



Lucy Beckham High School

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**Anna Dassing**  
Principal

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## Media Release

### **Peyton Matheson named Beckham's first valedictorian**

**Mount Pleasant, S.C.** – Lucy Garrett Beckham High School is celebrating the Class of 2023 as its first-ever graduating class (335 students). Peyton Matheson is the school's first valedictorian.

Matheson is headed to the University of South Carolina's Honors College but not before a trip through Europe, which he sees as an opportunity to learn and experience new things.

Matheson grew up in Mount Pleasant and attended Charleston County School of the Arts, where he developed his skills on the piano. He attended Wando his freshman year where he continued piano in the Jazz Band. Matheson transferred to Beckham for his sophomore year as a virtual student at the height of COVID 19.

Matheson was part of a class of students that mastered the pivot when it came to learning. He also took advantage of the flexibility virtual learning gave him and started a small landscaping business.

"It was a great learning opportunity for me to see the business side of landscaping," said Matheson. "I am going to be an applied math major and love business and entrepreneurship, so the business went along with my true passions. I love to learn new things."

It's not lost on Principal Anna Dassing that every student in this graduating class started high school elsewhere, as part of the staggered grade levels implemented when opening Beckham.

"They were new to the school and had to transition in the middle of COVID-19," said Dassing. "Beckham's Class of 2023 embodies resilience. They adapted beautifully and continued on to graduation successfully."

Dassing is especially proud of Matheson who applied himself and took advantage of everything Beckham had to offer.

"He was a wonderful role model to his classmates," said Dassing. "He is a perfect first valedictorian."

The mission of Beckham is to foster intelligence, challenge students to live with integrity, and promote civic involvement through a bold and innovative culture. Those are referred to as the three "Is" of the Tiger. Dassing said that Matheson personifies those traits.

"Lucy Beckham, who spearheaded the addition of a second high school in Mount Pleasant, was my mentor and a fellow principal," said Dassing. "Knowing that her vision came to life through Peyton makes me proud. I know she is smiling."

Matheson said learning new things keeps him motivated.

"Attending school is a part of life, and my philosophy is that if I must do something in this life, I must do the best I can," said Matheson. "This school is exceptional. The flex hours we had in our day allowed us to go to any teacher for additional help and mentoring, which sets all students up for success."

Matheson is honored to be in the school's first graduating class.

"I've heard nothing but good things about Ms. Beckham and this school lives up to her name," said Matheson. "It's unique in what it offers, especially the freedom it offers students. It's been an amazing experience and I am fortunate to have watched the school grow into what it is today."

According to Matheson, intelligence is not a measure of one's intellect; instead, it is an attribute of those who apply themselves effectively and meaningfully in their endeavors.

"For me, it was about finding and recognizing my strengths and then cultivating those into passions," said Matheson. "If you use what you know strategically, you can pave the way to a successful future."

That passion will surely guide him as he plans for a future in analytics in the financial sector.

Matheson is very thankful to the teachers and administrators who helped him learn and grow as a student and as a person.

"So many worked with me to help me navigate the challenges I faced, and I am extremely grateful," said Matheson.

Dr. Patty Tate was one of those teachers. She is in her first year at Beckham and is a seasoned educator, having been named State Teacher of the Year in 2012, and is a current Education Oversight Committee member. Tate was an AP English

teacher this year and immediately noticed a stand-out student in her fifth-period class.

"There was this young man who was engaged, inquisitive, and asked a lot of questions," said Tate. "That student was Peyton and I knew he would be a special student. I've watched him grow as a writer. He is a learner and it is important to him to understand and grow as a student."

Tate said that Matheson embodies how students learn at Beckham. "I've taught for 36 years and Peyton is one of the best students I have ever encountered," added Tate. "He has intelligence, compassion, gentleness, kindness, and is a friend to all. Everyone who knows him respects him and he respects everyone in return. We are all very proud of him. He joins a very special class of Seniors."

For more information, contact Principal Anna Dassing at 843-953-2900.

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#### **About the Charleston County School District**

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves approximately 49,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) programs, music and other creative and performing arts, career and technical preparation programs, and military.