

# BEN LIPPEN SCHOOL

## ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

FALL 2024

### 55 YEAR REUNION

CLASS OF 1969



The class of '69 refused to let the weather deter them from reuniting for their 55th reunion in Columbia last month. Some attendees traveled from as far away as Texas and California! Although the celebrations at the Ben Lippen campus had to be postponed, the group gathered at a local Cracker Barrel instead. The Alumni and Development Office joined them to visit and present a gift. It was special to be a small part of the reunion activities with our Asheville alumni.



### FALCON FAMILY REUNION

On Friday, October 25 Ben Lippen School hosted the rescheduled Alumni Tailgate, an event initially set for September but postponed due to Hurricane Helene. It was a wonderful evening to reconnect and celebrate the lasting bonds formed at Ben Lippen, with nearly 200 alumni, their families, and faculty members gathering in the new Blackwell Center for Life Impact. This tailgate coincided with the building's dedication ceremony earlier that day, honoring Mike Blackwell, its namesake, which added to the event's significance. Guests enjoyed a delicious dinner and conversations with old friends before joining the BL community for Trunk-or-treat festivities and cheering on the varsity football team. Thank you to everyone who returned to be a part of the fun!



# Alumni Tailgate 2024

ENJOY THE FULL GALLERY BY CLICKING THE BUTTON BELOW



# Alumni Spotlights

## Rio Mao 2018

FROM BL TO BUILDING THE FUTURE



When **Rio Mao** set foot on Ben Lippen's campus as a student from China, he likely couldn't have envisioned how profoundly those years would shape his future. Now a mechanical engineer in Austin, Texas, Rio reflects on his journey from Ben Lippen to his current role in automotive engineering, designing fixtures and overseeing complex manufacturing lines for industry giants.

Yet, for Rio, the story is as much about the people and experiences at Ben Lippen as it is about the career path he's carved.

## Grace Barlow 2015

FROM BL TO THE BIG SCREEN



After graduating from Ben Lippen in 2015, **Grace Barlow** pursued her studies at the University of South Carolina, majoring in Public Relations and minoring in Dance. It was during her time at USC that Grace's journey took an exciting turn as she began pursuing acting and modeling. Signing with Deabreu Agency in Columbia, SC, and Slamm Management in Atlanta, GA, Grace experienced a variety of opportunities that eventually led her to MMG in New York City and even a transformative study abroad experience in Milan.

Read the whole story by clicking the buttons below.

# Blackwell Center for Life Impact

## Ribbon Cutting Ceremony and Dedication Luncheon



On Friday, October 25, the Ben Lippen community of students, faculty, and staff gathered in front of the Blackwell Center for Life Impact for a ribbon-cutting ceremony honoring the building's namesake, Mike Blackwell. CIU President Bill Jones and Ben Lippen Headmaster Tony Fajardo shared personal remarks on Mike Blackwell's legacy and the Blackwell family's enduring impact on countless lives for Christ. Following the ceremony, a dedication luncheon was held in the building to celebrate and thank the generous donors who made this vision a reality.

It's already difficult to imagine campus life without the Blackwell Center for Life Impact. Middle and high school students and teachers are enjoying the new classrooms, and the flex space is bustling with parent meetings, student groups, and alumni gatherings. We feel incredibly blessed to have this space completed a full year ahead of schedule. At Ben Lippen, every investment in spaces like this is an investment in young lives, equipping them to carry the message of Jesus well beyond our campus.



# ENGAGING HEARTS AND MINDS: THE INTENTIONAL CHANGES IN BIBLE EDUCATION AT BEN LIPPEN

by Joey Caldwell, High School Bible Teacher

You may have noticed that the High School Bible Department has recently introduced significant changes. What might not be as clear are the reasons behind these changes. We believe it's important to share the heart and motivation behind this shift, so you can understand how it impacts your student's spiritual and academic growth.

At the start of last school year, the Bible department transitioned to a seminar-style model for its courses. This change wasn't sudden; it was the result of years of careful development and planning, during which we created Bible standards that reflect the mission of Ben Lippen School. Much like our English department's approach, we now offer semester-long courses centered on specific topics or themes, all of which align with these academic Bible standards.

Every freshman begins with two foundational courses, Progress of Redemption and The Life of Christ. Afterward, students have the opportunity to choose from a variety of courses based on their personal interests. This journey culminates in a senior-year "Capstone" course, where students synthesize their learning in a personal project that reflects their understanding of Biblical truths.

We're thrilled with this new direction because it helps us better meet students where they are. Over the years, we've seen the need for a Bible program that fosters deeper engagement and greater autonomy. By allowing students to choose courses that interest them, we're encouraging what we call "buy-in"—students become more invested in their learning. Additionally, the new model offers a diverse range of courses, bringing together students from different grades, which enriches the learning environment.

The foundation laid during the freshman year ensures that all students have a strong grasp of core Biblical principles. From there, they can explore topics like Ethics, Doctrines, Spiritual Disciplines, and more. The final Capstone course challenges them to apply their Biblical understanding to real-world issues, careers, or ethical questions, solidifying their personal beliefs and worldview.

