

Benchmark news

S U M M E R 2 0 1 0



Henry Winkler Kicks Off Speaker Series



The West Family
40th Anniversary Speaker Series
at
Benchmark School



Robb Gaskins

Knowing Where We Are Going and How to Get There: Reflecting on the Common Core State Standards

Have you ever tried to get a large group of people to work together on a project? Even if everyone is knowledgeable and enthusiastic, without a shared vision of where you are going, it is very likely that the process will be frustrating and you won't accomplish much. Consequently, the first step in almost any successful project is to establish a clear set of goals or desired outcomes.

One of the prominent educational endeavors in the United States over the past 20 years has been the push to increase the knowledge and skill level of our nation's students so that they are well prepared to compete successfully in the global marketplace. A critical problem has been that each state has established its own set of desired outcomes that state leaders believe will lead to this ultimate goal, with the result being an uncoordinated effort with uneven results. However, recently, leaders from across the country have been working to change this situation.

At the beginning of June, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and National Governors Association (NGA) released the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Mathematics. These standards were designed to establish what students should know and be able to do so that they are not only ready to meet with success in college and careers, but prepared to compete with the best and brightest students from around the world. Summarized succinctly, the English Language Arts Standards suggest that students who are college and career ready:

1. Demonstrate independence,
2. Build strong content knowledge,
3. Respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline,
4. Comprehend as well as critique,
5. Value evidence,
6. Use digital media strategically and capably, and,
7. Come to understand other perspectives and cultures.

These are critical qualities that characterize successful students and the standards that complement these qualities are worthy goals for our students. However, even if we wholeheartedly agree with the goals set forth in the Common Core State Standards, these standards will not produce the desired outcomes without careful consideration of the second important step in almost any successful project: the determination of how to get where we want to go.

Impressive as they are, the Standards are only the goals. The tremendously important task of determining how best to realize those goals has been left to teachers, researchers, and curriculum designers. Thus, as the Standards are embraced by states across the country, there will be a massive effort to create curriculum, materials, and instructional programs that will help teachers achieve these goals. In addition, there will be extensive professional development programs to help teachers provide instruction that consistently moves students toward these goals. As a result, purposefully progressing toward these standards will take some time.

Fortunately, Benchmark is well prepared to focus on these goals immediately. Throughout the history of the school, our staff has concentrated on developing confident, strategic, and open-minded students who know how to take control of their learning and effectively use the tools and materials at their disposal to build their knowledge and apply it flexibly and creatively. These desired outcomes are extremely similar to the outcomes set forth in the Common Core State Standards. In pursuit of these outcomes, the Benchmark staff has had the opportunity to (1) participate in extensive and on-going professional development efforts with leaders in education and psychology, (2) design innovative curriculum, materials, and instructional

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A Conversation with Henry Winkler Kicks Off The West Family 40th Anniversary Speaker Series

Successful actor, producer, and author Henry Winkler may be best known for his portrayal of the “cool” Arthur (The Fonz) Fonzarelli he portrayed in the 1974-1984 television comedy series *Happy Days* or more recently the series of nine books, *Hank Zipzer: The World’s Greatest Underachiever*, he co-authored with Lin Oliver. What most fans don’t know is that, despite his hard work, Henry Winkler struggled through school in frustration. It was not until he was 31 and identified as having dyslexia that he understood why he experienced such difficulty learning.

Given his strength and determination to succeed despite struggling with learning difficulties, it was fitting that Henry Winkler would speak at Benchmark School to kick off The West Family 40th Anniversary Speaker Series on April 15th. The evening was open to the community and made possible by Presenting Sponsors Al and Lorelee West and their son A. Palmer West, Benchmark Class of ’85; Benefactors Jay Eisenhofer and Ann Jameson, parents of Amy; and Partner Sponsors Randy and Amy Stein, parents of Lily. In the standing-room-only A. Palmer West Performing Arts Center, faculty, parents, friends, and fans were moved from laughter to tears and back again as they heard Winkler recount the challenges he faced as a student and aspiring actor.

“I was told I was stupid and I believed it,” Winkler stated bluntly. His parents called him “dummer hund,” German for “dumb dog.” “My father could speak 11 languages and do math in his head. He was confounded that I was in the bottom three percent academically in this country. He always pushed me to concentrate, because if I concentrated I would *get it*. If I sat at my desk long enough, I would *get it*.”

Winkler said he tried hard as a student. “I sharpened every pencil in my drawer. I tried to be organized. I tried to do



Presenting Sponsors Al and Lorelee West, parents of Benchmark alumnus A. Palmer West '85 chat with Henry Winkler after his talk.

the work. I wanted to be like everyone else in the school.” Winkler still didn’t *get it*, but he knew he wanted to act and through hard work and persistence he did succeed, graduating from high school, Emerson College, and earning his Master’s degree from Yale University’s College of Drama.

“If you know what you want and keep your eye on the prize, there is no reason why you can’t live your dream,” the actor said.

He once was the “king of negative thoughts,” but came to the realization that he needed to change his attitude. If a negative thought popped into his head he’d think, “No time for this now”

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Randy Stein takes a moment with Henry Winkler at a reception after Winkler’s talk. Randy and his wife Amy are Partner Sponsors of the Speaker Series.



Henry Winkler admires plaques, each one featuring a Middle School Musical performance, as he tours the school with Robb Gaskins. Winkler commented, “I wish I had gone to a school like Benchmark.”

**THE WEST FAMILY
40TH ANNIVERSARY
SPEAKER SERIES**

*Plan to Join Us for
These Upcoming Events*

OCTOBER 28, 2010

Irene W. Gaskins, Ed.D.
FOUNDER AND HEAD ÉMERITA
OF BENCHMARK SCHOOL

and

Robert W. Gaskins, Ph.D.
HEAD OF BENCHMARK SCHOOL

Will present a discussion on:

“The Future is Unknown, But Your
Child’s Success Does Not Have to
Be: Lessons Learned from 40 Years
of Teaching Struggling Readers”

APRIL 7, 2011

Daniel Pink

ANALYST, COMMENTATOR, AND
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF

A Whole New Mind:

**Why Right-brainers will Rule the Future
and**

**Drive: The Surprising Truth about
What Motivates Us**

Will present:

“What Motivates Us: Schools and
Workplaces That Encourage
Imagination, Creativity, and Innovation



*Henry Winkler moved the
audience from laughter to tears
and back again.*

Henry Winkler

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and replace it with something positive. “Don’t put a period at the end of a negative thought,” he explained. “Replace it with something positive. That way it doesn’t grow into a negative sentence, a negative paragraph, or a negative thesis.”

It wasn’t until he was “Fonzie” that his parents signed on. “All of a sudden they were Fonzie’s parents.” He spoke to the parents in the audience, many of them parents of Benchmark students, “You’re the advocates for your children. Their job is to dig up their gift and give it to the world, and your job is to support them in that.”

**Message from
The Head of School**

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programs, and (3) hone instructional practices directed at essentially the same educational outcomes promoted by the Standards.

Even so, we are constantly seeking ways to improve what we do. In fact, this perpetual quest to grow professionally is one of the key characteristics that has helped keep Benchmark’s instruction dynamic. Consequently, we are excited about the release of these new Standards. They present us with a fresh opportunity to reflect on our practices and consider what new insights they might suggest for our instruction, because, really, you can never have enough options for getting where you want to go.



