

SYCAMORE

SUMMER
2026



VOLUME 19.1

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John Huber

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CONTENT/STORIES

6 QUIZ BOWL AT NATIONALS

7 SCIENCE BOWL AT NATIONALS

10 LILLY GRANT AND
CENTER FOR EXCELLENCE

18 GRADUATION SPEECHES
*Zoe Zingh, Leah Adal and
Alumnus Alex Cheng '22*

24 THOMPSON AWARDED
BRADLEY SCHOLARSHIP

29 TRIVIA NIGHT

44 BATTLE OF THE BOOKS

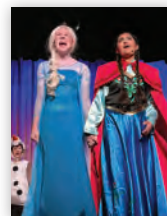
46 SYCAMORE MUSICAL MONTAGE

ALUMNI STORIES

24 ALUMNI INTERVIEWS
*Alison Klenk '90,
Kara Findley Gladish '02
and Tess Eggeson '24*

42 WHEN THEY COME BACK

47 HIGH SCHOOL
SENIOR SPOTLIGHT



ON THE COVER

For the 2026 Sycamore Middle School Musical, students presented *Frozen, Jr.* in the Sycamore Theater, their first musical performance using new stage lights installed in 2025.



- 8** SYCAMORE KINDERGARTENERS
- 23** TEACHERS RETURN
- 28** MUD KITCHEN
- 30** COLLEGE DECISIONS

- 31** 8TH GRADERS' HIGH SCHOOL DESTINATIONS
- 32** ALUMNI NEWS AND NOTES
- 36** SYCAMORE NEWS AND NOTES

Find Out More



sycamoreschool.org

To our Greater Sycamore Community,

SUMMER
2026

Each summer without fail I am asked two questions. First, do I actually work over the summer? And second, if so, what do I do?

Fair questions for those not in the field of education! Presumably you might think back to your own school experiences and believe that when classes end, everyone packs up and goes home. After all, once our 8th Graders graduate and our students begin their well-deserved summer break, what is there left to do?

Actually, quite a lot! To begin, Sycamore has a robust (and thrice award-winning) summer camp, filled with various enriching programs and activities. We welcome anywhere from 300 to 500 individual campers each summer, and they are engaged in over 100 different camp offerings, ranging from baking bread to baseball to building hamster mazes. So our hallways aren't actually quiet in the summer, but are filled with Sycamore students as well as children from the local community.

In addition to this, our administrators and staff engage in multiple day-long retreats to both reflect upon the prior twelve months and begin planning for the upcoming year. Some of this work will be to prepare for the upcoming ISACS (Independent School Association of the Central States) accreditation visits this August and September. Some of this work will be the fulfillment of the Phase 3 Lilly Endowment grant (see inside this edition of the magazine for more

information). Some of this work is the regular meat-and-potatoes annual tasks of reviewing our policies and planning our calendars. We also take a few days to volunteer at the Crooked Creek Food Pantry, one of our neighborhood partners. So while our summer hours may differ from those of the school year, we keep busy ensuring that we can hit the ground running when our students return in August!



This is what I do over the summer. What you should do, though, is read through this edition to learn the latest as to what's going on at Sycamore and find out what our alumni have been up to this past year. Enjoy the photos and articles found within!

Be well,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Huber". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly stylized font.

John Huber
HEAD OF SCHOOL

Sycamore Quiz Bowl Earns Trip to Nationals

Sycamore placed 13th in the nation at the 2026 Middle School National Quiz Bowl Tournament in Chicago in May. The event included 192 schools from across the United States. Sycamore finished with a record of 9-3 including playoff rounds

“Having students specialize in an area (History, Literature, Science) really helps make a strong team,” Quiz Bowl coach and Middle School History Teacher Tony Young said. “They work to cover areas like current events, geography, pop culture, math, and the rest of the potential topics. A successful team also requires a supportive environment.”

This year’s team earned the best preliminary record in Sycamore Quiz Bowl history. The team finished the opening segment at the national tournament with a

7-1 record, advancing to the championship bracket, where they won two rounds before being eliminated. “The competition level at nationals is awesome,” Young says.

Young attributes Sycamore’s many years of Quiz Bowl success directly back to what happens in classrooms at the school. “I think Quiz Bowl is one of the things that is supported by our rigorous curriculum along with focused preparation. Students really enjoy the camaraderie as well as the format of Quiz Bowl,” he says. “Strengths of a good team include being willing to practice on their own and learning to work together. Sycamore kids like to compete and do well so that helps, too.”

The Sycamore squad qualified to compete at the national tournament after earning the Indiana Junior Academic Quiz Bowl title with a record of 7-0. They were named the “NAQT Middle School Team of the Week” in March for their state tournament performance.

When asked why students like to compete in the Quiz Bowl, Young says, “What is not to love? Students are finding things they are good at, they are rewarded for their knowledge, and they are also acquiring knowledge in a fun environment. Plus, Quiz Bowl is something they can participate in at the high school and even the college level. They also enjoy the time spent together at tournaments and celebration at the team dinner.”

Sycamore’s 2025-26 team members included **Aarnav Silodia, Gavin Ceppa, Allison Jeray, Lydia Clemens** and **Joseph Zhu.** ●



Having students specialize in an area (History, Literature, Science) really helps make a strong team. They work to cover areas like current events, geography, pop culture, math, and the rest of the potential topics. A successful team also requires a supportive environment.

TONY YOUNG
Quiz Bowl Coach and
Middle School History Teacher

Sycamore Science Bowl Team Top 20 at Nationals

In the state Science Bowl competition, Sycamore Team B earned first place, while Team A finished second. Winning the state title allowed Team B to advance to the National Quiz Bowl Tournament held in Washington, DC in May. In the 32-team national double-elimination finals, the team advanced to the final bracket after round-robin play, scoring six out of a possible eight points. Sycamore fell to eventual national champion William Diamond MS and Alabama School of FA.

“The strengths of this year’s team in particular included being willing to study,” said Sycamore Coach and Middle School Science teacher David Schuth. “Team captain Alan Shen improved his knowledge ten-fold over the course of the year, even improving between Regionals and Nationals. His willingness to take chances, combined with forgivingness from fellow teammates when the chance doesn’t always pan out, was a team strength.”

Team members include **Joseph Zhu, Alan Shen, Dyer Thompson, Emma Lu, and Albert Jiang.**

As part of the Science Bowl experience, Schuth and two members of the team, Shen and Zhu, appeared on the WISH TV morning show before going to Washington, DC. They joined News 8 during the “Morning Bell” to share what’s next as they prepared for the National Tournament.

“As a coach, I really enjoy seeing my students’ eyes bug out during matches when they realize just how competitive other students are from around the nation,” Schuth, who has led Sycamore

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As a coach, I really enjoy seeing my students’ eyes bug out during matches when they realize just how competitive other students are from around the nation. I think Sycamore students benefit the most from being able to interact with other kids their age who are at their own high level of academic understanding.

DAVID SCHUTH
Sycamore Coach and
Middle School Science Teacher

to 11 National Tournament appearances and five top 10 finishes since 2014, says. “I think Sycamore students benefit the most from being able to interact with other kids their age who are at their own high level of academic understanding. Being with peers who ‘get you’ is a big deal.”

“The other main part of the success is having students who are excited about learning, excited about science, and willing to put in time going beyond what their regular classmates are learning,” he says. The students themselves would probably say that the ice cream was the most enjoyable part of Nationals.” ●

Sycamore Kindergarteners'

Study of Culture Includes a Trip to a Mexican Grocery Store and a Fiesta



Sycamore Kindergarten students concluded a unit of study on Mexican culture with a trip to a Mexican grocery store, Tienda Morales, in Indianapolis. Carrying a shopping list, students had to total the cost of the items on their list. Before the field trip, they met with one of Sycamore's Kindergarten teachers, who served as a bankers, to exchange their play money for real money.

"We have been studying money in math class," Kindergarten teacher Ruth Moll says. "We have also been studying different world cultures in our social studies unit. The focus of this trip was our study of Mexico and Mexican culture. With this field trip, many different things came together," Moll says. All of the independent skills that we've been advocating throughout Kindergarten are on display."

"What I like most is that it gets children into stores where there are lots of opportunities for language development," says Denise Estelle, Kindergarten teacher. "In these days of having things delivered to your house,



it's really good for students to get out into the community and into public places where they can see what those kinds of activities are like."

"Most of the prep work happens in math class," Estelle says. "We also talk about things like representing your school and your family, making sure that you make good decisions, and just being an overall good citizen out in public."

After the trip, students returned to school for a fiesta where they cooked the food that they purchased.

"Children learn that there are a wide variety of foods that perhaps they have not been exposed to and that they might be willing to try," Estelle says.

"When older children in Lower School see me in the hallway with the pinata, they're like 'it's fiesta day!'" Moll says. "That warms my heart as a teacher because I can tell that they have some core memories that are coming back." ●



“ ”

We have been studying money in math class. We have also been studying different cultures in our social studies unit. The focus of this trip was our study of Mexico and Mexican culture.

RUTH MOLL

Sycamore Receives \$6 Million Lilly Grant

by John Huber

I recall the moment when I learned that Sycamore had received a \$6,000,000 grant, the largest single gift in the school's history. It was the first of December in 2025, and I was sitting in a meeting with fellow faculty and administrators, discussing what guidelines and policies we wanted to develop for our community. My phone buzzed with a text from Greg Merrell, President of the Sycamore School Board of Trustees.

His brief and cryptic message, in full: Check your email! I immediately opened my laptop to see the following introduction:

Purpose: Marion County K-12 Private Schools Initiative – Competitive

Dear Mr. Huber:

It is a pleasure to inform you that Lilly Endowment Inc. (Endowment) has awarded a grant of \$6,000,000 to Sycamore School, Inc. for the above-referenced purpose.

I couldn't help myself but interrupt our meeting to share the momentous news, and cheers erupted in the meeting room. After months and months of hard work, we had secured this outstanding grant!

While the process of grant writing and research was exhausting, in truth, now the real work begins. As we look ahead to the upcoming years, we plan to use these funds to achieve the following:

- **Establishment of a nationally recognized Center of Excellence in Gifted Education.** Sycamore has long been a leader in gifted education, but with this grant, we may extend our reach and promote Sycamore further to the larger community.
- **Expansion of programming and support for social-emotional learning (SEL) and twice-exceptionality (2e).** All of Sycamore's students will be able to reach their potential by coupling their academic learning with further development of their SEL skills. Additionally, our gifted students with learning disabilities (2e) will receive enhanced and additional support.
- **Creation of new positions to meet the needs of all gifted learners.** This includes a Center of Excellence Director, as well as additional learning resource staff.
- **Expansion of time, funding, and training for teachers, assistants, and staff.** There will be a rich array of professional development, creation of teacher leadership positions, and dedicated time for student discussions.
- **Construction of both indoor and outdoor purpose-built learning spaces.** These include a new Learning Resource Wing with a gross motor room, a Middle School executive function classroom, and a completely new nature-based playground.



