Kaleidoscope

Youth Initiative High School

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Plant Your Stake in the Next 20 Years

Old warriors...

We've spent a good part of the year planning for our 20th Anniversary Party and now it's over. We partied. It was everything we had hoped it would be: reflective, hilarious, delicious, inspiring, weird, and everything in between. The past 20 years have been a gift to and from so many people it's impossible to tell who's been doing the giving and who the receiving. In this issue of the Kaleidoscope we hope to share a bit of the flavor from the event.

But here at Youth Initiative High School we don't like to dwell too long on the past as it can cause sluggishness, depression, and reactionary political mentalities. So it's on to the next 20, and to kick things off we're rolling out a fun, unique, and inspiring way for you to help. Check it out inside!

...and young fledglings

Be Our Valentine!

Join us for our Annual Valentines Dinner, on Saturday February 11 at the Rooted Spoon! Delicious food prepared by YIHS students under the guidance of Master chef Dani Lind! Amazing student entertainment! A sophisticated, romantic atmosphere! Purchase tickets at our website or by scanning the QR code on the right.

CIRQUE D' AMOUR

The Givers' Guild

In November, Shawn LaVoie and I went to the Mid-States Shared Gifting Conference in Milwaukee. We spent the weekend with colleagues from fellow Waldorf Schools, engaging in a process in which the Mid-States Shared Gifting Fund granted each participating school an equal share of a collective sum. Each school gave a short presentation on a brief project proposal with a specific budget. The representatives from each school spent time deciding how they wanted to distribute their allotted funds. Then, we gathered together and each school began giving money to the other schools' projects.

A school in Detroit might donate $1000 to help a school in Minneapolis build a science lab. Minneapolis might donate $250 to Ann Arbor toward the purchase of new computers, and Ann Arbor might give back to Detroit to help them fund an internship program. With each gift, a comment was made explaining why it was being given and why the recipient deserved the money.

The experience was transformative, and became less about money, and more about sharing ideas, thoughts, and dreams. The focus became about giving, rather than getting. We left Milwaukee invigorated and excited to bring this concept back to our school community. We invite you to participate in the 1st Annual YIHS GIVER'S GUILD!

The YIHS Giver's Guild is a unique program inspired by a similar program developed by the Rudolf Steiner Social Finance Group. The YIHS Givers' Guild invites you to give charitable dollars, while giving you power to help decide how those dollars are spent.

Like all non-profits, our school needs your support to meet its mission, but we also want your involvement.

Your gift—at any level—makes you (or a designated person) a member of the YIHS Giver's Guild. All members will share ideas and decide together how the money should best be spent to meet the school's needs. **On March 25th everyone who has donated is invited to attend (or send a designee) to this exciting event and help decide how to fund up to 10 exciting proposals.**

It will be inspiring, informative and will build a community of collective action and shared trust—a perfect complement to our school's philosophy and mission.

Please include your donation and email address with the enclosed card, and we'll send you an invitation to a one-of-a-kind experience. A portion of donations received via the Giver's Guild will be spent at the direction of the Youth Initiative High School Board of Directors. Youth Initiative High School is a 501(c)3 non-profit. All donations are tax-deductible. Every gift is appreciated!

Susan Nesbit

Interim Development Director

Here's 20 Cool Things YIHS Has Done Already This Year:

