

HIGH *when nature & minds meet* MOUNTAIN INSTITUTE

FALL 2022





As winter approaches, and we look back on the summer and fall at HMI, change is a common thread. Our search for HMI's next Head of School has come to a close, the newly constructed Academic Building is full of Semester 49 voices, campus spaces look a bit different, and planning for our 25-Year Reunion is well underway. What hasn't changed, though, is the feeling of home that HMI provides for students and employees alike.

In this edition of the newsletter, you'll find insights from our Interim Head of School on the nature of transition, a photo essay on how to capture the essence of an experience, a look into HMI Gap from the perspective of a student come teacher, an essay from an HMI Summer Term student, and much more. We hope that these pages remind you of your home at HMI and inspire you to come visit next summer—happy reading!

THROUGH OUR LENS



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

EMBRACING THE TRANSITION

“Transition moments—attending a new school, taking a challenging class, making new friends—test our strength in the moment and feel hard. But they are small, powerful gifts that can open up new and exciting doors in one’s life.”



My office windows in the East Building look across County Road 5A in Leadville; open fields full of elk herds extend to the Mt. Massive Wilderness, a blanket of aspen and pine trees whose branches reach but never touch the rocky, windswept peak of Mt. Elbert, Colorado’s highest mountain. Over the past few months, I’ve watched this majestic view transform from summer greens to autumn yellow and now, winter’s bright whites.

We teach students in all of our programs that change is an inevitable part of life, something that should be embraced, not feared. Transition moments—attending a new school, taking a challenging class, making new friends—test our strength in the moment and feel hard. But they are small, powerful gifts that can open up new and exciting doors in one’s life. Learning how to respond to, grow, and learn in these moments is a mark of one’s resilience, a hallmark of HMI programming.

This year, HMI is practicing what it preaches. As we move from pandemic to endemic programming, we are strengthening student supports in the physical and mental health realms; our physician advisor now makes house calls to campus and hikes out into the field to provide care to students. Our physical campus has also grown to meet the needs of our students with the opening of our new Academic Building which houses a wet lab for science classes, gender inclusive restroom and shower facilities, and a sunny, spacious library—the perfect spot to curl up and read during a snowy afternoon. Responding to the rising costs of housing in Leadville, our Board of Trustees recently approved plans to build additional on-campus employee housing. We’ve also taken steps during an inflationary year to support our employees, including incentivizing professional development and bolstering adjunct pay, among other initiatives.

I’m not sure what Mother Nature has in store for us this winter (hopefully a lot of snow!), but I do know that our community is a resilient one that will continue to weather change with grace and strength. The views outside my window will continue to change this year, but our campus will stand as strong as our mission and the mountains our students come to love. And when the snow melts this spring and the wildflowers begin to bloom, we will look forward to welcoming aboard Sam Critchlow, our new, permanent Head of School who will shepherd HMI into another exciting new season.

Warmly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AR', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Amy Roberts, Interim Head of School

HMI'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY!

By Barrett Donovan, Director of Communication & Engagement



HMI is special because graduates of its programs can continue to take away HMI's lessons long after leaving Leadville; the transference of these lessons also evolves as its graduates grow and enter new phases of life. I serve on the Alumni Council because I'm really excited to see our alumni family grow (25-years worth!) and support each alum in continuing to be able to lean into, remember, and live by the spirit of HMI - whatever that means for them!

—Emily Blau, Alumni Council Chair, Semester 21 Student, Semester 33 Apprentice

We are looking forward to welcoming folks to campus June 9-11 for our 25th anniversary celebration and a weekend of fun, connection, and adventure! All are welcome including alumni, alumni families, former faculty, staff, and apprentices, and friends and family of HMI.

As part of the Reunion, we will offer both large and small group gatherings including affinity spaces, opportunities for networking, program meet-ups, and more. We will also be hosting our famous Fun Run, a 10 mile run near campus—costumes encouraged!

Throughout the weekend there will be a silent auction (also available virtually for those who cannot attend the reunion) where folks can bid on fantastic items and experiences in support of our school. If you are interested in contributing an item or experience to the auction, please contact Barrett at bdonovan@hminet.org.

Whether you were a member of Semester 1, an apprentice in Semester 26, or a Gap student in 2016, we hope you'll come join us in celebrating 25 years of HMI. See you in June!



SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY

- Campus Tours
- Welcome Reception at Head of School House
- Dinner in Leadville (*Reservations Recommended*)
- Bonfire and S'mores on Campus

SATURDAY

- Fun Run
- Activities (*Turquoise Lake Hike & Picnic, Affinity Space Meetings, Story Hour, and more!*)
- Dinner
- Auction
- Dance Party!

