



# BHGA Newsletter

Summer 2016

*Our Mission ~ The Benton Harbor Girls Association is a non-profit corporation dedicated to enhancing educational opportunities for middle schools girls in the Benton Harbor area. Our goal is to provide an academy for middle-school girls that offers superior education in a safe and nurturing environment.*

*From the Desk of the Director*

by Patricia Ann Quattrin Ph.D.

This past year has seen a number of changes for the Benton Harbor Girls Academy, some very positive, others somewhat difficult. Our lease for the St. John Building was not renewed for 2016-2017, because SS. John & Bernard Parish needed it for offices. However, God provides. When one door closes, He opens another. My son-in-law, Brett, works for AEP/Cook Nuclear Plant and knew they had 14 unused modular buildings, which had previously held their administrative offices. He asked his executive management if they would donate the buildings to BHGALS for a school. They generously agreed to donate the buildings, along with all the furniture, and \$25,000 to help defray the expense to move everything. Once placed on the property that BHGALS had previously acquired, the building and grounds will provide plenty of space for classrooms, offices, a library, kitchen, all-purpose room, fully-equipped bathrooms, a large, safe playground area and the Craig Quattrin Memorial Garden.

Although the buildings were donated, it will take additional money to complete the project. Thus, a Capital Campaign for \$1 million is underway to pay for the project expenses and establish an endowment for the future funding of the Academy. When the project is completed, the building will offer enough space to provide additional classrooms as needed so BHGA can grow to the projected enrollment of 45 girls. In the meantime, Father Brian Stanley offered a space in the St. John's building for us to continue teaching until the Academy building is completed, most likely by Christmas.

The word is out! BHGA is the leading educational facility in the area, because all aspects of the human potential are addressed. Each year, more girls are added to the wait list, and this year is no exception. All but one the girls from last year are returning this fall. Our teaching staff is outstanding and our secretary is most efficient and personable. The atmosphere is one of learning. Everyone works together to give these girls the best education possible.

Our girls are experiencing outstanding results in Reading and Math, as evidenced by their IOWA test scores. When a girl enrolls in our Academy, the emphasis of the first year is teaching her how to learn. The second year, tests scores advance, sometimes even two grades. The gains in academics are only part of the experiences to which Academy girls are exposed. In addition to Girls-On-The-Run, community service, swimming, health classes, crocheting and educational field trips, this past year, the girls learned Spanish and used it on a trip to a Mexican restaurant. With a semester grant from Berrien Community Foundation, BHGA partnered with *I'm Saving Myself Arts Academy* and the girls learned voice, dancing, acting and play writing. Their end-of-year performance was delightful. This coming year, if the proposed grant for two additional semesters is awarded, Director Bonita Mitchell will add instruments and art to her program for each of our girls.

Please check out our new website: [www.bentonharborgirls.com](http://www.bentonharborgirls.com) and our Facebook page. Then, join others in supporting our Girls Academy. Take out your checkbook and write a nice check to our Capital Campaign. With God's help and yours, we can meet our goal of \$1 million. "When you educate a girl, you change the world!" BHGALS is doing its part in changing the world for the better, one girl at a time.

***A Non-Profit 501C3 Corporation***

## Fundraisers Launch Campaign

By Jodie Bender

What better way to raise awareness for the BHGALS Million Dollar Capital Development and Endowment Campaign than gathering our supporters for a special event? This spring, BHGALS hosted two opportunities for supporters to learn about the campaign in the festive atmosphere of Babe's Lounge & Restaurant in Benton Harbor. Jim Couvelis and his mother, Pauline, the beloved "Mrs. Babe," showed their outstanding hospitality by opening their establishment for our use.



On March 7<sup>th</sup>, BHGALS kicked off our campaign with a Blue Monday After Work fundraiser.

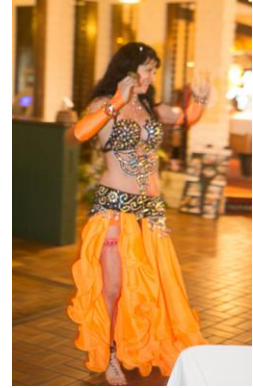
Approximately 75 guests enjoyed wine flights provided by White Pine, Baroda

Founders, and Tabor Hill wineries. Babe's street tacos, several varieties of Silver Beach Pizza, and a beautiful cake rounded out the menu. An entertaining 50/50 raffle, run by volunteer Brett Taylor, featured Mardi Gras beads. Whoever won the most beads at the end of the night took the pot.

