



*The Windhover*

# The Windhover

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# The Windhover

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Spring 2024

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Cover: *All We See from Here*  
by Jeffrey Carl

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Statement from cover artist, Jeffrey Carl:

Human beings have an innate desire to find meaning in the natural world and shape it according to their beliefs and values. Reciprocally, local geography influences our personal and communal identities. My work re-imagines familiar terrain as a means of exploring the dynamic relationship between our sense of who we are, and our sense of place in the universe.

*All We See from Here*, and other similar works reference both macroscopic and microscopic views of the earth made possible by modern imaging technology, from space telescopes to macro photography, yet the actual locations depicted are imagined, highlighting the rift between memories and impressions of a place and its quantifiable physical properties.

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## LISA RHOADES

### *The Deep Bell*

Brown apples and a deer carcass in the ditch.  
Every straightaway a chance to gain speed,  
but there's no leaving here. This place is stitched  
into my family's myth, a life of needs  
sometimes not met. I can romanticize  
the view, especially in fall when light  
retreats and the harvest's already prised  
from stubborn fields and the bales are wrapped tight,  
or try to blame the landscape for my crimped  
heart, crenulated as the milkweed pods  
and spears of sumac and goldenrod glimpsed  
outside my speeding car—or maybe God.  
But I'm the one who left, who let it go.  
The deep bell in my chest rebukes me so.

## CHRISTINE DYKSTRA

### *More and Less of Her*

KAYLA GOT THE SIX garbage bags, filled with a dead girl's clothes, on an evening in early February. She was alone in her room, listening to music and avoiding her geometry assignment. Until she pulled out her earbuds on her way to the bathroom, she had no idea anyone else was home. She stopped at the sound of voices, her hand on her bedroom door. The first sound she heard was strange, like a laugh that soured mid-breath. Its anguish caught her off guard as it filled the stairwell between the living room and her bedroom just above it. Seconds later, she recognized the voice of her mom's friend, Mrs. Eckhart, even in its strained state.

"Ron and David are at Mass. David's been going since Emily's...since Emily. He seems to think there is a blessing somewhere in the wafers and that cheap Eucharist wine. Ron humors him and goes with sometimes. He calls it the first half of his happy hour. The second is bourbon alone in his study." Kayla heard a sigh. "He probably won't even notice I'm gone."

Emily, the Eckhart's daughter, had died in a car crash the previous summer. At first, Kayla's mom was over at the Eckharts' house regularly, stopping by after work and coming home late. Then, the visits grew shorter and farther apart. Kayla couldn't remember the last time Mrs. Eckhart had come to their house.

"David always invites me, too, but I beg off, making up an excuse like a headache rather than reminding him of my unbelief."

Kayla couldn't hear much for some minutes other than a few murmuring sounds coming from her mother. She sunk down onto the floor, leaned her head against the wall, and waited. Weeping broke into the quietness, sounding feral-like and deep. Soon, in between Mrs. Eckhart's cries she could hear her mother's, so soft they were discernible only because she knew her mother, knew how easily she entered into the pain of others, crying with them as she tried to console.

Though Kayla didn't cry herself, she still felt spent by the time she heard the weeping subside and the voices start again. "I keep walking by her room. I can't shut her door, but leaving it open is a torture to me, too. There was this bright green shirt Emily had left on her desk chair, hanging there as if she'd be back for it. I swore at that shirt every day for months until one day I couldn't

stand it anymore. I went in and hung it up and left. But it didn't work. Everything about the room was devouring me, especially her closet filled with all the clothes she should still be wearing, the gorgeous ones we picked out together and even the gaudy ones I pretended I didn't know she had on under her coat when she left for school. The next day, I don't know. I just did it. I grabbed garbage bags from the kitchen and started throwing everything from her closet in them. I was in a rage. David was home sick; he came out of his room when he heard me. I should have cared more about my child still living than about her clothes, but all I could do was throw things, one after the other, into these bags. After so much stillness in her room, the moving felt good. I shoved all the bags into the back of my car and have been driving around with them for a week. I don't know what I was thinking. Tonight, I couldn't stand it anymore and decided to take them to the dump. Until now, the thought of getting rid of anything of hers left me choking for air." Her voice dropped. "Tonight, it felt like control."

