

# THE TORCH

a Kalamazoo Christian Schools Publication  
WINTER ISSUE 2019



## Off to STATE!



Girls Soccer, Girls Softball  
and team members from  
Track all went to STATE!

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## Welcome from Marc

**A note from Marc Verkaik,  
Elementary Principal & Lead Administrator**

What an amazing start to our school year. It has been great to see our students walking the halls and our teachers shaping lives. I hope you enjoy viewing and reading the "new" Torch. This is our communication tool to share with you the great things happening in the lives of our students and how they are impacting our community for Christ.

First I want to give you an update on the Strategic Planning process. Last spring over 250 constituents helped us answer some questions about our Heritage, our Mission and our Vision for Kalamazoo Christian Schools. The School-Board and a number of committees have been meeting to

look through the data and develop a strategic plan for our future. The School-Board and committees have also looked at our Mission, Vision and Core Values. See pages 4-5 for more information.

Second, over the past two years the staff has been developing our Faithlines. Faithlines are the common threads to our students' education, the outcomes of daily interactions, and the yearly goals provided to our students. They are the Christian Practices we want to see our students carry through the rest of their lives. This year our Faithlines focus on the theme "Building Christ's Kingdom". We are intentional about

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## Inside This Issue



International Student Program - Why would you willingly open your home for a year to a stranger? Why take the risk?

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Two Kalamazoo Christian teachers received the Extra Yard for Teachers Award...

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Lou Holtz Speaks to 2,200+ at Miller Auditorium event. Guess how much was raised for Kalamazoo Christian Schools?

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**A continued note from Marc Verkaik,  
Elementary Principal & Lead Administrator**

helping our students understand what this means, providing opportunities for them to engage and to demonstrate understanding. Over the course of this year and the years ahead, you will see Faithlines become more prominent throughout our school and in the lives of your children.

## FAITHLINES

- |                    |                             |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| • God Glorifiers   | Glorificando a Dios         |
| • Kingdom Builders | Edificando el Reino         |
| • Image Reflectors | Reflejando Su Imagen        |
| • Justice Seekers  | Buscando Justicia           |
| • Beauty Creators  | Creando Belleza             |
| • Creation Carers  | Cuidando Su Creacion        |
| • Truth Pursuers   | Buscando la Verdad          |
| • Living Stewards  | Administrando lo que nos Da |
| • Faith Nurturers  | Cultivando la Fe            |

We are excited to partner with you during our 142nd year of Christian Education in the Kalamazoo Community. It is a blessing to have the community to nurture young people in the important role they play in Christ's Kingdom. Thank you for your faithful support of the work we are doing and the role we play in this community.

## HOW TO HOST AN EXCHANGE STUDENT



**by Sue VanHamersveld**

Are you thinking about hosting an international student? Here are some of the basic family requirements and some advice for making the experience a positive one for both your family and your international student.

### Host Family Requirements

- Bedroom and place to study
- Meals
- Transportation
- Church attendance
- A caring, family environment

### Host Family Advice

- Expect siblings to be, well siblings (sometimes they will disagree)
- Set basic ground rules (dinner together, chores, church attendance, etc.)
- Help with homesickness (do something together that shares their culture)
- Give him or her space (you don't need to entertain/engage them at all times)
- Make your student part of the family (include them in activities and chores)

Contact Sue VanHamersveld at (269) 381-2250 or [svanhamersveld@kcsa.org](mailto:svanhamersveld@kcsa.org) for more information on this rewarding program.



**Top Row: Liuxun Zhou, Billy Zhang, Leo Luo, Mike Ravn and Yue Wang  
Bottom Row: Joanna Li, Lucy Yu, Julie Li, Angela Ruiz and Sunny Huang**

## KCHS International Student Program by Sue VanHamersveld

Host Parents were recently asked "Why?" Why would you want to be a host parent? Why would you willingly open your home for a year to a stranger? Why take the risk? The answers varied, but all had a consistent, open theme. Teaching our kids how to show hospitality. Eating dinner together and laughing together. Showing God's love to someone. **Hebrews 13:2 says Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.**

International students do not remain strangers and they are not always angels! They are normal teenagers, just like your own teenagers. They are addicted to electronics; they like to be in their room with the door closed; they can be moody one minute and hilarious the next. However, host families highlight a common theme: a unique opportunity to show these students God's love and what that looks like in a Christian home. Openness. Open homes. Open hearts.

Sometimes host parents experience the joy of seeing a heart changed. They have the privilege of answering many questions about the Bible, who God is, and why we believe in Him. Not every international student will have a change of heart, but the seeds have been planted and every effort is worthwhile. The inspiring stories that host families share often highlight the developing faith in their 'extra family member'. Here is one of those stories.

Malia Verkaik (11th grade) shares about 'sister', Sunny Huang:

*When Sunny first came to live with us, I wasn't sure how I felt about it. I was used to our little family unit of five people and I enjoyed being the only girl. It wasn't uncomfortable having an extra person around, but it was different. I would say it took until the second semester to begin to feel like it was okay. The second year, I had none of those uncertain feelings from the first year. In fact, Sunny felt like my real sister. And that was a good feeling.*

*One of the non-negotiables for our family was that Sunny had to attend youth group and church with us. We also pray together as a family at meals and before bedtime, and Sunny has come to a point where she now prays for us and with us. Before Sunny came to us, she didn't even know what prayer was.*

*I enjoy the things we do together and I really enjoy having someone to talk to in the car when we drive around. My brothers are great, but they don't talk to me like a girl does!*



