



# Alumnae Association Philadelphia High School for Girls

February/March 2018

*Perpetuate, Cultivate, Advance, and Enhance*

**Tickets are now available for the 129<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Business Meeting and Luncheon**



*Celebrating 170 years of the Philadelphia High School for Girls  
1848-2018*

Saturday, April 21, 2018  
Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown Hotel  
17th and Race Streets  
Philadelphia, PA 19103

Reunion time 10:00 AM–12:00 PM  
Luncheon: 12:00–3:00 PM

Ticket cost is \$75.00

*Discounted tickets available at \$65.00 for members that purchase tickets by April 6, 2018*

For reservation and ticket information please visit <http://mp.gg/9395u>

*Classes celebrating reunions of 55 years or more will not be charged for the reunion rooms*

## Calling All Girls' High Girls

We invite each class to submit their memories to be included in a video that will be presented during the 129th Annual Business Meeting and Luncheon, held on April 21, 2018. To aid the committee in producing meaningful, thoughtful, representative presentations, we are soliciting photos, videos, stories, and reminiscences from every class. Video no longer than three minutes in length can be submitted to:

[www.dropbox.com/sh/nwesmstd82oft4a/AABxA7Mzi6uFRIWsFFtEr\\_fca?dl=0](http://www.dropbox.com/sh/nwesmstd82oft4a/AABxA7Mzi6uFRIWsFFtEr_fca?dl=0)

We can't wait to see your videos and photos. We look forward to hearing your stories. Join us as we remind each other, and the current student body, that Vincit Qui Se Vincit truly *is* life's real goal!

For more information, please visit the luncheon page on our website: <https://wp.me/P8jliy-f1>

## Reunion at the Luncheon

The **184<sup>th</sup> Class of January 1953** will hold its **65<sup>th</sup> reunion** on April 21, 2018 in conjunction with the Alumnae Association's Annual Meeting and Luncheon. They will gather at 10:00 AM on the mezzanine in our designated reunion room at the Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown Hotel, 17th and Race Streets. For more information, please contact Ellie Horowitz Gesensway at [ellieges@yahoo.com](mailto:ellieges@yahoo.com) or 215-925-6795.



The Alumnae Association of the  
Philadelphia High School for Girls

129th Annual Meeting and Luncheon  
Moving Forward: Looking Back

*GHS is calling her daughters home. Come home to where it all began.*

**Got tickets? Don't wait!**

Members save \$10 per ticket  
Joining members save \$10 on  
annual or Lifetime dues.

*Limited time only.*

## Other Reunions

### 60<sup>th</sup> Reunion—Class of January 1958

The 194<sup>th</sup> class is celebrating its 60<sup>th</sup> reunion on Friday, April 20 at noon. For more information, contact Carol Ketchen at 215-672-2475 or Marilyn Kraft at 215-567-2401.

### 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion—Class of 1964

The 212<sup>th</sup> class is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> reunion on Saturday, October 6 from noon to 4:00 PM. Luncheon will be held at the DoubleTree Hotel at 237 South Broad St in Philadelphia. All 212ers who are on our email list will receive an invitation by email in May. There will also be more information in the next Alumnae Association newsletter in May.

### 20<sup>th</sup> Reunion—Class of 1998

The 242<sup>nd</sup> class is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> reunion on Saturday, November 24 from 7:00 to 11:00 PM. Dinner and drinks will be at Romano's Catering and Banquet Hall at 1523 East Wingohocking St in Philadelphia. Tickets are \$65 per person until June 1; after that, \$75 per person. (Payment is due by September 30 and includes a school gift.) Payment can be made through PayPal ([242GHSreunion@gmail.com](mailto:242GHSreunion@gmail.com)) or check; payments plans are available. For more information, contact [242GHSreunion@gmail.com](mailto:242GHSreunion@gmail.com) or see our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/groups/242GHSreunion](http://www.facebook.com/groups/242GHSreunion).



# News from Our School

On March 14, students held an internal walk to honor the 17 students and staff killed on February 14 at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. 17 students carried the images of the victims through the halls lined with students linked arm in arm. Over the public address system, the names of the victims were somberly announced, accompanied by the sounding of a gong.



## Dates to Remember

April 6, 2018	Museum Day
April 20, 2018	Career Day
April 21, 2018	Annual Business Meeting and Luncheon
May 10, 2018	Dance Recital
May 22, 2018	Spring Concert
June 8, 2018	Graduation



# Harvard's First Female President Visits Girls' High

Drew Gilpin Faust, has deep ties to Philadelphia. She is a graduate of Bryn Mawr College and the University of Pennsylvania, and was a faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania. Faust's message, herself a graduate of an all-girls high school and college, resonated with the students. Gilpin noted that while teaching at Penn, **Judith Rodin (January 1962)**, a Girls' High alumna and Distinguished Daughter, became its first female President. Read more at [www.philly.com/philly/education/harvard-university-first-female-president-drew-gilpin-faust-philadelphia-girls-high-20180310.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/education/harvard-university-first-female-president-drew-gilpin-faust-philadelphia-girls-high-20180310.html).



# NEWS & notes

## News from Our Alumnae

*By Dorothy G. Kapenstein*

### All Rise for Judge Shanese Johnson!

**Shanese Johnson, Esq. (June 1988)** is now the Honorable Shanese Johnson, Judge of the Court of Common Pleas of Philadelphia. She won her seat on the bench in the election of November 7, 2017. She took her oath of office in the historic Courtroom of City Hall on January 18, 2018.

