

# Bennett Beacon



Winter 2025 • Volume 27/Issue 1

Alumni Edition

Bennett High School • 2885 Main Street • Buffalo, New York 14214 • (716) 816-4250 • (716) 308-5451 • [www.bennettalumni.com](http://www.bennettalumni.com)

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Mark Overall, '03

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Marilyn Wittman, Retired Faculty

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Fred Sales

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Mary DelSignore - Athletics

## DIRECTORS

### Class of 2025

-Deby Fox-Hahn, '60  
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-Neil Lange, Faculty  
-Amanda Robert, Parent  
-Marilyn Wittman, Faculty  
-Jacqueline Hillary Jordan, '72

### Class of 2026

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-Margaret Lanz Puzio, '68  
-Lawrence Levin, '57  
-Roslyn Righetti, '74  
-Kathy Bulluck, Faculty  
-Tara Maj, Faculty

### Class of 2027

-Linda Barker Moore, '68  
-Carol Newman Caserta, '60  
-Marsha Jadd, '58  
-Mark Overall, '03  
-Christine Salamone, '73  
-John Fracos, '88

## Centennial Celebrations -

*Mark your calendars for Our Gala 100 year Weekend  
- September 19, September 20 & September 21, 2025*



As the clock struck midnight on the first day of the new year, I couldn't help but also welcome in our **100th Anniversary** year. It really is hard to imagine that our beloved Bennett has reached this milestone. In a large part, our history here is all about our alumni. Alumni were and are what has kept and keeps this building going strong. Now it is time to not only celebrate our beloved high school, but it is also time to gather together to celebrate all of our alumni and educators who have given their best for the Orange and Blue.

The weekend is **September 19, 20 and 21, 2025**. The place is our hometown - Buffalo, New York.

The weekend starts on **Friday at 5:00 pm** back at our high school - Lewis J. Bennett - 2885 Main Street. After you've parked your car, take a look at the Antique Car Show on our front lawn organized by **Paul Straus, '73** and **Jim Sandoro, '62**. Enter the building through the newly renovated center stairs and turn back the hands of time as you see our school again. While organized tours of the building will be conducted, you can wander around by yourself if you prefer. A finger foods reception will take place in the gymnasium. At 5:30 pm, our **Sports Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony** will take place in the Auditorium.

A **Silent Auction** will be held in the front hall. If you would like to contribute items or gift certificates, please contact Neil Lange at 716-308-5451 for details. Admission for Friday's events is just **\$25.00 presale; \$40.00 at the door**.

Following the school gathering, individual classes will head to their own locations for more special conversations and catching up.-

Please let Neil know where your class will meet.

Saturday is packed full of activities. The morning starts with a **Homecoming Parade**. Our students will help decorate your cars and we will parade around the neighborhood. Immediately following will be the **Bennett Tigers** kick off, tentatively scheduled for 11:00 am. Admission at the gate remains under \$5. As a part of the football game, we will be recognizing all **Bennett Athletes and Cheerleaders**. We need to know who will be in attendance, so please use the response card to indicate you will be there. We will also be listing all of the names of our recognized Athletes and Cheerleaders in our Souvenir Program and Ad Book.

After the football game, we encourage those who haven't been back to Buffalo in a while to explore the Canalside District. Major improvements have opened this area to activities for recreation and enjoyment.

The **100th Anniversary Dinner and Dance** will start at 5:00pm at the Buffalo Convention Center. Music will be provided by **The Lar-**

*Continued on page 2*

## Our President Reports... Lewis J. Bennett ... Standing Above the Rest



I'm sitting at my dining room table watching the snowflakes slowly settle to the ground. It's warm inside, but I know if I venture out, it is terribly cold. Even though we have alumni all over the world, each of us has that commonality. We have experienced Buffalo winters. Truth be told, I do enjoy the winter. The

quietness it brings. But remembering that beautiful flowers will be with us soon is on my mind.

It is this same hope and excitement I see building through all of our 100th Anniversary Committees. We have been planning for almost one year. A lot of people have put in much energy to get to where we are today. In this mailing are the results of that planning. Your invitations are ready. Please respond quickly! Our next steps depend on knowing how many people will be at each event.

I am so proud of all we accomplish together. It is so fulfilling to be able to work with our committees. Remember, if you still want to be involved, let me know. There is still much to be done. If you know of any of your classmates who do not receive our Bennett Alumni mailings, get us their addresses.

Also enclosed in this mailing are AD FORMS for our 100th Anniversary. Our Souvenir Program is your opportunity to be remembered forever in our 100th Anniversary publication. I hope each of you would consider sponsoring an ad. Additionally, I'm hoping that if you own a business, you would sponsor a business ad. And if you frequent businesses or other establishments, I hope that you might consider asking them to sponsor an ad. All proceeds from our Souvenir Program will go to the

Endowment Fund which will benefit our students well beyond our time.

