

# A Lasting Legacy



**The Werkman Family:  
Russell, Xander, Sarah, and Isaac.**

Anyone who works as a school principal for 10 years will have a list of accomplishments, and Saint George's Head of Upper School Russell Werkman certainly has a list:

- > *Hiring and developing good teachers;*
- > *Establishing the International Baccalaureate Diploma program;*
- > *Expanding the school's Outdoor program;*
- > *Giving students a chance to try something new during May Term;*
- > *Encouraging open communication between the administration, faculty and students;*
- > *Guiding students to their right school through the college counseling program;*
- > *And attending every kind of student event.*

But much more impressive than any list of accomplishments are the heart-felt thanks that so many members of the Saint George's community have for Russell. Listen to these representative comments about him as he leaves us this summer for family and opportunities in the Northeast...

## Students Kyrie Woodard '19

"Coming to SGS in 9th grade from a background not often paralleled by those attending Saint George's made me unlikely to interact with those around me, and Russell was one of the first to notice my hesitations.

He reached out to me, expressing his concerns while being honestly considerate of my own feelings as someone from a unique background. I am so grateful to him for doing so, as it shaped my high school experience for the better.

"I have never met someone so willing to learn other people's ideologies and recognize the different cultures and experiences between individuals. He is one of the few people who desperately tries to see someone eye to eye, both literally and ideologically. While he towers over most students, he genuinely attempts to see students' perspectives on the school and the world.

"I can't imagine my high school experience without Russell. He is truly an outlier when compared to most people in supervision positions, as he truly cares about student life and is incredibly involved in the school. I am always thrilled to see him standing outside at 8:10 am with a wide smile on his face, greeting everyone who enters the double doors.

"In short, Russell is the backbone of this school, the ceiling above our heads, the pillars under the staircases, the pencils in our lockers. Since day one he has been not only my principal but my friend who has stood by me in everything. I am so, so grateful to have spent my four years with him."



**Russell has been the coolest principal I have ever had. His helpful advice and positive energy made school a fun place to be, and his advice on organizing essays will be carried with me throughout college.**  
> **Kai Jacobs '19**



## Maddy Christiansen '19

"The class of 2019 has been very fortunate to have Russell Werkman as our principal throughout our years and we feel for the students who are not as fortunate. He is positive, intelligent, kind, supportive, dedicated and really funny.

"I have always appreciated him but during the college admissions process there aren't words to describe his contribution. He strongly encouraged an early start and helped guide the logistics of a very complicated process. When I was deferred from an early decision college I was panicked about all the essays I now needed to write. During the Christmas break he spent countless hours going back and forth with me to challenge my thinking, encourage creative approaches and help me develop essays of which I was really proud. I am confident those essays helped me get into my dream school and I couldn't have done it without Russell—on what was supposed to be his time off.

"I ended up getting into the college that deferred me but because of Russell's encouragement, I had started to open my eyes to other possibilities, went a different direction and couldn't be happier. Thank you for everything, Russell. You will be missed."

## Alumni

### Daniel Gimbel '15

"While I was at Saint George's, Russell was my advisor and did everything he could to help me succeed in school. He went out of his way to make sure I was on top of things, and when I wasn't, he helped me get back on target. Above all, he was a great guy and always extremely kind to the students. His generosity and selflessness have not gone unnoticed, you can be sure of that."

### Solveig Baylor '18

"After finishing my first year at Georgetown University, I am extremely thankful for Russell. He was my advisor, but he played much bigger role than that in helping me grow. He was a great resource for extracurricular and academic questions. I would not be half the leader I am today without his help.

"Most importantly, I literally wouldn't be at Georgetown without him. At first, I hadn't considered applying to Georgetown because it is Catholic and nothing outwardly grabbed me about it. Russell insisted that I look into Georgetown College and its government and economics programs, leading me to apply. Russell's care and attention to my needs as a student led me to apply to, attend, and thrive at my perfect fit university."

## Faculty

### Kerry Clark, English Teacher & College Counselor

"I always knew Russell would bring his full effort and energy with him to any task or event, and that energy has been enough to buoy, and even carry, certain events or situations in a way only he could.

"As a college counselor, Russell has shared his wealth of knowledge and experience not only with students, but also with me through the process of training me how to do the job, and he graciously allowed me to ask questions and take his time while I learned the craft. Without Russell's willingness to truly share his knowledge, I wouldn't have been able to learn the job as quickly, and I wouldn't be where I am today as a teacher and counselor.

"Thank you, Russell, for being such a supportive Head of Upper School at work and such a nice person outside of it."

