



The Briar Wire

THE SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE ALUMNAE ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

**Save the Date
for Reunion
Weekend
June 3-5, 2016.
Stay tuned for
more details!**

**The Briar Wire is
produced by the Alumnae
Alliance and the staff of
the Alumnae House.**

**Questions? Comments?
Suggestions? Call the
Alumnae House at
toll-free at (800) 381-6131.**

Dear Friends,

On September 2, our final payment to fulfill the terms of the settlement agreement was delivered and exceeded! Time to celebrate a hard-won victory to save our beloved College. The reason we are where we are is that everyone gave ALL they had, in whatever form that took. It was a team effort, and team victories are the sweetest!

Now the really hard work begins. We have only just begun Saving Sweet Briar College. It is a journey, and we are all in it together.

As of July 2015, there were 14,153 living alumnae. Sadly, we have lost some of those, but we also gained 138 alumnae with our 2015 graduating class. Sweet Briar's future depends on all of us working together.

This is a call to action. We must get to work now to ensure Sweet Briar's next 114 years! Recruit, recruit, recruit! Pledge, and then pledge again. Let's rally around 24595 and revel in the renaissance. It will be EPIC!

With best wishes,

*Alice Dixon '82
Chair of the Board Committee for Alumnae*

Sweet Briar rings in 2015-2016 academic year

On the afternoon of Wednesday, August 27, one day after it was supposed to close forever, Sweet Briar College emphatically celebrated its 110th Opening Convocation. Students beamed as the many returning — and some new — faculty members marched into a jam-packed Murchison Lane Auditorium.

President Phil Stone's welcome was greeted by several minutes of deafening applause. "We're here today to celebrate not only that we have it, but that we kept it," he said, referring to the College.

This was a day to celebrate, Stone said, and there would be many things worth celebrating in the coming year. He also reminded the community that it would take hard work and honesty to get there.

Stone left the podium to Student Government Association president Katie Craig '16, who admitted that she "cried like a baby" the last time she was up there. The last few months had changed everyone, she said.

"It is not just good enough for us to survive; our goal is to thrive and continue to show the world how Sweet Briar women break through barriers beyond all odds," Craig said. "As I said this past spring, for those who truly know what Sweet Briar is, you knew that we could never find it or recreate it somewhere else. We're home, and we're home to stay."

Interim Dean of the Faculty and Vice President for Academic Affairs Pam DeWeese followed Craig with a reflection on some memorable characters in Spanish literature and their parallels to the story of Sweet Briar. Unlike Don Quixote, the alumnae who came to the defense of Sweet Briar

were not tilting at windmills. Our story is a happy ending that is also the beginning of one yet to be written, she said, noting that the page is "waiting to be filled."

Psychology professor Dan Gottlieb brought a bag of shredded paper to illustrate the absurdity of the last few months and the "battle of will and intellect" that happened to save the College.

Math professor Jim Kirkwood reflected on the bell-ringing that punctuated the faculty protests over the last few months with a smaller version, accompanied by excerpts from Edgar Allen Poe's poem "The Bells."

Music professor Marcia Thom-Kaley brought lots of tears, a Starbucks cup and a set of pink and green keys to symbolize Sweet Briar's new beginning. The "endless sobbing" that the dean's office had threatened to put in the script in lieu of Thom-Kaley's speech, quickly spread through the audience as she reflected on the remarkable love and support she had experienced on campus since March 3.

To ensure that the College's story would continue to be shared, Thom-Kaley named first-year Caroline Thomas "keeper of the story" and handed her the savingsweetbriar.com bracelet she had been wearing since the closure announcement. In four



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For more information about Alumnae House staff, please visit <http://sbc.edu/alumdev/meet-staff>.



Nancy Godwin Baldwin '57 scholarship recipients

Vixen Voices: College awards inaugural Nancy Godwin Baldwin Scholarships

During Opening Convocation on Wednesday, Sweet Briar College awarded the first Nancy Godwin Baldwin Scholarships to several students.

Baldwin, who passed away August 5, 2013, was a member of the Class of 1957. Her association with the College spanned 54 years, including 22 years in the admissions office, mainly as its director. She also worked in the alumnae office, where she edited the Alumnae Magazine, and assisted in the development office for many years after she retired. The scholarship fund was established in Baldwin's name when she died in 2013.

"Nancy had a deep and abiding love for her College and saw Sweet Briar as an ideal place for young women to develop a strong sense of self and to realize their full potential," Stone said. "These scholarships recognize students who have made major contributions to the school and community through their leadership and demonstrate academic excellence."

