



The Aung San Suu Kyi Class of 2016 Graduates!

Grace Academy honored its fourth class of graduates on Wednesday evening, June 15 in the Meeting House of South Church. The members of the *Aung San Suu Kyi* class were the stars of the ceremony. Following an inspirational opening prayer by Pastor Adam Soderberg, the class recited the Grace Academy pledge and then sang a beautiful rendition of ? by ?. Each member of the class played a role in the ceremony, from an opening greeting, read in English, Spanish and Karen, to the presentation of gifts, to members of the community who impacted their lives, to a concluding farewell address.

The *Aung San Suu Kyi* class is composed of 13 students. All 13 students were admitted to a Catholic High School or Private school; East Catholic admitted seven students, Northwest Catholic twelve, and Mercy High School three. East Catholic provided a full scholarship to Sierra Scott and significant aid to Paw Say Htoo. Tianna Parnther will be the first student to attend The Master's School, located in West Simsbury, receiving significant aid. Abigail Stapleton will attend Concord Academy on a full scholarship, the first graduate to attend a boarding school out of state.

After conferring diplomas by Head of School, Matthew Fitzsimons, Dean of Students, Joy Chlus and Tom Manley (eighth grade advisor) presented awards to the following: Nyay Nyay Aye (*Mariposa Award*-the student who has demonstrated the most growth, personal development, perseverance, and overall effort); Paw Sat Htoo (*Aung San Suu Kyi Award* - the student who best exemplifies the spirit of her class's namesake); Mu Kue (*Athletic Award*-the student who has excelled in

athletics throughout her four years, becoming a team leader, improving skills, displaying respect for teammates, opponents and competition, and demonstrating grace in the face of every challenge); Abigail Stapleton (*Polaris Award*- the student who has excelled as a beacon of outstanding scholarly achievement); and Shir-Val Williams (*Spirit Award*- Grace Academy's highest honor, awarded to the student who most embodies the school's core values of respect, courageous compassion, academic excellence, hospitality, joy and grace throughout her years at Grace Academy). Matthew Fitzsimons introduced former board member, Marjorie E. "Marge" Morrissey, who presented the *Marjorie Murphy Morrissey Award* (a new award given to honor the mother of Marjorie E. Morrissey-see side article on next page), to Tianna Parnther.

What has become a tradition, two students, Ashanti Richards and Shayland Clarke, offered a farewell address, sharing the sentiments of their classmates. Shayland fondly recalled, "I remember in fifth grade when we first started at Grace Academy, we were so excited we broke out into song at lunch." While their exuberance continued through the years, they also acknowledged the demands of the program and the tension that can cause stress in their 'sisterhood.' Shayland related, "Even through all of the misunderstandings and drama, we've managed to stick together and stay close. It saddens me to think that this could be the end, but in reality this is just the beginning. We're always going to be in each other's lives, because we've been through so much together...I remember all of the times that we've laughed and cried together, and we were always there to pick each other up."

GRACE



Marjorie Murphy Morrissey Award

During the Graduation Ceremony, Matthew Fitzsimons introduced Marjorie E. "Marge" Morrissey, a founding member and benefactor of Grace Academy who presented the *Marjorie Murphy Morrissey Award* for the first time, given to honor her mother. Marge was one of the first involved in the formation of our school before we had a name and served on the Steering Committee where she helped bring our new school to life through her magnetic energy, warmth and wealth of ideas. She transitioned to the Board of Directors, serving as the Chair of the Development/Resources Committee where she helped promote and launch the first fundraising event – the *Grace Academy Golf Tournament*, and then transitioned to promote and secure corporate sponsors, auction items and volunteers for the very successful *The Power of Grace* benefit at The Bushnell, led by Marcia Herrera. Through her leadership on the Board, Grace Academy raised over \$3,260,000 in cash donations and \$400,000 in in-kind gifts; she helped grow the list of donors from under 25 donors to more than 620 people, foundations, corporations, businesses and organizations. Marge is, truly, an inspiring role model for women who want to give, build and make a difference in their communities. Instilled by her mother, Marge is a person of integrity who operates from a clear sense of her values and her commitment to the Arts, Science Center, Education, and the City of Hartford. Because education and service to others is of critical importance in the Morrissey Family, the *Marjorie Murphy Morrissey Award* was given to Tianna Parnter, an eighth grade student who has demonstrated a commitment to Community Service during her four years at Grace Academy.