All of this work is with the eye toward improving academic achievement and bettering the lives of our many students.

HUBER

All of this work is with an eye toward improving academic achievement and bettering the lives of our many students.

Mind you, one key requirement of this Lilly Endowment grant is that it can only cover up to 80% of our plans. And thus we will be talking with members of our extended Sycamore community as to how to reach our total budget of roughly \$7.6 million. But to be 80% of the way on any project is not a bad start indeed!

I wish to thank the members of the grant-writing committee for their dedication and hard work in helping us to achieve this goal. They include **Katie Baker, Patrick Juday, Dr. Samantha Outcalt, Dr. Kristie Speirs Neumeister, Tiffany Stahl, and Jennifer Williams.**

Particular thanks to **Jim Wood**, Director of Advancement, for shepherding this entire process from start to finish. We could not have done it without him! Additional thanks to **Duane Emery**, Director of Enrollment, for his contributions as we entered Phase 3 of the process.

Future Sycamore Magazine articles will detail the progress of our efforts, and I look forward to sharing these with you as our work continues. ●

GIVE TO SYCAMORE with the SGO

Giftedness is not exclusive to children of a particular socioeconomic status. Sycamore offers financial assistance based on a family's financial situation as determined by an independent third party. Without financial aid, these students might not otherwise be in our hallways.

Now Sycamore donors can support this important need while realizing substantial tax savings. Sycamore has partnered with the Sagamore Institute, a **Scholarship Granting Organization (SGO)**. This collaboration allows Sycamore donors to support financial assistance for deserving families and receive an Indiana state tax credit equal to 50% of their donation amount.

There is no cap on the amount you can give, though the state does limit the total dollar amount of credits available each year. The tax benefits you receive by giving to Sycamore through the Sagamore Institute may allow you to substantially increase your gift without increasing your true cost. For more information, visit Sycamore's giving page using the QR code below. Please consult your tax advisor to determine how this will impact your personal gift and tax situation.



SCAN TO LEARN HOW YOU CAN HELP PROVIDE THE SYCAMORE EXPERIENCE FOR OTHER GIFTED CHILDREN.



In Their WORDS

ALUMNI INTERVIEWS

Sycamore alumnae Dr. Alison Klenk '90, Kara Findley Gladish '02 and Tess Eggeson '24, returned to the school in April for a day of reflection on their paths after Sycamore, gentle advice, and inspiration. As part of the Alumni Speaker Series, the three talked to Middle School students during the day and to alumni, families, and Sycamore friends at an evening event.

DR. ALISON KLENK ('90)

Assistant Professor of
Clinical Dermatology
Indiana University

“”

The school does an excellent job of letting kids work together, and you have to find out how to perform within a group dynamic.

KLENK

Following high school at Brebeuf Jesuit and college at Duke University, Alison earned a medical degree from Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis and did her residency at Barnes-Jewish Hospital and the Washington University School of Medicine. Currently an Assistant Professor of Clinical Dermatology at Indiana University, Klenk sees patients in the area of medical dermatology as well as teaching medical students and residents. She is Mom to Sycamore alums Abby Cheng, class of 2020, who is a sophomore at Boston College, Alex Cheng, class of 2022, who will be a freshman at Duke next year, and Caroline Cheng, class of 2026.



Q ■ Did you always want to be a teacher?

I thought about myself when I was a Middle School student. I wanted to connect back to Sycamore and the lessons learned here that I actually still use to various degrees today, and the things that I used throughout my educational career. I do volunteer at the Sycamore STEAM Conference, and I have a Middle School girl at my house, so I understand the messages kids are getting from social media and from their friends about all types of skin care. A lot of the information is not really accurate, so I wanted to bring some of that into my presentation and talk about the scientific basis of things that you should be doing for your skin, which is honestly, in middle school, not that much. Wash your face. If it's dry, put some moisturizer on. If you're going outside, put some sunblock on.

Q ■ A lot of people go on social media and try to find answers. Is there a problem, as you see it, with finding answers to skin care on social media?

On the medical side, we are trained to look at the evidence. What does the study show? Is this a helpful thing for your skin? Social media is all about getting attention. It's about likes and clicks, and keeping it simple doesn't get a lot of attention. People end up coming up with ideas where they're mixing a bunch of products together, they're layering different things on their skin, and there's really no scientific evidence that doing that is a good thing. One person concocting a batch of something in their kitchen and trying it on their face doesn't necessarily tell us whether that's a good or bad thing to do. Most of the time, it's not.

Q ■ What's the easiest way to see if an idea is supported by science?

I look at medical literature. There's a source called PubMed, and I look up

topics and see what scientific articles are available to support that type of claim. That source requires a membership to the library or a university license, but there are a lot of other reputable websites out there. I think it's like anything else when you're trying to get information. You need to look at your sources. Just because somebody claims online that they're an expert does not make it true. You need to ask "what are their credentials?"

Q ■ You are a parent. You were a student here. From both perspectives, what are the best things about Sycamore?

One of the things that I loved about Sycamore when I came here was the fact that you could learn at your own pace. You were not limited by a rigid curriculum. I think Sycamore still does a really good job of meeting students where they are academically and then allowing them to reach their full potential.

Q ■ Did you feel like you had that experience when you were a student?

I did. It was a much less defined curriculum at that time. It was a different place because the school had just been created. There was a lot of freedom. I think the experience is very different, but I think the culture of Sycamore, the mindset, the support of arts and creativity, the language immersion experiences, all of those things are part of the DNA of Sycamore that continue to this day. The nuts and bolts of it have changed for the better, and the physical building is amazing. We didn't have anything close to what exists now.

Q ■ As a parent, do you see differences between children?

Absolutely. I think every kid is a little bit different. That's true within families, and I think that's true with

the diversity of students who attend Sycamore. You're going to have some who are extremely strong in math, some who are incredible artists or wonderful at chess, and some who are really good athletes.

Q ■ Are there some lessons learned at Sycamore that you still carry with you 35 years after being a student here?

Group project skills. It's something you start learning at Sycamore. The school does an excellent job of letting kids work together, and you have to find out how to perform within a group dynamic. That helps students when they get to high school. The ability to talk to adults is something that not all kids are good at these days, but I think Sycamore also does a really good job of facilitating conversations between students and teachers as well as members of the community that interact with Sycamore in various ways. As my kids have gone on to higher learning institutions, they use those skills all the time—the ability to really network and to identify resources to help you in different situations.

And I think that Sycamore is a safe space, so you can put yourself out there without feeling like you're not going to succeed. Maybe you will be a big flop when your presentation is done, but you have to put yourself out there. And I think Sycamore's culture is, "Give it a try."

Q ■ What do you know now that you wish you knew back then?

There are different ways to get to the same end point. You realize it's not a linear path from A to B to C. There are a lot of different ways to accomplish your goals. You're not always going to achieve them on the first go around, but that is fine. You're going to be okay at the end of the day.

ALUMNI
INTERVIEWS
CONTINUED

Q&A



**KARA
FINDLEY GLADISH** ('02)

Customer Success Manager
Socio

Kara's time at Sycamore included playing the clarinet in band, volleyball, basketball, track, Science Olympiad, and History Day nationals with her documentary on Henry Ford's Assembly Line. She started school here in Kindergarten as a member of Mrs. Williams's first class.

After graduating from North Central High School in '06 and Indiana University with honors in '10, she has pursued a career in the software and digital spaces. Her north star is connecting with others. During her career, that connection has included

championing consumers in voice of customer marketing at ExactTarget, serving small business owners via her own marketing and web design firm, and partnering with customers using event technology as Socio's first Customer Success Manager. In addition, Kara empowered teams at Cisco, first as Manager of Customer Experience and then as Director of Operations. She was recently certified as a life coach and is helping people live joyful, fulfilling lives.

Q: How did you end up in the career you have?

I was at an event technology startup called Socio, which was acquired by Cisco. That was in 2021, and I am still there. I'm also a certified life coach; that's my secondary career path. The tech industry shifted and there were layoffs, so I needed a backup plan. I happened to meet a couple of life coaches and thought it was an interesting field. They pointed me to a training program. I've always wanted to make a difference, and coaching is a great way to amplify that desire. It's meaningful work, and I really love the sparks of insight that happen when the people you're helping achieve their goals.

Q: How did you decide on your topic for the Alumni Speaker Series?

It's playing off the idea that kids are always asked "What do you want to be when you grow up?" Usually that means deciding what profession they want, but there's a lot more to life than your profession. It's also about how you want to show up in the world. What are you bringing to the party that we call life? I wanted to bring that perspective to my presentation. "Are you showing up and being who you want to be or falling into automatic patterns?"

Q: You started Sycamore as a Kindergartener in 1993 and graduated in 2002. That was a unique period when Sycamore was going from a grassroots startup school to the next level. Could you feel that change when you were here?

It was a time of growth. We had some classes in an outbuilding we called the Taj Mahal. We had to trudge out to that building in the snow. I'm a little jealous of the awesome gym. When I was playing volleyball here, we had a home court advantage because the ceiling (in the old gym) was so low. Other teams would always hit the ceiling with the ball, but we knew how to keep it in play.

Q: What are some of the things that you have carried with you from Sycamore?

There are so many. I've personally thanked Mary O'Malley because she was my first great English teacher, and she taught me so much. Writing has been a huge part of my career—from blogging to presentations. I also love the arts, and Mrs. Prince was a world-class art teacher. To this day, I'm really good at trivia if there's an art history question. I still do art as a hobby to this day. I've sold abstract art paintings and actually have pieces that I did at Sycamore on the walls in my home. I have Mrs. Prince to thank for that.

Q: What medium do you work with when painting? Oil, watercolors, or acrylics?

Acrylics. With watercolor, you have to be really precise because you only get one shot. Acrylic is forgiving and dries fast and so you can mess up and still paint over it. It's a very freeing medium.

Q: What advice would you give to current 8th Graders or to your Middle School self?

I actually wish I had asked for help more. I think Sycamore is so rigorous in Middle School that the difficulty is on par with high school and even college. I was able to cope with it, but I wish I had taken better advantage of the resources here. It is never too early or too late to use those resources.

Q: Do you still have friends from your time at Sycamore?

Our class was very tight-knit, and my best friend to this day is Alexandra Cochran—she was the maid of honor at my wedding. I am still friends with my 2nd Grade buddy from when I was in 8th Grade. She came to my wedding. The age gap of six years becomes smaller and smaller the older you get!

“ ”

Our class was very tight-knit, and my best friend to this day is Alexandra Cochran—she was the maid of honor at my wedding. I am still friends with my 2nd Grade buddy from when I was in 8th Grade.

GLADISH



ALUMNI
INTERVIEWS
CONTINUED

Q&A



Eggeson performing for School of Rock

TESS EGGESON (’24)

Student
University High School

Tess Eggeson likes to create opportunities. During 2020, she launched her own podcast, “Little T’s Big Interviews,” featuring conversations with inspiring female leaders including authors, athletes, musicians, and former White House officials. Tess is also a musician, playing guitar, bass, and singing with School of Rock since she was six years old. She is also the founder of a nonprofit, Rock of Ages, which connects generations through music. As a volunteer, Tess visits hospice and assisted care facilities, playing music for the residents, and teaching them chords on the guitar. In 2023, Tess was selected as one of just 27 students nationwide to receive the Caroline D. Bradley Scholarship providing her with four years of tuition to the high school of her choice. She currently attends University High School.

