



THE **TORCH**

a Kalamazoo Christian Schools Publication

SUMMER 2022



Creation Caring

THE TORCH

The TORCH is published twice a year with the purpose of fostering strong ties between the school, alumni, and friends in support of Christian education. Published by Kalamazoo Christian School Association. Please inform the Association Office of address changes.

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MISSION

Kalamazoo Christian Schools: an academically excellent Christian community equipping, inspiring, and challenging students to love



**KALAMAZOO
CHRISTIAN
SCHOOLS**

Undeniably Christian. Academically Excellent.

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Welcome from Marc

Marc Verkaik,
Head of School

At our end-of-year professional development day, I led our staff through a reflection exercise that helped us think about the events of this past year. We took a few minutes in quiet solitude to process relationships with students, interactions with parents, and collaboration with colleagues. We used reflection as a powerful tool to help us think about what went well, what didn't and what changes we need to make. This exercise got me thinking about our recent graduates and reflecting upon their experiences at Kalamazoo Christian.

Many of our graduates have spent their entire PreK-12 education in our school and have been challenged to think about their faith journey and where the Lord has been working in their lives. Teachers have invested their time, energy and wisdom into them. We celebrate their achievements and look forward to hearing about the passions they pursue in their lives. As a school, we pray that the following verse becomes evident in their life.

Romans 12:2, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."

This verse challenges us to think about the role we play in God's world. As you read the pages of this Torch, I hope you can reflect upon the journey our graduates have gone through to reach this significant milestone in their lives. As our graduates go onto college, the workforce, the military, and trade school, I ask you to say a prayer for them in their journey to apply this verse so they can love and serve Christ in all that they do.

Blessings to you and your family,
Marc Verkaik





New Elementary Principal

Hello, Kalamazoo Christian families! My wife, Heather, and our one-year-old daughter, Emerson, look forward to joining the Kalamazoo Christian community as I move into the role of Elementary Principal. Although new to us, Kalamazoo Christian has ties running deep in the family. With my mother-in-law, Beth Brand, her parents, Anne and Albert Woltersom, and Anne’s parents, Gertrude and Henry Smith, all graduates of Kalamazoo Christian, the family ties go back decades to the days of Ebenezer Christian on John Street! God has certainly been faithful over the rich history of Kalamazoo Christian.

The field of Christian education is also something that runs in the family. I am one of three boys in my family, and all of us are serving roles in Christian education. One brother is a teacher and assistant principal, and my other brother is a middle school teacher. We attribute this to following in the footsteps of our mom, who has been an elementary/early childhood teacher for many years, currently a 2nd grade teacher at the Christian school which we all attended. When we gather together as a family, it’s quite normal for the conversation to veer into education related topics!

My roots are in Edgerton, MN, a small, rural Dutch community in Southwest Minnesota, where I went through Christian school during my K-12 years. From there, I attended Dordt University for my degree in Elementary Education and later completed my Master’s degree in School Leadership. Heather and I met at Dordt, getting married shortly after graduation. After my first teaching position at Pella Christian Grade School in Pella, IA, we moved to Michigan, where I held the role of Superintendent and MS/HS Principal at Traverse City Christian the last 5 years.

As we settle in, our family will be sure to find ourselves biking on the Kal-Haven trail, along with finding other trails and spaces to enjoy the beauty of the outdoors. Trips out to South Haven are also sure to be a frequent route for us. If you have outdoor places that are on the top of your list to enjoy, we would love to hear about them and enjoy them as well.

We look forward to connecting with many of you over the next few weeks and months ahead. When you pop in the 12th Street campus, please don’t hesitate to stop in and say “Hi”. I’d love to meet you and your family!

By Tyler Van Schepen



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Grandparents' Day

On May 13th, more than 500 grandparents joined us for our annual Grandparents' Day. Students sat in class, played games, and enjoyed the company of their friends and grandparents at both the High School and 12th Street campuses. This is always a special time for grandparents to experience the community where their grandchildren spend so much time and meet the staff and teachers. We love this day and are looking forward to next year!



