

# MODUS VIVENDI

A WAY OF LIFE

WINTER 2015

**NEW UPPER SCHOOL AND  
FINE & PERFORMING ARTS CENTER**

**VICAR OF BAGHDAD**  
CANON ANDREW WHITE

**FACULTY PROFILE**  
RON AND PATTI LYNCH

**ALUMNI FEATURES**  
CHRISTIANITY AND PERSONALITY  
I FOUND AWE IN EAST AFRICA

THE BEAR CREEK SCHOOL MAGAZINE

## Modus Vivendi Winter 2015

*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.

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

*Modus Vivendi* is a community magazine published 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](mailto:modusvivendi@tbcs.org).

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



LET'S BE  
*friends!*  
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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 Bear Creek Alumni has a group. *Like us and share* with your friends!

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To get text or email reminders for upcoming events, athletics team events, and special programs, sign up for alerts at [tbcs.org](http://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. View a video in the “Website How To” folder in the resource box on the Parent Page to learn more about alerts.



## Pinterest

Looking for a classroom auction project idea or a craft project for your children? Our Pinterest page **bcauction** has five boards dedicated to ideas for projects in all sorts of art mediums and dozens of photos of past Bear Creek projects.



## Instagram

Find us on Instagram at **bearcreekschool**. Join the fun by entering one of our photo challenges or contests—and see all the great images that Bear Creek students and parents have uploaded.



## Around Campus Online

We are excited to announce that our online channels: Facebook, Twitter, Vimeo, and last but not least our website [tbcs.org](http://tbcs.org) are hosting new and added content, photos, and videos celebrating our arts, athletics, and academic accomplishments. Our **Around Campus** page hosts the same great photos and content that we previously featured in *Modus Vivendi!*



# Inside



## The Vicar of Baghdad

*Canon Andrew White visits The Bear Creek School.*  
Page 5



## Ron and Patti Lynch

*Ron and Patti Lynch reflect on the role of the dramatic arts at Bear Creek and new opportunities in the new building.*  
Page 10



## All in a Day's Work

*Project Manager Michael Sloane shares his perspective on the Upper School construction project.*  
Page 16

## Around Campus

- 4 From The President
- 5 Breakfast with The Vicar of Baghdad
- 6 Reflections on Teaching Mathematics
- 8 Caleb Ji: Exploring the Beauty of Math
- 10 Ron and Patti Lynch Embrace the Arts
- 11 Interview with James Choi
- 12 Rachael Urban

## Outreach

- 13 Mission Trip to the Dominican Republic 2014

## Philanthropy

- 16 All in a Day's Work
- 17 Staying Connected to God's Plan

## Alumni

- 19 Class Notes

- 21 And That's a Wrap  
Brandon Saw, Class of 2014
- 22 A Shared Passion:  
Whitney (Engel) Brammer,  
Class of 2007  
Jackson Brammer, Class of 2008
- 25 Parents of Alumni Stay  
Connected
- 26 Christianity and Personality:  
Looking Past Myers-Briggs
- 30 I Found Awe in East Africa



He strolled into my family room, tapped his phone, and my television went stark white. Then the video began. It was modern, sleek, graceful, and engaging. The protagonist moved elegantly across and around the screen while, in the background, subtle music played behind the narrator as he explained our plot and mapped our journey—from conflict to climax to resolution.

**M**y brother had just shown us the latest video from Apple, marketing their latest device, Apple Watch. And what struck me about the video was not the watch. Instead, it was the depth of thought that went into the video and the breath of thought that went into the product.

Far from being merely a technical device—which obviously the watch was—it was a creative synthesis of tech, math, science, and beauty. Rather than merely a STEM enterprise, the product (the watch) was a product of much more—you see, healthy stems always need strong roots.

Our world is changing. Industry experts, CEOs, politicians, and professors are articulating in articles and journals today the need for leaders who are not only technically proficient, but creative and able to exercise sound judgment. Such a need will likely only increase tomorrow. At a time when each of us can electronically access assimilated facts and information quickly and easily, tomorrow's leaders will need an education that teaches them to think both critically and creatively, analytically and artistically.

“It’s a horrible irony that at the very moment the world has become more complex; we’re encouraging our young people to be highly specialized in one task.” This quote from an August 2014 *Fast Company*

article by Elizabeth Segran about tech CEOs reveals a compelling perspective on the nature of technology and liberal arts education. The article continues, “We are doing a disservice to young people by telling them that life is a straight path. The liberal arts are still relevant because they prepare students to be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances.”

Similarly, Vivek Wadhwa professor at the Pratt School of Engineering at Duke University posted an article at *Tech Crunch* in March 2011 which contained the following observation about the future of engineering and the liberal arts. “But, even though I believe that engineering is one of the most important professions, I have learned that the liberal arts are equally important. It takes artists, musicians, and psychologists working side by side with engineers to build products as elegant as the iPad.”

We believe that a high-quality Christian liberal arts education is crucial to imagining the world as it should be and in preparing students to make that vision a reality. This belief has been at the core of The Bear Creek School from its beginnings. A Christian liberal arts education teaches students specific information, content, and skills—but it does not stop there. It also prepares students how to think and teaches them how to think wisely by cultivating a Christian worldview so students are prepared to engage the time in which they live and the specific circumstances they encounter with wisdom, compassion, and courage.

In December we released our latest strategic plan, *Dare to Dream: The Bear Creek School 2020*. While it affirms the mission and core values of The Bear Creek School, it also paints a picture of a Christian liberal arts education in light of the contemporary world—a vision to develop students who are curious, humble, and intellectually prepared to make wise and creative decisions as they engage tomorrow. As you wander through this issue of *Modus Vivendi*, I hope you also see the authentic and substantive ways our students already learn to be analytical and artistic, developing STEMs with deep roots.

Patrick Carruth  
President and Headmaster



Read the entire strategic plan, *Dare to Dream: The Bear Creek School 2020*.

## Breakfast with the Vicar of Baghdad

By Rev. Jeff Gephart, Dean of Students

On October 22, 2014, Bear Creek hosted a world leader who is bravely living out the call of discipleship in a tough place. Canon Andrew White, or the “Vicar of Baghdad” as he is known, spoke to a crowd of Bear Creek families and interested public. He spoke of the atrocities he has seen perpetuated by radical Islamic militants against Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq. White, an Anglican priest from England, has lived and worked in Iraq since the late 1990s. He is the chaplain of St. George’s Anglican Church and the president of the Foundation for Relief and Reconciliation in the Middle East, a humanitarian organization. Canon White also travels extensively in Israel and Palestine, actively building relationships with religious leaders to promote peace.

On the morning of the Vicar’s visit, I sat down with the Canon for an informal breakfast and interview. I will never forget it. To sit with Canon White is to be in the presence of a transcendent leader, that is, a leader who seems to work on a different plane or frame of reference than most of us. We spoke of his background, his ministry, and the things that keep him going amidst personal loss and continuous setbacks.

The Vicar brings home what is most essential in life as he shares his experiences: the loss and suffering of “his people” (though White is English, “his people” are the people of Iraq whom he pastors). White

often spontaneously breaks into song in reply to my questions—“I’ve got the love of Jesus in my heart....and I’m so happy, so very happy, I’ve got the love of Jesus in my heart.” His child-like faith is disarming; it is a fresh wind needed to bring peace to the world of hatred and violence in which he lives. White continues after finishing his song, “and that’s why young people say ‘when you’ve lost everything, Jesus is all you’ve got. And we’ve got Jesus.’”

White, who grew up in a Pentecostal church and later became Anglican, exudes a keen awareness of the presence of God in his life, an important feature of his faith that is tested weekly by news of more loss and suffering. “Well I’ve always been aware of the glory and presence of God, but not like now,” he admits, but, “Now there is a new reality, a new presence, a new joy, a new power.”

Andrew White’s courage, his enthusiasm for Christ, his steadfast faith, and even his mischievous humor and ability to “march to the beat of his own drum” make him a compelling spiritual leader. It is no wonder White has found favor among so many of the world’s religious leaders, particularly Jewish and Muslim leaders in the Middle East. White is an inspiring leader in our day who models for us a life of wisdom, compassion, and courage.

For more information about the work of Canon Andrew White and his organization, visit [frmeamerica.org](http://frmeamerica.org). White is the author of numerous books including *Faith Under Fire*, which is a good introduction to his story.

**See a video of Canon White’s reflections.**



Canon White with Rev. Gephart at The Bear Creek School. Photo by Sini Fernandez

# REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING MATHEMATICS

By Steven Prokopchuk, Bear Creek Mathematics Department Chair

I believe good teaching generates a sense of wonder, even as it stimulates the acquisition of knowledge.

In the best learning environments, the two are complementary. Wonder is particularly effective in directing and focusing attention, precisely because it is a posture perfectly suited for the kind of patient intentional study that stimulates curiosity and creative insight. It is this sense of wonder that shapes my passion for teaching. I continue to spend time studying my subject area and learning new topics in order to cultivate my own sense of wonder. Study nourishes my passion for mathematics because new ideas and challenges present unexpected insights and added depths of understanding to a subject I already find profoundly interesting. This growth is important, not only for me but for my students as well, because teachers who are deeply captivated by their subjects are much more likely to foster that sense of wonder in their students.

## An invitation to wonder

I am reminded of a hike I took during a school trip to Central America. In order to get to our destination, we needed to travel on foot through several miles of dense, humid rainforest. Several students groaned as we set out, but as our guide began to point out bullet ants, toucans, and poison dart frogs, our group thought less and less about the hard-going journey and became more interested in what curiosities they might encounter next.

Certainly within the landscape of mathematics, there seems to be an endless supply of dazzling monuments that warrant our admiration. Yet frequently, the journey one must navigate to reach these monuments can seem arduous, covering terrain that can be very challenging or seemingly mundane. Students may begin to ask if the journey is worth the effort. This is the context in which much of my teaching takes place, as I urge my students to patiently look, explore, and ask questions. As their teacher, I liken my role to that of an experienced and knowledgeable guide, one whose familiarity with the terrain and love for the journey enables him to point out the hidden gems along the way. Learning can be as much about the process as it is about the final destination. To be sure, once we reach our intended destination, and the monument or landmark comes into view, we must take the time and effort needed to adequately contemplate the richness and significance of the discovery. For it is often here, in quiet rumination, that the full value of the journey can be understood, as the destination lends fuller meaning to various twists and turns encountered along the way.

Of course, my students do not always find mathematics quite as engaging as a Costa Rican rainforest; nevertheless, the comparison is useful. Without our guide, we would have completely missed several of the most interesting parts of the hike. Even more, his expertise

greatly enhanced our understanding and appreciation of the things we were already noticing on our own. Study enhances my knowledge of mathematics, which in turn helps me to highlight surprising properties of logarithms, binomial expansion, or Riemann sums and make unexpected connections outside of mathematics. It is my hope that students will notice that I am still a curious and engaged learner of mathematics, and thereby come to understand that even in a single subject area, there can be more than a lifetime worth of learning. True education involves far more than the collection and consumption of data in order to attain practical ends. It is a way of being that both celebrates and is humbled by the mind of the Maker.