STUDENT	GRADE	HOME	FAMILY
Angela Ruiz	9th	Spain	Mike & Vanessa West
Leo Luo	11th	China	Tina Lei (aunt)
Lucy Yu	11th	China	Tina Lei (aunt)
Julie Li	12th	China	Dooley family
Joanna Li	12th	China	Jeff & Heather Offringa
Yue Wang	12th	China	Beryl Siegel
Liuxun Zhou	12th	China	Beryl Siegel
Mike Ravn	12th	Denmark	Krage & Marie Fox
Sunny Huang	12th	China	Marc & Lisa Verkaik
Billy Zhang	12th	China	Dael & Abbie Kurti

*Last summer our family traveled to China to meet Sunny's family. We stayed in their home and they were wonderful and kind to us. They showed us so many things, we ate the food they like, we learned so much about their culture. I learned that Chinese students have a choice of two main universities to attend. A college*

*degree from any other university has far less value. That is why so many students want to come to the United States to study because there are many more choices and opportunities here.*

*Having Sunny live with us opened up new opportunities for her. But that is only half of the story. It also opened up opportunities for me and my family that we would never have experienced if we didn't say yes to hosting an international student.*

Host families are recruited by KCHS and receive a monthly stipend. This stipend is paid to host families by the students and their families to help with the expenses of room and board. While host families pay for family activities, students buy their own clothes and cover their other personal expenses. If they go out with friends, the students pay their own way. Sometimes a student and host family will make a private agreement where no stipend is paid; however, this is a different arrangement than when we, as a school, recruit host families. Hosting an international student should never be a financial burden, and sometimes it can be an additional help to the family, as seen in this story.

Abbie Kurti's shares about 'son', Billy:

*In 2016 our family knew we needed to find an additional income source in order to help send our son to KCHS. In the past we had rented a room in our home to international graduate students at WMU, and we initially planned to do that again. However, when my husband went in to apply for financial aid, he was encouraged to consider the international program run through KCHS. At the time we didn't even know it existed, but we applied and were accepted. Since that time we have had the honor of hosting Billy, and it has also met our financial needs. Hosting a high school student is quite different than hosting a graduate student. It is actually much more rewarding. Our graduate students kept very odd hours and often were unable to join in family time. We have started referring to Billy as our 3/4 son. (since we have him about 9 months out of the year) This is our 3rd and final year with Billy, but we're thankful for what is sure to be a lifelong friendship.*

Painting a picture that highlights only the joys and benefits of hosting would be unrealistic. Hosting can be very difficult; sometimes families will struggle with their students and sometimes intervention is required. Some students change to a new home mid-year or go home before their year has ended. Sometimes they get homesick. Sometimes they won't talk or let you get to know them. While these circumstances are no one's fault, they can still be difficult and disappointing. Sometimes it just takes more time and patience! KCHS doesn't always get it right, but makes every effort to be supportive to families, to ensure a good placement and to make the relationships fulfilling.

As the director for international students, I am so grateful for my host parents. They are wonderful, giving people. If you are interested in hosting an international student, please let me know. I would love to sit down with you and talk about our program. Please pray for the students that they will adapt well to living here, that they will be able to learn the language, that they will do well in their host homes, and that ultimately they will come to know Jesus.



Mike Ravn with Marie, Charlie, Krage, and Lauren Fox



Billy Zhang with Dael and Abbie Kurti



Sunny Huang with Ethan, Lisa, Malia, Aaron Marc and Verkaik



The Verkaiks visit China to see Sunny's family.

# Strategic Planning

by Marc Verkaik, Elementary Principal & Lead Administrator and Angela Mitchell, Board President

Over the past year the Kalamazoo Christian School Board, Administration and other planning partners have been in the midst of developing a new Strategic Plan for the school to follow over the next 3-5 years. A new plan was needed, as most of the action steps and priorities established with the prior plan had been completed. Rather than linger in the sentiment and satisfaction of completion, your leaders resolved to continue positive movement and establish new priorities for the future.

Focus groups were assembled in February and March, 2019 to determine what a new plan would look like. These five town hall style meetings consisted of students, parents, grandparents, donors, administration, Association Board, Council members and other Kalamazoo Christian Schools constituents. All 250 participants were asked a series of questions:

**Hallmarks** What is special about these schools? What should never change? Why do you entrust your most precious possessions?

**Hopes** What are your dreams and aspirations for what the schools will be in future years?

**Handbrakes** What are the school's external constraints and internal inhibitors?

**Holes** What is missing from the schools experience? What are the obstacles to achieving hopes and maintaining hallmarks?

The meetings were very interactive and engaging, with a lot of energy and brainstorming throughout each hour and a half session. All of the comments and ideas from the brainstorming sessions were recorded and analyzed, and some common themes emerged. These common themes were then developed into priorities for the new Strategic Plan. The Association Board and Administration developed action steps for each newly established priority. The Association Board has now approved sections of the new Strategic Plan with **priorities in the areas of education, facilities, finance/development, governance and marketing**, with continued work being done on the priority of **diversity** before completion of the full Strategic Plan.

These important priorities for the future of Kalamazoo Christian Schools have been identified through continued communication with and participation by those who love, pray and care for our children and our schools. These priorities now give direction and focus for our leaders, teachers, planners and students.

A list of the priorities and action steps will soon be posted on the KCSA website, so stay tuned. Thank you to all who participated! Please join us in continued prayer that God works through the implementation of this plan to further bless our students and the future of Kalamazoo Christian Schools.

## Save the Date

### ANNUAL ASSOCIATION MEETING

Monday April 13, 2020

- Ratification of Board Members
- Presentation of 2020-21 Budget
- Discussion of Strategic Plan
- Mission, Vision and Core Values



If you are a current parent or a supporter who has donated \$50 or more in the last two years, you are a member of the association.



