

THE RIDGE

SPRING 2016





HEADMASTER TRIP DARRIN GREETINGS FROM ST. GEORGE

When I meet with BRS alumni — young men early in their careers and those who've achieved long-term success — almost without exception they tell me that experiences at the School made a huge impact on their lives. Over the last ten years, I've witnessed that transformation firsthand. Young men at Blue Ridge glimpse their real potential and achieve it under the guidance of mentoring educators.

This is gratifying work that requires gifted teachers who are dedicated to the boys in our care and to the daily efforts that over time cause positive changes to occur.

The School has recently rekindled the Faculty Emeritus program to pay tribute to great BRS educators. In this magazine, you'll read about two of them: Ed McFarlane and Tim Cormany.

Featured in the article on page 9, Ed McFarlane made a huge impact on Blue Ridge School in his service as Director of Development and Headmaster. Among other accomplishments, he grew enrollment and fundraising while launching the Fishburne Learning Center and the Outdoor Program. Not only did Ed champion these initiatives but he hired great educators to run them. Emblematic of enduring change and hand-selected by Ed, these educators are still with the School — Kevin Miller as Associate Headmaster for Academics and Operations and Tony Brown as Dean of Students and Director of the Outdoor Program. Both initiatives have become so embedded that they're now central to the School's mission and niche. As you'll read on page 6, the Outdoor Program has expanded over time to

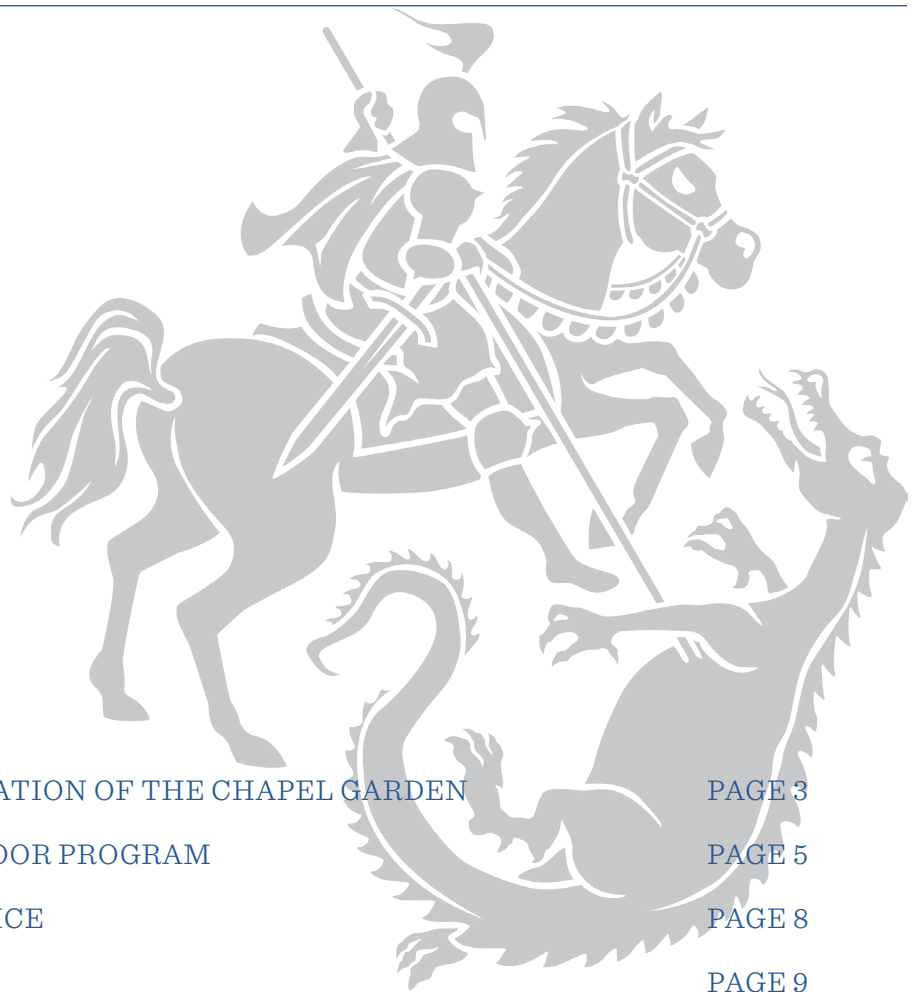
include classroom offerings, extra-curricular activities and an inter-scholastic mountain bike race team. Perhaps most importantly, the Outdoor Program serves as a venue through which a love of the outdoors is fostered and careful stewardship of the environment is taught.

Another gifted educator and true Blue Ridge character is Tim Cormany. Known for walking the campus barefoot to promote mindfulness and dressing as Santa, the Easter Bunny or in a toga at football games, Tim was a favorite of the boys. As you'll read on page 13, Tim started the apple butter tradition with proceeds going to support charity. Tim inspired the boys to think beyond themselves, to see the importance in helping people in need. Community Service has since grown to become another central component of the Blue Ridge mission. Not only has the apple butter tradition endured but the boys now run a food pantry on campus to serve needy families in Greene County and actively support non-profits such as Stop Hunger Now and World Bicycle Relief. Community Service is central to the School's character curriculum, and you'll read more about these programs on page 17.

I congratulate Tim Cormany and Ed McFarlane as the newest Faculty Emeritus inductees and extend my thanks to them for playing such a huge role in making our School great. Educators are the heart of the Blue Ridge School mission, and this edition of *The Ridge* is dedicated to the men and women who have transformed the lives of generations of Blue Ridge boys over many decades.

Educators are the heart
of the Blue Ridge School
mission...

