

POOR RICHARD'S GAZETTE

A Publication of the Ben Franklin Academy

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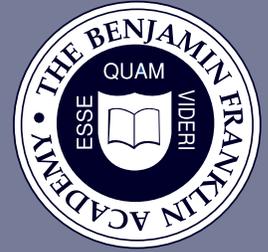
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Note from the Head of School

Dear Friends,

This edition of Poor Richard's Gazette celebrates the achievements and highlights of Ben Franklin Academy's 2024-2025 school year. Benjamin Franklin said, "An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest," and the impressive accomplishments of our students this year show how true those words are. We see clearly what can be done when a community comes together to support students. They achieve more than they thought possible.

We are grateful to our Board of Trustees, Board of Overseers, faculty, parents, friends, and students for moving us forward with our SAIS Five-Year Plan, which concludes with the 2025-2026 school year. As planned, we have continued to strengthen our clubs, activities, and sports, helping our students to develop their many talents. They have followed, as you will read in this newsletter, Ben Franklin's admonition, "Hide not your talents; they for use were made. What's a sundial in the shade?"

The talents of our seniors were on full display at graduation. This year's commencement speaker was Ann Cramer, prominent Atlanta businesswoman, community volunteer, and Ben Franklin Academy's friend. She has helped Atlantans of all ages. Ann encouraged our graduates to continue to develop their talents, citing Benjamin Franklin Academy's motto: "Esse Quam Videri" [To be rather than to seem.]. She urged the seniors to realize fully who they are and can be as they continue to grow into successful adults. Ann's insightful message is included in this issue.

We hope that you will enjoy reading our newsletter, which shares the many ways that the Ben Franklin Academy community came together this year, from Parent/Grandparent Night, to clubs and sports, to Underclassmen/women Awards, to graduation, among many other happenings. We continue our investment in knowledge, teaching our students well and supporting them to be authentically the best that they can be.

With gratitude,

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



Parent/Grandparent Night



Each fall, current parents and grandparents join the BFA faculty and staff for the annual Parent/Grandparent Night events. On Thursday, August 22, parents and grandparents of students with last names starting with A - L arrived at the school to meet with their student's teachers and advisor. Parents and grandparents of students with last names starting with M - Z came to BFA on Wednesday, August 28.

Parents were greeted by members of the BFA Administration and our Parent Greeters. Before meandering through the Jr. House to meet with their student's teachers, our visitors had their pictures taken and grabbed refreshments to enjoy while meeting with the BFA teachers. Parents and grandparents learned about how their students were doing in their courses, what could be expected of their students throughout the semester, and what extracurricular activities and clubs were offered throughout the school year.

As always, this event was a great success and helped to strengthen the BFA community by allowing parents and grandparents to meet with their student's teachers and chat with other parents and grandparents of current students. Thank you to those who could join us!



Special Activities

Senior Luncheon



Seniors Enjoying the Luncheon

Seniors enjoyed the luncheon, which included pizza, salad, cookies, and other desserts. Students played BFA and graduation-related games, including trivia about BFA teachers and "Pictionary." Students won prizes like fidget toys and gift cards to Amazon and Chick-fil-a. Parent volunteers Bonnie Bellinger and Randi Balog helped serve food, and many parents donated to the event.

On Friday, September 13, the BFA Class of 2025 came together for one of their first celebrations of their graduation in May. Each semester, we honor and celebrate our graduates with the Senior Luncheons. Thanks to the donations of parents and families, students are treated to pizza, salad, cookies and other desserts. While eating and chatting, students played a number of BFA and graduation-related games including trivia about BFA teachers and "Pictionary." Students were able to win prizes by winning games, including fidget toys and gift cards to Amazon and Chick-fil-a. We thank our two parent volunteers, Bonnie Bellinger and Randi Balog, who helped serve food, and we thank many parents who donated to this event.

