

THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL

NEWSLETTER

Volume LV

Number 9

June 2023

The Class of 2023 Graduates

On Sunday, May 21, family, friends and faculty joined the Class of 2023 at Atlanta Symphony Hall to celebrate their graduation. The audience joyfully welcomed the 120 graduating seniors — the largest class to date at the Paideia School — as they entered the auditorium to the Jackson 5’s classic, “I Want You Back.” On such a cheerful day, the hardships the Class of 2023 have experienced may have seemed far away but, the audience was reminded, their High School experience had not always been a cheery one.

Throughout the student vignettes, there was an underlying theme of perseverance. As the Class of 2023 has faced challenges — whether the daily commute by e-bike shared by **William Stone**, the oppression of Persian women and religious minorities in Iran presented by **Marcelle Nahai** and **Bahiyih Grant**, or battling cancer as recounted by **Sofia Irlando** — they have persisted, more often than not, citing the support of their friends and community as their strength.

In his opening remarks, Head of School **Paul Bianchi** shared one of his favorite lines from American writer E. B. White: “I arise in the morning torn between the desire to improve the world and a desire to enjoy the world.” As freshmen coming of age amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the racial reckoning following the murder of George Floyd, the rise of Asian hate, the war in Ukraine and restricted abortion access, they tried to balance “enjoying the world” and having as normal a High School experience as they could while “improving the world” by using their voices to speak up for their friends, themselves and the issues they care about.

“The school is value-driven, compelling, often changes lives and underscores the value of hard work. It is both funky and funny, which can be contagious,” Paul said, emphasizing, “above all else, it is personal: we know each other as best we can.”

Through knowing each other, the Class of 2023 grew; they found their voice through friendships centered around their shared identities as **Asha Ahn** and **Zalie Strayhorn**



shared. They found friendship in unexpected places: their teachers, as **Marco DeStefano** recalled of **Barrington Edwards**, “once a teacher, always a friend.” With the support of their friends, the Class of 2023 was empowered to create and transform, as Faven Wondwosen expressed in her poem, “In the Beginning.”

Throughout their time at Paideia, the Class of 2023 looked to their teachers and parents for guidance, whether it be finding balance between schoolwork and extracurriculars or big life decisions, such as where to go to college or what to study. As **Ava Arepally** shared, the challenges presented to her by teachers such as **Jack Bross** or **Miranda Knowles**, made her a more capable problem solver. Teachers from Elementary through High School imparted lessons and values that would define the gifts they share. **Manal Tarig** described the lessons she’s learned from teachers such as **Kim Mansion** (the importance of taking risks) and **Drew Kise** (how to think for oneself). Throughout the last year, as seniors have faced many questions and challenges, they have turned to their parents as well. As **Katie Horn** recounted, through her parents’ willingness to be the “Dr. Watson” to her “Sherlock,” she was able to investigate the challenges that came her way and discover a solution.

For many students, improving the world started with knowing themselves — know-

ing their gifts and passions, and leaning into them. During their time at Paideia, the Class of 2023 was pushed to branch out and try new things: **Michael Aaron** toasted his peers on finding themselves and testified to what amazing people they are. For **Madelynn Huff**, defeating the “curse of the one-year friendship” started with befriending herself — recognizing the confidence and grace that made her a good friend.

The environment and culture surrounding Paideia enabled many students to persevere through difficult times. **Jared Hamnerstrom** emphasized this as he noted the unique ways Paideia forms a community, such as Monday Morning Meeting, calling teachers by their first names or waving to those we run into daily around campus (even if the wave wasn’t intended for us). The traits that make Paideia unique attract newcomers to the school and empower them to be the versions of themselves they want to be.

Allie Schroeder experienced this firsthand. Upon seeing someone not wearing shoes during her first visit to Paideia, she knew she could proudly discard her shoes and embrace her love of being barefoot. Paideia accepts the quirky, unconventional and contrarian, as **McHenry Brewer** intoned with “Thank God for Paideia,” this school that has always felt like home.

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High School Awards Assembly

“Doing things well is a combination of talent and effort,” remarked Paul Bianchi during the High School Awards Assembly on April 20, 2023. “Sometimes this combination involves academics, sometimes it is in the arts or social service, sometimes in leadership and community building.” As students and faculty gathered in the theater, the High School took time to reflect and appreciate the accomplishments of the past year.

