



ROCK POINT SCHOOL

*Become Your Best Self*

# VIEWPOINTS

SUMMER 2019

One Rock Point Road, Burlington, Vermont 05408

802.863.1104

[www.rockpointschool.org](http://www.rockpointschool.org)

Dear Friends of Rock Point School,

Surrounded by family, relatives, friends, and staff in the library, eleven proud and glowing seniors graduated, ready to take their next step on their life journeys. The class of 2019 was filled with courageous students who found their voices by facing challenges and embracing joys. Our 91st graduation ceremony illustrated the transformations students go through while they are here. As with every RPS Graduation, everyone in the room was invited to speak from their hearts, and people did, lifting the ceiling off the room with funny, poignant, loving stories from recent past & the way past, along with well wishes for positive days ahead.



Transformations do not happen instantaneously. Students, as we all do, grow in micro-progressions, one step at a time. Our caring and committed staff help by consistently engaging with students and repeating with their individual and collective actions and with words: I see you; I hear you; I am with you; I love you; You can do it!

During Graduation I reminded our students that, as much as we can have times that we may feel alone on parts of our journey, we are never alone. I encouraged them to hold onto what they experienced here and to call on the strengths they developed at Rock Point when they feel a need for community and support. Recent alumni visited graduation week. They echoed this sentiment, sharing their positive reflections on what they did to build relationships here, how they see and understand their time at RPS better now, and how they appreciate and call on the power of those experiences to succeed in their lives today.

And, as always, thank you for being a part of this uplifting and hopeful community. Your presence and generosity is essential to our continued success. Please contact me if you have questions, thoughts, and/or would like to visit. We would love to see you!

Sincerely,

C.J. Spirito, Head of School

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# CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ROCK POINT SCHOOL CLASS OF 2019!



**Sasha K.** - In his two years at Rock Point, Sasha wanted to share his love of chess with as many people as possible and make genuine connections with peers and adults. This year he won the Vermont high school chess championship and will compete in the national tournament this summer! Sasha was also a kind and positive member of the community and we are glad he will be staying nearby as he continues his career in chess!

**Josh D.** - Josh came to Rock Point for his senior year and spent his time honing his academic skills, as well as his skills in the kitchen. Josh managed the menu and cooking for the art show and prom, demonstrating his excellent organizational abilities. In the fall, Josh will be attending Flagler College in Florida.

**Ian C.** - Ian joined us for his senior year. Although he was only here for a year, he made a huge impact on the community: organizing school-wide reflections, teaching preschoolers about maple sugaring, and being a leader in the scuba and photography clubs. Next year, Ian is seeking adventure at the University of Jakarta in Indonesia.

**Alex M.** - Alex spent his last year and a half of high school at Rock Point. In his time, he created many works of art, from digital images to hand sewn jackets. He played guitar at nearly every event and stayed active skateboarding, snowboarding, and joining in on any activity. We are proud of Alex for his acceptance to Columbia College of Art and look forward to seeing what he will create next!

**Jesse R.** - Jesse came to Rock Point School as a sophomore and has grown several inches since then! He has participated in many school activities including writing two plays honored at the Vermont Young Playwright Festivals in 2018 and 2019, acting in plays, running the Vermont City Marathon, Scuba Club, and photography club. In the fall, Jesse will attend Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.



**Rebecca P.** - Rebecca joined Rock Point in the spring of 2018 and has contributed so much to our community. Her passion for literature, her cheerful work in the kitchen, her sense of adventure, and her playful spirit will be missed. Rebecca has chosen to attend Lawrence University in the fall.

**Calvin M.** - For the past two years, you could hear Calvin playing music throughout the school. His kindness and steady friendship were a boon to students and staff. Calvin was a leader in the sugaring program as well as in the Burton Chill program. Next year, Calvin will be pursuing a career working with animals and exploring Vet Tech programs.

**Allison Z.** - Allison's artwork decorates many rooms at Rock Point. In her three years at the school, Allison poured her creativity into crafts and art projects from painting to sewing. Allison was always willing to volunteer to help at any school event, and even took on a volunteer internship at Burlington City Arts this year. We will miss her greatly next year!

**Ana S.** - In her two and a half years at Rock Point, Ana explored the arts in stained glass, poetry, and black and white photography. She was dedicated to her academics, earning top academic awards each year and pursuing her academic interests beyond what was presented in class. Next year, Ana will be staying nearby and attending SUNY Plattsburgh!

