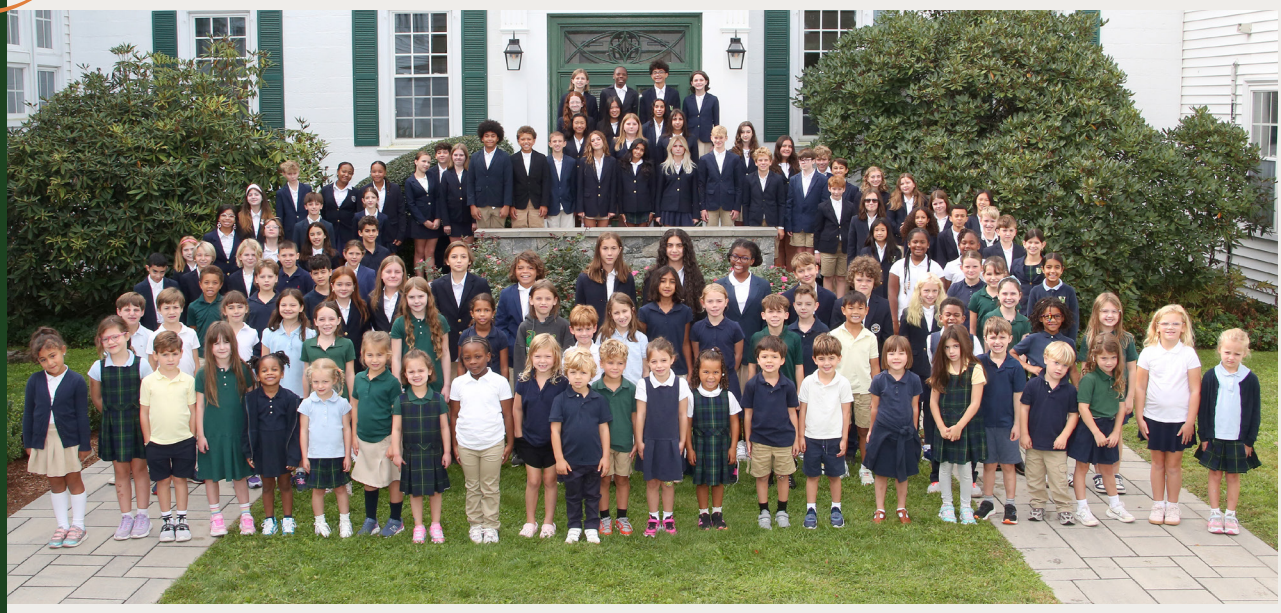
The Future is in Our Care



# Thank You for your Support!



Unquowa SCHOOL

CURA FUTURI NOBIS EST. 1917

## Annual Report for 2025-2026 School Year

*"The mission of The Unquowa School is to develop, educate and prepare our family of children with an unafraid spirit to achieve their personal best in a changing world."*



## *from the Board President ~*

Good evening to our Unquowa community - faculty, staff, parents, alumni, and friends. As the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Unquowa School, it is my distinct honor to welcome you to our annual meeting. We gather here to look back and reflect upon the past year at Unquowa -- to celebrate our students, and our accomplishments and to understand and address the challenges of an independent school education in a changing demographic environment.

Unquowa is intentionally designed around the needs of children, from their earliest school experiences through the transition to adolescence. We believe strongly in the value of Pre-K through eighth grade education. Our youngest students regularly participate in academic and artistic activities that allow them to present what they've learned in front of their peers. Students in the middle grades venture early into activities that develop their critical thinking and creative skills and our eighth graders take their well-earned role as leaders and mentors in the school, setting themselves up for success as they venture off to high school.

