

# POOR RICHARD'S GAZETTE

*A Publication of the Ben Franklin Academy*

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## Note from the Head of School

Dear Friends,

Ben Franklin Academy celebrated its 35th anniversary this year! On November 11, 1987, Dr. Smethurst and I established a small, innovative school on Clifton Road across the street from Emory University and the CDC, where BFA's Emory C. Black Hall (Senior House) is today. Designed to offer a college preparatory curriculum using a Mastery Learning Approach and Individualized Instruction, the school appealed to high school students who wanted a creative and nurturing school with a challenging academic program.

In 1987 we had a student population of around a dozen, and today we teach between 120-125 students a year. In 1987 we had a half dozen on our faculty and staff, and today we have 40. Over the years we have more than doubled the size of the campus and have eight times more classroom and office space. We have added curriculum enhancements every year to support our students' learning environment and needs. We also added clubs, activities, and sports. In 1987 we only offered a half day, Work-Study Program, but today we offer two Longer Day Options in addition to two half day, Work-Study Programs. Truly, we have much to celebrate!

In this issue of Poor Richard's Gazette, you will read about all of the events that have brought together students, faculty and staff, parents, friends, and Trustees and Overseers to celebrate this milestone year! You will also enjoy reading about our students' many achievements. We thank all of you for helping us reach our 35th year! We look forward to continuing to teach and support students who strive to be the best that they can be as they achieve their goals and realize their dreams.

In gratitude,

*Martha B. Burdette*

Martha B. Burdette, Ph.D.  
Head of School



# Graduation

Ben Franklin Academy celebrated the Class of 2023 in Baccalaureate and Commencement Services on May 19 and May 20, respectively. Both events were held at the Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church on the Emory University campus. Mr. Raymond King, the CEO of Zoo Atlanta, was the Commencement Speaker. Ella Greenbaum was the Valedictorian, and Pranay Pingali was the Salutatorian. In addition to the diplomas, the Seniors received awards for their accomplishments in academics, community service, sports, and the fine arts.



Pranay Pingali and Ella Greenbaum



Senior Class 2023

# Nonsenior Awards

Awards for all nonseniors were presented the last full week of school. Pictured below are some of the award winners. Abby Crutcher took home the Dr. C. Michael York Award for service to Ben Franklin Academy this year, and Colin Pan received the Alec Lansing Technology Award for his brilliant work in computer science coursework.



Abby Crutcher



Colin Pan

# Commencement Speaker

Raymond B. King  
President & CEO, Zoo Atlanta

I thought of challenging myself and all of you by giving a speech today that pontificated on the proper role of government in business; or the greatest advances in civilization over the centuries; or the effects of social media on public policy. But you are lucky, I put myself in your shoes and determined that would be cruel and unusual punishment on your big day of celebration.

So instead I decided to speak on the historic and stimulating subject of “Never eating alone”! Yes, if you don’t remember anything else, please remember “Never eat alone!” But first, let me answer the question virtually every audience asks me. How did you go from being a banker to CEO of a Zoo overnight?!

I was named CEO of the Zoo in 2010. But a pivotal occurrence happened 5 years prior. I was attending a civic gathering and met a leader of an accounting firm. Civic involvement was important to me (giving back, meeting people, talent development). As was my common practice, we stayed in touch, having coffee or lunch annually. 5 years later, the zoo CEO announces he is leaving and just who happens to be the Board Chair who has to hire a new one. He knew me well enough to ask me if I wanted to run the zoo and go to bat for me. Fortunately, I also knew much of search committee due to my long term focus on building relationships. Thus, they were willing to take a chance on me despite my lack of zoo experience.

Virtually every advance I made in my career was aided materially by personal and professional relationships. Having strong relationships does not exclude the need for talent and hard work, but they can still make a material difference in both opening doors and earning trust. The dynamic of our society will increasingly be defined by interdependence and interconnectivity. While a component of that is the increasingly virtual networks, there is no escaping the critical importance of real-life, in-person, human relationships.

The stronger the relationship network you have as an individual, the richer your life will be. That could be connections to organizations, people, your faith, and your community. The more relationships you have, the more opportunities in life that will come your way. As you graduate high school and go different directions, please remember that many of life’s most meaningful relationships are those formed early in life in high school and college. So be sure to hold on to them and nourish them.

However, as you seek to build relationships, it is critically important to approach those connections with an attitude of “How can I help” rather than “what can I get”. If your interactions are ruled by generosity, your rewards will follow suit. You just never know how two people will be able to help each other over the course of time. Building connections and relationships is an opportunity to make a difference in peoples lives, as well as to enrich our own lives. As part of building relationships, strive to make others successful. All people represent such an opportunity. As Winston Churchill said, “We make a living by what we get, but we make a life by what we give.”