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BLUE RIDGE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION:

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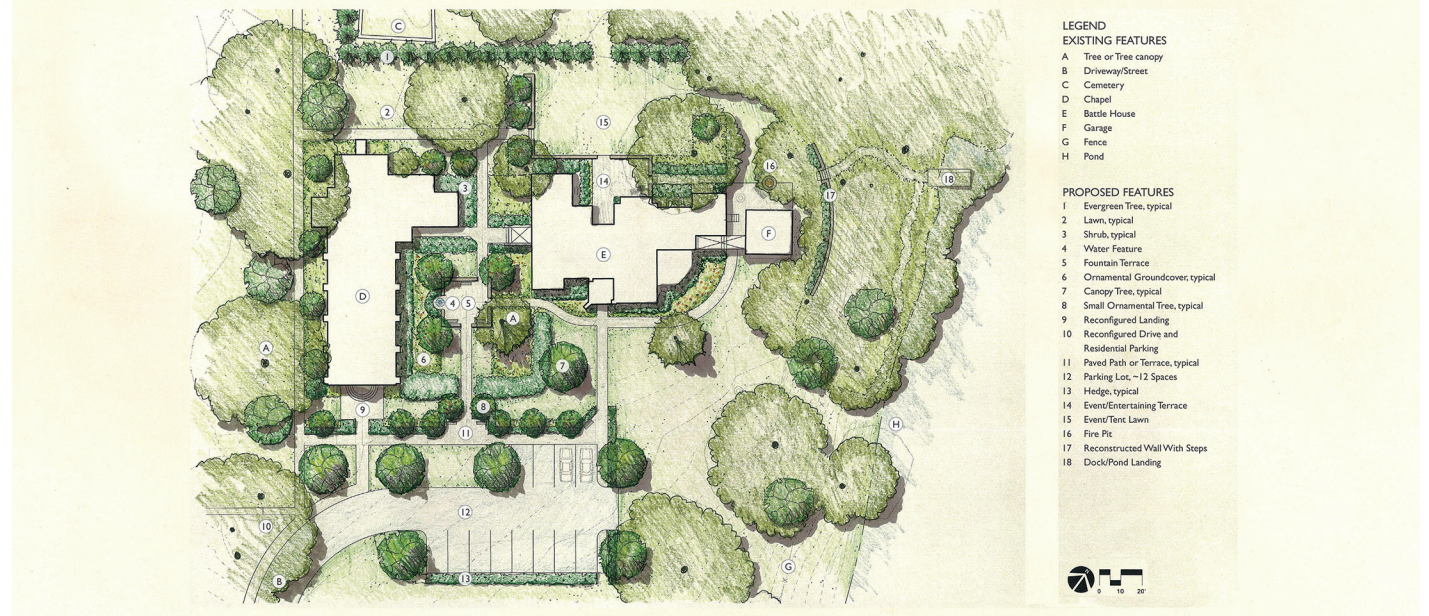
THE BLUE RIDGE SCHOOL MISSION:

We focus on helping boys reach their potential through personalized, structured, innovative learning practices in a college-preparatory, all-boarding community.

Blue Ridge School admits qualified young men of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the School. Blue Ridge School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, financial assistance and loan programs, athletic and other administered programs.

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On the cover are juniors RoRo Rymer, Aamir Simms and Brian Walker.



A SUITABLE MEMORIAL: BEAUTIFICATION OF THE CHAPEL GARDEN

Since May 29, 1932, the day on which it was consecrated, the Gibson Memorial Chapel has stood strong as the heart of Blue Ridge School. Well before its construction began in 1929, a young man by the name of John Joseph Morris attended Blue Ridge for both his primary and secondary education. Mr. Morris' relationship with Blue Ridge has proven to be one of the most steadfast and compelling in the School's history.

by Dan Dunsmore

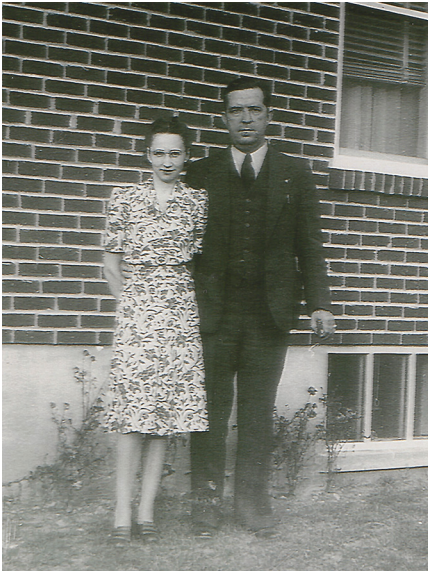
To honor Mr. Morris and his wife Genevieve Eddins Morris as well as their unwavering love for Blue Ridge, their daughter has recently made funds available for a Chapel Gardens and Landscaping Plan. This project, which will begin this spring, will serve as a beautiful memorial to John and Genevieve. It will also be symbolic of the difference that Blue Ridge School has made in young people's lives since 1909.

John was born on May 24, 1907, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. At age six, he moved to St. George,

Virginia, as he had been adopted by George Austin Morris and Susan Clementine Morris. The Austin Morris home adjoined the property of what was then called the Blue Ridge Industrial School. There is no doubt that John explored the campus even before he enrolled as a student. Since Blue Ridge offered elementary through high school instruction in the early 1900's, John attended the School for a full ten years! He graduated in 1923, after which he enrolled in the University of Virginia where he earned a B. S. in Education in 1928.

After graduating from UVA, John returned to his alma mater to teach. No one knows for sure what subject he taught, but he was known for his love of history. After two years of teaching, he enrolled in the George Washington Law School where he received his law degree in 1933. This would mark the beginning of an illustrious career as a lawyer in Virginia.

John had also begun dating Genevieve. She was beautiful and certainly not fragile. In fact, she had typically ridden her horse from her farm



Genevieve and John Morris '23 outside their home in 1941



John Morris '23 earned his B.S. in Education from the University of Virginia in 1928.



John Morris '23 in 1955

in Madison County to her elementary school as a child. She would graduate from Madison County High School before meeting John. They fell in love and thought it would be a great idea to hold their marriage ceremony in the recently established Gibson Memorial Chapel. They did just that on October 20, 1936.

Perhaps it was their marriage on campus that sparked renewed interest in the School, or maybe that interest had really never diminished. What we do know is that John was elected to the Board of Trustees in 1940, the same year that he and Genevieve moved into their own newly-built home in Stanardsville. This marked the first time in the School's history that an alumnus and former faculty member had been elected to the Board. He served in that capacity for seventeen years.

By all accounts, he became a major factor in Blue Ridge's progress during those years as he served on the executive committee and as secretary to the general board, during which time he became known for writing quite detailed minutes. As he had become a trial justice in Greene County, he also served as the School's counsel.

John kept quite busy outside of his Blue Ridge responsibilities, too. He was a member and vestryman of Grace Episcopal Church in

Stanardsville where he taught Sunday school. He was also a member and past master of the Stella Piedmont Masonic Lodge. He was a charter member of the Greene County Lions Club as well.

