FUTURE PERFECT VIA JAPAN
very few things in the world can compare to a trip to Italy, but a trip to Italy where you’re able to embrace the lifestyle of the people there is truly incomparable.

I, along with 6 of my fellow students and our school’s Italian teacher, Mrs. Bubesi, had the pleasure of venturing to Arezzo for a 10 day stay only 5 days after our final school bell had tolled. Any opportunity to go on a T-D trip is guaranteed to have elements unique to it, or sites that you would not be able to see on your average tourist trip, and this expedition was no exception. One of the most amazing of which presented itself in the form of a resort at the top of the mountainside in the village of Cortona that featured a fully-functioning farm with 130 cows and ostriches. Yes, ostriches.

As a student whose language of preference at TD is Italian, staying with the host families in Arezzo provided both an opportunity to experience Italian life, as well as the potential to practice what I had learned over the past 9 months. Though it may seem like a daunting task to have to live with a family that doesn't speak a language you’re proficient in, the Italian students were more than happy to serve as a translating medium between the American student and family, resulting in minimal confusion and easier conversations.

Having spent the better part of a week and a half driving through Italy’s countryside day in and day out, you never get tired of seeing the enormous rolling hills, towns built entirely on mountainsides, pedestrian streets and towns free of exhaust and car horns blaring. The overall serenity that pervades the streets of smaller towns like Arezzo and Cortona is something that is rarely seen here in New York, or anywhere in the US. You can't walk through a town in Italy without feeling like you're embodying the Renaissance Era experience that Italy is so famous for. Every square, cathedral, castle, fortress, and even building seems as though it was taken straight from the 1400s and brought to modern day, occasionally represented in the form of modern art statues and sculptures throughout the town that attempt to reflect a nationwide initiative to combine the old with the new.
One of the most unique aspects of Italy is that each of its bigger cities have their own history that encompasses hundreds or even thousands of years. Siena, for example, has an annual ‘tournament’ that features the best knights in each of the 17 sectors of the city. They all come out and compete in 4 separate events throughout the year. Each person in the town supports the knight of their sector, and it’s a citywide event each time one of these tournaments takes place, with the whole city coming together in their bunting and associated colors. It’s absolutely spectacular. Unfortunately, we weren’t there on the day of the actual horserace, but only caught a practice run. Nonetheless there were probably more than 10,000 spectators in the town square, with more than half of them yelling some kind of ‘fight song’ for their respective knight. It’s something you wouldn’t even know existed, and you would be hard-pressed to find a similar event in the United States.

But aside from these smaller and more antiquated cities in this magnificent country, the exchanges were also able to spend two nights in Milan and a full 8 hour day in the scorching hot Italian sun in the city of Florence. In fact my favorite day of the entire trip was in Milan, waking up crammed in the apartment of Sofia, daughter of the principal of the school in Arezzo, Stella, and taking a train out to the Milan Expo. The Expo is an enormous convention where each country around the world sets up a building meant to showcase that country’s newest developments in that field, with this year’s topic being environmental awareness. Each nation had amazing new developments to share with each and every visitor to their expo, ranging from the incorporation of all four elements into a more productive farming system in Germany, to a new method of fertilizing soils in Morocco. All in all, it was an incredible learning experience and a wonderful first day with our Italian hosts.

Ten days in Italy is nowhere near enough. Though you get a chance to embrace the culture and the traditions that have been alive for so long in one of the world’s most historically famous nations, there is so much to see and do that it would take a lifetime to enjoy it all. That being said, it does not mean that you can’t have the experience of a lifetime in only 10 days on Italy’s hallowed soil. I am forever grateful to Mr. Fleming and Mrs. Bubes for organizing such an outstanding trip, and encourage anyone and everyone, whether you take Italian at TD or not, to take a trip you would be hard-pressed to forget.

