

# Salem Academy

MAGAZINE

Fall 2017



FULL  
S.T.E.A.M.  
AHEAD





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# Salem Academy MAGAZINE

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**On the cover:** Two members of the Academy's award-winning robotics team, Sisters of the Motherboard, begin the process of designing and building a new robot for the team's upcoming competitions.

Photography by Patrick Schneider







## THE YEAR THAT I RETIRED, I SPENT A LOT OF TIME REFLECTING ON MY YEARS AT SALEM.

We talk about providing our students with the tools for a lifetime of learning and that is certainly what I received from Salem—a lifelong education of dealing with people, of new experiences, of challenges, and of the joys of communal living. The most important lesson of all was the development of a deep and abiding love for this institution, one that we all share. If you are reading this magazine, then I know that you love Salem as much as I do.

Since I returned last spring to take over as Interim Head of School, it has given me new opportunities to reflect on what

Salem is. I am seeing her from a different perspective and that just deepens the loyalty that I have for this institution, which has been such an important part of my life and I'm sure of yours. However, this article is not about me. It is about Salem, an institution that has stood proud for over 245 years. We have weathered wars and epidemics, depressions, recessions, all

manner of economic ebb and flow, and a myriad of changes in fashion trends. We have changed the things that are taught here from embroidery and penmanship through Latin and literature to calculus, robotics, and Chinese. Salem has been successful because she has been able to change with the times to keep the curriculum vibrant and relevant, without ever losing sight of the basic principles of honor, integrity, respect, and responsibility.

Salem Academy has provided an education for thousands of young women through the years. Among them have been little girls who started their formal education in 1772; Sarah Childress Polk, the first First Lady to receive formal education, and it was here at Salem Academy; and Sally Ridge, the daughter of a Cherokee chief. Some of these young women stayed at Salem for only a short time, such as Sarah Tilghman Hughes, who eventually became a federal district court judge in Texas and swore in Lyndon Johnson as President of the United States. Many stayed for all four

years of their high school education. Regardless of whether their time at the Academy was long or short, they took away from Salem the ability to think critically, to work hard, and to accomplish goals.

It is now your turn to reflect on your time at Salem. Think about all that she has given to you: the friends that you have made and kept through the years, the inspiration from a teacher that took you in a direction that you might not have otherwise gone, information that you discovered in studying that opened new worlds to you. Each of you has something that you have taken away from Salem and that is worthy of reflection and thought. Salem also learned from you and you made your mark here. You may have sung in the Glee Club, made hockey goals, started the school newspaper, formed a softball team, acted on our stage, given a superb and interesting chapel talk, befriended an underclassman, and you can continue this list. Each of you made a lasting contribution to the Academy and you also left an indelible mark on the fabric of the school, for which we thank you.

Which brings me to what is the most important aspect of Salem and that is the people. The many students who have walked these halls, sat in classrooms, played on the fields, performed on the stages, and peopled the lounges. The many teachers who have given selflessly of their time and energies to educate and motivate students to be the best that they can be. The staff who provide meals, clean up our messes, and make our grounds beautiful. We love our quirky old building with its loud plumbing, many staircases, squeaky auditorium seats, and uneven brick sidewalks. However, that is not really Salem Academy. The people are Salem—those who have gone before, those who are here now, and those who are to come.

Salem Academy is now at another crossroads, with a change of leadership in the near future. We are approaching our 250th year in continuous operation, and we continue to strive for Salem to be the robust and vigorous school that has seen us through the ages. It will take each of us to love her, to support her, and to help her as she continues to “do great things” in this world.

**Mary Lorick Thompson**

Interim Head of School





# I love the headline on the cover of this edition of *Salem Academy Magazine*: Full STEAM Ahead.

To me, those words, coupled with the photograph of two members of the Academy's award-winning robotics team, capture the exciting momentum the Academy is experiencing in science, technology, engineering, the arts, and mathematics—also known as STEAM.

As you will see in the following pages, the story of how the Academy is using an innovative hands-on approach to teaching these disciplines is a fascinating one.

At the center of the story is the dramatic rise of the robotics team. I know you will enjoy reading about it.

Buoyed by the popularity of robotics among the Academy's students and their parents, the team and their faculty advisors, Kris Sorrells and Kara Weimer, decided to offer STEAM camps during the summers of 2016 and 2017 for elementary and middle school-age girls, respectively. Eighteen students attended the first camp. Last summer, the number grew to nearly fifty.

The popularity of robotics is having a significant impact on the curriculum. The Academy now offers one-semester courses in an introduction to robotics and JAVA programming.

Salem Academy's STEAM camps are also helping to attract more and more bright and inquisitive students to the school.

In short, the Academy's hands-on approach to teaching STEAM is doing precisely what we all hoped it would do: it is getting more girls interested in STEAM-related subjects, it is keeping them fully engaged in those subjects, and it is giving them the skills they will need to go on to exciting and fulfilling careers in STEAM-related fields.



We in the Salem community cannot wait to see what Sharon Spencer, chair of the Science Department; Kris Sorrells, chair of the Mathematics Department; Kara Weimer, math teacher; and the Academy's brilliant students do next.

Full STEAM ahead, indeed!

**D. E. Lorraine Sterritt**  
President







# FULL S.T.E.A.M. AHEAD

HOW DO WE GET MORE BRIGHT YOUNG GIRLS  
AND WOMEN INTERESTED IN SCIENCE,  
TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, AND MATHEMATICS—  
ALSO KNOWN AS STEM?







Then, how do we *keep* promising young women fully engaged in these subjects so they stay committed to them, overcome the obstacles that confront women, and go on to have the kind of exciting and rewarding careers in STEM-related fields that they deserve?

Some of the world's best minds have been grappling with these questions for years. And as you're probably aware, the answers haven't been easy to come by.

As a result, women are still woefully underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Fortunately, promising new ideas and answers are emerging in laboratories and at centers of learning across America.

And some of the most exciting answers are being incubated at Salem Academy.

## REINVENTING THE CURRICULUM

To feel the excitement about what's happening with STEM-related subjects at Salem Academy, spend some time with Kris Sorrells C'96, chair of the Mathematics Department, and Kara Weimer, Sorrells's fellow math teacher and friend. Their enthusiasm is contagious.

But they don't want any part of taking credit for the exciting direction of STEM at the Academy.

The real credit for that belongs to Sharon Spencer, chair of the Science Department, Sorrells and Weimer explain.

"A glaring weakness in the standard math and science curriculum is the lack of opportunity to actually 'do math and science applications,' says Sorrells. "When Sharon came to the Academy in the mid-1990s, she decided to pretty much reinvent the strong programs she inherited and make them even more relevant. Now, thanks to Sharon's leadership, Academy students are blessed to have hands-on science lab period each week, where they can be a scientist. They can learn about science tools, use science tools, and truly get the feeling of what being a scientist means."

Sharon Spencer's hands-on philosophy has translated seamlessly to the way mathematics is taught and learned at the Academy as well.

"Too many females see math as regurgitating algebra, and of course it's not," says Sorrells. "So we're really trying to dispel that myth."

"We want our students to see, feel, and do math concepts in action. Math is a way of thinking, learning, doing, and organizing many concepts into a cohesive product that has a meaning. This conceptual and practical view of math is lost in the present math/science world of standardized multiple choice testing."

"One of the most relevant ways to use mathematical thought and logic is through computer programming and engineering concepts. So we were wondering how our students might be able to put engineering concepts and computer programming into action."

"Then, in 2012, the parent of a Salem Academy student came to us with an idea."



“ We used STEM for the longest time. But when you do that, you can knock out the girl who says, ‘I have no interest in science whatsoever.’ So you sometimes have to find a different hook.”

Kris Sorrells C’96,  
Chair of the Mathematics Department

## BEHOLD THE SISTERS OF THE MOTHERBOARD!

The aforementioned savvy parent suggested that the Academy apply to the Mebane Foundation for a \$5,000 grant to start a new math/science program.

The basic specifications of the grant regarding the new program were: a) it had to be something that was not already being offered at the school; b) it couldn’t build on an existing program; and c) it had to spark interest among prospective students.

The Academy proposed the creation of a new robotics team and the rest is history.

The team started informally and as a small club comprised of five to six students. The group knew it needed some kind of a cool, memorable name, but what could it be? After some brainstorming they arrived at the perfect answer: Sisters of the Motherboard.

year!” approach and sure enough the following year the team came in seventh place out of eighteen teams, won the first place Think Award at the Southern Guilford Qualifier, and moved on to the state competition where they won a first place Motivate Award.

Fast forward to last year’s team and the results are even more remarkable. For example, the Sisters of the Motherboard was one of only six FIRST Tech Challenge teams from North Carolina that were invited to compete in the World Championship in Houston. (The letters in the acronym FIRST represent “For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology.”) Out of approximately six thousand teams, the Sisters ended up ranked one hundred and ninety-third worldwide.

