

Winter 2015 Newsletter

Spotlight On Ava - "Team Awesome"

Ava, a student at Benedictine, was nominated to be featured in this issue as someone who models achievement and successful pursuit of goals. Using her communication device, Ava agreed to share her story of courage, hard work, and determination.

"I am 13 years old. I'm nice and smart and funny. I'm a hard worker, too. I don't like having CP (Cerebral Palsy) and kids asking me nosy questions. It's part of me but I'm just a kid. I like to sing with my karaoke player, watch musicals and ride roller coasters. I want to be a songwriter for a musical someday. I have been doing story times for the young kids at the library in the summer. I make it theater and reading time. I read books and make sound effects with my communication device. I wear costumes and act out the story. I make it fun for the kids. I have been racing for a year and a half with Athletes Serving Athletes. It's a team of disabled people running with coaches who are not disabled. It means a lot to me and I feel proud about racing. When I started racing I was in the jogger and I ran a little bit at the end. Now I'm doing all of the 5K with my RaceRunner!"

Most people know Ava best from the glint in her eye when she is getting ready to tell a joke or be mischievous. But when she is not in school, Ava, an accomplished athlete, runs in local and regional races. Initially partnering with Athletes Serving Athletes (ASA www.athletesservingathletes.org) for physical support during a run, Ava is now the proud owner of a RaceRunner, (www.by-conniehansen.com) an adaptive piece of equipment that allows Ava to run independently, propelling herself forward while maintaining balance. Recently Ava competed in the 2014 Osprey Sprint Triathlon in Snow Hill, Md., and is now setting her sights on the 19th Annual Race-Running Camp & Cup this summer in Denmark. The event is modeled after an Olympic track competition with races ranging from 100 – 800 meters.

Lisa, Ava's mother, reflected recently on factors that helped nurture Ava's drive and motivation. "If not for the partnership between Benedictine, Johns Hopkins Hospital and us, she may not have had the confidence to even try racing. The success and validation Ava has experienced at Benedictine contributes to her willingness to run in public which in turn alleviates her anxiety in integrated settings."

To help overcome the distraction of hundreds of people yelling her name at the end of a race, Ava and her running partner from ASA, Jaime Toner, came up with the idea of putting the word "awesome" on her team running bib. So next time you come up with excuses not to challenge yourself or go the extra mile, think of Team Awesome, remember Ava's remarkable spunk and courage, and get off the couch or contact ASA for more information on how to get in the game.



Recently Ava competed in the 2014 Osprey Sprint Triathlon.



From the Executive Director's Desk --- Scott Evans

Values from where we've come ... Preparation for where we're going



A year and a half ago on June 5, 2013, the Board of Directors and I announced the transfer of the Benedictine campus from the Sisters of St. Gertrude Monastery to the Benedictine organization. The transfer marked a significant milestone for both the Sisters and the leadership of the fine organization they built. The transfer has instilled a tremendous sense of responsibility to ensure that Benedictine continues a legacy of progressive programs and services while meeting a high standard of excellence. To preserve the legacy of the Sisters, we engaged in a process of discernment to identify those values that best reflect their spirit of over a half century. The values we continue to embrace are *compassionate caring, dignity of work, and hospitality*.

We operate 17 group homes located in Anne Arundel, Caroline and Talbot counties, and have turned our attention to increasing community-based living for transitioning students. Our Adult Services Program provides residential and day vocational services for 95 adults. And in Ridgely, the Benedictine School serves almost 70 students attending our residential and day school program.

Continuing in the tradition of the Sisters, we provide services to meet changing needs. With 34 percent of adult clients now working in competitive community employment, including through strengthened partnerships with the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), we continue to build on our established community integration programs for students and adults. Our planning efforts are focused on further developing community-based services and supported employment. Growth projections from the Easton Satellite Supported Employment office forecast a significant increase in community-based services in the next two years.

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As we prepare to meet the challenges of the next 50 years, we are strengthened by and optimistic in our resolve to continually embody the gifts left to us by the Benedictine Sisters, which are best defined as: a tireless dedication to the mission of helping those we serve to “achieve their greatest potential;” a commitment to a tradition of progressiveness and excellence; and a responsiveness to the needs of the population we serve.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Scott W. Evans".