Regina Smith



Roberta West

**Board of Trustees Welcome
Regina Smith and
Roberta West**

Benchmark School recently welcomed Regina Smith and Roberta West to its Board of Trustees.

Regina Smith, Benchmark’s Business Manager for more than two decades, brings to the Board a rich background of knowledge of every aspect of school life. “I am looking forward to working with the other Trustees in this additional capacity as Secretary of the Board of Trustees,” she said.

Roberta West is Director of the Law Education and Participation Project (LEAP) at the Temple University Beasley School of Law. She is a graduate of Morgan University and Temple Law. Roberta is the mother of Aurora Seamon, who graduated from Benchmark in June. “I’m honored to join the Board of Trustees,” Roberta stated. “I want to give back to the school that has given so much to Aurora and to our family.”

Benchmark Staff Present at 55th International Reading Association Convention

One of the aspects of Benchmark School that is unique among public and independent institutions is the extent of our commitment to research-based innovation. Not only do staff members enjoy reviewing and discussing the latest research so that it can infuse into our classroom instruction, but the staff also enjoys engaging in research projects related to original instructional innovations. Consistently engaging in original research and sharing our practices based on the current research literature not only enables staff members to give something back to the educational community that has enriched our practices, but, within the school, it generates energy and enthusiasm for new ideas that is difficult to achieve without this level of personal engagement.

In April, a number of Benchmark staff members had an opportunity to share recent innovations developed at Benchmark School while making presentations at the 55th Annual Conference of the International Reading Association. At this Chicago conference, five staff members were involved in three separate presentations.

The first session on the conference program that involved Benchmark staff members was a full-day institute organized by Drs. Cathy Collins Block, Susan Neuman, and John Mangieri. The institute addressed the intersection of content area knowledge, vocabulary instruction, and practices designed to enhance student comprehension. This session featured Robb and Irene Gaskins presenting about how



Mrs. Sally Laird, Ms. Jenny Roca, Dr. Irene Gaskins, and Mrs. Colleen O'Hara shared in a symposium discussing the topic: "Enabling Struggling Readers to Read, Write, Think, and Learn across the Curriculum by Applying Principles of Learning, Evidence-Based Practices, and Differentiated Instruction."

Benchmark integrates research on vocabulary and comprehension across the content areas. In particular, the presentation focused on the research that Robb Gaskins has been conducting with Emily Galloway on a conceptually-based social studies program he designed to be used with our first-year middle school students. It was a great honor for Robb and Irene to be a part of this institute that also

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Mural Spans Years of Musical Performances

What was once a drab, long wall has been transformed into the perfect entrance from the Dorrance Hill Hamilton Middle School into the A. Palmer West Performing Arts Center.

The wall now displays a mural commissioned as a gift to Benchmark from the 2008-2009 Student Council and designed by Art Teacher Mrs. Carol Rydel. The mural depicts all of the musicals the Middle School has performed from the 1993 performance of *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown* to this year's musical, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really*



Mrs. Carol Rydel works on the block featuring Benchmark's 1996 performance of Oklahoma.

Trying. Next to each "theater poster" is a list of the student cast and crew, and the staff from each performance.

"I've always wanted to do something lasting like this," Mrs. Rydel said. "Our stu-

dents will be able to come back, see their names, and remember their parts in the plays they performed in. I'm very proud to create something memorable and lasting for the school and our students."

Students, Alums, Parents Share Benchmark Experiences with Prospective Parents, Professionals

Even though Benchmark School has long been known locally, nationally, and internationally for providing bright, struggling readers with the tools and strategies they need to become lifelong learners, thinkers, and problem-solvers, when the doors to the school open to visitors, it takes a collaborative effort to present a comprehensive view of how Benchmark successfully meets the needs of its students.

“Visitors, whether they are professionals or prospective parents, are here for just a few hours. We try to give them a full picture of the school; its uniqueness, its mission, and what we offer a child, with a succession of presentations from faculty, students, parents and alumni,” explains Sally Laird, Assistant Head of School and Head of the Lower School.

This spring, for example, 40 guests attended the annual Open House for Education Professionals. Visiting were faculty and administrators from independent schools across the Delaware Valley, as well as pediatricians, psychiatrists, and reading specialists. The event was focused on instruction in the Lower and Middle Schools and included a discussion of how student and family

support is integral to Benchmark’s program. A panel made up of current students, alumni, and faculty talked about the Benchmark experience and welcomed open discussion with the visitors.

In addition to the Open House for Professionals, Benchmark welcomed prospective parents to monthly Open Houses throughout the year. Visitors learned the emphasis Benchmark places on research and teacher knowledge, the uniqueness of the school’s Math Department, and the Middle School mentoring program, as well our language arts program. In addition, students, alumni, and both current and alumni parents spoke about their experiences and answered questions from

prospective parents. Mrs. Laird states, “Benchmark School has so many unique qualities that set it apart. We try to bring together the essential elements in the day-to-day learning and life experiences to give our guests the most complete picture of all that Benchmark has to offer.”



Benchmark’s panel of experts, Third-Year students Audra Kemp and Brett Adams, Alumna Hannah Rogers ’09, and Alumna Parent Carol Netter, shared their Benchmark experiences with prospective parents at an Open House this spring.



Alumna Mary Katherine Ortale ’08 visits with Dr. Eleanor Gensemer, Head of Middle School, after serving on a panel at the Open House for Professional Educators.

Student Posters Earn Honorable Mention Awards

Lower School students Colleen Baldwin and Hannah Bruck earned Honorable Mention citations for the posters they entered in the 2010 Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Awareness Poster Contest.

Colleen and Hannah’s posters were selected from over 1,000 posters entered from 40 schools in Delaware County. The posters passed three stages of judging and were part of the top 100 selected.

The contest was funded by The Delaware County Office of Behavioral Health, Division of Drug and Alcohol and coordinated by Holcomb Behavioral Health Systems.



Health Teacher and School Nurse Sarah McCarren congratulates Colleen Baldwin (left) and Hannah Bruck (right) on their awards.

Photojournalist Jonathan Saruk '94 Named 2010 Outstanding Alumnus

Jonathan Saruk ('94) was named The Outstanding Alumnus of 2010 at Benchmark School's Celebration of Accomplishments in June. Jonathan was present via Skype while his parents, Anne Faulkner Schoemaker and Dr. Michael Saruk, accepted the award for him in person. An award-winning, internationally-known photojournalist, Jonathan's images take viewers around the world. From the cruel reality of the death of a 12-year-old during a violent demonstration on the West Bank, to an inside look at brick factories in Kabul, or the training of Afghan soldiers and the harshness of war, each of Jonathan Saruk's photographs tell a story. He brings the world home; capturing the intimacies of a moment in time and in life, most often in the midst of conflict and human suffering.



When Jonathan entered Benchmark in 1991, it was noted that he "hated to read and write." By his second year his Language Arts teacher commented that Jon had become a "competent writer." By year three, teachers noted that when Jon "gets involved with a book, his enthusiasm reflects a real enjoyment of reading."

Following Benchmark, Jonathan attended Salisbury School, a boarding school for boys in Connecticut. He achieved honors by his junior year, was elected a prefect, and was a member of the Crew team.

