

# MHS Professional Connection

A Newsletter for the Professional Partners of Milton Hershey School



## MHS: Who We Are

Established in 1909, Milton Hershey School is a private, coeducational home and school for students in Pre-K–12. The School offers a positive, structured home life and excellent education — free-of-cost — for eligible boys and girls from families in financial and social need.

MHS is funded by a trust established by chocolate industrialist Milton S. Hershey and his wife, Catherine. The endowment supports the following services for enrolled students:

- All expenses, including meals, clothing, medical and dental care, and educational supplies
- Housing in a family-like setting
- Small class sizes
- Activities, such as athletics, performing and visual arts, 4-H, scouting, and service clubs
- Vocational training and career planning
- Scholarships to qualifying students who pursue post-high school education

## A record-breaking summer



MHS Admissions Representative Kara Braderman reviews paperwork with Kelly FitzGerald, mother of newly enrolled 8<sup>th</sup>-grader Keely, who was also joined by her grandmother on Enrollment Day.

### This summer was a record-breaker at Milton Hershey School!

In early August, MHS enrolled 307 new students in PreK–5<sup>th</sup> grade and 8<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> grade and in September, with the opening of the new Springboard Academy, welcomed 78 additional students in grades 6–7. By the end of September, the School's total enrollment reached more than 1,700 students — the largest enrollment in MHS history.

Guidance counselors, social workers, Children & Youth counselors, and many other community service professionals play a vital role in bringing the MHS opportunity to children from families in need. Remember, MHS is growing. To learn more about how you can help, visit our website — [www.mhs-pa.org](http://www.mhs-pa.org) — or call the Admissions Office at 888-647-5439 (MHS-KIDZ) to arrange a visit.

**307 Enrollments**  
157 Girls & 150 Boys

**96** from Tri-County Area  
(Dauphin, Lancaster, Lebanon)

**157** from the rest of Pennsylvania

**52** from 19 other states  
including 1 child from Hawaii

■ 42% Caucasian  
■ 31% African American  
■ 12% Hispanic  
■ 14% Multi-race  
■ 1% Asian or Pacific Islander



## Springboard Academy: Not your typical middle school

Just drive up the road to Milton Hershey School's Springboard Academy and you'll know in an instant: This is *not* your typical middle school. Housed on a wooded and outdoor-oriented mini-campus, the Springboard Academy encompasses facilities where students live *and* learn, including two cottages, a commons building, and a welcome center.



The Springboard Academy welcomed its first 78 students in early September. The program is designed as a one-year program to help incoming 6<sup>th</sup>- and 7<sup>th</sup>-graders successfully transition into a group living environment during this challenging period of adolescence.

The Springboard program focuses on experiential education. Every moment in a student's day is viewed as a potential teaching moment — whether preparing a picnic lunch, learning science by viewing the night sky through a telescope, or debating issues around a campfire. Regular activities include:

- Working with animals in the barn;
- Drama and theater;
- Book clubs and literature circles;
- School-wide games and team sports;
- Challenging outdoor adventures, including scavenger hunts, and obstacle courses;
- Math and science, from wetland study to math in the cottage kitchens;
- Self-reflection time; and
- Healthy meals prepared by students and staff.

The objective of the Springboard Academy is to help students become successful, despite the difficult circumstances they may have experienced. In addition to hands-on learning, the program includes tailored student success plans focused on individual strengths; 24-hour staffing by qualified, caring mentors, and a healthy mix of structure, responsibility, and fun.



## Check us out!

### Attention community professionals:

Come see what MHS is all about at our Community Professionals Day, 8:30 AM–1:00 PM Friday, Dec. 7, on the MHS campus. The event will include a buffet breakfast, a presentation about MHS programs, and a campus tour.

To register for this **free** event, visit our web site: [www.mhs-pa.org](http://www.mhs-pa.org). Also, be sure to check out other MHS events for professionals *and* families.

## Meet: Jehan Whittaker '01, Adolescent Support Specialist, Springboard Academy

Jehan Whittaker came to Milton Hershey School as an 11-year-old 6<sup>th</sup>-grader in 1994 and graduated in 2001. With help from the MHS Continuing Education Scholarship program, she earned a degree in theater arts from Point Park University's Conservatory of Performing Arts. She also studied theater in 12 countries through the University of Pittsburgh's Semester at Sea program.

Following graduation, Jehan spent two years in Chicago, where she worked as a professional actor, an Artist in Residence, and a dramaturge (adapter of plays). From 2002 to 2006, she spent summers in Hershey, working with MHS's Year-Round Experience Summer Program. She returned full time in 2007 to work with the School's innovative new program for incoming middle school students, the Springboard Academy.