Underclass Luncheon

On Friday, October 25, BFA held the Fall Semester Underclass Luncheon as one way to celebrate our students and their hard work. Underclass students met in the Jr. House Carriage House for pizza, salad, and desserts. Students then spent lunchtime playing games, including many BFA-related games including "BFA Pictionary" and ice-breakers. Many students won prizes including Dunkin' and Chick-fil-a gift cards and fidget toys. New friendships were formed and existing friendships were strengthened in this celebratory event.

Thank you to our two parent volunteers, Jennifer Burger and Emily Boatright, who helped distribute food and for the many donations toward this wonderful event. We look forward to continuing to celebrate our BFA students!



Underclass Luncheon



The Franklin Players



The Franklin Players are always looking for a challenge as we search for plays to present in our three-show season each year. We try to find pieces that are a well-written example of their literary genre as well as those which have potential for embracing new technical effects and that contain an idea or message we can pursue in a deeper way for conversation on and off the stage. With all that in mind, the Players selected Eric Coble's *Swagger* for our Fall season opener. Ensemble members include actors

Devin May, Ever Wilson, and Lola Brown and tech crew Sophia Panayotopoulos and Cas Bosch. Joining us as a guest artist is Sari Flomenbaum.

The world of *Swagger* is brought to life by three very different dream-makers: a single mom opening a new hip clothing store; a rookie policeman trying to model the good kind of cop; and an eighth-grader self-searching his inner superhero. When they are brought together in a seeming act of violence, that moment is captured by a phone camera and goes viral. The play progresses as each one tries to tell his/ her version of what really went down and makes use of both humor and tragedy to deliver an impact to the audience.



Performed on November 6 and 7, our production concept included a live DJ, who colored the scenes with music and sounds from the streets of the neighborhood throughout the show. Our set depicted the glitzy clothes-filled *Swagger* store; a graffiti-covered hang-out convenience store; and "DeeJay's" apartment sound studio. The production was directed by Dr. Pamela Turner with sound design by Assistant Dean Jeff Guthrie and line coaching by faculty member Wright Howell.



Spring Play - *Murder for Two*

*It was a dark and stormy night.
A mansion casting shadows to fright.
A cake full of candles to light.
A hostess planning everything
just right...and Muuurrrddder!*



Spring Play - Continued

After a successful fall production of the heart-breaking drama *Swagger*, the Franklin Players decided to climb over to the comedy side of theatre and mix in a little intrigue with a showcase adaptation of a raucous murder mystery. Inspired by Joe Kinosian and Kellen Blair's musical cabaret *Murder for Two*, our cast romped around the stage solving and hiding clues, drinking poisonous tea, lying, cheating, and generally proving that everyone as a likely candidate for the murder of a famous and spiteful novelist who just happened to be the evening's birthday boy. Whew!

It was great fun, and the actors completely outdid themselves with outrageous characterizations matched to perfect comedic timing. Some even chose to "sing" their testimony, and a few played multiple characters that fooled no one, but definitely entertained the demonstrative audience. The lead actors for the show were Lola Brown and Ever Wilson, with strong performances as well by ensemble members Cas Bosch, Adler Greenbaum, and Stephen Pierce. Staff member Sari Flomenbaum performed as an exceptional guest artist. Costume manager, Sofia Panayotopoulos, dressed the actors with colorful enhancements that provided a visual cohesiveness on our stylized set.

Directed by Pamela Turner, the show was also brought to life by the music selections of Tech Director Jeff Guthrie and the actor preparation work provided by Line Coach Wright Howell.