Scott W. Evans, Executive Director

Benedictine Names Beth Mathis Adult Services Director

We are pleased to welcome Beth Mathis to Benedictine's executive team as Adult Services Director for the Open Community Program. Beth earned her bachelor's in psychology from the University of the South and a master's in behavioral science from the University of Houston and has dedicated her career to systems change efforts focusing on quality of life and community connections for all people. With over 25 years experience, most recently Beth has worked as vice president of business development for CQL, the Council on Quality and Leadership, an accreditation organization for human service providers meeting a high standard of person-centered, community based supports and services for people with disabilities. A certified Personal Outcome Measures® trainer, Beth is also a 2009 graduate of the Delaware Leadership Institute. Her work leading accreditation reviews, developing and delivering training and consultation, project management and business development will be an asset to Benedictine as we move forward in adapting to a new regulatory environment while maintaining focus on our mission and standards of excellence.



Beth looks forward to settling into her new role and says she is most eager to get to know the employees who have built such strong programs. “The strength of the services offered and the commitment of the staff provide a strong foundation and opportunity for Benedictine to continue to be a progressive leader for Maryland. I am grateful for the opportunity to work with Scott in support of Benedictine's focus on mission and excellence as Benedictine adapts to a new regulatory environment.”

Beth hails from Texas but now resides in Easton, Md., with her husband, Steve, and two sons, Davis, and Cameron.

Learning and Service at the Benedictine School College Volunteers Experience Benedictine

by Dr. Daniel McKee, Neumann University

For eleven Neumann University students, the Christmas holiday break provided a very special opportunity for spiritual and professional growth. These early elementary and special education majors spent three days at the Benedictine School, a residential school for students with disabilities in Ridgely, Maryland. There were two primary purposes for this trip to Benedictine. First, our future teachers would have an opportunity to learn about the extensive services provided on behalf of students with significant disabilities, beyond what they would normally observe within local parochial, public, or charter schools. Secondly, this trip to Benedictine would enable students from Neumann to engage in service, an important core value of the University.



Neumann University Education majors who spent three days at the Benedictine School are (kneeling) Gabrielle Neri, Katie Black, Clare Beatty and Gia Saddic, and (standing) Michelle Prendergast, Nicole Putnick, Melissa Dwyer, Brittany Nelli, Danielle Grayson, Courtney Kahlert and Amanda Mazzone.

The trip commenced on a blustery Wednesday morning, on which the group went to an orientation program regarding the various student and adult services offered through the school. They would be working in classrooms emphasizing functional academics, total communication classes for the neediest students who are non-verbal, and life skills programs. Students from Neumann also had an opportunity to serve in conjunction with speech, occupational, and physical therapists, as well as assisting in the gym and the pool. The students then visited the residences where the pupils at Benedictine live.

One evening, the group traveled to two community residences for adults with disabilities. At the group homes, they dined and socialized with the residents, and truly enjoyed the interaction, helping to provide the students from Neumann a view of how positive the future can be for adults with disabilities when proper care and appropriate resources are provided.

The students' insights regarding the experiences that they were having at Benedictine are astute. Danielle Grayson observed, "The teachers and aides go above and beyond for their students and it's really amazing to see their relationships." Several students were impressed by the reverence that the staff displayed for the students. Katie Black noted, "Reverence connects to this trip through the respect that the teachers give their students, as well as to their colleagues." Amanda Mazzone described the sense of excellence that she experienced. "These students show excellence every day in the little things they are able to accomplish. I think all of these students are amazing and I believe they all do great things each day."

The Neumann University students supported the educational programs at the Benedictine School and provided a wonderful opportunity to learn about this aspect of special education. These individuals served as commendable representatives of the University and an inspiration for future classes of students who are preparing to be teachers.



Welcome Megan Smith, The Benedictine School's Residential Director

Megan Smith recently joined our team as Benedictine School Residential Director. Megan has more than 14 years experience in providing support services to children, adolescents and adults. With a bachelor's in family studies and master's in marriage & family therapy, both from the University of Maryland, her specific areas of expertise have been management and supervision of residential and vocational psychiatric rehabilitation services, team building, budget development, and writing policies and procedures. Her tenure with the Sante Group, which pioneered community-based services for disabilities, is a perfect fit as Benedictine explores community-integrated residential options.

