SPIRIT The Leelanau School Magazine



Making Learning and Community Visible

At Leelanau, we believe that every student should be seen, heard, and known. Feeling valued is essential for anyone to feel worthy of their community and inspired to contribute to the world. Those left out in the cold are not likely to fetch the firewood. No light belongs under a basket.

Those of us on campus are inspired daily by the effort, compassion, and resilience of our students and staff. We begin each morning with

shoutouts and celebrations of individual accomplishments, big and small. Throughout our days, we accept and give help to each other. We acknowledge that we are all working on something - not necessarily the same things - but we share a supportive dedication to each other's journey that defines our community. I wish every person on the planet could experience and contribute to the spirit of belonging our students and staff create at Leelanau.

As a school, we have an obligation to enrich our learners by integrating them into the larger communities in which we live. Likewise, we owe it to other communities to invite them into the magic of Leelanau. As master teacher Joe Blondia is accustomed to reminding us, "The purpose of high school isn't to get good at high school. The goal is to get good at learning for the rest of your life." At Leelanau, we are becoming skilled and enthused about making contributions, not just in our school work but as problem solvers and community members. Success and happiness in adulthood depend on our ability to value and cooperate with people of all ages, to witness the passions and talents of those around us, and to feel supported by those beyond our immediate circle.

Schools need to be places where the world is invited IN, not kept away. Doing so expands the imagination of the young and, in return, exposes local communities to the brilliance of our emerging young adults—particularly the curious, compassionate, humorous, bright, and good-looking students of The Leelanau School.

Our strategic plan prioritizes community outreach as a means of helping us achieve our mission of "igniting a passion for learning...in a culture of acceptance." Teachers exist wherever there is visible passion put on display. Learners exist wherever there is intrigue. Bringing such opportunities together is more potent than any textbook. We can make that happen here.

Come learn about Leelanau, and let us learn about you. Be our teacher, and we will be yours. In doing so, more people from all walks of life will be seen, heard, and known. And more will be inspired to make a difference in the world.

In the Spirit of Community,

Rob Hansen, Head of School rhansen@leelanau.org



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Check us out online @ WWW.LEELANAU.ORG

Journeys Well Traveled

Leelanau launched nine seniors into the world on June 1, along with faculty members Bruce and Laura Hood, after 31 years of teaching brilliance.

Our seniors are off to study everything from visual art to aeronautics and marine biology to music education, following passions they discovered while at Leelanau. They love to cook, sing, metalsmith, write, travel, and play tennis. This class made a promise to each other during their first days on South Manitou Island to care for and mentor each other and Leelanau's underclassmen, and they fulfilled that pledge with kindness and flair! We will be forever grateful for their leadership, humor, and grace. They have set the bar high for their peers!

For the Hoods, their new journey to retirement kicked off with a 2,696-mile pedal along the Great Divide Mountain Bike Route—Banff to Mexico. They continue to set an example for us all!





"I quickly learned that learning at Leelanau was not like learning at my old school. It was exciting, it was interesting, it was challenging, but more than anything, it felt meaningful. This discovery changed the way I knew myself completely. I had come to know myself as a girl who was "bad" at school, a girl who HATED school. As a child, I had loved learning, but as I grew older I thought I lost that passion. I rediscovered it through experiential learning like Mr. Blondia taking my freshman class out on a frozen lake to observe fish, creating a taco truck for charity in Spanish class with Señora Ellsworth, and skiing up to 7 hours a day with the Hoods. All of these experiences had in common: passionate, inspiring teachers, fascinating class subjects, and most of all, the goal to teach people how to learn and think, not how to memorize and worry. "

- Sophie Schwartz | Valedictorian | Class of 2024

Our New Strategic Plan and Priorities:

The Leelanau School recently underwent an 18-month 360-degree self-study process, which resulted in our seven-year strategic plan update. This overview of our plan outlines goals and strategies across five key focus areas.



To review The Leelanau School's comprehensive strategic plan, please visit: leelanau.org/ strategic-plan

THE LEELANAU SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT:

The Leelanau School ignites a passion for learning in a boarding school environment where students thrive by engaging academically and celebrating everyone's unique learning styles in a culture of acceptance, preparing for successful and meaningful lives in higher education, careers, citizenship, and service.