K-Christian @ Heritage CRC

Due to increased demand, Kalamazoo Christian is excited to announce an extended day/pre-school program for 4s and Young 5s! We've hired an amazing teacher, Kristin Schneidenbach, and Kelly Visser will be her aide. This extended program will be held at Heritage Christian Reformed Church (less than half a mile from our campus). We have only a few spots left!

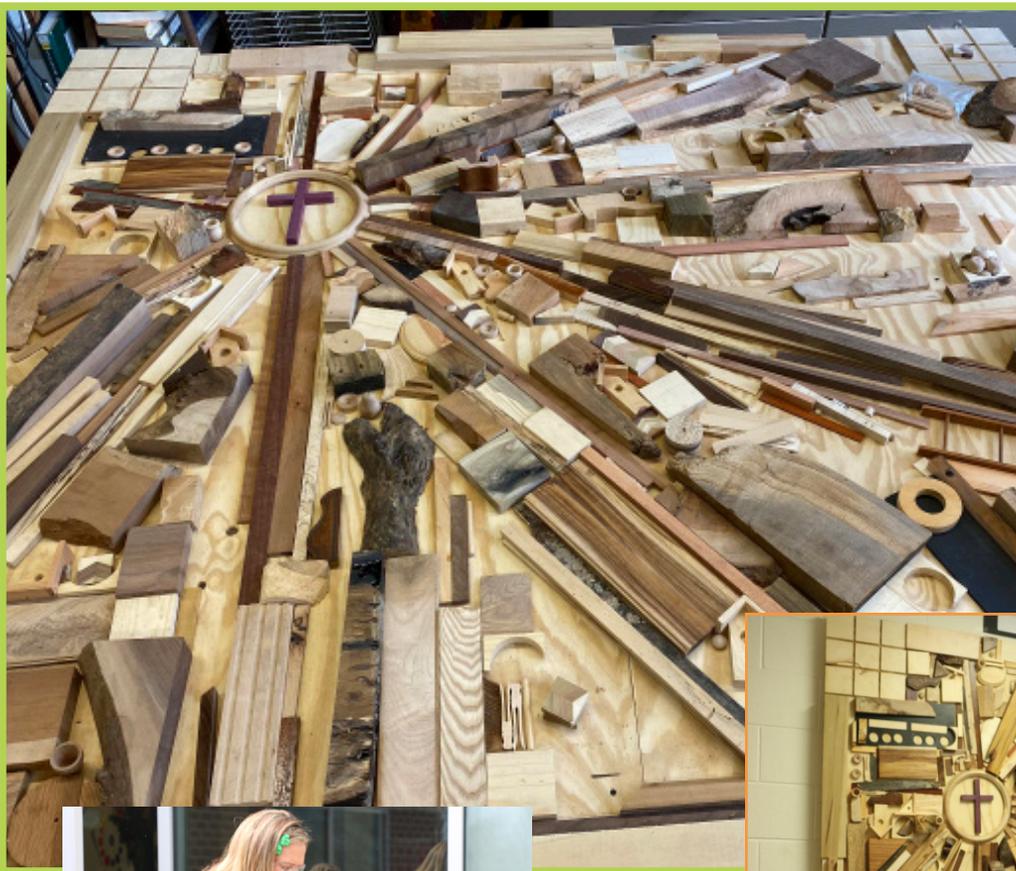


A Praying School

This Spring, the Art Club, led by Middle School Art Teacher Anne Brouwer and Elementary School Teacher Lori Gavan, embarked on creating a prayer wall. In 2013, some of our teachers at Kalamazoo Christian Schools were able to take a trip to Israel, and Anne Brouwer was one of those teachers.

During their time there, they got to see the Western Wall, which inspired them and left an impact. Mrs. Brouwer decided that she would love to implement a wall like this in our school at the 12 Street campus. The Spring Art Club met after school, and a group of 4th - 6th graders worked on this wall, which is a relief sculpture made of wood, or a wood assemblage. They spent time at the Kalamazoo Institute of Art for inspiration as well.

