



BHGA Newsletter

Summer 2019

Our Mission ~ The Benton Harbor Girls Association for Learning & Self-esteem 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.

By Dr. Patricia Ann Quattrin

GOD WILL PROVIDE

This past year has been very interesting for the Benton Harbor Girls Academy. With a new pastor in Benton Harbor/St. Joseph Parish, our Academy was asked once again to move out of the St. John building we have been occupying since 2010. And with the City Manager continuing to deny us a permit to place on our property the donated modular buildings that were to be our academy building, BHGALS found ourselves to be a “school without a building.” By August, the BHGALS was concerned. But I remained confident that God would provide.

The pastor of the Second Baptist Church, whose granddaughter attends the Girls Academy, offered to rent us space in a building owned by the Church. It was to be a temporary move, as we continued to try to work with the City Manager to grant the permit. Unfortunately, after two years of delays and demands by the City Manager, it seemed clear the permit for modular buildings was not going to be granted, and our attorney recommended that we sell the modular buildings and move on to construct a building for the Girls Academy. We are selling the modular buildings and, with some generous donations in the past two years, BHGALS is in a position to restart the Capital Campaign to raise the additional funds to build. God will provide.

Another setback occurred in August when the Girls Academy teacher, who has been with us for five years, was offered a position as principal at a small Christian school and, with regret, she moved on. Before the week was over, we hired a new teacher who proved to be excellent in the classroom. However, when we returned from Christmas break, this teacher had to resign for medical reasons. She recommended a woman who not only has an education degree, and a number of years teaching in the Benton Harbor School District, but also has a Ph.D. in psychology. She is dedicated to making our Girls Academy a premier school in the area. Three more girls enrolled in second semester and, with new parents calling to enroll their girls for next year, the future for the Academy looks positive. And God provided.

This summer, BHGALS will be conducting the Capital Campaign to build the Academy Education Center. This is a large endeavor for a small academy with few resources and personnel. This endeavor will require much input from all those who have donated and supported us in different ways from the beginning. Please consider generously supporting the Girls Academy once more by donating to the BHGALS Capital Campaign. Help God to provide.

A Non-Profit 501C3 Corporation

Our New Teacher



The Benton Harbor Girls Academy welcomes Dr. DeAnna Ellis-Chopin who has agreed to join our educational team. Dr. Chopin brings a valued set of skills.

She has taught for seven years, three of which were at the Benton Harbor High School. Dr. Chopin is the Director for the Center for Education in Black History, Theatre & Research (CEBHT-R) and has agreed to provide education in Black History along with our other course requirements. She especially enjoys teaching the East African language, Swahili. Additionally, she holds a license in Psychology and can formally assess our students for behaviors which create academic challenges.

In addition to teaching our academic classes, Dr. Chopin's goals are to facilitate the teaching of cooking, budgeting, gardening, and the other social skills which BHGALS desires to develop in each of its girls.



*"When you educate a girl
you change the world." Oprah*



Our New Secretary

My Name is Audrey Pringle. I'm the new secretary at the Benton Harbor Girls Academy. I started on January 3, 2019. When I started, I didn't know what I was walking into, but I'm a person who is willing to take on a challenge. As the Diana Ross song says, "Ain't no Mountain High Enough."

I had to get used to the girls and the same with them, but once we learned about each other, things became much easier. We developed a bond that began to grow between us. I was the favorite cook in the house. The girls loved my meals. We had some ups and downs, but we were able to work them all out.

The highlight of the year for me was their first Father/Daughter Dance. It was my idea and I organized it. We had music and food and lots of fun. If you could have seen the light in their eyes and those fancy dresses! I must say, they clean up pretty good. Everyone enjoyed the evening. We may do this again next year.

In all, it has been a privilege and a pleasure to work here with the girls and the staff. We make a great TEAM.



“Our Future” Fundraiser **Saturday, Aug. 24 11:00 – 3:00** **Celebration Cinema**

By Joseph Chopin, fundraising coordinator

We are holding a fund raiser at our local Celebration Cinema for the community and all who want to come and watch awesome movies, eat great food and meet with some of the coolest people from Benton Harbor and beyond, while having the opportunity to promote the greatest good for our world.

The "Our Future" community fund raising effort comes from a very special part of our city. The Benton Harbor Girls Academy gifted a wide variety of young girls in Benton Harbor the opportunity to reach for a future that has no limits; a future that is rooted in doing good by example and not for personal or selfish gain. In order for our community to really grow, the Benton Harbor Girls Academy must exist as a beacon of light and an educational facility in our community and should remain open for as long as we believe in the true positivity that Benton Harbor has to offer.



