

# 2021-2022

## Awards, Art Show, Graduation Celebration

### OPENING REMARKS

Welcome to our sixth annual awards and graduation ceremony. Please bear with us if you are not entirely familiar with our community's culture and nuances. We love our shenanigans and inside jokes. We are so grateful that all of you have chosen to spend your time here with us, celebrating the accomplishments of these students. I always like to begin with an acknowledgment of the hard work of our parents. It is with immense gratitude that I kick off this event.

This is a celebration. We are celebrating the hard work of our students, staff, and parents over the course of this last year. I think we can all agree that it is very challenging work!

The last two weeks were dominated by the Lock-in and party planning for this event. Next year we are definitely reversing the order of these events. It is very difficult to plan a celebration like this if you have been zombified by an all-night chaperoning gig. At my age, it takes a little time to recover.

Other than these two events, I had the pleasure of working with Aidan Doyle on a couple of things to get his work for the year completed. His final creative writing assignment for me was to recount his efforts to obtain his high school diploma. We had been working on the steps of the Hero's Journey and, it occurred to me, that obtaining a high school diploma is much like a hero's journey.

I bring this up now because parents and family members play many of the roles required in a hero's journey ... often you are the mentor with a gift, as with financing a private school education. Occasionally, you are the threshold guardian, as with setting expectations and maintaining boundaries for them. "You are not leaving this house looking like that", may come to mind.

Rescue from without is required a lot, as with fender benders in the parking lot, running home for forgotten homework or art supplies, or helping with challenging tasks.

The point is that your child's high school experience is much more successful when you are involved. Of course, it requires more than just family members. Teachers, administrators, and friends all play a part in a child's success.

So, as always, let's kick off this event with a huge round of applause for the family members that have shown up this year and are here today to support and celebrate the year's successes!

A couple of quick announcements.

- 1) We have a **fundraiser** in the next room that some of our students have put together to raise money in support of Ukrainian Refugee Children. There is some beautiful artwork for sale. Please take a look and buy some of their creations.
- 2) **Scholarships** will be announced throughout the event, not all at once. *Please note that all scholarships are awarded to returning students only. For students who already have scholarships, these named awards are part of your package.*
- 3) We will **break** for about 45 minutes halfway through our event.
  - a) A light **lunch** will be served at this time, buffet-style in the other room. Dessert will be served at your tables during the second portion of our event.
  - b) Please use this time to seek out Trish, who is our exceptionally talented **photographer**. She is available to take family photos and pics of the graduates.
  - c) This is a great time to check out the art show in the other room and, of course, **buy magazines and artwork**.

d) We will be moving along pretty quickly. We have provided **cheat sheets** for every table to provide additional information if you miss something. Let's Go!

We are going to go out of our normal running order now so that **Sharon Kaufman** from the VCA can bestow her awards onto her students before running off to another event. Popularity is a blessing and a curse! Sharon Kaufman, everyone.

## **ART AWARDS**

**Drawing: Samuel Casbarro**

**Painting: Broghan Dowler**

**Pottery: Rey Brass**

**VCA Scholarships: Gwen South Moran & Brooke Vena (\$250 each)**

## **HOUSE HUNT**

In these totally made-up, silly, purely for fun trials, these kids find that they are part of something bigger than themselves. It also happens to teach them negotiation and team-building skills, pulls them out of their comfort zones, gets them outside and moving, and is a ton of fun for participants and onlookers alike. Thank you, Shea, and all of our students for making this year's House Hunt awesome!

Now, Shea and Tucker are in charge of announcing this year's final House Hunt Standings.

Shea, Tucker, let's do this.

## **HOUSE HUNT RECAP**

Through blood sweat and tears, four teams clawed, schemed, and valiantly battled for the greatest glory here at Education Without Walls. Of course, I am referring to the 2021-2022 House Hunt Cup.

Over the course of this past semester, every one of our four houses has shown honor and commitment to the ideals we strive for here in the great hunt. Pandor, Snowpex, Brumblin, and Legendaw have all taken this competition we prize so dearly to a new level.

For those here who may be unaware - the fourth annual House Hunt is a year-long competition, where the four ancient houses of Education Without Walls compete for the glory of the house cup. The house hunt involves clue-based scavenger hunts, challenges such as paper airplane throwing or dancing competitions, logic puzzles, and much more.

Throughout the course of the year, the houses win points by completing challenges and finding artifacts. The house at the end of the year with the most points brings home the house cup. Now - here - live - you will all be privy to the 2021-2022 House Hunt champion. So without further ado:

In fourth place: This house showed special honor in the great duel, by being the only house to throw away their shot in the ultimate sign of peace. Of course, I'm referring to the goblet thieves, and the winner of the great paper airplane competition - Legendaw!

In third place: This house unequivocally proved to all that they are the masters of Education Without Walls history and lore by sweeping the floor in the ultimate EWoW jeopardy game. That's right ladies and gentlemen I'm referring to Pandor.