And speaking of our Endowment Fund, I would like to report that our fund (started only two years ago) is now valued at over \$130,000. We reinvested our first payout and plan to do that with our second payout. We have a few of you who are consistently contributing to the Endowment Fund. Thanks! A special thanks to Christopher Wende, '68, Margaret Lanz Puzio, '68 & Fac., Thomasina Stenhouse, Ph.D. '68 and Margaret Nash Carestia, '08 who have invested in our young people in a very generous fashion.

Enclosed in this mailing you will receive a brochure for the start of our Legacy Campaign - The Tiger Stripes Society. We are asking you to carefully consider, as a part of your Estate Planning, a contribution to the Endowment Fund. I can let you know that I have set aside 20% of one of my life insurance policies to the Bennett Alumni. When that time comes, that portion of my life insurance policy will go to Bennett Alumni. I have no idea the dollar amount. If I need to draw from my policy before, I can do that. It won't affect what cash I might need while alive, but it will certainly fulfill my desire to guarantee that I will remain a part of Bennett forever.

Finally, I would also like to remind you that we still have pavers available in our Alumni Walkway and Memorial Garden. If you would like to sponsor a paver for our very special 100th Anniversary, the cost is \$250. That cost will also include your annual membership, if you so desire. For more details, please give me a call or text at 716-308-5451.

I can't wait until the 100th Anniversary. I hope to see all of you there! For the Best is Yet to Be!

*Continued from page 1...*

**ry Salter Orchestra with Vibrant Strings.** Blue and Orange will be dazzling our guests as we remember all of the good times that Bennett has provided for us.

As a part of the evening's program, we will hear proclamations from government and distinguished officials. We will also induct **Sanford Greenberg, '58** as our 2025 Outstanding Alumni of the Year. **The cost of the Gala Dinner and Dance is \$125.**

Please use the enclosed response

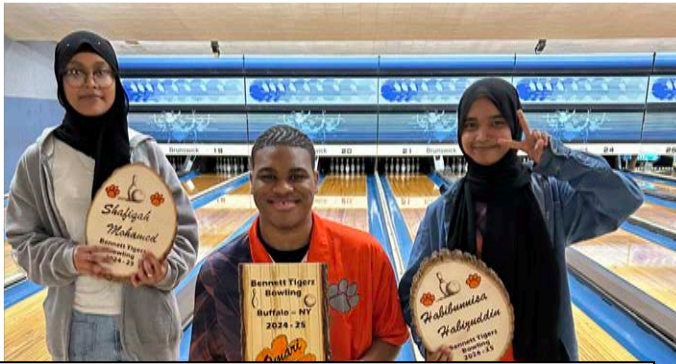
card or book your evening on Eventbrite.

On Sunday, we will gather as a family one last time for our **Alumni Brunch**. The cost is \$50. We will start at 11:30 am at the Marriott LECOM in the seventh-floor banquet hall. Following brunch, we will have a brief **annual meeting** to share the accomplishments and goals of the Bennett Alumni Association. The annual recognition of Bennett graduates who have distinguished themselves in their careers will follow with their Induction in the Bennett Alumni Honor Roll.

We will finish our weekend with the sealing of the **time capsule**. We are encouraging all of our guests throughout the weekend to bring mementos, reflection letters, photos and other memorabilia to add to our Bennett Alumni Time Capsule. Twenty-five years from now, our Bennett family will gather again and they will open our box full of stories. One generation will meet another generation. Our stories of our times at Bennett will live in the minds of the class of 2050 and beyond.

Bennett is the Tie That Binds!



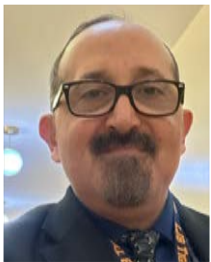


Senior Bowlers were : Shafiqah Mohamed, Omari Moore and Habibunnisa Habibuddin.

BY FRED SALES

## From Our Principal

*(Ed. Note: We welcome our new principal Fred Sales to Lewis J. Bennett. Mr. Sales comes to us from Burgard where he served as assistant principal. We are glad to have him here and look forward to working with him as we strive to give the best to our current Bennett students!)*



**G**reetings to all our Alumni. My name is Fred Sales and as Principal, I would like to greet you and thank you for all your efforts to make Lewis J. Bennett School of Innovative Technology a special place. When you attended, many of you became part of our school community to pursue a career.

Some of you enjoyed the life of sports and extra-curricular activities either by participating or spectating. After graduation, you have kept in your mind and heart the special feeling that you had when you were a student in our school. I thank you for staying with us as alumni. Very few schools have been able to preserve this special feeling. You have taken the pride for our school and school community. You have organized yourselves to support a new group of students that will grow up to become great citizens and proud members of the Bennett Tigers School Community. These efforts will perpetuate the reputation and character of our school.

Thank you for always supporting our school. Thank you for preserving a proud legacy. Thank you for always making our school a special place. We are a family that is 100 years strong and counting. Hope to see you all in our up and coming celebrations.