Kayla pictured her throwing the bags into large dumpsters, angry as she hurled. She saw the bags as they would be later, covered under all the garbage that came after.

"But then, I kept thinking of the metal that would eventually compact Emily's things into a space so small, when I'm already so afraid of her growing small for me, and I..." Her voice choked again. "I couldn't do it."

She spoke next through her crying. "I have no idea what I'm doing."

Kayla's mom murmured, "There's no playbook for this, Erin. None."

"I'm too smart for this. Clothes have no ties to life. I'm too smart to think this way, but I do it anyway."

Kayla waited for what came next, guessing even as she hoped she was wrong.

"Kayla's about the same...size...as...as...as Emily," she sobbed, and the stairwell filled with the sounds of her loss.

\* \* \*

Later, when Kayla's mom brought the bags up to her room, Kayla said nothing, letting her mom believe the explanation she gave for them was all new to her. After she left, Kayla sat down on her bed and stared at the bags. This was strange, really strange, she thought. Technically, there was nothing wrong with wearing a dead girl's clothes, but maybe only technically, she thought.

She pulled her biology book out of her backpack and tried to read. She

could still see the bags in her line of vision so she turned, faced the window, and tried to read again. She grabbed her earbuds, hoping those might help, but a minute later she was eyeing the bags. She stood up and noticed the top of a wire hanger poking through the side of one of the bags.

“This is stupid,” she said aloud. When they were younger, their moms had tried to encourage a friendship between Kayla and Emily and their two families, but everyone else remained distant acquaintances at best. Emily and Kayla traveled in different circles. Emily’s circle was involved—in drama, in student government, in “making a Tiger difference” as their principal always said. Kayla’s circle was uninvolved, intentionally, mostly absent from school-sponsored activities. From seeing Emily in the halls at school, however, Kayla knew this much: unlike her, Emily looked good. She always had, all throughout Kayla’s most awkward years, which had seemed to stretch throughout elementary and middle school and lingered even still. Unlike her, Emily had dressed to be seen.

She grew angry staring at the bags, bags she hadn’t asked for. She grabbed them and threw them, two at a time, into the mess of her open closet, and shut the door.

\* \* \*

When she was little, Kayla had lain awake many nights, fearing an unseen, unnamed evil she was sure was lurking in her closet. Just when sleep would overtake her, she felt, so would the evil thing hiding behind her closet door. As she grew older, its form changed, but it was always just behind the closet door, waiting.

She tried not to look at the bags when she went in the closet, but they menaced. She tried not to envision herself walking through school, wearing something that lay deep in one of the bags. One night she dreamed that all her own clothes were stolen, and that she had to choose between going to school wearing Emily’s clothes or going to school naked. She had been trying to figure out a third option, one that would flag less attention, when she woke.

There was too much now lingering in her closet. Sometimes, after she pulled one of her own outfits out and shut the door, she’d realize that she’d stopped breathing while the closet door was open.

\* \* \*

“He’s seriously hot, you know.” Amber was habitual in stating the obvious.

“Um, kind of yeah.” Kayla laughed and arranged her pillows, putting one underneath her laptop.

“No, not kind of.” Amber leaned back on Kayla’s bed, nearly knocking over the history textbook between them. “He’s got great eyes, a great body, and an actual brain, which is virtually nonexistent in the male population at our school. And he’s the male ideal in terms of hair. Literally, it’s model hair.”

“Great.” Kayla smiled as she scrolled through the rubric for their assignment.

“Although, I read that sixty-two percent of guys start experiencing at least some hair loss by age nineteen, so that might not be the best criteria for picking a long-term relationship.”

“First of all, hair loss? Seriously? Secondly, just *no* to the whole relationship thing right now.” That may not have been completely what she felt, but she wasn’t going to tell Amber, who was more of a project partner than a friend.

“You sell yourself short. You really think he contacted you because he’s just interested in your photography? Abby said yearbook’s problem is finding good writers, not photographers. He may not have selected you as the future mother of his children yet, but don’t assume there’s nothing there. And I’m telling you, if you’d give me a few minutes, you are—”

“—the perfect candidate for a makeover.” Kayla sighed; she’d heard this before from her mother and a couple of friends.

