

# Inspired GIVING

Spring 2016

Benedictine Foundation

“I doubt Benedictine’s program could be duplicated anywhere else in the country. There is a culture of caring here that is unique,”

comments William C. Doukas, M.D., a Benedictine parent and one of the newest members of the Benedictine Board of Directors.

“Benedictine is about helping people reach their highest potential and it’s a place where all people are treated with love and dignity,” Bill adds, noting that his family has its own personal relationship with Benedictine through his son, Zack, who entered Benedictine’s residential school program at age six.

Zack, who is now 18 years old, was born with cerebral palsy, intellectual disabilities and autism—resulting in significant cognitive and physical deficits.

Bill recalls, “As an orthopedic surgeon, it was difficult to see him at age six to nine months not meeting his developmental milestones. It is something you never expect to experience as a parent. It is ‘off-the-scale’ hard and it took a long time to come to terms with it. Over the years, my wife, Cindy,

and I have found that all we can do is love Zack and meet him where he is.”

Bill explains how the school’s expectations for its students have helped his own son make the progress he has made.

“Benedictine has expectations of all of its students. Every child is unique and is treated as an individual and encouraged to meet his or her own potential.”

Zack has excelled at the school, learning to communicate and complete tasks through the school’s life skills training program. Bill states, “He has developed his own language through his ‘tech talk’ devices. He has really mastered how to use them enabling us to communicate with him.”

Zack has made many special friends over his 12 years at Benedictine—particularly with his dorm mother, Sister Mary Agnes. Bill comments, “The most incredible people I have ever met work at Benedictine—everyone who works for Benedictine wants to be here. Sister Mary Agnes is one of these people. She is 80 years old and is still active and going strong. She loves the kids here, and they all love her.”

When Zack comes home, he fits right into family life with the other Doukas children, college-aged twins, Nicki and Jim. Nicki, inspired by her brother’s limitations, is pursuing a career in physical therapy, while brother, Jim, pursues a military career at West Point, following in his father’s footsteps. (Bill served for 24 years in the United States Army

*continued on page 2*



Pictured front row, left to right, is Benedictine Board of Directors member Bill Doukas with children Nicki and Zack, and wife Cindy. Pictured back row is son Jim.

“EVERY CHILD IS UNIQUE  
and is treated as an  
*individual...*”

culminating as a Colonel in the U.S. Army Medical Corps and serving as chairman of the Department of Orthopedics and Rehabilitation at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center.)

While Bill and Cindy have been actively participating with the school for some time, he was eager to give more and welcomed the opportunity to serve on the Benedictine Board of Directors.

As a newly-elected board member, Bill hopes to help with long-term planning for the school to ensure that families like his can continue to benefit from Benedictine's programs and services well into the future.

He says, "I am honored to be among the talent who has been assembled on the board. I hope that my previous leadership positions and understanding of what motivates organizations will enable me to be a part of ensuring the longevity of the school and its unique culture of caring."

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To reserve tickets or become a sponsor call 410-634-2292 or email [foundation@benschool.org](mailto:foundation@benschool.org).

**Adventures IN Wonderland**  
**MAD HATTER GALA**

**BENEDICTINE 2016 SPRING BENEFIT**

April 29-30  
Tidewater Inn, Easton, Maryland

The invitation features a blue and white diamond-patterned background. At the top, it says "You're Invited" in a large, white, serif font. Below that, in a smaller white font, it provides contact information: "To reserve tickets or become a sponsor call 410-634-2292 or email foundation@benschool.org." The central graphic is a white oval containing a yellow star, the text "Adventures IN Wonderland" in a decorative font, and "MAD HATTER GALA" in a blue banner. Below the oval is a colorful illustration of a Mad Hatter's top hat with a red and white polka-dot ribbon, a teacup, and a saucer. At the bottom of the oval is a blue ribbon with the text "BENEDICTINE 2016 SPRING BENEFIT". Below the oval, the dates "April 29-30" and the location "Tidewater Inn, Easton, Maryland" are written in red and black text.

# STELLA HALL: Housing for Benedictine's

Expanding residential options for students is a major strategic goal for Benedictine, in line with today's best practices and regulatory guidelines for community-based living.