Although Jonathan was accepted to a number of colleges, he opted to defer college for a year. He volunteered as a teaching assistant on a Navajo reservation, worked with the elderly, and became a volunteer fireman in the fall of that year. In the spring, he entered a French language immersion program, studied, skied, and traveled. He ended his year by biking from Seattle, Washington to Omaha, Nebraska.



Top: Jonathan Saruk, '94, was able to "attend" Benchmark's Outstanding Alumnus presentation in the A. Palmer West Performing Arts Center from his home in Sweden via Skype.

Above: Jonathan's parents, Anne Faulkner Schoemaker and Michael Saruk, accepted the award on his behalf. They are pictured with Joan Davidson, Director of Placement, and Robb Gaskins, Head of School.

Next, Jonathan attended Trinity University in San Antonio, Texas as an English Literature major. He spent his junior year in Copenhagen, Denmark and an interest in journalism began to take root. After graduation, he interned at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and WHYY in Philadelphia before attending the Journalism Institute of New York University. As a newspaper intern in New York, Jonathan worked with photographers and became interested in their craft. He took photography classes at NYU and then headed to Nepal and Brazil after graduation to try photojournalism on his own. He soon realized he needed more training and was awarded a scholarship from the *New York Times* to attend the School of the International Center of Photography in New York.

Photography Awards for his work in Afghanistan. In 2008, he attended the Eddie Adams Workshop and won an award from the Associated Press.

Jonathan has since traveled to Israel, the West Bank, India, Chile, and Laos. Recently, he was embedded with U.S. and French troops in Afghanistan. His still images have been published in the *New York Times*, *The Times* (London), *Newsweek*, Time.com, and *The Christian Science Monitor*. His video work has been broadcast on HDnet World Report. He was recently named a Selected Winner for the Magenta Foundation's Flash Forward 2009, and he was also honored last year by International

Jonathan was married in February to Rafaela Persson in Malmo, Sweden, where they currently reside. They are expecting their first child this summer.

Jonathan Saruk's portfolio of images can be seen online at www.jonathansaruk.com.



Taylor Mordy, Audra Kemp, Rachel Berger, and Liz Sexton celebrate their graduation.



Alexa Green gets a proud hug from her mother Ms. Sandra Casimir.



Michael Grosso holds up his diploma.



Benchmark's youngest class is ready to move up. They are pictured with Teacher Mrs. Cress (center), and Support Teachers Mrs. Milne, and Mrs. Hall.



Joe Gallo enjoys a moment with his mom, Mrs. Chris Gallo, and little brother Louis.

Celebrating Student Accomplishments

The final week of school is a time to celebrate learning and accomplishments. The youngest Lower School students had special presentations and parties in their classrooms with their parents, while celebrations for the older Lower School and Middle School students took place in the A. Palmer West Performing Arts Center.

A special thanks to faculty members Ms. Joyce Ostertag and Ms. Tori Ballas, and Middle School student Liz Sexton for producing slide shows highlighting events throughout the year.



Miles Tucker is all smiles as Mrs. Cress adjusts his cap.

Student Council Gifts a GaGa Pit

Student Council President Patrick Pearson and Vice President Nick Brady presented to Benchmark the gift of a GaGa Pit on behalf of the Student Council.

A GaGa Pit is an octagon-shaped court surrounded by a raised wall on which a type of dodgeball is played. Middle School



Pat Pearson and Nick Brady

students enjoyed playing the game on their camping trip and decided it would be a fantastic addition to the Benchmark campus.

Kickball Champs



The Powell/Brodo Second Year class team won the 2010 Kickball Tournament in June. A special thanks to parents and staff that helped make it a fun-filled last week of school.



Congratulations to 2010 Graduates



Brett Adams

Years at Benchmark: 5

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory at Benchmark was our Second Year camping trip. We were supposed to go to our cabins, find random items, and put them into a pillowcase. Instead we put Michael Grosso into it.

Favorite Book: I like *Prey* by Michael Crichton because it felt like I was watching a movie while I was reading it.



Emily Ames

Years at Benchmark: 4

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest Benchmark memory has been the whole Third Year because I have learned more about my friends and other Benchmark students.

Favorite Book: I don't have a favorite book because there are too many to choose from.

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Rachel Berger

Years at Benchmark: 6

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My favorite memory of Benchmark is the Middle School plays. When I came in third grade and saw the play I instantly wanted to do it. In Middle School, I was in the chorus for two years, but this year I had a lead role and I loved it. Our acting program is amazing and the experience

you get and the friendships you make are great. The best friends I have ever had are here at Benchmark. I have memories that will last forever along with great friends to share them with.

Favorite Book: *Prey* because it was a different style and a creative book and *Romeo and Juliet* because we got to act out our parts.



Nick Brady

Years at Benchmark: 5

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory was during Field Day last year. I was a relay racer on the Blue Team. Although my team lost, I was the only runner to pass a Red Team runner during the race. I've always loved running, and hearing people cheer for me when I passed the Red Team runner was amazing.

Favorite Book: *Prey* because it was creative, interesting, had some action, and was actually a book I could see myself reading without it being a school assignment.



Devon Cosgrove

Years at Benchmark: 5

Fondest Benchmark Memory: Meeting with my mentors and Support Services teachers because they were the ones to have the biggest influence on me and have helped me to learn so much about myself as a learner. Thanks Dr. Cunicelli, Mrs. Sennett, and Dr. Gensemer!

Favorite Book: I really enjoyed the book *Night*, because I like learning about events that took

place during Word War II. I find them interesting as well as sad. I feel that books like this can really get your mind thinking about what it would have been like at that time. They are also the most realistic.



Graham Cuddy

Years at Benchmark: 6

Fondest Benchmark Memory: Dorney Park was my fondest memory. I liked it because I spent time with and had fun with my friends outside of school.

Favorite Book: *Ender's Game* because I thought it had an interesting plot. I liked to see how Ender coped with difficult situations.



Andrew Currie

Years at Benchmark: 4

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory was going to Dorney Park.

Favorite Book: *The Breadwinner* series because it had an awesome storyline.



Paul Cardinale

Years at Benchmark: 4

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory was coming to Benchmark.

Favorite Book: *Trouble at Marsh Harbor* because it was an interesting book.



Joseph Dayrit

Years at Benchmark: 7

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My favorite Benchmark memory was last year's play, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. It was really fun getting to know people I wasn't familiar with in our group (the brothers) and having the chance to spend time with friends I already knew. Presenting the play to the Middle

School parents and Lower School students was also fun and gave us a sense of accomplishment.

Favorite Book: I have read many, many books, but my best "reading" experience was last year in Mr. McCorkell's class when he read the book *Speak* to us. It was fun discussing the book and there were many awkward parts that made us all laugh!



Amy Eisenhofer

Years at Benchmark: 7

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My favorite Benchmark memory is Mrs. Smith flooding the science room and getting drenched while showing us how a chemical shower works.

Favorite Book: *1984* by George Orwell. It had a good plot and it describes what could happen if everyone in the world were Communists.

Prey by Michael Crichton was also a good story.

I enjoy science fiction and a good story.



Connor Flynn

Years at Benchmark: 5

Fondest Benchmark Memory: Dorney Park.

Favorite Book: *Outsiders* because I like that the characters help each other, even if it means they are going to fail.