The second and first place winners were extremely close this year, but ... unfortunately... as always... there can only be one champion.

This house spent the year working away in the background while the other houses were at each other's throats. This house proved masters of deciphering clues and ciphers, logical puzzles, and anything related to general scheming behavior. The first house to recover every artifact, yes that's correct, our second place champions, Brumblin.

This year is Snowpex's first victory, in fact, Snowpex is quite notorious for coming in last. However, Snowpex's unwavering commitment to the Hunt and everything that the four houses stand for has, time and again, proven itself to be the dominant house this year. I specifically would like to mention the overwhelming dedication of the House Captain Lizzy B, who, for example, showed up for the house hunt on days she did not need to be at EWoW, arriving ready to participate not 10 minutes after she heard about the day's activity. Snowpex has removed all doubt from our minds that they are the true 2021-2022 house hunt champions. Please step forward to receive the house cup.

## **HOUSE HUNT SCHOLARSHIPS (\$250)**

Given to a returning student who is a member of each house, respectively.

Brumbelin Scholarship for Debate: Carter  
Snowpex Scholarship for Creativity: Brooke  
Legendaw Scholarship for the Instigator: Joseph  
Pandor Scholarship for Community Spirit: Broghan

## **SPECIAL RECOGNITION AWARDS**

This is the first year that I requested nominations for awards from the students and staff. There were a lot of nominations! I am going to hand these out quickly. Please come up as your name is called. The specifics of your nomination are inscribed on your medal. Congratulations!

- Matthew Mish (3)
- Rey Brass
- Gwen South Moran (2)
- ZZ James (2)
- Isidora Naples (2)
- Samuel Casbarro
- Broghan Dowler (2)
- James Irish (2)
- Maximus Verna

- Tatum Roche (2)
- Carter Casbarro
- Aurora Wescott
- Lizzy Berry

But, overwhelmingly, the kid's nominations this year were for one staff member in particular. This woman has had a challenging year, personally, and yet shows up every day to shuttle students back and forth to the gym or to outdoor hiking spots.

She feeds the kids, cleans up after them, and convinces me often to afford them leeway over messes left behind, running, or excessive noise. She does this because she truly adores each and every one of them. It shows, and they love her right back.

Here are some of the reasons given for nominating her for this award.

- for being so nice and generous and for always being so hardworking.
- 'cause she's so awesome and she does sooooo much! She should receive the most productive and amazing person award!
- because of her appreciation and dedication to all of the students and treating them all equally like they were her own.
- for being funny, sweet, extremely helpful, BUYS US BAGELS, and always bringing us back and forth from the gym!
- because she does so much and cleans up people's messes that they should be CLEANING THEMSELVES but they don't so she does it cause she's just awesome.

Mary Parascondola, please come up and let us cheer for you!

## **AWARDS**

Our mission here at Education without Walls is to Celebrate the Individual, while also fostering a sense of community. This event is very focused on that mission.

We are here to celebrate our community as a whole, while also celebrating our community members' hard work and commitment. When a student

receives an award, it is a celebration of their work, of course, but in a larger sense, it is a nod to everyone who helped them to work through their difficulties over the course of the year – friends, teachers, mentors, parents, and peers. Here, we spend a lot of time acknowledging those people who have, in some way, transformed themselves or their community for the better. And so, I think it is appropriate to open with an award created to honor those in our community who help to keep it on track. We call it the Compass Award.

## **COMPASS AWARDS**

My favorite student will always be that kid who challenges me. The one who fights for every scrap of freedom; for every nuance of respect; for their privacy and their right to be who they are. In doing so, they learn to advocate for themselves, and this often leads them to advocate for those around them.

At EWoW, these fighters are my compass. Occasionally, their contribution can be very subtle, going unnoticed over the course of the year. That is definitely the case today. Many of the students for which our award winner advocates are unaware that she has done so. “Hey Lockey, do you have a minute?” is always a cue for me to stop what I am doing and listen closely.

Elizabeth Berry, thank you for your honesty and willingness to ask the tough questions, but more than this, thank you for supporting and encouraging your peers to do the same.

Hold up. You are also one of the recipients of the **Coughlin Family Scholarship for Peer Support! Congratulations! (\$1000)**

**Broghan Dowler, you are the other one. Come get your paper. Congratulations! (\$1000)**

And the **parent Compass Award** this year goes to Jenna Roche. **Jenna, come on up!**

## **LYONS HEART AWARDS**

This award is inspired by the Purple Heart, which is earned by members of the United States Armed forces who are wounded in action. It is specifically a combat decoration. I am of the considered opinion that something equivalent should be created for parents.

The Lyons Heart Award, named for former student Ben Lyons, is given to students who have worked through continuous and ongoing struggles over the course of the year. Because they struggle with forces that they often cannot control, these are the kids who, just by walking through the door, energize those around them. I am always happy to see them and their successes are much of what drives me through each day. They are an inspiration. Thank you, **Remington Wescott and Joseph Parascondola** for showing the rest of us the true meaning of bravery. Please come up and gather your awards.