The individual accolades were even more impressive. In the annual FIRST Tech Challenge, Alexandra Maycock and Breanna Sorrells were chosen as Dean’s List Semi-Finalists for



“The Sisters part of the name is a tribute to the Moravian Single Sisters who started the Academy back in 1772,” Sorrells explains. “And in tech language, a motherboard is the main printed circuit board found in microcomputers and other systems. So it’s a pretty great name, don’t you think?”

The team spirit was high going into the Sisters of the Motherboard’s first competition in January 2014. The Sisters gave it their all with their robot named Phoenix, but despite their best efforts they came in last place.

That didn’t dampen the spirit of the girls for long, though. They decided to take a “Wait until next

North Carolina. Only eleven North Carolina students were selected as semi-finalists. Alexandra Maycock was also chosen as one of only three North Carolina finalists. This placed Maycock among the top one hundred First Tech Challenge members in the United States. Finally, one of the senior leaders of the team, Libby Tawes, is now attending Olin College of Engineering, ranked by *U.S. News & World Report* as the number three engineering school in the nation. Olin accepts only one hundred students a year.

The success of the robotics team is having other positive repercussions as well.





“The excitement created by the robotics team as well as the comments and support of students and parents pushed us to reevaluate our math curriculum,” Sorrells says. “This led us to begin offering a one-semester course which is an introduction to robotics as well as a one-semester course that is an introduction to JAVA programming. Java was chosen since it is a very relevant and highly used programming language. These courses have become popular and students are always amazed by what they are learning and doing.”

## FULL STEAM AHEAD. (AND WHY “STEAM” INSTEAD OF “STEM”?)

To spread the gospel of STEM, Sorrells, Weimer, and members of the robotics team decided to create summer “STEAM” camps for young girls. Why did they prefer to use the acronym STEAM instead of STEM for their camp? Their logic is that STEAM, in which the initial “A” stands for the arts, helps cast a wider net for talented and promising young girls and women.

“We used STEM for the longest time,” Sorrells says. “But when you do that, you can knock out the girl who says, ‘I have no interest in science whatsoever.’ So you sometimes have to find a different hook.”

The seed of the idea for the Academy’s summer STEAM camps actually came from one of the members of the robotics team. “She was thinking about doing her Girl Scouts Gold Award and that requires a major community service project,” says Sorrells. “She wanted to run a science camp for her project and that’s

how we started working with the Girl Scouts at Cape Hatteras. It became so big and helpful to girls in Cape Hatteras that we eventually turned the idea into a summer camp.”

The Academy’s first STEAM camp, aimed at K-5 girls, attracted eighteen campers. The second camp, which was geared toward middle school-aged girls and held this past summer, attracted almost fifty girls.

What’s been the secret to the camps’ success?

“Our robotics team members,” Sorrells says without hesitating. “They do the real work leading the campers and they bring passion, dedication, ideas, talent, and a willingness to share to every camp activity.”

Parents of the campers have evidently been impressed.

“Several parents of our campers have mentioned wanting to consider the Academy for their daughters,” Sorrells says. “These parents are impressed by the quality of student that comes out of our program. They also recognize that we do not teach to a standardized test. We teach the curriculum and content and knowledge for the future.”

What are Sorrells’s and Weimer’s goals for the camp and for the robotics team going forward?

Weimer speaks up first. “My goal is to see the girls try something they think they may not be good at or that they won’t have the opportunity somewhere else to try and learn a new skill that may help them in the future—problem solving, working together as a team. All of those things are helpful in life, not just in robotics,” she says.

“Our big goal, of course, is to hook students on STEAM and keep them hooked, hopefully for life,” says Sorrells. “Curriculum-wise I would love for us to have a full-fledged computer science/programming course. Programming is a necessary skill in today’s world. The students wouldn’t just learn coding, but the thinking behind how coding works.”

“FIRST has a lot of good internship opportunities, plus they have great scholarship opportunities,” Weimer adds.

“That’s right, there are millions of dollars in scholarships available in computer programming and science and engineering, especially for females because we’re so underrepresented in STEM-related fields,” says Sorrells. “NC State, for example, has a major scholarship program and they’re coming after females. We have such an exciting niche available to us and we need to take advantage of that niche to the fullest.”

Sorrells and Weimer say that the STEAM approach is continuing to help the robotics program recruit students and grow.

“What we discovered was that adding an art component and tying in math and science is a lot like color mixing. We’re pulling in the artistic kids who are using the Academy’s 3-D printers and are our artists and not necessarily our scientists. They’re learning CAD—computer-aided design—programs. They’re learning drafting software. And then they’re building 3-D models. So STEAM is giving us a hook to grab the girls who are initially hesitant to try robotics.”

“Those girls may never want to pick up a robot part, but they’ll design pieces for us,” says Weimer.

“So we’ve been able to let everyone come in and put their strengths into this program,” Sorrells adds. “Our artists focus on 3-D printing, our future engineers are the ones doing the actual physical building of the robot, and the girls interested in coding are doing the programming.”

“We also have students come in who are just really good at organization,” says Weimer.

“And we have a student who likes to write in journals, so she’s doing all of our notebook organization,” Sorrells says. “So everyone can find a niche in this program. From the outside it may seem that it’s just about engineering, but it’s really for everybody.”



# PROFILE

## EDUCATION:

### Harvard University

Doctorate in Biological and Biomedical Sciences, 2017

### University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Bachelor of Science in Biology with Highest Honors and Distinction, 2013

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:

### Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Boston, MA

Research fellow, 2017-present

### Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA

PhD candidate, 2014-2017

### University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Undergraduate researcher, 2011-2013

### University of Texas Southwestern, Dallas, TX

Summer undergraduate research fellow, SURF program, 2012

### Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC

Undergraduate research assistant, 2010

### Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Winston-Salem, NC

CERTL program mini-fellowship, 2009

### Targacept, Inc., Winston-Salem, NC

Intern in Pharmaceutical Research and Development, Analytical Chemistry, 2008

## HONORS:

- Landry Cancer Biology Research Fellowship, Harvard University
- Carolina Research Scholar Designation
- Elizabeth T. Williams Full Merit Scholarship, UNC-Chapel Hill
- AACR Scholar-in-Training Award for Tumor Immunology and Immunotherapy meeting
- Winner, Karin Grunebaum Poster Competition at Harvard Medical School
- William W. and Ida W. Taylor Mentored Research Fellowship at UNC-Chapel Hill
- Travel Award, UNC Office of Undergraduate Research
- Travel Award, UNC Student Enrichment Fund

# FINDING PROMISING NEW WAYS TO COMBAT CANCER

Meet Molly DeCristo A'09 and see how her days at Salem Academy prepared her for an exciting career in biomedical research.



# Q&A

**Q:** Growing up, you observed the impact of cancer on the lives of your mother, aunt, and grandfather. At what age did you first observe it and at what point did you decide to actively join the fight against cancer?

I saw the impact of cancer in the lives of my family members in elementary and middle school, before I arrived at Salem, but my first experience in cancer research occurred in the summer after my senior year. I had the opportunity to participate in a summer research mini-fellowship at Wake Forest University School of Medicine where I worked in the lab of Dr. Gregory Kucera, trying to better understand how certain chemicals impact the response of tumor cells to radiation therapy. In my summer in Dr. Kucera's lab, I became very excited about pursuing biomedical research, specifically cancer biology research, during my undergraduate studies.

**Q:** To what extent did the Academy help put you on your current path in medicine? I.e., did you come to the Academy already interested in biology and medicine (as opposed to astrophysics) or did a class or a mentor provide the inspiration/encouragement?

I came to the Academy already interested in biology and medicine, but my interest was further cultivated by my wonderful biology classes with Ms. Spencer. My Jan Term experience during my junior year was pivotal to my career trajectory, as well: I worked at a pharmaceutical company, Targacept, in their Research and Development group. This

exposure to the process of drug discovery and development not only piqued my interest in biomedical research, but also provided great insight into the challenges of bringing a new drug into clinical trials.

Ms. Sorrells, my advisor during my later years at Salem, was one of my most important mentors at Salem. I spent many afternoons in her classroom doing homework, and I believe that the simultaneously challenging and nurturing environment she provided was critical to my growth during my time at Salem as well as my preparation for my next steps.

**Q:** How would you grade the Academy re: the ways it prepares young women to succeed in STEAM-related fields? What's the school's greatest strength in this important area?

I felt very well-prepared by the Academy to succeed in a STEAM-related field. My coursework at the Academy provided a solid foundation in math, biology, and chemistry. I strongly believe that the writing and analytical skills that I learned in my English classes at the Academy were extremely beneficial in my undergraduate and graduate career, and I think that this skillset often differentiated me from my peers. This ability to clearly communicate my scientific hypotheses and experimental findings continues to be critically important.

