



Evelyn's Wishes

Newsletter of the MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation, Inc.

27 Students Receive Awards; Ned Perkins Retires, Two New Members

AT THE 130TH Annual Meeting of the MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation on September 28, Ned Perkins made official his retirement at the end of the year, after 37 years with the Foundation. Ned served as Secretary-Treasurer/Administrative Manager for the last 18 of those years. At the start of the New Year he will continue as an emeritus member. Thank you, Ned! (See interview on page 3.)

Two new Foundation members were voted in: Kathryn Reynolds Wayland and Amanda Baker, and current Executive Board members were re-elected: Leslie Massa as Secretary, Judith Read as Treasurer, Mary Seidner as Vice President, and Fred Behringer as President.

In his Financial Aid report at the meeting, Foundation advisor Sean Martin noted that the federal government will be making changes to FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) for the 2024-25 academic year. The launch of the application will be a little later this year, estimated to be December. Some of the changes are aimed at making the application process more streamlined, as well as expanding aid opportunities for low-income families.

On June 5, at our Annual Reception at the Lyme Art Association,

24 members of the Lyme-Old Lyme High School class of 2023, and 3 graduates from former years, received awards. At graduation ceremonies in June, Principal James Wygonik noted that this year's graduating students were the highest-ranking class for academic achievement in the school's 50-year history.

This year, a total of \$403,150 in educational awards were granted to 96 students across 5 classes, graduating from 2023 to 2027 (77 students are from Old Lyme, 19 from Lyme). The average award per student is approximately \$4,178, renewable every year dependent on the student maintaining a solid grade-point average. For the latest completed semester, the average GPA of MacCurdy students was 3.42.

The reception also honored three graduating seniors with special awards. Marielle Mather received the W.E.S. Griswold Class Valedictorian Award in honor of W.E.S. Griswold, the Foundation President from 1965 to 1992; and Anna Davis received the Class Salutatorian award in honor of Willis Umberger, the Secretary/Treasurer from 1966 to 1986. Madalyn McCulloch received the new Rowland Ballek Leadership Award, established in recognition of Rowland Ballek's service as the Foundation President from 2002 to 2022. ■



Class of 2023: Van Lamos, Max Bauchmann, Liam Celic, Samuel Todzia, Jonah Lathrop, Calvin Monte, John Buckley, Luke Celic, Caden Monte, Cole Dobratz, Aidan Ward, Kaitlyn Ward, Kennedy McCormick, Peyton Ogden, Matthew Grammatico, Monique Lavoie, Abby Patana, Madalyn McCulloch, Phoebe Lamos, Grace Colwell, Livie Bass, Madison Krol, Callie Bass, Samantha Tan, Anna Davis

MacCurdy PROFILE

Hannah McGow



Ben Conniff: Engaging in the World in Meaningful Ways

BEN CONNIFF has had quite a journey since graduating from Lyme-Old Lyme High School and receiving a MacCurdy Salisbury award in 2003. Today, he is Co-founder and Chief Innovation Officer of Luke's Lobster, a restaurant group with over 30 locations across nine US cities, branches in Japan and Taiwan, and a line of frozen lobster items available in supermarkets. Ben is also the author of *Real Maine Food*, has written articles for numerous magazines, and was named to the *Inc.* and *Zagat* "30 Under 30" lists—but his path to success was anything but straightforward.

When Ben was 12, his family moved to Old Lyme from nearby Deep River. He says Old Lyme was a great place to grow up, recalling that he spent a lot of time at the beach or on the water in his Boston Whaler, and later with the high school crew team. He also enjoyed playing in music ensembles and acting in theater productions, noting that those experiences

helped him to develop skills in public speaking and leadership. After high school, Ben studied at Yale University, graduating in 2007 with a degree in history.

