

# MODUS VIVENDI

*A Way of Life*



**STRATEGIC PLAN 2024**

**FACULTY PROFILE:  
ALLISON FLETCHER**

**RUNNING THE COVID  
MARATHON: HOW TO  
EMOTIONALLY STAY  
THE COURSE**

**THE BEAR  
CREEK  
SCHOOL  
MAGAZINE**

**SPRING 2021**



# MODUS VIVENDI

*Spring 2021*

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

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



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### BLOG

For an in-depth view into the happenings at Bear Creek, read our blog at [tbcs.org/blog](http://tbcs.org/blog). To receive alerts when new articles are posted, subscribe to the blog by clicking the "bell" icon at the top of the page.

### THE BEAR FACTS

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

### MyBC

Students, parents, and faculty and staff can find a complete list of role-specific resources. See MyBC at the top of any page at [tbcs.org](http://tbcs.org) and log in.

### ON THE COVER

Middle School girls advisory class enjoys the walking path around Redmond Campus that was created last fall by our Building Operations team. The path gives students of all ages additional outdoor space to stretch their legs and take a "brain break," supporting both their social and emotional well-being as well as their academic efforts.

PHOTO BY JANEEN SORENSEN



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# MESSAGE FROM THE HEADMASTER

By Patrick Carruth

## AS I REFLECT ON THE PAST 12 MONTHS,

I can truly say that this has been the most unexpected and difficult year of my career. Our administrative leadership, faculty, staff, and volunteers found ourselves in the position of re-inventing school, striving daily to educate our students in the best way possible in the midst of constantly changing circumstances, and they have done an amazing job.

Even as we strive to meet the challenges of the present, school leadership and trustees have been looking to the future, and we just released our Strategic Plan 2024, to guide the school for the next three years. Look for an article with more information about the Strategic Plan on pages 7 – 9 of this issue.

I am incredibly proud of our teachers and staff who remain steadfastly focused on our mission despite



the many challenges posed by the pandemic. Their dedication, tenacity, resilience, and commitment both to students and to Christ, who is at the heart of our mission, continues to inspire me. Our families and students stepped up as well, partnering with us to follow the new protocols and guidelines that allow us to remain safely open for on-campus learning and to provide for students learning remotely as well. Faculty and staff have demonstrated grace and flexibility through this year's challenges while

remaining focused on enabling students to become the individuals God intends.

If this past year has taught me anything, it has reminded me once again that I am not in control. Our God who is sovereign over all the earth has a plan for each of us, and we are to walk in faith, secure in the knowledge that He is leading us on the journey.





# The Bear Creek School STRATEGIC PLAN 2024

*President and Headmaster Patrick Carruth sat down recently with Andrea Lairson, Chair of the Board of Trustees at The Bear Creek School, to discuss Bear Creek's Strategic Plan 2024. Andrea has served on the Board for over 20 years and as Chair for most of those years. In this article, Andrea and Patrick discuss a little bit of the history of strategic planning at The Bear Creek School, how the school has grown through strategic planning, and lessons learned along the way, particularly in these COVID-19 times. Patrick also details four distinct planks targeted in Strategic Plan 2024.*

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Andrea starts the conversation by reflecting that, "The last two strategic plans were really focused on building the Upper School, and that included a capital campaign, stewarding the permitting process, negotiating with the neighbors so that we could build, and then actually building the building." Going back three or four strategic plans, having a school nurse was one of the goals. Andrea exclaims, "Who would have known that having a nurse as part of a strategic initiative would be so important!"

For Andrea, what stands out from the prior strategic

plan, *Dare to Dream 2020*, is the focus on integrating new technology into the classroom. This initiative meant that all the Middle School and Upper School teachers were trained on remote learning tools during the summer of 2019. So, Andrea remarks, "When COVID-19 hit in March 2020, the Middle School and Upper School teachers were already well on their way in preparation for remote learning."

Finances is another critical aspect of strategic planning, and Andrea shares that with the recommendation of Independent School Management, a well-regarded consulting and research firm, Bear Creek carries at least 20% of its operating budget in cash reserves. This is wise and strategic, providing the school with fiscal stability even in unforeseen situations. It is an important example of the ways in which Bear Creek's proactive strategic planning has been critical during the pandemic.

Andrea also describes how Bear Creek and its Christian identity are central to the school's strategic planning. She states, "It is who we are, and that is not going to change. We have open enrollment, and so we believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to lead Christians to Bear Creek. But we also believe that God is at work in the lives of non-Christians, and non-Christians are welcome." She explains further, "The mission is preserved through Bear Creek's leadership and that, too, was a strategic decision that was made at the school's founding and continues to be critical to Bear Creek's future."

Patrick adds, “I really appreciate the reminder of how God works through his people and how He has been working at The Bear Creek School for more than 30 years—through strategic planning and by having His hand on the school as we work in His kingdom to help students to become the individuals God intends.”

He continues, “As we look to the future, our *Strategic Plan 2024* is a three-year plan with four key planks: culture, people, program, and support.”



The **CULTURE** plank of the Strategic Plan encompasses our faculty and staff culture, as well as our broader school community. Our vision is to nurture a vibrant culture and community that attracts a wide range of missional faculty and staff and families, commits to care for all members as made in God’s image, and establishes The Bear Creek School as a recognizable asset in Redmond and the local community.

Over the next three years, we will work to refine our current internal (faculty and staff) culture to deepen our values of mutual trust, innovation, predictability, and support, which translates into a continually improving student experience and increased satisfaction. This includes training faculty and staff in developing a leadership mindset to value cultural outcomes and systems of execution and accountability.

Arising from our Northwest Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) re-accreditation process, and a key component in our commitment to care, our *No Ordinary People* initiative grounds that commitment to care for our school community in the affirmation that each person unconditionally deserves love, dignity, and respect because all humanity has been created *Imago Dei* (in the image of God) and is one in that common creation. Further, the Scriptures command us to love the Lord and to love our neighbor, which encourages us to be wise

and aware of the unique cultures He has created, to be compassionate by engaging diversity with dignity and respect, and by courageously centering our identity in Christ. These following strategies are central components of *No Ordinary People*:

- Invest in parent volunteer training, workgroups, committees, presentations, and events and activities that provide avenues to learn about one another more deeply and celebrate the diversity of *Imago Dei* in the school community.
- Expand our Community Partnership programs as part of our commitment to care and show compassion for others as made in *Imago Dei*, whether they are in our backyard or on the other side of the world.
- Refine faculty and staff professional development for student care.
- Implement student life curricula which train students to think biblically about loving one’s neighbor and showing dignity and respect to people in word and deed.



The vision for the **PROGRAM** plank is to elevate The Bear Creek School as a model for creative and innovative Christian liberal arts programming and to expand The Bear Creek School market in the local Redmond community and beyond. The pandemic has brought challenges but also given the school the opportunity to try new, innovative ideas and to think differently about how we approach our programs. We are excited to leverage what we learned this past year in ways that will benefit our current students and families as well as to offer a Bear Creek education to more families than was possible in the past. Our strategies to achieve this vision include:

- Invest in innovative curricular and programmatic opportunities that enhance our existing curriculum.