Scott Evans, Benedictine's Executive Director, notes that "Megan will oversee the school's entire residential program including the on-campus residential suites and our off-campus group homes, as well as our varied and extensive leisure activities program. Moving forward we will benefit from Megan's experience with community-based work in the behavioral health field."

Megan is excited to be joining the Benedictine family, "Everyone I have met brings a genuine desire to create a warm, loving home away from home. I'm looking forward to growing community-based services especially our residential group homes." Megan lives on Kent Island with her son, Jake, and two kittens.

Spotlight On Todd

Todd Smith, a member of Benedictine's Open Community Program, was nominated to be featured in this issue as someone who models achievement and successful pursuit of goals. Todd agreed to share his story of pride and success in his work.

Stop by the McDonald's in Denton, Md., any given weekday and be prepared to be impressed. The floor is spotless, the tables wiped clean and sanitized, and the condiment area free of soda spills, ketchup glops and mustard smears. Darting from table to counter to the play area, greeting customers along the way with a cheerful smile, waving with one hand, and clutching a cleaning cloth in the other, is Todd Smith. His employer and manager, Thomas Davenport, feels lucky to have Todd on his team, "Todd does a great job. He greets everyone; the customers love him, and he is always moving, always keeping busy." Galan Anderson, Benedictine's Supported Employment Manager, says Todd deserves particular recognition because he independently met with his boss to ask for an increase in his work schedule from 3 days to 5 days: "Kudos to Todd for going to his manager and making the ask!"



Not only does Todd's employment have an impact on his self-confidence and growing independence, but as a consumer he contributes to the economy, "I like the customers and I like saving up to buy a new phone and a new laptop." Todd has also been able to take advantage of the local public transportation system, Delmarva Community Transit (DCT), benefiting from DCT's travel training program that provides individualized assistance and mentoring to ensure that passengers are comfortable and confident using public transportation.

Benedictine is proud of Todd's growing independence, employment success and work ethic. Although he makes it look easy, Todd comments, "I work hard." Enough said.

Guest Commentary from the Division of Rehabilitation Services

Sue Page, Assistant Superintendent of the Maryland State Department of Education's DORS

"Benedictine and the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) share a common mission of employment and independence for individuals with disabilities. The presentation of the **Excellence in Partnership Award** to the Benedictine School's Open Community Program recognizes Benedictine's partnership with DORS in developing programs and services that assist individuals with disabilities on the Mid and Upper Shore," noted Sue Page, Assistant State Superintendent of DORS. "Benedictine is known for excellence in preparing individuals with disabilities for employment," Page commented, "and DORS is proud to be a partner."



One such successful program is Benedictine's eight-week hospitality training program, developed in collaboration with DORS staff and local businesses. Students in the program learn how to work as a team, manage money, develop a resume, provide excellent customer service, and many other important aspects of preparing for work. More than half of the participants became competitively employed in the community.

Division of Rehabilitation Services' Excellence in Partnership Award presentation, from left: Sue Page, DORS; Scott Evans, Executive Director, Benedictine; Dale Skinner and Jessie Thomas, Benedictine Adult Vocational Services; Candace Henry, DORS

Welcome Kate Rattie, the Benedictine Foundation's Annual Fund Manager

Kate Rattie has joined the Benedictine Foundation team as Annual Fund Manager. Kate came to Benedictine from Adkins Arboretum where she served as director of advancement managing the non-profit's capital campaign, annual fund, special events, grant writing, and donor relations programs. Previously Kate held executive fundraising positions with the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum and Chester River Health System. Earlier in her career she worked in corporate communications, public relations and marketing in Chicago, New York and Washington, D.C. Kate holds a bachelor's degree in communications from American University. She and her husband, Ron, recently moved to Ridgely from Centreville, Md., where they owned a horse farm.