Q: Let’s start with your music. You have been playing for a long time, certainly throughout your Middle School years at Sycamore. What do you play?

I am a vocalist, guitarist, and bassist. For the School of Rock House Band, I mainly do vocals because that’s what I auditioned for. We usually stick to the instruments we know and are most comfortable with. I go around to different events, festivals, venues, and perform with the most experienced kids at Fishers School of Rock to help market the program. It’s a great group. I really enjoy it.

Q: What instrument did you first learn?

I started out nine years ago with guitar. As I advanced through the program, I realized that vocals are something that I really enjoy doing along with being a front person. Playing bass is something more recent. We don’t have many bassists, so I help out where I can.

Q: How has your time been at University High School? What are you thinking about doing as you get older?

I love University so much. It introduced me to new things that I didn't know I would be interested in. I enjoy public speaking and wondering about how other people think, so I may study psychology or philosophy. I also love film and the arts. I have a podcast and a music-based nonprofit that goes into retirement homes, hospice centers, and community groups and either teaches or performs music. I have finished my second season of varsity tennis, and I'm also on the junior varsity volleyball team.

Q: What did you want to talk about as you returned to Sycamore?

My theme is how Sycamore helped me find my voice, because my voice is what I use the most, whether it's interviewing people for my podcast or performing at different events around town. Sycamore gave me so many great skills, and I wanted to show how what I learned here has helped me get to where I am now.

Q: What are some of the specific skills you learned at Sycamore?

Public speaking. Curiosity. The whole basis of my podcast is asking questions and the desire to learn about other people's perspectives. Independence is also a big one. I learned how to script, edit, research, and distribute my podcast completely on my own. I started my nonprofit on my own. I reached out to the IRS for a tax ID. I reached out to the Secretary of State. I did plenty independently, and I owe a lot of that to Sycamore.

Q: What do you consider the best part is about doing your podcast?

Learning about other perspectives and opinions has taught me a lot about myself. Those different ideas give me the information I need to make my own decisions. It's taught me a lot about what I might want to do going forward.

Q: Are there some classes at Sycamore that resonated more than others?

I loved all of them, honestly. I think the teachers played the biggest role. Mrs. Simpson is such an important figure to me, and I loved her English class. I still love all the books we read in class. Mr. Young's history and now AP U.S. History was my favorite class. I really enjoyed Spanish and think I know a lot about public speaking thanks to Profe. Fitzsimmons' speaking exams. They just taught me how to think on my feet and be comfortable in front of an audience.

Q: Any advice for an 8th Grader or other students at Sycamore?

Find the thing you're really passionate about. For me, that is being in front of people and using my voice to share perspectives and stories. Find the thing you're passionate about, do that and then broaden it. ●

“ ”

Find the thing you're really passionate about. For me, that was being in front of people and using my voice to share perspectives and stories.

EGGESON



Graduation Speeches

The conclusion of the 8th Grade year at Sycamore has many traditions, such as the class T-shirt, the Washington D.C. trip, and the choice of a special celebration for the class on “8th Grade Skip Day,” which this year was a trip to Kings Island. The most significant tradition, however, is graduation. A highly coveted opportunity, awarded to two graduates, is the privilege of delivering a speech during the ceremony. At the Thirty-eighth Commencement Exercises in May, Zoe Singh and Leah Adal had the honor of addressing their classmates.

THE FOLLOWING EXCERPTS CAPTURE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF EACH SPEECH:

“ ”

Our teachers believed in us when we didn't believe in ourselves, encouraged us when the workload felt heavy, and celebrated our victories like they were their own.

SINGH

GRADUATION SPEECH

ZOE SINGH

If 8th grade chemistry taught me anything, besides that our class should not be trusted with bunsen burners, it's that there are 118 elements on the periodic table, and that every element has a story. Where you begin, what shapes you, and what you become under pressure. This is our story:

Sulfur is S. Yttrium is Y. Calcium is Ca. Molybdenum is Mo. And Rhenium is Re, which, if put together, spells the only compound that ever really mattered — S-Y-Ca-Mo-Re.

That's us. The Class of 2026. Our properties: chaotic, resilient, and impossible to forget.

I joined Sycamore in 2nd Grade with a brand new backpack and butterflies in my stomach, completely unaware that I had just walked into the best years of my life. In Lower School, we were kids figuring out the basics. Like all living things, we started from the absolute basics and were pure carbon at this point: raw, unformed, and full of potential. We were diamonds in the making.

In 4th Grade, we went on our first overnight trip to Camp Tecumseh. We thought that we were ready for the



Zoe Singh continued

wilderness; we were not. Night-time hiking sounded adventurous until we realized, in the dark, every sound in the forest was definitely a bear. Something magical was happening. We didn't know it then, but we were slowly titrating our friendships, figuring out the right amount of give and take. In Lower School, our teachers became the catalyst speeding up the reaction. They took everything that made us different, turned it into our superpower, and launched us into Middle School.

Sycamore taught us to win with humility and lose with grace, and as a proud member of the 5/6 Grade volleyball team, I can tell you that we were very, very graceful. Our volleyball coach, Coach Guffin, had a secret weapon — a goldfish placard. Every time we lost a point, the placard would go up. The reason was that goldfish allegedly have a memory of just three seconds. Coach Guffin was telling us, "Don't dwell! Move on. Next point."

We wanted to be a stable compound, sharing our fears and holding onto each other tightly. Our field trip to Culver further strengthened the bond, and we found that freezing showers could shock your brain and make you forget your grudges. We were Sycamoreans for life.

When the classes got harder, you knew it was exam week when the group chats would blow up with study tips instead of YouTube shorts. In 8th Grade, our time together seemed even more precious. But we always knew that long after our Sycamore days were over, we could still pop into Mrs. Simpson's room for a pep talk, get hallway advice from Mr. Young, or check in with Mr. Schuth if he had done his Duolingo for the day.

Our teachers believed in us when we didn't believe in ourselves, encouraged us when the workload felt heavy, and celebrated our victories like they were their own.

Class of 2026, we came in as carbon. Sycamore applied the right kind of pressure and today we leave as diamonds. Unique, sparkling, and spectacular.

Graduation

GRADUATION SPEECH

LEAH ADAL

Well, son, I'll tell you: Life for me ain't been no crystal stair. It's had tacks in it, and splinters, and boards torn up, and places with no carpet on the floor – bare. But all the time, I'se been a-climbing on, and reachin' landin's, and turnin' corners, and sometimes going in the dark where there ain't been no light. So, boy, don't you turn back. Don't you set down on those steps. 'Cause you finds its kinder hard. Don't you fall now – For I'se still goin', honey, I'se still climbin', And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with this poem, it's called "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes, which we read in Mrs. Molter's 6th Grade Language Arts class. I recall this poem not to bring back any memories of a 3rd Grade Poetry Tea, but to show that our lives at Sycamore were not crystal stairs. We faced obstacles, we've made errors, but we still kept going, never sitting down on those steps, continuing on into who we are today.

I remember being nervous to shadow at Sycamore in 5th Grade. Coming to Sycamore was a tack in my stairs—a scary change—but because of the welcoming and nurturing people here, I had the

Continued on next page

Graduation

“ ”

We will never forget the amazing family and education we have had at Sycamore. Even though the climb up the stairs was long and challenging, the lessons we've acquired will come in handy as we strive to reach the bright future that awaits us.

ADAL

Leah Adal continued



ability to try new things without being worried of what others thought of me. I discovered a family in my classmates, a family that shares the same passion for learning as I do, and they are who helped me climb through my set of stairs. I noticed a spark in the community here — I knew I had found my people.

Sixth Grade was my first full year at Sycamore. Ms. Mihm could always be counted on to say “Let’s seize the day” when we went outside for seminar. 6th Grade was one of our best years by far, with not too much homework and plenty of fun. Going to Marine Lab pushed us out of our comfort zones. We didn’t quit climbing up our stairs; we persevered.

In 7th Grade, we had stairs notorious for having no carpet. Different teachers, homework drastically increased, and we were pushed to be our very best. Our teachers are the ones that made us strive

for excellence, the ones that prepared us with useful skills and habits for our futures, the ones that steadied us when we’re on the verge of tumbling back down the stairs. They instilled in us useful skills like time management and independence.

Entering 8th Grade was an odd feeling, because it felt like yesterday when our teachers used to say “You guys are about to be the oldest kids at school” before it became “you guys are going to graduate soon!” We will never forget the amazing family and education we have had at Sycamore. Even though the climb up the stairs was long and challenging, the lessons we’ve acquired will come in handy as we strive to reach the bright future that awaits us. As we get ready to turn the corner, I would like to thank the teachers for helping make this day possible. Sitting down on the not-so-crystal stairs was never an option.

Alex Cheng '22, delivers the Alumni Graduation Speech

Alex Cheng, a Sycamore “lifer” from the Class of 2022, attended Sycamore from EC-1 through 8th Grade. A recent graduate of Park Tudor School, he is an AP Scholar with Distinction, a recipient of the National Merit Scholarship, a four-time Gold Medalist on the National Spanish Exam, and a semifinalist in the U.S. Presidential Scholar Program. This fall, he will attend Duke University, where he plans to study Chemistry and Spanish on the pre-med track.

Four years ago, I was sitting exactly where you are now. I remember thinking high school felt huge. What I realized pretty quickly is that almost nobody actually has everything figured out. High school is really just four years of slowly learning more about who you are, what matters to you, and the kind of person you want to become.

I want to share a few lessons from one of my favorite animals: the manta ray. We look to nature all the time to solve complex problems, from studying birds to designing bullet trains to modeling termite mounds when building cooling systems. Nature can offer helpful reflection on human nature too. And honestly, I think the manta ray has an apt skillset from which you can learn from as you navigate the high school journey ahead.

First: Individuality

Every manta ray carries a singular constellation of spots on its belly, a pattern so distinct that scientists use these markings to identify and track individual rays throughout their lives.

High school has a way of making comparison feel inevitable. It is easy to look around and assume everyone else is more accomplished, more confident, or more “put together.” The temptation to follow the crowd, mimic social media trends, and just go with the flow can feel overwhelming. But trying to blur your own unique markings just to fit in only

hides what makes you incredible. The happiest people in high school aren’t the ones performing for the crowd; they are the ones thinking independently, growing into themselves, and showing off their distinct markings instead of molding into someone else’s expectations.

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Graduation

“ ”

Four years ago, I was sitting exactly where you are now. I remember thinking high school felt huge. What I realized pretty quickly is that almost nobody actually has everything figured out. High school is really just four years of slowly learning more about who you are, what matters to you, and the kind of person you want to become.