SUNDAY

- Walk on 5A
- Say Goodbyes

REGISTRATION/TICKETING

Register online at [hminet.org/reunion!](https://hminet.org/reunion)

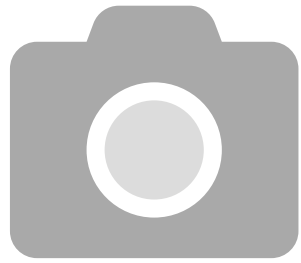
- Early Bird Pricing (before January 15th) = \$50
- Regular Ticket Price = \$75
- Kids ages 5-15 = \$25
- Kids under 5 = Free!
- **If the cost of attending the reunion is prohibitive to you, please email Barrett (bdonovan@hminet.org)—we want everyone to be able to attend and will work with you to make it happen.*

LODGING

- Cabins = \$50
- Borrow an HMI tarp and camp on campus = \$15
- Bring your own tent and camp on campus = Free!

TRANSPORTATION

Shuttles from Denver International Airport to and from HMI will be available. Pricing and details can be found online.



CAPTURING THE ESSENCE OF EXPERIENCE

By Justin Talbot, Director of Wilderness Programs & Risk Management



For me, taking pictures is a big part of being outdoors. I enjoy trying to capture the essence of an experience, whether it is just for me or others. Here are a few of my favorite HMI images and a few tips for taking your pictures.

In my spare time, I enjoy exploring the wild corners of the Leadville highcountry and taking pictures to inspire others to get outside with their friends. You can check out some of my images on my website 40minutesfromleadville.com or on [Instagram @justintalbot](https://www.instagram.com/justintalbot).

CAVE LIFE ▲

Take advantage of unique perspectives. You can find yourself in wild situations when you are in the backcountry. One night we camped under a giant boulder and I took advantage of the great vantage point.

DESERT CLIMBING ▶

Zoom in and remove distracting elements. I could have just as easily included the ground or the top of this climb in the picture. I chose not to include anything but the monolithic sandstone wall for a semi-abstract aesthetic.



GAP HIKING PATAGONIA ▶

Coach your subjects. A couple of quick instructions for your friends can make a big difference. In this image, I made sure the students did something with their hands because photos of hikers with their hands hanging by their sides often look awkward.



NIGHT QUIGLOO SCENE ▶

Night pictures are fun, particularly in the winter! You can use a small tripod to take images that are several seconds long. Most phones have RAW settings that can be useful when editing your nighttime pictures (look for DNG or HEIC file settings).



EDUCATOR'S EXPEDITION

By Lupe Bobadilla, Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion & Admissions Associate

This summer, twelve educators decided to embark on an expedition together after hearing their students share exciting and heartfelt stories about HMI. Although the expedition was short, we completed a successful trip and shared meaningful conversations throughout.

Our participants arrived at HMI from New York, Connecticut, Montana, Texas, and California; some were nervous as this was their first introduction to the backcountry, and others were excited to refine their outdoor skills. As instructors, Jess Wolinsky and I gave the participants a glimpse of the HMI experience while engaging in critical conversations about leadership and identity.

The first couple of days, like with all first expeditions, were fast-paced and focused on learning how to backpack comfortably. During this time, we got to know each other and learned about HMI's outdoor classes. But soon after, we started to share more deeply about our identities and opened up our more playful sides.

On expedition, we encountered rain, pesky mosquitoes, and confusion as we got lost while navigating off-trail. Through these moments, we shared laughs and created memories like finally arriving at our treacherous campsite at Decker's Lake.



The educators shared that this trip made them even more impressed with our students and the challenge that expedition brings.

Towards the end of the trip, we became a close group. We were vulnerable and had sentimental moments while embracing the beauty of the outdoors. This expedition meant more than the curriculum and professional development; the participants experienced the magic of HMI. The educators are now taking home the lessons they learned and the peace and grandeur the Sawatch has to offer.

Educator's Expedition offered a space for participants to learn outdoor skills and network with other educators from throughout the country. They expressed gratitude for HMI, and the instructors, and the safe space to process and learn.

I am now gearing up for admissions travel this fall and am looking forward to seeing these educators at their respective schools! ■



GAP ALUMNI CONTINUE A FINE HMI TRADITION

By Chris Barlow, Director of Programs



The tradition of alumni returning to HMI as staff is strong at HMI, and one of which we are proud.

