

HONORING

Dr. Stephanie Balmer

HARPETH HALL HEAD OF SCHOOL 2014-2018



*D*r. Stephanie Balmer, Harpeth Hall's sixth Head of School, arrived on the Harpeth Hall campus in July 2014 with her signature warmth, high energy, passion for all girls education, and visionary leadership. She inspired our students to achieve at the highest level, and she let them know that she valued each of them for their unique gifts and talents. Her eyes were always on the future as she led the community through a comprehensive strategic planning process that informs our work to this day. When the Harpeth Hall community lost our bright light on February 17, 2018, students, parents, faculty, alumnae, and Dr. Balmer's friends and colleagues

across the globe responded with heartfelt remembrances and generous gifts in her honor. In addition to gifts seeding future capital campaign initiatives and to the Annual Fund in her name, over 1,000 donors made gifts to the Stephanie Balmer Memorial Fund.

The Harpeth Hall School is especially pleased to announce the following tributes honoring Dr. Stephanie Balmer. Thanks to the kindness and generosity of memorial fund donors, Dr. Balmer's leadership will continue to have a positive impact on Harpeth Hall and on generations of young women.

- Stephanie Balmer Garden for Student Engagement
 - Stephanie Balmer Scholarship Fund
- Stephanie Balmer National Advisory Council (NAC) Grant
 - Stephanie Balmer Head of School Portrait

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STEPHANIE BALMER GARDEN FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Stephanie Balmer had a long and successful career in higher education and a heart for the education of young women that culminated in her headship at Harpeth Hall School. While serving as Vice President and Dean of Admissions at Dickinson College from 2008 to 2014, Dr. Balmer saw firsthand the impact that a working garden could have on a school community and was eager to realize that opportunity at Harpeth Hall.

In 2017, Upper School teacher Polly Linden and Middle School teacher Amy Emerson approached Dr. Balmer about a school garden, and she enthusiastically embraced their passion for this project. Dr. Balmer, teachers, and garden experts identified the ideal location for the garden across from the Dining Hall and next to Kirkman House. After researching other school gardens in the Southeast, in particular The Delta School in Arkansas, Dr. Balmer began to assemble resources in earnest to further the project. The scope extended beyond the planting of garden beds to the improvement of the east side of campus. Woodland plants and wildflowers would provide a beautiful natural outdoor space. "In all of our conversations with Stephanie, she always envisioned the garden as being a retreat for the girls. As such, our big dreams include ample growing space and outdoor classroom space, but also space that would feel more like quiet time away from the bustle of campus. The garden would be a wonderful place to dig and discuss, but also reflect" Emerson said. The vision for a more substantial teaching garden, combining function and beauty, evolved as the Stephanie Balmer Honor Committee explored lasting ways to remember her on campus. The committee secured the services of a landscape architect. Trustees, teachers, and several students joined in the design process. The Balmer family expressed wholehearted support for a beautiful,

educational, and living tribute. Growing support for the endeavor came from all facets of the Harpeth Hall community, and the Class of 2018 honored Dr. Balmer by gifting an arbor with a space for reflection. The 2017-18 Harpeth Hall Parents Association made a donation in her name directed to the garden. The Class of 2020 earmarked funds for a daffodil hillside, to be planted by the class alongside the garden.

Initial Impact: For the past few years, an early stage garden has become a part of the 5th grade science curriculum and Winterim classes. Students have designed beds, as well as grown and harvested vegetables that the school has served in the Dining Hall. Students have donated produce to and partnered with local charitable organizations such as the Nashville Food Project in support of their mission to alleviate hunger in our city.

In May 2020, the Board of Trustees unanimously approved the plans for the *Stephanie Balmer Garden for Student Engagement*. Located in the same space that Dr. Balmer worked with students and faculty to plan, this expanded school garden will promote student learning, interaction, connection, reflection, artistic endeavors, and a general curiosity about nature. Consistent with the school's commitment to sustainability, Harpeth Hall will better teach girls about the importance of caring for our environment and the critical role our land plays in our sustenance through this garden. As an example, wood from trees on campus that framed the initial beds in the garden will be preserved and reused in the new design.

Construction of the *Stephanie Balmer Garden for Student Engagement* is currently underway with an initial completion date expected in 2021. Realization of the entire future vision for the garden will occur over time.

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STEPHANIE BALMER SCHOLARSHIP FUND

During her tenure from 2014 to 2018 as Harpeth Hall's Head of School, Dr. Balmer led with enthusiasm and joy. A life-long learner, she exuded a bright and intellectual vitality that inspired all who knew her. She championed the education of girls and young women, valuing each student for her unique and authentic self. Dr. Balmer was deeply committed to innovative teaching, social and emotional wellness for students, and equity and inclusion. With a lead memorial gift from John and Stephanie Currey Ingram '82, the Board of Trustees established a scholarship fund in 2018 for girls demonstrating financial need to honor the legacy of Dr. Balmer's leadership and the values that she held dear.

Initial Impact: Beginning in the 2019-20 school year, the school was able to name the first Stephanie Balmer Scholar. This student will retain the Stephanie Balmer Scholar designation throughout her years at Harpeth Hall, and a new scholar will be named upon the first scholar's graduation.