## **MEDALS: ACADEMIC, SPECIAL RECOGNITION & CITIZENSHIP**

### **ACADEMIC AWARDS**

Awarded by teachers to students who have shown grit in their studies, as well as support for both their peers and their teachers. These awards are given to students who elevate those around them in a class or subject. These awards are not necessarily for the 'A' student, but for the kids who show the most character in class.

- **Social Science**

- **Nonprofit Club: Instructor, Peter Gross**

- This student thought of the idea we're pursuing and has been working hard at getting it launched. **Izzy Mains**, come on up.

- **Mock Trial Club: Instructor, Peter Gross**
  - This student is a strong leader and an intelligent contributor. **Henry Genden**, come on up. Ok, Hang on.
- **International Political Science: Instructor, Peter Gross**
  - This student consistently offers insightful contributions to the class which is appreciated by his classmates. **Henry Genden, congratulations.**
- **Psychology B, James Abbott, Instructor**
  - This student worked the hardest and contributed the most to class culture. She deserves this award because she always worked her hardest during class, no matter what. She never once made another student feel uncomfortable and was very supportive of every class member. She made the entire class more fun and helped her peers over the course of the semester. **Zinnia James, come on up.**
- **Pre-law/civics, James Abbott, Instructor**
  - This student worked the hardest and contributed the most to the class culture. She was always a great participant in classroom discussions, supported others' opinions, and was very respectful. She came to class prepared, and ready to work on the goal of the day. **Isidora Naples, come on up.**
- **Psychology A, James Abbott, Instructor**
  - This student worked the hardest and contributed the most to our class culture. She was always ready to help classmates who were struggling with the material and fostered a positive group environment for discussion. **Astrid Niles, come on up.**
- **Contemporary World History aka WDSTF, Teacher Lockey Coughlin**
  - This student was my right hand throughout the entire year. She helped to keep me and the other students on task and completed all of her work on time and as assigned. She also, very bravely, overcame her fear of

public speaking, giving 11 informative and insightful presentations. actually volunteering to them by the end of the year. On top of all of that, she is the best jeopardy judge I have ever worked with. **Aurora Wescott, come on up.**

○ **Geography, Teacher Lockey Coughlin**

- This student is the most supportive of his peers that I have ever seen in a classroom. His work is outstanding, thoughtful, and creative, but he is winning the award for this class, specifically, for his exceptional peer support. **Matthew Mish, come on up.**

○ **Binder/Atlas:**

In the book Freakonomics, written by genius economics superstar, Stephen Dubner, they discuss the idea of incentivizing student academics with financial rewards and actually conduct an experiment in Chicago inner-city schools to test their theories. Their work met with mixed results for many reasons, mostly a lack of parental involvement, but it did inspire me to try out a few things at Education without Walls. This is the inspiration behind the student tip jars, which you will hear more about later. It is also the inspiration behind the cash prizes for a couple of my classes.

Students were offered a cash prize for both the best binder in World History and the best Atlas in Geography. Prizes and criteria were announced in September and winning required some pretty consistent work throughout the year. I put two of the binders and two of the atlases in the art show because I truly believe they are works of art.

Several students gave it a good run. Honorable mention for the binder category goes to Broghan Dowler, who was very creative in adding extra credit work, as well as Astrid Niles, who was double-booked one class a week but still managed a comprehensive binder. Honorable mention for the atlas goes to Brooke Vena, who was tied for first until I had an impartial judge make the final decision. But, alas there can be only one winner for each category.

- Binder Award: Tatum Roche
- Atlas Award: Matthew Mish

## ● Foreign Language

- **Spanish, Teacher Monica Vazquez**
  - This student tries her best to speak the language daily, supports her classmates (all male, by the way) on their journey, contributes with extra information about cultural aspects, and has the self-motivation to keep learning Spanish. **Isidora Naples, come on up!**
  - This student started Spanish "to conquer the language, which many of my family members speak." His journey has been challenging, but he never gives up. He keeps trying, repeating, listening, and working hard to achieve his goal in every class. **Mateo, come on up!**
- **French, Teacher Lili Dyer**
  - **Virginia Steen, come on up.**
- **Japanese, Teacher Sandy Ho**
  - **Remington Wescott and Kyla Steen, come on up.**

## ● Language Arts

- **Literature I, Lockey Coughlin, Instructor**
  - This student was the only one to truly understand our final assignment of the year. It was to create a symbolic representation of one of the characters we studied. He chose Robin Hood and photographed a beautiful home overgrown with vines and trees. His work is showcased in the art show. **Joseph, come on up!**
- **Writing Lab, Cornelia Guest, Instructor**
  - This student has worked hard at improving his writing. **Scott, come on up!**