And the school's new "Stella Hall," a campus-based group home located in a former rectory, is its latest success enabling four adolescent girls a degree of independence while they learn important life skills that come with community living.

With the opening of Stella Hall in October, Benedictine now provides three residential options that are tailored to the needs of its students between the ages of 5 and 21: a campus-based group home for adolescent girls, eight residential suites in the main campus buildings, and three community-based group homes serving adolescent male students, one in Easton and two in Ridgely. Currently, Benedictine's 64 full-time residential students come from 14 jurisdictions in Maryland, as well as New Jersey, New York, Virginia, Delaware, and Pennsylvania.

Julie Hickey, Education Director at Benedictine, notes that by re-purposing the rectory to be the first of its campus-based group homes "we're creating a continuum of housing options for our students." The rectory, which once served as a residence for a full-time priest and later for visiting priests, had been unused for a number of years.

Julie adds, "Stella Hall is a first step in fulfilling our goal of providing transitional housing for our female population. We had students who were ready for more independent living. Their experience at Stella Hall will mirror their life as an adult."

In recent years Benedictine has reconfigured its residential suites, adding lounges, private sleeping rooms and kitchenettes to afford a more home-like environment. The off campus group homes and, now Stella Hall on campus, offer a step further for older students as they progress in practicing skills of daily living while still surrounded by a supportive environment.

Nick Fox, Benedictine's Residential Coordinator, comments, "The students living in our group homes gain practice in life skills and decision making in a smaller environment where they have more opportunities to do actual tasks. They have more choices, which they like. They'll pack their lunch and a snack for the day, as this is just one of the many tasks they will have to do once they leave Benedictine." (At age 21, Benedictine

# New Transitional Group Female Adolescent Students

students transition to either their families or to adult community-based homes in the states where they live.)

Nick adds, “The progress they make is amazing! Every student is happier. For our autistic students, who are often challenged by the sensory overload of a larger residential setting, the smaller group homes can offer a quieter and less hectic environment and more opportunities for learning.”

Shirley Blackston, the Residential Advisor at Stella Hall, adds, “Our goal at Stella Hall is to increase the girls’ independence in every area. They participate in chores, laundry, cooking, shopping and activities of daily living, which includes putting clothes away and caring for the house where they live.”

The concept at Stella Hall is working, notes Shirley.

“The four girls living here, ages 17 to 21, are proud to be a part of the house. They recognize it is a privilege they have earned and that they need to work to retain this privilege.”

She attributes their success at transitioning to living in Stella Hall to the responsibilities given to them in Benedictine’s residential suites.

The girls participate in family meetings at Stella Hall each week along with their teachers, staff and counselors. The meetings are a safe place to discuss issues and make requests. As the girls achieve their goals, there are more opportunities for them to earn community outings, such as eating out, shopping, movies, and bowling. Because they all work at Benedictine, they are learning to budget their paychecks while still enjoying their spending money. Among some of the girls’ favorite activities are meal preparation and entertaining other Benedictine students.

Shirley recalls the exuberance expressed by family members when they heard about their daughters moving to Stella Hall. “They were so grateful to have their children be a part of this transition. It was like their child was going to college. They helped them decorate their rooms and buy things for the house.”

“When you see students’ potential realized with opportunities like Stella Hall—it’s wonderful!” Shirley concludes.

Benedictine students and staff, including Cindy Hildebrand, left, were on hand to congratulate Sister Mary Agnes, right, during recent dedication ceremonies at Stella Hall.



## The Making of Stella Hall

With more than 60 years as a Benedictine Sister and 40 plus years of service as a teacher, dorm mother, residential coordinator, and graphics and training center supervisor at Benedictine, Sister Mary Agnes Dugan, O.S.B., has been a backbone of Benedictine’s residential program. So when the decision was made to open a campus-based group home for adolescent girls, staff didn’t have to look too far to find a namesake for the new home.

When Sister Mary Agnes was initially approached with the naming opportunity by Shirley Blackston, the new Residential Coordinator for Stella Hall, Sister Mary Agnes declined.

