An Achievable Dream (AAD) announced Charlie and Mari Ann Banks as sponsors of the Class of 2019 during the 26th Annual Tennis Ball gala on Saturday, November 17. As class sponsors, the Banks will provide annual merit scholarships to each class member for each year he or she attends college and maintains a certain grade point average. The graduates of the Class of 2019, who were honored in a special ceremony at the 26th Annual Tennis Ball, will be known as the Charlie and Mari Ann Banks Scholars.

“"We chose to sponsor the Achievable Dream Class of 2019 because they are our future. It is said that nothing great is ever achieved without enthusiasm, and this class has great enthusiasm! It is up to us to help provide them with the tools and skills to be strong leaders. We are proud to be part of An Achievable Dream.”" —Mari Ann Banks

Class sponsorship of An Achievable Dream graduates is a concept dating from the early days of AAD, when the late Walter Segaloff, AAD founder, and local businessman, rallied the Newport News business community behind the program. Each year since 2001, businesses and individuals have stepped forward to serve as class sponsors, ensuring that finances are not a limitation for AAD graduates attending college. On average, 90 percent of An Achievable Dream graduates have continued to two- or four-year college or a trade school, while 10 percent have joined the military or entered the workforce.

Walter Segaloff’s vision for An Achievable Dream has helped level the playing field for thousands of students since the program’s inception in 1992. Segaloff’s belief that “given the right tools and opportunity, all students can succeed” continues to guide An Achievable Dream as we look to the next 25 years.
26th Annual An Achievable Dream Tennis Ball
The 26th Annual Achievable Dream Tennis Ball was held on Saturday, November 17, 2018, at the Hampton Roads Convention Center. More than 900 guests enjoyed an extensive silent auction, gourmet dinner and exciting live auction featuring unique items, new cars, and even a boat! Proceeds from the event support the students of An Achievable Dream in Newport News.

THANK YOU to the Rotary Club of the Virginia Peninsula for partnering with us every year for the Tennis Ball!

THANK YOU to Casey Auto Group for donating the 2019 Subaru Ascent as the 2018 Tennis Ball raffle prize!
We use the word ‘odds’ to reflect the likelihood that an event will take place. Looking at how my life began, you could easily see the odds were stacked against me. If you had polled several hundred people to inquire what I would become, I doubt that accountant or attorney would have been among the top answers. Statistically speaking, I should not be standing in front of you today and I should not have accomplished any of what I have achieved. However, HERE I AM! I am here today in part because Walter Segaloff looked past the odds and statistics to bring about positive change in the lives of children who needed more than the hand they were dealt.

I was born 32 years ago to parents who both struggled with drug addiction. Prior to starting Achievable Dream in the fifth grade, I had already attended four other schools and moved more times than I could count. I was often angry and known for my bad attitude and insubordinate nature. My only dream at the time was to not have to move again and for a new family. Thankfully, when I was eight, my mother found her way to Narcotics Anonymous and has been drug-free ever since. While her sobriety did result in a more stable living environment, it did not give me the tools I needed for success. We still lived below the poverty line and were surrounded by people who did not have the time to dream because the focus was on making it in the moment; paying the next bill and providing the next meal.

I am grateful these barriers to success are being dismantled by An Achievable Dream Academy and people like you who support the mission of this organization.

An open mind opens doors; An Achievable Dream primed me for success in so many ways. I started every day at An Achievable Dream Academy reciting affirmations that still to this day help me believe in myself when others doubt me. I rarely feel out of place when attending professional functions and dinners because I learned which fork to use and which drink belonged to me in etiquette classes. My handshake shows people that I am not to be trifled with because I started every day at Achievable Dream perfecting the firm handshake. Longer school days and year-round activities helped ensure I did not fall into the school-to-prison pipeline in my idle time. Experiencing ballets, symphonies and the theater gave me an appreciation for the arts and a desire to work hard to afford such experiences for myself. Having the best teachers in the world changed my mindset completely and transformed me into a true dreamer. Exposure to higher education as an option started me down a path to obtain not one degree, but three.