Nick Gallo

Years at Benchmark: 5

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My favorite memory was our semi-formal dance.

Favorite Book: I enjoyed *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee.



Kyle Glassman

Years at Benchmark: 4

Fondest Benchmark Memory: Today. I won a Sun East "People Helping People" award and I got a 94 in Social Studies.

Favorite Book: *Hank Zipzer, The Contender* written by Henry Winkler.



Henry Goodhart

Years at Benchmark: 5

Fondest Benchmark Memory: Third Year has been my best year. I made a lot of great friends and learned a lot about myself as a learner.

Although it's difficult to feel prepared for next year now, I know I will have the memories of my friends and experiences from this year.

Favorite Book: *The Life of Pi* was a very

interesting story and made me think about the underlying message it had and certain alternatives to the story.

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**Michael Grosso**

Years at Benchmark: 5

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory was when I was going into Second Year and going on the camping trip because I had accomplished First Year and was moving on through Benchmark.

Favorite Book: Born to Fly because it reminded me of my cousin who went through the same

things as the main character and is now in the Air Force.

**Luke Massengill**

Years at Benchmark: 4

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory was doing the play *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying!* It was the best because we became closer friends backstage and on stage.

Favorite Book: Of Mice and Men because it showed two great friends on their journey.

**Christian Hotte**

Years at Benchmark: 4

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory was going to Dorney Park in my first year of Middle School. It was fun going on all of the rides and hanging out with my friends.

Favorite Book: Ender's Game by Orsen Scott Cord. It is my favorite because there are some funny parts and cool parts of the book.

**Taylor Mordy**

Years at Benchmark: 7

Fondest Benchmark Memory: There are too many to pick. I was happy when I got an A on Dr. Mac's final and the play was the best!

Favorite Book: To Kill a Mockingbird because it had a lot of action and it kept me interested.

**Eddie Kelly**

Years at Benchmark: 4

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory was when I took part in the Middle School Musical as a First and Second Year student. I liked the way the whole Middle School came together and how we also made it a really good musical.

Favorite Book: The Outsiders because I really

liked how the characters were always there for each other when they faced a problem.

**Pat Pearson**

Years at Benchmark: 5

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory was getting to spend time with all my friends for hours at a time to work on the musical. It was fun because it built friendships. It was also nice to do something different than regular school work and to know that all your hard work will pay off.

Favorite Book: My favorite book was *Scat* because it was interesting and full of action. The book was set in present time so I could relate to what was going on.

**Audra Kemp**

Years at Benchmark: 6

Fondest Benchmark Memory: I have several great memories. One was my fifth grade year. I also enjoyed all of the plays we produced in Middle School. My fondest memory is meeting all of my friends throughout the years, especially Rachel Berger, whom I have known since third grade.

Favorite Book: The Last Song by Nicholas Sparks. I got so into it I read it in three days. It was thrilling, inspiring, and interesting.

**Brandon Peltz**

Years at Benchmark: 4

Fondest Benchmark Memory: Scoring my first soccer goal in fifth grade as a member of the almost undefeated JV team.

Favorite Book: The Red Kayak because it's a good mystery that held my attention to the very end.

**Greg Kenkelen**

Years at Benchmark: 4

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory was Dorney Park because it was our end-of-the-year field trip and we could do whatever we wanted with friends.

Favorite Book: Imitate the Tiger because it's about a football player who has had a hard life, but he finds a way to not get himself in trouble.

**Michael Schwartz**

Years at Benchmark: 6

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory at Benchmark was last year's kickball tournament. The class versus class rivalry was a fun, competitive experience.

Favorite Book: My favorite book is *Timeline* by Michael Crichton. This book connects history with one exciting story.

**Josh Kline**

Years at Benchmark: 3

Fondest Benchmark Memory: Carl's laugh when someone tells a joke because it always makes me laugh.

Favorite Book: To Kill a Mockingbird because it was a great, well-written book.

**Aurora Seamon**

Years at Benchmark: 8

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory was this year's camping trip. I will always remember being kept up all night in the cabin.

Favorite Book: My favorite book was *Speak* because it was such a realistic fiction book that gave me a new perspective on life.

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Liz Sexton

Years at Benchmark: 4

Fondest Benchmark Memory: First Year in Yearbook. This is one of my favorite memories because I made friends with a lot of people who are still my friends now. I really liked producing the yearbook with everyone.

Favorite Book: *The Uglies Series* because it was really engaging and suspenseful. I felt like I knew what the main character was experiencing because the descriptions were so good.



Jordan Siegal

Years at Benchmark: 6

Fondest Benchmark Memory: Dorney Park. I enjoyed walking around with different people from school and finding out what people are like out of school.

Favorite Book: *To Kill a Mockingbird* because it is such a well-written book.



Robert Squitieri

Years at Benchmark: 4

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memories are hanging out with friends, cleaning up the lunch room, and the jokes we made.

Favorite Book: *Diary of a Wimpy Kid*.



Alexander Togli

Years at Benchmark: 6

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memories was the camping trip Second Year.

Favorite Book: *Prey*. I liked it because it's written like a movie. It was an intense book with a very well-made plot.



Erik Wrice

Years at Benchmark: 4

Fondest Benchmark Memory: My fondest memory is my first day of school. I was new and didn't know anyone so I was excited to meet new people.

Favorite Book: *To Kill a Mockingbird* because the book had a lot of drama.



Beauchamp Zirnkilton

Years at Benchmark: 5

Fondest Benchmark Memory: The Middle School play last year and this year. It was amazing to see us get together as a community and to be better in the end. I think that this helped us grow as people.

Favorite Book: *Physics for Future Presidents* because it was very informative at a basic level

so that a First Year student could read it. It explained nuclear energy and the hydrogen bomb very well. I also loved how it addressed the oil crisis and current events and new technologies.



Support Services staff member Ushi Tandon, parents Ellen and Arnie Glassman, Dr. Robb Gaskins and Dr. Eleanor Gensemer congratulate Kyle Glassman, recipient of the Sun East Federal Credit Union "People Helping People" Student Award.

Kyle Glassman Receives "People Helping People" Award

Kyle Glassman, a member of the Benchmark Class of 2010, was presented with the Sun East Federal Credit Union "People Helping People" Student Award by Dr. Robb Gaskins, Head of School, and Dr. Eleanor Gensemer, Head of the Middle School.

Kyle earned the award for his work with Operation Happy Note, an organization that collects musical instruments and sends them to U.S. soldiers in Iraq. Kyle, with his cousin, asked friends, family, and members of their synagogues to support their efforts by donating used instruments. Together they sent over 50 instruments to soldiers via the coordinators of Operation Happy Note located in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

Kyle wrote in his Sun East essay, "It feels good to be able to help soldiers who are fighting for our country by sending them instruments that bring music, memories, and fun into their lives, while they are stationed in Iraq."

The Sun East Federal Credit Union "People Helping People" Student Award honors eighth grade students who have participated in a community service project within the last year and can demonstrate having made a positive influence on the community.

Middle School Players Stage *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*

The classic musical comedy of the ambitious window washer, J. Pierpont Finch, who climbs the corporate ladder with the help of a handy how-to book was brought to life by the Middle School players on the stage of the A. Palmer West Performing Arts Center for four performances in June.

