

# ST. STEPHEN'S SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Welcome!

I am pleased to welcome everyone to the first edition of *The Cortile*. A bi-monthly publication, this newsletter is intended to celebrate the St. Stephen's community and its accomplishments. It will highlight school goings-on, community members and activities as well as faculty, student and parents' accomplishments both inside and outside of school. Its readership will be people within the current SSS community and my hope is that it will serve to strengthen communication within our community. This first edition features our community's summer events and activities.

I invite you to contact me at the email address below with questions and feedback of any sort; suggestions for article topics or particular comments you want to make about material in the newsletter. I hope you enjoy this first edition.

The Editor  
thecortile@ststephens-rome.com

## An Unforgettable Adventure

When you hear the words "the Galapagos Islands" what ideas come to mind? Instantly my head fills with images of Charles Darwin and his historic journey, which helped him arrive at his theory of Evolution. I think of finches, delicate black and yellow birds, famous for their varying beak sizes and shapes which provided evidence of how they could have evolved from one common ancestor. I think about the giant, lethargic tortoises for whom the islands were named, slowly wandering the shores. All of these images, however, are things I could have only imagined or read about in textbooks, or perhaps seen on a documentary on the Discovery Channel. But as teachers, we advise our students that it is necessary to travel and experience certain things first-hand, only then can lessons be learned that a textbook alone could never teach. I, too, wanted to journey to the place that I had read about so many times before. With the grant money I received as the first recipient of the St. Stephen's Junior Faculty Award sponsored by the Douglas Ely Memorial Fund, I was able to spend my summer in the Galapagos Islands, observing the finches in their natural environment, strolling alongside the tortoises, and walking where Darwin once walked. The 13 islands of varying sizes are located about 500 miles off the coast of Ecuador in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Before reaching my final destination, my husband Mike and I spent time in Quito, the country's capital. In Puyo, we hiked through part of the Amazonian rainforest, and canoed



Liz and a larger-than-life tortoise

down the Pastaza River while in Banos, as the name suggests, we soaked in hot sulfur springs. Lastly, we traveled to Cuenca where we enjoyed the unique architecture, museums, and breathtaking views of the Andes Mountains. After all of this traveling, Mike returned to Rome and I was off to San Cristobal Island, Galapagos. One of my main reasons for traveling to the islands most biologists only dream about was to take part in a research-oriented program where I would be able not only to visit the islands, but also to learn about conservation and reforestation initiatives that I could teach to my students. For 2 weeks, I volunteered on San Cristobal Island for a group called *Jatun Sacha*, which means "big forest" in Quichua, a language spoken by many indigenous groups in Ecuador and Peru. This organization has seven stations throughout the four distinct regions of Ecuador: the Amazonian rainforest, the Andes mountains, the Ecuadorian coast, and the Galapagos Islands. Its main goals are to conserve the natural resources of each region, implement conservation systems, reforest the land with endemic species ridding them of invasive, harmful species, and educate not only Ecuadorians, but volunteers and the rest of the world about sustainable methods of farming and the production of endemic crops. While volunteering, my duties included removing introduced, invasive species (one of which endangered the giant tortoises' food source) from areas to be reforested once these species were removed.

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# TheCortile

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## The Cortile - A Reflection

As you probably already know, The Cortile is our in-house name for the courtyard that constitutes the hub of the venerable edifice of St. Stephen's School. It is a place that has afforded peace and solace to the occupants of the building since it was first built by the Padri Missionari, and more recently to me during my first year's tenure as Head of School. As a passionate gardener, I have derived enormous satisfaction from the completion of a personal 'project': the landscaping of the cortile according to the precepts of the formal Italian garden, introducing dwarf box bushes, camellias, gardenias and an aesthetically pleasing collection of citrus varieties. It is, however, the tending of the plants themselves, in snatched moments at the end of long days, that has prompted me to truly

appreciate the silence of the quadrangle, the soft splash of the fountain (with its immutable fish!), the whirring flight of disenfranchised pigeons frantically searching for a new roost, and the occasional interjection of a young voice protesting about a homework problem or sharing a joke with a roommate. Because, as you may or may not know, in the evenings, our ex-convent reinvents itself as home for our resident boarders and faculty, and my gardening activity in this former cloister invariably reconnects me with that small but important St. Stephen's community as they study, socialize and stop by to say 'hi' on their way to dinner or snack in the dining hall. And as I water, weed, feed and prune, my mind wanders to the renaissance conceit of the well-tended garden being metaphor for constitutional order, and leads me to hope that the cortile will continue to embody the harmony and energy that make St. Stephen's such a special place to be.

