



## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT...

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### **Buncie Hay Lanners, Executive Director, Arts Association in Newton County Newton High School Class of 1979**



For Buncie Lanners, the Newton County community means everything. She was born, raised, and educated in Covington. And when the time came, both her children, Jay and Sarah, were also raised and attended school in Newton County.

A proud graduate of Newton High School's class of 1979, Buncie Hay, as she was back then, was an honor graduate and co-president of the student body along with T.K. Adams, Jr. She was in Beta Club and chorus—and made the All-State Chorus, too. With her musical talent, she was selected to star as “Maria” in *The Sound of Music* during her senior year.

“I was definitely a Julie Andrews-want-to-be,” said Lanners, who, as a singer and co-president of the student body, was charged with leading the singing of the alma mater at every pep rally.

“My kids loved to kid me that I was one of the few people in high school and college who knew the alma mater,” she joked.

Interestingly, both her children ended up following in their mother's footsteps.

Jay, Newton High School class of 2007, and Sarah, Newton High School class of 2009, were also co-presidents of the student body and each was even the valedictorian of their graduating class. And they didn't stop there.

“They went on to graduate from my alma mater, Davidson College, in 2011 and 2013,” said Lanners, who actually chose to follow in her own grandfather's footsteps when she selected Davidson.

“It was known as the Ivy League of the South,” she noted. “Very challenging academic environment. Plus, it was a Presbyterian College, and I come from a long line of Presbyterian ministers.”

Thinking she might want to teach due to her love of Dr. Charles Risher’s history classes at Newton High, Lanners majored in history, but ultimately changed her career goal. While in college, Lanners participated in the Davidson College Chorale and Chamber Choir and attained some lofty accomplishments along the way—Phi Beta Kappa, Omicron Delta Kappa, and Magna cum Laude graduate.

According to Lanners, her success in college has much to do with the teachers and the education she received in Newton County Schools—from E.L. Ficquett Elementary, to Cousins Middle School, Sharp Middle School, and Newton High School.

“There were so, so many special teachers—from my first grade teacher, Mrs. Bobbie Banks, to my teachers in high school—Mrs. A (Lee Aldridge), Huanne Brown, Dr. Risher, Paula Travis, Mr. Honeycutt, chorus teachers, Susan Merritt and Pat Haymore—literally wonderful people. I could go on and on.”

To this day, she still remembers the lessons she learned in those college-level history classes Dr. Risher taught through DeKalb Tech, now Georgia State Perimeter.

“I remember his international relations class where we were all assigned a country and had to come to the table for peace talks,” said Lanners, adding, “Learning how to relate to all kinds of people and to strive for excellence was a foundation of my experience in the school system.”

And that experience helped Lanners not only in college but also in her career. After graduating from Davidson, Lanners moved to Atlanta and worked at AT&T and later BankSouth. When son Jay was just a toddler, Lanners and her husband, Jay Lanners, Sr., moved back to Covington—just ten days before the birth of daughter Sarah.

Moving back home to the community she loved also led to a career she adores—serving as the executive director of the Arts Association in Newton County, where she is in charge of the financial management, fundraising and development, program development, staff management, community relations, artistic direction, and marketing and communications of the \$850,000 nonprofit, which happens to be the largest non-profit in Newton County.

“Our organization presents big concerts including the Atlanta Symphony, musicals, ballets, etc., at Porter Performing Arts Center as well as all of the concerts on the square at lunch and in the evenings,” said Lanners. “We have a full range of Young Artists Programs, including Covington Regional Ballet School and Company, Newton County Youth Strings, Oxford Singers, Oxford Acting Company, Newton County Community Band, adult education opportunities and a full range of summer camp offerings.”

According to Lanners, her job is, “the perfect blend of business and the arts.”

She explained, “My business experience at AT&T and BankSouth right out of college was invaluable in making our business work. My artistic talent and appreciation for all of the arts instilled in me the passion for the work. The combination of these two aspects of my experience and background has worked to grow our business exponentially, yet also insure it is managed conservatively from a financial perspective.”

When asked her professional goals for the future, she said, “That is an interesting question for a 56-year-old!” She then added, “I believe that I will always be involved in the arts, fundraising for the causes that I believe in, and committed and interested in Davidson College, as well as in the Covington/Newton County area. My current professional goal is to keep growing the Arts Association to meet the needs externally of our community, and keep it growing internally to support these services with the appropriate structure and staff. Ultimately, I want to be able to leave it a very strong organization, ready for new leadership, when I retire.”

When that day comes, she will no doubt be looking for someone who exemplifies the same leadership traits she learned during her time in the Newton County School System.

“My public school experience was the foundation for the rest of my life in teaching me how to work for what I wanted, how to lead, but most importantly, how to respect diverse people and their gifts and interact with all kinds of people to build community.”

When asked if she would recommend the Newton County School System and Newton County to families with children considering a move here, she did not hesitate.

“Absolutely I would recommend our school system,” said Lanners. “I enthusiastically encourage people to join this wonderful community of committed and caring people, understanding that what you get out of something is equivalent to what you put into it. My years of being PTO President at Palmer Stone Elementary, school council president at Cousins and Newton High were so important in my kids’ education. Parental involvement is immeasurable in terms of impact on their children and their children’s classmates.”

Lanners and her husband, Jay, are residents of Oxford, Georgia. When not working at the Arts Association, working with other community organizations, or spending time with family and friends, Buncie Lanners, a long-time member of First Presbyterian Church, can be found enjoying a favorite hobby—exercising!

“I can be seen on my daily four-mile walk around and near the Covington Square, and I enjoy taking yoga twice a week at the Covington YMCA,” she said.

For Buncie Lanners, home is where the heart is and that is right here, in Newton County.

“Rearing children within a real community of deeply caring people is powerful; truly, here, ‘it takes a village to raise a child,’” she said. “How special to think that I was raised by this village and so, too, were my children.”

In addition to being supporter of her hometown community, Buncie Hay Lanners is a very proud Class of 1979 graduate of Newton High School! Go Rams!

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