



St. Benedict's PREPARATORY SCHOOL



A CHANGING TIDE

Gray Bees are setting
the pace in crew, fencing
and water polo

THE MOMENT

We Are All Back

Senior Group Leader Sunil Das '21 raised his hand, and the Gray Bees gathered on the Upper Field grew quiet. It was May 17, the first in-person Convocation in 15 months and kids were a little rusty. Sunil wasn't having it. "Do it again," he instructed the Middle and Prep divisions. "When the hand goes up, everyone's hand goes up all the way." Satisfied with the response, student-leaders proceeded with the first live Convocation of the 2020-21 academic year, which also marked the first time the morning gathering was held outdoors at St. Benedict's Prep.

Since Summer Phase began on July 26, student-leaders have run live Convocation for their respective Divisions outdoors in different locations on the Property. Join us for Convocation broadcast every morning on YouTube. Alumni and friends are welcome to join us for prayer, songs, affirmations and the live chat.



St. Benedict's
PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Magazine • Summer 2021 • Issue 19

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Each year, college bound seniors write about defining experiences that shaped their lives, in 650 words or less. Maurice Tabron '21 wrote about rowing through failure to achieve success, and his essay is reprinted in this issue.

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GREETINGS



Re-Creating Community
When you put leadership in the hands of kids, the School has to be re-created every year. Why? Because each year at St. Benedict's Prep we send 120 young leaders into the world and a new group takes charge of rebuilding the community.

This year is no different, except for the fact that the rebuilding of community is on steroids. When we came back together for Summer Phase on July 26, many of our kids had not been on the Property in a year, nor had they witnessed our leadership structure in action. We prepared in many ways for these challenges.

To accommodate 900 kids – a 20% increase in enrollment since The Hive adopted the K-12 model in 2017 – we reconfigured buildings, optimized space and built new classrooms. Senior Group Leaders Justin Crespo '22 and Marie-Rosa Jeudy '22, and every Prep Division student in leadership this year, completed the Wilderness Inspired Leadership Development Expedition (WILDE) created and facilitated for us by Victory Road Leadership Development Group. We're planning to expand leadership training to more students with Victory Road, not only to rebuild community in this post-pandemic year, but to provide more opportunities and experiences for kids to push their limits and accomplish something consequential. To me, it's another sign that good things can come from adversity.

While our attention and efforts are trained on the present and the rebuilding that needs to happen this academic year, we are deeply grateful for the prayers, encouragement and financial support that came our way in 2020-21. The more than \$14.3 million raised, the best in our history, from over 3,300 donors kept us open and moving, "Forward, Always Forward." Alumni participation hit 36%, an all-time high for Gray Bees. As we re-create our community in 2021-22, I invite more of you to re-connect with The Hive. Join us for Convocation, broadcast every morning on YouTube.

Our kids need to hear your Benedict's stories. They need your wisdom. They need your support.

Courage,

Fr. Edwin D. Leahy, O.S.B. '63
Headmaster



STANDING TOGETHER

124 DIPLOMAS TO GRAY BEES AT 147TH COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

Nearly four years ago, they met as strangers in Shanley Gymnasium for the Freshman Overnight. On June 6, the Class of 2021 stood together and graduated as brothers during the 147th Commencement Exercises at St. Benedict's Prep. The emotion-filled ceremony followed the inaugural Commencement for the Girls Prep Division held on June 5.

"Although this was a surreal and unpredictable year, we got through it all," stated Valedictorian Adelynne Antilus '21 in her address to graduates. "Becoming part of the St. Benedict's Prep community was a challenge, and although we may not have gotten to experience it to the fullest, I know I'm glad to have taken on this challenge." Adelynne, who graduated with a 3.99 GPA, will attend Rutgers University and plans to study computer science. Salutatorian and Blue Section Leader of the Boys Prep Division Samuel Pineda '21 also spoke of the challenges of senior year. "It was the togetherness of Benedict's that saved the Class of 2021," he said. "I'll go out on a limb here and say that no other

class cares for each other as much as we do. We've got to keep loving each other. We've got to keep loving Benedict's, and as we go into the next phase of our lives, we have to bring the love and togetherness we shared at St. Benedict's with us."

Valedictorian and Senior Group Leader Sunil Das '21 told his Benedict's brothers he was "beyond proud" to graduate with this class. "With everything that happened [this year] we stand together again. The Class of 2021 is special and will forever be remembered for our perseverance and leadership." Samuel is headed to Seton Hall University and Sunil will attend Fairfield University.

Eighty-nine percent of graduating seniors from the Boys Prep Division and 100% of graduating seniors from the Girls Prep Division are college bound this fall. They are matriculating to a diverse array of public, private and Catholic colleges and universities. A number of Gray Bees are planning a gap year, entering the military or beginning apprenticeships.

MEET THE SENIOR GROUP LEADERS



JUSTIN CRESPO '22

HOMETOWN: Warren, N.J., boards at Leahy House

PREVIOUS LEADERSHIP POSITION: Freshman counselor (UDI), Group Leader Joe Kasberger (UDII)

OUTLOOK FOR 2021-2022: Excited and a little scared of bringing everyone back on the Property. "My teammates and I are tasked with forming 2/3 of a new School and passing down Benedict's traditions as we know them for the continuation of this place. My main goal is to keep Benedict's running as the special place it is and help create the relationship between the Boys and Girls Prep Divisions."

THE SENIOR NINE AND TEAM OF FOUR

The Senior Eight in the Boys Prep Division will be the Senior Nine this year. A new leadership position, UDI Leader was added to better acclimate sophomores who spent most of their freshman year in virtual school. In addition to Justin Crespo '22, the senior leadership team includes: Jayden Dasher '22 (Community Standards Leader), Andres Garcia '22 (Freshmen Leader), Andrew D'Arcy '22 (UDI Leader), Joseph Jumbo '22 (Maroon Section Leader), Nestor Martinez '24 (Freshmen/Transfer Leader).



MARIE-ROSA JEUDY '22

HOMETOWN: Newark, N.J.

PREVIOUS LEADERSHIP POSITION: Strategic Group Leader (UDII)

OUTLOOK FOR 2021-2022: Hopeful and a little nervous because, "Girls will be coming in for their freshman year from different schools and everyone has been learning virtually. The adjustment is going to be harder. I want everyone to feel welcomed. It's a year of building the St. Benedict's Girls Prep Division and our relationship with the entire School."

NEW SPRING PROJECTS

The Spring Phase keeps innovating with new courses and updates to longstanding ones. Here's a sampling:

Fix a flat tire? Check! Learn to renovate a room? Check! Created by Dean of the Girls Prep Division Analisa Branco, "I Am Woman," a girls-only Spring Phase class focused on life outside of the classroom. Don't forget to stop by the *The Benedict's News* room to see the makeover (below). Empowered women work to empower women!



START A NON-PROFIT BUSINESS

History teacher Susanne Mueller wanted to teach students how to start and run a business with a social conscience. The St. Benedict's Garden offered the perfect venue. Students in two classes created the Gray Bee Garden-Soil to Plate business. For more information, email graybeegarden@sbp.org.

GRAY BEE GARDEN





**35 YEARS
DEDICATED
TO THE HIVE**

Gray Bee social media lit up on April 1 with congratulations and gratitude from all corners of the St. Benedict's Prep community. The date marked the milestone work anniversary for Candace Bradsher H'99 who celebrated 35 years at The Hive. The Assistant to Abbot Melvin Valvano, O.S.B. '56, Annual Giving Officer and liaison to the Alumni Association, her current job titles cover a mere fraction of the service provided to St. Benedict's since joining the School in 1986. She is also a longtime faith leader, and last year, stepped in to teach after the sudden death of English teacher Bill Petrick.

"We'd be in a lot of trouble without Candace," said Headmaster Fr. Edwin Leahy, O.S.B. '63 in a tribute to Ms. Bradsher during Virtual Convo. "We're grateful for her commitment to us, to the kids and to the alumni. It's an honor to work with her all these years."



