



MIDLAND SCHOOL

Live Your Education

MIDLAND ANNUAL REPORT 2025 ►



LIVE YOUR EDUCATION

Midland School provides a unique college preparatory boarding school experience to a diverse student body. Through study and work, it teaches the value of a lifetime of learning, self-reliance, simplicity, responsibility to community and the environment, and a love for the outdoors.

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We have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this report is correct. If you spot inaccuracies or omissions, please accept our apologies and notify the Advancement Office at 805-688-5114, extension 114 or at advancement@midland-school.org.

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Thank You to Our Donors





Dear Midland Community,

Today marks my final day as Chair of the Midland School Board. It is a moment to reflect on the school's progress, our shared accomplishments, and the opportunities ahead under a new season of leadership.

I want to begin by thanking those who helped me step into this role following the heartbreaking loss of Jim Dreyfuss '81, P'15, P'17, P'20. Andrew McCarthy '85, P'17 and Gretchen Collard P'21, P'24 joined me on the Executive Committee, bringing multiple voices together to address the school's needs. The full Board engaged with care and rigor, and I am especially grateful to former Head of School, Christopher Barnes P'21, P'22, who helped guide a period of renewal across campus, curriculum, and community.

Over the past year, I have had the privilege of working closely with Hannah Nelson, our new Head of School. Her experience in school leadership, paired with a clear understanding of today's educational landscape, has kept Midland fiscally strong while deepening the culture in lasting ways. Hannah is the right leader at the right time, and I look forward to witnessing her tenure at Midland.

Tomorrow, Andrew becomes Board Chair, joined by Howard McCoy '89 on the Executive Committee. I am confident in their readiness and vision. My own skills in strategy, management, and finance were a good match for the renewal years. Today, Midland faces a new challenge. Hannah and the Board are aligned on Midland's top priority: enrollment. We have the people, the programs, and the resources to grow, even in a slowing national market.

Midland's academic program and college outcomes are among the best. What sets us apart is the depth of preparation our students carry forward intellectually, emotionally, and through lived experience. Andrew and Hannah will continue to build on this strength. I hope you will join me in supporting them and sharing Midland's story with those who know, as we do, that the Midland program and community are *right where they need to be*.

Thank You,



Tom Mone '72

Board Chair

A New Head for Midland

As I reflect on this first year, I want to begin with gratitude. Stepping into a new role, in a new place, comes with a kind of vulnerability. I have felt continuously welcomed by students, by faculty and staff, by families, and by alumni who have taken the time to share stories and offer perspective. That generosity opened space for me to listen, to learn, and to begin the ongoing work of understanding what this school asks of its leaders.



I came to Midland with a strong sense that it is the school I had always hoped to lead. What I could not yet know was how clearly its values would show up in daily life. I co-taught Midland 101 with our ninth graders, and the time we spent walking the land, learning the ecology and geology, observing the return of wildflowers to our burn scars, and identifying native species helped ground me in the meaning of this place. I learned just as much through Stillman meals and daily jobs, through the unexpected demands of the Lake Fire and its aftermath, and through both simple and structured conversations with students and staff that helped me see how this community holds itself together.

My family has grown into this place too. My son, William, started at the Family School and now comes home eager to report what he's learned about aphids and seeds and whatever plants he's watered that day. My husband, Marty, spends his time exploring the trails and ridgelines, often returning with observations about the land that I haven't yet had time to notice myself. We are learning this place together, and I am reminded every day of how lucky I am to be here.

What follows in this report reflects the work of many hands and minds across the year. We've taken a closer look at residential life, continued deepening academic programs, tackled facilities and enrollment challenges, and finished the fundraising year with resounding community support. I look forward to building on this foundation as we begin strategic planning and prepare for Midland's next chapter.

Hannah Nelson
Hannah Nelson
Head of School



A Senior Reflects on Hannah's First Year

When I look back on my final year at Midland, one thing stands out clearly: change. As part of the Class of 2025, I had the unique experience of going through my senior year alongside Hannah, our new Head of School. While it could have been a year defined by uncertainty, Hannah's leadership quickly put those worries to rest. From the beginning, she made it a priority to connect with the student body, not just in passing, but through real, intentional relationships.

Hannah didn't stay tucked away in an office or simply show up at community events—she was present. She spent time with us, sat with us at meals, asked us thoughtful questions, and genuinely listened. More than that, she taught alongside our faculty, especially with the freshmen in Midland 101, not only to contribute to the classroom, but to understand Midland from the inside out. That commitment to getting to know our community firsthand set the tone for everything else she did.

