

“Solid Gold” Is a Solid Hit

Solid Gold, the Annual Auction, held March 12, was the first in-person auction in two years. Parent volunteers led by auction chairs **Lisa McIlvoy** and **Allison Troxell** worked on the auction which is the major fundraiser for financial aid at Paideia. In the case of the auction, all that glittered was gold and the

chairs thanked “parents, volunteers, faculty and staff, and sponsors for making this year’s auction worth its weight in gold! With over 600 attendees, we set new records for financial aid and had an absolute blast doing so! We truly appreciate your support!”



BPO Presents a Celebration of Activism

The Black Parent Organization (BPO) hosted a Black History program that encouraged students to use their voices to take a stand on social justice issues. Students contributed to a message board that identified issues they planned to own by making their voices heard.

Students from the January short term class on activism taught by DEI director **Oman Frame** and BPO chair **Keri Hill** helped plan the event. Students in the class were **Margot Duncan, Dun-**

can Kelly, Bruno Damiani, David Golivesky-Bloom, Elyssa Golivesky-Bloom, Luisa Lieberman, Nate Marquardt, Fabiola Murillo, Taylor Powell, Mia Sidorski, Jack Tope, Karla Urquiza, Lua Varner, Julia Victor, and Eva Young.

Students who performed in the program were **Soloman Mustafa-Reid, Joe Elston, Isabella Hennington, Maia Pope, Winston Stukes, Camy Brown, Zaila Strayhorn, Karis Williams, Chloe**

Greene, Faven Wondwosen, Trinity Lockett, Elshaday Shiberu, Victoria Ellis, Mercy Hillo, Kalkidan Tefera, Partage Cadette, Justin Griggs, Madelynn Huff, Layla Green, Aurora Gray, and Maryam Muhammad.

Lighting, sound and videography were handled by **Connor Dunroe-Wells, Kalkidan Tefera** and **Jeremiah Butts.**

Faculty club leader and sponsors were **Kim Mansion, TRIBE** and **Rosa Mendez, Step Team.**

High School Music Programs Perform at Orlando Workshop

Members of the high school band, chorus, and orchestra went to Orlando to participate in Universal Orlando's Music and the Art of Foley workshop. The music students recorded the underscore to a portion of *Despicable Me*, and performed all of the voiceover work, as well as the sound effects.



High School Students Place in Voice Competitions

Several high school students placed in the recent Southeast Regional Voice Competition in Tallahassee. Senior **Charles Eastman** won first place in the music theater category for upper high school tenors and basses. Senior **Sophie Lyman** won first place for upper high school music theater for sopranos and altos. Sophomore **Liam Swinney** won second place for music theater for lower high school tenors and basses and third place for classical lower high school tenors and basses.

Junior **John Graner** was a finalist for upper high school music theater tenors and basses. Junior **Josie Bond** was a finalist for music theater for upper high school sopranos and altos and sophomore **Celia Reed** was a finalist for music theater lower high school sopranos and altos. **Josie Bond** also won an honorable mention award in the Schmidt Vocal Arts Competition. All of the students qualified to compete in the National Association Voice Competition.



Alternative Winter Break Explores Black Food Culture and Influence

Paideia high school students participating in an alternative winter break trip called "Stirring the Pot," traveled around the metro area visiting Black food growers and activists. Trip participants took a month-long course prior to the alternative winter break co-taught by trip leaders **Korri Ellis**, Paideia sustainability coordinator, and **Natalie Rogovin**, director of service learning and civic involvement. The goal of the trip was to show how Black Americans have influenced and defined American food culture. Daily posts on Instagram provided a trip log.

Student Named to All-State Orchestra

Paideia senior **Owen Zealey-Chen** represented the Paideia Orchestra at the recent Georgia All State Orchestra competition. He passed a rigorous three-round audition process to be selected as a member of the cello section.

Science Olympiad Team Wins Regional Tournament

The high school Science Olympiad team won the Regional Tournament at Middle Georgia State University, in Macon, on Feb. 26. In 16 events, the team took first place in eight events, second place in four events, and third place in four events. The team now moves on to the State Tournament in April.

