

# Educator Margaret G. Benedict, Ph.D. Leads Low Income Students to Higher Education Via The Matthew Gaffney Foundation



Stamford, CT – The upcoming National Higher Education Day, on June 6, 2023, will hold special significance for Margaret G. Benedict, Ph.D., the founder, and executive director of [The Matthew Gaffney Foundation](#). For the past 15 years Dr. Benedict has assisted 200 high achieving, economically disadvantaged students with securing scholarships and educational tools toward attending the most prestigious colleges and universities. Boasting a 99% graduation rate from institutions that include Harvard, Dartmouth and Princeton, the Gaffney foundation has successfully impacted society and the world at large, supporting underserved brilliant minds. Hoping to assist young graduates for many more years to come, Dr. Benedict is working to raise awareness for the Gaffney

Foundation to sustain the organization's continued longevity.

The Gaffney Foundation is in total alignment with [National Higher Education Day](#) which aims to prepare a path for more students toward a higher education degree. By implementing well-rounded protocols that start with identifying and prepping learners in their junior and senior year of high school, selected individuals are then provided with a series of foundational initiatives. These initiatives include SAT/ACT preparation; course advisement; college placement counseling and essay writing assistance; mentoring; supervised trips to campuses and amazing Outward Bound experiences. The resulting scholarship rewards are overwhelmingly life-changing for families who had considered college costs and attendance out of their financial reach.

The foundation targets 10 to 20 local high school juniors each year who are first generation, low-income and high-achieving, and provides free counseling services. The students' designated need is covered for tuition with grants and scholarships directly from the universities, allowing them to graduate debt free and continue educational pursuits or professional careers. Currently, the Foundation is working with 14 high school juniors providing college preparative guidance and support. Existing scholarship benefactors include 12 freshmen now enrolled in colleges and universities, 16 sophomores, 14 juniors and 16 seniors who will graduate soon.



Matthew Gaffney Foundation

"The national average for first-generation students is 14% graduation rate, leaving 86% who do not graduate. The Gaffney Foundation's 99% retention rate for well over a decade now is quite noteworthy," cites Dr. Benedict. "The lives I have personally seen changed, the young adults who have evolved into young professionals, with skills that positively influence communities and society at large, is nothing short of miraculous! It's been said it takes a village to raise a child, and the Gaffney Foundation is indeed a powerful village!"

Dr. Benedict is affectionately called “Dr. B” by her students. A ‘financial fairy godmother’ of sorts, she takes an individual interest in each adolescent and advocates fiercely as their liaison with the colleges and universities, making sure no stone goes unturned when uncovering financial aid.

“The Gaffney Foundation would love to do even more. We have several family foundations that contribute to our effort, as well as private donors, but we need outreach to large corporations and celebrity sponsors. In fact, it was assistance from Karen Wilder and her legendary comedian/ actor husband Gene Wilder that initially helped to solidify us,” notes Dr. Benedict. “The stories behind each scholarship are so compelling. One of our students, who was recently awarded over \$87,000 a year for school, comes from a single-parent home with a mom who cleans houses for a living. Imagine the joy her mother must feel knowing her dream for her daughter has come true!” cites Dr. Benedict.

The foundation is creating tangible generational legacies with their consistent commitment. For instance, in 2019, three new Gaffney Fellow recipients also had siblings who were former Gaffney Fellows. Adriana is graduating from The University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing and her sister Erica graduated from the University of Virginia in 2011 with a degree in civil engineering. Dayanara is graduating from Dartmouth and her sister, Hillary, graduated in 2018 from the University of Richmond and has also received a master’s in public health from Tufts University. Another recipient, Jeffery is graduating from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. His sister Nicole graduated with dual degrees from Bates and Columbia University and is a financial engineer at Natixis.

Dr. Matthew Gaffney, who the foundation is named for, was a renowned educator known for his commitment to educational excellence, innovation, and diversity. A graduate of Hobart College and the University of Buffalo, Dr. Gaffney spent much of his career leading some of the best public-school systems in New York and Pennsylvania as Superintendent. His work insured equal quality education for all. Following his

successful public-school career, Dr. Gaffney was a professor in educational law at Lehigh University. It was Dr. Gaffney's remarkable career that inspired his daughter, Margaret G. Benedict, to establish the Matthew Gaffney Foundation.

Margaret G. Benedict, Ph.D., is a professional educator who has spent over twenty years working with students at the secondary school and university levels. Holding a Ph.D. in 16th-century English literature from Lehigh University, Dr. Benedict has taught college-level English at several universities. Her work has been published in many professional journals and she has presented papers at numerous international symposiums. She is a Professional Member of IECA (Independent Educational Consultants Association) and a Member of NACAC (National Association for College Admission Counseling).

In addition to much-needed educational and financial support, The Gaffney Foundation lifts students' sense of hope and well beingness, encouraging them to aspire to top institutions of higher education while instilling optimism in their ability to secure their future. In a world riddled with ongoing despair, the foundation, led by Margaret G. Benedict, Ph.D., is a wonderful guiding light of optimism.

For more information and to support The Matthew Gaffney Foundation's efforts, go to <https://www.gaffneyfoundation.com> .

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