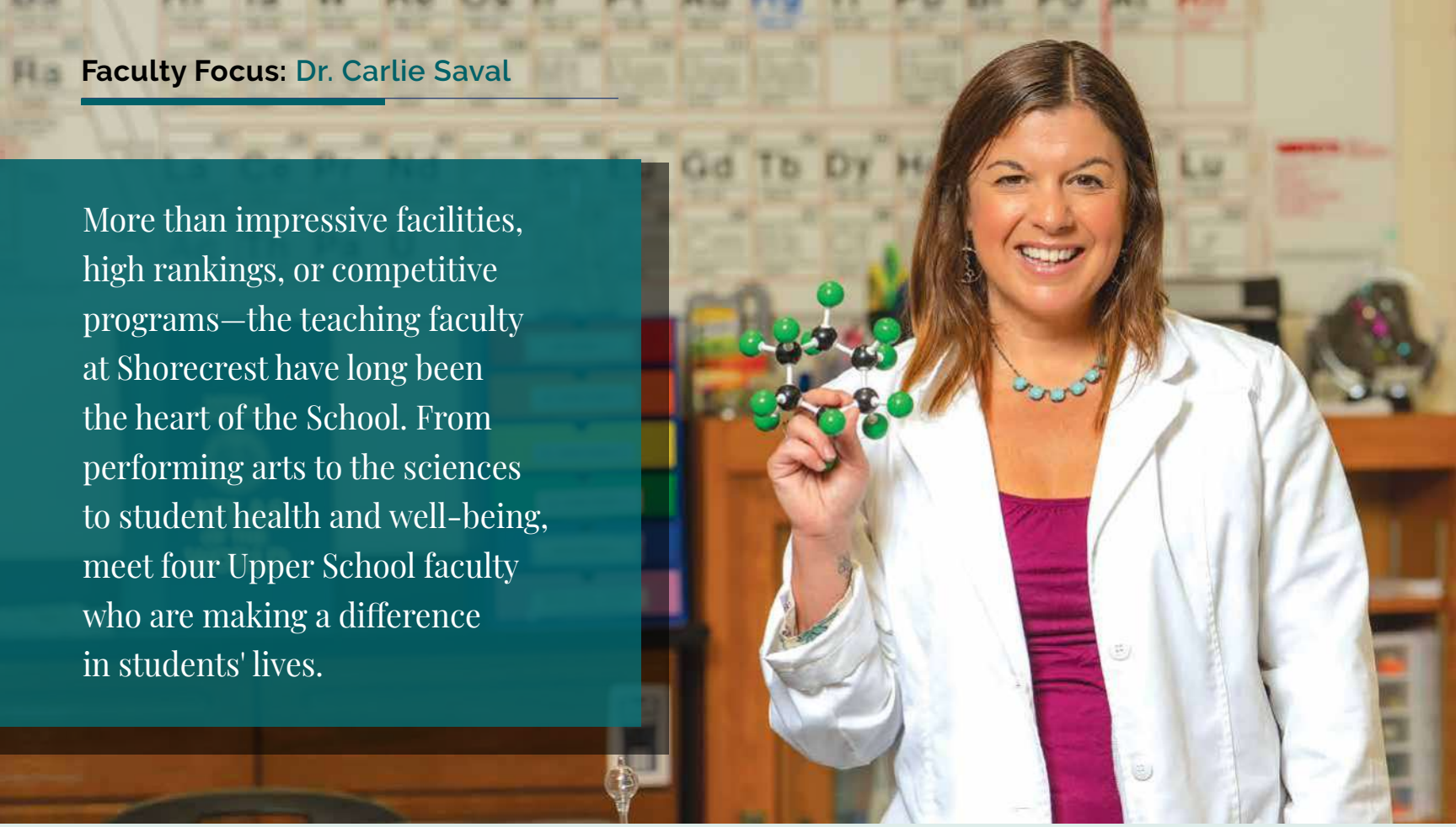

More than impressive facilities, high rankings, or competitive programs—the teaching faculty at Shorecrest have long been the heart of the School. From performing arts to the sciences to student health and well-being, meet four Upper School faculty who are making a difference in students' lives.

Sharing a Passion for Science

Profile: Dr. Carlie Saval, Upper School Science Teacher

By Mary Ellen Collins

Which Shorecrest teacher is most likely to be seen laughing, recounting a scuba diving experience, and wearing an outfit featuring a chemistry joke? The answer is Dr. Carlie Saval, a woman who literally wears her passion on her sleeve(s).