His daughter recalls that in the summer of 1950 he suggested that the family travel across the country. Because of his love for history, he insisted that they visit every state capital along the route. In his leisure, he particularly enjoyed the sport of baseball, and he also held season tickets to UVA football games.

Sadly, John had begun a brave battle with cancer while only in his 40's. He finally succumbed to this disease on November 11, 1957. Five years later to the day (Sunday, November 11, 1962), the trustees, headmaster and faculty of Blue Ridge School welcomed John's family and his many friends to the dedication of the John Joseph Morris Memorial in the Gibson Chapel. To commemorate this occasion, custodians of the John Joseph Morris Memorial Fund presented to the Chapel a red velvet dossal to be placed on the wall behind the altar. The Fund also installed a new communion rail in the Chapel.

Genevieve began working for State Farm Insurance Company in Charlottesville after John's passing. She was a fabulous cook, and her Tyler Pudding Pie was always in great demand

at family gatherings. She, too, had grown to love Blue Ridge School, its campus and especially its Chapel. She was still living in the Stanardsville home into which she and John had moved back in 1940 at the time of her passing in 2011.

With her parents having been married in the Chapel and with the memory of her own marriage in that same Chapel, the daughter of John and Genevieve could think of no better location to create a garden and additional landscaping in loving memory of them. The project will focus on the beautification of the area behind and surrounding the Chapel. It will include a memory garden dedicated to John and Genevieve and will feature a water element as well as new sidewalks and a new driveway in front of the Chapel.

Associate Headmaster for Advancement and Admissions Franklin Daniels comments, "Gibson Chapel is the architectural gem and spiritual center of the BRS campus. This project will further beautify this important and sacred space – benefiting the entire community." Faculty will surely want to exercise the option to hold their classes in this inspiring and bucolic setting, and other important events are already being planned to take place in this area. The project is slated to begin this spring.



The Outdoor Program at Blue Ridge School is one of its most diverse and complex offerings. Students have an array of options in this program, including academic electives, afternoon programs, or weekend and summer trips. (For more photos, [click here.](#))

DIVERSE AND COMPLEX: THE OUTDOOR PROGRAM

by Nick Patnaude

According to the Outdoor Program's Assistant Director, Mr. Cory Woods, the program has three major goals:

"The first goal is to develop a love for a lifetime sport. Mountain biking and canoeing, in particular, build such an appreciation. Second is to learn about our environment, interact with it, and develop a sense of stewardship. The third goal is to develop character education. A 'challenge philosophy' is a fundamental pillar in the Outdoor Program. Boys are pushed out of their comfort zone and face serious physical challenges that will be applicable in the real world."

TRIPS

Summer trips have included rafting, hiking, and camping adventures to places such as Idaho, the Appalachian Trail, Montana, and Utah. Cory mentions how these trips offer a different experience because "they are not rushed" and "students are not worried about the pace of the school year." This fortunately also applies to a week-long series of service-oriented trips all grades take separately during the Spring semester. Wilderness Trips, as they are called, are a required piece of a Blue Ridge School experience and offer an opportunity for each class to bond. They include Eagle's Landing (a wilderness adventure facility in New Castle, Virginia), The Golden Horseshoe (challenges beginning on campus and ending in Shenandoah National Park, sixteen miles away), and water rafting trips.

From left: Zach Neumann '19, Justin Armwood '17, Connor Morgan '16, Kris Deane '19 and Will Rukuba '19

Weekend trips are frequently taken to a climbing gym in Manassas, caving in Covington, ski resorts such as Wintergreen, and hiking and climbing in Old Rag, Shenandoah National Park, and Via Ferreta in West Virginia. Director of the Outdoor Program Mr. Tony Brown recalls alumnus and current intern Michael Carlini '10 telling him after such a trip that "he was finally using his fancy outdoor jacket for its real purpose."

Immersive wilderness trips are even part of the daily outdoor experience Blue Ridge School offers its boys. Numerous boys have spoken to me about spending a chilly, spooky night in the woods on Blue Ridge School's mountain in a student-constructed wigwam. To spend the entire night alone in the woods as a high-school boy definitely takes courage and determination. Congratulations to all the boys who have conquered this challenge so far.

"About eight years ago, we started the Great Blue Ridge Campout," says Tony. "Students in my classes have to spend the night outside by themselves as a reflection activity. Although it is a requirement for only some electives and the Rites of Passage, many volunteer just to have the experience."

"To look at the stars and think is a rare experience for many of the boys," Tony continues. "One boy came back down for a baseball bat when he was visited by raccoons. Another boy built a small wall in front of the shelter thinking something was going to get him."

CLASSES

The Outdoor Program's academic electives, unlike other classes, allow students in different grade levels to get to know each other, including opportunities in an outdoor classroom setting where students participate in team-building activities on an outdoor challenge course. The curriculum of these electives has been developed by Cory, Tony and others during the last eighteen years. It has been based on "student interest" but is intentionally focused on Appalachia and "what's going on locally," says Cory. "After all, we are only sixteen miles away from Shenandoah National Park," he adds. In one of the electives—Wilderness First Aid—boys exit the class professionally certified in Wilderness First Aid and CPR.

Other electives which are offered every trimester include Outdoor Leadership, Appalachian Studies, Service Learning, Outdoor Living Skills and Outdoor Appreciation.

Several famous speakers have also visited campus for events related to the Outdoor Program over the years. "The founder of SRAM and World Bicycle Relief came to talk to classes. Jeff Alt, the author of *A Walk for Sunshine*—who walked the Appalachian Trail to raise money for developmentally-disabled children (including his brother)—also came to speak and offer wisdom," says Tony.

The academic electives ensure that varsity athletes can also participate in the Outdoor Program.



The Great Blue Ridge Campout is a time when students spend the night outside by themselves as a reflection activity.

AFTERNOON ACTIVITIES

For afternoon activities, the Outdoor Program at Blue Ridge School has an assortment of popular offerings for our boys. Mountain biking occurs during both the spring and fall, while outdoorsmen is available for the boys during the fall, winter and spring. Outdoorsmen includes daily activities of fishing, hunting, animal tracking, and marksmanship and is led by Associate Headmaster for Co-curricular Programs Mr. Vinton Bruton and Residence Life Coordinator Mr. Hans Hermanson '97.

