MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

The New Year has finally arrived, and I could not be more thrilled and excited for what 2021 has to offer. As I look back on 2020, I am reminded that while there were many moments of challenge, there were also bright glimmers of hope. Throughout the past year, I have seen more support and community than ever before. Teachers collaboratively working together on new and creative ways to virtually teach students, faculty and staff rallying together to deliver school supplies and food to students and families, virtual friendships being made among students, supporters and friends of the Dream finding new and creative ways to rally around and support our Dreamers… the list goes on.

Throughout 2020, we stayed true to our core values and roots, while maintaining a 100% on-time graduation rate, continuing to provide the key elements of our MESSAGE

An Achievable Dream Announces PBMares as Class of 2021 Sponsor at the 28th Annual Tennis Ball

PBMares was announced as the sponsor of the Class of 2021, in honor of retiring CEO Alan S. Witt, during the virtual 28th Annual Tennis Ball gala on Saturday, November 14. As class sponsors, PBMares has committed to providing annual merit scholarships for each member of the Class of 2021 for each year they attend college and maintain a certain grade point average. The graduates of the Class of 2021, who were honored in a special ceremony during the Virtual Tennis Ball, will be known as the Alan S. Witt Scholars.

The firm partners orchestrated the sponsorship as a complete surprise to Witt, in recognition and celebration of his retirement in December, 2020. PBMares incoming CEO, Harvey Johnson, shared, “The one organization that has always had a special place in Alan’s heart is An Achievable Dream, and it’s something that he has been part of since its beginning. We couldn’t think of a better way to honor Alan’s legacy than to honor the legacy of his dear friend Walter, founder of AAD, and we are so excited to be this year’s class sponsor in his name.”

Continued on page 9

Thank you to our 28th Annual Tennis Ball Premier Sponsors:
The 28th Annual Tennis Ball was held virtually on November 14, 2020! Whether guests enjoyed the Tennis Ball from small, socially distant watch parties or from the comfort of their couches, there was no shortage of fun and excitement. The night consisted of inspiring video messages from President and CEO Lee Vreeland, keynote speaker Jada Lewis, Event Chair Kevin Murphy, the announcement of PBMares as the Class of 2021 sponsor, an online auction, raffle drawing, and much more. Proceeds from the event support the Dreamers of An Achievable Dream in Newport News. Some sponsors, including PBMares, pictured in photos below, hosted small, socially distant watch parties.

Michael Banks, AAD alum of the Class of 2001, joined the PBMares watch party to deliver the invocation for the evening.
THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Presenting Sponsor

Program Sponsor

Masquerade Sponsor

Virtual Auction Sponsor

Vehicle Sponsors

Celebration Sponsors

Platinum Sponsors

Gold Sponsors

Triple Silver Sponsor
Clancy & Theys Construction Company

Double Silver Sponsor
Michelle Jacobs

Silver Sponsors
Wallace and Vera Arnold
Bankers Insurance
Brown Edwards | Hugh Barlow
Brown Edwards | Leslie Roberts

Nancy Cannon
Canon Virginia, Inc.
Richard and Edna Coleman
Dister, Inc.
Dr. and Mrs. John F. Frantz
Rob and Karen Frazier
Hampton Machine Shop
Harvey Lindsay Commercial Real Estate
Hercules Fence Company
James River Architects
Dr. Ashby Kilgore

Betty N. Levin
Senator Mamie Locke
Mason Martial Arts Academy
NB Law Group, PLLC
Ann and Rusty Onhaizer
Old Point National Bank
Larry L. and Nettie M. Orie
Payday Payroll
PC&IA Business Environments
PMA Architecture
Chris and Jennie Simms
Team Titan Real Estate

TechArk
Dr. and Mrs. Helmuth Trieshmann
Virginia Health Services
Voyager Sopris Learning
Kathleen Hickey Wallis and Dr. James Wallis
Dwight and Barbara West
Williams Mullen
World Class Solutions Inc.
YLS, Inc.
YMCA of the Virginia Peninsulas

From soliciting auction items to securing sponsorships, the Rotary Club of the Virginia Peninsula has been instrumental to the success of the Tennis Ball since the very first event in 1991. We are so grateful for many years of friendship, and we look forward to many more to come.
"Beginning at An Achievable Dream in fifth grade, I knew I was a very shy and quiet student. Right away, I knew the atmosphere at the school was different. The teachers really cared, and they showed us and told us how much they cared by their willingness to spend extra time to make sure we were successful, and that it was a family atmosphere."

With the help of teachers like Mr. Perry, Jada was able to come out of her shell and flourish into the person she is today. From elementary, to middle, to high school, Jada always felt at home, and created relationships with teachers, staff, and students that would last a lifetime.