This year's recipients are Student Government Association president Katie Craig '16, acting judicial head and head of ambassadors Katherine Brown '16, senior class president Megan Shuford '16, junior class president Jessie Schuster '17, sophomore class president Jona Cumanani '18, and first-years Amelia Currin and Shelby Benny. ■

President Phil Stone's Inaugural Tour

Since his arrival in July, President Stone has made it a priority to meet alumnae across the United States and is embarking on a series of trips to several cities in the coming weeks. At each of these events, alumnae and their guests will meet President Stone, receive updates about Sweet Briar College and the Alumnae House, participate in a question and answer period with President Stone, and socialize with one another over refreshments. Updates to come in the next issue of The Briar Wire! ■

A Charge to Sweet Briar Alumnae: Be Admissions Recruiters for Sweet Briar!

By Marcia Thom-Kaley, Director of Alumnae Admissions Recruiters

"Well-behaved women seldom make history." This quote has been attributed to many remarkable women including Eleanor Roosevelt. Today, I would like to propose that it be the motto for our own remarkable women — the Sweet Briar College Alumnae Alliance. Against all odds, our alumnae rose up in a tidal wave of passion and devotion to save our legacy. These are the very women who had become disenfranchised from the alma mater they loved. Their college had seemingly turned a deaf ear to their suggestions, their concerns and their ideas.

On July 2, 2015 a new era began at Sweet Briar College and "alumnae engagement" became the buzz phrase for a new age. As such, I am incredibly honored to serve as Director of the Alumnae Admissions Recruiters. Of course, the AAR program existed prior to 2015, however, (to my knowledge) the college has never designated a staff position in Admissions for the sole purpose of serving the mighty Alumnae Alliance. Simply put, the alumnae had earned the right to be represented and served; their ideas heard and honored.

I am passionate about the mission of Sweet Briar College. As a faculty member for the past 10 years, I have seen young women enter our gates — frightened first years — and graduate four years later — empowered, remarkable women. I know what Sweet Briar College can and does provide for young women — an education unequalled in its importance and impact. We teach young women to become all they can be and more — in the classroom, on the athletic field, in their social lives and in their everyday life. We truly do teach girls how to become confident women.

As Director of the Alumnae Admissions Recruiters, I will endeavor to serve you with passion and a promise. I will not allow your voices to be silenced. I will never disregard your importance in the history of our home. I will give all I have to honor your work, your contributions and your devotion to a legacy we all must endeavor to keep, to protect, to honor and to love.

Holla, Holla, Holla and a very big HUG! ■

Do you have an email address you want to share with us? Do we need to update your information in our database? If so, please give us a call toll-free at (800) 381-6131 or send an email to alumnae@sbc.edu.

Update from the Alumnae Alliance Working Committee

The Alumnae Alliance Working Committee is dedicated to creating a new structure to ensure the active engagement of all alumnae in the future of Sweet Briar College. In the past six months, we have accomplished great things *en masse*; now we must strategically leverage our time, talents and treasure to rebuild Sweet Briar.

The Alumnae Alliance Working Committee process over the last two months focused on how the entire alumnae population can best serve the College. With that guiding principle in mind, we created a mission statement that captures the sense of alumnae engagement and then turned our attention to the formation of a new structure. This proposed structure is inclusive of former Alumnae Association Board members and alumnae who served in various capacities during the spring and summer of 2015, including members of the Saving Sweet Briar Board, Sweet Briar 2.0 and other volunteers; the goal is to incorporate the interests and ideas of all alumnae. It is now time to present the proposed structure and next steps to you. Below are the steps we have taken thus far:

1. The Alumnae Alliance Working Committee (AAWC) was appointed. This committee is made up of 4 leaders from Saving Sweet Briar, Inc. and Sweet Briar 2.0, 4 former members of the Alumnae Association Board, and Alice Dixon '82. These alumnae were selected by the respective leadership.
2. The AAWC sought input from all alumnae and created the following mission and objective statements:

THE MISSION: The Sweet Briar College Alumnae Alliance fosters and is pivotal to sustaining Sweet Briar's vibrant learning environment for women. The Alumnae Alliance promotes programs and services that enhance strong bonds of fellowship, mentorship and vision and supports Sweet Briar as an institution dedicated in perpetuity to producing extraordinary scholars and leaders who serve the needs of a contemporary world.

THE OBJECTIVE: The Sweet Briar College Alumnae Alliance promotes programs and services that connect alumnae to the College and to each other to sustain Sweet Briar in perpetuity.