Students from the mountain biking and outdoorsmen activities train for an adventure race held in Pennsylvania at the end of the fall semester. "This adds a competitive element," Cory says, "and includes a focus on outdoor skills like orienteering, belaying, fire-building, repelling, mountain biking and canoeing. The boys often claim it's one of the hardest things they've ever done. The race includes over six hours of activities, including a lot of running and biking."

The afternoon activities in the winter include skiing and fly-fishing in the spring.

Fierce competitions occur during mountain biking races during the spring; the boys will race against other adults who train throughout the year. The Brokenback Challenge and the Mountain Bike Challenge for World Bicycle Relief (held for ten years and running) are two other events which motivate the boys to train hard and push past the boundaries of their comfort zones.

TRAILS

Although two of the trails (Chesley Creek Loop and Twin Lakes) were professionally made with machines by Progressive Trail Design thanks to a grant from the Walton Family Foundation with BRS alumni and parent support, Cory, Tony and the boys are also responsible for the creation and upkeep of a variety of other trails located on the mountain behind Blue Ridge School.

Elective classes frequently build bridges, signposts and information signs about local flora and fauna—these educational signs are principally located on the Interpretive Trail.

"The forest reclaims its territory constantly," says Cory. "The boys have to bench the trails frequently because of erosion, fallen trees, and other accumulated debris."

THE FUTURE OF THE OUTDOOR PROGRAM

Recently the lower level of the Student Center has been renovated and has become a classroom for Outdoor electives as well as storage space for equipment. "Now that our equipment and program have been consolidated and centralized, prospective students and families will be able to discern the complex nature of our traditional multi-sport, adventure programs and electives," Cory states.

Blue Ridge School graduates have found the rigor, intensity and multi-faceted approach of this program inspiring. "Mason Schmidt '13 plans to transfer to a school with

Outdoor Recreation. Alex Stratman '08 is currently at Snowshoe. David Ford '02 has a Master's in Environmental Education," says Tony.

Tony would like to see facilities and student involvement increase even further with future phases of additional trail building.

For more photos of Outdoor Program activities, click [here](#).

TOM ENGLE TREE FUND

Former faculty member Tom Engle passed away last summer. He taught at Blue Ridge from 2002 - 2009 in the Fishburne Learning Center, serving as both instructor and director. (Read more [here](#).)

In the spring, as a fitting tribute to Tom's service to Blue Ridge School, a twenty-foot tall white oak tree will be installed on the School's lawn and a plaque will be placed to identify it as Tom's Tree. This tree will be the beginning of the next generation of oaks, assuring future Blue Ridge School students of a beautiful, shady lawn. Installing the tree and plaque will cost \$3,000. If you would like to help make this project a reality, you may make a tax deductible contribution to The Tom Engle Tree Fund by clicking [here](#).



Simon Yang '16 and faculty member Mr. Brandon Deane

THOUGHTFULNESS AND GENEROSITY LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH SERVICE

by Hilde Keldermans

The students in Tony Brown's Service Learning class have been busy creating walking sticks from cedar with a handsaw, sandpaper, polyurethane and a brush. After finishing his walking stick, Simon Yang '16 decided he personally didn't have a need for his creation. He did, however, notice a faculty member who might appreciate it: Mr. C. Brandon Deane, a longtime BRS Math and Science teacher and Outdoor Program instructor. "While I was sanding, cutting and preparing the walking stick that I made for Mr. Deane," Simon writes, "I got to understand how uncomfortable it is to live with an illness that Mr. Deane has

struggled with for several years. I imagined myself being Mr. Deane and I really wanted to help him. I imagined him walking with my walking stick, and that made me really happy." Tony states, "Simon is following his heart and learning to be service-minded." Simon and the other students are asked to write a paragraph after they create their walking stick "about a journey one might take with it." The project was inspired about eight years ago by Bill Bryson's *A Walk in the Woods*, a book that Tony was reading with his students for the Appalachian Studies class. Bryson writes of having received a walking stick as a gift from his wife for his trek along the Appalachian Trail.

"For a couple of years, we made walking sticks that were donated to the Blue Sky Fund in Richmond," Tony continues. "This Foundation offers inner-city students outdoor trips." This year, Tony's class will donate their walking sticks to the Earlysville Exchange, a local thrift store. Proceeds will be donated to those in need within the community. "I think it's important for the boys to make something with their hands," Tony adds. "Many students don't know how to use hand tools. This project might not be preparation for college, but it is definitely preparation for life."

FACULTY EMERITUS

DR. EDWARD M. McFARLANE

Dr. McFarlane's impact on the School in several vital roles over a decade and a half has been immeasurable.

Congratulations are in order for Dr. Edward M. McFarlane, who has recently been named Faculty Emeritus of Blue Ridge School. Ed is one of only ten educators in the School's 107-year existence to be given this recognition and only one of two headmasters, Hatcher Williams being the other, to be so honored. It's a distinction that Ed has earned through serving the School in several roles – always with a smile on his face and with a caring heart for each individual.

Ed's long and significant relationship with Blue Ridge School began by way of his son Todd '86 in 1984. Ed and his wife Nancy were employed by Davis and Elkins College in West Virginia at the time. Little did they know that Todd was looking for a change in venue to improve his academic and basketball skills. Todd's search led him to several schools in Virginia. During one of those admissions interviews, the school official recommended that Todd look at Blue Ridge, a small boarding school near Charlottesville. The School proved to be a perfect match for Todd, and who could have guessed it would become a great fit for Ed and Nancy, too? Ed's impact on the School over the next decade and a half in several vital roles would be immeasurable.

In the fall of 1985 (the beginning of Todd's senior year), Ed took a sabbatical from Davis and Elkins so that he could complete his doctoral dissertation in education from West Virginia University. Ed wanted to take

advantage of the vast University of Virginia library system to complete his thesis. He approached Blue Ridge's Headmaster Eric Ruoss with a proposal. He would oversee faculty workshops and seminars and serve as a second set of eyes on campus in exchange for room and board. Mr. Ruoss agreed that Ed could live in the spare bedroom in the School's infirmary and take all of his meals in the dining hall.

Ed's responsibilities eventually expanded. He taught an anatomy/human sexuality course to juniors and seniors. Since he had college-level basketball coaching experience, he also became an assistant to Bill Davis as the 1986 Baron varsity basketball team brought home a state championship. His son Todd was a member of that team. After Todd's graduation, Ed returned to Davis and Elkins College to teach and honor the terms of his sabbatical leave.