Team members were **Katya Haspel, Marcelle Hahai, Sean Zheng, Adrien Chung, Davis Hurt, Kaila Pearson, Emma Edge, Charlie Maxson, Ethan Castellino, Cecilia Pardo, Caroline Pierce,** and **Cooper West.**



Gender Day in the High School

In March the entire high school participated in Gender Day, an all-day discussion around gender and identity issues.

Oman Frame, director of diversity, equity and identity, said goal was for students to continue to have open dialogue in workshops and talks about the evolution and intersection of gender identity, consent sexuality education. Justine Fonte, a nationally known health educator, spoke to students about evolving understanding about gender identity and power and consent. The workshops were created and facilitated by students.

Mock Trial Students Honored

Athena Assikis '23 and **Kaiya Cihon '23** were among a small group of students statewide admitted to the Student Bar of Georgia after attending the Georgia Bar's High School Academy. Students, **Maisey Brown '24** and **Athena Assikis '23**, earned Best Lawyer Awards in the District Championships.

Students Build Birds a Place to Call Home

With a generous grant from the Paideia Sustainability Program, headed by **Korri Ellis**, Junior High Bird Club members **Ashima Gandhi, Madeleine Moon-Chun, Kya McMerit, Alexandra Huyhn, Gayatri Kedar** and **Talia Ghose** constructed 30 birdhouses to be distributed to family, friends and members of the Paideia community. A shout-out to director of college counseling **John Stubbs** who secured and cut all building materials to size for both Eastern Bluebird and Wren houses.

— *Tom Painting, Bird Club Advisor*



Why I Teach

Korri Ellis, sustainability coordinator, gave a “Why I Teach” speech at the faculty/staff retreat in August.

FYI, I was *never* going to be a teacher. In high school, I didn’t really like most of my teachers. My Dad was the assistant principal at my high school. My nonchalant sister had come before me, and the faculty thought they knew me because of my dad and my sister. I showed up to show them that I was my own person.

I had always loved nature and the outdoors. I grew up free ranging in collective backyards and surrounding parks and woods. I always liked science and math, but I never really connected or bonded with my teachers, even my professors in college. I did have a black woman mentor at the veterinary school at University of Wisconsin, Madison, for whom I served as a research assistant, and helped her set up her labs. She was a parasitologist, so that was interesting. Although we forged a friendship, and she was wonderful—I did learn through my work with her that I did not want to go to vet school. The research lab was not my place—I hated it.

So now what do I do now? At the urging of a friend who did the same work, I ended up at my former middle school as a special education aide. It was very surreal for me, being back in that building that I had little fondness for.

But then the work with the kids—it was good. I liked them, and I wasn’t fazed when they tested me. I knew the game. I liked surprising them with my (middle school) sense of humor and telling them about my life- which always surprised them- I have never liked conforming to stereotypes. The pay was abysmal so I waitressed in the evenings. Before long, I had a strong urge to escape my hometown and I eventually found that there was a whole career devoted to environmental education. My first job in environmental

education was at Camp Wah-sega just outside of Dahlonega, Ga. The people around me in Wisconsin looked at me crazy when I said I was going to work at a camp in rural Georgia. My grandmother was horrified as she was from rural Mississippi, and had made her way north during the Great Migration, when so many southern black people relocated to Northern cities in hopes of escaping the oppression and violence of the rural south. She was terrified. She had a lot of advice for me about what not to do. I just told myself that if it was not a good situation that I could leave. It was fine, despite the occasional Confederate flag sighting.

I then spent two years traveling the country working seasonal jobs at environmental education facilities that hosted student groups. We lived on site, and meals were provided. Again, the pay was abysmal, but I got to experience some pretty awesome stuff, and it brought me to places that I didn’t have the means to travel to on my own. I worked at a wildlife park in Texas where I drove visitors around on a safari truck teaching them about wildlife conservation. I lived and worked at a camp on Catalina Island off the coast of Southern California. It had no roads going in and out of it. We did everything by boat. We took students kayaking, snorkeling (even at night), hiking and more. I got to witness the Gray Whale migration, huge pods of dolphins, learned SCUBA and so much more adventure with those folks. I did a summer stint at Zoo Atlanta, and that is when I fell in love. With Atlanta. So when it was time to stop being a nomad, I decided that this was the place I wanted to make my home.

