



# THE PHOENIX ANNUAL

Issue 8

The Raleigh Charter High School Annual Newsletter

November 2017

## It's Not Magic.... It's Problem Solving.

At a recent charter school conference, I encountered an administrator from another school who wanted to know what we do to create the amazing educational environment at Raleigh Charter; an environment where students really thrive. The answer is straightforward: For 19 years, we have done thoughtful, hard work. I've heard folks say that what we do is magic. As I told my colleague, there are long hours of work and sweat holding up that magic. We have outstanding, passionate teachers who work very hard every day, keeping a relentless focus on learning and fulfilling our mission. Our success is built on the relationships that our teachers build with our students in classrooms every day. These teachers are the foundation of everything that we do, of everything that we have done for the last 19 years.

Our founders envisioned a school that not only delivered an excellent education to our students but also supported and respected teachers. Their model had to be sustainable. We began 19 years ago with 19 faculty members; 9 of them (47%) are still with us. They committed to Raleigh Charter High School because they believed in our mission, our students, and each other, and they have continued to provide an excellent education to over 1,900 students during the past 19 years.

A goal of Raleigh Charter High School has always been to compensate teachers better than local districts, but this part of the original vision has not yet been



**Collaborative problem solving is what we do every day.**

realized. Our School Board and our Foundation Board are committed to securing and committing adequate resources for improvements in teachers' salaries, benefits, and professional development. It is not only the right thing to do for our current faculty but is critical to the sustainability of our model. More than 50% of our current teachers will reach retirement age within the next ten years. We must be able to attract and retain the best teachers to continue to do the work behind the magic.

As you can imagine, given the current funding constraints in public education, supporting our teachers better is a tremendous challenge. But the Raleigh Charter community has always come together to solve problems and meet challenges. Collaborative problem solving is what we do every day. For the past two years, we have been studying options. As a result, our School Board and Foundation Board have launched a new

initiative to secure resources for our teachers –The Foundation Fund. It is specifically designed to support our teachers and classrooms. Our hope is that our alumni and their families will remember the teachers who touched their lives when they were our students and give to the Foundation Fund in their honor. (See pages 10 and 11 for information about how to do this.)

When our founders first began planning Raleigh Charter High School 20 years ago, none of our current students was even born. Those founders dreamed a dream for their students that we have made a reality over the last 19 years. We believe that it is incumbent upon all of us to do all that we can to continue to make that dream a reality for this generation – and for the next one. The Foundation Fund is the next step to continue the “magic.”

– Lisa Huddleston, Principal

# Learning A Systematic Approach to Problem-Solving

Jake Satisky sat down with Barbara Soloman to discuss her class, Systems Theory.

At times, describing a class can be easy. APUSH? You learn about US history, with a lot of reading and a big research paper. Constitutional Issues? You spend most of the year working on the We the People competition. But when it comes to Systems Theory? Ummmmmm....



In its simplest form Systems Theory is a senior-level class where we learn how to see issues from multiple perspectives. The class covers a broad range of topics and consists of a series of presentations and projects, including creating a business plan, participating in a debate, and writing two research papers. Barbara Soloman, one of Raleigh Charter's longstanding faculty members, teaches the class and thus describes its mission much more eloquently.

"Every problem facing both individuals and the community is a multidisciplinary problem, and if you look at it from a narrow perspective, through just one lens, you'll never see the whole picture. You'll never come to the best solutions and you will leave things out that turn out to be critical to the solution," she said. "If you train yourself to look at the big picture, you are more likely to arrive at viable solutions that will really work in your personal life and in the real world."

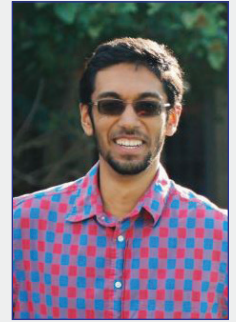
Ms. Soloman originally designed Systems Theory as a multidisciplinary, college-level course for her students at NC State. A few years after she began teaching here, she decided to offer the class to her high school students. Since its inception at Raleigh Charter, Systems Theory has become one of the school's most popular classes. Ms. Soloman said she loves that she has a whole year for the course because she can include all the projects that she could not fit into a semester at NC State. "If anything, in high school, I've made [the class] harder!" she says.