Shanese earned her BS in 1992 at West Chester University after majoring in business management with a minor in political science. Having already decided on a law career; she went on to earn her JD at Temple University Law School. She practiced real estate law for a while, but switched to family law and became an expert in the field. She founded her own law firm, Shanese Johnson & Associates. The following are more of her activities:

- Shanese has represented hundreds of clients in the local area in family law matters. She prides herself in providing experienced, compassionate, high-quality, and affordable representation.
- She was an adjunct instructor at Manor College teaching legal writing.
- Her other activities include the Philadelphia Bar Association (Family Law Section, Nicholas A. Cipriani Family Law Inn of Court, the Lawyers Club, Temple Law Alumni Association, Philadelphia VIP (volunteer attorney), Support Center for Child Advocates, Philadelphia High School for Girls Alumnae Association, Barristers' Association of Philadelphia, National Bar Association (Women Lawyers Division), Black Women's Health Alliance of Philadelphia (Board Member), National Coalition of 100 Black Women, 2000 African American Women, West Chester University Black Alumni

Caucus, Eastern Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce and Hope Charter School (Board Member).

Shanese worked on several cases representing local labor union employees in family law matters. These unions include the Fraternal Order of Police, 1199C, 623 UPS Teamsters, Laborers Local 332, and Local 56.

She has received awards and honors for her public service. They include:

- **2011:** Award of Service, Alumnae Association of the Philadelphia High School for Girls
- **2011:** Rising Star, Super Lawyers
- **2008:** Attorney of the Month, Philadelphia Volunteer Lawyers for the Indigent
- **2008-2013:** First Judicial District Pro Bono Honor Roll
- **2005:** West Chester University Drum Major for Justice Award

As noted above, we presented Shanese with our Alumnae Award of Service in 2011. She was a Board member for several years and then served as Corresponding Secretary, First Vice President, and Second Vice President. In the interview, she noted that Girls' High had helped to guide her into her career in law.

**Katherine Gilmore Richardson (June 2001)** has been elected Vice President of the Philadelphia Young Democrats.

**Carol Fineman (1979)** is a theater publicist and producer. Among her credits is the Tony award-winning musical *The Color Purple*. The production had three national tours, a London run, and a revival tour in 2017. Carol serves as Vice President and Producer

at Scott Sanders Productions, Inc. She served as the head of the press department at The Public Theater under legendary producer George C. Wolfe for 11 years, where she worked on *Bring In 'da Noise, Bring In 'da Funk*; *The Tempest*; and *Elaine Stritch at Liberty*, the last two at The Public Theater and on Broadway. From 2002 to 2007, she managed public relations for a variety of Broadway and off-Broadway productions at Carol Fineman Publicity, a firm she founded, and at Barlow-Hartman Public Relations.

We received an email from **Gale Fellenser House (January 1963)**, alumna and retired GHS faculty with a correction to the blurb about Contest in the Winter 2018 GHS Newsletter, On page 2 of that GHS Newsletter, Ellie Horowitz Gesensway incorrectly stated the "184th Class of January 1953, the ONLY class whose Green Team ever won the famed GHS gym contest..." We of the 204 Class of January, 1963, take exception to that statement. We were the victorious Contest Team as low juniors (Green Team) in 1961 and as the low seniors (Blue Team) in 1962. Our yearbooks will verify this information!"

**Loree Jones (1986)** is among the final 27 candidates to the Philadelphia School Board. Mayor Jim Kenney will make the definitive selection for the 9-member panel before March 30th. Loree is currently chief of staff for the chancellor of Rutgers University in Camden, N.J. She has served in top leadership positions in nonprofits, higher education, and government, including as Managing Director of the City of Philadelphia, in which role she was responsible for all city operations and provided oversight to more than 20,000 city employees. She also served as Chief of Staff to the School Reform Commission, the same entity that is

being dissolved on June 30th in favor of the new Philadelphia School Board.

**Rebecca Dallam (1978)** lives in Sydney, Australia. She works as an AMI Montessori elementary trainer, training adults to be elementary teachers. She was also teaching children, but is lessening her load in order to be able to travel in the Asia-Pacific region more readily.



# News from Our Distinguished Daughters

*By Dorothy G. Kapenstein*

**Howardena Pindell (January 1961)** was elected to our Court of Honor in 2000. She is an internationally recognized painter, university level educator, and museum official. Her art works are in the permanent collections of major museums such as the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Brooklyn Museum in NY; the Philadelphia Art Museum and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in PA; the National Gallery of Art in Washington; and many others. Howardena and her works are now represented by Garth Greenan Gallery. We recently received news items about two ongoing art shows that display some of her paintings. Learn more:

[www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/we\\_wanted\\_a\\_revolution](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/exhibitions/we_wanted_a_revolution)

<https://mcachicago.org/Exhibitions/2018/Howardena-Pindell>

**Dr. Rosalyn J. Watts (June 1955) and Dr. Vanessa Northington Gamble (June 1970)** were mentioned in the Spring 2018 issue of *The Chronicle* published by the Barbara Bates Center For the Study of Nursing History at the University of Pennsylvania's nursing school, Penn Nursing. Rosalyn has donated her personal papers to the Center. They contain curriculum, conference, and biographical materials. She is now Associate Professor Emerita of PennNursing. Vanessa has had a distinguished academic career at Penn that combined teaching,

research, and administrative responsibilities that span three decades. During her teaching career, she launched several new initiatives, including the graduate program for Critical Care Nursing and Human Sexuality in Health. She served for two decades as the director of the school's Biennial Black Health Program, which addressed health disparities for African Americans.

