

MODUS VIVENDI

A young boy with short brown hair is smiling broadly at the camera. He is wearing a white collared shirt under a dark blue V-neck sweater vest. The vest has a small logo on the left chest that reads "THE BEAR CREEK SCHOOL" with a bear silhouette above it. He is standing in a school hallway with white lockers behind him. In the background, other students are blurred, suggesting a busy school environment.

A Way of Life

COMMENCEMENT 2017

**FACULTY PROFILE:
COURTNEY
(VULETICH) COHRS**

**EARLY MIDDLE SCHOOL:
AN INNOVATIVE AND
INTENTIONAL MODEL**

**A DAY IN THE LIFE OF
OUR SCHOOL NURSES**

**THE BEAR
CREEK
SCHOOL
MAGAZINE**

SUMMER 2017



MODUS VIVENDI

Summer 2017

Modus Vivendi is translated as a way of life or a manner of living. The Bear Creek School seeks to develop individuals for whom the classical ideals of excellence in all things, love of learning, spiritual commitment, and self-discipline have become a way of life.

CREATORS

Editor-in-Chief, Karen Beman

Managing Editor, Alicia Williams

Copy Editor, Sini Fernandez

Copyreader, Alicia Williams

Art Director, Marla Zylstra

CONTRIBUTORS

Karen Blankenbeckler, Angela Burch, Patrick Carruth, Sini Fernandez, Christina Glass, Debbie Marchione, and Rob Sorensen

EDITORIAL SUBMISSIONS

Articles, photographs, and ideas are welcome and may be sent to modusvivendi@tbcs.org. We reserve the right to edit submissions for length, clarity, and style.

Modus Vivendi is published twice a year by The Bear Creek School. If you are interested in writing for *Modus Vivendi*, or have comments or questions regarding the publication, please contact us at modusvivendi@tbcs.org.

The mission of The Bear Creek School is to provide a high-quality, Christian liberal arts education in a nurturing environment that will enable each student to become the individual God intends.

PRESIDENT AND HEADMASTER

Patrick Carruth

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Andrea Lairson, Chair

Fileno Alleva, Vice Chair

Curtis Kraft, Treasurer

Kurt Maass, Secretary

Ted Robinson

David Smith

Susan Diamond

Patrick Carruth

Shawn Firminger

William Bieber

Colleen Broaddus

Craig Chapman

Kevin Keith

Stanley Humphries

Only online can you find the latest news, photos, and information about upcoming events. We're here, 24/7.

tbcs.org

***facebook.com/
TheBearCreekSchool***

The Bear Creek School Facebook page contains current photos and posts about what is happening at Bear Creek. Bear Creek Preschool also has a Facebook page, and The Bear Creek School Alumni and Parents of Alumni have groups. Like us and join the conversation!

Visit our Instagram

to see Middle School and Upper School photos.



LET US COME TO YOU

ALERTS

To get text or email reminders for upcoming events, athletics team events, and special programs, sign up for alerts at tbcs.org. Click on the "bell" icon next to any upcoming event on the school calendar to sign up for an alert for that event.

THE BEAR FACTS

Each Friday during the school year, *The Bear Facts*, Bear Creek's weekly newsletter, is emailed to current parents, faculty, and staff. *The Bear Facts* contains news and announcements from each of the school's divisions and from the athletics department. Back issues are archived and searchable on the school website at tbcs.org/bearfacts.

PARENT PAGE

Visit the Parent Page on our website to see the latest announcements, upcoming events, and a complete list of parent resources. The folder entitled "How to Use Online Resources" contains useful tutorials. The website demo includes instructions for setting calendar alerts (mentioned above).

SEE WHAT'S HAPPENING ON CAMPUS

Stay up-to-date on the latest news and events by visiting our Student Life page on tbcs.org.

ON THE COVER

Ryder Odem is an Early Middle School student. In this issue, meet Early Middle School teacher Courtney (Vuleitch) Cohrs, learn about Bear Creek's innovative and intentional model for teaching grades 5 and 6 students, and delve into the community and ensemble building aspects of our Early Middle School music program (pages 18-27). Photo by Amanda Kay Photography.

WHAT'S INSIDE



COMMENCEMENT

See excerpts from the Commencement speeches of the Class of 2017.
Pages 10-12



COURTNEY COHRS

Read about Early Middle School teacher Courtney (Vuletich) Cohrs.
Pages 18-20



EARLY MIDDLE SCHOOL: AN INNOVATIVE AND INTENTIONAL MODEL

Learn more about our Early Middle School program. Pages 21-23

CLASS OF 2017 COMMENCEMENT



6 Commencement Address from the Headmaster

9 Congratulations to the Class of 2017

10 Graduate Reflections

13 Faculty Address

IN THE CLASSROOM



18 Faculty Profile: Courtney (Vuletich) Cohrs

21 Early Middle School: An Innovative and Intentional Model

24 More than Notes and Scales

BEYOND THE CURRICULUM



28 Coding with Mister Mistele

30 A Day in the Life of Our School Nurses

PHILANTHROPY



34 Dana Bieber: A Portrait of Leadership

36 Thank You for Sharing!

ALUMNI



38 Alumni News and Class Notes

40 Following a Path of Service

41 Stay Connected

42 In Memoriam: Chaz Jacob Bruner

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS FROM THE HEADMASTER

By Patrick Carruth

Humility, Truth, and Love

It felt like a bee sting. As I walked back and forth along the front yard, mowing the grass in long green strips, I felt it. Stopped. Looked around. And tried to discover the location of the perpetrator, but to no avail. In his room, my brother had become bored with the day, or perhaps we were quarreling (I can't remember), and he decided to entertain himself at my expense. He slowly and slightly raised his bedroom window, creating a small crack between the sill and the frame. He then discharged his Daisy pump-action pellet gun toward me. It wasn't a bee. It was a sniper. And that sniper had a name. Mike.

We were silly kids then, so we have laughed this off in later years (mostly). But the image of sniping from afar symbolizes something that I find significant for us as a people. We have become a culture of snipers. And, today I would like to congratulate you all and also challenge you with something very straightforward and simple—let's stop the sniping by embodying humility, truth, and love.



Today we live in what may be one of the most polarized cultures in history. Group politics, the cult of individual autonomy, communal polarization, social media, on-demand everything, and the ubiquity of electronic devices have created in us a culture of snipers. We move quickly from test to test, workday to workday, news cycle to news cycle, and crisis to crisis. We worship the self in our quest for significance. We

align ourselves with various groups, hoping to give our lives meaning. We slump into the easy habit of creating echo-chambers in which each of our thoughts are echoed back without alternative voices to challenge our understanding of reality.

As David Brooks, Yale professor and Christian author has written:

My students, as I say, are amazing. By the time they get to Yale, they've started four companies, solved three formerly fatal diseases, and majored in a lot of obscure sports. They have the ability to dominate classroom discussion while doing none of the reading (sound familiar?). They do amazing community service. In class, they are

vibrant and curious and wonderful to be around, but they've been raised in a culture that keeps them frantically busy putting out fires—the next deadline, the next test. Their friendships are never on fire, and they get neglected. Their souls are never on fire, and they get left behind. They've been raised in a culture that encourages them to pay attention to the résumé virtues of how to have a great career but leaves by the wayside long periods of time to think about the eulogy virtues: the things they'll say about you after you're dead.

The result of this is a culture in which we frequently decide before considering and are unwilling to hear what others have to say. I suppose this would all be fine and dandy if not for one thing—this type of culture is toxic and deadly. It cuts us off from knowing truth, enjoying beauty, and celebrating goodness. We are left merely with screeching relativism and individualized emptiness. We deny the truth and beauty of the *Imago Dei*, abstract people as “the other,” and become haughty and less humble. We are thus unable to love truth and to truly love.

But my goal here today is not to bore you with what sounds like the cynicism of an old man looking at modern culture and yelling, “get off my lawn.” It is instead to present you with an optimistic challenge and then send you off into the world to make it happen. To quote Mr. Brooks again, speaking to Christian colleges, but I believe it applies to you:

You guys are the avant-garde of 21st century culture. You have what everybody else is desperate to have: a way of talking about and educating the human person in a way that integrates faith, emotion, and intellect. You

have a recipe to nurture human beings who have a devoted heart, a courageous mind, and a purposeful soul....

From my point of view, you're ahead of everybody else and have the potential to influence American culture in a way that could be magnificent. I visit many colleges a year. I teach at a great school, Yale University. These are wonderful places. My students are wonderful; I love them. But these, by and large, are not places that integrate the mind, the heart, and the spirit. These places nurture an overdeveloped self and an underdeveloped soul.

They go through their school with the mixture of complete self-confidence and utter terror, afraid of a single false step off the achievement machine.... They have not been provided with a moral vocabulary, so the only vocabulary they have is a utilitarian one. They use economic concepts like “opportunity cost” in an attempt to understand their lives. They have not been taught words like “grace,” “sin,” “redemption,” and “virtue” that would enable them to get a handhold on what's going on inside.

They assume that the culture of expressive individualism is the eternal order of the universe and that meaning comes from being authentic to self. They have a combination of academic and career competitiveness and a lack of a moral and romantic vocabulary that has created a culture that is professional and not poetic, pragmatic and not romantic. The head is large, and the heart and soul are backstage.

For many years now you guys have heard us repeat our desire for you “to live lives of wisdom,

compassion, and courage.” That’s exactly what David Brooks is saying. In an interesting irony what he calls the avant-garde, is, of course, quite old. The Scriptures remind us we are made in God’s image, and the Confessions that the chief end of our life is to, “glorify Him and to enjoy Him forever.” Again, Christ summarizes this in the two greatest Commandments, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Or, to say it another way (because I’m an English major and that’s what we do) Humility. Truth. Love.