## Senior Winter Field Day

**T**he first-ever LJB Senior Winter Field Day, held on January 17, 2025, proved to be a chilly but exciting event that brought students together for a day of fun, friendly competition, and plenty of hot chocolate! The day, with sunny skies and a crisp 28-degree temperature, was filled with winter-themed activities, and participants had a blast from start to finish.

Organized by Mrs. Tracy Cotter, Ms. Amy Viesnisky, and the Senior Board, with additional funding from the Bennett Alumni Association and support from teacher volunteers, this event was a community effort that turned into a memorable occasion. Students participated in winter games like building snowmen, tug-of-war, and snowball fights.



A crowd favorite was the hot chocolate bar, which allowed everyone to warm up while choosing from a variety of toppings like marshmallows, whipped cream, and assorted candies. And, for those with a sweet tooth, a selection of desserts kept spirits high all afternoon.

Despite the chill in the air, students bundled up and enjoyed the sunshine while making memories. Whether it was friendly snowball fights or building snowmen, everyone found this or her own way to embrace the winter weather.



Boys Bowling Team: Coach Mrs. Miller, Stephion Hall Jr., Omari Moore and Bilalluddin Habibuddin

# How Can We Ever Thank You Enough?

**G**ratITUDE comes from the Latin word “gratus,” meaning thankful or pleasing. Gratitude is a feeling of appreciation for acts of kindness and thankfulness for what we have. It is in the spirit of thankfulness that we write this message to our Bennett Community.

Without you, all that we do would just not be possible. We are unique in the world of alumni associations because of our focus on support for Bennett students today and in the future. While we are building camaraderie among our graduates through our Beacon and Alumni gatherings, we are always making the needs of today’s and tomorrow’s students a high priority.

Your loyalty and generosity have helped us transition the Bennett Alumni Association into an incredibly special organization that supports an urban public

high school. From our Board members and committee members who give unselfishly of their time and talents, to our donors who make all things possible, to the high school staff who are always ready to go above and beyond, we owe a huge debt of gratitude. Our students may not know how lucky they are, but someday they will.

As we *Cherish the past, Celebrate the present, and Embrace the future*, during our 100th birthday celebration, we thank all the members of our Bennett Community; your kindness has touched many lives.

• Margaret Lanz Puzio, '68 & Faculty



Our Holiday Bazaar was a great example of how our alumni contribute to make differences in our students’ lives. Maria Baker and Paulette Pagano wrapped gifts.

## Are Your Dues Paid Yet?

## Bennett Alumni Dues

**D**ues to the Bennett Alumni Association, Inc. make such a huge impact. Through your generous contributions, you have helped level the playing field for countless Bennett students. Your continued help makes a difference!

We thank you for your support!

\*\*\* For information about how your gift of \$250 or more can be used to sponsor a Memorial Garden paver, call Neil at 716-308-5451.

**Please make checks payable to Bennett Alumni Association, Inc.**

*If you prefer, use PayPal! Visit us at [www.bennettalumni.com](http://www.bennettalumni.com)*



**\$75**



**\$50**



**\$25 • Basic Dues**



**Other**



**Century • \$100**



**Gold • \$101 - \$199**



**Platinum \$200 - \$499\*\*\***

\*\*\* See note above



**Diamond \$500+**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Maiden Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Vocation \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Please Mail to: Bennett Alumni Membership**

**2885 Main Street**

**Buffalo, New York 14214**

**F**or any questions about your DUES, to make additional contributions, or to find out about our legacy program, call Neil Lange at 716-308-5451!

**Membership runs from September 1, 2024 until August 31, 2025**



**Carol Hoover Harvey**, '46,  
February 2, 2016  
**Valerie Ibbett**, June 13, 2020  
**Louis Sanfilippo**, '48, age 93,  
May 15, 2021  
**Norma Mandelkern Pearlman**, '47,  
**July 29, 2021**  
**Dorothy James Blanks**, '61, age 79,  
May 7, 2023  
**Sharon Clarke Oudemool**, '61,  
age 79, August 2023  
**Phyllis Keiper Abendschein**, '48,  
age 93, September 12, 2023  
**Dr. Joseph A. Chazan**, '52, age 89,  
July 26, 2024  
**William "Bill" Monkarsch**, '55, age 86,  
July 30, 2024  
**Alma Horne Kelly**, '48, age 93,  
August 3, 2024  
**Alicia D. Kemp Givens**, '58, age 83,  
August 10, 2024  
**Fay Goldwater Cheskin**, '55, age 86,  
August 11, 2024  
**Jane Vogel Fischman**, '57, age 85,  
August 21, 2024

## • In Memoriam •

*Your additions or corrections are requested.  
Please forward to the Bennett Beacon staff.*

