



# Fireside

A magazine for alumni and friends of Brownell Talbot College Preparatory School



Class of 2029 at their fourth grade graduation

**Portrait of a Graduate**

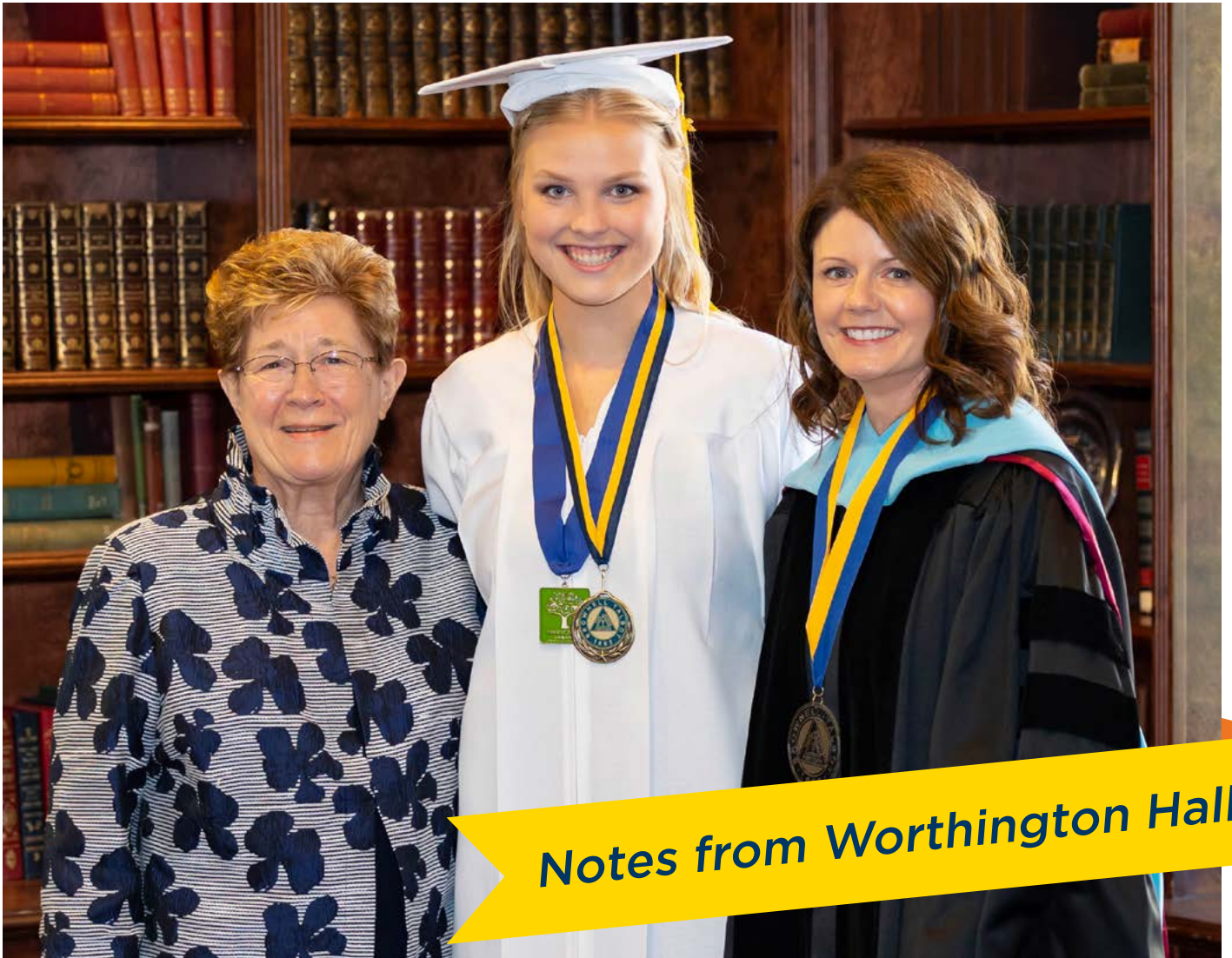
more on page 6

**Putting the FUN in Fundraising**

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**Farewell and Welcome: BT Board of Trustees**

more on page 16



The future will ask much of our students: Mindful leadership. Meaningful discourse. Acceptance and independence. Global understanding.

To change the world, our students need to see it, hear it, and embrace it. During the 2020-2021 school year, in tandem with ensuring the utmost safety amidst the pandemic, we focused much of our energy on defining and fine-tuning what it means to be a BT student and what current and prospective families can expect from a BT education. This issue of Fireside highlights much of that work - through our portrait of a BT graduate (page 6) and our partnership with Common Ground Collective (page 7-8) to the many celebrations and accomplishments of current students and alumni.

More than ever, Brownell Talbot is future focused. We are committed to inspiring students on their

journey of self-discovery and to challenging them to find a bolder way forward. The heart of this learning happens at 400 N. Happy Hollow Blvd; therefore, we are also excited to share the results of the campus planning study (page 5) to provide students with thoughtful, state-of-the-art facilities as they work to become empowered and determined to reach their unique potential and positively impact the world.

The future belongs to our students, and we can't wait to see what they make of it.

Sincerely,

Kristi N. Gibbs, Ed.D.  
Head of School

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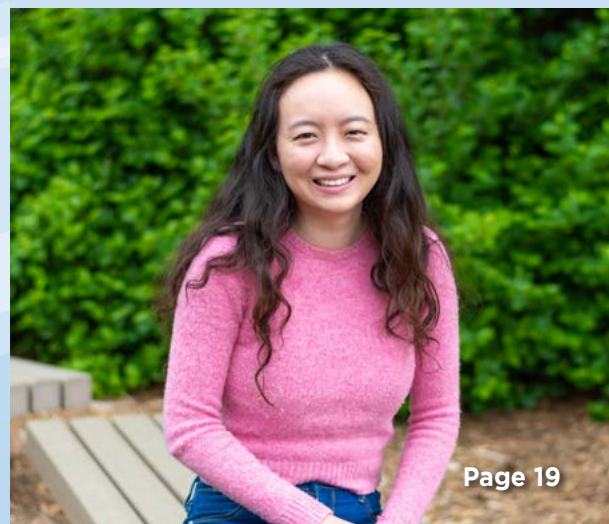
*Fireside* is published for alumni, parents, and friends of Brownell Talbot College Preparatory School. Send story ideas and comments to Brownell Talbot, attn: Kenley Sturdivant-Wilson, 400 N. Happy Hollow Blvd., Omaha, NE 68132; email [renae.mackender@brownell.edu](mailto:renae.mackender@brownell.edu).