When asked if he had taken any business classes in college, he laughed and said, "No, none at all. But studying history teaches you how to think and understand the world. A college history program forces you to back up your claims with evidence, while also not requiring everyone to have the same opinion. So being a history major was very helpful for me to get an understanding of how the world works, how we got where we are today, and how it's helpful to learn to build arguments based on facts." He added, "The education you get at college is only partly in the classroom. It's also about your extracurriculars, the relationships you make, the people you spend time with, and how you become socialized. I spent a lot of my time outside of classes doing social event planning and management. I had cooked my whole life, and enjoyed getting together with family and friends, and that really became true when I had the opportunity to organize larger-scale social events at college. I liked planning a big event, and then going to the event and seeing people really enjoying themselves."

Ben moved to New York City after college and began working as a journalist, mainly focusing on food writing, but he soon came to understand that it was the food and people that he found interesting, rather than sitting in front of a computer writing about them. He realized that he wanted to "make the story, not write the story," and began looking for work in the restaurant industry.

In 2008, he saw an ad on Craigslist posted by Luke Holden, who had been working in banking, but wanted to get back to his roots as a third-generation Maine lobsterman, and was seeking a business partner. The two met, and Luke's Lobster was born. Ben was able to use his storytelling skills to market the restaurant, and called on the logistical and organizational skills he learned in college

to open the first location in the East Village.

Since then, Luke's Lobster has grown into a thriving international concern, but with its roots firmly in Maine. It achieved B Corp Certification in 2018, meaning the company has shown a commitment to social and environmental good, not just profit. Ben mentioned the Lift All Boats Initiative, a student mentorship program to help diversify Maine's lobster fishery and make it easier for historically disadvantaged groups to obtain licenses. He explained that Luke's Lobster also works with the Maine Business Immigration Coalition to advocate for the rights of immigrants, also known as "New Mainers," who are essential to Maine's communities and businesses.

When asked what advice he would give to recent Lyme-Old Lyme High School graduates, Ben said that one of the few



Nicole Wolf

downsides of growing up in Old Lyme was its lack of diversity. It's important to acknowledge the history that has led us to where we are, and also the opportunities we have to help others who don't grow up with those privileges. He encouraged students to broaden their perspectives, to be introspective about the advantages they may have, and are bringing with them to college and beyond, and to engage with their world in meaningful ways. ■

New Goals and Changes— and Many Thanks



OVER THE PAST YEAR I've come to appreciate more and more all that Rowland Ballek did to guide the Foundation. I'm very grateful to Mary Seidner, Jude Reid, Leslie Massa, and Ned Perkins for helping me learn the ropes. While there is still more to learn, with their help we

had another successful year. This past spring, financial assistance was awarded to nearly a quarter of the 2023 graduating class, and three previous graduates. The Foundation is currently supporting just under 100 students seeking to further their education.

One goal for the Foundation has been to tap into the skills and talents of more members to help meet the challenges ahead. The Foundation is being strengthened by their contribution to the Alumni, Communications and Development committees.

Another goal is to let our Lyme/Old Lyme community know that assistance is not only available for those attending colleges and universities but also to those seeking further education in other ways, such as vocational training. We'll be spreading that message.

This is the first newsletter in many years not guided by John Stratton. John maintained a low profile but the time and skill he contributed to putting out the newsletter were of huge help to the Foundation. Fortunately, another very talented writer/editor, Mary Guitar, has volunteered to oversee publishing the newsletter.

Another change coming up is Ned Perkin's retirement. In addition to handling the bulk of financial matters, Ned has been the primary contact with our awardees. Keeping track of 100 college students is no small feat! Ned's dedication has played a big part in the Foundation's continued health. We will miss Ned and are glad that he will continue as an emeritus member.

Also of note, we are delighted that Amanda Baker and Kathryn Wayland have joined the Foundation.

In closing, thank you to all who have supported us this past year. The MacCurdy Salisbury Foundation is a unique organization. Founded 130 years ago, it has evolved over time but has remained true to its mission—helping Old Lyme, and now Lyme, residents pursue their ambitions through continued education. Please consider supporting the Foundation over the coming year.

Fred Behringer, *President*

Ned Perkins: Helping Students through the College Experience

AFTER 37 YEARS at the MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation, Ned Perkins is retiring to emeritus status at the end of this year. Ned has served as the Secretary-Treasurer/ Administrative Manager for the last 18 of those years.