*By Michael Fanelli ’16 – TD Lifer
TD’s Tallest Tree*
Francesco Gatteschi:

1. What are some of the things you like the most about Thornton-Donovan?
   “It’s a very different type of school, there is more than one building, a lot more space and it seems more open. I like it a lot.”

2. If you could stay in New York full-time would you go to this school as a student?
   “Yes, I think so.”

3. What are some differences between your school back home and our school here in NY?
   “In Arezzo it’s much more crowded. There is only one building and it’s not very nice, none of the classrooms look beautiful. But you do get to see your same people every class and that is nice about my school”

4. Had you been to NY before?
   “No, this is my first time.”

5. Do you plan on coming to NY with your school in the next few years?
   “Oh yes! Very much.”

6. Why did you come to New York with your parents this summer?
   “To visit New York for the first time. It gives me an opportunity to improve my English and live with a family in America to see how it was you lived. I had other opportunities this summer in countries like India and Ireland, but I said no.”

7. What are some of your favorite things about your school back home in Arezzo?
   “The school system is different, like you have the same teachers and classmates so it’s very easy to become close and become good friends. The classes are small, only 23-25 people and you are with them for all 5 of your years in the school.”

8. Were you excited to be staying with someone other than your parents?
   “Yes, because I have been travelling alone before and I am excited to be staying with actual Americans instead of in a hotel with my parents.”

9. Now that your parents are home in Arezzo, will you be travelling home alone? Have you ever done something like that before?
   “I will be travelling alone but I have done this before.”

10. Aside from the US, what other countries would you like to visit?
    “Oh god, I’m not sure I have seen most of Europe but the state of Texas is really attractive to me. I don’t really know why but I would like to see San Antonio.”

11. Where would you rank the US among the other countries you’ve visited?
    “Definitely close to the top, if not the #1 then in the top 3.”

12. What’s your favorite part about New York?
    “I am in Manhattan every day and I love it there, even though it is a bit too big for my taste but among the things in New York I would say NYC.”

13. What in New York is different from your hometown, Arezzo?
    “It is much bigger. The way of life is very different. People in Arezzo are more relaxed and the town isn’t very busy and more easy-going. But here, things are quicker and there are more cars everywhere which I don’t like as much as I like Arezzo.”

14. Are you homesick yet?
    “Haha no not really. I love staying here, it’s definitely a place I would love to stay for more months. I don’t need to go home this summer I should just stay here!”
Mrs. Vasendin:

1. How long have you been in America?
   “It will be my 17th year this year, we moved in 1998.”
2. How long have you been a teacher at TD?
   “This is my 10th year.”
3. Why did you originally come to the US?
   “My husband came on vacation and the very real differences between here and the Ukraine were very prevalent. While he was over here he saw a lot of opportunities for our kids. He is a doctor, and got his work visa to be able to work in the United States, which led to our whole family getting out of the Ukraine.”
4. Why did you choose New York over other states?
   “My brother in law lived here and that was the main reason.”
5. What was your occupation in the Ukraine?
   “I was a math and physics teacher for many, many years.”
6. Why did you want to become a teacher?
   “My mother and my aunt were teachers. I went to childcare school with them as my teachers and even after I was growing up I would help them with lessons and cleaning up and all kinds of things. Teaching and being in the classroom was all I knew as I grew up.”
7. What attracted you to TD as opposed to a public school or any other school?
   “English made TD a very easy choice. I did start as a teaching assistant in a daycare and spent 3 years there. It was in Ossining and at one point one of the other assistants was having trouble in her math class in college so she asked me if I could help her. I tutored her for a few weeks and she told me that I was really good and teaching, especially with math, and should become a teacher. So I applied to an agency to help me find a job and got 2 calls in response, one from Mr. Fleming and one from a catholic all-girls school much closer to home. But with the other school I thought that teaching the same subjects every single day of every single year would be miserable. I drove down to TD and it had this very strange and very welcoming feeling, a good feeling to it. Once I walked in for the first time I knew this was where I wanted to be.”
8. Both your kids graduated from TD, once you started working here, did you know that you wanted to send Dasha and Yuri here?
   “Absolutely, Dasha was in 8th grade and Yuri was in 10th grade. They were both in a very good school academically, but they weren’t happy. Yuri especially. Both of them were in advanced classes in the old school, but once they came here, they enjoyed every second. Yuri had a lifelong friend on the first day and Dasha made an impact on the school in her time here.”
9. Why a math teacher?
   “Math always came easily to me, and I had helped friends with it in the past.”
10. What are some things about the American school system that are different from Ukraine’s?
    “TD is unique, no question that it separates itself from any other school you go to. There is very little pressure on how to teach your students or what to teach them. The teacher can choose so many more things and has a lot more freedom. You see better results from your students this way. If something goes wrong, you may feel at fault but it is not too hard to change the environment to fix it. I could help the individual student more and not worry about keeping a strict pace like in the Soviet Union. The small classes also help with this. There’s also a lot less paperwork, back in Russia you’re forced to constantly write these pointless papers that provide updates on where your class is in the curriculum. They didn’t matter but you still had to write them. Any need I have as a teacher can be easily accommodated, and it’s not crazy to ask for more textbooks or another projector outside of the budget. The students are a lot nicer here, honestly I can’t remember any time where a student gave me a negative response. And in the Ukraine, you were forced to do jobs that aren’t meant for teachers. You had to clean your own classrooms and have your students clean the school as well. It left the teachers with much less time to prepare lessons or complete their job.”
11. Have you ever thought about moving back home to be closer to family?
    “Never, not once. Only my step-father still lives there, but all the other immediate family members now live in the United States. But we do travel back every year. However, every time we are in the Ukraine, we remember how much happier we are now that we’re in the US. We are forever thankful to my husband’s brother for letting us come to the US on vacation all those years ago.”
12. What about TD has kept you here all these years?
    “I have thought about finding something closer to home (close to a 90 minute commute to school each day), but I have never had any problems here. I am one of those people that likes consistency. I like when you find a system in your life that stays the same and that you enjoy. I feel good and I am happy here, what else do I need? The distance isn’t even a problem for me anymore.”
13. Do you plan on teaching at TD well into the future?
    “So far I have no other plans. We’ll see.”
T-D’s FOUR HORSEMEN GRADUATE
JUNE 17, 2015

T-D’S FOUR LIFERS

Four senior graduates wore T-D Lifer stoles at graduation. Each spent 13 years on Overlook Circle before diplomas were presented. Andrew Telesco, Alex Rudnitsky, Dylan Pizzo and Jonathan Romano are all T-D alumni from the class of ’15.

Keeping the horses stable on the left is Dan Skendzel, from Notre Dame and the University that made the Four Horsemen famous. To his right is Douglas E. Fleming, III, a ND alumnus and Andrew Telesco’s uncle. Next to the younger Fleming is the grey eagle, Douglas E. Fleming, Jr., Andrew’s grandfather.

Several other T-D commencement exercise photos are sprinkled throughout this newsletter.
FROM HORSEMEN TO HARLEYHEADS

ANDREW TELESCO '15
LEADS HIS CLASSMATES

ROLLING THUNDER – THE CLASS OF '15

FREE BIRD
ALEX RUDNITSKY '15

PUMP & CIRCUMSTANCE
JONATHAN ROMANO '15

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'
JUSTIN PIZZO '15
He came to T-D hardly speaking any English at all. Lots of hard work, English classes that were
never age appropriate, personal instruction with English Language Arts teacher, Sandy Pilla,
hundreds and hundreds of hours of after school time and a couple of inconvenient summer
school sessions, Kyle Huang never let hard work get him down. Along with this was living thousands
and thousands of miles from home and from his family. Kyle Huang was a different kind of Chinese kid — he was from
Taiwan. Fortunately he had an uncle and aunt living somewhat close to Thornton-Donovan and a 15 minute car ride
separated Kyle from his American home and our school.