I loved working at the zoo, but again I was waitressing, and tutoring in addition to make ends meet. So I decided I would put my “never would’s” aside and try out teaching in an actual classroom. I enrolled



in Georgia State in the masters and certification fast track grad program for science teachers. The plan was to teach for five or so years (I could get student loan forgiveness if I taught in a title 1 school for five years). Save up some money, pay off

my debt and then return to my true love of outdoor, informal, education.

I was hired at Grady High School and started teaching environmental science, botany, and genetics about two weeks after my graduation from GSU. That first year was intense and difficult and rewarding and exhausting.

My students were very open with me about how strange they thought I was. They thought it was hilarious and ridiculous when I told them that I didn’t have a TV in my home.

I was often met with protest when I said we were going to spend time outside during class. I got all types of excuses about why the outdoors wouldn’t work for them. Needed to keep sneakers clean, allergic to the outdoors, pollen was too high... I did not let them dissuade me- I purchased masks that they could wear outside and protective covers for their sneakers. My wonderful principal, Dr. Murray, also thought I was so strange but he trusted me and let me do my thing.

I became adept at writing grants and had many like-minded community partners and a group of students- the Earth Club students- who helped me establish a school recycling program, a garden, a composting system, install a rain barrel, and some campus fruit trees over the course of my years there. I worked really hard because I loved it, and I loved my students- for the most part. There were fights, there were traumatized students who acted out in big ways, and many students who dealt with things that I couldn’t imagine dealing with when I was their age.

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Junior High Students Win Honors in River of Words Program

Four junior high students in **Tom and Kendall's** class won recognition in the Georgia River of Words/Georgia Project WET poetry contest. **Grace McCarthy** was a national finalist, and **Margo Pierson** and **Rohan Thomas** were state final-

ists. **Alexandra Huynh** also was honored at the state level in the junior high division. The River of Words program is designed to help students understand their place in the environment by studying the watershed and expressing their thoughts

in poetry and art. Over 1,400 entries were submitted this year. The entries are judged by the Georgia Center for the Book and by the Georgia Environmental Protection Division.

Ode to Water

You seemed so cold and unkind
Your waves crashed to the shore
Like charging horses.
As I made my way in
You embraced me and allowed me to fly.

The dock swayed to your soft current
My eyes were fixed on you
The vast darkness beneath your surface
So quiet and peaceful,
So beautiful.

You weaved yourself between rocks
Before you cascaded off the cliff
Falling, falling
Striking the stones beneath.

You feed the crops,
Hydrate the animals,
You tie lands together.

You do everything
And ask for nothing in return
You give your life away, to let others live,
You are... water.

—Grace McCarthy, Grade 7

Tender Morning Hours

The fog reaches out
In the tender morning hours

It glides across the land.
Like a shiny scaled snake
Its ambushed prey,
always eaten whole

—Rohan Thomas, Grade 7

imperfection

i set my alarm for 7:09am
to an old heavy metal song my dad used to play,
i prefer knowing to being known
knowledge is more than power— it is protection,
i've always hated toys that make noise or light up
because i knew the battery would eventually die,
i take pictures of myself crying
just in case i ever need to prove that the pain was not imaginary,
i used to make playlists for every occasion
now i listen to a single song on repeat until my pulse is one with the rhythm,
i often feel like the sea without the moon
beautiful and free and dangerously inconsistent,
i was so worried my plants were dehydrated
that i almost drowned them,
i take personality tests obsessively
the results are always juxtaposition, contrasting and clashing and confusing me further,
i wish i were a jellyfish
because they are pretty and unique and have no brain or heart,
i wonder how it must feel to be the sun
to know the rain but not understand why it falls,
i think about my feelings more than i feel them
my mind is a book and i am merely analyzing the text,
i hate supermarket aisles
where you can taste the fluorescent light and feel the colors closing in,
i crave the sound of a city
noises piling on top of each other until they all fade into one synchronized cacophony,
i'll never have flowers in my house
because as i watch them wilt my grief will overpower my memory of their beauty,
i use chipped coffee mugs and break the spines of my favorite books
because there is intimacy in imperfection,
i smile when the weather forecast is wrong and always cheer for the underdog
because there is comfort in knowing the universe makes mistakes

—Margo Pierson, Grade 8

Mark your calendars for Alumni Reunion Weekend April 22-24

Reunite with beloved faculty and your fellow alums on Friday night from 6:30-9:30pm at the on campus BBQ courtesy of Dead Pig Society. There will be plenty of alumni giveaways and live music from **Parker Smith '04!**

Saturday night reunion class parties are off campus to celebrate the last three years (listed below). Please email alumni@paideiaschool.org to volunteer as your class party planner and don't forget the reunion class with the highest giving participation percentage wins the coveted Reunion Cup plus \$100 towards their party!