- Leverage innovative practices and technology developed during the pandemic.
- Foster an innovative mindset which leverages technology and creativity to improve efficiency and user experience related to business functions of the school.
- Explore technology-enabled avenues for remote program delivery to new markets.



For the **PEOPLE** plank of the plan, our vision is to secure the mission of The Bear Creek School by making missional work a realistic possibility in the Redmond area, developing the future leadership of The Bear Creek School, and leveraging innovative lessons of the pandemic around staffing resources. We want to make Bear Creek a highly desirable place for people to come and work. Bear Creek faces a number of ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining the best possible faculty and staff, among them the fact that this is an expensive area to live. Strategies for the People plank of the plan include:

- Identify and develop the next generation of school leadership.
- Establish intentional enrollment and employee targets which mirror the changing Eastside population, while maintaining and growing our classical and Christian distinctiveness.
- Deepen and solidify the future of our classical and Christian educational model by creating a new faculty and staff onboarding program and continuing strategic professional development.
- Create an active outreach plan to local, regional, national, and international communities which are missionally aligned to share best practices and skills.



The **SUPPORT** plank of the Strategic Plan is focused on securing the future of The Bear Creek School through long-term planning for measured growth and fiscal stability. To achieve this vision, strategies include:

- Create additional financial accessibility options to increase socio-economic diversification to support and enhance viability and our classical and Christian distinctiveness.
- Continue to strengthen the culture of philanthropy at the school and build long-term support through planned giving and other donor-focused giving programs.
- Complete the campus Master Plan through a Campaign Planning Study, and as warranted by the Study, conduct a philanthropic campaign to fund and build a new Athletics facility that will provide a high-quality and diverse athletics experience to Bear Creek students and families.
- Increase employee salaries to the ninetieth percentile of the National Association of Independent Schools average and increase average benefits.
- Create an active outreach plan to increase enrollment by connecting with local, regional, national, and international communities which are missionally aligned and not currently served by The Bear Creek School.

As we look to the future, we invite you to spend a little bit of time on our Strategic Plan website **[TBCS.ORG/SP2024](https://tbcbs.org/sp2024)** for more details related to the planks described above.

# FACULTY PROFILE:

# ALLISON FLETCHER

BY BROOKE KATO '17







# “KIDS WANT TO FEEL COMFORT AND WARMTH AND KNOW THEY ARE LOVED.”

**ALLISON FLETCHER EXUDES  
JESUS' LOVE AND EMPATHY IN  
HER P4 CLASSROOM DESPITE  
COVID OBSTACLES**

On a typical day in Allison Fletcher's prekindergarten classroom, she likes to gather the four-year-olds around on the floor. "I always say to my students, 'When my hands are messy, my brain is working hard,'" Fletcher said, adding that hands-on learning is an exciting way for the kids to learn. "It's really important for them to have their hands in things."

But in the midst of a pandemic, that familiar, explorative way of learning had to be reworked. COVID-19 has changed the way teachers present in class, with some students in-person and others learning remotely from home. Fletcher has adapted her teaching to a blended classroom, learning to use various technology tools, such as Microsoft Teams and the OWL camera, so she can teach all of her students simultaneously.

"Kids want to feel comfort and warmth and know they are loved," Fletcher said. "It's been a goal of ours to help them feel that, even though we can't hug them."

Instead, she tells her students to hug themselves, give themselves a pat on the back, high five themselves, and remind themselves that Jesus loves them. The four-year-olds learn from distanced observation of each other, instead of close-contact interaction, but Fletcher still does her best to make

them passionate about learning in the classroom.

"I love them like they're our own kids," Fletcher, a mother of two, said. "It's hard to see them grow up and head off to kindergarten."

She quoted Ella Wheeler Wilcox, saying, "With every deed, you are sowing a seed, though the harvest you may not see." Being a preschool teacher, she said, is just like sowing a seed, because although you don't see the end result of their learning right away, eventually the foundation that she laid as their first instructor will grow.

Being a teacher was not originally in Fletcher's plan, but when she began working at Bear Creek as an Office Assistant at the front desk in 2006 and saw the joy emanating from the preschool classroom, she was drawn to it. She returned to school to earn her teaching certificate, then joined the Preschool faculty.

Playing while also learning is the cornerstone of the prekindergarten curriculum. The teachers, Fletcher said, work diligently to create an environment where learning is fun. "Every time I





PHOTO BY LANA OZIK

Allison leads her class in making Mr. Y, as part of their kinesthetic learning strategies. Students use their bodies and motions to help their brains make stronger connections and stay engaged.

would go into the preschool classroom, it seemed like everybody was just playing the entire time, but so much learning was happening,” Fletcher recalled. “I thought, this is such a dream job. You play with children all day long, and at the same time, you have such a great impact on them.”

When Fletcher first graduated from college, she wanted to work in the sports-related realm. She played nearly every sport growing up, sometimes two in the same season. She was so committed to sports that when she broke her nose in softball practice one day, she didn’t go to the hospital. Instead, she went to her next practice for her traveling soccer team and “handled my broken nose the following day,” she recalled with a laugh.

Allison is also a die-hard Green Bay Packers fan, and even owns a share of the team, which her husband gifted to her years ago. When she can travel again, she

will most likely be setting off to see her favorite sports team in action. Although she does not play organized sports anymore, Fletcher remains incredibly active, going on daily walks and encouraging her students to move around in the classroom. “Children are active,



Allison Fletcher at Lambeau Field in 2019





PHOTO BY LANA OZIK

Build it, Read it, Write it with magnet letters on cookie sheets is a hands-on literacy game where students match the letters in each word, sound it out, and then write it on their dry erase board (depending on their level).

so it's a great fit for who I am," she said. "I have to be up and jumping and stretching and active all the time, so I always try to incorporate that into our school days, too."

More than just a sports fanatic, Fletcher is also a mother of two children who attend Bear Creek. She believes that teaching is her life, as well as an immense privilege. "In this role as a teacher, you have to rely so much on Jesus and His plan," she said. "It's a humbling job and such an honor that someone would entrust you with his or her child, especially a preschooler, because it's the first time the preschoolers have left home."

Fletcher's trust in Jesus exudes through her empathy in the classroom. She understands the different challenges students and their families can face because she has faced some of her own. Having been adopted as an infant and then later losing her adoptive parents, Fletcher understands loss. But she also knows what it's

like to gain family and feel nurtured—she reconnected with her birth parents later in life and was also welcomed in "with a ton of love" from her Bear Creek family, whom she refers to as her "friend-latives."

"I think all of that has given me a lot of empathy for challenges that families will have at school," she said. "That journey helped me solidify my own faith through those trials." Not only did she stumble upon a secondary family she never knew she needed, but she also saw the plan Jesus had in store for her. "The most valuable thing is that it's such a family at school," she said. "I feel like I've been adopted twice. Once as an infant, and then I joke sometimes that I was adopted a second time at Bear Creek."