After obtaining my bachelor’s degree in accounting, I went on to Wake Forest University to pursue my Masters of Accountancy. It was in that program that I not only landed a position with an international accounting firm and passed the CPA
Giving to Achievable Dream was important to me because I know firsthand the good it brings to an at-risk population. I’ve watched many who, statistically, should have failed, or not obtained as much, flourish. I have friends who are doctors, lawyers, dentists, leaders in the educational and business arena, who are first-generation graduates coming from low-income, single-parent homes. Some experienced displacement, neglect, abuse and all those things that statistically should have disqualified these resilient Dreamers. The only notable difference between them and others in their communities was attending An Achievable Dream. I’ve known AAD to house those who had nowhere to go, feed those with nothing to eat, stop their day to buy shoes for the student whose shoes were falling apart at the seams. They’ve provided Christmas gifts and Thanksgiving meals for students who may not have otherwise had one. AAD understands Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and meets any need that would prevent a student from accomplishing his or her goals. AAD has a culture. A culture filled with love, discipline, compassion and independence. At AAD, they cared for us. They cared enough to show us compassion but required excellence. We weren’t allowed to use excuses. They knew us well enough to know when we were defeated or not giving our best, and they knew how to meet us right where we were. They built bonds and established lifelong relationships. Some of my teachers and administrators have become honorary AAD Alumnae.

Barbara Banks with AAD president and CEO, Lee Vreeland.

As we enter 2019—a new year and a fresh start—I find myself looking back in order to look forward. I can’t help but think of how far An Achievable Dream has come over 26 years. For 22 of those years, I have worked with An Achievable Dream in various roles, so as we look to the future, I am inspired by the history of the organization and the legacy of those who led us this far. We are able to look forward only because An Achievable Dream has firm roots, thanks to the hard work of an amazing team over the course of many years, and I’m so thankful to be part of it.

One exciting change you may have noticed is this beautiful new, full-color edition of Achievements, made possible by our Achievements sponsors, MultiPrint, Inc. and Oyster Pointer. We are excited to continue bringing you the latest news of An Achievable Dream—now in vibrant color!

In 2019, I’m looking forward to: Connecting with YOU—our supporters, corporate sponsors, community partners, board members and more. You are our FAMILY!

Growing the Dream. We are continually working to expand the program in sustainable ways, and I’m excited for future initiatives that will impact even more deserving young students who have endless potential!

Celebrating success. At An Achievable Dream, we work hard and we play hard. Our incredibly dedicated teachers and staff live the Dream day in and day out, and we believe in a culture that celebrates that dedication! And most importantly, as our amazing Dreamers continue to achieve incredible things, we will continue to celebrate—and share that success with you!

2018 was a wonderful year, and I’m looking forward to 2019 with excitement and anticipation for all the great things to come and the dreams yet to be achieved. Thank you for the role you play in making dreams a reality for nearly 2,000 Dreamers. I am endlessly thankful for you.

Sincerely,
Lee Vreeland, Ed.D., President & CEO
An Achievable Dream has been a shining hope to me.

Nasir Curry, Class of 2014

Newport News, Virginia, has a way of trapping you in its trenches and not letting you see any way of getting out. Although I faced many personal struggles in this city, An Achievable Dream (AAD) has been a shining hope to me and ultimately has changed my life for the better. My family’s financial situation was never the best and because of this, I was not exposed to certain opportunities. AAD exposed me to many of these different experiences, which included opera, college tours, and many volunteer service works. This in turn has not just shaped me into a cultured person, but has helped me find my true purpose in life. Growing up where I did there were not a lot of options to pursue. As a teen growing up in the naval city of Newport News, most of the options presented to me were either to enter the military or go directly into the workforce. This caused me to feel discouraged about achieving much in life. The AAD faculty and staff always pushed me to pursue anything I believed in, which is one of the reasons I have pursued a college degree.

AAD has always shown me different opportunities, different hobbies, and different career options in the STEM and human services fields. This led me to pursue a degree in human development at Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and I hope to continue to pursue a master’s degree in counseling. Moreover, the strong partnership between the AAD program and Virginia Tech made it possible for me to attend college, period, thus overcoming my guardianship setbacks. Because of residency complications and financial aid restrictions, in-state tuition was impossible anywhere (as crazy as that may seem). With the persistence of AAD and the patience of Virginia Tech, we were able to overcome my legal obstacles, and my grandmother (who I lived with for 10 years) officially became my legal guardian. After all, she was truly my parent. Finally, my dream came true, and I became a Hokie.

The lessons I learned and the dedication of the faculty at AAD have impacted me greatly and influenced my personal life. As a result, I have become a member of many different community service-based organizations, such as Student African American Brotherhood and Black Student Alliance. AAD is a great program that I hope can continue for many years to come.