We are all working diligently to increase enrollment in the face of the headwinds from a declining school-age population in Connecticut, the cost of living in Fairfield County, and particularly, our neighboring towns, as well as the many choices available to parents in this area for their child's education. To help with this, we have added admissions expertise. This will help us to communicate our strengths more effectively and to reach out and partner with organizations that will introduce qualified students. Additionally, we are strengthening the communication with current families so they can see and understand their children's experience more fully. At the same time, the Board is focused on strengthening the school's finances and managing rising costs, while sustaining the quality of education we provide.

To attract new families and assure the confidence of those already here, we must make the value of an Unquowa education clear at every grade level. In the Pre-K through fourth grades, our teachers understand this is a critical window for developing problem-solving resilience. Students need to be given the space to try and fail in the course of learning. They need to learn to take academic and artistic chances in a safe space. In grades 5 through 8, the development of critical thinking and creative skills will be extremely valuable for future success. As AI makes answers easier to obtain, knowing the answer is no longer enough. Students must be able to ask good questions, evaluate what they are told and use what they know with sound ethical judgement and originality. Unquowa's approach goes far beyond memorization of dates and lists and definitions to one of analyzing the motivation behind an historical event or designing a science experiment or writing an original story.

As we look to the year ahead, we have much to be confident about: a clear educational purpose, dedicated faculty and staff, and a community deeply invested in our children's growth. Our responsibility is to build on those strengths – to introduce more families to Unquowa, deepen the connections within our community, and keep our students at the center of every decision. On behalf of the Board, thank you for your trust, your commitment, and the many ways you contribute to the school. Together, we can ensure that Unquowa remains a place where children discover their voices, learn to think for themselves, and grow ready to meet what comes next. I look forward to the year ahead with confidence and gratitude, and I am proud to share that work with all of you. As our motto states – "*The future is in our care*".

*Joan Panagos, Board of Governor's President*
*Mother of Lucy'16, Lola'17 and Lily'19*

# The Future is in Our Care



# *from the Head of School ~*

The late Miller Williams wrote the inaugural poem "Of History and Hope" in nineteen ninety-seven, long before the threat of artificial intelligence becoming a dominant force in our society was a common concern. While I haven't committed the entire poem to memory, its core truth has always stayed with me: as a democracy, we have not yet fully accomplished our founders' goal of equality and justice for all, but that we can pass that goal down to our children as a "long gift". As Williams so beautifully wrote, our children's eyes "are already set on a land we will never visit," so our job as educators and parents is to ensure they have what they need to get there successfully...the long gift, as he called it.

As a concept, the long gift serves as a warm, intellectual companion to the "unafraid spirit" that our school's mission aims to instill in every young person who walks through our doors. Over the past few decades, Unquowa's commitment to innovative programming has built the framework to provide children with both that unafraid spirit and the practical tools they will need to thrive in the ever-changing world.

More than ever, as a forward-thinking school, we must constantly re-evaluate how we teach. We cannot continue preparing students for a world that is already disappearing; we must prepare them for the radically different world they are actually entering. In this new landscape, the ultimate advantage will no longer belong to the person who simply memorizes the most information. Instead, it will belong to the individuals who know how to use information - to think, to build, and to lead.

For over 150 years, traditional schooling has trained children to become reliable workers by reinforcing a specific checklist: show up on time, follow instructions, memorize information, and complete the task.

While that system was designed during the Industrial Revolution to produce excellent workers at all levels, the future economy will reward something entirely different. The most valuable individuals in the next era won't just be excellent executors; they will be problem framers. They will be the people who see patterns that others miss, ask better, deeper questions, design innovative solutions, and build new systems instead of merely following old ones.

At Unquowa, our teachers intentionally focus on developing these problem framers by teaching our young people to think logically, philosophically, and critically. We want our students to be the independent thinkers who will lead the next era, equipped to continue finding true meaning in the world.

If machines eventually solve many of our basic survival problems, our children will still face the deepest human question of all: Why am I here? In a world that will potentially be shaped by AI, human purpose will matter more, not less. We want our young people to be able to identify their purpose, recognize their responsibilities, and accept the call to the meaningful service that follows.