Blue Ridge had grown on Ed, though. In 1988, he returned to St. George to serve as the School's Director of Development. He was personable, well organized and driven. He cared. All of those interested in Blue Ridge could see that the School really mattered to him, and he was quick to remind them of how much Blue Ridge mattered in their lives. One of the results of his fundraising efforts at that time was the construction of the Williams Library, which serves the students, faculty and staff

in many ways today. During his tenure in the Development office, he raised over \$5 million for the School, some of which went toward the building of an endowment.

When Blue Ridge found itself in need of a new headmaster in January of 1992, the Board of Trustees named Ed the Interim. The Trustees met with an independent school consultant several times prior to beginning a national search for a new headmaster. At the end of those consultations, it became clear to the Trustees that the person they were looking for was already in place. The Board asked Ed to become the School's headmaster, and he graciously accepted.

It is, of course, common, that a headmaster will travel from time to time with members of the Development Office of any school. Ed was a successful fundraiser already and would travel wherever he was needed. But the new Director of Development Rob Murphy along with Troy Newbraugh and Peter Holland '66, both Directors of Alumni Relations, would learn that Ed didn't like to fly. Road trips to places as far away as Florida were common while Ed was Headmaster from 1992 until he retired to North Carolina in 2000. Notably, the BRS endowment had grown to over \$6 million upon his departure.

Ed was not just a fundraiser, though. The list of Ed's other accomplishments during his eight years as Headmaster is



From left: Headmaster Trip Darrin, Associate Headmaster Kevin Miller, English teacher John Young, Dr. Ed McFarlane, History teacher Jim Niederberger and Residential Life Coordinator Hans Hermanson '97

remarkable. He formalized the Fishburne Learning Center and hired Mr. (not Dr. yet) Kevin Miller to be its director. He also began the tradition of advisory-group dinners with the Headmaster at Battle House. Ed would enjoy table conversation and answer questions from the boys while Nancy politely taught a few table manners. The McFarlanes also opened the first floor of Battle House to all students after study hall to watch television or just hang out while enjoying sodas and popcorn.

Though the School had certainly been full of advisors from the start, Ed created an advisory program that required (among other responsibilities) that advisors contact parents of advisees at least every two weeks. It was under his leadership that Blue Ridge also first began advertising online to attract international students through *Peterson's Guide*.

He was instrumental, too, in having the dorms wired for in-room phones (no more waiting in line for a phone in the dorm lobby) and Internet access. He started an Outdoor Education program that would include a climbing tower and ropes course, and he hired Mr. Tony Brown to lead it. His

vision for what the School needed was as strong as his love for what already existed. All along the way, he managed to increase enrollment and bring Blue Ridge out of a significant financial debt.

Ed continued to champion the alumni of Blue Ridge as well. He helped alums organize the first Alumni and Friends Golf Classic, now a Homecoming tradition that seems to grow each year. Perhaps most impressively, though, he was successful in uniting the "old school" and "new school" alumni. As the "old school" was a co-ed Episcopal farm school for local children and boarders from elementary age to high school and the "new school" became the all-boys college preparatory school of today, a natural disconnect might be expected. Ed would have none of it. Today during Homecoming and other local and regional events, all Blue Ridge alumni, male and female, young and not so young, enjoy reminiscing about their time on the same campus that has existed since 1909.

Hans Hermanson '97, current Residence Life Coordinator, has known Ed all of his life. Hans' grandfather Gordon E. Hermanson was President of Davis and

Elkins College from 1967 to 1982 and hired Ed as Athletic Director and Head Basketball Coach. He was also someone who would eventually encourage Ed to leave Davis and Elkins to pursue his Doctorate in Education.

Fast forward to 1995. Ed had been Headmaster of Blue Ridge School for three years. Hans was in need of greater academic support and structure. When he arrived on campus as a junior that fall, he was understandably nervous that Ed would give him special attention, be too hard on him, expect too much of him. He was relieved to discover that Ed would treat him as he treated every other student. This included Ed's nearly-nightly visits to students' dorm rooms. He did this to get to know the students, to ask how they were doing, and he certainly included Hans.

Hans became a Prefect his senior year. One Sunday evening, he and several other Prefects decided to skip Chapel to watch the All-Star NBA basketball game. They were caught, and they found themselves sitting in front of a concerned headmaster. Ed let each Prefect know how disappointed



Dr. Edward McFarlane and Mr. James L. Jessup, Jr., '69, former Chairman of the Board of Trustees (in 2000)

he was, but, at the end of their meeting, Hans remembers that he asked, "By the way, gentlemen, who won the all-star game (because I had to be at Chapel)?" To Hans and the other Prefects, this was just one more example of how Ed gained respect from everyone.

Fast forward again to 2012. Ed had encouraged Hans to apply for a faculty position at BRS. His application arrived during a moment when Blue Ridge was transitioning from one headmaster to another. Hans let Ed know he had applied but hadn't heard back from the School in several weeks. Ed happened to be traveling to the campus anyway to meet Trip Darrin, who had just been named Interim Headmaster, and take part in a celebration of the 1986 championship basketball team. Ed mentioned Hans' application to Trip and likely told him how much he thought of

Hans and his family. Two weeks later, Hans was invited to interview for the Residence Life position.

Hans remarks, "Dr. McFarlane has always been a part of the backdrop of my life. It began with stories that my grandfather would tell about him, then with the opportunity to watch him (as Headmaster) interact with students and faculty during my two years as a student, even to his presence at my wedding. Because of the relationship that he had with my family over the years and then my buying into his belief of what BRS can do for me, I can say that he was instrumental, through his guidance and support, in my search for a position here at BRS. Knowing Dr. McFarlane over the years has been both an honor and a pleasure."

Ed and Nancy currently live in Hertford, North Carolina. He continues to help Blue

Ridge in any way he can. Headmaster Trip Darrin says, "Over the last five years, Ed McFarlane has been kind enough to serve as mentor to me as a first-time headmaster. I have learned a great deal from him."

What began as a young man's desire to improve himself academically and athletically became a perfect match between a family who fell in love with Blue Ridge and a school that benefited greatly from that family's caring ways. Trip adds, "The School flourished under Ed's leadership, and it's a great honor to be part of recognizing his impact on Blue Ridge School through the Faculty Emeritus Award."

