

# The Briar Wire

THE SWEET BRIAR COLLEGE ALUMNAE NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2019 | VOLUME 5 | ISSUE 2

## Sweet Briar College's Alumnae Alliance: A Year in Review

by Alumnae Alliance Council Co-Chairs Sarah Clement '75, Kathryn Yunk '91, and Norma Valentine '93

**In 2018, the Alumnae Alliance (AA) continued to build on the strong foundation created in 2016, working to increase alumnae engagement with the College in innovative ways while also providing an enthusiastic, reliable corps of volunteers to help the College accomplish its goals of recruiting and graduating excellent students on a beautiful, historic campus maintained and preserved for perpetuity.**

To that end, the Governance and Strategic Initiatives Working Group (Governance WG) drafted the AA Principles of Governance to ensure the AA follows transparent, consistent, and fair processes in its work for alumnae and the College, and the AA Council voted to adopt the Principles in March 2018. The Governance WG continued to review and revise the Principles to enhance transparency and consistency in the nominations and selection process for Council co-chair positions and for creation and dissolution of WGs as needed to meet the immediate priorities of the College.

The Young Alumnae Squad (YAS) formed as a new WG dedicated to increasing engagement and philanthropy among younger alumnae who are 15 or fewer years out of college. YAS recruited 16 members who organized themselves into several committees focused on areas such as fundraising, engagement, communications, and events of interest to younger alumnae.

The Alumnae Clubs WG helped organize 33 Sweet Briar Days and 14 Back to School events. Read more about these events inside this issue of *The Briar Wire*.

The Admissions Ambassadors WG recruited 77 Ambassadors to assist the College. 77 AAs worked 120 fairs in 28 states, representing classes from 2018 – 1971. Kelly Iacobelli '88 covered the most fairs — 10 in Georgia. Elizabeth Young attended 7 in Illinois. We really appreciate the volunteers! Admissions Office in staffing 120 college fairs and contacting hundreds of prospective students by handwritten notes, emails and phone calls.

The Network WG organized another successful career weekend in DC with the Career Services office, hosting students who visited both private and Federal government offices to learn about internship and employment opportunities after graduation. The Network also initiated an Alumnae Book Club using the website Goodreads, where alumnae can meet virtually to discuss books and authors.

The Development WG helped the College achieve its most successful March Days of Giving to date, as well as supported College efforts to increase class participation in Reunion and overall giving to the College.

Over the past year, the Communications WG has concentrated on sharing news and increasing Alumnae engagement through both traditional and social media platforms. They created a group

of alumnae to proof the Class Notes, submitted story ideas and those of other alumnae, and are on-call to help write pieces for the Alumnae Magazine. They also edit the Council submissions to *The Briar Wire* when asked. On a daily basis they manage our social media feeds — Facebook, Twitter and Instagram — and are looking into how to better incorporate additional platforms, particularly LinkedIn, into our Alumnae communications strategy. They also worked in partnership with the Alumnae Relations and Development office for promoting participation in March Days of Giving, Giving Tuesday and 2018 year-end giving within AA social media platforms, as well as with the Young Alumnae Squad, in their successful "Update Your Info" campaign.

The Council Operations WG continued to work closely with both the volunteer leaders of the working groups and AR&D. Operating mechanisms include conducting biweekly meetings of the Council to discuss progress on the initiatives undertaken by each WG as well as to hear and share news from AR&D and other college departments about campus and regional events.

Close alignment of volunteers and the College's goals are the key measures of success. If you're interested in volunteering with the Alumnae Alliance, please visit [sweetbriar.imodules.com/alumnae-alliance-council](http://sweetbriar.imodules.com/alumnae-alliance-council).

### SWEET BRIAR FUND

FY 2019

GOAL: \$10 MILLION

RAISED: \$4,734,502 (47.3% OF GOAL)



as of 1.25.2019

Help us ring the bells by making your gift to the Sweet Briar Fund today at [sbc.edu/give!](http://sbc.edu/give!)

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## Sol Southall named Sweet Briar golf coach

by Casey Grogan

Sweet Briar College has hired Sol Southall, most recently an assistant football and women's golf coach at Earlham College, as its head golf coach.

Prior to a two-year stint at Earlham, Southall was the assistant football and head women's soccer coach at Sul Ross State University and an assistant football coach at Hardin-Simmons University.

