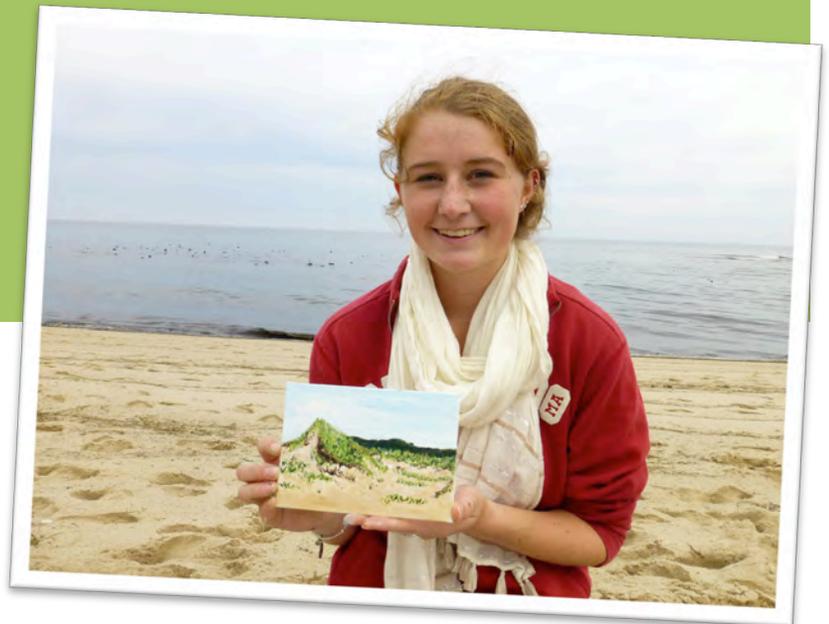


Falmouth Education F O U N D A T I O N

Supporting and enhancing
educational excellence in the
Falmouth Public Schools



GRANTEE PROFILE

SAND DUNES, SEALS, SOLITUDE PROVIDE NEW PERSPECTIVES ACROSS DISCIPLINES

Winter Gala Honors Teachers, Raises More Than \$58,000

The Foundation’s annual Winter Gala at the Coonamessett Inn in February was another sold-out affair, with some 350 supporters braving the snow to raise more than \$58,000 for education and create a new Teacher Opportunity Fund. Honorees **Joanne and Ernie Holcomb** (below), much-beloved educators in the Falmouth Public Schools, were celebrated for their long commitment to students, in and out of the classroom. Thank you to all our guests, sponsors, auction donors and bidders, auctioneer Genevieve Henrique, dance band Puffy Elvis, and the Gala Committee volunteers who made this event a rousing success. We hope to see you next year!

When Falmouth High School art teacher Jane Baker applied for a Falmouth Education Foundation grant for her project “Sand Dunes, Seals & Solitude,” her hope was to expand the world of her students, both artistically and geographically.

“I have two main goals in my teaching. One is to give students as many opportunities as possible to use their creative abilities on projects that reach outside the classroom and involve the greater community,” Mrs. Baker said. “I want them to look back at their time in high school and reflect on the great projects they took part in.”

Continued on next page



How Are We Doing? Take Our Survey!

We’re always trying to improve our communications to donors, teachers, students and residents in the Falmouth community. Please help us do our job better by taking our short survey online.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/5BCPNTW>



At the end of September, Mrs. Baker's AP and Advanced Studio Art classes, accompanied by FHS English teacher Lauren Kenny and her AP Literature class, traveled to High Head Beach in Provincetown to experience Cape Cod grey seals in their natural habitat. This cross-disciplinary project incorporated art, creative writing, and science, using seals as the subject.

For some, including Mrs. Kenny, the trip to the outermost part of Cape Cod was a first.

"I grew up in Bourne, but somehow I've never been to Provincetown. For me, experiencing that was the best part of the project," she said.

The art of science

The project also received support from Rebecca Gast, (through Woods Hole Sea Grant) and Andrea Bogomolni of Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution; and Lisa Sette and Owen Nichols of the Center for Coastal Studies, who educated the students about their work studying the ecological effects of the seal population. Elizabeth Bradfield of Broad-sided Press also contributed by

introducing the students to haibun, a Japanese literary form combining prose and poetry.

Prior to the field trip, Dr. Gast presented a lecture at FHS about seal ecology. Her diverse research program is microbial ecology; seals have only recently become a subject of her research, with work directed to a better understanding of their role as "victims and vectors of disease." From the late 1800s until the 1970s, a bounty meant that there were virtually no seals on Cape Cod. The removal of the bounty and the establishment of the Marine Mammal Protection Act in 1972 led to the recovery of the seal population. Dr. Gast explained that while the number of seals has increased, so have concerns about the repercussions, such as pollution, impact on the fishing industry, and whether or not there is also an increase in the shark population.

