

# The Briar Wire

Volume 10, Issue 1 | February 2024



## My fellow alumnae and friends,

Happy 2024!

For me, the new year is a time to look forward to all the opportunities ahead, but also to reflect on the things that I am grateful for from the past year.

I am especially grateful for the Sweet Briar community, on campus as well as around the United States and the world, who support women's education and leadership development. We all appreciate your support in so many ways, and also your

feedback to help us do our best work for Sweet Briar.

It is very heartwarming to have decades of alumnae — from the Class of 1946 to the Class of 2023 — come together to celebrate our alma mater and share their stories during 27 Sweet Briar Day events. The one tie that binds all of us is the close-knit community we shared at Sweet Briar during our college years. We are working hard to make sure that same close-knit community is here for our current students.

Alumnae engagement is always at the top of our priority list every year, and President Mary Pope M. Hutson '83 has made building community one of her key priorities.

Thank you for all that you have done and will do in the future to promote Sweet Briar College. Please plan to come and see us this year!

With best wishes for a healthy and happy new year,

**Claire Dennison Griffith '80**

Interim Vice President for Alumnae Relations and Development

PS: We always love to add new Sweet Briar Day locations. If there was not an event in your area and you would like to plan one for next year, please contact us at [alumnae@sbc.edu](mailto:alumnae@sbc.edu) or 434-381-6131.

### ABOVE

The Pittsburgh Alumnae Club gathered for their Sweet Briar Day. Honored guest, Joan Berend Gordon '46, is in the center.

# REUNION 2024

## Board of Directors of Sweet Briar College

Mason Bennett Rummel '83, Chair  
Mary Pope M. Hutson '83, President  
Elizabeth Groves Aycock '96  
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Marianne "Mimi" C. Fahs '71  
Kelley Manderson Fitzpatrick '85  
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Katie Hearn '85  
Martha Holland '72  
Keenan Colton Kelsey '66  
Michelle O'Neill '85  
J. Chapman Petersen  
Holly Prothro Philbin '95  
Norma Bulls Valentine '93  
Claude Becker Wasserstein '82

## Alumnae Relations and Development Staff

Claire Dennison Griffith '80, Interim  
Vice President of Alumnae  
Relations and Development  
Calli Arida, Advancement and  
Stewardship Manager  
Lea Sparks Bennett '83, Advancement  
Services Coordinator  
Rachel Blomquist, Administrative  
Assistant  
Pam Boydoh, Executive Assistant  
Lee Anne MacKenzie Chaskes '83,  
Director of the Sweet Briar Fund  
Margaret McClellan Driscoll '92,  
Director of Planned Giving  
Paula Eanes, Director of Advancement  
Services  
Heather Colson Ewing '90, Admissions  
Ambassadors Manager  
Katie Hawk '21, Advancement Services  
Associate  
Caroline Chappel Hazarian '09,  
Associate Director of Alumnae  
Relations  
Keeley Sullivan Jurgovan '92, Associate  
Director of Alumnae Relations  
Lisa Wray Longino '78, Senior Director  
of Major Gifts and Stewardship  
Rachel Pietsch, Assistant Director of  
Alumnae Relations  
Clélie D. D. Steckel, Director of  
Development Communications  
and Data Analytics  
Megan Sunwall, Alumnae Relations  
and Development Assistant



## Reunion registration launched February 1!

No matter your class year, we hope to see you at Reunion 2024! We will honor those classes that end in 4 and 9 to recognize their anniversary Reunion years.

Registration opened on Thursday, February 1 at [sbc.edu/reunion](https://sbc.edu/reunion). Early bird pricing is in effect until Tuesday, April 23 at 11:59 p.m. Registration closes on Tuesday, May 21 at 11:59 p.m., so if you plan to attend, please be sure to register before that time.

Reunion is always a fun time, with plenty of events for you to attend with friends and classmates, learn more about Sweet Briar and updates to campus, and enjoy our wonderful farm-to-table dining experiences. Here is a sampling of what you can expect for Reunion this year.

- Picnics (weather permitting)
- Special dinners for the 50th and 25th Reunion classes
- Greenhouse tours
- Wine tasting
- Reunion Convocation, featuring a college update and awards for class giving

and participation

- Alumnae Colleges, with the opportunity to learn from current Sweet Briar professors
- Opportunities to tour Sweet Briar's museum and galleries
- Outings like riding, golf, and hiking
- A celebration dinner and dance!

You can find a full schedule on our website at [sbc.edu/reunion](https://sbc.edu/reunion). There, we have also included information about pricing, helpful items to bring with you, the various accommodations available, and frequently asked questions. We have also posted a list of alumnae who have registered to attend, which we will update as we receive additional registrations.