*(Reported since Summer 2024 Bennett Beacon)*

**Cecelia Paolini**, '70, age 73,  
September 3, 2024  
**Sandra Markham Skaine**, '56, age 85,  
October 2, 2024  
**James Stephens Linderman**, '47,  
age 94, October 7, 2024  
**Dr. Lorna I. Peterson**, '74, age 68,  
November 11, 2024  
**Robert B. Mooney**, '48, age 94,  
November 19, 2024  
**Barabara Jane Lipsitz Thier**, '48,  
age 93, November 20, 2024  
**Janice Saturen Olzowka, MD**, '54,  
age 87, November 23, 2024  
**Richard Packard**, '61,  
November 24, 2024  
**Joseph Zackheim**, '54,  
November 30, 2024  
**Clayton W. Bihl**, '42 and Faculty,  
age 101, December 5, 2024  
(Math Teacher)

**Allan Harris Rosenblitt**, '65, age 76,  
December 7, 2024  
**Doug Sherman**, '74, age 68,  
December 11, 2024  
**Jerry Voskerichian**, '63, age 79,  
December 16, 2024  
**Leroy Wiggins**, Faculty, age 89,  
December 19, 2024  
(Business Teacher)  
**Alan J. Rizzuto**, '60,  
December 20, 2024  
**Gloria LeBlanc**, Faculty,  
December 25, 2024  
(Latin Teacher)  
**Samuel "Sandy" Dautch, Ph.D.**, '53,  
age 89, January 16, 2025  
**Joseph J. Burgio**, '68, age 74,  
January 30, 2025  
**Dr. Leonard Katz**, '53, age 89,  
February 6, 2025  
**Paul E. Kosek**, Faculty,  
February 7, 2025,  
(Science Teacher)

## Girls Basketball Team

**T**he LJ Bennett Girls basketball team is off to a great season thus far, with a 7 and 4 record, under Coach Mary DelSignore.

It was a tough year for the team as they had to share the gym with Middle Early College, for the first time. The team traveled to North Park Academy elementary school to practice 2-3 times per week. Our girls braved the cold as they took the bus down Hertel Avenue and walked down Parkside Avenue to get to practice.

The team is led by Freshmen stand out, Taja-neia Crosby who has totaled 57 points, 23 rebounds, 6 blocked shots and 5 assists in just 10 games. Another freshman stand out is Anna Lutete Ne, who became a starter in all games thus far this season. Anna has an amazing work ethic and has not missed one practice this season. She boxes out very well and has averaged 8 rebounds per game.

A special shout out to our senior leaders, Jon-airys Aleman Mercado, Gazaira Boyd, Shalea Johnson and manager, Helda Luzayadio for their dedication and guidance with all our younger players.

## Diamond Club - \$500+

Thanks to our MAJOR DONORS!

**Dr. Renee T. Alexander**, '70  
**Family of Marland Berdick**, '49  
**Richard Berkson, M.D.**, '64  
**David M. Braunstein**, '70  
**Joan Broderick Mooney**, '64  
**Philip Celniker**, '54  
**Sally Drake Laure Murphy**, '51  
**Robert S. Fink, Ph.D.**, '65  
**Sanford Horwitz**, '69  
**Harold S. Leader**, '57  
**Robert A. Russell**, '63  
**Gordon T. Warme**, '66

*(Other donors on page 11.)*



# Sanford Greenberg, '58 - 2025 Outstanding Alumni

• Margaret Lanz Puzio, '68 & Faculty

The Bennett Alumni Association is pleased to announce the 2025 Centennial Outstanding Alumni of the Year - **Sanford Greenberg, Class of 1958**. Sandy is an inventor, author, public servant, and philanthropist best known for his efforts toward the goal of ending blindness. His induction will take place as a part of the 100th Anniversary Gala and Dinner at the Buffalo Convention Center.



In the Forward to Sandy Greenberg's book, Hello Darkness, My Old Friend, the late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg writes, "a snapshot of Sandy in 1958 at age 17: brainy, athletic, president of his Buffalo, New York High School senior class, and of the school student council, trumpet player, a tall and all around good looking fellow. That year he entered Columbia College on full scholarship. There he thrived on learning, made lasting friendships and experienced the city's many wonders."

Flashback to Sandy at five years old when his father died suddenly; Sandy was now the man of the house, which included his brother, sister, mother, and grandmother who had immigrated to Buffalo from Poland in the early 20th century, "a survivor of Jewish ghettos, poverty, and pogroms."

Uncle Carl, his dad's brother, who also immigrated to Buffalo from Poland, married his widowed mother when he was ten. New financial stability enabled the family to buy a home in North Buffalo on Saranac Ave. and enjoy the opportunity to attend Bennett High School. Sandy worked in his uncle's junk business during summers. He met **Sue Roseno, '58**, who would later become his wife, in elementary school, where he joined "club after club," played ice hockey, baseball, and basketball, and played the trumpet because he thought it was "cool."