**Q:** Women have come a long way in STEAM fields like medical research but studies suggest that we still have some distance to go. What advice would you give to other young women hoping to navigate their way through a field like medical research which is still somewhat male-dominated?

Find mentors: (more advanced students and faculty) who will teach, support, and encourage you. Ask questions: to exponentially increase your learning. Explore your diverse interests: this will allow you to discover what you are most passionate about and give you a varied skillset to draw upon. Acknowledge that failure is a part of science: discovering that your hypothesis was incorrect means you are now a step closer to understanding the truth.

**Q:** You are involved with some exciting research right now and you are co-authoring multiple articles. In layman's terms, could you tell us about the progress you and your team are making with your current projects? What's on the horizon project-wise?

Recently, I've been working on studying a class of drugs that block tumor cells from proliferating (specifically, CDK4/6 inhibitors). In clinical trials, some breast cancer patients treated with these drugs have had very good responses with their tumors even shrinking. My group set out to determine how drugs that stop tumor cells from growing could cause a tumor to get smaller. We discovered a new way that these drugs work: by heightening the patient's own immune response against their cancer. This work is leading to the development of clinical trials for breast cancer patients testing new rational therapeutic combinations with this class of drugs. Currently, I'm interested in more deeply exploring the molecular mechanisms that underlie this anti-tumor immune response, and also understanding how tumors can escape the immune system.

**Q:** What's your long-range goal?

In the future, I hope to lead a research group at a major research university. As of right now, I hope to focus my research on discovering novel combinatorial therapeutic approaches that will render more cancers sensitive to therapies that reactivate a patient's own immune system (immunotherapy). Although some patients have experienced durable, complete responses to immunotherapy, such patients are currently the minority. In breast cancer, for example, very small numbers have had such good responses to immunotherapy in early clinical trials, so new combinations of immunotherapy with other therapeutic regimens are needed.



## PROFILE

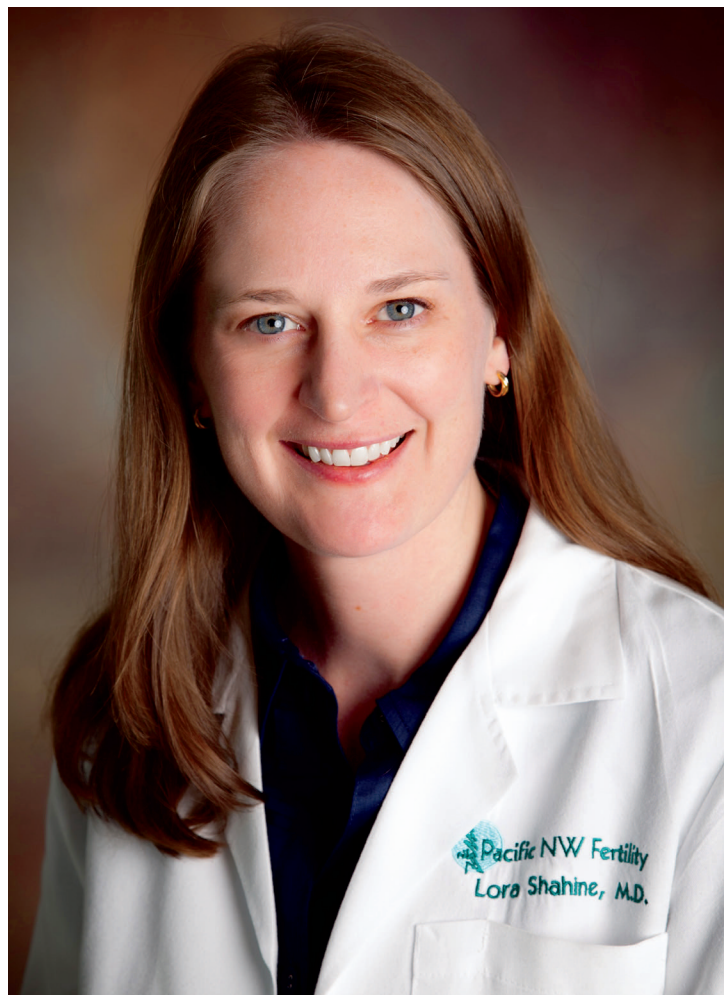
**WEBSITE:** [www.lorashahine.com](http://www.lorashahine.com)

Dr. Lora Shahine is a board certified reproductive endocrinologist currently practicing at Pacific NW Fertility and IVF Specialists in Seattle, WA. As a clinical instructor in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Washington and the Director of the Center for Recurrent Pregnancy Loss at PNWF, she is committed to providing excellence in patient care, teaching the next generation of women's health providers and continuing research in fields of fertility and recurrent miscarriage. She serves on the board of Babyquest, a non-profit organization which donates grants to fertility patients who need help with treatment costs.

Dr. Shahine is passionate about writing. She is a regular contributor to the *Huffington Post* and other blogs and has authored two books. In 2015, she co-authored *Planting the Seeds of Pregnancy: An Integrative Approach to Fertility Care* with Stephanie Gianarelli, Lac. *Planting the Seeds* is a step-by-step guide to fertility evaluation and treatment from both Western and Eastern medicine approaches. In 2017, Dr. Shahine published *Not Broken: An Approachable Guide to Miscarriage and Recurrent Pregnancy Loss*. *Not Broken* is an evidence-based but easy to read guide for anyone who wants to learn more about the evaluation, treatment, emotional impact, and concrete steps to decrease risk of miscarriage.

Decreasing the risk  
of miscarriage and  
helping to solve the

# THE RIDDLE OF INFERTILITY



As you'll see, Lora Shahine A'94 is Salem Academy born and bred. At left is just a quick glimpse of what she has accomplished in the field of reproductive endocrinology since she graduated from the Academy and med school.



# Q&A

## ACADEMY DAYS

**Q:** How did you and your family first hear about Salem Academy?

My family is a Salem Academy family! My mother, aunt, and sister all went to Salem Academy and my mother taught English at the Academy for many years. I can't remember "first hearing" about Salem because it's a part of my family.

I always wanted to go the Academy because my family had such wonderful memories from their time there.

**Q:** When you arrived at the Academy did you already have an inkling that you would one day be a doctor?

I have surprised my family by becoming a doctor because I'm the first in the entire family. I've just always known that that's what I wanted to do.

**Q:** To what extent did the Academy help put you on your current path in medicine? Was there a turning point?

My first exposure to medicine was during January term. I worked with Dr. Charles Turner, a prominent pediatric surgeon and family friend at Baptist Hospital. I spent the whole month in his shadow—up at 5:00 a.m. to see patients in the hospital before starting a long day in the OR at 7:00 a.m. I remember coming home one evening and my mom asking what I did for lunch. "I was starving so I had to leave this really cool surgical case,

run to the cafeteria for pizza, and run back, Mom! I was bummed to miss a really cool part of the procedure." My mother said she knew then I'd be a physician.

**Q:** In what ways did the Academy prepare you to succeed first in college and then in medical school? What useful skills (inside and outside of the classroom) did the school strengthen or inculcate?

Confidence in myself, resilience in adversity, and the power of friendship. It's less about the academics—although they were strong and prepared me to succeed at Georgetown University—but more about the confidence building to make me feel like I could succeed.

I had opportunities to express myself and to be brave in a comfortable and safe environment at Salem Academy through acting, performing, giving presentations in class.

**Q:** Are any of your Academy teachers and classmates still a part of your support network?

My mother is a Salem Academy teacher, so yes! I live far away from most Salem Academy graduates since I am in Seattle but I stay in touch as best as I can.

## THESE DAYS

**Q:** What do you find most rewarding about your work in reproductive endocrinology?

Knowing that every day I am helping people complete their families and no matter what the outcome I strive to give the kind of care I would want from my physician.

**Q:** What current or future projects excite you the most? Are there any more books in the works?

I am passionate about writing as a means to get a positive, balanced, accurate message about fertility and miscarriage to couples struggling to complete their family. I try to balance my writing between popular blogs for *Huffington Post* and fertility websites and

academic studies to further research in the field. I am particularly proud about my recent chapter on recurrent pregnancy loss for a prominent Gynecology textbook by Berek and Novak. It was a ton of work but doing the research helps keep me up to date with the latest in treatment for my patients. I definitely have another book or two in me and I am thinking through ideas.

**Q:** Women have come a long way in STEM fields but studies suggest that we still have some distance to go. What advice would you give to other young women hoping to navigate their way through a competitive field like medical research which is still somewhat male-dominated?