"We goofed off together, we learned together, we helped each other with homework, and we always looked out for each other. We still do."

While in high school, Jada was faced with a challenge when she was helping as a caretaker for her grandmother, who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, while her mother was working tirelessly to support their family. Although the days were long and the road was difficult, Jada was never without the support of her Achievable Dream family and felt comforted by the love that she was shown by both the teachers and her fellow classmates.

"Thanks to the constant support of An Achievable Dream’s administration staff and teachers, I was able to accomplish many things throughout my high school career. I was a member of the 3.0 Club, became inducted into the National Honor Society, and my senior year I was named president of my graduating class."

After graduating from An Achievable Dream in 2018, Jada began her studies at Virginia Commonwealth University and felt more than prepared for her collegiate journey. AAD classes such as etiquette, Speaking Green, and English have played an important role in her success at VCU.

"I attend career fairs and business events, and I am not afraid to talk with professionals. I know how to make eye contact and greet people with a firm handshake. I am confident in presenting myself and having a social conversation."

Due to the online format caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Jada was unable to return to the VCU campus and chose to remain at home to assist her mother. To help support herself and her family, Jada decided to get a full-time job. With the help of An Achievable Dream, Jada was connected to Casey Auto Group, and is now a full-time employee as well as a full-time student!

"An Achievable Dream is not an ordinary school. It is a group of people who have become my family and are always there for me through my ups and downs. I, Jada Lewis, come to you today as a 2018 graduate of An Achievable Dream, a third-year student at Virginia Commonwealth University, studying business marketing, and a full-time employee of Casey Auto Group. After hearing my story, I hope you know your support of An Achievable Dream is not just dollars and cents. It is lives changed. It is dreams made achievable. It is a new story for me and my family, one that will change the course of history."
An Achievable Dream Announces New Board Members

An Achievable Dream is pleased to announce the appointment of three new board members: Keira Lombardo of Smithfield Foods, Inc., William T. Morrison of TowneBank, and Doug Lutz of Capital Group.

“Our Boards of Directors is comprised of dedicated community leaders who are committed to the mission and vision of An Achievable Dream as we work to bring equitable opportunities to students in traditionally underserved communities in Virginia,” said Dr. Lee Vreeland, AAD President and CEO. “We are excited to welcome Keira, Will, and Doug to our board, and we are grateful for their expertise and passion for this work.”

KEIRA LOMBARDO, Chief Administrative Officer, Smithfield Foods, Inc., serves on An Achievable Dream, Inc.’s Board of Directors. Mrs. Lombardo joined Smithfield Foods in 2002 and assumed her current position in 2020. Based at the global food company’s headquarters in Smithfield, Virginia, she leads the communications, sustainability, legal, government affairs and human resources functions. Mrs. Lombardo is responsible for enhancing the company’s reputation and brand and creating internal strategic alignment among its 55,000 global team members. As the principal spokesperson for Smithfield Foods, Mrs. Lombardo is also responsible for developing, communicating, and executing a number of strategic initiatives, including Smithfield’s acclaimed sustainability program. She is president of the Smithfield Foundation, a non-profit organization that acts as the company’s philanthropic arm, and she serves on the boards of several industry organizations, including The National Association of Manufacturers and The North American Meat Institute.

Mrs. Lombardo shares, “Education has the power to dramatically strengthen communities. I am proud of Smithfield Foods’ long relationship with An Achievable Dream, and I am honored to continue that partnership as a member of the Board of Directors. We continue to support An Achievable Dream in providing students with equitable access to educational opportunities, right here in our own community.”

WILLIAM T. MORRISON, also known as Will, who joined An Achievable Dream Virginia Beach, Inc.’s Board of Directors, serves as Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of TowneBank Mortgage and Towne Realty following the merger of Monarch Bank and TowneBank in June of 2016. Previously chief executive officer of Monarch Mortgage from August 2011 until the merger, Mr. Morrison has more than 30 years of banking experience and has previously served as chief operating officer and chief credit officer at local community banks. A resident of Virginia Beach for 45 years and a graduate of Princess Anne High School and Old Dominion University, Mr. Morrison’s civic and community activities include having served on the Virginia Beach Community Service Board, the United Way Funds Distribution Committee, the Virginia Beach Youth Foundation, and Virginia Beach Forum. He currently serves on Old Dominion University Executive Advisory Council Board for the School of Business.

“An Achievable Dream works tirelessly to close the educational gap and provide students a path to success and futures filled with opportunity,” says Mr. Morrison. “TowneBank is proud to support this important work and I am proud to serve on the Board of Directors.”