Today, graduates of the Class of 2017, you will step across the threshold and begin to take the next step of your individual lives. But you will also be stepping into communities and into a culture that needs what you have. For many years you have spent time in classrooms at The Bear Creek School having your heads made large and your hearts and souls brought to the front of the stage. Our hope through that process has been that you would become students who were smart, knowledgeable, and full of Truth. But even more importantly, students with a poetic and moral imagination. Students with true humility. Students with heads, hearts, and souls. Because, graduates, part of the remedy for the sniping culture—is you.

I have stood at this lectern and graduated seniors for more than half of the life of the Upper School at Bear Creek. I have heard many senior projects over those years, but, none quite in the way as I experienced one of your classmate’s this year. It struck me because it embodied exactly what this education has been all about. At the end of this project I asked the question, “Having been through this journey, how would you advise your classmates?” And the answer came back something like this, “encounter those who have differing perspectives with an open mind and with humility, treating them as fellow people made in God’s image.” Humility. Truth. Love.

And, you didn’t think you were going to get away without a G.K. Chesterton quote from me, did you? He well reminds us of what happens when we embrace humility. It enables us to see the beautiful vision of things as they should be, things as they really are:

Humility is the luxurious art of reducing ourselves to a point, not to a small thing or a large one, but to a thing with no size at all, so that to it all the cosmic things are what they really are—of immeasurable stature. That the trees are high and the grasses short is a mere accident of our own foot-rules and our own stature. But to the spirit which has stripped off for a moment its own idle temporal standards the grass is an everlasting forest, with dragons for denizens; the stones of the road are as incredible mountains piled one upon the other; the dandelions are like gigantic bonfires illuminating the lands around; and the heath-bells on their stalks are like planets hung in heaven each higher than the other.... But the towering and tropical vision of things as they really are—the gigantic daisies, the heaven-consuming dandelions, the great Odyssey of strange-coloured oceans and strange-shaped trees, of dust like the wreck of temples, and thistledown like the ruin of stars—all this colossal vision shall perish with the last of the humble.

And therein lies my charge to you, Class of 2017. Step into this world with humility, truth, and love; or, if you will, with wisdom, compassion, and courage. Bring to this culture the truth of the Gospel of Christ. And, in so doing, help us all to put down the sniping pellet guns and embrace the beautiful Gospel vision of redemption and reconciliation.

Congratulations. We are very proud of you!

Congratulations to the Class of 2017

Adesuwa D. Agbonile***
Stanford University

Molly Claire Anderson ‡**
Bellevue College

Diana Karen Beare*
University of Washington

Annika Rose Boelitz*
University of California, Davis

Emma Naomi Braden*
University of Washington

Colby Michael Cadigan*
Seattle University

Scott Andrew Carlson ‡***
University of Washington

Joseph Davis Carruth
Whitworth University

Timothy Yao-Hua Chong ‡**
University of Washington

Jacob Theodore Drechsel
Gonzaga University

Yuzhou Du
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Steven Niehaus Dunn
Whitworth University

Trevor Alan Eckhoff
Washington State University

Claire Stilson Flynn*
Colgate University

Sean Howard Gallagher***
Stanford University

Krista Joy Geiger*
Washington State University

Esther Joy Gere
Northwest University

Joshua Benjamin Gere ‡*
Seattle Pacific University

Kaylie Sutter Jean Hatch‡***
GAP Year

Abigail Mae Helm**
Wheaton College (Illinois)

Yuxin Hu***
University of California, San Diego

Brooke Nicole Kato‡**
Syracuse University

Leia Louise Kirker‡
Washington State University

Karsten Frederick Kohout
Seattle University

Catherine Kok**
Wheaton College (Illinois)

Benjamin Blanchard Kranz
University of North Dakota

Douglas James Macrae Lambert**
Santa Clara University

Joshua Reece Lee‡
The University of Oklahoma

Justin Yuan Li***
Whitworth University

Abigail Lane Linnenkohl‡
Washington State University

Guanbo Liu**
Northeastern University

Price Walter Ludwig‡***
University of Washington

Matthew Collins Mistele‡*
Santa Clara University

Daniel Alejandro Paramo‡
Washington State University

Thaddeus James Perkins
Lindenwood University

Autumn Katherine Pinto**
Oberlin College of Arts and Sciences

Connor William Pittman‡*
University of Washington

Gianna Grace Prinzivalli
Hawaii Pacific University

Miriam Janice Rundell
Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Olaoluwa Oluwasijibomi Sobande
University of Portland

Toluwalope Oluwasomisola Sobande
Mills College

Paxton Lee Stump‡**
Western Washington University

Angela Tzen***
Northeastern University

Paul Iniabasi Ifeanyichukwu Ulaeto
Seattle Pacific University

Saraphina Ariel Wang***
University of Washington

Weijia Wang**
Babson College

Alexander Gregory Weaver*
Gonzaga University

Yian Xiong*
Boston University

Soohyun Yoon
Stony Brook University

‡ Legacy Honors (Bear Creek student from kindergarten through grade 12)

*** Summa Cum Laude (3.9–4.0 GPA)

** Magna Cum Laude (3.75–3.89 GPA)

* Cum Laude (3.5–3.749 GPA)

Commencement photos by Nation Photography, Christina Glass, and Sini Fernandez



Graduate Reflections

Excerpts from Commencement Speeches, Class of 2017

Timothy Chong

The teachers taught both their subjects and the joys of learning them, and provided unlimited amounts of encouragement and support to aid both my learning in school and my extracurricular, personal projects out of school. I would like to thank my peers as well, for struggling through homework together, for giving feedback and praise for my videos, and for providing me with an awesome time at Bear Creek. As I near the end of my journey...Bear Creek has instilled inside me an appetite for learning, an appetite, that, when fed will always seek more.



Connor Pittman

Bear Creek taught me a lot in my 13 years here. If I look back at it, some of the best memories are just interactions I had with teachers. From changing mindsets, to teaching life lessons, to getting me into writing, the teachers are what makes this school special. Their dedication to living out the curriculum is why Bear Creek had such a special impact on me and hopefully the rest of my class. I'll take what I learned here with me for the rest of my life. Thank you for teaching me more than just facts.

Brooke Kato

Individuality. This is something Bear Creek celebrates and also something it gives. This school has allowed me to grow in who I am and what I do. They have taught me that I have value, that my thoughts have importance, and to them, each student is a piece of the puzzle that is Bear Creek, and without one student the picture would be incomplete.



Justin Li

To all my friends: wherever you go and whoever you meet—give those people shelter. Give them shelter, like you’ve done for me. And if the ever-darkening world tells us it’s okay to judge and to label, to accept and to reject, then let us be the light that says that’s not okay. Let us be the light that says if any one of us deserves love, then every one of us deserves the same love. Let not one of us go gentle into that good night.



Abby Linnenkohl

From the undoubtedly thousands of hours that I have spent at school, I have found and made a home. Many of us have grown up in Bear Creek; it has been the only school some of us have known, but it is our time to pass the final baton. We are prepared because Bear Creek has helped us find the individual that God wants us to be through our teachers, our peers, and the building of our faith.





Tadd Perkins

Bear Creek fosters an atmosphere where we have formed new ideas, new friendships, new strengths, and new beliefs—ultimately enabling us to enjoy life as God intends; a life that spurs us, both students and teachers, to better ourselves and grow closer to the One who made us. In Psalm 119:33-35, David writes, “Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees, that I may follow it to the end. Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law and obey it with all my heart. Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight.” This is my prayer today for each one of us, that we would seek God and follow Him fully, finding our delight in Him.



Adesuwa Agbonile

On my very first day at Bear Creek, my first-grade teacher Mrs. Gladwish led me to my desk, pointed to the star taped on my nametag, and said, “Adesuwa! You’re the student of the day!” This was a huge deal. When someone asks me what my reason could possibly be for staying at the same school for eleven years, the image of that little terrified first grader who got to be Student of the Day always comes to my mind. And I think it’s because that image speaks to a beautiful feeling that Bear Creek has managed to bottle up and dole out every day—the feeling that every single person who goes to this school is always the Student of the Day.



FACULTY ADDRESS

BY ROB SORENSEN

Good afternoon Class of 2017! Let me start by saying what a tremendous privilege it is for me to be standing here today. I am deeply honored that you have asked me to give this year's commencement address.

It seems to be a long time ago that I taught many of you as freshmen. You were smaller and a good bit more squirrely then. I remember thinking that Jacob looked like he was maybe 12. And then as sophomores, when—in one of my favorite memories of the last several years—DJ surreptitiously replaced my class handouts with absurdist notes of his own (perfectly formatted to look like my customary handouts). I think I was several minutes into the lesson before I realized what had happened. Having taught all of you this year as seniors has often caused me to marvel at how much you have all matured in the last four years. Especially having watched your Capstone Projects last week—I saw many of you produce things that I would never have imagined you had in you four years ago. You have turned, very quickly it seems, from boys and girls into men and women.

And—here's a funny thing: I know that our relationship—the teacher-student thing—is supposed to work in that I teach you things, and you learn from me. And I hope that that has been true of our relationship. But it also

works in the other direction. Believe it or not, I have learned a lot from you as well. To be sure, a lot of it is bits of trivia about Lewis and Clark from Tolu. But many of you have also shown me how to be a better human being. Steven has shown me how to find joy in any situation. And Scott is a model of creativity that I can only hope to come close to.

So I am particularly honored by your invitation. Honored—and also a little bit intimidated. You see, the commencement address is not your average sort of speech. In the first place, this speech isn't really the most significant thing that's happening here today. The people gathered here today are here to watch you graduate, not to hear a speech from your history teacher. But there's also this trope that my task here—in the commencement address—is to impart to you some words of wisdom—some life advice, as it were—and this is the part of the task that I find challenging. It feels sort of false to present myself as somehow particularly knowledgeable and uniquely able to impart these words of wisdom to you as you graduate. And this is particularly true given the incredible faculty that you had to choose from when making this decision—all of whom are, in their own ways, far wiser than I am.