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# WHAT'S HAPPENING — ON CAMPUS? —



## 1. Junior Wins Two National Art Awards

Zoe Gilmore, '22, won two National Silver Medals in the Scholastics Art and Writing Awards. More than 80,000 students submitted nearly 230,000 works of art and writing to the 2020 Scholastic Awards. Only 2,000 works received a National Medal, which places Zoe within the top 1% of all submissions.

## 2. Yakking Raiders Continue Legacy of State Wins

The Yakking Raiders, BT's Upper School speech team, earned a first place finish, taking top honors at the Class C-2 State Speech Championship. The Yakking Raiders are perennially one of the state's best teams, having placed 15 times (1st - nine times, 2nd - four times, 3rd - two times) at the state tournament over the past 16 years.

## 3. Science Bowl Team Wins State

In its second year of competition, BT's Upper School Science Bowl team beat Lincoln East to win the Nebraska State Science Bowl and qualify for the national tournament. Front row: Aishani Srikumar, '21, Jack Cenovic, '22, Riley Hawkins, '22. Back row: Akshay Mehta, '22, coach and BT biology teacher Jay Sauer, Josh Randolph, '22.

## 4. BT Sweeps Nebraska Stock Market Game

The Stock Market Game is centered around teaching students the fundamentals of personal finance and investing, while practicing content and skills in math, English Language Arts, economics, social studies, and other subjects. The Nebraska game manages over 1,000 teams and helps over 4,500 students learn about U.S. financial markets. The Nebraska game concluded with BT's three teams earning the top three spots in the competition.



## 5. Senior Named U.S. Presidential Scholar

Aishani Srikumar, '21, was among 161 high school seniors who were selected as 2021 U.S. Presidential Scholars. The White House Commission on Presidential Scholars selects students annually based on their academic success, artistic and technical excellence, essays, school evaluations and transcripts, as well as evidence of community service, leadership, and demonstrated commitment to high ideals.

## 6. Early Years Field Day Offers a Glimpse of Summer Olympics

The theme of this year's Field Day was Olympics: Light the Fire Within. BT's youngest students demonstrated teamwork, good sportsmanship, and competitive spirits as they competed in sack races, bowling, ring toss, and more.

## 7. Varsity Cheer Achieves Safe and Successful Season

In February, the varsity cheer team won the Class C-2 game day competition at the State Cheer and Dance Championships in Grand Island. The team placed first out of nine schools. They were the only team to perform in face

masks, showing their determination and commitment to having a safe and successful cheer season this year.

## 8. Seventh Graders Design American Expansion Board Games

Teachers Betsy Peterson and Amber Straka's seventh grade United States History students culminated their unit on Manifest Destiny by creating board games that included trivia, facts, and pictures of what they had learned about the concept of Manifest Destiny and how America expanded its western border.

## 9. Middle and Upper School Students Give Weight Room a New View

Under the guidance of art teacher Kat Anderson, students spent a good portion of the semester designing, laying out, and painting a new mural in the weight room. Major drawing and layout contributors included Gabriella Utiger, '23, Dasia Wilson, '23, Ashley Rivas, '23, Elle Egger, '25, Abbi Gibbs, '26, Corbett Lanum, '26, Paige Birch, '23, Sophia Schlueter, '25, Anna Dougherty, '26, Mattingly Barnes, '24, Hailey Chen, '23, and Rayaan Sattar, '23.

# PLANNING STUDY RESULTS

*"The plans are amazing. I love the vision and the potential."*

For the first time in more than a decade, Brownell Talbot shared an overarching vision for its campus and endowment. The school unveiled a new campus master plan and new endowment priorities inspired by the 2019-2023 strategic plan and invited the entire school community to give feedback by participating in a planning study.

*"This plan will help support a growing enrollment."*

Designed to test the BT community's support and to assess the feasibility of a comprehensive capital campaign, the planning study focused primarily on phase one of campus improvements and endowment priorities – including the transformation of East Campus with a new state-of-the-art building to replace the current Lower School wing.

Thank you to the BT family and friends who took time to share their feedback and the Steier Group for conducting the study. **The study revealed wide-spread excitement and support to move ahead with the campus master plan.** Here are highlights from the study's key findings:

**The study revealed wide-spread excitement and support to move ahead with the campus master plan.**

*"The community is buzzing about this project! The sooner we start the better."  
"This project is long overdue and critical for BT's future."*

## OVERALL STUDY OBSERVATIONS

- Participants recognize BT as a premier educational institution with a challenging curriculum that prepares students.
- Participants are excited about the campus master plan and recognize that a significant investment in BT's campus and endowment is overdue and critical to the school's future. Many correlate it with enrollment growth and educational excellence in keeping with the caliber of the BT experience.
- Participants indicated a trust in the community to unite to raise the necessary dollars.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Participants in the study encouraged the school to maximize the functionality and cost efficiency of the proposed project. As a result, BT is partnering with Tetrad Property Group, along with Alley Poyner Macchietto Architecture, the architecture firm that created the campus master plan. Once this assessment is complete, the Board of Trustees will finalize the construction phases and endowment goals, which will then be shared with the entire BT community so that all supporters can begin to think about how they might invest in BT students and campus. We pledge to keep you informed of our progress and plans as we move forward with confidence and excitement for the future.

## BY THE NUMBERS

**95%** of respondents favor a capital campaign

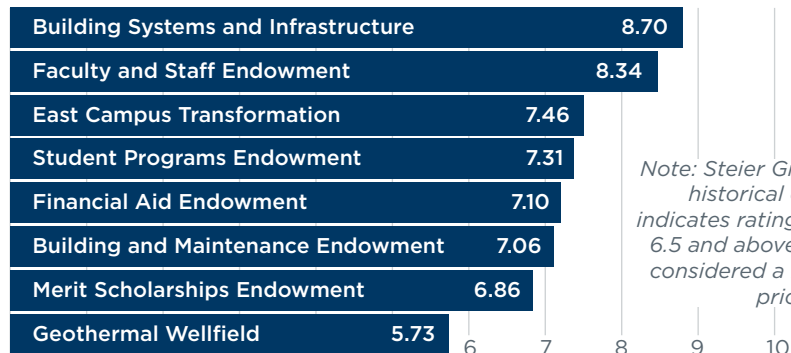
**76%** indicate they will financially support a campaign

**74%** ranked a tax-deductible gift to a campaign for Brownell Talbot at high or medium priority for their family

## PRIORITY OF RESPONDENTS

Study participants identified the top three priorities:

- 1 Building Systems and Infrastructure
- 2 Faculty and Staff Endowment
- 3 East Campus Transformation



Interested in learning more about the future of BT's campus and endowment? Visit [brownell.edu/masterplan](http://brownell.edu/masterplan) or call Vice President of Advancement Shannon Gilroy at 402.556.3772 to schedule a time to meet.