Kyle never talked much, even to his own aunt or his own uncle. He didn’t accept a single ride to school either. Instead
he chose to bike it each day. Rarely in the course of any school day did Kyle interact. His English didn’t allow it and he
was embarrassed to try. He clearly became the single most independent person in this independent school.

Little by little Kyle developed a persona out of his non-persona and at some
point he got tagged with the nickname — the Chief. To those who first heard it, the
reference to William Sampson starring in “One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest” seemed
to be a perfect fit.

With lots of extended parental patience, a faculty that believed so much in him
and T-D students who hailed the Chief, his life began to change. Travel student
jaunts to Alaska, Denmark, Sweden and Iceland all accelerated Kyle’s social growth
and enhanced his social circle. Playing basketball like William Sampson in the film
mentioned above made the nonexistent Chief glow with pride. Everything started to
change right after his first basket as his T-D Lions friends applauded him for it.

Being chosen as T-D’s International Speaker at graduation was an unthinkable
selection two short years ago. Speaking for Kyle wasn’t easy. Speaking in front of scores
and scores of T-D family members at graduation was not in anyone’s playbook. What
would the Chief do and what would he say?

Whatever classes that Kyle had to do each day, he showed up and performed always
to the best of his ability. He never took a school day off or left school before the bell for
some lame brain excuse. Kyle said yes to the speaking invitation. He just had to do it.

Kyle knew he couldn’t speak before people, and yet he did, and he really enjoyed it
and so did all those listening to him as he chortled at the Larchmont Avenue Church during graduation. Kyle was quick
to praise one and all and thanked his uncle, Lee Wen Chen, for being with him every step of the way. Even Chiefs salute
their commanders, as Kyle did so in expressing his gratefulness for his aunt and uncle’s parental like care.

Kyle will not be biking to his college or university in the fall. He’ll be residing at the University of Buffalo — how appropriate
for a Chief to be dorming there. T-D’s Chief is now on his way to becoming the first Buffalo commander to ever chortle.

With a 700 SAT score in math, Kyle is focusing on engineering.
Very few religious figures from any and frankly all religions are thought of more affectionately than Saint Francis of Assisi.

This year the official feast day will be celebrated on Sunday, October 4th. T-D is however honoring the life of Saint Francis the very next Sunday, October 11th. It will be Columbus Day weekend, perfect for everyone including the deceased Francis Albert Sinatra. Sinatra loved dogs and his favorites were Ringo and his King Charles Cavalier Spaniels. At one time Sinatra had seven dogs and four cats in residence and all were rescued from the pound. Sinatra loved his parrot, Rocky, who made it into a few videos. How appropriate and ironic that Frank’s birth name was Francis Albert Sinatra and now he can bring animal lovers together for a blessing and celebration. So it is just not Sinatra’s music that creates togetherness.

Sinatra loved dogs and his favorites were Ringo and his King Charles Cavalier Spaniels.

The program will begin at 11:00 AM with a religious ceremony by Reverend Michael from the Bronx Equestrian Center. At 11:30 AM or so all T-D families holding their pets, walking with their pets, or riding their pets, will be on full view in a Saint Francis Day Columbus Day Parade. October 11th is part of America’s Columbus Day Weekend. All animals in the parade will be blessed and those proudest of their pets asked to speak a few words about them.

T-D hopes to make this Saint Francis Feast Day Celebration and annual event. It should easily fit into next year’s Galapagos theme as it is one of the world’s foremost animal sanctuaries and wildlife thrives there.

St. Francis was born in Italy in 1181. He abandoned a life of luxury. He believed that nature itself was the mirror of God. He called all creatures his brothers and sisters and even preached to the birds and the animals.

The Franciscan Friars were founded as a religious order in honor of his good works and the way he worshipped nature. It continues on today.

Sammy, T-D’s African Grey is Getting Ready to Party.