The prayer wall is placed in the hallway joining the elementary and middle school. There are already prayers on pieces of paper tucked into different parts of the wall. Stop by and place your own prayer in it!



“The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.” James 5:16 (ESV)



Salmon Release

On May 5th, our 6th grade students traveled to Shamrock Park in Berrien Springs to release the chinook salmon that they raised in science class. This is part of the DNR's Salmon in the Classroom program, which teaches students about our Great Lakes Fisheries. The students received the salmon eggs in November and cared for them over the course of the school year.

The tank did not sit empty after the salmon release. Our school was selected to participate in the DNR's SLIME (Sea Lamprey in Michigan Education) program, where participants of Salmon in the Classroom can host two adult Sea Lamprey upon completion of their salmon release. This invasive species was discussed in class during our ecology unit, and students had the opportunity to see them up close and personal as we finished up the year. We are so grateful for everything that we learned from these projects and for the opportunity to work with the DNR as stewards of God's awe-inspiring creation.

- Brooke Mulder, 6th Grade Science Teacher



Creation Caring

Our faithline theme for 2021-22 was Creation Caring. Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it." Since the world belongs to God, and He shares it with us, this school year, we explored many ways to be Creation Carers, focusing on how to enjoy, protect, and restore God's creation.

From Preschool to 12th grade, students had many opportunities to engage in our theme. This included big events like All School Chapel in the fall with groups of students stopping to sing "This is Our Father's World" and nature hikes. We held chapels at each building focused on this theme at age-appropriate levels. The high school held a picture scavenger hunt to seek out the beauty in God's Creation and had a "no plastic" month encouraging students not to use throw-away plastics. PreK-8 participated in a Creation Care Challenge in April and May focused on learning topics such as recycling, composting, and landfills. Most importantly, teachers took time to talk with students in their classrooms about Creation Care and the other faithline themes that connect to science, social studies, math, and literature stories, to weave the faithlines into the classroom experience.

We loved learning about God the Creator and our role as Creation Carers this year - we pray it continues to impact the way we live, as we look forward to our new faithline theme for next year, which is Image Reflecting!