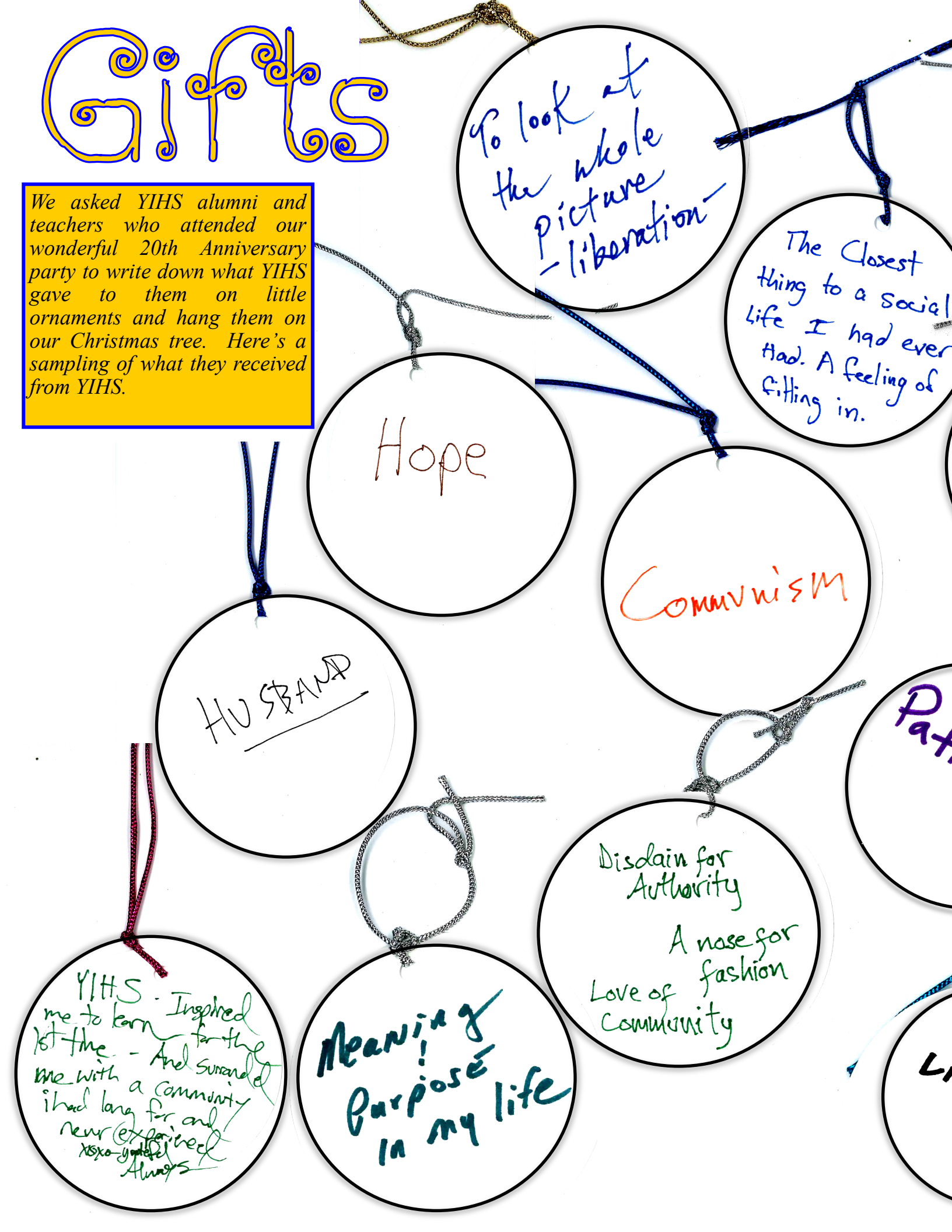
1. We took over 70 students and a dozen adult chaperones on a week-long adventure in the woods.
2. YIHS students sold literally thousands of tacos at local area festivals as part of the student-managed business Food for Thought
3. We won a blue ribbon at the Vernon Country Fair's Education booth
4. We took 20 juniors half-way across the country to tour some of the most progressive colleges in the country
5. Students and staff attended the Nobel Conference on Economics.
6. Twenty Sophomores and two chaperones paddled the Naumekegon River during a week-long riverine expedition
7. Twenty 11th Grades spent a week on the South Side of Chicago working with local schools and missions
8. 15 Freshman spent a week providing flood relief to businesses and individuals
9. Students produced a suave 1970s retelling of Moliere's classic the Misanthrope
10. Over 70 students fanned out across the county to provide service to local organic farms as part of our Fall Festival Day
11. Students created a shared mural with a school in Detroit as part of our Day of the Dead Festival
12. We entertained and inspired our community with another installation of Truth be Told
13. We threw a killer 20th Anniversary party for ourselves
14. Students gave area youth the fright of their lives at the Haunted Kaffe Haus
15. Students provided the community with wholesome Christmas gifts at the Pleasant Ridge Holiday Faire
16. We sent 230 fingers and 230 toes out into subzero temperatures for a week in January and they all came back
17. Revealed secret Santas and much more at our Winter Festival Day
18. Meditated for over 33,000 collective minutes
19. Cleaned the school for over 45,000 collective minutes (though you might not notice)
20. Students rebuilt the Landmark Center auditorium into an amazing theater space under the wise tutelage of Pita Daniels