Newly revised and board approved value statements that are used to examine and guide all new things offered at Kalamazoo Christian.

## MISSION STATEMENT

Kalamazoo Christian Schools is an academically excellent Christian community equipping, inspiring and challenging students to love and serve Christ in the world.

## VISION STATEMENT

To be disciples who transform the world.

## MOTTO TAGLINE

Undeniably Christian / Academically Excellent

## CORE VALUES

- Christ-Centered Focus
- Academically Excellent Environment
- Biblical Worldview Instruction
- Christian Faculty & Staff
- Caring and Welcoming Community
- Educating Children of Christian Families

## Upcoming Events

### Friday, Dec. 20

Christmas Break begins with dismissal at 11:40 am (resumes Jan. 6th)

### Thursday, Jan. 9 @ 7:00 pm

8th Grade Play

### Friday, Jan. 17

School Carnival

### Saturday, Feb. 8 @ 5:30 pm

Father/Daughter Dance

### Thursday, Feb. 13 @ 6:30 pm

2nd-4th Grade Winter Program

### Thursday, Mar. 5 @ 7:00 pm

High School Musical Cinderella

### Friday, Mar. 6 @ 7:00 pm

High School Musical Cinderella

### Saturday, Mar. 7 @ 2:00 pm and 7:00 pm

High School Musical Cinderella

### Tuesday, May 12 @ 7:00 pm

Middle School Spring Concert

### Thursday, May 14 @ 6:30 pm

Grandparents' Program

### Friday, May 15 @ 9:00 am

Grandparents' Program



One of our evening Strategic Plan brainstorming sessions.

# Off to STATE

In the history of MHSAA, Kalamazoo Christian is only the 4th school to ever send girls softball and soccer to the STATE finals in the same year.



The team completed a service project at Bethany Christian Services.



## 2019 Softball Team by Tami Koning

While the ESPN highlight reel showed the devastating end to this team's season, those of us who followed this team have a much different highlight reel of memories. We remember a teammate encircled by her team, praying together and offering support after her mom was in a terrible accident. We remember team captains who were recognized by the media not only for softball, but for taking time away from softball to serve and learn in Africa. We remember a team that sprinted to right-center field to welcome a special fan who was watching from the car, many weeks after her accident. Our highlight reel captures the team gathering with that special fan after winning Regionals to commemorate with a photo!



Team captains take time away from softball to serve and learn in Africa.



Supporting each other during the big game.



Senior boys show their team spirit at both STATE girls events in their own unique and special way!

One special highlight had a lasting impact. On June 11, the day of their Quarterfinal game in Battle Creek, this team first completed a service project at Bethany Christian Services that touched lives! The girls spent time with the teachers and children in the Transitional Foster Care program. The team, teachers and children walked to a park, played kickball (which soon transitioned into soccer), played with the younger students on the playground and even joined with another school group at the park and taught them a thing or two about playing whiffle ball! The girls gave little gifts of encouragement for the teachers and staff, coloring books and toys for the students, but most of all...they gave themselves! The teachers are still enjoying their succulents, which brighten their desks and their days, and the students are still playing whiffle ball because the girls made it so much fun! This team made an impact by giving of themselves at a time when it would've been easier to just think of themselves.

This team will be remembered, not because of the way the season ended – something we still don't talk about in our house – but for the way they represented themselves, their families and their school community. They will be remembered for the way they supported one another and how they were the hands and feet of Jesus! Thanks for the memories Comet Softball 2019! You are true champions!





**ABOVE:** Coach provides motivational words of encouragement.

**BELOW:** Seniors and Coach pose for a photo.



## Girls Soccer Run by Andrea VanSparrentak

The third year in a row at State, the soccer team wanted the title more than anything; but unfortunately they fell short to Royal Oak Shrine 4:0. The title proved elusive to the seven graduating seniors, who were part of all three title runs, but being State runner-up is certainly a tremendous accomplishment.

Here is a review of the seven senior girls' KCHS soccer careers:

Ally Roberts didn't take the field her senior year, but she was always cheering for her teammates on the sidelines! Ally was a key midfielder her junior year, helping both offense and defense. Mikayla Tiesman and Phoebe Will were dynamite outside midfielders, sending key crosses in front of the net for many of the goals that were scored. Grace VanPopering, a defensive midfielder, suffered a knee injury requiring surgery, but she came back her senior year stronger and more confident. Forward, Emma Bertrand also came back from a knee surgery with strength and determination. With a great eye for the field, Emma was also amazing on header shots, winning the Regional Finals game with a header off a perfect corner kick. Kayla Beebe was one of the fastest forwards around, earning over 100 goals in her high school career. She went on to play for Calvin University this fall and scored 3 goals in her freshman season. On the defensive line, Elise VanSparrentak, earned the nickname "Stonewall"! Elise controlled the back line all 4 years, helping with the Comets' 15 shutouts in 2019.

Thank you girls for your years of leadership and outstanding play – you will be missed!



**ABOVE:** Before playing their STATE finals game, the softball team comes over to cheer on their girls soccer team!

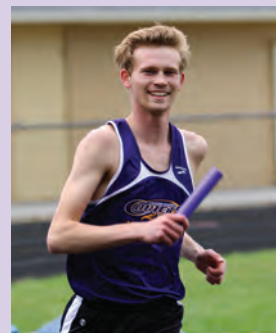
**BELOW:** Seniors pose together after regionals.