*An end to our season was bright,
All and all, such a beautiful sight.*

William H. Izlar, Jr. Poetry Contest

The month of April is National Poetry Month. At BFA, this month holds special meaning because along with this month-long, national celebration, BFA holds the annual William H. Izlar, Jr. Poetry Contest. This annual poetry contest was established by the Mary Ryan and Henry G. Kuhrt Foundation in memory of BFA's great friend and former longtime Overseer, Bill Izlar. Bill was a lifelong lover of poetry. Students could submit two poems for

consideration. This year, the Awards Presentation was held on Thursday, April 24. First place went to 11th grade student, Matthew Skop, for his poem "Goliath"; second place went to 10th grade student, Sofia Panayotopoulos, for her poem "Endings"; third place was awarded to 10th grade student, Theo Ryan, for his poem "Drowning Lessons"; and fourth place went to 11th grade student, Simon Severson, for his poem "Snapshots." Congratulations to all students who participated in this competition and to our four winners.



Cookie Swap

On Tuesday, December 10, BFA held the annual Cookie Swap. This event is a time to celebrate our teachers' and staff's hard work with home made and store bought goodies. Many students showed off their baking skills with various cookies and treats for their teachers to enjoy. Some of the highlights included many, many chocolate chip cookies, snickerdoodles, gingersnaps, gluten-free treats, and more. Our teachers and staff enjoyed many, many days of delicious treats!

Thank you to the families who participated in bringing goodies and thank you to the parents who set up the event.



Service Award

The Jane and Dameron Black, III Service Award

At the BFA Board of Trustees and Overseers Meeting on Monday, September 23, 2004, Overseer Mary Claus received the Jane and Dameron Black, III Service Award. Mary is the parent of two BFA alumni - William Block (2016) and Carole Block (2018) - and can often still be found at BFA teaching Yin Yoga to faculty and staff after school.

Mary Claus received the Jane and Dameron Black, III Service Award for her many years of support for the school's mission. Mary helped the school build its Apple platform, she directed the Teacher Appreciation Day Luncheon for many years, and she took the Annual Cookie Swap to new heights. We are grateful to Mary for her support over the years as a BFA parent, alumni parent, member of the Board of Overseers, and friend to BFA!



Nature Club



On Wednesdays during lunch, the BFA Nature Club meets to discuss current environmental issues and work on projects to support environmental causes and beautify BFA. Behind the Jr. House is a small garden where students, along with Club Advisors, Dameron Black and Dr. Edward Ellis, get their hands dirty planting and harvesting various vegetables. They learn about the process of growing food. Every month, students take a

field trip to the Emory University Farmers' Market and learn first hand about what it takes to be a local farmer in the Atlanta area. Club Members also continue to work toward improving the recycling program at BFA and learn about what can and cannot be recycled.

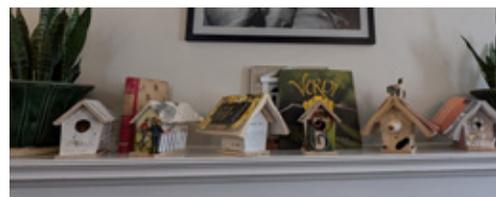


Arts and Crafts Club

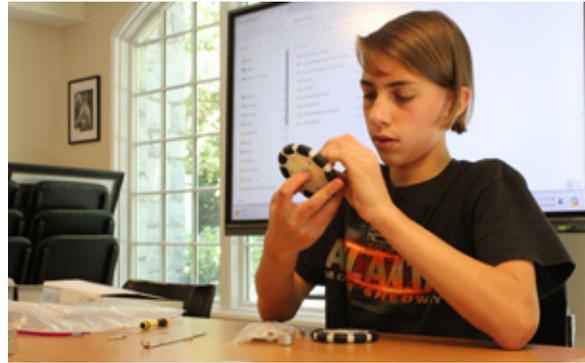


On Mondays at lunchtime, students at BFA can be found making all sorts of wonderful arts and crafts in the Arts and Crafts Club. With the guidance of our two club Advisors, Debby Keenan and Jan Bedol, students create different forms of art. This year students built their own disco balls and bird houses. Many of the activities in the Arts and Crafts Club help bridge the gap between science and engineering and art. For example, when making birdhouses, students learn about the materials and process for building and ensuring that their birdhouses are strong enough to stand on their own. Once the basic structure of the birdhouses are built, students move on to

decorating their birdhouses. Each student chooses a book to use as a theme for their birdhouse - and the roof! See some of our incredible students working on their birdhouses!



