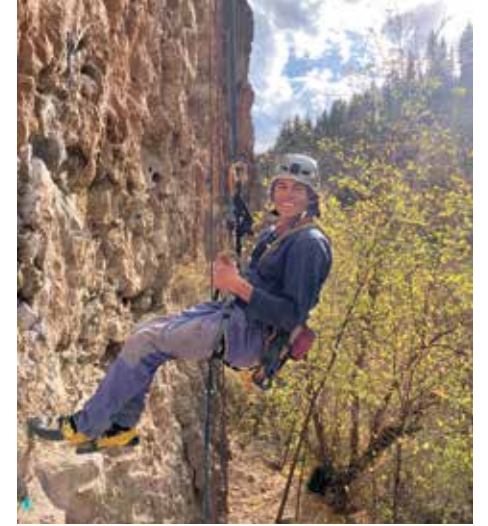


HIGH *when nature & minds meet* MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE





THROUGH OUR LENS



Scenes from Summer Term '24, Semester 53, and Fall '24 HMI Gap



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TO FOLLOW MORE OF HMI'S ADVENTURES,
FIND US ON SOCIAL MEDIA

FROM THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

Sam Critchlow

Nearly thirty years since our school's founding, we still tread lightly on the land, value small community, and celebrate learning that connects students to the world around them.



Summer moves quickly through Leadville. As Summer Term students can attest, snow persists in the mountains well into July most years, and frost is a frequent nightly occurrence.

Famously, Leadville has recorded snowfall during every month of the year. As I write this, summer, in all its two months of glory, has passed. The aspens of the Sawatch have taken on their autumn hue: gradients of green, yellow, into a rich golden orange crawling across the foothills and racing up mountain drainages. The last day of summer brought snowfall all the way down to 10,000 feet, leaving several inches on campus and a foot on the peaks. Fall HMI Gap students arrived amidst an early-season blizzard, only to wake to sunny skies and warm temperatures the next morning. HMI students bear witness to this type of change each semester, as the landscape enrobes and disrobes in its seasonal garb.

Beyond our seasonal flows of students, snow, and sun, the HMI campus has changed over the years in noticeable ways. From our humble beginnings in 1998 (one school building, four cabins, one mostly-constructed yurt) the campus has grown in thoughtful steps—some small, some big, but all meaningful. Our campus, twice its original acreage, now boasts the Academic Building, East and West Buildings, Stuen Hall, Bus Barn, and seven cabins, nestled around the original Barnes Building and cabin loop. As of this summer, we house nearly 2/3 of our full-time faculty and staff in beautiful, HMI-owned, campus-adjacent housing.

For alumni and families who have not visited campus in some time, seeing this cumulative change for the first time can be startling. Our hope is that this newsletter will help orient our community to our evolved and improved home, built over time and with great purpose. We will also reflect on how Leadville has changed over the years and hear from our most tenured faculty member on a decade of teaching and leading backcountry trips.

Through this growth and change, the things that anchor us grow in significance. The mission, values, people, and community are throughlines between HMI's many chapters. As I have remarked before, on my return to HMI last summer, while buildings and programs have grown, the soul of the place feels very familiar to our humble beginnings. Nearly thirty years since our school's founding, we still tread lightly on the land, value small community, and celebrate learning that connects students to the world around them.

A final note on this publication: you will notice that we have combined our fall newsletter with our annual impact report that thanks and honors our myriad supporters. This is an effort to save paper, money, and time while expressing our gratitude for our supporters to the HMI community as a whole.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sam".

Sam Critchlow, Head of School
scritchlow@hminet.org | (719) 486-8200 x101



CHANGING LEADVILLE CHANGING HMI

By Ray McGaughey, Director of Development

Leadville, Colorado has come a long way in the nearly 30 years since HMI cofounders Molly and Christopher Barnes selected the town to be the home of their new school.

At that time, the mid-1990s, Leadville's economy was bottoming out. Climax Mine, Lake County's largest employer for most of the 20th century, had closed the decade prior causing the local tax base to crater and the county's population to shrink by over a third. Real estate was cheap and Molly and Christopher took notice. They purchased the original 40 acres of land for HMI's campus in 1996 for \$2,075 / acre.