- **Grammar & Essay Writing, Cornelia Guest, Instructor**
  - Not only has this student done excellent work, but he also has brought up interesting questions in class. **Matthew, come on up!**
- **Creative Writing, Cornelia Guest/Tony Stahl, Instructor**
  - This student has done outstanding work on his novels! **Cade, come on up!**
- **Literature Analysis, Cornelia Guest, Instructor**
  - This student has initiated the most interesting conversations about the books we've read. **Henry, come on up!**
- **Literature & Language, Cornelia Guest, Instructors**
  - This student has done outstanding work and has been terrific at contributing to the class conversation. **Brooke, come on up!**

- **Science**

- **Chemistry, Teacher Spencer Lord**
  - This student shows a genuine aptitude for chemistry and a sense of curiosity necessary for a deeper understanding of the subject, which I hope he will pursue. **Broghan Dowler, come on up!**
- **Mycology/Toxicology/Entomology, Teacher Spencer Lord**
  - This student takes an interest in the class material and subject matter that goes above and beyond the scope of the classroom. Her enthusiasm and passion are at a level worth striving for. **Brooke Vena, come on up!**
- **EMT section 1, James Abbott, Instructor**
  - This student was able to make each class more fun with her personal stories, and overall upbeat attitude. She always made the class more fun and was active every

day with other students discussing class topics and material. **Aurora Wescott, come on up!**

- **EMT section 2, James Abbott, Instructor**
  - This student always made sure to respect other people in the class and always lent a helping hand to anyone who needed it. This could be sharing notes or answers on games that others were struggling with. He was always a great contributor and supporter not just of class but of his fellow peers. **Cade Schoenemann, come on up!**
- **Combined Science, Teacher, Jennie DeFazio**
  - This student was helpful in every class, energetic, showed a love for the topics, helped set up experiments, and always had a smiling face. **Chase Harrington, come on up!**
- **Combined Science, Teacher, Jennie DeFazio**
  - This student was hard working and focused, respectful, listened, and executed assignments with unbelievable reliability. He has helped balance out an often chaotic class dynamic. **Shane, come on up!**
- **Herbalism, Teacher Tamara Vena**
  - This student is the first to arrive for Herbalism class every week and is right by there completing every task as the class moves along. **Aurora Wescott, come on up!**

## ● **Math**

- **Algebra 1, Jennie DeFazio, Instructor**
  - This student deserves the award because she is always in class, always on time, open-minded about the lesson, offers support to others, and works so hard both in class and on homework assignments, even asking for additional work at times! **Aurora, come on up!**

- **Geometry, Jennie DeFazio, Instructor**
  - This student deserves the award because of her exceptional participation and enthusiasm for each new thing she learns! Homework and assessment assignments are completed with an extra effort at every step! **Brooke, come on up!**
  
- **Pre-Calculus, Jennie DeFazio, Instructor**
  - I'm sorry but there is no way I am picking between these two incredible mathemagicians. They are a fantabulous team that worked really hard together all year on a tough subject. Team Astrizzy. **Astrid and Lizzy, come on up!**
  
- **Algebra 2, Jennie DeFazio, Instructor**
  - There are two winners in this class for their hard-working positivity, and participation, respectively. They are the gods of math homework! **Gwen and Matthew, come on up!**

- **Art at 65 Bridge Street**

- **Digital Arts, Andrea Rios, Instructor**
  - The student has shown a genuine interest in going above and beyond expectations. He has encouraged his fellow students and has been open to trying new concepts and ideas. He has followed the guidelines of each project and has overachieved in them in order to meet his goals. **Matthew, come on up!**
  
- **Scientific Drawing, Andrea Rios, Instructor**
  - This student has acted as a creative mentor to other students and has always been present in the demos. He asks questions not just to clear any confusion but because of his own curiosity. He has been open and receptive to feedback and has tried different styles and ideas. **Broghan, come on up!**

- **General Art, Anrea Rios, Instructor**
  - This student's drive to pursue their own interests in their medium of choice. They have researched and practiced on their own time and have become well-read in the culture surrounding their art medium of choice. They can have well-backed opinions and can defend them in discussions. **Max Verna, come on up!**
- **Photography, Trish Halden, Instructor**
  - **Joseph Parascondola and Shane Battles, come on up!**

## Movement

- **Sports Lab, James Abbott Instructor**
  - This student would come to class almost every day, even on days when there was no class. He supported anyone who went to the gym and lent a helping hand. His positive attitude and support were influential in keeping others coming back to the gym and in improving overall morale. **Matthew Mish, come on up!**
- **Outdoor Education, Tamara Vena & Liz Evans, Instructors**
  - This student is always a trailblazer and helpful to her classmates. **ZZ, come on up!**
- **Cooking, Tony Stahl, Instructor**
  - **Conor, come on up!**
- **Circuit Training, Tony Stahl, Instructor**
  - **Broghan, come on up!**

## CITIZENSHIP AWARDS

First in class is awarded according to the votes of teachers and staff. These students received multiple nominations for this award. Think of this

like the academy awards. Somewhere in this list are the winners, which will be announced after the diplomas are handed out. Kids, please come up as your name is called to get your nomination medal.

