

The Phillips Scholar

The Stephen Phillips Memorial Scholarship Fund

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The Stephen Phillips
Memorial Scholarship Fund
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*The Staff (from the left):
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Looking Back, Looking Forward

Inspired by the Phillips Trust House's 30th anniversary, this newsletter considers transition, that point where we pause for a moment, consider where we've been, and ponder potential paths for the future. Two Phillips Scholars, Aimee Burke (Boston College '01, MSW '02) and Andria Darby (Smith College '02) offer their stories of time 'in between' the past and future, while Naomi Gray, Curator of the Phillips Trust House, details the exciting changes that the museum is undergoing to truly bring it alive. Also, be sure to turn to page four to meet Ben Currier, the new scholar whose award is funded largely through the generosity of our Phillips Scholar Alumni. Whether these stories of change and growth strike a chord of familiarity with our alumni or ease the concern of current scholars facing transition, we hope you enjoy them.

Looking Forward: Future Scholars

We were delighted by a visit from fifth graders who attend Nativity Preparatory School, a Jesuit middle school that provides a tuition-free, challenging and highly structured education to boys from Boston's inner city neighborhoods. Looking ahead to their college years, they asked many excellent questions about college in general and, in particular, the Phillips Scholarship. Their curiosity and unbridled enthusiasm were inspiring! We encouraged them to bear our criteria in mind as they navigate their high school years and certainly expect that some of the students shown above will join the 17 Nativity Prep grads who have received Phillips awards to date.



Alumni Scholar Announced

The generosity of a friend of the Stephen Phillips Memorial Scholarship Fund allowed us to establish the Phillips Scholar Alumni Award this year, to be given to a student who has exhibited great concern for improving his or her community, as well as meeting our financial need and academic standards.

We are pleased to announce that the recipient is Benjamin Currier, a 2003 graduate of St. John's Preparatory School and a resident of Salem, Massachusetts. Ben has demonstrated his commitment to serving others in both his school and wider community not only by dedicating countless hours to such activities as preparing and serving food at a soup kitchen, visiting with nursing-home and group-home residents, and participating in annual service trips to West Virginia, but also by providing

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The front door with its anniversary banner.

Naomi Gray, Curator

On September 25th, the museum celebrated its 30th anniversary with an open house and reception. Gathering with over 100 neighbors and Phillips House enthusiasts, the trustees and staff looked back on the last three decades.

In 1973, Mrs. Bessie Wright Phillips fulfilled her husband's wishes of opening his childhood home to the public. She prepared the house and carriage house with attention to every detail: walls repainted or wallpapered, new roofs, carriages restored and everything cleaned or polished until it sparkled. Upon her death in 1996, the trustees courageously embarked on a new era, with the intent of bringing the Phillips House up to 21st-century standards. It was a time for firsts: professionally trained staff and consultants; new policies and procedures; a first-time inventory of the collection; proactive short and long-range planning; and new tours and programs to better serve a diverse audience.

Of all the new projects and changes, the most exciting and daunting was the inventory project. It took one staff member, an intern and a consultant 18 months to carefully record the contents of the drawers, closets, attic, basement and carriage house. We calculated that we scoured through over 200 trunks alone. Imagine the wonderful primary source documents, artifacts

and clothing we "discovered."

Through our research of the Phillips archives, other primary and secondary sources, and oral histories, we have developed new tours and programs. They include a tour looking at daily life of the Phillips family and domestic staff, first-person tours, behind-the-scenes tours, a fine and decorative arts tour, walking tours of the neighborhood, programs on women's history (comparing the lifestyles of both Mrs. Stephen W. Phillips and the Irish domestic staff), early 20th century domestic technology, and proper etiquette, as well as various lectures ranging from Captain Phillips to carpets. The result is the house's coming to life for our growing public audience.

After September 11, 2001, the trustees decided to make the museum free to the public to increase visitation and access to all. The result has been fantastic. In 2002, our visitation increased by 147%! Public support has been outstanding; donations have nearly approached what were gathering in admission fees.

An exciting future is ahead of us, one filled with lots of research possibilities and ways to reach our audience. For 2004, we are looking forward to two projects, both funded by grants: one, to preserve our moving picture film from the 1920s to the 1940s; and another, to conduct paint analysis on the oldest rooms of the house, dating to 1800.

Look for future articles about our findings and programs. Do come for a visit when the house is open, from Memorial Day through the end of October, Monday through Saturday. We look forward to seeing you in 2004.