Our goal at Unquowa has never been to raise children who can only successfully pass tests. Test scores fade and real life evaluation replaces them. Our goal remains to raise human beings who can confidently meet whatever comes next with confident, curious minds, strong character, and ethical, independent thinking. To do this, we must give them the academic tools, scientific literacy, and emotional intelligence required to build resilience and deep human connections in everyday life.

That is our "long gift" to our children, and we take the responsibility of providing it very seriously every day.

*Sharon Lauer, Head of School*

## *The Future is in Our Care*



## *from the Board Treasurer ~*

I am pleased to report on a challenging, yet enriching, year for the Unquowa School. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2026, we funded a number of improvements and updates to the school campus ($100K), a digital marketing campaign ($15K) and continued work with StoryScape ($50K), a leader in effective private school marketing, as revenues from all sources covered most of the operational expenses.

The Investment Committee, under the direction of Paul Greenberg, has guided the school's endowment net assets, along with reserves, to nearly $3.03M. In addition, parent giving, via *The Fund for Unquowa*, along with the remarkable support from the Unquowa Parents' Association continue to play a vital role in bridging the gap between tuition and what it costs to provide an Unquowa education for all our students.

The Finance Committee continues to focus on key variables and risks so we can identify potential challenges to Unquowa's financial model, while developing the best options and solutions for our community. One of our challenges to a balanced budget is new student enrollment, while maintaining a strong reenrollment. In 2026, Unquowa added a Director of Enrollment and Marketing to lead a talented team to drive student recruitment and enrollment outcomes.

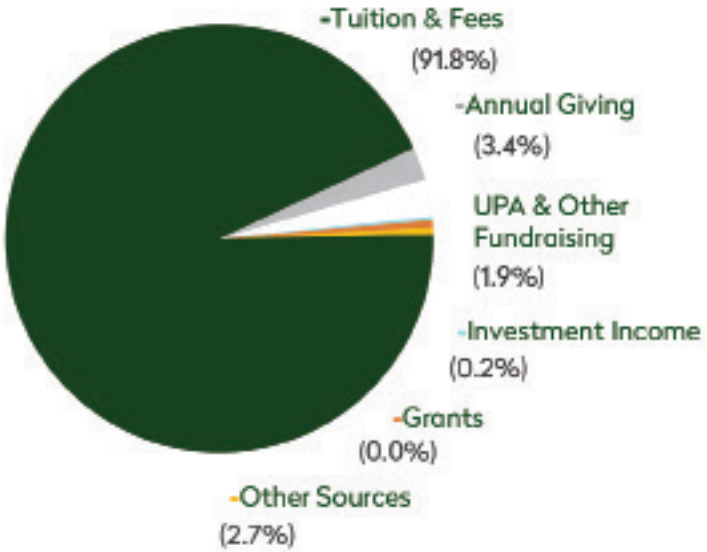
Driven by an experienced leadership team and effective management, as well as the knowledge gained over its 109-year history, Unquowa remains well positioned for long-term success in a challenging world. I would like to thank every member of our community and hope you will continue to help us achieve our goals.