# THE BUILDING OPERATIONS TEAM KEEPS THE SCHOOL SAFE AND RUNNING SMOOTHLY

BY JANEEN SORENSEN

One might think of the Building Operations team at The Bear Creek School as the helpful guys who open and prepare the buildings each day, change the lightbulbs, fix leaky toilets, and set up and tear down our events—the tasks that keep our buildings operating and safe each day. While this is all true, in light of COVID-19, safety has become a primary responsibility. Here is a glimpse into what a day looks like on each of our campuses for three of our Building Operations staff.

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF OUR BUILDING OPERATIONS STAFF

**5:40 A.M.** Mark opens the Upper School gates for the day and checks them for any signs they need repair. Then he walks around the building and makes sure all the exterior lights are working. On his walk, he collects any litter in the drop-off and pick-up area in front of the building. As Mark turns on the hose to supply more water to the Upper School fountain, he notices the connection is leaking and looks like it may have been stepped on. He makes a note to source a



PHOTO BY CINDY MCCAILL

Mark Schnarre keeps tables clean in the Upper School's Nagel Commons.

new hose splitter.

After checking the outdoor areas, Mark stops in his office, where he outfits himself with a mask and the supplies he routinely uses, including Upper School building keys, his name tag, phone, a multi-tool, flashlight, ink pen, Sharpie pen, and blue tape. He then moves through the interior of the Upper School building, listening for the sound of alarms, dripping water, or buzzing lights. He looks for lights that are not working, doors that should be propped open,





**David Dodson** is part of the Building Operations staff at the Redmond Campus Main building. He grew up in Bellevue and has a Bachelor of Arts in education from Eastern Washington University. Dave has been a member of the Building Operations team since 2013 and is one of our thoughtful and intentional Middle School basketball coaches. When Lower School students see him in the halls, they can be overheard saying, “Hi, Mr. Dave!” Dave says, “One of the special moments of my day is connecting with the students and hoping to share a little with them of who I am or what the Lord is doing in my life and work at the school.”

**Thomas McKinnon** is the primary contact for Building Operations at our Valley Campus, home of Bear Creek Preschool. He has been part of the Building Operations team since 2015. He enjoys variety and has worked in various roles at all our buildings. Tom says his favorite part of working at Bear Creek is driving a bus for student field trips and athletics events “all over the state—especially last year’s run during the State basketball tournament!” He enjoys being called Mr. Tom, Mr. T, and Mr. Fixit by both staff and students. Outside of work, he and his wife, Kristin, love raising their four children in Snohomish and taking them on beautiful road trips across the country.

**Mark Schnarre** has been a member of the Building Operations staff since 2001 when his wife Jacky Schnarre, grades 3 through 6 Science Specialist, mentioned that Bear Creek was looking for a night custodian and bus driver. Mark worked nights and then evenings for several years including two years at Valley Campus. Now Mark is the primary Building Operations staff for day-to-day maintenance at the Redmond Campus Upper School building. Mark’s and Jacky’s two sons, Benjamin ’21 and Levi ’23, have been students at Bear Creek since kindergarten.

items for lost and found, or any warmth-loving insects or other creatures that somehow found a way indoors.

**6:30 A.M.** Dave arrives on campus, unlocking the Main building gates and making a slow drive around the school, checking for lights that need replacing and anything that seems out of place. He makes sure the traffic cones are out and in the correct places and turns on the lights in our three outdoor tents. Once inside, he turns on all lights in the main halls upstairs and downstairs, band hallway, administration offices, and at the front desk. Along the way, he unlocks the work rooms upstairs and downstairs. He props open any interior doors to eliminate unnecessary touching of door handles throughout the day, and brings in any packages left outside the front door the previous evening.

**7:00 A.M.** Back in his office, Mark checks his email for any maintenance or Fixit requests that may have been sent overnight. Fixit tickets are generated by a request submitted via email from faculty or staff requesting help from Building Operations with a project or task. Fixits can cover a wide variety of things including PPE requests, replacing a classroom clock or light, changing batteries, and raising or lowering desks depending on a student’s preference and physical growth during the year. There are also the messier urgent requests such as clogged toilets or water on the restroom floor or cleaning up after a student gets sick or suffers a bloody nose.

Today there is a request for extension cords in the classrooms for student Surfaces that need charging before the end of the day. There is also an email to review the suggested location for a new picnic table.

Simultaneously, Tom arrives at the Bear Creek Preschool's Valley Campus, where he opens the driveway gate and rolls back the chain link gate to the faculty and staff parking lot and checks the dumpster area. He takes a few minutes to search for any trash in the west parking lot, then begins to unlock the bathroom and classroom doors while turning on lights as he goes. He checks that all of the classrooms were cleaned, and the garbage cans were emptied by the janitorial staff the night before. Once at his desk, he reviews his email for any issues that may have come up overnight.

**7:30 A.M.** In his office, Dave checks email and reviews his calendar for any events today that may need attention. It is a quiet day like most this year because many on-campus events have been reimagined online. If there were an event, he would check the Event Request Form (ERF) for the location, number of tables and chairs, and requested seating style and make plans to set up. He then turns his attention to completing his open Fixit tickets.

**7:45 A.M.** Before the students arrive, Tom walks around Valley Campus, checking for cobwebs and spiders on the metal fences near the parking lot and student entrance. He sweeps up any debris or scattered stones on the sidewalks. In the main office, he checks the thermostat and peeks in at the kitchen for any messes that need attention.

Tom starts the leaf blower to remove bark, leaves, and debris in the breezeway, then all the sidewalks, steps, and gravel paths. He straightens up the bark under the large willow tree and completes his circuit by blowing off any debris in the entrance driveway and parking lots, so the campus is clean and neat when the preschoolers begin arriving later in the morning.

**8:05 A.M.** Upper School classes have started, and students are on campus for the day. Mark walks through the building disinfecting the doors and other high touch areas. This is the first of three disinfection rounds for the day which take about 45 minutes each.

**8:45 A.M.** Preschool students are arriving in their classrooms, so Tom returns to his office, checks his



Dave Dodson changes a balast in the overhead lighting at the Main building.

messages, while being ready to tackle any last-minute needs that may arise during drop-off. There are a variety of tasks each day such as cleaning cubby tops outside the classrooms, wiping down windows, removing standing water on the breezeway, and occasionally retrieving an escaped chicken when the students are learning about the life cycle of a chicken. This morning, he takes a few minutes to help Denise Peeler, who runs the Discover and Investigate God's Creation (DIG) program, bring in supplies from her car for class.

**9:00 A.M.** Mark keeps an eye out the window for vendor trucks or large deliveries. Today he meets with the HVAC technician to explain an issue with Roof Top Unit #2.

**9:30 A.M.** After the Main building drop-off finishes, Dave checks and refills the disinfectant bottles and hand sanitizer stations located in entry and high traffic areas throughout the building. He checks in with the other Building Operations team members to catch up on what their workloads look like today and see if they need to shift responsibilities around to assist each other.