# PORTRAIT OF A GRADUATE



## **I HAVE A STRONG SENSE OF IDENTITY AND UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE OF MY ROLE IN THE WORLD.**

Who I am, my story, is unique. I am shaped by where I come from and the path I have chosen. I have value and so do my ideas. I have a voice and I am motivated to share what I know with others. I am proud of who I am.

I am an individual, but I am not alone. Just as I have value, I recognize that all humans have value and I am curious about others. I know that I don't have all the answers, and I know the convergence of thoughts and experiences generates the best ideas. I believe the diversity of human experience is its strength.

## **I AM AN EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR.**

In every interaction, I am aware that the process of communication engages the ears and eyes first, seeking to fully understand the words and movements of others. Experiences with those different from me only enhance my ability to communicate and tell my story. Understanding that conflict and disagreement are inevitable, I have the skills to facilitate fair, peaceful, and successful resolutions. I am thoughtful, compassionate, empathetic, and effective in my communication.

The value of a Brownell Talbot education is demonstrated in the young adults BT students become during their time here. As the school continues to strengthen and demonstrate its position as a leader in global education, BT created a straightforward way to communicate to prospective and current families the outcomes they can expect when their children graduate from BT. The school's focus is on mastery and personalization of five core competencies so that, as students go beyond its campus, they are prepared to effectively collaborate with and lead people from different national, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds in Omaha and abroad. A BT education provides a distinct and enduring advantage in college and within the competitive global economic environment.

Written in first person, BT graduates should see themselves in these statements:

## **I AM A CREATOR, IMAGINING NEW FUTURES.**

I am proud of what I know and willfully acknowledge there is much I don't know. I am continually learning and perceiving the world in new ways, finding hidden patterns to make connections between seemingly unrelated subjects. I make decisions, solve problems, and take appropriate risks when information is incomplete or not yet known. I am not afraid to fail. It allows me to reflect and find new ways to approach old problems. I believe in my ability to grow and learn.

## **I SEEK MEANING AND PURPOSE IN MY EXISTENCE.**

I am motivated to explore my interests, passions, and moral purpose. I seek out opportunities to serve others, the community, and the world. Because I know myself and I am curious about my world, I am prepared to identify an impact only I can make, and I will make it. I strive for balance in my life, knowing it will benefit my personal well-being and the ways in which I am able to contribute to the world.

## **I SHARE A DUTY OF STEWARDSHIP FOR THE WORLD I INHABIT.**

I am a global citizen. I know my daily actions can and do make an impact and my influence begins with my family, school, and local community. I lead by example in caring for the natural world and for humanity. I am an advocate for myself and for others, speaking up for my own rights and the rights of others.

*The portrait of a graduate was created in collaboration with BT faculty and staff and Common Ground Collaborative (CGC). Learn more about BT's partnership with CGC on pages 7-8.*





In 2020, Brownell Talbot partnered with Common Ground Collaborative (CGC), a non-profit organization committed to educating global citizens, in order to establish an agreed-upon foundation for which BT will move forward as a globally minded school. By joining CGC, BT became the only Nebraska school and one of the few North American schools in a network that includes the highest caliber schools around the globe, including International School of Brussels, Zurich International School, Jakarta International School, American Embassy School in New Delhi, United Nations International School, and International School of Bangkok.

At the core of CGC's work is the belief that there are six traits every human has in common and that you must appreciate and nurture each of these in order to be a globally minded citizen:

- **Purpose and balance.** We all seek meaning and purpose in our existence and we strive towards achieving balance in our lives.
- **Imagination and creativity.** We are all creators; we are all capable of imagining new futures and making them real.
- **Sustainability and systems.** We all share a duty of stewardship for the ecosystems we inhabit and to understand how they work.
- **Patterns and principles.** We all look for recurring patterns and enduring principles to help us make sense of things.
- **Stories and signals.** We are all storytellers; we all send messages to each other.
- **Individuals and groups.** We all seek personal identity; we all need a place to belong.





The purpose of BT's collaboration with CGC is not to adopt an off-the-shelf identity for how global education manifests at BT. Instead CGC has worked with the school to realize systems that are unique to BT and the school community. The first instance of this was in the creation of BT's portrait of a graduate, which used CGC's six commonalities as a foundation for discussions by the faculty and staff about BT's outcomes, which resulted in the identification of five competencies that are unique to BT graduates (*learn more about BT's portrait of a graduate on page 6*).

Once the portrait of a graduate was clearly defined, BT worked with CGC through workshops that included faculty, staff, and families to shape the common learning principles of Brownell Talbot and identify the pedagogical practices that support the principles of learning.

"The principles of learning are foundational to building a culture that requires and expects an 'all hands on deck' approach from faculty and staff, as well as families," said Head of School Kristi Gibbs. "The principles and related practices guide every member of our community in how they can support learning that fosters global citizenship."

The focus is now on refining the school's curriculum so it better aligns with the agreed-upon principles and what BT's stakeholders believe is most important when it comes to teaching and learning. This work is being led by CGC member Jay McTighe, who is a veteran educator and author of the Understanding by Design book series.