Zorba the Greek himself couldn't have put on a more enjoyable, authentic evening on April 26<sup>th</sup>, when about 70 people gathered for a Greek-themed evening. Babe's made a sumptuous feast featuring its signature Greek chicken, accompanied by Greek salad, parslid boiled potatoes, green beans, bread and butter, rice pudding, and punch.



Entertainment was provided by Dimitra, a belly dancer from Milwaukee, who included plenty of audience participation along with her intricate ethnic dances.



At both events, Dr. Patricia Quattrin, founder and executive director, and Florencia Madden, fundraiser, impressed upon guests the importance of the campaign to the future of the Benton Harbor Girls Academy. Over \$4,000 was raised from both events toward the new school and endowment.



Dr. Quattrin, Sr. Mary Pung, Cathleen Taylor and Pauline Couvelis.



Captain James Turner, Mayor Marcus Mohammad, former mayor Wilce Cooke, Florencia Madden and Princella Tobias

Donations are always appreciated at <http://bentonharborgirlsacademy.org/donations>

## Awards Night and Pot Luck Supper

By Mary Ann Dalton, CSJ, Ph.D.

On a beautiful evening, Tuesday, June 7, at Benton Harbor Girls Academy, students, families, friends, and school staff gathered at 6:00 p.m. in the girls' dining area for a special celebratory event of recognition of the girls' efforts and achievements for 2015-2016 school year. Dr. Patricia Quattrin, Executive Director of the Girls Academy, welcomed everyone. Excitement was in the air. Food for the potluck lined the table. School Secretary, Mrs. Zina Woodson, had coordinated the many items, all which were prepared by the families. The Reverend Pastor Gavin led the prayer of thanksgiving and then chicken wings, hot dogs, baked beans, potato salad, tossed salad, appetizers, and desserts were enjoyed by all of the approximately 40 people who were present. Every girl had support with family and friends present. There was enough food for everyone, even some seconds. Colorful decorations lined the tables thanks to grandmother, Mrs. Johnny Mae Washington.

After the meal, the group gathered upstairs in the classroom for the more formal part of the evening. A photo display prepared by Social Studies teacher and Activities Coordinator, Mrs. Luz Duarte, lined the wall and was viewed and enjoyed by all, as they waited eagerly for the program to begin.

Head-Teacher, Mrs. Pam Britt, introduced our students - Ne'siya Anderson, Juwana Callahan, Aanyzhia Davis, Bre'shonna Dawson, Shaniya Hines, Jazell Sims, and Nayda Irvin. She told some of the highlights of the year and of her personal joy at working with the girls.

To a drum-beat accompaniment by Aanyzhia Davis, the girls performed an impressive rap of all the US Presidents which had been taught by Ms. Duarte. As another mini-performance, each girl recited the math multiplication and division table of her choice. The audience was most appreciative and supportive of each girl,

especially when one of the facts became a little challenging to remember.

Finally, as each girl was called forward to receive her certificate of recognition, Mrs. Britt spoke of their unique contributions, highlighting her personal achievements and characteristics. This part seemed to be especially moving to the girls and their families, as they heard these personal remarks about themselves.

Each girl was also presented with a special gift of artwork with her name lettered exquisitely by Ms Duarte's father-in-law, Reginaldo Benitez. Mrs. Britt brought to life in her remarks many of the events of the year. What a wonderful evening to celebrate the 2015-2016 school year.







## All Things are Possible

By Luz del Alba Duarte, Social Studies Teacher & Activities Coordinator

As a new teacher and Activities Coordinator, I had the privilege to know these girls inside and outside of the classroom. Just the process of getting to know each student has been a blessing for me. I remember the first day when I met the girls, they brought joy to my heart when one of them said, "I am so happy that you will be our Social Studies teacher." That is an awesome welcome.

That's what we have in Benton Harbor Girls Academy - awesome students and staff.

One of the quotes that hangs on the wall of our classroom expresses the whole concept of what our students did during this school year. The quote by Maya Angelou reads as follow, "Each time a woman stands up for herself without knowing it, possibly without claiming it, she stands up for all women." Through physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual and social education, the girls from Benton Harbor Girls Academy have learned and have shown how to stand up effectively for themselves and for others. They are ready to show who they are and what they can offer to society. They learned that impossible things can become possible.