So I have spent a fair amount of time over the last month

checking out commencement speeches online, trying to figure out just what the right thing to say would be. This didn't exactly assuage my nerves, as there are some truly excellent speeches out there. And I racked my brain to find the most perfect, most powerful words of wisdom that I could find. I really wanted this to be the most profound speech ever—but nothing worked. It all kind of came out as sugary platitudes—or (far worse) as preachy and self-important. So I settled on talking to you a bit about what I have been learning lately—the life lessons that I myself have been learning, in the hopes that these things might be of some value to you. So here goes.

The big life lesson that I have been learning this year is in many ways very simple. Here it is: *I am not nearly as important as I would like to think I am.*

You see, like pretty much everybody else who is a human being, I am deeply, deeply narcissistic. (You remember Narcissus, right—from Greek mythology? Dude who fell in love with his own reflection?) What I mean here is that I habitually, persistently, subconsciously assume that I am the single most important person—the most important thing—in the known universe. I sort of picture the universe as a movie in which I have the starring role (“The Universe!!” starring Rob Sorensen). The rest of you are bit players, supporting actors in what I really see as *my* story. Now I know, in moments of clarity, that this is not actually how the world is. And I recognize—at least in my rational mind—that this is a profoundly unhealthy way to look at things. But the pervasiveness of this narcissism is that it's not located in my rational mind at all. It's kind of hard-wired into the human condition by the fall. It's sort of the default setting of humanity. If I don't actively work against it, this default assumption that everything is all about me just takes over.

And this default self-centeredness tends to play out badly in my life, too. I'm sure you have all had

the experience of feeling like you've been treated unfairly. Maybe you got a low grade on an assignment you worked really hard on, or maybe were punished for something you didn't actually do. Whatever. It happens to all of us a lot of the time. And, I think, these experiences of perceived unfairness hurt us so much because they challenge this default assumption that “I” am the most important person in the universe.

So I had this experience of unfairness a couple of times this year—and in a pretty powerful way. I had the sense that some important people in my life were treating me powerfully unfairly. Maybe they were; maybe they were not. But my reaction—fueled by this default assumption of my own centrality in the universe—was singularly

unhelpful. I was infuriated that somebody would have the gall to do these things to *me*. Don't they know how important I *am*? I stewed over the sense that I had been badly used; that people had not treated *me* with appropriate respect; that people had misunderstood *me*. I suppose you can see that a lot of these thoughts that I was harboring are pretty focused on one thing—*me*.

So—I was feeling grumpy about all this. And one of the habits I have long cultivated is to read for half an hour before I go to bed. And as I

was stewing over these frustrations, I was also reading a book of Flannery O'Connor's short stories. The particular story that sort of snapped things into focus for me is called “Revelation.” Incidentally, I'm totally going to spoil the twist in this story—sorry to those who haven't read it. Anyway, the central character in this story is one Mrs. Turpin. Like many of O'Connor's characters, she's rather unlikeable, and spends most of the story—which is largely set in a doctor's waiting room—critiquing in her own mind the other folks in the waiting room with her. They are ugly, foolish, white-trash, fat, etc. Now Mrs. Turpin doesn't voice these things out loud—she's far too polite for that. And she does thank Jesus for her ‘good disposition,’ and that she was, in her own estimation, a



better person than the folks she was sitting among. And then—in the powerful twist that is always at the climax of an O'Connor story—one of the poor, undesirable people picks up a book and cracks Mrs. Turpin over the head and screams at her: “You’re a wart hog from hell.” The girl who assaulted Mrs. Turpin is subdued and dragged off by the police, but Mrs. Turpin cannot get over the experience. And at the end of the story, Mrs. Turpin has a powerful vision:

Until the sun slipped finally behind the tree line, Mrs. Turpin remained there with her gaze bent to them as if she were absorbing some abysmal life-giving knowledge. At last she lifted her head. There was only a purple streak in the sky, cutting through a field of crimson and leading, like an extension of the highway, into the descending dusk. She raised her hands from the side of the pen in a gesture hieratic and profound. A visionary light settled in her eyes. She saw the streak as a vast swinging bridge extending upward from the earth through a field of living fire. Upon it a vast horde of souls were tumbling toward heaven. There were whole companies of white trash, clean for the first time in their lives, and bands of black [people] in white robes, and battalions of freaks and lunatics shouting and clapping and leaping like frogs. And bringing up the end of the procession was a tribe of people whom she recognized at once as those who, like herself and Claud, had always had a little of everything and the given wit to use it right. She leaned forward to observe them closer. They were marching behind the others with great dignity, accountable as they had always been for good order and common sense and respectable behavior. They, alone were on key. Yet she could see by their shocked and altered faces even their virtues were being burned away. She lowered hands and gripped the rail of the hog pen, her eyes small but fixed unblinkingly on what lay ahead. In a moment the vision faded but she remained where she was.¹

Mrs. Turpin was shaken by this vision—but she also saw herself clearly for the first time. She had thought herself to be righteous—deserving a place at the head of the line. Her vision revealed that what she saw as her own righteousness was nothing more than dross, to be burned away. And that her true place was something a bit more humble than she had assumed. I was also a bit shaken by the story—am I Mrs. Turpin, I wondered?

You see, it’s clear to the reader that Mrs. Turpin was, in fact, arrogant and unlikeable, even though she believed herself to be the very model of virtue. To her, it was profoundly unfair that the ‘freak’ in the doctor’s office had treated her so cavalierly. But the reader sees something deeper at work here. Maybe those incidents of being treated unfairly were, like Mrs. Turpin’s vision, a way for me to see myself more clearly.

For O’Connor, it takes a kind of violence to shake us out of our default self-centeredness; but this violent reorientation of our priorities is a step towards redemption. The central effect of the fall on humankind is turning our affections away from God and focusing them on ourselves. Luther—riffing off of St. Augustine—described the sinful human condition with the evocative Latin phrase *incurvatus in se*. We are curved in on ourselves. We can’t see the world truly because all we can see is our own belly. We need to be ‘uncurved,’ straightened out before we can see things rightly. For O’Connor, and perhaps for me, it requires a kind of catastrophe to provoke this straightening out.

And it’s important that we do straighten out, because being curved in on ourselves will eat us up from the inside. When I—even unconsciously—make the world all about my needs, my desires, my rights, my self, I set myself up for catastrophic failure. Because I am simply incapable of properly ordering myself. I need God to straighten me out. The novelist David Foster Wallace, in what might be the greatest commencement speech ever, spoke to this point. Wallace encouraged his listeners to look outside of themselves because...*pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive. If you worship money and things—if they are where you tap real meaning in life—then you will never have enough. Never feel you have enough. It’s the truth. Worship your own body and beauty and sexual allure and you will always feel ugly, and when time and age start showing, you will die a million deaths before they finally plant you.... Worship power—you will feel weak and afraid, and you will need ever more power over others to keep the fear at bay. Worship your intellect, being seen as smart—you will end up feeling stupid, a fraud, always on the verge of being found out. And so on.*²

And it’s the path that I’m trying (not perfectly

1 Flannery O’Connor, “Revelation,” in *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1965), 217-218.

2 David Foster Wallace, *This is Water: Some Thoughts, Delivered on a Significant Occasion, about Living a Compassionate Life*. (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2009), 8.

successfully, I might add) to break myself free from.

All right—this is all a bit heavy. But I do think there is a way out. But it is pretty hard. The world, for the most part, is set up to reinforce this default narcissism that comes from the fall. But there are some things I think we can do. So, let me leave you with four suggestions. Four practices that, I believe, can help us all resist the temptation to focus on ourselves and can reorient our attention towards God.

First, I encourage you to pursue real human relationships. The kind that are not facilitated by digital media. One of the benefits of relationships with real people is that they are not something you can control. Facebook friends you can turn off. Real friends force you to see the world through another set of eyes.

*The only way to [develop wisdom and courage] is with other people. We need people who know us and the complexities and difficulties of our lives really well—so well that we can't hide the complexity and difficulty from them. And we need people who love us—who are unreservedly and unconditionally committed to us, our flourishing, and our growth no matter what we do, and who are so committed to us that they won't let us stay the way we are.*³

There seems to be a kind of safety in not opening yourself up to others, and digital media enables us to have relationships that don't require us to open our hearts up any more than we want to. But, to the extent that you do this, all that remains for you is *you*—curved in on yourself. I have had the benefit of friends and family—people who know me well, who know my flaws and failings, and who love me anyway. This is a powerful tool to remind me that I'm not all that there is in the universe.

Second, I encourage you to read good books. I know that this may not be a popular suggestion with some of you (after all, didn't we graduate? Aren't we done with that?) Books, though, I think engage our souls differently than television or movies. And reading books—especially books from other eras or other cultures—is perhaps the single most powerful way to remind yourself that there is a world out there that is not focused on you; that there are different ways of seeing. C.S. Lewis

3 Andy Crouch, *The Tech-Wise Family* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2017), 92.

recommended reading old books because they

*...keep the clean sea breeze of the centuries blowing through our minds, and this can be done only by reading old books. Not, of course, that there is any magic about the past. People were no cleverer then than they are now; they made as many mistakes as we. But not the same mistakes. They will not flatter us in the errors we are already committing; and their own errors, being now open and palpable, will not endanger us. Two heads are better than one, not because either is infallible, but because they are unlikely to go wrong in the same direction*⁴

Lewis believes that old books take us outside of our own circumstances—out of the present world that is centered on us. As I said earlier, the habit of daily reading has been a powerful thing for me. Very often the things that I read help me see the world (and myself) in new ways. Remember that it was, at least partially, my serendipitous reading of Flannery O'Connor that shook me up so much.

