

*The Meadows School has consistently produced bright, intellectually curious, engaging, well-rounded, motivated young students with great character. The academic program and extracurricular offerings are superb, and students receive a broad and deep education in a variety of areas. The Meadows students have been extraordinarily successful at Yale and beyond.*

— **Robert Jackson, Yale University**

## The Products

[An Excerpt from The Meadows School book, 2010, by Phil Hagen]

The vision, the perseverance, the culture, the academics, the teachers, the well-roundedness, the spirit. This is The Meadows DNA. This is what gets inherited by the exceptionally able and ambitious students who pass through one of the most rigorous prep-school systems in America. This is the makeup of the product—so neatly described by Robert Jackson, Yale’s former associate director of admissions for the West—that goes out into the world.

En masse, this phenomenon can be difficult to fully appreciate. After Jackson’s string of adjectives and adverbs, what’s left to say about the “miracle school” and its 767 graduates as a whole? There are only different words to express the same idea. Take the Class of 2008: The seventy-two graduates finished with the usual sparkling array of accolades and academic achievements, and then some—eleven were National Merit finalists, two had perfect ACT scores, the volume and extent of their scholarship grants were unprecedented, and their community service triumphs exceptional even within the School’s extraordinary context.

It’s not till you get down to the personal level that the deeper Meadows effect really registers. This is why the commencements each May prove to be such powerful experiences. You may know some Meadows students individually or you may know of Meadows students collectively; what’s most impressive is to witness the full procession of well-rounded, polished gems and to hear of the storied colleges that, in a few short months, they’ll be attending and the

ambitions they'll be pursuing when they leave that gymnasium—molecular biology, architectural engineering, international relations, pre-med, pre-law ...

“When I listened and looked around at all the different graduates and interests, I am still amazed that one school was able to foster and develop such a variety of people,” says Alisha Smith Porter '97, a University of Pennsylvania alumna. “There were no two people alike, and that was phenomenal. We were all intelligent, well-mannered, and given tools to be assets to our society.”

At the 2008 Commencement, amid the usual dizzying recitation of honors and future endeavors, there was an especially poignant moment. Carolyn Goodman offered a special recognition of all the twenty-one graduates with alumni siblings. Midway through the ceremony, she asked one group at a time to rise. When she got to the Chowdhrys, Saba '08, the soon-to-be pre-law student at Case Western stood up among her classmates onstage, while her brothers did the same from their seats in the audience. Carolyn introduced Saba first then Adeel '03, a pre-law student at George Washington University; Shakeel '96, a micro-surgeon who graduated from Harvard and the Georgetown Medical School; and Aqeel '95, a doctor with degrees from UCLA and the Northwestern Medical School.

There was something poignant about seeing that one family of Meadows products stand together; and from the wave of electricity in the gymnasium, it was clear the whole crowd had sensed it together. Here was ample evidence of excellence not only pursued but achieved. Here was The Meadows' mission incarnate.

The School is, of course, immensely proud of the colleges and universities that its graduates attend, and each year it updates a map of the United States that pinpoints each and every institution. There are biannual alumni updates in the *Scholar Lane* publication, and they go a long way in supporting Mr. Jackson's testimony about product quality and Alisha Smith Porter's thought about product diversity. They all seem to sound like this:

- Chantel Hopper '07 has become the first Nevada representative in 30 years to place in America's Junior Miss Finals. And, by the way, she is double-majoring in molecular biology and Spanish at Duke.

- Alec Chapman '03 graduated cum laude from Princeton '07, earned the Kusaka Memorial Prize for Physics, and is now doing “promising physics research” at Goldman Sachs in New York City.
- Carlos Rojas '00, after earning a degree from Harvard, promptly set out to work with children as a tutor in Chile and as a teacher in the Marshall Islands before pursuing a career as a business consultant in Washington, D.C.
- Lindsay Horvath '00, who graduated cum laude from Notre Dame ... well, her blurb goes on for a half-page about her many community services and activism in Los Angeles. The ad exec is a local leader in the National Organization of Women (she gave a speech at its national conference in 2007), is on the boards of the YWCA and the Women's Reproductive Rights Assistance Project, was appointed by the City Council of West Hollywood to the Women's Advisory Board, and she produces a two-week festival throughout Los Angeles to celebrate safety and empowerment for women and girls ...