Shirley recalls, “At 80 years old, she is one of the hardest workers at the school, but she is one of the most selfless and wants to remain in the background here. After telling her we could name the house ‘Stella Hall,’ (after her baptismal name) she said she would reconsider.”

According to Shirley, it brought tears to everyone’s eyes at Benedictine when Sister Mary Agnes finally agreed to having the new campus-based group home named after her. Thus, Stella Hall was born.

Scott Evans, Benedictine’s Executive Director, comments about Sister Mary Agnes, “A gentle, humble soul, she is a tireless worker and we wonder if she ever sleeps. She seeks no recognition, but brings light to the efforts of others. She is loved and respected by those in her care and under her supervision. As a dorm mother, a role model, teacher, caregiver, and vocational coordinator, Sister Mary Agnes is an extraordinary saint among us. She has raised, loved, cared for, and nurtured hundreds of children. She is a true spirit of Benedictine.”

# NURSES...Meeting the Needs of the Whole Child 24/7

School Nurse Laura Kampmeyer and Nursing Supervisor Mary Winstead



**“Benedictine’s nursing department is an integral part of our educational program allowing us to meet the needs of the whole child,”**

notes Julie Hickey, Benedictine’s Education Director. “Our students are increasingly complex, many presenting with medical issues in addition to cognitive issues, so having nurses, who are highly skilled in working with special needs students, gives us the ability to address medical issues in a timely manner,” Julie adds.

Benedictine’s team of six school nurses provides 24-hour coverage, 7 days a week. The school-based nursing team is complimented by five nurses who work with Benedictine’s adult clients.

Nursing Supervisor Mary Winstead has cared for Benedictine’s students since 1984, when she became a Benedictine school nurse following graduation from nursing school. She had previously spent two weeks at Benedictine as part of her nursing school clinical rotation.

After five years at Benedictine, Mary left the school for a year, but quickly returned and has been with the school ever since. She recently celebrated 30 years of service. For many years, Mary assisted with the medical needs of the adults in the Open Community Program along with her school nursing services. She was promoted to Benedictine’s Nursing Supervisor in 2014 and comments, “Our nursing care at Benedictine has evolved over the years from caring for children with primarily physical ailments, to today, working with children with dual diagnoses along with a strong psychiatric component.”

Almost 75 percent of Benedictine’s students are on the autism spectrum. “A number of the children are on behavior modifying medications. If a child’s psychiatric needs are not met, it is an impediment to the child’s learning. This requires the additional expertise of a psychiatrist so Dr. George Rever, a board certified psychiatrist, is at the school two days a week to oversee students’ progress.”

Benedictine’s nurses are part of a multi-disciplinary direct care team and they rely on all of the team members to let them know when a student may be experiencing an illness or other health issue. Mary explains, “The other team members are our eyes and ears as they work with the students intimately each day. Because a number of our students are nonverbal and can’t describe their symptoms, such as a fever or headache, team members have to pay attention to behavior changes as they may be clues to a physical ailment that may be occurring.”

“Mary takes her nursing vocation and profession to the highest degree as she serves the most needy and challenging with skill, patience, and humor,” says Scott Evans, Benedictine’s Executive Director. “She is extremely knowledgeable about all those she serves, always quick and proficient in providing on-the-spot medical information about any specific student or adult at any given time. She uses her years of experience at Benedictine, consultation with others, and overall medical knowledge to make decisions and stands behind them.”

Mary and her nursing colleague, Laura Kampmeyer, who recently celebrated 35 years of service with Benedictine, were inspired by their role model and previous director of the school, Sister Jeannette Murray. Mary states, “Her passion was contagious.”

Laura, like Mary, got to know Benedictine during her clinical rotation as a student nurse. Shortly after her graduation from nursing school in 1980, she began her career as a school nurse at Benedictine, and continues in this vital role today.

Scott comments, “With Benedictine values instilled, Laura treats all students with respect and love. Her excellent nursing skills and genuine interest has made her a strong advocate for hundreds of children over the years. She adapts readily to new students and situations, and can always be relied on to ‘hold down the fort.’ While she is seen daily around the halls dispensing meds to students, she sometimes can be found with medicine cups of M&Ms® for staff as well!”