DOUG LUTZ, Administrative Coordinator at Capital Group, serves on An Achievable Dream Certified Academies, Inc.’s Board of Directors. Mr. Lutz provides administrative support to several departments of Capital Group, including event planning, data analysis, technical assistance, and editorial support. He also co-leads the volunteer programs and several employee resource groups, including the veterans community and arts community. Prior to joining Capital Group, Mr. Lutz had a successful career as a bandmaster in the United States Marine Corps’ music program before retiring in 2007. He then decided to put his organizational skills to use in a corporate environment. While at Capital Group, Mr. Lutz has become one of the company’s national speakers, promoting diversity and inclusion, especially with regard to the LGBTQ+ community.

“My first experience with AAD was as a volunteer helping at the end-of-year field day for the Newport News AAD Academy elementary school,” shares Mr. Lutz. “I was so impressed with the entire school, from staff to students. There are so many temporary ‘fixes’ in the world, but only when you provide hope to our kids will a true difference be made. An Achievable Dream does this, and I am truly excited to be part of this mission.”
REMEMBERING
Coach Mason

We lost a pillar of the Dream family, Kimberly “Kim” Mason, also known as “Coach Mason,” when she passed away on July 1, 2020. Coach Mason was a dedicated and beloved physical education teacher at An Achievable Dream Academy for more than 20 years.

“Coach Mason was a gem that was the epitome of whatever it takes to support our students, staff, and community. From her roles in physical education, as Crossing Monitor, and Night School Support, Kim did it with a smile and a great sense of humor.” —Quentin B. Jackson

Throughout Coach Mason’s 20 years at An Achievable Dream, she made a lasting impact on students’ lives, and would always leave a smile on their faces, making sure they always felt loved, accepted, and secure. Coach Mason’s colleagues, fellow teachers, and Dreamers and their families remember and celebrate her passion for teaching and her love for all Dreamers.

“She was a very loving PE teacher for ALL of her kiddos. She had a passion for them and it showed in her loving spirit towards them. She will be missed dearly.” —Judi Overbey

Her positivity and excitement for life shone through her teaching styles every day, and she is dearly missed by generations of Dreamers, their families, and the entire Dream community. We love you, Coach Mason.

REMEMBERING
Mr. Brickhouse

Mr. Anthony Brickhouse, our beloved security officer at An Achievable Dream Academy in Newport News, suddenly passed away on November 18, 2020. Words are inadequate to express the huge void in our Dream family left by Mr. Brickhouse. He was as much a part of the Dream as the Dream was a part of him. Dreamers were his joy, and in doing what he loved every day, he brought joy and love to so many students, teachers, staff, faculty, and the entire community. To know Mr. Brickhouse was to love him. His smile and loud “Good morning!” would turn your day around. He was a gentle giant, the sunshine on a cloudy day, a hero for our Dreamers, and the heartbeat of An Achievable Dream Academy.

We were truly stunned by this loss, and our students, teachers, staff, faculty and entire Dream community are grieving deeply for him. Our lives and the Dream will never be the same without him, but will be forever changed because of him. We know that Mr. Brickhouse would want us to honor the joy-filled life he lived by celebrating all of our wonderful times with him. He would want us to keep laughing and keep dreaming—and keep dancing, too. So we will.

Once a Dreamer, always a Dreamer. We love you, Mr. Brickhouse.
A Virtual Speakeasy Event is coming to your screen on March 5, 2021! Gather with friends or party from your couch, but either way it’s going to be “the bee’s knees!” Purchase tickets or sponsorships at NightToDream.org and get ready to party like it’s 1921!

SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Yellow Diamond Sponsor
$10,000

HOSPITALITY
- 20 guests — virtual event admission, virtual auction admission
- 20 raffle tickets (20 chances to win the raffle prize of $10,000)
- $2,000 catering voucher for food and additional beverages
- Speakeasy-themed at-home party supplies designed for a gathering of 20 guests in your home, including:
  - Bluetooth speaker and big band party playlist
  - Event decor
  - Photobooth props
  - Speakeasy-era accessories
  - AAD logoed face masks
  - Large floral centerpiece
- Premium wine

PROMOTION
- Logo inclusion in print and digital media advertisements promoting A Night to Dream
- Half-page ad in A Night to Dream digital program book
- Logo in the A Night to Dream digital program book
- Logo in print and digital Achievements newsletter
- Logo on An Achievable Dream’s website
- Listing and/or logo recognition on An Achievable Dream’s social media pages
- Recognition in event email blasts

Emerald Sponsor
$5,000

HOSPITALITY
- 8 guests — virtual event admission, virtual auction admission
- 8 raffle tickets (10 chances to win the raffle prize of $10,000)
- Speakeasy-themed at-home party supplies designed for a gathering of 8 guests in your home, including:
  - Bluetooth speaker and big band party playlist
- Premium wine

