



# LEGACY LEDGER

THE OFFICIAL MONTHLY E-NEWSLETTER OF LEGACY NAFC ALUMNI



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*A Message from the NAFC Education Foundation  
Alumni Coordinator, Sherri McKeen*

As February winds down, we're feeling inspired by the love and generosity that define this community. We just wrapped up our annual **Education Celebration! Gala**, celebrating two decades of impact on our students, teachers, and schools. This month's alumni spotlight features two incredible graduates who embody compassion in action—spreading love through recovery, support, and care for others. Their stories are a powerful reminder that when we lift others up, we all rise together.

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# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

*Amanda Beam, Guest Contributor*

February celebrates love.

So do this month's two NAFCS graduates.

Through their work, both bring much-needed compassion to our community. Their support uplifts others going through difficult circumstances, while finding joy even in the darkest of times.

As a palliative nursing assistant, **Ronyale Rankin (NAHS '08)** cares for those who are in their last few months of life. Her focus on preserving dignity and ensuring comfort brings peace to some of society's most vulnerable.

**Lauren Benningfield (FCHS '09)** knows firsthand the destruction substance use disorder can cause. Now sober for five years, she helps others overcome their addictions and lead happier, more meaningful lives.

Ronyale and Lauren's love of others goes far beyond February, helping to make the world a better place one caring act at a time.

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## **Lauren (Saylor) Benningfield (FCHS '09): Showing recovery is possible**

When Lauren Benningfield signed up for the annual camping trip organized by The Breakaway Recovery Home, she didn't expect to encounter the sacred.

And yet, while coasting in her canoe during the outing, a quiet moment on the water brought just that and more. As the 2009 Floyd Central graduate gazed toward the sky, she noticed sunlight filtering through the leaves. An awareness overcame her, one that assured her everything would be alright.

"I felt this sense, and I was like, 'You're going to be okay. You're where you're supposed to be.' I knew everything was going to work," Lauren said. "That was my first spiritual experience that I had when I started my recovery journey. And that's something I've held on to."



On December 20, 2024, Lauren celebrated her fifth year of sobriety. In that half-decade, through her work as a certified addiction peer recovery coach, the 34-year-old has empowered countless others in their substance use recoveries.

“If someone would have sat down with me that's been through the same things, I think it would have been a little bit different for me, and I think I would have listened a little better,” Lauren said. “So, to sit down with these girls that have gone through the same things I have, I can look at it from the same point of view.”

Her own descent into drug dependence began shortly after high school. She started with opioids but a change in their formula led to severe withdrawals. Heroin, she found, relieved these, though its use came at a high cost. Lauren’s life began to shatter, first with arrests, then, convictions. Her addiction eventually cost her custody of her son.

Sitting in Clark County Jail, contemplating her future, she knew she needed help. The first step was to stop using, which she did that cold December day. Upon her release, Lauren applied, and was accepted, to The Breakaway in New Albany. After successfully completing their months long program, she stayed at St. Elizabeth’s Home in New Albany. The nonprofit helped reunite her with her son.

“I didn't know if I could hold on enough until the miracle happened,” the mother of three said. “I'm really glad I did, and I just can't believe where I'm at today. I never thought like I would be where I am.”

Around the same time, Lauren began a romantic relationship with a longtime friend who worked in the recovery community. Not only did the couple create a beautiful baby girl and a loving marriage, but they also empowered others to overcome substance use disorder through the addiction recovery organization called Thrive.

Through Thrive, Lauren started working as a peer recovery coach at a transitional housing program in Corydon. Genesis House now employs her full-time in the same position.

“A halfway house is a recovery home you can go to, and it's a safe place where you can heal, and you can work through your trauma, your past,” Lauren said while noting the program’s emphasis on structure, accountability and responsibility. “It just helps you get back on your feet, or get on your feet if you've never been. It is a safe place for people to heal.”

The community has also started to notice her dedication. In September, Lauren boogied for The BreakAway’s ballroom dancing competition, raising thousands for her recovery house alma mater. The following month, she received Our Place’s Jamey Aebersold Spirit of the Red Ribbon award for her exemplary endeavors.

But through it all, maintaining her sobriety remains vital.

“What keeps me sober is my family and the love I have for myself today that I didn't have before,” Lauren said. “My job keeps me sober. My support system really keeps me sober. My higher power keeps me sober. And just seeing spiritual experiences in other people before they even realize it sometimes, that keeps me sober. I'm doing something, even if I just help one person.”

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# Ronyale (Grundy) Rankin (NA '08): Bringing comfort to the dying

Mother Theresa.

That's the nickname her mother gave to Ronyale Rankin, the child who always helped others even when inconvenient for herself.

Years later, the 2008 New Albany High School graduate discovered the legendary deeds of the Catholic saint and understood how she earned the moniker.

"I know no different because that's what I've seen," said Ronyale, crediting both her mother's caring personality and childhood church teachings for her altruistic path. "I like helping others. That's what you're supposed to do."

As a certified palliative nursing assistant with Hosparus Health Louisville, the mother of three attends to those nearing the end of their lives. This includes helping patients with their daily living needs such as bathing and eating, and monitoring their vital signs.