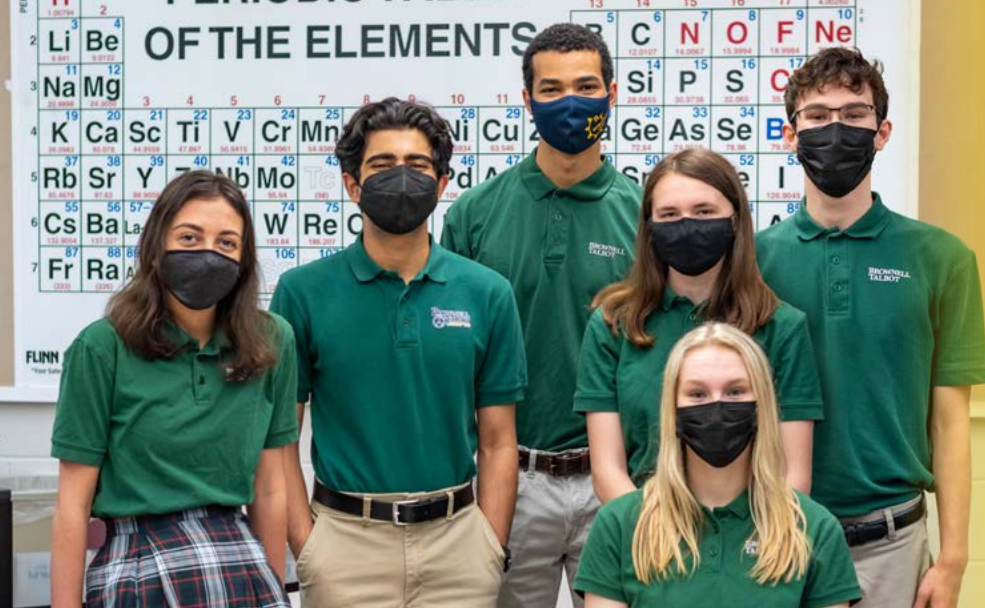
"The result will be specific observable traits and skills as they relate to each competency of the portrait of a graduate tied to each division level," Gibbs said.

To best support students and teachers and communicate with families about progress within this structure, BT recognized the need to re-align responsibilities in a few key areas. The newly created Assistant Head of Academics position, for which the school was still interviewing at the time of publication, requires an administrator with a sound background in teaching and curriculum development. The chosen candidate will lead BT's work with CGC and oversee a new academic support structure so that each division level will have a dedicated administrator:

- The Assistant Head of Academics will serve as the primary contact for Early Years - grade 4 families.
- Current Dean of Students Bill Harrell will serve as Dean of Students for grades 5-9, in order to provide continuity and extra support as students transition from Middle School to Upper School and Advisory to House.
- Science Department Chair Meg Harms will continue teaching physics, but in her new position as Dean of Students for grades 10-12, she will serve as a primary contact for grade 10-12 students and families and will work with faculty to support House activities.
- Angela Vetter will continue teaching seventh grade English. In her new role as director of curriculum and instruction, she will guide curriculum development and adoption with a focus on embedding the work with CGC.

"The support and enthusiasm for this work by our faculty and staff has been inspiring. Everyone is excited about the possibilities," Gibbs said, "Our partnership with CGC has really helped us all see how everything - our mission, vision, the portrait of a graduate, principles, practices, and curriculum - fits together and truly positions BT as a leader in global education."





# Making an Impact Only They Can Make

If you are looking for a tangible example of the portrait of a BT graduate competencies in action, look no further than JuSTEMagine. Founder and president Jack Cenovic, '22, had the idea to create a student-driven organization focused on STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math) education and social emotional learning (SEL) while he was volunteering with the robotics program at Nelson Mandela Elementary. After a conversation with the school's principal about education inequality and redlining in Omaha, Cenovic wanted to improve access to topics that are not always taught in low income school districts.

"Reading and math are almost always the subjects students are tested on, but they often don't get as much exposure to STEM and SEL," Cenovic said. "Our ultimate goal is to instill within students confidence in their abilities and themselves."

Cenovic sought out students with similar interests to create JuSTEMagine in 2019. The group originally focused on volunteering, often partnering with Completely Kids to offer STEM programming through their after school program. Then the COVID-19 pandemic challenged the group to reimagine their offerings.

With the help of Science Department Chair Meg Harms, JuSTEMagine connected with nonprofits in the Omaha area to continue their work virtually. Prairie STEM, which is focused on improving critical thinking and creativity in preschool - grade 12 students, quickly became an ally and partner in JuSTEMagine's work. The students began writing curriculum to support Prairie STEM's efforts and helped create and distribute more than 17,000 STEM challenge boxes to Omaha-area schools.

Moving their efforts online ended up being a difference maker for the group, helping them to think beyond Omaha's city limits. In addition to having 30 BT students as past or present volunteers, JuSTEMagine is now focused on sharing what they have learned with peers around the world through a chapter program that already includes 17 chapters in the United States, Canada, Iceland, and Turkey.

"Creating a chapter system multiplied our impact exponentially," said treasurer Akshay Mehta, '22. "STEM-oriented students want to do

more but it's not always obvious how to do that. JuSTEMagine gives them a platform."

"We have a lot of flexibility with our chapters," added vice president Riley Hawkins, '22. "We can guide them in setting up similar projects in their region or help them think through executing their own ideas."

Similarly, the BT students behind JuSTEMagine have found a lot of enjoyment in carving out their own specialties within the organization. One example of this is Hawkins' leadership role in girls in STEM initiatives.

"A big part of it for me was creating opportunities for girls," she said. "I wasn't comfortable working in this space until I had Mrs. (Jessica) Ryan as a math teacher. She made me feel like I could excel in science and math, and I want to inspire that same confidence in others."

Through JuSTEMagine, Hawkins has worked with Prairie STEM to organize two Sisters in STEM leadership summits and is currently planning a third with the JuSTEMagine chapter in Greendale, Wisconsin.

As the organization looks to the future, they hope to continue bringing on chapters at a steady pace and have plans to return to partnering with Omaha organizations like Completely Kids to serve as in-person volunteers.

"Our focus will continue to be on empowering others and promoting creative thinking, kindness, inclusivity, and individual emotional wellbeing through STEM so that we can all positively impact the world," said Cenovic.

## JuSTEMagine Leadership Team

Jack Cenovic, '22, president  
 Riley Hawkins, '22, vice president  
 Akshay Mehta, '22, treasurer  
 Claire Cenovic, '23, secretary and director of outreach  
 Maya Savory, '22, director of curriculum  
 Josh Randolph, '22, director of engineering curriculum  
 Sneha Selvaraj, director of expansion (not pictured)

# Hello! Let's Connect!

My name is Kenley Sturdivant-Wilson, and I am pleased to join the Brownell Talbot family as director of alumni and donor engagement. April was an exciting time to become a member of the BT family. I saw how the community united around the students, faculty, and staff with its support at my first gala (*check out the gala feature on pages 13-14*), honored the many accomplishments of BT students throughout the school year, and celebrated the graduation of the Class of 2021. Each event solidified how much you care for students at BT and our mission - Every student. Every mind. Every heart. Known. Inspired. Challenged.