And Here's 20 More We'll Do Before the Year Is Over:

1. Students will care for around 70 children for 3 days as part of the MOSES Organic Farming Conference
2. Students will bump the tunes at their Neon Kaffe Haus fundraiser
3. YIHS will open its doors to the public at its annual Open House Art Night & Faculty Showcase
4. Students will perform the Laramie Project
5. YIHS students and parents will create an atmospheric dining experience for 100 people at our Annual Valentines Dinner
6. The YIHS Boarding Program will share its cosmopolitanism with an International Dinner
7. 15 YIHS Seniors will share their passions with the community as part of the Senior Project presentations
8. YIHS students will spend 3 weeks in Guatemala teaching English and serving a rural Guatemalan community
9. Parents will host the 2nd Annual YIHS Lip Sync Battle
10. 15 9th graders will hike 5 days over 26 rugged Driftless miles on their 9th grade expedition
11. We'll throw an Earth Party during our Earth Day festival
12. 20 juniors will head north and west on a tour of public and private universities
13. We'll toast our donors with pizza and beer at the Donor Appreciation event
14. Students will host their Annual St. Patrick's Day Kaffe Haus
15. 15 seniors will bike over 50 miles over a week through the undulating terrain of southwest Wisconsin on their 12th grade expedition
16. 20 sophomores will spend a week at Community Homestead providing service to a neurologically diverse community
17. YIHS students will take part as judges at the regional elementary Waldorf schools Pentathlon
18. YIHS students will appreciate all mothers with their annual Mothers Day Brunch
19. YIHS will send 3 Teacher Development interns around the country to share experiences with other Waldorf schools
20. We'll send 16 wonderful graduates into the world!

Gifts

We asked YIHS alumni and teachers who attended our wonderful 20th Anniversary party to write down what YIHS gave to them on little ornaments and hang them on our Christmas tree. Here's a sampling of what they received from YIHS.



Life Long Family. Family doesn't Begin or End in Blood.
YIHS gave my awesome self an incredible education. One I will cherish forever. SSheena
-Acknowledgement that the work will never be done.
The realization that I can do more than I ever thought I could
Belief in the ability to accomplish anything.
3 Highly Inspired Loving GRADS
The chance TO SHARE my GIFTS
ence!!
a fully ignited passion and dedication to student-centered education
ice
Skills beyond the Classroom. Teachers who still inspire me Everyday.
Confidence

Are We There Yet?

The following is the transcript of a speech delivered by Administrator Matthew Voz at our 20th Anniversary Party:

My wife, who functions as the parasympathetic nervous system of this school, couldn't be here tonight. Instead, she had to drive three and a half hours with our four children, to a family Christmas celebration. I don't say this to you in an attempt to make a martyr out of her (she does that well enough on her own) but to introduce a trope which anyone who has children is far too familiar with. On any drive over five minutes where children are in transport, one or both of the following questions will almost inevitably be asked, often repeatedly: Are we there yet? and where are we? As a 4-time father of the year candidate (I haven't yet brought home the trophy – sooo close in '97, most people point to that year as my best as a father) my answer usually lies on a spectrum somewhere between "we are on a cold rock in an infinite void hurtling toward individual and collective demise", and "please stop asking that question". The organizer of this event, and a woman of a similar childlike inquisitiveness, asked me to make a stab at just those two questions.