CHENG

Alex Cheng continued

Lean into that individuality. Choose connections that genuinely lift you up. Take on the academic challenge that others shy away from. Learn from the people around you, absolutely, but never lose yourself in the process. Embrace what makes you different. Develop your own spots.

Second: Kindness.

Manta rays look intimidating. Some stretch wider than a car, gliding through the ocean as if leviathans meant to be avoided. Yet despite their size, they are incredibly peaceful. Unlike their stingray cousins, they're merely filter feeders and don't have a venomous barbed tail. As you navigate high school, remember that this balance of confidence and kindness is powerful. The strongest people you will encounter aren't the loudest or the ones trying hardest to impress. Be the person who makes others feel included, stays patient under pressure, and succeeds without making anyone else feel less than. Take it upon yourself to offer small acts of grace. A little patience, empathy, or generosity can stay with someone for years.

To paraphrase the great Maya Angelou: people may forget your grades or your resume, but they rarely forget how you made them feel. Carry yourself with confidence, but always choose to be kind.

Third: Ask for help.

Even manta rays, these enormous, graceful animals, are dependent on others. They will often visit coral reefs where smaller fish clean parasites from their skin; their survival literally requires cooperation. No one expects you to have your life mapped out at 14, or even at 18 when you're off to college. Your time at Sycamore has already taught you the power of community, but as you enter high school, keeping those habits alive is vital. Lean on your teachers, your parents, your friends, and your coaches—the people who want to see

you succeed. Ask questions. Be accepting of guidance. Admit you don't have all the answers yet. Nurturing these genuine connections will fuel your growth. Know this: you don't have to navigate the ocean alone!

And finally: Memory.

Manta rays possess extraordinary intelligence, carrying the largest brains of any fish species; they remember complex coral topographies, migration pathways, and specific ocean currents over decades, returning to the same feeding grounds year after year. As you move through high school and explore the vast world around you, remember where you started.

Remember Sycamore. Remember the buzz of the hallways in passing periods, the shared laughter over lunches, and the classrooms filled with wonder. Remember working in teams to build your lever launchers in science, and dutifully preparing for your oral exams on the latest Latin American country.

Remember the trips, across this campus, across the state, and even across the country. Remember the people. These people, places, and memories, will always be there to offer you guidance. They are your permanent geography; the home reef waiting for you after long journeys. Navigate the wide open world ahead with the memory of a manta ray. Trust your currents, remember your pathways, and never forget the grounds where you first learned to swim.

Manta rays travel thousands of miles across the ocean. As you head into high school, I urge you to channel your inner manta ray. Remember where you came from and the people who helped you get here. Embrace what makes you different. Move through life with kindness and quiet confidence. And never be afraid to lean on others along the way. Wherever your journey takes you, I hope you carry these qualities with you. ●

Fulwider and Stewart Return to Share Math and Writing Expertise



“

As a retired teacher, it has been a joy to work with Tony and our Middle School students.

STEWART

Deb Stewart (left) and
Doris Fulwider

This spring, Sycamore Middle School History teacher Tony Young was joined by former Sycamore Lower School teacher **Deb Stewart** to support students as they prepared to write essays. Each student met for an individual writing conference and set goals to focus on during the writing process. Follow-up conferences addressed the growth that occurred. “As a retired teacher, it has been a joy to work with Tony and our fine Middle School students,” said Stewart, who also tutors Sycamore students during the school’s afterschool program.

Doris Fulwider, a former Sycamore Lower School teacher who specializes in math, assisted Middle School math teacher Mark Brouwer with Honors Algebra 2 and Honors Geometry during the 3rd trimester. Doris assisted in teaching 7th and 8th Grade students how to understand the conceptual foundations of learning (as opposed to just performing) advanced mathematics. She is currently working on her Ph.D. dissertation at Purdue. ●

From a Student
Who's Been There:

Dyer Thompson,
Recipient 2025-2026

"Leaving His Mark
on Sycamore"

Caroline D. Bradley Scholarship

DYER THOMPSON

The Caroline D. Bradley Scholarship was founded on the conviction that exceptionally gifted young people are best equipped to reach their full potential in a nurturing, rigorous, and flexible learning environment suited to their individual academic needs and personal goals. Scholars receive a four-year high school scholarship to an optimally matched high school program intended to meet their unique intellectual and personal needs, as well as receiving individualized support, educational advocacy, and a network of like-minded peers.

Sycamore's list of Carolyn D. Bradley Scholarship recipients continues to grow. This year, an eighth distinguished scholar was added. Dyer Thompson, a soon-to-be Brebeuf High School freshman, explains the arduous process from the very beginning to the joyous end.

Q: WHAT DID IT FEEL LIKE WHEN YOU FOUND OUT YOU HAD BEEN SELECTED AS A CAROLINE D. BRADLEY SCHOLAR?

I was both overjoyed and immensely relieved because I had no idea if I had been selected or not. Out of approximately 300 applicants this year, only 26 were selected as actual scholars, making my selection a great honor. I was very happy that my hard work for the scholarship paid off.

Q: WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO APPLY FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP?

I had quite a few reasons for applying for the Scholarship, but the first one is because I wanted to explore going to boarding

school due to events like High School Information Night and the 7th Grade leadership trip to Culver. The scholarship helps students by introducing them to schools they might not be familiar with as well as helping cover the financial costs. As I explored high schools in the area and learned more about the Scholarship, my reasons began to shift to the intellectual challenge and the Caroline D. Bradley community that I had the opportunity to join. It's very similar to Sycamore—a community of like-minded, academically gifted peers.

Q: WHAT PART OF THE APPLICATION OR INTERVIEW PROCESS CHALLENGED YOU THE MOST?

The hardest part of the application process, for me, was probably the essays. I had to write three essays, with the prompts: "Tell us about yourself," "Find a song lyric that demonstrates something important to you," and "What hobby or interest do you become so invested in that you lose track of time?" The reason they were so hard is because I had so many different things to write about, and the repeated revision cycles were mentally taxing. The "Tell us about yourself" one ended up with over 30 drafts.

“ ”

I had quite a few reasons for applying for the Scholarship, but the first one is because I wanted to explore going to boarding school due to events like High School Information Night and the 7th Grade leadership trip to Culver.

DYER

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Fred and Marla Thompson, Dyer's parents, explained what this journey has meant to their family, and what they are most proud of in Dyer beyond the scholarship itself.

"This journey has been really special for our family because it reflects so much of who Dyer is. We're incredibly proud that he found the scholarship on his own and decided to go for it. He took complete ownership of the process—researching the program, working through the essays, and even setting up practice interviews so he could prepare. Along the way, he learned a lot about how to tell his story, present himself, and push through a challenging process. Watching him see something he wanted and fully pursue it was inspiring as parents.

In our family, we've always tried to encourage curiosity, initiative, and a love of learning, and Dyer has really embraced that. He's always been someone who is driven and excited to learn and grow—that's central to who he is. Beyond the scholarship itself, what makes us most proud is the way he approaches opportunities with thoughtfulness, determination, and genuine enthusiasm. We're excited to see where that mindset will take him."

Dyer Thompson continued

Q: WHAT ARE YOU MOST PASSIONATE ABOUT RIGHT NOW, AND HOW DID THAT INTEREST BEGIN?

It would be easier to tell you what I'm not most passionate about right now and how those interests didn't begin, but I'll try my best. Right now, I am reinitializing my cake business, Baked by Dyer, as the next installment in my entrepreneurial journey. The interest in entrepreneurship came during Spring Break many years ago when I decided to launch a website for a business selling crayons. We donated half of our revenue to the Ronald McDonald house after my brother spent time there, and it was my first taste of what would soon become a major pastime, hobby, and source of income for me. I also love participating in Scouting America, golf and karate, and I am also dabbling in Python coding, music composition, and more.

Q: CAN YOU SHARE A PROJECT THAT YOU FEEL REALLY REPRESENTS WHO YOU ARE?

My small business, Baked by Dyer. I have had to struggle through so many roadblocks to even get this business off the ground. It turns out making cakes isn't as easy as it looks, and that speaks to my perseverance and unwillingness to give up. It also more obviously demonstrates my love of entrepreneurship and business management.

Q: HOW DO YOU HOPE THIS SCHOLARSHIP WILL SHAPE YOUR HIGH SCHOOL EXPERIENCE?

This Scholarship was an extraordinary accomplishment for me because it reminded me that I had the ability to surmount huge projects and

challenges, a skill which will be instrumental to my high school experience. The community of adults and students will help support me throughout high school, and I will likely join more extracurriculars as I have learned first-hand how meaningful and impactful they are.

Q: WHO HAS INFLUENCED OR SUPPORTED YOU MOST ALONG THIS JOURNEY?

Many people helped me, and all in their different ways. First, I want to call out the great teachers at Sycamore, who gave me the academic experience and foundation needed to win. Mrs. Simpson (Middle School Language Arts teacher) was particularly instrumental in interview prep and understanding of the scholarship, as she had mentored past winners before. My mother diverted herself from whatever she was doing many times to read over the latest essay. My father was one of the best people to bounce ideas off of, and he helped my essays develop in that way.

Q: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO YOUNGER STUDENTS WHO MIGHT CONSIDER APPLYING IN THE FUTURE?

The biggest hurdles in the process aren't the semifinals or even finals, they're the application process itself. The process requires applicants to really look within and learn things about themselves that otherwise would not be learned at this stage. Also, if you're like me, you may be somewhat sensitive to receiving a lot of feedback on your work. Feedback doesn't mean the work is bad, it might just need rephrasing or the introduction of another topic. Don't fight the feedback. Finally, if you make it to the finals, interview prep is extremely important.

Teachers on Dyer

A few of his beloved teachers were eager to weigh in on Dyer's time at Sycamore. **Ruth Moll**, his Kindergarten teacher, reflected, "Dyer has been a vibe from the moment he walked into Kindergarten. He has always been curious, scholarly, and energetic. Above all, he is such an empathetic, kind friend. For many years after Kindergarten, he would stop in to check in and to keep us up-to-date on events in his life. Watching his Sycamore journey from afar and knowing Dyer to be true to himself, I am not surprised at all of his success. He is going to do great things with the opportunities life brings him."

David Schuth, his 7th and 8th Grade Science teacher, said, "Dyer is startlingly insightful, able to generalize widely from a single concept. Many times Dyer will come up with a question and then be able to answer his own question while asking it as he goes on to the solution! As a coach, it was fun to watch Dyer transform from a kid who, at the beginning of the year, thought he was not any good at Science Bowl, make the team, study hard, and go to Nationals in the spring. He enjoyed the experience so much that he has pledged to start his own team when he goes to high school. I love the enthusiasm Dyer has for life and discovery."