“The girl speaks truth!” Amber raised her arms and laughed. Kayla tried to imagine Amber’s version of a makeover, and decided it would probably involve leather, hair dye, and at least one tattoo.

“I’m listening, but not agreeing. I like the way I am. I like ponytails and hoodies and sweats. There’s no pressure in low maintenance, other than from my mom sometimes. It means I don’t have to worry about things like whether or not great hair matters in a guy, which is a problem I don’t need right now.”

“But how do you really know, if you’ve never tried a relationship? I haven’t found guys to be burdens. Well, except for Kevin. He makes my last statement more of a generalization than a rule.” Amber chewed on her pencil, and Kayla wondered if she was thinking about Kevin.

Kayla told herself she was only trying to distract Amber. “I’ve got something weird in my closet.”

“Oh, honey, don’t we all?”

“Yeah, well, they’re Emily’s clothes. Kind of.”

Amber leaned forward and looked at her. “Wait. Which Emily? Not—”  
“Eckhart.”

Amber sat back, eyes widening, and then leaned forward again. “Wait, what do you mean by kind of?”

“Um, I’m not sure. Well, I guess they’re mine now, which is something like weird, but not exactly weird, but I don’t know what to call it.”

Amber stared into the air, thinking. “Yeah, that’s probably a good way to put it.”

\* \* \*

An hour later, after Amber left, Kayla looked out her bedroom window at the cornfield across the street. They’d moved into this house eleven years ago, into a planned, three-phase community with two hundred houses in total, each one of five model plans. Her dad still called their home by its model name, the Canterbury, as if it were a British manor home. This was despite the fact that it had been nine years since the last community home was finished and sold, and despite the fact that, according to him anyway, thirty-two other homes in the subdivision were also Canterbury models, thus rendering the name, as Kayla liked to remind him, not a name so much as an unhelpful descriptor.

Developers had planned for the farm across the street to turn into yet another subdivision in the growing Chicago suburb, row upon row of corn replaced with row upon row of mid-priced homes. Last fall, the plans were put on hold and Kayla was glad. She liked to sit at her window, unobserved, watching the space in front of her. She liked being this close to earth that grew things, to the wide expanse of the fields. She liked watching the plowing of the ground in the spring, the growth as the summer progressed, and the harvesting that came with fall. She liked the sound of the wind riffing rows of cornstalks, and the sounds just beyond the cornfields, of men on tractors and cattle at pasture. She didn’t know a single thing about farming beyond what she saw out her window. But what she saw through that window was something, something enough to cause her to pick up a camera one evening years back, and point it at a sunset gold between the shafts. It was something enough, too, to make her set her alarm for early that next morning, before sunrise, so she could capture the first light of day as it hit the fields.

She looked at the clothes, now coordinated courtesy of Amber, into outfits around various spots in her room. She’d taken a few pictures of the room, dripping with clothing, though she’d surprised herself with this. A short skirt, white tank top, and cropped denim jacket hung from the back of her desk chair. On one side of her dresser, Amber had paired a short-sleeved romper with a long sweater, and the other side held light-washed jeans, a

Loyola University t-shirt and grey Converse tennis shoes. Amber had lined her bed with four more outfits, including a sleeveless metallic prom dress with accompanying clutch purse and sandals. For a moment, Kayla thought about picking it all up. Instead, she walked over to her bed and ran her hand over one of the sweaters, bright blue with a cream-colored stripe along the neckline. She thought it felt like cashmere, and then realized she wasn't sure if she knew what cashmere felt like. Whatever it was, it felt good, silky almost. Amber had paired it with dark jeans, a gold and pearl necklace with a Celtic cross pendant, a gold cuff bracelet, and brown suede booties.

She frowned at the necklace, and tossed it into one of the bags. The booties had heels, so those went, too. With one arm, she swept the rest of the outfits onto the floor by the foot of the bed. Then she sat down next to the sweater and jeans.

Her mom had left it up to her, but Kayla knew she really wanted her to wear the clothes. Emily's clothes were nice, mostly much nicer than what Kayla's family could afford. Her mom had been making small hints for days, hints about the odd nature of grief, hints about how, in time, it might help Mrs. Eckhart with her grieving, if she knew. "Wonder if Mom would ease up a bit if I wore this?" she asked aloud.