When HMI opened in 1998, there was no employee housing. All school employees lived in Leadville and commuted to campus. However, rents were low and home ownership was within reach for HMI staff. Christopher recalls: "In the early days, buying a home in Leadville was an option for many employees - at times, over half of HMI employees owned their own home locally. Sadly, those days are gone now, and affordable housing for educators is a significant challenge and issue."



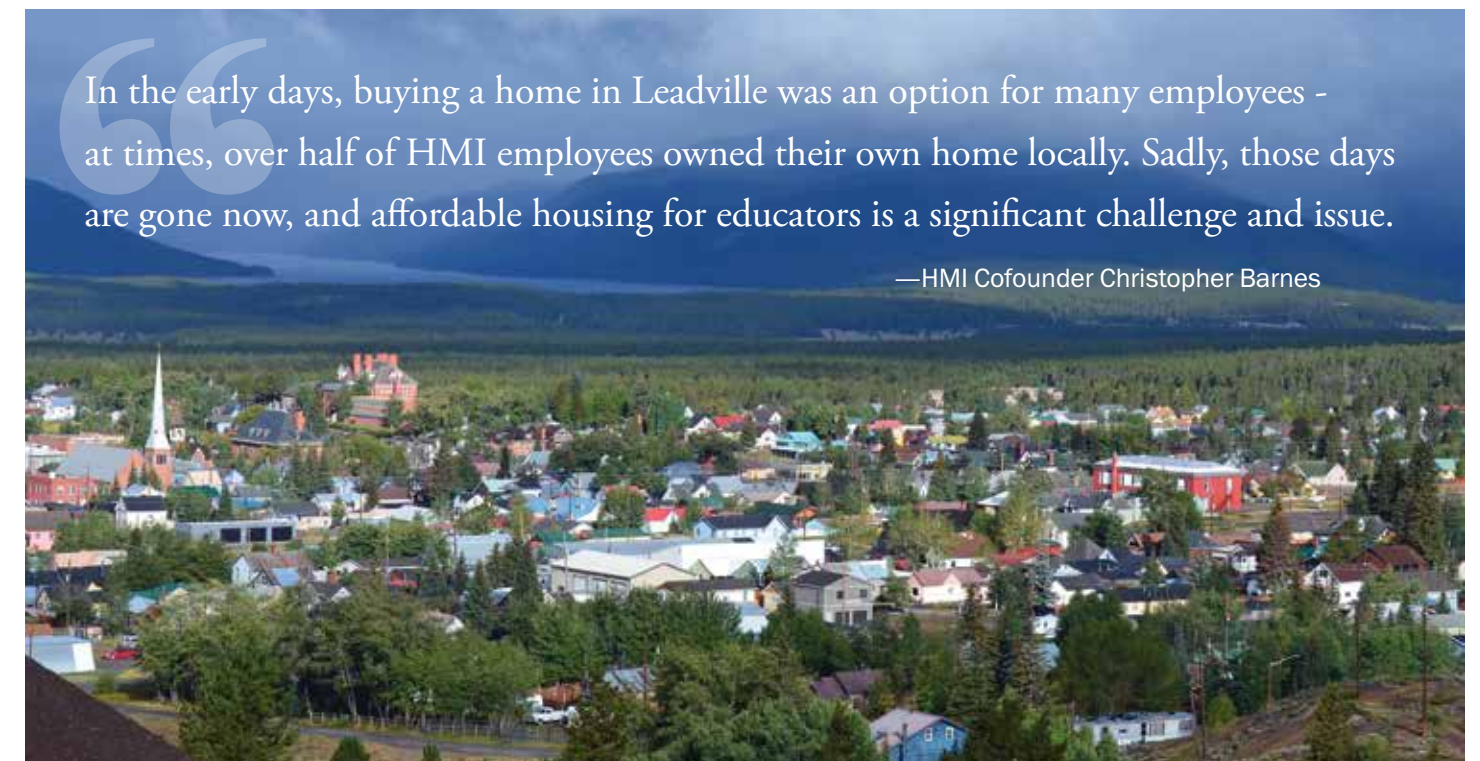
The beloved "We Love Leadville" sign was demolished in 2017 to make way for a 40-acre real estate development