We elected her as a Distinguished Daughter in 2002.

**Dr. Vanessa Northington Gamble (June 1970)** is a Bates Center Advisory Board member. She came to the Bates Center on November 8, 2017, to speak at a program co-sponsored by the Center and the Dornsife School of Public Health at Drexel University.

She is a double doctor, having earned both her M D and her PhD in the history and sociology of medicine from the University of Pennsylvania. She currently holds the post of University Professor of Medical Humanities at George Washington University. She is the first woman and the first African American to hold this prestigious faculty position. She also serves on the faculty of the History Department of the University's Columbian College of Arts and Sciences. Throughout her career she has worked to promote equity and justice in American medicine and public health.





# *In Memoriam*

<b>Linda Stein Zion</b> ( <i>June 1961</i> )	January 31, 2017
<b>Shirley L. Forte Guydon</b> ( <i>June 1947</i> )	April 11, 2017
<b>Dominga Miranda Cooper</b> ( <i>January 1955</i> )	April 2017
<b>Bernice Dziedzinski Gruszka</b> ( <i>June 1954</i> )	September 21, 2017
<b>Doris Rotko Felzer</b> ( <i>January 1948</i> )	October 11, 2017
<b>Tania Bieler Haftel</b> ( <i>January 1951</i> )	November 12, 2017
<b>Brenda Numeroff Laigaie</b> ( <i>1976</i> )	November 15, 2017
<b>Evelyn Largman Berger</b> ( <i>June 1948</i> )	November 18, 2017
<b>Elaine "Sis" Greenbaum Gilberg</b> ( <i>January 1946</i> )	November 18, 2017
<b>Martha Buchko Suchodolski</b> ( <i>June 1949</i> )	December 22, 2017
<b>Myra Owrutsky Durlofsky</b> ( <i>January 1950</i> )	January 2, 2018
<b>Elizabeth Purvis Allen</b> ( <i>January 1950</i> )	January 30, 2018
<b>Eboney White</b> ( <i>2004</i> )	February 21, 2018
<b>Erica Zissman</b> ( <i>1968</i> )	February 28, 2018

## Legacy Gifts to Our Alma Mater

Did you know that you can designate the Alumnae Association in your will or trust? Did you know that you can donate life insurance contracts, stocks, certain bonds, and/or mutual funds? These gifts may provide needed tax benefits for you, the donor, and help our Association promote and sustain its mission for many years to come. As we age, we all talk about leaving a legacy. This is your opportunity to do so for generations of women to come, as well as to help the school and the students as they battle the financial hardships they may be facing. If interested in helping or donating, please contact Joy Pollock at [jepollock@aol.com](mailto:jepollock@aol.com).

# Marie Fleming Litman (1944-2018)

## Girls' High Counselor

*By Dorothy G. Kapenstein*

Marie Litman, a long-time counselor at our school, passed away on February 6, 2018. She had a multifaceted professional life as a caring and compassionate nurse, a knowledgeable and efficient school counselor, and a wise and responsible colleague. To some of us she was a kind and considerate friend. Marie worked diligently to obtain an excellent education that prepared her well for her professional life. She graduated second in her class as a Registered Nurse from the St. Joseph's Hospital School of Nursing in 1964, and followed this with her BS in nursing from Temple University in 1970. She then earned her MA in counseling psychology in 1972 from Villanova University. Over the years, Marie did graduate study at St. Joseph's University and Gratz College. Finally, she earned her K-12 Principal Certification from Pennsylvania State University in 2006.

Marie's impressive professional career of 42 years began in 1968 with posts as a night supervisor at Doctor's Hospital, and then as a teacher of nursing at St. Joseph's Hospital School of Nursing and Gwynedd-Mercy College.

In 1971, Marie began the first phase of her outstanding 39-year career as a guidance counselor with the School District of Philadelphia. She was appointed as School Nurse and Counselor in the Alternative Program at Simon Gratz High School. From 1973 until her retirement in 2010, Marie served as a full-time public school counselor.

She was Lead Counselor at Wanamaker Middle School from 1973 to 1999. She applied her efforts to a full range of counseling duties, including individual and group counseling; coordinating a pre-college exploratory program; developing relationships with community organizations to

provide the students with academic support and cultural enrichment; having intense involvement in the Special Education Program; and developing a career exploration program. She was active in many other school programs as well.

Marie came to Girls' High in 1999. Her contributions to the students and the school fill more than a full single-space typed page. She carried out regular college counseling, crisis counseling, and mentoring students faithfully and efficiently, but she did even more. She served as Lead Counselor and was a member of the Principal's Cabinet. She served as School Test Coordinator for the mandated testing programs, a large responsibility. She conducted programs to inform students about the college application process and she identified academic enrichment programs to enhance student learning and give them exposure to more diverse opportunities. She did so much that we can only praise some of her work here.

Marie was honored with several awards:

- John Wanamaker Middle School Excellence Award: June 1998
- Philadelphia High School for Girls Employee of the Month: June 2005
- Dr. Ruth Wright Hayre Teacher of the Year: Nominee 2008
- Lindback Award for Excellence in Teaching: 2010

Marie was the wife of Dr. Randy Litman, a physician for 40 years. She is also survived by her children, Martin and Christina.