GOOD PROBLEM TO HAVE

RECONFIGURING THE PROPERTY FOR ENROLLMENT GROWTH AND IN-PERSON LEARNING

Enrollment at The Hive is growing in every division. In fact, with more than 900 students enrolled for the 2021-22 academic year, admissions increased 20% since St. Benedict's Prep adopted a K-12 model in 2017. The good news, however, comes with challenges. "We needed more classroom space to accommodate all of this growth and our entire community coming back to learn on the Property" said Associate Headmaster for Academics Michelle Tuorto H'16.

Earlier this year, faculty and administrative leadership strategized on the creation of more physical space. The plan needed to prioritize dedicated space for the Girls

GROWTH AT-A-GLANCE

Increases in enrollment drove the capital project to create more classroom space on the Property.

20% increase in total enrollment since 2017.

110 young women enrolled in the Girls Prep Division – a 29% increase over the previous year.

Double the number of fourth and fifth grade classes with two sections in each grade.

900+ kids learning on the Property for the 2021-22 academic year.

Francis to a mezzanine in St. Mary's Hall with room to conference with students and hold meet-and-greets with representatives from visiting colleges.

Theatre storage in Cawley Hall was also reconfigured, which established two new classrooms, while still allowing an appropriate amount of space for Drama Guild productions. Cawley Hall will be home for the Girls Prep Division for the current academic year; all of the girls' classes meet in the facility with the exception of art. Additionally, to make way for two sections of sixth graders, a computer lab in St. Mary's Hall was transformed into a classroom for one section. With the

Boys Prep Division utilizing new classrooms in other buildings, this freed up space for the sixth grade in St. Mary's Hall. The move also allows the fourth and fifth grades in the Elementary Division to add a second class.

"In a day when Catholic schools are closing by the dozens, this is a good problem to have," said Mrs. Tuorto, noting that

additional physical space is required if St. Benedict's continues to enroll more students. St. Benedict's is currently exploring options to purchase or lease property near or adjacent to 520 MLK Boulevard.

Construction on all the new classrooms was completed by the start of Summer Phase on July 26. Mrs. Tuorto gave a shoutout to Dean of Administration Michael Scanlan H'97 who oversaw the timely completion of the project. "Mike kept everything moving," she stated. Given the logistics and time frame, "We wouldn't have been ready for Summer Phase without him."

MIDDLE DIVISION GROWS A GRADE

When Fall Term begins in September, the Middle Division at St. Benedict's Prep will encompass Grades 6-8. The change represents more than a structural shift. According to Dean of the Middle Division Jim Duffy H'16, "The addition of sixth grade will establish a culture that is now three years long. We can do so much more with the kids in three years than two."

The change has many positive implications for student-leadership. Sixth graders will have more time to orient to the Group System and prepare to be Assistant Group Leaders in seventh grade. The three-year Division will also add two new groups and four student-leader positions to the leadership structure. Sixth graders will join the Middle Division for Fall Term. The requirement to attend Summer Phase will commence in 2022.

POWERFUL PARTNERSHIPS: HIGHER-ED ALLIANCES EXPAND EDUCATION AT THE HIVE

Maybe it was inevitable that St. Benedict's Prep, surrounded by institutions of higher learning, would forge meaningful alliances with its neighbors. For years, early college partnerships with Rutgers-Newark, NJIT and Seton Hall University have made it possible for St. Benedict's students to earn college credits while still at The Hive. Now Gray Bees are benefiting from additional higher-ed partnerships.

During the past school year, some students participated in an ongoing writing collaboration with The New School, and the Gray Bee Investment Club gained momentum through its involvement with Georgetown University. More opportunities are in the works.

WRITE ON, GRAY BEES!

Through contacts at The New School, Robert J. DiQuollo '65, Chair of the Board of Trustees, became aware of WriteOn NYC, a program that provides passionate writers to New York City schools. He suggested bringing it to The Hive and, crucially, was instrumental in lining up necessary funding. Michelle Tuorto H'16, Associate Headmaster for Academics, explained that any opportunity to bring in professionals to engage with students enriches them. "Working with professionals becomes a vote of confidence for the students. It makes them see they are capable of a lot."

WriteOn NYC was integrated into an existing course, Creative Writing and Media, taught by Bimpé Fageyinbo. She worked with two fellows from The New School, Tideneck Haileselassie and Rob Madison, to incorporate the effort into her goals for the course. The fellows, MFA students at The New School, brought a theme of "Revisioning," described on the WriteOn NYC website as designed to "convey how any type of writing or art (including, you could say, the art of living) might benefit from a revisioning mindset."

The New School fellows focused on doing creative writing exercises with students, Ms. Fageyinbo recalled. One assignment was to write a review of a music album. Afterward, students told her they couldn't listen to songs the same way anymore. "It put them in a position to think about writing from both a writer's and a reader's perspective," she observed.

Creative Writing and Media ordinarily involves students making a product, but, because the course was virtual, the class product became a poetry reading. Unsurprisingly, the COVID-19 pandemic was a theme in the reading. "They spoke about how they felt," said Ms. Fageyinbo. "Creating is necessary when you can't do what you're used to doing; it offers space to travel, in a sense, and to reflect on the year." WriteOn NYC will be part of the Creative Writing and Media course this year, as well, taught by Ms. Fageyinbo in conjunction with two new New School fellows and incorporating a new theme.

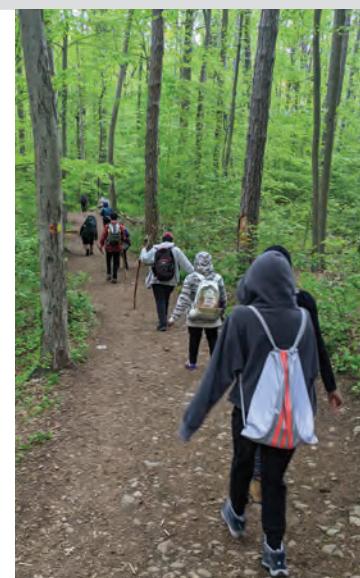
GEORGETOWN STUDENTS INVEST IN BENEDICT'S

The pandemic also turned out to be an auspicious time to launch the Gray Bee Investment Club, creating the opportunity for students to cultivate financial literacy skills and learn how to navigate careers in finance. The club has been enhanced through the participation of Georgetown University students who are members of the Georgetown University Student Investment Fund. The college students help bridge the gap between St. Benedict's students and the world of finance — all while introducing them to Georgetown college life and cementing the bond between the two schools.

MORE TO COME

Plans are underway to grow higher-ed partnerships in other areas of The Hive. The Vox Institute, an initiative established in 2016 to assist public, private and charter schools interested in adapting the educational model of St. Benedict's, is planning a partnership with the Center for Community Research and Engagement at Seton Hall University for Fall Term. The collaboration will pair Seton Hall undergraduates with Vox Fellows — students from the Girls and Boys Prep Divisions who educate schools on the St. Benedict's model — on two community service projects.

