



(From left) Velma Estess, Harold Williams, Bill Burt, Judy Burt and Linda Ebbers

Grandparents discuss Brookhaven Academy, *Building on Tradition* Capital Campaign

Forty years ago, the foundation of Brookhaven Academy was not built with a plan to raise tuition prices each year, introduce new fees or undertake capital campaigns.

Parents and grandparents, both then and now, have shown unending generosity, both financially and through volunteerism.

Bill and Judy Burt, Linda Ebbers, Velma Estess and Harold Williams recently met with Brian Emory, Director of Development, to discuss the future of Brookhaven Academy. The group has a combined 14 children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren at BA, which includes some recent graduates.

A Christian school from the beginning, the group agreed that BA today reminds them of their public school education because of the family atmosphere feeling.

“Since I went to a small Lincoln county school, Judy Burt said, it does remind me of the family atmosphere we had there.” Ebbers added, “I remember that all the teachers knew everything about us then, like it is now at BA. It reminded me of when I was teaching in the public school in 1968. Teachers focused on the children more.” Williams, said with a chuckle, “I remember news getting home to my mom and dad before I could even get home, to give them my side of the story, you know.”

Stories like these are echoed by many in our community and that will never change because the core values of Brookhaven Academy will never change.

“I love hearing my grandchildren come over and talk about a Bible story they learned,” Ebbers said. “They receive a foundation in what’s really important early on at BA.”

While the Christian values will never change, the value of providing a college-ready education continues to rise each year.

“The only way we can know where we are is to hear stories from our children and others in the community about how prepared they are when they begin their freshman year in college,” Estess said. “I like hearing the stories of our students that leave the school prepared, because I know that my giving is used the right way.”

Proper stewardship of donor gifts has helped several areas of the school, but there are many classroom improvements coming with the capital campaign funds, namely in teaching tools and computer technology.

“Even though he had a good foundation to enter college, my son told us he was in shock after the first few days at Mississippi State because there were things he had never heard before from lab teachers,” Estess said. “If you believe in what is happening out here, if you believe in the teachers that are teaching your children, then please give to the campaign.”

Giving helps in ways that most BA patrons don’t realize.

“I feel like if people that are not BA parents anymore would give it would help with our financial aid,” Estess continued. I would like for them to understand its fine to say that we don’t have this program or that program, but we’re not going to get those programs if we don’t give. We as parents are the only income source keeping the doors open and if we want to see the academy stay a vital part of our community then we have to give.”

The board of trustees has had to make the tough call to raise tuition in consecutive years in order to make up for rising costs across the board.

“You are either going backwards or you’re moving forward in education,” Bill Burt said. “You can’t afford to stay the same place. Not everyone can give, so, if alumni, grandparents don’t give, we have to keep raising tuition. That’s not the answer.”