Ashanti and Shayland joined their voices together to tell their classmates, "Remember to stay true to yourself because at the end of the day, you have to face yourself, no one else...this isn't goodbye, it's just a farewell for now."

In closing, Wendy Allerton, Board Chair,

offered the final blessing to the graduates. Immediately following the recessional, families and friends of the graduates joined faculty and staff at a reception in Gray Hall. The room was filled with balloons, hugs, and laughter as everyone celebrated with the Class of 2016 as they move on to bright futures in high school and beyond.



Eighth graders gather with the GSP volunteers at the annual Graduate Support Program Luncheon in June

Graduate Support Program (GSP) Highlights

The *Graduate Support Program (GSP)* is one of the distinguishing characteristics of the overall program at Grace Academy. Our goal is to help graduates complete high school and continue their education in college.

This year, Gina Bolduc and her team of volunteers worked with each of the 13 students in the *Aung San Suu Kyi Class* of 2016 to place them into private schools. The GSP team assists each student and her parent(s) with applications, essays, rides to campuses for interviews and shadow days, moral support and more. For the second consecutive year, admissions officers at Miss Porter's School visited Grace Academy to role play and prepare graduates for their high school interviews. The results were impressive. This year, all 13 students were admitted to private schools. One student will attend Concord Academy in Massachusetts on a full scholarship. This is the first time a graduate will attend a boarding school outside the state of Connecticut, breaking new ground for others to follow. Two other notable placements are a graduate who will attend East Catholic on a full-scholarship and another student will be the first to attend The Master's School in West Simsbury. This year, five girls will attend Northwest Catholic and three will enter East Catholic high school (*see right side article for more information on High School Placements*).

Tracy Smith has been monitoring and supporting each high school student and she has organized college tours for our high school juniors to such colleges as Connecticut College, Holy Cross, Assumption, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, University of St. Joseph, Eastern State University and others.

Parents and students are grateful to Grace Academy for the time and energy the GSP team devotes to them. In her speech at graduation, Shir-val Williams (who will attend Northwest Catholic) said of Miss Gina and the GSP team, "Without your help, we would not have been able to get into amazing schools. ...thank you Ms. Gina and Ms. Hanniford for supporting us and believing that we could reach our goals and dreams." The process is time intensive and can be stressful for the students. Yet, the volunteers who are assigned an individual eighth grade student work diligently with each girl throughout the year to provide positive reinforcement and a compassionate ear that gives the girls strength to follow-through. Shir-val said, "We are grateful to all the women who volunteered countless hours as they sat by our side pushing us and encouraging us through all the applications and essays. We wouldn't be here and going to amazing schools if it weren't for all the hard work that you put in to make sure that we were ready to attend high school. Thank you once again, we love and we will miss you."



happenings



Sports Teams Post Record Year

Swoooooosh!!! Goooooooooooooal! These were very familiar sounds to the Grace Academy soccer and basketball teams this year, the first in the 6-year history of the school that both squads qualified for the Hartford Middle School League playoffs.

Soccer

The soccer team finished above .500 and made it to the first round of playoffs against Classical Middle School. Down 4 to 1 at the half, the team battled back and nearly tied it in the last three minutes when 7th grader, Paw Shee, hit the post twice on crosses. At 5 to 4, with nearly 60 seconds left, alumni and families cheering, the referee called the game due to darkness. "With more light, Grace would've tied that game up," the referee said. "The end result wasn't the outcome we all desired, but the team had a tremendous season," said Coach Bryan Cote, who remembers the first few seasons in 2010 and 2011 when the team failed to win a single game. "The team has a lot of character - they have this uncanny ability to come back against talented teams against great odds - it's what we love about this team." Classical Middle School went on to win the league championship.

