

When it graduated the class of 2014, Exeter sent out into the world 317 scholars, athletes, activists, musicians, environmentalists, writers, scientists, chefs, dancers, historians, visual artists—it's a list that is seemingly endless, given the many talents and interests these Exonians developed during their time at the Academy. If space permitted, every graduate would merit a profile in these pages; however, the six featured here are representative of the larger class. They're passionate about science and music, helping others, learning new languages, raising awareness, sharing knowledge, and expressing themselves. They embrace their inner geeks, celebrate their athleticism, see past physical and developmental issues, and honor their heritage and religion. One saluted Exeter's diversity, commenting that in four years he never once felt he had to work to fit into social circles and observing, "I think you make a community as you progress through." Another was grateful for the opportunity to have served as a tour guide, for the chance to "brag about Exeter and be reminded a few times every week why it's awesome."

Stefan Kohli: Pointing a Lens at Sustainability


Predictably, when Stefan Kohli traveled to India in March 2013 as part of Exeter's first student/faculty co-learning trip, he brought his camera with him. But rather than share his shots only with family and friends back home, Kohli sold the prints, raising \$1,150—money he then donated to the school to be used to purchase six new cameras. Three of those will go to PEA students who are traveling to India this summer; the other three are intended to be gifted to students they meet there.

"The goal is for students from both groups to capture their perspectives on issues in India," Kohli says, "and what they see as problems they could tackle as youths." He's hopeful that students will share their photos and ideas with the larger PEA community and at other schools, to allow those who aren't able to travel to India to get involved, too. Kohli, who has contributed his photography skills to the Exeter Communications Office, *PEAN* and *The Exonian*, also co-founded The Exeter Dress Code, a blog inspired by the blog Humans of New York and initially a showcase of student expression through clothing. With 200,000-plus views, it's evolved into a resource for both current and prospective students—"It's become more than pictures sharing how cool peo-

Exonians



Stefan Kohli



Becca Nievar

Today

Profiles from the class of 2014

By Sarah Zobel

*Photographs by
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ple's ties are, to people being able to share their experiences," Kohli says. He also runs the Exeter Exchange, an on-campus thrift store for clothing and school items, which is another outlet for the Scottsdale, Arizona, Eagle Scout's interest in sustainability, something he nourished during a summer 2013 internship at the Conservation Law Foundation in Boston.

Colby College-bound Kohli is also a talented oboist who spent the past four years as a member of the New England Conservatory's Youth Philharmonic Orchestra, a commitment that required he travel to Boston every Saturday for daylong rehearsals, giving him bonus lessons in self-discipline and time management, in addition to the music experience. He's considering a career in neuroscience and would like to explore the effects of music on the brain, inspired, in part, by playing at an assisted-care facility, where he observed an audience member who didn't seem overly invested in the music but was tapping her cane against her chair; there was, Kohli says, "some sort of connection that we felt that transcends the need for words, through the music."

Becca Nievar: Lighting Up Global Health

Becca Nievar was only 5 when she joined her mother in her first Relay for Life, soon after her maternal grandmother had died of brain cancer. The relay is an American Cancer Society event to raise both funds and awareness in which teams of individuals take turns walking on a track or path for up to 24 hours. Since that first experience, Nievar has participated annually, even serving on the planning committee in her hometown of Tulsa at the age of 11; when she came to the Academy she continued to take part in the school's modified relay, including directing it during her upper year. As a senior, she coordinated the central ceremony, in which all lights are turned off and special luminaria made by participants are lit; names of cancer survivors and victims are read; and, at PEA, students and faculty members tell their own stories of cancer.

"It's such a great way to bring a community together," Nievar says of the relays.

Words and health are a recurring theme for Nievar, who is co-head of WORD, the on-campus spoken word



K i e r a n M i n o r

club, for which she helps organize monthly events and weekly meetings. Since her lower year, Nievar has also been co-head of H4, a peer education health club. H4 members coordinate forums, schedule assembly speakers and write a monthly newsletter, all focused on the kinds of issues that commonly affect adolescents and their health, including the biggies—sex, drugs and alcohol—but also sleep, hygiene and nutrition. Students are welcome to join as lowers but must be nominated by a teacher and then complete an application; leaders are certified through the BACCHUS Network.

“I’m really interested in health on a global level,” Nievar says.