On a personal note, I first met Marie when I became the school librarian at Wanamaker Middle School in 1978. I quickly joined her in her career exploration project. She brought in guest

speakers representing a wide variety of careers. The meetings were held in the library and I supported Marie in this effort until my retirement in 1991. Together we sponsored annual visits for our girls to Women's Medical College (now Drexel Medical College). Marie was always there to help with my programs and projects; we constantly worked together for our students and faculty

members. I retired in 1991 and soon became active in the GHS Alumnae Association. I was delighted when Marie joined the GHS faculty in 1999. After my retirement, we kept in touch. Marie was always there when I needed rides to medical appointments or help in other areas. We met for lunch now and then. I miss her terribly already.

## Gladys Bell (June 1938) Retired Educator

*By Marcia Hinton*

Born on June 20, 1920, Gladys Bell lived to see 98 birthdays. She passed on February 16, 2018, four months shy of her 99th birthday. She attended the Philadelphia High School for Girls and graduated at age 16 in June 1938. After graduation, she attended Cheyney State College, where she was crowned May Queen in 1942. At Cheyney she received both her bachelors and masters degrees in education.

After 30 years of teaching elementary school in the Philadelphia School System, she retired from the Kenderton School in North Philadelphia in 1979. In her post-retirement years, she raised her two grandchildren and found time to volunteer in the development office at the school they attended, Friends Select.

She was a loyal and dedicated member of the Church of the Holy Apostles and The Mediator Episcopal church, where she taught Sunday school and vacation Bible

school. Her work on the Altar Guild will forever be remembered. HAM (as it is affectionately called) boasts a strong Girls' High tradition and count many alumnae among the active members of our parish. GHS alumnae **Gladys Purnell Bell (1937),**

**Lucinda Witherspoon (1939), Sallie Ruth MacCorkell (June 1942)** GHS educator, **A. Rae Williams (January 1951), Adele Carter Thomas (June 1966)** former member of the Alumnae Association board of directors, **Janis Moore (1971), Marcia Hinton (1974), Valerie Williams (1976)** Distinguished Daughter **Leslie Esdaile Banks (1977), Lynda Murray-Jackson, Phd. (1979) Stephanie Marsh (1981), Iola Nelson Harper (1985), and Joyce Maddy (1986).**

Ms. Gladys appreciated the arts and was a faithful volunteer at both the Walnut Street Theater and the Kimmel Center.



At the 126<sup>th</sup> Annual Business Meeting and Luncheon Ms. Gladys is flanked by her fellow church members and Girls' High Alumnae. *From left to right: Stephanie Marsh Golson, Marcia Hinton, Gladys Bell, Adele Carter Thomas, and Valerie Williams.*

# "Close Encounters" of the GHS Kind

*By Dorothy G. Kapenstein*

Are Girls' High girls really everywhere? You can bet on it! I've been finding them in unexpected places lately and I have persuaded some of them to let me share their latest news with our readers. Here are their stories.

## Christa Wallace Van Antwerp

Some years ago I was very pleased to learn that a University of Pennsylvania Medical Practice was opening up just a few blocks from my home. I am a 1950 Penn graduate, and I was looking for a doctor, so I placed my medical care in the hands of the physicians who are maintaining the practice. I was really happy to discover that the office manager of the practice is **Christa Van Antwerp (1997)**. Christa's job is complex, and requires not only strong managerial and office skills, but also tact and understanding of patient needs.

Christa described her job: "I manage the front desk of a busy primary care office. I am cross-trained, so I am able to work in all aspects of the office. I mainly work the front desk, checking patients in and out, triaging calls, making referrals and prior authorizations, as well as doing front-end billing. I assist with care coordination as well as transition of care management. I'm also trained to work in the back office, so I can draw blood, give vaccines, perform EKGs, and do vital signs. I assist the medical records department with scanning documents and results in patients' charts. I am also the vaccine coordinator, which involves managing the finances and inventory of all the vaccines that my office offers. Since we are a primary care office, we see our patients quite regularly and have developed a great rapport with them! My co-workers and I were awarded CCAs Team of the Year in, 2017. We also won the Power Up and Beyond Recognition Awards in 2009, among other awards. I am very fortunate to have such amazing co-workers."

Christa noted that her GHS teachers prepared her well for the future. She spoke of **Dr. Gale House (January 1963)** and her great anatomy course and also of her math teachers, Barbara Moseley and Mitchell Bernstein. She said of her education, "GHS instilled an excellent work ethic, allowing me to do my job to the best of my ability. I am a critical thinker and a problem solver thanks to the skills I learned in my high school years."

Christa is married to Paul Van Antwerp. Their five-year-old son Dylan is a NASCAR fan and has gotten the family excited about it. In addition to family and work responsibilities, Christa reaches out to help the community. She has participated with, donated to, and helped raise money for numerous charities over the years.

## Marianne Ingham Black

I recently made it to my 89th birthday and my children and grandchildren took me to the Country Club Diner, a local landmark, to celebrate. I noticed that a tall, distinguished-



looking woman at a nearby table was standing up and heading for my table. She was **Marianne Ingham**, now Mrs. Black, a **January 1944** alumna of Girls' High! We could speak only for a few minutes, but

discovered that we both lived in Northeast Philadelphia in areas a short car ride apart. We weren't able to talk long, but Marianne kindly agreed to share some of her Girls' High memories and provide us with an update by email.



She followed her sister, **Nancy Ingham Long (June 1941)** to Girls' High. From the beginning of her time at Girls' High, Marianne was happy with her music and English classes. She sang in Treble Clef and wrote for the *Iris* and she still has fond memories of Miss Marguerite Goll, Treble Clef Director and Miss Dorothy Noe, English teacher. Marianne attended Drexel Institute of Technology (now Drexel University) for several years, and there she really appreciated her GHS education. She said that she was well prepared for college because of the writing skills and scientific learning she received at Girls' High.