*Karl Martone, Board of Governor's Treasurer*
*Father of Max'09*

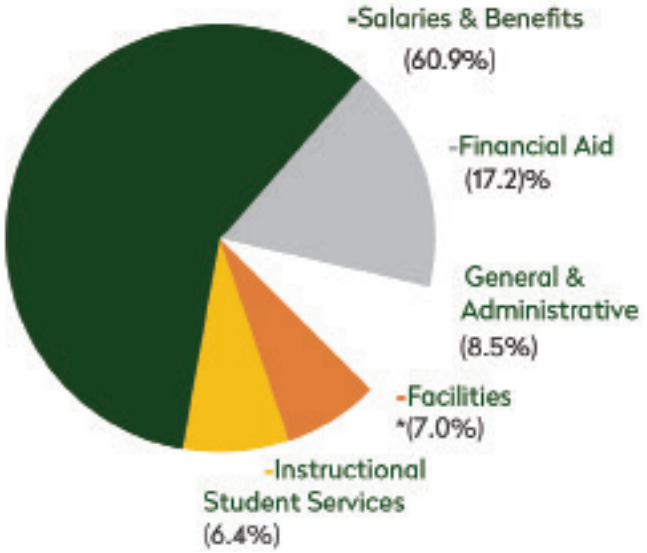
### UNQUOWA SCHOOL STATEMENT OF OPERATING ACTIVITIES

YEAR END - JUNE 30, 2026

**Total Operating Revenues:**




**Total Operating Expenses:**




## *The Future is in Our Care*

# *Annual Giving~*

The Fund for Unquowa not only provides vital support for programming, financial aid, student activities, professional development and salaries, it also supports socio-economic diversity, artistic exploration and updates to our campus and technological resources, not to mention helping bring inspiring musicians, artists and other leaders to our children.

Last year, our community generously embraced the shared responsibility that hangs over the school door: "Cura Futuri Nobis. The Future is In Our Care," donating $220,000. Please accept our gratitude and keep us as your philanthropic priority.

*Robin Pompa & Melody Waterhouse,*
*2024-2025 The Fund For Unquowa Co Chairs*

## Total $219,894 - From July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026

### CENTENNIAL CIRCLE
($25,000 AND UP)

Anonymous Donor

### LEADERSHIP CIRCLE
($15,000 - 24,999)

Alexander Thomson
and Katie Shields Thomson
Steven and Joan Panagos

### 1917 FOUNDERS' SOCIETY
($10,000 TO $14,999)

Paul and Ellen Greenberg
David and Heather Winkelmann
Philipp Kusche and Melody Waterhouse

### THE WINTERFEST SOCIETY
($5,000 TO $9,999)

Estate of Richard McKinley III
Fairfield County Community Foundation
Roberts Family Charitable Fund
Alison and Mark Smith
Alan and Debbie Steckler

### THE BROOK SOCIETY
($2,500 TO $4,999)

Lindsay and Nick Alexander
Brandon and Brooke Clark
Trisha and Mark Doyle
John and Sarah Freeman Foundation
Kari and Joseph Kazer
Sharon Lauer and Jerry Joseph
MacAllaster Family Foundation
Gregory and Hilary Tanner
Gabriele and Bradley Topar'99

### THE GARDEN CIRCLE
($1,250 TO $2,499)

American Online Giving Foundation
Amy Bedi and Vivek Bedi
Jill and Sean Curran
Peter and Bridgett diBonaventura
Susan and Tom Lenci
David and Elizabeth McKinnis
Jacqueline and Andre Nelson
Sara Parks and Frank Lin
Robin and William Pompa
Cecily Stoddard Stranahan'47

### THE MAYPOLE SOCIETY
($750 TO $1,249)

Athena and Daniel Adamson
Jennifer and Michael Evanko
John Freeman
William and Joan Grabe
Sarah and Mike Hart
Daniel and Barbara Holzer
Brian and Sharon Miles
Morgan Stanley
James and Maria Mulvehill
Neuberger Berman
Nor' Easter Foundation (Henry duPont '81)
Michael and Jill Pengue
Jacqueline and Jonathan Shahrabani
Peter and Jo Toolan
UBS-AMER
Lesley Vincent and Lauren Coakley Vincent
Karen and Dan Williamson

### THE GATOR SOCIETY
($350 TO $749)

Apple
Bank of America
Janice and Dick Cerone
Sara and Jon Deren
Ariana and Luke Ferrandino
Carlene and Paul Gordon
Scott and Colleen Jacques
Adriana and Kevin Liberatore
David and Sharon Mack
Amber McCartney and Jeremy Kennard
Anya and Charlie Mezak
Leonardo Mora and Ada Cacciatore
Allie and Steve Murphy
Anna Panagos-Chandler
Lucy Panagos'16
Lily Panagos'19