Chosen as Benchmark's 18th Annual Musical production, *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* was an ambitious undertaking for the Middle School team of students, faculty, staff, and parent volunteers. "Once again the students set the bar high for next year. *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* is truly one of the most challenging shows we have done and this year's students worked hard to make each performance a great one," noted Musical Director Dr. Eric MacDonald.

"We were assisted, once again, by Colin McAdoo ('98), who helped shape numerous scenes and choreographed several songs," he added, as he thanked Colin for volunteering his time. Colin starred as Finch in Benchmark's first production of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* in 1998.

There is more to a Benchmark production than meets the eye. The musicals serve as an integral part of the Middle School curriculum. The productions are tied into Music, Art, and Language Arts through the study of theater, characterization, the time period, and the play itself. In many cases, students are introduced to performing – acting, singing, and dancing – as well as set



*Rachel Berger
(Rosemary Pilkington)*



*Michael Fowler
(J. Pierpont Finch)*



*Taylor Mordy
(Miss Jones)*



Benchmark alumnus Colin McAdoo (left) helps the actors with the Executive Wash Room scene.



*John Connolly
(Mr. Twimble)*



*Devon Cosgrove
(Hedy LaRue)*



*Patrick Pearson
(Bud Frump)*

design and construction for the first time, often discovering talents they never knew they possessed. From the preparation through to the final performance, the musical serves as a vehicle to build individual self-confidence as well as a feeling of community in the Middle School.

Dr. MacDonald stated, "The musical production once again demonstrated what a

terrific community the Benchmark Middle School is and what such a community can accomplish."

Benchmark thanks Dr. MacDonald and his team for their hard work, dedication, and fabulous performances.

**Benchmark's 19th Annual Musical
June 2, 3, 4, 2011**



Third-Year Middle School student Michael Grosso created the "Painter Pro 5000," a painter and edger all-in-one.

Young Inventors

Creative Minds Produce Innovative Products

Expandable track shoes, a voice-activated car designed for quadraplegics and paraplegics, the Blood Glucose Tablet Dispenser, and the Painter Pro 5000 are examples of inventive minds at work at Benchmark. This spring, Lower School and Third-Year Middle School students proved that they can identify problems and create products to meet those specific needs.

The Lower School Rahm/Madison/Vasell class planned and designed products as part of their Social Studies unit about technology and invention.

Third-Year students created inventions as part of their Science Class curriculum. Each student was asked to look at a problem, research the issue, invent a product that addressed the issue, and research patents to ensure that the product invented was different or new. Students developed a prototype, created a display board, and "sold" their products at the Invention Convention.



Henry Goodhart solves the difficulty of accessing tablets with shaky hands with the "Blood Glucose Tablet Dispenser."



Inventors Paige Newbold, Joe Gallo, Teddy Rogers, and Alexa Green



Chris Benecke, Tara Higgins, and Scott White with their inventions



Jack Bereschak, Leighton Ball, Maria Karnavas, and Lilly Misher present their innovative products.

Building Bridges

*Writing is more fun
with a Pen Pal*

Students in Mrs. Lawrence and Mrs. Gries' classroom found that writing is much more fun when it's a letter to a Pen Pal.

The Benchmark class communicated via letters with the Fifth Grade at Whitman Academy, an international school in Amman, Jordan. Mrs. Gries and her son Jon made the connection. Jon is the Fifth Grade teacher at Whitman Academy.

Through the interaction, our students have learned that children all over the world enjoy many of the same things they do, such as spending time with friends, watching and playing sports, sending e-mail, chatting on cell phones, and watching movies. They also have learned that while much of Jordan is a desert, Amman is a busy city that is similar in many ways to big cities in the United States.

Most importantly, they have experienced the joy and benefit of expanding their horizons and building bridges with those outside their immediate community, a lesson that will serve them well through their lives.



Lower School students in Mrs. Lawrence and Mrs. Gries' classroom (above) display the letters they received from their fifth grade Pen Pals (pictured below) at Whitman Academy in Amman, Jordan.



Two Classes Partner to Share their Books



Max Palish (left) and Hutch Lee (right) look on as T. J. Fallon reads his book to them.

Mrs. Julie Mattaliano and Ms. Theresa Scott's classes partnered to share books they wrote and illustrated. Ms. Scott's class designed their books to emulate *The Little Miss and Mr. Men* series originally written by Roger Hargreaves. Mrs. Mattaliano's class shared historical fiction works they created in honor of Black History Month.

Partnering on projects is an ongoing initiative to bring together older and younger students.



Cameron Spencer and Anna Lodge hold the books they wrote and illustrated.



Staff, Students ‘Hoop it Up’



The Benchmark Cougars “hooped it up” as they faced faculty and staff in their annual match on the basketball court.



Pictured clockwise from top left: *Eric Wrice drives the ball down the court. The faculty/staff team included Support Teacher Justin DuBrock, Head of School Robb Gaskins, Athletic Director Wayne Reichert, and Classroom Teacher Drew McCorkell. It’s “high-fives” for both teams after the game.*

Ms. Scott’s Class Treated to a Fun Afternoon

Theresa Scott’s class was treated to lunch and an afternoon of fun with Dr. Robb Gaskins and Support Teacher Justin DuBrock this spring courtesy of Parents Larry and Pam Lederer. The Lederers won the afternoon for the children as part of the Spring Social’s Silent Auction.



Benchmark Welcomes Special Guests



Chairman of Special Guest Day Jennifer Durkan (second from left) and her parent helpers Ellie McGlinn, Mary Adams, Maria Courter, and Stephanie Brandow.

Family and friends spent the morning at Benchmark as special guests of the students. They mingled in the Clemens Family Lobby of the A. Palmer West Performing Arts Center, then joined students in their classrooms for special presentations.

A heartfelt thanks to Parent Jennifer Durkan and her committee for welcoming guests and providing refreshments.

Susan Handy (right) joins her grandson Thomas Handy in his classroom.



Students (far right) led guests to classrooms and gave tours of the campus.



Carolyn and Bob Vollrach enjoyed their visit with granddaughter Rylee Mauger.



Rosemary and Mervyn Beecham traveled from England to be with grandson Ollie.



Rosemary and Joe Farber, grandparents of Michael Farber, enjoy their visit.

Student In Charge

Zachary Henry shadowed Dr. Robb Gaskins as Head of the School for the Day in April. The day fell on the school's annual Special Guest Day. Zach and Dr. Gaskins began the morning by greeting students' friends and family. Zach introduced Dr. Gaskins to the stage for opening remarks in the A. Palmer West Performing Arts Center and later proclaimed a future "Dress Down Day" for students. They shared lunch in the Head of School's office, toured the grounds together, and enjoyed numerous opportunities to talk about school and outside interests.

"Head of the School for the Day" is an auction item each year at the Spring Social.



IRA Convention

Continued from Page 5

featured such distinguished researchers as Drs. James Baumann, Mark Conley, Ted Hasselbring, Margaret McKeown, Kathleen Roskos, and Timothy and Cynthia Shanahan.