Leelanau's 2023-2030 Strategic Plan

facilitates an enterprise-wide focus on goals that will govern our continuous improvement plans determined through our self-study. It accounts for the necessary resources to support improvements and establishes administrative accountability to the Board of Trustees. Our Strategic Plan is, therefore, the principal guiding document governing our decision-making over the next 7-year period.

Reaffirmation & Reaccredidation

The Leelanau School has been a long-time member of the Independent Schools of the Central States (ISACS). ISACS is a collection of hundreds of independent schools cooperating on best practice standards. Each ISACS member school follows a sevenyear cycle, to identify priority improvements, institutional goals, systems, and resources needed to be strategically aligned. Strategic planning is a natural outcome of the self-study and accreditation process.



Comments from the ISACS visiting team:

"TLS is a wonderful place that has taken the self-study process very seriously and produced from it a thoughtful strategic plan for the future."

"The commitment of the teaching staff and their skill in managing an active and at times free-form curriculum that encourages significant creativity, movement, and collaboration is a very special aspect of the school."

Overall, The ISACS reaccreditation team applauded Leelanau's community, creativity, and compassionate approach to education during their Fall 2023 visit. Major commendations included:

- Our culture of acceptance and a clear commitment to understanding, valuing, and supporting the whole person
- A committed faculty and staff who show total dedication to the students and wear their many hats with energy and enthusiasm
- Leelanau's creative use of natural and fiscal resources to strengthen the student experience and provide unique educational opportunities.

Areas targeted for recommended study and growth include:

- Clearly identifying the student population it exists to serve, focusing attention and investment in refining the program to ensure the success of that population
- Reevaluate the school's procedures related to student accountability and freedom of movement
- Analyze the student financial aid program to determine if more flexibility could help increase enrollment toward the 50-student goal noted in the strategic plan.

"Many schools strive for a family atmosphere, and with its size and intentionality, TLS has captured that."

"[Leelanau is] very aware of the challenges and is excited by the opportunities that stretch out before them."

"TLS is a beautiful place for a student who has not been successfully engaged by other school settings to grow and thrive."



Exploring Together

"What you are doing is exploring. You are undertaking the first experience, not of the place, but of yourself in that place... nobody can discover the world for anybody else. It is only after we have discovered it for ourselves that it becomes a common ground and a common bond, and we cease to be alone." — Wendell Berry, The Unforeseen Wilderness

Leelanau's popular Fall Exploratory programs and our new Winter Exploratory experience are not the only times we venture off the beaten path to learn something about our region, relationships, and ourselves. We often speak about the learning that happens after class - beyond the curriculum - that allows our students to become better citizens of our community and world. Trips to the beach, a museum or farm, the dunes, and time spent in one of the "Big Daddy" vans provide opportunities for playful and profound lessons and conversations. Getting good at adulthood fuels purpose in every member of our Leelanau community, freshperson to senior faculty alike! On these adventures, we practice inclusivity, mindfulness about our surroundings, attention to each others' emotional states, encouragement when the task is difficult, intervention when a friend needs help, or a listening ear when companionship is all that is required.

Central to these excursions are Leelanau's underlying core values of awareness, courage, resilience, integrity, leadership, stewardship, and interconnectedness. They guide us to a better understanding of ourselves and each other in new and familiar circumstances. We find our common bonds. We cease to be alone. "Leelanau has provided me with a safe place to take risks, grow independently, and be loved and supported all the way." -Anna Largent, 2-year senior

Faculty at The Leelanau School have curriculum flexibility that is enviable to most teachers. Longer class periods (4 classes each day, rotated odd and even) enable teachers to pile kids in the car to visit the Dunes, local artists, wildlife areas, tech labs, or wade through the Crystal River. Weekends are opportunities for extended expeditions for recreation and exploration.

The senior's Voyageur trip in September offers lessons in endurance and teamwork for students and faculty. Last fall, forty members of the community visited Korson's Lakeview Farm in Lake Leelanau, gleaning an impressive 1,708 lbs of apples for the Food Rescue of Northwest Michigan before settling in to make cider, apple butter, and pies for Leelanau's Thanksgiving Feast.