Many students have cited this class for the positive impact it made in their lives. For me, I know that Systems Theory helped me think more broadly, work more cooperatively in groups, present better, and analyze myself more thoroughly. I am grateful for having taken this unique class that only a school like Raleigh Charter could provide.

– Jake Satisky, Class of 2017

## Alumni reflect on their Systems Theory experience.

Systems Theory's power is not just in the problem-solving skills gained, but also in Ms. Soloman's acute awareness of each student's strengths, weaknesses, motivations, and personality.



I have been transformed by Ms. Soloman, but I am just one of many, many more who have had similarly powerful experiences with her class.

– Cheenu Tiwari, Class of 2015

Ms. Soloman's Systems Theory class provided a comprehensive and interdisciplinary way of exploring the world. We were able to take problems, issues, and topics into a new light to better understand why and how they exist, and why they are important. We came to understand how smaller systems fit into the bigger picture, and how those systems fit within an environment. In the class, we were exposed to multiple ways of exploring and presenting a problem through debates, mathematical modeling, brainstorming, extensive research, and presentations. However, Ms. Soloman's class was more than just objective exploration of topics. Ms. Soloman cared about our thoughts, opinions, and personal style as well.

– Alex & Anthony Kyu, Class of 2017



# Students Solving Community Problems



Each spring, Honors Civics and Economics students engage in a problem-solving activity through their research, analysis, and participation in workshops with experts about North Carolina public policy. Through this project, which stems from the Center for Civic Education's Project Citizen program, students conduct research in their community to analyze local policies, propose a solution that requires governmental action, provide a cost-benefit analysis of that solution, and identify which groups would oppose and support their solution. Students have researched issues regarding our state's marriage age, an economic terrorism bill, electronics

in landfills, compensation for eugenics victims and their families, and a memorial dedicated to victims of lynching in North Carolina. The students who worked on the memorial project last year were so passionate about the issue that they decided to join me in establishing a committee to continue the project. Together we formed the Freedom Struggle Committee and are now actively working toward implementing plans for a memorial in Raleigh. The committee has been meeting with county commissioners, community leaders, and student groups to gather information and generate support for our project.

***"It's been difficult to tackle this harsh topic of lynching, but we have learned it's important to come to terms with our history so we don't forget about the lives that were unjustly taken."***

*- Freedom Struggle Committee*

*- Melani Winter, History Teacher & Freedom Struggle Committee Advisor*



When I was in my last two years at Raleigh Charter, I had recently come out as a member of the LGBTQ community. I was really lucky to feel very supported by students and faculty, but around that time it became clear to me that trans students were not as well supported. After speaking with a trans classmate, Lane Rosen, the issue of providing access to bathrooms that did not misgender students became the top issue on the Queer Straight Alliance's agenda. We started

by presenting our idea within the student group and then began circulating a petition among the student body. We talked with the RCHS community about why this issue mattered to students. Finally, we met with the school's administrators who heard our arguments and reviewed our petition. Soon after, Raleigh Charter implemented single-user gender neutral bathrooms, which were to our knowledge the first in a public high school in North Carolina.

*- Alex DiLalla, Class of 2013*

# Parent-Powered Problem-Solving: Then & Now



***It seemed like magic that for every challenge or problem that came up, a solution was found and things moved forward.***

As parents of two children in the early years of Raleigh Charter, we heard the emphatic message that parents had to volunteer to make this charter school succeed. We answered the call by joining other committed families and teachers to set up classrooms, offices, labs, a drama room, and more in the historic Pilot Mill building.

One of the biggest challenges was gathering enough furniture so that students had desks and lab tables, teachers had book cases and white boards, and staff had office and work areas. We located surplus used desks from the Wake County School District that were already coated with a liberal amount of chewing gum. We found businesses that were upgrading and needed to dispose of still functional furniture – although much of it was not the prettiest furniture. Then the furniture had to be moved to the school.

Borrowing pickup trucks was nearly impossible. I was shopping around at the time for a new car and out of the blue a new Toyota Tundra tapped me on the shoulder and followed me home. Much of this furniture and other

donated items were hauled to the school by my trusty new Tundra pickup.

That first year included many weekend work parties cleaning up, repairing that seemingly good furniture, and even sweeping up after everyone stomped on the second story to get the dust out from between the cracks in the floor boards.