**Josh S.** - Josh joined us in 2016 as a sophomore and was a leader in the community. He participated in tending the Rock Point garden, open mic nights, maple sugaring, skiing and snowboarding, last year's service-learning trip to Nicaragua, helping with admissions, and the Ultimate Frisbee team to name a few. Josh's academic excellence also earned him a place at SUNY Plattsburgh next year!

**Charlotte J.** (not pictured) - Charlotte spent her last two years of high school at Rock Point, sharing her love of creative writing and poetry with us. She created zines and even inspired a zine-making class! In addition to art and writing, Charlotte had a passion for social justice, which she shared with the school and with her internship at the Peace and Justice center. Next year, Charlotte is planning to attend Lesley University.



Top left: Calvin, Alex and Aaron playing music together during the art show.

Above: Mud Olympics on the last day of classes.

Bottom left: White Water Rafting on the Hudson River.

# ROCK POINT SCHOOL VA A MÉXICO!

Over April vacation, five students and two staff members from Rock Point School traveled to Oaxaca, Mexico. The trip was in coordination with SURCO, a non-profit grassroots organization combining consulting, academic programs and local activism. While they were in Oaxaca, students did a homestay with local families, visited historical and cultural sites, and connected with local artists and educators.

Other highlights of the trip included a trip to the mountains to visit a local environmental restoration project where the community has spent years resurfacing the hillside and regrowing vegetation. They also visited a historical textile mill, which has since been turned into an art exhibit, and they traveled to see the geological wonder of Heirve el Agua, petrified waterfalls, outside Oaxaca. Finally, they visited a small village called Teotitlán where they worked with a Women's cooperative and learned more about rural living in Mexico.

Working with SURCO and visiting Mexico was an illuminating and formative experience for our students and we are excited to see how they have been inspired by the people they met there and the work they witnessed.



Students and staff explored historical sites in Oaxaca, Mexico.

## VERMONT YOUNG PLAYWRIGHTS

On May 3rd, a group of Rock Point School students headed to the Flynn Center for the Performing Arts for a day of theater workshops and performances! Our students have participated in the Vermont Young Playwrights' Project for almost 20 years, and we were honored to be part of the festival again this spring. In the fall, students began working on writing original ten-minute plays inspired by workshops with a professional playwright. They continued to edit their plays before submitting them to the festival for selection this spring.

The Vermont Playwright Project invites students from schools all over the state to participate. Selected plays from each school are performed by professional actors at the festival, in collaboration with Vermont Stage. Sophomore Jeff M. had his play "Air Port" selected for a cold reading, and senior Jesse R.'s play "My Side of the Water Cooler" was selected for a staged reading. Both plays elicited many laughs from the crowd. We are so proud of Jeff and Jesse for creating these excellent plays and sharing them with a wide audience!



Jeff listening to feedback about his play at the VYP Festival.





Yukiko practicing in the pool.

## Scuba Club

Scuba Diving Club began at Rock Point School in 2017. Fritz Senftleber, our resident photographer, wanted to share his love of scuba diving with our students. So, Fritz started with an opportunity for interested students to try scuba diving at a local pool, and then it blossomed into a regular activity.

This year, seven students committed to becoming proficient in scuba diving, which involved classroom work, pool practice, and open water practice. The training includes gear set up, health safety, and working to communicate with a partner. These students have now been through the open water training and are currently finishing up with the final testing. This program took commitment and hard work, if they pass their final test, they will earn a certification that is good for life anywhere in the world.

The goal of Scuba Club has been to get students into diving, comfortable in the water, and certified for the future. In the coming years, we hope to be able to incorporate scuba diving into one of our international service trips with some environmental projects. Waterfront Divers in Burlington was instrumental in training staff and students and helping us develop this program; we are very grateful for their help!



Jesse at mile 24 of the Vermont City Marathon.

## Marathon

Jesse R. has been running since he arrived at Rock Point as a sophomore in 2016. Through Run Vermont Junior Milers, a twelve-week training program designed to prep young people to run a relay in the Vermont City Marathon, Jesse started training for the marathon relay team for the 2017 race. During the program, participants learn about running and related topics such as nutrition, sports psychology, and the musculoskeletal system. Jesse absorbed the information and had such a positive experience, he decided to train for the half marathon in his junior year. He finished the 13.1 miles strong and ready for his next race!