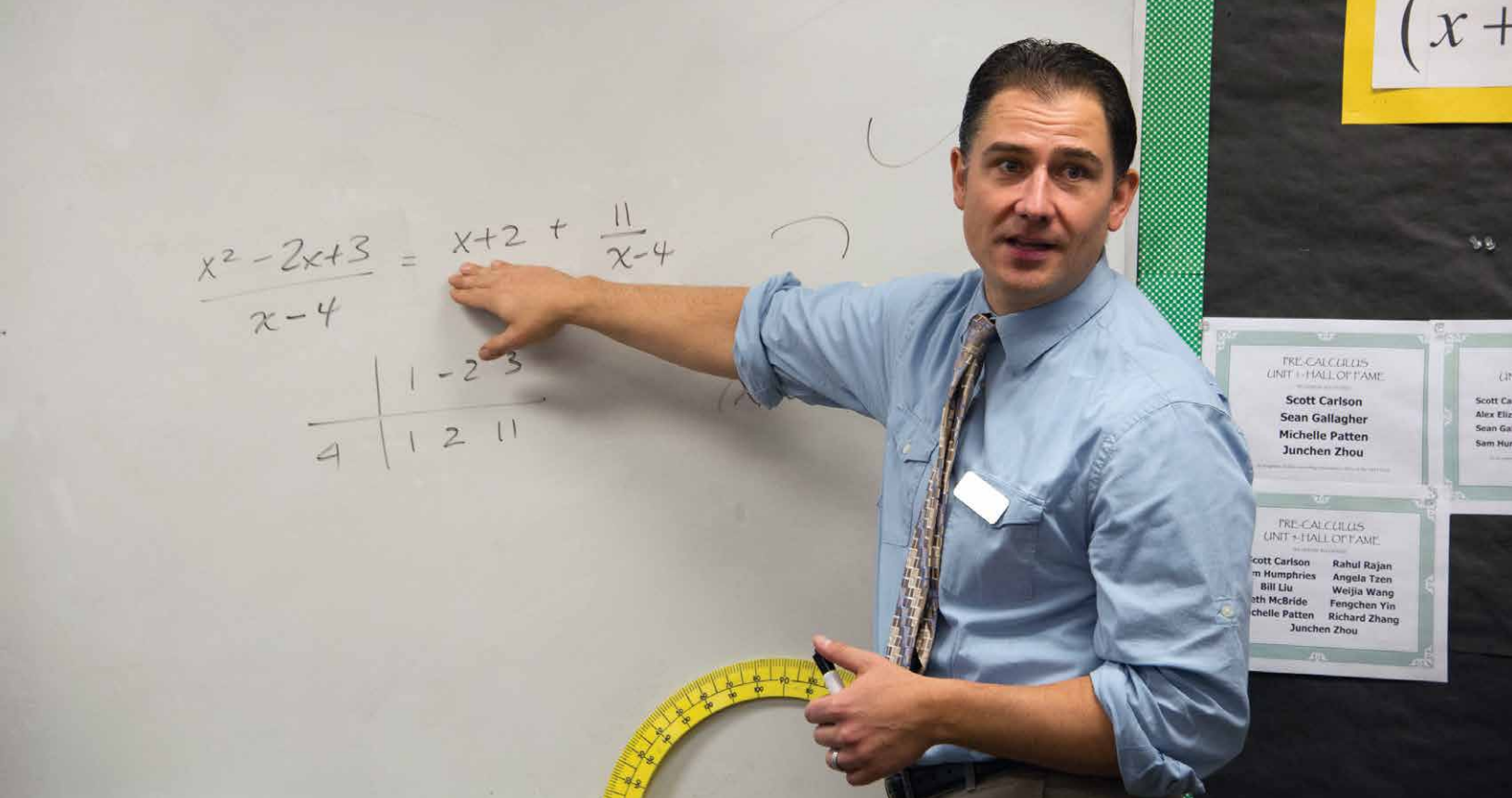
## The value of process

Perhaps, teaching with such ends in mind could help liberate students from developing unhealthy preoccupations with final answers and grades. While these are important, an exclusive concern with them can have an adverse effect on learning. Students may memorize steps to get to an answer without fully knowing why the steps accomplish the desired task. In such cases, they may find themselves incapable of applying the necessary mathematical tools in different contexts. The goal is to enable students to understand, question, and even take pleasure in the process of mathematical inquiry. In order to do this, students must understand the task that each tool performs and then use the tools along with the raw material provided, to construct solutions and thereby, understanding.

Time and again, my students hear me explain how real mathematicians are highly creative thinkers. Mathematicians often work on problems for which no textbook has yet been written. They do not labor over pre-set exercises and check answers at the back of the book. Mathematicians are faced with real and difficult problems which demand careful and patient observation. Using the tools at their disposal, they can uncover hidden patterns and relationships which bring clarity and simplicity out of the complexities of real life. Sometimes the demands of a problem can be so challenging that a mathematician may need to create an entirely new set of mathematical tools. Thus, even pure mathematics requires far more than the ability to reason analytically. Imaginative, esthetic, and even intuitive forms of intelligence are vital to forging paths in mathematical understanding.

## Integration

One of the strengths of the classical approach to education lies in its appreciation of knowledge as an integrated whole. Within such a framework, mathematics is understood as a body of knowledge embedded within a network of disciplines that mutually inform, complement, and often challenge one another. Too often, math students



Steven Prokopchuk reviews with his Pre-Calculus class prior to final exams. Photo by Sini Fernandez

(and teachers) view mathematics as a closed system, an isolated subject area with little or no relevance to life outside of the classroom. Science is often the only subject area that conducts much of a conversation with mathematics and even here, the conversation tends to start rather late in the curriculum. But, if we develop a more comprehensive view of mathematical knowledge, a host of bridges can be built between mathematics and other disciplines. Consider for example, the role that aesthetic perception plays in pattern recognition—one of the most important ingredients in mathematical reasoning. The great medieval theologian, St. Bonaventure, described this aspect of mathematics eloquently when he explained how all manifestations of beauty and delight exhibit some measure of proportion, and that numbers figure largely in any comprehension of proportion. If we extend mathematics, as most modern mathematicians do, beyond the confines of number to encompass the study of patterns in general, Bonaventure’s point becomes even more convincing.

### What can mathematics teach us about ourselves?

Last spring as we were coming to the end of a unit, the discussion turned to consider ways in which the concepts we had just covered could be expanded to explore a variety of interesting questions. We were considering both the conceptual power of mathematics as well as its limitations. Our discussion concerned a mathematical genius by the name of Bernhard Riemann, who was preoccupied with these very questions when he explored the possibilities of non-Euclidian geometry in the mid-1800s. At the time, Riemann had no thought of a scientific revolution, yet in just over 50 years time his curiosity would provide the mathematical machinery Einstein needed to formulate his theory of General Relativity. We paused, many of us contemplating the nature of mathematics, the potency of ideas, and the tendency for every answer to

provoke a host of new questions.

And that’s when it came—a quiet comment that elevated the conversation above mathematics to something far more important. A student simply said, “There is always more, isn’t there?” He didn’t make the comment begrudgingly as if he saw learning as an unending burden. Rather, the comment came with a relaxed smile, something that looked like an expression of gratitude and joy. In that moment, the true power of mathematics within the larger context of education pressed itself upon us. In its grandeur and “unreasonable effectiveness” for explanation and description, mathematics stands as an amazing testimony to the mind’s ability to understand our place within the created order. Despite our abilities to quantify, solve problems, and analyze, our acquired knowledge pales in comparison to the transcendent depths of the reality of which we are a part.

It is precisely when we hold these—the breathtaking achievements of math alongside its inability to fully explain human nature—that the richness of life emerges and the deeper questions arise. Pascal, one of the greatest mathematicians, captures this moment perfectly, “Reason’s last step is the recognition that there are an infinite number of things beyond it. It is merely feeble if it does not go as far as to realize that. If natural things are beyond it, what are we to say about supernatural things?”

As much as I love my subject area, I am more deeply interested in such questions. I want to prayerfully consider this paradox so that I may more fully understand how deeply we stand in need before our Creator. And if these are indeed the more fundamental questions, my students need to see that their spiritual journey is a fundamental concern within my classroom. It is my hope that in the midst of learning mathematics, students will run up against these fundamental questions and, in discovering that they are *fearfully and wonderfully made*, they will be challenged to work out their salvation *with fear and trembling*.

# Caleb Ji: Exploring the Beauty of Math

By Sini Fernandez

Mathematics, rightly viewed, possesses not only truth, but supreme beauty—a beauty cold and austere, like that of sculpture, without appeal to any part of our weaker nature, without the gorgeous trappings of painting or music, yet sublimely pure, and capable of a stern perfection such as only the greatest art can show.

“The Study of Mathematics” from *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays* by Bertrand Russell, 1917

Caleb Ji loves math. He finds mathematics fascinating because it defines and predicts the world in which we live—from the length of the hypotenuse of a triangle and the area of circle, to the path Earth travels around the sun, the date of the next vernal equinox, and the security of modern cryptographic methods. Caleb notes that formulas the ancient Greeks derived over 2,000 years ago still apply today. And while applied mathematics is of great interest to Caleb, the beauty of pure mathematics appeals most to him. In the course of our interview, Caleb, a junior, remarked several times on the beauty he finds in mathematics, even in the context of spending hours deriving a difficult proof, a task most readers would not relish.

Caleb, who is originally from Calgary, Alberta, has been competing in math contests since grade school, but his passion for math ignited when he attended a math camp during the summer after eighth grade. Caleb, a Bear Creek Price Scholar, has pursued opportunities to challenge his intellect and has competed with the math team each year. Math contests and Math Olympiads specifically are really just very difficult, multi-hour (and often multi-day) exams. In the 2013-2014 school year, Caleb wrote several such exams on the



**Caleb, back row far right, and the Canadian math team with which he traveled to Cape Town, South Africa last July for the 55th annual International Mathematical Olympiad.**

road to earning a spot on the Canadian national team. In addition to completing the American Mathematics Competition (AMC-12) with other Bear Creek students, and despite a disappointing performance on the American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME), Caleb was invited to compete in three additional prestigious competitions. First he wrote the Asian Pacific Mathematical Olympiad, then he wrote the Canadian Mathematical Olympiad, placing third overall. Finally, he wrote the USA Mathematical Olympiad exam. His combined performance on all three of these contests earned him the honor of training and competing with the Canadian team at the 55th annual International Mathematical

Olympiad (IMO) in Cape Town, South Africa last July.

Caleb learned in May that he would compete in Cape Town and immediately began preparing for the nine-hour, two-day competition. In the weeks prior, he completed many practice problems on his own and then traveled to Banff, Alberta with his teammates (another rising junior, two rising seniors, and two recent high school graduates) and coaches for a week of further training and team bonding while hiking in the Canadian Rockies. Finally, the team traveled to Cape Town, South Africa. At the IMO, about 560 students from 100 countries



completed six proof-style problems in such areas as number theory and combinatorics. Caleb earned a bronze medal by scoring 21 points of maximum 42 points, just one point shy of a silver medal, and helped the Canadian team to its overall ninth place finish in the competition.

Steven Prokopchuk, Bear Creek Mathematics Department Chair, math team coach, and Pre-Calculus and Multivariable Calculus teacher, says of Caleb, “He gives a lot of his time to Bear Creek’s math team. He often gives lessons to math team members and helps coach them. He makes worksheets, creates problem sets, and helps other Bear Creek students prepare for competitions. Such is the leadership he provides for the team. Caleb doesn’t just win competitions. He promotes mathematics and encourages others to get involved like no other student I have ever had.” Additionally, Caleb gathered some of the best math students in the state to represent Washington at the 2014 Princeton University Mathematics Competition. The team, dubbed “Washington Gold” represented Lakeside, Interlake, Newport, and Redmond High Schools, plus Bear Creek of course, competed this past fall at the international competition run by the Princeton University Math Club. In the more competitive Division A, the team finished eleventh overall, while Caleb personally wrote a perfect paper on number theory and tied for first place in that category. He also placed ninth in combinatorics.

Although his love for mathematics clearly takes a priority, Caleb has other interests as well. He has been a competitive tennis player for six years and competed on the Grizzlies boys varsity tennis team. In the 2014 fall season, Caleb played in the #1 singles spot in all 12 varsity matches. At the Emerald City League Tournament, he finished in fifth place, just missing the top-four that would have secured his berth at the State Tournament. During his freshman and sophomore years, he competed with Bear Creek’s forensics team in three very different disciplines, trying his hand at Student Congress, Public Forum debate, as well as Impromptu speaking. Forensics coach Kevin Davison says, “Caleb is a talented young man, and it’s quite evident in his eclectic competition. He is informed and works hard at all he does. He studies current events and

shows great insight into what’s happening in the world. Overall, Caleb evidences a keenly analytical mind with knowledge of the issues.”

This year however, he is forgoing forensics because he is applying to participate in MIT Department of Mathematics Program for Research in Mathematics, Engineering and Science (PRIMES-USA), a program for high school juniors with demonstrated extraordinary mathematical ability and the potential for conducting original research. The program runs the entire calendar year and involves conducting independent mathematical research under the guidance of a mentor from MIT, presentation of the research at a conference in May, and then completion of the research and submission of the results at the end of the year.

When asked for an example of the beauty he finds in pure mathematics, Caleb said that he is particularly interested in number theory, an area of mathematics which utilizes the simplest mathematical tools—

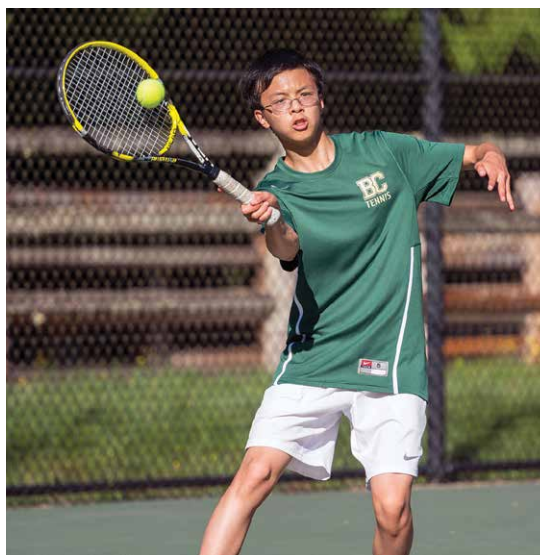
addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and a set of integers—to establish profound and beautiful results. Specifically, Caleb finds the law of quadratic reciprocity (which Gauss referred to as the “golden theorem”) to be quite extraordinary.