It was in his third year at Columbia that the trajectory of his life took an extraordinary turn. He had had episodes of blurry vision and periods where he lost his sight, but they always resolved themselves until December of 1960. He was sitting for his finals at Columbia and had to walk out because he could not see. This was the beginning of a challenging life journey where he struggled with an internal conflict of

how he would thrive as a person without sight in a sighted world.

But thrive, he did! He is credited with so many remarkable accomplishments that place him in the top echelon of human achievement. In an ironic twist, the title of his book and the familiar Simon and Garfunkel line from *Sounds of Silence* came about because Art Garfunkel was his college roommate and became a lifelong friend.

Sandy Greenberg emphasizes how important his wife, Sue, his family, friends and colleagues are in composing the rich life he has lived in spite of the early tragedy of losing his eyesight. One quote from the book summarizes his ethos, "After a half century of thought, I've come to the conclusion that the only really worthwhile things in the world are people and ideas."

We know that we, along with other Bennett Alumni, look forward to meeting this very special **Centennial Alumni** recipient.





# Class of 1973 and Their Monday Night Social Club

• Paul Straus, '73

In 1973, a group of BHS guys decided to get together every Monday night for dinner. This soon became known as the Monday Night Social, or "the Soc", or sometimes the 50% off club as we all went stag. It all started at what was then The Sign of the Steer, now known as The Steer.

It was just blocks from BHS and I could get my cigarettes in the front foyer from a machine for \$.35 a pack. The Soc continues to this day and we never miss unless it is a Monday holiday. In that case, we go out on Tuesday, somewhere that is usually closed on Monday. We switch off every week, but have a regular rotation of restaurants. All restaurants



Paul Straus, '73, Joe Rosenberg, '74, George Smilanich, '74. Peter Smilanich, '75 on their annual Florida trip.

must be locally owned. In summer, we insist on patio bars.

While together every Monday night, we take turns to decide on the next week's location. One of the group puts it in his phone to be texted out to everyone the following Sunday to remind us where we chose the week before.

We started that some years ago because most of us forgot by the time we got to the parking lot. We pay cash and one person oversees tallying up everyone's separate bills. It actually works. The wait staff loves it, if there is any leftover money it goes into the kitty for the Christmas party to have pre-dinner drinks at the bar!

Occasionally, we have a separate night to include the wives. (Through the years, we have had a few wanna-be alumni that have joined us). As time rolls on, we all have come to realize how special this is. Once a year, we go to Florida as a group to visit a fellow member of The Soc that has relocated there.



Mike Sonricker, '72, Paul Straus, '73, George Smilanich, '74, Danny Martin, '74 and Joe Rosenberg, '74.

## Bennett, Bennett, Thine Forever!

### Girls Tennis Team

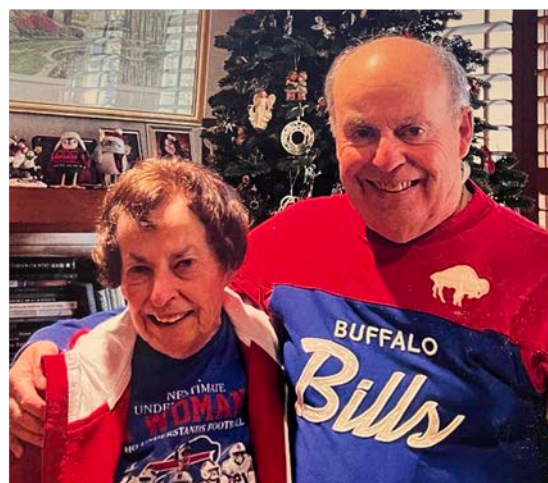
The LJ Bennett Girls Varsity Tennis Team, under Coach Mary DeSignore finished with a 6-4 record. The team began practices in mid-August at McCarthy Park, but played most of their games at Delaware Park.

The team was led by Junior, Journee Tyus and Senior, Shafiqah Binti Mohamed who won 6 out of 10 of their matches.

Also making up the team were: Samiya Akter, Afiah Ashra, Rabia Hafeez, Radea Hassan, Helda Luzayadio, Margreet Mataio and Sumaya Rahman.

The team will have to rebuild next year with 7 of the seniors graduating and only 2 returning players.

Best of luck to all our seniors and thanks for your hard work and dedication.



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Two Bennett Grads cheering on the Buffalo Bills in Chicago. These wonderful supporters of the Bills are also generous supporters of our Bennett Alumni. Thanks Suzanne Mitts Rappold, '55 and Don Rappold, '63 for your loyalty to the Blue and Orange!

## Remembering Gloria LeBlanc *requiescat in pace*

**T**he Bennett High School community mourns the loss of Gloria LeBlanc, a beloved teacher, colleague, and friend who passed away on Christmas Eve 2024. For decades, Gloria was the epitome of excellence at Bennett, inspiring generations of students as a master teacher of Latin. She guided many through the rigorous Latin Regents exams with her exceptional knowledge, dedication, and unwavering support.