3. The AAWC drafted and approved the intended structure of the Alumnae Alliance. The structure reflects a hub and spokes model. The hub is an Alumnae Council, composed of the original 9 members of the Alumnae Alliance Working Committee, with 6 working groups (spokes) coming

out of the Alumnae Council (hub). Members of the AAWC have volunteered to lead specific working groups for the immediate future. There will also be a strategic planning and visioning component that will provide an avenue for all alumnae to share their interest and talents. The founding members of the Alumnae Council will serve for a two-year term. During this time, the Council will develop the procedure for selecting future Council members.

The six working groups will focus on the following:

- Media, Marketing & Communications
- Development (Fundraising)
- Admissions and Retention
- Club Structure (Geographic)
- Class/Year Structure
- General Alumnae Relations

Once membership of the working group has been approved, the Alumnae Alliance Working Committee will take these next steps:

1. Share the structure and membership of these 6 working groups with the Alumnae Relations & Development staff for review and coordination.
2. Forward the structure and membership of the newly-formed Alumnae Alliance to the Advancement Committee of the Board of Directors to consider on September 25.
3. Once approved by the Board of Directors Advancement Committee, the Board of Directors will discuss the proposed structure of the Alumnae Alliance.

This process ensures that the Alumnae Alliance will be fully functioning and begin its work shortly thereafter. The Alumnae Council will operate the working groups to bring policy issues to the Board through the Advancement Committee and will work closely with the office of Alumnae Relations and Development. It is crucial that we begin our work right away. Our focus now is to help the administration and Board in the two critical areas of fundraising and student enrollment. We will publish information on the SBC website that details the working groups as it becomes available.

Your support of this new model is critical in ensuring that Sweet Briar succeeds in the short and long term. Thank you!



Sweet News: Saving Sweet Briar, Inc. Delivers on \$12 million promise

Saving Sweet Briar Inc. has made its third and final payment to Sweet Briar College, fulfilling its obligations under a mediated settlement that prevented the school from closing on Aug. 25.

The College has confirmed receipt of the \$3.643 million payment, which brings the total amount of Saving Sweet Briar's contributions to \$12.143 million by Sept. 2 as required under the June 23 agreement. The settlement followed an attempt by the former administration to shut down the school. In June, the alumnae-led group, Saving Sweet Briar, successfully negotiated an agreement to keep Sweet Briar open under new leadership, which took control on July 2.

"September 2 is a day to celebrate — together," said Mary Pope Hutson, chair of Saving Sweet Briar's Major Donor Task Force, in a statement released Sept. 1 by the nonprofit group.

"At twelve noon Eastern Standard Time, ring a bell if you have one, and let's show the world our colors — a sea of pink and green! And please share our story of tenacity and determination. We, the alumnae of Sweet Briar College, have preserved this unique institution of higher education to empower future generations of young women — just as it empowered us."

Sweet Briar President Phil Stone agreed that the occasion calls for ringing the bells in the College's iconic tower.

"Not only is this a significant gift itself, but it represents the culmination of extraordinary efforts by Saving Sweet Briar Inc. to save the College from closing," he said. "September 2 will always be remembered as the day Saving Sweet Briar demonstrated again the reality of the claim that at Sweet Briar College, the impossible is just another problem to solve!" ■

Alumnae Work to Make Campus Shine

Over 200 alumnae, spouses, students, and members of the Sweet Briar community volunteered their time from July 25 through August 14 to spruce up campus in preparation for students' return. They painted, weeded, pruned, power washed, mulched, sewed, scrubbed and polished their way through Sweet Briar's buildings and grounds.

Collaborating with Steve Bailey, director of physical plant, and Donna Meeks, grounds supervisor, Jen Phelps Staton '02 and Debbie Massie Thurman '76 identified critical projects and coordinated these "Sweet Work Days." Since the Sweet Work Days concluded we learned from Tom Connors, VP for Finance and Treasurer, that an estimated 4,200 volunteer hours were donated resulting in approximately \$60,000 maintenance costs savings in for the College. Thank you to all who participated – this work would not have been completed without you! ■

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years, she added, she would want the bracelet back to pass on to another first-year.

After recognizing the recipients of the first Nancy Godwin Baldwin Scholarship, Stone concluded the ceremony with his charge to students, faculty and staff.

"I charge you with making Sweet Briar College not only the model for higher education, the model for liberal arts residential education, but a model for women's education," he said. "We have seen what it can do, and we will preserve it." ■