PROMOTION
- Quarter-page ad in the A Night to Dream digital program book
- Listing in A Night to Dream digital program book
- Listing in print and digital Achievements newsletter
- Listing on An Achievable Dream’s website
- Listing on A Night to Dream website

Ruby Sponsor
$2,500

HOSPITALITY
- 4 guests — virtual event admission, virtual auction admission
- 4 raffle tickets (4 chances to win the raffle prize of $10,000)
- Speakeasy-themed at-home party supplies designed for a gathering of 4 guests in your home, including:
  - Bluetooth speaker and big band party playlist
- Premium wine

PROMOTION
- Quarter-page ad in the A Night to Dream digital program book
- Listing in A Night to Dream digital program book
- Listing in print and digital Achievements newsletter
- Listing on An Achievable Dream’s website
- Listing on A Night to Dream website

Cash Raffle Prize - $10,000! To purchase tickets, sponsorships and raffle tickets, visit NightToDream.org.
profiles in leadership:

An Interview with Dr. Aaron Spence, Virginia Beach City Public Schools Superintendent

We continue our Profiles in Leadership series by interviewing Virginia Beach City Public Schools (VBCPS) Superintendent, Dr. Aaron Spence. Dr. Spence has been a leader in the education community for 30 years, and the VBCPS superintendent for nearly four years. In this interview, Dr. Spence addresses some of the challenges faced in the past year, the opportunities that developed, and what he is most looking forward to in the new year.

Q: What have been some of the biggest challenges for you during this time, and what perspective have you tried to maintain as you approached those challenges?

A: There was no playbook for running a school division and educating tens of thousands of students during a global health pandemic. My team has likely grown tired of hearing me use the metaphor, but we had to build a plane while flying it. Without a blueprint. And while we successfully stayed aloft, we struggled with competing interests, some political, some just genuine differences of opinion about what would be safest for students and staff. That has naturally led to the challenge of keeping positive. But when times seem their darkest and most divisive, I try to lean into my core beliefs as an educator. And I ask my staff to remember why they became educators.

Q: We know that in challenges, we find opportunity. What are some of the opportunities you and your team have seen and embraced? What positive elements have come from that?

A: The concurrent teaching model has been a great success. In a relatively brief time, our educators discovered that they are pretty good at teaching from afar, provided the supports are there. And by supports, I mean the technology infrastructure that allows teacher and students to stay connected to each other and to their instructional materials. Our teachers have been creative, flexible, and adaptable to technologies that they might otherwise have never even tried to incorporate into their instructional days.

This health crisis has revealed just how important technology is to the successful delivery of educational experiences. It’s also exposed gaps in learning and equity as well as the need for social and emotional supports. Never has it been more important to realize the limitations of technology when it is not bolstered by a solid foundation of relationships between leadership and staff, between teachers and students, and between families and the school division.

While we’ve had a robust belief in the value of Social and Emotional Learning Curriculum (SEL) at the school and classroom level for years, it’s been gratifying to see our staff really dig in to the resources and implement best practices during the pandemic. In fact, an SEL survey taken of students recently showed an across-the-board increase of agreement levels of the five SEL competencies.

And while we all agree that teachers and students belong together in the physical classroom, we have also discovered that there are some young learners who thrive in the virtual environment. I believe that is something that will need to be explored further—once the pandemic is over, of course—as education takes the next step in its evolution.

Q: In what ways are you most proud of your team as they navigate an already challenging field of education during a global pandemic?

A: I am so blessed and grateful to be working with such a talented, dedicated, and tireless group of educators. And I include parents and guardians on that team because they became first-year teachers overnight.

From the moment the governor shut down schools last March to the need to build essentially two new school divisions—one all virtual, one face-to-face—we never missed a beat.

We created our Continuity of Learning Plan. Then we shifted to our Emergency Learning Plan, providing some synchronous learning and a more robust asynchronous experience as we concurrently considered how to end the school year minimizing learning loss and supporting our community. Then we created and implemented our Fall 2020 Plan, which has given families a choice of virtual or in-person learning. Elements of that plan are now evolving into the blueprint for the rest of the 20–21 academic year.

Not only have we kept students learning throughout, we’ve kept them
fed by making meals available via a pickup model at all schools and by delivering food via bus in some of our more vulnerable neighborhoods. Our division has been 1:1 for some time, but we've made our parking lots and playgrounds Wi-Fi accessible and offered extended hours for Chromebook exchange or replacement. We've worked with the city to open Safe Learning Centers, where children of working parents could be secure during the day.

And I am extremely proud to say that we saw a record graduation rate of 94.2% for our 2020 class. This marks the 12th consecutive year that we have reached record levels with our on-time graduation rate. What a testament to our work: amid a global pandemic, our graduation rate went up, not down.