## **Students**

- First in Class Nominees
  - Katharine Benson
  - Cade Schoenemann
  - Broghan Dowler
  - Isidora Naples
  - Astrid Niles
  - Lizzy Berry
  - Isabella Mains
  - Brooke Vena
  - Scott Taylor
  - Kayla Steen
  - Gwen South Moran
  - Carter Casbarro
  - Tatum Roche
  - ZZ James
  - Joseph Parascondola
  - Matthew Mish
  - Chase Harrington

## **Parents**

Education without Walls cannot function without parental involvement. These awards acknowledge some of the parents who have gone above and beyond to make the years a success. Most of these acknowledgments came from student nominations. I hope you find this validating!

- Jenna Roche, Magazine
- Lili Dyer, Community Involvement/French
- Grissel Wessman, Tennis

- Marguerite Mains, Community involvement, Spring Formal, Peer Counseling Mentor
- Lynn Harrington, Community Involvement
- ClareAnne James, Community Involvement
- Mikey Wescott, Community Involvement, ASL Instruction
- Agnieska Chapska, Community Involvement, Yoga Instruction
- Pam Krieger, Community Involvement
- Amy Cheek, Art Restoration
- Michelle Shute, Community Involvement
- Ben Moran Community Involvement, Chef
- Jenn South, Community Involvement, Gardening

#### Teachers

- Peter Gross, Mentorship
- Monica Vazquez, Outstanding Teacher
- Jennie DeFazio, Outstanding Teacher

## **SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS**

Many of these scholarships required an essay submission by April 15th for the student to be considered.

### **Evolve Yoga Mindfulness Scholarship (\$250 each)**

**Samuel Casbarro**

**Isidora Naples**

### **Living Earth Environmentalism Award (\$500)**

**Astrid Niles**

### **Maxwell Ringer Scholarship for Film (\$2000)**

Submission required

**Elizabeth Berry**

## **Elizabeth Barhydt Sentinel Award for Journalism (\$2000)**

submission required

**Astrid Niles**

## **Christopher Cararra Award for Social Science (\$2000)**

submission required

**Broghan Dowler**

## **Shea Coughlin Award for Musical Theater (\$2000)**

submission required

**Tatum Roche**

# **KINDNESS/TIP JAR AWARDS**

Envelopes are on Tables

Special Mention for the quiet, but mighty: Cade Schoenemann, Izzy Mains

Month of May: Broghan Dowler

Overall the Entire Year: Izzy Naples

# **SPEECHES**

## **A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE**

Theresa McSpedon

Good afternoon everyone! Welcome to all the staff, students, and their families. And to the graduates .....You guys did it!!! Congratulations. You all are amazing and, if I may, I would like to paraphrase song lyrics from a song from Timbuk 3

“You studied math and science  
You loved most classes  
You got some crazy good teachers

One even wears dark glasses  
Things are going great, and they're only getting better  
You are doing alright, you are graduating  
Your future's so bright, we all gotta wear shades"

Your individual talents and achievements are nothing short of remarkable.  
Congratulations we are all so proud of each and every one of you.

To all the parents and families..... WE DID IT!!! We helped them reach out today. We are the shoulders they stand on. They may or may not understand or acknowledge it yet, someday they will come to appreciate all your love, support, cajoling, badgering, begging, bribing, caring, and of course, financial support you provided so they can fly on to the greatness we all know they will achieve. Congratulations parents, grandparents, and family – you did great!

Hi, for those of you who may not know me, I am Theresa McSpedon. Those of you who do know me, probably know me as the “business” person at EWoW, sending out invoices, ensuring those are paid in a timely manner, etc. Generally, as they say in Yiddish – a nudnick to many of you. Today, I am not here as a staff person, I am not here even as the friend of Lockey, which I hope she thinks of me as for I do her, but rather I am here, just like you all as a parent. A very very proud mom to the most amazing (if I do say so myself) person I have ever met, my son James Irish. Why James is amazing is mostly his story to tell. Don't worry James, this speech isn't going to embarrass you (well maybe a little) and isn't really even mostly about you.

What I really want to focus on today and speak about is EWoW and Lockey's incredible influence not only on James' life but on all of our children. Every year Lockey spends hours on the perfect speech to make sure to capture the uniqueness and wonderfulness of our children, this year I want to flip the tables on her and speak about her and EWoW's unique and special place in all our lives. And no Lockey, you will not be allowed to cut me off. We are going to spend a few minutes focused on you and how much we love and appreciate you.

I met Lockey over five years ago, a prospective first-time new parent to a teen. I had absolutely no idea what I was doing or what to do about educating James when he would come to live with us. I remember sitting in

Lockey's office at the old building, an office filled with pillows and warmth, and thinking this place is like heaven. Is this really a place where students learn anything??? It seemed too good to be true. Lockey sat there for as long as I needed talking to me, educating me, giving me many options, so patient, so caring, even though (as she said it) she has never seen the foster care system allow a foster child to be "home-schooled" but still sat with me to make sure I got James (a child, she hadn't even met yet) all he deserves. And that is Lockey in a nutshell, isn't it?