My role has two equally important components - strengthening alumni connections and engaging donors through the school's annual appeal, The BT Fund.

## Alumni

When they moved their tassels over, the Class of 2021 became the newest members of the BT alumni network, which spans the globe. I am excited to work with our entire alumni network to help forge new friendships with fellow Raiders and deepen the lifelong relationships formed while at BT.

## The BT Fund

The nuances of learning and keeping everyone safe during a pandemic brought unique challenges to students, families, faculty, and staff. The ability for BT to be nimble and adapt to the ever-changing environment is an example of how The BT Fund directly supports the BT student experience and impacts every part of our community. Designed to cover the difference in tuition and the cost to educate a student, participation in The BT Fund is evidence that those in our community believe in the value of our school, our faculty, and our educational mission. In the coming months, I look forward to speaking with you more about how The BT Fund impacts life at Brownell Talbot. (*Learn more about the success and impact of this year's The BT Fund on pages 11-12*).

I am thrilled to be part of the Brownell Talbot team. Now that BT's campus is open, I encourage you to drop by for a visit, even just to get a cup of coffee (my treat!). Please reach out with any questions you may have about alumni events or supporting The BT Fund.

I am looking forward to getting to know you! I hope to hear from you often.

Warmest regards,

Director of Alumni and Donor Engagement



## Get to Know Kenley!

- He is part of the 15% of the world's population who cannot catch poison ivy or poison oak.
- His hometowns are Earle, Arkansas, and Phitsanulok, Thailand.
- He has two chiweenies (dachshund and chihuahua mixes), Earle and Franklin.
- He is an alumni of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville - Go Hogs!
- He spent 10 years in the military, both in the US Army and US Air Force.
- In the past four years, he has lived in three states (South Carolina, Kentucky, and Nebraska).

Contact Kenley at [kenley.sturdivantwilson@brownell.edu](mailto:kenley.sturdivantwilson@brownell.edu) or 402.556.3772 ext. 1013.

# Putting the FUN in Fundraising

**BROWNELL  
TALBOT**

One School. One Goal. 100%.

In the fall, BT families joined the One School. One Goal. 100% Participation in The BT Fund challenge. Similar to previous years, students earned prizes and parties as their grade or House reached participation milestones, with the ultimate prize being a day of fun, designated BT Fun Day, for any grade or House that hit 100%.

This school year, BT had to reimagine so many school celebrations to create social distance. As BT Fun Day approached, school administrators realized the unique opportunity the event offered for the entire school to reconnect with one another safely outdoors. So the event expanded to include every student and faculty and staff member. BT Fun Day was the perfect capstone to a remarkable year of BT participation in The BT Fund!

## REASONS TO CELEBRATE:

**100%** participation by faculty, staff, and trustees



**\$424,751  
RAISED**

**76%**  
parent  
participation

**\$986**  
average gift size

**24%**  
of alumni  
gifts were  
from new  
donors

Every grade and House met or exceeded the **60%** participation milestone



SUPPORTING OUR  
MISSION



SUPPORTING OUR MISSION

# A GALA WEEKEND



From April 24 to May 8, BT's incredible community of donors and supporters bid on items, purchased raffle tickets, made donations, and raised their paddles to the sum of a record-breaking \$1.3 million for scholarships, activities, athletics, faculty and staff enrichment, and the fine arts.

Inspired by the art, beauty, and imagination of Brownell Talbot, this year's gala, "Masquerade," was a truly historic weekend for the community. Planning for the school's largest fundraiser is always a feat, but planning gala in the midst of a global pandemic was something else entirely. To accommodate for the ever-changing landscape, gala featured a two-week online silent auction paired with two in-person events: an intimate Masquerade Ball for sponsors on Friday, May 7, and an adults-only Carnival on Saturday, May 8.

Friday's Masquerade Ball was a formal affair featuring a cocktail hour in the gala tent and dinner and live auction in Scott Gymnasium. This year's live auction culminated in three stunning pieces from renowned ceramicist Jun Kaneko.



Saturday's Carnival, originally set for Skutt Field, was moved into the tent and gym to accommodate for the spring rain. This event was a celebratory party for guests and included live music by the Finest Hour band, carnival games and food, a robust silent auction, and a \$10,000 raffle drawing.

Gala Co-Chairs Sheila Christ and Fred Vakili and Fatima and Farhan Khan navigated the plans and preparations for a two-day gala weekend - a format first for BT - against the backdrop of the pandemic and did so with grace, trust, and humility. Their talents combined with the leadership of this year's Honorary Chairs, Debbie and Brian Wood, was truly a dream for BT. Debbie and Brian's commitment to ensuring gala was spectacular in every way is a testament to their devotion to the school. This year's gala steering committee was asked to work twice as hard in order to put together two amazing events and their dedication and generosity is appreciated and valued by all.

The support of the BT community affirms the school's vision of creating compassionate learners empowered and determined to reach their unique potential and positively impact the world. The future belongs to them, and because of the generosity of so many, BT is enabled to deliver the education experience students need and deserve to fulfill this vision.

*Watch the gala video at [brownell.edu/the-future](http://brownell.edu/the-future).*

# TO REMEMBER



**HONORARY CHAIRS**  
Debbie and Brian Wood

**CO-CHAIRS**  
Sheila Christ and Fred Vakili  
Fatima and Farhan Khan

**THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS:**

**WEEKEND PRESENTING SPONSOR**

**Brian & Debbie Wood**  
***TransWood***

**VISIONARY SPONSORS AND UNDERWRITERS**

Gale Etherton and Fedja Rochling  
Brady and Ryan Gibson  
The Lori and David Scott Foundation

**HERO SPONSORS AND UNDERWRITERS**



**Diventures**



Katie Weitz, PhD and  
Tim Wilson

**CHAMPION SPONSORS AND UNDERWRITERS**

Sheila Christ and Fred Vakili



Fatima and Farhan Khan



A full list of sponsors and underwriters can be found at [brownell.edu/gala](http://brownell.edu/gala).



# Recognizing BT's Retirees

Congratulations to our retiring faculty who gave so much to the Brownell Talbot community during their time at the school!