Exposure to the field of interest is key for anyone planning to go into a field of science. I think finding a school environment that exposes a young learner to multiple STEM fields in a safe, supportive way is ideal. Salem Academy is particularly supportive and the exposure in an all-girls setting can be even better.

**Q:** Have you been mentored by any women along the way and are you mentoring women now?

Absolutely. Female mentorship is key in any field and I seek it out and support other women.



# WHEN MARY DAVIS HOLT SPEAKS, WOMEN LEADERS LISTEN

It has to be one of the most remarkable success stories in Salem Academy and College's long history.

Against her parents' wishes, a recent Salem College graduate (and also a Salem Academy graduate) decides to strike off for New York City to pursue what seems like an impossible dream.

The year is 1972 and New York isn't nearly as safe as it would become in the 1990s. Also, corporate America isn't as welcoming of ambitious women as it is today. (As we all know, it still has a long way to go.)

The young Salem graduate doesn't know a soul in the city and she only has enough money to rent a room at a hotel for one month. Which means she has to land a job within thirty days or she will have to go back home and listen to a chorus of "I told you so's."

Armed with the communications skills she honed during her years at Salem and with an unshakeable self-confidence, she joins the sea of people pounding Gotham's pavements, her sense of urgency building with each day.

Then it happens.

She lands a job as a financial analyst at Time Incorporated.

And she rises.

First she rises from analyst to business manager to general manager (meanwhile going to NYU at night and earning her MBA). Then she ultimately vaults herself into the rarefied air of the C-suite, serving first as Vice President of Magazine Manufacturing and Distribution, then as President of Time-Life Books, next as Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President of Time Life Inc, then on to President of Time-Life Kids and Time-Life Education, and ending as Chief Operations Officer and Senior Executive Vice President of Time Life Inc.





After being a trailblazer for other women and achieving such lofty heights in corporate America, many people would be content to float away into the sunset on a cushy golden parachute.

But not this Salem graduate.

She decides she wants to help other women move up the corporate ladder the way she was able to. To pass on to them some of the hard-won lessons she has learned along the way.

So she reinvents herself. And quite unexpectedly, she becomes something she never thought she'd be. An entrepreneur.

She joins a fellow Salem alumna who, along with another woman leader, had founded an all-woman-owned firm dedicated to helping executive women leaders move further, faster.

Things go so well that she and her two partners decide to pool their hard-won knowledge about leadership and they write a book together.

The book becomes a *New York Times* bestseller.

Again, she is something she never thought she'd be: a bestselling author.

She does a TEDx talk in front of a packed house in Manhattan based on the themes of her book. The video of the talk is posted on YouTube and it is viewed by thousands of people.

Today she is very much in demand as a keynote speaker. And she continues to coach up women leaders.

No doubt you've already guessed the Salem grad's name: Mary Davis Holt A'68 C'72. (Perhaps the headline gave it away.)

*Salem College Magazine* recently had the privilege of speaking with Ms. Davis Holt as she was driving—on her way from Old Town Alexandria to see a football game in Chapel Hill with North Carolina friends.

She was exceedingly generous with her time and we talked about many subjects—among them, the role Salem played in preparing her for success.

Following is an edited transcript of our conversation.



# Q&A

**Q:** You've played many interesting/major roles in your remarkable career: COO. President. Board Chair. Influential board member. Entrepreneur/co-founder of a company. Bestselling author. Executive coach/trainer/consultant. Has there been a favorite role—one you've relished just a little more than the others?

I will first tell you that I am the kind of person who tries to do only what I love. I'm not saying I've been able to do that—only what I love—every single day of my career, but for the most part I have. I always try to get myself to a place where I can enjoy what I'm doing.

Something I've really enjoyed doing recently is being a keynote speaker. I've always done a lot of public speaking in my career. It so happens that I was president of Pierrettes at Salem College, and I was also in several plays at Salem Academy, so I've always enjoyed being on the stage; but for a while prior to the publication of our book, *Break Your Own Rules*, I hadn't done a lot of public speaking. When the book came out and it was so well received, we realized that there was a whole business doing keynote speeches based on the themes in the book, so I did tons of them and I really enjoyed it. I love being able to connect with so many people at once and of course I'm a big believer in our book so it was easy for me to speak out. Interestingly, I would have to say that my favorite role these days is being a keynote speaker.

**Q:** To accomplish what you have in your career takes confidence and courage. Did you always have that confidence and courage—i.e., did you walk into the Academy and/or the College with it? If not, to what extent did your time at Salem help imbue you with those qualities?

I think I've always had confidence in myself. When I make decisions about what I'm going to do like going to Salem Academy or going to Salem College or going off to New York, I'm very motivated by my goals and I'm able to overcome whatever fears I might have. I really wanted to go to Salem Academy. I had no fear. I felt very directed, so I had the kind of confidence you get from knowing what you want to do.

I will also admit that like anyone, I've had moments when I lacked self-confidence about whatever the next challenge was going to be. I was going out of my comfort zone—and sometimes I would have moments where I might have a little breakdown. I remember during my first days of trying to find a job in New York and I was staying at the Barbizon Hotel for Women. It was like a dorm—you had a sink in your room and the bathroom and the shower were down the hall. I had never eaten a meal in a restaurant alone! One night I called my mother and for the first time in my life I was homesick. I said through a few tears, "I don't know anybody here and I'm just really lonely." And my mother said, "I'm going to send you \$25 and you can rent a TV for the month." That helped get me through it.

So I've had moments of fear or of lacking confidence, but for the most part I think I have always been a pretty confident person.

My two years at Salem Academy and my four years at Salem College were very special times in my life. They both helped me a great deal in my career and in my life, each in their own way. Salem Academy was one of my most challenging academic experiences—it was actually more challenging than earning my MBA at NYU. I also followed my two sisters, Dottie and Catherine, there—I had their fabulous legacies to live up to—so that was a little tough being the third daughter to come along. I give the Academy credit for teaching me time management. That has been so important to me all of these years. When I went to the Academy, you had a schedule and you only had so much time to get things done.

And if you wasted time during the day, there was no closing yourself in the closet later that evening with a flashlight so you could catch up. It just didn't work, so I learned how to cram everything I wanted to do into every hour of the day.

The College is where I really blossomed into leadership and I loved it. I had so many opportunities to grow as a leader, whether it was as the head of Pierrettes, or Scorpions, or in whatever I was doing. That, I think, is the magic of going to a women's college—you get to do *everything*. If you want to be a leader, or if you want to run for office, or if you want to get up and speak—whatever it is you want to do, you can do it. You get a fair shake, an equal opportunity to do all of those things. I really came to know at the College that I have a leadership quality about me and that I could leave Salem armed with my education and go to New York and I was going to be able to make it work.

Again, I think the most important thing the Academy taught me was time management and the College gave me the opportunity to really spread my wings and try new things and feel the empowerment of being a leader. I received different things from both sides of the campus.

I can't leave these six years without talking about my dear Salem friends who have supported me through the years—my classmates, my professors, and later in life the then-president, Julianne Still Thrift. These are lifelong, deep relationships that sustain me today.

**Q:** Did you have any consequential mentors during your time at Salem?

Definitely. At the Academy it was Miss Elizabeth Wright. She was head of admissions and she was my mentor and my godmother. We have always remained in touch. She was a fabulous adviser to me and she was critical to my success at the Academy. Miss Nunn was my math teacher and I ended up majoring in math and I have my MBA in accounting. I credit Miss Nunn for helping me find my joy in math.

Over at the College, Mr. Mangum and Dr. Shewmake were wonderful mentors. I double majored in math and art and they were both pivotal to my success. I loved art and they opened up the big world of art to me. I learned



so much from them—they ultimately became my colleagues and friends and I stayed in close touch with them. Then there was Dr. Mary Homrighous who was not only my English professor, she was also the director/faculty advisor for Pierrettes and theater. She had high expectations of me and it was really formative trying to live up to her expectations.

**Q:** Did you have any inkling while you were at Salem that you were going to strike off to New York and try to find a new life there?

Well, I owe that to Dr. Homrighous and to Pierrettes. We decided that we were going to take a busload of students to New York to see some great theater, so I helped arrange the whole thing—we chartered the bus, we reserved the rooms at the hotel, we got the tickets. We left school on a Thursday night as I recall and we went up for the weekend and saw four plays. It was my junior year and because of that trip I fell in love with New York. I said to myself, “One day I’m going to live there.” So I have to say that I owe all of that to Salem.

**Q:** If you look at Salem’s long history, the spirit of entrepreneurship seems to have been a part of the institution’s DNA from day one. Did you sense that entrepreneurial spirit while you were a student here? (I.e., was that spirit “in the air”?) If so, how so?

