

February 2015 Headmaster's Letter (Chris Cross)



Headmaster Fleming

Dear T-D Family,

It wasn't Meatloaf and two out of three ain't bad. It was I'll take Manhattan, the Bronx and Staten Island too. Frank Sinatra would have been proud of us. The heavens didn't allow T-D to get to Poe Park and his cottage, but T-D heard voices and lots of verses at various sacred sites. Highlights? The wreath laying, a ritual that

occurs daily around the world, only this one was a tribute like none other as flowers were placed at the very site where officers Ramos and Liu spent their last day on mother earth after being ambushed. After a few moments of silence, a few Thornton-Donovan students eulogized the fallen officers and Benoit VanLesberghe led all T-D students from grades 8-12 in prayer. A number of pedestrians passed our way and were very touched and taken with T-D's sympathetic expressions right on the corner at Myrtle and Thompkins Avenue now renamed "Fallen Officers Way".

Meditations at John Jay were a most pleasant surprise as Joel Rosow led the group and our eighth graders were as engaged as T-D seniors. Solana Gagliano, Rayaana Ba and Quincy Campbell took to it right away. After lunch on the John Jay campus, our buses traveled uptown to the United Palace Church, not really a church, but really a theatre. Rev. Ike began his preaching there. The theatre is one of the most opulent I've ever seen and Mike Fitelston filled us in on all its history and future plans. It's at 175th Street and Broadway and it's good to know there are gems far removed from the Big Apple's Diamond District and The Great White Way.

The trip to Staten Island showed 100 teenagers just how easy it is to get from borough to borough. So many of T-D's teens had never set foot on this Island. The 9/11 Post Card Memorial tribute created a somber tone and setting. It stirred one's imagination and allowed those born after 2001 to feel and understand the pain and anguish.

There were numerous uplifting moments – Monsignor Dorney at the Church of Saint Peter was one. The Danish Seamen's Church was both exhilarating and enlightening.

The week of enlightenment began at T-D with Rabbi Sean Hoffman from Anshe Sholom Synagogue from New Rochelle speaking about faith, Judaism, and the spiritual world. It was a great honor to have the Rabbi in our house, as it has been to be in his for team building.

The week concluded at the Brooklyn Crab House as many T-D students ogled our lady in the harbor. T-D's Chinese contingent seemed very illuminated on a day of serious grey.

Dr. Robert Allen spoke to everyone about respect and authority. He spoke more like a minister than a teacher. Actually, Dr. Allen is like a priest in a science teacher's clothes. Everyone left the restaurant in a refined and dignified way. Science teachers naturally illuminate and edify.

The very next day as the glory faded, our Danish Delights arrived. They were hosted by T-D families from February 7-14, Valentine's Day. Special thanks to the Ba, Lipton, Telesco, Gazzola, Breazna and Takona families for their red carpet treatment. Madame Tussauds, the Discovery Museum, Saint John the Divine, "Les Miserables," Lincoln Center, Bowlerland, Avery Fisher Hall, Top of the Rock, and Ridge Hill were all a part of their week. I fully expect that T-D and the Danes will meet again somewhere between April 12-17 in Copenhagen.

Rayaana Ba, Yahya Alrubai and Noah Vincencio were marvelous student ambassadors. On one of the coldest days in the City, as T-D waited for Jose and his on time all the time Braga Bus, Yahya took off his winter coat and covered up a frozen Danish boy. Idina Menzel would have been proud of this most thoughtful Yemenite.

At lunch last Wednesday with the Danes, Rayaana Ba spoke briefly about what he has learned as a host. He knew more Danish words than I did and pronounced them like a native. He's got a great gift of gab and for languages.

Grace Kretzmer, who stole the show in the Blue Note room as T-D saluted the Danes with music and song, spoke eloquently about her voice, theatre and performance training.

Then Noah Vincencio rose to the occasion and put all things right, fair and just in perspective. Noah's social skills are extraordinary and his ability to articulate equally praise worthy. His words were just sweet enough to

not be saccharin and his sentences showed a side of him few of us have ever seen before. He took center stage. Noah, a T-D junior, says being an art teacher is a goal. I think his commentary at the Danish luncheon was a real art piece in itself.

As T-D's Danish Delights were ready to cross borders, three T-D upper schoolers were passing over numerous time zones. After 27 hours of travel time, Maureen Flynn, Grade 10, Andrew Breazna, Grade 10, and Stephanie Rzyk, Grade 11 touched down at JFK. All three were as weary as they were jubilant. Frankly speaking, their travel adventure should have been part of the Apollo space series program. The praise given and the thanks offered were so indescribable and each student was more effusive than the other. T-D has now inherited three American kiwis. Special thanks to our sister school in New Zealand. Jessica Jane, Justina and Jezebel Selfe, along with the pineapple, Lady Astrid and the Raven himself, Ben Selfe helped stretch their *long white cloud* all the way to our red, white and blue shorelines.

Special thanks to the Corelli International Academic School of the Arts and to Kristin and David Selfe, the school's principals, who cannot be lauded enough – both are summa cum laude as people. T-D is ready for more of your talented and terrific teens. The Corelli faculty make the Corilli school a real "Cabaret."

One of T-D's traditions, of which there are a special few, is Valentine's Day. Each year, with the help of *Banderas* of Sutton Florist in New Rochelle and a longtime T-D family member, faculty and students alike receive fresh Hawaiian leis from the island of Kauai. Rarely has one ever been adorned with a more beautiful necklace than these made of exotic and very fresh orchids. *Banderas DeVivo* has been a longtime friend of Prince Kuhio. They both go back to Morris Park, not McArthur Park, as some believe. Without the Prince, no orchid would have gotten to Suttons alive. Thanks for all the love and stay close to Kuhio.

Beginning on Thursday, March 12 through Wednesday, March 25, a group of 9 or 10 students from Sera High School in Sera, Japan will be hosted by the T-D family. Late in the month of June extending into July, T-D's student contingent will visit the Hiroshima Prefecture. For those who want to host, an equal number of teenage boys and girls are available as guests. Simply contact T-D's Main Office.

On Thursday, February 26, there will be a National Honor Society convocation at the Radisson Hotel at 7:00 pm. Snacks and beverages will be available as all those on the top of the Headmaster's list are saluted. Parking is readily available. Should you come by carriage, I won't tell DeBlasio... just horsing around.

Sincerely,

Douglas E Fleming, Jr.

Douglas E Fleming, Jr.
Headmaster