A little later in the conference, Irene Gaskins, Sally Laird, Colleen O'Hara, and Jenny Roca presented a symposium that addressed how Benchmark teachers facilitate students' reading, writing, and thinking by integrating principles of learning, evidence-based practices, and differentiated instruction. Irene Gaskins, who also chaired the symposium, laid the foundation for the session by sharing principles of learning and evidence-based practices that assist struggling readers. Colleen O'Hara followed by describing how Benchmark teachers employ instructional methods that incorporate the knowledge that learning is more likely to occur when: instruction is explicit, teachers model and scaffold the application of the strategies being taught, students are actively involved, and learning environments are designed to create a sense of belonging, meaningfulness, competence, and autonomy. Sally Laird then shared research-based examples of how writing is a tool for thinking and learning across the curriculum. For example, she shared evidence from Benchmark classrooms related to research that suggests that writing before engaging in discussion helps foster reflection, understanding, participation, rich responses, and awareness among students of what



Robb Gaskins discussed research conducted at Benchmark School at the IRA Convention.

they know and don't know. Jenny Roca addressed how Benchmark teachers differentiate instruction for students based on formative assessment that is built into the curriculum. One of the greatest challenges of teaching is that students learn at different rates and exhibit unique combinations of strengths and weaknesses. However, embedding formative assessment in instruction helps teachers clarify students' specific strengths and weaknesses, tailor instruction to student needs, track progress, motivate students, and initiate programmatic changes.

Robb Gaskins provided a third presentation involving Benchmark staff members when he spoke about the process of conducting research while simultaneously functioning as the teacher in the classroom. As an example, he discussed the Middle School social studies project he conducted with Emily Galloway, focusing on different facets of the project than were addressed in the earlier presentation. He shared how students were taught a conceptual framework that he designed that helped them understand the causes and consequences of human actions. As such, the framework, known as the Action Cycle, provided a structure that helped students understand events across human history. Findings from across the five-year research and development project suggest that the instructional approach centered on the Action Cycle helped students: plan, predict, recall, and make connections when engaged with expository texts in social studies. Further, after a year of using this approach, students express higher levels of interest in social studies.

Finally, it is important to note that, in addition to having the chance to share original research and instructional practices, the Benchmark staff members who attended the 55th International Reading Association Convention brought back a wealth of ideas from the sessions that will help fuel the next round of innovations at the school.

Students Bring Youthful Enthusiasm to Retirement Community

Visiting Martin's Run Retirement Community in Media was fun and games for 10 Benchmark Middle School students. Organized as a community service project by Third-Year student Graham Cuddy and his mother, Tricia, the students played cards and board games with residents. A Martin's Run resident taught several students to play Pinochle, while other students taught residents to play Chess and other games. All of the students enjoyed chatting with residents. An impromptu *a cappella* group was formed by Benchmark parent Fran Cardinale and three of the residents.

The students that visited Martin's Run were: Paul Cardinale, Graham Cuddy, Kyle Glassman, Michael Grosso, Christian Hotte, Taylor Mordy, Hannah Peacock, Isaac Russell, Jordan Siegal, and Hugh Taussig-Lux. They were accompanied by parents Fran Cardinale, Tricia Cuddy, Ellen Glassman, and Karen Taussig-Lux.



Benchmark students enjoyed their visit with Martin's Run residents.

Taylor Mordy said, "I had a lot of fun playing card games like Fish and War with the older women. I think Benchmark students should visit next year. All of us need to be more active in community service."

The Last Day of School: Fabulous and Fun Field Day!



Jacob Newmark and Miles Tucker hop to the finish.



Jimmy Klenk has the ball with Ryan Salamone giving chase.



Nick Gallo gives Spencer Adams a ride to the races.



Art teacher Mrs. Rydel hopes the water balloon won't break.



Mark Salamone and his teammates do their best in the Tug of War.



Daryn Youngblood is the fastest runner in the Lower School.



Anna Lodge finds out just how cold the water is in the water bucket relay.

Alums, Students Return to School to Help Make Summer Camp Fun



Summer campers look up to Benchmark alumni and senior counselors Matt Natal '00, Peter Garrity '06, Scott Draper '04, Paul Shump '96, and Mary Katherine Ortale '08.



These Benchmark current students and recent grads enjoy their summer as junior counselors at Benchmark. Front row: Rachel Berger, Nick Gallo, Devon Cosgrove, and Laney O'Shea. Second row: Nick Hannon, Nick Rehtiene, Hugh Taussig-Lux, and Ryan Moore. Back row: Ryan Handy, Hadley Mottola, Haley Kulp, Spencer Adams, Hannah Bruck, Daryn Youngblood, Maria Ortale, Hannah Peacock, and T. J. Fallon.

Leadership Donors Honored at Reception



Annual Fund Chairman Frank Zirnkilton and his wife Katie join Head of School Robb Gaskins and his wife Jennifer.



Benchmark parents Peter and Beth Goodhart enjoy a moment with Amy and Randy Stein.



Class Captain Jim Klenk joins Nick Kemp, Chair of the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 Annual Funds, and his wife Dawn.

Benchmark honored members of The 1970 Society, leadership donors to its Annual Fund, at a reception at the home of current Benchmark parents Kirk and Stephanie Brandow.

The party was previously scheduled for a winter date, but record-breaking snows on the East Coast led to rescheduling it in early April. Close to 50 people attended the occasion, catered by Stephanie Brandow herself! Shrimp, chicken teriyaki, bacon wrapped scallops, Chinese dumplings, all matter of dips, and a surprise birthday cake for one of the attendees, made for a delicious menu.

Frank Zirnkilton, Chairman of Benchmark's 2009-2010 Annual Fund, thanked contributors for their generous participation.

As guests looked on, Head of School Robb Gaskins thanked Chairman Frank Zirnkilton, Annual Fund Vice Chairman Greg McMahan, and hosts Kirk and Stephanie Brandow for their support. Gaskins said, "Benchmark's tradition of excellence will continue to be possible thanks to our loyal and generous supporters. We are deeply grateful."



Kirk and Stephanie Brandow were presented with a gift from the School in appreciation of their welcoming The 1970 Society to their beautiful home.



Benchmark parents Monique Silvi and Emily Newmark take a moment to chat at the reception.



Jim Roese Photography

Stephanie Brandow welcomes Board of Trustees member Betsy Bemis and her husband Charles to her home.



Kevin and Maria Courter enjoy chatting with Dr. Irene Gaskins, Head of School Emerita.



Class Captain Roberta West (left) enjoys chatting with Placement Counselor Greg Coleman and his wife Marcia.



Alumni parent Carol Atterbury and Barbara Rogers, Director of Development for Special Gifts, share a fun moment.



Kirk Brandow and Jamie Hole take a moment to chat.

2009 - 2010 Annual Fund Committee

Loralee & Al West
Honorary Chairmen

Frank Zirkilton
Chairman

Greg McMahon
Vice Chairman

Leadership Gifts Committee

Sarah Beecham

Peter Cooke

Richard L. Fox

Beth Goodhart

Heidi Thiermann Hole

Nick Kemp

Arden Williams Saligman

Randy Stein

Amy Stone

David van Adelsberg

Class Captains

Maddie Beever

Maria Courter

Marie Connolly

Sue Deakins

Christine Gallo

Shawn Handy

Jim Klenk

Marina Lesser

Mike Meyers

Lynn Ortale

Jill Peacock

Deirdre Peake

Michel Schwartz

Roberta West

March Pepper

Board of Directors Representative

Robert R. Tabas

Alumni Parent Representative

Duffy Keith Nichols '87

Alumni Representative

John & Louise Heckler

Grandparent Representatives

Suzanne Perot

Foundations & Corporations Representative

Maggie Churchville

Faculty & Staff Representative

Robb Gaskins

Head of School

Irene W. Gaskins

Head of School Emerita

Barbara Rogers

Director of Development for Special Gifts

Lynn Gonzalez

Director of Development Programs

BPA Celebrates a Successful School Year

Benchmark Parents Association (BPA) members celebrated another successful year at their final meeting which was generously hosted by BPA President Mary Adams and her husband Joel. Mary Adams (right) and BPA Vice President Stephanie Brandow (left), presented Robb Gaskins with a \$14,000 contribution to the Benchmark Children's Fund. The Children's Fund supports projects, activities, and materials that enrich students' learning experiences.