Yet her work goes beyond just medical necessities. Ronyale's caregiving allows her to become a friend and confidant to those living their last few months. She comforts her patients in ways as unique as each personality.

For some, that may mean just sitting by their bedside, listening and ensuring they know they are not alone. For others, she tries to fulfill their requests in the best way possible.

One such client wished to ride in his Cadillac a final time, and blast the radio like he did when he was younger. While his condition prevented him from an actual drive, Ronyale turned on old school music, and sat with him for an hour while he took in the sounds. Often, something so simple can make a person's day, she said.

"We all are going to die no matter what we do. We can't run away from it. So why not make the best of the situation? Why not look at it as a celebration?" Ronyale said. "If there are any last-minute things that you want to do and are able to do, let's make it happen. Let's make as many more memories that we can make. Let's take pictures. Let's be silly. Let's listen to music and dance and be goofy and just celebrate life."

Ronyale didn't always dream of entering the health care field. As a teenager, she aspired to become a Navy Aviator. Her plans changed when she gave birth to a son in her junior year of high school. Welcoming this beautiful baby into the world also invited new possibilities.

With a shift in her school schedule, the new mom ended up splitting her time between New Albany High School and the Reitz Learning Center. Shirley Rice, a counselor at the latter, connected Ronyale to Work One. The career services organization helped her explore different vocational options. Once she decided on the health care field, they also assisted the future CNA with training and job placement.

"Even though I had a baby, and it kind of slowed my plans down, I knew that he needed me, and he needed me to be successful," Ronyale said. "So, I hit the ground running. I had to succeed. I could not be a statistic. I had to do something with myself and with my life, because I had this baby counting on me."

Eighteen years later, Ronyale continues to advance in her field. In addition to her continued patient care, she has trained other CNAs. Just last year, Hosparus presented her with the Dr. Joe Rotella Compassion Award for her selfless service.

"This is what I'm supposed to do," Ronyale said. "My puzzle piece fits here. This is what I have been called to do, to love on people, take care of people and to make the best out of situations. That's what God has called me to do."



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# Education CELEBRATION

**2025 GALA**

HUBER'S PLANTATION HALL  
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 21ST

A Celebration of Impact,  
Innovation, and Inspiration

New Albany-Floyd County  
Education Foundation

## A Night to Remember: 2025 Education Celebration Raises Over \$200,000 for NAFC Schools

The NAFC Education Foundation's 14th annual **Education Celebration! Gala** was an evening filled with gratitude, generosity, and community spirit. The event brought together educators, alumni, business leaders, and supporters, all committed to making a lasting impact on our schools.

We are thrilled to share that—thanks to the unwavering support of our donors, sponsors, and attendees—we have once again surpassed **\$200,000 in funds raised** to support vital initiatives for NAFC students and teachers.

These funds directly support impactful programs such as:

- **Great Classroom Grants** – empowering teachers with resources to bring innovative ideas to life
- **Mental Health Grants** – providing students with the support they need to thrive
- **The Dolly Parton Imagination Library** – fostering early childhood literacy
- **Blessings in a Backpack** – ensuring students have food security over the weekends
- **Junior Achievement** – equipping students with financial literacy and career skills

### An Evening of Celebration and Support

Guests enjoyed an unforgettable evening featuring a lively auction, a delicious dinner, and incredible entertainment from the Juice Box Heroes. We also took a moment to reflect on 20 years of impact that the NAFC Education Foundation has had in our community.

### Relive the Night

We have shared a few photos from this amazing event on the [\*\*NAFC Education Foundation Facebook\*\*](#) page, and more will be coming soon. Stay tuned for additional highlights.

### Thank You for Your Support

We are incredibly grateful to each and every person who attended, donated, bid in our auctions, and helped make this night a success. Your generosity ensures that our teachers have the tools they need, our students have access to resources, and our schools continue to thrive.

From all of us at the **NAFC Education Foundation**, thank you for believing in the power of education.



# JOIN US ON FACEBOOK!

Stay updated on your Floyd County classmates, discover thrilling events in your NAFC school community, and learn firsthand about the NAFC Education Foundation by connecting with us at [facebook.com/LegacyNAFCAlumni](https://facebook.com/LegacyNAFCAlumni).

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The New Albany Floyd County Education Foundation is a not-for-profit organization that works in conjunction with NAFC Schools to provide privately funded supplemental resources and programs to students, teachers, and schools. Legacy NAFC is the official alumni support group of the NAFC Education Foundation and New Albany Floyd County Schools.

When alumni donate to the New Albany Floyd County Education Foundation, you are investing in the success of all NAFC students and educators. Alumni donors become Legacy NAFC members through an annual donation.

**Make your impact today and become a Legacy NAFC Alumni Member!**

For more information, contact Sherri McKeen at [smckeen@nafcs.org](mailto:smckeen@nafcs.org) or 812-542-2242 at the NAFC Education Foundation.

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[www.NAFCEdFoundation.org/alumni](http://www.NAFCEdFoundation.org/alumni)



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