Gloria was more than just an educator — she was an organizer, a mentor, and a trusted friend to both students and colleagues. Her commitment to education extended beyond the classroom, creating enriching experiences that brought learning to life. Among her many contributions, she will be fondly remembered for orchestrating the Roman Banquet, where students donned togas and immersed themselves in classical traditions, making Latin come alive in a way few could replicate.

Her warmth, kindness, and dedication left a lasting impact on everyone who had the privilege of knowing her. Gloria LeBlanc's legacy will continue to shine through the lives she touched, and she will be deeply missed.

Your Alumni Association is forever grateful for those who make contributions in honor of or in memory of or in thanks for Bennett Alumni or anyone you wish to recognize..

### • Gift Received in Memory of...

Robert Mooney, '48

by Peter Martina, '48

Albert M. Kraemer, '66

by Glenn Kraemer, '68

Douglas Scott Thielking, '66

by Bruce R. Thielking, '66

Roberta Jadd Goldberg, '62

by Mr. & Mrs. Gerald Bergman, '59

Bennett Friends

by Robert S. Fink, Ph.D., '65

T. Thomas Reigstad, '42

by his son, Thomas Reigstad

### • Gift Received in Thanks For...

My Life Partner & My Long Life and Good Health

by Donald S. Blanke, '57

## Calling All Former Bennett Athletes and Cheerleaders

**A**re you ready to roar like a Tiger again? We're thrilled to invite you to the 100th Anniversary celebration of school spirit and sportsmanship! Join us as we mark Bennett High School's 100th Anniversary with an unforgettable football game at All High Stadium on Saturday, September 20, 2025, at 11 a.m.

This isn't just any game – it's a chance for us to honor the legendary athletes and cheerleaders who have brought pride and glory to Bennett over the years. Whether you donned a jersey on the football field, played any varsity sport or led the cheers from the sidelines, we want YOU to be our special guest of honor!



To make this celebration even more personal, we'd love to hear from you. Please visit [www.bennettalumni.com](http://www.bennettalumni.com) and click on the "I am a Bennett Tiger Athlete" button on the home page or complete the card with the invitation. Share your story with us by letting us know:

- What team did you play on?
- The years you were part of the team
- If your team clinched a championship title

Let's relive those golden days and celebrate the incredible legacy of Bennett athletics together! Whether it's been decades or just a few years, we can't wait to see our Tigers reunited under one roaring banner.

Spread the word to your fellow teammates and cheerleaders – let's make this a game to remember!

Mark your calendars, and don't miss the chance to reconnect, reminisce, and reignite that Tiger



pride!

Go Tigers!



**W**e'd love to report about you! Please send your updates to us. Your friends would love to know what you're doing. We'd love to know about your accomplishments!

**We received a nice note from Dale Chodorow, '61 with his contribution for membership.**

**"I thought it would be appropriate to join the Century List in light of our 100th Anniversary."**

**We agree, Dale. Your \$100 donation reflects a great celebration for our special 100th year!**

**Did you renew your membership contribution?**

• Jesse Brace, Bennett Librarian

## Alumni Funds for Library Improvements

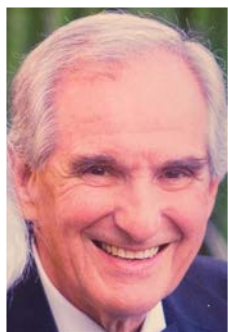
**O**ur library, which is how I refer to Lewis J. Bennett's library to all of us within Bennett's realm, recently was the recipient of a very generous \$500 mini-grant from the Bennett Alumni Association. And with said grant, we were able to purchase six new bean bag chairs for our students to relax in while they are making the most of their time in our library. To say they've proven to be a hit is an understatement.



The six bean bag chairs, all sized large and overstuffed, were added to the reading section I've created that fosters literacy while providing a safe environment for our students in the process. Since the bean bag chairs have arrived, our students have quickly taken to them and the spot is becoming one of the most well used in our library. They are utilized whenever students visit our library and have proved to be so popular I am on the lookout for more.

In addition to the wonderful bean bag chairs, our library has received numerous donations of books from **Rosanne Bednarczyk Cahn, '62**. Our library loves book donations and readily put whatever's given into our catalog. If you would like to donate books, or have any questions about what we need, you can email me at [jjbrace@buffaloschools.org](mailto:jjbrace@buffaloschools.org). Thank you for all you've done, and will do, for our library. Your contributions do not go unnoticed and help prepare our students to be the leaders of tomorrow.

## Fondly Remembering Past President Dr. Len Katz



**D**r. Leonard Katz, '53, was born on August 7, 1935 and died on February 6, 2025. He was a distinguished alumnus of Bennett High School. He often expressed deep gratitude for the education he received there, maintaining strong ties to the institution throughout his life. In the 1990s, when the Bennett Alumni Association was established, Dr. Katz took an active role, serving

on the Board of Directors and eventually being elected president. He was instrumental in initiating the Mini-Grant Program, which annually awards thousands of dollars for enhanced educational opportunities for our students.