While she considered this, she took the bracelet and rolled it back and forth across the length of the sweater, smoothing the loose fibers of the wool as she worked. She tried to picture herself in the sweater. After a moment, she shook her head and swept all of it on the floor with the rest.

\* \* \*

Late that night, Kayla went down to the kitchen for a snack. Her mom was sitting at the table with her computer, as she had done every night for the last two months, working a pencil eraser back and forth across her leg as she scanned for job openings within a fifty-mile radius. Her severance was ending soon, Kayla knew. The kitchen light made her look pale.

Kayla grabbed a bag of popcorn, careful to be quiet, and left the kitchen unnoticed. Back in her bedroom, she pulled the sweater and jeans from the pile and set them on a chair by her backpack.

\* \* \*

The next morning, Kayla walked quickly; she'd woken late, left for school without a coat, and was freezing. She turned around a corner of the school and approached the front entrance at the same time that Mrs. Eckhart was dropping off her son David. At first, the morning light shone white between

them, and they didn't see each other. Then, her backpack began to slip, and she shifted her weight, stepping to one side and as she did, breaking the light between them. Kayla stopped when she saw Mrs. Eckhart. She grasped at her necklace, trying to hide it, its size and weight a reminder of whose clothes she was wearing. Mrs. Eckhart was turned sideways, and Kayla heard her calling out the passenger window, reminding her son of the ashes still on his forehead from the early morning Mass, but he kept walking, seeming not to hear his mother. When Mrs. Eckhart turned forward again, she looked right at Kayla, standing a few feet in front of her. She stared, and Kayla stared back. Mrs. Eckhart's mouth opened, and her hand went to her throat.

Kayla tried to think, to form words, to move somehow, and faltered. Students, most larger than her, brushed past her on their way into the building. She looked at the ground, and then up again, and with her free hand pulled her long brown hair forward, covering the edges of her face.

Mrs. Eckhart let go of her throat and extended her arm, reaching forward toward Kayla. Then she stopped, and her hand hung there between them, contorted. Her eyes moved from Kayla's face to her clothes and lingered there, taking in the full of them, and then moved back to her face again.

Kayla choked over her words, stopped, and all that came out when she tried again was "Sorry." Stupid, she told herself, even as she said it, not knowing what else to say.

Mrs. Eckhart continued looking at her, transfixed. Her hand dropped to the armrest beside her. Her eyes seemed watery, pained. Kayla looked down and frowned, anxious, her fifteen years of existence poor preparation for this. Despite the cold, she felt sticky, sweaty almost, her arms suddenly itchy. She wanted to get away from all the unspokenness now chafing at her, from all of Mrs. Eckhart's staring, so she said something she felt was probably all wrong.

"Should I go?"

Mrs. Eckhart turned her head and stared ahead. Slowly, she nodded, and then sank her forehead down onto her steering wheel. She made a sound, low in her throat, that followed Kayla as she hurried away.

Kayla entered the school and turned at the long hall that led to her locker. It was crowded; the passing-period bell would ring soon, and the halls were pregnant with students and backpacks and the occasional hall monitor. She squeezed between groups of bodies, trying not to slip on some papers lying on the floor, passing locker after locker until she reached her own. She needed two tries to open her combo lock; her hands were still shaking. She emptied



all the books for her afternoon classes into her locker, nearly dropping several in the process, and headed upstairs to English.

No one seemed to notice her or her clothes as she entered the classroom and moved toward her usual seat in the back. She pulled her laptop from her bag as she sat down, this time dropping a pen on the tile floor. When class started, she tried to focus on the teacher, but found she couldn't, her attention instead held by the image of Mrs. Eckhart's face when she had first recognized Emily's clothes, her dark eyes wide, her jaw loose. She kept hearing the guttural sound Mrs. Eckhart made as she walked away. It was like the sound she remembered her own mother making, a year ago, when they'd gone to the retirement home with a bag of groceries and found her grandmother sitting lifeless in her recliner. Her mother had made that sound again at the funeral, and a couple of times after that it filled their house until there was no room left for anything else, no room left for anyone else's sounds.

