

Alumni Spotlight

BY RICH MEYER, DIRECTOR OF ALUMNI AFFAIRS & FACILITIES OUTREACH

Where Eagles Soar

Hillside Alumni use Eagle Scout Projects to Give Back to Hillside

What do former President Gerald Ford, astronaut and first man to walk on the moon Neil Armstrong, and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg have in common with Hillside alumni Kolya Ecker '06, Nick Klein '06, and Chris Houston '08? They are all Eagle Scouts. Soon joining this group of Hillside Alumni are Dominic Casamassima '10 and Ethan Butterworth '11 who are in sight of their Eagle Scout rank.

Eagle Scout is the highest advancement rank in Boy Scouting and becoming an Eagle Scout is not an easy task. Those who achieve this ranking have demonstrated leadership, physical fitness, and high moral character throughout their scouting careers. The skills and values required to become an Eagle Scout are similar to those that Hillside endeavors to instill in all of its students, so it is not surprising that our alumni should attain this honor.

Among other challenges, an Eagle Scout candidate is required to plan, develop, and lead a service project. The three alumni mentioned above completed their service projects at Hillside.

Chris Houston '08, who attended Hillside for four years beginning in grade six, did his service project while still a student at Hillside. While involved at the farm, Chris discovered an old trailer back in the woods. It was rusted, twisted, and, in most people's opinions, ready for the scrap

heap. In spite of this, Chris believed that he could salvage the trailer. It took about five months, nearly 400 man hours, and about \$1,000 in donated goods from local hardware stores, but Chris successfully restored the old trailer. The result was a beautiful trailer that has become an iconic piece at the farm and is used each year at Hillside's Farm Day event to give hay rides.

Dominic Casamassima '10 was grateful to Hillside for helping him to mature as a person, so he chose to do his project at Hillside in order to give something back to the school. Dominic had noticed that one section of the path connecting the main campus to the farm was often washed out or underwater, often making it difficult to use. He developed a design for a culvert, or drainage system, which would allow excess water to flow underneath the path but provide a wide enough and sturdy enough path for vehicular use. Dominic then recruited a team to help him execute his plan to improve the path. The team included his scout troop and some neighbors who spent a weekend working under Dominic's lead. The culvert design improved the path

and Dominic felt very proud to see it transformed from a washed out path to a usable road. Dominic now attends Worcester Academy, where he will begin his junior year this fall as a member of their football and wrestling teams.



Dominic Casamassima '10 (top) and Chris Houston '08 revisit their Eagle Scout Projects

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Hillside School, Inc.
404 Robin Hill St
Marlborough, MA 01752-1099

www.hillsideschool.net

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Kolya Ecker '06 also sought to give something back to Hillside with his Eagle Scout project and, like Dominic and Chris, he saw an opportunity to do so at the farm. About two years ago Kolya, returned to campus and noticed that the pasture across the street from the Farm Dorm had become overgrown, making it difficult for the animals to graze. For his Eagle Scout service project, he decided to clear the pasture. He organized a group of people and successfully led his team with all the vigor and energy that those who know Kolya have come to expect from him. Shortly after completing the project, Kolya moved to Wisconsin, but when he returns for a visit to campus in the fall he will be glad to see that his hard work has been maintained.

Our most recent Eagle Scout candidate, Ethan Butterworth '11, is in the planning stages for his project. Having graduated from Hillside this past spring, Ethan will be attending Proctor Academy this fall. He plans to return to Hillside to do his project on campus.

We may have other Eagle Scouts out there among our alumni, and if you are one, or if you know of one, please let us know so that we can share the story! 🏆