Raleigh Charter flourished and grew in reputation and academic excellence. It seemed like magic that for every challenge or problem that came up, a solution was found and things moved forward. It seemed like magic that things just kept falling into place. It was indeed magic. It was the magic created by the entire student body, the parents, and the RCHS staff and leadership who jointly worked together, hand in hand, week after week – and many weekends – to achieve what we consider the stuff of legends. It needed all of us, and we all stepped up to the task.

– Bob Zandt & Diana Monroe, Alumni Parents

***Thank you to our RCHS parents, past & present, for supporting our vision and believing in Raleigh Charter!***



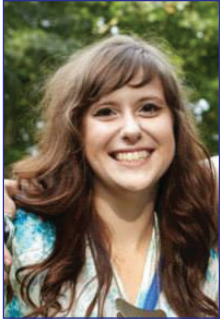
Mr. Hussey, Ms. Chalifoux, and Ms. Mann enjoying their upgraded seating.

Our dedicated, caring community of parents continues to support Raleigh Charter in many different ways by driving our students to activities on Community Work Days and Flex Days, providing lunches to fuel our faculty, keeping our kitchens and work rooms clean, and managing our cardboard recycling. These are just a few of the ways our parents generously share their time, energy, and resources to help out wherever and whenever they can.

Just this past fall, several parents answered the call when we asked for donated office chairs. We replaced several chairs that some of our teachers had been using since they were originally delivered to Pilot Mill in Mr. Zandt's truck.

– Margaret Barnett, Communications Specialist

# Alumni Problem-Solving at Work



I'm currently wrapping up a PhD in Child Psychology at the University of Minnesota, where my research focuses on infant brain development. As a scientist most of my waking hours are spent problem-solving. I work to answer big questions like "How do babies think about other people?" or "What brain circuits might be most vulnerable to preterm birth?" and

smaller matters like "How do I get this 3-month-old to sleep through an MRI?" or "Why is this spreadsheet suddenly empty?". More broadly, child development research aims to solve big picture problems about improving child health and well-being, and while we've made great progress there's much work left to do.

– Angela Fenoglio, Class of 2004



At SpaceX, we design, build, test, and fly some of the most advanced launch vehicle systems in the world. We are only successful because all of our teams, from engineering to operations, embraces a "first principles" approach to problem solving. This philosophy requires a problem statement that is not bound by current constraints, but

only bound by physical truths that are "known by nature." Do you think landing a 14-story tall rocket on a floating platform in the middle of the ocean from an altitude 75km above Earth while traveling at speeds greater than 2000 meters/second is impossible? So did every major aerospace company in the world. They were wrong, and within the next decade, reusable orbital launch vehicles aided by first principle problem solving will help propel humans farther into space than we've ever gone before.

– Dan Summers, Class of 2007



## CALLING ALL ALUMNI & ALUMNI PARENTS!

Please **update your contact information** with us so we can

- Send you alumni news and event invitations via email.
- Connect your skills & talents with volunteer opportunities at school.
- Keep you up-to-date with all things RCHS!

Visit [raleighcharterhs.org/alumni](http://raleighcharterhs.org/alumni) to update your record today. We want to hear from you! Email us anytime at [alumni@raleighcharterhs.org](mailto:alumni@raleighcharterhs.org).

## Join us for these upcoming alumni events!



### Alumni & Faculty Annual Winter Coffee

Tuesday, Jan. 2 at RCHS  
1:30 - 3:00 pm

Alumni are invited to join us for warm beverages, wintry treats, and some time to catch up with your fellow Forever Phoenix and RCHS faculty and staff!

### 10 Year Reunion RCHS ALUMNI Classes of 2007 & 2008

Saturday, Dec. 23 @ 7 PM  
Neuse River Brewing  
518 Pershing Road, Raleigh

Hosted by the '07 & '08 class leadership

Join the **Raleigh Charter High School Alumni** Facebook group or email [alumni@raleighcharterhs.org](mailto:alumni@raleighcharterhs.org) for more info.

# THANK YOU!

## Problem-Solving Together

During the 2016-2017 school year, our community of alumni, alumni parents, current parents, students, grandparents, friends, corporations, and foundations came together to raise **\$336,622**, exceeding our \$325,000 Phoenix Fund goal by \$11,622!