We as parents always come to Lockey with questions, sometimes fear, sometimes anger, sometimes gratitude but we are always coming to her with something. It is relentless. The staff and students likewise come to her too with similar questions and emotions. Lockey responds with kindness (even if that kindness must take the form of firmness or a no). She always carefully listens to all, no matter their age, or emotional state. She is this warm place of kindness for us all. I can't imagine always having all that come at me every day, almost all day. Lockey does it with grace and aplomb. Lockey is the personification of EWoW's philosophy and expectations.

EWoW has been a godsend for our family, as it is for many of you. First, let's talk about the building and how warm and cozy Lockey makes it. It is essential for our children to feel safe, comfortable, and ready to learn. You all may not see it, but Lockey spends endless hours planning and arranging (then rearranging – of course) all the spaces to make them feel inviting and nurturing to the students and staff. Every decision she makes about the space is about our children. She absolutely loves doing that and when the students curl up with a book or attend classes in their PJs (James I am looking at you) relaxed and open to learning, she melts and knows she has achieved the objective of our children being able to thrive. When Lockey is in her groove making the building safe, warm, nurturing, and welcoming to children I call it Lockey's "happy place." I have never seen anyone smile so much while moving furniture.

Next is the EWoW curriculum and how it is managed. I attended private schools my whole life and my husband attended public, and we have not seen such a remarkable array of classes below the university level. The ability to allow the students to learn at their pace chose their own classes, and be responsible for their education is nothing short of not only brilliant preparation for college but also for growing our children's executive

functioning skills, a skill many children in private and public school don't develop until way into their college career. The courses are designed to be challenging, thought-provoking, and memorable. I would have killed to take the class "We didn't start the fire" that focuses on all the events and their history of them mentioned in Billy Joel's classic (another boomer reference for those of you counting). Learning about science by living in the great outdoors. Lockey tries to mix experiential and contextual learning into every subject. Which as we all have learned in life, is the best way to truly absorb and learn.

Next is the staff she hires. Of course, she makes sure they are subject matter experts, but she is also looking for the right chemistry and the right vibe for the students. Staff who will challenge and encourage our children but also be able to be flexible, to be kind. Staff who understand Lockey's fundamental learning philosophy that it is about doing the work, not the timeline, not the grades, not the accolades, but students learning to do the work. Staff who can understand that no child is allowed to fail, the staff and EWoW must hang in there with every student for as long as it takes (sometimes well beyond the semester) for the student to get the work done. The term "get the work done" really means not only physically doing the work but really absorbing and learning.

Lockey spends months, sometimes years seeking out the right staff for our children. Hopefully, you have seen that. I have seen it. My James hated, hated, hated, did I mention hated, math. He rebelled at every approach taken to help him. Lockey pursued and when she found Spencer she knew she had found the right match not only for James but for many Math resistant students. This is just one example among many.

All that I just mentioned I call the "Lockey Magic." You may think I am exaggerating but I am not. I know I am usually blunt and direct, but the Lockey Magic requires a bit of waxing poetic, so please indulge me in my clumsy attempt. I watch many children come into EWoW, some are happy to be there, some are eager, some are overachievers, some are underachievers, some are overconfident, some are underconfident, some are relieved to be here, some are pissed to be here, some are entitled, some are disadvantaged, some are angry, some are always happy, some are perpetually in motion, some are slugs, some are dejected, some are hopeless, some are rejected, some are lonely, some feel unsafe, some are dealing with major life issues and some are dealing with some physical

challenges, some have amazing families and home life, some do not. Many of these are defense mechanisms or conditions that are all barriers to educational success. Lockey is never daunted by any of these, never exasperated.

A little while ago I told you how I came to meet Lockey. When my James finally came to us in June 2017, we gave him the opportunity to choose any school he wanted to go to, public or private. After visiting many James resoundingly chose EWoW. My James came to EWoW after being in 14 public schools through no choice of his own, he was done with education and especially with trusting any educator. He was unwilling to interact. He sat for most of his first year in a corner with his hood up, being a “ghost” in his words. Doing the bare minimum to just keep everyone off his back. I was beside myself trying to figure out how to help him. Lockey kept telling me to stop, wait, be patient, AND LISTEN, he will come around, I have to give him time. She spent countless hours with me, talking me down off a ledge. Probably did the same for many of you too. Telling me the hard truths that had to be said. Now James is not only thriving academically but also socially. This first-year recluse started the peer counseling program here at EWoW this year! He just received a \$36,000 full academic scholarship to a great university outside of Philly. This is almost all due to not only his hard work but also the Lockey Magic, the special magic here at EWoW, and the EWoW family.