Along with the contribution of funds to Benchmark, the BPA organizes, sponsors, and supports countless activities that enhance school life for students and staff.



Author, Naturalist Gary Ferguson's Stories Intrigue Students

Lower and Middle School students listened intently as noted author and naturalist Gary Ferguson took them through the process of reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone Park in the mid-1990s.

The children learned that 14 wolves from different packs in Canada were transported to Yellowstone, placed in acclimation pens, then released. Using a slide show, Gary Ferguson explained the social complexities of a wolf pack and the challenges that were faced in releasing the wolves.

Gary Ferguson's presentation was one of three Children's Programs this year sponsored by the BPA. A special thanks to Heidi Thiermann Hole for heading the Children's Program series. All of the presentations were educational and enjoyable.



Students Colleen Baldwin, Maylen Gehret, Sara Hole, and Kevin Bowser join Gary Ferguson on stage after his presentation.

Benchmark Coffee Celebrates Parent Volunteers



A coffee, organized by BPA staff liaison Regina Smith, was held this spring in the library to recognize and celebrate all that Benchmark parents do for the school.

Current parent and past president of the BPA Beth Goodhart (far left) enjoys a moment with Dr. Betsy Cunicelli, Head of the Math Department. Director of Development Programs Lynn Gonzalez, on right, joins current parents Maria Rechiene and Marsha Peltz.

BPA Luncheon Celebrates Faculty and Staff

Faculty and staff were treated to an elegant picnic -- complete with handcrafted styrofoam ants -- at the Appreciation Luncheon sponsored by the BPA. Held in the Clemens Family Lobby of the A. Palmer West Performing Arts Center, faculty and staff were treated to a wide array of gourmet sandwiches, salads, and desserts courtesy of the Benchmark Parents Association.

A special thanks to Co-chairs Dawn Kemp and Tricia Cuddy and their committee for organizing the delightful luncheon.



The Teacher and Staff Appreciation Committee: (kneeling) Maria Brady, Lisa Salamone, and Karen Gryga, and (standing) Beth Anne Maas, Liz Price, Stephanie Brandow, Tricia Cuddy, Dawn Kemp, Mary Adams, Susan Cosgrove, and Katie Zirkilton.



Faculty and staff relaxed and enjoyed the luncheon. Left: Sandy Madison, Justin DuBrock, and Colleen O'Hara. Right: Jackie Sheridan, Zeffie Spirokostas, and Melinda Rahm.



Art Goes to School

Parent volunteers transformed the Clemens Family Lobby of the A. Palmer West Performing Arts Center into a museum when they presented Art Goes To School for three days this spring.

The program, presented by Tricia Cuddy, Karin Micheletti, Ann Marie Siegal, and Katie Zirkilton introduces Lower and Middle school students to visual art created around the world and throughout history. The parents spend a day a week for months preparing the course. They study paintings, discuss artists, choose a theme that ties the art together, and look for highlights that will interest all of the students. "We present the program as if our children are visiting a museum," Ann Marie Siegal said. "We want them to speak up and be curious."

Tricia Cuddy (left) points out the various elements of paintings to students.

40th Anniversary Spring Social Shines at Merion



Head of School Robb Gaskins and his wife Jennifer (right) congratulate Spring Social Chairman and President of the BPA Mary Adams and husband Joel on the fabulous evening.

Benchmark parents, faculty, staff, and friends celebrated the School's 40th Anniversary at the school's Spring Social at Merion Cricket Club in Haverford in March.

Guests enjoyed cocktails, dinner, and a live band as well as a "uniquely Benchmark" raffle and silent auction.

Hosted by the Benchmark Parents Association, the money raised from the Spring Social goes to the Children's Fund which supports projects, activities, and materials that enrich the learning experiences of Benchmark students.

A special thanks to the dedicated team of volunteers who created an evening to remember.



Parents Anne Marie and Todd Siegel and Classroom Teacher Barbara Mistichelli enjoy the event.



Current parents Marsha and David Peltz and Marie and Jeff Kenkelen take a moment to chat.



Ira and Arden Saligman take in all of the festivities.



Current parents Richard and Tina Fox and Lou and Karen Gryga were all smiles at the Spring Social.



Left: Robb Gaskins and Mary Adams congratulate Rob and Aralisha Newbold (left) winners of the lavish "Dream Vacation" for four to one of the Dream Resort & Spa locations chosen by the lucky winners. The "Dream Vacation" was generously donated by Benchmark parents Alex and Janine Zozaya.



Right: Chris Gallo and Francie Rogers welcome guests.

Current parents Kevin Courter, Vince Gallo, and Gerald Dati (left) take a moment together.



Classroom Teacher Barbara Demos enjoys the evening with her husband Roger.



BPA Past Presidents Susan Cosgrove and Beth Goodhart get together for a chat.

Spring Social Committee

Congratulations and many thanks to the members of the Spring Social Committee for creating a fabulous evening benefitting Benchmark's Children's Fund!

Chairperson
Mary Adams

Committee
Margaret Barry
Sarah Beecham
Maria Bereschak
Stephanie Brandow
Maria Courter
Bern Currie
Deb Dati
Chris Gallo
Shawn Handy
Amanda Lonergan
Karin Micheletti
Francie Rogers
Lisa van Adelsburg

Faculty and staff members (right) Melinda Rahm, Karen Berry, Sarah McCarren, and Regina Smith review the auction items.



'73

Tom Brown is IT Project Manager at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in Brooklyn, NY. He works to facilitate the communications between the school and patrons and customers. He says it is a job that combines his interest in theater arts and love of computers. Tom lives in Highland Park, NJ with Robin, his wife of 23 years, and their 14-year-old daughter. Tom is a graduate of The Christian Academy. He earned a B.S. degree from Ithaca College and his Master's degree from Syracuse University.

'80

David Bloom lived and worked in New York City for six years. He recently moved to Swarthmore with his wife Jennifer and son Jackson. David is a graduate of The Shipley School, Villanova University, and Widener Law. David is a private banker with J. P. Morgan.

'83

John Russell graduated from Marvelwood School in Kent, CT in '88 and is now a faculty member and coach at the school. He is a graduate of University of Vermont and Teachers College - Columbia University. John lives with his wife and son in Kent. He says he enjoys reading *Benchmark News* and learning about his classmates.