Real estate values began to rebound in the 2000s and the local economy received a huge boost in 2012 when Climax Mine reopened. Leadville hung on for a few more years as a rare "bastion of affordability" where teachers could still purchase a home and rents remained low. But between 2016 and 2022 Lake County experienced a stratospheric explosion in home prices. The median home value shot up by a staggering 250%, growing from \$191,000 to \$480,000, while household incomes increased by only 45%. Rents also skyrocketed. A recent study found that over three-quarters of Leadville households with incomes under \$75,000 now contribute an unsustainable amount towards rent.

While the proliferation of AirBnB and remote work has unquestionably contributed to this record growth, Leadville is also gentrifying. The town's downtown now boasts six boutique shops, twelve restaurants, and an art gallery. The famous "We Love Leadville" sign that welcomed visitors into town for decades is gone, replaced by a 40-acre development site that will eventually contain over 100 new homes, currently priced around \$700,000 each.

Thankfully for HMI, this period of decreasing affordability in Leadville has coincided with a residential building boom on our campus. Over the past decade we constructed eleven new housing units including the O'Brien House, our head of school home that doubles as an event space. 60% of our staff now live on campus and new hires relocating to Leadville no longer have to find their own place to live in the tight rental market. Perhaps most importantly, HMI's campus is more vibrant than ever. Most employees bike or walk to work; faculty host their advisees for dinner in their homes, and there are generally more adults around for supervision. Thanks to the vision of HMI's past leaders and advisors as well as the many supporters of our recently completed *Campaign for Community*, our school is better positioned than ever before to weather the boom-and-bust economic cycles that have defined Leadville since its inception.

Photo credit: Leadville Tourism Panel



In the early days, buying a home in Leadville was an option for many employees - at times, over half of HMI employees owned their own home locally. Sadly, those days are gone now, and affordable housing for educators is a significant challenge and issue.

—HMI Cofounder Christopher Barnes

HMI'S GROWING CAMPUS

HMI's physical plant has grown significantly in the past decade. A residential neighborhood—Grey Jay Way—has sprung up east of our main campus which now houses 60% of our staff. We have also added two student cabins (bringing the total to seven) and a new academic building. At this time, there are no plans for additional campus expansions.



ACADEMIC BUILDING
OPENED 2022



HEAD OF SCHOOL HOUSE*
OPENED 2016

** Not shown
in aerial image*



TRIPLEX
OPENED 2024

The "Grey Jay Way" Neighborhood:

- 1 Triplex
- 3 Single Family Homes
- 1 Quadplex
- 20 Total Residents



SINGLE FAMILY HOMES
OPENED 2020-2021



QUADPLEX
OPENED 2019

STUDENT CABINS

Our solar arrays generate more power than the entire demand of our campus.

IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS



REFLECTING ON 10 YEARS OF TEACHING

Jacob Sheetz-Willard

HMI History Faculty 2014-2019, English Faculty 2019-Present

“I.T.G.S.O.T.I.N.B.D.” I learned this initialism from a co-instructor during my first trip in the Sawatch: “In the grand scheme of things, it’s no big deal.” It’s become a mantra of sorts through my ten years of salaried employment at the High Mountain Institute.

Useful while desperately cleaning the fuel line and shaker jet of a faulty stove or searching for the teenagers who’ve wandered five canyon miles in the wrong direction. I chant it under my breath like a psalm or snippet of vedic wisdom as the copy machine surrenders to entropy, doing so—inevitably, excruciatingly—as I attempt to print syllabi on the first day of the semester.

Whenever I find myself flailing and faffing about in the proverbial weeds, I remember those three vowels and seven consonants. If the situation feels especially dire, I ask a further set of questions: are the students physically and emotionally intact, more or less? Does x, y, or z experience, albeit exasperating and/or painful, contain within it some learning potential? Will we be able to laugh about this sometime within the next

moon cycle? Whatever’s overcooking our collective grits at any given moment tends not to matter so much in two weeks’ time—or even within the space of twenty-four hours. The storm blows over and the sun comes out.