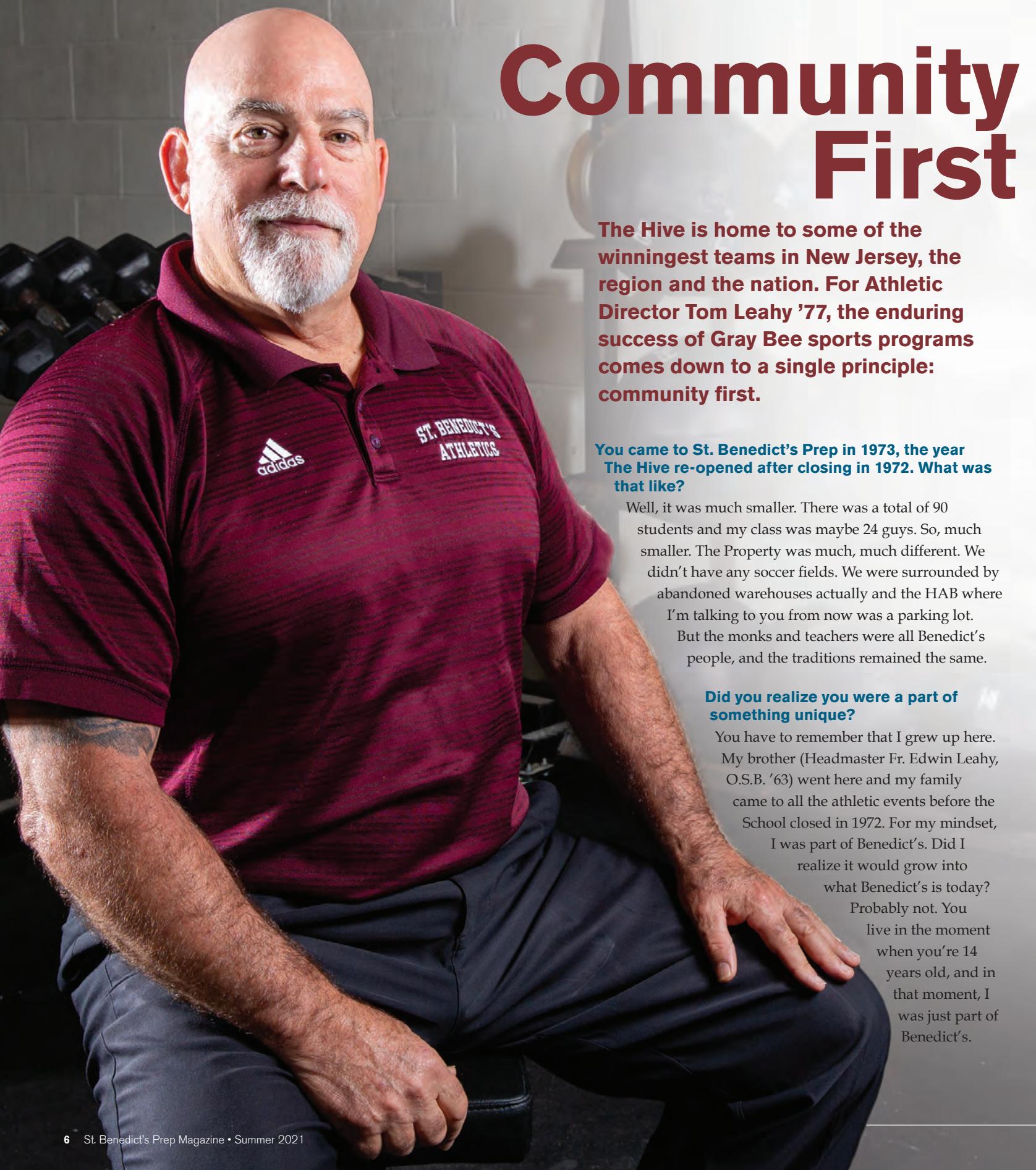
The coming school year will be a richer one due to higher-ed alliances. Mrs. Tuorto is enthusiastic about the boost these partnerships give students: "They help us meet kids where they are, whether they are struggling or high-achieving. Then we can help them go as far as they can go."



TROOP 1973

The pack number for The Hive's newly formed Boy Scouts of America (BSA) troop needs little to no explanation. 1973 was the year St. Benedict's Prep re-opened following its closure the previous year and the number holds significant meaning for adults and kids involved in the new venture.

The BSA troop at St. Benedict's was established last year and began meeting and working on basic skills in the spring. "It's a great opportunity for our kids to more clearly define their leadership roles and get in the outdoors," said Daniel Kane '03, Middle Division Latin teacher and one of the adult organizers of the program. In keeping with the co-institutional structure of the School, there is one troop for boys and one for the girls. Current participants are mostly Middle Division students and Mr. Kane expects the program to extend to the Elementary and Prep Divisions. "We plan to keep it going until they turn 18," he stated. "It's our job to keep building enthusiasm and make sure our kids advance."



Community First

The Hive is home to some of the winningest teams in New Jersey, the region and the nation. For Athletic Director Tom Leahy '77, the enduring success of Gray Bee sports programs comes down to a single principle: community first.

You came to St. Benedict's Prep in 1973, the year The Hive re-opened after closing in 1972. What was that like?

Well, it was much smaller. There was a total of 90 students and my class was maybe 24 guys. So, much smaller. The Property was much, much different. We didn't have any soccer fields. We were surrounded by abandoned warehouses actually and the HAB where I'm talking to you from now was a parking lot. But the monks and teachers were all Benedict's people, and the traditions remained the same.

Did you realize you were a part of something unique?

You have to remember that I grew up here. My brother (Headmaster Fr. Edwin Leahy, O.S.B. '63) went here and my family came to all the athletic events before the School closed in 1972. For my mindset, I was part of Benedict's. Did I realize it would grow into what Benedict's is today? Probably not. You

live in the moment when you're 14 years old, and in that moment, I was just part of Benedict's.

You taught and coached at The Hive for a couple of years after college, left, and then came back in 1992. How come?

I went into the corporate world and spent six or seven years in the telecommunications industry. I was not really happy. My passion was always in teaching and coaching. In my career here I have taught religion, health, phys ed, a business course and a physical science course. I coached wrestling, started the CrossFit program, and always did the Backpacking Project for Spring Phase.

What have been your guiding principles since becoming Athletic Director in 2015?

My philosophy for being an Athletic Director (AD) is to provide our coaches and our athletic teams with whatever they need to make the program successful. That can encompass everything from equipment to training and being able to travel and play games all over the country. Whatever they need to succeed.

Sports have always been a huge part The Hive. How do you manage the expectations of students and families who choose St. Benedict's because they want to play a particular sport?

The easiest way to manage expectations is to be brutally honest. If you are coming to Benedict's just to be an athlete, the demands of the School are going to be very difficult unless you buy in. You have to be more than an athlete. You have to be a student. You have to be a community member.

"We're all on the same page here...There is no one sport that is more important than the whole community."

Very few people walk in here and play a varsity sport. You have to pay your dues, and when you're paying your dues, usually what happens is you buy into the community. It's no longer, 'I'm here to play soccer or basketball or run track.' It becomes, 'I'm here to be a part of the community, and my sport is something I have to be good at and like to do.' As AD, I don't make the decision of who can play. The coaches do that. But I'll tell you one thing! The coaches put the best players on the field who do everything they are supposed to be doing. There are no automatics here. Everything is earned.

There are a lot of athletic programs that aspire to that kind of integrity. Why is St. Benedict's able to do it on such a consistent basis?

We're all on the same page here. From the academic side, the Headmaster and all the way through, anyone who works here understands that we are about community first. There is no one sport that is more important than the whole community. Our values are our values, and we don't change them for a sports team, or the Drama Guild or anything else that goes on here.

Speaking of values, you've been a big proponent of a partnership with Victory Road Leadership Development Group (see story on page 13) to take student leadership to the next level. Why do you think it's a good fit for St. Benedict's?

A few years ago, I took some athletes to a Victory Road offering. It showcased a Leadership Reaction Course they do for high school athletes. When I saw what they did, I thought, 'This is us.' It's another level up of what we're doing in terms of developing grit and staying with something until you get it. It transcended athletics. We started with the Leadership Reaction Course for our potential leaders, and it's really grown from there.

Turning back to Athletics, COVID-19 presented so many obstacles for Gray Bee teams last year. What impressed you most about how student-athletes and coaches responded?

I was impressed with how coaches were able to transition and keep their teams together, even when we couldn't compete. Fall and winter there were Benedict's teams that couldn't compete much because we would only play against teams that were testing regularly or would submit to a rapid test before they came on the Property. We weren't going to compromise the health of our community to get a match.

We did manage to get 10 games in for basketball. We managed to get a couple of fencing meets and the soccer team played a club schedule. In the spring, baseball and track resumed. The crew team got back on the river. Coaches and kids were thrilled. It wasn't normal, but it was more normal.

What will Athletics look like for this current academic year?