# It's like home...

At first, Ridgely, Maryland, seemed to Anna and Mike Mallas to be a most unlikely place for their developmentally disabled son, Billy, to call home.

The Mallas's of Brooklyn, N.Y., had previously visited eight residential schools on the East Coast and Benedictine was the last on their list—none of the previous schools met the mark.

“As we drove through the beautiful farmland, I said to my husband ‘there’s not even a place to get a cup of coffee in Ridgely, so there’s no need to look at the school.’ We did anyway and it was magnificent. Just as I was giving up, I found it. I knew immediately this was where Billy should be,” Anna remembers.

What attracted the Mallas family to Benedictine is the meticulous way in which the school and the students are cared for, the proximity of dorms to the classrooms, and the fact that at that time the school was run by the Benedictine Sisters.

Prior to coming to Benedictine, Billy had been in a public school system where he had behavioral problems and difficulty working well with other children. In a short time at Benedictine, Billy began to thrive. His behavioral problems improved and he began dressing himself, feeding himself and improving his communication with caregivers.

Anna recalls, “Although Billy was very low functioning when he arrived at the school, his progress was amazing. He graduated from the residential program at age 21 and has turned out to be a very sweet and polite gentleman.”

Today, Billy is 37 years old and part of Benedictine’s Open Community/Adult Services Program, which supports adults

ages 21 and over with developmental disabilities. He lives in a Benedictine community group home and works in Benedictine campus-based businesses including Benedictine Graphics. Some of Billy’s favorite things at Benedictine are his personal trainer, horseback riding, and getting to ride his bike and take walks.

Anna has gone on to become very involved at Benedictine, eventually serving as chairman of Benedictine’s Tri-State Area Parents Group for New Jersey, New York, and Connecticut. Her enthusiasm spread and throughout the years, the entire Mallas family became generous supporters of the school—bringing the extended family to Benedictine’s annual Spring Benefit every year, as well as occasionally to the Chrome City Ride event. Most years, the family reserves two tables for Spring Benefit and family members enjoy bidding at the Benefit’s auction. They make the weekend a three-day event. Many family members have also become longtime donors to the school.

Anna comments, “We are a big and warm family. Billy was our first family member to experience a disability, but from the beginning, everyone in our family embraced him. They look forward to when he is able to come home and visit. From the start, our family has supported us emotionally. We call it ‘The Billy Mallas Fan Club.’”

Anna comments, “Billy is our only child, so if anything happened to us, we want to be sure he will be cared for. It has given both of us peace of mind to know that Billy can remain with Benedictine for the rest of his life.” She adds, “He is in good health and has no physical limitations. Everyone in his group home supports him and he is very comfortable there.”

Anna concludes, “Benedictine has taken care of our son. Everyone works together like a family. That’s very important to us and to Billy. It’s like home.”



Pictured left to right are Mike Mallas, Anna Mallas, Cal Ripken, Billy Mallas, Eugenia Mallas and James Mallas at Benedictine’s 2015 Spring Benefit.

“EVERYONE WORKS together like a *family*.”

# Partnership with Neumann Grows Future Teachers



“CARING FOR STUDENTS  
*with respect and dignity.*”

Students from Neumann University with their professors and staff members of the Benedictine School take a break during Neumann's annual immersion experience for its students preparing to be special education teachers.

The evolving partnership between Benedictine and Neumann University is providing future teachers with a unique experience on how to give back and how to receive.

“Our partnership allows people to come to the Benedictine campus and see what it means to respect all of humanity—something Benedictine screams to the world,” explains Leonard J. DiPaul, Ed.D., Assistant Dean of Education and Human Services at Neumann University.

Benedictine's affiliation with Neumann University began just four years ago and has already grown into a significant partnership for the two schools. In January, Benedictine further formalized its relationship with Neumann when the Benedictine Board of Directors elected Dr. DiPaul to a three-year term.

