

Reflecting achievements

- 1998 Lucy Beckham is hired as the principal of Wando High School
- 2002 Awarded the Barbara H. James 2020 Vision from the National Board of
- 2004 New school built to hold 3,000 students, opens for 2,500 students
- 2009 *US News World Report* names Wando one of "best in the country" for high schools
- Named Principal of the Year by South Carolina Administrators Association, South Carolina Association of Student Councils and Southern Interscholastic Press Association
- 2010 Metlife/ NASSP National High School Principal of the Year
- Honorary doctorate from the College of Charleston and Aluma of the Year and induction into the Citadel Education Hall of Fame
- Received the Order of the Palmetto, the highest civilian honor
- Recipient of the Septima P. Clark Award for Excellence in Education by the Trident Urban League
- 2014 The Center for Advanced Studies opens at Wando High School
- 2015 Lucy Beckham takes on new role at Wando. She moved over to the Center for Advanced Studies to oversee educational planning and the design of the new Mount Pleasant high school

More than just a principal

School reflects on loss of cherished and inspiring leader and friend

Jane Daniel and Bhavani Srinivas
co-writing editor and staff writer

When Principal Dr. Sherry Eppelsheimer's shaking voice announced the news, a sense of shock fell over the campus. Executive Principal Lucy Beckham unexpectedly passed away on Dec. 13 at her home.

Wando students and staff grieved the loss of a beloved leader and mentor and many reflected on Beckham's legacy and their memories of her.

Eppelsheimer said Beckham's work transformed Wando. "If there is one word that would define Lucy Beckham, it is visionary," Eppelsheimer said. "Not only did she wish for Wando students to graduate on time, college and career ready, but she also wanted each one to have a viable plan. Every decision she made in relation to educational opportunities, she considered what was best for students. The Center for Advanced Studies is a testament of her vision."

Beckham created a new standard for Wando that puts students first, Eppelsheimer said.

"She truly believed in doing what was best for students, and she instilled that belief in each of us," she said. "I consider myself fortunate and blessed to have worked with such an extraordinary educator. Wando will remain Lucy Beckham's legacy as we continue her expectation of excellence."

Athletic Director Bob Hayes said Beckham was an exceptional leader.

"She is the greatest leader I have ever known," he said. "Her ability to organize, motivate and inspire is unmatched."

Human Geography teacher Jason Brisini said Beckham's influence will be lasting.

"She left her footprint all over this place," Brisini said. "We're always going to be who we are because of her. Look at it, her son-in-law's a principal, her son's a teacher, [her] daughter-in-law's here as a teacher. Her influence is always going to be around here."

Student Body President senior Cole Whitman said when Beckham went out of her way to wish the baseball team luck for their state championship, he knew she cared about every student.

"They [other Wando teams] were all getting send off's but we never got a send off. All the baseball players were a little upset

and we were all talking around like, 'Dang, no one cheered us out as we left,'" Whitman said. "And so we go to Chick-fil-A for our pre-game meal and in walks Lucy Beckham. She took time out of her ridiculous schedule to wish us off and wish us good luck. She was the principal of a school of over 4,000 kids, she obviously has stuff that she needs to be doing but she was like, 'You know what, no. I'm gonna go to Chick-fil-A and I'm gonna wish my boys off.' That was amazing. That was probably one of the happiest memories that I have of her is when she walked in and came over to me and gave me a hug and wished me good luck for the state championship."

English teacher Cynthia Lawson said Beckham was a kind and charismatic woman.

"Certainly winning the National Principal of the Year in 2010 was a professional accomplishment. But I tend to think along the lines of the simple, everyday kindnesses, not the grand gestures, but the everyday kindnesses that are done on a consistent basis," Lawson said. "Lucy Beckham is a force of nature here at Wando and you can't really think about Wando without thinking about her."

French teacher Stacy Attafi said that for Beckham, family was always a top priority.

"My father had Alzheimer's for seven years and he just passed away this year," Attafi said. "The first thing she would always ask is how's your dad, how's your family. She would always say at the end of the meeting 'Take care of yourselves and take care of your families. That comes first before you stay late after school, grade papers.'"

Assistant Principal Charles Coker, who also taught Math at Wando before becoming an administrator, said Beckham "hired me to do my dream job when I was just out of college. She believed in me more than I believed in myself. She had the ability to make you feel like you could do anything. She allowed me to do everything I have been able to do in my career. Ms. Beckham taught me many things but the two things that stick out the most are to fight for what you believe to be right and to love those around you as well."

Government teacher Misty LeClerc said she believes Wando is well-equipped to proceed into the future.