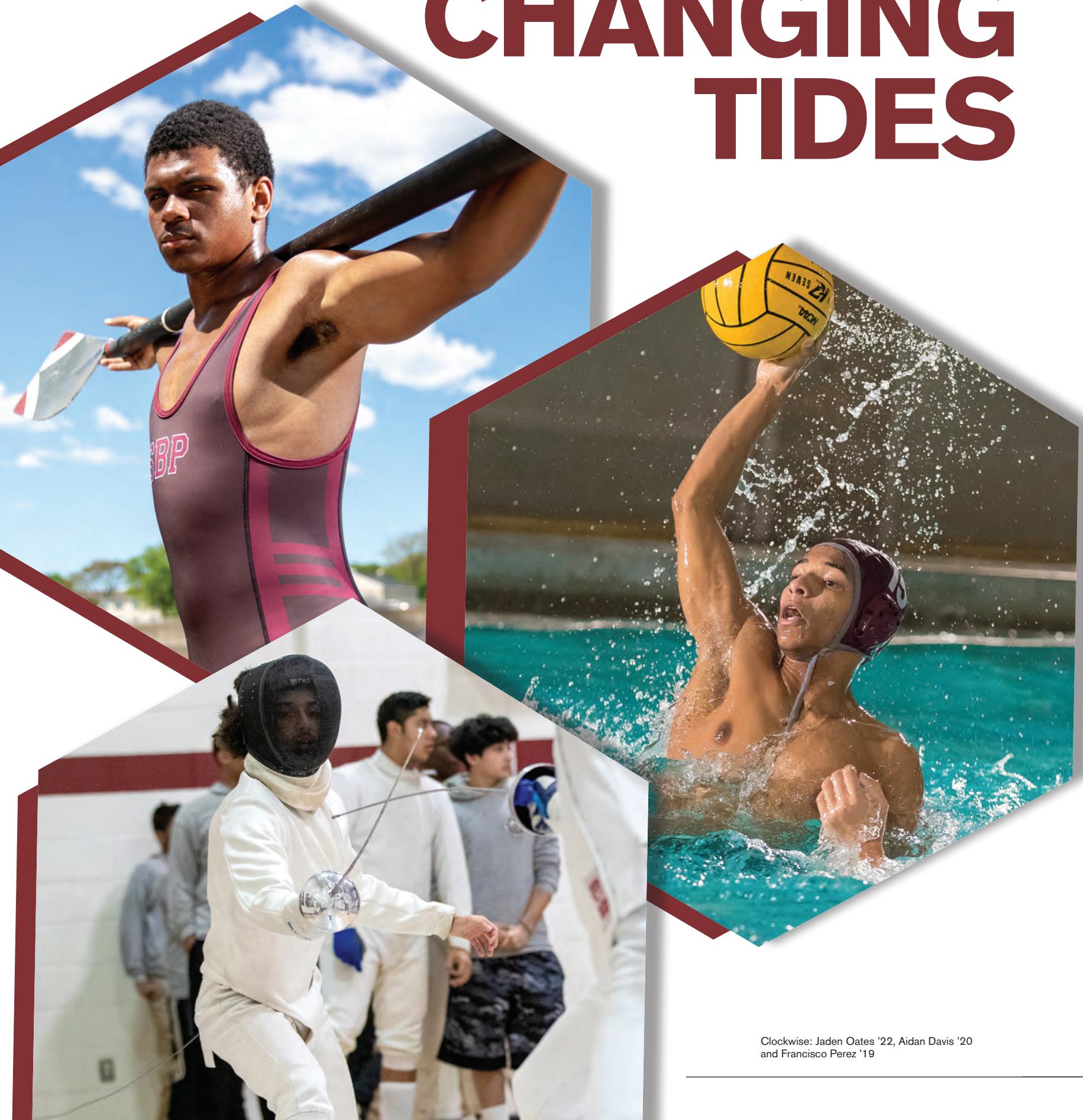
I'm hoping we're able to return to how things were. Questions are still out there, 'Will we be able to travel overnight?' But as far as our local games, we've got a full schedule for our teams in the fall, and we've mostly scheduled for the winter. We're going right back to what we were doing and will make any adjustments if we have to.

What's made you most proud to be a Gray Bee this year?

I'm proud every day coming to work here. St. Benedict's is a special place. To be a part of it and to be able to contribute is such a privilege. It's not hard to get up and come in every day and spend the hours I spend. It's pretty easy as a matter of fact. Because every day you can see that there's a difference being made, and if you're a small part of that difference, it's easy to come in and do the work.

During his nearly 30-year career at St. Benedict's Prep, Tom Leahy '77 has served as director of annual giving, assistant coach of soccer and wrestling, and teacher of health, science, religion and physical education. The 2021-22 academic year marks his seventh year as Athletic Director. Mr. Leahy holds a bachelor's degree in health and physical education and is a graduate of Central Connecticut State University. 

CHANGING TIDES



Clockwise: Jaden Oates '22, Aidan Davis '20 and Francisco Perez '19

Crew. Fencing. Water Polo. Three sports that have long been the domain of more affluent schools are well-established and thriving at The Hive. As more Gray Bees have the opportunity to compete and grow as rowers, fencers and water polo players, they are being changed by these sports and also changing them for the better.

Ivan Jordan '18 was about to be surprised. It was the fall of 2014 and Jordan, who had played no sports prior to St. Benedict's Prep, was intrigued by the novice crew program. "I didn't like running," he remembered with a laugh and, as a freshman, assumed rowing would require little of it. Jordan, who now rows for Boston College, watched as gear and knapsacks were loaded onto the bus, and the driver left for the Kearny Boathouse without any passengers. Then, every member of the team ran the four-and-a-half miles to the boathouse on the Passaic River for water practice.

The anecdote is telling because it illustrates the lengths Gray Bee crew goes to develop the Benedict's ethos of persistence, discipline and teamwork that has propelled the program to significant success entering its 11th year. "Most other teams are bussed to practice by their school district or students drive to practice in their own vehicles," said Head Coach Craig White '04, who began crew in 2011 because kids asked for a program. "It's a logistical hurdle unique to our program."

In actuality there have been many obstacles Gray Bee crew has had to navigate over the last decade. Elite programs have a well of resources and some now expose students to the sport as early as middle school. Boats, trailers and other equipment require significant investment. And there is the issue of access to the Passaic River. Though competitive rowing thrived in Brick City in the last half of the 19th century, it evaporated by the early 1900s. Today, no boathouse exists within the city of Newark or Essex County to provide entrée to the water, though they are established on the Bergen and Hudson county side of the river. "In order to get better at the sport, you need as much time on the water as possible," Mr. White explained. "We don't have a space that is ours. It's a logistical problem that makes life more difficult."

Despite the challenges, Mr. White and his team of assistant coaches, freshman English teacher Hannah Stafford and Eric Lombeyda '15, focus on the areas where they can gain an edge, like the fact that the majority of the team's competitors are also introduced to the sport as freshmen. Hence, the Gray Bee regimen of running every day to water practice. Year-round training. Long practices on ergometers, the indoor rowing machines that build cardiovascular strength. And making the most of the time the team gets to row on the water.

"We never turn down a water practice," said Jaden Oates '22,

who rowed in the junior eight boat this year. "The mastery of rowing happens on the water. You need that time, and when we get on the water, we make the most of it with long, long practices."

"We erg a lot but there's only so much you can get from erging," added Jayden Dasher '22, who also rowed in the junior eight boat. "We're going up against teams who have year-round docks. But we're self-driven and motivated. We didn't let COVID-19 stop us this year and just kept going."

"The mastery of rowing happens on the water. You need that time, and when we get on the water, we make the most of it with long, long practices."

THE BAR IS HIGH

In the decade in which crew grew from nine to more than 60 rowers, it has developed into something much bigger than athletics. Crew is a way of life, one that demands that Gray Bees bring their best, every single day. "The crew team is held to a lot of standards," said Mr. White. "We really focus on making sure each kid under our care is growing completely — academically, athletically and interpersonally — and that they become better people by the time they graduate."

