



## ASHBROOK INDEPENDENT SCHOOL

*To Challenge and Nurture Academically Capable Students*

*From the Office of the Head of School, Dr. Christopher A. Schoberl*

### **Is it Monday Yet? 3/1/24**



### **Our Founders Didn't Merely "find" Ashbrook!**

Ashbrook School will celebrate Founders Day this year on Wednesday, March 20, as a way to honor David and Cecilia Gore, and many others, who played a pivotal role in the founding of our school. This celebration is not just about commemorating the past, but also about recognizing the values, vision, and efforts that went into creating our school and a way of encouraging others to pay forward the benefits they have received from being members of the Ashbrook community.

When I hear the word "founders," I realize how closely it resembles the past participle of the infinitive "to find" and I understand how this can be confusing to our students. Did the Gores simply "find" Ashbrook, and if so, that doesn't sound like such a big deal, right? In fact, it would be difficult to imagine a more passive role in the history of an institution than to simply "find" it already in existence and merely point to it, saying, "there it is." In yet another example of how our language can be both tricky and provide us with the tools we need to see past the trick, a closer examination of the history of "founder" presents us with a more favorable idea of people who are "founders," not merely "finders." Examined more closely, we discover that to be a founder is to create, as in the Latin *fundere* "to melt, mold, shape, or pour out," much like the activity one would expect to see if visiting a *foundry*.

In 1993, Dave and Cecilia Gore, our principle founders, set out to *break the mold* of schooling available in the area in an effort to meet the educational standards they sought for their two youngest children. They started by gathering a critical mass of like minded others who valued the idea of the school they envisioned, and the idea started to grow. Although momentum was building, it took several more years of looking for just the right spot to build, designing the perfect school to support the curriculum and teaching methods the Gores were looking to

develop, developing that curriculum, and then hiring the best possible staff to deliver it. Initially called the Independent School, we opened our doors in September 1997 on our current 12.5-acre site, chosen for its natural beauty, including many ash trees lining an adjacent brook... and "Ashbrook" was born. Over the years, Ashbrook has grown and evolved (actually graduating a handful of high schoolers in its early years), and last year we celebrated our silver anniversary and 25 years of educational excellence.

As we prepare to celebrate Founders Day 2024, I thought it would be important to offer this brief walk through history and to talk a bit about why we take the time to commemorate our founding, a date that coincides with David Gore's March 18th birthday.

First and foremost, we take the time to celebrate Founders Day to say thank you and to pay tribute to the founders' vision and hard work. It's an opportunity to acknowledge the sacrifices and contributions of those who had the courage, foresight, fortitude, and dedication to see the project through to the end and establish the school. Indeed, it is fitting that we celebrate Founders in March, which on our Character Education calendar is "integrity month" (defined by Ashbrook as striving to achieve consistency between what we say and what we do). And if you come to the Founders Day assembly you will be treated to a skit and lesson by the Student Council about this very idea.

Knowing where one comes from, whether as an individual person or as an institution, is an important way of acknowledging history as a critical part of establishing identity. In this way, Founders Day helps families, students, and staff understand the history of their school, which in turn contributes to a sense of identity and belonging. From this core knowledge, we are better able to appreciate our school's culture of inclusivity and kindness, and as a place that nurtures even as we challenge our students to grow past their comfort zones. All of this is intentional and grows from our founding values. So, when we celebrate our founders, we also celebrate their vision as deliberate and essential parts of who we are, and not as accidental or random occurrences, but as the result of thoughtful design. Knowing our school's origins is to know the values and ideals upon which it was built, and this instills a sense of pride and responsibility in the current school community to preserve these values and ideals.

Taking time to celebrate our founders also has an important educational component; we are, after all, an organization dedicated to learning. By reflecting on the achievements and challenges overcome by our founders in the past, students can find inspiration and motivation in their own educational journey, looking forward. This knowledge highlights the importance of vision, perseverance, and commitment, qualities that are valuable for personal development. As students encounter academic and personal challenges, they have in Dave and Cecilia Gore the personification of grit. When David and Cecilia are able to join us on campus for this special day, as they have faithfully done for many years, students get to see what people who "follow through" look like and, remarkably, they realize that they are just regular people, like they are, and not superhuman. Seeing themselves in our founders in this way helps our students to envision their own futures, futures in which they are able to persevere and bring transformative ideas to fruition, no matter how tough it may seem.

Finally, taking the time to celebrate our founders is a GREAT way to build community and, in so doing, to inspire others to join us. This is one of the few times over the course of the year that the whole school is assembled in one place (fire drills notwithstanding!) and THE only time when we sit for an all school photograph, stopping time for a moment and memorializing our common membership in this wonderful community. The stories we tell on this day and the events we program, work to strengthen connections among all those involved with our school, linking us to past, current, and future Explorers.

Founders' Day at Ashbrook School is much more than simply a date on the school calendar. It is a way for us to press pause and take an opportunity to honor the past, understand the present, and inspire those who will mold our future. It's a day that connects everyone in the school community to the rich heritage and ongoing journey of THEIR school, a story that continues to take shape, and in that respect, maybe we are all founders, in a way.