Entrepreneurism is definitely woven into the fabric of Salem, so yes, the spirit of entrepreneurship has always been very much in the air there. Just look at the history of Salem and the ingenuity of the women who made the school what it is and how they kept the school alive through the Revolutionary War and the Civil War and the Great Depression and two World Wars. You still see that spirit now.

Here’s what I think Salem said to students then and I’m sure Salem continues to say it to students today: Figure out who and what you want to be and go do it. Be true to yourself, be authentic to yourself, but don’t let anything hold you back from your dreams. I feel like Salem absolutely walks the talk on that.

Now I have to be honest with you, I don’t know if I had the entrepreneurial spirit during

my years at Salem. I didn’t really see myself as an entrepreneur. I thought of myself as a corporate person and I wanted to work in a big corporate environment.

Now that I’ve been an entrepreneur I realize how much I love it. It really makes you nimble and flexible. You learn that you can do it yourself and there’s nothing like working for yourself and being successful to make you feel motivated to do more.

There’s a lot that goes into making an entrepreneur. My parents weren’t entrepreneurs, so I didn’t have any role models in that respect. I came to entrepreneurship late in life, but I feel that Salem had subtly planted the seeds in me to be successful at it. I think it is in the air there and it is part of the legacy that I inherited from Salem.

**Q:** So after graduating from Salem College, you strike off for New York City—at a time when the city wasn’t at its safest and corporate America wasn’t as welcoming of women in the workforce as it is today. You also had no contacts in the city to speak of. What was it like for a woman (with zero contacts) to try to climb the corporate ladder in NYC in those days?

It was definitely daunting. I was so sure that I wanted to be there and I knew that I had to be self-sufficient. I wasn’t on my parents’ dole. I had enough money to live for a month and I had to make it work in a month or I’d be going home. And I did not want to go home. So I was very motivated to make it work for me.

In terms of meeting people, I’m sure if I’d gone to Charlotte or Atlanta or even Washington, meeting people would have been easier. It took a while but eventually I discovered that there were some Salem girls and some girls from Chapel Hill in New York. I’m an extrovert so I quickly met people and I made a bunch of friends at work as you always do. I think I learned early on the power of networking and what that can do for you. So I took care of the loneliness part pretty quickly.

Making it in a man’s world was difficult. I hate to say this, but I think it’s still difficult for women. I was a hard worker, I did my homework, I tried to meet my commitments, I went to NYU at night and got my MBA, and I would say that there was a wave of women rising at that point and I rode that wave.



SALEM ACADEMY WAS ONE OF MY MOST CHALLENGING ACADEMIC EXPERIENCES—IT WAS ACTUALLY MORE CHALLENGING THAN EARNING MY MBA AT NYU.



Time Inc, where I started, was really good about letting you know what you had to do —what your path was going to be if you were going to get where you wanted to go. There wasn't a big mystery. I knew what I had to do and I would say, "I want to do that."

So I was very vocal and if I met with a hurdle or a person or something else that was going to stop me, I tried to go to my Personal Board of Directors, those people who were guiding me, and they would help me figure it out. I've always been a pretty active player in my career and my life path. If I'm not happy, I say, "Okay, now what am I going to do?" I didn't tend to wait for things to happen.

At one point I was advocating for a promotion with my then-boss. He told me "no." It would upset a male peer. Not so long ago, he apologized and admitted that was not right, but those were the times and as a woman you met with outright discrimination in some ways. Now it's much more unconscious bias that women face. It's ingrained in the culture.

**Q:** So in spite of that unfortunate incident would you say that Time Inc. was relatively progressive for that particular era?

In some ways, yes. In other ways, it was very much an old boys' club. It was run by very smart white privileged men. I was definitely not a member of the club. No woman was. So it was hard from that vantage point, but the harder I worked and the longer I was there, the easier it was to get credit and to get promoted. I do think in that respect Time Inc was ahead of the times.

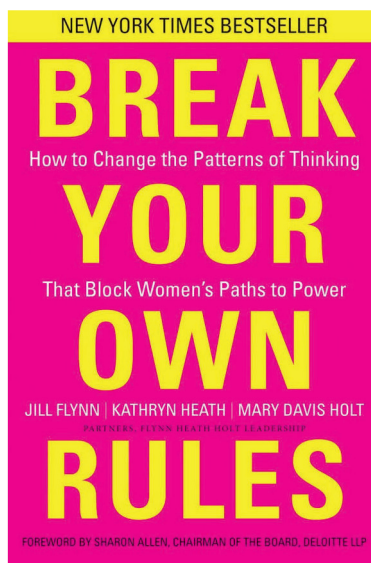
**Q:** Were you helped or mentored along the way by any women?

Yes and no. Honestly, I didn't have any female mentors in the early years. I did have some male mentors. The problem was there were no women in positions of power to speak of who *could* mentor me. It wasn't like there were bunches of them up in the higher echelons of the company who were selfish and doing their own thing. Now in the last third of my career, I've had lots of women mentors. Lots and lots.

Madeleine Albright says, "There's a special place in hell for women who don't help other women." One of the things we women in senior positions are trying our best to do is dispel the

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I'M PROUDEST OF BEING ABLE TO TOUCH PEOPLE AND SUPPORT THEM AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO GO HIGHER. IT'S PROBABLY THE MOST REWARDING ASPECT OF MY LIFE.



myth that women don't help other women. I have had so much help from other women over the last ten years it is amazing.

**Q:** The current trend among young women—especially "Gen Z" women—seems to be the desire to start their own companies, to be entrepreneurs, rather than "working for the man"—i.e., making their way in corporate America. Does this trend concern you? Don't we also need bright, entrepreneurial, innovative young women in corporate America now more than ever? Doesn't one have to be at least somewhat entrepreneurial to lead "units" of major corporations like Amazon, Google, Time Inc, etc.?

There is some research saying that when women decide to opt out of working in corporate America they often go off to be an entrepreneur. I think we need entrepreneurial women in corporate America, so I try to inspire the women leaders I coach who are considering opting out to really think about why and what else they could do in corporate America instead. I think we need to learn how to make it in a man's world and we have proven over and over again that we can do that. Yes it's hard, but you can do it.

**Q:** Doesn't one have to be at least somewhat entrepreneurial to lead units of Amazon, Google, etc.?

Yes, absolutely. So true. When you're a partner at an accounting firm or a partner in a law firm, you're in effect the head of your own business. You are an entrepreneur. Consultants are entrepreneurs—whether you're at McKinsey or Boston Consulting or anywhere else. Corporations today want that innovative entrepreneurial spirit. So I think you can definitely find it in corporate America for sure.

**Q:** In *Break Your Own Rules*, the *New York Times* bestselling book you co-authored with your fellow Salem College alumna, Jill Flynn C'67, along with Kathryn Heath, you set out to do nothing less ambitious than to "change the patterns of thinking that block women's paths to power." What heartening signs have you seen that those patterns are changing?

Well, that's what we preach. We think women have a lot of limiting beliefs—whether it's the imposter syndrome or they think, "I don't



know enough about that job to take it.” Or: “My family couldn’t handle the move.” That may all be true or it may not be true. We don’t want women’s innate fears or reluctance to take risks to hold them back from bigger jobs, so the new thinking is to be empowered, to be strategic about your career, to give it thought, to ask yourself, “Am I scared to take this job or am I really not qualified?” I’m sure in your own life you’ve heard women say, “Oh, I don’t know enough to take this job.” And I’m sure you’ve then heard them say, “I can learn it.”

We do have a need to be perfectionists, to know it all, and what we’re trying to do is see if women can break that pattern, so they can have new successes.

Have we seen breakthroughs? I’ll be honest with you. The numbers have moved a little bit. Where they’ve moved the most dramatically is on corporate boards. We’re almost to 30% women on Fortune 500 corporate boards, but we’re still down in the mid-teens for senior-level jobs. We haven’t made as much progress getting women into the C-suite as we’ve wanted. It’s been difficult. 2008 was a setback for women.

A lot of women left the workplace, women left boards, so that hurt our numbers. It’s been even harder for minorities to make good progress. Their numbers are far worse and that is very disheartening.

**Q:** You and Jill Flynn also produced and appeared in a terrific short video entitled “Be Your Possible” (posted on YouTube) and the video gets to the heart of a crucial issue: the persistent and disturbing confidence gap that exists among women versus men. As Jill says in the video, “We as women have a confidence issue. [We think] we’ve got to feel confident before we act confident. I would tell you that it’s just the opposite. You’ve got to act confident in order to become confident. It’s almost like a muscle you just have to exercise.” Is that the secret? Anthony Hopkins once said this in an interview: “Act boldly and mighty forces will rush to your aid.”

Yes, we made that video for Barclays Bank. Building up, strengthening your confidence is a little like this: if you see it you can be it. It’s like an athlete visualizing herself hitting the big serve under pressure and winning her match or sinking the game-winning basket.