The tradition of alumni returning to HMI as staff is strong at HMI, and one of which we are proud: We believe it's evidence of the deep connection students build to the school. This fall, Gap has joined this tradition with not one but two alumni, Becca Lansman and Macy Cunningham, serving as field faculty for our fall Gap courses.

Becca and Macy were both part of the second year of Gap in Fall 2016. Since then, Becca graduated from Quest University with a degree in Sociology, focusing on criminology and prison reform. Living in Squamish, British Columbia, she worked at a homeless shelter, taught climbing workshops, and traveled the Western Hemisphere

to continue growing as a rock climber. She first returned to HMI as a summer intern in 2019 and then again as residential life faculty for Summer Term 2022.

After her Gap experience, Macy attended Northland College to earn a degree in Outdoor Education and Gender & Women's Studies. She has worked extensively as a leader for Camp Widjiwagan, including a seven week expedition in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, as well as several other outdoor programs. She also has continued to explore the world through backpacking and rock climbing, even teaming up with another Gap alum in the fall of 2021 to climb Castleton Tower, this time without the guidance of an HMI instructor.



It is an exceptional treat to meet folks like Macy and Becca at such a pivotal moment in their young adulthood and watch the inspiration and passion they showed then evolve into the insight and professionalism they now bring to HMI. Of course, we're proud that HMI is a place that they are now drawn back to and profoundly grateful that they're now excited to mentor a new generation of Gap students. ■



THE BUTTERFLY

By Carlo Goldberg, Summer Term 2021 Alum



Carlo attends Evanston Township High School in Evanston Illinois. It has been over a year since he completed the summer term at HMI, but the writing skills he learned over the five week time period have continued to boost him through the first portion of his junior year. Having a more developed approach to writing style and the editing process has, and will continue to be, a great asset regardless of my future direction. Beyond a busy high school year, Carlo has enjoyed playing high school hockey, tennis, and playing in a jazz and blues band. What drives Carlo as much as anything is getting back to nature, whether it's fishing in nearby Lake Michigan, canoeing in the Boundary Waters, or hiking the peaks near Leadville.

1 in 400 trillion. That's all we are. A cool fall day, and I was born. Out of the 196.9 million square miles of this world, I opened my eyes to a blank white hospital room. The butterfly flapped its wings and I existed.

A young boy in the cover of the night only had a small forest to work with. Although rotting wood and empty beer cans littered the swampy ground of Perkins woods, it was all I needed. Fallen trees served as the walls to our several hideouts throughout the forest preserve. Hundreds of conversations and memories would take place in the cover of the thick oak trees that belonged to Perkins woods.

A butterfly flapped its wings and I pressed submit. 5 weeks in the wilderness with a group of high schoolers. I had no idea what I was getting into, but here I am, in the true vastness of the Collegiate Peaks hiking towards a goal I am yet to figure out. Me and my group trek the tall ridges as the bluebells patiently watch from their hiding spots. Just days ago, I was in the comfort of my own house but here I am with a pen, paper, and my thoughts to work with.

I am used to the peaceful 2 minute walk across Perkins woods, but suddenly I am trekking ridges and valleys in the boundless Colorado wilderness. Now instead of oak trees, I see forests of aspen that gracefully sway in the cold air that swoops through the valleys. Instead of empty beer cans, I see rusty food cans that miners used around 100 years ago. Instead of my best friend and twin brother next to me, I see a group of highschoolers that I met a matter of weeks ago.

My group hikes along under the sun that shines bright over the Collegiate mountains. My feet are wet and cold from the icy alpine stream we were forced to cross a few minutes ago. Our timekeeper announces "30 minutes until break!" My mouth falls open. It had seemed like break was going to happen any minute yet we still had 30 minutes to go? I try to change my mindset, but I can only think about how I'm going to get through 7 more days of this trip.

“5 weeks in the wilderness with a group of high schoolers. I had no idea what I was getting into, but here I am, in the true vastness of the Collegiate Peaks hiking towards a goal I am yet to figure out.”

All of a sudden, something grabs my attention. My group is surrounded by a swarm of butterflies. "It's like a movie!" My hiking group exclaims. They get very close to us, and follow us down the trail. After 10 minutes, they still haven't left. They simply flutter around us, flying in and out of the trees, flitting in the shadows. I watch the butterflies dance around us as I walk for the next 15 minutes. I watch their paper thin wings flutter to support their delicate bodies. The butterflies distract me, and before I know it, we're almost there. ■



A CONVERSATION WITH HMI'S ALUMNI COUNCIL

By Louisa McBride, Advancement Associate

The HMI Alumni Council first gathered on HMI's campus in May of 2012. There were 18 alumni in attendance, from a range of different HMI Semesters. Since then, 46 alumni have served or are currently serving on the Council.