## D4 All State Track Strong Finish

**by Kim Hoogenboom and Joey DeKoekkoek**

On a June day filled with rain, hail, thunder and lightning, seven students from the Kalamazoo Christian Track Team spent a long time at the D4 All-State Track Meet in Hudsonville, MI. At the end of the day, Josh Hoogenboom placed 2nd in Shot and 4th in Disc and was named All-State! Anders Bogard placed 9th in the 800, Mikayla Tiesman placed 14th in 100 high hurdles, Lilly Offeringa placed 16th in the 3200. The boys 3200 relay team of Anders, Kyle Miedema, Evan Triemstra, and Nathen Koetje ran a great race and finished in 13th place. The boys team finished 17th in state while the girls tied for 49th. **This was the last year for head coach Joey DeKoekkoek. Help us thank him for his 19 years of service and dedication to our Track Athletes.**







## Salmon in Sixth Grade

by Brooke Mulder

On October 3rd, the 6th grade visited the Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery for a field trip to learn about the Salmon in the Classroom program and our Great Lakes Fisheries. The students heard a presentation by the Michigan DNR and toured the hatchery. Students observed the fish tagging process and touched a live Sea Lamprey as part of an invasive species presentation. They also completed a macroinvertebrate study to determine water quality and fed the trout in one of the show ponds!

During the month of October, the students prepared the salmon tank for the 150 Chinook salmon eggs, which arrived on November 12th from Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery. In early May we will release the salmon that we've raised so they can make their way out to Lake Michigan.

Each week, different students are in charge of checking on the fish and taking daily water quality samples. Through this project, students get an up close look at how a tiny egg develops into a 3-5 inch fingerling in a matter of months. This project lets students see the wonderful resources Michigan has to offer all while teaching them about God's precious gift of life!



Celebrating their big checks, Joel Netz, Kim Meyer, Lauren Manting, and Marc Verkaik got to be on the Bronco's field.

## Extra Yard for Teachers Award

Two Kalamazoo Christian teachers received the Extra Yard for Teachers Award, which is funded by the College Football Playoff (CFP) Foundation and administered through the Mid-American Conference. Every year the CFP Foundation, in partnership with colleges and universities across the nation, hosts an 8-day celebration that is dedicated to honoring and recognizing great teachers across the country. Kalamazoo Christian's preschool teacher Lauren Manting and middle school teacher Kim Meyer were two of four area teachers who received this award during the WMU vs. Georgia State football game on September 14.

**Lauren Manting** shares her memories of the on-field presentation as well her plans for how her class will use the \$1,250 grant funds:

*I had never been to a WMU football games before. It was fun to be on the field with the other teachers and administrators. The President of WMU was so excited for us, and was so kind thanking us for our work as teachers. We laughed about actually receiving the huge checks you always see on shows and movies. It was a fun event and I am grateful for the experience.*

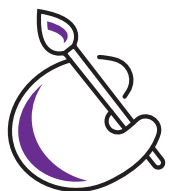
*We plan to use part of the grant award for a set of Muddy Buddies, an all-weather gear for preschoolers. We love taking our preschoolers outside to learn, play, and experience God's creation year round. Preschoolers find a lot of joy in running in the rain, jumping in puddles, digging for earthworms in the mud, and stomping around in the garden. Since the gear they wear to school is not always appropriate for these activities, we have refrained from some of these sensory, creative, and important experiences. My son's daycare used these Muddy Buddies, so I was inspired to find a set for our preschoolers. The grant is for more than what it would cost for a set of these rain suits, so now we are dreaming about what it might take to expand our preschool playground. We would love to create a natural "woody" play area with logs, stumps, and rocks. We also dream of including a small track for bicycles, scooters, and balance bikes. We know that this award will not cover all of these things, but it is fun to have a place to start and to begin to dream!*

**Kim Meyer** also received a \$1,250 grant check for her Extra Yard Teacher Award.

*As a science teacher, I have a lot of animals in my classroom. I would love to purchase a better incubator so that we will be able to hatch more chicks in the spring. I would also love to expand our animal and outdoor program by purchasing a chicken coop so that students can help us raise a few hens. The eggs these hens lay can be sold to buy their feed, making it self-sustaining.*

*As exciting as it was to be on the WMU field, it was just as much fun walking through the stands waving and talking to KCS families.*





## Sisters Paint Mural @ KCHS

Advanced Art students Kaylee and Alexis Klaassen (class of 2020) recently completed a mural in the hallway of the high school. The following is a conversation about the project:

### What inspired you to do this project?

Since our freshman year we have always wanted to paint the school wall and create a mural. We want to use our gifts and talents to glorify God and create beauty in His world, and we thought creating a mural in our own school hallway would be a great way to start!

### What does the mural represent?

The mural represents all of the different aspects of our school, from classes, to school clubs, to sports, to some of the spiritual aspects such as faith, prayer, and the Bible.

We made the mural out of 5 different sized circles. Each circle contains a symbol that represents one of the aspects of our school. The biggest circles contain the most important things like prayer, faith, and purpose. The medium circles contain things like family, friends, and community. The smaller sized circles contain things like chapel, Comet Cafe, and sports. The smallest circles contain symbols that represent the classes that K-Christian offers.

### Talk about some of your color and design choices.

We wanted to give our mural a modern and classy look. The circles are black, gray, and white to match our hallways, and we incorporated fun accent colors into the symbols.

### What kind of feedback have you received?

We have heard great things so far! Many of the teachers and students love to look at the symbols and guess what they represent, since we kept the symbols unnamed to spark imagination.

### Do you have plans to do any other murals this year?

The school has many more opportunities for murals, but we will have to see what God has planned for us next.



## National Merit Commended Scholar

Congratulations to Carley Broekhuizen, a KCHS senior whose scores on the PSAT/NMSQT test last fall have earned her recognition as a National Merit Commended Scholar. This designation means that Carley scored within the top 50,000 of the more than 1.6 million who took the PSAT across the nation, a truly impressive accomplishment. Carley is the daughter of Barry and Cindy Broekhuizen. Great job Carley!