*The Future is in Our Care*

Matt and Gail Smith
Anthony and Jenna Venditto
Mary Anne Whelan'52
Jenah and Jack Yeung

## FRIENDS OF UNQUOWA

(UP TO $349)

Steve Aikenhead'54
Christopher Anderheggen'70
Andrew and Gina Arnold
Natasha Auguste-Williams
Ernesto and Faith Barbuto
T. Brooks Barrett'47
Cheryl Bennett-Davidowitz
and Robert Davidowitz
Elizabeth W. Brew Boyd'70
Jonathan Brew'72
Robert and Deborah Colantuoni
Eric Dawson''76
Maureen and Djibril Diallo
Mary Erler
Diane Galasso
Haskell Family Foundation
Sandy and Kate Haviland
Jeffrey Joseph
Wendy Kerr
Lisa and Michael Kirsic
Evan Lawrence'68
Shelley Levi and Kevin Sorhaindo
Carol and Alvaro Lujan
Sasha Mack'05
Max Martone'09
Michael McCormick
Dylan McCormick'16
Bruce and Sally McDermott
Patrick McGettigan and Elliott Glass
Jennifer McLevy-Bazzanella
and John Bazzanella
Lloyd Mitchell
Madison Mitchell'22
Morgan Stanley
John and Lynne Morgan
Jacqui and John Mudre
Michael O'Brien and Margaret Codan
David and Amber O'Connell
Jennifer and Tim O'Neill
Ann Palm
Sarah and Ross Raggio
Scott and Laurie Renzulli
Hans and Jennifer Richter
Lauren Rocheleau and Mark Lotty
William Sadd and Megan Kordenbrock
Laura Schmid
Madeline Shantz'19
Linda and William Shelton'55
Rebecca Shepard'49
Jasmine and Shawnta Smith-Cruz
Harald and Stephanie Stavnes
Lee Streett'51
Sankar and Subhashree Sunder
Sonya Thompson
Yei and Ying Tien
Karen Tripoli
Jon Richard Turner'48
Lucinda White and Thomas Kelley
Chester Williamson
Judy Williamson
Jessica Wolf

## ALUMNI

Christopher Anderheggen'70
Steve Aikenhead'54
T. Brooks Barrett'47
Elizabeth W. Brew Boyd'70
Jonathan Brew'72
Eric Dawson'76
Evan Lawrence'68
Sasha Mack'05
Max Martone'09
Dylan McCormick'16
Madison Mitchell'22
Lucy Panagos'16
Lily Panagos'19
Jon Richard Turner'48
Rebecca Shepard'49
William Shelton'55
Madeline Shantz'19
Cecily Stoddard Stranahan'47
Lee Streett'51
Bradley Topar'99
Mary Anne Whelan'52

## COMPANIES & FOUNDATIONS

American Online Giving Foundation
Apple
Bank of America
Estate of Richard McKinley III
Fairfield County Community Foundation
John and Sarah Freeman Foundation
Haskell Family Foundation
MacAllaster Family Foundation
Morgan Stanley
Neuberger Berman
Nor' Easter Foundation (Henry duPont '81)
Roberts Family Charitable Fund
Panagos Charitable Fund
UBS-AMER

## IN KIND

Active Dog CT
Adventure Park at Discovery Museum
Amie Guyette Hall
Annick Winokur
Athena Adamson
Bedgear
Bijou Theatre
Bojana Jankovic Weatherly
Bricks & Minifigs
Bridgett DiBonaventura
Camp Eastwood
Caroline Pech
CB Sportif Ski & Bike
Chris Capelle
Dani Pitts
Dean Fisher
Doorbell Barbers