The canyons, in particular, are venerable teachers of perspective. Traveling through southern Utah three or four times per year has taught me about the relative smallness of my own immediate concerns. I’ve seen petroglyphs in Cedar Mesa centuries older than the oldest European relic in North America, 150 million-year-old Navajo sandstone striated through an east-facing monocline of Comb Ridge, the stars of the Milky Way stretched out over Bears Ears. Each is a visual reminder that, however enduring we suppose our work at HMI to be in the scale of individual human lives, we’re ultimately just

a blip in the cultural and geological history of the region; we’re a nearly imperceptible aberration of matter, a buried fraction of a line item inside the cosmic accounting.

A useful bit of nihilism, to be sure. But nihilism alone does not a tenured teacher make. The other species of wisdom I’ve gleaned from twenty semesters comes from an abiding spiritual allegiance to the humanities—a set of disciplines defined by their faith in human agency, authority, and interpretation. Words matter, the poet insists; the world would look otherwise, says the historian, were it not for the efforts and actions of ordinary humans. Yuval Noah Harari writes in *Sapiens* that “there are no gods in the universe, no nations, no money, no human rights, no laws, and no justice outside the common imagination of human



JACOB’S TIME AT HMI BY THE NUMBERS

- ▶ **21** Semesters; **2** Summer Terms; **1** Educator’s Expedition
- ▶ **127** college recommendations written
- ▶ **51** wilderness expeditions
- ▶ **648** students taught in History and English
- ▶ **586** days spent leading backcountry trips with HMI
- ▶ **7** grease trap cleaning experiences
- ▶ **14** times reading Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Ceremony*
- ▶ **184** FOD days

beings.” Our future depends entirely on the stories we tell about the present and have told about the past. And maybe HMI is just that: a story made and maintained in the collective imagination of several thousand students and a few dozen adults over the course of a few decades, many of whom have chosen to love the school and call it home.

“You make the thing,” writes the poet Tom Lux, “because you love the thing / and you love the thing because someone else loved it / enough to make you love it.” It’s no big deal in the grand scheme of things, but I’ve learned that a love like that—whatever it means and however it manifests in small and ordinary ways—matters in the world.



FROM THE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT Ray McGaughey



I'm one year into my tenure as Director of Development and what a privilege it is to represent HMI in this capacity.

In my previous role as admissions director, my focus was on future HMI students: mainly high school sophomores and their families. Now I get to experience the opposite side of the coin: the HMI alumni and families that have gained so much from the transformative, unique education we provide. I've worked with newly-minted HMI graduates, parents who are decades removed from their child's time in Leadville, and everyone in between. Although HMI is for most students a mere four-month chapter, it is clear that this place leaves a lasting impact.

The generosity of our community continues to inspire me. It reaffirms what I already knew: that HMI is a special place that many people care about deeply. This past year, 634 alumni, families, and friends of the school helped us raise nearly \$1.2M to support financial aid, faculty compensation, and campus improvements. The median gift was just \$26! Semester 48 (Spring '22) won the Alumni Summit Challenge for the second year in a row with 75% class participation. However, their predecessor by 20 years, Semester 8 (Spring '02), gave them a run for their money with 47% contributing!

As Sam mentioned in his introduction, we are combining our fall newsletter with our annual impact report this year. This is an effort to conserve resources while sharing our gratitude with an even larger segment of the HMI community. I hope you will join me in thanking the donors listed in the following pages for their support and their belief in the mission of the High Mountain Institute.

Sincerely,

Ray McGaughey, Director of Development
rmcgaughey@hminet.org | (719) 486-8200 x109

“

This past year, 634 alumni, families, and friends of the school helped us raise nearly \$1.2M to support financial aid, faculty compensation, and campus improvements. The median gift was just \$26!