Something I truly admire about Hannah is her willingness to embrace change, even when it's not easy. One of the biggest shifts this year has been her efforts to rethink our disciplinary system. Rather than leaning into punishment, she is helping the school move toward a model rooted in restorative justice—one that prioritizes accountability, healing, and growth over simple consequences. It's a change that reflects Midland's values and one that, I believe, will make a lasting difference in how we care for one another as a community.

As a graduate, it's not always easy to let go of a place you've called home and the people who have made it one. But knowing that Midland is being led by someone as thoughtful and student-focused as Hannah gives me hope. She is not just managing the school, she is making efforts to help Midland grow.

By Parker Bledsoe '25

Junior Prefect, Dish House Head, Waiter Head

YOUR IMPACT

\$50,227
average financial aid award

46%
of students receive financial aid

*Our 2024-25 regular operating budget
(approx. \$4.3 million)*



69% Net Tuition
15% Endowment Draw
9% Annual Fund
7% Other Income

Summary Balance Sheet

FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
ASSETS (MILLIONS)					<i>unaudited</i>
Cash & Other Current Assets	6.0	6.2	6.9	4.4	5.1
Investments	22.9	15.5	15.2	17.7	19.6
Property, Equipment, & Buildings	9.9	15.8	20.3	22.3	22.5
Depreciation	(4.3)	(4.3)	(4.6)	(5.5)	(5.5)
Property, Equipment & Buildings less Depreciation	5.6	11.6	15.7	16.8	17.0
Total Assets	34.5	33.3	37.8	38.9	41.7
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS (MILLIONS)					
Current Liabilities & Pre-Paid Tuition	3.0	4.3	3.2	2.8	2.9
Long-Term Liabilities	0.0	0.1	3.9	4.0	5.0
Without Donor Restrictions	16.3	17.0	17.9	18.1	18.5
With Donor Restrictions	15.2	11.9	12.8	14	15.3
Total Net Assets	31.5	28.9	30.7	32.1	33.8
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	34.5	33.3	37.8	38.9	41.7



55% Payroll, Taxes and Workers Comp
8% Employee Benefits
7% Educational Program (Academic, Experiential, Athletics)
6% Insurance
9% General Office/Administrative
15% Other Expenses

FUN FACTS + FIGURES

42 Trips, 66 Nights Under the Stars



On average, a group slept outside one-third of the nights school was in session!

500+ Hours of Trail Work

The sophomore class completed 1/2 mile of mountain bike trails during Experiential Week, while two separate senior projects completed miles of hiking and biking trails on the property!

STUDENT EXPERIENCES

20+ Students Introduced to the Midland Horse Program

Students with no prior experience were invited to the Barn for Experiential Saturday introductory riding lessons, rejuvenating enthusiastic student interest in beginner-level horsemanship.



35 *Midland Mirror* Articles Published



A team of 7 talented editors and writers brought 4 issues of student journalism to life.



1st Season of Mountain Biking

Five students joined the pilot sport, combining trail riding, bike maintenance, and hands-on work shaping the first sections of Midland's new mountain biking trail system.



GATHERINGS

90+ Decades Reunion Attendees

It was amazing to see so many folks at the Decades Reunion Weekend, all the way from 1961 to 2015.



COMMUNITY & FARM

3,978 lbs of Produce Donated to our Community

Farm interns harvested and donated nearly two tons of produce to Veggie Rescue, supporting over 50 Central Coast organizations, and volunteered at the group's annual fundraiser dinner.



500+ Thanksgiving Meals Served

This Thanksgiving, Midlanders gathered from near and far to run the Turkey Trot, have a farm-fresh meal, and enjoy Stillman porch performances.

ANNUAL FUND

73% Parent Donor Participation

Congratulations to the Class of 2026 for achieving the strongest participation this year at 85.7%!



\$94,567 Raised in Final Push by 120 Annual Fund Donors

Thank you to all of our new and returning donors who went above and beyond in helping us close our Annual Fund goal.

CLASS OF 2025 COLLEGE ACCEPTANCES

This list is comprised of institutions where Midland School students were accepted in 2025. Institutions where students enrolled are listed in bold. Institutions with an acceptance rate under 30% are noted by *.