**Lesley Murphy, Head of School**

## Summer Sessions at SSS

Last July St. Stephen's School launched its summer program. Nine eager students and seven faculty members defied the unbearable Roman heat and brightened the school campus with their energy. The students and most teachers traveled to Rome from different parts of the world and lived on the school grounds, creating a warm sense of community. On most days, the art history teachers guided the students around the eternal city allowing the knowledge they imparted to blend with the students' impressions of monuments and museums. This fostered the students' natural curiosity and allowed each lesson to become a memorable experience. The students also went on day trips to Tivoli and Pompeii, where they were able to translate their understanding of the ruins into drawings that they then used for their art exhibit.

The students' school day was long and challenging. Classes began at eight o'clock each morning and ran well into the afternoon. Their consistent enthusiasm and the passion they put in their work, however, reflected the genuine gratification they gained from their learning. The courses included several academic classes (two different art history classes; history; and Latin) and three creative courses (creative writing; art; and photography). Students successfully completed exams in all of the academic courses and brought home intriguing portfolios with all their creative pieces. The students' nightlife and weekends were equally compelling as three lively interns organized and chaperoned a wide variety of activities (including: genuine gelato; *Carmen* at the Terme di Caracalla; a

soccer match at the stadium; and a day at the beach). In the evenings the students were also involved in a vivacious cooking class that made dinner adventurous and delicious.

**Dr. Livia Sacchetti, English Department**

**Up close** The summer program was the brainchild of **Dr. Crispin Corrado**. When asked about what inspired her to create the program she responded, "After studying in Rome for a summer myself when I was in graduate school, I became thrilled with the idea in general. Years later my family and I moved to Rome. I learned about what was available for children to do here during the summers. As my children grew, their needs grew, and I thought about the fact that there were at the time no summer academic programs at all for older children in Rome.

"This was around the same time that I got to know, and fell in love with, St. Stephen's School. It is all that an international abroad program should be: it is academically challenging, has first-rate faculty and staff, and it takes advantage of the location of the school

in terms of the curriculum offered. In addition, it is a gorgeous school on a gorgeous location with boarding facilities for students to live and study.

"So! All of these things came together and St. Stephen's School is the perfect institution to offer such a program. I approached Head of School **Lesley Murphy** with the idea. It had been an idea that she had been thinking about, as well! It was perfect timing, you might say."



Photo by M. Buening

Summer school sketchers

## An Action-packed Summer

My summer adventures, like Gaul, were divided onto 3 parts. Part 1 took place on the African continent where I spent many delightful hours with preschool kids in the north of Rwanda, a few exciting hours visiting a community of orphans in the 'wild west' town of Goma in the D.R. Congo and one exhilarating, unforgettable hour with the Amahoro group of mountain gorillas (see next edition of *The Cortile* for an account of this adventure).

For Parts 2 and 3, I moved to the Middle East. Just outside the Christian town of Beit Sahour near Bethlehem, 150 teenagers from 6 refugee camps throughout the West Bank came together for the first time after a yearlong program of special classes. These classes, taught by qualified professionals, included Human Rights, Democratic Citizenship and the Rule of Law, Gender Equality and Women's Rights, Journalism and Principles of a Free Press, Conflict Resolution, and Photography.