## DAR Good Citizens Award

Congratulations to Claire Dirksen, Class of 2020. She is the recipient of the Daughters of the American Revolution Good Citizens Award. Claire was selected by the faculty for the following: Dependability (includes truthfulness, loyalty, and punctuality); Service (includes cooperation, courtesy, and consideration of others); Leadership (includes personality, self-control, and ability to assume responsibility); Patriotism (includes unselfish interest in family, school, community and nation). Claire is the daughter of James and Sarah Dirksen. Congratulations, Claire.



## Fundraiser Changes

by Vicki DeVries

Lots of changes are coming this year for some of the fundraising programs.

But the most significant change is that our long-time volunteers, Jerry and Andrea Vermeulen, are stepping down from helping with these vital fundraisers. Thank you Jerry and Andrea for over 30 years of volunteering with these programs!

As of June of 2019, we collected and sent in 10,441 box tops, which earned \$1,044.10 for our school! A big thank you to all of the faithful parents and grandparents who have collected and turned in labels over the years.

### SCHOOL SPIRIT

We are collecting School Spirit UPC labels from Aunt Millie's bread still.

### CAMPBELL'S & TYSON PROJECT A+

We will no longer collect Campbell's UPCs or Tyson Project A+ labels, as these companies have discontinued these fundraisers.

### COLLECTING METAL

We also no longer collect the metal pull tabs from pop and beer cans.

### BOX TOP\$

The biggest program change is coming to the BOX TOP\$ for EDUCATION program. Although the box tops will continue to appear on some products, they are being phased out and replaced with a new way to raise money for our school. Download the new **Box Tops app** to your smart phone and register under Kalamazoo Christian West Elementary ID# **587273**. Then scan your receipts within 14 days of purchase and you will see your earnings for the school right away. Please continue to cut the box tops that appear on products and drop them in a new bag in the 12th Street school office.

[www.boxtops4education.com/How%20To%20Earn](http://www.boxtops4education.com/How%20To%20Earn)



## NEW! Theater Lab Class By Aaron Potter

In place of the fall play performed the last few years, the high school is experimenting with a brand new theater lab class taught by Mr. Aaron Potter. This new class design gives students a taste of the many different areas involved in theater, including acting, directing, and the creating of sets and costumes.

The class has a more experimental and fun laboratory style that primarily uses activities, projects, and games to teach rather than lectures and notes. Tongue twisters ("Ninety nine nuns and a ninny in a nunnery"), improvisation, and theater games strengthen students' creativity, bodies, and voices. A common scene in class might include the students acting out a scene from a classic play, creating an improvised story one word at a time, or "sizzling" on the floor as they pretend to be bacon.

Other fun activities have included a class trip to see the delightful musical *Matilda* at the Civic Theatre downtown and an activity where the students adapted fairy tales into mini-musicals using popular songs. The students look forward to more upcoming activities: seeing a play at Calvin University and writing/producing their own play based on a children's book. In just the first quarter, this new class has already been a joy and a blessing, and hopefully it will continue to be so for years to come.

## Comet Time by Dirk Walhout



Kalamazoo Christian High School students have something new in their schedule this year. Comet Time takes place on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 25 minutes right after second period. This twice weekly time slot offers students an opportunity to receive any needed academic support, participate in additional spiritual growth opportunities, and engage in club activities or recreational pursuits. Every teacher sponsors a unique

Comet Time activity, and students then select their activities by signing up through a Comet Time app.

While the primary purpose of Comet Time is to provide opportunities for academic support and additional faith formation, other activity options are also available. Some examples of Comet Time activities include math tutoring, Bible study, college recruiter visits, lawn games, student council meetings, intramurals, etc. Comet Time provides an additional time and place for students to accomplish things, but also to engage in activities that don't fit into their regular class schedule.

Teachers can require students to sign up for certain Comet Time activities, such as a student council meeting or a conversation about academics. However, as a general rule, the students have freedom to decide what they would like to do. Comet Time allows teachers to step outside their established curriculum and bring some innovative and creative ideas that provide added benefit to the students and the school.



# Comet Dust

by Mark Hoogsteen '69

*On the Occasion of the Class of 1969's 50th Graduation Anniversary...*

If you and I had spent any time as students in the Kalamazoo Christian Schools, we knew what Comets were in the heavens. We knew that the High School mascot was, of all things, a Comet. Fast, directional and streaking were all good terms to describe the style of Comet Basketball. It also seemed to fit our style of Kalamazoo life. Not furious but not stopping either.

But, it seems, there was a lot more to being a Comet.

A comet, as you might know, is a small, rather insignificant body in the universe. It belongs to the universe but, it seems that it is another body that is not fully explained and certainly is not seen as a major entity. You see, comets are a mixture of water, odd and different minerals. Each one is different and yet somewhat the same.

Comets have a path that they take. Sometimes the path is regular and sometimes they seem to be passing through. They have a course but, they are seemingly independent. Yet they too have a purpose.

As a comet streaks along on its path, it sheds some "dust". This is visible in its "tail". What happens to the "dust"? It would seem that it spreads out and is just sort of left behind. That is not true.

Evidence suggests that comets leave a trail of dust that is caught up by other objects. Planets, moons, and other asteroids seem to "catch" some of this dust. We have little idea of how the dust affects these other entities, but we do know that any encounter will change the body just a little. The orbit or the path of these other bodies may be altered just a little as well.

