

# THE BEN FRANKLIN ACADEMY

# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

In Memory of Dr. Wood Smethurst BFA Co-Founder, Teacher, Mentor, and Friend.



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# A Message from the President of the Board of Trustees



The 2014-2015 school year at Ben Franklin Academy was a memorable one for many reasons. From an academic perspective, Ben Franklin Academy achieved its goal of offering an exceptional college preparatory education for each of its students with great success. The thirty-four seniors in the class of 2015 (pictured on the front cover) were awarded more than \$2.6 million in

scholarships, including 79% who qualified for the Hope Scholarship. In addition, more than 76% of the graduating seniors were admitted into their first choice of colleges which are among the finest and most challenging schools of higher education in the country. We wish our graduates continued success as they move into the next exciting chapter in their lives.

Faculty and parents worked together during the 2014-2015 school year to provide the support that all our students in grades 9-12 need to be successful. We are grateful to our Trustees and Overseers for their continued leadership and help in achieving goals outlined in the school's Strategic Plan.

While the purpose of this report is to acknowledge and give thanks for the many contributions received during the past academic year, we would be remiss if we did not also acknowledge the recent passing of two distinct contributors to Ben Franklin Academy. Dr. Wood Smethurst, Co-Founder of the school, and Dr. C. Michael York, former Board Chairman, were two of Ben Franklin Academy's dedicated leaders. Our community remains deeply saddened by the loss of these two leaders.

Dr. Martha Burdette, Dr. Smethurst's co-founding partner, was appointed Head of School by the Board of Trustees at the end of June. We look forward to her leadership during the 2015-2016 school year and beyond with both excitement and pride. Next year, Ben Franklin Academy will conclude the final step toward reaccreditation with the SACS/SAIS Visit in the fall. This process is always a wonderful time to evaluate both the strengths and opportunities for improvement within the school and will help launch BFA to the next level of private, secondary school education.

Thank you for your partnership and care for all that we are doing at Ben Franklin Academy.

Sincerely,

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Henry F. Edelhauser, Ph.D.

# A Message from the Head of School

Dear Friends and Family of the BFA Community,

Before highlighting the many accomplishments from the 2014-2015 academic year, I would like to thank you for your support as our community remembers, honors, and celebrates the life of Dr. Wood Smethurst, my co-founding partner. It is truly a blessing that we had him for as long as we did, and I am grateful for all that he gave both to me, as my mentor, and to our students. He recognized their talents, and he helped each student find success in learning. He believed that the highest calling one could have is to be a teacher, and he lived in a way that demonstrated his passion for education, Mastery Learning, and a love for all of God's children. The Smethurst Family has generously asked that all donations



made in memory of Dr. Smethurst go to the Wood Smethurst Scholarship Fund to help students who otherwise could not attend our school.

As we dedicate this Annual Report to Dr. Smethurst, we recognize how integral his role was in the success of the 2014-2015 academic school year. It was one of the school's strongest years to date, thanks to our outstanding Faculty and Staff. A few highlights include:

- We continued 2013-2014's trend of strong enrollment, with 134 in the High School Program and 153 in the Clinic Program. Over 50% of students chose the Longer Day Option, continuing a three-year trend of growth in this area.
- Our sports teams had outstanding seasons. The Cross Country team had a particularly noteworthy season and participated in eight meets. Over the course of these meets, every runner improved his/her personal record. At BFA we like to celebrate these individual victories, which highlight personal growth both in and out of the classroom.
- The Parent Committee provided strong support this year, hosting student lunches, parent socials, and a graduation party for the seniors and their parents. We believe that the success of our Annual Fund efforts can be attributed, in part, to their dedicated efforts.
- Our Alumni Committee planned its inaugural reunion event at The Luminary Restaurant for all BFA alumni and their parents. We had a great turnout, which included attendees from a broad range of classes.

I appreciate the efforts of the Trustees, Overseers, Faculty, Staff, parents, students, and friends who made it possible for our school to continue to prosper and address the unique needs of our students – even during times of loss and leadership transitions. I look forward to the next phase of our work together, and I am honored by the Trustee's decision to appoint me Head of School.

With gratitude,

Martha B. Burdette, Ph.D.

Head of School

# **Our Mission Statement**

As a college preparatory high school, we provide our students with a challenging individualized college preparatory education within a caring community of learners, while advancing the knowledge and methodology of adolescent education.