During his farewell speech, retiring faculty member Bruce Hood reminded us to cherish the moments in our lives, not only the milestones. Leelanau explorations always provide these moments and memories for our community.







Olive Oil, Biscuits, and Bonny Winter Term 2024

Winter Term never disappoints, and this year's offerings were a tasty mix of fresh ideas and family favorites. Elizabeth Blondia's new Ted Lasso course delivered daily reminders of the power of positivity and delicious biscuits bedecked in pretty pink boxes. Señora Ellsworth and Señor Piña spent several weeks prepping students for an incredible 10-day journey to Málaga, Spain, complete with language and cultural immersion, home visits, sightseeing, paella lessons, and taste testing at one of the region's century-old olive oil mills.

Snow sports continued to snowball in popularity as a chance to build and polish skills while celebrating Northern Michigan's very real winter. Thankfully, better snow supported better skiing and snowboarding this year at Crystal Mountain.

Storytelling and Songwriting classes inspired profoundly personal and outrageously playful ideas from Leelanau students, including a penny-whistle-infused tribute to "Anne Bonny, Pirate Girl."

Food is Love baked and pickled their way into our hearts. Our Watercolor class featured Leelanau winter landscapes and watercolor palettes created by Leelanau alumnus Daniel Smith '64 and gifted by alumni via the Leelanau faculty wishlist.

Several "senior" faculty members were delighted to see students sporting big hair and listening to the fantabulous music of the era in the "Retro 80s & 90s class." At our Winter Term gathering, everyone benefitted from an important and upbeat presentation on the history of LGBTQ representation in film and TV.

Lastly, we admired the intention and attention needed from our Advanced Math Topics and Winter Lights metalsmithing students, who were mastering new skills and tools. Their in-depth focus on new materials perfectly illustrates the joys and demands of Leelanau's Winter Term experience.







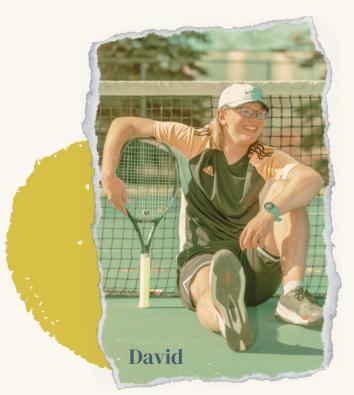


Growing Up Leelanau

We asked the Class of 2024 to reflect on their Leelanau School journey. These are a few of their wise words!

"After coming to Leelanau, I have felt more like myself in terms of having freedom in how I choose to work and the topics I can research or learn about. I feel like Leelanau has helped me step out of my comfort zone by exploring new ideas, new places, and just having new experiences. Leelanau has also helped me understand what a tennis student-athlete looks like in terms of juggling practice, having a vigorous work ethic, and competing."

- David Best, 3-year senior



"The Leelanau School is very accepting. It makes me feel safe and comfortable in a school environment, which is really uncommon." - TJ Foley, 1-year senior





"I have seen Leelanau be exactly what a found family should look like. We all have people in our corner, and even when we stray, there will always be someone waiting for you to find yourself again. I hope it will always feel like home here. My mom, dad, sister, and I have all made the sacrifice of letting each other go enough for me to make this community my family. It has been a valuable lesson for us to learn that adding to your family means more love and connection, not less."

- Sara House, Salutatorian, 4-year senior

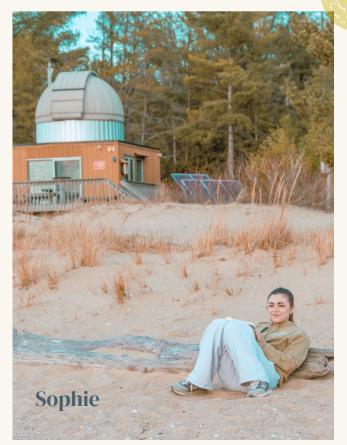
"Leelanau has given me a place to discover who I am and what I am interested in by reigniting my love of learning. It helps me discover who I am while also encouraging me to be the best version of myself and be a positive community member.

Before Leelanau, I had no idea who I was or what I was interested in. I had no opportunity to explore in my old school since classes revolved around completing busy work to pass the class. Only when I came to Leelanau I discovered that I loved photography, sciences, and history through being allowed to engage with subjects to learn, not just to complete the class. Leelanau showed me who I am and what I am passionate about while encouraging me to be a better person. I admired older students and adults who were full of integrity, kindness and motivation and always looking for the best in others.