At Earlham, Southall spent time with the women's golf program in the spring of 2018 as the Quakers competed at the Heritage Hill Collegiate and the Franklin Spring Invite. At both the Heritage Hill Collegiate and the Franklin Spring Invite, the Quakers placed three golfers inside the individual top-30 and were led by Hannah Toresdahl's pair of top-25 finishes.

In addition to his time with the golf program, Southall was the offensive coordinator for the Quakers' football team. Southall was a dedicated recruiter at Earlham, recruiting more than 75 percent of the program's incoming class for the 2018 season. On the field, Southall helped coach Quakers players to school record-setting performances, including quarterback Wes Hundley



breaking the single-season rushing record. Off the field, Southall also served as the football program's academic coordinator and saw the Quakers' team GPA rise nearly .20 points under his mentorship.

A 2008 graduate of Angelo State University, Southall earned his Bachelor of Science in business while also playing quarterback for the Rams. Southall's daughter Trinity is wrapping up her senior year of high school in 2019. ■

## Planned Giving: 5 Steps to a Better Estate Plan

By planning your estate now, you create a legacy that reflects what makes a difference to you. You can do this by creating a secure future for your loved ones and also ensuring your support for the places, people and causes close to your heart continues for years to come. Discover five simple ways you can ensure that your estate plan reflects you:

1. Make the most of what you have. Meet with qualified professionals to form a financial and giving plan that satisfies your needs and meets your goals.
2. Protect family and loved ones. Keep loved ones safe by making sure your estate plan is up-to-date. It should be reviewed regularly for changes in personal relationships, tax laws, births, deaths and state of residence.
3. Be tax-smart. Don't let taxes place a

burden on your family, with careful planning now, you can get the most out of your estate plan.

4. Make sure your wishes are fulfilled. Use the services of a qualified estate planning attorney to draw up your will and other legal documents, ensuring that your wishes are clearly stated so there are no misunderstandings.
5. Continue helping others after your lifetime. Gifts to charitable organizations, such as Sweet Briar College, in your future plans ensure your support for our work continues even after your lifetime.

### Make Sweet Briar a Part of Your Plan

Want to learn more about including a gift to Sweet Briar College in your future plans? Contact Claire Dennison Griffith '80 at [cgriffith@sbc.edu](mailto:cgriffith@sbc.edu) or 434-381-6479 to learn more. ■



## Sweet Briar Days

by Alumnae Alliance Clubs Working Group Co-Chairs Jeannette Pillsbury '72 and Joanne Hopkins '98

Over the last month, Sweet Briar Day events have been held around the country with a few more planned in the coming weeks. A total of 33 separate events are taking place demonstrating the strength and connectedness of the Sweet Briar community. While several events are being held in Virginia, they are also taking place in the northeast, mid-West, Texas, Florida, California and even Alaska!

The events have taken many forms, including traditional lunches in homes or restaurants, chocolate shop gatherings, bowling, attendance at a regional equestrian event, and culminating with a devoted group who will be at the Iditerod in March to cheer on alumna Alison Lifka '13 in her first race. Here are just a few highlights of some Sweet Briar Days that have taken place thus far:

- Indianapolis kicked off this year's Sweet Briar Day events. Ten alumnae "and one very little baby" gathered on December 20. Katie Keogh Weidner '88, major gifts officer, joined the gathering to share College news and activities.
- In Houston, alumnae gathered for lunch followed by a visit to the Museum of Fine Arts for the "Tudors to Windsors: British Royal Portrait" exhibit – Houston is the only location in the U.S. where this exhibit is being shown. A unique opportunity for a Sweet Briar Day gathering.
- Sweet Briar alumnae in Richmond, VA met up at a local gelato shop where they indulged in many delicious sweets, while those in Milwaukee gathered at the Wicked Hop – a location known to have Milwaukee's best bloody mary.
- The Philadelphia Alumnae Club hosted two different events on different dates and in different locations across the region in hopes of reaching more alumnae and students. Both events were well attended, with several alumnae attending both events. You can never have too many Sweet Briar gatherings for this group!
- The Asheville, NC club took a field trip to Tryon International Equestrian Center for a special tour given by Kathryn Cunningham-McMahon '97.
- Alumnae in Raleigh, NC enjoyed a fun afternoon of bonding while bowling!
- Atlanta greeted many alumnae in three different venues. Late on a Saturday afternoon (1/12) the first Atlanta Sweet Briar Day event was held at the Historic