This mathematical theorem has over two hundred proofs and gives the conditions for the solvability of quadratic equations modulo prime numbers. Caleb puts his money where his mouth is, so to speak, regarding his love of math and number theory. In 2014 and again in 2015, Caleb will co-teach a course on the subject with Mr. Prokopchuk during JanTerm. Their course, entitled “Number Theory: An Exploration of the Beauty of Numbers,” introduces number theory and is designed to help other Bear Creek students step inside the world of numbers, to look more carefully at numbers and see below the surface where remarkable and unexpected patterns emerge. Together they hope to impart what “all mathematicians share... a sense of amazement over

the infinite depth and the mysterious beauty and usefulness of mathematics.” (Martin Gardner)



Caleb and the “Washington Gold” team at Princeton



Caleb played in the #1 singles spot in all 12 varsity tennis matches for Bear Creek during the 2014 season. Photo by Brent Ethington



Ron and Patti Lynch pose with the set they created for *The Scoundrel*, Bear Creek's winter 2015 production. Photo by Sini Fernandez

## Ron and Patti Lynch Embrace the Arts

By Alicia Williams

For the past 14 years The Bear Creek School has been building a dynamic dramatic arts program under the direction of Dr. Ron Lynch. A gifted saxophonist and member of the 1960's band, The Cascades ("Listen to the Rhythm of the Falling Rain"), Ron brings a wealth of talent and experience to the classroom and stage along with a doctorate in curriculum and instruction from the University of Washington and years of experience as a high school principal. But with all that talent and experience and those impressive credentials, it is inspiration that wins the day for the school's dramatic arts students. And, as Dr. Lynch might confess, the day he met a petite, blond-haired, blue-eyed Minnesotan beauty named Patti, was the day he met his true inspiration; and together he and his wife Patti, the Fine and Performing Art Department's artistic director, have been inspiring students ever since.

When Ron and Patti are not out on the town, arm-in-arm (a portrait of distinction and sophistication) attending a play or gallery opening, you can usually find them building sets and painting scenes on the stage at Bear Creek. Saw buzzing, garbed in lab coat and goggles, Ron plots and plans his next engineering marvel, creating convertible sets seemingly out of thin air; while Patti, with a years-long career as an artist's agent and talented artist in her own right, strolls effortlessly

across a vast canvas, charcoal and brush in hand—with each deft stroke, bringing to life a hamlet in the melodious hills of a war-torn Austria, awakening a sleepy little Iowa town in "trouble with a capital T," or creating incredible Chagall-inspired stained glass windows from which a certain fiddler could look beyond tradition.

Armed with imagination, skill, and some smoke-and-mirrors, for years the Lynches and their students have been able to transform a small stage into quaint villages full of colorful characters, royal palaces in corrupt kingdoms, and fiery (if not comical) battlefields. With the addition of the Performing Arts Center at the new Upper School, Dr. Lynch shared his excitement for the larger designated area which would allow for more innovation and integration of the arts. He anticipates that the increased space would also provide for a wider range of drama curricula (scene design, scenery construction, costume and make-up, lighting and sound, among others). He also looks forward to offering beginning, intermediate, and advanced drama classes.

As we hear more and more about the importance of education in science, math, and technology, how do the arts complement the sciences and enhance a full education? Why is education in the arts so crucial? What contribution does education in the arts make? Dr. Lynch does not see the arts apart from the sciences—the essence, or biology, of

who we are created to be. He summed it up this way, “At The Bear Creek School we embrace the arts because they are a reflection of who we are and represent the beauty of God’s designs. The arts bring ‘Technicolor’ to the blank areas of our lives. The arts give us the balance required by God for us to focus on what is good, what is worthy, and what is satisfying.”

With all their talent and passion, it is the Lynches’ model of humility and genuine affection for their students that graduates remember and that which launches them into living lives of passion with a yearning for truth, beauty, and goodness. And whether graduates go on to pursue studies in the arts or sciences, these graduates have a strong foundation for the arts, whether as an actor or patron, long after they have taken their last curtain call on Bear Creek’s stage.

As one alumnus of Bear Creek’s dramatic arts program, Chris Patillo ’09, shares:

I can honestly say that the time I spent at Bear Creek with both of them was a very important process in my

development as a person. Dr. Lynch was always there to give us a constant flow of advice and personal anecdotes that both entertained and taught a lesson. Through his drama classes, I was able to come out of my shell and learn the art of communication both eloquently and in a way that would be accessible to my audience. My training in drama at Bear Creek has given me an enormous leg up in my current field of study, and has made me much more comfortable in presentations both at school and various conferences. Of course, Mrs. Lynch was always there to support us, and her breathtaking scenery painting and set designs were what made every performance truly special. Her cheerful spirit and sincerely caring attitude made us all feel valued. I came to consider both of them as parental figures, and will always look fondly at the time I spent with them and the drama program.

## Interview with James Choi

By Annika Hoiem ’15

From starting a green initiative at our school to placing first at the Seattle Region Math Is Cool competition, the accomplishments of students at Bear Creek are far from the ordinary. While our school is often acknowledged for its achievements in the humanities, its math and science departments are also gaining increasing recognition through the success of our students.

Senior James Choi recently set out to revive Bear Creek’s eco-team. This year Choi and his team audited the school’s energy use, water consumption, and waste production, and applied to be certified by the National Wildlife Federation’s Eco-Schools USA program ([www.nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA.aspx](http://www.nwf.org/Eco-Schools-USA.aspx)). I recently sat down with him to discuss his personal interest in science and the environment.

**ANNIKA HOIEM:** James, what about Bear Creek’s math and science programs is so compelling to you?

**JAMES CHOI:** We often think about Christianity in terms of humanities like philosophy, literature, and those parts, but we have teachers who think that science and math are integral parts of the Christian education. I think the students are getting a really good foundation that this world is God’s creation, and God is actually the greatest scientist and mathematician. I think that is the best part of the Bear Creek science and math program. Also, we have a very rigorous program, even compared to secular private schools.

**AH:** Tell me about your goals for the eco-team.

**JC:** We are trying to make our school as sustainable as possible. Our first project was to audit our school, how much energy we use, how

much water we use, how much waste we make. Then our next project was based on that, trying to reduce the amount of energy we use by replacing the light bulbs at our school. We succeeded in doing that for the gym and Commons, and I think we are going to do that in the hallways too. Our current project is trying to install water bottle fillers next to the water fountains and sell Bear Creek water bottles so that people can use less of this (points to my plastic Dasani water bottle). Through all these small projects, we are working towards the goal of being certified by the National Wildlife Federation. This is an eight-year project, so they will come here every two years and check how we are doing with our sustainability changes and our reductions in waste production, as well as energy and water use. I am trying to create an environmental legacy at our school.

**AH:** What about math and science is inspiring to you?

**JC:** What tipped me into science was my personal connection.

I had severe asthma, and I really wanted to know why I was different from others. My doctor told me that air pollution was the cause [of my asthma], not genetics. That got me curious about what environment pollution is and I really got interested in the science behind that. [Science] is like a lifelong partner. It’s part of my identity. Now I not only want to fix my own asthma, I want to fix “everybody’s asthma” or everybody’s environmental problems with the world. My dream is to create cheap, but clean energy. It’s all about helping others now, making an impact.

**AH:** What do you see yourself doing in the future?

**JC:** Currently, I am looking for college degrees that combine engineering and business administration. I feel that, just like Apple, Samsung, Ford, all progress in the modern era is made by companies. I want to create a company that deals with the problems that our society faces. I want to create clean energy, find a way to solve the water problem in Africa, [and] maximize efficiency in waste management—those are my dreams.

# Rachael Urban

By Christina Glass



“I saw a complete difference in education, in terms of how students were being taught and how information was presented to them.”

Rachael Urban started teaching at The Bear Creek School almost fifteen years ago as a grade 6 teacher when the school was renting space from Bear Creek Community Church. She soon transitioned to teaching grade 1. When she had children of her own, Urban put a hold on teaching to stay home as a fulltime mother. Rachael returned to Bear Creek four years ago as a preschool teacher when she enrolled her son Titus in prekindergarten.

Recently Urban transitioned into the Office of Admissions. Last year when she was teaching preschool at Sammamish Campus, she had the opportunity to conduct preschool applicant interviews for the Admissions Office. This was her first encounter working in an admissions capacity. She loved speaking with prospective preschool families so that she could really explain what we are doing in the classrooms, how we individualize, how we bring out character, and how character is such an important part of our program. Soon after, Vice President for Enrollment, Collegiate, and Alumni Relations Karen Beman urged Urban to take on a larger role in the Admissions Office. Because Rachael’s heart was and is for the students and their families, she was apprehensive at first. It was hard to leave her

classroom and students, but she had a deep desire to lead families into our school. She is very passionate about sharing with others what Bear Creek does well. As a teacher, she was able to guide her students through our program and saw what shaped the children’s character, and she also loved how as a teacher she was able to come alongside them and be a part of their families’ lives in a different way.

As a parent, Urban wanted the amazing teachers, the emphasis on character development, the high academic standards, and the faith-based curriculum for her children. Urban describes her experience as a teacher as being incredibly rewarding because she had the opportunity to see students grow, witnessing the shy first grader grow up to be a confident individual performing on stage. “Young children grow into their own people and accomplish big things in life,” she adds.

As a teacher, she worked hard to walk the school’s mission daily so that she could reinforce the environment she valued as a parent. She did this by touching the students’ minds and hearts and by being in community. She has attended some of her students’ birthday parties or has been invited over for dinner. She loved that engagement and how she was a part of the bigger picture with those families. The children were not just students to Rachael; rather, she felt she was truly in a partnership with those families. That is what drew her back to Bear Creek.

When her son was getting old enough for preschool, she realized she wanted to be back in that community, a community that has deeply impacted her family. As a parent of Bear Creek students, she appreciated the quality of the education from a new perspective and that the right kind of people were speaking into her children’s lives and echoing the values that are taught at home. “My kids come home sometimes exclaiming, ‘We had Mrs. Maurer today! She played the ukulele.’ I find my football-loving son singing the songs around the house. There are people here who I am so glad my kids have in their lives.”

Upon her return to Bear Creek, Rachael discovered employees who had been here from the beginning, many of whose children had already graduated. People who thought highly enough of Bear Creek that they not only wanted to work here, but they had their children

enrolled. Urban emphasizes that it is the Bear Creek community’s passion for the mission that makes the school so special. “It attaches them to this place and even when their kids move on from this place; they still contribute.”

She has enjoyed coming alongside families in a different way this year—giving prospective families a picture of what Bear Creek looks like, whether by a tour through the hallways or just by talking with them. She loves being a first voice that informs families about our programs, giving them glimpses that include a first person teacher perspective.

Rachael is excited about the upcoming changes at Valley Campus and how the preschool teachers will be able to work with the kindergarten teachers in a new setting. They will have more time to dialog with each other and share resources because those age groups are so closely linked. Next year the campus will have some physical modifications such as additional bathrooms in the classrooms for kindergarteners. Programmatic enhancements are also planned, including an outdoor science lab for exploring the wetlands and an outdoor garden. The satellite campuses will also expand the science curriculum, but in a more intimate setting. Kindergarten students will travel up to Redmond Campus for library time in the Ida Lairson Library to help maintain their connection with the Lower School community.

Urban also connects families to community and to parenting resources. She helps organize Parenting Your Child for Success, a seminar that is held each fall, and she writes on the school’s blog, providing resources for our families. She truly believes that Bear Creek makes the connection—nurturing the faith, mind, and heart!

The faculty, staff, the board, and Headmaster Carruth invest in the school and the students with their time, their prayers, and their resources. These investments are seen through the transitions, not compromising on the two monumental elements of being a rigorous school and maintaining the faith-based component. Urban closes with, “We are serving more than ourselves here. It is not just a job to us, but it is contributing to the kingdom of God.”

**You can follow Rachael and others on Bear Creek’s blog at [www.tbcs.org/blog](http://www.tbcs.org/blog)**

# Mission Trip to the Dominican Republic 2014



Bear Creek's 2014 Dominican Republic mission team poses on Spirit Mountain. Students and faculty served at the Doulos Discovery School in Jarabacoa.

The following blog posts were written during Bear Creek's April 2014 trip to on-going mission partner, Doulos Discovery School in the Dominican Republic. Upper School students and faculty will return to Jarabacoa for the third time in February 2015 and will continue serving at the school to reach Dominicans for Christ.

## APRIL 7

### Our first few days — Holly Ray

On Saturday when we got to our villas, we relaxed and played dominoes and cards. Yesterday we went on a pretty steep hike and were all very thankful for the breeze on the mountain. Then we changed quickly and went to a church where the sermon is translated to English. Everyone there was so welcoming and full of joy! Somehow during dinner everyone started dancing (or tried to dance) the *merengue*.

Currently, Gracie and I are making children's coloring books for Dominican Day on Friday. We also have people outside preparing ground for sod and weed-whacking, decorating second grade classrooms, and picking up trash along the river.