This growth mindset impacts Gray Bees as individuals and as a team. "With crew there's always a goal and you're never done," explained Dasher. "For me, [rowing] helps keep my grades up. It keeps me productive. There's so much you have to do to commit to the team." Oates pointed to the sense of camaraderie that is built from hours spent learning to row in unison. "We're really one big family," he explained. "It's so attaching, you don't want to let go of it. When you're in a boat with nine people, everyone depends on one another to do the right thing. That dependency and consistency helps out everyone on the team and it affects more people in a positive way."

There is also the expectation that each class will break new barriers and raise the bar for every rower who follows them. Ivan Jordan remembered how the first class of rowers, who were seniors his freshman year, set the tone. "They were excited to keep the team going and to build it up for the next generation," he said. Jordan introduced his younger brothers to



new possibilities when he received the Bill Braxton Memorial Regatta Scholarship his senior year, an award that recognizes two high school rowers from Philadelphia and the surrounding area for their courage, conviction and dedication to community.

PARADIGM SHIFT

More breakthroughs came in 2020-21, even as the team managed the added challenges of the pandemic. At the Stotesbury Cup Regatta in May, the St. Benedict's junior eight boat advanced to the semifinals for the first time in program history.

Three rowers from the boat, Dasher, Alvaro Paulin '22 and Yamill Harris '22, earned spots at the Olympic Development Program operated by US Rowing in Florida this summer.

They are the first Gray Bees

to attend the highly competitive

program, which develops and

supports rowing's most promising

athletes.

In July, the St. Benedict's

Prep crew team was named one of

five

recipients of a national grant

from the A Most Beautiful Thing Inclusion Fund (AMBTIF) to provide

greater

access

to

the

sport

of

rowing

among

underserved

students.

The

team

is

getting

national

recognition

and

with

this

massive

grant.

Arshay Cooper, rower and author of *A Most Beautiful Thing*, met with Gray Bee crew in 2020.

A GAME-CHANGING GRANT

With a \$75,000 gift from the A Most Beautiful Thing Inclusion Fund, St. Benedict's crew will have resources to bolster its coaching staff and expand to the Middle Division and Girls Prep Division. The grant provides 10 new ergometers and a pair of two-man boats to enhance training and competitive opportunities. The fund is under the umbrella of The George Pocock Rowing Foundation.

Crew began at St. Benedict's in 2011 thanks to the time, talent and contributions of Tom Quinn '62, Carlos Fariñas '85 and Katharine Thornton.

\$75,000 gift (see sidebar) will provide critical resources that will take the program to the next level of excellence.

"We've overcome most of the logistical barriers that stymie growth," said Mr. White. "Everything the Class of 2022 has achieved feeds its way down to the younger classes who say, 'Wow. It's possible for me to do this.' There's a paradigm shift of what is possible now that the team is getting national recognition and with this massive grant."

DIVERSIFYING THE SPORT

There's no doubt that the crew program has opened doors for Gray Bees who have gone on to successful college careers at Boston College, Boston University, Villanova University, Rutgers-New Brunswick, NJIT, Virginia Tech and other institutions. At the same time, St. Benedict's rowers are changing the predominately white sport, growing more competitive and compelling programs to acknowledge the value of diversity. Jordan and his teammates had always wanted to

reach the second day of competition at the Stotesbury Regatta during their time at Benedict's. When the junior eight boat accomplished the feat in May, he sent an all caps text to the teammates he still counts as his best friends to this day: "THEY MADE IT!" "St. Benedict's is really performing and making a name for itself," said Jordan.

"St. Benedict's is showing that people of color can do this, the program can be successful and that the team can thrive in this type of environment," said Oates. Dasher, who hopes to land a spot on the US Rowing Junior National Team and become an Olympic rower, added, "We're showing people of color that going to the Olympic Development Program is possible. That you can earn a spot in a top-tier environment. That if you show up and put in the work good things can happen."

There have been other satisfying wins. Mr. White recalled a recent encounter with a prep school crew team that appeared to dismiss the possibility that they might be beaten by the predominately Black and Hispanic St. Benedict's team. The Gray Bees outraced their opponents, "which felt good to watch," said Mr. White. "That's the whole point of the program. Kids learn that if they put in the hard work and dedication every day, if they put in the time and effort and focus on the right things, they can go up and win against anyone."

They are the first Gray Bees to attend the highly competitive program, which develops and supports rowing's most promising athletes. In July, the St. Benedict's Prep crew team was named one of five recipients of a national grant from the A Most Beautiful Thing Inclusion Fund (AMBTIF) to provide greater access to the sport of rowing among underserved students. The

team is getting national recognition and with this massive grant," said Mr. White. "Everything the Class of 2022 has achieved feeds its way down to the younger classes who say, 'Wow. It's possible for me to do this.' There's a paradigm shift of what is possible now that the team is getting national recognition and with this massive grant."

There's no doubt that the crew program has opened doors for Gray Bees who have gone on to successful college careers at Boston College, Boston University, Villanova University, Rutgers-New Brunswick, NJIT, Virginia Tech and other institutions. At the same time, St. Benedict's rowers are changing the predominately white sport, growing more competitive and compelling programs to acknowledge the value of diversity. Jordan and his teammates had always wanted to

UPHOLDING A LEGACY

Like rowing, fencing bouts were once a regular occurrence in the City of Newark as several high schools sponsored teams. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Olympic fencers and collegiate champions regularly emerged from Barringer and Essex Catholic high schools. By the time St. Benedict's Prep re-opened its doors in 1973, "Fencing had all but disappeared from the city," said Head Fencing Coach Rich Molina '06.

Essex Catholic, which closed in 2003, still sported a team and fencing got a big boost in Newark when The Hive started its modern day program in 1985. The program's beginnings were inauspicious. The squad was limited to foils. Gray Bees practiced with broomsticks in the cafeteria. Instead of fencing strips, a playing area constructed of metal or conductive material, kids learned how to handle blades on makeshift rubber mats bound by removable tape.

Yet under the direction of Head Fencing Coach Derrick Hoff H'96, Gray Bees quickly gained ground. The program went undefeated for four seasons, dominated the State Prep Championships, and was crowned squad champion of the NJSIAA in 1990. As the program matured, it continued to perform under the guidance of Jeff Austin '96, and now Mr. Molina, and assistant coaches Idris Mitchell '11 and Elliot McFarland '12. In the four seasons preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, St. Benedict's notched two first place titles and one second place title at the State Prep Championships. The team went 13-3 in 2020, and Nolan Williams '20 led the sabre contingent to first place at the State Prep Championship.

FROM THE GROUND UP

Even with decades of success and investments like the state-of-the-art Cetrulo Family Fencing Center (see sidebar), some David vs. Goliath realities remain for fencers at St. Benedict's. The equipment is extensive (white jacket, underarm protectors, mask and body cords, glove, knickers and blades) and expensive, which is why the sport isn't widely available in underserved communities. Gray Bees also regularly face off against opponents who've trained for years before joining a high school squad.

"Ninety-nine percent of our fencers learn how to fence

at St. Benedict's," said Mr. Molina. In New Jersey, which boasts roughly 60 competitive secondary school programs, it's not unusual for fencers to have prior experience in clubs and academies. "Club sports are a really big deal. It's a big disadvantage for us."

Like most Gray Bee fencers, Francisco Perez '19 discovered the sport freshman year. "I'd never fenced a day in my life before St. Benedict's Prep," said Francisco, now an épéeist on the Drew University men's fencing team. "Having little experience was challenging. You have to learn it from the ground up."

BENEDICT'S TEAM MINDSET

Despite the lack of experience, "We catch up in ways our competitors can't," said Mr. Molina. Practices start during Summer Phase and ramp up in intensity to six days a week by November. Fencers internalize the sheer will to win. "We would carry the mentality that we would beat every team we were going to fence even if we lost," said Francisco. "It transcends sports. With the right mentality and giving your all to keep on pushing, you can overcome any kind of adversity in life."

Also unique to fencing is the Benedict's team mindset. Though fencers face their opponents alone, "We place great emphasis on being a team and believing, supporting and relying on each other," Mr. Molina noted. That was certainly an adjustment for Nolan Williams, who started the sport at age seven and trained with the Fencers' Club in New York and The Peter Westbrook Foundation.