**Q: How have you maintained positivity throughout this time?**
**How have you maintained your mental health and/or have you embraced new routines since the onset of the pandemic?**
**A:** I’m the first one to admit that doom scrolling is addictive, and it only compounds the feeling that this crisis is never-ending. But I have also found joy in scrolling through our #VBAlwaysLearning campaign and witnessing all the amazing ways our entire community—teachers, parents, grandparents, siblings, friends—has stepped up with inventive and inspiring ways to keep our children engaged in their learning.

I’ve also tried to incorporate some focused family time with no digital distractions. It’s not easy, but it’s necessary, and when I manage to make it happen, I find I am much more positive in my outlook. And I encourage my team to find that time in their own lives. We’re all more productive in the long run.

**Q: What are you most looking forward to in 2021?**

Everyone getting vaccinated! And then hearing the sounds of children in hallways and classrooms again, laughing and learning. I’m also excited about our inaugural equity policy, which defines expectations for consideration of racial and social equity and provides a framework to advance educational equity in alignment with our school board and the division’s visions and priorities. There will be an equity assessment in the coming months as we develop an equity plan that is aligned to our strategic plan. I can’t wait to see how these efforts move our division forward and effect real change for our entire community.

---

**Message from the CEO, continued from page 1**

SAME framework virtually for our students, and investing in our community as the challenges of the pandemic swept the nation. We innovated in an ever-changing education landscape, and we will continue to do what is in the best interests of our students. I am grateful for a fresh start in the new year and am excited for what is in store. 2021 will bring opportunities that will allow us to grow. Whether it is expanding our programs throughout all campuses, investing in our core leadership team, providing even more resources and opportunities for our alumni, or the launch of our legacy giving society, there is no limit to what this team can and will accomplish this year, and I am honored to serve alongside this remarkable team.

Whether learning is virtual or in-person, we will continue to do whatever it takes for our students to be safe, healthy, and engaged. Our *Dreamers* continue to exceed our expectations.

2021, An Achievable Dream is ready for you and our *Dreamers* are going to make this year one to remember.

*Sincerely, Lee Vreeland, President/CEO*
Barbara Banks, Class of 2009

It’s hot outside. We’re sitting cross-legged in a single line on tennis courts divided by class. It was the first day of summer session so we wore school-distributed red gym shorts and white t-shirts with the original An Achievable Dream logo embedded on them. The embroidery was color-coordinated by grade so mine was a red racket. I was nervous. I did not think I knew anyone other than my sister, two grade levels ahead of me. I could not find her in the crowd. I was anxious in that moment, and I didn’t realize that in the next few days, months, years, I would meet my life-long friends and become a part of a really big family.

I can remember every teacher I ever had, and how each one gave me something different, beneficial, and encouraging. Some of their tactics I did not understand initially but as I continued to grow, I had a greater understanding. It seems An Achievable Dream knew how to hand-select the best faculty, and this faculty created a culture filled with love and discipline, compassion and independence. They cared for us, more care than many of my classmates experienced at home. Not because their parents did not love them, but more so because their parents did not know how to love them. Our teachers and administrators never gave up on us, even when someone was suspended several times for the same behaviors. They saw past our flaws and pushed us into our potential. Their actions inspired student buy-in and student buy-in produced student results. That love and persistence instilled a desire to push myself even when I felt like something was impossible.

They also taught us character through the affirmations we stated every morning and the character-building workshops. My favorite was “It’s nice to be important, but it’s more important to be nice.” That one seemed to resonate with me, and to this day it still does. I understand that as I grow and become a pillar in my community, I must also possess a heart that ensures everyone I encounter knows the love I have for them, and this requires constant reflection. I will be great and do great things, but I still want to be a person with a great heart. An Achievable Dream taught us kindness and how to conduct ourselves in different environments by exposing us to refinement through an etiquette course, field trips based on art and literature, and service projects within our own community.

My friendships have been amazing. It seems as if everyone in my grade level and those before and after me are all family! I have a few great friends, but I think my best friendship would have to go to Kami’lah Brown. We were always so busy trying to outdo each other that we brought out the best in each other. I would like to let you know that Kami’lah is completing her DDS residency at Johns Hopkins, and I am extremely proud of her.