Basketball

The basketball team also made it to the first round of playoffs this year, notching

several wins in the regular season, under head coach Shantel Hanniford, a former Trinity College basketball standout. "We were the last seed in the league which meant that we had to play the number one seed - I'd say gearing up for that game was one of the biggest challenges of the season because we had nothing to compare it to," Hanniford said. "We were in many close games throughout the season and were pushed beyond our limits, but nothing compared to playing against the top team in the league." Grace fought hard the entire game and challenged the other team to work for their victory. Overall, the basketball team this season won more games than ever.

Sports Program

Our sports program at Grace Academy is unique. Every student is required to participate in a sport. This year we offered one competitive sport each season while the other students rotated between various different sports. The Grace Academy teachers serve as coaches to ensure that all students are engaged in a sport. During each season there is a culminating activity such as 5k race, *Hartford Marathon Fitkids*, or the Faculty vs. Student game. Every year our sports program grows more and more and our kids have a bright future ahead of them!

Stepping Into Formation



For the first time ever, Grace Academy stepped into formation with the creation of its Step Team, taught by head coach Kiayani Douglas and assisted by teacher, Becca Witt. After an extensive try-out process, twelve girls were chosen to par-

ticipate in an intense 10-month training, learning synchronized drills and choreographed routines. With official *Grace is Our Movement* uniforms, the Step Team not only looked the part, but also took their performances very seriously, work-



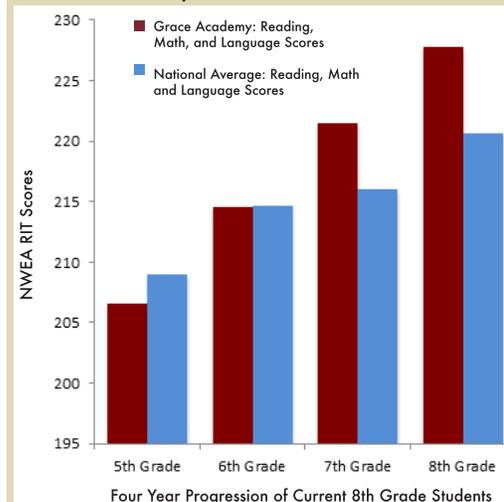
High School Placements

The following is a list of schools each member of the Aung San Suu Kyi will be attending:

| | |
|--------------|----------------------------|
| Nyay Nyay A. | Northwest Catholic |
| Shayland C. | Northwest Catholic |
| Janelle D. | East Catholic |
| Paw Say H. | East Catholic |
| Heavyhn K. | Northwest Catholic |
| Mu Kue | Northwest Catholic |
| Sabrina L. | Law & Government Academy |
| Tianna P. | The Master's School |
| Ashanti R. | Journalism & Media Academy |
| Sierra S. | East Catholic |
| Abigail S. | Concord Academy |
| Dayanara V. | Northwest Catholic |
| Shir-val W. | Northwest Catholic |

Grace Academy Students Excel Academically

Grace Academy vs. National Student Performance



Grace Academy students entering the 5th grade were significantly below the national average. These same students, this year's 8th grade, outperformed 68% of eighth grade students nationwide in combined Math, Reading, and Language.



New Student Victory!

This past year, Grace Academy began a partnership with Capitol Squash, a non-profit urban squash program based at Trinity College with a mission to provide underprivileged Hartford youth with life-changing opportunities such as the sport of squash, intensive educational support and mentoring. This winter, Capitol Squash helped provide us with one of their top squash players, sixth grader, Julissa Mota. Julissa has made a smooth transition into the Grace Academy community and has continued to excel in the Capitol Squash program. During Urban Individuals, held at Williams College, she finished third in the Girls Under 13 A division and won the Under 13 Academic Contest. Given the prompt, "The world would be a better place if..." Julissa wrote about how all girls deserve the right to a quality education. She wrote, "If we as a society fail to do this, then we will overlook people who could create greatness in our world."