"Just about every Sycamore student is unforgettable in his or her own way, but there are a few who are unforgettable even by Sycamore's standard of forgettability," 7th and 8th Grade Spanish teacher, **Brandon Fitzsimmons**, explained. "Dyer is one of those students who will come to my mind for years to come when I think of a student who overflows with enthusiasm for new challenges each day. He is truly fearless, humorous, adventurous, and contagious in his love for learning. Dyer has illuminated every single Spanish class session during the past two years." ●

FOLLOW SYCAMORE on Social Media

A school's social media presence can extend beyond polished announcements or carefully staged photos—it can serve as a living, breathing glimpse into the daily life of the organization. By sharing behind-the-scenes videos and moments from a school day, Sycamore hopes to foster an authentic connection not just with current families but also with alumni and the wider community.

During the 2026-27 school year, our goal is to offer glimpses into classrooms, rehearsals, science experiments, or even the joyful chaos of recess. We want to demonstrate that learning is alive and thriving in every corner of Sycamore. Graduates and past parents will recognize these meaningful instances, but we also want current parents and prospective families to gain a deeper sense of Sycamore's culture and energy. Traditional newsletters and brochures cannot fully capture the moments when students are the unfiltered versions of themselves. A spontaneous laugh during art class, a group working together on a project, or a student proudly showing their work are each snapshots of why families are drawn to Sycamore.

In an era where connection can happen via the screen of a computer or phone, these shared stories bring those outside the building closer to the true heart of our school. The everyday moments captured alongside the teaching of the curriculum are a reminder that Sycamore is not only a place of learning but a vibrant, supportive community.

Follow us on Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube to watch our videos and see the pics.



Instagram @sycamoreschool



Facebook @sycamoreschool_indy



SEE SYCAMORE
VIDEOS ON OUR
YOUTUBE CHANNEL



SCAN TO LEARN MORE
ABOUT THE HEAD OF
SCHOOL CIRCLE GIVING
SOCIETY

MUD KITCHEN

Added To Early Childhood Playground



Sycamore Kindergarten teachers had an idea they believed would enhance both the social and the playground experience for Early Childhood students. Envisioning a collaborative play station, they tasked Dave Estelle, the husband of Kindergarten teacher Denise Estelle, with creating what the Estelles call a “mud kitchen”—a station where students can play together during recess.

“It’s not only creative play,” says Denise, who along with fellow Kindergarten teacher Ruth Moll, came up with the idea. “It helps the students with problem-solving and collaboration, and even with their math skills, like measuring and counting.”

Dave, who is a skilled, self-taught woodworker, spent six months, whenever

he had spare time, working on the ten-foot long custom table with built-in spaces for plates, bowls, dishes. The table debuted on the day students returned from spring break. It’s become an instant favorite, with Kindergarten students lining the outside edge of the “kitchen,” creating “dishes” that include a mixture of grass, dandelions, flowers, dirt, and rocks, and whatever else they find that might work for their playground kitchen concoctions.

“Part of the plan was to try and create a space where students can talk, facing each other around a space, while playing,” Denise says. “Preschool and Pre-Kindergarten students are using it too. It has been a great addition”. ●

Trivia Night

Putting the Fun in Fundraising: Sycamore Trivia Night and Silent Auction



In 2026, Sycamore's annual signature fundraising event took on an exciting new twist. Instead of a traditional auction gala, the Sycamore community gathered for a lively Trivia Night and Silent Auction on February 28 in the school gym. The evening was filled with laughter, friendly competition, food and drinks, and a fantastic lineup of silent auction items.

More than 260 members of the Sycamore community joined the fun, bidding on 85 auction packages that included favorite teacher experiences along with standout items like a signed Caitlin Clark jersey, Pappy Van Winkle bourbon, and a beach cottage getaway in New Buffalo.

The trivia competition was hosted by Matt "Hambone" Hammond and

featured 29 spirited teams made up of parents, faculty and staff, alumni, grandparents, trustees, and friends of Sycamore, including an entire team of Sycamore alumni. After a night of fierce but friendly competition, "Dark Academia" claimed the championship trophy, which will proudly be displayed at Sycamore throughout the coming year.

Guests also rallied behind this year's Fund-a-Need, supporting financial assistance through Sycamore's SGO partnership. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our community, the event raised more than \$140,000 in net income for the school. These funds play a vital role in supporting the exceptional educational experience Sycamore students enjoy every day. ●

SYCAMORE CLASS OF 2022

College Decisions

Audrey Zachwieja Alberts
University of Cambridge, UK

Hasini Ambaty
Indiana University BS/MD Pathway

Alex Cheng
Duke University

Evelyn Cunningham
University of Tennessee

Shivani Desai
University of Chicago

Kavya Devarapalli
New York University

William Eaton
University of Michigan

Annamaria Ebersole
Wake Forest University

Arnay Garhyan
Stanford University

Liam Hendry
University of Illinois

Sarah Hinchman
Purdue University (since fall 2025)

Jennifer Hu
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Garrett Hur
Case Western Reserve University

Oscar Hyatt
Boston College

Vidhatri Iyer
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
BS/MD Program

Connor Kacena-Merrell
University of Texas, Austin

Nicholas Kahi
Indiana University

Luna Kandel
University of Oregon

Katie Kaplan
University of Georgia

Ford Lee
University of Notre Dame

Sophia Liang
Columbia University

Sam Louis
University of Notre Dame

Lily Grace Martinson
Georgetown University

Addie Moeller
Indiana University

Evelyn Murray
University of Tennessee

Rishi Nagireddy
New York University

Kaitlyn Park
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Julius Payner
Purdue University

Justin Puno
Indiana University

Kelsey Rehmel
University of Tampa

Mukund Sagi
University of California,
Berkeley

Daniel Sajdak
Andrews University

Leo Sniderman
University of Oxford, England

Kaia Starnino
Purdue University

Annabel Swearingen
Purdue University

Lillian Tabor
Boston College

Riti Tandra
University of Pennsylvania

Julia Watson
Denison University

Benjamin Wei
Purdue University

Adam Wilkerson
Indiana University

Wesley Wong
Rose-Hulman Institute of
Technology

Owen Zhang
Northwestern University

SYCAMORE CLASS OF 2026

High School Destinations

BREBEUF JESUIT HIGH SCHOOL

Nolan Brown

Scarlett Cross

Lucy Ko

Angela Lu

Will Naughton

Alice Obst

Sahana Pesek

Charlotte Pryor

Auden Rich

Savannah Reymer

David Sanchez

Zoe Singh

Dyer Thompson

Andy Wandel

CARMEL HIGH SCHOOL

Leah Adal

Jasmine Alsatie

Chloe Heraly

Ellis Moy

Violet Pangan

Aarnav Silodia

Hukam Singh

Rowan Siwec

Shri Subbagari

Amara Tahir

CATHEDRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Tyler Stahl

HERRON HIGH SCHOOL

Sylvester Wiehe

PARK TUDOR HIGH SCHOOL

Luke Bramhill

Kushi Chandra

Caroline Cheng

Lydia Clemens

Benjamin Dorantes

Layla Farlow

Oscar Guillaume

Elise Hawkins

Jonathan Lin

Michael Mergott

Joseph Zhu

UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL OF INDIANA

Charlotte Farnum

Allison Jeray

Mina Raiesdana

Alumni News and Notes

HIGH SCHOOL

Rising Star Class of 2027 (Juniors)

BREBEUF JESUIT
Matilda Kelly

CATHEDRAL
Ginny Neumeister
Hailey Neumeister

NORTH CENTRAL
Isaac Rabuck

UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL OF INDIANA
John Coutant
Annabelle Douglas
Sonali Guttikonda
Alessandro Salerno

- In December, Park Tudor seniors **Annamaria Ebersole** and **Hasini Ambaty**, both from the Sycamore Class of 2022, who are in the Advanced Interdisciplinary Studies (AIS) Science Program presented their research projects to faculty, thus marking the successful completion of all course requirements. This rigorous, multi-year program supports students as they develop the skills and experience necessary to conduct authentic scientific inquiry alongside professional researchers—often in university laboratories.

- **Annamaria Ebersole** — *Exploring the Links Between Screen Time, Physical Activity, Sport, and Anxiety in Youth, Indiana University School of Public Health, Dr. Kyle Kercher.*

- **Hasini Ambaty** — *Interactions of Cortisone and the Lipid 1,2-Dilauroyl-sn-glycero-3-phosphocholine (DLPC), Department of Membrane Biophysics, Indiana University, Dr. Horia Petrache*

- Park Tudor senior **Riti Tandra**, Sycamore Class of 2022, won the state level in the 2025–2026 DAR (Daughters of the American Revolution) Good Citizen Writing Contest. Essays are judged for historical accuracy and adherence to the topic, in addition to their persuasiveness. The question Riti grappled with this year was “*Our nation will celebrate the 250th birthday of the United States of America on July 4, 2026. Describe how the characteristics of a good citizen help to renew and strengthen the democracy achieved by the Patriots of the American Revolution.*” Riti has advanced to the Midwestern competition.

- This spring, Park Tudor Quizbowl Team A, which includes Sycamore alumni **Evan Ting**, **Gavin Sigua**, and **Sameer Zaidi**, placed first at SSNCT (Small Schools National Championship Tournament) in the Open Division. In addition, Evan Ting earned 10th place at the 2026 IPNCT (Individual Player National Championship Tournament) for individual quizbowl players.

- In March, Park Tudor’s AP Physics Class competed at Purdue’s Bridge Bust Competition. The event was hosted by Purdue’s American Association of Civil Engineers. The objective of the competition was to build a balsa wood bridge that can carry the largest capacity possible, using as few materials as possible. Awards are based on design as well as loading capacity. A team consisting of **Alex Cheng** and **Connor Kacena-Merrell**, both Class of 2022, earned a very impressive second place in the design category. In total, 106 teams consisting of 212 students from 15 schools from Indiana and Illinois competed.

- **Liam Hendry**, Class of 2022, is a member of the Fighting Illini Band: “Sycamore was the beginning of my exposure to percussion, and as my love for it spread into high school through Zionsville’s marching band and indoor percussion programs, it became a huge part of my life, and it only felt natural to carry that into college. The marching drumline at the University of Illinois is fairly sought-after, and it was an arduous audition process, but it was very worthwhile to join an activity that I know will help me meet many new people. The group has nearly 400 members and tens of thousands in every audience, but it’s always exciting to be part of something big.”

- Brebeuf senior **Shivani Desai**, Class of 2022, was selected as one of Indiana's two delegates to the 64th annual United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) in Washington, D.C. in March. Shivani represented Indiana along with U.S. Senators Todd Young and Jim Banks as part of a distinguished national delegation of 104 outstanding high school student leaders.

Chosen from among the state's top students, Shivani participated in an intensive week-long study of the federal government, meeting with national leaders including members of Congress, the President, and a Supreme Court Justice. Each USSYP delegate also receives a \$10,000 undergraduate college scholarship. Congratulations to Shivani for this impressive achievement.

- Carmel High School Senior **Jennifer Hu**, Class of 2022, was named a MATHCOUNTS Alumni Scholarship Finalist. She participated in MATHCOUNTS for three years, qualifying for the National Competition twice and placing 36th individually in 2022. Since then, she has been inspired to share her love of math through her nonprofit organization "Infinity Squared Mathematics."