Thoughts of a Mentor

By Joseph Chopin

This year, I had the opportunity to help teach and mentor at The Benton Harbor Girls Academy. I really enjoyed my time at The Girls Academy. The process of learning from little girls is quite educational. There are

many things that can be learned from girls in 4th through 8th grade. Mostly, the learning begins at the first introduction. It is our duty as mentors to guide the young people in our community in the right direction beginning with this initial introduction. One of the things that I learned upon meeting these young ladies is that first impressions are everything.

I truly believe that these young ladies have grown a lot over this semester, and it will take a community of mentors and people who love them to continue to push them towards success. Now that two of them, Janah and Shakira, are headed to high school, they are going to face challenges much different than they did in middle school. I will do my best to be a mentor as long as I can, to help guide all of them along the way.

Benton Harbor Girls Academy Graduation 2019



Benton Harbor Girls Academy graduated two girls on Tuesday, June 11th. The graduation ceremony took place at the Covenant Christian Church on Union Avenue. The younger girls processed in twos to the front pews where they formed a reception guard. After Shakira and Janah, dressed in purple graduation gowns and board hats, processed to the front of the church, the graduates turned and handed rolled diplomas, symbolizing the passing of leadership, to the 7th grade girls. Reverend Kenneth Gavin spoke to the girls, their families, and their friends about the need to keep God in their lives as they go forward to continue their education. The families were entertained with a collage video of the two girls and their classmates, depicting their journey from entrance into the Academy to the present, after which Dr. Chopin handed out Honor Certificates. A reception followed with cake and punch.

Congratulations, Shakira & Janah

by Dr. DeAnna Ellis-Chopin, Educator



Congratulations to Shakira Lynch and Janah Trensey, our 8th grade graduates for 2019! While "graduation" is a word affiliated with moving onward and upward, by no means does it imply "finished learning" or "independence from others." The hope is that Shakira and Janah continue to experience advancement in learning and growth of character, but accept that the gift of "graduation" requires them to properly represent all those who have made it possible for them to see graduation day, such as God, the Benton Harbor community, their parents, and the Benton Harbor Girls Academy (BHGA). BHGA stresses the importance of healthy "self-esteem" which cannot be successfully internalized without the support of significant others.

Equipped with the ability to take on the next academic assignment, both Shakira and Janah have gained enough knowledge from the BHGA to maintain healthy awareness of the real world they live in and the responsibility they have to it, plus the faith that they can succeed in it.

Shakira and Janah have both been accepted into the St. Joseph High School. Shakira has an interest in Fashion Design and Janah is interested in Engineering.

Congratulations again ladies! May your academic journey be nothing but a blessing. Perspective graduates for 2020 are Ne'Siya Anderson, Nadaya Irvin, Mi'Auna Jones, Tamia Seldon, Jazell Sims and Elasha Willford.



Father-Daughter Dance

By Audrey Pringle



The Benton Harbor Girls Academy held its first Father-Daughter Dance March 2, 2019, at the Magical Memories Event Center in Benton Harbor. It was a night full of laughter and fun for the girls. Although our school is small in number, the girls made up for it with enthusiasm, dancing with their dads, uncles, brothers, and friends.

Mr. Ricky Hill took pictures that were available to the families. A buffet of fried chicken and a variety of dishes provided by BHGALS and parents were served. Music, dancing, and games made for an exciting evening. A night to remember for the girls, their fathers and friends. The Girls Academy would like to make this an annual event.



Girls Academy Extra-Curricular Activities

By Dr. Patricia Ann Quattrin

For the second year, the Girls Academy participated in the Home-School Partnership created and directed by the Berrien Springs Public School System. These classes take place during the Late-Day Activities, 3:30 to 6:00pm, and provide the girls with new extra-curricular opportunities. In the Fall Semester, the courses in which they were enrolled were Environmental Studies and Taekwondo. In spring semester, they continued their Taekwondo training and added a course in Music Appreciation.

The girls enjoyed their Taekwondo training. Several of them became so proficient and dedicated to Taekwondo that they graduated from white belt, which is the first level, to orange belt, and one even became a yellow belt. Each belt requires the learning of different routines. Taekwondo is a martial arts training that not only teaches the girls defense methods, but also personal discipline, respect for themselves and for others, emphasized through character, academics, and prescribed physical movements.