I had some of my greatest moments and defeats at the Dream, but every hill and valley created something beautiful. Academically, I have managed to complete undergraduate school on an academic scholarship brokered by An Achievable Dream, Inc., a master’s degree, and my Ph.D. in Educational Management. I am now the Director of Enrollment Management at Hampton University. I continue to give back to my Dream community by mentoring and advising current Dreamers. I have even started a non-profit 501c3 called Bridging Education and Excellence, to provide resources similar to what the Dream gave me to other students.
Selected Class Notes

Christie Davis
Class of 2001
Graduating from Liberty University with a Master of Business Administration in Marketing degree as well as a Master of Healthcare Administration degree from Pfieffer University, Christie has dedicated her life not only to her dreams but to serving others as well. As a marketing consultant, Christie helps small businesses and nonprofits find their voice and utilize strategic marketing to maximize the impact they are able to have on local communities. She is also a licensed nursing assistant who continues to work with patients so that she may stay up-to-date with healthcare operations. Combining both her skills in marketing and leadership with her first-hand experience of healthcare, Christie hopes to one day become the chief marketing officer in the healthcare industry. “I have lived by one of An Achievable Dream’s many quotes that I stated with confidence each morning before camp: ‘Nothing was ever achieved without enthusiasm.’ This was one of the banners that we had to repeat every day during tennis camp at Huntington Park, and it hung high in the gym during the school year. This one banner has stuck with me and pushed me forward during times when I wanted to give up.”

Kendall Crump
Class of 2013
Kendall has spent much of her time after AAD collecting college degrees! She currently holds an associate degree from the Richard Bland School of the College of William & Mary, an undergraduate degree from Old Dominion University, and as of June 2019, a master’s degree in business administration from Strayer University. “Although I always knew college was in my plans after high school, being a Dreamer helped my family and me tremendously and allowed me to not worry about having to drop out or retain so much debt that I couldn’t concentrate on the big picture.” Kendall is currently applying her leadership and business skills to her work at Finish Line as she continues to pursue her dreams.

Miata Palmer
Class of 2012
Miata knew from a young age that she was passionate about “helping people, impacting lives, spreading love, and demonstrating positivity.” After receiving her master’s degree in social work, Miata is now a Crisis Stabilization Program Director at Intensive Community Outreach Services in Norfolk, VA. She is currently pursuing a LCSW certification. “I decided at a very young age that I would become somebody and make a difference in my life and in my community. I am a living testimony that dreams are in fact achievable.”

Sherrelle Sardik
Class of 2006
Sherrelle is not only an AAD alum, she is also an AAD parent! With twin boys in 6th grade at the Achievable Dream Middle and High School, Sherrelle and her family embody the truth that AAD is a family. “‘Nothing was ever achieved without enthusiasm.’ This was one of the banners that we had to repeat every day during tennis camp at Huntington Park, and it hung high in the gym during the school year. This one banner has stuck with me and pushed me forward during times when I wanted to give up.” After taking a break from college to focus on her sons, Sherrelle re-enrolled at Norfolk State, where she received a bachelor’s degree in psychology and is currently pursuing a master’s degree in treatment and addiction from Liberty University. “There are not enough words to explain what being a Dreamer has done for me.”

2021 Sponsor, continued from page 1
Witt, who was surprised during the program when AAD President and CEO Dr. Lee Vreeland went live during the virtual program’s live stream to make the announcement, shared a few words with the small group of PBMares guests gathered to watch the program. Alan said, “To my friends and my associates at PBMares, thank you so much. This is an incredible honor. As I have tried to give back to my community, I have always held Walter up as the individual who was relentless in doing so. I am humbled, and I’m appreciative.”
This Year, Community Education Partnerships More Vital Than Ever

By Lee Vreeland, Ed.D., President & CEO, An Achievable Dream, and Keira Lombardo, Chief Administration Officer, Smithfield Foods

The year of 2020 was an incredibly challenging year, particularly so for students. Their educations have been beset by delays and uncertainty as the COVID-19 pandemic forced school systems into uncharted territories—all to keep students, educators, and the community at large as safe as possible.

Amid a year of so many hurdles, acts of kindness meant more than ever before. That is why An Achievable Dream (AAD) was so pleased to receive an annual holiday contribution of food baskets from Smithfield Foods, providing students and their families with a delicious meal during the holidays and a sense of normalcy during an otherwise abnormal year.

AAD is a nationally recognized K–12 program that partners with public school districts to cooperate in primarily underserved communities, providing additional resources to level the playing field for students. AAD works with public school systems in Newport News, Henrico County, and Virginia Beach City to achieve these goals.

Headquartered in Virginia, Smithfield Foods is an American food company dedicated to producing “Good food. Responsibly.” Part of that responsibility extends to supporting local communities. Smithfield believes education has the power to dramatically strengthen those communities over the long run and demonstrates that belief through supporting a range of education initiatives that empower its employees, their families, and their communities.

Partnerships are essential to success in education, and the collaboration between Smithfield and AAD extends well beyond sharing meals. In fact, Smithfield has a long history of supporting AAD in its mission to bring equity to education by providing opportunities for success in school and life, contributing more than $2.8 million since 2004.