Dan Dunsmore wishes to thank Peter Holland '66 for allowing him to use excerpts from a story about Ed that will appear in Peter's upcoming book about Blue Ridge School.



*Phase I of the Baron Athletic Complex was completed in August 2015
(photo by Harry Buchanan '16)*

PHASE II

by Nick Patnaude

The Baron Athletic Complex's Phase II looks to be both exciting and invigorating for the campus. With a total goal of \$2.675 million, the Baron Athletic Complex (BAC) is a significant new investment in the BRS campus. Not since the construction of Williams Library in the 1990s has the School undertaken a capital project of this scale.

Phase I was a resounding success according to Mr. Franklin Daniels, Associate Headmaster for Advancement & Admissions.

Most of the approximately \$2 million raised for Phase I was raised by the summer of 2014, and the construction of this phase was completed on time in August 2015. Franklin notes how much of a "confidence boost" the success of this project reveals; not only does it symbolize a chance for Blue Ridge School to "stake its claim" amongst a top tier of schools but it also represents the generosity and commitment of Blue Ridge School's alumni, parents and community to our treasured School's continued development.

One major aspect of Phase II is the beautification of Bacon Hollow Road. Although Blue Ridge School does not own the road itself—it's a state road - we do own the land on both sides of it (BRS owns a grand total of 750 acres).

Driving up Bacon Hollow Road gives visitors, alumni and prospective students their first glimpse of Blue Ridge School. As such we need to "make it as sharp as it can be," according to Franklin. To this end, a second outer set of stone gates will be installed at the service entrance. Extra signs will also be installed in order to direct visitors to the main entrance. Handsome trees will be planted to replace scrub trees and brush. A formal crossing zone will be constructed as well, allowing students to pass safely between the lower and upper fields.

Phase II will also further constitute a major reconstruction of the lower fields in a green, eco-friendly manner. The old track will be removed, and two fields will be elevated to alleviate the drainage problem that

coaches, athletes and fans have dealt with over the years. Additionally the baseball diamond will be significantly improved and an entirely new golf practice area will be created directly across from the main entrance to campus.

"There is another benefit of the BAC that will lower operating costs," Franklin adds. "While the turf field and track in Phase I, for example, were expensive to build, they will be much less expensive to maintain than the constant upkeep required by the previous field in the same location."

While fundraising is not complete, Headmaster Trip Darrin, Franklin, and Senior Director of Development J.C. Ignaszewski are on schedule and making strides. They hope to have both phases entirely complete by spring of 2017. Construction of Phase II is slated to start in summer 2016.

Donate online by clicking [here](#).



Todd Wild Barclay '98, Hugh Sponar '99, Toby Jay Kearney '99 and Mick Thornton '99 with Tim Cormany in 1998

MAKING APPLE BUTTER BRINGING SMILES AROUND THE WORLD

Recently, Mr. Tim Cormany was honored by Blue Ridge School as Faculty Emeritus. He is one of only ten retired faculty members to receive this designation. One of the many reasons Tim received this recognition is because of his leadership in making apple butter for Operation Smile for many years.

Click [here](#) for photos of Tim Cormany's Faculty Emeritus presentation.

By Dan Dunsmore

Tim will be the first person to tell you, though, that he owes a great deal to a Blue Ridge student named J. J. and to one Lily "Peachy" Batton, who at the time worked with the dining hall staff.

It was during the school year 1990-1991 that James (J. J.) Dickens, Jr. '92 approached Tim about raising money for an organization called Operation Smile. At the time, J. J. lived next door in Norfolk, Virginia, to Dr. William (Bill) McGee, Jr., who along with his wife had traveled to the Philippines in 1982 to repair children's cleft lips and cleft palates. They were so moved by the overwhelming need for those procedures in the Philippines that they

created Operation Smile. Furthermore, they hoped that schools might form Happy Clubs as a way to raise money for their organization.

After hearing the story behind this endeavor, Tim was all for it. During that first year, the Blue Ridge Happy Club recycled aluminum cans and sold sweatshirts and bumper stickers to raise funds for Operation Smile. The following year, Tim wanted to try something different - something that might involve the entire Blue Ridge community. That's how Tim rolls. It was Peachy who gave him the idea of making apple butter, and it was she who gave him the instructions on how best to make it.

Peachy was the cook at Blue Ridge in those days. In fact, she served the School in that capacity for twenty-three years (from 1972 to 1995). She still appears on the campus from time to time as she and her husband Herbert live just a few miles down the road. If you ever have a chance to speak with her, it'll be a treat. Her role in the beginning of making apple butter at Blue Ridge is just one of many ways in which she has shown her love for this community.

Peachy's first rule for making apple butter was to peel your own apples. Those who would purchase apple sauce for the undertaking would be sorely disappointed in the final product in her estimation. Tim took this advice to heart as he learned from Peachy that thoughts of such short cuts were misguided.

Tim turned to another Tim he knew when it came time to purchase the apples. Tim Henley of Henley's Orchard in Crozet, Virginia, liked the idea as much as Tim Cormany did so he was willing from the start to sell Blue Ridge bushels of apples at a much-reduced cost. To this day, Tim continues to give the School a great price on apples. Both Tims have always recommended York, Rome or Jonathan apples. Virginia Gold or Grimes Golden

work, too, but stay away from Red Delicious. "They fall apart and get very pithy shortly after picking," according to Tim Cormany.

The recipe called for twenty-five bushels of apples. They were initially stored in the large kitchen refrigerators below the dining hall. These apples would produce about twelve bushels of meat - the peeled and cored apples. The meat would be refrigerated once again in plastic containers until the cooking commenced. The final product was anywhere from 90 to 110 quart jars of apple butter. Tim describes the inexactness of it all. "It all depended on how much juice was in the apples that year, which depended upon how much rain had fallen and other weather factors."

Peachy accepted the fact that placing sharp knives in the hands of young men, careful as they might be, might not be as safe as using hand-cranked apple peelers. Tim had five of them. Students peeled during class time in the chemistry lab and eventually outside. Tim kept track of who peeled, cooked and sold the apple butter. Those students were then recognized as members of the Happy Club, and their hours were recorded for community service.

Peachy supplied the kettle and stirrer for the first few years. It seems that copper is one of the keys to making good apple butter.

