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### **Tree Sit Ends After 36 Hours With No Result: Crisis of Leadership at Middlesex School**

July 18, 2006, Concord, Massachusetts: Two alumnae of Middlesex School, Molly Tsongas ('00) and Rachel Banay ('03) descended from their trees along Lowell Road this afternoon after spending the past 36 hours high in the air. The alums, co-directors along with Page Stites ('94) of Middlesex Graduates for Estabrook, were protesting the development of the Estabrook Woods by their alma mater. Their specific demands included a request for a mediated dialogue between the stakeholders and the school's Board of Trustees. The Trustees stonewalled, sending only a boilerplate response to the alumni.

At the end of the day, Tsongas and Banay descended from their trees and led a procession across the Middlesex campus into the Estabrook Woods, where they affixed the banner to the very trees they have fought so hard to protect.

Below are parting words from the participants:

Rachel Banay says, "We consider our tree sit a success because it was truly a community event which reinforced the magnitude of this movement both in numbers and in scope. We remain committed to fighting for the preservation of the Estabrook Woods and the values this struggle represents."

Molly Tsongas says, "What the Board of Trustees does not understand is the meaning of why we're here: the meaning of education, the meaning of community values, the meaning of environmental stewardship, the meaning of historical legacy, and the meaning of genuine community participation in the decision-making process. Even when our Congressional delegation and state leaders affirm the meaning of these values, there is a stunning void of moral accountability on the part of the Board. The real outcome of this event is the revealing of a shameful failure of leadership on the part of the Board, especially its chairman, Jim Oates."

Page Stites says, "The Trustees labor under the false impression that building world-class athletic facilities will make the school a better place, when in reality the best way to improve the school is to focus on its integrity. Middlesex is engaged in an arms race that at the end of the day is morally bankrupt and, worse, demoralizing to the institution. This school has a long tradition of educating students in the importance of values and relationships. The most important outcome of our protest has been to affirm that our struggle here represents the need for Middlesex to return to its core values."

For additional information, photographs, or video footage, contact Page Stites at (508) 207-5620.

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