This year, Jesse took on the monumental goal of running the entire marathon. With our head of school, C.J. Spirito, as his advisor, Jesse had a personalized running coach. "C.J. really helped me with my training. He helped me stay motivated and consistent," Jesse said when I asked about his running inspiration. Although the heat of marathon day surprised Jesse and he had to get two I.V.'s after the race, he is ready to run again! Next year at Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, Jesse will be joining the cross country running team. "I definitely want to try to run another marathon. I just don't know which one!"

## *Senior Initiative from the Class of 2019*

Each year the graduating class picks a meaningful project they want to leave as their legacy at Rock Point School. These projects have included raising funds for a porch swing (the first Senior Initiative), building a hoop house for the garden, and updating the lighting system for our drama productions.

This year's senior class decided they wanted to focus on the rec room. Their plans include updating the pool table and ping-pong table, as well as invigorating the space with new plants and artwork. In their own words, "This is important to us because we have so many fun memories here—playing games and music, laughing, and relaxing after classes. We want to leave a lasting legacy for future students to enjoy this space."

**We are 50% towards our fundraising goal, thanks to these generous donors:**

Rhea Bensman and Jeffrey Monin  
Larry W. Chavis Sr.  
Marley and Robert Skiff  
Ethel R. Lee  
Janet and Tim Jones  
Dawn and Ben Tonneau  
Emily Bruell and Chris Ruigomez

Dorothy Campbell  
Mario and Sheila Jimenez  
Tadaatsu and Kayoko Shimamura  
Kathryn Waugh  
Nicole Kosersky  
Thomas Morley

To make a donation to the 2019 senior initiative, visit [www.rockpointschool.org/giving/](http://www.rockpointschool.org/giving/) or call the school at 802-863-1104.



Petrified waterfalls in Mexico, Prom, and the pyramids of Monte Alban, Oaxaca, Mexico.

THE MISSION OF ROCK POINT SCHOOL is to provide a small, supportive educational community for teenage girls and boys, where they can become successful students and learn skills for living in a community with peers and adults. The school is committed to providing the educational, cultural, spiritual, and recreational opportunities necessary to accomplish these goals.





## *Scholarship Fund Announcement and Donors*

From Remarks made by David McKay, Former Rock Point School Board President, at Graduation:

Once in every generation, an institution is the beneficiary of the time and talents of those people who make a special impact. This school you and I have been a part of has been fortunate enough to enjoy the gifts of two such individuals who have truly devoted themselves to the mission and vision of Rock Point School.

Bishop Tom and Ann Ely have spent the last 18 years serving Rock Point School, quietly behind the scenes and out in front as our biggest advocates. Ann came first to “just help out” and spent the next seventeen years reaching out to supporters, managing the school’s data, and adding her voice to the chorus of the students’ cheerleaders. The Bishop, too, dove right into the life of the school: leading monthly discussions with students to address critical topics to foster personal growth. He did this in addition to his duties as a Trustee of the School.



David McKay, Ann Ely, and Bishop Tom Ely at graduation.

As they come to the end of their time on the property, we thought it fitting to take a moment to reflect and recognize their influence on the vibrancy of this community we know as Rock Point School, and so we created The Right Reverend Thomas Clark and Mrs. Ann Wiggins Ely Endowed Fund to insure the fullest learning experience for students in need. May this fund be a permanent reminder to its beneficiaries and all alike how we can make a difference in the lives of many with great and small acts of kindness.

If you would like to contribute to this fund, visit [www.rockpointschool.org/giving/](http://www.rockpointschool.org/giving/)  
or call the school at 802-863-1104.

### **The following generous donors have contributed to this scholarship fund:**

The Reverend Gordon Bardos  
Laurel and Charles Bongiorno  
Barbara and Kenneth Brown  
Kara and Gus Buchanan  
Kathy Butts and C.J. Spirito  
Karin and Gerald S. Davis  
Estelle Deane  
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Elisabeth Wolf



## ROCK POINT SCHOOL

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[www.rockpointschool.org](http://www.rockpointschool.org)

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# VIEWPOINTS



ROCK POINT SCHOOL is a co-educational boarding and day high school located on 125 acres of wooded lakefront property in Burlington, Vermont. Rock Point is an alternative high school that focuses on educating the whole person. In our small classes and cohesive community, students form close relationships with teachers and peers and often grow in ways they never would have thought possible. Whether in the classroom, on the playing field, or out in the wider community, our mission is to help young people become their best selves.