

James Newman, Ph.D., Head of School

August 2010

Dear Academy Families and Friends,

"226 Years Young" doesn't have quite the same ring as our *Triple Anniversary* motto, "225 Year Young." Nor does, "225 plus 1-More-Year-Young!"

Nonetheless, our "youthful" approach to student learning and achievement continues; and in fact, it becomes more pervasive.

Outstanding independent schools like Harrisburg Academy perennially find themselves at the crossroads of innovation and tradition. As a result, they consistently ask essential and probing questions about how best to improve student learning and achievement to judge how to proceed. Of course, the reality is that the best independent schools don't merely promote tradition or instructional and program innovation over the other. Instead, they pursue their missions with a blend of meaningful tradition and artful innovation.

It's the artful innovation that constitutes our youthful and reflective approach. Our division heads and teachers continually ask two primary questions: "What works best for our students?" and "What kind of instructional or curricular change will best benefit our student learning and achievement?" These are the right questions to ask, but not surprisingly, deciding how to implement that change and innovation requires a lot of group discussion, reflection, and decision-making. It's for these reasons that our entire faculty returns to the Academy two weeks in advance of the first day of school. Those ten work days are filled with conversations about constructing new curricula and modifying how we teach, and they are key to how the Academy continues to be so young!

And what remains the same? Why does tradition persist? The urge to continue other facets of the academic program and how we've taught in the past comes from our singular focus on what is best for our students and the entirety of each student – or in other words, what has come to be known as "the whole child." The Academy's mission and ten core values sustain that focus and what has developed as our tradition. Any number of our core values articulates this focus and our tradition. For example:

- We promote each student's growth in integrity, creativity, self-worth, resilience, leadership, global awareness, and critical thinking skills;

Challenging our students in an environment that nurtures and inspires.

- We teach our students to use their minds well and encourage them to actively pursue learning for the sake of learning by developing a healthy curiosity for the world around them.

In part, this is what Mark Parsells '78 referred to in his Commencement Address to our graduating seniors in June. In Mark's words, his experience at Harrisburg Academy taught him three "core lessons" that have served as his compass since he graduated. They were intellectual independence, fair play and resilience, and respect for others. This is our tradition and it will not change.

I hope you and your families have enjoyed the summer months. I look forward to seeing everyone at our All-School Picnic and Ice Cream Social on Sunday, August 29. Until then, I hope that you're able to stay cool, read some great books, and enjoy the opportunity that the summer offers for change in our families' routines.

Three cheers for 225 years, plus 1!

Best wishes,

Jim Newman