

New Head of School at TPS Looks Toward a Bright Future

By Alison Fritz

Putting children at the center of the educational experience is the thing that impressed Lisa Sun most about The Philadelphia School. “TPS understands that children should have a voice in their own education,” says Sun. Throughout her 20-year career, that philosophy has driven her work as an art teacher, diversity practitioner, and Lower School Head. This fall, Lisa Sun steps into the role of head of school at The Philadelphia School. “I was drawn to TPS because of its commitment to social justice, and it aligns beautifully with one of the core tenets of progressive education, which is to raise active and engaged citizens.”

Her path to becoming an educator started early. As a girl, Sun never considered herself an artist until she met Mr. Mastrodonardo, her high school art teacher. His gentle manner, enthusiasm, and encouragement had a way of bringing out the best in each of his students. “It was his ability to connect with his students and to instill a sense of confidence in each of us

that allowed me to see myself as an artist,” recalls Sun.

Mastrodonardo inspired not only a deep love of art but also a passion for education. So it's not surprising that, after receiving a Bachelor of Fine Arts from the University of Illinois, Sun returned to the art room as a teacher.

Thinking about moments that stood out in her career, Sun tells a touching story of a kindergarten student who had recently been adopted. The girl was withdrawn and struggling academically. Sun, a school principal at the time, partnered with the parents, teachers, and school administrators to establish a plan and a system of support that would ensure the child's success.

Sun watched as the girl slowly began to blossom. In 1st grade she was starting to form friendships and gain confidence. By 2nd grade, she began improving academically. Then in 3rd grade, she made a huge breakthrough: “She became a leader among her classmates—vibrant, social, and happy,”

recalls Sun. “She also made huge academic gains. We had all been on this journey with her every step of the way—so we were thrilled to be there to witness her success.”

The Philadelphia School shares that commitment to providing the right kind of support to help everyone succeed in their roles. “In the same way TPS gives students what they need in order to be successful, the Board has been extremely supportive and thoughtful during this transition. I feel confident that they are invested in my success, and it's something that I am very grateful for.”

As Sun begins this new era in her career, she says, “TPS is young enough to still remember the founders' vision for the school. There is a real sense of family and close community. With the 50th anniversary coming up in 2022, we have a unique opportunity to retain what is important to who we are, and to shape the next phase of The Philadelphia School's future. I am truly excited for the journey ahead.”

CCStreetwise

Ultimo Coffee Bar Owner Steps Up to Fix Sidewalk

By Bonnie Eisenfeld

Since summer of 2017, neighbors have been annoyed by an unpaved square of sidewalk near the northwest corner of 20th and Locust outside the Ultimo Coffee Bar. Apart from being unattractive, the unpaved square presented a tripping hazard. Neighbors who complained to the city learned it is the property owner's responsibility to repair sidewalks. The owner was listed as a corporation at 238 S. 20th Street. Repeated complaints to Philly311 and attempts to contact the owner led to dead ends.

Recently Tom Knadig, a Locust Street resident, contacted Aaron Ultimo, the owner of Ultimo Coffee Bar, about this issue. Ultimo is a renter in that location and is not legally responsible for the sidewalk. Knadig obtained bids from contractors to do the repair work, and Ultimo agreed to step up and pay a contractor to fix the sidewalk. The work was completed on Friday, July 27.



Workers repair the unpaved section of sidewalk in front of the Ultimo Coffee Bar.

When neighbors thanked Ultimo, he said: “We can't survive without being a part of the neighborhoods in which we do business. Your support is integral to our success. One of our core principles is to be a community

gathering spot. We hope to be that place for you and to continue a long and productive relationship. We always appreciate any and all support from the neighbors. That is more than an adequate thank-you.”