University of Georgia Certificate of Merit

Kate Banks, Maisey Brown, Sahil Gandhi, Sammy Kodish, Krish Leveille, Michael London

Governor’s Honors

Omair Farooqui, Lily Gao, Brodie Gross, Samuel Kodish, Baikal Miller, Emerson Moore, Kaila Pearson

Internship Commendations

Asha Ahn, Athena Assikis, Maggie Bowen, Camilo Castrillon Davis, Adrien Chung, Kaiya Ciho, Hannah Garrett, Alex Graham, Lily Grill, Teagan McIntosh, Katie Porkert, Phillip Salzinger, Zach Smith, Manal Tariq, Kenji Wu

Community Service Award

Bahiyyih Grant, Alan Schwartz, Phoebe Schwartz, Kolby Seefried

National Merit Scholarship Finalists

Rohan Chanani, Luke Choi, Adrien Chung, Kai Diez, Alex Graham, Alec Hutchinson, Alex Liu, Skyler Marks, Alexandra Schroeder, William Stone

Robotics Award

Alex Crowley



Environmental Citizenship Award

Phillip Salzinger, Kolby Seefried

Journalism Award

Jared Hammerstrom, Theo Stein, Megan Walter

Yearbook Award

Hannah Garrett, Lucy Gillett, Emma Jane Wanamaker

Musician Award

Allie Gilbert

Golden Tin Cup Award

Hannah Garrett, Teagan McIntosh

Musical Theater Award

John Graner, Aurora Gray

Drama and Film Award

Lulu Javelona, Buzz MacIntyre

Mock Trial Award

Athena Assikis, Rohan Chanani, Kaiya Ciho, Phoebe Schwartz

Junior Book Awards

Brown University — **Sammy Kodish**
 University of Chicago — **Carolina Hardin**
 Columbia University — **Emerson Moore**
 Dartmouth College — **Luisa Lieberman**
 Georgia Tech — **Gia Iardi**
 Harvard University — **Brodie Gross**
 Phi Beta Kappa — **Lily Gao**

Smith College — **Maisey Brown**

Wesleyan University — **Kate Banks**

Yale — **Stella Roumanis**

Positive Athlete of Georgia Award

Rohan Chanani

Athletes for a Better World

Tebarek Hillo, Megan Walter

Marty Hays Award

Kenan Orlovic, Alessia Sacchi

Head of School Award — Juniors

Tyler Colby, Babisha Dahal, Catherine Dwyer, Thomas Grant, Sharif Kemp, Maia Pope, Eva Young

Head of School Award — Seniors

Ava Arepally, Athena Assikis, Kaiya Ciho, Aurora Gray, Justin Griggs, Spencer Hollberg, Sofia Irlando, Kenan Kadragic, Lila Jane Long, Phillip Salzinger, Elshaday Shiberu, Winston Stukes

Leadership and Service

Athena Assikis, Adrien Chung, Kaiyo Ciho, Madelynn Huff, Alec Hutchinson, Sofia Irlando, Kenan Kadregic, Elshaday Shiberu

Susan Ehrhardt Award

Bahiyyih Grant

AJC Cup Award

Rohan Chanani

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ELEMENTARY



JUNIOR HIGH



HIGH SCHOOL



Senior Dinner

As whale sharks, manta rays and beluga whales gracefully glided through glimmering blue water, the Class of 2023 and their families commemorated their time at Paideia at the annual Senior Dinner. The Paideia School returned to Georgia Aquarium for the second year in a row; as Paul joked, “The beluga whale made us an offer we couldn’t refuse.” Signs reading “Paideia Class of 2023” and rubber ducks dressed in cap and gown adorned the room as seniors shared performances and reflections of their time at Paideia.

Head of School **Paul Bianchi** began the evening with an apology to the Class of 2023 on behalf of the universe. He said, “I have been designated by the universe as one of their go-to guys to apologize for big things that go wrong. It keeps me busy. In this case, I am here to apologize for what was supposed to be your normal journey through High School, Paideia High School. The universe screwed up.”

As Paul recounted, when these students started High School in August 2019, it was business as usual, but as the entire world faced a pandemic — the likes of which have not been seen in more than 100 years — everyone had to adapt to the unknown. The Class of 2023 finished their freshman year on Zoom and spent the majority of their sophomore year following a hybrid schedule.

“It is typical that a senior class becomes more vivid in its last year, and it is especially true for you guys because your sightings were so irregular and different from previous years,” Paul continued. While COVID-19 impacted every aspect of their first two years of High School, the Class of 2023 poured all of their energy and passion into art, music, theater, sports, Model U.N., Academic Bowl, Mock Trial, urban ag, community service and much more.



Throughout the evening, members of the 120-person class displayed their personality, sharing talents and stories unique to them. Following Paul’s introduction, members of the Senior Planning Group — **Maggie Bowen, Adrien Chung** and **Marcelle Nahai** — announced the 2023 Class Gift. The Class of 2023 raised \$21,700 with 85% of the class participating. The class will continue the tradition of donating the majority of the money raised to Paideia’s financial aid with a smaller portion going toward planting a new tree in front of Oakdale Hall.

The evening transitioned into performances and student speeches. **Katie Porkert** sang a rendition of “Slipping Through My Fingers” from “Mamma Mia.” **Adrienne Chung** and **Luca Horn-Morawa** followed with Jean-Marie LeClair’s Sonata for Two Violins, Op. 3, No. 5. **Alessia Sacchi**, accompanied by **Sammy Kodish ’24** on keyboard and teacher **Rudy Gilbert** on percussion, performed Bobby Caldwell’s “What You

Won’t Do For Love” on saxophone. **Alexa Miller** followed with a rendition of Elton John’s “Goodbye Yellow Brick Road.” The last performance of the evening came from choir members **Ava Arepally, Vivi Belkin, Josie Bond, Cassie Edmund, Aurora Gray, Anika Hofmeister, Julie Joffe, Jena Mamdani, Alexa Miller, Elshaday Shiberu, Jana Stemple** and **Clare Tubbs**, who sang “Dancing Queen” from “Mamma Mia.”

