now a member of the Grandparent Group.

As soon as Katie learned about the *Take Flight Campaign*, she knew she wanted to honor Bill. And she was clear about how she wanted to do that. "My approach is to focus on what I really value, and then give as much as I can to it." To achieve her goals, Katie is making a comprehensive campaign gift and supporting two priorities of *Take Flight*: Renbrook's academic programs through the reimagined library and Renbrook's people through the creation of a new endowed fund.

"On a practical level, giving a portion now and pledging an additional contribution through a bequest lets me give more," says Katie, a founding member of Renbrook's Legacy Society. Remembering when the Legacy Society first started Katie shares, "Bill and I knew immediately we wanted to be a part of it."

Katie hopes the Bill Nixon Fund for Innovative and Creative Teaching will encourage teachers to think outside the box. "Bill

Pictured above: Katie Nixon (right) with her daughter Fran Nixon Denote '04 (left) and grandson William '34 (center)

DONOR SPOTLIGHT



HEATHER VIETS '94

"Each morning, coming across the brook was such a touch point for me," recalls Heather Viets '94. "I can remember gauging the water: Is it raging? Is it low? I felt like I was entering a magical world when I crossed that brook."

Heather attended Renbrook from first through eighth grade. These days, she lives in New York City and is a partner at Weil, Gotshal & Manges. As a young alum, she attended alumni events in The City and even returned to Renbrook for her 10th reunion. A few years ago, longing to reconnect on a deeper level, she started volunteering as a corporator. Now Heather serves on the Board of Trustees.

For Heather, whose parents no longer live in Connecticut, Renbrook is her last connection to the area where she grew up. Maybe this is why she was nervous taking those initial steps to engage with the school. Would the connection be gone? Each step she took, she found not only was it still there, but it was surprisingly easy. "I've met so many new people, and connected with them," she says. "People whose paths never would have crossed mine... Renbrook is our common thread."

She was inspired to join the ranks of *Take Flight* donors because "I love the school. I remember the experiences, but I also remember the emotions." Heather's memories of what she learned and even more so of how she felt at Renbrook are intrinsic to her, and her support of *Take Flight* is the bridge between her past and her commitment to Renbrook's future. The campaign's dual focus on programs and place spoke to her too. "Both touch points mean so much to me. The school as an institution is important. The teachers, the students, the Renbrook experience... That's all so

Nixon cont.

was not constrained by convention, at all. He was incredibly creative... and a great innovator." It was Bill's creativity and innovation, along with his passion and individualism that earned him the nickname "Wild Bill" among his former students, who also call him simply "the legend." Legend indeed. Ask any alum or parent of alum from the 80s through the aughts, and they will have a rousing story about Mr. Nixon, his energetic student-centered teaching, ridiculous jokes, and knack for turning anything into a science experiment.

"The first time Bill and I drove up Renbrook's driveway, we had no idea how important the school would become for our family," Katie laughs. "And today, its importance is triply so. I am just so grateful for this education for Frances, and now William." Perhaps this is why Katie's advice to her fellow Renbrook parents and grandparents is to support their children's primary school. "If you have to choose whether to support their education early or later on, do it early. Dispositions toward learning develop early in children, and central to Renbrook is taking kids where they are and giving them what they need, not just academically but as people.

"I want Frances and William to know that our family values education and giving back, which is why I am so happy to be a part of this campaign and in this way. We want students to be lifelong learners," Katie says. "And that's exactly what Bill was."

For her past, present, and future gifts, Renbrook thanks Katie Nixon. We are grateful for her support of the *Take Flight Campaign* and for all the ways she and her family have made Renbrook a part of their legacy. They are certainly part of ours.

CAMPAIGN EVENTS



Renbrook Takes Flight: San Francisco



Matt Sigrist, Allie Young, David Crombie '83, Morgan Irving Harding '97, Siobhan Oat-Judge '95, Tania Whitney King '85, Neville Bowers '98, Ina Kort P'99, and James Kort P'99 at a dinner event in San Francisco

Last month, San Francisco area alumni and parents of alumni joined Head of School Matt Sigrist and Director of Development Operations and Individual Giving Allie Young for a dinner hosted by Neville Bowers '98. Guests gathered around a table at the Waterbar restaurant and shared their favorite Renbrook memories, asked questions about Renbrook's current priorities, and learned about Renbrook's plans for the future.

Viets cont.

important," says Heather. "But the campus is equally important. That old building is so special."

Heather has high expectations for the campaign. She hopes it will give the school what it needs to maintain the original structures, update the campus for 21st century learning, and develop future generations of leaders. She also hopes the campaign will lead to a stronger, more connected community. "We have a common cause: giving the school what it needs to continue to educate in that uniquely Renbrook way. The school needs the right resources to care for its students, teachers, and buildings, and Take Flight is the way we can provide those resources."

Heather thinks a lot about Renbrook, "about how amazing it was in my life, how it set me up for success. I think a lot of us owe Renbrook for that." She wants alumni to know their connection to the school matters and their support for *Take Flight* is needed. "I think people focus too much on the dollar amount. Yes, Renbrook needs to raise a lot of money, and large donations are important. But this campaign is also about engaging as many people across this community as possible. Renbrook needs everyone's contribution, whatever it is. We need alumni to be involved, in whatever way makes them feel good and by giving whatever amount is comfortable for them."

Perhaps more than anything, Heather hopes alumni will use the opportunity *Take Flight* provides to engage with Renbrook. "It's been very personally meaningful for me. Every time I engage, I am amazed by how it brings back the old feelings," says Heather. "It still feels magical. And I love that."

We love that too. And we thank Heather for all the ways she gives to Renbrook. For her volunteerism, service on the Board, philanthropy, and championing of the *Take Flight Campaign*, we are grateful.

CAMPAIGN LEADERSHIP



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Matt Sigrist

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