We have been spending a lot of time playing intense card games and creating new friendships with each other! The Dominican Republic

is beautiful, and the people have welcomed us with open arms. We can't wait to see what else is in store for us this week!

### Great time in the Dominican — Gracie Matthews

Last night during a very authentic meal in the Dominican, spaghetti, our host's husband invited us all to dance to the Latin music playing in the restaurant. Eventually, we had almost everyone dancing together, laughing and having a great time. Every meal has been a great time to mix together and get to know a different person in our group. We braved a steep hike in a coffee plantation and saw the unroasted berries and beans on the way. We got to see firsthand, the hard work and time put into the process of making coffee.

My favorite personal experience so far was playing a large game of Signs (a motion memorization game that involves a group) together; everyone participated and had a great time. Hopefully, we will have more excursions and experiences as exciting and enjoyable as these.

## APRIL 8

### Coffee — Benjamin Lee

For most of us, getting a coffee is a process that involves getting in our car and going to the nearest Starbucks. I know that I thought coffee

was unpleasant drink made with these dark beans that grew on a tree. I had no idea how involved the process was.

On Sunday we visited Spirit Mountain, an ecological reserve and organic coffee plantation, which was completely different than I expected. I was ready for rows of coffee plants, glaring sun, and lots of people picking beans. In reality, the coffee grew in a forest, and 350 acres are worked by just 15 people. They pick the beans that are completely red and bag them. A machine shells them and then the shelled beans are laid out to dry. Once the beans are dried, they are bagged and sent to a factory in town where the papery shell is removed. Finally, they are ready for roasting.

The now shell-less beans are put into the drum six pounds at a time. I thought that roasting was a slow process that took at least an hour or more. Darrell, the guy that roasts the beans, asked us how long we thought it took to roast six pounds, and I guessed an hour. He laughed, so I guessed again, “a couple hours, then?” Nope, that answer was still way off. It takes him just 15 minutes to roast coffee to a “medium roast.” Darrell believes that by roasting the beans too much, you lose the flavor of where the bean came from, and are thus losing all of the hard work

that went into cultivating the perfect bean. The flavor of the coffee roasted here reflects the labor that the workers put into growing it, a process invested in deeply by many.

### Host dinners — Jeff Gephart

Host dinners are always a highlight of the trip. Groups of two or three students get dropped off at selected sponsor families to spend the evening. The sponsor families are the ones who are on full scholarship, and typically families in the States support individual students. Each year about ten new kids get sponsored. If this is something that interests you, read more here: [doulosdiscovery.org/support/sponsorship](http://doulosdiscovery.org/support/sponsorship). Last night as we arrived home, the students were bursting with enthusiasm. So many exciting, fun, awkward, or new experiences! Often someone would be telling a story only to be interrupted by someone else, and then the whole group would erupt in chatter. It was quite funny to watch.

The students made good work progress today and are leaning into the idea of “flexible.”

### APRIL 9

#### Wednesday morning! — Jeff Gephart



Meaghan McCahill works with two children at Doulos Discovery School. Photo by Elissa Bell

The midpoint of our trip is past! Once again, it is a glorious morning.

Last night we played in a gym with kids that were part of FIGHT, an outreach ministry to raise awareness about issues of slavery and the sex trade. Our students had a ton of fun with the kids. We walked the town a bit too and visited a supermarket for snacks. We had *pica pollo* (fried chicken) for dinner with Mike Zweber, Executive Director of the ministry, and his family.

The sod was laid yesterday, and students helped with projects in the classrooms. We anticipate more work in classrooms today and tomorrow.

Looking forward to another great day!

### Reflections on Monday — Belle Nelson

Monday was full of new things. I worked with Christine. We pulled up “grass,” weeds actually, and then replanted it in a new spot. After the weeding, we had to flatten the dirt for the new grass coming in today. For the first time ever, I used a pick ax. I was using my great big muscles to loosen the dirt so Christine could go over and rake it down to perfection. Urie, the head groundskeeper, told us he loved it. I am also proud to say I got my first real callus; in the worst possible place...my palm. I don't think I have sweat so much in a very long time. After the long hard day of gardening, I got to take a nice freezing cold shower and got ready for our host family dinners. Zoe, Megan, and I had dinner at a girl named Rebekah's house. She is a senior at Doulos and has two younger siblings who are in the elementary program. We “fan-girled” about *Grey's Anatomy* and *Gossip Girl*. Rebekah taught us the phrase *muchacho amigo* (special friend). We all bonded, and even got her Snapchat and Instagram name so we can stay in touch. It's upsetting to think the trip is almost over, but I'm happy that I get this experience.

### APRIL 10

#### Thursday morning! — Jeff Gephart

Expedition Day. Up a little later this morning. We are anticipating a full day

of working in the classrooms today as the school gets ready to present tonight. Had a fun time dancing again last night at the same place that we ate on Sunday night. This time Darrell asked his wife to dance, and we got to see them do the *merengue!* Okay, we're off to another day. Looking forward.

## Jumping in — Zoe Ludwig

This morning our volunteer coordinator, Sandy, asked, "Does anyone speak Spanish?" I hesitated; looking around at her options, I realized I'd have to be the one to step up here. "*Un poco,*" I replied. As soon as we walked in the door the language barrier hit me like a ton of bricks. I've taken three years of Spanish (and thank goodness for Benjamin) so I could understand the basic instructions given to me. Nonetheless, it was uncomfortable at best when the guy I was working with tried to tell me to do a better job drying the lettuce and I reached for a knife. But what amazed me was that over the couple hours we spent there, I could actually feel binders full of Spanish homework (and test retakes) returning to my head. By the time the lunch rush was over, I was actually having a half-way intelligible conversation with *mi amigo* serving *los pollos*.

In a way, this experience in the kitchen was a lot like my experience on this trip. For the past several days, we white-skinned, bug-fearing, monolingual *Americanos* have been braving culture in a way many of us have never experienced. It's been rough. However, we have come a long way from bug bites and sunburns on day one. I mean I won't get ahead of myself; it would take a long time to feel at home here. But I now feel comfortable enough to get out of my comfort zone. This place has served to expand my horizons in that way. The comfort is a start to understanding the world, one for which I'm very thankful. I know for certain I'm going to be sad when I have to leave this place behind, where immersion has been so easy.

## I am an artist too — Paul Freed

Today I had the awesome privilege of working with an artist named Darrell. He is an artist who practices the art of coffee. He crafted perfect beans in the same way Bob



AJ Rial and students prepare for Expedition Day at Doulos Discovery School. Photo by Elissa Bell

Ross painted or Michelangelo sculpted. I felt slightly out of place in his roasting chamber for I am an iced tea person. It was still fascinating as I watched him do really cool things. I will probably be spending the rest of the day in classrooms helping kids with my bubble cutting expertise. It's a change up from the work I have been doing, which has been creating beautiful lawns out of boring landscapes of dirt. It has been truly wonderful at the school, even though a small child said I looked like a horse. I am excited to see what the near future brings!

## Basketball — AJ Rial

Wednesday after school Chris, Rex, Paul, Mason, and I all had the privilege of participating in basketball practice. Unlike basketball at Bear Creek, all grades and ages practice together at Doulos. At first I hated that little kids were practicing with us, but then I realized that they can learn from us, and we can learn from them. At the end of practice, we got to scrimmage, Americans vs. the Dominicans, and although we had more experience, the play was definitely harder

than we expected. Luckily, with Paul draining threes, Mason getting boards, Chris breaking ankles, and Rex posting people up, we pulled off the win. Overall it was a great experience for me, and I got to meet some new kids, get a new feel for basketball, and teach the kids some new stuff.

## APRIL 11

## Last day — Jeff Gephart

Today is our last day. It's hard to believe we are almost done. We spent a lot of time playing with the kids today and just enjoying the fruits of everyone's labor. Expedition Night was a huge success and today all the students were just cleaning up. It was a mellow school day. We spent an hour playing the game Signs with some middle schoolers. This afternoon there is a lunch with the seniors, then we'll go downtown with the juniors, and finally to the waterfall. Before we pack up tonight, we will have *sancocho*, a traditional Dominican stew, for dinner.



See videos of our construction progress.

Michael Sloane on site in November 2014 as the building was taking shape. Photo by Sini Fernandez.

## ALL IN A DAY'S WORK

Overseeing the construction of a 52,800 square foot building is all in a day's work for Michael Sloane, Project Manager for Abbott Construction. Debbie Marchione, Director of Philanthropy, recently toured the construction site and interviewed him to learn more about the new Upper School and Fine & Performing Arts Center building project.

### How did the unusually dry summer make a difference?

The dirt on the site is great to work with when it is dry; some rain on the site is also good and helps keep dust down, but once the soil reaches a certain saturation point, essentially no more water can run through it and it turns to soft, sticky mud. Water pools in it and trucks and equipment cannot operate in it. We were fortunate to have a dry summer, with only a few very rainy days. This allowed us to pour the foundation, lay the temporary blacktop (ATB) for the trucks to utilize, and get the building 'out of the ground' on schedule.

### Can you tell me about a unique challenge of the project?

In order to add a turn lane on 208th Avenue NE and build a driveway, we have to move two electrical power poles and one Comcast pole. This requires extensive design and approvals as well as careful timing and coordination with the crews from Puget Sound Energy. Moving a pole with a significant number of lines can be tricky as many different agencies have input and requirements for their lines.

### What are some of the environmental features of this project?

Because of the wetlands on the site, we have had to incorporate a variety of environmentally responsible features, including nine rain gardens and large areas of pervious paving. The rain gardens are small, specially landscaped areas designed to collect and filter rainwater and absorb run-off from the paved areas. We also built a large storm water retention tank, as required by King County, to reduce the chance of flooding during major storms, and ensure that run-off seeps slowly into the ground, without damaging the wetlands. Creating a crossing over the creek and pond between the new building and the main building also proved to be an interesting challenge.

### How many workers are involved with the construction?

On any given day, between 20-50 people work onsite, but over the course of the project, at least 500 people will be involved. A project of



this size involves extensive collaboration not just with sub-contractors and the design team, but also with outside agencies including the County and Puget Sound Energy.

### How do you coordinate so many people?

Good question! There are many tools we use. One that I specifically like is called Data Vault and is set up on the site. It houses a high-powered computer and extra-large monitor from which we can access every aspect of the plans related to the project. A worker can look up everything from the overall floor plan to the size and location of a single pipe or fixture. It helps us address any questions immediately and reduces the possibility of errors. We also greatly appreciate the continued involvement and support provided by The Bear Creek School Facilities Committee and owner team. A construction project is an always evolving machine and having great owner participation always results in a better end product!

### Are there opportunities for student involvement?

I am teaching a JanTerm course for Middle School and Upper School students with an interest in architecture, construction, or engineering. This course will be an introduction to the design/construction industry and careers by utilizing the new Upper School as a case study. Classes will include guest lectures from project team members and multiple site tours of the new Upper School construction site. Other students will have the opportunity to tour the building as construction advances.

*Abbott Construction continues to work diligently under Michael Sloane's leadership to complete the building on time and on budget. The Bear Creek School is grateful for their commitment to excellence and their partnership to create the best possible facility for our students.*

## Staying Connected to God's Plan



Fil and Holly Alleva have been involved with The Bear Creek School since 1999. All three of their children—Erin, Caleb, and Zach (pictured above) have graduated from Bear Creek and are now in college. They have supported the school in many ways over the years as volunteers. Fil has served on the Board of Trustees since 2008, and both have spent countless hours volunteering in Bear Creek classrooms, on the sports fields, and at school events. Holly currently works as a Library Assistant, as well as helping on the Parent of Alumni Committee. Bear Creek is deeply ingrained in the rhythm of their family. Fil took some time to reflect on why he and Holly have given so generously of their time, talent, wisdom, and financial resources over the years.

"For Holly and me, giving is an important way we stay connected to the things we care about. For us, the gift is free and freeing since there was no obligation to give and no obligation for us to account for what is received in return. It is a great and simple expression of love. Another reason we give is because it helps

keep our world from becoming too small. By giving it connects us to the whole world which is God's and reminds us that nothing that we have is truly ours, just something that is temporarily our responsibility, a part of which we gladly put back in God's hands.

"Giving is something I learned from my father. Each Sunday I saw him faithfully make his contribution at a time when I later understood that we didn't have a lot. I didn't think much of that again until I became a Christian. I knew from my father's example that part of following Christ was to be a faithful giver, but for me the question was how? This was about the same time that I got my first full time job which meant I had a little regular money; when I learned of a friend of a friend who was entering campus ministry in need of financial support, I knew what to do. Thirty-five years later we're still supporting those same friends in the same ministry. Although we rarely get to see our friends, we remain a part of each other's lives in a unique way. Giving affords us a way to participate in ministries and lives when other avenues aren't available because of time, distance, or situation. For me, I think of giving's impact on us and others as something that builds over time, like spinning up a large flywheel. At first there is not much change, but year after year, as the momentum builds you see the difference you are making. That momentum connects you not only to what's happening right now, but it also creates a connection to the future. Our part in God's plan is small and brief, but we are part of that big plan, and giving makes us more deeply part of that.