Speaking on behalf of their class, seniors **Rohan Chanani** and **Faven Wondwosen** reflected on the qualities that defined their experiences at Paideia. As a former kindergarten student in **José** and **Tisha’s** class, Rohan reflected on the competitive nature

of Paideia, recalling his push to fill in hundreds of boxes on his number scroll. As he matured, this competitiveness shifted from the classroom to the tennis court and mock trial room, where he realized his drive to win was focused less on victory itself and more on the time and effort shared with his team. Rohan reflected, “This school taught me how to relentlessly pursue victory without losing the spirit of community that defines Paideia.”

In reflecting on her time at Paideia, Faven shared the impact the COVID-19 shutdown had on her perception of big moments. She began by describing life moments that make a person feel infinite; for many, this might be a graduation or a wedding. For her, these moments would include her first open-mic night and her first trip away from home. Without these big moments, Faven realized the importance and small infinities that exist within smaller moments, such as listening to a good song, watching a sunrise or making her mother laugh. These moments, while not

life-changing or revolutionary, still matter because of the happiness they bring. She then recited her poem, “inevitability.”

Each year, one parent shares a reflection with the graduating class. This year, **Dave Krugler** — father of **Jack ’20, Lila ’23, Grace ’27**

and **Bobby ’31** — congratulated the Class of 2023 for doing the unthinkable: getting Paul to quit!

“Forty-eight classes have graduated before you, Class of 2023. More than 3,600 students have received their diplomas. There have been fires and floods, tornadoes and lockdowns. Through it all, Paul Bianchi has been our North Star, our unwavering beacon, guiding us through the storms. And then, your class came along. And Bianchi said, ‘I can’t do this @#\$\$ anymore,’” Dave joked.

Dave focused on the world the Class of 2023 will now face — one troubled by racism and injustice, environmental catastro-

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THE PAIDEIA SCHOOL

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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 Caroline Driebe, Editor, at Paideia School, 1509 Ponce de Leon Avenue, Atlanta, GA 30307. Phone number is 404/377-3491, ext. 339; e-mail address is driebe.caroline@paideiaschool.org. For information about sports schedules and upcoming events visit our web site at www.paideiaschool.org

CLASS OF 2023 GRADUATES *continued from page 1*



The ceremony featured many wonderful performances from the talented graduating seniors. Josie Bond and Julia Joffe sang “Flight” by Craig Carnelia with accompaniment by Anika Hofmeister on piano. Alan Schwartz performed Étude Op. 25 No. 1 by Frédéric Chopin on piano. The choir performed a beautiful rendition of “Baba Yetu” from “Calling All Dawns” by Christopher Tin, featuring soloists Cassie Edmund, Aurora Gray and Alec Hutchinson. Midway through the ceremony, John Graner and William Lowance performed “You and Me (But Mostly Me)” from “The Book of Mormon.” Members of the Paideia band Raw Honey (which includes Aurora Gray, Alec Hutchinson, Anika Hofmeister, Winston Stukes and Cole Williams '24) followed with a performance of Stevie Wonder’s “Sir Duke.” Boys choir closed out the performances, singing and dancing to Crewe and Gaudio’s “Can’t Take My Eyes Off of You.”

To close out his speech, Paul advised the Class of 2023 to find the people and places that will accept and support them. He said, “We laugh that Paideia is a bubble. As one of the chief soap makers, I’ll admit that we are a bubble, one of the many bubbles that exist. Seniors, find bubbles that work for you, or build a new bubble with your sudsy friends.” Enjoying the world and improving the world is no easy task, but surrounded by a community that supports, accepts and challenges them to learn, grow and embrace their passions, the Class of 2023 will be just fine. Congratulations, Class of 2023! We are so proud of you and will miss you!

SENIOR DINNER *continued from page 3*

phes, gun violence, war and disease. While the world has its problems, Dave implored the soon-to-be graduates to help.

“You’ve been given a gift by coming to this school. And you are uniquely equipped to make our world a better place: not because you can throw a frisbee; not because you can read Egyptian hieroglyphics, and not because you know all the lyrics to ‘Mascot of Might.’ You’re uniquely equipped to make the world better because of the core principles the teachers and administrators have woven into the fabric of Paideia: empathy, curiosity, hard work, optimism and humor.”

Dave imparted two lessons to the Class of 2023 — lesson 1: do what you love and lesson 2: make people’s lives better. He then concluded that “if we all work together, then we make society better.”

The evening ended with High School math and science teacher **Martin Aguilera '96** sharing his rules for the world: 1. Don’t die, 2. Don’t be a jerk, 3. Don’t be that person and concluded with an open-ended question, acknowledging that only the Class of 2023 can decide who they will be.