Sophie Schwartz, Valedictorian
3.69-year senior

"Leelanau has prepared me to leave and be ready to go to a new place safely. They've made it easy to move into a dorm and prepare for classes. Essentially, we've already done all that, things like orientation and meeting new people, so it'll be easier for me once I go to college in the fall. The whole process here at Leelanau makes my next step less intimidating. All in all, Leelanau has better prepared me for what's to come."

Nathaniel



Getting Fiscally Fit Leelanau Annual Report

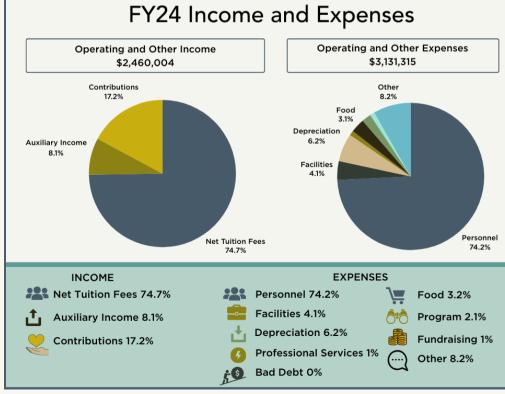


Like many families, the Leelanau School community spent much of the year tightening our belts and juggling the rising cost of living in our active household of growing teenagers. Food and Insurance expenses grew throughout the year, while educational priorities and programs remained of foremost importance. A replacement of the Pinebrook House roof and extensive repairs to a boiler took a necessary bite out of the budget.

Charitable gifts allowed Leelanau to complete and dedicate the Charles E. Scripps Jr. Creativity Center, including the laser engraver. Gifts-in-kind from family and friends provided siding and windows, an epoxy floor, landscaping, and a fully equipped woodworking shop for student use.

Tuition revenue was down slightly, based on a large 2023 graduating class and increased requests for financial aid. Leelanau continues to seek an ideal of 45-50 students to balance our community and budgets. Your help is an invaluable tool in spreading the word about The Leelanau School. This past Spring's launch of the Alumni Key Scholarship program, designating \$5,000* a year in scholarship support to applicants referred by Leelanau alumni, parents, and former faculty and staff, prompted lots of interest and at least five new enrolled students for 2024-25.

Your meaningful word-of-mouth engagement and endorsement makes all the difference in our recruitment and fundraising efforts!



*Additional aid may be available based on financial need.

Why I Give

"When I contribute to Leelanau it is my return tribute of respect. gratitude, and admiration. The best of you helped develop the best in me. Your selfless concern for my well-being, the enrichment of my future (now my present), and the extended family you have given me are more than I could ever repay. Your mission is worthy of preservation. You were there for my future, who am I to not be there for yours?"

— JP Larkin '87 Leelanau Board of Trustees



Time and Treasure

All of Leelanau's strategic priorities focus on balancing student experience and faculty development with fiscal and community sustainability. Outreach, understanding, and support from our extended Leelanau family and new partnerships within our regional communities are ways to move forward to financial security and longevity.

We've done the work to create a creative, compassionate, and comprehensive school program that is "right for everybody and critical for some." We need your help to grow the student body, provide financial support for deserving students, and preserve and protect this magnificent campus. Here are a few ways you can help - today!

All the Ways to Give

Why I Give

"I give because I believe in the Leelanau School, what it stands for, and how it forever changes the lives of the students that pass through its portals. I want that to continue. I give because the Student Center still smells the same way it did when I was a student 40 years ago—like pancakes, syrup, cedar, and love. I want that to continue, too." - Gretchen Knoblock '82

Leelanau School Board of Trustees



- Make a one-time or recurring gift online at leelanau.org/welcome
- To create a Named Scholarship or refer a student for the Alumni Key Scholarship, visit leelanau.org/giving
- Watch for our Faculty Wishlist and Giving Tuesday later this fall.
- Contact Kate Olson, Dir. of Alumni and Development, at 231.334.5841 or kolson@leelanau.org

