

## Alumni Note Advantages to Waldorf Education

Teachers at Tamarack “take their time with teaching,” according to Tamarack Waldorf High School 9<sup>th</sup> grader Morgan Asgard. “The result is that you learn more and learn deeply. It sticks with you.” Along with four Tamarack alumni, Morgan answered questions about life in high school and beyond at Monday night’s annual Alumni Panel. Joining Morgan were Maria Rogers (8<sup>th</sup> grade class of 2004), Nathan Deicher (8<sup>th</sup> grade class of 2005), Nicholas Christopher-Hayes (8<sup>th</sup> grade class of 2007); and Gabby Poulos (8<sup>th</sup> grade class of 2013).

Nathan, a 2013 graduate of UW-Madison now working in finance at Johnson Controls, said his most vivid memory of Tamarack is “drawing with our toes” in 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. “It’s all about trying new things, and that’s how you learn,” he said. “Waldorf cultivates a curiosity in trying new things.”

Nick, a senior at UWM who works part-time as a psychology department research assistant and also at a local law firm, said he has come to appreciate having done a yearly class play. “If you don’t think you’ll like it, you’ll like it, and if you don’t appreciate it, you’ll appreciate it ... years later,” he said. That experience has helped him learn to speak publicly with ease.

Gabby, finishing her sophomore year at Pius XI, said she really appreciates the handwork training she received at Tamarack, and she has come to see its ripple effect on others. She described how she likes to knit as a way to relax and to feel comfortable speaking up in high school. “My teachers would let me do this in class. It started a chain reaction. A bunch of other people brought out their knitting needles and yarn.” She said it was remarkable how something that was a required activity at Tamarack sparked such an interest at her current school.



*(L-R) Front: Morgan Asgard, Maria Rogers, Gabby Poulos. Back: Nathan Deicher, Nicholas Christopher Hayes*

Maria, a graduate of Community High School and the Institute of Beauty and Wellness, said she values the “hands-on” aspect of Waldorf education and credits it with opening the path to her current career as a massage therapist trained in multiple massage techniques. Recalling the transition from Tamarack to high school, Maria said even though she went on to a small high school, “everyone was adjusting,” so she didn’t feel different. Morgan agreed with Maria that transitioning to a small high school is still an adjustment; even though she is still a Tamarack student, she has had to get used to a new group of classmates.

“I don’t think anyone is really ready for high school or college. It’s a learning experience. It’s not anything you can be ready for,” said Nathan. All transitions are challenging, “but it’s a challenge for everyone. You get over it.” He noted that he appreciates how Tamarack focused on the basics; unlike his high school colleagues, he did not “freak out” when they had to do math without a calculator. Waldorf excels in “investing in relationships ... getting to know everyone for who they are.” This is key when people go out into the work world, he said.

Nick agreed. It can be overwhelming to enter a high school that is “a couple thousand percent larger” than your middle school, he joked, but like Nathan, he feels Waldorf gives students skills with relationships and with building resilience. “Getting involved in sports definitely helps with the social transition” to high school, he said, with nods from his fellow panelists. Nick also noted that he has come to appreciate the emphasis on writing at Tamarack. Cursive writing “opened up an artistic part of myself,” he said. He still writes drafts in cursive.

Morgan summed it up: “Things that I’ve learned in the process of going to this school have benefitted me so much more than I ever thought it would.”