Third, I encourage you to spend some time working with your hands. You have completed a course of study at a rather academic school, and most of you are headed for white-collar careers in which you will be paid for the work of your mind. Even so, doing something in which you directly engage with the physical world is important. This has the effect of showing you—in a very visceral way—that you are not the center of the things. Engaging directly with the physical world—whether through gardening, painting, woodworking—even playing a musical instrument—all of these require you to submit to a real thing that is outside yourself and not entirely subject to your whim. “True craftsmanship,” says the brilliant essayist Matthew Crawford, “refers to objective standards that do not issue from the self and its desires.” Thus, he argues, working with your hands is a powerful way to orient ourselves away from the self to the true Good.

The craftsman's habitual deference is not toward the New, but toward the distinction between the Right Way and the Wrong Way. However narrow in its application, this is a rare appearance in contemporary life—a disinterested, articulable, and publicly affirmable

4 C.S. Lewis, “On the Reading of Old Books,” in *C.S. Lewis: Essay Collection and Other Short Pieces*, ed. Lesley Walmsley (London: HarperCollins, 2000), 439-440.

idea of the good. Such a strong ontology is somewhat at odds with the cutting-edge institutions of the new capitalism, and with the educational regime that aims to supply those institutions with suitable workers—pliable generalists unfettered by any single set of skills.⁵

Crawford—a philosophy professor who also runs a motorcycle repair shop—reminds us that manual labor serves to powerfully orient us towards a vision of the true Good.

Finally, I encourage you to pray often and to engage in corporate worship. A powerful way to remind yourself that you are not the center of the universe is to come face to face with the One who actually is the center of the universe. Prayer is a spiritual discipline that is easy to neglect—and it's one that I struggle with—but there is nothing else that will help you reorient your soul towards its proper end.

And do not neglect corporate worship. In the same way that real friends, real books, and real work put you in touch with a real world outside of yourself, a real church full of real people forces you to set aside your narcissism, just for a bit. To be sure, church can be dull and interacting with those other people can be challenging. C.S. Lewis understood this:

When I first became a Christian, about fourteen years ago, I thought that I could do it on my own, by retiring to my rooms and reading theology, and I wouldn't go to the churches and Gospel Halls;...I disliked very much their hymns, which I considered to be fifth-rate poems set to sixth-rate music. But as I went on I saw the great merit of it. I came up against different people of quite different outlooks and different education, and then gradually my conceit just began peeling off. I realized that the hymns (which were just sixth-rate music) were, nevertheless, being

*sung with devotion and benefit by an old saint in elastic-side boots in the opposite pew, and then you realize that you aren't fit to clean those boots. It gets you out of your solitary conceit.*⁶

Corporate worship, says Lewis, 'gets you out of your solitary conceit.' It helps to uncurve you—straighten you out—so that you can see things truly.

And seeing things truly requires us to recognize that we are not the most important thing in the universe. But, once we recognize that, we can see ourselves as we truly are—beloved children of God, made in His image, and destined to do His work in the world.

I want to conclude by saying something I've been telling

many of you individually. You all have been an important part of my life for the last four years (I'm sure the rest of the faculty would say the same). And although I celebrate your graduation, you will all leave a little gap in my life when you're not there next year. So—as you set out to make your own lives, don't forget your old history teacher (or these other fine men and women who have cared about you at Bear Creek). Stay in touch. Come back and visit us once in a while. And as you go forth to become the human

beings that God intends for you to be, remember you will always have a family here at Bear Creek.

Now, as St. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints. (1 Thess 3:12-13)




5 Matthew Crawford, *Shop Class as Soulcraft: An Inquiry Into the Value of Work* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009), 19.

6 C.S. Lewis, "Answers to Questions on Christianity," in *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 61-62.



FACULTY PROFILE: **COURTNEY COHRS**

BY CHRISTINA GLASS



“ONE OF MY
FAVORITE PARTS
ABOUT WORKING
HERE IS THAT
I GET TO SEE
THE STUDENTS
I TAUGHT
IN GRADE 3
GRADUATE AND
MOVE ON TO
COLLEGE.”

DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF SCHOOL, Courtney (Vulecich) Cohrs informed her students of some exciting news. There was a sparkling addition on her hand—she would be getting married in the spring. Shrieks of joy waved across the classroom. Then one student suddenly interrupted, “Wait! Wait a minute! He did ask you already, didn’t he?” Courtney laughed at the memory of her students’ excitement of her upcoming big day, “I value community so much.” That is the core of her classroom dynamic: community. The emphasis on relationships allows her students to feel heard and known.

Courtney attributes her community-driven mentality to growing up in the small farming town of Colfax in eastern Washington. “It was idyllic and a good fit for me. I felt known and enjoyed how tight-knit the community is.” Grade 4 teacher Lena Whitlock is also originally from Colfax. “We both went to the same church, where our parents served together. Her brother was also my youth pastor in high school.”

There is one public school in Colfax which was about the size of Bear Creek. There, Courtney profited from the priority of community. There are many advantages of going to a small school, one of which is the opportunity to be involved in many things. She was not pigeon-holed to one activity, but was able to explore a wide gamut of interests. “I

might not have been qualified or have sought out certain activities, if I attended a larger school.”

Courtney left her beloved town to pursue her education at Seattle Pacific University, where she had been awarded a piano performance scholarship. Teaching had always been an option in her mind. However, it was through the mentorship of her high school band teacher and his wife that those thoughts were solidified. Even now, they still serve as her mentors.

Music plays an important role in Courtney’s life. “I am most passionate about music and spending time with people. Growing up, I played the piano in school and church. I was recognized as the town’s piano player. I used to

dance, before I started piano. I remember responding to the music more than I thought about the dance moves.” She believes music is something everyone can appreciate, even if they don’t know a lot about it. She considered performing piano, but she felt as if there was something lacking relationally. Instead she uses it to bless others. “There are so many ways to use music. I can be a part of so many life events such as weddings and graduations.” She has also served as an accompanist for Middle School and Upper School students who compete at music recitals. “It never feels like work; I love playing, and it is a gift that I can give.”

“I learned about Bear Creek from Lena, who kept track of me during my educational journey.” Lena invited Courtney to an interview. “I remember coming to the interview, and Karen Blankenbeckler welcoming me. There were so many friendly faces.” She could sense community was important for them too. It was a good fit.

“One of my favorite parts about working here is that I get to see the students I taught in grade 3 graduate and move on to college.” In the fifteen years Courtney has taught at Bear Creek, she was a grade 3 teacher for four of those years. She also returned to school to get a master’s degree in educational leadership and received a principal’s certificate. After that, she took on the role of Lower School Division Head for a year, but realized she was not finished in the classroom, and decided to return to teaching grade 5.

“I love the developmental level of grade 5 students. They are beginning to come out of the grammar stage, and their minds are beginning to analyze, make connections, and synthesize information in a way not possible in their younger years.” She enjoys seeing

those connections and the depth that is beginning to form. “I like to see where they can go relationally, spiritually, and academically with the curricular content.” Courtney likes facilitating that process for students and yet she points out, “they are still kids.” It is a unique season for them. Some are grieving how they don’t want to grow up and others are excited for Middle School.

Since community is important to Courtney, as much as possible she strives to make her classroom feel relational. “In the mornings, we catch up on each

other’s lives. Some come with sad news of a pet dying or an illness in the family. We pray and set the pace for the day. I make sure my students know what to expect in the day and week.” One thing that makes Courtney’s teaching style a bit unique is that she gives her students a lot of freedom. “I give them freedom, but with expectations. They know what is appropriate within the classroom community. The scope is pretty big and the leash is long, but they know there are consequences.” The students are able to walk around the room freely, as long as they are not disrupting others. When she was observed a few years back, she received feedback as to how

the observer was impressed that the students didn’t abuse that independence, but moved around the room respectfully. She believes it is important to honor the students for who they are. School is where they spend more waking hours each week than anywhere else. She aims to equip them and then give them the space to figure things out. “God’s given them to me for a nine-month snapshot. Yes, I have a job to teach the curriculum. So while I am important, I am not that important. God is going to use my work for His purposes.”

**“YES, I HAVE A
JOB TO TEACH THE
CURRICULUM. SO WHILE
I AM IMPORTANT, I AM
NOT THAT IMPORTANT.
GOD IS GOING TO USE
MY WORK FOR HIS
PURPOSES.”**

EARLY MIDDLE SCHOOL: AN INNOVATIVE AND INTENTIONAL MODEL

By Karen Blankenbeckler

Vice President for Academic Affairs

Photos by Cindy McCahill



In the fall of 2015, Bear Creek officially launched a new division called Early Middle School or EMS.

If you survey schools across the U.S., you will find various configurations. The most common models include: K-6 Elementary School and 7-8 Middle School; K-5 Elementary School and 6-8 Middle School; K-6 Elementary School and 7-9 Junior High; or K-4 Elementary School and 5-8 Middle School.

Bear Creek has chosen to create a unique model which intentionally addresses the developmental demands in grades 5 and 6 and has programs specifically dedicated for this age level. Students at this age have distinct cognitive and social/emotional needs, and separating them into their own division helps us pay attention to those differences.

Cognitive Development

Students in grades K-6 are sponges for information. They absorb facts readily and eagerly and their brains grow strong when they are used regularly to memorize information. Neuroscientist and professor of neuroanatomy at University of California, Berkeley, Marian Diamond reminds us that, “The number of branches or dendrites that act as receptors in the brain can be increased. This is important because it is these connections that create learning and memory. As students exercise their brains through experiences such as memorization, repetition, and review, they are actually growing more dendrite branches which allow the brain to build up its strength and ability to acquire more information.”

In grades 5 and 6, the brain continues to grow stronger as the hard work in their younger years of building dendrites pays off and allows them to connect new information with the information already learned, therefore gaining knowledge at an increased rate. At this age, students are advancing in their cognitive ability to make connections between topics and ideas, integrate their thinking



to form a whole picture, and apply their learning in creative ways.