- Carmel High School Freshmen **Izzy Abraham**, **Laura Cai**, and **Prudy Peng**, Class of 2025, returned to Sycamore to give a presentation on nutrition, in both Spanish and English, to 1st Grade and Kindergarten students. This was part of a HOSA community outreach project for students interested in being health care professionals.



Carmel students: Prudy Peng, Izzy Abraham, Laura Cai

- Brownsburg High School junior **Simon Williams**, Class of 2023, marched in the very rainy 137th annual Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California on New Year's Day. He is the son of Sycamore's Associate Head of School, Jennifer Williams.



- University High School's **Leo Salerno**, **Jane Ai**, and **Ellie Eaton**, Class of 2025, performed at the IBA All-Region Honor band this year. This is Leo and Jane's third year of performing in the band, and Ellie's second year. Sycamore alumni **Leni Lee '25**, from North Central High School, played in the band as well.



- **Steve Hackwelder**, Class of 2023, took home some serious hardware at the University High School Theater Department year-end awards. He was awarded Best Male Actor in a Play for his performance in Almost Maine, Best Male Actor in a Musical for his performance in Bring It On, and Best ComedySports Team Member for his work with the school Improv Team.

Alumni Honors

- **Hailey Neumeister**, Class of 2024, has been named captain of Cathedral High School's Show Choir; her twin sister, **Ginny Neumeister**, also from the Class of 2024, has been named captain of the Cathedral Fighting Irish Swim Team. Congratulations, Neumeisters!
- Cathedral freshman **Matthew Roth**'s home robotics team qualified for the VEX IQ World Championship by winning the Amaze Award. Also on his team are former Sycamore Class of 2025 classmates, **Nirdvaita Chandrana**, a student with the Davidson Online Academy, and **Violet Fortner**, also a Cathedral freshman.
- Congratulations to **Violet Fortner**, Class of 2025, for being the first freshman female at Cathedral to ever be the Indiana Math League Champion! While they have had female champions over the years, this is the first time a young lady has earned the title as a freshman! Six times during the school year, Cathedral Math League students are tested on six difficult math problems. Even though she is only a freshman, Violet is currently enrolled in AP Precalculus and looks forward to taking more challenging math courses at Cathedral.
- Several Sycamore graduates were inducted into the Sociedad Honoraria Hispanica (Spanish Honor Society) at University High School. The organization's President and Secretary, the Alumni Speaker at the Ceremony, as well as 7 of the 14 new inductees are Sycamore Grads.



President: **Annabelle Douglas** '23
 Secretary: **Ava Deng** '23
 Alumni Speaker:
Constantine Stefanidis '19

INDUCTEES:

Leo Salerno '25
Daniel Bazeley '25
Joshua Alcantara '25
Steve Hackwelder '23
Jeffery Kirkendall '24
Sawyer Jackson '24
Keith Deng '25
 (not pictured)

Long-Lasting Sycamore Alumnae Friendship

- **Anna Sanborn** and **Aisha Kokan**, both from the Class of 2018, attend school in Boston. Anna is a senior at Northeastern studying Biology and Political Science. Aisha is a senior at Harvard studying History of Science. Recently, **Abby Ko**, also from the Class of 2018, visited them in Boston. She is a senior at Julliard.

Anna came to Sycamore in Pre-K, Abby came in Kindergarten, and Aisha came in 3rd Grade. They have been close friends ever since.



Abby Ko, Aisha Kokan, Anna Sanborn

Baldwin Wedding

- **Jonathan Baldwin**, Class of 2004, married Jamie Williams in March. His brothers **Andrew** '99 and **Michael** are also Sycamore alumni as are his cousins, **Nathan Baldwin** '04 and **Jacob** '08. Also in attendance at the wedding was **Kevin Kroeger** '04.

Pictured: Kevin Kroeger, Jacob Baldwin, Nathan Baldwin, Jonathan Baldwin, Lily Baldwin (Sycamore student), Andrew Baldwin (holding his son Henry), and Michael Baldwin (Sycamore parent and Board of Trustee member).



COLLEGE

• **Elizabeth Schuth**, Class of 2021, as a news reporter for Indiana University's newspaper the Indiana Daily Student, reported and wrote one of the paper's first bilingual stories ever available in English and Spanish. To complete the story she traveled across Bloomington conducting the majority of interviews in Spanish. The story covered Norma Landgraff, a community leader originally from Bogotá, Colombia.



• Harvard University freshman **Sam Rudavsky**, Class of 2021, has been named a staff writer for the Harvard Crimson, the university's student publication.



• Brebeuf sophomore **Shayen Maun**, Class of 2024, and Purdue freshman **Kelly Fulk**, Class of 2021, attended the STARTed UP Challenge regional competition at Purdue University where Shayen presented his invention "ARYS-Rx," which is an AI tool to increase medication compliance for patients. Kelly is in the Purdue Honors Engineering program and is a former STARTed UP People's Choice Winner. The STARTed UP foundation offers mentoring and opportunities for high school students to explore entrepreneurship through invention and innovation. Kelly was a sounding board for Shayen's ideas as he went through the competition process; the Sycamore community never ends.

PROFESSIONAL

• **Rebecca Ogle '03**, LCSW, delivered a presentation entitled Mindfulness for Tough Parenting Moments as part of the Wellness Collective Parent Academy. Her talk focused on applying mindfulness attitudes and techniques to parenting. The goal was to give parents tools to stay grounded even when their children act out. The event was hosted by the Independent Schools Wellness Collective of Indianapolis.



• **Saam Momayez**, Class of 2012, teaches 7th and 8th grade science at City Springs Elementary/Middle School in Baltimore, Maryland. He also recently graduated with a Master's in Education from Johns Hopkins University.

• **Claire Dallman**, Class of 2013, is living in Thessaloniki, Greece, with her husband, Aristeidis, and their dog, Pepper. She leads economic empowerment programs at Irida Women's Center, helping refugee and migrant women gain language, digital, and job skills and connect with employment opportunities. She enjoys life in Greece and often recalls the Ancient Greek roots she studied in Middle School, helping her learn the language and make her unexpected adventure feel like destiny.

• **Spencer Durham**, Class of 2017, has been working on the engines for the Artemis rockets. His job title is RS-25 Powerhead Project and Component Engineer at Aerojet Rocketdyne. He is a graduate from the Purdue University School of Aeronautical and Astronautical Engineering and the Purdue University John Martinson Honors College. Spencer had also been on the board of the Purdue Space Program. He was at the launch for Artemis II in Florida.

Sycamore Earns First In Nation: Four Top 10 In Math Competition

Throughout the school year, Sycamore math students emphasize problem-solving, with the Noetic Learning Math Contest (NLMC) woven into the program twice annually. As part of a nationwide competition, the NLMC offers students an opportunity to recognize and apply the problem-solving strategies they have been building all year. Each contest consists of 20 challenging problems completed independently within 45 minutes. The NLMC has one of the highest participation rates for middle school math reasoning competitions in the United States. Results of the fall competition:

TEAM ACHIEVEMENT:

Grade 7: 1st in the nation
 Grade 4: tied for 3rd in the nation
 Grade 5: tied for 6th in the nation
 Grade 6: tied for 8th in the nation
 Grade 3: 21st in the nation

INDIVIDUAL ACHIEVEMENT:

Grade 2: **Isaac Tsai**
 Perfect Score; tied for 1st in the state
 Grade 3: **Benjamin Kleber**
 Perfect Score; top in state
 Grade 4: **Walker Clendening**
 Perfect Score; top in state
 Grade 5: **Ivan Lu**
 Perfect Score, top in state
 Grade 6: **Quin Fortner**
 Perfect Score, top in state
 Grade 7: **Gavin Ceppa** and **Emma Lu**
 Perfect Scores, top in state
 Grade 8: **Joseph Zhu**
 Perfect Score, tied for top in state

Sycamore Students Earn Writing Honors

The Regional Scholastic Arts and Writing Awards have recognized vision, ingenuity, and talent in youth since 1923. Students' submissions are judged annually against thousands of entries written by Indiana students in grades 7-12. This year's award winners include three Sycamore student writers.

HONORABLE MENTIONS:

Scarlett Cross: "Read It Again" (A Palindrome Poem) (poetry)
Saloni Bains: "Supernova" (screenplays and scripts)
Ellis Moy: "Ice and Blood" (short story)

Mathcounts Finish Third In State Competition: Two Students In Top 30

Sycamore School finished first at the MATHCOUNTS Chapter Competition held at Sycamore in February. Our students competed against representatives from Creekside Middle School, Indy Homeschool, Park Tudor, Clay Middle, Westfield Middle, Northview Middle, Fall Creek Junior High, and Carmel Middle School. The Sycamore team of **Emma Lu, Joseph Zhu, Gavin Ceppa**, and **Alan Shen** answered all 10 questions of the Team Round correctly to earn the title.

The Sycamore MATHCOUNTS team concluded its season with a 3rd place team finish at the Indiana State Competition. Nine of the 130 students invited were from Sycamore:

Alan Shen, Joseph Zhu, Gavin Ceppa, Jonathan Lin, Emma Lu, Holden Swingley, Albert Jiang, Kacie Yan and **Angela Lu**. The 3rd place squad consisted of Alan, Joseph, Gavin and Emma. Both Alan and Joseph finished in the top 30, and seven of the nine Sycamore students finished in the top 41.

Music Teachers Honored

Sycamore's band and choir teachers, **Dr. Matt Murdock** and **Noah Buchholz**, were honored by the Indiana Arts Education Network for their contributions to music education in the state. Sycamore School was also one of only two elementary schools in Indiana that earned recognition for its music program.



Five National History Day Qualifiers

In Regional competition, five Sycamore students qualified to participate in the National History Day State Contest. **Mina Raiesdana** (8), **Aarnav Silodia** (8), **Tabby Ko** (7), **Kacie Yan** (7), and **Audrey Ting** (6) advanced to the state competition. At the state competition, three qualified for the June National competition in Washington, D.C. In addition, **Omid Raiesdana** (4) placed in the Youth division at state.

Students advancing to Nationals:

JUNIOR INDIVIDUAL DOCUMENTARY

1st place: **Kacie Yan**

"The Revolution of the LZR Racer: A Question on the Role of Technology in Sports"

2nd place: **Tabitha Ko**

"Minidoka: A Wartime Reaction and the Long Road to Reform"

JUNIOR PAPER:

1st place: **Mina Raiesdana**

"Miriam Menkin and the Watch-Glass: The Female Scientist who Revolutionized Reproductive Medicine and Paved the Way for In Vitro Fertilization"

Four Earn Math Honors at Pentathlon Tournament

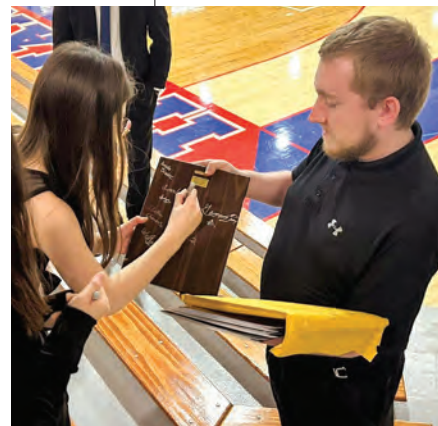
Four Sycamore 4th Graders participated in the Division 3 National Mathematics Pentathlon Academic Tournament at Ben Davis High School in March. **David Quan** won all five games and received the highest ranking of Hall of Fame with a gold medal. **Veronica Kao** received a silver medal, and **Elizabeth Kirkendall** and **Keenan Parran** received Pentathlete ribbons.