Robotics Club



In Robotics Club students can be found building and learning about robots. For our engineer-focused students, the Robotics Club is a fantastic opportunity to delve deeper into the intricacies of this hobby or potential career path. With the support and guidance of the two Robotic Club advisors, Kecia May and Paula Riefkohl, students learn all about what makes robots tick - literally and figuratively! The first week of the semester, students worked to take apart old robots to understand the mechanisms and parts that are used to build them and what function they serve. Students then move on to rebuilding robots and, in many ways, make them even better. Once students have built their robots, they move on to programming them to move in different ways. Toward the end of the semester the students' robots race through an obstacle course, which often includes having them race under tables and chairs, spin in circles, pick up and put down various items and more. This competition gives students a great opportunity to see what they have learned and how to make further improvements.

Students then began the process of programming the robots using coding, which allows them to program the robot to respond to virtual inputs and with more intricate movements. We look forward to sharing more updates about our BFA Robots!

Game Club

Students gather to play games in Game Club with Club Advisor, Ryan Cottrill. In these club meetings, students play beloved games and learn new favorites. Some students prefer to play familiar games like “Uno” and other card games, while others spend this time learning new and different games including various board games and chess. Some students play different, longer campaign-based games, like “Dungeons and Dragons,” as well. As students learn and practice the rules of different games, they also learn and practice good sportsmanship, sharing, and other important life skills.



Philanthropy Club

One of the most well attended and beloved clubs at Ben Franklin Academy is the Philanthropy Club. With the support of Club Advisors, Dr. Edward Ellis, Dameron Black, and Asefeh Hemmati, students decide on nonprofit organizations to support and how best to do so. This year, the Philanthropy Club sponsored an Animal Drive. Students collected highly requested items for donation to the Fulton County Animal Shelter, including towels, sheets, paper towels, cleaning supplies, dog and cat food, toys and treats.

Through a bake sale, the Philanthropy Club was able to raise funds that were then matched by Ms. Hemmati's nonprofit rescue, Global Animal Aid. Additionally, gift cards were donated toward buying additional supplies for the shelter. Students also started a second project, which involved making and selling bracelets to raise money for an organization that helps with natural disaster relief.

Late fall, the BFA Philanthropy Club led the annual Angel Tree Project, spearheaded by faculty members Jan Bedol and Asefeh Hemmati. BFA families, students, and community members choose a requested gift, posted in a communal space, and bring said gift in to be wrapped and sent to the family who requested it. This fall, we were able to provide essential clothing and holiday gifts for twelve people. Six of those individuals are students in North Carolina who were displaced by the hurricane. We were also able to provide gifts to a family in Macon who has been struggling because of a child's illness. We were also able to deliver two boxes of essential clothing to two young boys who will now have new coats, school clothes and shoes. We are so grateful to be a part of this community and for all of those who donated gifts and otherwise participated in the 2024 BFA Angel Tree Project.

Latin Dance

On Tuesdays and Thursdays after school, students can be found moving and grooving in Latin Dance. Alex Correa, the activity advisor, teaches students a variety of dance moves including Salsa and Zumba-inspired moves. Latin Dance is a wonderful way for BFA students to keep active, learn and practice new skills, and hang out with friends after a long day of learning.



Fall Sports and Activities Banquet



Each semester, we celebrate the achievements of our student athletes and band members with the Sports and Activities Banquet. This fall's event took place on Thursday, December 12, in the Junior House Carriage House. Parents, friends, and family celebrate their student's hard work and successes in various sports and activities from the Fall Semester. Attendees were treated to pizza, salad and cookies. Golf Coaches, Riley Baxter, Jorge Correa, and Ryan Cottrill; Latin Dance Instructor, Alex Correa; and Cross Country Coaches, Dr. Edward Ellis and Max Dudukovich, gave out awards, adding anecdotes about each student.



