Official Superintendent Portrait Unveiled

On Friday, January 8th, the entire campus of Tennessee School for the Deaf came together in the Ward Building Auditorium for the presentation of the official superintendent portrait of Mr. Alan Mealka. Special guests included Mr. Mealka’s wife, Elsbeth and Assistant Commissioner, Joey Hassell.

The portrait was a gift from the senior classes of 2006 and 2015. Calvin Farley, president of the class of 2006, explained in his presentation that the class of 2006 wanted to provide the portrait as their gift, but after much research discovered that the cost for a portrait was out of their budget. Instead, the class of 2006 chose to leave a $500 gift to be used for the portrait at a later date. The class of 2015 found out about their gift and decided they wanted to be the class that finished this project. So, after much fundraising and hard work, the class of 2015 had earned enough money to complete the portrait project.

The artist’s name is Cindy Moore. Mrs. Moore was once a resident of Knoxville but now lives in Texas. She completed the portrait based soley on pictures provided by the class of 2015. Her work is a superb likeness and will be admired for years to come.

In June of 2015, Mrs. Moore delivered the final portrait to TSD. Taking advantage of the opportunity, Mrs. Moore presented Mr. Mealka with his portrait and we were able to get a great picture with continued on page 4
This past fall semester was jammed packed with activities and events. We saw some changes in our Elementary and Middle School athletic program: Flag football. Although our young athletes were inexperienced, they proved they can be very competitive against community teams. These athletes continued to improve throughout the season. The volleyball team did excellent and maintained a positive attitude. Our basketball teams are busy with games around Knoxville and the surrounding area right now. Keep it up!

We were very busy with Homecoming, in which we were able to see and visit with many of our wonderful alumni! The Halloween season provided a fantastic Fall Fest with the elementary and middle school departments. Thanksgiving proved delicious, as usual, both in the dining hall and at the cottages. Our special focus groups provided top-notch Veteran’s Day and Gallaudet-Clerc programs.

Within our department, there are five committees focusing on specific areas. Two of the new committees are “Special Focus Group” and “MAP” (Measuring Academic Progress).

The Special Focus groups spend time focusing on areas that play significant roles in our lives: Deaf Awareness Month, Veteran Day, Gallaudet/Clerc Day, Black History Month, and Martin Luther King Day. During the month of September, our residential staff and students spent time designing/developing posters highlighting prominent Deaf figures of today and the past. The posters were hung in the Central Dining Hall, Elementary School, Middle School, High School, and the Clinic. The movie, “Love is Never Silent” was shown to the student body in our Student Union Building.

The MAP committee was assembled this year—consisting of cottage supervisors to work on developing greater relationship between the residential and instructional components, while focusing on improving academic progress for each child. Each cottage supervisor received training in how to access each of their student’s testing results and spot specific areas that need attention. In coming weeks and months, we anticipate greater collaboration between the two departments. It is an exciting time for our school – after all, “it’s all about the children!”

It is with much gratitude that we are seeing so many things happen on and off campus. Much of this was made possible through the generous support from Variety -- The Children’s Charity of Eastern Tennessee. Through their generosity, we were able to fully fund our Summer Camps, recreation program, elementary and middle school athletic program, and other after-school programs.

Each year, TSD hosts three summer camps: Senior High, Junior High, and Camp Courage. Each camper had a blast as they traveled to Downtown Knoxville, Pigeon Forge, Ocoee, and Chattanooga. Activities varied greatly from doing crafts, to going swimming, to visiting the Chattanooga Aquarium, to staying in a cabin and going to Dollywood. A lot of fun was had by all! This year camp will be July 10 – 15, 2016 and we look forward to seeing you there!

by Dr. Steve Farmer, Director of Student Living

Scan the QR Code to connect to TSD Athletics on HS Cube (http://thecube.com/cube/tsdvikings)

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Student Living News

Student Living Fall Fest

What better way to celebrate fall than through games, food, and fun? The Elementary and Middle School cottages met at the Pavilion for an evening of games such as: donut eating contests, bobbing for apples, corn hole, pumpkin sweep relay races, and more! Students also enjoyed a meal of grilled hot dogs, and ended the evening with a sweet treat of apple cider ice cream floats.

Thanks to all our Elementary and Middle School cottage staff for all their hard work in making this event a success--from serving the food to assisting with games--you are all greatly appreciated! Last, but certainly not least, thank you to Dr. Farmer for all you did to make Fall Fest a success!
Mr. Mealka and the artist who created his portrait.