Alfred University
American University
Appalachian State University
Arizona State University
Bates College*
Baylor University
Beloit College
Berry College
Boston University*
Bowdoin College*
Brandeis University
Cal Maritime
Cal Poly*
Carnegie Mellon University*
Chapman University
College of Charleston
Colorado College*
Colorado State University Fort Collins
Cornell University*
Dartmouth College*
Earlham College
Elon University
Emerson College
Florida Institute of Technology
Fort Lewis College
George Washington University
Georgia State University
Illinois Institute of Technology
Indiana University
James Madison University

Kansas State University
Kenyon College
Lehigh University
Lincoln Memorial University
Macalester College*
Michigan State University
Middlebury College*
Montana State University
Mount Holyoke College
The New School
Oklahoma State University
Oregon State University
Otterbein University
Penn State - University Park
Pitzer College*
Portland State University
Reed College
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
St. Lawrence University
Saint Louis University
San Diego State University
Santa Barbara City College
Sarah Lawrence College
Savannah College of Art and Design
Scripps College
Skidmore College*
Southern California Institute of Architecture
Syracuse University
Tulane University*

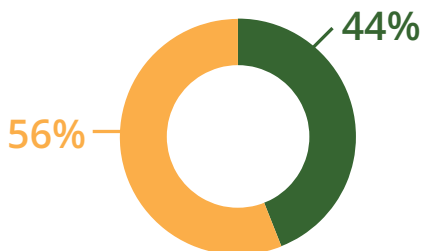
The University of Alabama
University of Arizona
UC Berkeley*
UC Davis
UC Merced
UC Riverside
UC San Diego*
UC Santa Cruz
University of Colorado Boulder
University of Connecticut
University of Hawaii at Manoa
University of Kentucky
University of Maryland
University of Massachusetts Amherst
University of Missouri Columbus
University of North Dakota
University of Oklahoma
University of Oregon
University of San Francisco
University of South Carolina
University of Sydney
University of Vermont
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin Madison
University of Wisconsin River Falls
Western Michigan University
Washington State University
Whitman College
Williams College*

Matriculation Trends and Degrees Earned by Midland Graduates

This year, a larger number of Midland graduates decided to enroll in public universities as compared to prior years.

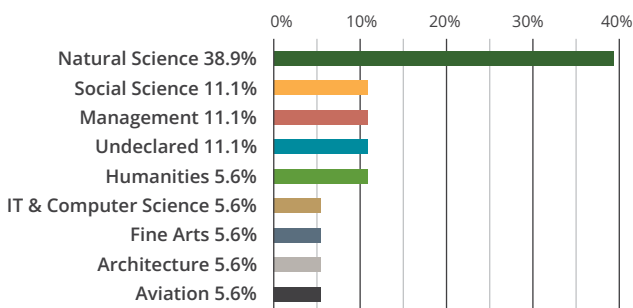
MATRICULATION FOR THE CLASS OF 2025

- Enrolled in private institutions
- Enrolled in public institutions



MAJOR SELECTIONS FOR THE CLASS OF 2025

The Class of 2025 continued the trend of graduating seniors leaning into Natural Sciences.



Congratulations to the following Midlanders on their academic milestones completed in 2024!

Elizabeth '20 Bachelor of Arts in Women, Gender, and Sexuality from Oregon State University

Freya '18 Bachelor of Fine Arts in Graphic Design from Portland State University

James '16 Associate of Arts in Psychology from Santa Monica College

Jamie '20 Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Business from Cal Poly

Jiaqi '20 Master of Arts in Statistics from Columbia University

Madeline '20 Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from Scripps College

Quinn '20 Bachelor of Arts in Human Ecology from College of the Atlantic

Shannon '18 Masters in Social Work from University of Nevada Reno

Duncan '17 Masters of Science in Physics from University of British Columbia

Did we miss giving a shout out for an academic achievement in 2024/2025? Email us your updates at advancement@midland-school.org



CHARTING OUR FUTURE

Nearly a century ago, Midland's founder Paul Squibb wrote, *"The world has need of what we are trying to do here."* That conviction continues to guide us as we embrace the recommendations from our 2024-25 re-accreditation process.

Re-accreditation is a rigorous, peer-reviewed evaluation that takes place every five to seven years and is conducted by the California Association of Independent Schools (CAIS) and the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). It offers a rare opportunity to step back, assess our practices, and receive feedback from fellow educators who understand both the promise and the responsibility of independent schools.

At Midland, we've taken this process as an invitation to reflect deeply on who we are and who we aim to become. Rather than treating the recommendations as a checklist, we are engaging the entire school community in foundational work that will shape our next strategic plan. We've already begun meaningful work across several areas.

We also heard a clear charge to better communicate the value of a Midland education: how a simple, self-reliant, and place-based life fosters strong, resilient learners, leaders, and doers. We are taking this call seriously, knowing that telling our story well is part of shaping our future. As Paul Squibb reminded us, Midland's task is not just to survive but to serve. These efforts reflect our ongoing commitment to making Midland more sustainable and mission-aligned than ever before.