### Josh Hayes, History Teacher

"Back in 2012, I did a May Term called Zombie Wars. One day involved zombie make-up and re-enactments. Russell assisted that day. I remember him telling the kids how people who are pretending to be zombies tend to just shamble around a little, raise their arms and cry 'brains'. Instead, he encouraged the kids to imagine what it would be like physiologically, perhaps part of the body would suffer from rigor mortis, while part would not. Or how one would move if one had no sense of self-awareness.

"Then I saw him relax his entire body and move in a way utterly unlike I've seen a person move before. It was the only time I truly saw him go into 'actor-mode'. Over the course of

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**Russell has been an amazing class leader since I came to SGS in 3rd grade. He came on trips with my class and was always willing to help out.**

► Michelle Lee '19



**Russell's larger than life personality will be greatly missed in the halls of SGS. He always had a warm smile and a kind greeting for everyone he saw. Russell truly cared about the wellbeing and success of students, faculty, and staff alike.**

► Kyler Hayes '14



**It has been a pleasure to have you as a principal and a father. I cannot imagine being in School without you being the principal, literally. I don't think I would have wanted it any other way.**

**From your most loving son,**

► Xander Werkman '19



**May Term  
Zombie Class:  
Russell can be seen-  
towering over every-  
one in the back.**

**I would like to thank Russell for encouraging me to try on the “admin hat.” Russell cares about letting people try new things and supporting them along the way. What a wonderful quality in an educator!**  
**> Joelle Neiwert,  
Head of Middle School**



**My parting words to Russell as he leaves for his next adventure are... “I wish you well Goliath. All the best, David.” Cheers!**  
**> Joe Kennedy,  
Former Head of School**



the next hour, the students and I were never able to capture the movements he did in the first few seconds despite repeated attempts. His transformation has stuck with me for the past seven years.”

## **Administrators** **Kathy Johnson, Head of Lower School**

“Russell’s affable personality is a magnet to students, colleagues, and parents. When you meet Russell, you quickly learn that he is authentically interested in getting to know you. He cares about personal relationships, and he has been remarkable at establishing deep connections within the various constituencies at Saint George’s School.

“Russell has been a colleague, mentor, and team member of mine throughout his ten years at SGS. I have appreciated his ongoing quest for knowledge, insightfulness, and infectious humor. He is the quintessential cheerleader for students and diligently strives to foster their school experiences inside and outside of the classroom. He truly exemplifies our mission by inspiring scholars, athletes, and artists to serve and lead others.”

## **Joe Kennedy, Former Head of School**

“Conversations with Russell Werkman are one of the highlights of my tenure at Saint George’s. Russell and I would often start the mornings with a discussion of middle and high school student issues, how to respond to an irritating email, and what we had to do and where we had to be during the day. But the mundane soon evolved into conversations that were always fresh, open, and animated. They could focus on education, philosophy, politics, religion or even Malcolm Gladwell. Nothing was off limits. The talks continued even as we

made our way to the student drop off outside of the McCutcheon Upper School.

“At the end of the day, Russell, wearing a big grin, would often arrive at the Davenport House and we would pick up where we left off that morning. The talks would become more animated as we introduced a few glasses of Rombauer Chardonnay (one of his favorites) to the discussion.

“When we weren’t talking face-to-face, our emails and texts often took the ideas set forth earlier to a new level. Russell’s ability to use the English language is uncanny. I assume his Reading, Writing, and Language SAT scores are what got him into Williams College and what helped him in his former career as an actor. Needless to say, he punishes with his word play.”

## **Jamie Tender, Head of School**

“Russell Werkman’s arrival in 2009 marked a decade of change, innovation, and gregarious enthusiasm to make SGS the best version of itself. During the last ten years, change has resulted in adopting the International Baccalaureate curriculum, personalizing the college counseling program, creating a globally-minded Upper School, and finally, bringing an unmistakable laughter and energy to student activities and events.

“Russell’s role has expanded throughout his tenure, and his dedication to the school, the students, and the faculty and staff is without question. The key to Russell’s success has been built on developing relationships, always making the time to get to know the members of our community.

“Over the years, Russell’s presence in welcoming students in the morning and visiting with parents, even if it caused a back-up in morning drop-off line, will be missed. His summer cookouts, book discussions and morning meeting antics will all be fondly remembered.

“We wish Russell well on his pursuit of new adventures, and we know he again will find himself as a catalyst in building community, along the way laughing and bringing others to generate thoughtful reflections on a myriad of topics. Enjoy the rising road ahead of you!”