Sara L. Whiteley '91 Presented Distinguished Alumni Award

Sara Whiteley '91 with Alan Brooks '55, P'89, '91, '96

Trustee **Sara L. Whiteley '91** was presented the 2018 Alan F. Brooks '55 Distinguished Alumni Award at An Evening on Williams Hill dinner Sept. 21. The award, which was established in 2011 by the Class of 1966, is given annually to a former student who exemplifies in thought, word and deed Westminster's mission and its core values of community, character, balance and involvement.

In presenting the award, **Alan Brooks '55, P'89, '91, '96** said: "Sara has always been there for Westminster. Boston receptions, Black and Gold activities, school celebrations, Sara shows up. She has supported the annual fund every year since her graduation, increasing her gifts over time. Invited in 2007 to the Westminster Today program, she attended; asked to call her classmates for their reunion or alumni for annual fund leadership gifts, she calls; requested to give a talk, she steps up; invited to serve on the Alumni Association Executive Committee, she serves; called on to support an important school program, Sara gives thoughtfully and generously. It seems whenever Westminster needs her, Sara says, 'I'm here.'"

Sara giving remarks at the dinner.

Sara entered Westminster as a Fourth Former from Chatham, Mass. She played on First Girls' Ice Hockey and Second Girls' Field Hockey, for which she served as captain, and competed in figure skating. She also was editor of the yearbook, served on the John Hay Vestry, was an officer of the Outing Club, tutored elementary children in Hartford, and was a member of Black and Gold. "Sara distinguished herself with her selfless concern for others both within the school community and in the Greater Hartford area," said Alan.

Sara earned a B.S. in civil engineering at Tufts University and served as a geotechnical engineer with Hayley and Aldrich in Cambridge, Mass., for projects such as the Central Artery Tunnel Project, also known as the "Big Dig," and numerous foundation restorations in the Back Bay area of Boston. In 1998, she returned to Chatham to join the family business of W. Vernon Whiteley Inc., where she serves as vice president. She is part of the third generation of ownership of the business, which is a full-service plumbing, heating and air conditioning installation and service company.

Sara has served on the Westminster Board of Trustees since 2010. She is the former chair and a current member of the Faculty and Students Committee and also serves on the Committee on Trustees. She previously served on the Advancement and Marketing Committee.

Earlier this year, Sara stepped forward with a commitment for interim bridge funding of the school's sabbatical program for five years. She has also contributed to Westminster's capital program, supported the Westminster Teaching Initiative and is a member of the Thring Society.

Sara was appointed to The Cooperative Bank of Cape Cod's Board of Directors in 2014 and previously served as a corporator beginning in 2008. She lives in Chatham with her daughter, Chloe.

"The true measure of a great school is the extent to which that school touches souls and changes people for the better," said Alan. "But we know it works the other way as well. The school is touched for the better by people like Sara, and that, too, is part of Westminster's greatness."

Sara thanked the Westminster community for the award, saying: "I try to live our core values every day, and I do so in a way that is uniquely my story. The words community, character, balance and involvement are more than words. They are the foundation of who I am and because of them, I have found success, happiness and coherence in my life in ways I never would have anticipated as a student here nearly three decades ago."

She described how she constantly strives to find the balancing point between opposing energies and how a desire for balance is an incubator for character development.

"The Westminster community planted and continues to water the seeds of courage, integrity and good judgment in me," she said. "You have heard it before. This place is different. That intangible we always talk about. We embrace differences, diversity and challenges, and encourage each other to constantly push beyond the comfort and safety of the known, not just for academic or athletic achievement but also to connect with our intrinsic character. The community constantly supports that growth by rewarding successes and turning failures into learning opportunities. And while I am not sure that self-awareness is truly possible as a teenager, I'd like to believe that Westminster, more than anywhere else on my life path since, instilled in me the core beliefs and values required for the continual evolution of my self-awareness."

In closing, she added, "My community may be small, but my goal is to create a ripple effect of energy that intensifies as it flows outward through people and spreads to other communities with an amplifying effect."