There is so much that I can say about An Achievable Dream. I must first say THANK YOU! I don’t know where I would be without this program. My name is Monique Nicholson, and I joined An Achievable Dream in 1993 when it was only an after-school program. This program has given me a family for life. Even all these years later, my friends from An Achievable Dream and I still yell “green group!” when we see each other.

This program gave me so much joy as a kid. From playing tennis in plastic green shorts, taking midday showers at the YMCA, eating Nutri-Grain bars and drinking frozen juices, going on field trips to the symphony and everywhere, reciting banners every morning, to having uniform inspections, we learned so much. I could literally go on forever! I really appreciate what this program did for me.

I graduated from Heritage High School. I earned a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration with a concentration in real estate management from Saint Augustine’s College in Raleigh, NC. I am currently pursuing my master’s degree in social work from Capella University. I am currently employed with the City of Hampton, working as a benefit program specialist. I plan someday to become a licensed clinical social worker so that I can help people in my community.

Congratulations on 25 years, An Achievable Dream!
Selected Class Notes

**Class of 2009**

**Shamanese Robinson:** Graduated from Virginia State University in 2013, earning a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology. She then attended Liberty University and earned a master’s degree in marriage and family therapy. Shamanese is currently attending Walden University and is a third-year student in the clinical psychology program. She recently moved to Austin, Texas, where she is a clinical case manager.

**Class of 2010**

**Chris Jeter:** Chris graduated from Winston-Salem State University in 2014 majoring in sports management; he graduated from Florida Institute of Technology in 2017 with a master’s degree in public administration. After working as a tennis coach at An Achievable Dream, Chris accepted a position as a real property specialist at Maryland Department of Transportation.

**Class of 2011**

**Sharmane Tonkins:** After receiving a full tennis scholarship to Virginia State University, Sharmane went on to graduate magna cum laude with a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice, minoring in sociology. Sharmane began working as a tennis instructor for An Achievable Dream in 2016. Additionally, she is studying to take the LSAT and the Military Officer Examination in hopes to go into the Air Force and study law.

**K’Wmane Tonkins:** Like his twin sister, Sharmane, K’Wmane, attended Virginia State University on a tennis scholarship, graduating with a degree in health and physical education in recreation health sciences. He is currently working for Huntington Tennis Center in Newport News, Virginia, as a tennis instructor. K’Wmane is studying to take the Military Officers Examination in the spring.

**Class of 2012**

**Miata Palmer:** Miata graduated in May 2018 with a master’s degree in social work. On December 22, 2018, Miata, and her fiancé, De’Von Cook, were married!

**Class of 2013**

**Kendall Crump:** Kendall graduated from Richard Bland College of William & Mary in May 2015, earning an associate’s degree in science; she graduated from Old Dominion University in August 2017, earning a bachelor’s degree in health services administration; and she is now attending Strayer University in pursuit of a master’s degree in business administration. Kendall is working full-time at Lidl US as she continues to attend college.

**Class of 2014**

**Briana Jones:** Briana is a 2018 Virginia Polytechnic Institute graduate majoring in public urban affairs. She is currently living in Newport News, Virginia, working at Children of the Village Childcare Center. Briana majored in city planning and community development, so she is currently applying for positions in this field. Briana is in the planning stages of helping Virginia Organizing start a chapter in the Newport News area.

**Jahad Mills:** Jahad earned a bachelor’s degree in philosophy from Virginia Polytechnic Institute (2018). Today, Jahad is working as an operations supervisor with UPS, and he plans on pursuing a master’s degree in business management.

**Class of 2015**

**Isaiah Lucas:** A 2017 graduate of Richard Bland College, Isaiah is currently studying political science at Old Dominion University with plans to graduate in the spring of 2019. Isaiah is student body president, program assistant for the Dean of Students, and he serves on the President’s Task Force for Inclusive Education.

**Tiffany Fox:** A 2017 graduate of Richard Bland College, Tiffany is currently studying psychology at Old Dominion University with plans to graduate in the spring of 2019. Tiffany is the community service chair for the Black Fist Club, and she is secretary for the TRUST, a club to unite the community, work in the inner city, and organize events to benefit local charities.