Should you have any questions, please call 434-381-6131 or email us at [alumnae@sbc.edu](mailto:alumnae@sbc.edu). ●

# Sweet Briar Forever Month and March Days of Giving



## RIGHT

Maria McCoy '25 turns the soil at the annual rose planting to commemorate Sweet Briar Forever Month in 2023.

For the ninth year, Sweet Briar College will hold its annual March Days of Giving, a ten-day giving initiative to raise \$1 million (or more)!

March is Sweet Briar Forever Month, when our community recognizes our commitment to perpetuity. This fundraising initiative not only increases the amount raised so far each year, but also increases alumnae participation rates.

Each year, we encourage alumnae and friends of Sweet Briar to make their gifts to the Sweet Briar Fund, the College's annual giving program. However, any gift to Sweet Briar, no matter the size or the designation, truly makes a difference.

Over the years, we have learned that many participants in March Days of Giving like to plan ahead for their gifts. If you'd like to send a check in advance to count for March Days of Giving, please write either "March 1" or "March 2-10" in the memo line. If you plan to make a gift of stock or by wire transfer, please ask your broker or wealth manager to include a note that the gift is for March Days of Giving, if possible. If you plan to make your gift by credit card on either March 1 or during March 2-10, you may do so online at [sbc.edu/give](https://sbc.edu/give).

Finally, in addition to making your gift, you can make March Days of Giving successful by asking your classmates and friends to join you. If you are an alumna and would like to encourage participation within your class, please reach out to your class leaders to learn how you can help. ●

## March Days of Giving Goals:

### March 1

Raise \$500,000

### March 2-10

Raise \$500,000

Make your March Days of Giving gift online at [sbc.edu/give](https://sbc.edu/give)!



## SWEET BRIAR DAY PHOTOS

### **Boston, MA**

January 6, 2024

Eithne Broderick Carlin '80 hosted the Boston area Sweet Briar Day at her family restaurant, DJ's Famous Wings.



### **Dallas, TX**

January 13, 2024

Ann Stuart Kling '74 hosted the Dallas Sweet Briar Day at her home. Lisa Wray Longino '78 gave an update from Sweet Briar and Professor Jeff Key gave a talk on current events around the world.

### **Williamsburg, VA**

December 17, 2023

Alumnae in Williamsburg gathered to join Courtney Hurt '10 for a walk around Colonial Williamsburg to see the holiday lights. Margaret McClellan Driscoll '92 provided an update from Sweet Briar.





## SWEET BRIAR DAY PHOTOS



### Washington, D.C.

January 7, 2024

President Mary Pope M. Hutson '83 gave a wonderful college update to guests at Top of the Town. Professor Lisa Powell gave a talk on human and environmental sustainability at Sweet Briar.

### Charlottesville, VA

January 14, 2024

President Hutson gave a college update at Farmington, where Margaret McClellan Driscoll '92 hosted alumnae for Sweet Briar Day.



### Fredericksburg, VA

January 7, 2024

Abby Carter '89 hosted the Fredericksburg Sweet Briar Day at her home, and Interim Vice President for Alumnae Relations and Development, Claire Dennison Griffith '80, gave an update from Sweet Briar. Professor Chris Penfield also attended and gave a wonderful update on the Women's Leadership Core Curriculum and the course he taught last semester, Contemporary Ethical Questions.

# Spring Art Exhibitions



**ABOVE**  
Alexi Hunt '24 unloads plastic bottles for *Under Land, Over Sky* (left) and artist Susie Ganch and husband, Jerod Eisenshtadt (right) unload some of the completed panels to display in Pannell. Photos courtesy of Clare van Loenen.

Thanks to Clare van Loenen, professor and director of galleries and museum, and Nicole Burkett, collections manager, Sweet Briar's spring semester is full of opportunities to see original works of art. The list below includes the exhibitions on display through June.

## ***Under Land, Over Sky***

**Susie Ganch**

**February 8 to June 29, 2024**

Pannell Gallery, Thurs., 12-5 p.m.; Fri. & Sat., 12-5 p.m.

The overwhelming scale of plastic pollution and its relationship to climate change is viscerally experienced in the approach to making of artist Susie Ganch. Her human-scale form of recycling has woven coffee cup lids into swirling tapestries, plastic bags into cloud rooms, and now water bottles into architecture. In *Under Land, Over Sky* seven elevations of green emerge through translucent bottles activated by daylight from unshuttered, refectory windows. This collaborative art installation with Professor Lisa Powell involved the entire Sweet Briar community, who collected and processed the plastic bottles used in the original artwork.



