A student leader rouses their fellow hikers from their post-lunch respite on the warm rocks. The group members tidy up their picnic spot, following Leave No Trace principles. After a quick consultation with the map, they shoulder their backpacks and hike onward, enjoying the panoramic views offered by the Franconia Ridge Trail.

This is a scene from this fall’s Field Course, “Backcountry Living and Alpine Ecology in the White Mountains”, but it could as easily have been a snapshot from 1973 or 1933. St. Mary’s in the Mountains was founded as a haven of inquiry and exploration for young women, who too often at that time were excluded from other halls of learning. As the school moved into the mountains and later renamed itself The White Mountain School, it has continued to provide a framework in which students from a diversity of backgrounds have had the opportunity to learn more about themselves, each other, and the world around them.

In this edition of Echoes, we are thrilled to share our latest view from the mountains, where students and faculty continue to engage in dialogues in which we co-create the present, mindfully, with heart, and with an awareness of how our connections can make or break us as individuals, as communities, and as a species. On this campus, for generations, people have embraced learning and community with Curiosity, Courage, and Compassion. We continue in the ethos and episteme of Episcopalian co-education and are overjoyed to learn from those who have come before, while developing our own skills within these beautiful natural surroundings and within this inspiring tradition. On page 2 you’ll find an excerpt from Charles Baudelaire’s poem “Correspondences”, written just a few years before the founding of this school. Baudelaire’s words reflect the power of our echoing correspondence in the beautiful natural surroundings of the White Mountains, where so many generations of students have found their passion and their voice.
Backcountry Living & Alpine Ecology in the White Mountains Field Course.
Correspondances
A POEM BY CHARLES BAUDELAIRE (1857)

Nature is a temple where living pillars
sometimes emit confused words
humans pass through this forest of symbols
Which observe us with familiar gazes
Like long echoes which merge in the distance
In a dark and profound unity
Vast as the night and like the light
Perfumes, colors and sounds co-respond
After an extensive nationwide search, I am delighted that Anne E. Swayze has accepted our offer to serve as Head of School and is joining The White Mountain School on July 1, 2024. I would like to extend our thanks to Donald Ball, who has served as Interim Head of School.

Anne, known as Swayz to family and friends, has spent over 30 years in the independent boarding school space in New England, most recently as Head of School at Greenwood School in Putney, Vermont.

Anne is a graduate of Indiana University, where she was awarded a B.A. in Education, after which she attended the University of Colorado earning an M.Ed in Educational Leadership.

Co-Chair of the Head of School Search Committee, alumna Anne Weathers Ritchie ’70, shares: “I am thrilled to welcome Anne to the White Mountain School community. She will be a wonderful addition to our school, an inspirational leader and the first woman in over 50 years at The White Mountain School/St. Mary’s-in-the-Mountains to serve as our Head.”

I share our Co-Chairs’ joy in welcoming Anne and her family to our school community. I’m confident that Anne will embody our mission and steward our vision. Our School will benefit from Anne’s commitment to experiential, student-centered education. She understands the transformative power of our educational model and will ensure that The White Mountain School continues to be a place where students practice curiosity, courage, and compassion. Her relational approach to headship is a terrific fit for our close-knit community, and I’m so excited for students, families, faculty, staff and alumni to get to know Anne.

With the prospect of exciting new leadership and the continuing dedication of our faculty and staff, we look forward to a bright future for The White Mountain School.

Sincerely,

Alana Kumbier
Chair, Board of Trustees
To enter this school as a teacher is to have your work in the classroom amplified and supported by what happens in Morning Meetings, in the dining hall, on Orientation trips and Field Courses. Generations of teachers and students here at The White Mountain School know through experience that our work is holistic, interdisciplinary, dialogic, and thus transformational. The LASR Capstone projects allow each student to embrace their individual passions and creativity within this tradition, echoing in a microcosm the ways in which our species over generations has adapted and transformed the skills and teachings of those who have come before us.

In what follows, we share a few excerpts from our current teachers and students, as a gift to those who have come before and those who will come after.
“Late night walks under the stars, sugar-frosted mountains, and the company of my friends are what I love most about being in The White Mountain School. These are what I think about when I made the split second decision to come back for my senior year. At the age of 16, I left home for a country that’s not my own, not knowing anyone, anything. The cold weather, the foreign foods, the tongue that doesn’t have the sentiment that my language does were all terrifying. I was afraid to try new things, afraid to speak to people who don’t know my culture the way I do, and afraid to be different than all of these kids. After some months of getting to know people and the school, gradually, I came to terms with the way I am. I’m never going to be like anyone else, and people are going to be okay with that. I’ll be okay with that. I’ll write my friends poems on their birthdays, take them to the lake lazing around on weekends, and make them the foods they’ve never tried before. I’ll be me. So when one by one people stood up during Pass The Book, a ceremony where we tell each other about how our experiences were, it felt right. WMS is a place where you can be comfortable in your own skin, and at the same time, willing to get out of it when you want to.

If WMS has taught me anything last year, it is that no matter who and where you came from, you will learn to love your differences in a world where so many are fitting in.” 🌟
Ecology & Artistic Expression: Nature Journaling in the White Mountains
In my World History classes, 9th graders have been studying “cognitive revolutions” as an essential truth of our deeply social and collective species. As we witness the ways in which each generation uses language, tools, and concepts that we did not ourselves invent, we encounter and explore the true power of dialogue and collaboration, inquiry and creativity in our own present. We have thought about the power of dialectical thought – embracing processes where we analyze history and arguments in terms of naming a central thesis, before developing and witnessing an antithesis to this idea. Then, we explore an understanding of what a synthesis of these two opposing views and truths might be. I learned this process from my teachers more than 30 years ago. They learned and named this process through systems as old as Aristotle. As students and teachers in today’s world, via this process of crafting our arguments, building evidence, and learning from and with each other, the power of engaging with a variety of perspectives and truths comes into view. We might argue that these skills of building syntheses and seeing connections between opposing points of view have never been more important in human history. We might argue that these skills have always been core to our survival and creativity as a species.