Smithfield’s donations to the AAD annual fund have supported many of the core elements of its educational framework, including extended academic hours, uniforms, field trips, clubs, wraparound services and more. In 2020, this support was especially vital, as AAD explored new ways to reach its students in the current virtual learning environment. In recent months, AAD has worked toward providing substantial technical support, equipment, and access to training and staff professional development to ensure virtual learning accessibility for every student.

Additionally, Smithfield renewed its partnership with AAD in 2020 through a $200,000 grant that will fund core components of its program, provide career readiness training, and develop a cultural competency task force. This year, Smithfield redoubled its efforts to address structural inequalities through supporting organizations that work to improve education programs for historically underserved communities, provide access to quality education, and bridge divides within local communities. AAD is exactly the kind of partner that will match the company’s commitment to accountability and effectiveness.

Smithfield’s relationship with AAD goes even further, with dozens of current and former AAD families—including parents, guardians, and grandparents across Newport News and Virginia Beach employed by the company. In fact, alumni of the AAD program have gone on to work for Smithfield, serving as a testament to the success of AAD’s efforts along with Smithfield’s commitment to the uplifting effect of educational opportunities. The communities that AAD partners with are the same ones in which Smithfield employees live and work.

Smithfield’s support for—and collaboration with—AAD serves as a timely example of a successful community partnership. This year, collaboration has been more paramount than ever before in bringing equity to education. Despite the many challenges that 2020 brought, Smithfield Foods and AAD continue to share the belief that education can truly transform communities, and providing opportunities for students allows them to succeed in school and life. In 2021 and beyond, AAD and Smithfield look forward to offering students even more moments to learn and grow.
Community Leaders Speak with Dreamers about Hard Work and Success

Classes may be virtual, but that doesn’t stop community friends from meeting Dreamers! Throughout the school year, community leaders have taken the time to meet our Dreamers on Zoom to discuss their career fields and what it takes to be successful. Check out some of our virtual guest speakers and what they taught our Dreamers!

Mr. Russell Burke, a marine biologist with Christopher Newport University, virtually visited Ms. Shannon Payne’s marine biology class and had a great chat with Dreamers about the importance of marine conservation and preserving oyster reefs. Dreamers really got out of their shells and asked some great questions about what it takes to be a marine biologist and how they can get involved with local conservation!

Not only did Smithfield Foods sponsor the 28th Annual Tennis Ball, but it also virtually visited Dreamers as well. Ms. Jess Jones and AAD Class of ’16 alum Lashondra Walker met with Dreamers to discuss the importance of working hard, giving back to the community, and having fun!

Ms. Tess Baker with TowneBank came and spoke with sophomore and 6th-grade students at AAD Academy about what it takes to build a work ethic! Students learned about “developing an insane work ethic” and how to focus on their passions.

Ms. Stephanie Holvick, an RN Entrepreneur, virtually met with some Dreamers to talk about finding their passions and using their gifts to benefit those around them.

Jahzeel Mumford spent some time with the 7th and 8th grade Dreamers from AAD’s Middle and High School in Newport News and Lynnhaven Middle School in Virginia Beach. Dreamers had the opportunity to speak with the performing artist about staying focused on their dreams. Most recently seen on Netflix’s Voices of Fire, Mr. Mumford is no stranger to working hard and being passionate and encouraged our Dreamers to never give up on their dreams.

Dreamers for Change Task Force

Since announcing the Dreamers for Change Task Force in May 2020, a dedicated group of An Achievable Dream staff, alums and board members have met on an ongoing basis to address racial inequality in our communities. Coming from a diverse set of backgrounds and experiences themselves, the conversations in these meetings have been thought-provoking and courageous. One of the primary action items of the Task Force is to maintain honest and constructive conversations on a regular basis. Over the past few months, Task Force members have met and spoken with local leaders who bring their unique skill sets to AAD to provide a solid foundation for challenging conversations.

- Suzanne Pease, Certified Trauma Informed and Care Instructor—An AAD teacher at Lynnhaven Middle School, Pease joined the group to discuss the effects of trauma on children and communities.
- Dr. Alvean Lyons, Relationship Expert and Leadership Consultant—Dr. Lyons spoke to the group about the importance of having a “macro-why” and a “micro-why,” which she defined as “the reason you are doing this work.” Dr. Lyons encouraged Task Force members to focus on their “micro-whys” because big change stems from what is closest to you.
- Cynthia Butler, CEO and Founder of Courageous Conversations—Butler brought her years of experience to the group in a discussion about the RACI Model. Responsible, Accountable, Concerned, and Informed, this model helps identify and define roles and responsibilities within organizations.

Continue to follow Dreamers for Change on our website and social media.
What’s Happening at An Achievable Dream?