Sycamore Music Department Hits Milestone

The musicians sign the back of our ISSMA plaque each year. "We share that it is not the rating on the front that is important," Band Director Dr. Matt Murdock says, "but the people listed on the back."

The Sycamore music department's Vocal Jazz and Jazz Ensemble passed their ISSMA Benchmarks, earning Gold-Superior ratings from the judges this spring. "These are arguably the most challenging benchmarks to achieve, as they require significant extracurricular commitment and preparation from our students," Murdock says. "This success builds on the momentum from earlier this year, when our Sycamore students qualified for Solo/Ensemble Benchmarks across four different dates in January and February." As the school year ended, Sycamore completed the eight ISSMA Benchmarks required, earning the ISSMA Total Music Award for the second consecutive year. Sycamore was one of only six elementary/middle/junior high schools in the state recognized, and the only private/independent school to achieve this honor.



Music Students Participate in All-State Honors Choir in Fort Wayne

The Indiana Music Education Association hosted the All-State Honor Choir at the March IMEA Annual Conference held at the Grand Wayne Center in Fort Wayne, which included seven Sycamore honorees. Seven honorees from Sycamore were among the students selected from around the state. At the conference, students participated in ensembles and whole choir experiences, culminating in a concert at the Embassy Theater.

Congratulations to Sycamore's All-State Honor Choir members:

Gabriela Tejada (5), **Lyla Colone-Brady** (5), **Ella Blatt** (6), **Amelia Siwec** (6), **Nikhil Pesek** (6), **Cyrus Drambarean** (6), and **Scarlett Cross** (8).

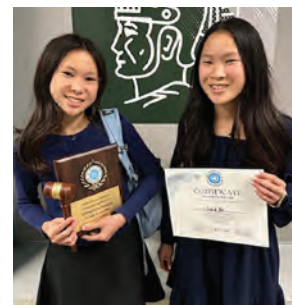


Vex Robotics Team Top 15 In State

Sycamore VEX Robotics Team 10775, consisting of 6th Graders **Arjun Polsani**, **Jackson Reymer**, and **Jonathan Wu**, placed 14th in finals of the 2026 Indiana Robotics Middle School State Championship at Lucas Oil Stadium. The team also earned the 2026 Indiana Robotics State Championship Teamwork Champion (VIQRC) Award at the Southeast Indiana VEX IQ Robotics Competition.

Sycamore Students Compete at Model UN in Chicago

Tabitha Ko and **Lucy Ko** participated in the International Affairs Conventions (IAC) Chicago Regional Model UN conference for elementary and middle schoolers. Tabby won Best Delegate for the 7th Grade cohort during the morning general session, second place for the afternoon session, and has qualified for Nationals in Orlando in May.



McKay (right) was surprised with a last day party. (pictured with 3rd Grade teacher Cara Hermacinski)

McKay Retires After 23 Years

Cindy McKay, long-time 2nd and 3rd Grade Assistant, retired this spring after 23 years of service to Sycamore School. Counting her years as a Sycamore parent to Meredith '06 and Tommy '08, she has been an important part of the community for more than 30 years. To help celebrate her retirement, many alumni sent her good wishes and congratulations, all written in one of her passions, cursive.

SSA Shoe Drive Nearly Doubles Collection Goal

Sycamore School partnered with Changing Footprints, an all-volunteer shoe charity located in Indiana, in March to collect and donate shoes to those in need. Students dropped shoes off in the special collection containers at Sycamore entrances. The goal was 400 pairs of shoes, at least one pair from every Sycamore student. At the end of the collection, more than 700 pairs had been donated. The shoes were then distributed by Changing Footprints. The organization has distributed more than 500,000 shoes locally, nationally, and internationally since its founding in 2004.

Four Earn Art Honors

Four Sycamore students earned honors in the International Violin Competition's 2026 Juried Exhibition of Student Art (JESA) for Indiana. This competition was open to students across the state in grades 1-12 in celebration of the 12th Quadrennial International Violin Competition of Indianapolis. More than 11,000 students registered to participate in the preliminary rounds, representing 119

schools across 54 counties in Indiana. A panel of jurors selected the top 150 Regional Winners, and from that group, 30 Grand Award Winners were chosen. Grand Award Winners included four Sycamore students:



Zenith Zhang, Grade 1
Musical Mountain
mixed media on paper



Nithya Polsani, Grade 4
Allegro
mixed media on paper



Zoey Zhang, Grade 4
Harmony of Life
colored pencil and marker on paper



Rose Gabig, Grade 7
Overture of the Field
oil pastel

Fourth Graders Visit With State Representative

During the 4th Grade visit to the Indiana Statehouse, Representative Cherrish Pryor answered questions from Sycamore students. Representative Pryor is one of the representatives for Sycamore's district. This was the first time a Senator or Representative has spoken with our students during this annual trek to downtown Indianapolis



Students Earn Top Honors at Academic Bee Competitions

Several Sycamore students participated in International Academic Competitions this Spring. The following students received awards at the National Competition in Orlando in May:

Aarnav Silodia (8th Grade)

2nd Place Triple Crown (recognizing combined performance in Geography, Science and History), 5th Place Academic Bee, 7th Place History Bee

Jayden Zhu (5th Grade)

4th Place US History Bee, 6th Place National History Bee

Additionally, the following students placed at Regional Competitions, qualifying them for Nationals:

Gavin Ceppa (7th Grade)

1st in History Bee, 2nd in Science Bee, 2nd in Geography Bee

Willia Dregits (6th Grade)

4th in History Bee

Sohum Pai (5th Grade)

1st in History Bee, 2nd in Geography Bee, 2nd in Science Bee

Cal Silva (5th Grade)

1st in History Bee, 1st in Geography Bee, 3rd in Science Bee

Edmond Ting (3rd Grade)

1st in Science Bee

Sycamore State Champs in Indiana Math League

Sycamore 6th–8th Graders competed in the 2026 Indiana Math League in March, and the results are in — Sycamore earned two state championships, as well as a state runner-up finish! All students mentioned are state honorees.

8TH GRADE – 1ST IN STATE

Joseph Zhu – Top Student in Indiana with 29/30 correct

Dyer Thompson (26 correct – 5th in Indiana)

Luke Bramhill (25 – tied for 6th in Indiana)

Jonathan Lin (25 – tied for 6th in Indiana)

Angela Lu (21 – tied for 13th in Indiana)

Michael Mergott (19 – tied for 18th in Indiana)

7TH GRADE – 1ST IN STATE

Emma Lu – Tied for Top Student in Indiana with 28/30 correct

Gavin Ceppa – (27 – tied for 3rd in Indiana)

Sanaya Parikh – (27 – tied for 3rd in Indiana)

Alan Shen – (27 – tied for 3rd in Indiana)

Albert Jiang – (26 – tied for 8th in Indiana)

Kacie Yan – (26 – tied for 8th in Indiana)

Brooklyn Reymer – (25 – tied for 11th in Indiana)

Niam Shah – (25 – tied for 11th in Indiana)

Shanti Una – (24 – tied for 18th in Indiana)

6TH GRADE – TIED FOR 2ND IN STATE

Demi Cui – (25 – tied for 3rd in Indiana)

Holden Swingley – (25 – tied for 3rd in Indiana)

Sophia Liu – (24 – tied for 7th in Indiana)

Ivy Xie – (23 – tied for 14th in Indiana)

Sophia Zhu – (21 – tied for 26th in Indiana)

Students Design 8th Grade Mural

This is the fourth year that we have offered the third trimester mural elective for 8th graders. The wall leading out to the recess area by Mrs. Baker's office has become a scenic wonderland of creativity thanks to these creations. This year's group has chosen a jungle motif on the extra-large area remaining in that hallway. The artists creating this masterpiece are **Leah Adal, Jasmine Alsatie, Caroline Cheng, Lydia Clemens, Layla Farlow, Charlotte Farnum, Chloe Healy, Violet Pangan, Sahana Pesek, and Amara Tahir.**



Ocean Issues To Ocean Heroes – 6th Graders With Mrs. Caudill

During the “Our Oceans Exploration: From Ocean Issues to Ocean Heroes” project 6th Grade students conducted in-depth research on an ocean issue that stirred their passions. Following research, the students identified individuals and organizations—their “heroes”—who are actively working to address these issues. The project culminated in the creation of video nominations, modeled on the CNN Heroes project, to select an Ocean Hero Award recipient based on impact. Students voted for the final winners.

1st place – Ben White and the International Ocean Noise Coalition

2nd place – The Major Project Foundation

3rd place – Turtle Island Restoration Network

Quan Wins Presidential AI Challenge

Sycamore 4th Grader **David Quan** and former Sycamore student **Chloe Chen** have been recognized as Indiana State winners in the Presidential AI Challenge. The Presidential AI Challenge seeks to inspire young people and educators to create AI-based solutions to community challenges. David and Chloe’s passion for innovation and their use of AI as a powerful tool set them apart. This achievement highlights the strong technical capabilities of these students and their commitment to driving meaningful real-world impact.

Students Garner Top Awards at Math Pentathlon

Sycamore students earned outstanding results in both divisions at the Division 1 and Division 2 National Mathematics Pentathlon Tournament.

IN DIVISION 1 (grade K–1), **George Rapp**, **Santiago Tejada**, and **Logan Ferry** achieved the tournament’s highest honor—Hall of Fame recognition—for posting perfect 15–point scores and winning all five games. Pentathlete Awards (scores up to 10) were earned by **Survir Pai**, **Helena Yuan**, and **Niamh Buchanan**. **Joshua Kirkendall** received Honorable Mention for scoring 11 points, while **Sahil Patel** and **Lily Halsema** earned Bronze medals with 12 points.

IN DIVISION 2 (grades 2–3), **Oliver Dailey** and **Jade Parran** earned Gold medals with 14–point performances, while **Benny Kleber** and **Charlie White** earned Pentathlete Awards, and **Ari Ramaswamy**, **Michael Schumm**, and **Albert Chow** received Bronze medals.

Sycamore Takes Six of the Top Ten Spots in Potus Project

Savannah Reymer, **Leah Adal**, **Violet Pangan**, **Jasmine Alsatie**, **Kushi Chandra**, and **Chloe Heraly** are top-10 finalists in the Project POTUS through the Benjamin Harrison House site. Project POTUS invites middle school students to use historical resources to tell the story of one American President in a video of 60 seconds or less. Their projects are eligible for the Grand Prize, Spotlight Awards, and the Citizens’ Choice Award which are awarded in April. In addition, Sycamore Alum **Izzy Abraham** is in the top 10 for the high school division.