Called "Our Voice" ([www.refugeevoice.org](http://www.refugeevoice.org)), the project has been sponsored by Lajee Center in Aida Camp, where I have volunteered for 9 years, and funded by the



Helen, far right, hard at work

European Union and the Belgian NGO Brodelijk Delen. The overall objective is 'to enhance unity, democracy, human rights, and civic responsibility for, and amongst, Palestinian Refugees, and to create solid foundations from which a collaborative refugee youth voice can resonated loudly both nationally and internationally through the production of a collaborative Refugee Youth Magazine' (Project Statement). During my time there, I was one of 4 foreign volunteers (one of the other volunteers was St.

Stephen's graduate) who participated in the workshops, discussions and activities with the children. It was an exciting, inspiring and fun time: these teenagers demonstrated a wonderful capacity for critical thinking on important issues and an impressive ability to articulate their thoughts before a large audience. The project will continue for another 2 years and at the end of the program the participants will produce a magazine - designed, written and illustrated exclusively by them.

Part 3 - Aida Refugee Camp, near Bethlehem. As co-director of Lajee Center's ([www.lajee.org](http://www.lajee.org)) 8th International Work Camp, I oversaw an intense 2-week program of activities for 32 international volunteers (including 3 graduates from St. Stephen's), local volunteers and children from the Camp. We spent many hours with the children, talking, dancing, singing, playing soccer and basketball (we had 2 professional Italian players with us), getting to know them and learning a little about their lives in the Camp. Several of the children gave us formal lessons in basic Arabic, enjoying their role as teacher, while we sat at desks in front of them and tried desperately to repeat unpronounceable words. A truly outstanding series of talks by local people and foreign specialists offered new insights and perspectives into a situation that is rarely portrayed in our media. The 3<sup>rd</sup> aspect of the work camp was physical labour. We met each morning to clear a piece of land immediately behind the new Children's Centre. Aida Camp, like all refugee camps, is cramped and overcrowded; streets are narrow and there is no recreation space. While the population has increased, the access to land has decreased due to the construction of the Israeli Wall on 2 sides of the Camp. This has cut off all access to open land where, until recently, the children used to play. We took satisfaction in seeing the transformation of what had become a rubbish dump into an attractive, open area which could benefit the entire community and began thinking of the children playing soccer there, of a playground with swings and slides, perhaps even a vegetable garden. As we made our mark on the land, the land made its mark on us. Thus was born the ambitious and rather daunting project of launching an appeal to raise the €200,000 in order to purchase the land to improve the quality of life for Aida Camp residents (any ideas or suggestions would be very welcome!).

All volunteers were overwhelmed by the warmth, generosity, openness and hospitality of the local people, and by a new awareness of the realities of their lives and the daily difficulties they face due to their situation. It was an inspiring and educational experience for all, and I look forward to Lajee's 9<sup>th</sup> International work Camp next summer.

**Dr. Helen Pope, Classics Department**

## Changing in Order to Remain the Same

This academic year begins with a few changes to administrative faculty positions. After more than a quarter century of hard work and dedication in his position as Trips Coordinator, **Jack Ullman** came down from his throne to hand the crown to **Duncan Pringle** who will take over from him. **Angela Marra** will assist Duncan in his new position. **Dr. Livia Sacchetti** will take over from **Dr. Helen Pope** as Grade 9 coordinator. **Martina Anfuso '85** will serve as the new Math Subject Area Coordinator (SAC).

This year will also see faculty members in newly created administrative positions. **Viktoria Podagelyte '99** will be St. Stephen's first Faculty Coordinator. **Michael Brouse** will now serve as the School's Director of Advancement.

Head of School **Lesley Murphy** created the new positions as a reflection of her desire to develop faculty involvement in the administration and to maintain what she sees as key roles in making St. Stephen's the special place that it is.

## Keeping it in The Family

The Boarding Department will be seeing new, yet "old," faces and new activities this school year. During the final weekend of August, the Boarding faculty participated in an overnight team-building retreat hosted at **Helen Hannick's** agriturismo in Umbria. Dr. James Charney, Yale professor, family psychiatrist and long time consultant to Choate was present as an expert advisor. Helen, **Elizabeth Escobar** and Head of School **Lesley Murphy** also led sessions.