The same writing skills served her well during her career. Marianne worked as a copy writer in the advertising department of Bonwit Teller, an elite women's dress shop on Chestnut Street in Center City Philadelphia. Later, she worked as a clerk and bookkeeper at the Locust Club, a men's club. But she emphasized that her family life—raising children, cooking, sewing, and entertaining—was the best part of her life. She was also active in church work and occasionally in neighborhood activities. She spoke of her 67-year marriage to Joe Black, WWII fighter pilot, later an oil refinery engineer. Marianne told me that they have five children, seven grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren, as well as three step-grandchildren and several more step-great-grandchildren."

Marianne now lives in a retirement community. She remains active by working in the library and visiting residents in the Personal Care Unit. She said that she had made many good friends at Girls' High, and some are still good friends. She has enjoyed being active in her class reunions and attending them.

## **Phyllis Reed Macatee**

Recently I visited my ophthalmologist for a check-up. I was told to sit and wait. I always carry a book or two with me. In a few minutes another woman was seated in the empty chair next to me. She had a book and that got us talking. By the time someone came to get me, Phyllis and I had talked a good bit.

Would you believe she is a Girls' High girl and, like me, a Drexel graduate? **Phyllis Macatee (1962)** chose GHS because of its great reputation for preparing students for higher education, and it met her hopes and expectations. It provided her with a good background and study habits that enabled her to do well in college. She said that she really liked all of her teachers because they were all dedicated to seeing that their students were well prepared for life after high school. Her favorite subjects were English and science.

After receiving her GHS diploma, Phyllis earned her BS from Drexel University. She followed this with graduate study at the University of Minnesota and Rutgers University at New Brunswick in New Jersey.

Her professional life began with a job in a laboratory at Thomas Jefferson University. Then she coordinated lab courses at Pennsylvania College of Podiatric Medicine for two years. After that, Phyllis did genetic research at Einstein Hospital with a well-known research group. When they moved on to Texas, Phyllis got a job in a new area. She became a legal secretary and worked for 35 years for an attorney who specialized in federal and state tax matters and estate planning. Phyllis retired in 2010. She enjoys gardening, baking, reading, and doing puzzles. She is an avid supporter of animal rights.



*By Barbara Dowdall  
Editor Emerita*

**Testimony for Philadelphia City Council Hearing on Early Learning  
Monday, March 12, 2018**

**Barbara McDowell Dowdall  
English Department Head (Retired) A. Philip Randolph Career Tech High School  
Member, Alliance for Philadelphia Public Schools (APPS)**

**Grandparent of Four (Ages 6 years – 6 months)**

Good morning, Council Members. I regret that I cannot be here today to testify in person, but I need to attend to a friend in a nursing care facility at some distance from City Hall.

Early childhood education, of course, has been important to me beginning in my early childhood and continuing through my growing up at the Vernon Park Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia, attending Philadelphia public schools usually with librarians (no librarian at Fitler; librarians at both Roosevelt Junior High and Philadelphia High School for Girls). I must stipulate here that I was privileged from the beginning by having one parent who was a professional librarian ("Borrow books!" she said) and another who, although expelled from college for political activity as a sophomore, was a voracious reader ("Buy books!" he said. "You must read at least 10 books on a subject before you claim to know anything!" My librarian mother made an exception to the borrowing-preferred rule with children's books. We had many in the house, read and re-read countless times, eventually tattered and bearing evidence of our appreciation by our beginning-to-learn-to-write unauthorized ownership-claiming printing of our names inside. This is just to say that access to many books, a variety of books, books made of paper precious to the touch, books with pictures, to adults who read to us, to both public and school libraries—rather than to phonics charts, skill and drill with letters, and certainly not computer screens (we're talking mid-20th century)—was the key to the four of us growing into avid lifelong readers.

Scholarship today affirms aspects of our parents' approach:

The playing field between early readers and other children usually evens out by the second or the third grade. That doesn't mean that reading shouldn't be taught with some rigor in the first grade. But drilling 3- and 4-year-olds on phonics and expecting 5-year-olds to be fully literate isn't the best approach. "It may squelch their natural enthusiasm for books," says Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a professor of psychology at Claremont Graduate University, in California.

[www.parenting.com/article/the-best-way-to-teach-kids-to-read](http://www.parenting.com/article/the-best-way-to-teach-kids-to-read)

Ideal components for preschoolers are remarkably easy to find (e.g., [www.pbs.org/parents/education/reading-language/reading-tips/qualities-of-a-good-classroom-young-child-and-kindergartner/](http://www.pbs.org/parents/education/reading-language/reading-tips/qualities-of-a-good-classroom-young-child-and-kindergartner/)) and, based on my parental and grandparental experience, would hold up the Cooperative Nursery School (CNS) at the Unitarian Church in Germantown, Montgomery Early Learning Center (MELC) at 45th and Springfield as models worthy of emulation.

What our children need, most definitely starting with kindergarten and onward through the early grades, is that access to a wide variety (fiction, nonfiction, poetry, drama, art, music) of reading material—appropriate for their age but varied in reading level—with small classes, professionally schooled teachers of reading, and certified teacher librarians. Oh, and play time!