**Brandon Jones:** Class of 2018, enlisted in the Marines in fall 2018. He successfully completed basic training and is assigned to the Midwest for additional intense training. Brandon recently visited AAD Middle & High School and is pictured with AAD Director of Operations and Student Services, Judi Overbey (left), and Vice President of Academics, Amy Marchigiani (right).
Community Support

Marine Specialty Painting, Cape Henry Collegiate, Cox High School and Sheila Stratton donated food supplies to ensure that every Dreamer’s family who needed it received a Thanksgiving meal!

Students from AAD Academy at Highland Springs Elementary School received eye exams and glasses if needed, thanks to Dr. Donna Brown of Virginia Eye Institute.

Thank you to our newest classroom/space sponsors in Virginia Beach: TowneBank, Cheryl McLeskey, the Clarkson Family, the Beisel and Atkinson families (Chick’s Oyster Bar) and the Fine Family. Their sponsored spaces at Seatack Elementary An Achievable Dream Academy were dedicated in December in a special ceremony! Each room is represented by a characteristic meaningful to the sponsor. Every day, our students will be reminded of the importance of these traits.

Every student at Seatack Elementary AAD Academy got to pick out a book to take home thanks to the ladies of Women Helping Others (WHO).

Our friends at Cox did something incredible for our seniors. Each member of the Class of 2019—53 to be exact!—received a Chromebook in a surprise announcement as a tool to help them succeed in their college careers.

What’s Happening at An Achievable Dream?

Cox High School

Schooners Bar & Grill and Brake King hosted the annual toy drive in support of An Achievable Dream. Thanks to these amazing partners and the support of the community, students at An Achievable Dream Academy each received a bag of toys for the holidays!

Smithfield Foods loaded us up with 110 hams to supply holiday food baskets to Dreamers and their families!

Students from AAD Academy at Highland Springs Elementary School received eye exams and glasses if needed, thanks to Dr. Donna Brown of Virginia Eye Institute.

Thanks to the generosity of Wendy Drucker and the Drucker family, each child at AAD Academy received a book to take home over the holiday break. We are so grateful for this special gift!
School Fun & Events

Sailors stationed aboard the USS Gerald R. Ford partnered with An Achievable Dream Middle & High School, joining the sheriff’s deputies and Newport News police officers who are at the school every day. Sailors began greeting middle school students in the morning and participated in various programs and activities at the school. Thank you for your service and for showing you believe in our students by joining us for this important part of our day!

AAD seniors on a tour of Radford University. So far this year, seniors have toured a total of nine college campuses to include the following post-secondary institutions: University of Virginia, The College of William & Mary, Virginia State University, Radford University, Old Dominion University, Norfolk State University, Virginia Military Institute, Jefferson College of Health Sciences and Virginia Tech.

First Colonial Day, an event that has taken place at Seatack Elementary for more than 20 years, was great fun as always this year! AAD students are greeted by more than 100 “elves” from First Colonial High School. First Colonial students raise funds all year for our students to receive presents given to them by Santa. The First Colonial students also visit our classrooms and do various activities, read stories, and spend time with our students.

Twelve students from Seatack Elementary AAD Academy went through a 13-week program at iFly Virginia Beach to learn indoor skydiving. In December, the students had the opportunity to showcase all of the tricks and movement they could do in the air tube to the parents in attendance. Hampton Roads Heroes at Home also presented a $2,000 check to the iFly team to allow them to continue offering this program to deserving students like our Dreamers!

Three students attending the AAD program at Lynnhaven Middle School—Jasmine, Love and Mahkayla (far left)—partnered with other Lynnhaven Middle School students to make blankets for the homeless!

A young Highland Springs student with Henrico County Police Officers on Career Day. She wants to be a police officer when she grows up!

Masterpiece in the making! Two students at AAD Certified Academy at Highland Springs Elementary are working on an art project.

Students at AAD Academy at Highland Springs Elementary celebrated with a monthly student birthday party in partnership with CelebrateRVA, a Richmond-based nonprofit.

Sixth-grade band students from the AAD program at Lynnhaven Middle School performed their first concert in early December on the auditorium stage at First Colonial High School. These students performed a concert with their seventh- and eighth-grade counterparts. They were also able to hear the bands of First Colonial High School, which allowed them to both hear and see the progression of participating in band.
What’s Happening at An Achievable Dream?

Upcoming Events

Volunteer Day: March 15, 2019
Volunteer Day at Seatack Elementary AAD Academy in Virginia Beach. Join AAD students to complete a community service project!

Career Day–High School: April 12, 2019
Career Day at An Achievable Dream Middle & High School in Newport News. Share your profession with AAD middle and high school students.