Tim eventually purchased the School's current forty-gallon copper kettle from an Amish company in Ohio along with a stirrer. The stirrer didn't hold up so Tim had a sturdier one made locally. In those early days, the necessary constant cooking and stirring took place during overnight hours. Tim explains, "The students really enjoyed the idea of pulling an all-nighter to do the cooking. We usually cooked under the stars behind the chapel." Students in the Outdoor Program provided enough wood to burn for twelve straight hours.

Weather conditions sometimes forced the operation under a shelter - one year

the cabin by Cabin Lake, one year an old barn across the road from the main campus. Tim recalls that the year the apples were stirred in the barn resulted in an unexpected ingredient. Apparently, no one had noticed the wasp nest over the cooking fire. "When we went to sell the apple butter, we found some wasps in the jars. We figured the wasps were as well cooked as the apples so we sold the butter anyway."

The Fall Parent Weekend happens to coincide quite nicely with the typical season to make apple butter. It made sense to Tim and others that current parents would be the prime customers while they were visiting their sons that weekend. That is still true today though the customer base has spread to include alumni, alumni parents, trustees and faculty members.

Though wasps are not a preferred feature of the recipe, several other ingredients are important to the taste and texture of good apple butter. Peachy recommended seasonings such as cinnamon oil and clove oil - available at grocery stores in highly-concentrated form - in addition to twenty-five pounds of sugar. This sugar is added during the eleventh hour of the twelve-hour process along with twelve cleaned copper pennies or copper washers. Tim remembers, "I thought the copper washers were just an old tradition, but I learned that it kept the mixture from burning at the bottom of the kettle." Tim purchased the necessary quart jars along with rings and lids so that the students could eventually can the recipe.



Peachy Batton

Tim also recalls the participation of the maintenance and kitchen staffs over the years. "Maintenance personnel provided tables, electrical lines and lights for our nighttime cooking. Many times the kitchen staff saved food for us to have when we cooked. The making of apple butter truly became a full-school community project." After Hurricane Katrina devastated Louisiana in late August, 2005, Tim decided to make the apple butter a second time to raise money for that relief effort. The school community had no problem embracing the event twice in the same school year.

And then there was the clean-up. Tim used an old Boy Scout trick of rubbing soap over the outside of the kettle before the cooking would begin. The soap made an easily cleaned layer between the kettle and the soot from the fire. To clean the inside of the copper kettle initially after it was emptied, Tim's wife Eunice would bake biscuits for everyone who helped. Just imagine a dozen or more students and faculty scooping up apple butter on those freshly-baked biscuits for breakfast.

Then Tim would dunk the copper kettle into Cabin Lake overnight. The fish seemed particularly pleased, and the overnight dunking softened what was still stuck to the kettle enough that an SOS pad and some elbow grease returned it to its original shine.

One year, a cold front moved across the campus about midway through the overnight process. Students were stirring the pot as adults supervised behind the chapel. Suddenly, thunder cracked, and a lightning strike sent shivers through all the participants. Accounts of just how loud that thunder was and how close that lightning bolt hit near the operation have varied, but it was boisterous and near enough

to convince several concerned spouses, who came running from their homes, that the students and supervisors might be dead. Everyone was certainly shaken but otherwise okay.

It was that experience that led Tim to speak with Scott Lamar '06, who he knew was looking to fulfill an Eagle Scout project. Tim recommended that Scott design and build a shelter behind the chapel for the express purpose of cooking the apple butter during foul weather. Scott had been a student at Grymes Memorial School in Orange, Virginia, before his guidance counselor helped him enroll at Blue Ridge. Her husband Mr. Peter Williams jumped at the chance to help with the project. Scott also enlisted his dad, uncle and cousin to saw boards and hammer nails. Today, that solid shelter is used for a variety of events and occasions.

Students, who one might imagine would eventually become a little competitive during the process, began to pride themselves on the number of consecutive hours they stirred. One year, for example, faculty son Brooks Engle and alumnus Charlie Waddell '05 set an eight-hour stirring record. They set the bar high for future students, and each year a couple of students attempt to match the all-time stirring record of twelve consecutive hours, which was originally established by Eric Strasser '08 and Dominic Walker '09.

Though Tim re-introduced apple-butter making to the Blue Ridge community in 1992, there is evidence that the enterprise dates back to at least the mid-1930's (and likely before) on this campus. The April, 1936, issue of *The Mountain Echo* mentions that members of the Blue Ridge Industrial School community picked apples from an on-campus orchard. They then used the

"somewhat primitive method, common throughout the mountains, of boiling the 'butter' in a huge kettle out of doors." Sometimes classes were suspended for a day or two (the time being made up later), and an especially large quantity of perhaps one hundred and fifty gallons was made. It is interesting how closely the modern-day process mirrors the methods used eighty years ago.

Tim retired from Blue Ridge in the spring of 2009, and the School did not make apple butter that following fall for the first time since 1992. Many in the community realized the tradition had to return. In particular, then French teacher Dominique Eareckson brought it back in 2010. She enlisted the help of Michael Johnson '03, who had been her advisee while attending the School, William Scipio '02, Kevin Dantzler '03 and Zach Sutley '04, as well as then FLC instructor Jo McKeown. Buddy Knight, a campus neighbor, loaned Blue Ridge a stainless steel canning device that made the transfer of the apple butter from the pot to the cans much easier. Buddy now kindly lets the School use that device each year.

In 2011, William, Michael, Kevin and Zach approached Dan Dunsmore (Alumni Relations Director in those days) about helping to keep the tradition alive as Dominique was no longer at Blue Ridge. Dan knew he wouldn't have time to coordinate the operation, but he also knew that one Kevin Miller, now a doctor and all, was about to return to Blue Ridge. Kevin had fond memories of having been a fellow hall parent with Tim back when freshmen lived on Upper West and Upper North. He agreed, as busy as he knew he was going to be in that first year back on campus, to oversee the process as a tribute to his good buddy Tim. Dominique returned to campus



From left: Trevor Eaton '15, Abdalla Beshir '16 and Felipe Reyna '16 watch Connor Morgan '16 in the final stretch of seventeen straight hours of stirring. In this photo Connor is assisted by Harry Wang '17 and Austin Schultz '15.

that year to help the alumni, and Jo once again assisted in 2012.

College Counselor Carrie Woods took the helm in 2013. As she also oversaw the Student Council, it was agreed that she and those student leaders would run the operation. Carrie has made sure that students and faculty peel the apples and has maintained many of the other traditions.