MISSION AND CORE VALUES RENEWAL:

We are re-engaging the entire community in a reflection on Midland's founding purpose and how it might continue evolving to meet the needs of each new generation of students. This includes revisiting our core values with faculty, students, and alumni to affirm what remains essential and refining our mission to powerfully express Midland's distinct spirit, purpose, and impact.



COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING

EXPANSION: With a focus on clarity and coherence, our academic leaders are refining a roadmap for deeper integration of our skill-based assessments. We are preparing to pilot a competency-based learning management system to better reflect and clearly communicate the growth our students achieve.



STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT AND

ADVANCEMENT: We completed a 360° admissions review through the Association of Independent School Admissions Professionals (AISAP) and are crafting a strategic enrollment plan aimed at increasing overall student enrollment and net tuition revenue. In tandem, we are laying the groundwork for Midland's Centennial Campaign, with enhanced major gift planning and alumni engagement strategies.



OPERATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY: From evaluating our campus master plan and compensation structures to deepening our mental health support and documenting institutional history, we are ensuring Midland is equipped to meet the practical needs of our community today and into the future.

Some recent projects have been necessary due to shifts in climate and land use. Others respond to the changing needs of the campus population while staying grounded in Midland's values. In all cases, the intent is to maintain the conditions in which Midland's program can thrive, without altering the character that defines the school.



ON THE FARM, we broke ground on a new walk-in cold storage and began a greenhouse upgrade. Thanks to a generous alumni donation, the cold storage will allow us to better preserve storage crops for use in the kitchen, contributing to a more stable year-round food supply. The greenhouse improvements aim to extend the growing season and support greater student involvement in farm-based learning. These projects reflect the farm's dual role as both a source of food and a living classroom, central to Midland's philosophy of purposeful work.



In response to extended heatwaves and the increasing length of the warm season, a small air conditioning unit was installed **IN THE LIBRARY**. This addition is used selectively to maintain safe indoor temperatures during full-school meetings, presentations, and summer faculty sessions. The decision was not made lightly. It reflects the need to ensure that critical gatherings can continue without disruption during extreme heat events, which have become more common and more intense in recent years.



WILDLIFE ACTIVITY continues to shape our campus maintenance. Following the wildfire that moved through the region, we've experienced a significant increase in mice in living spaces, classrooms, and vehicles. Students responded with coordinated efforts to reduce the problem, applying practical and creative solutions. Their response reflected both shared responsibility and the school's ongoing culture of resourcefulness. Additional wildlife, including coyotes, bobcats, and opossums, continues to appear in night camera footage; these glimpses remind us of the school's position within our broader ecosystem.



THE TRAIL SYSTEM has also received attention this year. Post-fire conditions required targeted restoration to support erosion control, improve access, and protect regenerating areas. Trails continue to serve as important daily routes for students and staff, as well as spaces for instruction and reflection.



Much of this care is shared. Students participating in the **MAINTENANCE SPORT** contribute directly to the repair and upkeep of campus facilities, including Pink Palace, the footbridge, and fencing for residences. Their work takes place within Midland's long-standing tradition of hands-on stewardship that shapes both our campus and the people who care for it.

REPORT ON ENROLLMENT

At Midland, we track enrollment success through a mix of quantitative and qualitative metrics.

First and foremost, we seek to fill our cabins and classrooms with students who are a strong match for Midland: young people who will both benefit from the experience and contribute meaningfully to the life of this place. We aim for a diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, and passions that align with Midland's mission.

Second, we monitor total enrollment. A robust student population helps ensure vibrant classroom dialogue, a healthy social and work culture, and a sustainable distribution of shared responsibility for the labor required to run the school.

Third, we pay close attention to net tuition revenue per student, a key financial measure that reflects the average tuition received after financial assistance is applied. Since our founding, Midland's philosophy has been that any mission-aligned student should be able to attend, regardless of ability to pay. Our balance of philanthropic support and fiscal discipline is crucial to Midland's long-term sustainability.

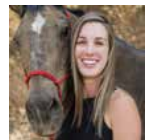
Independent schools nationwide are navigating shifting demographics along with a new wave of pressures and social challenges facing kids and families. The past two years have presented enrollment challenges, and Midland is not alone in this trend. Parents' desire to keep young people 'close to home' even as kids venture into new digital worlds makes Midland's mission more important than ever, and one that requires new levels of outreach and clarity.