Pedro Ruiz, current Hartford resident and graduate from the original NativityMiguel School in NYC, enjoying the Pancake Breakfast fundraiser with his family

Pancake Breakfast

On Saturday morning, April 30, over 150 plates of pancakes, bacon, and eggs were served to guests at Infinity Hall in Hartford. The pancake breakfast was led by the parent councils at both Grace Academy and Covenant Prep and remains to be the most exciting and successful annual fundraiser. Parents and students from both schools planned the event, served and bussed tables, and sold raffle tickets. At the end of the two hour event, six great prizes were raffled off and all funds raised were divided equally between Covenant Prep and Grace Academy.

ing diligently 3 days a week after school. Captains of the team, eighth graders, Shayland Clarke and Shir-val Williams, embraced their leadership roles and became great role models for the group; they initiated every drill and even created their own choerographed routine, which they were able to teach to their teammates. The Step Team had an amazing inaugural year, per-

forming for our Winter and Spring Showcases, Hartford's St. Patrick's Day Parade, First Congregational Church in West Hartford, and *The Power of Grace* event at The Bushnell in May (shown above). We are very excited for the future of the Step Team and look forward to seeing the talented performances yet to come!



Teacher Profile: Shantel Hanniford

What inspired you to become a teacher and join Grace Academy's AmeriCorps program?

I took my first education class during my sophomore year at Trinity

College. The class exposed me to the need in schools and ultimately inspired me to become a teacher. That same year, I learned all about Teach for America (TFA), a community service-based organization funded by the AmeriCorps program. Right away, I knew that it was the perfect fit for me because of my passion to teach and give back to the community.

How did you first hear about Grace Academy and why did you originally decide to work here?

I first heard about Grace Academy through my friend, Tamar McFarlane, who taught at Grace Academy during the 2012-2013 academic year. Tamar knew I was interested in teaching and after telling me all about Grace Academy's mission and its affiliation with the *Nativity-Miguel* model of schools, I was hooked.

What about Grace Academy makes you want to continue teaching here?

I really connect with Grace Academy's mission. I think GA is the best opportunity that is offered in the city of Hartford to middle school-aged girls and their parents. It is a very unique program that not only allows students to grow and learn leadership skills as they mature, but it allows teachers to do the same. I know that if I was in another program, I would never be given the opportunity as a young teacher to develop my own curriculum and create a brand new sports program. The abil-

ity to have freedoms such as these have been crucial to my own growth as an educator and I cannot be more thankful for the experience this program has given me.

Tell us more about the sports program at Grace Academy as the Athletic Director.

Being an Athletic Director for the first time this year has been an enlightening experience. I am so grateful for this opportunity in only my second year of teaching. So far, being the Athletic Director has taught me more about responsibility than I could have ever imagined. I think the greatest growth for me has been learning how to manage all of the logistics and scheduling, while at the same time, balancing my time as a coach and lifting team morale.

In what ways has playing on the Trinity College's basketball team affected your ability to coach here at GA?

There have been so many moments throughout my two years here at Grace Academy that I have needed to reflect back on my experience as a player on Trinity's basketball team. As a player, I had to push myself in order for my team to be successful. At times in my basketball career, I would go to the gym and practice free throws on my own for hours because I never wanted to let my team down on Game Day. Now, as a coach, the concept is exactly the same. If I don't work hard to ensure that my students understand each and every practice drill and concept, then our team will not be successful. The pain and sweat I endured as a player has prepared me for coaching at Grace, and although we may not see instant results, I am a strong believer that hard work does pay off when the time is right. At Grace, there is a collectivist attitude that truly helps motivate the students to the next level of greatness and I think, with continued perseverance and determination, our team can achieve even more success.

What have you gained from your experience at Grace?

When I arrived 2 years ago, I did not fore-

see the effect Grace Academy would have on my life as a teacher, let alone on a more personal level. Teaching at a school like Grace Academy has really forced me to step out of my comfort zone, learn new ways of thinking and viewing the world. It has given me the confidence to realize that I can make a difference and tackle problems I had once overlooked. As I continue progressing at GA, I now can see the role I play in molding young minds, which can ultimately change the community.



What is your favorite part of Grace Academy?