Looking down Chestnut Street during the Antique Car Meet.

Renewal Reminders

With your fall semester just about over, now is the time to order your transcript and think about the Renewal Process! Visit our website www.phillips-scholarship.org to download your renewal application. You may fill it out on the computer, print it out, and mail it in with your supporting documents. If your e-mail address has changed, please be sure to send us that change so that we will be able to send you updates and reminders.

Your parents should begin the FAFSA as soon after the first of the year as possible, so that you will receive your Student Aid Report in a timely fashion. Remember: **April 1st is the mailing deadline** for your application, a copy of your most recent financial aid award letter from your school, and a sealed transcript with fall semester grades included. Your Student Aid Report, if not included with your application, must be received by May 15.

If you have trouble downloading the application, please email (renewal@spscholars.org) or call us (978-744-2111), and we will send one to you. We will not, however, be mailing renewal applications to all current recipients, because it is available on the web.

We look forward to reading your essays to learn about your experiences this year. As always, early applications are greatly appreciated!



Andria Darby: AmeriCorps

What should I do after I graduate from college? Like many students before me, this question became the source of much anxiety as senior year rolled to a close in the spring of 2002.

I imagined that I had to choose one of only two possible options: I would either get a job, or I would enroll in a graduate program. My parents were avid fans of the former. To them, college attendance was a means to an end. They were proud that I would receive my bachelors degree – something neither of them had had an opportunity to do – but, I had well-founded suspicions that they also believed I had been spoiled by 4 years of extended adolescence, and that I was long overdue to become a full-fledged, bill-paying member of the “real world.” I was personally leaning more towards a decision to continue on to law school. However, I was not entirely sure of this, since I was in the midst of academic burnout.

It wasn't until a good friend casually suggested, “Why don't you do AmeriCorps?” that my polarized vision of my options was destroyed. What could be better? I would have an opportunity to serve the underprivileged on a full-time basis, which has always been one of my life-goals; it would give me a break from the academic world; and it would provide me with a stipend. I was excited about doing meaningful work, and relieved that I would be able to be self-sufficient financially. Suddenly the way forward was clear.

The following September I moved to Washington, DC, to assume a position as a construction-crew member for the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity. Together with eight other AmeriCorps members, I led teams of local volunteers in various tasks that included everything from painting and cleaning the site, to hanging drywall, framing, putting in windows and roofing. I met and worked with amazing individuals who cared about alleviating poverty-level housing. I learned all sorts of valuable building skills, had the opportunity to use every kind of power-tool imaginable, and developed the most impressive biceps I'll probably ever have; but all this cannot eclipse the satisfaction of watching a family prepare to move into their very own home. I knew that day after day of exhausting work in the sun, the rain, and even the snow, was worth it when I saw the joy on their faces as they received the keys to their houses.

My experience in AmeriCorps converted me to service, and convinced me that it should always be a part of my life. I even decided that I wanted to reapply for a second year in the program. Currently I live in San Diego and work for Casa Cornelia Law Center, a non-profit law firm that does pro-bono work for the indigent immigrant community. Although I've traded my overalls for “office-casual wear,” and my hammer for a pen, I'm still always aware that I'm making a difference in the lives of disadvantaged individuals. Holding down a “real job” and going to graduate school are both worthy pursuits, but I wouldn't trade my AmeriCorps experience for anything else.

Andria Darby is from the small Berkshire town of Peru, Massachusetts, about an hour away from her Alma Mater, Smith College. After finishing a second year of AmeriCorps in San Diego, she hopes to go back to school to earn her Master's degree in Historic Preservation.

Aimee Burke: Mexico

Two weeks after receiving my MSW degree, I moved to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. I had concocted a lengthy list of reasons to rationalize the procrastination of the social work licensing exam, the job search, the loan payments... responsibility. Learning Spanish at a local language school would provide me with an essential tool in my career as a social worker, I explained to my parents. Living with a Mexican family, I would experience firsthand the cultural traditions of the families I might someday work with. The children at the impoverished daycare where I would volunteer would teach me lessons I could not otherwise learn. What better way to transition myself to ‘the real world’ after five years of academia? A trip to Mexico to ease this transition sounded very logical and ideal to me. I didn't predict, as part of my travel plans, the *aloneness*...