After the Sports Awards, the BFA Band, led by Norm Ficke and Joe Gransden, played a variety of musical pieces including "Are You Gonna Go My Way," by Lenny Kravitz; "Welcome to Paradise," by Green Day; and "Higher," by Creed. After the performance, band members were given awards recognizing their hard work and musical talent.

Thank you to those who attended the event to help celebrate the end of the Fall Semester's sports and activities!

Band

On Tuesdays, the Junior House Carriage House is alive with the sounds of music thanks to our BFA Contemporary Band. With the support of BFA's two band directors, Norm Ficke and Joe Gransden, students learn and practice new songs and skills on their instruments. Students play a variety of instruments including the guitar, bass guitar, piano and drums. Each semester, the BFA Band performs at the Sports and Activities Banquet to showcase their musical talent.



Cross Country



Runners enjoyed participating in the Fall BFA Cross Country Team. On Mondays and Wednesdays, students meet with our two Club Advisors, Dr. Edward Ellis and Max Dudukovich, on the Izlar Patio outside Jr. House. Students stretch and do some conditioning before starting their run for the afternoon. Often, the Cross Country Team makes their way to the Lullwater Preserve, located on the Emory University Campus. Sometimes, students work on sprinting, and other times they work on longer distance running. Toward the end of the Fall Semester, students participate in a race to see who is BFA's Fastest Runner.

Along with these more casual practices, students participated in various Cross Country Meets on the weekend and competed against other Georgia High Schools.

Golf



In both the Fall and Spring Semesters, BFA golfers can be found learning and practicing the sport. In the Fall Semester, students who have never played golf or who are newer to the game participate in BFA Golf. This non-competitive environment allows students to learn the basics of the sport and begin to hone their skills. On Tuesdays after school, students go to the Charlie Yates Range to practice their swings, chip shots, and short game. With the mentoring of Head Coach, Riley Baxter, and the Supporting Coaches,

Ryan Cottrill and Jorge Correa, students practice the new sport. Our golf coaches noted that many of our more veteran players took some of the newer golfers under their wings. In the Spring Semester, the BFA Golf Team competed against other local high schools and in a larger area-wide tournament.



Underclass Awards

On Monday, May 19, the Underclass Students and teachers gathered on Founders' Courtyard to celebrate their achievements throughout the 2024-2025 school year. Students were recognized for their hard work in their AP, Honors, and College Preparatory classes.

Along with the academic awards, many of our Underclass Students were recognized with special awards including the Ted Sizer Franklin Scholar Award, the Alec Lansing Technology Award, and the Dr. C. Michael York Service Award. The Ted Sizer Franklin Scholar Award is given to students who have met all the aspects of the ideal Ben Franklin Academy student. The winners of the Ted Sizer Award for the 2024-2025 school year were Juniors, Liam Connolly, Vee Hooper, and Mackenzie James; Sophomores Ethan Frost-Boyce, Colin Pan, and Theo Ryan; and 9th grade student, Stephen Pierce. The Dr. C. Michael York Service Award was established by Mrs. York and presented to a student who has provided service to the school and/or the community. The winner of the 2024-2025 Dr. C. Michael York Service Award was Junior, Devin May. The Alec Lansing Technology Award is awarded to a BFA student who demonstrates great interest in and excels at technology, including engineering, coding, and/or computer science. The winner of this year's Alec Lansing Technology Award was 9th grade student, Allie Southerland.