Professionally, Dr. Katz was a highly respected gastroenterologist in Buffalo. He earned his medical degree from Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1961 and completed his residency in internal medicine at Yale New Haven

Hospital. With over six decades of medical experience, Dr. Katz was known for his dedication to patient care and his contributions to the field of gastroenterology.

Dr. Katz's professional achievements did not diminish his willingness to be part of his Bennett family. He remained humble and deeply connected to his roots. He never forgot his experiences as a student at Bennett High School and was committed to uplifting others. His brilliant mind was always full of ideas to benefit the school, and he was ready to do whatever it took to help.

Dr. Katz's legacy lives on through the programs he championed and the countless individuals he inspired. His life serves as a testament to the power of education, gratitude, and unwavering service to others.

Dr. Katz will live on as an example for us all.



# Bennett Parent Explains Her Passion for Our School

• Michelle Courtney, Mother of William, '27

I love Bennett. Bennett is really exceeding all of my expectations. My son William was a freshman last year. He came from a school where he didn't have a voice.

William has always been a great student, very rarely misses school, is on the high honor roll, is quiet and works very hard. A great student. Unfortunately, in elementary school, William was never recognized for his achievements - no honor roll assemblies or attendance recognition.

The school never looked to parents for extra help. In short, neither William or us ever really felt comfortable.

William's first day at high school found him fearful because of his preconceived notion that Bennett was going to be worse than his elementary school. When I picked him up at the end of the day, he greeted me with the HUGEST smile that I have ever seen.

"It's nothing like my teachers in eighth grade said it would be," he proclaimed. "The teachers are very nice. I don't feel so stressed."

Imagine that. The very first day and William felt he had a voice. His anxiety levels have been reduced. He has teachers who help him with his work when he doesn't understand.

In January, he learned he would be taking the Algebra exam. It spiked his anxiety, but with the encouragement and extra help of his math teacher, he was able to pass the exam.

Loving, caring, encouraging, supportive are the words that describe the atmosphere at Bennett. The teachers work with him on more than academics. They help him organize and plan his time.

William feels part of the team. He has positive connections with his teachers and the administration. He is developing leadership skills. He joined the Support Systems Team in the school which helps parents, teachers, administration and community members to work together to plan positive interactions and activities.

I am so glad we chose Bennett. We did our research. Bennett was first choice because of the high graduation rate and its technology focus.

For me it's great because I am a parent that wants to be involved. And Bennett shows that they really want involvement. When I send an email, I always get a response. Every question is answered and every concern is addressed.

I can't thank the teachers enough for all they do. Everything they do for students is beyond amazing!

## 2025 Contributors to the Bennett Alumni Endowment Fund

Robert S. Fink, Ph.D., '65

Scott W. Gehl, '70

Margaret M. Lanz Puzio, '68

Margaret J. Nash Carestia, '08

Teresa R. Nash, Parent

Bruce R. Thielking, '66

Thomasina R. Stenhouse, Ph.D., '68

Christopher H. Wende, '68

*Please let us know of any errors or corrections.*

**Your Alumni Board held a phone-a-thon in November to remind people that it was time to renew their memberships. We recognize the following students who volunteered to assist:**

**Abiq Hasan**

**Sidalli Ibrahim**

**Osman Somo**

**Hasan Tajwan**

**Arianna Olivera**

**Ja'lae Thomas**

**Gwen Humphrey**

**Thanks to our Alumni who were so kind to our young people and who renewed the dues.**

**Check out our  
Legacy Brochure!**



# 2024 - 2025 Major Alumni Donors

## Platinum Club - \$200 - \$499

Marilyn Bass Buxbaum, '54  
Rosanne Bednarczyk Cahn, '62  
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Pat Burke Young, '55  
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John P. Emerling, '64  
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Marcia Freedman De Avila, '68  
Terrence Gamble, '65  
Scott W. Gehl, '70  
David S. Goodman, '60  
Sue Ann Gordon Gallie, '59

Janet Headley Brown, '71  
Jacqueline Hillary Jordan, '72 & Faculty  
Elaine Kaiser Kellick, '59  
Robert J. Klein, '68  
Linda Konrad Byers, '60  
Carolyn "Cookie" Kulick Weil, '60  
Margaret M. Lanz Puzio, '68 & Faculty  
Lawrence H. Levin, '57  
Lawrence M. Memel, '55  
Marcia Mitchell Soden, '63  
Kenneth J. Munro, Jr, '57  
Carol Newman Caserta, '60 & Faculty

Marilyn Newman Walsdorf, '53  
Danis J. Norman Gehl, '70  
Carolyn Price Singletary PhD, '66  
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Deirdre L. Webb, '89  
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Elvira Brinson Brennan, '84  
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Dr. Cary A. Present, '60  
Thomas Reigstad, Friend  
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Norman Schreiber, '59  
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Susan Silverman Carrel, '60  
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Gloria Van Riper Askren, '56  
Lawrence A. Veronica, Faculty  
Nils A. Vigeland, '68  
Sandra Wolfberg Schreiber, '61  
Gary L. Wolfe, '68  
Judith Zent Deck, '59

As of February 6, 2025. Please let us know if there are omissions or errors in our records. We'd be happy to check!