The painting is acrylic paint on canvas with finishing touches and details in prismacolor pencils protected by acrylic matte medium and acrylic UV varnish. Mrs. Moore said of the process, "drawing is more my forte than painting so I have a tendency to incorporate pencils or some sort of drawing medium in the later stages of my paintings, both acrylic and watercolor. I consider it an honor to have my artwork hanging at the school alongside work by other accomplished artists."

We look forward to seeing this portrait hanging in the halls of TSD for many years. Congratulations, Mr. Mealka!
Running a school is like paddling a canoe, only the expert can keep it running straight and true to course. Thanks Alan, for your twenty years of not only keeping the TSD boat afloat, but for keeping its path true and straight.

~Richard Davis, Teacher-Bridges Program

All the Lady Vikings, Vikings, and Coaches say thank you for your support of TSD Athletics through the years. Your determination for our student-athletes and coaches to have everything they needed to succeed is certainly appreciated! During your tenure TSD has had 67 All-Americans, three National Players of the Year and won one National Championship, three Mason-Dixon Championships and seven Mason-Dixon Sportsmanship Awards! From all of us, enjoy retirement and Go Vikings!

~Luke Benson, Athletic Director

Rosalynn Carter once said, “A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don’t necessarily want to go, but ought to be.” Alan Mealka, you are a great leader. You are a man of integrity and a constant reminder of why we choose to work in this field. During my interview, you asked if I enjoy laughing. Now I understand you were beginning to teach me the value of levity. I appreciate, respect, and admire you. Your legacy will live on for years to come and you will be missed. Thank you for everything. Now go enjoy your newfound freedom. You’ve earned it!

~Rebekah Haugen, Secretary to Mr. Mealka

One of the first things Mr. Mealka did when he became Superintendent was to have maintenance repair the fountain. It had not worked in several years and was in bad shape. Sam Cope, Rancy Lampkin and Moe Vanover were assigned the task. They spent several weeks repairing the plaster, cleaning and painting it and wiring in a new fountain. It was beautiful when they finished and Mr. Mealka was pleased with the clear blue water spewing up in the air.

After a few days, Mr. Mealka called Sam and told him he had some large goldfish he was going to put in the fountain. He thought it would be fun to have the fish swimming around. Excitement filled the air when the fish were released in the fountain and everyone loved it. The next day, however, sadness filled the air. The fish were found floating instead of swimming. An important fact had been overlooked – the water used to fill the fountain is chlorinated and the fish cannot survive in it.

Thus ended the dream of the goldfish, but rubber ducks were quickly added to the fountain to help ease Mr. Mealka’s disappointment.

~Jeanne Fair, Elementary PE teacher

I met Alan Mealka for the first time at Lowe’s when I was about 8 1/2 months pregnant with my son, Ethan, and, strange enough, my son “grew up” with him for 17 years! He is the longest serving superintendent during my career at TSD and I have come to know him very well. He is the most humble man I have ever known. He doesn’t brag about what he’s doing but he works very hard for our Deaf children. He set high expectation for our Deaf children and he wouldn’t accept any excuses for them being unable to achieve them. I am very fortunate to be a part of his years here at TSD and he will be missed!

~Michel Swafford, High School Teacher
by Rebekah Haugen

The Tennessee School for the Deaf is fortunate to have had an honorable, wise leader for twenty years. Superintendent Alan J. Mealka, a self-described simple Midwestern boy, has led with integrity. He consistently puts the needs of students above his own.

During Mr. Mealka’s tenure, he has spearheaded statewide workshops, expanded parent services, and established a family learning weekend for the education and advancement of deaf/hard of hearing students and their families. His endeavors are instrumental in providing programs for students from early childhood through the postsecondary transition phase, and he can boast of a one hundred percent placement rate for students upon graduation. When it was announced the West Tennessee School for the Deaf would also be under Mr. Mealka’s supervision, he quickly rose to the challenge, often visiting the school and constantly working to ensure all aspects were running smoothly.

Mr. Mealka works with the Department of Education and other entities on behalf of both schools. Due to his unwavering determination, funding was obtained for life safety projects, projects funded through the Americans with Disabilities Act, and the enhancement of the grounds and property of the campus.

Construction of the new Alan J. Mealka High School will soon begin on the TSD campus. The name seemed quite an appropriate homage to a man who has worked so hard to see the project come to fruition. It is, in some small way, meant to honor his legacy.