Hands down, the students! There are days when I am stressed beyond belief, whether it's due to my work load or personal life. However, the instant I start talking with my students, they always find a way to cheer me up by sharing a silly joke or funny memory. They give me the clarity to understand

how important it is to live in the moment and to cherish the time I get to spend with these girls. They are all so precious!!

What do you hope to accomplish here at the school?

I want to be a teacher that inspires students to love school and help them realize their full potential. Grace Academy is a great environment for girls to grow as individuals, challenge themselves, and really focus on what they need to do in order to move on to the next level. I hope to continue fostering an encouraging environment for my students and their families that will enable them to achieve their goals and understand the unlimited possibilities their futures hold. When I think about the capabilities these young girls possess, I know they can go on to change the world for the better. They all have unique skills and I hope, in some way, I play a role in cultivating the intrinsic skills that they have growing inside of them.

Grace Academy Welcomes its Newest Board Members

As the school developed its strategic plan for accreditation, the GA Board of Directors considered how it will sustain the mission and vision for the decade ahead. The Board is honored and excited to introduce to the Grace Academy community two new members who will help position the school for its long-term future: Kathy Bromage and Nancy Barone.



Kathy Bromage (Center) with Brianna (Left) and Eden (Right)



Nancy Barone (Right) with Michelle (Left) and Taina (Center)

Kathy Bromage is *The Hartford's* Chief Marketing and Communication Officer and has oversight for the company's enterprise marketing, branding and communication functions. She also serves as Senior Vice President of Strategy for the company's Small Commercial Insurance segment and most recently, Kathy served as Senior Vice President of e-business, with oversight responsibility for *The Hartford's* digital assets, channels and marketing activities. Prior to joining *The Hartford*, Kathy worked at the *Shawmut National Corporation* and *PricewaterhouseCoopers*, a "Big Four" accounting firm. Kathy received a BBA in Accounting from the University of Massachusetts and is a CPA. Kathy comes from a large family and was raised in Hingham, MA. She attended Notre Dame High School in Tyngsboro, MA, an all-girls Catholic school. Through her all-girls education in high school, she identifies her experiences with the mission of Grace Academy. Kathy has been actively involved in Hartford's community, serving on such boards as the Boys & Girls Club and the Aurora Women & Girls Foundation. She brings many gifts to the Board with her marketing background and board experiences with other organizations.

Nancy Barone has an investment management background, having served in ING's Investment Management division for 25

years, attaining the position of Senior Vice President. Over the past ten years, Nancy has worked as a consultant in trade cost analysis for hedge funds. Nancy, her husband, Dominic, and their three children (ages 11, 13, and 16) are actively involved in their church and help the community with such projects as supporting the homeless by providing sleeping bags and fundraising, serving in soup kitchens and planting gardens for urban food pantries. Nancy learned of Grace Academy through friends who are actively involved at Grace, but also through her daughter who volunteers in the city with Hartford City Mission/Camp Noah. Nancy's daughter has not only volunteered at Camp Noah, but she has spoken to the members of the family's congregation about the impact volunteering has had in her life and how a commitment of time to others can change a child's life. These factors motivated Nancy to serve the school and join the board.

Transitions at the top:

Wendy Allerton has ably served the GA Board of Directors as Board Chair since Grace's founding in 2010. Following seven years of dedicated involvement, Wendy passed the baton of leadership to Jennifer Centrone, SVP, Head of HR Retirement and Annuities at Voya Financial. Centrone will begin her tenure as Chair this coming fiscal year.

With Grace



Monet For A Day

On two successive Saturdays in May, teacher Tom Manley and his mother-in-law, Kim Zimmerman, led an art workshop at the Hill-Stead Museum, an idyllic and historic home designed by Theodate Pope Riddle, located on a picturesque overlook in Farmington. The famous home holds numerous paintings by Monet, Manet, DeGas, and Cassatt. With these masterpieces serving as inspiration, Kim Zimmerman showed students how to look at the landscape, use light and shadow, and an impressionist brush stroke to create beautiful acrylic works of art (*shown above*). These works of art were then displayed at Grace Academy's annual showcase in late May.