Middle School Students Dress Down to Help Benchmark Alumnus

Middle School students organized a Dress Down Day in February to help Benchmark alumnus Marco Degli-Esposti '04. Marco was seriously injured in a car accident late last year. The money collected from the Dress Down Day went to Marco's medical fund. Marco graduated from Devon Preparatory School in 2009 and is a Penn State University freshman.

facebook

Linked in

'92

Kristie (Gonzalez) McCollom and her husband Eric welcomed their first child William Maddox McCollom on May 30th. The McCollom family lives in New Hampshire where Kristie is the Director of Constituent Relationships at the Tilton School.

'93

Dan Berger was married last fall. He and his wife are expecting their first child in November. Dan is President of Berger Rental Communities and lives in Newtown Square.

'94

Megan (Hord) Woodward lives in Philadelphia and is a self-employed interior designer. Megan is a graduate of Oldfields School in Glencoe, MD and earned a degree in Communications from the College of Charleston.

'96

Sara (Wilson) Searing works for H&M Clothing as a training and recruitment manager. She married her husband, Scott, in June of 2009. The couple live near Ann Arbor, MI with their pug Stella. Sara is a graduate of Radnor High School and the University of Michigan.

'99

Ted Levin graduated Summa Cum Laude with high honors in Language and Linguistics from Brandeis University in May. He was elected to The Phi Beta Kappa Society and earned a full scholarship to Massachusetts Institute of Technology to study Linguistics.

'02

Carly Niness is a sophomore and starting soccer player for Penn State University. She is majoring in Criminal Justice and last semester was named to the Dean's List and was a 2009 Fall Academic All-Big Ten Honoree.

Sage Thompson '92 Gets Alums 'LinkedIn'

"As alumni we are not connected only by the time we spent at Benchmark. We are connected by our common effort to succeed in life." - Dan Levine, '81



Sage Thompson '92 read fellow alum Dan Levine's quote and was inspired to create a group for Benchmark alumni professionals on LinkedIn, the business-oriented social networking site. "We understand each other," Sage explained. "I think it would be great if we can reconnect and help each other professionally."

Sage is Creative Director for Tat Communications, Inc., a multimedia company located in Ardmore. The company is owned by his father, and Sage notes that by working together over the years they have grown the company little by little.

Married in May, 2003, Sage and his wife Janet live in Drexel Hill with their two sons, Jack and Oliver.

A special thanks to Sage for reaching out to alumni and managing the LinkedIn group. To join, go to "Groups" on LinkedIn.com and look for "Alumni of Benchmark."

Matt Robison graduated from Cornell University with a B.S. degree in Engineering.

'04

John Donahue graduated from The Shipley School in June. He will attend George Washington University in the fall. John wrote that he is looking forward to taking some time to explore Washington.

'05

Evan Casciato graduated Conestoga High School in June. Evan made honor roll each semester for four years. He was on the soccer, lacrosse, and squash teams, and was co-president of the Ultimate Frisbee Club. He will attend the College of Charleston this fall and plans to play on the squash team.

Natasha Harnwell-Davis graduated from The Shipley School in June. She plans to attend The University of Chicago this fall. Natasha has spent the last two summers interning in a biochemistry lab and for her local congressman.

Demetri Vlahos is a sophomore at Immaculata University where he is playing singles on the tennis team. He writes: "I find my science courses very strenuous, but the strategies I learned at Benchmark have assisted me greatly."

'06

Peter Garrity had an excellent senior year at Strath Haven High School. His accomplishments include the National Technical Honor Society in the Boeing Program, the Career and Technical Award presented by the Delaware County Chamber of Commerce, and the National Society of High School Scholars. Peter returned to Benchmark this summer as a camp counselor.

'07

Kelly Archer had a great freshman year at The Shipley School. She joined Model UN and enjoyed being a novice member of Shipley's rowing team.

Henry Butterworth is traveling to Costa Rica for two weeks with his junior class from Episcopal Academy. He is involved with robotics and is a member of the crew team at Episcopal. In addition to his trip to Costa Rica, Henry is doing an internship at Trilian this summer.

'08

Stephanie Bogutz had a wonderful sophomore year at Delaware Valley Friends School. She is an Honors student and particularly enjoys Math. She is a tour guide, takes part in musical theater, and enjoys time with friends. Stephanie will be dancing, traveling, and attending acting camps and auditions this summer.

Mary Katherine Ortale was selected to represent Delaware Valley Friends School at the HOBY (Hugh O'Brien) Leadership Conference, a four-day leadership training program, at Temple University this spring where she had a phenomenal experience.

At the closing ceremonies, HOBY



'05

Macauley Kistler (left) and **Nathaniel VanderWerff** graduated from B. Reed Henderson High School in 2009.

Macauley enjoyed her freshman year at West Chester University. She hopes to pursue health and physical education. Macauley is actively involved in Young Life, a Christian organization in West Chester, and is training to become a leader in Campus Crusade for Life at West Chester University.

Nathaniel had a great first year at Elizabethtown College. He hopes to earn a degree in Business Administration. He says he "enjoys the college life."

announced that they were selecting one male and one female student from the group of 150 students from the eastern region of the U.S. to attend the HOBY World Leadership Conference at The University of California, Los Angeles. Mary Katherine was chosen. She will be one of 400 students selected internationally to participate in this week-long conference. She was awarded a \$750 scholarship to cover half of the registration and she will raise funds to cover the additional costs.

Mary Katherine's mother, Lynn, wrote, "In all the paperwork we are filling out we are sure to include that Mary Katherine is a proud graduate of the Benchmark School! Thank you for all that you have done to support Mary Katherine's growth and development. Her experience at the Benchmark School was truly transformative for her."

Hannah Rogers excelled as a sophomore this year at The Purnell School, an all-girls boarding school in Pottersville, NJ. She is President of her class and recently returned from New Orleans where she and others from Purnell helped build a house for Habitat for Humanity. She says that school is going well, but she misses Benchmark.

'09

P. D. Ayres acclimated to Delaware Valley Friends School as a freshman with ease. He enjoyed playing on the school's golf team. In February, 2010, P.D. participated in a National Young Leaders State Conference (NYLSC) in Pittsburgh. Nominated last year by Dr. MacDonald,

the premise of the conference is to learn the tools and strategies needed to navigate as a leader. P. D. walked away from the conference with an understanding of how he needed to work on a strategic plan to accomplish his personal leadership goals.

Zack Leftow had a great first year at Perkiomen School. He joined the school's baseball and football teams.

Stephen Paschos enjoyed his first year at Marple-Newtown High School. He played soccer, joined the swim team, and ran track for the first time. He joined the set crew for the school's spring musical, *Wizard of Oz*. Stephen says his favorite class is Honors English.

Dina Veloric had a great year at Harriton High School. She earned all As, had her artwork exhibited, and was a member of the track team.

Send Us Your News!

We want to hear from you! To send a note and photos, visit us on-line at: www.benchmarkschool.org and complete the Alumni Update form. Write: Benchmark School, 2107 N. Providence Rd., Media, PA 19063, or call: (610) 565-3741 xt. 152.

Thank You!

A very special thanks to our parents, faculty and staff for contributing photos to this edition of *Benchmark News*.

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STEPS

- 1** Fill out and fax one-page form. Wait for response by mail.
- 2** Write business tax check to Benchmark School.
- 3** Claim 75 - 90% of your donation as a tax credit off your corporate state taxes.

For further information, please contact Lynn Gonzalez, Director of Development Programs,
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