Swan Coach House, 45 RSVPs. Camille Yow '55, shared updates on her "Living Room Learning" lecture series, a winter series that is sold out! Norma Bulls Valentine '93, shared alumnae updates and Marshalyn Yeargin Allsopp '68, shared SBC Board updates and news from the campus. Those who could not make it to this first event had the option of going to dinner with Heather Colson Ewing '90, Atlanta Club chair and Sweet Briar's Admissions Ambassador co-chair. Following the Saturday Atlanta events, a group of alumnae gathered Sunday at The Basement Theatre for Sunday night comedy night: Sunday Stand-Up for Sweet Briar with Amy Gibbs Brown '99.



A representative from Sweet Briar has been present at many of the events to provide updates from campus. While the events themselves were each unique, the common theme at all of the events has been to bring the Sweet Briar community together, including alumnae, current students, prospective students, parents, and other friends of Sweet Briar. ■



## Nobel laureate Kip Thorne to speak at Sweet Briar's 2019 Engineers Week Banquet

by Janika Carey

The region's 2019 National Engineers Week Banquet at Sweet Briar College will feature a prominent speaker: theoretical physicist and Nobel laureate Kip S. Thorne. The event will take place from 6 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb. 20, in the College's Upchurch Field House.

Thorne, who is recognized as one of the world's leading experts on the astrophysical implications of Einstein's Theory of General Relativity, was one of three scientists to win the 2017 Nobel Prize in Physics.

"We are proud to bring the engineering community in our region together for another exciting, thought-provoking presentation," said Bethany Brinkman, director of the College's Margaret Jones Wyllie '45 Engineering Program. "Dr. Thorne's contributions to the global scientific community are truly groundbreaking and we are honored to have him speak to us this year."

This is the fourth year in a row the College is hosting the banquet, an annual event that brings together industry professionals, high school and college students, educators and members of the public. The event, which has nearly tripled in size over the last two years, kicks off at 6 p.m. with hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar, followed at 6:45 p.m. by the dinner and program. Advanced registration is required.

As part of National Engineers Week, Sweet Briar is again inviting high school girls (grades 9-12) from across the region to join its engineering faculty and students for Introduce a Girl to Engineering Day, also on Wednesday, Feb. 20. Activities will begin at 3 p.m. and include hands-on design projects led by Sweet Briar engineering faculty



and students, a campus tour and dinner tickets to the Engineers Week Banquet. Participants will also get to meet Thorne that afternoon for a special Q&A session. Participation is free, but space is limited to 20 students. Advanced registration is required. Please note that while student participants are provided with a ticket to the Engineers Week Banquet that evening, tickets for family members are not included and must be purchased separately. For more information about both events, please contact Rebecca Girtten at [rgirtten@sbcc.edu](mailto:rgirtten@sbcc.edu) or 434-381-6447. ■

## Alumnae Survey results highlight opportunities for engagement and communications

This past summer, the Alumnae Relations and Development Office collaborated with Maggie Saylor Patrick '07 to conduct a survey of alumnae to measure engagement among Sweet Briar's alumnae base.

The fall issue of the Alumnae Magazine included a summary of the survey process as well as general findings. The results of the survey helped the Alumnae Relations and Development Office make some determinations about how we communicate with our alumnae.

In the coming months, we'll be sharing survey results and how we are applying the findings to improve communications and engagement with alumnae. Keep an eye out for these columns in future issues *The Briar Wire* and at [sweetbriar.imodules.com/alumnae-survey](https://sweetbriar.imodules.com/alumnae-survey).

## Join us for the 30th Annual Gospel Fest!

Featuring artist Rev. Luther Barnes,  
Rocky Mount, NC.

Friday, February 22, 7 – 9 p.m.  
Memorial Chapel

The annual Gospel Fest is hosted by Sweet Briar and is one of the events during Black History Month that brings our campus community together. All are welcome!



## After five years in Alaska, Sweet Briar grad Alison Lifka gets ready for Iditarod



No bones about it: Alison Lifka has a giant appetite for adventure. It's why she moved to Alaska three days after graduating from Sweet Briar College in 2013. And it's why she's now training for the Iditarod — the world's "last great race."

