

School Committee Report to IYMC 2021

“I will love the light for it shows me the way.

Yet I will endure the darkness for it shows me the stars.”

– Og Mandino

It was a year of both loving the light and enduring the darkness, and cultivating the practice of appreciation for both. The staff, leadership and students of the school found new ways through these unprecedented times, and we are deeply grateful for their immense efforts and creative solutions.

Last July, in the depths of the pandemic, we welcomed John Zimmerman and his family (Stephanie, Jack and Miranda) to Scattergood, and what a year it was to begin his journey as a new Head of School! Here are but a few of the major milestones that were faced: the launch of a Middle School program; beginning a Healing and Boundaries project to listen and learn from the challenging stories of the school’s past and to ensure more safety on campus; surviving then recovering from the severe Derecho storm in August; planning and directing Covid-19 safety practices on campus; creating virtual learning programs and sustaining community when online learning was necessary.

This was a year to be nimble and flexible so we were grateful to be small. The school tackled the daunting logistics of adaptation such as reimaging living arrangements, meals, and classrooms, to nurturing a sense of connection while maintaining distance and wearing masks. The Covid protocols were well planned and followed so even when a positive case did appear, the virus did not spread throughout the campus.

Much of the work needed to sustain the school from a standpoint of admissions, outreach and governance was put on hold because of Covid, but the connections that have been made through the necessity of virtual interactions have provided previously unthought-of possibilities. For instance, we are now able to include people on the School Committee and subcommittees who may not have otherwise been able to participate. It is our intention that even as we are able to meet in-person for School Committee business, we will continue to have virtual and hybrid meetings to provide more access with less travel.

Long overdue, the School and School Committee have begun work with Chi Achebe from Chicago to help us take a deeper look into our systems, policies, attitudes and participants through a lens of racial equity and bias awareness. This work is not just a marathon but rather an ongoing daily walk, and it must be integrated into our culture and all that we do.

Financially we are ending the year on a relatively strong note. We nearly reached our Annual Fund Giving goal and the school qualified for two forgivable PPP loans. This helped with our cash flow so we did not tap into our line of credit, putting us in a stronger position to begin the

2021-22 academic year. Enrollment was higher and the increase in revenue was welcomed. The

Middle School has shown itself to be a successful educational program and as a feeder school for the secondary grades. Five weeks of Camp Scattergood this summer filled a need in the area, yielded some profit, and also served as a playful outreach to connect with local youth. There are plans underway to continue and expand the summer camp program.

Looking ahead, we are in the planning stages for a capital campaign to address the installation of sprinkler systems as well as few other costly facilities updates. The five main projects include: sprinkler systems in the dorms, a new well, dorm bathroom renovations, air conditioning in the dorms, and installation of more solar panels to offset energy use.

The state of Iowa requires the school to install sprinklers in both dorms and a water holding tank for the entire system. A new well is needed and it is prudent to attend to this proactively instead of waiting for an emergency. The dorm bathrooms will be updated to provide more privacy, improve ventilation, and possibly to relocate the water heaters closer to the showers instead of hot water traveling the long distance from the basement.

We have come to the conclusion that air conditioning is necessary in the dorms for a number of health and safety reasons: weather is becoming even more unpredictable and there could be dangerously high temperatures in dorms during the school year; we are planning to expand our summer options to include residential programs but would need temperature-safe dorms to do so; and lastly, air conditioning with an air filtration system improves air quality which is crucial for students living with allergies. We have begun conversations with Dwight Schumm of Design Engineers to help us find energy efficient options. Dwight specializes in designing green HVAC systems and has connections to IYMC. The addition of more solar panels will offset the increase in energy associated with air conditioning and hopefully provide electricity for other areas of the school as well.

Although the pandemic is not yet over, we are in a better place and are grateful to get back to our business of things like future planning, outreach, facilities updates, and our 7-year reaccreditation process which begins soon. We offer our resounding appreciation to the faculty, staff and our Head of School for their tireless efforts. Without their sacrifices of time, energy, resources and family support, this year would not have been possible. We also thank the students and their parents and guardians for their patience, perseverance, and support in keeping the community together and thriving. Although the challenges were many, the grace and resilience of the community shone through. This past year had many blessings when viewed through a lens of gratitude, and we hold all who made it possible in the Light as we faithfully look forward to continuing this mission of Love.

On behalf of the School Committee,

Ruth Hampton, clerk and Roy Helm, assistant clerk