As we engage with developing new skills, using new and ancient technologies, in our classrooms, and while rock climbing, white water rafting, exploring the streets of Montreal, or engaging in Eco-Art explorations (to name only a few of our recent experiences), we see how we are in a constant state of inquiry and dialogue out of which we live and create an ever-changing and ever-connected synthesis in our present world.

As I took on the task of interviewing and inviting contributions to this magazine, I asked – how can Echoes reflect the connections and the dynamism of our classrooms of our conversations around the dinner table, or on the path? A few pages and photos cannot contain that deep work. However, we can show you a few echoes of our current work in the classroom, in Field Courses and Orientation trips, and in our outdoor sports and invite you to revisit campus through these reflections and perhaps in this way continue to rekindle our own collective inquiry and faith!
In a school grounded in the Episcopal tradition, one answer to the question of values could be very simple: we endeavor to follow an established moral code. But, what kinds of moral code lead to healthy communities and individuals? Our school setting prides itself on independent thinking, collaborative projects, and inquiry-based learning as values and actions deeply entwined in Episcopalian traditions of faith and learning (episteme kai pistis) because we know that collaboration recognizes not only our independence but our interdependence. The ability to question and enter into dialogue represent values
of inclusivity and connection so core to our collective survival and well-being.

Last Spring Semester, a group of Seniors grappled with these ideas in my class entitled “Ethics and Moral Philosophy.” Struggling together to find a set of values upon which a group of humans might live in justice and compassion, and impelled by innate curiosity, the students worked in dialogue to uncover principles which might always be considered good, trying to create a caring code for a community. While the academic classroom is a wonderful place to wrestle with creating a system of values in this way, it quickly becomes evident that values need actions in addition to words. Students learned the importance of setting intentions and breathing life into these intentions through actions, guided by principles. To be involved in the courageous act of setting intentions is one of the inspiring and inspirational aspects of life at The White Mountain School, as it requires continual questioning of one’s beliefs and understandings, rooted in listening to and dialoguing with others’ perspectives and ways of thinking. How can we strive to continually develop a community based in human dignity, adaptation, respect, and love? What kinds of intentions, words, and actions can we develop to deepen our connections and our understanding of the community and the individual? 🌻
The overview effect
TheOverviewEffectisdefined as “a state of awe with self-transcendent qualities, precipitated by a particularly striking visual stimulus,” a term most commonly used to describe a poignant sadness experienced by astronauts when seeing our planet from above for the first time. Everything experienced in a lifetime: every heartbreak, every love, every quiet moment spent alone, every laugh and every cry happened on the strange blue green sphere floating in the darkness before you.

While I have never been to space, the concept of graduating and leaving this school feels like boarding a rocket ship to the stars. Simultaneously exciting and terrifying, some part of me will always feel as if I am not ready. As if the past five years I have spent preparing for this moment will never be enough; as if I am still not ready to stop being a child.

There’s something so odd about being a senior. One foot in the past and one foot in the future, it feels as if now doesn’t exist. Our class has been divided: one group living in the future counting down the days, and one group deep in the past, refusing to even acknowledge the change and the journey ahead. But now here we are and for all of us it is simultaneously now, then, and there; nebulas of memories weaving together to form our perception of our school, our home.

For some reason, this conglomeration of artists, athletes, scientists, and poets were brought together for these four years to love, to struggle, to exist in this place. We have all been through something here, at this school, incomprehensible to an outsider. When we search for home, we will all follow the same constellations back here, to a clear winter’s night on Edge field, Kara’s car engine humming, cold fingers hastily punching in coordinates to a telescope that may not even work.

I know some part of us will always live in the walls of this school. Some version of me will still be running to Morning Meeting at 8:27am, walking to Edge to watch the soccer games, sitting in the art room, covered in Gamsol and paint. Even after we are all forgotten and the stories of our class and our adventures are no longer told, the ghosts of our teenage years will still call this place home. The echoes of our voices will still fill the glass hallway, our snowy footprints still imprinted on the Bio Loop.

Whether or not we believe it, and no matter how intense the Overview Effect hits us when we drive down West Farm Road for the last time as students, we are all ready for the stars.

Someone once told me that only when you love a place so much you can’t bear to leave it are you truly ready to move on. It’s time for us to escape the comfort of the nest, to explore the cosmos and all it has to offer.
Where Our 2023 Grads Are Going

Arizona State University - Tempe
Case Western Reserve
Chapman University
Clemson University
Colorado College
Dickinson College
Emmanuel College
Gettysburg College
Hofstra University
Lewis and Clark College
Montana State University
Northwest University
New York University
Pennsylvania State University
Rutgers University
School of Visual Arts
Skidmore College
Southern Maine Community College
St. Lawrence University
St. Louis University - Madrid
Suffolk University
University of Gloucestershire
University of Massachusetts - Amherst
University of Miami
University of Wisconsin - Madison
University of New Hampshire
University of Denver
University of Montana
University of Vermont
Washington and Lee University
Thank you
FOR SUPPORTING THE
WHITE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL
IN 2022-2023!

YOUR GENEROSITY SUSTAINS CURiosity, COURAGE, AND COMPASSION.

A gift to The Fund for White Mountain ensures the vitality of our school and enriches the experience of every student.