

Benjamin W. Thorndike to Receive Walker's Distinguished Community Leadership Award

16th Annual Lives in Bloom Gala Saturday, May 7, 2016



BOSTON — On Saturday, May 7, Walker, a non-profit leader in special education, behavioral health and residential treatment for children and families, will present Benjamin W.

Thorndike with the 2016 Distinguished Community Leadership Award. The Award will be presented to Thorndike, who has been Chair of the Walker Board of Directors for nearly a decade, during the 16th annual *Lives in Bloom* Gala. The Distinguished Community Leadership Award is presented annually to an individual, family or organization who has demonstrated, through words and deeds, a commitment to bettering the lives of children, youth and families. This year, Walker honors Benjamin W. Thorndike for his outstanding

advocacy, leadership, heartfelt philanthropy and unwavering support for the Walker community. To recognize the accomplishment and in honor of his commitment and service to Walker, the Board of Directors are naming the Walker School gymnasium as, *The Thorndike Family Gym*.

“I have been humbled to have been welcomed into the vibrant Walker community of dedicated professionals and generous friends who are committed to the work of teaching, caring, and building hope,” says Benjamin W. Thorndike, CFA, Principal at Mercer and Boston resident, “It has been a privilege to both support Walker and help position their cause for future success. I truly believe that Walker changes lives—it certainly has changed mine.”

A tireless advocate for the children and youth Walker serves, Thorndike and his family have been devoted supporters of Walker's mission for nearly 30 years. Throughout, Thorndike effectively utilized his global experience in fundraising, relationship management, team building and restructuring to spur Walker's growth and development. After years of generous support, he joined Walker's leadership in 2004, and a year later moved to the Board of Directors as Head of the Advancement Committee. In 2007, Thorndike was voted as Chair of the Walker Board of Directors.

“I am thrilled to present our dedicated Board Chair with this award honoring his steadfast and enduring service,” says Susan M. Getman, MSW, Walker's President and CEO. “A longtime supporter, Ben has made ‘giving back’ central to both his personal and professional life. Through his leadership, he has helped to change the lives of the children, teens, and families served by Walker programs who deserve a bright future filled with promise and hope.”

During his tenure as Chair of Walker's Board of Directors, Thorndike was instrumental in building a bridge between the organization's Needham and Watertown communities and programs. In recent years, Thorndike's leadership was critical to the development and completion of the Nancy C. Lincoln Center at Beacon High School on Walker's Watertown campus. In 2012, he worked to ensure a smooth transition as Walker's devoted CEO of 30 years, Dr. Richard W. Small, retired and then led Walker's Board of Directors as they hired the charitable organization's third President and CEO in Walker's history, Susan M. Getman, MSW. Under Thorndike's helm, the nonprofit established the Walker Trieschman Institute for Research and Training to strengthen professional development programs and promote emerging interventions. Most recently, Walker Community Counseling was launched to expand Walker's continuum of behavioral health services and offer community-based, outpatient therapy services to children, adolescents, adults and families. Implementing a vision of "Walker without Walls," the organization has grown from serving thousands of children and adolescents each year to impacting more than 20,000 children, teens, and families annually through a myriad of programs, outreach, trainings, and consultations throughout Greater Boston, the North and South Shore as well as in Central Massachusetts.

A lifelong athlete, in the mid-90s Thorndike took on Heartbreak Hill completing the Boston Marathon four years in a row. Sharing his passion, Thorndike coached many youth baseball and soccer teams in the town of Dover, and as an avid amateur photographer, he captured thousands of memories for his children and their teammates. Thorndike also brought his love of athletics to help support Walker as a co-chair of the *Fore the Children* Golf Tournament in 2007. It's this love of sports that led to the decision to dedicate *The Thorndike Family Gym* at The Walker School in his honor.

The goal of the *Lives in Bloom* Gala is to raise more than \$400,000 for the non-profit's academic and therapeutic programs that support children, teens, and families facing complex emotional, behavioral, and learning challenges. This year's Gala will highlight the Urgency of Permanency—Walker's core belief that every child deserves to live and grow up with a loving, lifelong family. Permanency weaves through all of Walker's programs to help a child or youth find their way to stronger family relationships, and when needed, help children with no family they can return to, prepare to join a new, permanent family to call their very own.

Ben Thorndike has spent more than 30 years in the asset management business, working in senior leadership roles for firms including Scudder, Wellington Management, Bain Capital and his current employer Mercer Investments. Thorndike is a proud graduate of Colby College where he currently serves on the Board of Overseers. He raised his three children, Jamie, Jake and Emily, in Dover MA. Thorndike and his wife Heidi (who raised her two sons, Andrew and Nicholas, in Concord MA) live in the center of Boston, where they roam every corner on foot and where he competes passionately on the doubles squash court at The University Club. When not in the city, Ben and Heidi can be found on the shores of Lake Winnepesaukee in New Hampshire, loving life with their five children and two high-spirited dogs.

Walker's *Lives in Bloom* Gala will be held on Saturday, May 7 from 6 p.m. to midnight at

The Renaissance Boston Waterfront Hotel. The black-tie celebration of Walker's mission is preceded by a VIP champagne reception. More than 500 guests will enjoy cocktails and canapés while perusing a magnificent silent auction. A spectacular live auction emceed by Billy Costa of KISS 108FM and NESN's Dining Playbook will be followed by a three-course gourmet dinner and dancing to the music of the renowned eight-piece horn band, Soul of Boston. Over the past 15 years, millions have been raised for Walker's programs through the event to make a difference in the lives of the children, teens, and families Walker serves. Individual tickets start at \$250. For more information, or to purchase tickets, visit: www.livesinbloom.org.

About Walker

Walker is a leading not-for-profit charitable organization providing intensive therapeutic and academic services for exceptionally vulnerable yet resilient children, teens, and families facing complex mental health, emotional, behavioral, and learning challenges. Founded in 1961, Walker's evidence-based programs positively impact nearly 20,000 children, teens, and families each year throughout Greater Boston, the North and South Shore as well as in Central Massachusetts. Walker provides services through campuses in Needham and Watertown, community-based clinical and youth development programs, professional seminars, consultations, and Walker staff embedded in public schools. For more information, visit walkercares.org or facebook.com/WalkerCares.

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