We know that for so many young people, Midland's program will be the foundation for a healthy, successful life. Midland's board of trustees has purposefully and responsibly expanded our investment in recruitment and enrollment programs. As a key step forward, we are actively implementing new strategies aligned with recommendations from a recent 360° enrollment audit by the Association of Independent School Admission Professionals.

This year, we welcome three new admissions and advancement staff members, including an alum with deep experience in visual storytelling. We look forward to more family-hosted gatherings and off-campus events. The Midland community is always our best enrollment resource, so please reach out if you'd like to support our efforts.

Cierra

Cierra Rickman
*Director of Admission and
Advancement*





REPORT ON RESIDENCE LIFE

Residential life at Midland refers to the structures, routines, and relationships that shape how students live together on campus. While alumni may remember this as the natural rhythm of school life, what they might not remember is the behind-the-scenes thought and work that faculty members put in to create that rhythm.

“Res Life,” as we commonly refer to it on campus, now encompasses the intentional systems through which students experience guidance, accountability, and belonging outside the classroom. From cabin check-ins to house meetings, from shared meals to student leadership roles, residential life provides the framework in which Midland’s values are practiced and passed on.

In recent years, Midland has updated its academic and experiential programs to reflect contemporary research and place-based pedagogy. During that same period, the culture of residential life has remained largely consistent. In recognition of this, and amid a leadership transition, a faculty committee undertook a semester of research and reflection. The purpose was not to implement

change, but to better understand how our residential program already supports our students’ on-campus experience and personal development, and where we can identify room to grow.

The committee gathered input through student surveys, campus conversations, and visits with peer schools. **Clear themes emerged: student desire for more informal connection with adults, earlier and more inclusive leadership opportunities, and a disciplinary system that restores trust rather than relies solely on labor-based consequences.** These insights now serve as a foundation for ongoing reflection and refinement.

As Midland welcomes Taylor Replane as the new Dean of Residential Life, the school does so with clarity of purpose. Taylor brings over two decades of experience in education, including work in outdoor leadership, social-emotional learning, and student mentorship. He joins Midland at a moment when young people are asking for deeper connection, and when the structures that shape their daily lives matter more than ever.



REPORT ON CURRICULUM

This year marked an important milestone in Midland’s continued evolution as a mission-driven learning community.

From classrooms to farm rows, job crews to backcountry trails, our focus has been clear: **to deepen the connection between what students do every day and who they are becoming.**

At the heart of this work is our growing commitment to competency-based learning—an approach that helps students develop the essential skills and habits that will serve them well beyond Midland. This year, faculty across departments aligned their teaching and assessment practices around key skills drawn from our Portrait of a Midland Graduate—such as Using Models, Communicating Clearly, and Supporting Original Claims with Evidence. Students practiced self-reflection using learning scales, received clear, constructive feedback from teachers and peers, and gained a clearer

understanding of how they were growing as learners, teammates, and leaders.

This shift was also powerful in our experiential program, which remains a signature strength of the Midland experience. On the Farm, students started each semester by identifying skill-based goals, checking in on their growth throughout the term, and receiving feedback tied to real work with real purpose. In the Jobs Program, students explored a new skill every two weeks—introduced by seniors at Coffee Tree and woven into work crews across campus. These changes help students see the through lines between academic rigor, physical work, and community contribution.

This spring, **Midland completed its re-accreditation process**—a comprehensive, external review of all aspects of school life. The



visiting committee affirmed what so many of us already feel: that Midland’s mission is not only alive, but thriving. As they wrote:

“The community is nurtured and sustained by a deeply held pride in its purpose, the students it serves, and how they live the mission... Students from the earliest days of the school would feel quite at home at the Midland of 2025, where daily physical work, care for the environment, rigorous academic studies, and a disciplined pursuit of simplicity remain at the heart of the teaching and learning experience.”

And yet, we know that to honor our past while preparing for the future, we must continue to adapt. One of our biggest challenges—and opportunities—lies in how we track and communicate learning. While our current gradebook and transcript system reflects traditional grading models, it does not

fully capture the richness of skills-based and experiential learning. That’s why, in the coming year, we will pilot **a new system designed specifically to support competency-based learning**—one that better reflects the kind of growth our students are experiencing and allows us to communicate it with clarity to families, colleges, and future employers.

We’re proud of the progress we’ve made this year—and deeply grateful to the parents, alumni, and donors who make this work possible. Your belief in Midland helps us continue offering an education that prepares students not just for college, but for meaningful lives steeped in purpose.