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

IN 2023-2024 HMI:



Passed the **2,000** alumni milestone for the HMI Semester
(current alumni count: **2,009**)



Recorded an operating
revenue of **\$4.8M**



Served **145** students across the Semester, Gap,
and Summer Term programs



Grew our endowment to **\$10.8M**; continued to direct
100% of our endowment draw towards financial aid



Raised nearly nearly **\$1.2M** from **634** donors
to support financial aid, faculty compensation,
and campus improvements



Finished construction
of three final on-
campus housing units,
bringing the total units
completed in the past
decade to eleven. **60%**
of HMI staff now live
on campus.

THE HMI FUND & FINANCIAL AID



THE HMI FUND
MAKES OUR
FINANCIAL AID
PROGRAM POSSIBLE.

Tuition alone does not cover the full cost
of bringing HMI to life. We depend on
our donors to fund 15% of our operating
budget each year. The HMI Fund is our
annual fundraising effort to fill this budget
gap. Donations to the HMI Fund support
financial aid, faculty and staff compensation,
and campus maintenance.

THIS PAST YEAR HMI:

- ▶ Awarded financial aid to **50** students, 34% of our participants
- ▶ Provided **100% free outdoor gear rental** to 18 students
- ▶ Purchased **14 round-trip flights** and **7 pairs of hiking boots** for top financial aid recipients
- ▶ Allocated over **\$1M** and **100% of our endowment draw** towards financial aid
- ▶ Ran the **free Lake County Backpacking Trip** for 10 Leadville middle schoolers

For detailed and audited financial statements, please contact
Ray McGaughey, Director of Development, at rmcgaughey@hminet.org.





Isabelle Ross

HMI SEMESTER 38 (SPRING 2017)
HOLTON-ARMS SCHOOL /
HUN SCHOOL OF PRINCETON '18
UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY '22

What does HMI mean to you?

HMI is the most special community that I have ever been a part of — a community that fully embraced me and also wholly challenged me. HMI was my first experience away from home and in an entirely new state and part of the country. Growing up “inside the beltway” in Bethesda, MD where local news is national news, HMI gave me a profoundly different perspective as to what local really is in a setting that is both breathtaking and unique. My daily routine continues to mimic several aspects of my days at HMI. I still start most of my days with a run outside, I frequently use map and chart reading skills in my job, and I continue to telemark ski when I can. In addition to providing me with a family of classmates and new hobbies, HMI afforded me the opportunity to learn and flex leadership skills that I use every day and will carry me through the rest of my life.

What are you up to these days?

After leaving HMI in 2017 and graduating high school in 2018, I attended the United States Naval Academy. I graduated with a degree in Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering with honors and was commissioned as an Ensign in the U.S. Navy in 2022. I moved to Charleston, SC to complete the Navy Nuclear Power pipeline where I studied the rigorous 6 months of nuclear power school and 6 months on a moored training ship in the Cooper River at prototype. I currently serve as a nuclear submarine officer in the U.S. Navy and am stationed in Groton, CT. As the Chemistry and Radiological Controls Assistant leading the Reactor Laboratories Division, I am responsible for maintaining chemistry in the nuclear



Isabelle, bottom left, on expedition in Semester 38

propulsion plant as well as taking radiological controls to minimize radiation exposure to the ship’s crew and to the environment. In my free time, I play on a Navy hockey team and coach a girls U14 hockey team.

Why do you choose to support HMI philanthropically?

It is an honor to give back to the community that gave me such an incredible and transformative experience during my semester at HMI. I want future students to be able to experience the same in beautiful, functional new classrooms and facilities with new backpacking and skiing equipment. Additionally, I want to ensure that HMI is able to hire the best teachers and staff as possible and be able to afford them with the benefits and support that they need, such as faculty housing. Whether it was dancing in the kitchen while cleaning up after cook crew, collecting snow samples for science projects, going into town on a Saturday afternoon, or being out in the wilderness on expedition, the HMI experience was truly invaluable. I want as many students as possible to be able to experience the same joy that I felt at HMI.



Whether it was dancing in the kitchen while cleaning up after cook crew, collecting snow samples for science projects, going into town on a Saturday afternoon, or being out in the wilderness on expedition, the HMI experience was truly invaluable. I want as many students as possible to be able to experience the same joy that I felt at HMI.