Comets leave an effect. Did you notice that statement? Comets leave an effect. Kalamazoo Christian Comets leave an effect as well. Most of the time we do not really know how our dust affects other.

As you travel life, especially in the last 50 years, how have you affected others? Was the smile you gave to a stranger the first glint of hope that changed their life? Was the kind deed you were involved in doing, the first time someone cared? Did you give your last dollar to a person who had even less? Did you grumble and cause someone to feel bad? How did you try to raise your children or help your aged parents? How did you spread YOUR Comet dust?

I have had many good and a lot of trying experiences. I have not done as well as I should have done. I try to keep improving and I feel God helping me every day. I have become intentional in my efforts to spread God's word through experiences, failures and successes.

My questions and charge to you are these: As you continue through life, how will you spread your Comet Dust? Will you spread the Dust from yourself to people that need God's message of saving grace?

The HEAVENS declare the Glory of the Lord! So should Comets.



# Plastic Grocery Bags!

By Dawn Brown

Do you have a bunch of them stuffed in random closets? Mrs. Brown will take them off your hands! During interim week, her class will be turning those grocery bags into sleeping mats for the homeless people of Kalamazoo. Each mat uses about 1000 bags, so we need to start collecting now. Look for a collection barrel in the high school commons.

Please bring in any color of plastic grocery bags (Target, Meijer, Walmart, Dollar General, etc). Please note that larger and/or stiffer plastic department store bags, produce bags, dry cleaning bags, newspaper bags, or paper bags are not needed.

If you are interested in getting involved with this project, please contact Mrs. Brown. We will need people to cut bags, join bags, and eventually crochet bags. Adults and students are both welcome to participate in this project! Watch the upcoming school announcements for more details.



**Vendor Blender tables with handmade crafts, tasty treats, and coffee.**

# Israel Trip 2021

By Dawn Brown

Twenty-four students and three teachers are signed up and excited for the next Israel Trip. This 15-day trip to the Holy Land will take place during Interim and Spring Break, 2021. Six student slots are still available! Teachers are Dawn Brown, Tammy Eaton and Aaron Potter.

Students will have various fundraisers for the trip. The most recent fundraiser was the popular and well-attended Vendor Blender, which took place on November 16. This year's Vendor Blender raised around \$2,100 and hosted 62 vendors. Next year's Vendor Blender will take place on November 14.

A generous donor wrote a check for \$2500 and the following note: "I want these kids to know that someone out there is supporting them in their decision to take this journey. Here is \$100 for each student." We would love to see others support the kids and this trip with a donation of any amount. Make checks payable to KCSA and write "Israel" on the memo. These donations are tax deductible.

If you have questions, comments, or just want to hear more about the trip, contact Dawn Brown at 269-998-2453 or [dbrown@kcsa.org](mailto:dbrown@kcsa.org)



The Miller Auditorium main stage was full for our VIP Fundraising Dinner for 190+ donors and sponsors and guests before the main event.



ABOVE: An impressive 2,200+ site from the side of stage at the main event.

BELOW: The evening kicked off with a fun raffle with referees representing the sports theme to the evening.



Lou entertains and inspires students with magic and message.



## [ KALAMAZOO UNITED IN PURPOSE ]

### Lou Holtz Speaks to 2,200+ at Miller Auditorium by Mary Denison

When Coach Lou Holtz took the stage, the crowd jumped to their feet clapping and cheering for the revered former football coach of Notre Dame. Using his quick wit and honed sense of comedic timing, Coach Holtz took his fans on a journey through some of the highs and lows of his life and shared how perseverance and faith in God propelled him forward.

Throughout his stories, Lou highlighted three rules that have guided his coaching career and his life:

1. Do what's right.
2. Do everything to the best of your ability.
3. Show people you care.

Using his own house burning down in 2015 as an example, Coach Holtz offered advice for facing loss: allow eight hours to regret mistakes or misfortune, but then look ahead, recognizing that you can't change the past.

Prior to the main event, Coach Holtz also spoke to 190+ attendees at a fundraising dinner. Lou gave credit to Beth, his wife of 58 years, and her unwavering faith in God. Together, they have faced her health issues for many years and still

kept a positive outlook, trusting God for wisdom and strength.

The next morning, approximately 850 5th-12th graders from Kalamazoo Christian, St. Monica and Hackett Catholic Schools were treated to a magic trick and talk by Coach Holtz. He reminded them that they honor God through their integrity and respect for others. Impressed with our students and school missions, Lou wrote checks to Kalamazoo Christian and Hackett Catholic, each for \$5,000.

Media coverage before and after the event shone a positive light on both schools. The community's response to Lou's visit and positive message has been tremendous, and the Kalamazoo United in Purpose committee has been inundated with praise.

#### The event raised over \$115,000 for Kalamazoo Christian Schools!

Many thanks to our major sponsors: Best Way Disposal, DeNooyer Automotive Family, Farm Bureau Insurance – The Buckham Agency and the Andy & Kathie Hoekstra family.

[www.KalamazooUnitedInPurpose.com](http://www.KalamazooUnitedInPurpose.com)





**Evening activities included:**  
 Buy-A-Line  
 Silent Auction  
 Hole-In-One  
 Pies for Sale  
 Purse Pass-a-Round  
 Desserts to Go  
 Heads or Tails  
 Mystery Bag Game  
 Bread Loaves  
 Live Auction

## Our KIDS Gym Auction Raises \$57,000+

by Mary Denison

A good time was had by all on March 23 in the high school gym for the 2019 Our KIDS Gym Auction!

