

# ENVOY

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ASSOCIATION



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# THHS UPDATES

- The THHS Music Department held its annual Winter Concert on December 14 and 15. The first concert was held during the day for students and the second was at night for families.
- HIV/AIDS day took place earlier this month. Peer educators visited classes and a guest speaker from Generation Q addressed students at an assembly.
- The Townsend Harris Reading Initiative held "Season's Readings" on December 16 and continues to encourage students to read during seasonal events.
- The Girls Varsity Basketball team is headed to Kissimmee, Florida for the Kaylee Scholarship Association's 2022 Basketball Classic tournament. Both the Girls and Boys Varsity Basketball teams are currently undefeated.
- The Arista Induction Ceremony was held earlier this month, led by new COSA Jaime Baranoff.
- Multiple THHS teachers have signed up to score thousands of admissions essays and videos for the new THHS admissions policy. The grading will take place until mid-January.

# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: WAQAS SHAIKH

## **Tell me a little about yourself.**

I graduated from Townsend Harris in 2003. I went to Columbia University, graduating in 2007, and I went to med school at The State University of New York in Brooklyn, SUNY downstate, graduating there with an MD/MPH degree in 2013. I did my dermatology training at University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia. Then I did a fellowship in Mohs Micrographic surgery, which is skin cancer surgery, at MD Anderson in Houston, Texas. I worked in Houston for a year at a private practice / dermatology clinic and now I live in Atlanta, Georgia, or, well, the suburbs of Atlanta. [And that's] where I worked for a practice for about three years. [I] just left to start my own practice about four months ago. I'm married and I have two kids. My oldest is six; her name is Sarah, and my youngest is 20 months. I met my wife in college at Columbia.

## **What would you say is the greatest lesson you learned at THHS?**

I don't really remember how I found out about it. I mean, it must have been through one of my middle school teachers. You know [how] during that time you have a zoned school that you're set to go to and then there are the specialized schools. At the time, there were the three science ones, Bronx Science, Stuyvesant and Brooklyn Tech. Honestly, I don't know how I heard about Townsend Harris, but once I heard about it and looked at it, [I saw it] had a great reputation and I liked the fact that it was really close to where I lived. I lived in Flushing, Queens, so it was a much better commute than going to the other specialized high schools. I liked the fact that it was well-rounded and it had a humanities focus. I liked [that] especially since that's the area I wanted to home in on [in regards to] my education. I was more [into] math and science but I felt like I wanted to take up the humanities and philosophy and things like that just because it didn't come naturally to me



Waqas Shaikh  
THHS Class of '03

[so I wanted to] fill that gap in my education.

**What is the greatest lesson you learned during your time at Townsend Harris?**

I guess my long-term memory isn't, isn't that good. I don't remember a lot of details and things like that, but what I do remember during my Townsend Harris time is The Ephebic Oath. I think there's something in the oath of sort of, um, leaving your city or your town better than you found it. So, you know, I don't remember a lot, but that's one thing I took away: you should always leave what you left better than you found it. And that's a sign that you've sort of made an impact for the better.

Also, those election simulations taught me that you always need to vote and have your voice heard. I've voted in almost every election when I've been eligible since graduating. That's because of the lessons and the civic lessons from the school.

**What do you miss most about Townsend Harris?**

Definitely the people. Some of my best friends right now are from Townsend Harris. It's definitely unfortunate that I live in Atlanta and they live mainly in New York so we just don't see each other that much, but we still talk to each other. We have WhatsApp groups and we're constantly messaging each other. So [I miss] the people, the friends that I made. They're lifelong friends--brothers--that I can always touch base with or rely on. I just miss having that sort of community--especially that unique community that Townsend Harris attracted. It attracted people from all walks of life, a really diverse, student population. And it was very special in retrospect.

**How have you implemented the sentiment of the Ephebic Oath into your life since graduating?**

Good question. I mean, I had so much schooling and training to become a doctor. During that time, you're just a student and you do things you know, work with projects and teams. But really, I feel that the way I've been able to implement that is by [starting my] practice and creating a culture or a work environment which I'm proud of and where my employees feel valued and listened to. ... I have the means to implement any changes ... and respond a bit more than I would in a larger sort of setting or organization.

**Is there any teacher that greatly influenced you during your time at Townsend Harris?**

Definitely my fencing coach, Ms. Michlewitz. I didn't have an English class with her, but her lessons, her positive attitude, always encouraging [me] to be proud of my accomplishments and do better. [And] Mr. Brown, my math teacher, is someone I remember a great deal. He was always very supportive, but also just like a great person. Very funny and lighthearted and would never be too serious, but also just a great teacher. [He was] great at kind of like

conveying concepts and making you understand complicated mathematical concepts. Those are the two that stand out the most for me. Again, my memory is terrible. I should probably remember more of my teachers' names. There was one more teacher who was also very nice, very kind, and just had a great spirit. [He was] a Latin teacher and he was there for I think quite a long time...I don't know, maybe I have to look at my yearbook. I might have to get back to you regarding that.

**What is a recent accomplishment that you're proud of?**

I don't know. That's always [a] tricky [question] with me. I don't feel as if I've accomplished anything. You know, I'm always just trying to strive and do better. People say, oh, you accomplished this or accomplished that. And to me, I guess, I have in some respects, but I'm never looking at it like that. I'm always trying to see what's next, [how] I can make things better, whether it's for me, myself, or my community. That's the mindset I have and part of it is what I learned at Townsend Harris. You know, trying to leave your city better than you found it.

**What advice would you give to current THHS students?**

Really enjoy your experience in high school. It can be difficult, but when you look back, oh, that's gonna be one of the best times of your life. You're never gonna be able to be in an environment where you have so many different types of people supporting you and so many different opportunities. Even in college, it's still not the same because there's a level of independence that you're given in college, whereas in high school you still have someone looking over you, whether it's your parents or your teachers; they just have a bit more vested interest in you. So take advantage of that because life isn't like that.

**Is there anything I haven't asked you that you want to share?**

I mean, I really enjoyed my time fencing and the extracurriculars. Being on the fencing team, was an important part of my life and I tried to carry that on in college, fencing for my college team. And again, being exposed to a very obscure sport like fencing helped me get into college.

And now I've enrolled my daughter in fencing. So again, Townsend Harris just exposed me to [things] I may not have been exposed to if I didn't have that opportunity whether it's sports or certain subjects. The impact of that exposure is, is really meaningful. We just, we just enrolled in a local fencing school here. She's really super excited about it. She's enjoyed it [so far], so it's nice to see that. And it's nice to be able to help her and coach her and give her some advice and share that bond and the enjoyment of the sport with her.

**How can other alumni and current THHS students connect with you? Do you have a LinkedIn or website you are willing to share?**

I do have a LinkedIn; it's just my name. Another easy way to contact me is the website for my company. People can just reach me there at [info@peachdermatology.com](mailto:info@peachdermatology.com) [or] just go to [www.peachdermatology.com](http://www.peachdermatology.com) and leave a message at Contact Us and reach me that way.



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