The weekend of 18-20 September, this semester's 37 boarding students, who hail from the four corners of the world, went camping on the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Boarding camping trip at the Feniglia natural reserve. Weekend activities prior to this included daytrips to Tivoli and the beach. Boarding faculty, including three new members who join the Boarding faculty, accompanied them.

These new members to the Boarding faculty are not, however, new to St. Stephen's. Picking up where **Viktorija Podagelyte '99** left off after her several successful years as Boarding Head, **Eleni Mantzarlis '00** has taken over. She has an MSC in Marine Biology and a PGCE from Portsmouth University, U.K. She taught for two years at the Mountbatten Secondary School, in Romsey, Hampshire before returning to Rome where she taught Science at Castelli International School last year. In addition to her responsibilities as Boarding Head, she teaches IB Environmental Systems, a new course offering, as well as Grade 10 Foundations Physics. She commented, "As a SSS graduate I'm very happy to now be part of the faculty as I know what SSS has to offer. I look forward to doing activities with the students." **Jan Claus di Blasio '04** is one of the new Boarding Residential



Boarding students pausing for a photo-op in Tuscany

Advisors (RA). A graduate in Classical Archaeology and Ancient History from the University of Geneva, Switzerland, he is completing a Masters' program at the University of Leiden. In addition to his duties in Boarding, he works in the library, coaches sports and does some substitute teaching. When asked how he felt about retuning to St. Stephen's in his new role, he responded, "For the first time I enter St. Stephen's as a faculty member: this allows me to experience this school in a completely different way. This is clearly something that I see as a challenge, an inspiring one, and I'm looking forward to contributing to that sense of community that I enjoyed as a student back in 2001-2004." **Lucy Clark '05** is also a new RA. With a B.A. in English from Vassar College, beyond her responsibilities in Boarding, she is teaching Grade 9 English and her passion for poetry makes her an exciting addition to the students' extra-curricular life. Lucy says, "I'm glad St. Stephens has taken me back, and I value the opportunity to get experience teaching things I'm excited about, such as writing, right out of college. It's wonderful that the network of the school community allows St. Stephen's graduates opportunities that they would be unlikely to find elsewhere, particularly in this tough job market."

In addition to these changes, non-Boarding faculty will be taking a more active role in Boarding life this year. On occasion they'll be assisting in the supervision of Boarders as well as helping to organize off-campus excursions for Boarding students. All of these changes will help to make Boarding at St. Stephen's an even more unique experience that its participants will take with them when they leave, be it after 4 years or 1 semester.



## The Columbia Experience

When I first applied to the Columbia High School Summer Program, I thought, “OK, so you’re applying for a creative writing course. But the best thing is, if you get accepted, you’ll be in New York City, studying at Columbia University!” What I really wanted was a taste of the college experience; the course was just a bonus. I admit that I was curious to see what the teachers at Columbia would “teach” me - after hearing so many people say, “Creative writing cannot be taught,” I was a little skeptical. I found it hard to believe that someone could learn anything useful about the writing process in less than three weeks. I would soon be proved wrong.

On the 28th of June, I went to Columbia University for registration. When I arrived on campus, I was nervous but excited; this would be my home for the next seventeen days! I was soon shown to my suite, where I would be living with six other girls and two resident advisors. My suite-mates turned out to be wonderful, all from different backgrounds: two girls were from Turkey, one was from Indonesia, two were from New Jersey, and one came from San Francisco.

As soon as classes began, I realized that I had been silly to think that the creative writing course was “just a bonus.” There were only ten people in my class, allowing for focused discussion and creating an intimate atmosphere. Our three wonderful teachers were (or had been) graduate students at Columbia University. In the mornings, one of the teachers gave us material to read and discuss. She also gave us writing exercises and told us to keep a notebook, to write down conversations that we heard on the subway, and to love words. In the afternoon, we had two workshop classes, taught by two other teachers. Every day we would “workshop” someone’s piece of work and discuss it. At the beginning, I was worried that this would be a useless activity; however, I quickly discovered that I could learn so much simply by listening to the teacher’s and my peers’ comments on pieces that were not my own. This is what I loved so much about the course: I never felt that any time was wasted. Almost every night, we were given different assignments, which we would edit and then compile into a portfolio. By the end of the course, our final portfolios contained two free-verse poems, one prose poem, one

scene from a film or play, a short story, and anything else that we wanted to add.