Philadelphia public schools have been systematically robbed of their school library resources, beginning before, but wildly accelerated under the SRC, to the point of virtual extinction. Once upon a time, The School District of Philadelphia Division of Libraries distributed a bookmark with the motto: **"Your Library is the Heartbeat of Your School,"** and a list of **Vital Signs of a Healthy Library Program:** A full-time certified librarian and a full-time LIMA; an adequate budget per student for library materials; Information technologies (computers and CD-ROMs); A collection large enough to support the curriculum (10-20 books per student); Current and accurate library materials." PA House Bill 740 would require a certified teacher librarian in every Commonwealth public school. Might the new school board, with a strong nudge from City Council, lead the way by restoring our precious school libraries? [bmcdowdall@gmail.com](mailto:bmcdowdall@gmail.com)

# Girls' High Girls Do So Many Things!

*By Dorothy G. Kapenstein*

History is full of examples of multitalented individuals, both men and women, who achieved success in more than one area. I was reading a bio of the great Russian all-around genius Alexander Borodin (1833-1887). He is best known in Europe and the Americas as an outstanding composer of classical music. However, in his native land, he was also honored and respected for being a research chemist and a physician. He was a strong supporter of women's rights and he even founded a medical school for women in 1885 in St. Petersburg! Reading this article this made me think of my great interest in the history of our school and the many graduates who contributed to it. Girls' High history is full of

examples of alumnae who had or have diverse talents that have enabled them to achieve success in more than one area. I have interviewed a number of them and written about them and others like them from the past. I recently interviewed alumnae Ilene Brill and Kimmika Williams-Witherspoon, who are excellent examples of just what such individuals can accomplish. Here are their stories.

## **Ilene Brill (1975): On with the Music, the Dance and Medical Research!**



Alabama. Since 2003 she has been involved in

Ilene earns her daily bread as a data processor of scientific research. Her current title is Systems Analyst, Department of Epidemiology, School of Public Health, University of

work for an HIV study. She is initially responsible for quality assurance, preparation for data analysis, analysis of data compiled prior to transitioning to a new data entry system, and the establishment of a new study component. She has developed SAS macros to convert questionnaires entered as external data sets to SAS data sets with the onset of the new data entry system. Previously, Ilene assisted with quality assurance design and programming. Since 1981 she has been involved (in her own words) "in a long career as a systems/data analyst/statistical programmer mostly programming in SAS for occupational, environmental, STD/HIV, cancer, nutritional, respiratory and eye epidemiology studies." Ilene works with a team of research scientists. Together they have co-authored an amazingly long list of articles and studies.

In addition to her science career, Ilene is a talented violinist, and the violin played a role in getting her to Girls' High. She began studying violin on a school instrument at J. Hampton Moore School in 2nd grade. Continuing her private lessons, she later played violin in the District 8 orchestra, All City Orchestra and Fels Junior High School Orchestra. Ilene is a member of a GHS family that includes her mother, the late **Lorraine Perloff Brill (June 1946)** and her sister, **Joni Brill Dashoff (1973)**. Ilene made a deal with her mother: "My mother decided I would attend Girls' High for 9th grade. I agreed on the conditions—that she buy me my own violin and bow and I could continue with private lessons. Sure enough my mom agreed and I got a beautiful Roman Teller violin that I still play today. The sound has only improved with time, and I love my violin. In the early 1990s in Birmingham, I started studying with local Alabama Symphony musicians Patricia Treer, Jeffery Flaniken, and later Jim Pipkin. Today I play violin with Red Mountain Chamber Orchestra and the Samford University



Orchestra. In the prior two years, I also played with the Jacksonville State University Orchestra. I also have a couple of holiday church jobs."

In addition to being an inspiring scientist and a gifted violinist, Ilene is a talented dancer. While attending GHS, she started learning Israeli dances at every opportunity, at her synagogue, Jewish youth group, and also as a participant in the Gratz Hebrew High School trip to Israel. Later she attended weekly Israeli dance lessons and practice while a student at the University of Pennsylvania. She became a dancer in the Penn Hillel Israeli Dance troupe, and later performed with a privately run local Israeli dance troupe during her last two years at Penn, the Kalanit Israeli Dance Troupe. After graduating from Penn, she spent a year and four months in Israel doing volunteer work and studying Israeli dancing. She also took dance classes and appeared in performances. Ilene has studied and performed modern dance, flamenco, and Argentine tango. She continues to take adult ballet, modern dance, Flamenco and Argentine Tango classes as time allows.

There's an old saying, "Mother knows best" and this time she did! Girls' High proved to be the right choice for Ilene. In answer to an interview question about her GHS years, Ilene said, "I was extremely well prepared for college. I learned how to study and focus on academics. I loved the challenges of my math and science classes and was most impressed by the excellent teaching of all my science teachers. I enjoyed so much all the books and literature I read for English classes at Girls' High. I also was exposed to so many people of diverse backgrounds that prepared me so well for my later work life. I felt Girls' High prepared me well with the tools I needed to succeed in life." At graduation, Ilene was awarded a Mayor's Scholarship and a Board of Education Scholarship that covered the tuition for her BA in biology at the University of Pennsylvania. She graduated cum laude. She went on to earn an MPH in biometry from the School of Public Health of the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

During the interview, Ilene provided me with a great closing statement that echoes the way that so many alumnae feel about our school when she said: "I loved how everyone at Girls' High (teachers and students) was so supportive and really seemed to like school and learning. It was

extremely motivating. Just a very nurturing environment that prepared me well for my life work."