Seek quality over quantity. It’s not about how many business cards you collect or the number of LinkedIn contacts you have, or the number of “likes” you have on Instagram. Follow up immediately with people after you meet them if you want to build a relationship and look for things in common. Meeting new people, don’t get trapped in small talk for too long. Move quickly to substance where you can really get to know each other and you can demonstrate character and confidence.

You will also find that as you grow your relationship network, so will your influence and ability to have an impact grow. Maintaining strong relationships requires an ongoing investment of time. You have to stay in touch, one way or another. Out of sight is out of mind, and people naturally move on sadly. People often tell me they just don’t have the time. That is when I remind them that they probably have breakfast, lunch, and dinner everyday. So, if nothing else, just never eat alone and use that quality time for building and strengthening new and existing relationships.

Too often I see people ignoring the building of a network of relationships as they focus on their schooling or career and they then find themselves scrambling to build them when they are really needed in pursuit of a job, building a business, etc. It is too late then. Over the years, I’ve learned that a meaningful life is one steeped in purpose. It’s also one grounded in relationships with family, friends, a higher power and community. Yes, you may face failure and hardship and pain along the way, but the strength of those relationships will help pull you through. I think of the time I lost my Mother as a teenager; and when I faced a cancer battle in later life.

So, in conclusion, please remember that connection is one of the greatest gifts we can give each other on this path of life. So, don’t hesitate to ask for it or offer it to someone else. The joy you’ll feel will brighten your mood and give you a spring-like feeling that will carry you forward.



# Celebrating our 35th Anniversary



Ben Franklin Academy welcomed students back to school for the 2022-2023 school year on August 4. Ben Franklin Academy began its celebrations of its 35th year with a Pizza Party for students and faculty held on Founders' Courtyard on August 12. The 35th anniversary celebrations continued for families with the two Parent/Grandparent Nights, the first one for parents and grandparents of seniors on August 25, followed by the second one for parents and grandparents of nonseniors on August 31.

Parents and grandparents enjoyed the opportunity to meet their teen's teachers, and seniors enjoyed their first luncheon as the Class of 2023.



## Celebrations

Ben Franklin Academy celebrated Founders' Day -- its 35th birthday -- on November 11. The school was established on November 11, 1987, and every year students and faculty gather to celebrate the school's birthday with cake and stories about the founding and early days of the school. The students and teachers enjoyed the BFA trivia game about the history of the school when we met on Founders' Courtyard this year.

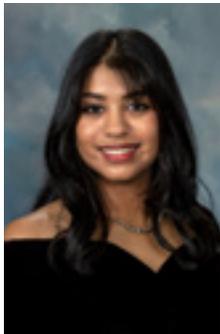


# BFA Students as AP Scholars

The following students qualified for the AP Scholar Program based on their AP scores.

AP Scholar with Distinction -  
Granted to students who receive an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams.

- Kaitlyn Crutcher
- Ella Greenbaum
- Pranay Pingali



AP Scholar with Honor - Granted to students who receive an average score of at least 3.25 on all AP Exams taken, and scores of 3 or higher on four or more of these exams.

- Ayesha Hayat
- Gibby Heiser



AP Scholar - Granted to students who receive scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP Exams.

- Elsie Adams

## Service Award

The Jane and Dameron Black, III Service Award was presented to Jessica and Jeff DeHart, who are parents of two BFA graduates and are members of BFA's Board of Overseers. They have been wonderful advocates for the school for many years. They are pictured above receiving the award from Jane and Dameron Black. Thank you, Jessica and Jeff, for all you do!



# The Franklin Players



Cast of *Sorry, Wrong Number*



The Franklin Players had a creative and varied 2022/2023 season of learning and play productions. In the fall, we presented a new take on the classic radio drama *Sorry, Wrong Number*, putting the piece on stage with a series of surprise effects and showcasing our tech crews talents with building a full-size replica of a 1940s phone booth complete with a constructed historically accurate telephone and folding doors into the structure. For winter we adapted the play *The Glabrous Four* by Sandra Hosking and set it in a mystic dystopian world ruled by laws requiring baldness. Actors learned to don bald caps and appropriate make-up and to make use of puppetry. The final piece was a work in progress project writing a new play based on television dating shows. In between our production schedule, the ensemble worked around the installation of our newly enhanced theatre lighting system which is due to be finished during the summer.