"Fencing was always an individual sport for me," said Nolan, now a sabreist on the Ohio State University team. "It was difficult adjusting to the team aspect of it. You can have the best day fencing and still lose terribly as a team." Nolan, who finished 12th at the USA Fencing National Championships in 2020, believes he was well served by the team-oriented focus at St. Benedict's. "You need to be working with the team instead of against it."

INFLUENCING THE SPORT

The team-first ethos is one sign of St. Benedict's influence on high school fencing in New Jersey. Exposing generations of students of color to the sport is another. "I really like how Benedict's gives opportunities to inner city kids to play a sport they wouldn't have been exposed to and excel," said Francisco. Looking ahead to the 37th season and welcoming members from the Girls Prep Division, Mr. Molina reflected, "Coach Hoff's teams worked really hard and created something really special. It's a legacy we're holding up and putting our own twist on it."



**OVERCOMING THE ODDS**

There are only six public swimming pools serving the more than 280,000 residents of Newark, and even fewer places for kids to learn how to swim or get better at it. That's a huge hurdle to overcome when your job is directing competitive high school swimming and water polo programs for athletes with little to no swim experience. It's a predicament Head Swimming and Water Polo Coach Jose Cruz '97 is uniquely qualified to solve.

As a freshman at St. Benedict's Prep, Mr. Cruz wanted to join the water polo team, which was just getting underway in the early 1990s. Only problem, he'd never learned to swim. "I had no idea what water polo involved," Mr. Cruz recounted. "I told Jim Schmidt, who was the coach at the time, 'I want to play. I don't know how to swim.'" The coach rubbed his goatee for a moment and said, "Alright."

Swimming and water polo got Mr. Cruz to Montclair State University where he swam freestyle. He coached at the club level for many years before returning to The Hive in 2016 to lead the

swimming program. Mr. Cruz took over water polo after the death of Spencer Vespole '09, an All-American water polo player at Bowdoin College and beloved coach of the Gray Bee team since 2013.

SHOW UP AND DO YOUR BEST

Thirty years after water polo began at St. Benedict's Prep, the program still works with kids who've never played the sport, have little swim experience or need to strengthen swimming skills. The two sports are inexorably linked as the speed, endurance and strength players need to play water polo is developed through swimming. "We get a lot of kids who don't swim or are playing water polo for the first time," said Mr. Cruz. "We ask two things of them: show up and do your best. Everything else will work out."

Aidan Davis '20 did have swim experience. He'd trained for a few years with a local YMCA team before showing up for water polo practice in the fall. "I'd never played water polo," he stated. "There's definitely a learning curve with the sport. You have to learn how to move your body around the water and dribble the ball while swimming." Aidan liked the team-oriented aspect of the game. Even if Gray Bees weren't as experienced (as their opponents pointed out), he observed that, "Chemistry and teamwork can outshine people who are more talented."

Benedict's water polo players, most of whom are also swim team members, regularly go up against teams equipped with more advantages. In New Jersey, three of the four private prep schools sponsoring water polo teams charge tuition that is at least triple the amount of St. Benedict's. "The fact that we have this in Newark and can offer it to kids who may not have swum before is really significant," said Aidan, who now attends Georgetown University. "Despite any disadvantages we might have had, there was always a determination and the willingness to win."

"We do a good job of overcoming the odds," agreed Mr. Cruz. He believes lessons from both sports he coaches extend beyond The Hive. "Our kids are tough, or they get tough doing this. They are able to fail and face adversity in a controlled situation. They learn to trust, overcome failure and then build a foundation and house that they get to live in for college."

GRAY BEES BELONG

Aidan, meanwhile, took a minute to think about how Gray Bee water polo is changing the sport. His response sums up what every water polo player, fencer and rower from Benedict's might feel walking into competitions where little diversity is represented. "When we go to a tournament, you look to your left, you look to your right, and few people look like you. The fact that we are able to compete so well is a good feeling," he said. "We're proving — not that we are worthy — but that we belong. That is important." **B**



Gray Bees Grow as Leaders

Partnership with Victory Road expands leadership training

When the first Convocation of the academic year was held on July 26, it wasn't just one class of freshmen

learning the ways of St. Benedict's Prep. Sixteen months of virtual and hybrid learning during the COVID-19 pandemic imposed a whole new set of challenges for community and student-leadership. In grades 9-11 of the Boys Prep Division for instance, only the juniors, aka UDIIIs, had experienced life on the Property, and the current UDII class had its freshman year interrupted when school went virtual in March 2020. There is also the two-year-old Girls Prep Division, which spent most of last year in Virtual Convo and will also be experiencing many Benedict's traditions for the first time this year.

"Buying into the culture of Benedict's is seeing it," explained Associate Headmaster for Leadership and Community Glenn Cassidy, Ed.D. '90. A freshman watches the Freshman Counselor help the younger brothers in his group and thinks, "I could be that guy next year." An Assistant Group Leader gains confidence in the role and sets his aspirations on becoming Section Leader. "Most of our kids haven't seen it," Dr.

Cassidy continued. "This year especially, the

more we can put in front of kids to be ready for leadership, the better off they will be."

MORE LEADERS, NOT FEWER

"Expanding leadership possibilities is even more important now with the uncertainty and frustrations kids are experiencing as a result of this virus," agreed Headmaster Fr. Edwin D. Leahy, O.S.B. '63. "You need more leaders, not fewer, in these situations." To accomplish this, St. Benedict's is growing its partnership with Victory Road Leadership Development

"This year especially, the more we can put in front of kids to be ready for leadership, the better off they will be."

Group, an organization dedicated to advancing leadership in high performance schools, companies, professional sports teams and other institutions. Victory Road's approach to leadership can be understood by its motto, "Leaders are made, not born."

The Leadership Reaction Course launched the partnership four years ago, and student-leaders and faculty have worked closely with Chris Howe, a former U.S. Navy SEAL and member of Victory Road's senior leadership

team. The course presents a number of challenges to UDIIIs applying for senior leadership positions, which is followed up with sessions for reflection and discussion. Having the opportunity to perform under pressure, creatively solve a problem and articulate the kind of leader you want to be, has become an integral part of selecting the senior leadership team.

INTRODUCING WILDE

Anticipating the challenges of bringing The Hive together in 2021, St. Benedict's collaborated with Victory Road again on a new course. The task was to prepare UDIIIs — who'd been physically apart for a year and hadn't witnessed senior leadership in action nor developed essential skills — to assume leadership of the School in 2021. Victory Road's founder Chris Firriolo and Chris Howe developed WILDE (Wilderness Inspired Leadership Development Expedition) and four groups of aspiring leaders from the Boys and Girls Prep Divisions participated in the inaugural program last March.

The program is an intensive, 36-hour expedition to Stokes State Forest that takes Gray Bees far out of their comfort zones

Story continues on next page.



complete to graduate from St. Benedict's, and assuming the day-to-day operations of the School senior year. "I'm looking to create more situations where kids are given bigger challenges that they can be successful at, gain self-confidence and feel more independent."

NEW LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES

Expanding the partnership with Victory Road will involve rite-of-passage experiences that follow the Freshman Overnight and Backpacking Project. Every sophomore (or UDI) will participate in a challenge next year that will likely be water-based. WILDE will be worked into the academic year and is expected to be a requirement of every UDII. The Leadership Reaction Course will continue as part of the selection process of senior leaders, and Grit, Guts & Glory, which was introduced to the Class of 2021, will be further developed for rising senior classes.

"I'm looking to create more situations where kids are given bigger challenges that they can be successful at, gain self-confidence and feel more independent."

Victory Road is excited about the possibilities. "Many organizations like the idea of empowering leaders," said Mr. Howe. "Very few adults are willing to walk five miles in the wrong direction to teach kids a lesson. St. Benedict's Prep values growth more than anyone else and it's such a privilege to work with a school that's helping to inspire and develop leaders."