Reunion Classes 2020: '75 '80 '85 '90 '95 '00 '05 '10 '15

Reunion Classes 2021: '76 '81 '86 '91 '96 '01 '06 '11 '16

Reunion Classes 2022: '77 '82 '87 '92 '97 '02 '07 '12 '17

On Sunday morning bring your kids to the firetruck for a playdate with light snacks 11 a.m.-noon. Sunday afternoon the Black Parent Organization commemorates their 40th (ruby) anniversary at the Spring Reception on the green from 3:30-5:30 p.m. to celebrate graduates and welcome new families!



The Black Alumni Organization hosts: Creativity in your Career

On February 23 the Black Alumni Organization (BAO) introduced a panel of talented alumni focused on how the creative process plays into their careers. The discussion was moderated by **Clark Moore '09**, an actor, filmmaker, and host of *Soul Balm* podcast with featured panelists **Courtney Creer '09**, a boutique owner and wardrobe stylist, **Nicole Buchanan '11**, a freelance documentary photographer, and **Adria Gunter '14**, an art history graduate student working in museum curation. Watch the discussion at paideiaschool.org/alumni.

An Interview with Birney Robert '04

College of Computing at Georgia Institute of Technology

First, tell us a little bit about your background. What all have you been doing since you graduated Paideia, and where are you now?

I am an Atlanta native – born and raised in Midtown, where I still reside today. I came to Paideia in the sixth grade and continued through high school. I went to college at Birmingham-Southern, where I studied studio art and came back to Atlanta after graduating. My first job was at Emory University in MARBL, the manuscript, archives, and rare book library. That job was temporary and only lasted six months due to all the layoffs from the economic crisis. My second job was for the City of Atlanta working for two councilwomen. After City Hall, I went over to Sandler Hudson Gallery to manage their contemporary art gallery. After four years, I transitioned over to Georgia Tech to be the event coordinator for the College of Computing, where I have currently been for seven years. Georgia Tech

(GT) is where I developed a lot of career confidence because of all the opportunities for growth and education. GT has allowed me to return part-time to school for a graduate degree in anthropology, thanks to the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) (which makes schooling free if you keep a certain GPA). After five years of school at Georgia State University (GSU), I will finally graduate with a master of arts in anthropology in the spring of 2022. My concentration at GSU is in museum anthropology and my thesis is centered around museums at the intersection of art, science and technology. My dream is to build, or help build, a contemporary museum and residency program for art, science and technology here in Midtown.

In the spring of 2021, I decided to apply for an accessibility Microsoft grant offered through GT, which was advertised to anyone associated with GT. I applied with my research on exhibits at the innovative intersection of art, science and technol-

ogy. In the fall of 2021, I heard back from GT and Microsoft that I had successfully received the grant to fund the curation of two exhibits at the intersection of accessibility, art, science and technology at GT. These exhibits will be feasibility studies for a museum and residency program in Atlanta.

With regards to the GT-Microsoft Accessibility Research Seed Grant Program, can you tell us a little bit about how it works?

This is a grant from Microsoft and Georgia Tech's Center for 21st Century Universities and "the program seeks accessibility-focused research and projects in digital accessibility/assistive technology, diverse student backgrounds, and campus life." Four proposals submitted will receive around \$40,000 for their research.

How about your winning proposal for accessible exhibits at the intersection of art, science and technology? Why do you think this is important right now?

These exhibits are designed for artists

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COMMUNITY

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My five years came and went and I kind of forgot that it was my time to go. I liked the rhythm of teaching. I had a trusting leader and I was able to establish new classes at the school like AP Environmental Science and Oceanography. I kept telling myself, just a few more years, and then I'll break away. But it was fun teaching all of those sets of siblings, then hearing about them going to college and having an environmental science related major. Then, seeing some of my former students at professional conferences. Also seeing former students in the community doing great work, environmental related or not. I really love those parts of this work.