THANK YOU, DONORS!



THANK YOU

With sincere gratitude, we list the following donors who have supported HMI in fiscal year 2024 by making gifts to the HMI Fund, Campaign for Community, or endowment. Through their generosity, support, and commitment to our school, we can continue to offer transformational experiences *when nature and minds meet*.

In past years, we have used this report to highlight the donors who support HMI at the highest tiers. Moving forward, in an effort to more equitably acknowledge our supporters, we have eliminated giving tiers.

With this change, we aim to emphasize the collective impact of all contributions, regardless of size.

This list reflects donations made to the High Mountain Institute between June 1, 2023 and May 31, 2024. We have made every effort to ensure that this list is complete and accurate. We apologize for any errors or omissions. Please contact Ray McGaughey, Director of Development, with any corrections at rmcgaughey@hminet.org.



THE MT. ELBERT CIRCLE ▲

Named for Mt. Elbert, the highest peak in Colorado, the Mt. Elbert Circle recognizes donors who have given consecutively for the last five years or more.

EVERGREEN DONORS 🌲

Evergreen Donors help support HMI all year long by making regular monthly donations.

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Christina Davis ▲
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SEMESTER 2

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Join the LinkedIn Group
 High Mountain Institute Alumni & Friends

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FULL CIRCLE GIVING

HMI makes a lifelong impact. *You can too.* Please consider including HMI in your will or trust. Your bequest can help ensure that HMI is as successful tomorrow as it is today.

If you are interested in supporting HMI through planned giving, please contact Ray McGaughey, Director of Development, at rmcgaughey@hminet.org.



SEMESTER 40

Will Brown ▲
Genevieve Chiu-Schaepe ▲
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Marina Faura
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Theo Hill
Maizie Bartlett
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Ansel Waisler
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Teo Barrachin
Rosie Binette
Jack Davison
Callie Dawson
Anna Elias

Hope Fagan
Nathan French
Nieve Fromhein
Cate Garretson
Sydney Goitia-Doran
Jack Gross
Hugo Guckert
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JC & Charlotte Stites ▲
Sarah, Sarah, Mark & Mark Davison





Mary & Curt Beech

PARENTS OF TATE BEECH, SEMESTER 46 (SPRING 2021)

What does HMI mean to your family?

We have lived in Brooklyn, NY since Tate was in third grade. We love it here, but it was never Tate's truth. HMI was the opportunity for Tate to live where and how she is meant to: outdoors in nature, with smart and interesting people who love camping, hiking, science and the beauty of nature. Tate was in Semester 46 in the Spring of 2021. COVID was ever-present, and almost all students, including Tate, got it, pre-vaccine. But I don't think Tate would trade the experience for the world. Tate found their identity, their voice, and their truth at HMI.

Why do you choose to support HMI philanthropically?

HMI was unlock for Tate. It was the most profound experience of the first two decades of their life. We couldn't ever have provided Tate what HMI did. We want to ensure HMI continues, and that other students and families have access to the experience.

What is Tate up to these days?

Tate graduated high school in 2022. They were accepted at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, but applied to do a gap year. They spent their gap year working extensively on two farms: an organic vegetable family farm in Maine, and a commercial flower farm in England. Tate also hiked 150 miles of the Appalachian Trail with a fellow HMI Semester 46 alum!

Tate is in their sophomore year at Reed College in Portland, OR. They are an environmental science major with a focus on biology. Reed is the only undergraduate institution with a nuclear reactor on campus. Tate is a nuclear reactor technician, and currently in the senior reactor operator training program. Tate is also enjoy fire spinning, and looking forward to their semester abroad in Barcelona in Fall 2025.



HMI was unlock for Tate. It was the most profound experience of the first two decades of their life. We couldn't ever have provided Tate what HMI did.