If you will indulge me one final time, I will again paraphrase from a well-known boomer TV show ..... “Faster than a speeding child. More powerful than an angry parent. Able to leap tall barriers in a single bound. Look! It’s Lockey! - strange visitor from the planet of eternal patience, empathy, and inclusiveness who started EWoW with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal beings. Lockey - who can change the course of mighty-willed children, bend steel resistance with her kindness, who can provide children with learning far beyond common measures, and who, disguised as a mom, a mild-mannered schoolteacher for a great School (yes, I said school, Lockey), fights a never-ending battle with great will, determination, kindness, empathy, adaptability, incredible insights, awesome foresight, and collaboration for our children. Lockey, I love you and we all do! I ask everyone in the audience now to join me in standing and showing your love for Lockey and all she has done for you, your children, and your family. Lockey, we love and thank you!!!

## **A WORD FROM A SENIOR**

Scott Taylor, who has been at EWoW for six years, has offered to say a few words on behalf of the other seniors. Scott, your up.

## **PRESENTATION OF HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMAS**

Today is not only an awards ceremony but also graduation for seven of our students. This tends to be an emotional part of the celebration. I cry the teachers cry, the parents cry, it's completely normal. We cry because we are all so invested in the success of these students. We have put a huge amount of time and effort into helping them along the way and, in doing so, we have also come to truly care for them and to root for them.

Much of the following is pulled directly from recommendations for these students. I love writing these recs, as it gives me an opportunity to brag about these kids. They certainly are all brag-worthy. But I feel that it is important to remember and to remind them that it is their faults (and their struggles to overcome them - or embrace them, as the case may be) that make them so incredibly loveable.

### **Aidan Doyle**

Aidan, thank you for joining us this past couple of years. Ivan, Christy, and Pam thank you for sharing him with us.

Aidan possesses a remarkable sense of self. He knows what his interests are, what his energy levels are on any given day, how he feels about things, what he is good at, and what his boundaries are. Not only that, but he is honest and upfront about it. This candor is one of my favorite things about Aidan. Aidan, you may not know this, but when you walk through the door at EWoW, it always puts a smile on my face. Your humor and laid-back attitude put those around you at ease, your photography is captivating, and you put in the work to earn yourself this diploma despite many hurdles during your high school experience. I am so immensely proud of your perseverance, especially in the last few weeks. Working with

you is challenging, but also a lot of fun. Thank you for the work you put in to make this happen. You have earned this.

## **Cade Schoenemann**

Cade, thank you for joining us this past year. Janis and Dietrich, thank you for sharing him with us.

Cade is a lovely human being. He is respectful, positive, thoughtful, supportive, and generally accommodating. Having you in my class this year, Cade has been an absolute pleasure and I know that is a sentiment echoed by every one of your instructors and mentors. Cade actually has written a novel already, young as he is, and he is currently working on a sequel. I have read some of his work and it is very engaging.

Cade, you have not been with us a long, but you have made a lasting impression and I certainly hope that you will pop in to visit on occasion, to let me know how you are doing. Please also remember to send me a note when you win your Pulitzer prize.

## **James Irish**

Thank you for joining us these past five years. Theresa and Scott, thank you for sharing him with us.

The academic and social progress that James Irish has demonstrated over the course of his high school career has been miraculous. When James first arrived at Education without Walls, he spent a lot of time observing. He had his black hoodie up, covering his face, a favorite place to sit on a couch in the corner of our common room, and that was it, other than attending classes, for three months. The other students allowed him all the time he needed. Very slowly, James came out of his shell. Today, while still quiet and observant, he is also a leader both academically and socially at Education without Walls.

This year, James lead the effort to create and facilitate a new peer counseling program. His steadfast belief in the importance of comradery and support within our student body is inspiring and I hope to continue to build this program in years to come. James is an incredibly insightful, intelligent, brave, and relationship-oriented young man who is remarkably honest and forthright in all of his communications. He has worked very hard to find success both academically and personally. Congratulations on your graduation James.

James, your presence here will be greatly missed.

## **Katharine Dyer Benson**

Kate, I am so glad that you joined us this past year. Lili and Nick, thank you for sharing her with us!

Kate is a sophisticated, cultured, and sagacious young woman, willing to take chances, with strong organizational skills and an intense need to understand. Surface information and easy answers are not for her.

Kate's writing is exemplary. Her love of the written word is matched only by her interest in social justice and in the human condition. Journalism is a natural fit for these skills and interests, so, of course, Kate determined to create, with the help of as many of her fellow students as she could wrangle, an Education without Walls news publication. The result was our first inaugural issue of 65 Bridge Magazine. Kate clearly enjoys working with her peers and makes a noticeable and unapologetic effort to include everyone. Her work as the editor of this publication showcases this effort.

## **Lucy McKay**

Shea Coughlin has asked to present Lucy's diploma.