Benedictine's 2015 Annual Fund

Thanks to the generous support from families, friends and regional corporations, as of January 15, Benedictine has raised more than \$329,000 towards its \$455,000 annual fund goal for 2015. Your gifts will help fulfill these initiatives:

- Tuition assistance for those in need
- Modernization of campus instructional and residential spaces and Open Community homes
- Vehicles for transporting adults in the Vocational Program to jobs and training
- Information Technology including network upgrades, server, workstations and laptops for system-wide IT integration
- Telecommunication upgrades to facilitate collaborative information sharing and decision making
- Professional development and regulatory compliance training
- Aquatherapy pool resurfacing and enhancements
- Vocational equipment for Garden Bees, Baker Bees, and Benedictine Graphics
- Additional specialized equipment for physical therapy

To make a gift to the Annual Fund, visit benschool.org or call Kate Rattie, Annual Fund Manager in the Benedictine Foundation at 410-634-2292.

Across the Bay 10K for Benedictine



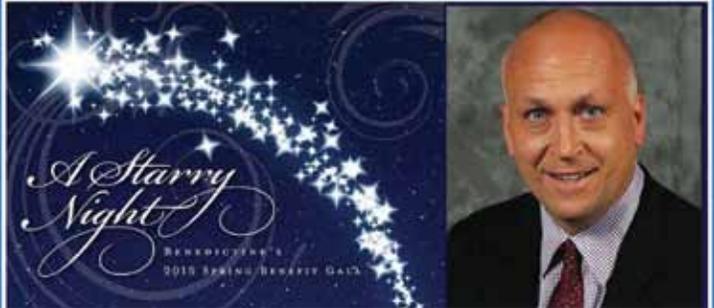
Father Eugene Hasson of Greencastle, County Tyrone, in the diocese of Derrpastor, Northern Ireland, was one of more than 100 friends of Benedictine who ran in the first Across the Bay 10K on November 9, 2014. Our 100 friends joined almost 20,000 people who participated in the event, one of the largest 10K races in the country. Father Eugene traveled 3,268 miles to be part of the historic bridge run and to run in memory of Sister Jeannette, a founder of the Benedictine School. The event raised more than \$10,000 in support of Benedictine's programs and services for kids and adults. The 2015 Across the Bay 10K is slated for early November with the date expected to be revealed soon. Benedictine is excited to announce we have been selected as one of the designated charity partners for the next event!

Father Eugene with Ava, Benedictine's official 10K ambassador

Benedictine's "Signers" Celebrate Christmas in St. Michaels

On Saturday December 13, Benedictine's kids showed their holiday spirit in the Christmas Parade through St. Michaels, cruising through town towed in a beautiful wooden speedboat and performing in their own special way. Our sponsor for the event was The Antique and Classic Boat Society Chesapeake Bay Chapter.

Our "Signers" showed their Christmas spirit at St. Michael's holiday parade, thanks to the Antique and Classic Boat Society Chesapeake Chapter.



SAVE THE DATE!
April 25, 2015

**Benedictine's 2015 Spring Benefit ~
*A Starry Night***

An elegant evening of gourmet dining, fine wines,
an exciting live auction, music and dancing

Benefiting the Children and Adults of Benedictine

Featuring Cal Ripken, Jr.
Baseball's Legendary IRON MAN and
Baltimore Orioles' Star Infielder

**A very special thanks to PNC Bank for
making Cal Ripken's appearance possible!**

The Tidewater Inn, Easton, Maryland

For details and an invitation, contact the Foundation
410-634-2292, email foundation@benschool.org

Benedictine Individuals In the Community

One of Benedictine's objectives and one of our greatest strengths is community integration—creating opportunities and encouraging, facilitating and coaching our students and adults to move out into the world, expanding their horizons, developing their self-esteem, and raising the community's awareness of the tremendous character and abilities of people with disabilities.



Mark and the ABLE class are learning about shopping at Food Lion.

Nick enjoys helping out a friend at the veterinarian's office.



"Claire's Closet" designer T-shirts are featured at Frugalicious in Easton.



Kevin uses the Delmarva Community Transit to get to his job.



Benedictine's Special Olympics speed skating team.

Brad is appreciated at his job with Sal's Pizza Restaurant in Denton.

