

LIFE ON CAMPUS

21 YEARS LATER, THE VIEW FROM GREY JAY WAY

By Jacob Sheetz-Willard, English Faculty

In his masterful long poem, “Four Quartets,” T.S. Eliot writes that “the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time.” Gathered in Stuen Hall at the conclusion of each semester, students inevitably mention how much has changed since they first stepped through the door of the Barnes Building—how they’ve grown in self-knowledge, confidence, and openness. How they’ve come to know themselves “for the first time.”

The profound internal changes that happen over the course of four months tend to overshadow the remarkable external changes this place has also undergone since Semester 1. There are few left on campus to remember the color of the first yurt, the “portaparties,” or the seemingly inconceivable fact that the Barnes Building didn’t actually have a door when the first intrepid students arrived in Leadville in 1998.

With the addition of four employee townhomes on campus this past August, the master plan that HMI founders Molly and Christopher Barnes proposed over two decades ago has become one large step closer to fruition. I feel grateful for their vision, the dedication of our builders, and expeditious shipments of lumber: my new townhome on Grey Jay Way came complete with not one, but two external doors.

From the window above my kitchen table I can see Mount Massive peaking through the stands of lodgepole pine. Inside are broad, exposed beams, doors of knotty pine, and two bedrooms with large windows that let in the sunshine and biting air of evening in Colorado. I now have cupboards enough to start shopping in bulk. Against the advice of our architect—given the efficient insulation of each unit—the faculty and staff committee charged with approving the blueprints insisted on a woodstove in the living room. As any true HMI student would agree, cast irons are an irresistible aesthetic.

Without a commute, I’ve found time to run the roads and trails with students more often. I take a few more of my meals on campus. And I’ll even admit to a midday nap or two. I look forward to saving my paycheck from the gas pump, as well as the insatiable maw of the Leadville rental market.

There’s a clear “why” behind the “what” of campus housing. HMI has an inspiring mission that attracts talented educators; this housing enables HMI to offer compensation that will help keep that talent around for the long-term. Campus housing offers clear proof that HMI invests in its community. It recognizes that the student experience begins with those who make transformative education possible: the faculty and staff.

“To arrive where we started.” With the final pieces of the campus master plan falling into place, HMI begins its next decade in a position of strength. But in all the ways that really matter, nothing has changed. Stop by for a tour of Unit D if you ever find yourself on Grey Jay Way in the near future. We’ll chat missing doors, mission statements, and what it means to know a place, again, for the first time. ■



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