See yourself as a successful corporate woman in the job you want to be in. I love that quote from Anthony Hopkins. I may have to steal that!

**Q:** Your career and life illustrate the importance and rewards of taking risks. After you take one risk is it then easier to take another, in your experience?

Probably the biggest risk I ever took was going to New York. My parents didn’t want me to go. My father wanted me to go to work for a bank in Charlotte. I didn’t want to do that. I really wanted to have a big life in New York. After I took that risk, the next risks I took might have looked less risky. Maybe that was good training for me, so yes, I do think it gets easier.

What you learn when you take a risk is that if you fail, it’s not the end of your life, it’s not the end of your world. I’ve made mistakes. Everything hasn’t been right. But if you’re not failing, you’re not trying. Everybody has to fail a *little* bit. You’re not going to make every single right choice.

I’ve heard two famous women athletes speak on this subject of the lessons you learn when you fail. One is Billie Jean King, the other is Bonnie St. John, who despite having her right leg amputated at age five became the first African American to win medals in Winter Paralympic competition as a ski racer. In both of their inspirational speeches, they talk about when they failed, when they were down and thought they could never win, and they rallied quickly and won. Their point is it’s not about failing, it’s about how quickly you recover. I think that’s a good life lesson. You know, we’re all going to stumble and fall, we’re all going to scrape our knees, everything could not be perfect—the odds of life will not give you that—but what do you do when you do fail? Often for me, when I failed, or when I didn’t get the job I wanted, I discovered it’s true that another door opens and it turns out to be a great door. You will have other opportunities that will come your way.

**Q:** Can risk-averse people actually be coached into becoming risk-takers?

In our coaching, when somebody is in a risky situation we try to help them unthread the situation and look at it objectively. We do scenario planning. What’s the worst that can happen? You think you’re going to lose

your job? Now let’s be realistic. Are you really going to lose your job? Probably not. Once you unthread what is scaring you so much you can usually get down to the basic plot line and decide what can you handle and how bad could bad be and how good could good be, then at least you’re making a decision about what you want to do. We do that. Now, does that automatically turn somebody into a risk taker? Probably not. But can they use this kind of planning and strategy work to help them next time? They can. So much is about exercising that new muscle to make you stronger in an area. Even if you’re an introvert, you can learn how to effectively build relationships and network. If you, for example, hate strategic planning you can learn to do a strategic plan and be a visionary. You *can* learn how to do these things.

**Q:** Of your many accomplishments which are you the most proud?

Oh, goodness. The most rewarding aspect is when I see a woman succeed and achieve—whether it’s in her life vision or her career vision. That is the most rewarding. I’m proudest of being able to touch people and support them and encourage them to go higher. It’s probably the most rewarding aspect of my life. My leadership touchstone is to inspire.

I will say I never thought I would ever write a book or do a TED Talk and I’m sure I wouldn’t have done it without the help of my partners. But I am proud of that and the role I had to play in making it happen.

**Q:** What’s the next big thing for you?

I just went on a second board, so I’m now on two large fund clusters for American Funds and I’m loving it. It’s challenging, it’s big, it’s exciting. That’s one of my biggest new ventures for sure.

Who knows what life is going to present to me next? I don’t consider myself too old for something new and exciting to happen. I’m very open to it. I don’t know what it would be. Maybe it won’t come, maybe it will come; but I do try to stay open to opportunities.

My aim is to support, and yes, inspire women to achieve greater life and career heights; I keep striving for those things, too.

## PROFILE

Natasha Del Toro A'93 is an award-winning journalist and television host. She's currently an on-camera correspondent for Fusion's investigative documentary series called *The Naked Truth*, where she has made documentaries about the Panama Papers, the mugshot industry, and the US electoral system. Prior to Fusion, she worked on staff at TIME.com and as a freelance journalist covering a wide range of topics such as arts and culture, politics, the environment, and the Haiti Earthquake, for which she was honored at the New York Press Club. She has produced stories in Cuba, Haiti, and Peru for PBS Frontline World. She also traveled across the US with internationally renowned photographer Joakim Eskildsen to create a book and multimedia website on poverty in America called American Realities. That project led to a documentary by KQED and Center for Investigative Reporting called *Hunger in the Valley of Plenty*. She is also a Colombia Fulbright scholar and host of *America Reframed*, a national PBS documentary program.

# VIVA DEL TORO!

# AN AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST ON A MISSION



# Q&A

## ACADEMY DAYS

**Q:** How did you and your parents first hear about Salem Academy?

We heard about Salem through a dear family friend and Salem student who was also from Lexington (NC) named Kiki Harris. She was a few years older than me and I admired her. She spoke so highly of the school.

So we arranged a visit. I'm forever grateful to her for introducing me to Salem! Also, her senior year (my freshman year), Kiki asked me to be her little sister, which is such a special tradition. Kiki was good to me.

**Q:** Who made the decision that the Academy was the right choice for your education at such a pivotal/impressionable time in your life? Did you have any say in the matter?

My parents and I both made the decision. And it was an easy one. We had seen some other schools before Salem and my parents had even put down a deposit for one of them. But once we visited Salem, we knew it was the place for me. It stood out amongst the others. The fact that it was an all-girls school was appealing.

Of course, I was sorry my parents lost money on the deposit for the other school, but we all agree it was well worth it. Going to Salem was one of the best things I've done. The education and the experience set me on a completely different life track.

**Q:** What were the school's most attractive attributes to you and your family?

We were first struck by the beautiful buildings and school grounds. I also really like the many traditions at the school like Senior Vespers, smooch cake, the Athletic Picnic, and Opening Chapel. I liked that it was an all-girls school where we could focus on our classes, extracurricular activities, and friendships without any additional distractions. Most of all, I was impressed by the quality of the education. Salem's emphasis on academic excellence is hard to match. I remember watching the movie *Dead Poets Society*, which came out in 1989, about an English teacher who inspired his students and I remember feeling like I had experienced the female version of the movie at Salem. I had been just as inspired by some of my teachers. I also really liked that the school was located in historic Old Salem and that it had been around since 1772. It meant a lot to me to attend a school with a sense of history and place.

My mother says she wishes she could have attended a school like Salem. She also loved going to the Old Salem Bakery and getting the Moravian bread and cookies. I think that was another reason she wanted me to attend.

**Q:** You grew up in a small North Carolina town and you were the only Latina in your community. Did you in a way feel more at home at the Academy than you did in your hometown? I.e., was the Academy community a more diverse and welcoming place for you?

I would say so. Salem was a diverse place. I made friends from many different countries, including Mexico, Bahrain, and Egypt. And I believe it's gotten even more diverse since then. Coming from the small town of Lexington, North Carolina, it was incredible being exposed to people from different cultures.

**Q:** Did you know it was the right school for you right away or did it take a little while?

I knew right away. And while my classes and extracurricular schedule were demanding I never considered being anywhere else.

**Q:** Were there any pleasant surprises along the way?

January Term was more exciting and fun than I could have imagined. My sophomore year I went to Mexico and Costa Rica and my senior year to Greece and Italy. I learned so much during those trips.

They piqued my curiosity about other cultures and I discovered my love of travel.

**Q:** It takes courage and confidence to do what you do. Were you self-confident from the get-go—the first day you walked into the Academy as a student—or is that something you had to work on/develop? Did the Academy have any role in building your confidence?

Honestly, I think I've always been a go-getter, but Salem definitely helped me develop my confidence. I know that in some co-ed environments, sadly, women tend to underestimate themselves. They don't always speak out. But that was never the case at Salem. We learned how to think critically in a safe environment and our opinions and ideas were always encouraged. I've carried the confidence I gained with me into my professional life. If I had a daughter, I would send her to Salem without thinking twice.

**Q:** Did you have a pivotal mentor at Salem? Was there a course or a new friendship or something else that served as a turning point while you were here?

I owe a debt to so many people. Beth Beatty my theater teacher; Jean Ashley, my freshman English teacher; Jean Burroughs, my choir teacher; Lynn Ellis, my political science teacher; and Jim East, my senior year English teacher. I also appreciated Miss T. for keeping me in line.

**Q:** When did you first know that you wanted to be a journalist?

I started thinking about it in college when a friend of mine, who was struggling with an assignment for her journalism class, asked for my help. She got an A on her assignment. I enjoyed it so much I started thinking it might be interesting to pursue a journalism career. I got serious about it after 9/11.

That event made me want to report on what was happening in our country. I got a job working at a newsweekly and shortly thereafter I decided to go to graduate school for journalism at Columbia University where I got a masters degree in broadcast journalism.

**Q:** In what ways did the Academy prepare you for your exciting and demanding career? For your life outside of work?

I became a better writer and researcher during my time at Salem. So much so that by the time I started Tulane University, where I got my undergraduate degree, the classes seemed easy by comparison.

