



wando is **LUCY**



*On Dec. 13, the hearts of the Wando family were collectively broken. **Lucy Beckham**, longtime principal and nationally-renowned educator, suddenly passed away. She left behind a legacy that forged one of the top high schools in the country. The yearbook staff asked **Kendall Mercer**, 2015 graduate, yearbook alumna, and a student whom Beckham particularly influenced, to express the impact Beckham had on Wando—through the eyes of a student.*

I never expected to receive a phone call that Lucy Beckham had passed away, especially on a day I was planning to see her just hours later. And although months have passed, it is still hard for me to wrap my head around the reality that Ms. Beckham is not at Wando anymore, mostly because for me, Lucy Beckham was Wando.

I attended both her visitation as well as her funeral. It was remarkable to witness the immense impact Ms. Beckham made and see that her contributions to education were so significant that recognition was found in our community, our state and our nation. Hearing her son, Bill Beckham, speak of her personal side and Dr. Lynda Davis speak of her professional side, I was reminded that we as her students were lucky to have had the leadership of such an incredible person. Honestly, I wasn't sure how I felt about her visitation being held at Wando, but after being present for it, I realized that there really wasn't any other place it could be held because she was our chief Warrior, we were her tribe and Wando is and forever will be her home.

designer d. armstrong; inset photographer s. winnick

As an aspiring educator, I am grateful to have had the opportunity to learn at Lucy Beckham's Wando as my passion was further developed and my eyes opened wider to the importance of good educators through her. Lucy believed that everyone needed someone to tell them they were good, but could be better, that they could think bigger, work harder, do more, be more, and then she helped them get there. Along with providing a world-class education, she really taught us to be who we wanted to be and who the world needs.

She was in charge of the largest high school in the state, but she still made time for each of us. She made time to attend every concert, show, and sporting event. She made time to find the kids who needed her most, and she made time to be there for them. She made time to honor students who succeeded by going beyond the expectation. She made time for her kids long after they left the halls of Wando. She made time to make people feel special. I thank her for taking time to care for "her kids". Because to Lucy, we weren't just students. We were kids. Her kids.

I feel lucky to have been a student at Lucy Beckham's Wando and it makes me upset that future Warriors won't have that opportunity. For me, her influence was a gift and something I will never take for granted again.

While my thoughts keep coming back to the idea that Lucy Beckham *is* Wando, I think it is more appropriate to say Lucy Beckham *is* Wando. And though I may never grasp that she is no longer walking the halls candidly telling us how things should be, truly speaking her mind, attending our activities, and always inspiring each and every one of her kids to do their best, I may never really have to. She has left a legacy that will remain in our hearts and live on forever. I have come to realize that the boundaries of her impact are endless because her spirit has inhabited Wando and the Warrior family forever.

Because of Lucy Beckham, no matter where we are or what we are doing, we will always Walk Like Warriors.

-Kendall Mercer is a freshman education major at Clemson University