Kindness Shown to Drama Club Students

Beth Ballentine has volunteered for the past four years to lead Grace Academy's *Drama Club* and produce our annual play. Students interested in theater make a two-quarter commitment in order to prepare for the show's production, which is performed at the end of the year. Beth uses various techniques to develop and enhance the students' acting skills. This year, Beth went above and beyond. On April 26, she hosted and generously paid for her theater students to attend the show, *Matilda*, held at The Bushnell. Prior to the show, our students attended a workshop where they learned from professionals how a major musical is produced.

Days of Service; Community "In"-Reach



HIMCO (left) and Voya (right) employees gather with students during days of service

Since Grace Academy's founding, many businesses and organizations have volunteered their services to help with needed projects, amounting to huge cost savings in the school's budget. These have included: alumni associations of Notre Dame and Holy Cross, The Hartford, PwC, LINKS, Miss Porter's, Ethel Walker, Loomis Chaffee, East Catholic and others. This year, The Hartford sent employees from HIMCO to help with projects on September 11th. This spring, two new corporations sent employees for a Day of Service: Voya Financial and Prudential Insurance. On May 17, Jen Centrone, Grace Academy board member and upcoming Chairperson, visited GA, along with 20 Voya employees, to tackle some big projects. These energetic individuals cleaned walls, floors, and the

school's stage; cleaned and organized the school's storage closet (a thankless job, indeed); weeded the gardens, planted flowers and added mulch; applied spackle to holes and divots, painted three rooms; and made trips to the local hardware store to purchase items to fulfill tasks. In addition to having a good time, three employees made personal contributions to the school. On May 20, only three days later, employees from Prudential Insurance dropped by for an hour of service as part of the *Dash for a Difference* Campaign. These employees further weeded our garden and walkways and replaced tennis balls on all of our students' desks and chairs. We are grateful to organizations and businesses such as HIMCO, Prudential, and Voya for reaching out and caring about our school.

Marcia Herrera & The Power of Grace Through the Years...

As Grace Academy approached the date of its first graduation ceremony in 2013, Marcia Herrera inquired as to what type of celebration the school had in mind to honor the occasion. What Marcia envisioned was far more than anything conceived at the time, and what resulted was an ambitious benefit at The Bushnell that evolved into *The Power of Grace* event. With great spirit and energy, Marcia formed a committee of dedicated ladies who created and planned a signature fundraising event that attracted 100s of friends and corporate donors. Over the past four years, Marcia Herrera and her committee have managed to raise over \$625,000 for the school. For-



Marcia with Auctioneer, John Motley at *The Power of Grace 2015*

mal planning for the event begins, yet Marcia works throughout the year meeting people, representatives from businesses and corporate contacts who have the capacity to provide a donation, auction item or corporate sponsorship. She energizes people around a common cause and then celebrates the success of each event with a post-event party with gifts of appreciation for each committee member. After four years of dedicated service, Marcia is passing the torch of event leadership on to others who will follow the example she has set. Grace Academy is deeply grateful for her vision and enthusiastic service.

+ Gratitude

Farewell to Christy; An Inspiration to the GA Community

The gift of time is precious, and volunteers are truly generous when it comes to investing this valuable resource in our school and with our students. Christy Lybass is one of those rare individuals any organization would be blessed to have as a volunteer. Christy learned of Grace Academy through her work on the board of Cherish the Children, and following a Cherish the Children board meeting held at Grace Academy, she offered her services as a tutor and helper in the library. That initial involvement brought her to the attention of Grace Academy's Board of Directors who invited her to join in 2014. Over the past three years, Christy visited two to three days each week, tutoring students and working in the library (cataloguing new books, checking-in returned books, and advising students on "great reads"). However, she became the ears and eyes to needs in the building. When teachers needed calculators for the students, she purchased them. When art supplies were needed, she purchased them. When we ran low on copy paper, erasers, white board markers, post-its, or notecards, Christy would unexpectedly surprise us with boxes and bags of supplies to the joy of the teachers.

