April 8, 2022

Dear Thacher Community,

On March 21, I welcomed students back from Spring Break and shared my first TOADTalk as Acting Head of School. In it, I referenced a book given to me in my youth entitled *14,000 Things to Be Happy About* by Barbara Ann Kipfer. As I look ahead to a traditionally busy Thacher Spring, I hope to lead from a place of appreciating the small, tangible things that bring joy—the many things to be happy about: the smell of orange blossoms, the parade of horses out to Gymkhana field each afternoon, meals shared in community, listening to students laughing together and engaging in thoughtful conversation. These seemingly small moments make a big difference; collectively, they make the Thacher experience.

While this year has certainly presented us with challenges, daily life on campus is joyful, productive, and filled with inquiry and optimism. Whether they’re hanging out with friends, attending classes, sports practices, and games, riding their horses, heading out for a hike, or preparing for a camping trip, my goal as acting head of school is to ensure that students continue to have a consistent and meaningful educational experience at Thacher. Focusing on the student experience is my biggest priority, and that commitment is shared by our incredible faculty.

On April 24, we will kick off our third annual Walker Bell Challenge. The “walker” bell has called the Thacher community together for dinner for generations, and we look forward to continuing that tradition, and the tradition of the Walker Bell Challenge, for many years to come. **Throughout the week of April 24-29, we invite you to join our students, faculty, staff, and community for Assembly, classroom visits, guest speakers, and special performances.** We invite you to see and experience the many small moments whose collective impact makes Thacher, Thacher. In addition, I hope you will share with us the small moments that made a difference in your experience, or your child(ren)’s experience at Thacher—the 14,000 things to be happy about here at Casa de Piedra.

Of course, the student experience doesn’t happen by accident. It requires tremendous community support each year. The Walker Bell Challenge is a great opportunity to show your support for our students, faculty, and programs. As in years past, we will ask you to help unlock challenge funds for our financial aid program, so we may continue to increase access to a Thacher education. One in three Thacher students today receives financial aid, and thanks to your previous support and growth in the Annual Fund, we now award over $4M in support, a number that has increased by more than $1M in the last five years. If you would like to give now, [please click here](#).
As Blossom often shares, Thacher is a collective endeavor. There are no passengers here. We are all crew, working together toward a common goal, shared values, and collective mission. Meaningful change takes time—and your support. We cannot do this alone, nor would we endeavor to do so. Everyone in this community is thus part of Thacher’s history, and its future.

I look forward to seeing you during one of the many community offerings during the Walker Bell Challenge, and for the opportunity to celebrate the little things together. Thank you for all you have done, and continue to do, to give our students a meaningful and memorable experience here at Casa de Piedra.

Sincerely,

Jeff Hooper
Acting Head of School
The Thacher School

P.S. If you are interested in seeing my TOAD Talk and a smattering of the 14,000 Things to Be Happy About, you may do so here.