Having cultivated that awareness of globalism while volunteering as a proctor in the PEA office of multicultural affairs, Nievar is headed to New York University Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates, where she plans to focus on biochemistry and Middle Eastern studies before enrolling in medical school. She prepped for her undergraduate experience in part by taking classes in Arabic at the Academy. Nievar’s ultimate, admittedly long-term goal is to serve with an organization such as Doctors Without Borders and then open an NGO dedicated to women’s health in the Middle East or northern Africa.

Kieran Minor: Sharing the Global Power of Music

There was no time for senioritis for Kieran Minor, who had a busy final month at Exeter: He directed 14 students in Dramat’s modern production of Shakespeare’s *King Lear*—complete with strobe lights, Spandex and electro music—was featured in the choral concert as the winner of the 2014 Vocal Competition, performed his senior recital on piano, and was invited to read his 10-page meditation on the relationship between home and music, complete with interspersed song lyrics, to the entire school. But Minor is no stranger to performance, having acted throughout his four years at PEA in mainstage and Dramat productions, including *Beauty and the Beast*, *Mahabharata*, *Waiting for Godot* and *Little Women*. He’s also a member of the concert choir, The Exeteras a cappella group and a jazz trio. The latter group performed by invitation at New Hampshire Gov. Maggie Hassan’s inaugural ball in 2013.

And now Minor is taking music around the world, with plans to divide a gap year between Australia and Arizona before enrolling at Oberlin College. Funded by the Academy’s Perrin Fellowship, Minor will spend three months traveling around Aboriginal areas in northern Australia before heading to the Navajo Nation for another three months; in both locations he’ll study music theory and musicology, including its history and culture and how an environment affects the music that is produced.

“It’s sort of going to be like show-and-tell,” Minor says. “They’ll teach their theory and I’ll teach mine.”

Minor, of Danbury, Connecticut, has traveled before: He spent last fall in Stratford, England, during which he was invited last-minute to join a choir that was singing evensong at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. Though Minor admits he was nervous to be singing music he'd seen only once, doing so further spurred an interest in global music that had been generated earlier in June, when he'd traveled to Haiti with Student Council summer fellows for a two-and-a-half-week stint working with a nonprofit studio in Port-au-Prince. There he recorded a number of musicians for pieces he planned to air on WPEA.

Minor says he was pleasantly surprised that a school as rigorously focused on academics as Exeter would allow students equal space to explore extracurriculars, and credits the school's work ethic with helping him diversify his own interests.

"Once you find what you really love," Minor says, "you have all these extra skills, and that makes it more dimensional."

Amina Kunnummal: Merging Science and Feminism

When Khalid Shah, Ph.D., spoke at a school assembly earlier this year, Amina Kunnummal wasted no time in introducing herself to him. Long interested in the sciences and medicine, Kunnummal reached out to Shah and kept in touch after he'd returned to Harvard Medical School, where his research focuses on the use of stem cells in treating neuro glioblastoma tumors. Kunnummal, who is of Indian ancestry but was born in Kentucky, felt a connection with Shah thanks to a shared heritage and fascination with medicine. She "bugged" him enough that he finally invited her to tour his lab, which she did this spring, parlaying the visit into a summer internship. So before heading off to the University of Kentucky in the fall, Kunnummal will be in Shah's lab transforming bacteria, isolating DNA and running gel electrophoresis polymerase chain reaction—all things she's already experienced in, thanks to her Academy science labs.

Though becoming a doctor has long been Kunnummal's plan, reading Siddhartha Mukherjee's *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer* had already sparked an interest in that disease in particular.

"There are very few things that get me as fired up as talking about stem cells and cancer does," she says. That kind of focus is nothing new for Kunnummal, who says that after living in Saudi Arabia from the age of 4 on, she decided to send herself to boarding school because she sought academic challenge.

"I was that geeky kid and I loved it," she says. It's also what led her to serve as opinions editor of *The Exonian*, co-head of the Muslim Students' Association and co-founder of the re-established Feminist Union, which holds weekly open meetings to look at feminism in popular culture—a recent discussion centered on whether



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Agnes Zhu

Miley Cyrus' twerking episode on an awards show was an imitation of "a gross stereotype" of women of color or her own brand of feminism. The fact that there was no consensus among those present is fine with Kunnummal, who says the goal is not answers, but dialogue.