The cast of *The Glabrous Four*

# Arts and Crafts Club

The Arts and Crafts Club, led by Debby Keenan and Jan Bedol, was busy this spring with projects that attracted a large group of students. When we returned from Spring Break, students began learning about open and closed terrariums as part of our year's STEAM projects. Club members learned that the open terrariums support plants that love sun and don't require a moist environment, primarily cacti and succulents. The closed terrariums act more like tiny, self-sustaining gardens that love moisture and heat.

Among several short term projects, students painted their own canvas inspired by nature and created and assembled paper puppets. Arts and Crafts Club was a success with students engaged in the club at lunch on Mondays. In the coming fall, the club will begin using polymer clay, paint and other materials to form animals. Then students will create themed hats using various recyclable materials. The club is a perfect opportunity for students to express their creativity, enjoy some time with other students and have fun using various artistic materials.



# Robotics Club



Our newest activity, the Robotics Club, has begun at BFA! Interested students built objects with Legos, learned about simple mechanics, and worked together in small teams. As these students progressed in their building and thinking skills, they transferred these skills into building and programming their own robot!



# Nature and Philanthropy Clubs

During fall semester, Nature Club made field trips to the Emory Farmer’s Market to enjoy the produce and prepared foods and support local farmers and vendors. The club continued to work on the organic garden and planted lettuce, kale, snow peas, and chicory for the fall/winter season. We also rearranged and beautified the garden area by adding chairs, a gnome, and other ornaments; these additions make an enjoyable sitting space and gathering area for students, staff, and wildlife on campus. We have also planted sunflowers, marigolds, peas, and jalapenos in our organic garden to grow alongside the kale, cabbage, chicory, and strawberries that survived the harsh winter. This year, we did not see any cabbage moth larvae feeding on our kale and cabbage, so we suspect that the marigolds we planted served as a natural deterrent to this pest. Next year, we might start an insect collection to display what we find on campus.

Additionally, the Green Club overhauled the recycling program with recycling teams designated for each house. They make recycling runs twice a week and process large materials such as cardboard boxes for pick-up.



Green Club

The BFA Philanthropy Project hosted several drives for local and international organizations this fall. Early in the year, the club sponsored a supply drive and a bake sale for the Fulton County Animal Shelter, raising \$160 and collecting cat toys, blankets, towels, dog treats, cat chow, and dog food. Local animal shelters have had a surplus of animals, so they are appreciative of this help. We also put together over sixty bags of essential items for homeless men and women living in Atlanta shelters. Items included breakfast bars, tissues, socks, deodorant, toothbrush, toothpaste, hand sanitizers, and combs. The Philanthropy Project also worked again this year with The Mission of Hope School in Liberia, Africa. The club gathered supplies, which included dry erase markers, pencils, staplers, rulers, pencil sharpeners, scissors, folders, paper, and pens. And, finally, the club sponsored the Angel Tree Drive again this holiday season and collected hundreds of items for five families in desperate need. Items included bedding, cooking ware, children’s toys, cleaning supplies, and clothing. Additionally, as part of the holiday drive, they were able to cover the wish lists for two families (single moms with kids) and two single men (one with a health issue and one with a mental health issue) in the Atlanta area. Each family also received a couple of gift cards for groceries. Overall, the BFA Philanthropy Project had an incredible year, and we are so grateful that the students were able to share their time and talents with our community.



Philanthropy Club

# Cross Country, Golf, and Ultimate Disk

The 2022 season was a wonderful period of growth for the Ben Franklin Academy's Cross Country team. The team this year included a healthy mix of new and returning runners, all of whom made strides to improve their fitness level and running capabilities. Some of our old familiar faces provided a sense of leadership and stability for a large number of new runners who developed into strong athletes by the season's end. This year, the team participated in a number of races including the Dominion Dash in Marietta, the Wingfoot Classic in Cartersville, and Regional meet at Allatoona Creek Park. Through these races our younger runners learned valuable lessons they will carry into future seasons, guaranteeing strong performances for the team in the coming years. What many of us will remember most about the 2022 season, however, are afternoons conditioning and bonding as a team at Lullwater Preserve.



Cross Country Team



Golf Team with Coaches

At Ben Franklin, our Golf Team had an outstanding year. Two primary objectives for this year were sportsmanship and competitiveness. We had several matches throughout the year—the biggest match was an all day tournament in North Georgia. Riley Baxter, the Head Golf Coach, was assisted by Coaches Ryan Cottrill and Jorge Correa. We are very excited to see what is in store for this coming year's Golf Team!

This year the Ultimate Disk team had an amazing turnout! We had a number of consistent and skilled players come out every practice, and many of our players were returning students who had been on the team the year before. The number of students at practice by the end of the season was regularly 14 or more! It made the season very valuable for everyone as we were able to have full size scrimmages at practice with a high quality of play. The students brought passion and skill to practice and made it a great environment to have fun, hone their skills, and make friends along the way!