# 2014 - 2015 Annual Fund

We were humbled by the generosity of our school's families, friends, and local foundations this year, and we are pleased to announce that Ben Franklin Academy raised **more than \$477,862** for the 2014-2015 Annual Fund. Ben Franklin's Annual Fund provides support for the most crucial needs of the school, which were designated for capital improvements and support for our Scholarship Fund during the 2014-2015 year. At Ben Franklin Academy, we want to educate all deserving students, regardless of financial background, and you, our community of supporters, help to make that goal a possibility .

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# The Wood Smethurst Scholarship Fund

The Wood Smethurst Scholarship Fund was established in 2008 to provide much-needed financial assistance to future BFA students. For nearly three decades, Wood Smethurst led the way and served as an inspiration to the whole BFA community. This Scholarship Fund is a way to pay tribute to him as the remarkable educator that he was. Please consider honoring Wood with your support of a special memorial gift to this fund. Gifts made to the Wood Smethurst Scholarship Fund will allow teens from every economic background to benefit from a progressive educational program, tailored to students' individual needs, which helps them reach their academic potential. We are truly grateful for your support and commitment!

### Tribute to Dr. C. Michael York

Dr. C. Michael York, President of Ben Franklin Academy's Board of Trustees, who was a member of the Board for over twenty years, passed away this spring. He assumed the role of President of the Board of Trustees in 2010 and led the school brilliantly until his untimely death. A professor of Industrial Psychology at Georgia Tech for thirty-five years, Dr. York brought insight into the successful management of nonprofits to the Board. A long-standing advocate of the school, Dr. York could always be counted on for support and steady guidance. A generous, wise, and humble man, Dr. York will be sorely missed by our community.



# Georgia Tax Credit

Ben Franklin Academy partners with Apogee Georgia School Choice Scholarship Fund to participate in student scholarship organizations (SSO's) to provide families and alumni the opportunity to designate a portion of their state liability to the school's financial aid program. Thank you to our donors who participated in the 2014 tax year. Your contributions totaled more than \$25,000 for Ben Franklin Academy. BFA uses this funding to provide support for incoming eligible BFA students who are currently enrolled in public school, allowing BFA greater flexibility in responding to financial aid needs.

### 2014 Donors to the Apogee Georgia School Choice Scholarship Fund

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For further information about this program, please contact John Panessa at 404-419-7123, or visit www.Apogeescholarships.org.

### Alumni News

**Wells Brown** (1999) completed his Ph.D. at the University of Texas and worked at MD Anderson in Molecular Biology Cancer Research this summer. He's now doing postdoctoral work at Purdue University in breast cancer research.

**Sally Benedict** (2002) is an Atlanta artist displaying her works in galleries and businesses in Atlanta. Check out her art at sallybenedict.com.

**Lisa Kenn** (2004) works in Public Relations and Communication for the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice.

**David Ramirez** (2004) is a cellist in five string ensembles that perform concerts all over the world.

Christina Hoff (2006) is the Artistic Director of Fabrefaction Theatre Conservatory.

**Elise Barnes** (2010) was recently named the Assistant Director of Alumni Engagement for Eckerd College.

**Shelby Pressler** (2010) was accepted to the Colleges of Veterinary Medicine at both UGA and Auburn! She has chosen to attend UGA's College of Veterinary Medicine this fall.

**Anna Klingenberg** (2011) graduated in May 2015, from Eckerd College, with a BA in Creative Writing.

**Brendan Cassidy** (2012) recently joined the Cobb County Fire Department.

Patrick Malins (2012) is a student at SCAD, Savannah campus, studying Industrial Design.

**Nick Catherall** (2013) was elected to the College of Charleston Student Government Association as a freshman senator and was distinguished as Senator of the Month in November.

# **Alumni News Continued**

Skylar Sims (2013) just completed his sophmore year at Georgia State University.

**Eli Harrison** (2014) just finished his freshman year at Brandeis University, where he plans to major in Journalism.

### Alumni Committee

The newly formed Alumni Committee hosted a BFA Alumni Event for Ben Franklin Academy graduates and their families at The Luminary Restaurant on Krog Street in Inman Park. They enjoyed sharing stories about their years at Ben Franklin Academy and about their lives and careers since BFA. Owner and Chef of the Luminary, Eli Kirshtein, a graduate of Ben Franklin Academy, hosted the evening's festivities. The Luminary features artwork by two graduates of Ben Franklin Academy: Sally King-Benedict and Austen Risolvato.



Christina Hoff, Kelly Winship, David Ramirez, Dr. Martha Burdette, and Sally King-Benedict

At BFA, we are proud of our alumni and all that they accomplish. If you have news to share, please keep us updated - we love hearing from you and highlighting your continued success!