Although being a classroom teacher wasn't initially on her professional radar, sharing her love of science with others has been a thread running through what she calls, "a very winding career path." Always assuming she would become "some kind of scientist," the Maryland native earned a bachelor's degree in marine science with a minor in coastal geology at Coastal Carolina University. She then spent a year and a half with the Living Classrooms Foundation, where she lived aboard the S/V Lady Maryland—a historic sailing ship replica, doing science-based programs for kids and adults.

Her research interests led her to graduate school at the University of South Florida, where she received her master's and doctorate in paleoceanography, studying how changes in global ocean circulation patterns changed climate over the last 50,000 years. An avid diver, she also worked part-time for Scubanauts International, teaching middle and high school divers how to collect scientific data using REEF coral and fish survey techniques.

Still uncertain about what she wanted to do for a living, it took a good friend to point out the obvious. "We were out on a boat with some other people, and I got all excited telling my adult friends about the sea grass and the manatees we saw," Carlie says, laughing. "And my friend said, 'Why are you not teaching? You need to be teaching!'"

That reframing of her passion for science led to a five-year stint at St. Petersburg High School, where she taught biology and chemistry, in both the International Baccalaureate and traditional programs, and realized, "This is my thing." Carlie came to Shorecrest in 2022



Photos: *Known as "Dr. Carlie" to her students, Carlie Saval brings energy and expertise to the Shorecrest chemistry lab.* ***(Bottom)*** *In addition to teaching Upper School students, Carlie Saval is the proud parent to daughter, Coral, Shorecrest Class of 2037.*

"She made me a more curious and confident student. She was so uplifting, always saying, 'You can do this!'"

— Adelaide Oman '24

to teach AP chemistry, college prep chemistry, and honors chemistry, and she feels that everything she did up to that point makes her a better teacher today.

"I think hiring her was a real coup for us," says Brian Potter-Racine, former Upper School Science Department Chair and physics teacher. "She brings a wealth of real academic experience as an expert in her field, as well as a huge amount of experience teaching in the IB program at St. Pete High. She's also the person I go to, to vet ideas and talk things through before talking to the whole department."

When there was an opening for a senior elective, Carlie made a successful pitch for oceanography to be added to the curriculum. Adelaide Oman '24, now a student at The Ohio State University, considers herself lucky to have been one of three students in Carlie's first honors oceanography class. "She's very outgoing and super funny and she knows a lot. It was very inspirational to see her passion and hear her great stories about all of her personal experiences. I was a good student, not a great student, and she went out of her way to help me outside of class and help me develop new study habits. She made me a more curious and confident student. She was so uplifting, always saying, 'You can do this!'"

That type of encouragement and support is a hallmark of Carlie's interactions with her students and their families, according to Wes and Natasha Wells, parents of Indiana '27.

"We appreciate the time, energy and flexibility Dr. Carlie has had to analyze, discuss and plan our daughter's next best course of action," says Wes. "At one point, after the hurricanes hit and our family's house had been destroyed, Indi thought seriously about dropping down to college-prep chemistry. It was understandable, as there were so many moving pieces, including us finding a new place to live. Dr. Carlie was patient, kind, and understanding, but she was also very honest. She knew this was going to be a tough road for Indi, and it wasn't a decision she could make for her. The thing that stuck with us was that she wholeheartedly believed in her, and she admired all her hard work so far. This was all we needed to hear, especially after surviving the storms. Indi's grit kicked into overdrive, and while things are still challenging, I think it's safe to say she'll come out on the other side better for it."

Carlie's enthusiasm for her subject equals her enthusiasm for sharing it. "I love teaching high school. I get to have fun and do science every day! I love enabling the students who are super into chemistry; and I love getting the kids who aren't super science-minded excited about something they didn't think they were excited about. Most of them haven't decided what they want to do, and I like to see them at that point – when nothing is closed off to them yet."

It's easy to feel the fun that's infused in Carlie's teaching. One day she welcomes Experiential School students to come into her class, don goggles and do child-friendly experiments with older student volunteers. Another day, her chemistry class undertakes the mole rocket experiment, in which they fill pipettes with different ratios of hydrogen and oxygen gas and shoot them across the classroom to see which combination is most explosive.

Despite the fact that she didn't set out to be a teacher, it's clear that everyone wins when Carlie's in the classroom. ■