## Tammy Simkins

**18 years at BT, 34 years teaching**

**Favorite BT memory:** attending graduations of students that she once taught in junior kindergarten!

**Retirement plans:** spending more time visiting her one-year-old grandson, Asher, in Columbus, Ohio.

"Congratulations! Thank you for being such a remarkable teacher to all three of our kids. You will be missed! Wishing you the very best in retirement!"

- The Klinefelter Family



"Congrats Mrs. Simkins! Wishing you a wonderful retirement. Thank you for mentoring so many students over the years. We'll miss you!!"

- The Christ-Vakili Family

"Congratulations Mrs. Simkins! You were an amazing teacher and MathCounts instructor, and you will be missed. I really enjoyed seventh grade Algebra and all the candy you gave us during class. I hope you have a relaxing retirement, and I hope you have fun with your grandkids!"

- Brett Fisher, '24

"Mrs. Simkins, You will be missed! You have such a gift in teaching and made math approachable and fun. We wish you all the best!"

- The George Family

"Your compassion for students and passion for math will be dearly missed here at BT. I have loved being your colleague for the past 10 years and hope you have a wonderful retirement. I know you'll have a great time loving on the grandkids! May God Bless You."

- Bob Williams

## Sandy Thompson

**4 years at BT, 32 years teaching**

**Favorite BT memory:** seeing her grandchildren, who attend BT, each day and being able to witness their growth and support them at their many activities.

**Retirement plans:** golfing and traveling with her husband.

"You have the most gentle way of helping our little kiddos find their footing, gain confidence, and grow into their best little selves. Thank you for sharing your light and love with BT students. Congratulations on your retirement. You will be missed!"

- The Larson Family



"Farewell to a wonderful lady! Gigi enjoyed having you and Mrs. Jones as teachers this past semester. She has come a long way since January, and we owe it to you ladies. Enjoy your summer! Enjoy the extra free time with your hubby, family, and friends. You will be greatly missed. Thank you for all you've done. You're amazing!!"

- The Wachal Family

"You've been so caring and a wonderful influence for our Genevieve. You're always positive and always willing to help. I sincerely wish you the best and I know you're looking forward to your next chapter. It's much deserved, you will be missed!"

- The Lawson Family

"It has been great having you be part of our Early Years team, and you're leaving big shoes behind to fill!!! I (and I know Erin too!) will miss you dearly. Thanks for all you gave of yourself to give our littles such a caring, nurturing, and fun experience. Enjoy this next chapter and come visit us once in awhile!"

- Susi Gibbins

The BT community is thankful to our retiring faculty for their years of service and many contributions to the school. Please join us in wishing them the best!

Visit [brownell.edu/farewell](http://brownell.edu/farewell) to add your appreciation to their comment walls.



# FAREWELL AND WELCOME: BT BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Brownell Talbot is appreciative of the individuals who have accepted the invitation to help guide the direction of the school and the implementation of the strategic plan. Their willingness and excitement to serve BT families is inspiring. Please join us in saying thank you to outgoing members and welcome to new additions!



## *Farewell*

Brownell Talbot Board of Trustees has the deepest appreciation for outgoing member Bethany (Beavers) Graves, '86. Graves joined the Brownell Talbot Board of Trustees in 2018. During her time on the Board, Graves provided invaluable insights and leadership as a member of the

Enrollment and Marketing Committee and the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice Committee. She has been an active member of the BT community since her days as a student. She served as Booster Club president during the 2017-2018 school year, and she and her husband, Todd, co-chaired the 2018 gala. Their two children Brett, '17, and Audrey, '18, are BT graduates.



## *Welcome*

The Board of Trustees welcomes its newest member, David Welch. Welch was born in South Korea, moved to the United States as a toddler, and lived his teenage years in Omaha at the Omaha Home for Boys. He graduated from the University of Utah in 1999 with a major

in film studies. Upon graduation, he owned and operated Siren Productions, LLC, a commercial content production company for several years. He then received his masters in business administration from Creighton University in 2006. Welch began working in the Marketing and Sales Department at Union Pacific Railroad in 2004 and currently serves as a general director in the Industrial Products Division. Welch has served on Union Pacific's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council since 2019 and has had leadership roles in the Asian Employee Resource Organization. Welch and his wife Anna Lee have three children, Ivy, x'24, Clara, x'25, and David, Jr, '28.

## 2021-2022 BOARD MEMBERS

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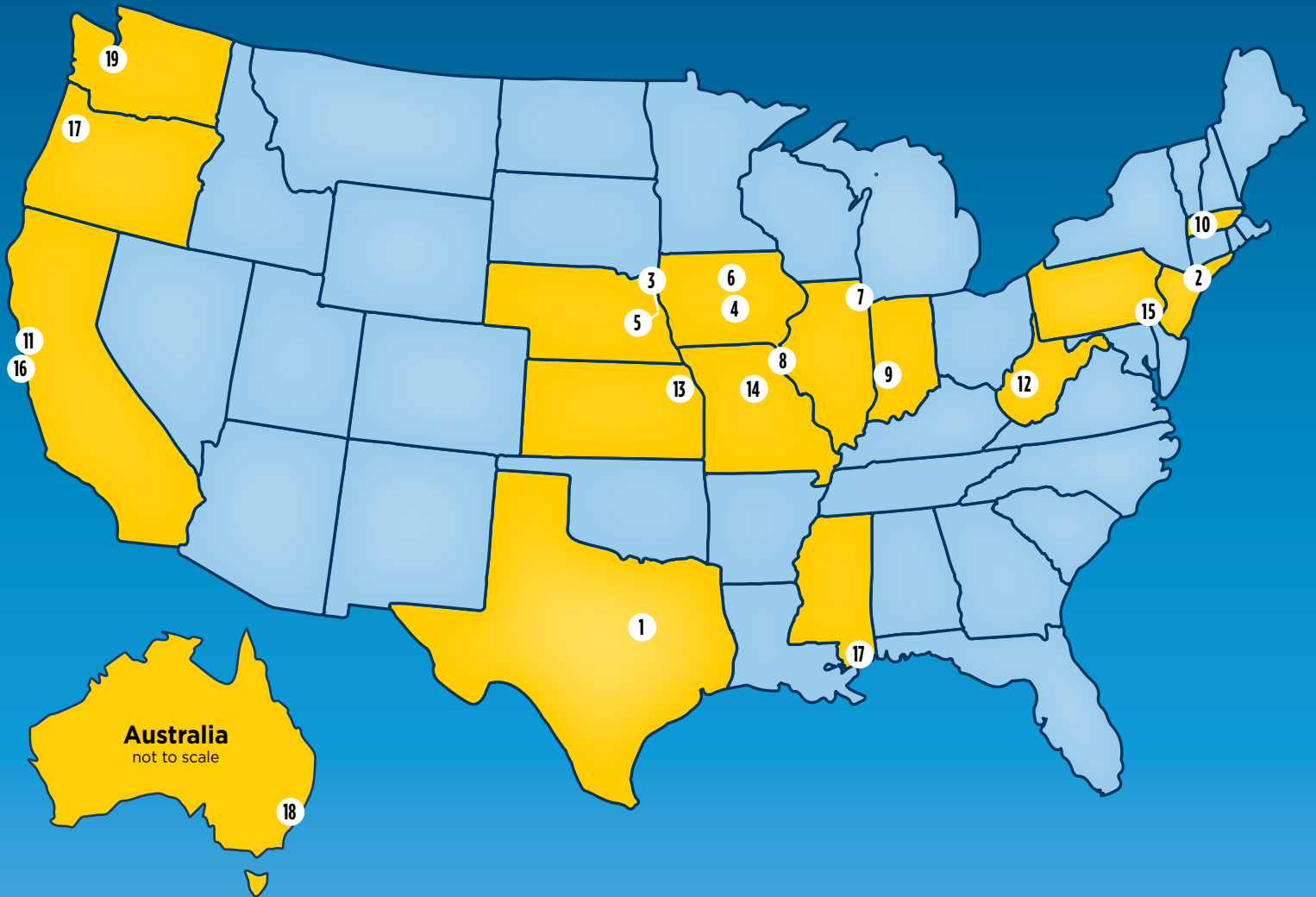
Niki Theophilus