However in high school, I didn't know I would become a broadcast journalist. I wanted to be an actress and was in all the school plays.

**Q:** Did the school help you develop skills you're using today in your profession?

I've had to get comfortable being in front of a camera so I think the acting skills I developed at Salem have certainly come in handy! My writing and research skills have as well. More generally, I think the school taught me a lot about being fair, working hard, and maintaining a high ethical standard. Those are values that I apply across the board in journalism and in my non-work life.

**Q:** What's your fondest memory of your years at the Academy?

Oh gosh. Too many to pick just one. Playing guitar in front of the student body, going on a ski trip with friends from Salem, (even though I was the only one who couldn't ski and fell off the ski lift), being in the school plays, going to the Waffle House and talking over way too many cups of coffee with my friend Jamie Jones, who also became a journalist—an amazing one at that.

**Q:** What would your classmates from Salem be surprised to hear or know about you today?

Thanks to Facebook I think most of them know what I'm up to.

**Q:** Do you stay in touch with any Academy classmates and friends? Do you lean on any of them for support or as a sounding board?

Jamie Jones Thompson and Candler Vaughn Cox came to visit me in Miami and we had a BLAST. Adrian Harrold and I have also kept in touch and I read her blog about motherhood religiously. I wish I could see my Salem friends more often, but I know if I ever needed anything, that there is a tremendous network of women at my fingertips. Salem friends are for life.

## THESE DAYS

**Q:** What are you up to these days? What current or future projects excite you the most?

I'm a correspondent and producer for an investigative series called *The Naked Truth* on a national TV network called Fusion where I've worked on award-winning documentaries about The Panama Papers, the opioid crisis, and our electoral system, among others. I'm currently working on a documentary about environmental issues. I've done short cultural docs for an HBO series called *Outpost*. For the last five years, I've also been hosting an Emmy-nominated television show called *America Reframed* that features independent documentaries on PBS. A few days ago I returned from Puerto Rico where I reported on Hurricane Maria and went to find my family that lives there and I am excited about the possibility of turning that into a longer documentary exploring the relief effort. I also worked on a book, multimedia website, and documentary on poverty in America a few years ago that I'm thinking of updating.

**Q:** The profession of journalism seems to be going through turbulent times what with budget cuts, the obsession over "clickbait," etc.—but you are clearly thriving in a tough, competitive field. What's your secret?

My secret is perseverance. Sometimes it's painful. The schedule can be grueling. And it's very competitive.

But I keep going. It's so gratifying when the story is finished and when you see that it's had an impact.

It's also just really interesting work.

**Q:** Have you been mentored by any women along the way and are you mentoring women now? What keeps you jazzed about your work?

Lots of women have spurred me on and given me opportunities. I wouldn't be where I am without them.

Cynthia Lopez, Nelli Black, Justine Gubar, Alisa Soloman, Liz Weinreb, June Cross.

Though one of my greatest mentors was my uncle, Pablo Navarro, a great teacher, author, and historian.

He passed away last year but he's one of the reasons I became a journalist and I think about him all the time.

And of course, I'm really lucky to have the most amazing mother and wonderful female friends who keep me grounded, give me love and support, and make me laugh when I'm taking life too seriously.

I am often asked by young women for advice on how to get into journalism and I try to offer them guidance or get them internships when I can. People have helped me and I believe in helping others in return.

I stay fired up by the people and issues I cover. There is so much going on right now. It's an exciting time to be a journalist. And I feel so lucky to get to tell people's stories and that they trust me enough to let me into their lives. It's a job that always lets me learn about new things and meet really inspiring individuals.

Thanks for giving me an opportunity to do this interview. It's made me feel nostalgic writing responses to your questions, thinking about my Salem experience and how far I've come.

I couldn't have done it without everything I learned at Salem Academy. It set the foundation.



# ATHLETIC PICNIC



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PURPLE?



OR ARE  
YOU GOLD?

See more  
Athletic Picnic photos online at  
[flickr.com/SalemAcademy/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/SalemAcademy/).



# Salem Academy Theatre Presents *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

Last spring, Salem Academy Theatre transported audiences to the fairy realm for a creative and colorful rendition of William Shakespeare's comedic play about romance gone awry.

The ambitious four-show production, which featured a cast of about two dozen students, transformed the Drama Workshop to an ephemeral dream world, complete with fate-bending fairies, fanciful flirtations, and troublesome trickery.

"Every play that I have the privilege to attend at the Academy is a marvelous experience," Interim Head of School Mary Lorick Thompson said. "The quality of the performances and all of the things that add to the entertainment factor such

as costumes, set, lighting, props, house management, are all run by students."

Approximately sixty girls play some role in the play, which makes it a collaborative effort involving about one-third of the student body despite incredibly demanding schedules, including sports and countless extracurricular activities.

"Yet at every performance they show up and give one-hundred percent at whatever their theatre job is," Thompson said.

Salem Academy Theatre will present *Faith County* at 7:30 pm November 9 through 11 and at 2:00 pm November 12. Admission is free. There are no tickets or reservations. Doors will open thirty minutes before each performance.







# Beloved Dean of Students Says HELLO AGAIN to Salem



When she retired at the end of the 2016 Academy academic year, Mary Lorrick Thompson promised she'd come back to visit. But after forty-four years of service, she said it might not be right away.

But Salem called anyway, asking if she wanted to make it forty-five years. As it turned out, she missed us as much as we missed her.

We were delighted to welcome back Miss T last April to serve as our Interim Head of School at the Academy.

And as Salem Academy and College President Lorraine Sterritt made the surprise announcement to students, you should have heard the cheers that resounded throughout the auditorium.

Miss T will remain in her position through June 2018. The search for a permanent Head of School began in August. In the meantime, our students are thriving under her remarkable leadership.

The Women of Purpose Campaign continues to focus on updating Salem Academy's campus and meeting student needs. Incoming gifts will provide for the renovation of the dormitory spaces, bring much-needed air conditioning to our boarding students and will allow ADA accessible dormitory options. Please visit our Women of Purpose giving website to view existing naming opportunities.

Many wonderful naming opportunities still exist. If you are interested in making a gift or pledge to name a space at the Academy, or would like to partner with your Academy sisters to name a space, please contact Marianne DeCristo, Director of Development and Alumnae Relations at (336) 721-2664.

## WOMEN of PURPOSE

*The BREAKTHROUGH CAMPAIGN  
for SALEM ACADEMY and COLLEGE*

[purpose.salem.edu/naming-opportunities](http://purpose.salem.edu/naming-opportunities)





## Academy Student Gives Back to Local Children

Salem Academy student Izzy Pare was recently awarded a Capstone Plaque from the John Austin Cheley Foundation in Denver, Colorado.

According to the Cheley Foundation website, Izzy, a fifteen-year-old boarding student from WaKeeney, Kansas, attended Cheley Camps as a JACF camper for three years.

"I love working with the children of Winston-Salem," Izzy wrote in her Capstone Project, "but with being a boarding student at Salem Academy, I run into a few difficulties."

As a boarder, Izzy said her volunteer work had to be carefully planned around school work, precious free time, and limited transportation.

But she stuck with it, and she worked hard coordinating multiple sensory-friendly events at the Children's Museum of Winston-Salem. She even recruited nearly thirty of her fellow classmates to assist her with the events.

"I've learned there are many children out there just waiting for their creativity to be set free," she said. "Through my project, I've worked with children with sensory issues, developmental delays and children from all different backgrounds, but they all have one thing in common—creativity."

In addition to the work at the Children's museum, Izzy also collected books to donate to the Diggs-Latham Elementary School where she volunteers.

"I feel like I've been effective in my volunteering," Izzy wrote. "I taught children important aspects in life like counting but also using their imagination and creativity."

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**BY MARK LANDON SMITH**

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"Faith County" is presented by special arrangement with SAMUEL FRENCH, INC.



## 2017 Oak Award Winner



Alexis Hubbard A'17 was the recipient of the 2017 Oak Award which recognizes an outstanding senior who has made notable contributions to the quality of life at Salem, has demonstrated strong leadership, and has diligently pursued academic distinction.

Alexis was recognized for her consistent commitment to academics during her years studying at Salem. She served as Parliamentarian of the National Art Honor Society and as co-editor of the Academy student newspaper, *Grassroots*.

Alexis is currently attending Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) where she is studying her "absolute favorite subject," fashion management and marketing.

Looking back on her Academy accomplishments, she said she is most proud of her AP Portfolio because arts will be the core of her career.

"In five years I hope to be living in New York City and working at either a small PR firm or a magazine company, building my way up to the corporate level," Alexis said in her 2017 Student Artist of the Month profile. "I will be able to use my art knowledge to make decisions about color, texture, and really all the elements and principles that I have learned throughout my many years of art."