The ability for grades 5 and 6 students to make connections between ideas, information, and experiences informs areas of the EMS curriculum where we teach students to use and apply information. This improves their cognitive functioning and increases their learning. In John Medina’s book, *Brain Rules*, he states, “We know that information is remembered best when it is elaborate, meaningful, and contextual.” The EMS curriculum is designed accordingly. For example, as students read novels they are asked to connect the text to their own experiences, other texts, and the world around them. All grade 5 and 6 students conduct weekly experiments in the science lab where they apply, test, and evaluate information. In many areas of the EMS curriculum, students are asked to creatively demonstrate their knowledge through presentations, experiments, and projects.



Social/Emotional Development

In addition to cognitive advances we see in Early Middle School students, we also see social and emotional changes.

One key shift that occurs in most students sometime during the fifth grade year is the change from being adult-focused to being peer-focused. Until this time, most students look for approval, affirmation, direction, and guidance from the adults in their lives, primarily parents and teachers. Then, as students enter EMS, they begin to look more toward their peers. This is not to say the adults cannot or do not make an impact; they most certainly do, however peers are gradually becoming important influencers in a student's life at this age. Being aware of this fact is important as we guide students. We especially want to affirm and remind them that they are unique and dearly loved by God and they have value because God made them, loves them, and has important

work for which they are uniquely equipped. This is emphasized throughout our EMS program.

It is our goal to nurture students through this developmental period and help them to grow in their ability to be wise, compassionate, and courageous people. Intentional social and emotional focus during the EMS years affirms their identity in Christ and helps them grow to a new level of independence and responsibility.

Greater Independence

Students at this age also change in their need for greater independence and increased responsibility. As grade 6 teacher Amy Fowler puts it, "They are able to work independently of their parents, and they often *want* to work independently of their parents." For this reason, it is important that we focus on strategies to help them manage their responsibilities well so they can experience success. Time management skills, organizational skills, and prioritization are all things we teach in our EMS program.

Also, to help them grow in independence and responsibility, we give Early Middle School students many opportunities to develop leadership skills. EMS students participate in various student government roles throughout the year, taking responsibility to plan and implement ideas that benefit their division or school. Each year our grade 6 students lead Field Day, which is an event for our younger students. Other opportunities for leadership include serving as a Big Buddy, assisting in primary grade classrooms, and leading worship in Chapel.

The Early Middle School years are a time of tremendous growth both academically and emotionally. The EMS division provides a critical space to focus on this special age and intentionally implement programs and curriculum to meet those needs. This unique model fosters a community where students—no longer lower schoolers, but not yet middle schoolers—continue to mature and grow into the people God intends.



MORE THAN NOTES AND SCALES

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SINI FERNANDEZ

“When students make music together, they grow together, learning about each other and what it means to be in community.”

Judy Loudenback, past Performing Arts Department Chair, asserts that making music together plays a critical part in a student’s formation. At Bear Creek, music education begins in preschool. Students meet with a music specialist through grade 6 as part of the regular school curriculum. This has built a remarkable

school culture in which “everyone just sings,” according to Loudenback. The Lower School general music classes are taught using the Orff Schulwerk methodology which combines music, speech, movement, and drama in lessons that resemble child’s play. Students learn the grammar of music and become comfortable with their singing voices, which are the musical instruments they will carry with them

Photo: Music Teacher Kelsey Jobst leads grade 5 students on the drums in a general music class lesson about rhythm.

throughout their entire lives. As they sing together, they grow in community, engage with one another, and build each other up. Loudenback reflects, "It's a lot like sports. Teams have a way of bringing out the best in each teammate when they play well together. So, too, does music when students are performing together in the classroom." The majority of time in general music class is spent gaining experience, knowledge, and skills, though the students also have an opportunity to share a small piece of all they have learned at the annual Christmas and Mothers Tea programs.

The Early Middle School music program is currently led by two amazing educators. Debra Maurer has been a member of Bear Creek's music faculty for 20 years. She absolutely loves elementary music education and knows it's what she was meant to do. After graduating from Western Washington University, she continued her education through certification courses in elementary music curriculum. She directs the grade 6 choir in addition to teaching Lower School and Preschool general music classes. Kelsey Jobst just completed her second year teaching at Bear Creek. She studied French horn and piano in college, earning a bachelor's of music in music education (so she can actually play almost every band and orchestra instrument at a middle school level). Currently, she is halfway through a master's in education program at Northwest University. Before coming to Bear Creek, she taught middle school band, elementary band, and preschool general music for four years. Kelsey teaches grades 5 and 6 general music classes and directs the grade 5, grade 6, Middle School, and jazz bands as well as Upper School sinfonia. Rounding out the Early Middle School music faculty is an orchestra director (Bear Creek will welcome a new orchestra director this fall).

Beginning with Orff's "Sing, Say, Dance, Play," our students learn to match pitch and keep rhythm. Music specialist Debra Maurer notes, "It looks like so much fun, they're just playing...and we are, but we are teaching real musical concepts." She continues, "There's nothing better than walking into a room and seeing 19 kids all doing something different but

making beautiful music. That's community. They are part of a community, and each part is important as a contribution to the whole, not just individually."

The current school of thought regarding teaching music is not unlike the way we learn to read. For example, a child never reads the word "cat" without knowing what a cat is. The same applies to music. Students are not taught what a quarter note or an eighth note are until they have experienced them hundreds of times. They experience what it feels like to modulate up to change keys or use syncopation before they know the theory behind those musical concepts. So, the goal of the general music classes is to expose the students to *lots* of music, including traditional, folk, classical, and jazz. Kodály is another popular music education methodology that Jobst incorporates into her Early Middle School general music lessons. The Kodály method draws its materials from authentic folk music, spirituals, and good-quality composed music.

All students are required to play a band or orchestra instrument in grade 5, having finally grown big enough to play band instruments which don't come in multiple sizes like stringed instruments. This ensures all students start at the beginning and have the opportunity to build their music proficiency together as they continue playing and performing each year. If a student has taken instrumental music lessons as a younger child, then he or she is encouraged to pick up new instrument.

In previous years, Bear Creek students could choose between band and music appreciation, but two years ago the curriculum was revised to include both band and orchestra in grade 5 and eliminate music appreciation. Loudenback recalls, "We realized that the most worthwhile music education at that age is to learn an instrument. Learning an instrument is highly valuable because it teaches students to read music (a different language), listen, keep time, stay with the group, and follow the instructions on the page while watching a conductor. There are so many things going on simultaneously. It stretches all those synapses and is one of the best ways to get kids to think non-

linearly. Music students respond to what they are hearing while they are doing something (i.e. playing their instruments), reading music, and getting feedback from their director. Plus, there is the physical aspect. They have to learn to make all those notes using the proper fingering and/or embouchure [mouth shape]. It's multitasking in the best way."

Grades 5 and 6 bands and orchestras are performance ensembles and, in many ways, are the practical application of all the music grammar learned in general music class. True to form however, Bear Creek students are intentionally prepared for their ensemble experience. In grades 3 and 4, they learn to play the recorder. Maurer remarks, "Recorder is a great introductory instrument for playing in an ensemble. It's a tool we use to teach how to be an ensemble member: get along, know your part, listen to your neighbors, wait your turn. Recorder also teaches valuable skills that will transfer for those who go on to play a wind instrument. Plus of course, students learn to read and understand notation, and practice correct breathing and posture."

Grade 5 band is limited to four instruments: flute, clarinet, trumpet, and trombone. To ensure that all students learn to read music notation, only those with a background in piano may choose percussion. Grade 5 orchestra students may play violin, viola,

cello, or bass. The list of allowed band instruments is restricted to a small set of popular instruments because they are more widely available and less expensive to rent. "Also, there is strength in numbers," Jobst says. "I don't want sections of just one (e.g. one bassoon or one tuba) because those students won't have anyone else to rely on as they try to recall the correct notes, playing

posture, etc. It's a big job to learn to translate black and white spots and lines into rhythm, fingering pattern, and embouchure!"

There is no expectation for ensemble students to take private lessons on their instruments, although lessons are not discouraged. Of course the most important predictor of success is practice. Loudenback notes,



Music Teacher Deb Mauer leads Grade 6 choir



Grade 6 band

"When kids practice at home, they will self-select to stay in band or orchestra because they will find success at it." Jobst adds, "We want kids to stick with an instrument long enough to make it count."

In grade 6, the ensemble curriculum is expanded to include choir as well as band and orchestra. Maurer notes, "Grade 6 choir builds on the singing skills learned in general music, but

we concentrate much more on choral technique including vowel placement, resonance, balance and blend between sections, and expression. The repertoire is challenging with more difficult part-singing and a wider range of notes. At this age, their ability to sing in a higher and lower range is expanding." She emphasizes that each student is not just a voice but an integral part of the ensemble,

and the feeling of belonging makes for a very closely bonded group. Grade 6 band students can choose to continue on the same instruments they played in grade 5, or they may switch to more obscure instruments. In grade 6 band, you might find oboes, saxophones, bassoons, French horns, baritones, or tubas. By the end of the year, students are able to play 6-8 notes on their instruments and perform ensemble music with distinct parts.

The Early Middle School ensembles give two concerts each year in January and May, and the grade 6 groups also perform for adjudication at the ACSI Elementary Musicale in March. Last spring some students also independently formed small (two to five members) ensembles and performed for adjudication at the Lake Washington School District's Middle School Solo and Ensemble Festival.

Loudenback concludes, "I think beauty draws people to Christ." The Early Middle School music program intentionally puts students together in community to create something beautiful. The program draws students together as a community of believers as they explore their gifts and talents and the beauty that is music, while preparing them to be a part of the Middle School and Upper School performing arts program where they can continue to learn and polish their skills as part of exciting performance ensembles.



Grade 5 band



Grade 5 orchestra

CODING WITH MISTER MISTELE

STORY AND PHOTO
BY CHRISTINA GLASS



“If you want a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, you could ask your mom, ‘Hey mom, would you please make me a peanut butter sandwich?’ Then you would have one. If you want a computer to make you a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, it would not be as simple. You would have to tell it to get the two slices

of bread and then tell it to put the peanut butter on, then the jelly, and then instruct it to place the two pieces together. Then cut it in half.” Matthew Mistele ’17 gave this illustration to his youngest students to help explain line-by-line coding.