### **Kimmika Hawes Williams-Witherspoon (1976): A Creative Scholar**



Writing about Kimmika is not an easy task. She has a great number of accomplishments and constantly adds to their growing number. She has been well known as an educator at the university level for many years.

Currently she is Associate

Professor of Urban Theater and Community Engagement in the Theater Department of Temple University. She teaches a number of classes, including Creativity Basics, Theater of Protest, Literature Criticism, and Urban Theater. She noted in an interview in the *Fox Chase Review* that her students are not only in the Theater Department but come from all over the University. She stated, "My classes, first Performance Poetry and then Poetic Ethnography, have been wildly popular with the student body and not limited to just theater students. In any given semester, at least two thirds of the class comes from English/Creative Writing programs, Dance, Tyler School of Art, Biology, Communications, and the like. Alumni, students, and senior scholars have even come back to audit the course when they couldn't fit it in to their schedule before graduating. I have former students replicating what I've taught them in public schools and community programs across the nation—keeping K thru 12 access to the arts is consistently (and strategically) being cut back and curtailed."

Kimmika is a highly skilled writer with many published works in a number of academic areas. She is the author of 11 books, which include works of poetry and books on the history of African American theater. She has an amazing number of

scholarly articles published in the news media and in professional journals to her credit. She has contributed chapters to books and anthologies and other writings as well. She is a playwright with 29 plays already produced. She is a talented performer with appearances in over 20 productions and eight one-woman shows. In addition, as a performance poet, she has performed poetry in at least 93 national and international venues! She is also a skilled director and has staged a number of plays. She said of her life work, "I am an anthropologist, playwright, and performance poet. It seems like I am always working at something...writing, performing, directing."

Kimmika obtained an impressive education to sustain her in her -multi-faceted career. After obtaining a BA in journalism at Howard University, she went to Temple University for graduate work. There she attained a Graduate Certificate in women's studies, an MFA in playwriting, and both an MA and PhD in anthropology.

Kimmika's years at Girls' High set the stage for her success in higher education and later for outstanding professional achievements. Looking back at her GHS years, she wrote, "Some of the best and the brightest young women in our time came through Girls' High and I am proud to be one of their graduates, but at the time, I didn't know any of that. All I knew was that I liked learning new things, I loved books, and I liked hanging out in the library. Long before "geeky was cool," I was a geek and to my surprise there was a school full of smart, ambitious young women like me where I could finally fit in. I tell

people all the time that Girls' High (and my undergraduate institution, Howard University) helped to make me the woman I am today. Girls' High, with its same-sex environment, allowed us the freedom to be *geeks*. We competed against one another for scholastic accomplishments—not for any of the stupid stuff that comes with the teenage years. We weren't vying for anyone's attention but instead we were encouraged to develop into well-rounded, learned young women and, as a result, for the most part, we worked to be the best we could be. We learned *how to learn* at Girls' High and *that* skill that we developed made every other aspect of our lives easier. College, graduate school, and then later on *life* had its challenges, but when you know *how to learn*, the challenges are manageable and *life* is never *too* difficult. I owe a lot to Girls' High and some of my best friends today are the women I went to school with at Girls High."

Kimmika noted that she has a full life with a family of three children, Essence, Tenasha, and Thoreau. She attends New Baptist Church in Newark, Delaware, where her brother, Reverend Dontel Hawes, is Pastor. She summed up her leisure time activities with these words: "I love to garden and grow vegetables every year. Cooking is my therapy and I love to cook and create new recipes. Because I love to cook, it means I also have to work out a lot. It's a good life."

*Editor's Note: I had the pleasure of stage managing the world premiere of Kimmika's play "Survival Strategies: A Tale of Faith, produced by First World Theater in March 2003.*

# Celebrated Sisters

*The Alumnae Association of the Philadelphia High School for Girls believes it is important to take note of dedicated alumnae. These women, whose important contributions have eased the way for, and inspired so many women, not just in their community, but across the nation and across the world. Celebrated Sisters is an initiative designed to complement our Distinguished Daughters by highlighting the continued accomplishments of Girls' High graduates.*

## Willa Mae ChrisAnne Sanders (1970) Champion for Women's Health

Willa Mae chose GHS because she knew it was absolutely the best option for her life. College was her dream and she knew that GHS was her ticket out of poverty to attain that dream. Her first "she-ro" was her beloved mother, the late Viola Sanders, a gifted woman, devout Christian, and an iconic community activist.



At GHS Willa Mae participated in the Future Physicians Club and the Dance Club, and sang in the All Philadelphia Senior High School Choir. She has fond memories of Girls High's lush green campus and the pink marble hallways.

She excelled in Spanish and history, but struggled terribly with math, even in grade school. In 12th grade, she found herself failing algebra. Enter her guidance counselor, Mrs. Vida Carson. Mrs. Carson found a tutor for Willa Mae; she paid for

the tutor and drove Willa Mae to the tutor's house after school. Mrs. Carson would pick her up after the session and drive her to where she would catch the 23 trolley that stopped directly in front of her house at 12th and Poplar. On special occasions, after tutoring sessions there were the cherished visits to Mrs. Carson's beautiful Mt Airy home. There would be delicious snacks and then Mrs. Carson would drive Willa Mae home, often with bags of beautiful clothing that Mrs. Carson had given her. Mrs. Carson had a daughter who was also a student in the same class with Willa Mae, but she still found the time and love to invest in Willa Mae's future. Mrs. Carson was nothing less than her guardian angel and an example that would follow Willa Mae all her life. Vida Carson imbued in her a pursuit of excellence and Willa Mae has proudly carried that legacy of excellence.