Kayla felt sick, so she pushed up her sleeves and tried to take deep, quiet breaths. It was all wrong, all sham, her wearing these clothes. She felt watched, like someone might realize she was wearing Emily's clothes and see her as a vulture, swooping down amid such loss.

She remembered the necklace she'd thrown on, last minute on impulse and reached now to take it off, wanting the eye-catching piece gone. Then she stopped; the motion of taking it off might draw more attention to her than the necklace itself. Instead, she crossed her arms in front of her, buried the pendant in her fist, and decided she'd wait to remove it in the bathroom during passing period.

She slumped and tried to sit still while the teacher droned on about the structure of Dylan Thomas' poem.

\* \* \*

When the final bell rang, Kayla headed for her locker, squeezing sideways between groups of students. Two minutes, she thought, and she'd be on her way home.

She slid the one textbook she knew she wouldn't need in her locker but took everything else, not wanting to think. This method took a little longer than she'd hoped, as she tried to figure out how to fit four books and her laptop in a bag designed for half of that. In the end, she could only zip it part of the way shut, but she had everything.

She turned as she shut her locker door, and there was David, staring at her. He looked like an Eckhart, thin and muscular, everything about

him compact and clean except for the remnants of ash still smeared on his forehead.

He looked down at her sweater, fixing his gaze. Then, he leaned forward, and brushed his face against her shoulder. It was so light, so brief; if she hadn't been looking, she might not have known that he had touched her.

He looked at her face, and his reddened. He dropped his gaze and they stood there a moment, both silent. She heard a few students nearby growing quiet around them, their heads turning toward David.

"Sorry," he spoke, and began to back away. Then he stopped. His voice broke, and he worked at speaking.

"Hers?" he asked, and looked up at Kayla.

She hesitated, remembering his mother's reaction that morning. "Yes."

He nodded once, and his eyes filled. He put one arm over his face and struggled for composure. He rubbed his eyes with his shirt sleeve, hard, back and forth, leaving a smear of tears and ash as he pulled his arm away. He coughed and drew his arm across his face again to cover it, moving away from her as he did.

He began walking toward the exit. His words were just above a whisper, just loud enough so she could hear. "She was my sister," he said, and she thought of his brother grief, wondering if there had been any room for it beside the crushing water-weight of mother grief.

She watched him walk, shoulders hunched, his bag tight across his back. She could see more students now, watching him, watching her. His outline grew smaller, until she was afraid he wouldn't hear if she spoke, afraid of the attention she'd have to draw.

She said it anyway, her words pulling all the eyes in her direction. "I know," she called.

He slowed and turned toward her. He looked at her and held his breath. His eyes narrowed, his face contorted, and he made a sound, low in his throat. Then, he exhaled, slowly, expelling what he'd long held fixed. His face loosened, and was soon wet with release. She lifted a hand forward, toward him, a sweep of acknowledgement, and brought it to her shoulder.

When she released it, it came away black.

## DANIEL GLEASON

### *Yeah, me neither*

is the kindest lesson in theology  
I've ever received.

The priest said it to me after he had asked  
*Do you have this all figured out yet?*

and I had said *no*.

## MICHAEL PENNANEN

### *The pastor moves on*

Now that we're about to say goodbye, the catch in the throat says *Don't linger here*. In this zone where parting looms I'm on edge...though truth be told, I want time to remember, to savor

the ways you welcomed this newcomer; cues whispered when I slipped up; teasing, a cover for affection; trust that called me into realms most personal. Your gifts to me, mine to you:

we could dwell on all that's brought us here. Still, this space between common past and separate paths is a restless place, no-man's-land. Can we just say *it's been good* and move on?

Or shall we name one last thing we share? You fear my leaving you behind; I've got qualms about forging ahead. Partners in anxiety, we can't help but cross this bridge together.

We have what we need to do this. We know the taste, have received the strength of communion in trial and triumph. Arriving at the other side, I'll head one way, you another; yet nothing can rob us of the gift these years have given.

May nothing now turn you from your appointed path, or me from mine.

## LIBBY MAXEY

### *Farm Kitchen Hymn*

The gravity of air is like a stone  
Upon the press. We weep for our constraint  
And harden: thus we keep, and by the taint  
We ripen. In the cutting we are known  
And opened to the tasting of that air  
Whose weight in living we are meant to bear.