The Music Appreciation course introduced the girls to American Popular Music History, which included the different types and variety of sounds that make up modern music from 1965 through 2004, including the modern tempos of Rock, Hip Hop and Rap. The course was taught by David Carlock, an instructor of several different instruments and a local performer. The Music Appreciation course also provides a foundation for individual students who might be interested in playing an instrument in the future.

Another of our Extra-Curricular activities this past semester was an Art and Dance class taught by volunteer LaShae King. The girls learned several types of dance, including Praise Dance, Hip Hop dance, & Lyrical Dance. LaShae also worked on some very creative art projects with the girls, such as a positive self-esteem vision board, Calligraphy, Drawing, Painting, and DIY (do it yourself) art. LaShae said she enjoys volunteering and is looking forward to next year and years to come at the Benton Harbor Girls Academy.

Nature Heritage Fall 2018

Another Extra-Curricular activity was the Environmental Course, which the girls continued from the previous Spring Semester. This course opened their world to the flora and fauna found on earth and, specifically, the variety of species that grow in Southwestern Michigan. After reading and discussing the texts, they took field trips to surrounding areas of foliage, sand, and water. They studied different plants and flowers and how the Indians used them for food and medicine. They read and discussed how the Hadza tribe lives in nature in Tanzania, Africa. They learned that we have nature today because of the care



Left, the girls are standing under a Sugar Maple tree, which is turning color in the fall. Right, the girls are taking a closer look at the lawn. Take nothing for granted. The lawn is not just lawn, but it's moss, dandelions, and shamrocks, and more. A student found a dime in the lawn.

Christmas Gifts for the Girls



John Kasmer, a long-time supporter of BHGALS, sent \$600 to be used for Christmas presents for the Girls Academy. Gifts purchased for each girl were an Academy sweater, a long-sleeve shirt to wear under their uniform shirts, puzzles, games, and drawing materials. Bill and Diane Loeffler also gave the girls a gift bag of personal items.

Each girl sent a personal Thank You card to Mr. Kasmer and Mr. and Mrs. Loeffler.



Check our website or Facebook Page for other news of fund-raising projects coming this fall!

~ BHGA Website ~

www.bentonharborgirlsacademy.org



Zina, We Will Miss You!

By Dr. Patricia Ann Quattrin

At the end of last year, before Christmas break, our secretary for the last four years, Zina Woodson, retired. It was a sad day for the girls and the faculty. Zina was a conscientious person who always looked for things that needed to be done. When her daily work was completed, she found other areas in which she could help. She reorganized all the secretary files, the Academy files, and the files in my office. She kept the Academy area clean, neat, and appealingly decorated, adding pictures and other items to beautify the surroundings. At every fundraiser, Zina helped as a volunteer, never expecting any special treatment or extra pay.

The girls loved her. She was kind and empathetic to each girl who attended the Academy. But when discipline was needed, she was able to apply that also, kindly but firmly, as the proper development of each girl was as important to Zina as it was to the faculty and the Director. When a driver was needed to take the girls to an activity, she never hesitated, even remaining with them when needed.

Zina was the first person to greet the girls in the morning. In addition to her duties as secretary, as the girls arrived, she would check the girls as they arrived for clean uniforms, and then make them a healthy breakfast. At lunch time, she organized the parent-prepared meals, and when no meal appeared, she made the girls lunch. After supervising their kitchen cleanup chores, Zina took them out for recess and supervised their play.

No doubt, Zina was an important part of the Girls Academy for the past few years, and the reason that, on most days, all went well. She will be missed!

**Benton Harbor Girls Association
For Learning & Self-esteem,
Benton Harbor Girls Academy
Staff members**

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*Dr. Patricia Ann Quattrin ~ Executive Director*

*Elnora Gavin & Dr. DeAnna Chopin - Teachers*

*Joseph Chopin - Teaching Assistant*

*Audrey Pringle ~ Academy Secretary*

**Classroom Volunteers**

*Jeri Gavin      Kim Isom      Lashea King*



Seventh grader, Ne'siya Anderson, receiving her Honor Certificates at the graduation ceremonies in June.

**Benton Harbor Girls Association  
for Learning & Self-esteem**

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~ BHGA Website ~

[www.bentonharborgirlsassociation.org](http://www.bentonharborgirlsassociation.org)

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