In my 13th year of doing this I had an exit plan. I was going to write a major grant that would create a position at an unknown school that I was going to create for myself. I had watched many of my peers in environmental education create their own nonprofits or create a new position within their organizations to fit their strengths. The position was to be an environmental education connections class- so just like students would take art, or PE, they would take an environmental learning class.

As I was gearing up to do this, a friend that I am bonded with for life due to starting at Grady the same year, both of us fresh out of grad school and naively hopeful about how we were gonna be the best

teachers EVER... contacted me about this job posting at Paideia. She immediately thought of me when she saw it. It was for a sustainability coordinator position. I was amazed— they stole my idea and I was thrilled! They created this position just for me! How could they *not* hire me for this job!

I'm now starting my sixth year here, and I love my work, and I love teaching. As much as I tried to resist, it is in my blood.

Korri's "Why I Teach" speech was dedicated to her father, who died the first year she taught at Paideia. He was her teaching mentor and role model. She still 'updates' him about "the awesome projects I get to work on and the students that I get to watch grow up before me."

ALUMNI NEWS

Birney Robert '04 continued from page 6

and researchers working at the intersection of science and technology with a distinct focus on accessibility. When using the term "accessibility" I am referring to the United Nations definition, which is:

"to ensure persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. These measures, which shall include the identification and elimination of obstacles and barriers to accessibility."

When thinking about accessibility, these exhibits will be ADA compliant in terms of the space and location; the exhibits will be free and open to the public; there will be a public call-for-artists for both exhibits; a committee will review the submissions; the content and curation will be accessible to a large age range of audience members; and there will be video record-

ings and IRL options for the artist talk, which will have closed captions and a sign language interpreter. Accessibility protocol will be applied to the website, exhibition text, and marketing materials.

If you could go back in time and give the high-school version of yourself advice, what would it be?

To not let the use of tutors or labels such as "slow reader" "slow learner" and "ADHD" somehow steal your confidence. To know that absolutely anything is possible when you are passionate and dedicated to what you do!

Any favorite teacher(s) you want to give a thank you or shout out to?

Catherine Springer – Seventh and eighth grade are synonymous with Catherine Springer. Catherine put play, laughter, and engagement into my education. She made me appreciate my humor and quirks, and to not feel alone. Catherine became a dear friend after junior high.

Catharine Tipton – Catharine wrote one of my three letters of recommendation for GSU grad school in 2017, which says a

lot because the last time I was in her class was 2004! It really illustrates how dedicated Catharine is to her students, to write about them 13 years later. She was the one who taught me how to write papers – I have so much to attribute to Catharine's classes and mentorship.

Susan Ehrhardt – Everything I know in math is because of Susan. Susan took the time to tutor me one-on-one on various occasions. She made math fun. I miss her dearly.

Joseph Cullen – I (and **Katie Nall '04**) will never forget Joseph's classes – he gave me a love and appreciation for English and Irish literature such as, Seamus Heaney, Beowulf, Shakespeare, James Joyce, and many others. My only regret is not going on his Ireland trip – Maybe after COVID...

Elana Himmelfarb – Elana is the one who got me through Paideia. She took the time to help me unpack each course in high school when I needed guidance and assistance with difficult concepts and workload. She gave me encouragement and support that helped me develop confidence.

THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL

1509 Ponce de Leon Avenue
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THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL is nonsectarian, serving families with children ages three through 18. Paideia does not discriminate in employment or in admissions. It actively seeks racial, cultural, and economic diversity in its student body. The ancient Greek word *Paideia* conveys the concept of a child's total education: intellectual, artistic, and social. The Paideia School Newsletter is published 10 times a year. The deadline for the newsletter is the 1st of the preceding month. Send all correspondence to Jennifer Hill, Editor, at Paideia School, 1509 Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30307. Phone number is 404/377-3491, ext. 339; e-mail address is hill.jennifer@paideiaschool.org. For information about sports schedules and upcoming events visit our web site at www.paideiaschool.org

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