AAD high school student Victoria has been studying arthropods and created a 3D model to highlight what makes them unique. We think Victoria’s model is so good, it’s scary!

Artistic Zak Duff joined Ms. Payne’s Enrichment class to speak to Dreamers about being an artist. After a great chat, Mr. Duff drew a phoenix for the students! At the request of the students, this phoenix will live next to photos of her dog, Ludo, on the walls of Dr. Vreeland’s office.

It’s pretty sweet that these Dreamers had perfect attendance and made the honor roll! Dreamers and their families came by the Middle and High School to pick up certificates and cupcakes to celebrate their success.

Not only do Dreamers practice Speaking Green, the Garden Club at Seatack Elementary School also practices growing green! The Garden Club continues to take care of the plants so that the garden stays healthy and fresh. And Julien takes it even further: he’s practicing WEARING green too!

At the Movies!

Teachers at An Achievable Dream Academy hosted a virtual movie night! Students were able to pick up popcorn and snacks from the school and they all watched the movies together from their own homes! What a fun night!

AAD hosted a drive-in movie night for our Dreamers at Lynnhaven Middle School! Students and families enjoyed a screening of “The House with a Clock in its Walls,” with popcorn and hot cider. A canned food donation earned students bonus snacks!

Every year, AAD distributes some Thanksgiving staples to our families and communities. Thank you for all that you do, Dream Team!

Thank you to Schooner’s Grill, Howard Hanna Real Estate Services, and The Brake King for sponsoring this year’s An Achievable Dream Holiday Toy Drive. While the holiday season is about so much more than gifts, every toy donated helps make Dreamers’ spirits bright.

AAD hosted a Thankful Dinner drive-through for our faculties and staff across the AAD campuses! Our teachers go above and beyond for Dreamers every day, and we’re so grateful for all that they do. We love you, AAD teachers!
Thank you to our friends at Smithfield Foods for donating holiday hams! Several AAD families received holiday dinner baskets complete with ham, sides, and special snacks to share with their families and friends. At An Achievable Dream, we believe in making spirits bright and tummies full!

Thank you to our friends at AFP Hampton Roads for recognizing Dr. Vreeland and AAD as a Community Champion for 2020! We are proud to be able to serve children and families right here in our community, and we’re so grateful for all the support we receive along the way.

An Achievable Dream is committed to fighting food insecurity in every community. In order to stay committed to this fight, AAD staff assisted with Newport News Councilwoman Sharon P. Scott’s One City Food Drive!

We hope Dreamers at Seatack Elementary in Virginia Beach are enjoying the books they received from the holiday book drive! Happy reading, Dreamers!

This year, Highland Springs Elementary hosted a Winter Festival! Henrico Dreamers received holiday gifts and goodies to celebrate all their hard work throughout the semester.

Wendy Drucker (pictured here) and all of our friends at Drucker + Falk sponsored the annual Book Drive for Newport News Dreamers! Dreamers received reading-level appropriate books to take home and enjoy over the holiday break. Happy reading, Dreamers!

AAD senior, Tylicia, a participant in Christopher Newport University’s Community Captains program, was interviewed by local news station WAVY TV 10 and shared about her experience: "It expanded the horizon to see what college life is like, what classes are like, the average day for college students. It made me realize CNU is a good school and I got to learn more about what the school is actually about." Way to go, Tylicia!

Dominion Energy supported the holiday food baskets drive for Dreamers in Virginia Beach! Generous support from our partners like Dominion Energy makes it possible for us to continue ensuring Dreamer families in Virginia Beach have plenty of food this holiday season.
As we continue to navigate the changes and challenges of the pandemic, our students and their families need our support now more than ever. Needs vary widely from food, supplies, and academic support. An Achievable Dream needs the support of our friends and partners during this time as we continue to ensure that our students are safe, healthy, and equipped to succeed.

Here are 3 ways you can help AAD students and their families:

1. Give to our Annual Fund

Help keep AAD operating by supporting our annual fund. This will be a difficult season as many regular fundraising activities have been interrupted or halted altogether. We don’t know what recovery will look like yet, but we do know that nothing can stand in the way of providing our students with the education, resources, and opportunities they deserve!

2. Give to Food for Families fund

We are providing—and will continue to provide as long as necessary—food, school supplies, and hygiene items to our families. The cost of a two-week supply bag is $100. Please consider giving to support this effort! Just $100 can supply food and supplies for a family for two weeks.

3. Give to support college students

Help us support our college students as they navigate this stressful and unexpected change! We are providing food for our college students who are now at home after campus closures, as well as technology support and other supplies needed to complete their coursework.

Visit AchievableDream.org to help support our Dreamers through the challenges of COVID-19!