Ms. Bradfield spoke with the students about the history of haibun, which combines concise prose, a haiku, and rough sketches to communicate a journey, often emotional or physical.

"This form goes against everything they have learned about traditional writing, so it offered a challenge to them," Mrs. Kenny said.

Authentic education

As both an artist and a teacher, Mrs. Baker subscribes to Louis Agassiz' philosophy, "Study nature, not books."

"I encourage my students to work from original sources as often as possible," she said. "It is difficult to feel connected to a work that has its origins in an Internet search, and that is the easiest and most common creative source for many people."

When they arrived in Provincetown, the students had to hike out to a portion of High Head Beach where hundreds of seals could be seen congregating at a "haul out," a term referring simply to the way they haul their bodies out at low tide to rest in the sand in a large group. The day was spent sketching, painting, writing, and simply, but no less important, observing.

Bogomolni, Nichols and Sette spoke with students on the beach

"This form goes against everything they have learned about traditional writing, so it offered a challenge to them."

about their individual research, in addition to the work of the Northwest Atlantic Seal Research Consortium, which Bogomolni co-founded and chairs. The students finished their trip with a visit to several Provincetown art galleries, where they were able to see artists in their element and talk to them about their creative process.

“Enabling opportunities like these is exactly what the Falmouth Education Foundation aims to accomplish for our students,” Foundation President Ellen Barol explained. “I wish I could have participated in this project myself!”

Tangible outcomes

The project yielded a showcase of writing and art, including oversized charcoals of the seals, and paintings of the dunes, which were displayed at Falmouth Museums on the Green from February through April. Additionally, the students bound their haibun in a collection using paper they made from recycled drawing paper and seaweed from High Head. They also created an oversized seal sculpture from commercial fish netting found washed up on High Head, along with netting donated by local fishermen and scientists. The material was used in an effort to encourage people to think about the varied opinions surrounding the growing seal population on Cape Cod.

Ruth Fuller, a junior in Advanced Studio Art, believes the success of the project was due to what she described as its “unconventional” nature.

“We were given the freedom to find our own space and sketch. I had never sketched on-site before and it was a great experience. My



seal is one of my favorite pieces of art this year. Not only had I never used charcoal before, but had also never drawn such a tricky animal,” she said.

“The best part was seeing all the seals up on the wall at Museums on the Green. Each one has its own character and personality.”

The project provided a first for Tommi Gans, a senior in AP Art.

“Experiencing the atmosphere on the beach in Provincetown was unlike anything I had ever done. I had never in my life seen even one seal, so to see so many at once was breathtaking,” she said.

“The visual of those amazing animals and the vastness of the beach contributed greatly to how absorbed I was able to get in the art and writing. Seeing the seals firsthand allowed me to capture more of the emotion and a realistic sense in my artwork, one that I couldn’t have gotten from a simple photograph.”

Tommi also appreciated the creative writing element.

“The form of haibun is so simple and free, perfect for the environment we were in. It’s

almost a poetic way of taking notes, which forced me to really focus on what was around me and what I was experiencing. The reason I took so much in was because I was focusing on what to write, so I feel it was definitely a beneficial portion of the project.”

Arjun Chaturvedi, a senior in AP Literature, said the trip opened up a new world to him, one virtually in his backyard.

“Going to Provincetown and experiencing its creative culture has really broadened my perspective. The atmosphere is totally different from Falmouth, and I have come to appreciate the beauty of Cape Cod even more,” he said.

“Seeing the seals at the haul out wasn’t just an amazing scientific and artistic adventure for me; it was a spiritual one as well. I felt close to nature – a connection that high school students may not often get. I can only hope that this wonderful invitation is extended to more FHS students in the years to come.”



Falmouth Education Foundation

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Help us update our database, save money, and keep you updated on special news and events. Send your email address to falmoutheducationfnd@gmail.com

SAVE THE DATES

Falmouth Flag Day 5K

Sunday, June 14, 2015, 10:15 a.m.

This walk/race along the beach on Vineyard Sound, starting and ending in Falmouth Heights, is for ages 5 and up, and all proceeds go to the Falmouth Education Foundation for future grants. Register at www.falmouthflagday5k.org

FEF in Action

Tuesday, October 6, 2015, 6:30–8:30 p.m.

The Falmouth Education Foundation Board of Directors invites you to our annual celebration of grantee works. Teachers and students will present their innovative new projects, along with a reception and exhibition, in the Falmouth Public Library's Hermann Room (FREE).