In addition to the creative writing course, I took journalism as an elective. I was taught by two young professional journalists who would let the students go out and “play the field” – our pieces were uploaded onto an online blog called “Off the 1” (because students would always take the “1” train to return to Columbia). Although the course wasn’t as intensive as the creative writing one, I still got a feeling of what it is to be a journalist. I learned how to think like a journalist: how to interview strangers on the street, how to develop my own shorthand, and how to write news articles. One of the pieces I wrote was about the Italian community in New York City. Accompanied by a friend, I made went to the city’s “Little Italy”, where I interviewed several Italian-Americans whose families had lived in New York for several generations. It was

interesting to note the differences between these people and the Italians with whom I have been living here in Rome (their food and their dialects, for example, were so different from those to which I am accustomed).

In addition to attending my classes, I had ample time to explore the multi-cultural beehive that is New York City. Some of my best memories include: watching fire-flies glow all over the Columbia campus; seeing the lead actors from the film *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* at the red-carpet

premiere; watching *The Gold-Diggers of 1939* sitting on the grass in Bryant Park; kayaking on the Hudson River; watching Fourth of July fireworks from the West Side Highway; visiting the city’s most prominent museums; sitting a few rows away from Anne Hathaway in a movie theatre; and walking through bustling Times Square in the rain.

Much too soon, my time at Columbia came to an end. In my final days, I cried on the subway, in two taxis, and at the airport. But my weeping made me realize how much I had enjoyed my three-week experience in New York City, and how wrong I had been to be skeptical of the course. I had just experienced three of the best weeks of my life; I was, and still am, grateful to Columbia University, my teachers, my new friends, and, of course, New York City.

**Sofia Orlando’10**



Sofia, second from left, and her Columbia classmates

## You've Been Paged

This past summer I was appointed by the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi, to be a Congressional Page in the U.S. House of Representatives. Pages, who provide legislative assistance, act as messengers, and prepare the House floor for sessions and debates, have been serving the House of Representatives for almost two hundred years. My keen interest in history and politics attracted me to this overwhelmingly popular program; I was fortunate enough to be one of only 70 Pages chosen out of the 4,000 students who applied. Working as a Congressional Page I was able to meet U.S. Congressmen in person and see history in the making.

I have mainly lived abroad in Sri Lanka, Thailand



Alessandra, center, and her "fellow" Pages

and Italy, so I have never had the opportunity to study American history in context nor have I had direct contact with the American political process. As it turned out, I was the only student currently living abroad, which immediately set me apart from the other students. Every other Page came from one of the U.S. Congressional districts. The best part of the entire experience was what I took away from it: I now have a better understanding of the American political system than do many American citizens.

This is due in part to the fact that I attended classes each morning in the Library of Congress before Congress convened each day. The Page School is a fully accredited school, and attending classes for four weeks gave me a credit towards my high school diploma. The courses involved an in-depth study of the U.S. government and International Relations. These classes gave me a greater understanding of the debates I witnessed each day on the House floor.

Highlights of my summer include witnessing the debates on the House floor pertaining to the new controversial health care bill; attending the U.S.

Senate hearings for Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, the first Hispanic and only the third woman to be nominated to the U.S. Supreme Court; staring up at Senator John McCain as he delivered a passionate speech about the new F-22 fighter jets; being introduced to the Iraqi Prime Minister in an elevator while he was visiting Washington. These extraordinary experiences, coupled with the camaraderie that I felt not only with the pages from all over the country but also with the friendly congressmen and women as well, will stay with me for life. I feel this experience has changed my life and will certainly influence my future course of study and career choices.

**Alessandra Scalise '10**

## 2009 At a Glance

This year's total student population is 251, representing 31 nationalities. We have 54 students in Grade 9, 55 students in Grade 10, 69 students in Grade 11 and 73 students in Grade 12. At present, 37 students are boarding.