Since arriving here, Lucy has transformed from a shy, removed, timid student to one who is curious and vocal in her classes and very positively

involved on a social level. When she first joined my class, I was slightly nervous about how she would fit into a class full of rowdy, opinionated teenage boys in the middle of the term.

At first, she struggled to speak in front of her peers and would often make choices for the sake of keeping the peace in the classroom. However, as she became more comfortable in this setting, her natural intellect, insight, and enthusiasm shone through. By the end of the year, she was able to voice her opinions, engage in healthy debate, and speak with ease in front of her classmates while still maintaining her underlying calm and level-headed attitude. It is for this reason that she received top marks in my class in addition to receiving one of the highest grades in the class on her final project.

Additionally, I have observed Lucy integrate herself into the social scene at Education without Walls in a wonderfully uplifting and positive way. She has a natural way of practicing inclusion in any group setting and is very skilled at making new students feel comfortable in a new environment. Congratulations on your graduation Lucy!

## **Scott Taylor**

Scott, thank you for joining us these past six years. Paula and Chris, thank you for sharing him with us.

Oh man, where do I even begin with a student that has been with me for six years? Scott joined us when he was in seventh grade and really has struggled quite a bit with the ups and downs of his health issues. Some years, months, weeks, or days, it has been a struggle for him just to show up to classes. He has powered through much of his time here. He has also been extremely successful. If you take a look at your cheat sheet, you will see the numerous accolades and awards that this brilliant young man has collected while at EWOW.

Scott's defining trait is definitely his quick wit, but he is also just a really nice kid. He is kind and warm and helpful. He has a terrific smile and

keeps me on my toes with his wonderful sense of humor. This is a student that was never really sure that he even wanted to go to college. Today, Scott is graduating with 18 college credits, and told me, very excitedly, that he had gone to look at the Post University campus. Scott, we all wish you the absolute best that life has to offer. Visit often.

## **FIRST IN CLASS AWARDS**

The freshman, sophomore, and junior awards bestow a \$1500 scholarship on the recipients.

See if you can guess the student before they are named ...

### **This Freshman**

is committed to his workouts at the gym but is also incredibly motivated academically. He is highly supportive of his peers and is always striving to improve himself. Final hint, he wore a fur coat to school one day. **Matthew Mish, congratulations, you are the first in your class this year!**

### **This Sophomore**

loves to learn, is highly supportive of her peers, and makes a ton of noise when she wrestles with her friends in the game room at 65 Bridge Street. She loves to organize books and volunteers at the Gunn Library. She is an incredible artist, and is obsessed with bones, mushrooms, and science, in general. **Brooke Vena, congratulations, you are first in your class this year.**

### **This Junior**

has been at Education without Walls for quite some time. He is exceptionally bright, very humble, and works off part of his own tuition over the summer. We are all getting to see his stunning artwork this year. This is his third time winning this award. I think we all have this one ... **Broghan Dowler, you are first in your class. Congratulations!**

### **This Senior**

is incredibly well-spoken, loves the English language, has a beautiful smile that lights up a room, and will definitely talk your ear off. She loves learning

for its own sake, and is incredibly inclusive of her peers. She was the progenitor of the 65 Bridge Magazine and will be going to Italy in the fall. **Katharine Benson, congratulations, you are first in your class this year.**

## **TOP HONORS**

### **PARKER AWARD**

### **ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE**

#### **Virginia Lokken Steen**

Brett and Dana, thank you for this incredible young woman.

Virginia is a young woman who, much like her mom, takes charge wherever she goes. Her academics this year are off the charts and I will tell you, she has worked very hard to get them there. Virginia is graduating with 12 college credits, took a full course load of Education without Walls classes, and just kept adding more classes because they are “interesting and I have free time.”

She consistently challenges herself, she is incredibly competitive, she is our student council president, and is what I would term a true force with which to be reckoned. I am in awe of her strength.

Please take some time to look at her gorgeous creations from her Independent Study Project in Fashion Design, on display in the other room. Virginia, you are ready for Sarah Lawrence, where, I am sure, you will find great success, both socially and academically. I am so proud of your hard work to get to this milestone in your life.

## **HOULDIN AWARD**

**EXCELLENCE IN LEADERSHIP, ACADEMICS,  
COMMUNITY SERVICE, STRENGTH OF CHARACTER,  
and PEER SUPPORT.**

When I created this award it was definitely with seniors in mind. It never occurred to me that I might be giving this award to a freshman, but that is how the voting went. This student had, by far, the most votes of anyone for the first in class awards and, therefore, is this year's Houldin Award winner. She has definitely earned it this year. She has a very challenging schedule, academically, choosing to take several classes designed for upperclassmen, and she excels in them.

She has volunteered her time to collect food for the underprivileged, is always happy to help around EWoW, supports her peers, advocates for herself is a driving force behind the NFP group raising money for Ukrainian refugees, and the list just goes on. I think you all have it by now, Tatum Roche, you have earned the highest award we have to give. Congratulations, you are the 2022 Houldin Award Recipient.