### Why did you return to MHS to work at the Springboard Academy?

I'm passionate about using the theater as a tool — whether to tell a story, to affect social change, or just for entertainment. When I saw that the plan for Springboard Academy was to use Experiential Learning Theory to teach students, I knew that it was my ideal job.

### What do you do as an Adolescent Support Specialist?

I'm one of several people who mentor students in the classroom, the cottages, and in the areas of reading, math, and social skills. The goal is to help our students develop the tools to successfully transition in Milton Hershey's [main] program.

### What are some meaningful ways MHS affects students?

It presents them with options. MHS doesn't force students to make the "right" choice, but it does expand their once-narrow scope by showing them the bigger picture. They can either take advantage of that or not.

### What are some of the challenges?

You're away from your family. That's always tough. One of the challenges I faced as a student here was fighting for independence. I was involved with a lot of activities in high school — sports, drama, AP classes — and it was difficult to fit my schedule into the schedule in the student home. That's why I'm glad the Transitional Living program has been implemented for seniors. It has great potential and will positively affect the seniors' lives.

Whittaker (back of canoe) and a student enjoy one of Springboard's outdoor activities.

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## Learning Life Lessons in Transitional Living

This year, all 150 Milton Hershey School seniors are getting hands-on lessons in budgeting, meal-preparation, time-management, and other essential life skills — and they're learning it in the School's innovative independent living program, Transitional Living.

MHS piloted the TL program with 40 students in the second half of the 2005-06 school year. Today, the 81 girls and 69 boys of the Class of 2008 are occupying apartments in renovated student homes, under the guidance of on-site adult staff members.

The TL curriculum reinforces the lessons students learn from the independent living experience. Topics include conflict resolution and communication; study habits; budgeting and bill paying; checking and banking; taxes; and medical/sexual health. Along with the core high school curriculum, the TL program helps ensure that MHS seniors are ready to meet the challenges of life after graduation.



### Contact us!

Call **1.888.MHS-KIDZ** to obtain an information packet or to speak to the Admissions Counselor for your area.

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

### Our Mission

*In keeping with Milton and Catherine Hershey's Deed of Trust, Milton Hershey School nurtures and educates children in social and financial need to lead fulfilling and productive lives.*

### MHS Admissions Criteria

Milton Hershey School seeks applications year-round for qualified students who meet the following criteria.

The child must:

- Come from a family with low income, limited resources (total household income cannot exceed 150% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines), and social need
- Be from the ages of 4 through 15 at the time of enrollment
- Have the potential for academic achievement
- Be free of serious emotional and behavioral problems that disrupt life in the classroom or the home
- Be able to participate in the program offered
- Be born in the U.S.

### Meet: Kayla Hidlay, MHS Senior

Senior Kayla Hidlay, a native of Bloomsburg, came to Milton Hershey School on Sept. 13, 2004. Next year, she plans to attend a four-year college to major in equine science. For the past three summers, she's been getting a head start on those plans as an intern in the MHS Agricultural & Environmental Education program.

#### What did you do on your AEE internship?

I mainly worked with the horses at the Locustdale barn. During that time, I was able to expand my knowledge in such areas as diseases and also stacked hay (probably the hardest part of my job), improved my riding skills, and taught younger students about what we do every day at the barn. Also, I helped with our other large or small animals that we have on campus, such as beef cattle, sheep, goats, and rabbits.

#### What did you learn from the experience and how did it help prepare you for life after graduation?

I not only learned about the animals I was working with, but I also was able to discover new qualities about myself. This past year, I learned that my presentation skills have become better. I was able to take on leadership roles and not be hesitant ... you cannot be hesitant in life; it is very important to let your opinion be heard and to take some type of leadership role, whether large or small.

Hidlay rides an MHS horse.



#### What did you like best about your internship?

My favorite part of the summer were the days that we were able to ride all day long or for at least an hour. I also enjoyed the horse shows that I was able to participate in. I think I hold a record for a race at one of the shows. First place every time.

#### What is your best MHS memory?

It is hard to pick just one memory out of the millions that you have created. ... But if I had to pick one, it would probably be the day I enrolled. If it wasn't for that day, I would not have been able to create all my memories that I have here at MHS.

**More Students = More Staff** More MHS students means more MHS staff. As a community professional, you probably know talented individuals who might be interested in opportunities to join the MHS community and help us fulfill our unique mission. Positions for houseparents, teachers, operations, and administrative staff are just some of the career possibilities at MHS. To learn more, go to [www.mhs-pa.org](http://www.mhs-pa.org) and click on the "Careers" link.