Parents, grandparents and supporters of Kalamazoo Christian Schools gathered to bid on a variety of items, services, gift cards and activities like a 7-night stay for two in The Netherlands (\$1,600), half a pig (\$450), four Calvin/Hope basketball tickets (\$300), high school hot lunch for a year (\$250), and much more! Auctioneers, father and son team Jeff Buckham Sr. and Jeff Buckham Jr., worked the room seeking out the highest bidder.

Gull Lake Country Club prepared a delicious buffet and very popular chocolate fountain. Students served drinks and bussed the tables. Attendee Joyce Hay raved about server, Avery Ekkens: "I hope my daughter is like Avery when she gets to high school. She was great!"

Guests putted golf balls for prizes, tossed cash into the Vera Bradley purse or bought a Rykse's pie. The Buy-a-Line prizes included a Migala Carpet gift card, a Roomba, a 55" TV and more. A thrilling Heads or Tails Game ended with Rachael Batts winning the \$500 tuition voucher. Marilyn Boersema won the Mystery Bag Game grand prize (a \$500 tuition voucher), and Jeff Offringa was the

well-deserving winner of a HUG from Marc Verkaik.

Parent volunteer, Jaime Ekkens, talked to attendees and donors about the opportunity we have to give back to Kalamazoo Christian. "I want people to experience the joy that giving to our school brings while getting back something of value. Auctions can be such an enjoyable part of the life of the school family and are a terrific bonding experience!"

Special thanks to our major sponsors: Steensma Lawn & Power Equipment, Farm Bureau Insurance—the Buckham Agency, Docsa Capital Management, and Wenke Greenhouses!

Thank you to ALL the volunteers and the committee who helped make this event such a success!

**\$71,000+** Donated items collected  
**\$2,000** Paid for ONE loaf of homemade bread  
**846** Items purchased  
**259** People attended  
**49** Parent volunteers  
**44** Student volunteers  
**31** K-8 Class Baskets valued at \$5,274 created by room moms  
**20** Staff volunteers



KALAMAZOO CHRISTIAN  
 SCHOOL FOUNDATION

## Exercising Stewardship

by Terri Sportel

Do you have a will? Is your family provided for should a death occur? Have you visited your estate planning documents lately? Do you have a trust?

The Kalamazoo Christian School Foundation has hosted several educational events in the last few years where we have offered our constituents information regarding first wills and estate planning. These events have been led by local attorneys with expertise in the area of estate planning, some of whom have an association with our schools. These attorneys have led these events free of charge to us which we greatly appreciate.

If you answered "no" to any of the above questions, please consider attending one of the sessions. It will give you a good beginning or continue the process of stewarding blessings from God, caring for your family's financial future, and ensuring that your wishes will be carried out at the time of your death.

Please check with the association office regarding the schedule of these events in 2020 or feel free to reach out to Larry Stehouwer at LStehouwer@kcsa.org for more information.



## Terri Sportel Retires from KCSF Board

After more than eighteen years of service, Terri Sportel is retiring from service on the Kalamazoo Christian School Foundation Board. Terri is a 1967 graduate, parent of alumni and a grandparent of current students at Kalamazoo Christian Schools.

Thank you, Terri for being a loyal supporter and volunteer, and for giving your gifts and talents for God's Kingdom work.

# THE ALUMNI *connection*



**A** Violet Bishop



**B** Caroline Mae Cooper



**C** Leia Hawyer



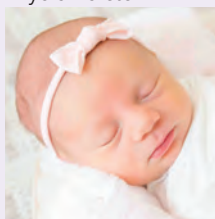
**D** Lucy Kaemingk



**E** Felix James Karsten



**F** Lydia Karsten



**G** Emma Jane Ott



## A NOTE FROM CONNIE *alumni director*

At this time of year we look at all we have to be thankful for. I am thankful for God's faithfulness in my life. I am thankful to know that I can go to my God and pray and that He listens. I am thankful for Kalamazoo Christian Schools, for over 140 years of Christian Education. I am especially thankful for each of our alumni and their families. You are so important to this school and to God's kingdom! Without you there would be no

Kalamazoo Christian Schools, alumni events, homecoming alumni fun, and the advancement of His kingdom from those who have graduated from KCHS.

**We give thanks to God always for all of you, constantly mentioning you in our prayers.** 1 Thessalonians 1:2.

May you and your family have a blessed holiday season.

*-Connie Van Der Slik*

## Alumni Babies

Jonathan Edward Alphenaar  
10/6/19  
Charles '06 & Mary '06 (Schering)  
Alphenaar