Ned said recently that his favorite task during those busy years has been working with the students who have received awards. He has shepherded them, as many as 100 at a time, through four years of college, making sure that all is going well. He reminisced, "That's been fun and the students are very good to work with."

One window into student life for Ned has been the thank-you notes that are sent to the Foundation: One student wrote, "Thank you so much. I will use [the award] toward my engineering laptop. Engineering materials seem to be especially expensive!" Another wrote, "In May, I completed my degree . . . My time at college was fulfilling and enlightening and I am very grateful for your help in making my college experience possible."

Ned says, "I had a note from a student graduating this year. She thanked us and then said, 'And what can I do to help?' I told her that when she gets a letter asking for a donation, do it! That would really be a help."

"Scholarships from the Foundation are based on financial need, without taking grades into account," Ned explained. "No other town around here has anything like this. We've got to keep it going. Mrs. MacCurdy Salisbury gave \$45,000 in 1895, and [the fund] is 10 million dollars today, with a few additions."

College choices have changed a bit over the years, Ned says. "There was a shift at one point to more community and state colleges, but we're still seeing a lot of students going to schools like Brown and Yale and Princeton. We're also seeing a lot of southern colleges recently, like the University of Alabama."

Ned emphasizes that the Foundation also gives financial help for programs that are not traditional four-year colleges. "People come back who are married with kids and want to go to nursing school, trade school. Those also qualify."

In the end, Ned says, "It's been great to help these kids out. College experience can really open up someone's life." ■



Left: Marielle Mather accepts the W.E.S. Griswold Class Valedictorian Award from Ned Perkins. Right: Ned Perkins presents the Rowland Ballek Leadership Award to Madalyn McCulloch.



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The MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation has a long-standing tradition of providing financial support to local students going on to further their education at colleges and universities after their high-school years. Founded by Evelyn MacCurdy Salisbury in 1893, the Foundation was originally named the Lyme High School Association, and helped support educational activities in Old Lyme. It began giving direct grants to students from Old Lyme to continue their education beyond high school in 1918. In 1939, the name was changed to the MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation. In 1973 Berenice Brevillier started the Lyme portion of the fund at the Foundation so students from both towns—the majority of whom attend the Regional District 18 school system—could participate. In 2016 the Old Lyme and Lyme funds merged to better serve students from both towns.

MacCurdy Salisbury Educational Foundation, Inc. 2023-2024 Membership

Officers	Year Joined
Fred Behringer, President	2016
Mary Seidner, Vice-President	2000
Judith Read, Treasurer	2011
Leslie Massa, Secretary	2000

Board of Directors			
Cyndi Miller Aird	2019	Kevin McGlinchey	2017
Matthew Cantner	2008	Thomas Richardson	2016
Michael Ganey	2019	Thomas Sherer	1997

Board of Education Representatives			
Jennifer Burke	2009	Paula Gaudet	2018
Jon Goss	2022		

Foundation Members			
Steven Ames	2004	Gregory Hack	2003
Christopher Arnold	2007	Jeffrey Hartmann	2009
Amanda Baker	2023	Susan Hessel	2005
Rowland Ballek	1975	David Kelsey	2017
Nicki Berry	2008	Ben Merris	2022
Rev. Rebecca Crosby	2005	Steven Olstein	2019
Ramzi Dagher	2022	John Pfeiffer	2005
Winnie Bing Edmed	2015	Kathryn Wayland Reynolds	2023
James Fairfield-Sonn	2013	Matthew Sharp	2013
Rev. Carleen Gerber	1986	David Speirs	1981
Katie Gingras	2019	C. Michael Walker	1996
Leslie Gourlay	2011		
Evan Griswold	2012	Thomas McGarry, Esq.,	
Matthew Griswold XI	2015	Legal Advisor	1969
Timothy Griswold	1975	Ned Perkins,	
Mary Guitar	2022	Administrative Manager	1986