Board of Trustees Updates

A complete list of Board Members can be found at leelanau.org/discover

LISA A. PAPPAS, '82 - B.A. | Michigan State University

Lisa joins the Leelanau Board of Trustees with nearly 40 years of experience in marketing communications, fundraising, and alumni relations. She is the Director of Communications and Creative Strategy for the Office of Advancement at the Stephen M. Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan. Lisa and her husband, Michael Weiss, enjoy living in their Mid-Century Modern home on the outskirts of Ann Arbor, MI (Scio Township). The two enjoy gardening, playing acoustic music, spending time on their property in Burdickville, and doting on their three cats. Lisa also enjoys researching local history (including publishing her works with Michigan History Magazine) and serving on the Scio Land Preservation Commission.

BRUCE HOOD - M.S. | Central Michigan University

Bruce Hood joined The Leelanau in 1992, sharing his wisdom and versatility for thirtyone years before retiring this past spring. Among his many duties, Bruce taught AP Chem, Biology, Earth Sciences, Ecology, Ornithology, Anatomy & Physiology, skiing, and cooking, and was chair of the science department. He started the Pottery program in 2010, adhering to the Bernard Leach/Shoji Hamada tradition. During summers, Bruce has worked with Leelanau colleagues Rob Karner and Joe Blondia for the Glen Lake Association's swimmer's itch mitigation program. Bruce is a dedicated skier, mountain biker, and hunter, and together, Bruce and Laura (another faculty legend) tend a big garden with their Telford Farm community, providing most of the food for their dining table. Bruce and Laura are the proud parents of children lan and Jessie. Bruce is transitioning from faculty liaison to full-time trustee.

ELIZABETH BLONDIA - M.Ed. | DePaul University

Elizabeth began her 27th year at The Leelanau School this fall. She is the chair of the Humanities Department, advises the Senior Seminar, teaches the Food is Love and Ted Lasso Winter Term courses, and leads 8th hour's ever-popular Volunteer-Yoga-Hiking class. She has her Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from Valparaiso University and her Master's Degree in Education from DePaul University. Elizabeth is married to Joe Blondia (science teacher/chair) and has two college-age children, Kate and Jamie. She enjoys reading, cooking, hiking, traveling, and playing viola. Elizabeth will serve as a non-voting faculty liaison on the Board.







Our Gratitude Journal

The Leelanau School is honored to recognize these alumni, parents, friends, foundations, and organizations that contributed to our programs, capital, and scholarship funds or made gifts in kind between July 1, 2023, and June 30, 2024. We are deeply grateful for our community of supporters.

Leadership Gifts of \$10,000 and above

Anonymous

Joan Conway Family Fund Drs. Mary Beth Hardwicke and Robert Provenzano Kalamazoo Community Foundation Andy* and Julie Maner Family Giving Fund Skip* and Hilary Maner Dellora A. & Lester J. Norris Foundation John and Janet Norris Lee and Alexandra Perez Don and Judy Dow Towsley Rumelhart* Frederic* and Wanda Sherriff Jane* and John Todd III The Harry A. & Margaret D. Towsley Foundation

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"I awoke this morning with devout thanksgiving for my friends, the old and the new." — Ralph Waldo Emerson

Bob and Trish Juranitch **Eileen Kamerick and Victor Heckler** Rob and Barb Karner The Kemper Foundation[^] Arya* and Mary Jane Khoshnegah Dan and CeCe Kim Gretchen Knoblock* Richard and Kay Kobetz **Rick Lane** Jim and Melanie LaPerriere Mark and Brie Largent JP* and Karina Larkin+ Leelanau Coffee Roasting Co. Dallas Lippincott*+ Chris and Amie Lipscomb+ Richard* and Jeanann Lungerhausen **Travis and Jennifer Madsen** Dr. Fred Malmstrom* and Susan Gates Danita Lively and Douglas Martin Biff* and Josie Mautz Donna Rehm-McCabe and Michael J. McCabe Sr. James and Judith McCabe Kevin* and Denise McCarthy James McIntyre* Alison E. McLeskey* Laura and Steve Melvin Cal Meyers+ Mimi* and Gerard Michaud Michigan Department of Education Peggy and Geno Miller Sue* and Richard Miller* Bryant and Wendy Mitchell Jane Monto Daniel and Anne Mosqueda+ Mary Myers Janet Nawrocki John and Jean Neely Network for Good Northwoods Retail, LLC Hope O'Quinn Hana* '69+ Marv Beth Oddv* **R.E.** Olds Foundation Jim* and Roberta Olson Kate and Rocky Olson Constance Olson Julie Hitchens Paron* and Dr. Nicholas Paron Cris Piña-Gautier+ Andy Porter and Annie Cruz-Porter David Quade* '61 Bill and Paula Riccobono