Dan Susman *Ellie Moore*

Dan Susman and Ellie Moore
Dean of Experiential Learning
and Dean of Academics





REPORT ON THE HORSE PROGRAM

I believe horses make better people. They teach you to be resilient, to take feedback without taking it personally, and to keep your focus on what you can control. You can't go into the barn thinking about yourself too much. The horses will remind you that your energy affects theirs. That your timing matters. That the smallest shifts, where your weight sits in the saddle or how you hold a rein, change everything.

As someone with dyslexia, I've always relied on big-picture thinking and nonverbal cues. That's how I connect. That's how I teach. Horses speak in feel, not words. And so do a lot of students, even if they don't know it yet.

I joined Midland this past winter, and I've spent my first semester listening; first to the horses, then to the students, and then to the patterns in

between. What I've found is a strong foundation: students who are willing to work hard, a barn culture that values care, and a herd that still has more to give. I've also seen where new energy can be useful. The program is ready for its next chapter, one that keeps the integrity of what has worked and expands access to more of the student body.

The academic and sport components of the program remain central. Students who choose to ride as their sport of choice learn both the technical and the relational aspects of horsemanship. In the internship, they move more deliberately: feeding, grooming, and tending to the full scope of the animals' needs while developing an understanding of training principles and equine behavior. These forms of learning depend on consistency, repetition, and reflection.

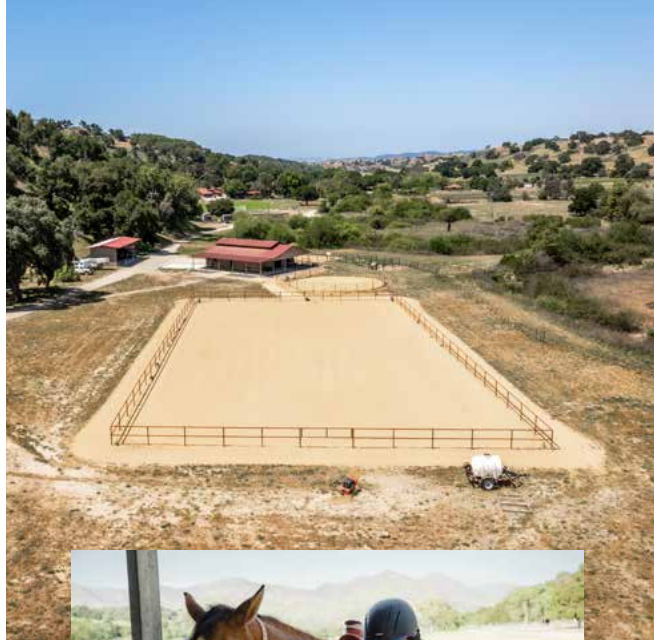
Beginning this spring, we've introduced a new pathway: all students now have the opportunity to ride through Experiential Saturdays. This change opens the barn to students who may not have considered themselves "horse people," and offers a first point of contact that is structured, safe, and relational. It allows students to try without committing a full term, and gives them the chance to build familiarity with the barn and with themselves in that setting.

We are also attending to the long-term viability of the program. Our current herd includes many horses in their twenties. These horses remain valuable instructors, but they are ridden less frequently. We are beginning the process of gradually refreshing the herd with younger horses who can support more consistent riding and development for students. In parallel, we are investing in staffing and training systems that protect the physical and mental health of the horses, and that preserve a high standard of care.

Looking ahead, I see opportunities to connect the horse program more deliberately to Midland's academic and communal life. The barn is not only a place for movement and care, but a site for learning that touches land stewardship, animal systems, resource planning, and human behavior. Students who work with horses learn to notice without judgment, to adjust without delay, and to move forward after a misstep. These capacities are central to Midland's mission. The horses help teach them, one ride at a time.

Lauren Pearson

Lauren Pearson
*Horse Program Director
and Educator*



As we look to expand Midland's horse program, we are seeking younger herd members. If you know of a horse in need of a new home, please reach out to horseback@midland-school.org



Trailbuilding: Building a Bike Trail

Aquila Ramsey-Ray '25, 11th Grade
Prefect, Dish House Head



Aquila's senior project was to design and build a durable mountain bike trail at Midland, aimed at supporting the school's emerging bike program. His goal was to create a beginner-to-intermediate flow trail featuring berms, rollers, and jumps that riders of all skill levels could enjoy.

Starting from a partially completed and unridable trail, Aquila reimagined the layout, carefully planning features to ensure both fun and sustainability. Throughout the process, he learned to use new tools like the mini excavator and deepened his trail-building knowledge through hands-on work and guidance from his advisor and online resources.

One of the biggest challenges Aquila faced was dealing with cattle repeatedly damaging the trail.