"She gave me a voice because I'm just a follower with some good ideas on occasion and she said, 'nope you're gonna do this and you're gonna do that.' I think I would've not been runner up for Charleston County Teacher of the Year if it hadn't been for her giving me the leadership opportunities and for that I'm thankful to her," she said. "We are going to continue to put one foot in front of the other and this school's going to be fine because she left a structure. She left the leadership in place. We've all learned from the best."



Mary Prickett / photo

(Top) **Lucy Beckham** stands with her grandchildren on Oct. 23 as Lucy Beckham Boulevard is dedicated. Her grandchildren include **Christopher Antonelli, William and Lucy Kate Beckham, Bella Antonelli** and "**Shep**" **Beckham**. (Below) Beckham met **President Barack Obama** in the White House in July 2010 as part of her activities as National Principal of the Year. Beckham stands with valedictorian **Grace Whitbeck** and salutatorian **Elise Hynd** in June 2015.



photos provided by Legend

Leaving her legacy



Beckham leaves a lasting impression on students, staff

Francesca Mathewes
associate editor

I can distinctly remember the excitement I felt on that early August morning, stepping into the fresh and pristine office in the Center for Advanced Studies. The new school year was just days away. I can remember feeling my nerves tingling, and a faint shadow of intimidation following me through the threshold. I can remember feeling like I was about to meet someone who was truly great; a legend, if you will.

I know now that this was not a feeling -- it was fact. Ms. Lucy Beckham is a legend.

In that early morning interview on Aug. 14th, we talked about the future. We talked about her new job promotion, the new high school in the works, her plans for the future of Mt. Pleasant and most of all, we reflected on her time at Wando. She oversaw the construction of 1000 Warrior Way, and the creation of the CAS. She watched the trophy cases that line our halls fill themselves with shiny new awards, glistening with the pride of the students who earned them. Each year, each achievement, cherished with a staff of educators hired by no one other than herself. People she trusted, she loved and ensured the best for.

But out of all of these milestones, achievements and career marking moments, there was only one thing she was really concerned about me writing in my article. She paused, the purest moment of reminiscence reflected in her eyes.

"I think it's the kids. That's what I'm most proud of."

I remember just how genuine that statement felt to me. In that fleeting moment, that's all it was. A meaningful statement by someone who had more impact on my day to day life than I understood.

Now, three months later, I realize the depth of those words, and how they not only defined who she was as an educator, but as a person. Lucy G. Beckham lived a life that bettered the lives of others. Whether you've graduated from Wando and shaken her hand at graduation, a parent of a freshman who just started this school, or just another person in this community, Lucy Beckham has touched your life in some way. She taught someone you know. She guided someone you love. She provided the foundation for the education and advancement of thousands upon thousands of aspiring young adults, and set generations of students in the Mt. Pleasant community on the path for success.

In these coming days, weeks, and months, there will be uncertainty. Her inspiring presence will leave a void felt by those who didn't even know her. But if there is one thing I learned from her on that early August morning, it's what dedication looks like. It's to never give up. It's to surround yourself with the right people, and move forward to get the job done. To make a difference.

And the day we walk across that stage, diplomas in hand, and bid our final farewell to the halls she molded herself, we know that she lives on. We will move into the future knowing how truly great it is to be a Wando Warrior: To be educated in her image. To carry on the legacy of Lucy G. Beckham.

To succeed.



"She was amazing. I don't know another word. I'm still kind of grappling with the reality on what we learned. One of the things I admired most about her was her honesty, her integrity and her fairness in everything."

Jeanine Fox
Teacher



David Crockett
Administrator

"She was like a mom. Every time you were around here or in her office, she would just turn, kind of look at you, and give you the 'Hey sweet boy! What's going on?' Every aspect of what she did had some kind of joy in it."



Kat Shoemaker
Junior

"All of my other siblings went to Wando, and they would come home and talk about how great Lucy Beckham was and how great of a principal she was."



William Milton
Senior

"I love Ms. Beckham. At every sporting event I freaked out when I saw her. We made a sign that said 'Lucy Beckham for President' for one of the football games. I just loved seeing her everywhere. I made my prom date take a picture of me and Lucy Beckham at prom."



Caroline Taylor
Teacher

"She taught me that no matter what happens to always put the kids first. I will continue to do that for every day of my career. If I become half of the educator and advocate that she is, I will have succeeded. We are all devastated and we will miss your passion and presence daily."



Connor Griffin
Sophomore

"My greatest memory of Ms. Beckham was when I first moved here. I went on a tour of the school prior to my first day here, and she was one of the first people that I met. She was just so nice and so welcoming. She really gave off a positive vibe about Wando."