It all began in Middle School, when Matthew’s interest in computer programming sparked. “I really liked video games, so I thought to myself, I

could make one.” He spent the next year and a half creating an Xbox game simply by reading through two textbooks on the topic. At age fourteen, he uploaded his game to Xbox 360 Marketplace. Since then, it has been downloaded over two thousand times. It was a valuable experience; one that has set him up for more programming projects.

Little did he know that Mrs. White’s JanTerm blogging class would be the catalyst for his mobile application endeavors. As part of a class assignment, he wrote a blog on how he made the Xbox game. In the final blog post, he mentioned how he was going to start developing apps. Shortly afterward, he received a message from someone in Australia who was interested in Matthew’s skillset. The man offered to compensate him for a mobile app with his company’s logo on it. Matthew wasn’t sure if it was a troll, but after a Skype call, there was a check in the mail. He built the app. The following summer he developed a traffic light mobile app during his internship at INRIX, a traffic services company where his father works. He took all the traffic information on the servers and put it on a map and added a couple of features that enabled users to save locations.

While a student at Bear Creek, Matthew used his talents to teach younger students in grades K-8 when he wasn’t working on personal projects, interning, playing golf, or upholding his responsibilities as senior class representative. As a freshman, he taught Summer Camp classes in Scratch, an interactive programming language for young learners, and Java, a general purpose programming language that prepares students for AP Computer Science. As a junior and senior, he was employed by Coding with Kids and taught classes for the Bear Creek *Plus* after school program.

The coding bug runs in the family. Matthew’s brother Stephen, now a junior, has assisted him in teaching the programming classes. “He was a big help. I lectured, and Stephen walked around helping those who were struggling with a concept.”

In the after school programs, Matthew taught students in kindergarten through grade 6. In the Little Coders (K-2) class, he focused most of the class time on activities that helped the students think in terms of coding. Like the peanut butter and jelly sandwich illustration, he anecdotally explained the line-by-line coding they must understand. Since the kids were still learning how to type, they played games to help them think about how to input things into a computer. He taught them a little about Scratch, how the coordinate system works, and how to move a figure on a screen.

The older students know the coordinate system and know how to type; they also know about numbers and how to add and subtract. “I can dive deeper into coding and how you would code on a professional level. We perform functions, learn about acceleration, and more challenging concepts.” Teaching a class with students ranging from grade 3 to grade 6 is not easy. Grade 3 students are just learning to type, while grade 6 students are already creating projects of their own. He taught the younger students the basics, while the older students worked on a project. As they finished, he had them add more advanced concepts, such as making the characters accelerate or adding another antagonist.

Just as asking a computer to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich isn’t as simple as asking a parent, teaching isn’t as easy as explaining. While balancing a curriculum to cover a range of ages, he has gained a new perspective. “As a student, I now empathize with teachers who try to keep their classes on track. I see and treat my teachers differently. I also know now how much work goes into lesson planning.” There are good parts about teaching, too. Matthew loves those moments when a student understands a concept for the first time or integrates something learned in class into his or her own project. “It is so fulfilling when students come to me and proudly share games developed on their own time.”



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF OUR SCHOOL NURSES

BY ANGELA BURCH

PHOTO BY CHRISTINA GLASS

WHAT DOES A SCHOOL NURSE DO? Each day the school nurses at Bear Creek: Angela Burch, Gayle Di Iorio, Pat Kirker, Lea Hysom, and Sara Tom, work as a team alongside other key providers, treating the many recess “owies” and taking a holistic approach to caring for the students, faculty, and staff in the Bear Creek community. Here is a glimpse into School Nurse Angela Burch’s day.

8:00 A.M. Ice. I start out the day by collecting a large 6-liter cooler of ice. Ice and Band-Aids are our most used tools of the trade. As I walk through the Main Commons, I notice a Lower School student with her arm in a sling. “What happened?” “I fell off

my trampoline on Saturday at home and broke my arm.” I make a note to follow up with her teacher about a recess plan and to see if we need to make any accommodations for school work.

8:10 A.M. I start checking emails when I get a call from the Upper School. A student closed two fingers in a car door. I do a quick phone triage and ask Mrs. Leckvold to give the student ice until I get there. I take a walk to the Upper School Building. His fingers are bruising and swelling quite quickly with limited mobility; his pain level is high. After icing for a time with little reduction in pain level, and consulting with mom, the decision is made for mom to take

him to urgent care for further evaluation. Once the student leaves, I head back to the Main Building.

On my return, I continue checking emails, paying close attention to attendance notifications. I am looking for infectious illnesses, anything that can be passed on to others, whether it be colds or flu, tummy bugs, chicken pox, strep, or head lice. A couple of students in one Lower School classroom are out with sore throats and fever, and I have an email informing me that another student in the same class has a confirmed case of strep throat. I email the parents of the sore throat kiddos asking them to follow up with their physicians as there is a chance these sore throats will be strep too. Streptococcus B infection is one of the more common childhood illnesses the health team sees. It can occur at any time of the year but is more likely to be seen in fall and spring, and infected students must be on antibiotics and fever-free before returning to school.

8:45 A.M. I meet with Valerie Foskett, our school counselor. Miss Foskett primarily works with Upper School students, but today she is hanging out in the Middle School and Early Middle School hallways. Valerie and I meet at least once a week to discuss students who we may have concerns about or who a teacher may want us to check on. The nursing staff can treat the physical symptoms of tummy aches and headaches, but often these symptoms are brought on by emotions. Navigating the teenage years can be an emotional roller coaster and having a school counselor on our team is key to helping students deal with some of these issues. Valerie works with students one-on-one, in small groups, in the classrooms, and at Chapel; she uses her resources in the local community to refer students and families to other providers if needed.

On the way back to the health room, I stop by a couple of classrooms, putting the recess plan in place for the student in the sling and letting the teacher know that there may be three possible cases of strep in her class and that she should send any sore throats, tummy aches, and headaches to the health room.

9:05 A.M. A very pale Lower School student is waiting with her buddy outside the health room. As I take the student into the health room the panicked words, “I don’t feel well” come tumbling out. Before I get a chance to grab a vomit bag, the poor student loses her breakfast onto the floor and my shoes. Occupational hazard! I learnt very early on in my

nursing career never to wear anything to work that can’t be wiped down or thrown in the washing machine. I get the student, floor, and shoes cleaned up and call mom to come pick her up.

9:45 A.M. Recess starts. A steady stream of students, mainly from Lower School, come to the health room over the next hour. I assess and treat a variety of injuries including cut knees and

hands, a twisted ankle, someone who fell off the swing, a splinter from bark chips, and a teacher with a headache. I chart every student or adult who comes into the health room needing care. At the beginning of each school year, and throughout the year if needed, parents update their child’s medical profile, providing the health team with confidential medical information about allergies, current medications, and a list of which over-the-counter medications I may administer at school. This is invaluable information that I review before treating each student. When I make a note on the chart of a student I see, an email is sent to the parents notifying them that their child came to the health room and what treatment, if any, was given.

8:10 A.M. I START CHECKING EMAILS WHEN I GET A CALL FROM THE UPPER SCHOOL BUILDING. A STUDENT CLOSED TWO FINGERS IN A CAR DOOR.

11:00 A.M. My alarm goes off. In the health room, there are alarms periodically set to remind us of when medications, including insulin, are due. There are several students who may need nursing intervention throughout the day. Our goal is to keep students in the classrooms with minimal interruption. Recent steps in medical technology allow some monitoring, particularly for diabetes, to be handled remotely from the health room. For example, one device allows us to watch a student's blood sugar; it sends an updated record to a cell phone every five minutes, I can see trends throughout the day and if the student's blood sugar starts to climb too high or drop too low, I can intervene quickly. However, some checks still need to be done manually, so

I take a walk down the hallway, check a student's blood sugar and give him a lunchtime dose of insulin after texting mom for a consultation.

11:15 A.M. I receive a phone call from a parent of one of the students out with a sore throat. Strep throat is confirmed. I send out a health alert.

2 confirmed cases of strep throat in LS, including a link to further information. Health alerts are text or email notifications to which parents may subscribe. Anytime we have an infectious illness that may require a physician follow up or further intervention, a health alert is sent out to notify the school community. They help families know what illnesses may be going around in their children's classrooms, what symptoms they may see, and the recommended treatment.

Lunch recess is in full swing. Eight Band-Aids, ten bags of ice, two sets of daily medications, three doses of Tylenol, one dose of Tums, and two head injury assessments. Head injuries are a big part of the health room activity. The nurses take every bump to the head seriously, no matter how trivial

it may seem. These two students collided while playing soccer. One has a big goose egg bump on his forehead; the other one has a headache. Over the next 30 minutes while providing ice and rest, I run through the head injury assessment and check list. The student with the goose egg bump is symptom-free apart from the bump. I send that student back to class with a copy of the assessment to give to his parents and a note to the teacher requesting no further physical activity for the remainder of the day. The other student is still complaining of a headache, he also has some dizziness and nausea. I phone mom and recommend that she follow up with a physician for further assessment; mom is on her way to pick up her child. I send the student off

to see his physician with a copy of the head injury assessment. There is an area on the assessment form for providers in the community to complete notifying us of their findings and any restrictions the student may have if a concussion is diagnosed. Since concussion symptoms may not manifest for 24 hours, we err on the side of caution with every

bang to the head. If a student is diagnosed with a concussion, the nurses will liaise with the families, community providers, and teachers to ensure the student gets adequate physical and cognitive rest to promote healing, and we also follow up with the physicians for clearance before students may return to any physical education or sports activities.