They thought many things were impossible: How in the world I can memorize 43 presidents

in order in few months? How can I name more than 30 states? How can I learn more than 40 Spanish words? How can I spell more 65 words in a spelling bee? How can I learn my math facts? When do I learn how to jump a rope or run a 5k? When do I learn how to read without sounding the words out? Well, overall they did it! Without knowing it was possible. After all this and more, I think that I have the smartest students in town.

The girls were excited when they heard that they will be learning some Spanish words during the year. This made their learning process more interesting and different. They did a performance in Spanish. They went to a

Hispanic Restaurant and ordered their food in Spanish. They greeted Hispanic people in Spanish. This is how one internalizes and uses learning. I have seen these girls growing and increase their knowledge. They learned that you can be wrong, make a mistake, and still accomplish what you need by never

giving up.

Benton Harbor Girl Academy is a faith-based school. We teach values to these girls even when they line up for lunch. It is a one-on-one experience in the classroom and out of it where, as a teacher, I can know deeply the real needs of my students.





## **Our Corporate Board**

By Dr. Cathleen Hanau Taylor

The Corporate Board of the BHGALS was fortunate to welcome three new members this past year, Heather Marschke, Jody Bender, and Chris Takamoto.

Heather Marschke, who joined the Board last fall as the bookkeeper and treasurer, brings wonderful skills and experience to BHGALS as a Certified Public Accountant. She is currently employed as a CPA with Blossomland Accounting, LLC., and before moving into that role, she was employed as a government auditor. Heather grew up in Bridgman, graduated from Western Michigan University in 2007, and earned her CPA license in 2013. In her spare time, Heather enjoys volunteering and spending time with family and friends.

Jody Bender also joined the Board last fall and has since taken on the responsibilities of fundraising and community engagement. Jody is currently the Development Officer at Lakeland Health Foundation serving Caring Circle. She has more than 25 years of nonprofit experience as both a volunteer and staff member. Before moving to Benton Harbor last summer, Jody spent 12 years at Loaves & Fishes Community Services in Naperville Illinois, with her final role as Director of Community Engagement. She is a native Pennsylvanian, a Midwesterner of 26 years, and a graduate of Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, where she met her husband, Jack. The empty nesters have two adult sons, Jonathan and Alex, and share their home with their two feisty cats.

Chris Takamoto, who joined the BHGALS Corporate Board in May, is the most recent

addition. Chris is a Sergeant and Shift Supervisor with the Benton Harbor Public Safety Department where he has worked for the last 18 years of his 22 year career as a police officer. He brings a lot of experience and knowledge of the Benton Harbor community to the Board and hopes to continue to make a positive impact on the Benton Harbor community through his work with BHGALS. Chris grew up in the Detroit area and graduated from the Oakland Police Academy. He and his wife, Latoya, live in Stevensville with their four boys. In addition to spending time with his family, Chris is all about sports. He enjoyed playing football and baseball in high school and college, and he continues to pursue this passion through fantasy leagues. In addition, he is a big NASCAR and wrestling fan.

### **Corporate/Academy Board**

Patricia Ann Quattrin Ph.D. - President

Mary Pung CSJ - Vice-President

Mary Ann Lischer – Secretary

Heather Marschke CPA – Treasurer

Jody Bender

Barry Bowman

Margaret Clayborn

Mary Ann Dalton CSJ, Ph.D.

Cathleen Hanau Ph.D

Hildegard Molter

Chris Takamoto

### **Auxiliary Support**

Al Baker

Nan Beaty

Sheila Boettger

Stephanie Blommel

Charlene Durfee

Cathy Froggatt

Loretta Kasmer

Barbara J. Konopka

Fritzi Lochner

Mark Miller

Margaret Nuccio

Laura & Scott Rosenhagen

Father Brian Stanley

## A Productive Year

By Pam Britt, Head Teacher & Part-Time Mistress

This past school year was a year to build confidence, perseverance, and academic ability. We had seven young ladies, ranging in grades three through six, all of whom were new to our school. They came to us with different needs and abilities, but a common factor was their lack of confidence in their academic ability. Perseverance and confidence are equally important characteristics for success, not only in the classroom, but also in adult life. Building and expanding both of these traits in our girls became our focus for the year.