Mark fills a crack in the Performing Arts Center floor. He also checks on his Kenwood two-way radio to make sure it is charged and ready for incidents like an earthquake, fire, lockdown, or any other emergency on campus. Mark mentally walks through what the



Tom McKinnon checks construction of the playhouses at Valley Campus.

response would look like if a significant earthquake struck right now. While COVID-19 procedures have taken a primary role this year, our Building Operations team continues to work hard to ensure the safety of our students during an emergency.

**9:45 A.M.** It takes two members of the Building Operations staff to disinfect the bathrooms and high touch point areas throughout the Main building. Each morning Dave tackles the bathrooms by spraying disinfectant on all toilet seats and urinals, sinks, door handles, locks, and other high touch areas. He lets the solution sit for five minutes and then wipes everything down.

**10:00 A.M.** Preschool recesses start. While each of the classes rotate onto the Valley Campus playground for the next hour, Tom checks the water levels on the portable sink reservoirs in the empty classrooms and refills as needed. He sprays disinfectant and wipes down all high touch areas in the classroom such as the student desks, backs of chairs, counters, and door handles. He also disinfects the breezeway bathrooms, classroom exterior doors, hand sanitizer stations, and breezeway railings.

**10:15 A.M.** The Upper School students finished their break, so Mark walks through the building disinfecting the doors and other high touch areas like the doorknobs, chairs, and tables. He starts to plan garbage can dispersal based on grade-level room

assignments in preparation for lunch.

**10:30 A.M.** Dave checks the janitorial supplies in the stockroom to ensure there are enough touchless paper towel rolls, hand soaps, toilet paper, and other supplies to support our janitorial staff. Part of his job is to manage the inventory and submit an order for approval by Building Operations Manager Nathan Foshee. On occasion, he makes a run to Home Depot or Batteries Plus Bulbs for an immediate need.

**10:50 A.M.** Lunches are starting, so it is time to move garbage cans into position. Dave places cans in the Lower School hallways. The rolling 40-gallon garbage cans allow students to throw out their lunch garbage and not overfill the classroom trash cans. After lunch ends for the younger students, Dave redeploys the garbage cans upstairs for grades 5 – 8 classes to use. Mark moves the garbage cans into the Marilyn R. Nagel Commons and in the hallways outside the classrooms. He then fills the mop bucket with disinfectant for the tables in the Nagel Commons in preparation for clean up after lunch.

**11:00 A.M.** Now that Preschool students have finished using the Imagination Lab for the day, Tom sprays and wipes down the manipulatives, interior surfaces, and all doors. In the Little Gym, he sanitizes all floor mats, climbing racks, moveable blocks, rolling carts, and anything else the students may have played with throughout the day. He also disinfects the interior doors and exterior access doors throughout Valley Campus.

**12:15 P.M.** Dave takes a half-hour break for lunch, checks his email, and reviews any Fixits that have come in from teachers or staff. Today he has a Fixit request for an extra desk in the hall for a student to work at if needed and for one-on-one assessments with their teacher. Another Fixit requests special rug tape to remove the wrinkles in the middle of a Lower School classroom rug that is creating a potential tripping hazard.

**12:30 P.M.** Valley Campus is starting to shut down for the day. After a quick lunch, Tom checks and tops off all portable sink water reservoirs in the



classrooms, then tackles his larger projects and Fixits for the day, including repairing some light fixtures. He also maintains all the landscaping, which can range from trimming the bushes to raking errant leaves. This afternoon he plans to cut the lawns and weed whack the natural growth areas.

**12:45 P.M.** Dave and Mark collect the garbage cans from lunch and transfer the garbage and recycling to the outdoor containers, then replace the liners in preparation for tomorrow.

**1:00 P.M.** Each afternoon Dave disinfects the high touch areas throughout the building including disinfecting all door handles from the classrooms to the administration offices, push bars on the external doors, light switches, seat cushions in the main hallway, desks in the hallways, railings on the staircases, the telephone in the hallway outside the gym, and the intercom button for the front entry door.

**1:15 P.M.** Back in his office, Mark now has some time in his day for special projects. Distance and

spacing are very important, so to demonstrate six-foot spacing in the classrooms, he has made floor plans of the classrooms in Microsoft Visio with appropriately spaced six-foot circles. Today he works on refining those drawings. He also has the opportunity for 3D printing objects for furniture and fountain repair.

**2:00 P.M.** It is time for the weekly Facilities meeting to review what has happened this week, get updates from the administration or teachers, and go over any big upcoming events that need more detailed planning.

**2:30 P.M.** In the last half hour of the day, Dave checks for any new Fixits and emails to make sure he has addressed everything that needs attention before he leaves. He checks in with Nathan to update him on the day's events and see if there are any vendors that will be on campus tomorrow. Mark finishes the final tasks of the day and as he heads home at 3:00 p.m., turning his thoughts to planning what to cook for dinner tonight.

## SAFETY PROTOCOLS WITH NATHAN FOSHEE

Before students started to return to campus last fall, Building Operations Manager Nathan Foshee, in conjunction with Health Services Manager Lea Hysom, worked to create a comprehensive cleaning and disinfecting plan that followed the guidance of Seattle King County Public Health as well as the more global recommendations put forth by the Washington Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). After the plan was developed, Nathan states, "Our Building Operations team took on numerous additional daily responsibilities to assist with the new protocols and have been working tirelessly to ensure their success."

The team took stock of any high-touch area, which is any area or item that multiple people come in contact with throughout the day. The Building Operations

staff utilizes a modified airless paint sprayer filled with an EPA-approved disinfectant. According to Nathan, "We spray entire bathrooms every two hours and allow the disinfectant to evaporate properly before re-opening them. For other high-touch areas such as doorknobs and counters, we spray disinfectant and wipe them clean every two hours." Each evening, the janitorial staff utilizes their own sprayers to clean and disinfect every classroom as well as common areas.

Another critical piece of the Bear Creek safety measures is managing air filtration and fresh air cycling into the building and classrooms. Over the summer, Nathan worked very closely with our heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) vendor to have air balance testing completed on the

**3:15 P.M.** Tom starts wrapping up his day and checks for any teachers remaining on campus to let them know they will soon be responsible for locking the gates if they are planning on staying any later. He is looking forward to hearing about his children's day when he gets home.

Dave, Mark, and Tom were all quick to mention that seldom do the days as part of the Building Operations staff follow typical or routine patterns. The new COVID-19 safety measures and procedures provide a consistent framework for the day, but as Dave explains, "Things can change on a daily basis, and never is one day similar to the next." All three would likely agree that this constantly shifting mixture of tasks and projects make for an interesting day filled with variety.