AP Scholars

We are proud to announce the following students earned the distinction of AP Scholar, which is granted to students who receive scores of 3 or higher on three or more AP Exams:

Sophia Brookswolf, Lauren Meltzer, JD Rausch, Henry Reilly, Owen Stockton, Katie Thompson

The following students earned the distinction of AP Scholar with Honor, which is 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 AP Exams:

Lucas Koh-Maitre, Taiga Shimizu, Sanath Subramanian, Robert Tong, Jayden Torres Odom, Freddy Xu, Peter Green

The following students earned the distinction of AP Scholar with Distinction, which is granted to students who receive an average score of at least 3.5 on all AP Exams taken, and a score of 3 or higher on five or more of these exams:

Finn Murphy, Abby Crutcher

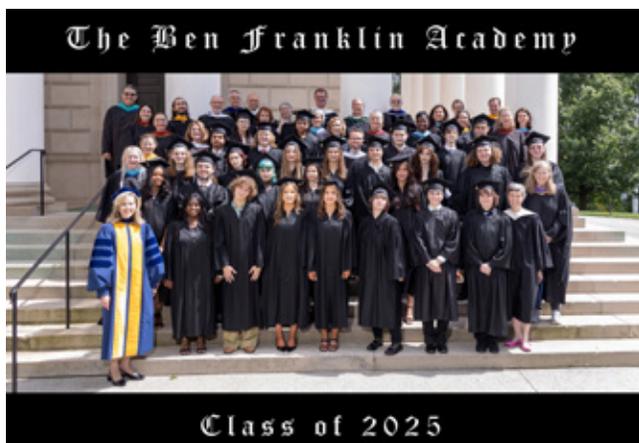
Commencement

Each Spring, BFA honors the graduating Seniors with two events: Baccalaureate Service held on Friday evening and Graduation Ceremony on Saturday afternoon. This year, BFA held the Baccalaureate Service on Friday, May 16, at Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church. This event is an intimate opportunity for Academic Advisors to highlight the journey their graduating Advisees have embarked on in high school with a personalized Tribute.

On Saturday, May 17, the Class of 2025 gathered to close their high school career. The Graduation Ceremony took place at Glenn Memorial Church, where the 28 BFA seniors and their families and friends heard from speakers, received their well earned awards and were handed their diplomas. Ann Wilson Cramer, Atlanta businesswoman and community leader, spoke to the graduating seniors about finding and claiming the “Why & Who, What and So What?” of their lives after high school. The 2025 Valedictorian was Abigail Crutcher and the 2025 Salutatorian was Audrey Schmidt-Davis.

Students are honored with special awards including the Austin Botts Art Award, for Excellence in Art; the Dameron Black, Jr. Entrepreneurial Award, recognizing students with outstanding commitment and advancement in a Work-Study position or community volunteer work; the Emory C. Black Service Award, recognizing service to Ben Franklin Academy; and the Atlanta Journal-Constitution Cup Award, recognizing a student leader who works hard to attain a well-rounded education. Audrey Schmidt-Davis was awarded the Austin Botts Art Award; Claire Lobdell and Adam Bellinger Neff were awarded Dameron Black, Jr. Entrepreneurial Awards; and Abigail Crutcher was awarded Emory C. Black Service Award and the AJC Cup Award. Many of our students also received the President’s Award for Academic Excellence or the President’s Award for Academic Achievement.

The BFA Class of 2025 showed remarkable perseverance in finishing their high school courses and in applying to colleges. The Seniors earned 94 acceptances to 56 different colleges. Students will attend colleges and universities to include Auburn University; Oberlin; University of Michigan; Emory University; Georgia Tech, including an Honors College acceptance; University of Georgia (Honors); and Clemson University among many others. The Class of 2025 was awarded merit scholarships with a four-year total of \$5,232,484, and 89% of the Senior class qualified for the HOPE or the Zell Miller Scholarship.



Commencement Address



Ann Wilson Cramer, retired from the IBM Corporation as Director for Corporate Citizenship and Corporate Affairs for the Americas, and has been a Senior Consultant with Coxe Curry & Associates. Ann is a graduate of Salem College with a degree in Mathematics and received an Honorary Doctorate degree in Public Service from Clayton State University. In 1991, she received Salem College's Alumnae Leadership Award.