Ultimate Disk Players

# Senior Athletes Signing Day

Two members of BFA's Senior Class signed with Fencing teams at major universities. Ella Greenbaum signed with Notre Dame, and Susan Wiggers signed with The Ohio State University. See pictures of Ella and Susan below.



Ella Greenbaum



Susan Wiggers

# STAR Student and STAR Teacher

Pranay Pingali, BFA's STAR Student, and her STAR Teacher, Dr. Edward Ellis, attended the recent luncheon honoring STAR Students and STAR Teachers.

Pranay was dually enrolled with Emory University this year, taking math and physics on the college level. She will attend Reed College this fall.



# BFA Alum Visits Campus



Ben Franklin Academy hosted alumnus Gabriel Troiano (2015), who read from his newly published book of poetry, *Inner Worlds*, to the delight of the students. Gabe, who now lives in London and works with a business firm there, recently completed his M.A. in Creative Writing and Education at Goldsmiths, University of London. Gabe received his B.A. from Furman University.

# Alumni News

William McLean (2007) is living in Atlanta and is the CEO and co-founder of Yom Ice Cream.

Graham Waldrop (2007) is married and lives in Atlanta. For enjoyment he plays in The Band Upstairs. Check out his first song, "Home to You," on Spotify, Apple Music, Pandora, Amazon Music, or Youtube.

Irene Zielinski (2014) was named to the Dean's List at Georgia State University.

Betts and Chet DeHart (2014) had a Lucid FC Spring/Summer Trunk Show at The Interlock on Howell Mill Road on April 29. Their clothing business is thriving!

Connor Cassidy (2015) has completed an M.B.A. at Florida Tech.

Michael Lovett (2015) was named to the Dean's List at Georgia State University for the Fall, 2022 Semester. He majored in Public Policy and graduated this spring.

Mary Pena (2016) was named to the President's List at Kennesaw State University for Fall Semester. She is majoring in Media and Entertainment.

Sydney Sims (2018) graduated from the University of Georgia with a B.A. in Political Science and Women's Studies.

Andrew Thomasson (2018) made the Dean's List this spring at Georgia State University.

Alexandra Kwasha (2019) was named to the Dean's List at the University of Vermont for Fall Semester. She was a senior majoring in Professional Nursing.

Brendan Lyster (2019) completed his junior year at Covenant College. He is majoring in International Politics.

Annabelle Magee (2019) was named to The President's List at Kennesaw State University. She is majoring in Integrated Health Sciences.

Alexa Ryan-Oat (2019) completed her B.A. at the University of Kentucky this spring.

Alex Warren (2019) graduated this spring from the University of Georgia. He majored in Philosophy and minored in Horticulture.

Peter Merrill (2020) was named to the Dean's List at Berry College.

Zach Meyers (2020) is enjoying Kenyon College and looks forward to returning there this fall.

Preston Seligman (2020) enjoys Tulane and will be returning there for his senior year this fall.

Patrick Marsden (2021) is attending Auburn University.

Erika Wu (2021) is attending Tulane University.

Ryan King (2022) made the Dean's List Fall semester at Birmingham Southern College. He plays varsity tennis for BSC and has won all his singles matches!

# Celebrating BFA's 35th Anniversary

The achievements of our school are made possible not by one individual but by our collective community, and we are grateful to our generous supporters and caring learners who gave to this year's anniversary Annual Fund.

BFA's Annual Fund provides support for community priorities above and beyond the cost of tuition. As we celebrated our 35th Anniversary, we were proud to honor our past while investing in our future. Gifts to the 2022-2023 Annual Fund supported need-based scholarships through the Wood Smethurst Scholarship Fund and enabled us to purchase technology enhancements and upgrades for Ben Franklin Academy faculty and students with a focus on STEAM investments.

Thank you to this year's Annual Fund Co-Chairs and Committee members who gave of their leadership and time:

Laura Palickar and Wally Curran  
*Current Parents, Annual Fund Co-Chairs*

Lei Shan and Ron Stockton  
*Current Parents, Immediate Past Co-Chairs*

Ioana Bonta, *Alumni Parent*

Jackie Conley, *Alumni Parent*

Amy and Gabe Damiani, *Current Parents*

Daniel Eberly, *Current Parent*

Sonja Greenbaum, *Current Parent*

Patty King,  
*Board of Overseers, Alumni Parent*

Fluffy McDuffie,  
*Board of Trustees, Alumni Parent*

Tricia Warren,  
*Board of Overseers, Alumni Parent*

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