David Welch

Renee Wessels

# CLASS OF 2021 COLLEGE MATRICULATION

Are there any Raiders coming to your campus or alma mater?



## CLASS ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The 28 members of Brownell Talbot's Class of 2021 were offered admission to 74 colleges and universities in 27 states, the District of Columbia, and Australia.

Mean GPA: 3.76  
(through fall 2020)

More than \$4.4 million in scholarships were offered.

93% of graduates were offered one or more scholarships.

20 graduates were eligible for the Frontier Academic All-Conference Award based on their standardized test and GPA achievements.

ALUMNI  
IN ACTION



1. Baylor University
2. Columbia University
3. Creighton University (8)
4. Drake University
5. Independent Study with Ernest Richardson,  
Resident Conductor of the Omaha Symphony
6. Iowa State University
7. Northwestern University
8. Quincy University
9. Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology
10. Smith College
11. University of California-Berkeley
12. University of Charleston
13. University of Kansas (2)
14. University of Missouri, Columbia
15. University of Pennsylvania (2)
16. University of San Francisco
17. University of Southern Mississippi-Gulf Coast
18. University of Sydney
19. University of Washington, Seattle



**ALUMNI  
IN ACTION**

# Alumni Spotlight

## Jenna Mu, Class of 2018

I am a rising senior at Boston College, studying global public health on the pre-dental track. I'm also a research assistant at the Boston College Global Observatory on Pollution and Health, where I research air and ocean pollution, and ways to address them. I am also a research assistant at the Harvard School of Dental Medicine where I research dental waste around the world and write policy briefs aimed at improving the environmental sustainability of dentistry. This summer, I am an intern at the United Nations Environment Programme where I'm enjoying diving deeper into the world of policy.

### **Congratulations on being named a Harry S. Truman Scholar. Can you tell us a little bit more about the program?**

The Harry S. Truman scholarship program is a graduate fellowship centered around public service. In addition to receiving funding for graduate school, Scholars attend the Truman Scholars Leadership Week and Summer Institute—the latter of which connects Scholars to internships in Washington, D.C.

### **Did you pick up any pandemic hobbies?**

I've been biking outdoors a lot!

### **How did BT help prepare you for what you are doing now?**

At BT, I developed a variety of skills that I use on a daily basis in college. BT taught me the importance of taking initiative. Through the National Honor Society, I organized the annual food drive at Completely KIDS. When I realized that many kids at the nonprofit didn't have access to musical instruments, I founded Forever Music, an after school program that provides free music lessons to kids. I remember the incredible support that I got from the BT community: Mr. (Bill) Harrell asked parents if they had instruments to donate, Mr. (Jules) DeSalvo gave me advice on how to teach music lessons, and friends from BT signed up to volunteer.

### **Which BT teachers had the biggest impact on you?**

The speech coaches, Mr. (Chris) Hamel and Mr. (Mike) Recker, have been really inspirational and influential mentors in my life. They taught me how to communicate effectively, think critically, and use my voice to advocate for what I believe in. They both encouraged me to try extemporaneous speaking (extemp), which is a speech event centered around current events. Extemp has truly been one of the most meaningful experiences of my life and really sparked my interest in policy and advocacy. I'm immensely grateful for the mentorship and support of Mr. Hamel and Mr. Recker.

### **What advice would you give to current BT students?**

Throughout my time at BT and in college, I've learned just how important mentorship is. I'd encourage BT students to actively seek out mentors in their classes and extracurricular activities. Having a good support system is crucial and can really help as you explore different colleges and careers.

### **Last book you read?**

I recently re-read *Just Mercy*, which is a powerful, life-changing book.

### **What's on your bucket list?**

Learn as many Taylor Swift songs as possible on guitar!

### **What is something you learned recently?**

This semester, I took a class titled "Children's Health and the Environment." I learned about how the environment is a powerful determinant for children's health and well-being.

### **What's next?**

I've become really interested in the intersection between the environment and human health.

After graduating from Boston College, I hope to obtain Doctor of Medicine in Dentistry and Master of Public Health degrees. My overall goal is to become a dentist and policymaker who reduces dental health disparities and environmental degradation.



# ALUMNI *on Campus*

Alumni and friends are now welcome to come to campus! We cautiously began opening campus to guests in spring of 2021 and are now pleased to open our doors to visitors. Please email or call ahead if possible to ensure someone is available to meet you and share the most up-to-date information regarding mask requirements on campus.



