



Belmont Abbey
COLLEGE
*That in all things God
may be glorified*

For Immediate Release
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Belmont Abbey College Names Recipient of 2024 Benedict Leadership Award

Belmont, N.C. (February 26, 2024) – The Benedict Leadership Institute at Belmont Abbey College is pleased to recognize Robert Luddy as the recipient of the 2024 Benedict Leadership Award. This award highlights the achievements of individuals whose lives reflect the heroic leadership of St. Benedict.

Belmont Abbey College founded the Benedict Leadership Institute in 2016 to develop Catholic leaders and inspire them to transform society in light of their faith. Mr. Luddy is the seventh recipient of the Benedict Leadership Award, being recognized in part for his advocacy of education. He has established multiple schools with an emphasis on classical curriculum and character formation.

Robert Luddy has a unique business history beginning with his career as a graduate of LaSalle University and a U.S. Army veteran. His entrepreneurial eye recognized a demand in the marketplace and, with a \$1300 personal investment, he purchased a sheet metal shop in 1981, transforming it into CaptiveAire Systems, which is now the leading manufacturer of commercial kitchen ventilation systems in North America. From its humble beginnings, the business has grown steadily. Today, with over 45 years in business, CaptiveAire employs over 1600 individuals in over 100 sales offices, occupying six manufacturing facilities nationwide, with over 40 display centers, more than 55 service regions, a Research and Development Lab, and sales over \$600 million in 2021.

Mr. Luddy has maintained a single-minded focus on goal setting, constant improvement, and ongoing innovation, which made hiring the right team of people an essential component to the company's success. As Luddy has stated, "If you hire skilled people and you give them tough problems, they're going to solve them."

The same philosophies evident in Mr. Luddy's business practices earn him many accolades. CaptiveAire has been voted best in class overall in the ventilation systems category based on votes by industry kitchen equipment dealers, broadliners, consultants, and operators. CaptiveAire was also featured in Foodservice Equipment & Supplies Magazine and won best in class for Dealers, Operators, and Consultant Class in 2014. Innovation and entrepreneurial spirit have been the keys to success at CaptiveAire.

Mr. Luddy has received numerous awards beginning in 2006 with the Benemerenti Medal from Pope Benedict XVI for exemplary service to the Church and Community. In 2007 he received the Ludwig von Mises Entrepreneurship Award for "entrepreneurial success and devotion to the free-market ideal." In 2015 he earned the Civitas Audentia Award from the Civitas Institute in recognition of his business leadership as founder and president of CaptiveAire, and his civic leadership in establishing and supporting top-quality private and charter schools.

Mr. Luddy's intellectual, moral, and financial support have helped propel growth of entrepreneurship education. While running his growing and successful company, in 1998, Mr. Luddy established Franklin Academy, a Wake Forest public school that is now one of the largest and most successful charter schools in North Carolina. In 2001 he founded St. Thomas More Academy, a classical college preparatory middle and high school in Raleigh N.C. In 2007 Thales Academy was created as a network of private schools offering high-quality Pre-K – 12 education at an affordable tuition. The Luddy Schools are quickly growing, with over 8000 students enrolled and nearly 600 faculty and staff employed throughout North Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia. In 2022 the network expanded yet again to include Thales College, a classical college offering an affordable and accelerated undergraduate degree program.

Mr. Luddy is an avid supporter of entrepreneurs and the free-market system, evident in his 2018 published book *Entrepreneurial Life: The Path from Startup to Market Leader*, which details the story of CaptiveAire, highlighting his principles for entrepreneurial success. In 2023 he published a second book, *The Thales Way*, which chronicles the story and mission behind his schools. Prior to that he had been published numerous times in *U.S. News and World Report* as author of "How to Bring Back American Prosperity", "Government Regulation is Killing Economic Growth", "Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship are Learned Young" and "Let Oil and Gas Drive the Economy". Both the *News & Observer* and *Business Leaders* have published articles about Mr. Luddy's businesses and schools, highlighting his leadership and impact in the triad region.

Mr. Luddy is a widely sought-after public speaker, offered multiple addresses, conference keynotes, and commencement speeches.

He has two grown children and five grandchildren.

About Belmont Abbey College: Founded in 1876, Belmont Abbey College is a private, Catholic baccalaureate and liberal arts institution. Our mission is to educate students in the liberal arts and sciences so that in all things God may be glorified. Guided by the Catholic intellectual tradition and the Benedictine spirit of prayer and learning, we welcome a diverse body of students and provide them with an education that will enable them to lead lives of integrity, to succeed professionally, to become responsible citizens, and to be a blessing to themselves and to others. Our beautiful and historic campus is conveniently located just 10 miles west of Charlotte, N.C., and is currently home to more than 1500 students. For more information, visit <https://belmontabbeycollege.edu/>.

About Benedict Leadership Institute: The Institute was founded in 2016 by Belmont Abbey College to develop Catholic leaders and inspire them to transform society while remaining true to their faith. The Institute accomplishes this goal through publications, events and through the awarding of The Benedict Leadership Award, presented annually to an outstanding Catholic leader. For more information, please visit <https://benedictleadershipinstitute.org/>.