Eyecare Associates PC
Fairfield County Fitness (FC Fit)
Fairfield Family Health
Fairfield Theater Company
Fairfield University Athletics
Fatto A Mano
FS8
Gruel Brittania
Holzer Family
Howe Family
Jenah Yeung
Joe and Suzanne Upton
KiiN
Kneaded Recovery
Lauren Benz
Lewis Associates Land Surveying & Civil Engineering
Lumani Family
Marsona Salon
National Museum of Racing and Hall of Fame
New World Stages
Optimal Sports Therapy and Wellness by Yaun Chiropractic
Park CIty Music Hall
Patrick McGettigan
Rosie's
Ruggieri Family
Saugatuck Rowing Club
Shalva Clinic
Silas Capital
Soccer and Rugby Imports
SoNo Baking Co.
Sunflower Bee Interiors
SweatHouz
Tennis Club of Trumbull
The Clubhouse Westport
The Home Cook CT
The Post
The Studio at Penny Lane
Tieks by Gavrieli
Trattoria A'vucchella
Trek
Violet Lumani
Wings Over Water
Woodstock Inn & Resort
Yeung Family

## GRANDPARENTS .....IN HONOR OF

Diane Galasso..... Ava Sylvestro'24, Taylor Sylvestro'34 (Grade 1)
William and Joan Grabe.....Derek Grabe'14, Nicole Grabe'11
John and Sarah Freeman..... Addie Mulvehill'24, Eleanor Mulvehill'26, Charlotte Mulvehill'28 (Grade 7), Maeve Mulvehill'31 (Grade 4)
Sharon Lauer and Jerry Joseph..... Vivian Kelley'25
Susan and Tom Lenci..... Noah Clark'26 (Grade 8),Ezra Clark'31 (Grade 4), Zoe Clark"35 (Kindergarten)
Shelley Levi and Kevin Sorhaindo.....Anthony Venditto'25, Archer Venditto'30(Grade 5)
Anna Panagos-Chandler..... Lily Panagos'19, Lola Panagos'17, Lucy Panagos'16
Laura Schmid.....Ines Alexander'25, Ellie Alexander'28 (Grade 7)
Yei and Ying Tien.....Blythe Tien'30
Karen Tripoli.....Henry Clark'28 (Grade 7), Gabriel Clark'36 (PreK)
Lucinda White and Thomas Kelley.....Graham Kelley'28
Chester Williamson.....Jojo Williamson'32 (Grade 3)
Judy Williamson.....Jojo Williamson'32 (Grade 3)



*The Future is in Our Care*



## 2026-2027 UNQUOWA BOARD OF GOVERNORS

JOAN PANAGOS - President • PAUL GREENBERG - Vice President • KARL MARTONE - Treasurer • HEATHER WINKELMANN - Secretary

NICK ALEXANDER • BRANDON CLARK • LAUREN COAKLEY VINCENT • TRISHA DOYLE • MARIA MULVEHILL

JACQUELINE NELSON • ROBIN POMPA • ALISON ROBERTS • ALISON SMITH • HILARY TANNER • MELODY WATERHOUSE

JENAH YEUNG • BARBARA HOLZER(UPA) * PATRICK MCGETTIGAN(UPA) * ALAN STECKLER *not in photo

# Unquowa Parents' Association ~

During the 2025-2026 school year, parent volunteers in the Unquowa Parents' Association came together to raise funds to support their children's school while promoting events and activities to strengthen the connections among our students, families and faculty.

Their extraordinarily successful fundraising efforts supported both traditions and innovation, and impacted every child and every classroom.

Funds raised by the UPA helped to underwrite a wide range of activities and events throughout the year - Winterfest, spring musicals, teacher appreciation, commencement, yearbooks for every student, custom sweatshirts for 8th grade & much more.

A Giving Tree Challenge from the Board of Governors at the Spring Gala & Auction raised an additional $47,000 for financial aid.