Daniel Baker  
7/23/19  
Sean '02 & Lauren Baker

Oliver Bechtold  
7/23/19  
Reanna '00 (Baker) & John Bechtold

Hendrick Richard Bierenga  
9/24/19  
Keith '01 & Brenda Bierenga

**A** Violet Bishop  
8/3/19  
David '03 & Lydia Bishop

Ethan Brower  
7/4/19  
Sean '07 & Ashley Brower

Clayton Elliot Cooper  
9/20/19  
Jon '04 & Christy Cooper

**B** Caroline Mae Cooper  
6/13/19  
Kevin '04 & Anna-Kathryn Cooper

Asher Jay Dykstra  
8/22/19  
Branden '08 & Briana Dykstra

**C** Leia Hawyer  
8/1/19  
Beth (Greydanus) '97 & Joe Hawyer

Gracie Mae Hoeksema  
9/18/19  
Kevin '99 & Amy Hoeksema

Roky Willard Hoffman  
10-3-2019  
Alicia (Nieboer) '05 Craig Hoffmam

**D** Lucy Kaemingk  
7/23/19  
Tara (Meyering) '07 & David Kaemingk

**E** Felix James Karsten  
10/27/19  
Will '04 & Chara Karsten

**F** Lydia Karsten  
11/11/19  
Neil '05 & Natalie Karsten

Boden Arthur Mulder  
10/28/19  
Chad '08 & Megan Mulder

**G** Emma Jane Ott  
7/26/19  
Cara (Boekeloo) '03 & Bobbie Ott

**H** William Theodore Pennings  
1/26/19  
Marya (Lemmer)'01 & Scott Pennings

**I** Jameson Riley  
10/5/19  
Lauren (Block) '09 & Mike Riley

**J** Rhett Scheffers  
9/13/19  
Jason '06 & Jessica Scheffers

**K** Cameryn Smit  
5/1/19  
Peter '01 & Beth Smit

**L** Judah David Smit  
5/23/19  
Mike '05 & Rachel (Bishop) '05 Smit

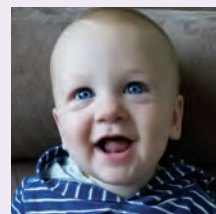
Merritt VandenBerg  
7/27/19  
Chester '07 & Jessica VandenBerg

**M** Brenna VanderHulst  
6/16/19  
Jessalyn (Valk) '09 & Doug VanderHulst

**N** Pieter John VanderPloeg  
9/17/19  
John '09 & Jessica VanderPloeg

**O** Finley Charles VanDyke  
9/24/19  
Olivia (Holmes) '08 & Brad '08 VanDyke

Jeremiah VanKooten  
10/24/19  
Betsy (Huyser) '06 & Kyle VanKooten



**H** William Theodore Pennings



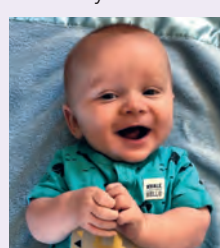
**I** Jameson Riley



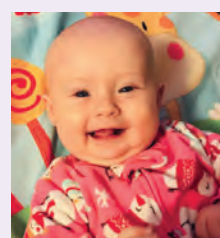
**J** Rhett Scheffers



**K** Cameryn Smit



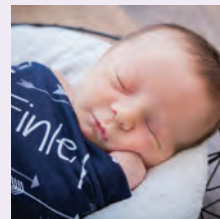
**L** Judah David Smit



**M** Brenna VanderHulst



**N** Pieter John VanderPloeg



**O** Finley Charles VanDyke





## KCHS Graduate Works on New Water Tower in Kalamazoo

2007 KCHS graduate, Anna (Groendyk) Crandall, is a Senior Civil Engineer for the City of Kalamazoo in the Water Resources Division of Public Services. She is currently working as a project manager for the water tower project, which is located on the west side of U.S. 131, not far from the 12th Street campus. While the City of Kalamazoo manages the project, Jones & Henry Engineers, Ltd. is the design engineer and McDermott International is the company building the water tower.

The new water tower provides additional storage capacity which was needed for the service area. Many have noted not only the tower's prominent location but also its shorter stature. The water tower's site was selected because of its elevation. When the elevation is higher than the service area, the tank does not need to be built as tall as if it was built at a site with a lower elevation.

Water towers provide storage of drinking water and regulate the system pressure. Water is pumped into water towers and the pressure



**Former Mayor, Bobby Hopewell with 2007 alum Anne (Groendyk) Crandall.**

is maintained in the system based on the elevation of the water in the water tower. Water towers allow the system to be pressurized even when pumps are not running.

This water tower has a capacity of 2.5 million gallons. It stands over 100' tall with nearly 970,000 pounds of steel and 1,092 cubic yards of concrete (116 trucks). Over 1 mile of water main was installed to connect the water tower to its service area. This project will be substantially completed and the water tower will be in service by the end of this year. Depending on weather, final completion may be spring of 2020.

## Calling the Class of 1959

Class of 1959 Reunion  
Thursday, September 10, 2020 at 11:30am  
Lunch at Michelle's on Gull Road

RSVP by 8/27/2020 to either  
Jeanine Helmer (269) 649-3414  
or Doris Inkster (269) 352-1901

## Calling the Class of 1979

Class of 1979 Reunion  
Saturday, July 18, 2020  
at Tom & Joan Brussee's home

Join the Kalamazoo Christian  
Class of 1979 Facebook page or  
email [terpstrakat@msn.com](mailto:terpstrakat@msn.com)

## Class of 1969 - 50th Reunion

On Saturday, June 15, 2019, over 70 members of the KCHS class of 1969, along with spouses, friends, and a few former faculty members, gathered from all over the nation at the high school for our 50th Reunion celebration. It was a wonderful afternoon and evening of renewing acquaintances, highlighted with lots of laughter, hugs, and sharing of special memories. We treasure the faith and the values that were evident in our education, as well as the lifelong friendships that we enjoy with our former classmates.



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Winter 2019 Issue

think  
**BIG**  
Leadership & Education

**Liz Bohannon**

**Thurs. Oct. 15, 2020**

The Delta Hotel by Marriott

- VIP Reception
- Dinner & Keynote Address
- School Chapel
- Women in Business Brunch

Seventh in Our Series Presented by

 **KALAMAZOO**  
CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

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## 2020 Homecoming Alumni Events

**Date:** Friday, February 14, 2020

**Reception Starts:** 5:30 pm

**Location:** KCHS Student Center  
(former library)

The Kalamazoo Christian Comets take on Schoolcraft at home. Come and enjoy fellowship with former classmates.

Homecoming festivities are held between the girls game and the boys game, approximately 7 pm.

Classes being honored: **2010, 1995, 1970, and 1960.** All alumni of Kalamazoo Christian High School are invited to join for the fellowship time in the Student Center.

For information on being a sponsor or donor, please contact [development@kcsa.org](mailto:development@kcsa.org).