"Holly and I believe The Bear Creek School is part of God's plan, and we want to share in that. Over time, our growing commitment to Bear Creek has connected us to God's plan for the school and allowed us to feel even more connected to both the history and the future of Bear Creek. By God's grace and with the community's support, Bear Creek will carry on for many, many years to come. So that's why we give."

We are grateful to have the Alleva family blessing our Bear Creek community in so many ways!

# BEAR CREEK ALUMNI

People of wisdom, compassion, and courage using their individual gifts to bring truth, beauty, and goodness to the communities in which they live.

## Why Alumni Leadership?

A message from Tyler Kowal, Class of 2004  
President, Alumni Leadership Committee

Following the election of the first Alumni Leadership Committee, Tyler Kowal shares a few thoughts on leadership and the role of alumni at Bear Creek.

I first considered getting involved in a leadership capacity after completing the alumni survey that was sent out several years ago. I remember the question on the survey that asked if we would like to be involved with the school or alumni. I checked “yes” in hopes of staying better connected with my peers. Karen Beman and I met for coffee to catch up; it was at that time that we discussed the possibility of creating a formal structure for an alumni group. We explored the timing and value for our alumni, and she asked if I would be interested in joining a founding group to develop a leadership structure. I knew instantly that this would be a great opportunity to not only stay involved with the school, but to get better connected with the larger alumni community.

Shortly after that conversation, a small group of us met on campus and worked through the initial planning stages, from how to increase involvement at events, to the creation of a purpose statement. For two years, a team of five (Alex Higinbotham '07, Abby Gomulkiewicz '11, Nate Castle '08, Beth Graham '09, and Michael Davisson '10) and I held regular planning meetings and created a foundation for an alumni leadership group. We wrote bylaws that have now been forwarded to the Board of Trustees for final approval. In the summer of 2014, we held our first vote to approve new members on the Executive Committee and Members-at-Large.

I think my biggest motivation to serve in leadership was a desire to help the school grow and become a beacon in the community. It is my belief that a strong alumni population will help to inspire and motivate current students to reach higher and accomplish lofty goals. If Bear Creek's current students can see strong alumni who are active in their faith, with their community, and at their alma mater, I believe it will inspire them to value and elevate the Bear Creek experience.

For me, the most life-shaping aspect of my years at Bear Creek was the community. The friends, the faculty, and the administration made up that community. It defined my entire time at Bear Creek and shaped me into the person I am today. If I were given the chance to change my experiences at Bear Creek, I would have to decline as they were some of the best days of my life.

I was on campus recently for one of our committee meetings and

there happened to be a forensics tournament taking place; I thought to myself, could I even still get into Bear Creek? Would 'high school Tyler' be able to keep up with the academic rigor that is currently expected here? I'd like to think yes, but as a testament to the school, it also gives me hope that my dream of inspiring the students today could be a reality in the very near future. We just need to build a program that continues to build community connections that are valuable for all alumni!

If I were to offer any words of advice for current students, I would encourage each one to cherish his/her time in school. Life happens so fast and no matter how much you dislike homework, or having to get up early, you will miss it one day. School is a great time to learn, make mistakes, and grow from them. Bear Creek is an excellent environment to foster that growth; you have great teachers, family, and friends who will help to challenge you (with homework) to learn! One day in the not too distant future, when you are paying bills, or stressed out at your job, you will look back and miss the good ol' days when you were back at Bear Creek.

To our current alumni community, the leadership team would love your involvement in any and all capacities. We know everyone has different gifts and passions; we also know we are a young program and need your help in so many ways. If you are interested in participating in any capacity or have questions about what we do, please email us at [alumlead@tbc.org](mailto:alumlead@tbc.org) (this goes directly to me). You can also contact Bear Creek alumni via our Facebook group (Bear Creek Alumni) or on Twitter (@BearCreek\_Alum). Lastly, stay connected and **please update your contact information** by completing the online form at [www.tbc.org/alumni](http://www.tbc.org/alumni) so we can send you information on the happenings at The Bear Creek School.

Sincerely,  
Tyler Kowal  
Alumni President

Tyler is a Certified Public Accountant working at Amazon in Seattle. He and his wife Karri were recently married and live in Woodinville.



## Alumni Leadership Committee

Affirmed August 2014

### Executive Committee

President	Tyler Kowal '04
Vice President	Alex Higinbotham '07
Secretary	Abby Gomulkiewicz '11

### Members-at-Large

Classes of 1998-2005	Hugh Foskett '04 and Andrew Imhoff '05
Classes of 2006-2010	Karlee Aronson '08
Classes of 2011-2015	Gannon McCahill '11 and Katie Gomulkiewicz '13

## Class of 2003

### Danny Jacobson

Danny wed Suzanna Kohly on February 17, 2013 in Miami, FL where they enjoyed a gorgeous Cuban-style reception! **David Jacobson '04** and **Matt Jacobson '06** were best men, **Joy Jacobson '10** was an attendant. **Brig Dengenis '03** and **Rhyne Dengenis '02** served as groomsmen. Danny and Suzanna honeymooned in Costa Rica and recently



moved to the San Francisco area where she works for Google and Danny is with an investment banking firm.

### Rebecca (Mar) Rothnie

Becca married David Rothnie on June 28, 2014, at Covenant Presbyterian Church in Issaquah. The couple met while attending Handel's *Messiah* at Benaroya Hall with their church's young adults group. During their courtship and engagement, David spent most weekends driving between Vancouver, WA,

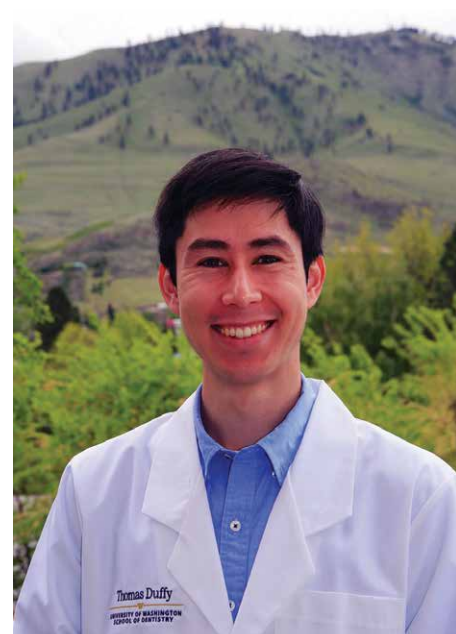


and Redmond to see Becca, who worked at the *Mercer Island Reporter* for six years. David is a project engineer at Schommer & Sons in Portland, and the couple now resides in Vancouver.

## Class of 2004

### Tommy Duffy

Tommy recently graduated from the UW School of Dentistry and is working at two general dental practices: one with a long term position in Shelton and one in Auburn to cover the maternity leave of a friend. His



wife Sarah is studying hard to complete her comprehensive exams at the end of this quarter. It's the last hurdle before she can write her dissertation on some aspect of organ music and Gregorian chant. Their little Agatha turned one this year and will have a sibling sometime next summer.



## Class of 2004

### Continued

#### David Jacobson

David is currently living in Los Angeles and has just produced his second feature film, *Shake the Dust*, which will be released in theaters, Netflix, DVD, and TV in 2015. The documentary film explores how breakdancing and hip-hop culture have been used as a tool for positive social change in Colombia, Cambodia, Uganda, and Yemen. *Shake the Dust* premiered at the Seattle International Film Festival in June 2014. David has been working as Head of Film, TV, and Business Strategies at a company called Dave Stewart Entertainment where he produces content, manages musical artists, develops and incubates brands, and builds technology platforms for the media industries. He has been very involved in the launching of a digital, creative community bank called First Artist Bank in partnership with industry leaders including Dave Stewart and former Chairman and CEO of Credit Suisse and Deutsche Bank, Michael Philipp. David has also been developing a high-profile new music competition show which will air on NBC next year.



#### Galen Haws

Galen graduated with honors from Biola University in 2008 and then moved to New York City to pursue a job in finance. In 2009, he married Carissa Fishel, who he met at Bear Creek while in Middle School. In September 2013, he received the designation of Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) upon completing a series of exams. In February 2014, he moved with his wife from New York City to Los Angeles, CA to take the position as Director of Investments to the Screen Actors Guild Producers Pension and Health portfolios. He oversees the management of ~\$3.5 billion in assets. He would also like to note how thankful he is to his teachers at Bear Creek, especially the late Mrs. Hernandez. Galen said, "I will be forever grateful for their sacrifices and am very appreciative for their patience over the years."

#### Nathalia (Almeida) Bartels

Nathalia and her husband, Cory Bartels, a software engineer, have been married for seven years. They met at Texas Tech during their freshman year. They have two children, Hailey, age 4 and Haeden, age 1. They live in Amarillo, TX where Cory works as a software engineer, and Nathalia is a respiratory therapist.



## Class of 2005

#### Kathryn (Mueller) Dron

Kathryn's and husband Dan's little girl, Annabelle June, was born on September 6, 2014 in Issaquah. She weighed 7 lbs. 14 oz. and was 21 inches in length.



#### Barbara (Kautz) Morris

Barbara was married on October 19, 2013 at the W Hotel in Seattle. Her husband Mike works at Amazon as a financial analyst. The couple recently purchased a house in Maple Valley and are very excited to be moving there in December 2014. After working for a top-branded merchandise agency for four years, Barbara needed a change and moved into the digital analytics world at Society Consulting in Bellevue. In her free time, Barbara loves to take cycling classes and spend time with her family including their 3-1/2-year-old Catahoula pup named Henry.



## Class of 2006

### Nathan Joyner

Nathan and his wife Elizabeth are currently living in Newburgh, Indiana, with plans to move back to Washington next summer. Nathan and Elizabeth were married August 13, 2013 in Sandy, Oregon.



### Harold Kim

Harold has relocated to Toronto, Ontario after graduating from the University of Washington with a degree in law, societies, and justice. In August, he started pursuing a J.D./M.B.A. combined degree at the University Of Toronto Faculty of Law and Rotman School of Management. Law school has been challenging, but he manages to stay on top of his reading and composed during the Socratic method cold calls.

## And That's a Wrap Brandon Saw, Class of 2014

By Catherine Fernandez '14



Freshman year of college is a time to meet new people, live in a new city, go on crazy adventures, and for my fellow Bear Creek graduate, a time to try his hand at being an entrepreneur. Brandon Saw, a current freshman at the University of Pennsylvania, has spent the first semester of his freshman year working on a new product, Wrap. Brandon reinvented his workspace by creating a product that would turn the surface of his desk into a whiteboard. Even though this wasn't a new idea—previous solutions destroyed the surface of the desk. Wrap is a flexible film that can be easily applied to the surface of your desk and is custom cut to your exact specifications. It

makes the entire surface dry-erasable, and the adhesive is completely removable. It is created for people who must switch offices and move out of their dorm rooms because when you leave, Wrap comes with you.

Brandon has spent the last four months making this concept into a reality. The work included graphic and website design, networking and advertising, finding suppliers and manufacturers, financial analysis, shooting and editing a promotional video, managing social media sites, and running a month-long Kickstarter campaign. His goal was to raise \$4,000, and he met his goal to say the least. Wrap received 1023 backers and is over 1000% funded!

For Brandon, the hardest part of this project was dealing with all the moving pieces. This whole business was practically a one-man job and everything from finding a supplier to choosing shipping labels, it was all up to him. Even though Wrap has consumed countless weekends and has resulted in many sleepless nights, doing it almost all by himself, he gained some tremendous business experience. What Brandon found most rewarding was the gratification that many people whom he did not know took interest in his product and were willing to become backers and invest in Wrap. When he first thought of the idea last summer, Brandon had no idea to what extent he would be successful, and he is so thankful to see how great it has been received and that all of the hours he has worked on Wrap are eventually beginning to pay off. The work for Brandon is not over yet. His next steps include spending the entirety of Christmas break fulfilling orders, including custom cutting each individual Wrap to the customers' request. Brandon is not sure where he will eventually take Wrap—will he sell the company? Run a small business on the side while pursuing his undergraduate degree? Grow it into a multi-billion dollar industry? There are many possibilities, and he is keeping his options open.

## A Shared Passion: Whitney (Engel) Brammer, Class of 2007 Jackson Brammer, Class of 2008

By Dani Erickson '09



It isn't uncommon for Whitney to return home from work to a house echoing with screaming music. Maybe that is not the most welcoming sound, but she knows it is only her husband, Jackson, studying the day's heavy science and medical content.