The more you examine the cases, the clearer it becomes that The Meadows DNA carries a deeper family trait that is just beginning to blossom out there. By way of explanation, Headmaster Henry Chanin sums up the School's mission this way:

“The Meadows is for able and ambitious students who want to become part of those who lead their generation. And whether that's leading by making a gazillion dollars or finding a cure for cancer or trying to improve education in the inner city, we're trying to train those who'll have the most say in the lives of their generation, to make them not only thoughtful and dedicated citizens but instill in them some sense of obligation.”

Chanin pauses for his statement to sink in, then adds: “It's a really high goal.”

It sounds really high, but when you meet those who have graduated and are, or about to, lead their generation, it actually seems pretty standard.

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Two alumni are most often mentioned in the course of trying to better understand The Meadows product. The first is Patrick Hummel '02, and his story is uniquely fascinating because, of all those brainy Einsteins who have passed through The Meadows, he is no doubt the brainiest. However, underneath the staggering accomplishments, his example is also about how a school can support a child who's blessed with one-in-a-billion genius to grow academically and personally in order to become a leader of his generation.

In a school that takes a lot of pride in "teaching to the top," Patrick was the peak. As a second-grader, he was taking middle school math and getting supplemental instruction from high school teachers. As a fourth-grader, he taught himself to play chess. Within two years he had achieved the coveted title of U.S. Master and won the first of his eight National Scholastic Chess Champion titles. As a fourteen-year-old freshman, Patrick became the youngest student ever to win the National High School Chess Championship. By freshman year, he had already begun to accrue the first of his eventual sixteen perfect scores on Advanced Placement exams, and by the time he was junior, he had completed all the math and science courses the School offered.

And Patrick made it all look easy. Such as the time he borrowed a teacher's AP Statistics textbook for a weekend, read it cover to cover, and earned a perfect score on the AP exam. Patrick stayed at The Meadows his senior year because the School kept him engaged academically and allowed him the flexibility to learn at his own frenetic pace. When teachers could no longer feed his intellect in math and science, the School supported Patrick's request to take university level courses through Stanford. By the time Patrick graduated, he had completed seven terms of Stanford's university-level math and physics classes, including such courses as Differential Equations, Real and Complex Analysis, and Thermodynamics. But even then, the teachers, administration, and his parents knew The Meadows was still contributing to his personal growth.

Patrick had come a long way from being the extremely shy second-grader who enrolled at The Meadows upon moving to Nevada in 1991. The path started in Lower School when June Pierce, then a second-grade teacher, first identified his tremendous intellectual potential. Each teacher thereafter understood Patrick's gifts and shortcomings—Lower School Director Isabelle Holman

recalls him being “in the top reading group, but he didn’t read with expression, and he didn’t like reading aloud”—and then tailored his classroom experiences while keeping him with his peers.

With time, Patrick eventually came out of his shell and even became quite comfortable speaking in front of groups. When the Chinese National Chess Team opened its 2000 U.S. tour in Las Vegas, Patrick gave the welcoming speech before an audience of 1,000—in Mandarin, which he’d taught himself.

During his senior year in high school, Patrick could easily have been succeeding academically in college rather than continuing on for his senior year, but already one of the youngest in his class, his parents felt it was in his best interest for him to remain at The Meadows and graduate with his class. Former Headmaster Will Richardson recalls one classic example of the socially graceful person Patrick had become as a result. “His AP Physics teacher, John Milburn, gave the class a problem set to do over the weekend in preparation for the big exam. On Monday, Mr. Milburn asked, ‘Well, how did you do?’ One kid said, ‘I got 17 out of 40, and I worked for 10 hours on Sunday. It’s ridiculously hard!’ So the other kids were commiserating with each other, and then Mr. Milburn said, ‘Patrick, how’d you do?’ And Patrick said, ‘Oh, I got ’em done. Some of them were rather challenging.’ As the class was packing up, Mr. Milburn asked Patrick, ‘How long did it take you?’ ‘Oh, almost two hours.’ ‘And you got ’em all right?’ ‘Yeah.’”

The lesson, Richardson says, is that Patrick matured socially, gained tremendous personal confidence, and become comfortable with his peer group. “He didn’t show off or anything. And that’s not a bad thing to learn.”