Our fantastic students come to us from Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Switzerland, Ivory Coast, China, Germany, Ecuador, Spain, Ghana, Greece, Ireland, India, Iran, Japan, Korea, Sri Lanka, Montenegro, Mali, Malaysia, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Russia, Sweden, UK, Uruguay, Zambia, Italy, and the USA.

**Alex Perniciaro, Admissions Officer**

## And the Winner is...

...**Chloe Howe-Harambolous '10**. *Again*. St. Stephen's resident poet won first prize for the 14-19-age tier of the annual The Keats-Shelley poetry competition for the second year running. After last year's "Consolation," this year's winning entry entitled "Tea," was based on the prescribed theme of creation. The real highlight for the poet was receiving her award (for "Consolation") from Carol Ann Duffy, a personal hero.



Chloe Howe-Harambolous '10

## En Breton

In the month of July I traveled to Brest, northwest Brittany, “le bout du monde” (the end of the world), to refresh my French language skills at Brest’s International Centre of French Studies for three weeks, thanks to The St. Stephen’s Faculty Fund. I chose Brest for my studies because of the renowned quality of the teaching at Le Centre Internationale.

The Centre offers advanced courses for adults in different areas, from Economics to Teaching French and French Language and Culture, which I attended in addition to a class of Literature from the 1940s. Besides the widespread use of technology in class, the most stimulating aspect of my experience was being in contact with a variety of classmates from different backgrounds. There were students from China, Thailand, Vietnam, Arab countries, and the Emirates. Speaking in French with adults of such different backgrounds in and out the school was both stimulating and rewarding. In addition to refreshing my French, I also enjoyed traveling on school-organized excursions to places of interest such as l’Ile



A scene from the Festival of Celtic Music and Dance  
Quimper, Brittany

d’Ouesst to view its amazing wildlife and Pont d’Aven, where Paul Gauguin founded his school and painted his works from the so-called “Breton Period.”

While in Brest, I was exposed to Brittany’s unique culture, which has been preserved by its inhabitants as “La Celtique.” This sets Brittany apart from the rest of France. Although French is the official language, Breton is mostly spoken.

Brittany’s costumes, music and dances (300 different ones from different villages are recognized, starting from *Gavotte*), are religiously safeguarded from an era when the population depended on fishing in the open waters of the Atlantic Ocean. The ocean continues to be a central part of northwest Breton culture, and during low tides one can still go down to the beach to get his own clams, mussels and crabs.

I truly enjoyed my time in Brest and am glad I had the opportunity to continue my study of French language and culture.

**Antonella Micone,**  
**Language Department**

## Small Worlds...

A small world moment occurred on the other side of the Atlantic when **Jo Ann Clark**—former SSS IB English teacher, a past Boarding Head, Founding External Affairs Director and current Director of the School’s New York Office—found herself co-editing **Helen Barolini**’s recent Slapering Hol Press publication, *Hudson River Haiku*. Though they’d never met, the Press (whose name is Old Dutch for “Sleepy Hollow”) is located in the village where Jo Ann lives, just upriver from Helen’s home in Hastings-on-Hudson. Helen, is a writer and SSS parent, who was the School’s first librarian in its original Parioli location. Two of her three daughters, Teodolinda and Susanna, attended St. Stephen’s. Teo, a long-serving trustee of the School, is now a renowned Italian Literature Scholar at Columbia University. Susanna lives in Urbino with her husband, Nevio Mengacci, the artist whose watercolors illustrate the book.

Jo Ann comments, “Meeting Helen was a delightful coincidence because my SSS life rarely intersects with my life as a poet and editor of poetry. It was fun because hearing Helen’s stories about **Edward Steinberg** and **Jack Ullman** from their time together in Parioli. She characterized Jack and Edward as upstarts whom senior faculty like herself could never keep in line. I assured her that things at St. Stephen’s - and some people - hadn’t changed much.”

The release of *Hudson River Haiku*, coincides with the Quadricentennial Celebration of Henry Hudson’s exploration of the river that bears his name.