While Dave, Mark, and Tom are key personnel of the Bear Creek Building Operations team, they are not the only members in this tireless crew. **Nathan Foshee** oversees the COVID-19 safety protocols and also manages vendors. **Michael Riley** manages

the scheduling and set-up requirements for events as well as coordinating transportation off campus. He researched and set up the sanitizer stations, procured new furniture like individual desks for this school year, and sources and manages our personal protective equipment (PPE). **Paul Holeman** takes care of much of the outside upkeep and improvement at our Redmond Campus including the new walking trail and field to the north of our Main building. **Adam Johnston** worked to set up the 6-foot spacing in our classrooms, placed the sticker distance reminders in the hallways and outdoors, and supports Dave with disinfecting and sanitizing. **Jimmy Quinonez** oversees the janitorial work and deep cleaning each night after the students and staff have left for the day.

The Bear Creek School is grateful to the entire Building Operations team for their dedication to keeping everything running smoothly, helping our faculty, staff, and students stay healthy and safe, and maintaining our beautiful campuses.

units for our buildings. Our vendor improved our units to bring the maximum amount of outside air into the buildings through air exchanges every ten minutes. As Nathan explains, "This is the best thing to prevent COVID-19 spread in a large building; coupled with the masking, social distancing, and disinfecting protocols we have in place."

The Upper School building also switched to Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value (MERV) 13 filters. The MERV 13 rating means the filter is 90 – 98% efficient at capturing particles. The higher the rating, the more efficient the filter and the more particles it can filter. The windows in the Upper School classrooms also open to allow for more airflow. Over Mid-Winter Break, the school replaced the HVAC system in the Main building to a MERV 13 unit. The windows

open in the preschool classrooms at Valley Campus, allowing adequate fresh air to circulate without the need for additional filtering.

In addition to these changes and upgrades, Nathan notes, "I take numerous air quality readings around the buildings at the start of each week to monitor different metrics. I take note of carbon dioxide outputs to make sure they fall within a range appropriate for the size of the room and occupancy." The testing consistently verifies low carbon dioxide outputs, which indicates that the HVAC improvements and open windows are successfully increasing fresh air flow into our buildings and classrooms.

# 2021 SENIOR ART SHOW

*What do teens of today think about? What affects our youth so profoundly it alters the way they think, the lens they look through, and the art they create?*

This combined exhibition by eight Advanced Studio Art students featured the works of seniors, each a passionate student-artist exploring his or her thoughts through visual form. Read excerpts below, or for complete statements about their work, see the post on our Bear Creek Blog at [www.tbcs.org/blog](http://www.tbcs.org/blog).



## UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

*By Katelyn Britney*

I believe animals have a very important role in our world. They bring a different light that people do not necessarily possess. When people say a dog is a “man’s best friend,” I believe it to be true. Dogs understand you at a different level, comfort, and will listen when no one else will. It brings me great sorrow seeing these hopeful, loving dogs on the street with nowhere to go and

no one to love. They can look gruffy on the outside, but their appearance shouldn’t matter. Unfortunately, it is quite common for a dog to go throughout their whole life without ever finding “their” person or source of companionship.



## LIFT OFF

*By Eleanor Carruth*

No matter what stage of life we are in, we are growing, learning, and changing. I have always felt an unprecedented gratitude to people in my life and to God for giving me the ability to explore and express what I wish. The freedom to speak, think, learn, and act the way I choose is something that I am forever grateful for.

So, I chose to focus on depicting birds. Together, they are the paragon of freedom, but as individuals they also present

pieces of my person: Spring, Scotland, and the Swallow.



## IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE

*By Parker Jani*

Life is difficult. Life is unpredictable. Life rarely goes where you expect it to. My life has been nothing short of these descriptors. Like many I have lived through astounding highs and tremendous lows. I have experienced feelings so great I could not even begin to describe them, and feelings so dark I wish no one would ever have to experience. I have had moments where I have never felt more alive and times spent wondering if this moment or the next is when I will die. ... However, in some odd way, through all the trials and tribulations I have experienced I have come to realize life is the most beautiful thing the world has to offer.





## HOME IS ALWAYS HOME

*By Khanh Le*

Home always waits for us. Despite traveling thousands of miles and through all the changes, home is always home. Adjusting to a new city, community, and school was a challenge because I was used to being in Vietnam, with my old friends, at my old school. ... As an international student with no friends who speak the same mother language, I experienced a loneliness that grew in time. I found solace in my video calls with my family in Vietnam. They would never fail to let me know that despite being on two different continents, they will always be there for me.



## COUNT IT ALL JOY

*By Claire McArthur*

My feet clip-clopped on the

sidewalk, my ponytail swooshing from one shoulder to the other. Back and forth. Back and forth. My shoes slapped on the pavement as I gazed up at the trees and sunny spring sky. Despite being sweaty, sore, and sick of the same old routine, I had begun to find a certain hidden joy within runs through my neighborhood. They soon became a staple of my spring and summer of 2020 as I relished the moments away from my desk as I focused on the simple breeze blowing through my hair. Such afternoon runs led me on a journey to joy.



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*By Kate McDonough*

Every individual has a beginning, middle, and end. People have a story, full of climax or anti-climactic instances, innocence and hardship, joy, and sorrow. Each of our stories are just as diverse as each person is individualistic. However, we all share the commonality that our stories are what shape and inform us. ... We all have stories, good and bad, for better or for worse, that provide context and insight as to where we are from, where we are, and where we will go.



## THE FULLNESS OF LIFE

*By Zoe Osborn*

Whether you are a coffee or a tea person, or maybe both as I am, you will understand that a good beverage can make your day that much better. When we miss that special morning drink, we can feel like our day didn't start out on the right foot; something feels missing and we are not completely satisfied. In a similar way, life can sometimes leave us wanting more, leading us to desperately try and fill our lives with things we think will satisfy us.



## VOICES OF HOPE

*By Lily Parker*

History is written by the victors, the powerful, the mature. But what would a child tell us about being sieged by the Nazis, or marching for civil rights, or carrying tradition forward? We always look to the leaders for the story, when truth can also be found in the small and the innocent.



# RUNNING THE COVID MARATHON: HOW TO EMOTIONALLY STAY THE COURSE

BY SHANNON DUBOIS, PSY.D.

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PHOTO BY JANEEN SORENSEN

## Editor's Note:

As part of our care for the social and emotional well-being of our students, we are paying special attention to mental health, which has been particularly challenging during the pandemic. Dr. Shannon DuBois, who is a licensed psychologist, adjunct professor at Northwest University, and parent of a current Bear Creek student and two alumnae, recently partnered with Dr. Flaviane Ferreira, another parent and psychologist, and Lauren Neely, our school counselor, to present tips to our Upper School students for staying mentally strong. She graciously agreed to expand their presentation into this article, which also incorporates information she has shared with the Northwest University blog.

**"IT'S A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT."** This was the mantra espoused by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) where I worked as a mental health expert during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time, like everyone else, I had no idea what lay ahead, but I certainly didn't think of the pandemic as a marathon. In my mind, it was more like an 800-meter run. Who knew that more than 12 months later we would still be battling this virus, still be running this marathon.