Ann's commitment to and involvement with children, youth, education, social justice and the arts has been a lifelong journey. Even though she is retired from her job at IBM, she continues her work with the improvement of conditions for families and children.

As a result of her service to the community, she has won numerous awards to include the Mayor of Atlanta's Phoenix Award, as well as the Young NonProfit Professional Network's recognition in her

honor: the Ann Cramer Civic Leadership Award. Ann also received the Atlanta Business Chronicle's first Corporate Social Responsibility Lifetime Achievement Award, which is named in her honor. Recently, Ann was the winner of the 2024 Association of Junior Leagues International (AJLI) prestigious Mary Harriman Community Leadership Award! Additionally, Ann serves on numerous nonprofit boards to include the Woodruff Arts Center, the Alliance Theatre, and Atlanta Way 2.0, to name a few. Ann and her husband, Jeff, are long-time residents of Inman Park and are the proud parents of two adult children.

Thank you so much for that gracious introduction! MANY, many thanks for this very humbling opportunity! First things first! Congratulations 2025 Ben Franklin Academy (BFA) "graduates." You truly do intimidate, impress and inspire me!

Let's look at YOU – in fact look around at YOU:

It has been a very different experience than you planned! Thru fears, tears, triumphs – the hope is that you have had an opportunity to claim: the "Why & Who, What and So What" of your life after high school.

And that you feel confident about your next steps of "Your Journey in Challenging Times!" Many of you have already traveled a non-traditional path!

Yes – YOU/we have been living in Liminal Spaces in Transition: Liminal spaces are transitional or transformative spaces. They are the waiting areas between one point in time and space and the next. Often, when we are in liminal spaces, we have the feeling of just being on the verge of something.

WHO you are! WHY are you here? WHAT you can do about it! And the SO WHAT difference can you make? The CHALLENGE to you! The WHO! That is YOU!

YOU have already submitted an astounding 150 college applications, leading to admissions at some of the nation's most respected institutions! And 96% of the class is eligible to receive Georgia's HOPE scholarship. Additionally, you have been awarded over 23 institutional scholarships and are still receiving award offers. Many of YOU have been deeply involved in the arts and there are a number of student-athletes. And I am so very proud of and grateful to those of you who have dedicated countless hours to volunteering with organizations!

The training received through the Ben Franklin Academy should be fuel for your life engine. Now, the work begins. It's up to YOU to determine how to leverage and make an impact. You have the power to tell your own story! What do you want your story to be! You are the MAKER – not the TAKER – of YOUR story!

YES – The WHY! YOUR WHY! The Ben Franklin Academy is one step. Your WHY is nurtured here: The Ben Franklin Academy's motto, "Esse Quam Videri" ["To be rather than to seem"] The training journey continues. BFA graduates are always looking to get smarter and more informed to tackle critical community issues. Now – as before it is so important to remember to reset, recharge, and recommit to the vision and mission in the next phase of your life.

Commencement Address - Continued

MY WHY? Personal Mission Statement - To contribute to a world in which EVERY child Grows up: Safe, Healthy, Educated, Connected and Employable and Becomes a contributing interdependent resident/citizen=PERSON! With my faith statement (Baptismal Covenant): All we are asked to do is to love! And seek justice, mercy and peace among all people - and to respect the dignity of every human being!

What is YOUR Why? A Catalyst for Positive Change

BFA inspires service, develops leaders, and empowers one to “Be the Difference” in the Atlanta community and the world. What I hope to share – is what BFA means for each of you as members, for our community, and the power of the collective voice of the community coming together!