# Lewis J. Bennett (1833-1925) - Industrialist and Benefactor

*[Bennett High School is named after Lewis J. Bennett, who donated the land for the school and for All High Stadium, as well as the land for three churches in Central Park. This is a biography about him.]*

## **Personal Life**

**M**r. Bennett was a Universalist in religious belief and, although not a member of a church, was a generous supporter of all. Politically, as may be inferred, he was a Republican. He was a charter member and first treasurer of



Fultonville Lodge No. 531, Free and Accepted Masons; a companion of Chapter No. 71, Royal Arch Masons, Johnstown, New York; and a Sir Knight of Apollo Commandery No. 15, Knights Templar, Troy, New York.

He was a life member of the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences and of the Buffalo Historical Society, formerly holding official positions in both; plus a member of the National Society of the Sons of the American Revolution. He presented the former society with a most valuable collection of fossils, which is exhibited at their rooms, the largest and most complete collection in the world.

He was also a member of the Buffalo Chamber of Commerce, and one of the 250 honorary trustees of the Lincoln Farm Association, organized to preserve the birthplace of President Abraham Lincoln.

## **Marriage and Family**

**H**e was married, in Johnstown, New York, on October 6, 1857, to the former Mary F. Spalding, who was born June 1, 1840, daughter of Andrew and Emeline

(Hamilton) Spalding of Johnstown, New York. They had two children:

\* Leslie Bennett, born May 25, 1860, at Fultonville, New York, was educated in Buffalo common and high schools and a graduate of the State Normal College. He went on to become vice-president, secretary and assistant treasurer of the Buffalo Cement Company.

\* Louisa A. Bennett, born May 16, 1868, married James P. Wood, of Buffalo on November 16, 1887. They had five children: Helen B., Frances L., Harriet A., Mildred V. and James B.

## **Lewis J. Bennett and Central Park**

**L**ocated adjacent to Parkside, Lewis J. Bennett developed the area north of the Belt Line Railroad known as Central Park.

On 200 acres west of Main Street and north of the Belt Line, Bennett began to develop a neighborhood in 1889. Two principal conditions for the development of the area were its proximity to the Olmsted & Vaux-designed Delaware Park and the completion of the 1860-1882 Belt Line Railroad, which enabled Buffalo to boast more train trackage than any city in world at that time. The only remaining station of the original 19 is at Starin & Amherst.

The boundaries of Central Park were Main, Woodbridge, Parkside, Linden, Starin and Amherst streets. Working with Charles Besch, Bennett himself plotted the location of the streets. Along the planned streets, they dug holes, blasted into the bedrock and planted elm trees. This initial preparation took four years and cost \$300,000 to complete. Originally, nineteen stone markers delineated the boundaries of the neighborhood.

On 20 May, 1892, Bennett formally signed the zoning ordinances which would shape the neighborhood. Deed restrictions more stringent than Buffalo's — e.g. no commercial R3 businesses and only one dwelling and one

barn per lot (with eleven exceptions) were allowed.

Zoning ordinances called for only single family homes being at least two stories in height with barns to be placed in the rear of all residences. He also outlined the minimum costs for all residences and zoned them according to what streets on which they would be located. Homes on Depew were to cost a minimum of \$4,000; those on Main, \$3,500; and those on Linden, \$2,500. To insure that large houses would be built, he provided free (large) foundations on corner lots.

An integral part of the social life of the neighborhood was the Otowega Club. Located on Starin at Linden (now a vacant triangle), the building contained a bowling alley, billiard hall, card room, dance hall and dining room. Prior to its destruction in the 1940s, it served as the meeting place for residents and religious bodies organizing congregations in the community. Many of the streets in Central park were named after Bennett's family and friends.

Bennett built the first house in Central Park for himself. He hired prominent Buffalo architect Milton Beebe to design a 24-room house at 354 Depew, located just north of what is now named Burke's Green.

Burke's Green was originally an unnamed triangular piece of land with a fountain (dismantled in the 1920s and a new one installed in 2002), which was deeded to the city by Mr. Bennett to be used as a park. It was officially named Burke's Green in memory of F. Brendan Burke, a civic-minded Central Park resident in the 1960s. Although it is a city-owned park, the Central Park Association has maintained it since the 1960s.

Bennett's house was demolished in 1935 and replaced by 12 lots. Mrs. Bennett then moved to the Campanile Apartments.

Submitted by Dale Chodorow, '61  
Source: <https://buffaloah.com/h/ben/ben/index.html>