### Our **PHOENIX FUND** is *operational*.

It pays for today by supplementing low per-pupil funds.

With the extra \$11,622 raised, we were able to support our newest initiative – The Foundation Fund.

### Our **FOUNDATION FUND** is *aspirational*.

The Foundation Fund exists to support teachers and classrooms. As of June 2017, our community contributed \$72,384 to the Foundation Fund.

Learn more about The Phoenix Fund and The Foundation Fund on page 10 and 11.



From our students and faculty, **thank you to the following contributors for gifts received from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017.** Your support keeps our classes small, provides updated textbooks and other classroom resources, and ensures that we are able to attract, retain, and support our faculty.

## Phoenix Fund

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**THANK YOU**

*We are grateful to the many donors who contributed in support of our Drama, Athletics, We the People, and student assistance programs, donated iPads, and aided in our schoolwide LED light bulb replacement project.*



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Steven and Simone Horvitz  
Rashmi Mehta  
Steven and Lori Meyerhoffer  
Diana and Eric Parsons  
Anne and Dirk Steckmann

Deutsche Bank Americas  
Foundation  
Fidelity Foundation Matching Gifts  
to Education Program  
GlaxoSmithKline GIVE Program

## Foundation Fund

Anonymous (2)  
L. Boulkina and S. Tsynkov  
Jennifer Elam  
Santiago and  
Mary Michaels Estrada  
Matthew and Kathryn Gerber  
Thomas and Sally Humble  
Steven and Lori Meyerhoffer  
Greg and Angela Miller  
Patrick and Michelle Murray  
Eric and Diana Parsons  
Charles and Jodi Long  
Dirk and Anne Steckmann  
Alice and Christian Tate

BBVA Compass Bank  
Quintiles  
GlaxoSmithKline GIVE Program  
Intel Corporation



We make every effort to ensure that this listing of donors is accurate. Please contact Carolyn Jackson at [cjacksonraleighcharterhs.org](mailto:cjacksonraleighcharterhs.org) with corrections.

## Save the Date!

*Students, parents, alumni, alumni parents, family & friends are invited to celebrate 20 years of Raleigh Charter during the 2018-2019 school year!*

**20** Raleigh Charter High School  
**ANNIVERSARY & REUNION  
CELEBRATION WEEKEND**

**YEARS of RCHS  
1999-2019**

**Join us June 14-16, 2019 at Raleigh Charter**

# Will You Help Us Meet Our \$325,000 Goal?



Raleigh Charter High School  
**PHOENIX FUND**  
*Every family. Every year.*

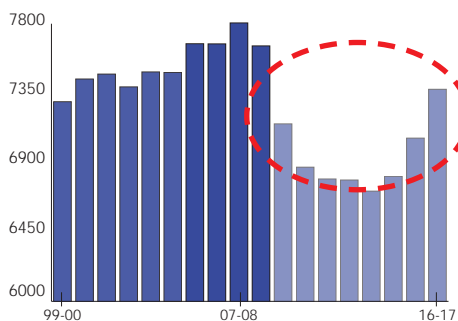
The Phoenix Fund is operational. It pays for today.

The Phoenix Fund is our annual fundraising appeal. Contributions are used to supplement limited per pupil funds. The Phoenix Fund supports **small class sizes, technology, textbooks, college counseling, community service, the arts, and much more.**

**When every family gives every year, we can reach our \$325,000 goal.**

## RCHS Per Pupil Funding History 1999-2017

(Adjusted for inflation in 2016 dollars)



As a line item in our budget, The Phoenix Fund continues to help us survive low state funding.

### Per Pupil Funding Comparison

National Average

**\$12,200\***

NC Average

**\$9,100\***

Raleigh Charter High School

**\$7,400\***



**\$6,400**  
remaining per student

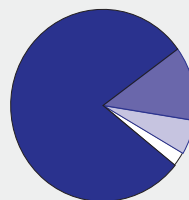
\*Approximate state & local funding 2016-2017. Source: NEA Rankings and Estimates Report 2017.

### RCHS Economics

Unlike county schools, charter schools do not receive lottery funds or building funds. When Wake county residents vote for a school bond, none of the bond money goes to charter schools.