"Music is my fuel for studying," says Jackson. "I need to keep my brain entertained enough that I can focus on studying." And finding himself in

the midst of his third year of medical school and diagnosed with ADHD just the year before, Jackson plays whatever music he needs in order to achieve the hyper-focused attention he requires. "I like the way I learn, the way my brain works; I see things other people don't."

It is the unique things he picks up on, this hyper-focus, that Whitney says makes Jackson who he is. "Sometimes he has a hard time filtering all the information," she said. "But when he's there with someone who's hurting—not just physically, but emotionally, too—it's a beautiful thing."

"I don't think the last 'D' in ADHD is accurate," Jackson says. "It isn't a disorder or a crutch; it's just a label for what I am experiencing." Jackson studies medicine at Loma Linda University, a Seventh-day Adventist institution whose mission is "to make man whole." It is here that he was introduced to his "ADHD superpowers" and where he pursues the skills to, in turn, aid others. "There isn't anything much more cool than helping someone through a hard time," he says.

The Loma Linda mission statement aligns with Jackson's motivation, and it is clear that he and Whitney are also matched in that way. Whitney discovered her passion for healing during her undergraduate years at the University of Washington, where she also earned her master's in occupational therapy. She now works at Arlington Gardens Care Center in Riverside, helping

people regain their skills and abilities to be as independent as possible in everyday life.

"I like seeing people make progress," she says. "I like seeing their excitement when they realize what they can do." She loves the look on a man's face when he can finally grasp a ball after his stroke. She loves the relationships she develops there: meeting a woman in incredible pain from a broken hip, working with her, earning her trust, building a mutual comfort, and finally seeing her rehearse how to safely get up off the floor on her own just months after her previous fall.

Another thing Whitney and Jackson have in common is their mutual desire to be seen humbly and transparently for who they really are. Jackson used medical school as an example. He described how our culture holds doctors in such esteem, but no doctor or medical student, himself included, leads a perfect life. He cautioned against thinking successful people do not have problems; everybody has troubles, and no one is alone in that.

Similarly, the Brammers shared that they do not want their relationship to be mistaken as perfect, either. They have faced times of diagnoses, depressions, anxieties, and divorce statistics, both for getting married young and for going through the pressure cooker of medical school. The two met and started dating while students at Bear Creek, took a short break after Whitney graduated, then got back together at UW where they both lived in Vision 16, a men's and woman's Christian housing community. They married the summer before Jackson's senior year of undergraduate studies and Whitney's final year of graduate school in order to get a solid year of marriage under their belts before Jackson began medical school. Having been together for so long, Whitney admitted to thinking their marriage would be easy, "But it's not," she said. "You think you know [someone], but there are always surprises."

Nevertheless, it is their commitment to each other that binds them, and they celebrate that. "I get to see how he's struggling, what he's working for, just as he witnessed me as I worked my degree in occupational therapy," Whitney said. They have designated Friday nights as "date night," and work to spend time together and outdoors despite the constant pressure to study. And they continue to get closer to each other—tighter as a team—every day.

## Class of 2006

### Continued

#### Inness Pryor

Inness is in the community counseling graduate program at Seattle University. Her partner bought his first house, and they live in Madison Valley now with two odd but delightful shelter dogs. They traveled to Grenoble, France in June and road-tripped to and through Yellowstone in September.



## Class of 2007

#### Alex Higinbotham

Alex just started the second year of his M.B.A. at UW's Foster School of Business. Between full-time work, school, leading YoungLife at Bear Creek, and serving as Vice President of the Bear Creek Alumni Leadership Committee, he still manages to get some traveling in, having recently visited friends in Dallas. He's also looking forward to some more sunshine on an upcoming trip to Mexico.

#### Katie (Price) McRoberts

Katie graduated from the University of Washington in June with a master's of arts in comparative religion. She married Jake



McRoberts in September at her parents' home on Bainbridge Island. In December and January, Katie and Jake will honeymoon in Europe and the Arctic Circle in search of the Northern Lights.

#### Katherine Ross

After taking a few years off, Katie returned to USC in August to begin her first year at the Keck School of Medicine in Los Angeles. Though unsure of her eventual specialty at this time, Katie loves her classes, especially gross anatomy dissections. She is participating in the U.S. Navy Health Professions Scholarship Program, so plans to serve as a naval doctor after she completes medical school.

#### Ryan Tilton

Ryan and his wife Sandra were married in 2014. He started a telecom company called Vestalink ([www.vestalink.com](http://www.vestalink.com)). It was a successful year as the company went from just 200 clients to over 4500!

#### Nick Williams

Nick completed an M.Ed. from Framingham State this past summer and this year wed Luisa González in Venezuela on December 26. Nick is also excited to become *papi* to Luisa's adorable 5-year-old son, Luis Miguel. Nick and his little family will reside in Venezuela while Luisa finishes her medical studies. They plan to return to the States in 2016 so that Nick can pursue a Ph.D. in sustainable development and where Luisa hopes to set up a midwifery practice.

## Class of 2008

#### Carolyn Heine

In June, Carolyn graduated with her master's in library and information science from the University of British Columbia. Carolyn then moved to Riverside, CA where she accepted a tenure-track faculty position at California Baptist University as their new instructional services librarian. When she's not teaching



or assisting students and faculty in their research, she's pursuing her own research about the implementation of institution-wide information literacy assessment practices.

#### Todd Lien

This year has been a year of change for Todd. He was attending a respiratory therapy program with plans to pursue a pharmaceuticals postgraduate degree at UW, but experienced a change in trajectory from science to acting. He recently moved to Hollywood to study for a M.F.A. in acting for film at the New York Film Academy in Los Angeles. This year he started working on commercials and TV shows in Seattle and Los Angeles. Several of these have been on air already. Now he has decided to commit himself to acting and singing professionally. This year he also participated in singing competitions, such as *Supernova Singing Competition* (top 10), the *Top Idol* (top 6), *The Voice of China in North America* (top 3), and *The Chinese Idol* (selected U.S. representative to compete in China).

## Class of 2009

#### William McCahill

Will graduated from Gonzaga and now works at Microsoft as a business analyst in their games studio. Will's wife, **Brittanie (Vander Weide) McCahill '09**, graduated with her master's in marriage and family counseling from Gonzaga this past May. She now works for Populus Group as a client services coordinator. They are excited to be finally living in the same city, and recently brought home their first puppy.

## Class of 2009

### Continued

#### Beth (Graham) Patterson

After graduating from Washington State University in May 2013 with a degree in neuroscience, Beth spent the 2013-2014 school year working as a substitute teacher and science aide at Bear Creek. On May 25, 2014, she married Jade Patterson at a small winery outside of Yakima. Jade and Beth met at Washington State University, where he studied chemical engineering. In July, they moved to Denver, CO so that Beth could begin medical school at the University



of Colorado. Jade works for an oil and gas company outside of Denver, and they love the beauty and sunshine in the Mile High City.

#### Courtney (Wallis) Storti

Courtney married Andrew Storti on July 18, 2014 amongst friends and family in Redmond, WA. The newlyweds live in



Bellevue where Courtney and Andrew both work. Courtney is finishing her first year at Mars Jewett Financial Group, a financial planning firm, after graduating from Seattle Pacific University in June 2013. Andrew and Courtney are currently serving in the youth group at Westminster Chapel in Bellevue while also helping plant a church in Central Seattle. They both feel so blessed by the life God has given them!

## Class of 2010

#### Carson Baker

Carson recently began graduate school at the University of Washington in structural engineering. In this program, he is doing research on concrete and steel. Last summer he worked at KPFF Consulting Engineers as a design engineer. He is currently living in U Village with three friends. Carson has been on the adventurous side, taking road trips to California and riding down long mountain roads in a handmade luge!

#### Megan Cheever

Megan is finishing her illustration degree at Academy of Art University in San Francisco. She recently completed a three-month internship as a concept artist at Cloud Imperium Games in Austin, TX and had her contract extended as associate concept artist. She anticipates working there full-time as a lead character concept artist on the game *Star Citizen*. She has been enjoying the Texas heat and sunshine where the occasional drizzle makes it feel like an average day back in Redmond!

#### Angela Martucci

In May 2014, Angela graduated from Gonzaga University with a B.A. in public relations and a minor in advertising. Since graduation, she has been working for MSLGROUP, a public relations firm in Seattle. Angela spends her days planning integrated marketing campaigns as well as managing and designing content for client's social media sites. So far, this year has been full of exciting changes, including a ring! On September 21, Angela said, "yes" next to a gorgeous alpine lake to college-boyfriend, Chris Hirning. Angela and Chris have been dating for three



years and are best friends; they can't wait to start their newest adventure together. In October 2015, Angela and Chris will become "Mrs. and Mr. Hirning" surrounded by family and friends. Until then, Angela is enjoying living in Seattle, working, and planning her wedding.

## Class of 2011

#### Gannon McCahill

Gannon and Nichole Crews '11 are engaged to be married. They are both currently attending Baylor University and will graduate in May. Gannon's degree is in finance and real estate; Nichole is studying nutrition. Their wedding is planned for June in Seattle after which they plan to move to Dallas where he will begin work as an investment analyst for J.P. Morgan and Nichole will complete a year-long nutrition internship (a requirement to become a certified dietician).

## Class of 2012

#### Erik Domas

Eric Domas is currently a junior at Whitworth University, and he is pursuing a degree in biology. Last summer he interned at Seattle Genetics. This January he plans to go to Guatemala on a medical mission trip.



## Class of 2013

### Alyssa Buchanan

Alyssa is currently in her sophomore year of college at Baylor University. She is majoring in community health and is hoping to go on to occupational therapy school. Last summer she had the privilege of interning at Little Bit Therapeutic Riding Center in Redmond. As an intern she learned how to run and teach therapeutic riding lessons, and eventually taught a variety of lessons. If she wasn't teaching a lesson, she was making lesson plans, riding, and working with the horses. She learned more about occupational and physical therapy, specifically with the use of horses (also known as hippotherapy). She participated in many of the hippotherapy lessons there, helping the physical and occupational therapists with the riders. It was an enriching and amazing experience. She is



blessed by what each individual rider taught her this summer and loved every moment she got to spend there with them.

## Class of 2014

### Emily McBride

Emily is in her freshman year at Westmont College studying English on the secondary education credentialing track with a Spanish minor. She has an internship as a liberal arts ambassador tutoring kids after school twice a week. Next fall she plans to study abroad in Mexico.

## Parents of Alumni Stay Connected



Dominic and Leah Levasseur, Helen Twentyman, and Vivian Hom



Anne McDonough

Once a part of The Bear Creek School community, always a part of Bear Creek! Stay connected to other parents and keep up with what is happening today at Bear Creek through parents of alumni activities. We hold two fun events each year, a social gathering in the fall and a service project in the spring. Co-hosted by the Alumni Leadership Committee, our spring event will once again feature a service project to bless the children served by Olive Crest. Watch for your invitation to this morning of good food, fellowship, and care for at-risk children. Visit [www.tbcs.org/parent](http://www.tbcs.org/parent) and click on Parents of Alumni tab to update your contact information.

# Christianity and Personality: Looking Past Myers-Briggs

By Jake Casale '14

From *The Dartmouth Apologia A Journal of Christian Thought* with permission to reprint from the author.

“And blessed are those  
Whose blood and judgment are so well commingled,  
That they are not a pipe for Fortune’s finger  
To sound what stop she please.”<sup>1</sup>

Hamlet is a man paralyzed by the tumult in his soul, unable to control his powerful feelings of rage, betrayal, and sadness enough to follow through on the course of revenge he has planned; he longs to be among those more balanced in spirit. The question of what this balance actually consists of, however, is relevant far beyond the pages of Shakespeare’s magnum opus. Though the Bard is one of the most potent elucidators of the human condition, writers have noticed and commented on the duality of the human soul since the beginning of the Common Era, centuries before *Hamlet* was penned—and have continued to do so to the present day. The societal struggle to define the proper relationship between logical thought and passionate feeling within the human cognitive process is a recurring topic of discourse, one on which it seems a lasting consensus cannot be generated. Reason and emotion are often cast as opposing players in the drama of human motivation, with one or the other emphasized as more conducive to right living. The pendulum has swung back and forth throughout history—for example, the Stoics in the Roman Empire sought to achieve inner peace through the subjugation of emotion by rationality, but writers in the Renaissance and Romantic eras fought against this classical interpretation by arguing that all of man, including his mind, is ruled by the heart. Though the dialogue continues today, it has become more subdued after the cultural rise of postmodern thought, which suggests that as long as an individual is true to his or her inner self, he or she will lead a happy and fulfilling life.

