

Headlight

Written by the students of Marblehead High School for our school and community

A Freshman Perspective: My Transition from Charter

Alex Kerai
Headlight Staff, Freshman

(This is the first in a multi-part series on Alex's transition to Marblehead High School.)

Introduction

Joe Perry's guitar woke me up. My alarm was going off; that shouldn't be happening. It's summer, I shouldn't be up at six thirty, I should be sleeping until noon, like usual. So I hit snooze. Five minutes later, Steven Tyler's voice came on. I looked at my clock, then the date and got out of bed, reluctantly. I got dressed and walked into my kitchen. I was tired, but there was nothing I could do about it. I couldn't sleep later; it wasn't summer. I couldn't wait until one thirty to get up, for then I'd be late for school.

School. It starts in September, but it haunts you throughout the summer. "Get your summer reading done" or "Back to School Savings Here!" Those signs and phrases remind you that summer is only temporary. But school is important, and I like it. You need a good education to achieve anything, and that's the truth. You need words to speak, and you need to know how to read to do anything. So, it does help; and it is, rather fun.

However, this year is different. I'm one year older and that means a new grade, but this year it also means a new school. High school. It's one of those things that everyone is grooming you for. Eighth grade is preparation for high school, the classes, workload, reading, and essays. There's no missing work, you cannot redo. Aside from that, I was leaving the Marblehead Community Charter Public School; and for me (and the others leaving) it was a pretty big deal.

Leaving Charter

We capped off our eighth grade year with a trip to Canada and two musicals. Canada brought some interesting times (our teachers dancing and a boat ride through rapids) and a farewell of sorts. When we came back, the two musicals were in full swing. Once Upon a Mattress (a new retelling of an old story) was having the finishing touches being put on it, while I was making sure my musical Three Free Birds (I was the writer, director, rhythm guitarist, and producer) ran smoothly. It did and was performed on its opening/closing night to over a hundred paying patrons.

Then we came to the final week. Hurried projects were being completed for Charter's fiftieth Exhibition of student work. The Jazz Band and Honors Band (both of which I was a percussionist for) were preparing for their Music Night performance and the eighth grade was go-

ing to Abbot Hall weekly to ready itself for Graduation. Music Night came and went, and Exhibition came and was shortened for the Bruins' Stanley Cup win. Finally, there was graduation. Our year (or maybe it was five) had built up to this. A quick walk down the stage, a shake of the hand, and a certificate received was our token out of eighth grade and into the abyss of High School. It was a long walk; but it capped off an amazing five years at Charter.

Two weeks before Graduation, everyone going to Marblehead High School from Charter took a math and science placement test, received our teacher recommendations, and then we met our mentors. We had a tour of the High School and made a plan to get together over the summer with our mentors. Mine was (and still is) Max Levine. He plays saxophone in the band, and does lighting for most of the High School's shows. We were a pretty good match; me a percussionist in Charter's Honors Concert and Jazz Band and guitarist on the side, and the director for Charter's first student written-directed-and run musical production and him a saxophonist for the concert and marching bands and the one who did lighting for Marblehead High's theatre productions. We met again over the summer where we went to Mino's and he gave me a tour of the High School, showing me where my classes would be and answering my questions about work load and clubs. I felt that I was ready.

Building Bridges

Paige Kelloway
Co-Editor, Senior

I was first introduced to the Bridging Lives program by my neighbors at the beginning of freshman year. Their daughter had been involved for all four years of high school and was constantly raving about it. I asked them for an application because I had always wanted to be a part of a "Big Brother, Big Sister" style program. A few weeks later, I was paired with Macayla, a third grade girl living in a single-parent household in Marblehead, and we have been meeting every week ever since.

In 2000, Marblehead residents Dr. Jack Weltner, a family and child psychiatrist, and Judith Black, a nationally renowned storyteller, created a mentoring program for Marblehead youngsters, called Brid-

ing Lives. They have also found support from Judy Luise, an adjustment counselor at the high school, and Paul Crosby, director of the Marblehead Counseling Center. Elementary students from kindergarten to fifth grade throughout the town are matched with teenage volunteers, mostly from Marblehead High School, who are then committed to two hours a week with their little partner. Since its beginning, over 100 students have participated in Bridging Lives as either a big or little partner.

There is no set schedule or requirements that the pair must follow when they're together; they create their own unique agenda. It may include baking a cake, playing basketball, or reading a story aloud. Together, my partner Macayla and I have developed a comfortable routine: start with having a snack, then finish her homework, create

a recipe from scratch, and finally, play a card or board game. Whatever the activities the pair decides to do, the goal is the same for all: to "add a little extra TLC" to the lives of their partners, as co-founder Judith Black likes to say. The ultimate purpose is to provide the children with the one-on-one attention so necessary for growth, reassurance, and empowerment.

In addition to the weekly meetings with their partners, members of the program are encouraged to attend biweekly teen support group meetings, led by Judith Black. There are also four special annual events throughout the year, the fall picnic, Hanukah party, winter game day, and "No Talent Show." These meetings and events provide opportunities for the teens to discuss any conflicts they may be having, learn how to strengthen their relationships or solve

problems, and, of course, eat some of Judith's famous cookies. But more importantly, Judith reminds the teens that it's mainly about simply showing up for their partner. It doesn't necessarily matter what they do because it's the consistent commitment and connection that truly makes a difference.

Even though Bridging Lives is designed for high school students to be mentors, my partner Macayla has often been the one in this role. I think of her as a little sister who has taught me about self-confidence, taking risks, and embracing opportunity. Bridging Lives states that it fosters "Partnerships for Growth," and my relationship with Macayla is certainly a testament to that. I am so fortunate to have joined this program freshman year, and I urge all high schoolers reading this to do the same.



Some participants in the Bridging Lives Program
(photo from Paige Kelloway)

The Citizens' Scholarship Foundation of Marblehead is having their annual Phonathon!

Sunday, October 2-
Thursday, October 6

Student Volunteers are needed on these dates from 6:00-8:30 P.M.

Please contact csfmvolunteers@yahoo.com if you can help

TRIVIA!

Answer: Swampscott leads the Marblehead-Swampscott football series, 48-47-6

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