One detail has changed, though. The cooking takes place during daytime hours, which allows the entire Blue Ridge community to cheer on the stirrers. Carrie further explains, “Students and campus kids alike love to help with the process — from quality control to chopping wood for

the fire to stirring to being the lacrosse ladle guy. With the addition of some occasional live music, quality lip-singing contests and dinner on the lawn, the making of ‘buttah’ is a highly anticipated event in which the best of Blue Ridge is on display.”

In 2014, two more students matched or set stirring records. Well before sunrise, Spencer Cook '17 began stirring and lasted twelve consecutive hours. To top that, Connor Morgan '16 worked the ladle back and forth and around for a full seventeen hours as he was given food and drink by his peers, who cheered him on the entire day.

Blue Ridge School has donated a total of \$15,656 to Operation Smile since 1992

according to their records. Accounting for the one year apple butter wasn’t produced and considering the year that Tim had to purchase the School’s own copper kettle, the average donation per year has been \$726. The Organization could not be more appreciative as it recognizes Blue Ridge each year with a special letter of appreciation. Students remark that it is one of their favorite activities during their time at the School. Thanks to Tim, who envisioned the making of apple butter as a full-school activity, Blue Ridge students, faculty, staff, their families and friends come together to serve the world community even as we celebrate our own.

Click [here](#) for photos of this year’s Apple Buttah making.

COMMUNITY SERVICE: IN GIVING WE RECEIVE

by Nick Patnaude

Mr. Tony Brown and Chaplain Anne West have been committed to offering an array of volunteer, service and charity opportunities for the boys at Blue Ridge School this year.

Blue Ridge School assists with the Stanardsville Methodist Church weekly service (Tuesday Table). Tony and Chaplain West have been overseeing Tuesday Table deliveries. BRS completes one of five delivery routes. Food is supplied by several churches in the county. Zachary Temin '16 has been instrumental in helping to coordinate this. Approximately thirty meals are delivered each Tuesday to low-income families and home-bound senior citizens.

“The joy I get from this experience is twofold,” Chaplain West says when discussing Tuesday Table. “First, we are called by God to serve others, and, second, I get to spend one-on-one time with two or three students each week talking about life.”

The Buck Mountain Food Pantry is another BRS enterprise held in cooperation with Buck Mountain Episcopal Church in Earlysville. Deacon Anne Sculphome has been instrumental in helping Tony keep the pantry stocked and operating every Saturday morning. The BRS Pantry serves thirty to sixty people each Saturday, about one third of whom are children. Abdalla Beshir '16 has been the most consistent and hardworking member of the Food Pantry this year. “There are some families who arrive at the Food Pantry who are unable to fill out the required paperwork because they can't read or write. This is another eye-opener for students,” remarks Tony.

From left: Steven Armstrong '18, Jared Brown '17 and Joseph Kim '17



Jim Chen '16, Jack Starr '18, and Abdalla Beshir '16 (not pictured) along with Mr. Paul Fehlner and Mr. Tony Brown are regular volunteers for the food pantry held every Saturday morning in the Chapel.

Honor Council members, from left 2nd row are seniors Nicholas Hou, Abdalla Beshir, Matt Minford, Cole Jackson. Front row includes Joe Zhou, Jose Espinoza, Mr. Jim Niederberger, Connor Morgan and Spencer Ammen.

The Saturday Morning Program “Stop Hunger Now” provided 10,000 meals to underprivileged families in Haiti earlier this year. BRS has been participating in this project for over five years; each year, we have reached this number. That’s 50,000 meals! Great work, Tony, students, staff and faculty!

Another project Tony has overseen is the GRACE Angel Tree Program that resulted in BRS helping to provide underprivileged families with gifts this past holiday season; our boys even ended up with their photo in the *Greene County Record*.

For the tenth year in a row, BRS will also host the Ride the Ridge Mountain Bike Race on April 23-24 during Parent Weekend. Money raised will go to World Bicycle Relief. “Next fall we have another bike race planned that is in the development phase,” Tony adds. “It will take place Oct. 15th and will be called the Bacon Hollow Hustle. The race will include a variety of hill climbs, and all proceeds will go to fund the Food Pantry.”

On the student-led volunteer front, our boys have been organizing “Movember” for the past three years in order to raise awareness about men’s health. In addition, Honor Council members have been raising money for the Greene County Women’s Club—an

organization that sponsors campaigns to purchase gifts for needy children. Blue Ridge School has been contributing to this cause since 1978, donating at least \$1,000 dollars each year in the last thirty-eight years. “These children are living in such poverty that they would likely not receive any gifts at all were it not for the efforts of the Women’s Club,” says Mr. Niederberger, who organizes this fundraiser.

On the parent front, the BRS Parent Association (PA) has organized “Shop with a Baron” in December for the past four years. This year seventeen local children were given \$120 each to spend on a shopping spree at Walmart thanks to the efforts of our Honor Council and BRS parents, including PA President Carol Hess.

Chaplain West, a wonderful addition to our faculty this year, has been busy on the service front with her own project as well. After Thanksgiving break, she reopened the Tuck Shop—a food and snack shop for which she bakes and procures savory goodies for students to enjoy after study hall and on weekends.

“The primary motivation for reopening the Tuck Shop snack haven was to raise needed funds to continue running our

weekly Buck Mountain Food Pantry from the Chapel,” Chaplain West says. “That was its primary goal, but it has emerged as a wonderful gathering place for students and an opportunity for leadership from those students who wish to be involved behind the counter.” Chaplain West continues, “I want to send out a huge BRAVO to Abdalla Beshir '16, Nawaf Al Saud '18, Yousef Abdel-Kader '16, and Jonah Werner '16 who have proven invaluable to the Tuck Shop and the Food Pantry.”

Chaplain West recalls a fond memory of community service when her son Sam was a young child. “I remember going to the grocery store weekly with twenty dollars and Sam helping me to find good food bargains, fill our cart and bags and take them to the local shelter in our town. Because Sam was raised by two priests, he would always say to the wonderful lady at the desk at the shelter as he handed her the bag, ‘the bread of heaven for the people of God.’”

Chaplain West has led over thirteen mission trips. She hopes to lead her first trip with BRS students in the spring of 2017 and to continue to expand the program with Tony, adding, “I believe with all my heart that, by giving, we receive.”

BLUE RIDGE SCHOOL
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Click [here](#) for aerial views of the lake taken
by Harry Buchanan '16.

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