

New Trustees - May 22, 2020

The HMS Board of Trustees convened via ZOOM for our final meeting of the school year. It is hard to believe how fast the year went, especially considering the past 3 months! We spent a good portion of this meeting expressing gratitude: for the fact that, despite the tumultuous past few months, the school is in a strong financial position; for the service of our departing Board members Marti Anderson & Sandy Campbell, who will continue to remain active at Hilltop via committee work; for the fact that Tamara is staying on as Head of School; and for the warm community which we experience through our Board Service.

We also managed to get a lot done! We reviewed and approved the annual Head of School evaluations from the Board, staff & faculty, and Tamara herself, and the Board Self-Evaluations. We reviewed and approved Tamara's new contract. And, we formally voted in our officers for the 2020-21 school year, and welcomed 4 new Trustees! We are so excited about our new Trustees Ellie Pennell, Dora Urujeni, Marta Bernbaum, and Elizabeth Fisher; check out their bios below! We look forward to welcoming them into the work of the Board at the annual Board retreat this summer, and are really hoping we will be able to meet on the beautiful Hilltop campus later this summer.

Ellie Pennell

Ellie has worn several hats as a member of the Hilltop staff for 10 years - from Children's House classroom aide to starting and directing the Toddler Program. She is thrilled to continue serving the Hilltop community in a new way as not only a board member, but also In-Coming Chair. Ellie holds two Montessori teaching certificates at the Infant/Toddler and Children's House levels, as well as a BA in Psychology from Miami University, and a Masters in Education from Loyola University Maryland. She is now transitioning to a new role at an educational non-profit, The Aloha Foundation, as the Director of Hive Camp for 7-12 year old girls. With her husband, Andrew, Ellie has 3 teenage children, the youngest of whom is a Sixth Grade student at Hilltop. She loves running with her dog, hiking, anytime near a beach, and feels so lucky to call Vermont home.

Marta Bernbaum

Marta grew up shuffling between the Maine Coast and the Colorado Rockies as a kid. She now lives in West Brattleboro, up high off of Sunset Lake Road, with her husband

Josh and son Finn, who is in Upper Elementary. She has a Fine Arts Degree with a focus in working in glass, which has evolved into glass art teaching and offering lessons through Airbnb Experiences (both virtual and in person). During her free time she plays ukulele, does graphic design for a few different nonprofit groups of which she is a member, and can usually be found gardening on her three acres. Being a participant in the local "Hortidorks" group as well as being steeped in her family's landscaping business, it is hard to keep her out of the dirt. She's hoping to continue her efforts with Kegan on the grounds work that she has been a part of for the past few years, and is excited to work the overgrown areas into something bright and vibrant again!

Dora Urujeni

Dora earned her Master's Degree in Peace Building and Conflict Transformation from the School of International Training, and a Bachelor's Degree and Graduate Diploma in Educational Psychology from the University of Rwanda. She is a former Member of Parliament in Rwanda. She was the Director of Memos, an NGO dedicated to educating youth and community members about non violence and genocide prevention. She was deeply involved in the Truth and Reconciliation processes in Rwanda, and was a lead organizer of international exchange programs and logistics coordinator for field studies courses with those visiting from Smith College, Johns Hopkins University, Zen Peacemakers, and the School for International Training, among others. She was a visiting fellow at the Greater Falls Community Justice Center, supporting and developing programs aimed at providing restorative justice alternatives to incarceration. She is skilled at leading circles for conflict transformation and harm repair. She first joined the Hilltop community as a parent to her young son who started in the Toddler Program and is now in the Birch Room.

Elizabeth Fisher

Elizabeth is the mother of Nicholas, now grown, and Cara, who attends the Upper Elementary at Hilltop. Cara and Elizabeth share their West Brattleboro home with a Bassetoodle, a Bischopoo, two kittens, and a variety of Dust Bunnies. As a child, Elizabeth lived on the Islands of Jamaica and Trinidad, where she observed troubling racial and socio-economic divisions; she developed a lifelong interest in seeking understanding and reconciliation between people of differing races and cultures. She attended The School of International Service, at American University, where she received a B.A. in International Relations; and went on to receive an M.Div from Yale Divinity School. She served as an Ordained Pastor to United Church of Christ (UCC) congregations in the D.C. Metro Area, Connecticut, and VT., for 18 years. After

adopting her son from Moldova, she moved to Brattleboro to study at SIT where she earned an M.Ed in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in 2001, and for the fifteen years thereafter, she was a teacher for immigrant and refugee children in the Greenfield Public School System. Since Cara began at Hilltop, Elizabeth has enjoyed volunteering in her daughter's classroom. She was also involved in forming the Parent Anti-Bias Committee. She also volunteers as a Guardian Ad. Litem for Foster Children in Windham County, and is an active member of the Guilford Community Church. In her free time, Elizabeth enjoys hiking, biking, photography, and gardening.