**Jo Ann Clark, New York Office**

## Horseback Riding in Special Conditions

Up in deserted and out-of-the-way Billings, Montana, there is a school called Yellowstone Boys and Girls Ranch, also known as YBGR. YBGR is not like any school I have ever encountered because it is a school with a multi-service organization providing mental health programs and services to emotionally disturbed youths. In fact, the school is not a school like we know it, with grade levels where people learn; it is like a college where you are put into classes according to what your mental disability is, and how severe it is considered. Most kids come from a violent household, or are orphans, or have already been involved in serious crimes, like stealing cars, drug abuse or weapons possession. Accompanied by a family friend, I worked with students from the Ranch over the summer.

My friend Nona loves horses and teaches horsemanship and gives horse therapy sittings to children from the Ranch. What we did was very interesting. In the morning, we went to the main campus to pick up the kids and drove them to the stables.

Next, we chose and saddled our horses. I did not know how to saddle a horse, because in Italy it is not permitted to do so on your own unless the horse is yours. I learned quickly with Nona's help. Next, we went into the corral and started our lesson. Nona mostly relied on me to keep the situation under control, because although the kids appeared normal on the outside, it was possible that, if something triggered their emotions, they could become aggressive or have serious reactions. Therefore, it was my job to keep the conversation light, to make sure everyone was in a good mood and enjoyed their riding.

In the afternoons, Nona sometimes had horse therapy or sometimes had other groups of smaller children riding in the corral. Horse therapy is a fascinating



Chiara taking her horse for a ride

activity. A class is divided into teams and each team is given a problem involving a horse; for example how to move the horse from one place to another without speaking to it. The idea of the exercises is to observe how each student reacts to the task at hand. Through these observations, teachers are able to help the kids with their problems. Whenever we did not have horse therapy, Nona and I stayed with the horses, and in the afternoons entertained a group of smaller children, who are considered "at risk" because they come from violent families, or have a parent in jail. We made sure that at least during those hours the children had the childhood they should have had at home.

A few encounters I had while I was working at the Ranch made me think about how lucky I am. While working with another 18-year-old intern, I asked him what his plans were for the future. He answered me very matter-of-factly that he was going to go to jail for a long time because he had been caught smuggling weapons into the United States. I was shocked, because for him it was such a common, natural thing. This made me realize just how lucky I am that I have everything I need and that I don't live in a family where violence and abuse could lead

me to extreme actions. On another day, while we were driving back from the corral, I lent my phone to the boy sitting next to me, and he played a game of "Guitar Hero." When he finished he thanked me as if I had just given him a present he really wanted. I later learned that at the Ranch they are not allowed to play any type of videogames, and that he had just had the most fun he had had in weeks. This made me appreciate everything I have, the education I am getting, the environment I live in, and I was and still am very thankful that life has been kind to me by supplying all

my needs and not leading me in the wrong direction, like it has for these children.

Chiara Caiusi '10

### **An Unforgettable Adventure** *(continued from front page)*

Approximately 1,100 yearly volunteers work tirelessly to reforest the land with these endemic species of plants in hopes that some day tortoises and more finches will return naturally to the highlands of San Cristobal.

I also participated in a bird-watching study where I was in charge of recording data about the nest locations, food sources, and numbers of bird species in all 4 forest regions of San Cristobal Island. Completed each year in June and July, this study helps to provide statistical data and proof that the reforestation project is working effectively. Many other projects are underway at this station including a nursery to raise and protect endemic species of plants, initiatives to educate local inhabitants about the importance of the native species and production of native produce to eliminate the use of mainland crops on the islands, since they potentially can bring with them new and possibly harmful species of insects and bacteria.

The memories I made, the friends I met, and the things I learned about conservation, ecology, and reforestation will remain with me forever. I feel incredibly lucky to have had the opportunity to experience this place and I hope to return there one day with a group of energetic, eco-friendly St. Stephen's School students who will hopefully realize the importance of these islands and become more globally aware of their own actions on our planet.

Elizabeth M. Johnson-Mottola, Science Department