Lifka, who was born in Ohio and grew up in North Carolina, says a lot of her fierce spirit comes from her four years at Sweet Briar, where she studied environmental science. "Sweet Briar molded my current character. Entering college, I was a shy, quiet student," she recalls. "While determined with a strong work ethic, I was easily intimidated and wasn't very confident in my skills. I still tend toward quiet and reserved, but now there is a steel edge and resiliency to my quiet determinedness. This is very much thanks to Sweet Briar. My professors, soccer coaches and peers taught me the value of the strength of women and pride in doing

something not quite the norm. In the sport of racing sled dogs, where the gender of the competitor doesn't matter, I have found a niche that Sweet Briar helped prepare me for."

Dede Conley '72 learned about Alison's participation in the Iditarod and saw an opportunity: she and several other alumnae will be traveling to Alaska to see Alison off at a Sweet Briar Day dinner on March 1, the ceremonial start of the race in Anchorage on March 2, and the final race departure on March 3 from Willow, Alaska. After she launches her sled, Alison will race for the next 12 days and more than 1,000 miles with her team of 14 dogs.

Lifka's fans can learn more about her sled dogs and her training progress on her website:

[www.bearnecessitiessmushing.com](http://www.bearnecessitiessmushing.com). ■

# I SBC because...



Keep an eye on your email on Thursday, February 14 to find out what our students love about Sweet Briar! Visit the [Sweet Briar College Now and Forever](#) Facebook page to apply our frame to your profile photo and tell us what YOU love about Sweet Briar, too!

## Brewer Fund Grant Update: Sweet Briar's environmental science programs, internships and student research



*Students in Sweet Briar's beekeeping club learned about the College's apiary this past summer.*

This year marks the third year since Sweet Briar received a major grant to bolster the College's environmental science programming for its students including research our community conducts on our campus — a true living laboratory.

Initiated by the Judith Haskell Brewer Fund of the Community Foundation for a Greater Richmond, this award has two components: a \$500,000 grant to support the environmental science program, funding faculty and their research, student internships, equipment, the Explore Environmental Science outreach program, and more; and a \$500,000 challenge grant for program operations going forward and program endowment.

Internships supported by the Brewer Fund's grant have addressed myriad environmental projects on campus, such as growing produce in our community garden, researching alternative fuel sources and monitoring an invasive water plant in one of the College's lakes.

With the establishment of the campus apiary, students also have an opportunity to learn not only beekeeping, but with the introduction of a 20-acre wildflower garden, pollinator habitats and the effects they have on our campus ecosystem.

The Brewer Fund's grant has also supported the

Sweet Briar College Land-Atmosphere Research Station (SBC-LARS), consisting of a 120-foot research tower and adjacent laboratory shed for the collection and analysis of atmospheric data, located in one of Sweet Briar's many forests.



Sweet Briar has a remaining \$155,000 to raise in support from alumnae and friends of the College to match the Brewer Fund's \$500,000 challenge grant. When this amount is complete, contributions to the environmental science program from the Brewer Fund and from donors making challenge gifts will total \$1.5 million.

If you are interested in supporting this challenge grant, please call Claire Dennison Griffith '80 at **434-381-6479** or by emailing [cgriffith@sbc.edu](mailto:cgriffith@sbc.edu).



## Nominations open for Outstanding and Distinguished Alumna Awards

Nominations for the 2019 recipients of the Outstanding and Distinguished Alumnae Awards are now open. To submit your nomination or view past recipients of these awards, please visit [sweetbriar.imodules.com/awards](http://sweetbriar.imodules.com/awards) or call 800-381-6131. Nominations for both awards are reviewed and recipients are selected by the Alumnae Alliance Council and the President's Council of the College. Nominations are invited from any member of the Sweet Briar family: alumnae, faculty, staff, students and the Sweet Briar College Board of Directors.

### Distinguished Alumna Award

The Distinguished Alumna Award was created to honor alumnae who have brought distinction to themselves and to Sweet Briar College through outstanding accomplishment in a volunteer or professional capacity.

### Outstanding Alumna Award

This award may be given to graduate alumnae who have been out of college for at least 15 years in recognition of their outstanding service to Sweet Briar in a volunteer capacity. ■

## Save the Date!

Reunion registration goes live at [sbc.edu/reunion](http://sbc.edu/reunion) on Feb. 4, 2019.

All classes are welcome!  
We will celebrate classes  
ending in 4's and 9's.

Questions?  
800-381-6131