**Total UPA Net Profits July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026 - $70,246**

**Unquowa Parent Social.....$1,260**

**Celebrate Unquowa Gala & Auction.....$112,527**

**Gator Goods Gift Shop.....$459**



Unquowa's founding Headmistress, Virginia Birdsall (second from left) with the school's first faculty in 1917.

# The Unquowa School Endowment ~

**Total as of June 30, 2026 - $3,027,509**

When Unquowa celebrated its first 100 years during the 2017-18 school year, the Board launched the *Second Century Campaign for Endowment* in an effort to dramatically strengthen the school's financial foundation.
A strong endowment is vital to every independent school. Endowment funds, some of which are restricted, are carefully invested so that a portion of earnings each year will provide critical resources to the school and its students.

A healthy endowment protects against the potential impact of future market or enrollment fluctuations and ensures unwavering support for curriculum, innovative programming, financial aid commitments and faculty.

## NAMED ENDOWMENT FUNDS AT UNQUOWA

***Created with endowment gifts of $25,000 or more***

Proceeds from family funds may be directed by the donor towards an area of interest at the school or may be unrestricted for the school's leadership to determine where they are needed most.

We are so grateful to these donors who have already established Named Funds in Unquowa's endowment.

**~ The Brewer and Beach Family Fund**
**~ Friends of Maria Taylor Fund**
**~ The Alan '53 and Arthur '54 Kornblut Endowed Fund for Tuition Support**
**~ The Russo Family Fund**
**~ The Jean Carpenter Winton '34 Endowment Fund**

## The Future is in Our Care

# Legacy Giving Society ~

Our celebration of The Unquowa School's first 100 years was a chance to look back... and to look ahead.

As alumni, parents, grandparents and faculty came together to mark this historic milestone, we had both the opportunity and responsibility to launch Unquowa's second century from a position of financial strength.

Established in 2012, Unquowa's *Carl Churchill Legacy Giving Society* is named for headmaster Carl Churchill, whose twenty year' tenure shaped the early years of Unquowa's history and laid the firm foundation for its progressive philosophy.

Legacy giving offers a unique level of long-term security that strengthens Unquowa's financial foundation for the future. As with all giving to the school, donors have the option of directing a legacy gift towards an area at the school that they are passionate about or leaving it unrestricted for the school's leadership to determine where it is needed most.



We are so grateful to these dedicated families who have made a bequest to Unquowa in their wills or whose family has established a legacy gift in their name to support the school for years to come. Please let us know if you have made a bequest to Unquowa so that we can thank you and recognize you as a member of the *Carl Churchill Legacy Giving Society*.

**~ Steve Aikenhead, '54**
**~ Georgiana Brewer Beach,* '26**
**~ Kate and Sandy Haviland, Charlie '10, Grace '13**
**~ Craig Knebel, * former faculty**
**~ Bruce G. Lockhart,* '48**
**~ Norman Morse,* '33**
**~ Joan and Steve Panagos, Lucy '16, Lola '17, Lily '19**
**~ Ruth Powell,* former faculty**
**~ Carolyn Gaines Ruckle, '53**
**~ Jean Carpenter Winton,* '34**

**deceased*

A variety of legacy giving methods are available at Unquowa and each offers a different path that can be taken to support the school while providing possible tax and inheritance benefits to the donor and their family. Since the school is not in a position to provide financial advice, if you are considering making a planned legacy gift, we strongly urge you to discuss these options with your financial advisor.

Together we are making Unquowa stronger for the students who are here now and for those who will join the Unquowa family in the future. On behalf of all of them, thank you.

To learn more, visit the Giving section of the school's website or contact Janice Cerone in the Business Office at 203-362-2561 or janice.cerone@unquowa.org.

*We have carefully reviewed the names listed in this report but recognize that errors may still occur.*
*Please accept our sincere apology if your name has been omitted, misspelled or incorrectly listed.*
*So we may correct our records, please notify:*
*Janice Cerone at janicecerone@unquowa.org*

## The Future is in Our Care