“SEL” EBRATIONS: End-Of-Year

A cornerstone of our comprehensive Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program is Wayfinder, an evidence-based platform created by child development and educational psychology experts. Wayfinder focuses on six core future-ready skills: Adaptability, Empathy, Self-Awareness, Agency, Purpose, and Collaboration. To measure the effectiveness of the program, we compared student progress in SEL skills over the course of the school year. At the start of the year students highlighted Empathy as their greatest strength and identified Agency (the ability to take initiative and advocate for themselves) as the skill with the most potential for progress. Our educators noted significant improvements, especially in Purpose and Self-Awareness. Students themselves (grades 3–8) also reported growth in their own skills over the span of the year with Collaboration and Empathy noted as areas of significant collective strength.

Spanish Students Win 34 Gold, Silver, and Bronze Medals

Sycamore Middle School Spanish students participated in the 2026 National Spanish Exam (NSE). A total of forty 8th Graders and thirty-eight 7th Graders completed a two-part, 80-minute online exam to assess their Proficiency (Reading and Interpreting) and Achievement (Vocabulary and Grammar) at either HS Level 1 (for 7th graders) or HS Level 2 (for 8th graders). Of the 78 Sycamore participants, 59 placed nationally in the 50th percentile or higher, and 34 of the 59 medaled by finishing in the 75th percentile or higher. In addition, 20 Sycamore alumni participated in HS Level 3, 4, 5, or 6 of the NSE, with eight winning gold medals.

NATIONAL GOLD MEDAL WINNERS

8TH GRADE:

Allison Jeray

Savannah Reymer

Leah Adal

Amara Tahir

Sycamore Musicians Earn ISSMA Honors

Sycamore piano and vocal students participated in the Indiana State School Music Association's (ISSMA) Solo/Ensemble Festival at Noblesville West Middle School this spring. Sycamore musicians earned 38 Gold Ratings and two Silver Ratings, and two students reached the high school benchmark by qualifying for the ISSMA State Festival February 28. Instrumental students participated in the ISSMA's Solo/Ensemble Festival at Ben Davis High School and earned 51 Gold Ratings and four Silver Ratings. Five students reached the high school benchmark by qualifying for the State Festival.

Jan Glazer, One of Sycamore's Founding Parents, Passes Away

One of the founders of Sycamore School, **Janet Glazer**, 79, passed away on January 17, 2026. A dedicated early childhood education advocate, Janet devoted herself to a variety of local educational organizations. Altogether, she volunteered thousands of hours at the Indianapolis Hebrew Academy, at Butler University's lab preschool, and especially at Sycamore School, which she and her husband Barry helped co-found with like-minded parents in 1985.

In the early years of the school, in support of her strong commitment to experiential education, Jan chaperoned nearly every class field trip. In addition, drawing on her expertise as a national award-winning event planner, she became the designated school party organizer, developing and implementing creative themed parties to celebrate dozens of occasions at the school.

Jan is survived by her husband and daughter (Ann, a 1992 Sycamore graduate), her two sisters-in-law, her nephews and niece, and many cousins. She was preceded in death by her parents and her two brothers, Brian and Kevin Hendricks.



When They Come Back



1. Alumni Open House Ambassadors

2. **Cole Welton** '24 returned to help Coach Branigan with Boys' Basketball practice before he returned for the second semester at the Culver Academies.

3. **Claire Dallman** '13, who lives in Greece, returned to Sycamore to visit all of her former teachers and see the changes during the past 25 years (pictured with Sycamore's Melissa Branigan and Tiffany Stahl).

4. **Jordan Smith** '14 came back for a visit (pictured with David Schuth, her former science teacher).

5. **Emma Simon** '10 (rear) assisted in Middle School Crochet Elective this past trimester (pictured with Scarlett Cross, Charlotte Pryor, and Savannah Reymer, all from the Class of '26).

6. **Annabel Simpson** '21 and Pre-school student **Cal Ericksen** at Sycamore Quest.

7. **Saam Momayez** '12 attended the annual SchuthCon event during the holidays.

8. High school and college students **Rohan Parikh** '24, **Aditya Bhatia** '24, **Evan Ting** '24, **Nate Liang** '21, **Derek Ai** '23, and **Grace Yang** '19 volunteered in January to proctor and judge the Middle School Science Bowl Invitational. Sycamore's Team A won the tournament.



9. FaceTime Bomber **Owen Zhang** '01 "posed" with fellow '22 graduates **Arday Garhyan**, **Will Eaton**, **Connor Kacena-Merrel**, and **Liam Hendry** at the Senior Send-Off.

10. **Ella Pryor** '24 and **Alex Bramhill** '24 returned for their younger siblings' graduation.

11. **Nick Rosiello** '01, **Scott Brody** '02, **Matt Giffin** '02, **Andy Warren** '02, and **David Sledge** '02 often get together.

12. Former student **Dr. Grace Yedlika**, who participated in the radiology session at this year's Girls' STEAM Conference, caught up with Mary O'Malley and Katie Baker.

13. **Kristen Lange** '07, her daughter **Marlowe**, and sister **Alexandra Lange Miller** '09 spent an afternoon going down "Memory Lane."

14. **Bill Ristow** '08 visited Sycamore Middle School History class.

15. December Alumni Homecoming

Sycamore Begins “Battle of the Books” Competition

Battle of the Books
competition held this
spring at Sycamore



Four years ago, Sycamore Media Center Specialist, Courtney Floyd, was contacted by the Middle School librarian from Park Tudor to see if she had any interest in starting a Battle of the Books competition, run similarly to an academic team or quiz bowl style competition. In Indiana, schools that form or participate in a Battle of the Books often use Young Hoosier Book Award (YHBA) nominees as their reading list for the year.

“We went into it not knowing exactly what it would look like, and the first year was a little primitive,” Floyd says. “The second year we were contacted by a representative from Beloved Community Co-op to see if they could also participate. It’s grown and changed and gotten better every year.”

Park Tudor participated in the event at Sycamore this year, and Floyd says the Orchard School wants to join next year. Sycamore typically has about 20-25 students that make up four or five Battle of the Books teams.

Sycamore teams use the YHBA Middle Grade list, which Floyd says consists of 20 books of various genres and interests. Teams divide up the reading list so that each book is read by at least one member on the team. The chances of answering competition questions correctly increases, Floyd says, if each book is read by more than one member of the team.

“Our Battles use a Jeopardy-style board for questions. Teams take turns selecting question values but each team has the opportunity to answer each question,” says Floyd. “Points are awarded for correct answers, but points are not deducted for incorrect answers. There is a final question, answered Jeopardy-style, allowing teams to strategically wager points for the opportunity to win. Winning team members earn a gift card to a local bookstore.”

“““

Teams divide up the reading list so that each book is read by at least one member on the team. The chances of answering competition questions correctly increases if each book is read by more than one member of the team.

COURTNEY FLOYD
Sycamore Media Center Specialist

Students have about six months to read and prepare for the competition. The Sycamore library purchases a copy of each book, but students often purchase their own books or check them out from their local libraries.

Floyd recently completed her first year on the Young Hoosier Book Award committee and she says she learned a few things about helping teams to keep track of their reading and prepare for the Battle. “This year, I provided a spreadsheet for teams to keep track of how many readers each book had, as well as a form to fill out to create summaries and questions about the books that they could later use to practice for the competition. The week before the competition, the students were invited into the library to practice during recess time.”

Floyd is pleased with how the competition has expanded since its humble beginning.

“I’m pleased that our little, informal reading competition has grown into something that a lot of Middle School students are excited to participate in.”

Sycamore 8th Graders Kushi Chandra, Leah Adal, Lucy Ko, Chloe Heraly, and Layla Farlow won this year’s Battle of the Books.

FROZEN, JR.



Spotlight on 2026 Seniors

[SYCAMORE CLASS OF 2022]

2026 NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP FINALISTS

BREBEUF HIGH SCHOOL

Shivani Desai

CARMEL HIGH SCHOOL

Evelyn Cunningham

Mukund Sagi

Kaia Starnino

NORTH CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

Luna Kandel

PARK TUDOR

Alexander Cheng

Arnay Garhyan

Connor Kacena-Merrell

Kaitlyn Park

Leo Sniderman

Riti Tandra

Owen Zhang

ZIONSVILLE

Liam Hendry

PHILLIPS ACADEMY ANDOVER

Sophie Liang

NATIONAL MERIT COMMENDED SCHOLARS

CARMEL HIGH SCHOOL

Jennifer Hu

Evelyn Murray

PARK TUDOR

Hasini Ambaty

William Eaton

Annamaria Ebersole

Rishi Nagireddy

U.S. PRESIDENTIAL SCHOLAR CANDIDATES

Congratulations to the following seniors who were among the 6,000 candidates selected nationwide in the 2026 U.S. Presidential Scholars Program.

Candidates for the U.S. Presidential Scholars Program are high-achieving graduating seniors invited based on exceptional performance on the SAT/ACT, artistic talent, or Career and Technical Education (CTE) accomplishments. Candidates are selected by the U.S. Department of Education based on academic achievement, leadership, and community service.

PARK TUDOR

Alex Cheng

Arnay Garhyan

Kaitlyn Park

Leo Sniderman

Owen Zhang

Note: Park Tudor had five candidates, and all five are Sycamore alumni.

PHILLIPS ACADEMY ANDOVER

Sophie Liang

COCA-COLA SCHOLAR

PHILLIPS ACADEMY ANDOVER

Sophie Liang

PARK TUDOR CUM LAUDE SOCIETY CLASS OF 2026 (SENIORS)

Alexander Cheng

William Eaton

Arnay Garhyan

Leo Sniderman

Connor Kacena-Merrell

Kaitlyn Park

Riti Tandra

Owen Zhan

INDIANA ACADEMY ALL-STARS

Kaitlyn Park

Forty percent of the Sycamore Class of 2022 attended and graduated from Park Tudor School. Several of our graduates were recognized for their academic and extra curricular achievements at the Senior Awards Breakfast.

THE FRANK MEEK MEMORIAL AWARD

Leo Sniderman

THE FLETCHER, MARGARET AND REBECCA HODGES AWARD

Alex Cheng

VIRGINIA SMITH HIGHEST ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Alex Cheng

Arnay Garhyan

Connor Kacena-Merrell

Kaitlyn Park

Riti Tandra

Owen Zhang

MICHAEL "BOOMER" WALLACE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

Alex Cheng

OTHER DISTINCTIONS

Evelyn Murray, Carmel High School, was on the Athletic Director's Honor Roll for the top GPA on the Girls' Varsity Swim team.

Audrey Zachwieja Alberts was named valedictorian of Cape Elizabeth High School, Cape Elizabeth, Maine. She is a three-time Maine Math League State Champion.

UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL CUM LAUDE SOCIETY (SENIORS)

Vidhatri Iyer

Ben Wei



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