The Meadows’ Class of 2002 Valedictorian (he missed graduation because he was in Bethesda, Maryland, training with the U.S. Physics Olympiad Team), Patrick turned down offers to attend Princeton, Harvard, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, among others, in favor of the California Institute of Technology, where he was offered a full scholarship—a rare honor at any elite school. Patrick quickly became a legendary figure at Caltech. By the time he was a junior there, he had completed three terms of a notoriously difficult third-year graduate chemistry course—the only person, undergraduate or graduate student, to do so that year. What is more, he finished the yearlong, three-term course in just ten weeks, receiving an A-plus each term—the

only A-pluses that professor had given in his 30 years at Caltech. Patrick graduated first in his class in 2006 with simultaneous undergraduate degrees in Applied and Computational Mathematics and in Economics and with a graduate degree in Chemistry. He is presently a student at Stanford Business School studying microeconomic theory.

What Patrick will do in the real world is hard to imagine. He had two papers published in academic journals by the time he left The Meadows and roughly a dozen papers published in academic journals by the time he graduated from Caltech. He earned many of that school's top academic honors, including the Sigma Xi Award for producing the most outstanding piece of original scientific research by an undergraduate. His own DNA is set to handle a much greater load: His maternal grandfather won the National Medal of Science.

Richardson remembers the first time he saw Christina Hruska '96 in a classroom. It was when the tall, red-headed girl was in first grade at Gray Elementary, where he had just become principal. The teacher was reading Roald Dahl, the British author who loved a good pun. "While these little first-graders were totally enthralled, only one was really getting all of the word games," he says. "It was Christina, and she was giggling and covering her mouth with guffaws."

By the time Christina was in fifth grade, both she and Richardson were at The Meadows. The School was practically a fairy tale come true for a girl like her. "I was able to do anything and everything I wanted to try," she recalls, "every math and science course I could cram in, a smattering of two languages, handbell choir before school, an independent study religion/philosophy course in my free period, varsity sports year-round, and support with any other club I wanted to participate in or start."

She pursued them all in hopes of achieving "a balanced focus on excellence." For example, while she was twice All-State in volleyball and basketball, and won the state championship in discus, she also was a math and chemistry Olympian. At Princeton, she was a cadet leader in Air Force ROTC, an All-American rower who was the first woman to earn the university's Spirit Award, and a participant in several student-run community service organizations—all while earning a bachelor's degree in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering.

“The Meadows, in a way, permitted me the ability to take on so many different identities, so that when I entered Princeton, I did not see myself as solely a student, solely a musician, solely a member of a community dedicated to its service, or solely an athlete. I was a well-rounded individual who really enjoyed simultaneously pursuing many interests.”

Nonetheless, Richardson sees Christina as something more specific—an astronaut. She certainly has the right stuff: After graduating from Princeton '00, she was a fighter pilot in the Air Force while earning a master's in mechanical engineering from Georgia Tech '06. But if she never flies in space, it might have to do with her Meadows upbringing and the end product—what Richardson calls “a woman for all seasons.”

She considers her seven-year military service “as the extension of the opportunities I had at Meadows participating in many community service projects,” and she's now chasing new interests. She spent the first half of 2008 at a Taiwanese national lab on a research fellowship, helping a long-range project “to miniaturize biomedical devices for application in smaller packages—both machines which process material and for application in the body.” That fall, she went to the Harvard Business School to pursue an MBA.

What is all that well-roundedness adding up to “I'm still trying to figure that one out,” she says. “There are plenty of choices—almost too many.” Then, with Richardson's prediction in mind, she adds, “Perhaps building a Mars ‘spaceline’ company can be one of those options. I'll just make sure that the business model is not based on any of our U.S. legacy airline business models.”

Is that Christina's bright sense of humor or a really high goal?

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“The Meadows School was founded for the Christinas and Patricks of the world, on a certain level,” Richardson says. “There was a void in Las Vegas, and that was what Carolyn and Dr. Cobbley were looking to fill.”

The Meadows, like those esteemed, centuries-old Eastern prep schools, was founded to get the most out of each and every able and ambitious student. Chairman of the Board Lawrence

Epstein, who, as a boy, ended up going to a boarding school because The Meadows wasn't yet founded, is continually surprised by the success of the mission. "These kids are so ambitious. They know what they want to do, and they're so well-spoken and mature well beyond their years," he says. "I was a smart kid but I don't remember being anything like these kids."

The Meadows has also succeeded in graduating young adults who have an awareness of others in the world. It manifests in little ways: "To this day, I can't walk past someone in a hallway without saying 'Excuse me' and then smiling with the memory [of Lower School] in my mind," says Audrey Dolginoff '99. And it manifests in big ways: "What makes The Meadows truly exceptional is not only its unprecedented academics but also how it encourages students to learn about and appreciate all the cultures of our world," says Dilek Moore Jensen '92, who transferred to The Meadows from The American School in Switzerland and now owns a real estate development company in Las Vegas. "In the times we live, there is no better education we can give our children."