My first urge to get on the next plane home came nine days later. My best friend's mother died. I couldn't imagine not being by her side during the toughest week of her life. I learned, with difficulty, how to hold her hand from a distance of 3,500 miles. The next longings for home came during the sporadic times that I craved meaningful conversation and couldn't find it, in either English or my developing Spanish. The college experience is unique, I realize in retrospect, in that one never has to be physically alone if she doesn't go out of her way to be. With the constant barrage of dorm-mates, lectures, and campus activities, there is endless opportunity to be surrounded by

Aimee Burke
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either casual banter or deep intellectual dialogue. Neither expensive e-mail services nor poorly timed, infrequent international phone calls could close the gap.

Over the next months, cravings for home would hit like the Mexican monsoon rains – infrequent, but fierce and unexpected. The public telephone in the plaza seemed suddenly magnetic; drawing me near, self-dialing American Airlines, somebody else’s voice coming out of my mouth asking how much it would cost to buy a ticket to Boston for, uh, tomorrow morning, please? My willful self would snap that phone back down on the cradle. Feelings of homesickness gave me an opportunity to stop to appreciate the rewards of my time in San Miguel de Allende... the very city that the revolution for Mexican independence originated. I loved waking up to fresh-squeezed orange juice, mango slices and laughing with Senora, learning how to ride a horse down the edge of a canyon and across a river, the children’s rough voices as they eagerly repeated my English words. A moment of reflection was all I needed, and I would hurry off to meet my German, Canadian, and Mexican friends for *cervezas*.

With my free time, I would walk up a nearby hill, so steep that few ventured in that direction. I found solitude and reflection on a bench by a seemingly deserted church. From this bench, I had a spectacular view of the city below and a quiet sunny space to write letters or read. It was here that I realized my own smallness. It occurred to me that no one in the entire world knew where I was at that moment. Living in central Mexico lent me a sense of anonymity that I had never before experienced. If I skipped my afternoon Spanish lesson, no one worried, or even noticed. I could disappear for days before my loved ones would receive word. At first the realization was overwhelming and lonely, but then it was freeing, empowering. Time! Finally, I had the time and space and distance to know myself. Who I am, whom I love and miss, what it is important to me, where I am going...

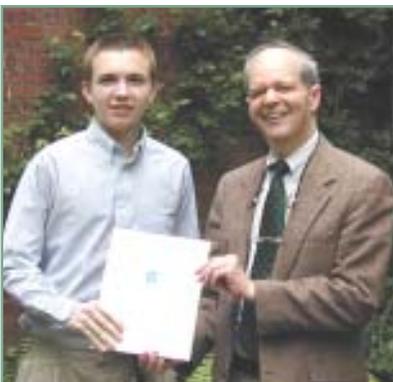
I’ve been back in the United States for a year now. From a distance, I might look like the hundreds of other professionals commuting into downtown Boston. I work from 9 to 5, I wear business casual attire, and I do, finally, get paid. But look closer. Can those around me boldly tell you they absolutely love their job the way I can? As a school social worker, the Spanish that I learned in Mexico has certainly been useful, but, more importantly, I gained self-assurance from being on my own and finding enjoyment in my own company. I also figured out what would fulfill me, right now, both professionally and personally. These are ongoing lessons. The learning never ends; it simply takes place in a different kind of classroom.

Aimee Burke graduated from Boston College with a B.A. in Human Development and an M.S.W. in clinical social work. She currently works as a school social worker for a non-profit organization, The Steppingstone Foundation, which seeks to provide underserved populations in Boston with educational opportunities by helping them apply for and succeed at the Boston exam schools and area independent schools.

Phillips Facts

- ◆ For the 2003-2004 academic year, 172 new scholars received awards totalling \$763,000.
- ◆ 513 students’ awards were renewed for another \$2,275,000.
- ◆ Scholars attend 183 different colleges.
- ◆ The grand total, then, for the Stephen Phillips Memorial Scholarship Fund this year is \$3,038,000.00, awarded to 685 students.

Alumni Scholar
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leadership to varied service groups and other clubs at his school. In addition to his prodigious volunteer work, Ben held a part-time job during the school year and summers, and achieved honor status at St. John’s. Ben attends Bentley College where, he notes, there isn’t a soup kitchen program—yet!

The Trustees of the Stephen Phillips Memorial Scholarship Fund are grateful to the Phillips Scholar Alumni who donated so generously to the fund for the Alumni Scholar Award. Donations were matched, dollar for dollar, by a friend of the scholarship; all monies raised were used for this \$5,000 award.

Congratulations to Ben Currier on his selection as Alumni Scholar and to the generous Phillips Scholars who helped us expand our ability to help students attend college in these difficult financial times.