The staff kept our expectations high, while encouraging and challenging the girls. Our challenge was to prove to the girls that their ability level was as great as we knew it to be. We did this in many ways, one of which was a monthly spelling bee. Mrs. Duarte and I chose words from six different academic areas, including Spanish words. These words were introduced to the girls a month at a time and, at the end of each month, a spelling bee was held. During the first spelling bee the winning student spelled five words correctly. However, at our final spelling bee, the winning student spelled over 70 words correctly, with her classmates not far behind!

We found that number sense was lacking in most of our girls. We did many hands on activities in all academic areas to build and solidify this. Workshop Way was used in the classroom again this school year with great success. Workshop Way is a program that allows the girls to work independently while the teacher monitors their progress and calls small groups or individual students to work with her on various math skills. This program not only builds confidence by allowing students to work independently, it also encourages self-monitoring and self-

motivation. Increasing number sense also increases reasoning skills. During math lessons the girls were encouraged to determine the validity of their own answers; focusing and reasoning were discussed in-depth during math lessons and throughout the school day.

We also made good progress in reading comprehension skills. The girls were required to read 30 minutes an evening during the school week, and an hour and a half on the weekend. This was choice reading, and required parents to sign off stating that the girls completed reading as well as their other homework. In the classroom, our reading units consisted of authentic reading from novels. Some of our favorite books were *The Giver* by Lois Lowery, *Ninth Ward* by Jewell Parker Rhodes, *Shiloh* by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, *Maniac Magee* by Jerry Spinelli, and *Between Shades of Gray* by Ruta Sepetys. These books allowed us to discuss rich vocabulary and relevant, interesting themes, such as, perseverance, friendship, loss, family, and victory. With assigned books to read and reading aloud in the classroom, our girls completed fourteen novels this past school year. That does not include the books the girls read on their own. Mrs. Duarte and I both saw the confidence of the girls in their ability to read challenging texts begin to blossom. With this confidence built, we can begin next school year with even greater expectations. The seeds of perseverance and confidence have been planted.





## Our New Secretary

By Zina J. Woodson

My first year of working at the Benton Harbor Girls Academy has been a great joy. It is a privilege to be working for a school with a mission in providing the very best for the girls in our community.

I look forward to coming to work every day, especially during breakfast, lunch and recess. This is the best part of my day, being able to laugh and talk with the girls and enjoy some fun time.

I've been blessed to have been given a great opportunity to be a mentor, a mom, a sister and a friend to the girls here at the Benton Harbor Girls Academy. During the past seven months, I have formed a close relationship with the staff and volunteers.

Our lunch volunteers and our parents have been a wonderful blessing. The girls would ask, "Who's bringing lunch today, Mrs. Zina." They so look forward to the different varieties of food that our parents and volunteers provide.

Hats off to the board, staff, and volunteers for their dedication to the students and this Girls Academy.

I am truly happy to be part of the BHGA family.



Visiting  
Pottawatomie  
Zoo



Volunteering at the Humane Society



Health classes at the YMCA



I'm Saving Myself musical performance



Our Spanish Play – at the Spanish Court

### Benton Harbor Girls Association for Learning & Self-esteem, Benton Harbor Girls Academy Staff Members

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*Dr. Patricia Ann Quattrin* ~ Executive Director

*Pamela Britt* ~ Mistress of the Academy  
& Head Teacher

*Luz del Alba Duarte* ~ Social Studies Teacher  
& Activities Coordinator

*Zina J. Woodson* ~ Academy Secretary

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Classroom Volunteers

*Loretta Kasmer*

*Hilda Molter*

*Johnnie Mae Washington*

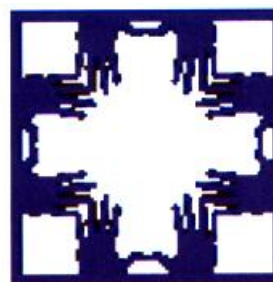
*Monell Dawson*

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Benton Harbor Girls Academy Families at our picnic



~ BHGA Website ~  
[www.bentonharborgirlsassociation.org](http://www.bentonharborgirlsassociation.org)

~ Phone Number ~  
269.925.9922