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**SUPER-
WOMEN**
pg. 52

**+ Also
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At **Perkiomen School**,
the “difference maker”
of boarding school
changes students’ lives
in a safe, encouraging
environment designed
to help them thrive.

page 62



ALL ABOARD

AT PERKIOMEN SCHOOL, THE “DIFFERENCE MAKER” OF BOARDING SCHOOL CHANGES STUDENTS’ LIVES IN A SAFE, ENCOURAGING ENVIRONMENT DESIGNED TO HELP THEM THRIVE.

BY PHIL GIANFICARO | PHOTOS BY JODY ROBINSON

When asked to cite perhaps the most significant benefit to students who attend boarding school at Perkiomen School, Head of School Mark A. Devey has the answer on the tip of his tongue.

“The faculty are ever-present,” says Devey, who has been leading the school since 2015. “That is the biggest difference maker in changing the lives of these kids. Boarding offers something different.” Say a student is struggling in math and needs a tutor, is working on violin lessons, plays afterschool sports, and wants to be in the drama production. If they’re at Perkiomen, they get all of that. Parents don’t have to scramble. It’s one-stop shopping.”

Devey emphasizes the advantages of the student-staff connection for boarding students.

“The benefit to boarding here is we have time with the students; 95 percent of our teachers live on campus,” he says, noting that 165 of Perkiomen’s 330 student population are boarders. “I worked at premier day schools all around the country. As outstanding as the school may have been, at the end of each day, I felt an emptiness. One has so little time to interact with the students.

“At Perkiomen, teachers and staff have extra time to invest in their students,” he continues. “We work with students around the clock, and we have a wonderful learning center for those who need greater academic support. When students board here, we can better meet their needs in a warm and welcoming environment. These are the critical moments where we can

have a significant impact as we prepare the students for college and beyond.”

Founded in 1875 and spread across a lush 185-acre campus in Pennsburg, Montgomery County, Perkiomen School is an independent, co-educational, college-preparatory boarding and day school for students in grades six through 12, and also offers a year for post-graduate students. Perkiomen School features four dormitories, a dining hall, a health center, and faculty housing. Students can take advantage of an athletic center with a swimming pool, two gymnasiums, a weight room, eight tennis courts, multiple athletic fields, and an indoor and outdoor batting cage.

“We are just about to complete our \$30 million capital campaign, which will fund a student center and new entrance to the campus, a track and turf field and three more full-size athletic fields, and an outdoor play area,” says Devey, whose commitment to the athletic programs is no surprise given his athletic career; an All-America athlete, Devey starred on the soccer team at Moravian Academy in Bethlehem and later at the University of North Carolina and US U-20 National Team.

Perkiomen School is among a small per-



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centage of K-12 boarding schools in the United States. Approximately 35,000 students attend private schools as boarders, mostly on the East Coast, according to The Association of Boarding Schools. Despite the relatively small numbers, the benefits academically and socially are immeasurable.

“The primary benefit to a boarding school like Perkiomen, I believe, is that students learn to be problem solvers,” says Amber Goupil, who has been at Perkiomen for 12 years, and is in her first year as assistant head of school for student life. “Students who board here learn to manage their time, learn how to get their work done, how to do laundry, and where to seek out help for problems. They learn to navigate certain types of personalities, and who they are within the community. They meet people from around the world. The social development for boarding students is

immense. They figure out who they are.”

Among the myriad benefits for students (day and boarding alike) is the Institutes at Perkiomen School, which entail entrepreneurship, artificial intelligence, medicine, and design. The institutes guide students in exploring new ideas and encourages them to interact with and apply the knowledge and skills they learn in the process.

“We create a college-like experience where kids get to get their feet wet and learn more about what field they might be invested in, at a time where the stakes aren’t as high,” says Devey. “Wouldn’t you like to have a better sense of self before making life commitments? At Perkiomen, you can feel it out while you’re still in high school.”

Technologically, Perkiomen School also offers a digital arts lab and an Apple lab. All dorm rooms have internet connectivity, and

all classrooms have computers and ActivBoards. Also, the school’s Innovation Center—the hub of the entrepreneur institute—is a cutting-edge makerspace equipped with collaborative workspaces, computer and manufacturing equipment, and multiple 3D printers.

“We bought the 3D printers when we opened the entrepreneur institute,” says Devey. “When the printers needed to be repaired, we hired professionals. Now, our students repair them, and each student builds their own 3D printer. That’s a metaphor for who we are. We create a culture of empowering students. We provide opportunities for active learning, and encourage students to take risks and be responsible. That’s exponential growth.”

Devey realizes that myths and misconceptions persist regarding boarding schools, though he is quick to dispel them.

“The first one is that kids are sent to boarding school because they’re in trouble or are unhappy at home,” he says. “But, it’s exactly the opposite. Our kids here come from great families, and we don’t have disciplinary problems. The kids come here for the love of learning, competitive sports, and vibrant arts.”

Recent research supports Devey’s assertion. Nearly 90 percent of boarding students reported a happy home life, according to a survey conducted by *U.S. News & World Report*. Furthermore, 60 percent say their main reason for attending a boarding school is to get a better education.

“Being able to work with kids individually, and giving them the attention every kid deserves, is what makes independent schools different,” Devey adds. “At Perkiomen School, we can offer a life-changing opportunity for students who live locally and those from around the world. Students here are in a safe, encouraging environment that helps them flourish.” ■

ABOUT PERKIOMEN SCHOOL

With an average class size of 11 and a student-to-faculty ratio of 7:1, Perkiomen School affords students the best of a liberal arts education in a world-class learning environment while cultivating a spirit of exploration and entrepreneurship. The school promotes problem-solving beyond the classroom, making education relevant and exportable to an uncertain future.

Perkiomen School offers 132 academic classes overall, as well as 27 Advanced Placement and 20 Honors classes. Perkiomen supports 42 teams across 20 sports, plus 21 clubs and activities and seven leadership organizations.

While many Perkiomen School students live in Pennsylvania, the student body includes those from 14 U.S. states and 28 countries. Students embrace global citizenship by learning and living among multitalented students of divergent races, socioeconomic backgrounds, religions, sexual orientations, gender identities, and world views in pursuit of excellence every day.



Perkiomen School

200 Seminary Street | Pennsburg, PA 18073 | (215) 679-9511

www.perkiomen.org