**STEPHANIE BALMER
NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
(NAC) GRANT**

Alumnae leaders from around the country serving on Harpeth Hall's National Advisory Council in 2017-18 and 2018-19 united to establish the Stephanie Balmer National Advisory Council (NAC) Grant, under the leadership of NAC Co-Chairs Marcie Allen Van Mol '92 and Alison Smith '79, to be given annually by the school. In 2019, Derek and Marcie Allen Van Mol '92 made a commitment to permanently endow the grant, which is awarded each year to a junior for an internship or special study program during the summer before her senior year.

Dr. Balmer inspired our school community with her enthusiasm for learning and her confidence to step outside of her comfort zone. This program continues Dr. Balmer's legacy by supporting a student who wishes to expand her educational experience in preparation for college and her career and that reflects a bold pursuit of knowledge in a field of great interest to the student.

Initial Impact: Thanks to alumnae on the National Advisory Council, as well as members of the Class of 2019, six students have benefited from this program to date.

In 2018-19 three members of the Class of 2020 received grants to attend the following programs:

- University of Michigan Global Leadership and Social Change Academy
Amy Gilmore
- Georgetown One-Week Medical Academy
Mackenzie Higgins
- Abbey Road Summer Spanish Immersion Program in Barcelona, Spain
Sarah Parks

In 2019-20 three members of the Class of 2021 received grants to attend the following programs. *(Due to COVID-19, these awards made in December 2019 were either directed to online programs or deferred to 2021)*

- Public Policy Academy at Georgetown University
Janet Briggs
- Reach Cambridge Law in England
Tina Karamaghiaie
- Broadway Dance Center's Summer Intensive Program
Hannah King

“This program represented much of what Dr. Balmer's legacy does: leadership, global awareness, and a constant push to better our society. The world needs more female leaders, global citizens, and empowered women, and I gained skills this summer that have served me well and will continue to do so next year in college. Again, thank you for allowing me to participate in this opportunity, it has made me a better student and person.” — Amy Gilmore '20

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**Stephanie Balmer Portrait
Harpeth Hall Head of School 2014-2018**

The Board of Trustees commissioned renowned artist Michael Shane Neal to paint Dr. Balmer's portrait, which will be featured prominently at Harpeth Hall along with the portraits of former Heads of School.

“At Opening Convocation this past August (2016), we announced our all-school theme of sustainability.

In order to tackle a topic as complex as sustainability — spanning environmental, political, economic, and social spheres — we empowered our students and faculty to plan assemblies, to enhance curriculum, and to organize student learning activities around sustainability. We created a sustainability lending library, and we devoted most of the Fall and Spring Speaker Series to hearing from local leaders, writers, professors with sustainability expertise, including Paul Quinn College President, Dr. Michael Sorrell, who shared his strategic decision to convert his South Dallas historically black college's football field into a working, income-producing organic

farm! That's a bold move — and it has been extremely successful.

Our girls are taking a vital issue and not only asking 'Why?' but 'What if?' — two words that spark innovation. Our faculty and administration are always striving for Harpeth Hall to be a place where our students confidently ask 'What if?' — a place where bold ideas and innovative thinking are welcomed, celebrated, and supported.

Thank you for your gifts that spark innovation, plant the seeds of life-long learning, and enable our Harpeth Hall village to thrive. Your investment in our promising young women prepares them beautifully to lead confidently and to make their bold mark on our world.”

Excerpts from Dr. Stephanie Balmer's Head of School Remarks
at the Patrons of the Hall Dinner on May 10, 2017

The Harpeth Hall School, the Board of Trustees, and the Balmer family express deep gratitude for the outpouring of love and support as we seek to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Stephanie Balmer in significant and permanent ways within our school community.

“We are, and will always be, profoundly grateful for Dr. Stephanie Balmer, her multitude of immeasurable contributions, and her impact. The wonderful qualities that defined Stephanie — her vibrancy, warmth, intelligence, inner beauty, strength, compassion, and love — were a tremendous gift for us all to witness. During her tenure, Stephanie led our school with vigor and vision. She secured Harpeth Hall’s position as a nationally recognized innovator in girls’ education through practice and programs that enable each girl to reach her potential. She endeavored to prepare our students to thrive in college, career and life in a complex and changing world. She valued resilience, wellness and balance for girls and young women. Stephanie was a strategic, insightful thinker, an innovative, energetic leader, and a luminous, dynamic role model who inspired students, faculty, parents, trustees, friends and colleagues here and around the country.”

Emily Cate Tidwell '75, Board Chair, 2014-2018

Jane Berry Jacques '72, Board Chair, 2018-2022



With special thanks to the Stephanie Balmer Honor Committee:

Collins Weaver Hooper '88, Committee Chair

John Ingram, Trustee

Frank Majors, Trustee

Barry Stowe, Trustee

Emily Cate Tidwell '75, Board Chair 2014-2018

David Vandewater, Trustee

Ex Officio:

Amy Emerson, Middle School Teacher

Jess Hill, Head of School

Jane Berry Jacques '72, Board Chair 2018-2022

Polly Linden, Upper School Teacher

Susan Moll, Director of Advancement