Nicholas & Nina von Moltke

APPRENTICES

Samuel Kwon

SEMESTER 49

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 Josh Ballenger
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 Eva Bogan
 Mary Bosco
 Ava Brown
 Claire Carroll
 Kate Cruickshank
 Toby Galson
 Anna Hildreth
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 Ximena Ventura
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 Jimbo & Emmy Huckabee
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 Loren & Tracy Walker
 John Grant & Sara Woolf
 Jon Sobel & Irina Yuen

SEMESTER 50

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 Stella Green
 Thie Harthono
 Coby Kramarsky
 Gigi Nevins-Saunders

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 Conlan Lamb
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SEMESTER 52

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SUMMER TERM '23

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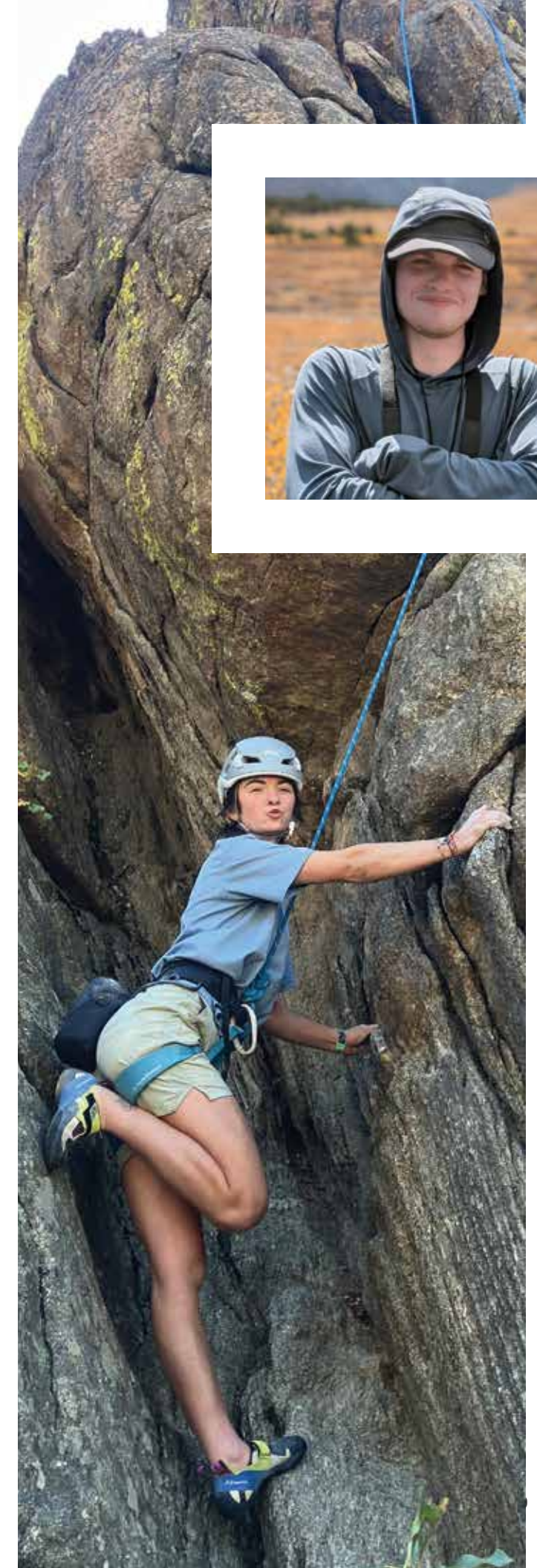
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2023 SUMMIT CHALLENGE

Congratulations to Semester 48 for winning the 2023 Summit Challenge with 75% class participation... for the second year in a row!

Shoutout to runners-up Semester 49 (71% participation) and Semester 8 (47% participation)!



THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS!

The following lists recognize some of the people who have contributed their time and talent to advance our school over the past year. Their spirit of service is inspiring!

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- Jeff Soller, Debbie Arthur,
& Cedar Soller
- Pearl Strong
- Nina Wong & Kieran Eldredge
- Irina Yuen & Skye Sobel

A special thanks to the hosts of our “Meet the New Head” tour!

- José De Jesús and the Dalton School
- Lia Kelly
- Martie McKinney and the Crossroads School for Arts & Sciences
- James and Janet Nahirny
- Claire Sutton and Hayden Shea

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