Superintendent Alan J. Mealka has dedicated his life and his career to improving those of deaf/hard hearing students. Now, after devoting forty-five years to educating these children, he has begun his retirement. He plans to spend more time doing the things he loves, including skiing, running, sailing, and traveling. Most of all, Mr. Mealka looks forward to enjoying the company of his lovely wife, Elsbeth, his daughter and son-in-law, Annie and John, and especially his two beautiful grandchildren, Dylan and Phoenix. He will be greatly missed and is wished well by each person who had the honor of working with him.
The Tennessee School for the Deaf invites you to its annual Student Art Show Reception

Wednesday, May 11, 2016
4:00 - 5:30 PM
TSD Ward Building
Old Library

For more information contact:
Victoria Haggarty
v.haggarty@tsd.k12.tn.us

The Tennessee School for the Deaf Virtual Vikings Cyber Defense Team is selling fleece stadium blankets to support their team competitions and activities. The blankets are 50” x 60”, have a carrying strap, and have the TSD logo embroidered on one corner.

These blankets can be purchased for $25 and shipped to your home for an additional $7. If you are interested in supporting the Virtual Vikings with a purchase, please send your $32 check, made payable to “PTCA of TSD” to:

Mrs. Brandi Rood
c/o Tennessee School for the Deaf
2725 Island Home Blvd
Knoxville, TN 37920
My name is Brittany Barcio. I grew up in Oak Ridge with my mom, dad, and younger sister. After high school, I moved to Cookeville, TN to go to Tennessee Tech for college. While in college, I started dating my husband, Morgan and we married in August 2013. When we graduated from TTU, we moved back to East Tennessee. We now live in Powell with our cat, Snowball.

This past summer, I started looking for school counseling jobs. I knew I wanted to work in the Knoxville area and hoped that I could find a middle school counseling position. I’ve wanted to be a middle school counselor since I was in middle school! I’m looking forward to many wonderful years working at TSD!

Hello! My name is Mallory Clark and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to teach at TSD this year. I will be teaching in the Post-Secondary Transition Program as well as Work Based Learning in the high school. I grew up here in Knoxville and graduated from Karns High School. I attended the University of Tennessee and graduated with a degree in Communication Disorders. I returned to UT for a master’s degree in Deaf Education and decided that teaching was my true passion. After coming to TSD campus throughout undergraduate and graduate school, I knew I wanted to work here as a teacher. TSD is an amazing welcoming place and I am excited for my first year here at TSD!

My name is Megan Fletcher (though some of you know me as Megan Pope). I am a recent graduate from the University of Tennessee. I have my Masters Degree in Deaf Education. During the summer, I got married to the most amazing man, Wesley. He also graduated from UTK.

I grew up learning sign language from my aunt, who used to be an interpreter. Since then, I’ve always had a passion for ASL and Deaf culture. When I had the opportunity to intern here last year in the middle school, it was a confirmation that this is what I’m supposed to do with my life. TSD is a dream come true for me. I’m enjoying being a part of the team!

Hello! My name is Lisa Tackett. I was born and raised in Oliver Springs, Tennessee, and am a recent University of Tennessee at Knoxville graduate with a Master’s of Science. I became fascinated with science at a very young age thanks to the influence of some amazing science teachers and family members. After a temporary bout of hearing loss followed by persistent tinnitus I experienced how difficult it was to not have full access to the information being provided by the teachers. This influenced my desire to teach science to deaf and hard of hearing students. Currently, I am an active educational member of the Civil Air Patrol, Kappa Delta Pi and an Aerospace STEM instructor for the UTK Aerospace Teachers Workshop.

Hello! My name is Alyssa Von Holten. This is my first year at Tennessee School for the Deaf, TSD. In the Fall of 2013, I was an intern for Pat Rittenhouse in the middle school. I am proud to have been given the opportunity to work my dream job!

In 2013, I graduated from Illinois State University with a degree in Special Education for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. I then took on a teaching job in Vernon Hills, Illinois as I waited for an opportunity for a job here, at TSD. I moved down to Knoxville this summer from northern Illinois. Living and working in Tennessee has been a wonderful adventure so far! I look forward to a wonderful year with many great students and staff!

My name is Katherine Canfield. I am the new math teacher in the high school. This year I am teaching Algebra 2. I have been teaching for 11 years and I have taught every level of math in the high school. I have a Bachelors in Mathematics from the University of Tennessee and a Masters in Secondary Education from UT. I have been teaching at TSD for two years and I love teaching here! This is my 12th year of teaching and I have taught every level of math from prealgebra to AP Calculus BC.