The goal of the Council is to provide another leadership opportunity through which HMI alumni can grow and stay inspired by an organization that has played a meaningful role in their lives. Alumni Council members assist in the school's strategic planning, with fundraising efforts, and by helping maintain a connected alumni community.

Each May, the Council gathers on HMI's campus for an annual meeting. This spring, after two years of virtual meetings due to the pandemic, the Council was able to return to Leadville for a weekend on campus to meet students and reconnect with a place that means so much to them.

In this article, you will hear from Alumni Council members about their experience on the council and what HMI means to them. On behalf of all of us at HMI, thank you to the Alumni Council for their dedication to our school!

Q: WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT BEING ON THE ALUMNI COUNCIL, AND THE WORK THE COUNCIL DOES?



I love serving on HMI's Alumni Council because it offers a meaningful way for me to continue to engage with the HMI community. My semester concluded over ten years ago, but I still think about the lessons I gained from HMI and apply them to my life frequently. HMI has grown a lot over the course of its history, but there is

still room for the School to consider how to continue to grow and change while keeping the core of HMI intact. I view the Alumni Council as an important avenue to maintain HMI's core mission and vision, facilitate change, and offer support.

—Alexa Adams, Semester 28 Student, Semester 40 Apprentice, and Alumni Council Governance Committee Chair



I view the Alumni Council as an important avenue to maintain HMI's core mission and vision, facilitate change, and offer support.

Q: WHY DID YOU JOIN THE ALUMNI COUNCIL? CAN YOU SHARE A BIT ABOUT THE DEI SUB-COMMITTEE AND ITS WORK WITH THE COUNCIL?



For me, HMI posed an extreme challenge and in my case I did not build the community to make these challenges bearable. Through the work of other alumni of color, I realized my experience was not unique and many other students of color struggled to create a community at HMI that accepted the breadth of

their challenges. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Subcommittee of the Alumni Council has given me the space to build the community I lacked during my time at HMI, and I am proud of my involvement with HMI and the community I believe this work has the potential to build.

The DEI Subcommittee of the HMI Alumni Council is responsible for providing the explicit lens of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) to the Alumni Council's actions and priorities, with a specific emphasis on racial equity and inclusion. Secondly, the DEI Subcommittee serves a supportive role for HMI staff, especially those primarily focused on DEI initiatives at HMI. Through this work, the subcommittee aims to support HMI students and alumni of color and help hold accountable high-level decision-makers at HMI pertaining to DEI initiatives.

—Jordan Sanchez, Semester 33 Student and Chair of the DEI Subcommittee

Q: HOW HAVE YOU SEEN THE ALUMNI COUNCIL CHANGE OVER THE YEARS?



In the years since its inception in 2012, the council has changed quite a lot—we've defined what we are and outlined our missions, contributing to HMI in a number of ways including organizing ways to engage alumni, advising the Board of Trustees, and forming subcommittees that influence the school's direction. The total number of HMI semesters has nearly doubled since the inception of the Alumni Council, and while our membership has not grown at that pace, we now represent a diverse cross-

section of HMI alumni, with members on both coasts and everywhere between, members from semesters spanning most of the school's 25-year history, and members who represent racial diversity that is as important to our group as it is to HMI more broadly. Some things never change, though, and it's our annual meeting in Leadville that serves as a strong anchor for the Alumni Council, because nothing is more valuable than our chance to connect with each other and the HMI community on County Road 5A.

—Andrew "Bernie" Bernstein, Semester 8 Student

Q: HOW HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE AT HMI IMPACTED WHERE YOU ARE TODAY?



My experience at HMI, as a student, apprentice, and employee invited me to build confidence as a young and now adult woman. HMI built my capacity to make sound decisions and communicate my needs clearly—not only to others but to myself. Whether it was deciding the thru-hike the Colorado Trail this past summer, leaving teaching to pursue a graduate degree in

business, or choosing an undergraduate program that was the best fit for me back in 2010, HMI was one of the first places that really taught me and allowed me to practice the skills of assessing risk, communicating goals, and working as a team to accomplish big and daunting tasks.

—Emily Blau, Alumni Council Chair, Semester 21 Student, Semester 33 Apprentice

We are incredibly grateful for the work the Alumni Council does for HMI.

**IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE ABOUT THE COUNCIL,
EMAIL LOUISA AT LMCBRIDE@HMINET.ORG.**

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25-YEAR REUNION

**REGISTER FOR
HMI's 25-YEAR REUNION**

June 9 – 11, 2023

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