Even so, why is this struggle—the subject of numerous debates, poems, and household squabbles—such a prevalent part of human history? The preoccupation arguably stems from the human capacity for contemplative self-reflection, which fosters a desire for self-understanding. There are two tiers of questions surrounding the self:

the most basic involves foundational identity, or the ubiquitous musing, “Who am I?” The second, more complex tier involves twin components: *how* the self functions and *why* it functions that way. The avenues through which people have historically pursued self-understanding are multi-faceted, but two are particularly prevalent: personality theory and spiritual exploration. Indeed, within the Christian community of 21<sup>st</sup> century America, the topic of spiritual personality has become popular. Some of the most widely used worldwide personality tests have

been incorporated into the formation of church leadership/ministry teams, and discussions abound in small groups about how God, in His divine wisdom, creates every individual uniquely and purposefully. It is thus commonly accepted that wherever an individual naturally falls on the reason-emotion continuum is where God has placed them. Yet the theological context in which this position is placed is often problematic, as is the notion of a reason-emotion “continuum.” Improper interpretations of the position give rise to several implications that are contrary to what Christianity has to say about God’s intentions for human personality and community. The most easily accessible path to explore and challenge these implications—and in doing so, re-contextualize personality within an accurate theological framework—is through the reason-emotion dichotomy, but the results of such an exploration are equally applicable to other sectors of personality. First, it is important to understand exactly what is meant by personality in society at large before addressing how that definition has,

in turn, interacted with Christianity.

Personality psychology encompasses the wide variety of theories on what exactly constitutes an individual’s interior self. Before any real treatment of personality can be given, it is crucial to note that no consensus or universal definition exists within the academic realm, although a basic assumption is common to each theory: individuals are similar in some ways, but different in others.<sup>2</sup> Beyond this fundamental postulation, several factors can contribute to a theory; dominant patterns of behavior and decision-making, expectations and preferences, reaction to social and cognitive stimuli, and self-perception are just a few major elements that can be emphasized. Generally, a



theory will account for human behavior by suggesting a framework through which these factors can be organized. However, it is one thing to be a psychological theorist who devotes years to mastering and reconciling the vast body of often contradictory conjecture surrounding personality, and another to be an individual possessing a cursory knowledge of the discipline. Within the populace, the percentage of the latter far exceeds the former, but the desire for self-understanding remains constant—not just in an esoteric sense, but also as a matter of necessity, since society is built upon organizations that are dependent on collaboration and partnership. In other words, humans cannot live and work with other humans without forming relationships, and relationships demand a level of personal understanding.

This helps to explain the popularity of personality tests, which lend people a seemingly well-rounded measure of insight into themselves without the time commitment and mental octane required to digest academic literature. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is particularly ubiquitous in the commercial world, as “eighty-nine companies out of the U.S. Fortune 100 make use of it for recruitment and selection or to help employees understand themselves or their co-workers.” It is estimated that 2.5 million Americans take the test each year<sup>3</sup>, not accounting for the various facsimiles of the test accessible on the Internet. After completing dozens of “either-or” multiple choice questions, the test-taker is given one of sixteen possible types that arises from the combination of where a person falls in each of the four bi-polar categories the test examines: Introvert-Extrovert, Sensing-Intuitive, Thinking-Feeling, and Perceiving-Judging. For example, David Keirse (creator of a test closely associated with Myers-Briggs) speculated based on observed behavior that Oprah Winfrey is an ENFJ, while Marie Curie was likely an INTP. Ultimately, the MBTI provides an easily graspable framework through which differences in personality can be viewed. If Person X is a thinker, he or she processes largely through reason, just as Person Y (a feeler) would tend towards emotional processing. The key phrase here is “tend towards.” At best, the test can only indicate which type of processing a person naturally favors—taking it as a unilateral definition would be an exercise in folly, as research shows that “as many as three quarters of test takers show a different personality type when tested again.”<sup>4</sup> It is hardly a secret that humans are dynamic beings who change over time; thus, the MBTI functions well as a localized diagnostic (assuming, of course, that one has the self-clarity to answer the questions in a way that corresponds with reality).

However, the test is used as far more than a localized diagnostic by most companies, organizations, psychologists, and educators. Whether it determines aptitude for a specific job or tells an elementary school-age child how he or she learns best, the results of personality tests are rarely taken with a grain of salt; instead, they are accepted as truth. In the words of Annie Murphy Paul, “For almost a hundred years [the tests have] provided a technology, a vocabulary, and a set of ideas describing

who we are, and many Americans have adopted these as our own. The judgments of personality tests are not always imposed; often they are welcomed. And what, some will ask, is wrong with that?”<sup>5</sup> The simple answer is that an approximation of truth is not a substitute for truth itself. To treat it as such is to miss the bigger, more complicated picture of the human psyche. In fact, an individual’s approximation of his or her own personality (i.e. self-perception) can be termed a psychological construct.

While many theories speculate on the avenues of construct formation, one is particularly attuned to the role of personality tests. The theory of constructive alternativism postulates that “a person’s psychological processes are channelized by the way in which he anticipates events. This is to say that human behavior is basically anticipatory rather than reactive.”<sup>6</sup> In other words, it is too simplistic to say a person’s self is formed through the accumulated effects of thousands of external stimuli. Rather, the self is pre-eminently formed by how a person anticipates the future will take shape. Furthermore, an element of “response planning” is involved as an individual comes to understand herself by identifying her most likely future responses to potential events. Such anticipation is predicated on self-reflection. The

results of personality tests can thus profoundly influence the way an individual perceives her own tendencies of response. Armed with knowledge of her type, she may be drawn to self-select into certain response patterns that accord with the type, driven by an evidence-founded sense of pre-determined inevitability. Thus, over time, tendencies can come to be seen as certainties, and the personal construct is molded according to the MBTI type. To pursue other avenues of response would upset the construct, which could cause anxiety, fear, and even guilt.<sup>7</sup> Person X, who understands herself as a thinker, assumes she will respond to all events, problems, and trials with logic. Person Y, the feeler, believes her response will be emotional. The unexamined construct has become one massive, repeated, self-fulfilling prophecy.

This process of construct formation, especially through personality tests, has an array of implications for the psyche, but for the purposes of discussing Christianity’s interaction with personality theory, it is also crucial to explore how the construct affects a second sector of human psychology: motivation, the pursuit of goals, and the fulfillment of needs. While behavior can be approached as construct-regulated, it can also be seen as regulated by motivation in the pursuit of goals.<sup>8</sup> This framework suggests that “goals influence ongoing thought and emotional reactions in addition to behavior [and that] goals are accessible to conscious awareness, although there is no requirement that the goal be represented in consciousness while the person is in active pursuit of it.” Finally, in this context goals are defined as “objectives that a person strives to attain or avoid”, which is quite a broad statement that can be applied to both long-term pursuits and day-to-day activities. Indeed, the latter category could contain events

Humans cannot live and work with other humans without forming relationships, and relationships demand a level of personal understanding.

that may seem positively mundane compared to what the former refers to; after all, the gulf between “be home on time for dinner” and “secure a seat in the House of Representatives” looks wide. But both objectives impact the nature of the cognitive process and require a motivational impetus to complete. Moreover, as for goals, it is not necessary for needs to be consciously represented in order to be pursued—some of these needs are ever-present in the human subconscious, compelling an individual to fulfill them. Note that needs are distinct from desires; if a desire is not met, a person may not experience a certain type of pleasure or gratification, but functionally and emotionally they will be no worse for wear. An unfulfilled need, however, is guaranteed to impact well-being.<sup>9</sup>

So we have goals and needs, both of which are centralities around which behavior is organized in order to facilitate the most effective pursuit of both. According to constructive alternativism, humans also organize behavior based on how they anticipate they will react to events. It can be assumed that the achievement of goals, as a process fixed within the temporality of human existence, consists of a series of successive events, which opens up the possibility for an integrated theory of personality that incorporates both constructive alternativism and goal-oriented behavior: personal constructs become the anticipatory methodology through which humans pursue goals and fulfill needs. This integration has distinct ramifications for the Christian faith, in which a relationship with God is both the ultimate goal and the deepest need.

This is where the thinker-feeler dichotomy comes into play, for according to the philosophy behind the MBTI and other tests, individuals are fundamentally locked into favoring one over the other. Moreover, this “favoring” implies an opposite-poled axis of trust; if a person trusts reason, he or she will naturally have an equivalent distrust of emotion, or vice versa. Yet this seems to be an inherently broken psychological set-up, as the presence of both needs and goals in the human psyche implies the necessity of *both* emotion and reason in the human cognitive process. Since it is characteristic of needs that they are felt (as opposed to thought), they are closely intertwined with emotions. Indeed, some needs are primarily emotional, including the needs for security, for goodness, for beauty, and to love and be loved.<sup>10</sup> The satisfaction of such needs is necessary for inner peace and full mental health. The definition of goals is broader, for several goals that humans pursue have no emotional attachments, but require reason and logic to carry out. More importantly, however, reason is a certifier; it legitimizes actions and beliefs based on objective principles, a solid foundation that filters the instability that can arise from the subjectivity of emotions. Clearly, both reason and emotion have inherent value, and the ideal construct would incorporate both in order to fulfill the broadest possible spectrum of both needs and goals. But, as Shakespeare notes, such a harmonious

synthesis is rarely observed, so much so that the individuals that exhibit it can truly be called “blessed.”

As alluded to above, because God endowed mankind with both reason and emotion, it follows that His creatures cannot truly flourish in life without both. Moreover, since all truth is contained within God, it is impossible to fully *know* God (i.e. be in relationship with Him) without both emotion and reason, just as human relationships require both to function with stability. Indeed, God created earthly reality good,<sup>11</sup> and his first human creations, Adam and Eve, were no exception—until their disobedience released sin upon creation. Thus, one of the many tragedies of the Fall is that the proper intercourse between reason and emotion no longer comes naturally to mankind—and what’s more, society sees the two as largely incompatible at best, enemies at worst. However, that is not meant to be the end of the story. By sending His Son to die for the sins of humanity, God facilitated the road to redemption for creation, beginning with His Son’s own resurrection. Thus humanity is able to live in relationship with God once again, and dwelling in that relationship engenders a growth and transformation of the mind and soul.<sup>12</sup> Thus, ideally, an individual who

has entered into a restorative relationship with God commits to surrendering all aspects of their life—including the personal construct—to God, Who begins to mold the individual, psyche and all, according to His perfect vision of who He created him or her to be.

It is at this critical juncture that misconceptions about the nature of personality among the Christian community, both at an individual and collective level, can impact the realization of this redemption. As stated before, the MBTI functions well as a current, localized diagnostic of an individual’s leanings in personality, assuming

she answers in a way that corresponds with reality, but treating it as both infallible and fixed often leads the individual to reduce her capacities by anticipating that she will respond to events in certain ways. When the test’s bipolar categories are emphasized in group settings, this same attitude can be extended to a larger scale: individuals not only restrict themselves, they also believe that whatever capacities the test prescribes for their peers are unalterable as well.

This ultimately fosters a community that is defined solely by the differences of its members, which counters the formation of cohesive relationships because it does not generally promote finding common ground. When reason and emotion are cast as enemies at war, the best that can be hoped for is a *reconciliation*: the enemies lay down their arms and call a truce. Yet a community that is predicated on a premise of difference has already begun to move away from reconciliation, instead functioning as a collection of closed systems; individuals have no checks in place to prevent their constructs from becoming restricted to one side of the dichotomy, which in turn limits the range of goals that can be fulfilled, needs that can be met, and ultimately, truth that can be known. C.S. Lewis, in his treatise on education,

Both reason and emotion have inherent value, and the ideal construct would incorporate both in order to fulfill the broadest possible spectrum of both needs and goals.

*Abolition of Man*, noticed a manifestation of this problem occurring in contemporary school systems in the form of instructors teaching “the belief that all emotions aroused by local association are in themselves contrary to reason and contemptible [...] [the instructors] have cut out of [the student’s] soul, long before he is old enough to choose, the possibility of having certain experiences which thinkers of more authority than they have held to be generous, fruitful, and humane.”<sup>13</sup> Despite his own commitment to knowledge and education, Lewis feared that the loss of emotion in the youth of his era would result in stunted growth of the new generation’s mental capacities for creativity and morality, and his address was directed equally at secular and religious audiences. For the believer in God, the stakes are even higher: whether emotion or reason is the missing element, the individual is ultimately robbed of the ability to know God in His entirety. No price is more costly.

But what did Lewis think caused this loss of emotion? Simply put, the instructors had failed to understand reason and emotion as *complimentary*—as different approaches to the same body of truth. The problem thus lies with how the relationship between the two is contextualized. They are not diametric opposites; instead, ideally, they work together to push an individual towards truth and the ultimate joy of life. This completely contradicts the messages of unavoidable tension that personality tests transmit throughout society. Yet, because these messages are so ingrained within the societal mindset, it is hard to imagine what this improved situation even looks like. Indeed, the mindset itself may, at its root, be an inescapable result of the fallen world. Though people can indeed be redeemed and transformed by a relationship with Christ, the reality of brokenness continues to pervade this existence and will do so for every individual until he or she fully enters God’s presence in heaven. But this does not mean that humans cannot move towards this complementary understanding of reason and emotion while still on earth, for Christ’s work within the human soul is essential for moving that soul to final completion. Therefore, the work’s importance cannot be understated, and it is through that work that we begin—however fleetingly—to glimpse God’s original design for the human psyche as a tool for understanding our lives. What is one way in which Christ enacts this work? The answer lies within a Christian community in which the members are tied together through fundamental kinship: God uses a sharing of life experiences on the corporate level to engender a complimentary perspective on the individual level.