Christy arrived each day with a warm genuine smile and innate sense of empathy for the students. Students from the fifth grade to eighth grade sensed her innate humbleness and had the utmost affection for her. She never sought recognition and would often purchase items or accomplish tasks without anyone's knowledge. Christy also joined *The Power of Grace* benefit committee and worked closely with Marcia Herrera to help make the annual event a success. At this year's benefit, she involved her family by recruiting her son Michael and daughter Elizabeth to work the door. Earlier this year, Christy and her husband, David, hosted a fundraising reception at their home to introduce others to Grace Academy. The family has now relocated to Florida, but just prior to their departure, Christy and David made the decision to sponsor a student. "Christy is part of the fabric that makes up our school community and is highly valued to us all," said Gaby Witt, ELA teacher and school librarian, "she is a devoted and inspiring individual who has contributed so much to the library, our students and our school; she is an asset to our community and to my fellow teachers."



Students thank Christy with a "Jelly Roll" hug

The Links, Inc. Host 8th Grade Trip to The Hartford Stage

In April, Farmington Valley Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, a national service organization composed of 14,000 professional women of color, hosted a special Saturday field trip for the Aung San Suu Kyi (8th grade) students. On April 23, the eighth graders spent the afternoon at The Hartford Stage for a performance of the award winning production, *Having Our Say: The Delany Sisters' First 100 Years*, which included lunch, a tour of The Hartford Stage, and even an after-show dialogue with the director and actors.



Ekphrastic Poetry with West Hartford Poet Laureate and The Golden Thread Gallery

During April's *National Poetry Month*, as part of a grant from The Henry Niles Foundation, West Hartford poet laureate, Ginny Connors (*shown below*) introduced the concept of *ekphrastic poetry* (a poem inspired by a work of art), teaching four lessons throughout the month of March to our students. As a way to conclude the lessons, the fifth and eighth grade visited West Hartford's Golden Thread Gallery where they received a tour from gallery co-founder, Kate Wilson (*shown above*) and worked together to create their own ekphrastic poems based on the gallery's exhibit, *Woman: A Fierce Beauty*. Epephanie LaBoy, one of our fifth graders, even came back to the Golden Thread Gallery during their closing reception and read her poem aloud to the public.



• *Respect* • *Leadership* • *Courage* • *Hospitality* • *Joy* • *Grace* •

A Partnership Blossoms with the Tariq Farid Foundation



Left: Mu Ket posing in front of her week-long summer camp cabin at Silver Lake; Right: Asma Farid with Mu Ket (on far right) and her classmates at Connecticut's Immigrant Day held at the Capitol in April

One of America's most successful entrepreneurs lives right here in Connecticut, and recently became a friend of Grace Academy. Tariq Farid, Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Edible Arrangements, is a generous philanthropist to non-profits in Connecticut that help alleviate suffering and enable individuals to reach their full potential. Farid pioneered the idea of delivering to one's door, high quality, artistically designed fresh fruit arrangements that look like beautiful flower arrangements. Tariq Farid's family immigrated to West Haven, CT from Pakistan when he was a child. His father worked as a machinist. As a teenager, Tariq mowed lawns to earn money and later got a job at a local McDonald's. With some entrepreneurial flair, he opened one flower shop at age 17, which soon blossomed into four, and eventually led to the idea to create healthy fruit arrangements. What started with one store in East Haven has now grown to over 1,200 franchise locations throughout the world. Tariq Farid has had the opportunity to experience the

many benefits and blessings the U.S. has to offer, and he believes that with his success comes responsibility. Tariq and his wife, Asma, are committed to helping the less fortunate, and through the Tariq Farid Foundation, they contribute to organizations that help others to experience the American Dream. Earlier this year, the Tariq Farid Foundation learned of Grace Academy and enthusiastically decided to sponsor a student. Tariq and Asma are now following and sponsoring Mu Ket through her years at Grace. Along with a few other student sponsors, the Tariq Farid Foundation has taken an additional interest in Mu Ket; they arranged for Mu Ket to get a scholarship to a week-long summer camp in Litchfield County. Mu Ket's own interest in healthy eating, gardening, and providing food for the undernourished is a wonderful fit with the mission of Edible Arrangements and the Tariq Farid Foundation, and we look forward to seeing what else develops from this relationship!