"WILDE is a step up for us," explained Fr. Edwin. "It involves a lot more mental than physical challenges in terms of thinking under pressure and working as a team under the time constraint. It's a whole different level of intensity." Rather than a one-year fix to rebuild community following the COVID-19 pandemic, the Headmaster wants WILDE and other Victory Road facilitated experiences to be a permanent part of leadership training at The Hive.

"When we lose kids, we lose them between 10th and 11th grade," said Fr. Edwin, noting that there's a void between the Freshman Overnight and The Trail, two seismic experiences every student needs to

Learn how you can support expanded leadership training at The Hive by contacting Chief Advancement Officer Mike Fazio at (973) 792-5777 or mfazio@sbp.org.



BUILDING BRIDGES

Expanded leadership training for Gray Bees is now reaching beyond The Hive. In July, St. Benedict's Prep students and members of the New Jersey State Police participated in The Building Bridges Wilderness Inspired Leadership Development (WILD) Expedition, facilitated by Victory Road Leadership Development Group.

The two-day, overnight program, held on the School's property in Sandyston, N.J., is designed to be physically, mentally and emotionally challenging for both kids and police officers. The larger aim of the experience is to promote and accelerate individual transformation and team synergy to build bridges between law enforcement and the St. Benedict's community.

Headmaster Fr. Edwin Leahy, O.S.B. '63 said the initiative was, "important and critical," given the deeply-rooted tensions between communities and law enforcement and believes the pilot program could be a model to develop cultural acceptance and trust. WILD Expeditions will continue throughout the summer and fall.

Donors Make a Difference

SCHOLARSHIP FUND ESTABLISHED IN MEMORY OF FORMER BOARD CHAIRMAN



William H. Connolly H'91

The St. Benedict's Prep Board of Trustees has established the William H. Connolly H'91 Memorial Scholarship Fund to honor its longest-serving member, who passed away in February. Mr. Connolly was a Trustee for nearly 35 years — and Board Chairman for a dozen. To date, close to \$1.4 million has been given or pledged.

Mr. Connolly, while not a graduate of The Hive, carried on a tradition of service to St. Benedict's from his

father, William Sr., who graduated from St. Benedict's in 1934 and served on the School's Board of Trustees from 1977 until his death in 1986. William Jr. filled his father's seat on the Board and stayed on until his passing, stepping down as Board Chairman last summer, when he handed on the torch to Robert J. DiQuollo '65.

FUND WILL BENEFIT DESERVING STUDENTS

Mike Fazio, Chief Advancement Officer, said the fund will be used to offset tuition for academically deserving but financially needy students. Even before the announcement of the William H. Connolly H'91 Memorial Scholarship Fund, gifts have arrived in memory of Mr. Connolly and have been directed to the fund.

"He was a special guy, to say the least," said Mr. Fazio. "Bill was a good example to our kids of how a true leader conducts himself, steady at the wheel, but prepared to take calculated risks. He had the best interests of the School at heart, and that's what drove him. I'm sorry he's not here to experience everything that is happening at the School, but I believe he is seeing it from up above."

Those wishing to make a gift to the William H. Connolly H'91 Memorial Scholarship Fund can do so by contacting Chief Advancement Officer Mike Fazio at (973) 792-5777 or mfazio@sbp.org. Online gifts can be made at www.sbp.org/giving.

PLANNED GIFT OF LIFE INSURANCE 'PAYS FOR THE FUTURE'



Karen and Bob Hahn '70

A generous alumnus, Bob Hahn '70, and his wife, Karen, recently made a planned gift of a \$150,000 life insurance policy to St. Benedict's Prep. Mr. Hahn, a retired civil engineer who lives in Lebanon, N.J., got the idea from a former classmate, an insurance broker who himself had made a planned gift of life insurance on the occasion of their 50th class reunion. "He took out an insurance policy on himself and named Benedict's as beneficiary. It sounded like a good idea to me also."

"Bob is a real 'Benedict's guy.' Bob has for decades and decades thought of the community and has always been so generous," said Tom Faulkner '86, Leadership Gifts Officer. "A gift today is awesome and pays for today. The gift of life insurance is a beacon of hope and pays for the future."

"It was a painless experience, and I'm glad to do it," said Mr. Hahn. "A lot of us at Benedict's come from humble beginnings. I'm one of those people." He noted that St. Benedict's — when he was a student and still today — helps students understand the value of hard work, the spiritual side of life, and the gifts of brotherhood and, now, sisterhood. "The School sends out a great message to everyone," said Mr. Hahn.

STREAMLINED PROCESS

St. Benedict's has recently streamlined the planned giving process to facilitate easier giving. Potential donors are advised to consult their accountants and lawyers, and then sign a simple letter of intent. "Planned giving is an easy way to ensure the School is there for future generations — and it's not as confusing as it sounds," said Mr. Faulkner.

Interested in making a planned gift of life insurance to St. Benedict's? Contact Leadership Gifts Officer Tom Faulkner at (973) 792-5713 or tfaulkner@sbp.org.

GETTING A HEAD START ON COLLEGE

Ten seniors from the Girls and Boys Prep Divisions completed pre-college courses at Syracuse University, Marist College, Skidmore College and New York University (NYU) this summer thanks to the generosity of The Charles Hayden Foundation. Each year, the foundation provides full scholarships for inner city students to experience college life and acclimate themselves to the expectations of higher education.

The Charles Hayden Foundation

is for students to become familiar with the college environment. Understand what a syllabus is, office hours, study groups, even how to do your own laundry. These types of opportunities give young people a leg up when they land at a college campus for the first time."

In a typical year, the summer programs take place on campus, but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they were held virtually. Mr. Holland noted that Syracuse and NYU were hoping to offer a partial in-person experience over one weekend.

...St. Benedict's students are always at the top of the list for performance, engagement, respectfulness and discipline."

St. Benedict's Prep students have participated in pre-college programs sponsored by The Charles Hayden Foundation for several years with impressive results. "When we review the evaluations at the end of the summer, St. Benedict's students are always at the top of the list for performance, engagement, respectfulness and discipline," said Mr. Holland. "We love the relationship we have with St. Benedict's Prep."

The appreciation goes both ways. "The Charles Hayden Foundation has been one of our most committed and supportive partners," said Kevin Moriarty '63, Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations at St. Benedict's. Since 1976, the foundation has underwritten extraordinary opportunities for Gray Bees to expand their educational and leadership horizons. The non-profit is also a generous supporter of the Steven M. Grossman Counseling Center, and provided additional funding for COVID-19 testing, equipment and cleaning during the global pandemic. **B**

We Couldn't Have Done it Without You!

The St. Benedict's Prep community stood strong despite the challenging and extraordinary circumstances of 2020-21. Here is what we accomplished together:

Forward, Always Forward

\$14.3 million raised, the most ever recorded in St. Benedict's history. Thank you!

36% alumni participation – a new record! Robust participation from alumni is a strong signal to others that The Hive is worthy of support.



The special three-day event, "Best of Benedict's," encompassed Giving Day, an Online Auction and Virtual Reunion. The inaugural celebration of students, faculty and alumni was a huge success.

**560 donors
\$714,801
1 Community**

Complete coverage of the 2020-21 Year of Giving will be available in the upcoming Annual Report, which will be published by the end of the year. If you would like to make a contribution to the 2021-22 Annual Fund, visit sbp.org/forward.



SHARE YOUR GOOD NEWS!

St. Benedict's welcomes any and all news about your career, education, family life and reconnecting with other alumni. Submit news via email to graybee@sbp.org.

1963

Ron Villano renamed his Brielle-based boat, "The Gray Bee," in honor of St. Benedict's Prep.

In May, **Rob Schramm**, Ron's classmate, assisted in the launching of the newly named boat into the Manasquan River, where the local fish are quite concerned.



1968

Ernie Porter, who spent a career with the FBI, is spending his retirement years building an aggregate

of content about the agency.

His most recent articles cover fellow SBP alumnus **G. Gordon Liddy '48**. To see the website, visit www.fbiography.com.

1989

Stephen Elias, son of **Alexander Elias**, is following in his father's footsteps as a champion foil fencer and team captain at Columbia High School in Maplewood/South Orange. Dad Al was also captain for Benedict's from '87-'89.