## MAURA H. HARRISON

### *Sudden Storms*

I WASN'T SUPPOSED to be out of the house while Mama was gone. If someone were to come up the drive, which I'd know about if the dog was barking and tearing up the paint next to the front door, I was to go up to the boys' room and peek out the window. I was to peek in a way so as not to be seen. That's what we always did. Hide there like folds in the curtains, secret eyes in the fabric.

But I wasn't inside. I was outside along the drive when Mr. Stranger arrived in his clunker car. I heard it a long while before I saw it, so I had plenty of time to get off the drive and into the woods.

I didn't really want to do it. Step into the woods that is. But I wasn't supposed to be out of the house, like I said. I wasn't wearing the right shoes. I should have had high boots so as to counter the copperheads. And I was to have had bug spray, so those make-you-allergic-to-meat ticks wouldn't ruin my dinner. But I had no choice. I had to step off the drive and into the woods 'cause I wasn't supposed to be outside while Mama was gone.

I stepped off the drive and hunkered down in the mountain laurel. This was a good curtain since, at the moment, it was in full bloom, little pins of pink about to open to wide saucers of white in a cover of evergreen leaves. I held my breath and kept real still, trying to be a secret child in the forest. I became as green and pink as I could be. I was a leaf, flush with the new strength of spring, and a flower in the forest's leafy folds.

Mr. Stranger pulled up to the house and idled. He revved his engine, and his clunker shook and shuddered like a metal cough. I said a little prayer: please little brothers, go into the folds, be faint like little ghosts; I myself am blossoming.

I could see that Mr. Stranger was having a bad thought. He was no good, for sure. He was all tangled in cutting and taking and changing. He was a loud metal noise. Mama would have filled the front yard with her presence, and he would have shivered. But Mama wasn't home, and I was hiding in the laurel.

Oh little brothers, hold still a few minutes longer. I looked at the pink pins of my laurel, such feeble swords, and wanted to cry. I should not have left the house while Mama was gone. But maybe, maybe, maybe I can scare the Stranger away. I moved a few steps deeper into the woods, into my forest, into

the presence of the trees I knew so well.

I found Mr. Beech, the one along the drive that kings our creek, and hid behind his trunk. My brothers and I always behaved around the beeches. In our games, sometimes they were the nurses who gently made us follow the rules. Other times, they were the loyal guards protecting our castle. Always, they were watching with their bark of eyes, the rings where the branches shot out. I said another little prayer: please, Mr. Beech, open all your eyes. Mama isn't home, and I'm in the woods with the wrong shoes and no spray.

Mr. Stranger revved his clunker again. It was the growl of a no-good bully.

My guardian stirred. Looking up, I saw Mr. Beech's branches rustling. He swayed and reached out to his neighbor, his leaves turning over as if to receive some rain. The neighbor tree, another beech, did the same. From tree to tree through the woods and towards the house, the beeches held hands and stirred up a storm. The beeches were awake, their eyes were wide with secrets, witnesses to a bruising and swelling sky. Oh little brothers, maybe we should pray for this stranger: May he go on his way! He is not a man who should be outside! If Mama were home, she would make him sweat.

A large crack fell from the sky, and I heard it slap the clunker car with sudden storm and purpose. Oh Mr. Stranger, you're in big trouble. You're getting direction. I heard revving and spanking and screeching and groveling. Squealing tires flared then faded away. He was gone and the beeches were still.

I kissed my Mr. Beech and ran back to the laurel. I kissed the laurel and ran back to the house. I ran upstairs and into the folds of the curtains and kissed my brothers. Oh little brothers, let us pray: Thank you for beech eyes and laurel curtains, for holding hands, for sudden storms. Thank you for not needing high boots. Or bug spray.

# The Windhover

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## CONTRIBUTORS

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Paul Jaskunas

Steven Searcy

Phil Flott

Heather Kaufmann

Richard Spilman

Carla Galdo

Mary Grace Mangano

Sandi Stromberg

Patrick Gavin

Clay Matthews

Elise Tegegne

Bethany Getz

Libby Maxey

Sally Thomas

Daniel Gleason

Stella Nesanovich