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Creativity Centered ६ Leadership Lit

As The Leelanau School begins planning for our Centennial Anniversary, we look to the future for creative financial solutions, educational opportunities, and partnerships. Gratefully, we have alumni, past and current parents, and community partners that are dreaming along with us - often leading the way!

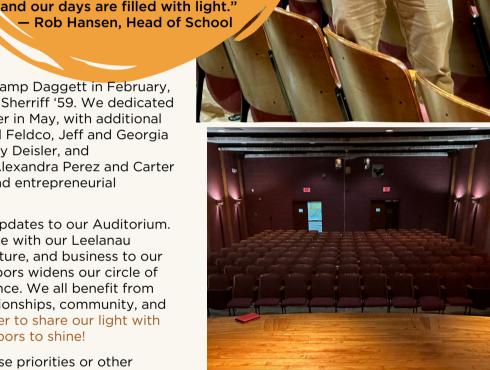
We were delighted to participate in a

second Winter Exploratory program at Camp Daggett in February, provided through the generosity of Fred Sherriff '59. We dedicated the Charles E. Scripps Jr. Creativity Center in May, with additional support from Doug and Dianne Cook and Feldco, Jeff and Georgia Geitzen and Northwoods Hardware, Ginny Deisler, and woodworking equipment from Lee and Alexandra Perez and Carter Products. Hands-on academic, artistic, and entrepreneurial opportunities abound.

Leelanau continues to seek support for updates to our Auditorium. Renovating and sharing this historic space with our Leelanau County neighbors will bring more art, culture, and business to our neighbors. Likewise, engaging our neighbors widens our circle of friends and enriches our student experience. We all benefit from expanded opportunities, audiences, relationships, community, and school pride. The Leelanau School is eager to share our light with others and provide a stage for our neighbors to shine!

We welcome your support for any of these priorities or other projects that speak to your own Leelanau experience!

Contact us at development@leelanau.org or 231.334.5841.





"I am blessed to spend my days at The Leelanau School, where I

witness embers of curiosity ignite into a blaze. Our students learn to be vulnerable and thus become courageous. The process of learning does not stop at the acquisition of knowledge but in

sharing that new wisdom for the service

and inspiration of others. Without the

courage to put it on display and the

generosity to give it to others, talent and

knowledge have little value. At Leelanau,

the light of learning is witnessed in

performance, debate, writing, invention,

and relationships. Students let it shine.

What You Told Us Alumni Reunion Survey Feedback

A heartfelt "Thank you" to everyone who participated in this year's Alumni Reunion Survey! Though participation was modest not unlike recent Reunions - several patterns emerged from the responses. Here are a few of the themes and requests we saw.

Please consider updating your contact information and that of your friends so we can keep you updated on off-campus events, Reunions, and news from Leelanau!

leelanau.org/update



Reconnecting with Mentors

Faculty and mentors are a big draw for Reunion attendees. Sharing time or a meal with a former teacher holds a great deal of appeal. Unfortunately, over the decades, past and retired faculty addresses were not tracked and updated in Leelanau's databases with the same attention as alumni information. We are looking to change this! Holly Lang '87 helped the alumni office research names and employment years through our library of yearbooks, and now we need your help in updating addresses and emails. If you are in touch with a teacher, house parent, staffer, etc, please drop their info to us at <u>alumni@leelanau.org</u>. We'd love to know what they are up to and include them in Reunion plans!

What life lessons did Leelanau teach you? "I can change for the better and I am worthy of being around people who care about me. Rebellion is sometimes warranted, but it doesn't make for a good place to live." – Catherine Graham, '88 Atlanta, GA

Friends and Classmates

Unsurprisingly, "hanging out with friends" and classmates was the number one reason Leelanau alumni chose to attend reunions. It is also the primary reason they don't return. "None of my friends can make it this year" was a common refrain. We hope that alternating years will help build awareness and interest, and we are counting on YOU to stay in touch and help rally your friends through updated addresses, emails, and social media!