My name is Kathy Canfield. I am the new math teacher in the high school. This year I am teaching Algebra 2. I have been teaching for 11 years and I have taught every level of math in the high school. I have a Bachelors in Mathematics from the University of Tennessee and a Masters in Secondary Education from UT. I have been teaching at TSD for two years and I love teaching here! This is my 12th year of teaching and I have taught every level of math from prealgebra to AP Calculus BC.

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Community Day of Service

by Theron Strickland, PSTP Principal

On November 17, 2015 TSD juniors and seniors participated in a day of service for the residents of Island Home Neighborhood. The students decided that they would use this day of service to help older residents clean up their yards in preparation for the Thanksgiving holidays.

The Community Service Day served two purposes. First all seniors are required to complete eight hours of community service to be eligible for the Tennessee Promise Scholarship. Second, it was a great learning opportunity for the students. They were able to experience, first hand, what it means to be part of a community, by giving back to their community and putting others needs before their own. The students were able to help nine residents in the neighborhoods. The students eagerly pitched in to help rake leaves, pick up brush and clean out gardens and ponds. It was wonderful for them to interact and get to know some of the residents of the neighborhood! They demonstrated great teamwork during the day as well.

The Community Service Day is not a one-time event. We plan to make this a tradition for our juniors and seniors. By establishing good citizenship skills now, it is our hope that it will carry over to their home communities once they leave TSD.

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by Jeanne Fair

Tennessee School for the Deaf regrets to announce the canceling of Run for the Deaf due to major construction projects beginning on our campus. These projects will continue for the next three years. This was not an easy decision for us to make. We have always put on a top-notch event but realized we could no longer maintain our high quality of excellence. Runner safety, accessibility, and parking were all carefully considered before making the difficult decision to cancel the race.

We appreciate everyone who has been a part of the Run for the Deaf over the past 30+ years. You can visit our website at www.tsdeaf.org to the History of the Run for the Deaf and see all the previous shirts and overall winners.
Thomas Scott Marr is arguably the most famous graduate of the Tennessee School for the Deaf. He was born hearing in 1866 but became deaf at age 3 from scarlet fever. His parents sent him to public school in Nashville but after Thomas had to repeat Second Grade three times, they decided to enroll him in school at TSD in 1878. He graduated from TSD in 1884 and was admitted to Gallaudet College (now University). Thomas received his Bachelor of Science degree from Gallaudet in 1889 and studied Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Thomas returned home to Nashville to begin work as an architect and owned his own office by 1897. In 1904, he hired 13 year old Joseph Holman to be an errand boy. Thomas began teaching Joseph about architecture and in 1910 they formed a partnership, Marr and Holman Architects.

Thomas designed many buildings, including the old Post Office in Nashville, now known as the Frist Center for the Visual Arts. He often said that his proudest achievement was the design of the new campus of his alma mater, the Tennessee School for the Deaf. Thomas designed 8 buildings for TSD; only Ward Building and the Old Gym are still standing. Gallaudet University Video Library has a film of Thomas in his later years, talking about his life's work. The film shows some of his most famous buildings and has footage of TSD's campus. It also shows his summer home at Beersheba Springs, TN. The video can be found at http://bit.ly/1OBwE1Q.

Thomas loved to travel and kept scrapbooks of all his trips. He donated some scrapbooks to TSD, along with his collection of The Silent Observer (TSD's newspaper, now known as The Tennessee Observer). These items are in the TSD Archives. He passed away in 1936 of a stroke.

Top Left: Thomas Marr in Panama-1924; Top Right: Thomas Marr in front of his summer home in Beersheba Springs, TN; Bottom: Thomas Marr's second grade report card-1875
TSD’s veterans and active military personnel participate in a ceremony honoring their service. Pictured are: (L-R) Pete Barone, David Dowdy, C. D. Carl, Jr., Ken Byrd, Marty Sepeda, and Dale Miller.
(Not pictured: Vince Ferrari and Rick Thompson)
Introducing the Alan J. Mealka High School

On Thursday, January 21, 2016 at a reception honoring Superintendent Alan Mealka’s retirement from TSD, Director of Facilities Management, Oliver Lang, made the announcement that the new high school building will be named the “Alan J. Mealka High School”. The announcement was greeted with a standing ovation by the TSD staff! This legislative action was led by Representative Harry Brooks and Senator Becky Massey and it passed on January 20, 2016.