It has been a tough 2020 and start to 2021. Political strife, racial tensions, economic instability, and





remote learning were at the forefront of our daily thoughts. Underneath these tensions were feelings of sadness, worry, anger, loneliness, and confusion, often lurking with no words, but continually present like a shadow we can't outrun. Mental health often took a backseat to the more obvious goals of wearing masks and distancing from family and friends.

Unfortunately, these well-meaning, necessary safety protocols combined with pandemic stress may have contributed to feeling isolated and down. In a recent survey of adults, nearly 41%

experienced at least one mental or behavioral health condition: 31% reported symptoms of anxiety or depression, 26% said they had experienced trauma or stress related to the pandemic, and 13% started or increased substance use to cope with stressful emotions.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, 25% of teens had thoughts of suicide.<sup>2</sup>

Like me, you may be feeling as if you finished the sprint last March, but completely fell short of the year-long marathon. Maybe there was no support system to cheer you on or hand you that much needed glass of water along the way. Or maybe your path was muddled with sadness as you unexpectedly

stumbled over grief. This pandemic has tested our fortitude, our spirit, our inner core, taking its toll on each of us in a personal way.

Whatever you have experienced, the following tips will help you set a new COURSE to emotional wellness if you are in need of some encouragement:

**CARE**—Many people forget to take care of themselves during difficult times. Self-compassion and self-care are important elements in everyday living. Practice some self-care each day by doing what you enjoy in order to de-stress. Examples: walk in nature, play with your pet, cook your favorite food, meditate or practice breathing (using an app such as Calm), draw, paint, craft, take a nap, read a book, watch your favorite show. Furthermore, taking care of your physical health relates to your mental health. There are a variety of exercise apps and YouTube videos that are easy to access. Eating properly and getting the recommended hours of sleep (7 – 9 hours) will improve relationships, mood, and focus.

**OTHERS**—It is easy to withdraw and isolate, especially during mandated stay-at-home orders. Remain safely connected to positive friends and other encouraging people remotely through tech, outdoors with masks, or in-person, as more people become vaccinated.

## **UPEND PERFECTIONISM AND**

**COMPARISON**<sup>3</sup>—Perfectionism is a trap. It is an aspiration that can never be attained and can lead to feeling paralyzed by procrastination, frustration, and burn out. It is important to put your best work forward and prioritize, but know that in some instances, “good enough” is a better goal. In addition, comparison to others can leave one feeling inferior, especially as it relates to social media. The only person worth comparing to yourself is you.

**REFRAME CRITICAL SELF-TALK**—At times we all resort to seeing negativity in ourselves. Over time this can develop into patterns that are detrimental to our well-being. Explore what you think about and say to yourself. Does it tend to be



overly negative and defeating? If so, work to identify the positives in yourself and your abilities. To help you get started, make a list of things you like about yourself and your abilities. It can also be helpful to replace negative self-talk with a positive mantra such as, “I got this.”

**SHOW GRATITUDE**—One of the antidotes to depressive feelings is gratitude. Think of ways to express thanks to people or keep a gratitude journal. Writing down three things that you are thankful for every day can result in a more positive outlook and mood.

**EVALUATE DISTORTED BELIEFS**<sup>4</sup>—We may have irrational thoughts about our circumstances. If anxious thoughts lead to overwhelming fears, evaluate whether those fears are rational. Challenge those beliefs by looking at the evidence and facts. Sometimes what we imagine could come true isn’t based in logic. Don’t let your worries trick you into blowing things out of proportion.

We cannot ignore how COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on our lives. Cancelled or postponed graduations, sports seasons, art performances, and transitioning to a virtual job or classroom have taxed our emotions. We find ourselves being forced to let go of our plans and timelines; we are learning to be flexible. Japanese author Kanuki Kaneshiro once said, “A tree that is unbending can be broken in a storm.” Adapting to change is not easy but is necessary. Take this opportunity to revisit your goals and revise how you can achieve them. Make sure to break goals down into small measures that you can accomplish. Then celebrate your mini successes each step of the way!

Finally, one of the best ways to remain resilient is focusing on others. Think about society and the greater good. Not only is giving back a responsible thing to do, giving back can alleviate depressive symptoms. It feels wonderful to be a part of something bigger than yourself and/or give to another human being. Think creatively during this COVID-19 pandemic and ask yourself how you can make a difference. Utilize the gifts that are unique to

you; nobody else has your exact combination of God-given strengths to offer others. Remember—you are valuable!

Fortunately, we are nearing the end of this Covid marathon, although the race is not yet complete. As we live through this historic time, we need to take a moment to appreciate how far we have come, even if it has been a little messy. And just like a marathon, the person who starts the race is not the same person who finishes the race. Like it or not, COVID-19 has forced us all to become so much more.

## IF YOU NEED PROFESSIONAL HELP

We all have times when seeking professional help is necessary. If you feel at risk in any way, do not hesitate to use the following resources:

For immediate help: Call 911 for a life-threatening emergency

- 24-Hour Crisis Line 1-866-427-4747
- Washington Suicide and Crisis Hotline 1-800-784-2433, 1-800-273-8255
- Washington Recovery Helpline (substance abuse and mental health) 1-866-789-1511

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<sup>3</sup>Edberg, H. (2017). How to improve your self-esteem: 12 powerful tips. Retrieved from <http://www positivityblog.com/improve-self-esteem/>

<sup>4</sup>Burns, D. D. (1993). Ten days to self-esteem: The leader’s manual. Quill/HarperCollins Publishers. Social-Emotional Learning during a Pandemic



# SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING DURING A PANDEMIC

*With the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been keenly aware more than ever of our social-emotional learning (SEL) objectives for our students. Recently, some of the faculty and staff involved in setting and leading our social-emotional learning objectives participated in a round-table discussion for Modus Vivendi (MV). The Bear Creek School approaches SEL with intentionality, preparedness, and compassion—with a lot of fun thrown in for good measure! Here is a glimpse into that conversation.*

TP = Tressa Parker, Lower School Dean of Students

TM = Tyler Mendezona, Middle School P.E. Teacher

LN = Lauren Neely, Middle School and Upper School Counselor and Lower School and Early Middle School Student Support Specialist

DU = Dave Urban, Upper School Associate Dean of Students

**MV:** How does Bear Creek provide consistency in daily routines to foster a sense of safety and predictability for students who are on campus as well as those learning remotely?

TP: Lower School students thrive with predictable routines, and teachers create schedules and processes in the classrooms so that children know what to expect. The nurturing classroom environment provides students with a sense of safety and security and gives them a place

where it is safe to be themselves, share their thoughts, try new things, make mistakes, and find success.

TM: From the time students are dropped off in the morning to the time they leave, with the well-thought-out carpool procedures, each student is individually outfitted with the tools to safely have a positive experience at school. Schedules and cohorts allow the students to safely interact with one another. The school has provided learning tents so students and teachers can safely enjoy some fresh air outside. Each part of a student's day is thoroughly planned out and safety protocols are executed by teachers who are diligent and really care about each student's health, safety, and overall well-being.

