

around town: high school senior spotlight

By Alison Southworth and Theresa Carr

Madeira Senior Gives Spotlight Address at National Private School Leadership Conference

Teresa Carr



“At Madeira, gender excludes you from nothing. Our strongest athletes are women, our fiercest advocates are women, our most steadfast leaders are women,” noted Madeira senior, Theresa Carr, as she delivered the student spotlight address at the Department of Education’s recent National Private School Leadership Conference, which included the nation’s top private and home school educational leaders from across the country, along with the Secretary of Education.

Carr, the only high school student speaker at the conference, was asked to share why she chose to attend an independent school. “My education at Madeira is more than academic: my experiences with faculty members and my fellow classmates have empowered me. I learned how to succeed outside of a classroom at Madeira, particularly through our internship program, the Madeira Co-Curriculum Path. Every student at Madeira has an internship relating to community service, civic involvement, and their own personal career goals.”

“My junior internship on Capitol Hill infused the history and English curriculums I learned that year while at the same time giving me practical office work skills, insight into national politics, and greater self-confidence,” Carr continued. “Now, in my senior year, I know nothing holds me back from seeking even the most ambitious internships because I know that I am prepared for the 21st-century workplace.”

In her speech, Carr covered single-sex education, equality, and the privilege of a Madeira education. “Looking back, Madeira’s status as an all girls’ school was incidental to me. In fact, it was the only single-sex school to which I applied,” Carr notes. “Now, as I begin a similar search again, this time



for college, I’m surprised at how many current college students speak with dismay about their high school experience. I’m even more surprised to learn that many female college students describe high school as a period of shyness or of apology. They talk about college as if it was the moment they found the courage to raise a hand or become confident. I’m surprised because that isn’t my experience at all. My classes are packed with a mix of chatter about everything from prom to geopolitics. I’m rarely the only one with my hand raised, and we are not women who apologize for having diverse ideas and beliefs.”

She went on to speak to Madeira’s mission by saying: “We aren’t just launching women to change the world—we’re a little too impatient for that. We’ve decided to go ahead and start building the new world we wish we saw.”

“Contrary to most other students, I’ve spent my high school experience *living* at my school. When I arrived at Madeira as a 14-year-old, I began the experience of living away from home that most people encounter only in college or later,” Carr observes. “Above all, I am extremely grateful for the many opportunities Madeira provides to young women, including me,” said Carr. “It is



a privilege to receive the kind of education I have. But it shouldn’t be. It should be the norm.”

Addressing Department of Education and national nonpublic school leaders, Carr emphasized, “Every student should have access to an education that invigorates a student’s mind, challenges their intellectual ability, and provides a diverse, inclusive community to feel at home. They should have the resources available, school supplies available, encouragement and empowerment so that they can experiment, where they can try something without fear of failing because they’re safe, physically and emotionally. That’s where learning happens.”

In concluding, Carr affirmed, “That’s the real value of any school, public or private: to provide a safe place where students can dream, where they can grow in both success and failure, and where they can dare to change the world, one woman at a time.”

The annual National Private School Leadership Conference provides a forum to address Department of Education programs and initiatives, highlight innovative practices in the nonpublic school community, and facilitate discourse between the department and national nonpublic school leaders across the country.

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