The Meadows has succeeded in creating products who contribute to society, too. This has happened internationally in humanitarian ways—there are dozens of examples like Holly Coombs '04, a theater arts major at Puget Sound who started a club on campus working to end global poverty—and locally in economic ways: "The Meadows has helped educate a new generation of thinkers and responsible adults and has helped to transform Las Vegas into a metropolitan city that competes on a global scale," says David J. Saltman '98, a graduate of Tufts University and Case Western School of Law who now works in real estate.

Above all, perhaps, The Meadows was founded to do all of the above and to create people who can lead with those qualities. Members of the Class of '08, as those who graduated before them, seem more than prepared to exemplify Chanin's implementation of the School's mission statement.

Ryan Saxe, the young Darfur activist, doesn't just want to study political science or get a law degree, he wants to be involved in international human rights. "That's where my passion lies."

Marc Beck, who needed twelve years of financial aid to get through The Meadows, doesn't just want to be a doctor, he wants to be an "advocate for those who go to disadvantaged schools,

because I've gone to The Meadows School my whole life, and I think other kids should have that opportunity."

Then there's the tireless Kenny Chen, who doesn't want just a career in education, he wants to be the Secretary of Education. "I could picture myself doing that," he says. "The public school systems are allowing untapped potential in kids to go to waste."

If these products of The Meadows School—or any others that you've met in this chapter—sound a bit idealistic, consider the sources behind the School itself. There's kindergarten teacher Linda Verbon, who once, long ago, left the security of public schools for lower pay but a higher ideal. There's Henry Chanin, the man who pulled the plug on a lucrative banking career so he could teach teenagers for a salary that probably equaled what he made on a good day in the 1980s. There's Barbara Stout, who, despite having no children of her own at The Meadows, has served on the Board for more than twenty years. The models of obligation go on and on.

Of course, that list starts and ends with Carolyn Goodman. As the Founder, fund-raiser, and lead worker bee, she has had a presence on campus every day for twenty-five years, never drawing a paycheck. It would take Patrick Hummel to calculate the monetary value of her sweat equity, but what's most impressive is the vast range of what she did and the results. During all of those years—and for her, The Meadows history is much longer than twenty-five years—she was The Meadows' long-serving first Board President, then became the School's President, more recently served as Head of School, and again returned to the position of School President in 2008. And this wasn't some ceremonial position; Carolyn's desk was where the buck always stopped. It was also where The Meadows' college networking happened. Amid all of her other duties, she served as the full-time College Counselor from the School's inception through 2004. Not only did she help students find the right colleges, she also helped get them in—back when this Las Vegas was *that* Las Vegas.

"When I went to school in Massachusetts, people thought I was a gangster," Epstein says. "I can't tell you how many times people asked me if I lived in a hotel. Las Vegas has changed so much over the years. I still think that we're always fighting some bias when you're in the admissions office of Harvard and Yale. But we've placed kids there, and that stigma is greatly

diminished, partly due to Carolyn. As our College Counselor for many years, she broke down a lot of those walls and shattered stereotypes.”

And she did it from nothing, with nothing, for nothing. In the most unlikely of places, she developed an idea from mirage to miracle. With all due respect to mission statements and charters and traditions, what better guiding light for each Meadows graduate than Carolyn Goodman

While Carolyn Goodman’s extraordinary contributions to the success of The Meadows School’s first 25 years are well known by The Meadows Family and by the Las Vegas community at large, her leadership achievements have also been recognized and acknowledged statewide and nationally. In 1989, Carolyn was named “Distinguished Nevadan” by the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada. On a national level, she was selected in 2006 by the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) to receive the prestigious Seymour Preston Award as an outstanding leader in independent- school education.

“When it comes to walking the walk, no one does it better than Carolyn,” says Dr. Judy Reese, a former Meadows School Development Director and parent.<sup>1</sup> “She embodies the definition of altruism.”

And, more importantly, leadership. While the School’s foundation undoubtedly has been built with a tremendous amount of assets—from parent volunteers to building donors—“the one we could never re-create is Carolyn,” Epstein says. “She could have been the CEO of General Electric—that’s the kind of person she is. But she did this instead.”