**MV:** In what ways does Bear Creek monitor the struggles and successes of students' social-emotional learning and behavior?



PHOTO BY JANEEN SORESENSEN

Middle School Badminton



LN: One of the ways that Bear Creek monitors and cares for students who might be in distress either emotionally, socially, or academically is through the Student Support Teams. In each division, we have a Student Support form that any teacher may fill out when they have a concern about a student's well-being. This can be anything from the student not engaging in class (such as not turning on their camera, or "ghosting" class), academic concerns (e.g., not turning in assignments, getting low grades in their class), or showing signs of social or emotional distress (appearing sad, withdrawn, sharing that they are struggling, etc.).

Once this form is submitted, the Student Support Team in that division consults about this student and assigns one or more members of the team to be the student's point-person. The Student Support Team determines next steps, such as connecting with the student's parents, having the counselor reach out to the student, or working to provide additional support such as a Study Skills session.

The Student Support Teams help Bear Creek take a proactive approach to student care. Teachers are encouraged to submit concerns as soon as they arise, rather than waiting until a student is in crisis. This team format allows us to care well for the *whole* student as we typically find that an academic concern often has social and/or emotional factors as well.

TP: Lower School is home to 268 students, each with his or her own personality, style, strengths, weaknesses, approach to learning, and way of experiencing our world. During this unusual season, we know that all our students have unique academic, social, and emotional needs. Prior to the start of school, our Student Support Specialist Lauren Neely conducted professional development training with the teachers to provide extra guidance on how to support students' social and emotional needs. Teachers found this training extremely helpful and felt

more equipped to recognize and meet the needs of students who would benefit from extra support.

Lower School teachers really get to know each student and can identify any struggles. They work closely with the families to talk through the support needed and partner with parents to come up with a plan.

We also find ways to celebrate academic and social-emotional success and growth. Through Growing in Virtue awards, students are nominated and honored at chapel, and the community benefits from hearing about the impact of the student's actions, a definition of the quality, and a Scripture verse that connects directly to the virtue. At the end of the school year, teachers recognize each student with a Growing in Virtue certificate for consistently displaying a certain character quality.

**MV: Students may be disappointed about missing out on sports, competition, performances, and other important rituals during the pandemic. How does Bear Creek encourage a sense of hope in our students?**

DU: One of the ways we helped the students both remember and spread the hope we have in the Lord was through a week of events dedicated to just that...hope. Hope Week 2021 was an incredible experience for our students this year. Not only did it serve to launch our new community partnership with World Vision and raise over \$3,000 for the creation of a deep water well in an impoverished community, but students throughout Upper School and Middle School participated in daily challenges based on Jesus' parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25. This helped them grow in their understanding of, and compassion for, people in need all around the world. It was a powerful week that reminded us all that God's love and care for us never changes, even in the midst of a pandemic.

**MV: How does Bear Creek view the importance of getting students outside and engaging in physical activity?**

TM: Coming up with creative ways to engage students with physical activity has been a huge blessing this year. We have seen a need for students to safely engage with one another in an active way within bigger spaces. Giving students a chance to be physically active in a safe space has tremendously improved their overall attitude and perspective. Students have safely played games like badminton and pickleball. P.E. classes also incorporate discussion regarding the importance of playing together, showing each other grace, and supporting one another as well as the importance of physical activity as a life-long practice.

This year I have been very fortunate to build relationships with students and athletes, in addition to speaking with families, about the importance of staying active throughout these tough times. I believe the willingness to speak about social-emotional learning during this pandemic has been extremely beneficial in the overall well-being of each student at Bear Creek.

TP: At Bear Creek, we have a strong commitment to educate the whole child: heart, mind, body, and soul. Lower School recess provides an opportunity to meet many objectives related to cognitive, physical, social, and emotional wellness. Students can absorb new information more effectively if they are given brain breaks, and they return to the classroom refreshed and ready to learn. There are enormous benefits to being immersed in God's creation: fresh air, sunshine, and even rain are good for the soul and invigorate the body and mind. Recess also provides an opportunity for students to build relationships with classmates, work on problem-solving skills, and practice the virtues of wisdom, compassion, and courage.

While the experience looks different than it has in previous years, we are grateful for a large campus that has enabled us to safely continue with outdoor activities. For example:

We have divided the playground into activity zones, supervised by a Classroom Assistant, so that cohorts have ample space to play while maintaining distance from other cohorts.

Earlier this year, we were able to open the play structure, and recently we added the ability to play with balls within cohorts. We continue to consider adding more recess opportunities and choices as guidelines allow.

For additional breaks outside recess times, students often go on class walks around campus. Our Building Operations team created a new walking trail from the grassy area east of the gravel lot, behind the Farmhouse, and around to Owens Field.

We have developed a list of over 40 games and activities that can be played in zones. Some favorites include Human Foosball, Obstacle Course, Freeze Dance, Foursquare, Ball Tag, and Steal the Bacon.

**MV: Steal the Bacon? (or is that Squeal the Bacon?) We will be sure to ask a Lower School student about that one!**

**Speak to the partnership between the school and parents and the importance of strong two-way communication.**

TP: We are honored that parents entrust us with the education of their children during the school day. When we work in partnership with parents toward common goals, students benefit by getting the same message both at home and at school. We love working together to help students grow in character, and we acknowledge that without the support of parents, it would be difficult to impact students in meaningful ways.



Upper School student Bingo game

**MV:** Managing social-emotional learning objectives is about caring for the overall well-being of our students as they learn, play, and navigate their surroundings and relationships. Kids (and teachers) being creative and silly helps illustrate how our students are not only adjusting and being supported, but also thriving, during a pandemic. What are some of the wacky-fun highlights we have seen on Teams or on campus this past year?

**DU:** One of our goals in Upper School Student Life this year has simply been to figure out ways for the kids to do just that—have fun and be silly. Remote and blended learning had the potential of adding a level of stress and pressure to the students that none of us really could have anticipated, and we realized we just had to give the students opportunities to let their hair down and still be teenagers.

One fun thing we did was to have them play

tag out on Owens Field with pool noodles. They played Bingo in the Nagel Commons. And in December, Mr. Davison dressed up as St. Nicholas and delivered stockings to everyone. A few limbo contests even took place in classrooms one day!

During a year where things rarely have felt normal, there has still been a lot of laughter and smiles around this place, and that's always good for the soul.

**MV:** What a nice way to sum this up, Dave. Yes, laughter and smiles are, indeed, good for the soul! A major tenet of the mission of The Bear Creek School is included in the phrase “in a nurturing environment.” The care and concern for students’ social and emotional learning plays a vital role in providing the nurturing environment where students can do their best, learning and growing into the individuals God intends.