"If we can show even one person what it means to be a feminist," she says, "and get them to think about how gender and sexuality affect their life, then we've been successful."

Agnes Zhu: Crossing Boundaries and Making Connections

Although there's plenty of learning happening on campus, Agnes Zhu discovered what many Exonians already knew: that there's also much to be learned beyond Front Street. During her time at PEA, Zhu, of Bloomington, Indiana, spent a semester at The Mountain School in Vershire, Vermont, and made two service-learning-oriented trips to Ireland.

Housed on a farm, with 45 students in residence each semester, The Mountain School combines Harkness-style class time with experiential learning and a focus on the environment. So in addition to academics, a given day might include early-morning duty feeding the school's chickens, a lunch made with vegetables grown on the premises and kitchen cleaning or wood chopping during the two-hour afternoon work period. Zhu says focusing on the environment as more than theoretical changed her perspective of it, and she's now considering majoring in environmental science at UC Berkeley.

"I always used to say, 'Turn off the lights! Global warming!'" Zhu says, "but now I'm interested in really spreading information on how the Earth and its ecosystems work and what they're doing." Another passion Zhu discovered at the school was gardening; that was also an important component of her trips to Ireland. Through the Exeter Social Service Organization (ESSO) program, Zhu spent 10 days in Callan, near Kilkenny, where she helped a group of adults with special needs prepare a play for the Callan inclusion festival, an experience she describes as "life-changing." Zhu returned to Ireland on her own last summer for a six-week stint in a self-sustaining Camphill community for individuals with disabilities, where she again farmed and served as a companion.

Zhu connected with strangers on still another level during the remainder of that summer when she and a friend filmed seven hours of footage related to the problem of homelessness in Venice Beach, California. Once they've edited it to an hour, they plan to share the documentary with both the Exeter and Venice Beach communities.

"It's important to me to cross those boundaries that seemingly can't be crossed," Zhu says, adding that in working with the differently abled, there are plenty of obvious boundaries, "but at the end of the day, it isn't about me helping someone who's disabled, it's about me meeting another person I can connect with."

Tyler Courville: Keeping His Balance in Academics and Athletics

Tyler Courville came to the Academy from Saint Ignatius, Montana, a town in the center of the Flathead Indian Reservation. It's remote enough that the closest middle school cross-country team was an hour's drive away; with no other option, Courville joined, but was unable to regularly attend practices. Nevertheless, he was consistently the team's top runner, and when he entered PEA as a freshman, he grabbed the last varsity spot. He's been a four-year, three-season athlete, running indoor track in the cold months and outdoor track in the spring, and this year he was co-captain of all three teams.

Courville's most distinguishing honor, however, had little or nothing to do with athletics: He was named a 2014 Gates Millennium Scholar, one of only 1,000 students nationwide to receive a scholarship for his entire undergraduate education—including tuition, room and board, books, and fees—from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The application process required that Courville write seven 1,000-word essays, maintain a minimum 3.3 GPA and demonstrate leadership abilities. He will use the funds to study at Stanford. Though he's not sure of his long-term plans, Courville says he's choosing to focus on the sciences and engineering as a way to balance the classics diploma he earned at Exeter.

Courville hopes to be a walk-on with Stanford's cross-country team, but if not, he might join the team in triathlon, a club sport. He's undaunted by the challenge, having survived his first steeplechase last summer, competing against, among others, someone who was going for the Olympic qualifying standards. ("And then there was me," Courville says, laughing.) He's got some swimming experience, thanks to spending the fall semester of his lower year at The Island School on Cape Eleuthera, in the Bahamas, a period he describes as the "best 100 days ever." Students focused on marine biology and sustainability, and Courville researched biodigestion—how to produce methane out of organic matter. They were also given the option to train for a half-marathon or a four-mile swim along the island's coast, and Courville chose the latter, for the relative novelty, and he was pleased and a little surprised by his third-place finish. Although he also enjoyed the school's required 48-hour solo experience on the beach, it's the PEA community and its diversity that Courville most appreciates, noting that one of his neighbors hails from Korea and a friend is from Zambia.

"All these people from totally different facets of life," Courville says, "learning to live together, is pretty invaluable, and I'm very grateful to have been here." ●



Tyler Courville