So here goes: Where are we? Well, we're in a pretty nice piece of countryside, if I do say so myself. With unprecedented enrollment numbers surpassing 70 total students, historically unparalleled financial security, and a growing national reputation as an educational innovator, Youth Initiative High School has come in to its own as a mature and stable institution (even if it's leaders are neither of those things). That's not to say we don't have our challenges. We're still a scabby, rag-tag band of misfits living in what is essentially a well-managed squat. Too often our students wear pajamas to school and therefore don't do enough to push themselves to their full potential or fight hard enough to change the world. Too often our faculty cut corners and don't meet deadlines. Too often our administration doesn't communicate its rationale from deep within its inner sanctum. Too often our parents leave the volunteering to someone else. I said it was good – not perfect. But one thing we can say about where we are is that it is proof that if a group of people trust one another, with a little hard work, they can defy the odds and change the world for the better. So we are where we started, in need of one another; and though it might look a little more sophisticated than what began with a couple of dreamers and their families, it really isn't any different. This school is built on trust, we don't need to like everyone every day, but if we don't trust each other, we are lost.

Are we there yet? I'll give this one to the little kids, this question is a pretty tantalizing one to ask and so satisfying to answer. We ask it every day at this school a thousand times. Is that mailing out yet? Is that paper

written? Is it spring break yet? It is fairly easy to get lost in an endless, endorphin-releasing checklist, that, if managed correctly reminds us that yes, we're there, we've succeeded! But as I look out into this room which contains three or four generations of our community, with alumni old enough to be the parents of current students, and the little children of our graduates and faculty, I'm reminded that the whole point of this endeavor is to not get there at all, but to keep going, to keep wandering together on a cold rock in an infinite void forever. But we can't do that alone. We die. Only through trusting each other not only in space but in time can we avoid collective demise. Maddy Preston, a girl who grew up in Tennessee and Kyoto, Japan, perhaps she didn't know it because she hadn't yet been born, but she trusted another teenager named David Ecklund to do something crazy 20 years ago. Just the same, Jerome McGeorge must trust Matthew Krings to make the right decisions to protect and nourish the seed that Jerome helped plant two decades ago. That seed has grown from a sapling into a beautiful, though slightly crooked, tree. Its branches reach farther to the cardinal directions and to the sky each year. Each year its crown grants its protective shade to more teachers, students, and their families. It is watered with the trust I have mentioned, fed by the rich soil of the ideas of great thinkers, pruned through hard work and difficult decisions. I am reminded of the Chinese proverb that the best time to plant a tree is 20 years ago, the second best time is now. We are indebted to those who knew the wisdom of that proverb 20 years ago, but we are equally indebted to those 20 years from now, who will inherit the tree which is now in our care. So let us wander hand in hand through space and time, in trust, onward to nowhere!

Letters from Lerie

The following is transcribed from a hand-written letter which appeared in our office after our 20th Anniversary party whereat Lerie Alstad was honored as a "Founding Mother" of YIHS:

December 24, 2016

Last night, the 20th anniversary of YIHS, I had no idea what to expect, nor that any acknowledgement to the Founding Mothers was to take place. Being called upon to speak after the honoring surprised me and I admit I was lost for words. As I drove home in deep gratitude for this meaningful event, I thought about the question asked, what inspired my involvement with the school?

The integrity of the Mothers (this includes Jerome) and of the many students I taught through to the eighth grade.

The beauty of young women and men living into their upright consciously and moving together in freedom as one, so gracefully was and is such a beautiful expression of love in unity out of diversity.

Twenty years later and still moving together with the students expanding upon all the virtues and health benefits to be experienced is purely as meaningful then as it is now.

Ultimately it's called, thinking outside the box; unconditional love; living into one's upright posture while gracefully moving freely in one's being in truth and beauty re-membering our Oneness with all life.

Sincerely,
Lerie Alstad

Again, a hearty thanks to the Matching Gift Circle members from 2016-17!

Matching Gift Circle
Community Supported Student Initiative

Every year a dedicated group of individuals and businesses--the Matching Gift Circle--matches the fundraising efforts of students. Every dollar that students raised through their taco truck, their coffeehaus events, and their dinners these community supporters more than tripled. The Matching Gift Circle members recognize the value of students learning how to run events, to take responsibility for their education, and to become social entrepreneurs.

There's still time to join the 2016-17 Matching Gift Circle. If you are interested in supporting the students' efforts, please contact us.

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David & Diane Banner
Kelvin Rodolfo & Cathy Crittenden
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