1:20 P.M. I check a student's blood sugar and administer a dose of insulin, then I head to lunch. Many of the tasks I complete throughout the day outside of the health room would be impossible (including taking a lunch break) without the assistance of the main office staff. Mrs. Domingo, Mrs. Leckvold, and Mrs. Nail (formerly at Valley

**11:15 A.M. I RECEIVE A
PHONE CALL FROM A
PARENT OF ONE OF
THE STUDENTS OUT WITH
A SORE THROAT. STREP
THROAT IS CONFIRMED. I
SEND OUT A HEALTH ALERT.**

Campus) are as much a part of the health team as the rest of the nursing staff. They hold down the fort while I am out of the health room or working in a different building. They are able to deal with the minor cuts and scrapes or medication needs and will call the nurse on duty if needed.

During lunch, I log in to catch the last half of a webinar with the State Department of Health. This is a monthly webinar that keeps community providers up-to-date with the latest immunization changes or illnesses in the community. I don't have enough time to listen to it all but will catch up when the notes are published. Staying on top of updates in the community and nationally helps the health team to change and develop health policies and provide the best care possible. As a team, we consult with the CDC, Public Health Department, American Academy of Pediatrics, and national and state association of school nurses. To keep my Registered Nurse license current and also for my own benefit, continuing education is a must. By attending conferences, taking classes, and reading a lot, I can keep up-to-date with the ever-changing medical world.

1:45 P.M. I walk with a student to the health room; she is having a tough day. A chat, a hug, and a prayer get a smile back on her face, and she promises to come check in with me again tomorrow. Having God on my team as well helps me throughout the day. Knowing that I can honor God by using the skills and talents He has given me, praying with students, faculty, and families, having His guidance, all affirm that I can do my job and do it well.

2:00 P.M. I receive an update from the student with the crushed fingers; one broken finger has been splinted. The student will return to school tomorrow. Thankfully it's his left hand, so it

shouldn't impact his school work too much.

2:10 P.M. There are two field trips tomorrow; it is time to make up the emergency bags so they are ready for pick up on the morning of field trip day. The bag contains emergency contacts and medical information for each student on the trip, along with any emergency medications they require, including inhalers or EpiPens. We also include a first aid kit and some emergency medical supplies. At Bear Creek, faculty and staff members are trained in CPR, first aid, and emergency medication administration so that in the event of an emergency and if an RN is not available, prompt care can be given to students until professional or health care personnel arrive. There are three staff members, including me, who

are American Red Cross CPR/First Aid instructors. Keeping 150 employees, plus coaches, certified is a daunting job, but Karen Martucci and Mike Walkington, our primary instructors, make the task look easy.

2:30 P.M. Students continue to come to the health room for assessment. On an average day, I see about 30 students. The ailments vary greatly from major

breaks needing emergency care and a call to the EMTs to the tiniest of scrapes that sometimes need a magnifying glass to see and a hug to fix.

3:15 P.M. I get a chance to respond to emails that have gone unanswered, finish charting, and liaise with teachers and parents with student updates. Time to pack up and head home.

I love my job! I love the fast pace, hands-on care, and working with an amazing team of nurses, plus the faculty, staff, and parents, to provide care for not only the cuts and scrapes but for the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being of each student.

**1:45 P.M. I WALK WITH
A STUDENT TO THE
HEALTH ROOM; SHE IS
HAVING A TOUGH DAY.
A CHAT, A HUG, AND
A PRAYER GET A SMILE
BACK ON HER FACE**

Dana Bieber: A Portrait of Leadership

BY DEBBIE MARCHIONE

Focus, organization, delegation, dedication, excellence. These traits describe Dana Bieber's approach to leadership. In her professional life, Dana is a political consultant working on ballot campaigns around the country and serves as the Executive Director of the Washington Liability Reform Coalition, both challenging roles requiring those skills and more. With three busy children at home, Kate (grade 10), Sam (grade 7), and Max (grade 5), and a husband who coaches sports, serves on The Bear Creek School Board of Trustees, and owns his own construction company, Dana has plenty to keep her occupied.

Despite her demanding work schedule and busy family life, Dana volunteers actively in a variety of ways. "I love volunteering because it gives me a chance to be with my kids. And, I believe that with anything I am involved in or care about, I should volunteer in some way." For that reason, Dana does not limit her volunteering to Bear Creek, but also helps out with Kate's 4-H group, as well as with her sons' Little League teams.

Dana began volunteering at Bear Creek as soon as she enrolled her daughter Kate in kindergarten in 2007. She happily helped out in the classroom, spending time with Kate and her friends and doing anything teacher Cindy London needed. Sam and Max soon followed their big sister into Bear Creek classrooms, giving Dana even more reasons to spend time at the school.

Dana laughs as she says, "At that time, I loved the classroom work so much, I vowed never to assume



a leadership position because I didn't want to miss a moment with the kids!" However, her leadership skills soon became apparent, and when Kate was in grade 3, Dana was asked to serve as the Valley Campus representative to the Parent Teacher Fellowship (PTF) Board. "I agreed because I liked everything the PTF did and believe very much in the group and its value to Bear Creek."

After a year on the Board, Dana took over as PTF President, with the goal of helping define a clearer mission for PTF, focusing its efforts, and streamlining the financial processes. She relished the challenge and the opportunity to work with a diverse group of creative people. "The Board is all pointed in the same direction, and it is such a collaborative effort. And delegation is key. I admire other volunteers who give their time and talent in

ways that I cannot,” she comments. “Plus, serving on the Board let me see first-hand all the wonderful things that happen here.”

Dana’s favorite PTF activity is the Faculty and Staff Appreciation Lunch held each spring. The PTF has a long tradition of blessing the faculty and staff with a delicious, hand-made feast as the culmination of a week of appreciation. “Preparing food brings me joy, and I love the fact that it touches everyone who works at the school,” she reflects.

After five years on the Board and four years as President, Dana is stepping aside from a leadership role. She is quick to point out that she is not going away, but just shifting her focus. “I will miss being on the PTF Board, because it is in the middle of

so many things. At the same time, I am looking forward to being involved at Bear Creek in other ways.” As the kids get older, it becomes a little harder to connect with them at school, she notes. “But food will always get you in the door, especially with teenagers, so I expect to be around the Middle School and Upper School with treats quite a bit.”

Bear Creek has been very fortunate to have Dana’s leadership. Her philosophy of focusing on service, collaboration, and excellence is a wonderful model for her fellow volunteers, parents, and our students. Dana says, “There is something special here, something that doesn’t happen elsewhere.” That something special is testament to Dana’s efforts and those of all the other amazing Bear Creek volunteers.

A GIFT FOR THE AGES

Planned gifts such as bequests or trusts are a meaningful way to leave a legacy while helping to educate future generations of Bear Creek students. Our students leave Bear Creek ready to impact the world as leaders with wisdom, compassion, and courage. If you have already made a provision for The Bear Creek School in your will or estate plan, please let us know so we may say thank you and recognize your generosity.

Contact Debbie Marchione, V.P. for
Philanthropy and Community Engagement,
at dmarchione@tbcs.org
or 425-898-1720 ext. 339.





THANK YOU



The Bear Creek School is so grateful to everyone who shared their time, talent, wisdom, and treasure. Your many contributions helped make it a great year!

Your generosity to the Annual Fund helped our students go on more than 60 field trips and participate in arts, athletics, and many other activities. You made it possible for teachers to integrate the latest technology tools and curriculum innovations into their classrooms. And, you provided financial aid to families who would otherwise be unable to receive the benefits of a Bear Creek education.

The outpouring of support from the many guests who enjoyed dinner and fellowship resulted in more than \$361,000 raised from our 2017 auction: Once Upon a Time. Thanks to those who gave to the Fund-A-Need both before and during the event, our playground is being expanded and enhanced to give our students more room to play and grow.



FOR SHARING!

Employer matching gifts for donations and volunteer hours from companies such as Boeing, Microsoft, Outerwall, AT&T, Shell Oil, T-Mobile, and others helped to magnify the impact of gifts from our community.

We also deeply appreciate the many parents, grandparents, alumni, and parents of alumni who poured their talent and time into Bear Creek and our students. From serving on a board or a committee to baking treats for students, from planning the Fall Party to helping at the Hungry Bear concession stand, from listening to Lower School students recite poems and verses to teaching an Upper School JanTerm class, from coaching the forensics team to organizing a service project, volunteers are the engine that keeps The Bear Creek School humming.

Thank you for sharing your gifts and blessing our school.



ALUMNI NEWS AND CLASS NOTES

Class of 2007

Alex Higinbotham

Alex just got married in April! He and his new bride live in Eastlake and love living so close to work and to the city! Outside of work, they are starting up with an incarnational ministry organization that builds community in apartment buildings in Seattle.



Class of 2008

Carolyn Heine

Carolyn just finished her third year as the Instructional Services Librarian at California Baptist University. In March 2017, she presented at the Southern California Electronic Library Consortium's annual conference on the topic of developing effective research instruction for online doctoral students.

Cara Linnenkohl

Cara is currently completing prerequisites so she can transfer to Bastyr University for continuing studies in naturopathic medicine. She has started her own company, sMILESforPaws, that specializes in providing personalized activity and care for family pets.

Class of 2012

Morgan Rial

Morgan graduated from Baylor in December 2015 with a B.S. in biology and began work as a Certified Nursing Assistant at Providence Health Center in Waco, TX. In January she began a physician assistant master's program South University in Tampa, FL; she plans to graduate in March 2019.

Class of 2014

Caleb Alleva

Caleb married Karrah Bandy on June 18 at the historic Crockett Farmhouse on Whidbey Island. Caleb is a mechanical engineering student at Santa Clara University and plans to graduate next June. The wedding was attended by many members of the Class of 2014.



