



THE TRADITION OF LONG FALL TRIPS
HAS RETURNED.

A Message **from the Director**

Dear Putney alumni, parents, and friends,



Emily Jones

*Director of
The Putney School*

Two weeks after classes started this fall, all the students packed up and set out on Long Fall. In groups of about eight, they hiked the Long Trail or in the White Mountains, kayaked on Lake Champlain, canoed various rivers, biked back roads, tackled ropes courses, and cooked and slept in the open. New Englanders have long believed that wilderness is good for kids, sending them off to summer camp to live in tents and teaching them to make campfires in Scouts. Although we have students from many cultures at Putney, some of whom do not come with the conviction that this is a good idea, we continue to insist that spending time in the woods is a piece of our core curriculum.

We see many obvious benefits. Students learn that they can do things they were pretty sure they were incapable of. They learn that different ones among them become leaders in different contexts. They learn that muddy and filthy is fun, if they didn't get born knowing it. Most important, perhaps, they learn to notice what they walked by before, to see the trees for the

woods, to recognize birds by their calls, to populate the natural world with specifics where before it was just a backdrop to the manmade. This year the fall weather was glorious, and almost every group came back insisting that their trip was the best. From what I hear from alumni of every generation, these weeks will last in our students' minds forever. The trips will have an impact on how they see man's place in the natural world, and will give many of them a lifelong love of the outdoors. In a country in which schools are canceling recess to increase time for test preparation, we are very lucky to have the freedom to do this.

Interestingly, science is beginning to support what educators have observed for years about the importance of nature to young people.* It turns out that simply having trees and grass visible on a school's grounds improves learning. Using outdoor activities—from walking in the woods to planting gardens to serious environmental education programs—have all been correlated with better test scores across the board, and so

there is some hope that as a result of this recent research, the tide will turn and fewer students across the country will be locked indoors throughout their educational lives.

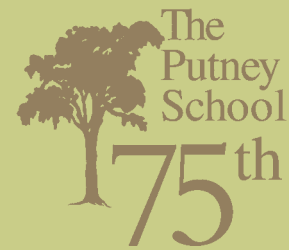
All the best to all of you,

—Emily

*Much of this research is summarized in the National Wildlife Federation report, "Back to School: Back Outside," which is available on their website. It provides a complete bibliography.



**"TO WISH TO LIVE ADVENTUROUSLY THOUGH NOT RECKLESSLY,
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THAT ONE DEFINITELY PROGRESSES ALONG THE LONG SLOW ROAD
TOWARD ACHIEVING A CIVILIZATION WORTHY OF THE NAME"
—FROM CARMELITA HINTON FUNDAMENTAL BELIEFS**



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