## ***Digital and Smart Phone Photo Show*** **Student Exhibition**

**Jan. 18 to Feb 4, 2024**

Benedict Gallery – Open 24/7

An exhibition of 16 Sweet Briar College student photographs that make the most of digital and smartphone technologies. As photography professor Medford Taylor tells his students, "The best camera is the one you have with you."

## ***Valé Shenandoah***

**Ian Donegan**

**Jan. 15 to March 30, 2024**

Vaulted Gallery – Open 24/7

Ian Donegan's relationship to land is a through-line in his practice, which spans painting, drawing and video. He is an interdisciplinary artist based in Richmond, VA and a 2021 graduate of Virginia Commonwealth University.

## ***In Print: Laura Pharis***

**Feb. 8 to March 30, 2024**

Benedict Gallery – Open 24/7

Where do female artists find themselves in collections? *In Print* gathers together prints and print exchanges by Professor of Visual Arts, Laura Pharis, alongside her paintings, usually scattered across campus, and one sculpture. ●



# Information about Sweet Briar to Share with Prospective Students and Families

As we shared in the December issue of The Briar Wire, Sweet Briar has embarked on a “word of mouth” marketing campaign to augment our efforts to recruit future classes for the College. We created a chart of talking points for alumnae and friends to help you address Sweet Briar’s greatest strengths in conversation with friends and prospective students.

**Sign Up to Help Admissions!**  
If you are interested in becoming an Admissions Ambassador, email Heather Colson Ewing '90, Admissions Ambassador Manager, at [hewing@sbcb.edu](mailto:hewing@sbcb.edu).

What We Do	Examples of How We Do It	Your Experience
<b>Cultivate Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Unique Women’s Leadership Core Curriculum</li><li>• 8 out of 10 students hold leadership roles on campus</li><li>• The Honorable Verda Colvin '87 is a Georgia Supreme Court justice</li></ul>	Add your personal experience through stories from your time at Sweet Briar to make these talking points your own.
<b>Powerful Sisterhood</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A global alumnae network — more than 14,000!</li><li>• Valued traditions, including tap clubs, athletics, and riding</li><li>• Sweet Briar alumnae are executives, entrepreneurs, and educators, like Leah Solivan '01, founder of Task Rabbit</li></ul>	Having examples of your experience at Sweet Briar will make the conversation more personal and authentic. Think about the questions below to help you get started.
<b>Academic Excellence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 6 out of 10 students conduct undergraduate research, which is three times the national average</li><li>• ABET-accredited engineering program</li><li>• Sweet Briar alumnae go on to graduate school at Duke, Georgetown, Columbia, and more!</li></ul>	How did Sweet Briar cultivate you as a leader?
<b>Beautiful Campus</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2,847 acres and more than 20 miles of trails to explore and find your favorite spot</li><li>• Outdoor recreation equipment on loan at no cost for students</li><li>• 22 buildings on the National Register of Historic Places</li></ul>	What does your version of the Sweet Briar sisterhood look like?
<b>Personal Exploration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Each student receives a grant for engaged learning, up to \$2,000 for a personal project during one of their three-week sessions</li><li>• Academic centers that encourage collaboration and research: Human and Environmental Sustainability; Creativity, Design, and the Arts; Science, Technology, and Engineering</li><li>• Raise bees in our 20-hive apiary or create a ceramic masterpiece in our wood-fired kiln</li></ul>	<p>What was your academic experience like?</p> <p>What was your favorite spot on campus?</p> <p>How did you explore your own path at Sweet Briar?</p>



## Save the Date for Sweet Work Weeks July 12-28, 2024

Come back to Sweet Briar this summer for our annual Sweet Work Weeks, when alumnae and friends volunteer to care for the College's buildings and grounds. Sweet Work Weeks projects include:

- painting, indoors and outdoors (including dorms!)
- weeding
- trimming shrubs
- planting
- pressure washing
- cleaning outdoor furniture
- trail maintenance
- and much more!

When you come to volunteer for Sweet

### **RIGHT**

Ellen Harrison  
Saunders  
'75 removes  
weeds in front  
of the bell  
tower.

Work Weeks, Sweet Briar provides you with housing and meals during your stay. You'll work alongside alumnae and friends during the day, and in the evenings, you'll have time to get to know each other and learn what brought you back to Sweet Briar as a volunteer!

Registration for the 2024 Sweet Work Weeks session launches on February 16. If you have any questions about accommodations for Sweet Work Weeks, please contact Rachel Pietsch, Assistant Director of Alumnae Relations, at [rpietsch@sbc.edu](mailto:rpietsch@sbc.edu) or 434-381-6163.