Our facility costs for 2016-17 were \$1,000 per student, leaving just \$6,400 per student in state and county funding for everything else.

Our Budget (2017-2018)  
**\$4,855,692**



- 79% Compensation
- 13% Building & Facilities
- 5% Office & Other
- 3% Instructional Resources

many  
**Ways**  
 to  
**Give**

To contribute to The Phoenix Fund, direct your payment to **Raleigh Charter High School.**

Fill out a **Blue Card** or go online to [raleighcharterhs.org/giving](http://raleighcharterhs.org/giving)

Write a Check\*

Set Up Automatic Payments\*

Donate Stock

Give Online

Matching Gifts through your employer

Workplace Giving Campaigns (CFC, SECC, or United Way)

\*These methods incur no fees so RCHS will receive 100% of your donation!

# Can You Do More to Help Our School?

Raleigh Charter High School

# Foundation Fund

SUPPORTING TEACHERS & CLASSROOMS

**The Foundation Fund pays for the aspirations of tomorrow and secures the school for our future students.**

Contributions to The Foundation Fund will be used to steadily and sustainably increase compensation for our dedicated faculty so that RCHS salaries become competitive with the top Wake County salary scale. The Foundation Fund will also secure our classrooms by replenishing reserves used for major building maintenance.



## Did you know?

The average RCHS teacher salary is \$52,000 with a faculty that averages 16 years of classroom experience.

RCHS teachers make **12% less than those in the local district.\***

\* Due to the National Board Certification pay scale.

**Given that, RCHS teachers work every 9<sup>th</sup> year for FREE.**



We not only recognize the **high quality of education** that our children receive when attending RCHS, we value the **sense of community** that it creates as well as the **dedication and selflessness of the faculty**. Our children came away from their RCHS experience with a strong sense of self-worth, confidence, empathy, community, and life direction.

– Eric and Diana Parsons, current/alumni parents '11, '14, '18

To contribute to The Foundation Fund,  
direct your payment to  
**Raleigh Charter High School Foundation, Inc.**

Pledge forms are available online at  
[raleighcharterhs.org/giving/foundationfund.asp](http://raleighcharterhs.org/giving/foundationfund.asp)

Raleigh Charter High School and Raleigh Charter High School Foundation, Inc. are two separate 501(c)3 charitable organizations. Your gift is tax deductible to the full extent of the law.

To learn more  
about how you can  
support RCHS,  
please contact:

Carolyn Jackson  
Director of Development

919.715.1155

[cjackson@raleighcharterhs.org](mailto:cjackson@raleighcharterhs.org)

# RCHS EVENTS AT-A-GLANCE

- November 24 **Alumni & Alumni Parent Get Together**, Lynnwood Brewing Concern, 6:00 PM
- November 28 **#GIVINGTUESDAY** Help us kick off the season of giving by donating to RCHS
- Winter Concerts** **Band** (Nov. 30), **Choral** (Dec. 4), **Strings** (Dec. 11), William Peace University, 7:30 PM
- December 23 **10-Year Reunion for the Classes of 2007 & 2008**, Neuse River Brewing, 7:00 PM
- January 2 **Annual Alumni & Faculty Winter Coffee**, RCHS, 1:30-3:00 PM
- January 26 - February 26 **Application Period for 2018-2019 School Year**
- January 26 & February 1 **Informational Meetings for Prospective Families**, 5:30-7:30 pm
- February 15 **State of the School**, RCHS, 7:00-8:30 PM
- March 2-4, 8-10 **RCHS Drama presents *The Little Mermaid. Jr.***; Burning Coal Theatre
- March 9 & 16 **Flex Days**
- March 17 **Admissions Lottery for 2018-2019 School Year**, RCHS, 10:00 am
- April 20 **Spring Community Work Day**
- April 20 **SOOTS Cake Bake & Art Farm**, RCHS, 1:00-3:30 PM
- Spring Concerts** **Choral** (April 30), **Strings** (May 1), **Band** (May 3), William Peace University, 7:30 PM
- June 2 **Graduation**, Meymandi Concert Hall, 4:00 PM

SAVE THE DATE: **June 14-16, 2019** ♦ Raleigh Charter's **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary & Reunion Celebration**

Connect with RCHS!



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raleighcharterhs.org



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Raleigh Charter Alumni  
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