- Meghan VanLente, Curriculum Coordinator & Instructional Coach



New STEM Program

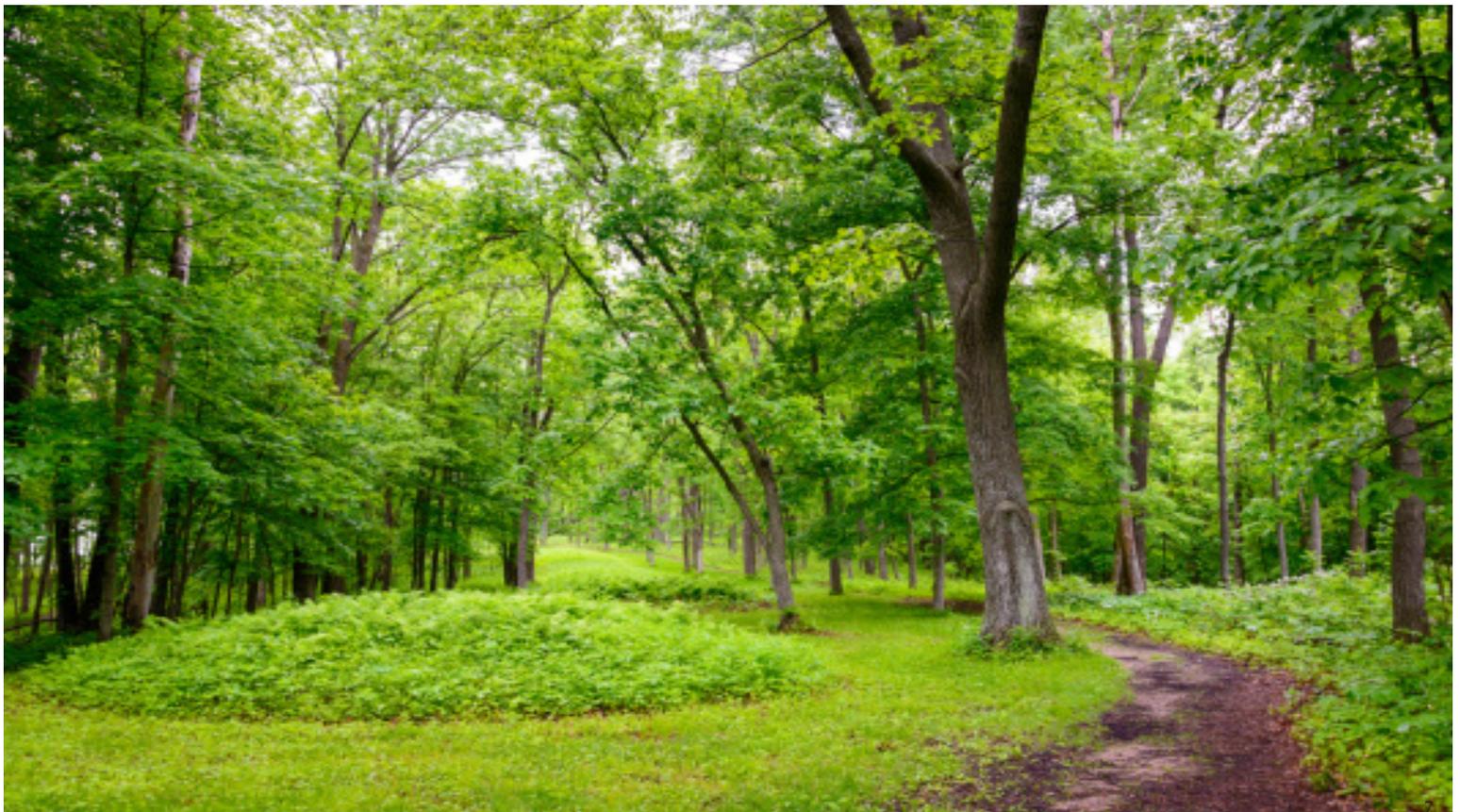
Remember the good old days? You would get home from school, hop on your bike, head over to a friend's house, and play outside until dark. Today's kids don't seem to have quite the same experiences though. Whether it's doing homework on a laptop, streaming movies and tv shows on their personal tablet, or playing video games online with friends, we seem to have fewer and fewer stories of students enjoying time in nature, unless you count the time spent in sports. So, how can we show children the incredible gift of the great outdoors?

Brand new for the 2022-2023 school year, KCS will offer a STEM (Science, Technology, Education, and Math) & Outdoor Education special for all K-8 graders. Inspired by our Creation Caring theme, the goal of this program is to engage students in learning outside of the walls of the traditional classroom through different outdoor experiences. Our school has been blessed with beautiful property where we can take advantage of lots of natural spaces. Growing gardens, taking care of animals, preserving and observing nature, recycling, composting, and getting "hands on" with science and social studies concepts are some of the learning experiences this program will bring to the 12th Street campus. In addition to learning opportunities on campus, we also plan to incorporate more nature-based learning experiences off campus.

While this program presents many exciting opportunities to spend time outside in nature, the reality is that the weather in Michigan is unpredictable at best. The STEM aspect of this program brings the concepts that students encounter into the classroom. By presenting them with different learning challenges, students develop and improve their teamwork, creative thinking, communication, collaboration skills, and critical thinking about the concepts learned from their classroom.

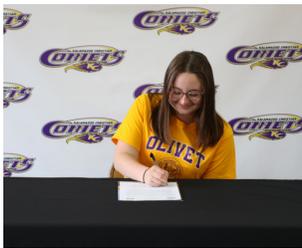
While many aspects of this program will morph and change over the next few years, the goal remains the same. We want kids to understand the beauty of the great outdoors: how to appreciate it, enjoy it, sustain it, and restore it. Hopefully the experiences and knowledge gained at school will inspire the next generation of outdoor lovers. Someday their own children will roll their eyes listening to stories about staying outside until dark.