After Girls' High, Willa Mae attended the University of Vermont in Burlington for three years and completed her undergraduate education at Temple University with a degree in history and a certificate in Latin American studies. Along the way she let go of "Willa Mae" and adopted her middle name, ChrisAnne professionally. Named for her mother's sister who died right after giving birth, she carried the name in honor; she felt ChrisAnne was more suited to her personality.

After graduating from college, ChrisAnne began her professional career as a special education assistant teacher. She then went on to work as a paralegal and spent eight years with Community Legal Services in Philadelphia. But it was her next job that would change the trajectory of her career

and become her life's mission. She acquired a love of women's health 26 years ago when she took a job as Community Development Specialist in the Division of Maternal Child and Family Health with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. There she became an advocate for mothers and infants, teaching the benefits of early prenatal care, nutrition, dental care, breast feeding, mental health, and post-partum depression awareness. It was in this job that she saw first-hand infant mortality and how women's health prior to pregnancy was the cause of many deaths, of mothers as well as their infants. She became an advocate for maternal child and family health programs and women's self-care.

Since 2014 she has been the Community Engagement Specialist with the Family Practice & Counseling Network. ChrisAnne works at the Health Annex, located at 61st & Woodland Avenue in Southwest Philadelphia.

The Health Annex is a federally qualified health center; no one gets turned away regardless of their inability to pay. FPCN offers services on a sliding scale for uninsured patients. In 2014 when ChrisAnne first went to FPCN, 26% of the patients seen were uninsured. Today that number has been reduced to 9% because of the work done daily by outreach and enrollment specialists to assist uninsured patients with enrolling into health insurance programs.

ChrisAnne has two goals as she ponders her imminent post-retirement life. The first is becoming a Certified Life Coach. She has offered coaching services for several years and recently decided to become officially certified. One of her mentors, the late **Reverend Olivia Stuard Henry (June 1924)**, encouraged ChrisAnne to pursue this dream. Reverend Stuard acted a mentor to ChrisAnne. She inspired her to recognize the mind/body/spirit connection to healing. Utilizing all she has learned, ChrisAnne looks forward to helping others achieve their goals and dreams.

*Editor's note: Reverend Henry's mother, Mary Olivia Covington was an 1898 graduate of the Philadelphia High School for Girls. Reverend Henry was devoted to religious life and had made an intensive study of the religion she loved. For more about the incredible life of Rev. Olivia Stuard Henry please see "A Living Treasure: Reverend Olivia Stuard Henry" in the Alumnae Association News of Spring 2004 and "Reverend Dr. Olivia Stuard Henry: A Second Tribute" in the May 2017 newsletter.*

ChrisAnne's second goal is based on her love of the work she did while at the Philadelphia Department of Public Health. She is in the process of identifying a doula certification program that will allow her to assist women in their birthing

experience. A doula, also known as a birth coach, is a trained professional who provides continuous physical, emotional, and informational support to a mother before, during, and shortly after childbirth to help her achieve the

healthiest, most satisfying experience possible.

The overall job of the doula is to ensure the mother's safety and comfort, often offering massages and breathing techniques. Doulas, unlike midwives, have no clinical role, duties, or decision-making in the labor process. Studies have proven that the support that doulas provide during labor improved outcomes for mothers and infants with shorter labor and delivery, fewer caesarean sections, less medication, and more satisfying birth experiences for mothers.

Her two adult children, Ginger Smith and Lee-Benson Smith, have given ChrisAnne the greatest gifts of all—her eight grandchildren whom she affectionately calls her "SugarBabies" and the one great-grandchild she calls her "Great SugarBaby." In her leisure time, ChrisAnne pursues her other interests—writing, tutoring Spanish, attending theater and concerts, international travel, cooking, and gardening. ChrisAnne is truly living her personal motto "Here to Serve."



# Our Alumnae Association Matters!!

Please continue to send information if you or someone you know is serving or has served in our Armed Forces. Please email your news to [dorothyko8@aol.com](mailto:dorothyko8@aol.com).

Do you have news about a retired faculty member or are you a retired faculty member? Please email your news to [dorothyko8@aol.com](mailto:dorothyko8@aol.com).

We are very interested in receiving gift items for the Archives such as yearbooks, commencement programs, gym contest, concert, drama, or other memorabilia that will enhance and substantiate GHS history. Please email Dorothy G. Kapenstein at [dorothyko8@aol.com](mailto:dorothyko8@aol.com) or call her at 215-331-2681. Please do not send items directly to the school.

**What's New?** Send your news items and pictures to [news@ghsalumnae.org](mailto:news@ghsalumnae.org). GHS classmates and friends love to read the latest news about each other!

Do you want to enjoy the intangible spirit of the days at Girls' High? Would you want to have items that have the Girls' High name or logo imprinted on them? If so, the Alumnae Association can help. Please contact:

[communication@ghsalumnae.org](mailto:communication@ghsalumnae.org) and you will be advised of which items are available for purchase. You can also go to our website to see items that are available to order. To visit our website, click [www.ghsalumnae.org](http://www.ghsalumnae.org).

Please join our Facebook group, the Alumnae Association of the Philadelphia High School for Girls. All social, no business! When you ask to join, please be sure that you have indicated your year and class somewhere on your Facebook page, and your name at graduation if it was different than your current name. While you do not have to be a member of the Alumnae Association to join the group, it is limited to alumnae and faculty.

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We look forward to hearing from you!



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