Ultimately, our hope is that as students explore these courses, they will encounter the wisdom and truth of Christ in every area of study. Our prayer is that this deepens their relationship with Him and transforms their lives in light of the gospel. As Romans 11:36 reminds us, "For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen."



# SHOUT OUTS FROM CAMPUS

## FALCONS COMPETE

Congratulations to the girls' tennis program on earning Region Champs recognition after clenching the win against Heathwood Hall and to Varsity Tennis Coach Katie Mason on being named SCISA 4A Region 1 Coach of the Year.

Senior volleyball athlete Alivia Martin was selected as the 2024 SCISA 4A Region I Player of the Year. The Ben Lippen Cross Country team finished an excellent season at the SCISA State Championship. The boys came in 4th with two BL runners securing spots in the top 10.



## CONGRATUALATIONS!



## FALCONS SOAR

This year, our Advanced Placement (AP) scores continue to showcase strong academic performance, with 173 tests taken and 146 tests passed, leading to an overall pass rate of 84%, an increase from last year's 82%. Several subjects achieved outstanding results, including English Literature, Government, Calculus AB, and Human Geography, all with a perfect 100% pass rate. Additionally, U.S. History, Chemistry, and Statistics saw substantial improvements, with pass rates near or above 87%. This year's scores reflect our students' dedication and the strength of our AP program in fostering academic excellence.

## FALCONS PERFORM

The high school theater program is gearing up for its February performance of *Mary Poppins: The Broadway Musical*. This promises to be another outstanding production, and congratulations to Connie Anne Woodard '25, daughter of '99 alumni Robby and Emily Woodard, for landing the role of Mary Poppins!

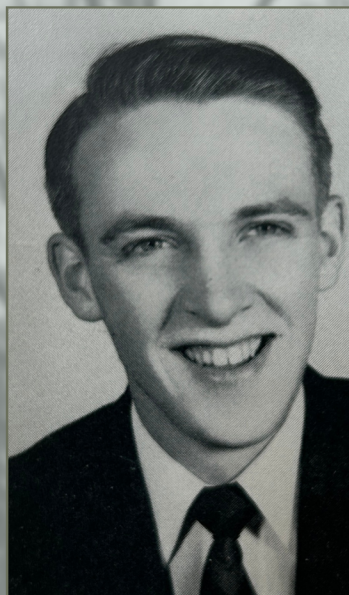
If you would like to attend the show, please email [alumnibl@benlippen.com](mailto:alumnibl@benlippen.com) to inform us, and we will arrange a ticket for you!



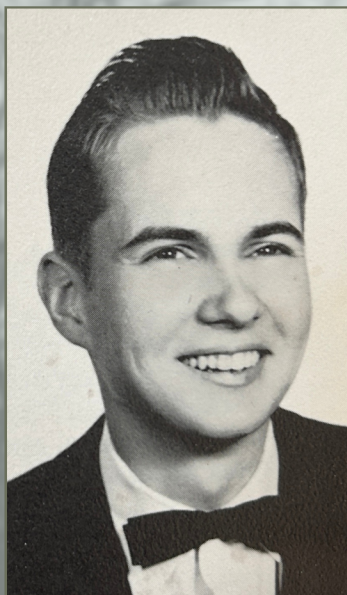
# Remembering Our Falcons

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WE HONOR THE MEMORY OF OUR CHERISHED ALUMNI WHO HAVE PASSED, CELEBRATING THEIR LIVES, LEGACIES, AND LASTING IMPACT ON THE BEN LIPPEN COMMUNITY.



**Merle Dye, Jr. '54**



**Senator Earl Baker '57**



**Bill Jones '57**



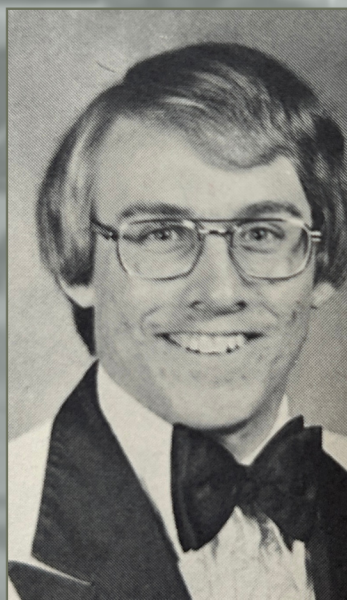
**Heather Sutherland  
Danielson '58**



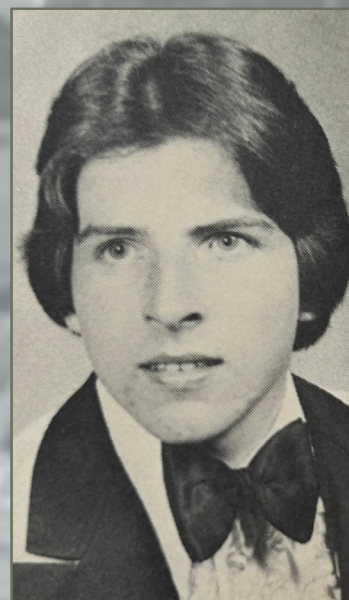
**Mary "Polly" Parker  
Elniff - Faculty**



**Susan Bishop  
Strickland '72**



**Russell "Rusty"  
Tolbert '76**



**Rick Huss '76**