- Chris Bierenga, STEM Teacher



Committed College Athletes

Brandon DeVries - Michigan Technological University - Football
Collin Durian - Carthage College - Football
Lauren Fox - Olivet Nazarene University - Golf
Faith Kline - Glen Oaks Community College - Softball & Golf
Madison Ling - Trinity Christian College - Soccer
Maegen Meldrum - Otterbein University - Softball
Ben Netz - Taylor University - Football
Reid Stilson - Sterling College - Football
Tess Van Dyk - Western Michigan University - Track & Field
Mikaela West - Asbury University - Tennis
Will Zuiderveen - Carthage College - Football



NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

Congratulations to Kalamazoo Christian senior Sara Bussey, who has been named a finalist in the National Merit Scholarship Competition. Sara qualified as a semi-finalist last fall based on her score on the PSAT (the entrance exam for the National Merit competition) and moved to the next stage of the competition, which required a qualifying score on the SAT, a substantial application, and a recommendation process. More than 1.5 million students take the PSAT each year, and Sara is one of only 15,000 students nationwide to be named a finalist. Approximately 7,500 Merit Scholarship winners will be selected from those 15,000 finalists.



ATHLETIC RECAP



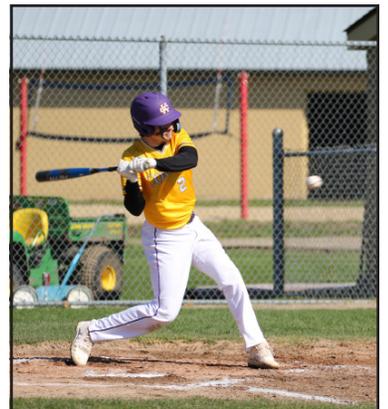
FINAL WINTER RECORDS

GIRLS FRESHMAN BASKETBALL: 7-3
GIRLS BOWLING: 4-4
BOYS BOWLING: 6-5-1
VARSITY BOYS BASKETBALL: 15-7
VARSITY GIRLS BASKETBALL: 17-5
JV GIRLS BASKETBALL: 15-2
JV BOYS BASKETBALL: 15-3
FRESHMAN BOYS BASKETBALL: 11-1



FINAL SPRING RECORDS

SOFTBALL: 23-19-1, DISTRICT AND REGIONAL CHAMPIONS
VARSITY BASEBALL: 20-13
VARSITY GIRLS SOCCER: 19-6
DISTRICT AND REGIONAL CHAMPIONS. STATE RUNNER-UP
JV GIRLS SOCCER: 8-4-1
VARSITY GIRLS TENNIS: 4-10-1
JV GIRLS TENNIS: 2-3
BOYS TRACK: 4-2, 3RD IN DIVISION. REGIONAL CHAMPIONS
GIRLS TRACK: 5-1, 2ND IN DIVISION
*TESS VAN DYK (22') - SHOTPUT STATE CHAMP.
DISCUS STATE RUNNER UP*
BOYS GOLF: SAC CHAMPIONS, STATE QUALIFIERS



Class of 2022 Congratulations!



Lydia Allabaugh
Cullam Antisdale
Madelaine Antisdale
Ellie Batts
Genna Baudoux
Samantha Bertrand
Isaac Bos
Ethan Bouma
Reagan Broekhuizen
Sara Bussey
Lynsey Cook
Willem de Jong
Elise DeKoekkoek
Brandon DeVries
Lucas Dommer
Collin Durian
Andrew Eaton
Alyssa Ebbeler
Abby Eshlaman
Lauren Fox
Aaron Graves
Nathan Hill
Elizabeth Hoeksema
Isaac Hoeksema
Alexa Hoogenboom
Ethan Johnson
Kylie Jonkman
Michael Keckler
Faith Kline
Anna LaLonde
Madison Ling
Matthew Lubben