"The cattle wrecking my work was frustrating, but it taught me resilience and problem-solving," he shared. Despite setbacks, he persevered, rebuilt damaged sections, and collaborated with fellow students and staff to refine the trail.

By project's end, Aquila had created a quarter-mile trail with 21 berms, 8 rollers, jumps, and a wooden feature, designed for fun and longevity. Reflecting on his experience, he said, "This project showed me the importance of community involvement—I'd definitely bring more people in next time to share the workload and energy."

Aquila hopes his trail will be well-used and maintained, providing a foundation for Midland's bike program and inspiring future riders to develop their skills and passion for mountain biking.

Science: Custom Tree Finder

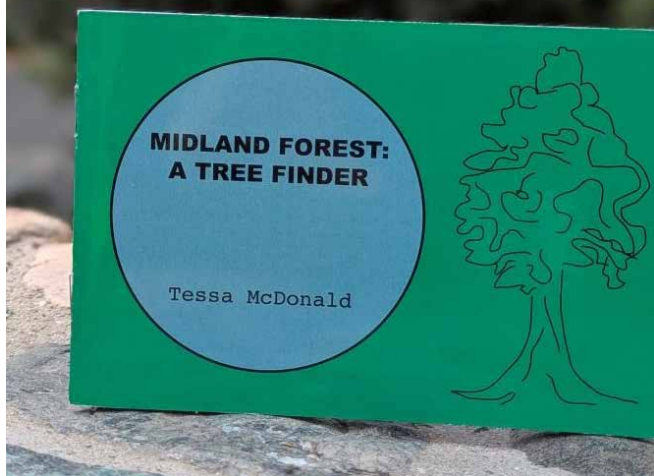
**Tess McDonald '25, Head Prefect,
Farm Head, Kitchen Head**

For her senior project, Tess turned her love of forest ecology into a thoughtful and accessible gift to future Midland students: a custom tree finder for the trees and shrubs growing on Midland's campus. Inspired by the challenges of traditional plant identification books—often heavy on scientific vocabulary and complex genus-based classification—Tess set out to design a simpler, more intuitive guide that anyone, even a new ninth grader, could use with ease.

“My goals for my finder were for it to be quick and easy to use, avoid overly-scientific vocabulary, and to have interesting information,” Tess explains. Her project centers around a dichotomous key—a branching sequence of questions that guides users step by step to identify specific trees. The finder includes 27 species, each with a photograph and a short paragraph featuring unique characteristics and fun facts.

To build her guide, Tess combined her own knowledge with resources like iNaturalist, expert input from Dean of Experiential Learning Dan Susman, and several field guides. She then used Adobe InDesign to format her content into a polished, printable booklet. “There’s not another single project I’ve put as much time into,” she reflected.

Tess’s tree finder is already in use on campus and will help students recognize, appreciate, and connect with the natural world around them for years to come. With this project, Tess has made a lasting contribution to Midland’s culture of curiosity, stewardship, and love for the land.



Midland's 2025 Senior Projects

Every Midland student completes a senior project or thesis in their final year. The senior project is an opportunity for seniors to design an independent, project-based course addressing a line of inquiry in an area of their own interest. It is a semester-long endeavor that requires planning, time management, craftsmanship, problem solving, and student agency.

Woodshop: Paipo Mania, *Sam '25*

Ceramics: Slip Casting, *Morgan '25*

Trailbuilding: The Golden Horseshoe, *Ruby '25*

Woodshop: Building a Boat, *Kielson '25*

Art: A Midland Mural, *Brodie '25*

Coding: A Midland Video Game, *Simon '25*

Summer Scholarships

Due to the generous donations of Midland graduates, we are able to offer two named scholarships for summer programs.

The Cosby Award

We are excited to celebrate the achievements of Midland’s Class of 2025 Cosby scholars! The Cosby Award is funded by an endowment donated by Midland alumnus and former trustee John Cosby ’63. Its purpose is to allow students the opportunity to explore an area of interest or passion that they may want to pursue as a career.

Cosby scholar Tess ’25 shared, “It broadened my interest in other areas of environmental science, like cave ecology and salamanders, which are unique to southern forests. We sampled fish in a stream using a seine, a really big net. You get chest-deep in the water and run with the net to collect the fish. We also cored trees, taking a pencil-sized sliver to determine which part of the tree is actively pushing water.”

While studying editing at the New York Times, Caleb ’25 realized the importance of connections, “A huge takeaway is that in the journalism industry, connections are everything. You need to make connections and become business associates, because you never know when your paths might cross again. There are so many ways you can join, especially now, with the age of technology. You can be a computer science major in college and be the person who is a data analyst or helps code. You could be a sound engineer or a script writer. There are so many ways to join an industry.” This lesson should do him well as he enters into Cornell’s Hospitality program!