Jon Kok

Jon is studying music at Wheaton College. As many people know, he is a die-hard fan of singer/songwriter Taylor Swift. Earlier this year, with the help of friends, he created a video featuring a song he wrote, asking Taylor Swift to accompany him to Wheaton's annual President's Day Ball; he posted it on social media. On the night of the ball, he still hadn't heard anything from Taylor, so his media studies professor, who had helped him try to get the video to go viral, invited Jon over for dinner with his wife and nine children! Jon says the dinner was actually more delightful than the ball itself because they served cheese and chocolate fondue and playing with his professor's kids was just the therapy he needed to get over the disappointment. Even though he has yet to hear from Taylor, he admits he was really surprised by how much attention the video received and that several newspapers even printed stories about it.

Class of 2015

Colin Eckhoff

Colin recently finished his sophomore year at the University of Washington. He has been accepted into their competitive bioengineering program; one of only 16 sophomores accepted. Colin is a Dean's List student and is actively working in a biosensor lab with a world-renowned medical geneticist.

Annika Hoiem

Annika has completed her second year studying magazine journalism and creative writing at Syracuse University. Last winter, she was selected for the Jewish National Fund's Caravan for Democracy trip, which takes student leaders to Israel to learn about the current culture and politics in the Middle East.

This past year, she worked on the editorial staff at *Equal Time* magazine and was published in *Jerk*, *Zipped*, *High Chair Mag*, and *Table Hopping* as well. This summer she is interning at *Darling* magazine in Los Angeles, a publication focused on generating uplifting content for women.

Benjamin Lee

May marked the end of Ben's second year at Georgia Institute of Technology where he is studying biochemistry. Last summer he studied abroad in Lyon, France; this summer he is interning in Seattle at the Ben Towne Center for Childhood Cancer Research, a place he has been interested in since touring it with Mrs. Dunn and Dr. Gephart during his junior year at Bear Creek. This fall he is taking a break from his studies and will be interning with Globalscope, a division of CMF focused on international campus ministry. He will be doing ministry and outreach to a university community in Valencia, Spain. In January, he will return to Georgia Tech to continue his studies.

FOLLOWING A PATH OF SERVICE

Lydia Imhoff, Class of 2004

“I never expected to become a missionary. I thought that was for super spiritual people and super bold people!”

As Lydia looks back at the thirteen years since she graduated from Bear Creek, she marvels at how God has led her from earning a biology degree from Seattle Pacific University to working with VIDApasionada, a Christian church in Madrid, Spain.

When Lydia graduated from college, she went to work for EarthCorps, a non-profit organization that utilizes volunteers to plant trees, build trails, and preserve the environment. She soon realized that she found more joy in working with the people than with the environment, so she accepted a position at L’Arche, caring for people with disabilities. When some friends invited her to come to Madrid and help with their ministry, she jumped at the chance. “I knew their ministry, and how they connected with people through teaching English and in other activities, in order to share the love of Jesus with them,” Lydia states.



Lydia Imhoff (green blouse) with her husband, Warren, and friends in Madrid

She soon began coordinating the children’s ministry in the church, as well as supporting other ministries, and leading English clubs with the affiliated non-profit. Much of her work involves building relationships and encouraging people to search for God. “It doesn’t feel like work though, when we go out for breakfast, or go hiking together, or go to a concert,” she comments. “A lot of the things I love the most are also the biggest challenges! I love stretching my skills to be creative with the kids, train the teachers, and create systems to make kids church sustainable.”

On her second day in Madrid, nearly two years ago, Lydia accompanied the teen group from the church on an outing. On March 4 this year, she married the leader of that group, Warren Flores, and they continue to work together in the ministry. While she misses her family, friends, and cheddar cheese, Lydia and Warren intend to remain in Spain, although, she notes, “We are open to moving to other countries if we feel that is where we can best serve.”

Being a missionary and far from home comes with challenges, Lydia notes, “But in the end, I didn’t come here to be comfortable. I came here to serve people. In Seattle, I really experienced God’s love changing my life, which made it easy to tell my story to other people. And I’ve learned that we can all share the love of God wherever we are, whether we are at home or on the other side of the world.”





STAY CONNECTED

The Bear Creek School Alumni and Parents of Alumni Leadership Committees have fun events planned throughout the upcoming year where you can reconnect with friends and find out what's new at Bear Creek. We hope you will join us for some or all of these activities. In addition, we love to have alumni and parents of alumni come to any of our many drama or musical performances or athletics events. Check the calendar on tbcs.org for up-to-the-minute dates, times, and locations.

PARENTS OF ALUMNI FALL GATHERING

Friday, September 22, 6:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m.
Woodhouse Winery, Woodinville

GREEN & GOLD NIGHT

Tuesday, November 21, 5:00 p.m.—8:30 p.m.
Bear Creek Gym

ALL ALUMNI FALL GATHERING

Wednesday, November 22, 5:00 p.m.—7:00 p.m.
Flatstick Pub, Kirkland

HOMECOMING BASKETBALL GAMES

Friday, December 15, 4:30 p.m.—9:00 p.m.
Bear Creek Gym

SPRING SERVICE PROJECT AND BRUNCH

Alumni and Parents of Alumni
Saturday, March 3, 10:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m.
Marilyn R. Nagel Commons, Upper School

ALUMNI VS. STUDENTS ANNUAL SOCCER GAME

Saturday, June 16, 10:00 a.m.—12:30 p.m.
Owens Field

CLASS OF 2008 TEN YEAR ALUMNI REUNION

July – date and location TBD

Please be sure to update your email and home address, so you will receive invitations and more details. Go to www.tbcs.org/alumni to submit your current information. If you are interested in serving on a committee, or helping to organize programs for alumni or parents of alumni, please contact Lori Lee, Alumni Relations Manager, at 425-898-1720 ext. 324 or lori.lee@tbcs.org.

As she looks back at how Bear Creek shaped her, Lydia reflects on the importance of the relationships that she formed here. “They have been a great encouragement through college and even now! My teachers showed me what it means to be passionate about your subject and about your students, and I hope I can carry that forward with my students. And the fact that we could learn about God in every class really helped me see how God is in every part of our lives.”

“Of course, I am eternally indebted to Sra. Llanos for teaching me Spanish—I never realized I would be speaking it every day! And even though I am not working in biology, when Mrs. Dunn taught us to look at the world with wonderment, it extended to every subject, and to people also. When I can look at people from other cultures with openness and curiosity, rather than judgment, it opens a door for a relationship.”

Lydia embodies the wisdom, compassion, and courage of our alumni, boldly following the path that God has laid out for her.

IN MEMORIAM: CHAZ JACOB BRUNER



CHAZ BRUNER passed away suddenly and unexpectedly at age 15 on the morning of Tuesday, April 18 of an aortic dissection. He was a fun, kind, and gentle young man who showed compassion and caring to everyone he knew. He loved sports, most especially basketball, and was a talented musician. His passing has left a deep hole in the class of 2020.

The following is from the eulogy delivered by Kevin Keith, Bear Creek trustee and a personal friend of the Bruner family, at Chaz's memorial service.

We first met Chaz and the Bruner family, four years ago in 2013 when they purchased a home in Lake Chelan next door to ours. It is the Bear Creek tradition that on a child's birthday, the other kids share the character

traits they see in their fellow student, I want to share four traits I saw in Chaz that made him the young man, good friend, and loving brother and son that we all will remember.

Chaz was hard working. Our first summer as neighbors made this clear as we watched Chaz tackle chore after chore at Lake Chelan. We would watch as Chaz trudged heavy trash cans to the curb at the top of our steep shared driveway, moved wheelbarrows of dirt, served as a faithful first mate and boat hand, swam logs that washed up on the beach back out into the lake—almost always with a smile on his face. He had a strong work ethic.

Chaz was a humble, encouraging friend. Chaz was unique in his ability to be friends with a very diverse set of people. He was the glue that brought different people together who otherwise might not have been friends. We saw this over the last four years as many family members and friends have come through Lake Chelan: different personalities and ages, but Chaz connected with them all. Chaz was an encourager and people always felt they could be themselves around him.

Chaz was determined. Chaz might have been quiet, but he was dedicated, had strong perseverance, loved sports, and was always seeking to improve. When at the lake, he (along with his sisters) would get up at 7:00 a.m. or 8:00 a.m. and get on the flat water determined to improve his wakeboarding. He might have been gentle, but he liked to talk smack to me whether it was in a game of horse or fantasy football.

Chaz was thoughtful. Anyone who met Chaz immediately recognized his maturity, thoughtfulness, and humility. He was polite—always looking you in the eye. He was gentle, easy to talk to, and a great listener, no matter the subject or the person. He put

others ahead of himself.

As I have been reflecting on Chaz, one more word keeps coming to mind. It is not another character trait *per se*, but maybe a word that (for me) helped summarize who Chaz was. That word is meek.

In today's world, many might equate meekness with weakness. But the biblical definition of meekness is very different. The biblical definition is "strength under control" and is associated with great biblical leaders including Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. Those that are meek are humble and gentle towards others, great listeners, great friends, and willing to be submissive and obedient to the Lord. That was Chaz.

A.W. Tozer wrote, "The meek man is not a human mouse afflicted with a sense of his own inferiority. Rather he may be in his moral life as bold as a lion and as strong as Samson... He knows he is as weak and helpless as God declared him to be, but paradoxically, he knows at the same time that he is in the sight of God of more importance than angels. In himself, nothing; in God, everything."

Chaz was a very special member of The Bear Creek School community, and he clearly was an inspiration to all of his classmates and countless others whose lives he touched. In Chaz's memory, a tree was planted along the pathway by the Upper School. The Chaz Bruner Memorial Scholarship Fund established by the Bruner family will also keep his memory alive at Bear Creek by blessing students for years to come. He is deeply missed.

To see more memories of Chaz or share your own with the Bruner family, please go to www.rememberchaz.com.



8905 208th Avenue NE
Redmond, WA 98053

www.tbcs.org



BACK TO SCHOOL FAMILY PICNIC
SEPTEMBER 16, 2017 • 5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
RSVP TBcs.org/picnic