## Celebrate Your Senior

**1** Peter Massey, '81, pictured with son Andrew Massey, '21, and wife Michelle.

**2** W. David Scott, '81, pictured with daughter Kaitlyn Scott, '21, and wife Lori.

## Other Events

**3** Abhinav Suresh, '16, pictured with BT faculty Mike Recker and Chris Hamel. In addition to visiting former teachers, Suresh also spoke with Middle School parents about how BT prepared him for success at Columbia University and his new career on Wall Street.

**4** The following members of the Class of 2020 participated in a panel discussion via zoom with the Class of 2021. They spoke to the students about their experience with the transition to college: Zekiel Krejci-Hyde, Sarah Aoki, Emalie Wightman, Carson Propst, Jade Segur, Charlotte Hussain, and Connor Patterson. Also pictured are Director of College Counseling and Guidance Bri Vander Vorst and senior class sponsor Meg Harms.

## Gala

**5** Colesun Wood, '19, enjoyed attending the Gala Carnival with his parents Debbie and Brian Wood, who served as this year's Honorary Gala Chairs.

**6** Charlotte Hedican, '15, came to the Gala Carnival with her dad, Chris Hedican.

## Graduation

**7** The following alumni were on campus to celebrate graduation with their siblings:

John Vovk, '18, and Maddie Vovk, '19

Madison Scott, '18

Stuti Patel, '19

Charley Pugsley, '20

Taylor Stuke, '17

Sean Gardner, '17, and Alison Gardner, '24

Boden Whitmore, '18

# ALUMNI NEWS AND NOTES

The Alumni News and Notes section of *Fireside* celebrates your recent accomplishments. Share information about births, weddings, anniversaries, career moves, retirements, and life-changing experiences! We publish alumni submissions and any other news we receive from friends, employers, and media sources.

**Alejandro Anderson, '13**, was recently promoted to Sergeant in the Air Force. Anderson also received the Language Professional of the Year (Spanish) for his squadron.

**J.B. Davis, '13**, recently joined the law firm Sodoro, Mooney, and Lenaghan specializing in worker's compensation and insurance defense matters.

**Wellesley Michael, '14**, recently accepted a new position as staff assistant, House Communications Standards Commission for the U.S. House of Representatives.

**Will Calderon, '15**, started a new position as an assistant environmental engineer at Olsson, an engineering and design firm.

**Lauren Zimmerman, '15**, has been accepted to University of Nebraska Omaha's Information Technology Ph.D. program, where she will continue her work with the Department of Homeland Security's Center of Excellence in Counterterrorism (NCITE).

**Michael Bartz, '19**, is working this summer as a group claims intern at Mutual of Omaha.

Hot off the presses! We hope you have enjoyed this issue of *Fireside* magazine. Can you help us identify the women printing the school newsletter in this photo? Email Director of Alumni and Donor Engagement Kenley Sturdivant-Wilson at [kenley.sturdivantwilson@brownell.edu](mailto:kenley.sturdivantwilson@brownell.edu) if you recognize them.



## IN MEMORIAM

### ALUMNI

Shirley Ann (Frazier) Burrell, '42  
*D. April 20, 2021*

### FRIENDS:

Kathryn Drake, survived by son, Matt Drake, '01.  
*D. February 8, 2021*

Cara Jamieson, survived by children  
Mark Jamieson, '80, Susan Runnels, '86, and  
Mike Jamieson, '87. She is also survived by grandsons,  
Grant Runnels, '17, Harrison Runnels, '16, and  
Adam Runnels, x'22.  
*D. March 29, 2021*

## REUNIONS

### Classes of 1970-1974

Mark your calendars for fall 2022 (Date TBD) for a fun-filled reunion! Watch your email for a quick survey about your event interests as well as reunion updates from the school and your classmates.

This weekend promises to be far out!

### Classes of 1980-1985

It's on! The 1980-1985 reunion is set for October 1-3, 2021. The planning committee is working hard to finalize the plans for this rad weekend! More details to come via email and on the reunion's Facebook group. Search for BT 80-85 Reunion in 2021 to join this lively group!

Be sure to visit [brownell.edu/hello](http://brownell.edu/hello) to ensure your contact information is up to date!

# A Page in Time

## THE CLASSES OF 1980-1985

Fond memories of friends, fun, faculty, and maybe a few shenanigans will fill the weekend of October 1-3, 2021, as the Classes of 1980-1985 gather for a reunion!

We look forward to welcoming BT alumni back to campus, and for some, back to Omaha! To join in on the fun, contact Director of Alumni and Donor Engagement Kenley Sturdivant-Wilson ([kenley.sturdivantwilson@brownell.edu](mailto:kenley.sturdivantwilson@brownell.edu)) or Executive Assistant to the Head of School Renae Mackender ([renae.mackender@brownell.edu](mailto:renae.mackender@brownell.edu)).



### LET'S CONNECT!

#### *Feeling social?*

Follow us on Instagram @BrownellTalbotSchool and on Facebook @BrownellTalbotAlumni

#### *Looking to network?*

Join the Brownell Talbot College Preparatory School Alumni group on LinkedIn.

#### *New contact information?*

Is your mail going to your parents' address? It's time to update the school at [brownell.edu/hello](http://brownell.edu/hello).

#### *Help us connect with lost alumni.*

Visit [brownell.edu/alumni/lost-alumni](http://brownell.edu/alumni/lost-alumni)  
If you have a connection to anyone on the list, reach out to Kenley at [kenley.sturdivantwilson@brownell.edu](mailto:kenley.sturdivantwilson@brownell.edu)

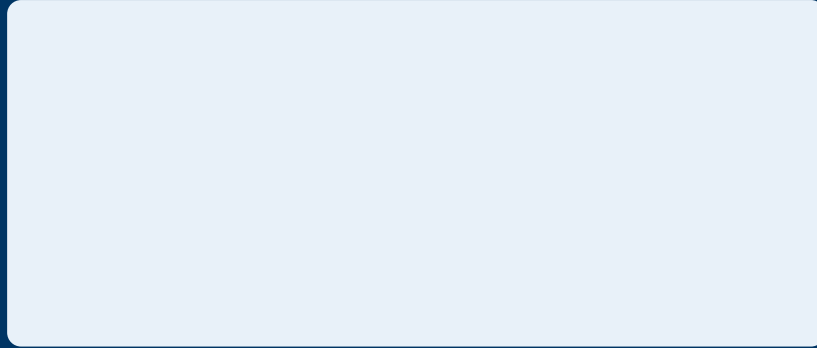


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