STUDENT	COSBY AWARD PROGRAM	COLLEGE MATRICULATION
Caleb	Learned the Fundamentals of Editing at the New York Times	Hospitality at Cornell University
Parker	Participated in Vogue Fashion Media Summer School	International Relations at University of Washington
Tess	Studied Field Ecology at Sewanee: University of the South	Biology at Bowdoin College



Congratulations to the winners of the Class of 2026—*Kathy, Veronica, Shae, Guillermo, and Sascha*—whose application essays earned them a place among Midland’s Cosby scholars. They attended programs this summer focused on fashion media, environmental field studies, and newspaper editing. We are excited for them to share with the community about their learning!



Dan Shapiro '68, B.G. Kress '68, Mateo '26, Mia '26, Jim Quick '68

Class of '68 Wilderness Fund Award

Through the generosity of the class of 1968, Midland students can apply for funding toward wilderness-based programs and/or wilderness skills training over the summer. The goal is to provide advanced opportunities for Wilderness Fund recipients to foster a deeper connection to the environment, build their leadership skills, and to encourage the development of skills necessary for a lifelong engagement with the natural world.

In November, we heard from 2024 Wilderness Fund winners, Mateo '26 and Mia '26. Mateo attended a 30-Day NOLS Alaskan Wilderness Backpacking Program and Mia earned her NOLS Wilderness First Responder certification in San Rafael.

At Midland, students are encouraged to reflect on their relationship with place and environment, and often do so in profound ways. **2025 winner, Amelie '27, shares about her motivation for attending a 30-Day Mountaineering Course with Outward Bound in Colorado:**

“Wild places have a remarkable ability to bring out the unsheltered parts in all of us, allowing for strong connection formed through letting go of protective facades and unnecessary fear of judgement. Yet, not everyone is comfortable being uncomfortable; it takes a leader modeling

both vulnerability and strategies to push through discomfort for a group to collectively enter this state of unsheltered growth.

Thirty days mountaineering and rock climbing in the Colorado Rockies is a chance for me to step into a completely unknown world with inherent challenge and fear. Pushing myself to be comfortable expressing my struggles and strategies to cope with them will allow me to create a space where others feel comfortable advocating for their needs rather than feeling insecure for needing help.

Although I have become aware of how I need to move forward, *it will take time to become comfortable balancing self care, group care, and the expression of weakness as a way to grow.* This expedition will be a chance for me to enter an unknown peer group where I may be the youngest and least experienced, while also learning concrete new skills like how to tie climbing knots and trust my grip on rock.

The peer leadership skills that I would inevitably gain through a month in the Rockies will return to Midland with me to share. I look forward to earning more leadership roles as a Steward and rising upperclassman, and *my hope is that this course will nourish my ability to be vulnerable so that I can help inspire and care for the next generation of outdoor leaders at Midland.*”

MAJOR GIVING

Major gifts provide Midland with critical resources to plan boldly, act strategically, and invest in opportunities that shape the future of our school. These leadership contributions—often given in addition to Annual Fund support—make lasting impact, from enhancing academic programs to improving campus facilities and growing our financial assistance capacity. We are deeply grateful to the donors listed here for their commitment to Midland's mission and their belief in our long-term vision.

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The 2024–25 Annual Fund closed at \$488,567, surpassing our goal thanks to steady support throughout the year and a remarkable final push, when more than 120 donors came together in the last ten days to help close a nearly \$90,000 gap. *The following list recognizes all who gave during the 2024–25 fiscal year.*

We have made every effort to ensure that the information contained in this report is correct. If you spot inaccuracies or omissions, please accept our apologies and notify the Advancement Office at 805-688-5114, extension 114 or at: advancement@midland-school.org.

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Ensuring a Vibrant Future for Midland School

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2024-2025 Annual Report

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Save the Dates

Thanksgiving—Thursday, November 28th

**Alums, Parents, and Friends Day, and the
John Dreyfuss '52 Distinguished Alumni Award
(JDDA)—Saturday, April 25th**

Graduation—May 30th

Decades Reunion—June 5-7th

'46, '51, '56, '61, '66, '71, '76, '81,
'86, '91, '96, '01, '06, '11, '16

Ways to Give

Your support sustains the
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generations to come.

- Scan the QR code to give
your gift online
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Have questions or want to discuss a leadership gift?
Reach out to Cierra at crickman@midland-school.org

From strong roots grow mighty oaks. Thank you for
helping them grow.