Ryan Lubben
Jacob McClure
Maegen Meldrum
Samuel Meyers
Brandon Miller
Benjamin Netz
Lincoln Norris
Lilian Offringa
Xander Penny
Claire Pschigoda
Ricardo Rivera
Josie Russell
Allyson Schut
Emma Schut
Tucker Seelbinder
Elizabeth Seifert
Neve Skalla
Lucas Stecker
Morgan Steensma
Reid Stilson
Jordan Triemstra
Madison Triemstra
Maddy VanBeck
Theresa Van Dyk
Konraad VanDyke
Konraad VanDyke
Ashton VanSparrentak
Andrew Watson
Mikaela West
Graham Wheeler
Tyler Zichterman
William Zuiderveen



“But now thus says the Lord,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have re-
deemed you; I have called you
by name, you are mine. When
you pass through the waters, I
will be with you; and through
the rivers, they shall not over-
whelm you; when you walk
through fire you shall not be
burned, and the flame shall
not consume you. For I am
the Lord your God, the Holy
One of Israel, your Savior.”
Isaiah 43:1-3 (ESV)





KALAMAZOO CHRISTIAN SCHOOL FOUNDATION

On April 20 at the Kalamazoo Country Club, the Kalamazoo Christian School Foundation celebrated the addition of many new members to its 1877 Society! This gathering was the first since 2019, and we were thrilled to reconnect in person with many old friends. Foundation president Dave Cleveland provided a Foundation update and the Foundation’s vision for longer-term financial support for the Kalamazoo Christian Schools. Head of School Marc Verkaik offered highlights of the school year and noted the increase in enrollment over the past three years. High School Senior Regan Broekhuizen shared her personal experiences as a KCSA student. Good food and great company provided our outlook and anticipation for an even larger 2023 gathering!

- Dave Cleveland, Foundation Board President

2022 Retirements



JOANNE COOPER
20 YEARS



SUE VANHAMERSVELD
22 YEARS

Thank you!



OUR [♥] Kids 2022 AUCTION

for tuition assistance at Kalamazoo Christian Schools



What a fun night! 340 volunteers and supporters of Kalamazoo Christian Schools gathered on April 30 in the high school gym to bid on 250+ items. A special thanks to our major sponsors: Steensma Lawn & Power, Brian & Joyce Ackerman, Phyllis Schauer, Wenke Greenhouses, DeNooyer Ford, B DeVries Services, Docsa Capital Management, Farm Bureau Insurance - the West Agency, Kuipers Advisors, and Visser Construction.

Maggie’s Catering prepared a delicious buffet while The Mickeys played some toe tapping music during dinner. First time attendee and volunteer Emily Diederich said, “The event was incredible! It was an amazing night and our table had so much fun.”

The Buy-a-Line drawings started the live auction with cheers for the winners of a \$500 Migala Carpet gift card, an Oculus VR headset and more. A thrilling Heads or Tails Game ended with Marc Verkaik and Randy VanDyke facing off for a \$500 Speedway gift card. Marc (wearing his money suit) was victorious! Lorence Wenke won the Mystery Bag Game and a \$500 Speedway gift card. The \$5,000 tuition voucher was won by Seth ('99) and Vanessa ('97) Wassink drawn from 553 entries.

Tim Schauer ('83) remarked that “It was great to see a mix of new and current families and alumni who want to support our school. They were having fun bidding against each other!”

Thank you to the committee and all the volunteers who helped make this event such a success! \$88,985 went to the annual fund, \$8,000 went to the MS gym, and \$500 went to debt reduction.

Fast Facts:

- 14,088 donated items collected
- \$15,850 in cash donations were made by 25 sponsors & volunteers
- \$1,440 spent on 78 orders of banquet!
- 54 board/ally displayed/decorated/donated
- 40 K-8/Class Baskets created by 11 representatives (Thank you!)
- 31 MS/HS students volunteered with table help, kitchen help & with our down
- 21 staff members volunteered
- 77 parents volunteered



Nature Preschool Makes Syrup

This winter, both 3s and 4s nature preschool classes learned how to make maple syrup. Middle School teacher Mrs. Van Dyke helped the students put taps in the maple trees, and they spent all of March collecting sap. Students learned a little history about Michigan settlers who collected sap, and counted how many gallons of sap they collected each day. Did you know it takes 40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of maple syrup? The preschoolers know! After collecting enough, students boiled down the sap and had a pancake party to celebrate their hard work! Each child also took some home at the end of the year!