Adam Hutchinson was named Athletic Director at Earlham College in Richmond, Ind.

1993

Emmanuel Yamoah and his son, Yan, ran into Middle Division Dean **Jim Duffy '16** and his son, William,

Events

SUNSHINE STATE RECEPTION



The Florida Virtual Reception was held on March 25 with **Carl Biello '70**, **William Ehrhardt '62**, **Michael Falivena '59**, **Ed Joyce '67**, **William Lawless '55**, **Daniel Raymond '82**, **Richard Sauer '59**, **Ed Wujciak '64**, and long-time supporter Frank Semcer in attendance.

The group enjoyed catching up and hearing an update from Headmaster **Fr. Edwin Leahy, O.S.B. '63**.

He is a journalism professor at the University of Houston, and he is in production on his first documentary, which examines the role of Latinos in Southern hip-hop. You can reach him at camilosmith@gmail.com.

1998

Mark Comensafas writes that he has been named executive director of the My Brother's Keeper Newark (MBK) initiative. MBK was begun by President Barack Obama in 2014 in response to the killing of Trayvon Martin. "The work of MBK is all about advocating with and for boys and young men of color across multiple areas including education, health and wellness, workforce development and more," said Mark. "It is the work that Benedict's has been doing for years and I am excited about taking this on at a citywide level. Please share with my Gray Bee brothers!"



2007

John Michael Sarabia, CFP, earned a Certified Financial Planner

certification in March. He is a Senior Client Service Associate with Marquette Wealth Management in Minneapolis, Minn.

2009

Justin Morant earned an M.B.A. after successfully completing his two years at Harvard Business School.

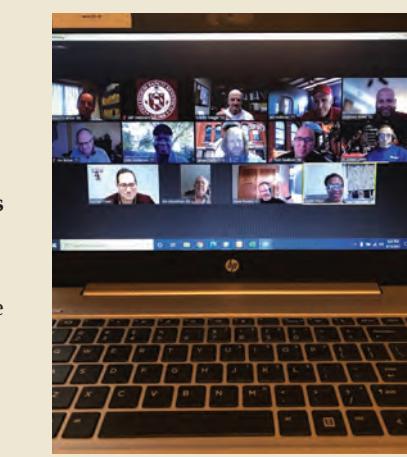


2010

Matt Aaron is the Founder and CEO of LUX Wealth Planning and was featured on Yahoo! Finance.

Philip V. McHarris successfully submitted his dissertation and now has a Ph.D. He is also excited to announce he was selected as a Princeton University Presidential Postdoctoral Fellow and will be joining the Department of African

WEST COAST VIRTUAL RECEPTIONS



West Coast and Pacific Northwest Virtual Receptions took place on April 15. Gray Bee alumni **John Anderson '71**, **James Bober '71**, **Addison Grant '02**, **Bill Holloran '71**, **Martin Mager '53**, **James Moynihan '68**, **David Pereles '81** and **Robert Scanlon '68** participated.

BROTHERS FOREVER

CLASS NOTES AND EVENTS

American Studies and Ida B. Wells Just Data Lab at Princeton.



2012

Frantz D. Soiro recently graduated from Morehouse School of Medicine with a Master of Public Health and has accepted a full scholarship to the University of Georgia College of Pharmacy to complete his doctoral degree in Pharmaceutical Health Services, Outcome & Policy. His focus will be in pharmacoepidemiology. After graduation, Frantz is enjoying this summer break with his wife, Mo Soiro, and two daughters, Maya and Nia.

Frantz is also continuing his efforts overseas in Tanzania, East Africa. Frantz serves as the Chief Health Officer

and Executive Manager of a startup health care nonprofit called Project RunFor, which addresses mental and physical health through developmental programs for adolescents and young adults. Research shows that adolescents and young adults can reach their optimal level of health if their mental and physical health are equally addressed. To achieve this level, Project RunFor tailors its approach to empower youth to prioritize physical activity and peer-to-peer mental support. The project is made up of four founding members, **Akeem Miller '12**, CEO; Frantz Soiro, Chief Health Officer & Executive Manager; **Jabriel Roberts '12**, Director of Marketing and Communications and Carlos Herrera, Director of Philanthropy.



2013

Ahmad Boyd was named Assistant Director of David G. Kalliber – NU for Life Program at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill.

Dear Admissions Committee



The College Placement Team accompanied 124 Gray Bees through every aspect of the College Application process this year, including the crafting of scores of common application essays. Maurice Tabron '21, whose essay appears below, wrote about his experience on the crew team, and how rowing became much more than earning an activity credit.

The clock read 3:20 p.m. I headed hesitantly over to rowing practice. Why was I so hesitant? Because it was my first day. Arriving at practice, I saw a hallway lined with rowing machines called ergs. I was taught the basics of rowing and sent off to my first workout. About five minutes in, I wanted to quit. But "Benedict's Hates a Quitter." This was a motto that had been ingrained in my head since I arrived at this school. So how could I quit on myself? Fifteen minutes later, I was finally finished. I wanted to shoot out the door to go home. All I could think about was what sport I was going to do instead of rowing. But somehow, I was drawn back to that hallway the next day. I couldn't think of anything else I wanted to do. And that first practice somehow sparked something I barely recognized in myself.

At first, I rowed just to earn an activity credit. During the fall season of my freshman year, I was not in a boat. There were only eight spots for freshmen. Although rowing wasn't important to me then, it hurt me that I couldn't get a spot in a boat. I am powerful, but my terrible technique took me out of contention for a seat. Over the winter, I trained every day for hours. I even had an erg of my own at home, a Christmas gift from my grandmother. I would train at school and then go home and do it all over again.

During the spring season, I was able to race for the first time at the state championships, the biggest race of the season. Upon arriving at the lake, we rigged the boats and waited for race time. I was so anxious. The eight people I was set to race with didn't have much practice time together. Independently, we were strong, but we needed to learn to work together.

Launch time approached, and whether we were ready or not, we had to race together. We rowed up to the starting line. "Ready, set, row," we heard the referee yell. We threw ourselves into the beginning of the stroke. The first boat passed us. We were inclined to give up, but our coxswain pushed us forward. By the last five hundred meters, we looked back to notice we were dead last. It wasn't even close. The loss hurt, but the race was an amazing experience. The competition and the feel of the boat sealed my obsession with rowing. Although we lost, my love for the sport consumed me.

Rowing is important to me not only because of the races. I have formed powerful connections with each of my teammates. We help each other inside and outside of practice. As a team, we strive towards a goal but also have time to joke around with one another. The rowing community at St. Benedict's is special. We combine the connectedness of rowing with responsibility for one another through all aspects of life. Academics are just as important to us as athleticism. Anyone struggling in a class is more likely to be helped by his rowing teammates than by a teacher. We all have someone to catch us before we fall too far.

Juggling rowing practice with academics is hard, but luckily there is always someone to help me. I have learned to do the same for others. Rowing has made me a person who can speak my mind and lead others. My fear of failure disappeared when I made it into my first boat. I have realized through rowing that failure can eventually lead to success.

Maurice Tabron '21 will attend the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) this fall. "I received an amazing amount of financial aid," he said of his acceptance to the university. "Attending RIT should not be a financial burden on me or my grandmother." Maurice intends to major in electrical engineering. 



SUSTAIN COMMUNITY

Make a Recurring Gift to the Annual Fund

The Hive is a community like no other. Become a St. Benedict's Prep Sustainer to ensure that Convocation and everything we do to build connection among kids, endures. By making a recurring gift to the Annual Fund on a monthly or quarterly basis, Sustainers provide a dependable source of support and receive added recognition and benefits from St. Benedict's. Become a Sustainer today at sbp.org/Sustainers.



St. Benedict's
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SUSTAINERS



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2021 GRAY BEE GOLF OUTING

Monday, September 20

Spring Lake Golf Club
Shotgun start for 18 holes at 12:30 p.m.



SBP.ORG/GRAYBEEGOLFOUTING

For more information, please contact Mary Hauck at mhauck@sbp.org or (973) 792-5776.