It is not surprising that community is a significant restorative avenue of Christ’s work, for God created us not only to be in relationship with Him, but also with each other.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, God intends His children to share life with each other through mutual teaching and experience, for not only does God create people purposefully, He creates them in His image—mankind reflects God’s nature, both individually and corporately. The real intention and beauty behind Christian community, thus, is the collective imaging of God that arises only when the church comes together in relationship; a dimension of God is reflected that is not seen through the individual’s own power, but instead becomes apparent when he or she is joined with his or her brothers and sisters in Christ. This sharing allows God to use people

as conduits for His truth in one another’s lives by providing living, breathing demonstrations of the various way in which He can be sought. When one Christian is brought to understand how another relates to God, he or she is invited to share in that relationship, and that period of time spent dwelling with God in the presence of another leaves him or her with a new layer of kinesthetic perspective that colors behavior, mental functioning, and spiritual life. Community, thus, is used by God to enrich the lives of each member and move His children closer towards both Himself and His ultimate vision for their lives. These two results of God’s transformative work are simply not the focus of the MBTI, or any other such personality tests. The information such tests provide can definitely be useful, but according to Scripture, an individual’s identity in Christ is preeminent. Perhaps it is these individuals who Hamlet speaks of: people who do not appear preoccupied with defining themselves at present, but instead look to their Creator in eager expectation of who they will become.

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3 “Myers-Briggs Widely Used But Still Controversial,” 12 December 2013, <<http://www.psychometric-success.com/personality-tests/personality-tests-popular-tests.htm>>

4 Annie Murphy Paul, *The Cult of Personality Tests: How Personality Tests Are Leading Us to Miseducate Our Children, Mismanage Our Companies, and Misunderstand Ourselves* (New York: Free Press, 2005) xxi

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6 George Kelly, *The Psychology of Personal Constructs: Clinical Diagnosis and Psychotherapy* (New York: Routledge, 2003) 3

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8 Robert A. Emmons, *The Psychology of Ultimate Concerns: Motivation and Spirituality in Personality* (New York: Guilford, 1999) 22-23

9 Clifford Williams, *Existential Reasons for Belief in God: A Defense of Desires and Emotions for Faith* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011) 27-28

10 Williams 21-27

11 Genesis 1:31

12 Romans 2:12

13 C.S. Lewis, *The Complete C.S. Lewis Signature Classics* (New York: HarperCollins, 2002) 471

14 Jerram Barrs, *Echoes of Eden: Reflections on Christianity, Literature, and the Arts* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2013) 29

# I Found Awe in East Africa

By Tajel Mehta '10

Tajel recently shared her thoughts about a service trip to East Africa with Karen Beman, Director of Alumni Affairs. Tajel is the daughter of Dr. Nawzer Mehta and School Nurse Clare Mehta and a 2014 graduate of the University of San Diego.

I was tired of textbooks. I understand that this is going to be published in a school magazine so let me explain. I loved learning, still do. No joke, I will be one of those retired ladies taking “Introduction to Middle Eastern History” at the local community college fifty-odd years down the road. But half-way through my last semester at the University of San Diego I realized that there I was, poised to receive my B.A. in international relations, and all I really knew about the world came from the ridiculously overpriced books I ordered at the beginning of every semester and the musty supplementary readings I fished out of the dimly lit stacks at the library. An overwhelming consciousness that I had spent the last eighteen consecutive years in a classroom hit me like a ton of bricks. I had been sitting at desks, listening to teachers who cared about my success, in beautiful, warm private schools nearly my entire life. I added up how much money spent so far on my academic career, and after making a mental note to be extra-syrupy sweet with my “I love you guys” on my next Skype date with the parents, I decided two things:

1. After eighteen years at a desk, I was restless and needed to stretch my legs, and
2. I really needed to do something for someone else.

College can be a selfish time, and in a way, it should be. You need to take care of you and figure out who that is in a new context. Aside from schoolwork, your only real responsibility is yourself. I guess I was ready for that to change. I wanted to apply what I had been studying for the past four years to the real world, and I wanted to collaboratively assist people in the process. It was a bit ambitious and definitely naïve, but spoiler alert: I did exactly that. It was the best month of my life.

On August 1, after months of vaccinations, an FBI background check, a visa application, stacks of paperwork, fundraising, and treating all of my clothes with mosquito repellent, I sat by my gate at Sea-Tac with several boarding passes stowed in my passport. All I knew of East Africa was the stories my dad told me of Nairobi, where he was born and raised. To me, it was magic. But it was another world. It was going to be a long journey to Tanzania, and I had never in my life been so unsure of what was going to happen. My self-doubt was amplified ten-fold by my seatmate on the flight from Dulles to Addis Ababa, a beautiful Ethiopian woman with a child resting upon her abdomen. I was smiling at her daughter, who had inquisitive light brown eyes and, I thought, incredible fortitude for a two-year-old on a crowded, turbulent plane, when she asked me where I was headed. I told her my final stop, and she looked at me in mock-horror. “My girl, you are going to Dar es Salaam?” I smiled at my ability to elicit such a response and at how much I enjoyed the

sound of her words. And as she implored me to come to Addis my heart began to pick up pace; it increased exponentially the closer I got to Dar.

As my final flight began its descent into the city I would call home for the next month, my bloodshot, puffy eyes widened. The entire airplane window was filled with a staggering view of a jungle of corrugated iron. It was nothing like what I had drummed up in my mind. It wasn't beautiful. Not at all, in fact, it was ugly. How was I supposed to reconcile my original interpretation of East Africa with the reality that I now faced? This was what I asked myself in the car, as I looked up at ads in Swahili on the side of the road that I understood to be for Coca-Cola and mobile phone networks (because some things are universal). I got my answer almost immediately. To my left, to my right, crossing the road, with buckets on their heads and children on their hips, the women wore the most brilliant colors I had ever seen. If a woman in the States wore these colors, they would not look the same. Without the dreary, ubiquitous gray of the surrounding city, they would not shine so brightly. I've never seen such colors. When people say that a city is beautiful, they usually mean the lovely view, the organized infrastructure, and the architecturally pleasing skyline. I found no such beauty in Dar. Instead, I found it in the people, in the relationships I forged, in the stories I heard, in the discussions I had.

I lived in a house with Tanzanians and other volunteers from around the world. I was the only American and took my fair share of chaff for this (all in good fun though). I met citizens of Denmark, Britain, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Finland, and Canada and got on with them all very well as we were all there for the same reason after all. I soon discovered I was the only volunteer working at the hospital; the rest went off to orphanages in the morning to teach the children English.

My day began with coffee and toast, which I slathered with peanut butter (my prized possession, stowed in my suitcase). There was no end of teasing over the peanut butter. Apparently, Americans are known for our love of the stuff, a stereotype I proudly reinforced with gusto at the table, through sticky, unintelligible mouthfuls. I then bartered with a *bajaji* or *piki-piki* driver for a decent fare to Mbwani Hospital. A *bajaji* is like a motorized rickshaw and a *piki-piki* is a motorcycle. The *piki-piki* drivers drove way too fast on treacherous dirt paths, without helmets and even before I saw the aftermath of such means of transportation at the hospital, I decided that I would rather grit my teeth and pay the extra for a *bajaji* then risk the very real possibility of brain damage on a *piki-piki*. Upon arriving at the hospital, I would find Dr. Baracka for grand rounds, observe in theater 1, or work at the HIV clinic. All three of these options were eye-opening.

I saw things I will remember for the rest of my life. I sat with twins after a Caesarean section and soothed them as they were given their vitamin K injections and silver nitrate drops in the eyes. I held a woman's hand and breathed with her as her post-op infection was reopened and cleaned. I felt like fainting as she lay there writhing in

pain and thought about my intolerance for a mere paper cut. I was told over and over when I asked about their lack of anesthesia, their lack of EKG machines, their disregard for proper sterilization, “This is Africa; we do not have the resources.” At the HIV clinic, I learned all of the combinations for the antiretroviral drugs and filled prescriptions for the patients who would walk many kilometers in order to take care of themselves properly.

I saw all of this and more, but the most intense experience I had happened on my first day at the hospital. My participation relied solely on my initiative. On the first day, I marched up to the nurses’ station and asked how I could be of assistance. Initially, the nurses would whisper in Swahili about me and wouldn’t include me in their conversations. So in order to get in their good graces, I decided to focus on the head nurse. If I could get her to like me, the rest would surely follow. So I would ask her intelligent questions about the patients while the doctor examined them. For example, “Sister, he looks as though he has a distended bowel; what is the cause?” She gladly explained that he had BPH, benign prostatic hyperplasia. And on it would go, through our rounds, until finally the other nurses began to anticipate my questions and kindly walked me through the diagnosis and treatment in English. I was feeling quite triumphant at my success with the staff when my eyes fell on our last patient of the day. His bed was in the corner of the men’s ward, which explained why I had yet to see him. Though, if Dr. Baracka hadn’t stopped by his bedside, I might have believed the bed empty. The usual garrulous buzz of the nurses died away, and the smile fell from my face as I listened to the hushed voice of the doctor. Though I didn’t know much Swahili, it being my first week in Tanzania; I didn’t need language to understand what was happening. Before my eyes, lay a man dying of AIDS whom I later found out was my age. His ebony skin was pale and pulled taut against his frame, which I remember thinking made him look as though he was gradually fading into the white tiled wall. Dr. Baracka later explained to me that he had been sharing his antiretroviral drugs with his sister because they are so expensive and now he was going to die because they don’t work unless you take the full dose daily. The look of malaise in his eyes, the cracked lips, and the skin lesions across his face stay with me, and I expect they always will.

I felt more like myself than I ever had before. I was stripped down to my most genuine me. I couldn’t hide behind make-up, nice clothes, or pop culture references. I was me in my most unadulterated sense. All that was left was the human experience in its most raw state, and I found I truly had something to offer. It feels very different to come back to the States and immediately begin my job hunt. I went from feeling so useful to now, basically begging someone to hire me so that I can attempt to be of value to a business. Not to sound jaded, but it is a bit sad. It’s as if I had a purpose, and now I am looking for something that I know ultimately won’t be nearly as fulfilling (I suppose I

shouldn’t put that on the cover letters).

But on a more upbeat note, I learned that I am good at teaching. Or not so much teaching, but collaborating. For instance, I would lead discussions with my adult English class that would then turn into heated debates. I asked them to talk about topics that made them uncomfortable at times, like homosexuality (a giant taboo in that part of the world). I would also go to local schools and give HIV awareness seminars/sex education classes. It was all very hands-on which I’ve decided I really enjoy. So, this certainly won’t be my last trip to Africa. Educating the public, encouraging discussion, and thus erasing stigmas, these are important undertakings. So, as much as I wish to go into global health policy, I need to make sure that I don’t stray too far from the personal act of teaching.

This part was the most joyful of my time in Dar. At three in the afternoon, I would go down to a classroom on the grounds and teach

an adult English class. I happened into the position entirely on accident. One evening I was eating my dinner, some rice and bean dish most likely, when I heard one of the volunteers was leaving and her adult English class was going to be left in a lurch if someone didn’t pick it up. So I ended up taking over for her, not knowing what to expect. After I got back from the hospital, I would get my chalk and books and teach for three to four hours. I met the most amazing people in this class. Among them I had two young Masai, a man who begged me to teach him Spanish (which I did), a proud young man from a tribe in the south who challenged all of my teachings and who I came to adore, and an incredibly

gifted woman (the only woman in the class) who I encouraged to go into politics one day. They were a bunch of characters. I would answer their questions about odd words and phrases and in exchange they would tell me stories about growing up in Africa. I’d give them writing assignments, and they would ask for more. It surprised me, this thirst for knowledge. I love to read and enjoyed certain research in college, but this was something entirely different. They were passionate. So I began to ask them questions like, “If you had a seat in parliament, what would you do?” And, “What kind of tribal politics have permeated Tanzanian government, are they antiquated or important?” I asked them questions about unemployment, gender politics, and military policy. They went above and beyond answering my questions. We talked for hours. It was awesome. And I mean that in the most accurate sense of the word. I was in awe.

I intend to get my masters in global health and I know that I have to keep traveling. I want to have a job that takes me all over the world and not just the glamorous places. I want to keep meeting people who awe me. When I am that old retired lady, taking “Introduction to Middle Eastern History,” I want to have been to the pyramids, I want to know the smell of the spiced olives in Tel Aviv and the falafel in Beirut, and I want to know the colors of the clothes in Istanbul.



Tajel with her adult English class in Tanzania



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