Traditional Reunion Weekend in late June

Leelanau's traditional third weekend of June continues to be the favorite time to gather. with late August a close second. Affordable housing on campus was considered a plus but not a deal breaker for many of you.

Meals, campfires, and canoe trips remain popular choices during the reunion. Short classes led by current and past faculty were of interest to almost everyone and something Leelanau would love to incorporate into Reunions!

Adventuring

Voyageur canoe trips, hiking the dunes, and backpacking the Manitou Islands scored big as possible additions to our Reunion weekends. (Including your families in Reunion activities...not so much.)

A few of you expressed your desire to bring your families on your own time, with the ability to be on campus and enjoy Leelanau County at your leisure.



The Reunion Verdict

Our lesson-don't mess with what works! The recipe is right, the only missing ingredient is you!

Leelanau is pleased to announce the following Reunion Weekend dates through 2030.



O June 20-22, 2025 📀 June 18-20, 2027 o June 22-24, 2029 The Leelanau School

Centennial Celebration! "Leelanau, as it is for many of us, was the right place at the right time for me, and set me up well for what life threw my way later." Rusty Gildner, '82 Woodinville, WA

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Reflections on 95 Years: What we're still learning about ourselves after all these years

by Kate Olson, Director of Alumni and Development

I had brunch with Leelanau's 2024 salutatorian, Sara House, in late summer, just a few weeks before she headed off to Warren Wilson College in North Carolina. For those unfamiliar with Warren Wilson, it is a community dedicated to "curiously insightful, experienced, and capable individuals" interested in academics, work, and service. What a great choice for a Leelanau graduate, particularly Sara.

Sara and I arrived at Leelanau at the same time in 2020 - when the pandemic was rearranging our lives. Like the nation, we were operating without a map. Everyone was anxious, standing six feet apart and working hard to build connection and community with one another. Head of School, Rob Hansen, asked for patience and grace as we found our way forward.

Looking back, I am astounded by the growth and grace of Sara and her classmates. They were our teachers in many ways, demonstrating powers of observation, perspective, and resilience not often demanded of kids their age.

It is fair to say I learned more from Sara over these past four years than from any other. Little nuggets of wisdom regularly tumbled from her brain. Last fall, for instance, when my new puppy Fern was still adjusting to the Leelanau community, she barked ungraciously at Sara. After my many apologies, Sara brushed it away with a thoughtful, "Don't worry. We're all working on goodness. I can't imagine puppies have it all figured out."

During our brunch along the Crystal River, Sara mentioned natural concerns regarding her transition to college, a few worries about classmates who will miss the structure and support they've experienced on campus, and her appreciation for Leelanau's authoritative vs. authoritarian parenting style. "Look it up," she said to my quizzical glance. "It's a thing."

During her Lawn and Tree address, I was especially moved when Sara reflected on the many demands of being away from home for four years. "My mom, dad, sister, and I have all made the sacrifice of letting each other go enough for me to make this community my family. It has been a valuable lesson for us to learn that adding to your family means more love and connection, not less."

Sara continued, "Boarding at Leelanau is a lot of everything all at once, a concentrated version of life, as I call it. The people here have made sure that my life is never boring. Every moment since the day I found my soul here, I have come to learn new senses of pride as well as perspective life lessons. This place is experiential learning at its finest, which is a really fancy way to say we are a mistake-friendly space. The mistakes I have witnessed took courage to be shared, and I have taken great notice of the growth that comes from acknowledging them."





Sara, her classmates, and you did the hard work Leelanau asked of you. In addition to navigating schoolwork, relationships, and selfdiscovery, you have reflected on learning, goodness, sacrifice, family, resilience, pride, connection, stewardship, experience, leadership, growth, and interconnectedness. You worked within the boundaries of the Leelanau community to discover independence and self. As Sara reminded us, "Leelanau is what you make it - it's just a bunch of buildings and a river without your magic."

Self-Discovery







"Leelanau is what you make it —it's just a bunch of buildings and a river without your magic." - Sara House, '24

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