“Having special education as a major at our college, we wanted students to be aware of the whole spectrum of special needs education. Benedictine offers our students the opportunity to see a year-round residential program that has a broad array of services for those with intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, and autism,” notes Dr. DiPaul. “This immersion experience also enables our students to engage in service in their disciplines, an important core value of the university,

and to reflect on these experiences, relative to aspects of professional, personal and spiritual growth.”

Neumann, a private, Catholic, co-educational university, based on the Franciscan tradition and located in Aston, Pa., had traditionally placed its education majors at local parochial, public, or charter schools for their individual field study experiences.

The collaboration, which began in 2014 when 12 Neumann students visited Benedictine for three days of generalized experiences over the college's spring break, has grown into an annual experience for junior and senior education majors.

Dr. DiPaul and his colleague, Daniel McKee, Ed.D., a professor at Neumann, worked with Benedictine's Executive Director Scott Evans, to kick the program into gear.

Now, approximately 12 junior and senior students from Neumann visit Benedictine each year at the end of their winter break in January, staying on campus in Benedictine's Berg Center, dining in the residential group homes, touring the school's facilities, and spending time in the residences and classrooms working with students. Word about the Benedictine field experience has spread among the students so that now it is a highly coveted opportunity sought out by Neumann's upperclassmen.

Faculty member Megan Scranton, Ed.D., who accompanies Dr. McKee and Dr. DiPaul each year to Benedictine,

# University

comments, “The University is committed to providing a uniquely personal experience for its students. Benedictine mirrors this approach with its personal approach to its own students—caring for students with respect and dignity.”

Dr. McKee adds, “The hospitality offered by Benedictine is also critical to each Neumann student’s experience. By living together and dining together at Benedictine, they experience Benedictine’s special hospitality. It is a very personal experience for them.”

This year, Neumann students were given individual journals to record their experiences while visiting Benedictine. Their field reports included a writing component, asking questions about what stood out to them at the school and group homes and how they think differently about teaching students with disabilities. This reflection process helps them evaluate their experiences and also discover something about themselves.

One of the Neumann students reflected,

“This experience helped me to recognize that all children are different and we must use a variety of tools and strategies in order to help all of our students succeed.”

The Neumann-Benedictine collaboration was also the topic of a recent journal article written by Professors McKee and Scranton and published in the *International Journal of Arts and Humanities*. “Benedictine was a transformational experience that promoted professional, personal, and spiritual growth in our pre-service teachers... As a result of this experience, all students reported an increased understanding related to the services provided for this population of students and were able to articulate how the values of the University were integrated with what they were learning.” The five core values of Neumann University are respect/reverence, integrity, stewardship, excellence, and service.

As a new board member, Dr. DiPaul comments, “It is a great honor to be a part of this learning partnership between Benedictine and Neumann University, as well as to serve on the Benedictine board and to serve God’s people in so many capacities. There is something about Benedictine’s mission that is inspiring—for parents to know their sons or daughters are being cared for and embraced here for who they are.”

William C. Doukas, M.D.



Leonard J. DiPaul, Ed.D.



Victoria E. Brennan

## Benedictine elects Brennan, DiPaul and Doukas to Board of Directors

**Victoria E. Brennan, Leonard J. DiPaul, Ed.D.**, and retired **Army Col. William C. Doukas, M.D.**, have been elected to Benedictine’s Board of Directors.

Ms. Brennan, Senior Manager with PricewaterhouseCoopers Baltimore Assurance practice, has more than 15 years of professional experience in public accounting. She has served both public and private clients in the healthcare, higher education, and other fields.

Dr. DiPaul, Assistant Dean of Education and Human Services at Neumann University, Aston, Pa., supervises all graduate education and doctoral programs under the aegis of Neumann’s department of education and human services. He previously served as director of the office for youth and young adults with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia.

Dr. Doukas, an orthopedic surgeon, recently joined Bay Area Orthopedics and Sports Medicine in Glen Burnie, Md. A specialist in shoulder, upper extremities and sports medicine, he is a fellow of the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, an associate member of the American Shoulder and Elbow Surgeons, and is a board examiner for the American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery. Previously he served as staff orthopedist at UHC Orthopaedics in Bridgeport, WV. He served for 24 years in the United States Army retiring as Colonel in the U.S. Army Medical Corps.



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