## Nature Photography Sends Salem Senior Around World

During the summer Academy Senior Ana Grace Sapp got a chance to travel the world with camera in hand. She received a full scholarship from National Geographic to participate in a summer photography expedition in Yellowstone National Park, and she also participated in a Youth Conservation Photography Workshop by Karine Aigner Photography and Tropical Herping in Ecuador.

"I will never forget these two incredible trips, the rich biology, and wildlife, as well as the extraordinary people I worked with along the way," Ana said. "These experiences have sparked my passion for biology and photography, my future!"

According to National Geographic, the scholarship application process was incredibly competitive, and Ana was one of a small number of students selected among a large pool of applicants.

In Yellowstone, Ana had the full experience of Bozeman, Montana, as well as the wildlife and natural wonders within the first national park established in the US. She attended the largest rodeo in the nation, rode horses, hiked, toured hot springs and learned about the local wildlife, including bison, coyotes, grizzlies, and black bears.

While in Ecuador, she focused on the wildlife and culture of three areas: Quito, the capital of Ecuador, the Mindo cloud forest, and the Yasuni National Park in the Amazon jungle.

"In these incredible places, we photographed and studied with scientists who focused on wildlife in the rainforest, herpetology, and many other aspects of biology," she said. "One of my favorite parts of this trip was photographing and interacting with the indigenous people of Yasuni National Park, who graciously invited us into their world."

If you would like to see photos from her travels visit the Ana Sapp Photography and Art Facebook page at: [facebook.com/a.sappshots/](https://facebook.com/a.sappshots/).



## ACADEMY YEARBOOK WINS NATIONAL AWARD



Last month, Salem Academy students learned that the 2017 edition of *The Quill Pen* won a first-place award from the American Scholastic Press Association.

"We're so excited about the award," Yearbook Advisor Jenny Orr said. "This was the first year I entered the yearbook into

a national contest. Normally I just enter the state contest, but this year I entered both. I just felt as though the theme, 'This is Our Home,' and the design of the 2017 yearbook were the best we've ever produced."

Last year's staff primarily consisted of two students—Kadie Hicks and Emma Maddrey.

"We had some students help occasionally, but Kadie and Emma did the majority of the book themselves," Orr said. "I am thrilled that they are receiving the recognition they deserve."

Out of a possible 1,000 points, national judges awarded Salem Academy a score of 920. The accompanying letter said Salem's "yearbook shows excellence in the fields of writing, photography, and page design and contains elements/sections of a memorable yearbook that will be treasured for years to come."

Emma Maddrey, who was honored with the award during Assembly, said winning the award was a huge honor.

"Kadie Hicks and I worked so hard on last year's book," she said. "And now all that hard work has paid off."

## Meet the 2017 Salem Academy Sisters Merit Scholar



Maggie Dees of Salisbury, NC has been named as the recipient of the 2017 Salem Academy Sisters Merit Scholarship, a competitive award that enables an incoming first-year boarding student to attend the 246-year-old academy for high school girls tuition-free for four years.

She is the daughter of Mr. Jay and Mrs. Meg Klutz Dees of Salisbury, NC. Mrs. Dees is a Class of 1989 graduate of Salem Academy.

Maggie, who came to us from Salisbury Academy in Salisbury, NC, began her first year at Salem Academy this fall.

"Maggie is an outstanding young woman with a bright future," Salem Academy Associate Director of Admissions Wynne Overton said. "She is curious, engaged, and passionate about what she loves."

The scholarship application describes the recipient as a student "who will

enrich Salem with her presence, inspire her fellow students, and extend the reputation of Salem beyond her years as a student. A Sisters Merit Scholar is committed to academic excellence and to a lifetime of learning, and her leadership will recognize our global world. Through a four-year journey of immersion in Winston-Salem and the surrounding community—science/technology, fine arts, community service, and government—she will discover her passion and set off on her own journey while, at the same time, she will be committed to roles outside herself that inspire others, and roles that build community and make the world a better place in which to live."

Applications for the Sisters Merit Scholarship are received annually from all over the country. The scholarship application deadline is in December and finalists visit campus in February.





# New Park To Bring New Track

## Happy Hill Park Will Undergo \$5 Million Renovation

Major changes are coming to Happy Hill Park next year, the area directly beyond Salem's softball and lacrosse fields, and between the College and the UNCSCA campus as the city undertakes the first phase of a multimillion-dollar facelift.

The long-term plan for the park is ambitious, with an in-ground skate park, a garden with a raised boardwalk trail, a south-end amphitheater, horseshoe pits, picnic areas and shelters, and a north-end stage area with lawn seating that could be used for events and festivals.

But for now, city crews have already started Phase I of the renovation which will provide new basketball courts, two regulation-size soccer fields, a water-splash area with jet sprays and dumping buckets for the youngsters, and an improved playground.

For Salem Academy and College, the revitalization and investment into the area is great news and both College and Academy students will take advantage of what will be the city's only eight-lane running track on city park property.

The park will also feature a stone and timber pavilion with restrooms, concessions, open and covered viewing spaces overlooking the track and soccer fields, and a sloped lawn for seating that can be converted into grandstands in the future.

The city has \$5 million in funds from the 2014 bond issue approved by voters that are earmarked for the project.



# Net Gain: Salem Academy's Harcus Finds Lots to Love About Tennis



By JENNY DRABBLE

Winston-Salem Journal,  
September, 15, 2017

Faith Harcus started high school in search of a new sport.

She ticked basketball, running, swimming and field hockey off the list before settling on tennis, which was undoubtedly the best decision she could've made, she said.

With next to no tennis experience, Harcus quickly excelled to Salem Academy's varsity team only one year after picking up the sport.

"I really didn't know what sport I wanted to do, but since I played tennis (in first grade), I decided to give it another try," she said. "I love it. Especially this year, I don't dread practice at all. I really look forward to playing tennis at the end of the day."

Harcus, 15, tried out for the JV team as a freshman on a whim and had a successful season as she learned the ins and outs of the sport.

After a year of hard work, Harcus, now a sophomore, is one of the stars on the varsity squad.

"She's a great addition to the team," Salem Academy tennis coach Varner Sink said. "She has a wonderful attitude, she's very consistent and she anticipates well."

Harcus spent the summer training, by herself and in private lessons, to improve

her skill set. She also credits a training clinic last spring with the JV team with helping refine her wabilities.

Each day after school, she trains with the team for an hour and a half. On Sundays, she trains by herself.

Sink said Harcus' determination and attitude in the classroom and on the court are what make her such a well-rounded and impressive student-athlete.

"With Faith, you put her on the court and you don't have to worry about her because she's always going to do the best she can," Sink said. "We're excited to have her. She's a good solid player and a really sweet girl."

Sink said Harcus will only get stronger and more seasoned as time goes on and he's excited to see what comes next for the budding player.

While Harcus said she enjoys playing both singles and doubles, her favorite part of the sport is just spending time with her teammates and being active.

"I really like at the beginning of practice, hitting the ball back and forth with my friends and just having fun with it," she said. "The team is really, really great, and I love spending time with them."

While Harcus has no plans to play in college, she said she plans on playing tennis for the rest of high school and the rest of her life at some level.

Outside of tennis, Harcus is passionate about her school's Key club and her youth group at church, she said. Much of the rest of her time is spent doing homework or commuting to school from her High Point home 30 minutes away.

Tennis has taught her life lessons that will transcend her days as a high school athlete, she said, foremost, to never give up.

"Tennis has taught me to try no matter what. Even if you think the ball is out, still run because each point makes such a difference," she said. "I've learned to think of the big picture, but also to make the most of each step."

*Permission to reprint this article was granted by the Winston-Salem Journal*

## ANOTHER GREAT YEAR FOR ACADEMY TENNIS



After finishing in second place during the regular season this year, Salem Academy Varsity Tennis players participated in the Triad Athletic Conference tennis tournament on October 10. Salem Academy defeated rival Westchester Country Day, 5-0, in the semifinal round.

The win marked the third time this season Salem defeated Westchester, and all six of Salem's players played an important part in the victory.

Jayden Brown/Amanda Na, Lea Allescher/Caroline Harman and Faith Harcus/Veronica Li took all three flights in the doubles compitition while Jayden and Veronica closed the match with subsequent singles wins.

Jayden Brown, pictured above, was honored as the 2017-2018 Triad Athletic Conference Girls Tennis Player of the Year.



# Celebrating the Class of 2017







Forty-six members of the Class of 2017 received their diplomas at the May 27 graduation ceremony and are now enrolled at some of the nation's top colleges and universities. They received nearly \$2.4 million in merit scholarships.

See more graduation photos online at [flickr.com/SalemAcademy/](https://www.flickr.com/SalemAcademy/).



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