Career Day–Elementary School: April 17, 2019
Career Day at An Achievable Dream Academy in Newport News. Share your profession with AAD elementary students.

Sponsors’ Day Newport News: April 18, 2019
Sponsors’ Day in Newport News at An Achievable Dream Middle & High School. Exchange business cards, have lunch with a student and hear about our seniors’ college plans.

Seafood Festival: April 20, 2019
at Chick’s Oyster Bar
A party you don’t want to miss! Proceeds benefit An Achievable Dream Virginia Beach.

Sponsors’ Day Virginia Beach: May 2, 2019
Sponsors’ Day in Virginia Beach at Seatack Elementary An Achievable Dream Academy. Exchange business cards, hear what our students want to be when they grow up and have lunch with a student.

Give Local 757: May 14, 2019
Hampton Roads’ annual day of giving!

Career Day–Elementary School: July 25, 2019
Career Day at Seatack Elementary An Achievable Dream Academy in Virginia Beach. Share your profession with AAD elementary students.

27th Annual Tennis Ball: November 16, 2019
Join us at the Hampton Roads Convention Center for the 27th annual Tennis Ball gala.

Visit AchievableDream.org/Events to learn more.

Special Visitors

In December, we were honored to welcome Virginia’s First Lady, Pam Northam, to tour An Achievable Dream Academy!

Two special visitors, Ron and Joy Feigles, who are avid supporters of An Achievable Dream all the way from Pennsylvania, took the time to visit while in town over the holidays!

Seatack Teacher of the Year

Seatack Elementary AAD Academy named April Burrows (left) 2020 Teacher of the Year. Anne Bianchi (right) was recognized as a Distinguished Teacher.
me from achieving any dream. I will continue taking strides to accomplish more. In two weeks, my daughter and I are moving to Chicago because I’ve been recruited by an even larger law firm with even more opportunities for success and growth.

An Achievable Dream Academy was truly the difference between the woman I am today and the woman society would have expected me to become. This program not only changed my life, it also helped change the narrative for every generation after me because I have been able to create a life where the barriers for success that existed for me do not exist for my daughter.

On behalf of all of the Dreamers, thank you.”

“AAD taught me the value of believing in myself, obtaining an education and giving back to my community.”

—Barbara Banks

my bachelor’s degree in three years, obtain a master’s degree and own a home by age 25. At 27, I started my own business that gives back to the community through tutoring at-risk students for free or a low rate, planning trips that expose those same students to educational experiences they couldn’t normally access, mentoring youth and so much more. I am currently pursuing a Ph.D. in educational management with hopes to be Dr. Banks by age 30. On January 29, I’ll be 28 and beginning dissertation phase so I’m certain it’s possible.

AAD’s foundation definitely inspires me to continue to dream. While today, I am an instructional designer, with the chance to possibly grow in the educational arena by becoming director (fingers crossed), I hope to one day work for myself in a business that is dedicated to positively effecting change in my community. As I take on this endeavor, AAD acts as a guideline for my future plans.
**Join the Dream Club!**

Join supporters like AAD alumna Barbara Banks in this powerful local movement. With five monthly giving levels available, anyone can support An Achievable Dream!

**Step 1:** Visit www.AchievableDream.org/Dream-Club and pledge monthly, recurring support at an amount that is meaningful to you.

**Step 2:** Tell a friend! Share on social media, forward an email and help us spread the word about the Dream Club!

Your tax-deductible donation makes it possible for our children to succeed in school, continue to college and become successful members of society. An Achievable Dream is changing lives through education. With your support, our students are well on their way to achieving their dreams!

*When I saw an affordable way to give to AAD, I thought to myself, “If I can find a way to give to Old Dominion University, a school I might not have attended without AAD, I was surely going to find a way to give to ‘the Dream’—a cause I know to be tried and true.”*

—Barbara Banks, AAD Class of 2009
Instructional Designer, Business Owner, and PhD Candidate

**From a Dreamer:**

“An Achievable Dream makes me want to go to school every day and on time. [They] always encourage me to do my best.”

—Edward, 3rd Grade, AAD Certified Academy at Highland Springs Elementary

**Mark Your Calendar!**

27th Annual Achievable Dream Tennis Ball
Saturday, November 16, 2019
Hampton Roads Convention Center

**DID YOU KNOW?**

100% of the Class of 2018 graduated with advanced studies diplomas.