- Jennifer VanderMolen, Nature Preschool Teacher



MS Rec Sports

This school year brought an exciting addition to extracurricular sports at the middle school. Esports were added through a partnership with Kalamazoo Parks & Recreation and the WMU Esports program. The first programs held at the Esports Arena on East Campus included a fall team playing Super Smash Bros and a winter tournament playing Mario Kart.

The fall team for Kalamazoo Christian had 12 students and the winter tournament had six students. Seventh grader Ryley Berns competed in the Mario Kart tournament and ended his flight with an exciting sudden death playoff to win his 4th place trophy in the last seconds. Styled just like the online gaming tournaments with announcers, video play-by-play and interviews with the winners, K Christian players enjoyed this new experience. "I really liked playing Mario Kart in the tournament and winning my trophy was so cool!"

Ryley said.

The partnership between KCMS and KPR began back in the fall of 2002 with a golf league. A few years later we added a bowling league and then archery. The middle school has had a team for every year of these three leagues and has performed well. This past fall, the golf team won the league!

"I think it's important for our kids to feel like they are a part of something, and that they belong. Sports can provide that," MS Athletic Director, Kyle Mastenbrook said. "I am thankful for the work of our Parks and Rec Department and Pete Aerts (Event Coordinator) giving these different opportunities to so many of our kids."

- Mary Denison



THE ALUMNI connection

Alumni Babies & Weddings



Ruth Ford
1/31/2022
Natalie (Deering) '14 & Darren Ford



Oaklee Lin Lemmer
3/04/2022
Savannah (Block) '14 & Kyle Lemmer '14



Madison Jane Tomilo
5/12/2022
Melissa (Balkema) '15 & Evan Tomilo



Melissa (DeVries) '10 & Caleb Knol
6/11/2022



Rachel (Long) '17 & Ethan Davis
6/18/2022



Megan (Hoekstra) '17 & Brennan
Heidema '14 - 6/18/2022



We plan to recognize alumni who have passed in 2022 in the 2022 Winter Edition of the Torch. Please email alumni@kcsa.org with the name, birthdate, day of passing, and graduation year of your loved one.

Thank you



Capital Campaign Update & New Development Director

The Kalamazoo Christian Schools Association welcomes Scott Pease in the role of Development Director. Previously, Scott was the Donor Relations Specialist at Kalamazoo Gospel Ministries, and the General Manager at Taste of Heaven prior to that.

“Kalamazoo Christian Schools has had a significant impact on our family. From kindergarten to graduation, our kids and their friends are equipped to take a little more Jesus into the world. I’m looking forward to helping advance that legacy and to be part of ensuring impact for generations to come! I hope to meet and interact with you all! No, seriously!” says Scott.

All of Scott’s children have been through KCS at some point in their schooling, and he has served as the Comet basketball announcer for the past eight seasons. Some things that Scott loves include: baseball, exploring small towns in Michigan, waterways and tourist spots. Scott enjoys buying and selling two seat convertibles, car shows, and seeing movies in the theaters.

Scott is married to his wife Angie, and they have three children; Bonnie and Alex Fernandez with a baby on the way, Marissa Pease, Travis ‘18 and Aliyah (Lemmer) ‘17 Pease.

Scott will be working with donors, our capital campaign, fundraising events, KCS Foundation, and much more! Scott says, “I’m excited to connect donors, alumni, families, and the community more deeply to the mission, vision and legacy of KCSA!”





**KALAMAZOO
CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**

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Save The Date

HOMECOMING 2023

Friday, January 27

Alumni Festivities Start @ 4 pm

KCHS Gym

KALAMAZOO CHRISTIAN

COMETS