The WHAT! Words and phrases that we have heard over your last 4 years - like Resilience – one thing we have learned is resilience – the art of bouncing back! Continuous Learning and OPEN to New Opportunities! For me, sitting where you are right now, I had a limited set of options for my life: to be a teacher, nurse, or a receptionist – or to have a ring (an engagement ring!) I went to Salem College, a fantastic small liberal arts women’s college – and lo and behold majored in math – and when I realized that I did not want to be any of the 3 options I had in my path –the head of the math department suggested that I interview with IBM – and I had to ask: “how do you spell that?” Well because I was resilient (not stuck!); willing to learn (and listen to a marvelous teacher!) and was open to a new path - IBM – 3 letters that changed my trajectory

For YOU – I pray that you, too, can find your iki gai

ikigai - a way to live life better and longer: is thought to combine the Japanese words Ikiru, meaning “to live,” and kai, meaning “the realization of what one hopes for.” Together these definitions create the concept of “a reason to live” or the idea of having a purpose in life.

Four key questions start us down the path toward the state of ikigai:

What do you love? What are you good at? What does the world need from you? What can you get paid for?

Passion + mission + vocation + profession = “Ikigai” = YOU!

Gandhi’s word rings true -“Your beliefs become your thoughts, your thoughts become your words, your words become your actions, your actions become your habits, your habits become your values, your values become your destiny.”

Your Values! It is not where you sit – but on what you stand! So what will you do?

The SO WHAT? The power of the BFA, the power of You, and the power of the collective impact – over time!

You are the power! You have the power! Just like She-ra – the she-ro – and He-man – the hero! You are women and men shaping the future! Power is in you! Claim the power that is in you! Power to change – yourself, first! Life is in the transitions!

And the last time we were together I was introducing the Atlanta Way 2.0! Remember?

Purpose: To strengthen the civic fabric of Greater Atlanta

Mission: To create a compassionate and just community by educating, equipping and engaging activators, partners and stakeholders

Vision: Atlanta has a thriving civic culture where all people are connected, engaged and empowered

At the heart of the Atlanta Way 2.0 movement are Activators! Activators are people who want to help strengthen the civic fabric of Greater Atlanta. Open new doors; meet new friends; build new skills; enrich your life!

“Somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known.” Carl Sagan (1934-1996)

MANTRA: Hope lives! Love always wins! Justice prevails! Show mercy! Walk humbly! Face forward in faith! Persist with grace! Respect the dignity of every human being! Ever onward in gratitude and patience! Wage Peace! Always choose JOY! And Dance!

“Be the Difference!” Use Your Power! During this LIMINAL Space: A NEW ERA BEGINS ---- WITH YOU!

CONGRATULATIONS, BEN FRANKLIN ACADEMY CLASS OF 2025!

Annual Fund

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our community, Ben Franklin Academy raised over **\$525,000** for the 2024-2025 Annual Fund in support of our mission. This milestone marks one of our most successful Annual Fund efforts to date. Every gift helped make this achievement possible, and we are deeply grateful to everyone who participated. Your gifts make a lasting difference in the lives of our students and the strength of our school.

Ben Franklin Academy also extends sincere appreciation to our dedicated Annual Fund volunteers. Their generosity—in time, talent, and resources—has been instrumental in helping BFA fulfill its mission. Through their efforts, we've secured vital support for the **Wood Smethurst Scholarship Fund** and expanded our **technology initiatives**, further enriching the student experience. We are truly grateful for their unwavering commitment to the Ben Franklin community.

Co - Chairs

Maria and Jonah Hooper, *Co-Chairs, Current Parents*

Committee Members

Sonja and Jeff Greenbaum, *Alumni Parents,
Immediate Past Annual Fund Co-Chairs*
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Alumni Parents, Past Annual Fund Co-Chairs
Ioana Bonta, *Alumni Parent*
Jackie Conley, *Alumni Parent*
Amy and Gabe Damiani, *Alumni Parents*
Daniel Eberly, *Alumni Parent*
Amy and Jay Harrison, *Current Parents*

Patty King, *Alumni Parent,
Board of Overseers*
Fluffy McDuffie, *Board of Trustees,
Alumni Parent*
Dana Meyer, *Current Parent*
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