# LEADERSHIP IN A PANDEMIC:

## SEEING OPPORTUNITIES INSTEAD OF OBSTACLES

STORY BY DEBBIE MARCHIONE

PHOTOS BY CINDY MCCAILL

Alysse Quin '21 had been looking forward to her senior year not least because she was poised to serve as the ASB Social Committee Head. In this role, she hoped to lead a group of students in planning and organizing some of Bear Creek's most beloved Upper School traditions, such as the Fall Costume Dance and Winter Ball, as well as building student community through some new events.

Then came the pandemic.

COVID-19 upended student life activities at Bear Creek like everything else. Faced with initially all-remote students, then a hybrid situation with some students on campus and some remote, and severe restrictions on gatherings, Alysse saw her original vision for the year evaporate.

For many teens, this situation might have been a reason to just give in and resign themselves to a year without school-sponsored social activities. However, thanks to Bear Creek's strong leadership development program, Alysse was able to look at the situation as an opportunity, not a setback. With support from the Upper School student life faculty and staff, the ASB Cabinet, and energetic committee members, she transformed a traditional dance into something new and exciting that brought students together in a fun, safe way.

The annual Fall Costume Dance became a week-long

Fall Extravaganza that included a costume contest, a trick-or-treat relay challenge, and a riddle contest. The Winter Ball, traditionally a formal dance, metamorphosed into an afternoon of fun outdoor activities, including a socially-distanced dance under a tent!

Alysse, like all of our other student leaders, did not allow the various health and safety restrictions to dissuade her. As Dave Urban, Associate Dean of Students and ASB Advisor, notes, "One of the key leadership principles we teach is Modeling the Way. This year, that has meant seeing things not as 'this is terrible' but instead – 'let's work with what we have, be flexible and adapt, look for the opportunities God has given us during this time.'"

This principle serves our students well now, and along with the other leadership principles they learn, will guide them as leaders well

into the future. Upper School leaders from ASB, House, and clubs participate in a summer intensive "Leadershop," a two-day workshop that prepares them for the school year, as well as meet individually with adult mentors throughout the year to examine and build their leadership skills.

Bear Creek uses the book *The Student Leadership Challenge: Five Practices for Becoming an Exemplary Leader* by James Kouzes and Barry Posner as a basis for its leadership curriculum. The book offers five principles, which Bear Creek bolsters with



a Christian foundation and other skills such as communication and empathy, to teach leadership.

- Modeling the Way
- Inspiring a Shared Vision
- Challenging the Process
- Enabling Others to Act
- Encouraging the Heart

Upper School Dean of Students Kevin Davison points out that leadership is a skill that can be taught. “Yes, there certainly are highly charismatic individuals who have the ability to pull people in, but fundamentally leadership is influence. As long as you have influence, you have leadership.” Bear Creek students learn that as part of a community, they each have areas of influence.

He continues, “Our goal is to not only have discussions about principles from the book, but also to put more onus on the students for planning and executing events, which means that the Deans can focus on mentoring and leadership development.” Student leaders are encouraged to put the principles into action, which sometimes means that they will fall short.

“We spend a lot of time investing in our student leaders to give them an opportunity to actually lead, giving them real power in the school to make decisions and to plan things as well as to risk failure and to actually fail,” says Davison. “What we’ve found is that by giving students the ability to do something, and then telling them, ‘The potential for failure is here and failure will mean X, Y, and Z,’ they tend to bite into that very strongly and can produce something that’s meaningful, even if it doesn’t always look like what we envisioned.”

This year has tested both students and adults to also think differently about what leadership looks like when faced with students in different physical spaces, rather than together in the same building. “If you’re a

servant leader, you’re trying to bring everybody with you by allowing your leadership to ultimately reward the community,” notes Davison.

House student leaders had to think outside the box to come up with ways to continue to foster relationships among students and House Deans in a remote setting, then through the creation of Grade-Level Groups continue those relationships for on-campus students that still fit within our health and safety requirements. They designed a fun, interactive remote House Induction Ceremony and have planned House challenges throughout the year that both on-campus and remote students participate in together. Other organizations such as Bear Creek’s chapter of the National Honor Society stepped up to the challenge as well, organizing a highly successful all-school virtual food drive for Hopelink along with a virtual blood drive through Bloodworks Northwest.



Urban comments that the pandemic environment has increased the urgency for students to embody the principles of Modeling the Way and Encouraging the Heart. “We’ve never needed our student leaders to step up more and be an example for the rest of the student body than we did this year. Whether it was mask wearing, social distancing, being flexible and gracious with all the constant changes taking place, or just simply choosing to have a positive attitude during a

year when things often weren’t what any of us would have hoped them to be, our student leaders have been phenomenal in setting a positive, responsible, and gracious example for our entire school community.”

Bear Creek’s Upper School student leaders like Alysse continue to grow and thrive, despite the many challenges of the year. Their creativity, dedication, and innovation have been instrumental in allowing a fun, community-oriented student culture to continue to flourish at Bear Creek.

# Reflection on Leadership

By Claire McArthur '21

**H**igh school. Two words. Ten letters. Three vowels. Though high school is simply a place where teens attend school five days a week, it has sparked musicals, novels, songs, and much more. In August 2017, my high school adventure began. I walked through the doors eyeing the new building where I would soon spend most of my time. I took scrupulous notes about the high school dress code, office hours, and student-athlete expectations. After our orientation, a group of bubbly ASB leaders promptly introduced themselves to us. Katie Leszynski '18 bounded over and sat on the curb with me and my freshman crew. She introduced herself, answered any questions, and honestly made us feel more at ease about this whole "Upper School" thing. Little did I know it, but the student leaders during the 2017 – 2018 school year would make my classmates and me feel welcome, included, and loved. Without the warm smile from Sophie Schroth '18, big hugs from Siena Cysewski '19, or the caring attitude of the upperclassmen, my first year of Upper School would have been a much different tale.

Fast forward four years and the roles have shifted. The same freshmen who shuffled into orientation are now engaged in student leadership roles and working hard to establish a welcoming, inclusive, caring school community. Whether it is House, ASB, Eco Club, News Team, or YUPP, student leadership opportunities are a major factor in the formation of school community. Though The Bear Creek School community is currently in a state of flux, shifting between in-person and remote realms, the work of student leaders has made this not-so-expected school year a little more enjoyable.

Kathryn Sutherland '21, National Honor Society (NHS) Vice



President and member of the Meitner House leadership team says, "My goal as a student leader is to meet the needs of the community inside and outside of Bear Creek. Whether that be through food and blood drives in NHS or academic advising or fun programs in House, I want to make sure that people feel heard and that

I am helping to fulfill a need." This year has had a lot of needs. A need for interaction, a need for safety, a need for seeing human faces. Without the efforts of student leaders, a lot of those needs would still not be met.

Jennifer Buckley '21, ASB Treasurer and the Youth for University-Level Political Preparedness (YUPP) President, adds that, "My goal is to encourage my peers to share their opinions on difficult topics and to create a space free from judgment where club members can learn from each other through productive dialogue." Whatever the club, Bear Creek student leaders are invested in our school. They strive to serve, whether that is by planning a dance, encouraging dialogue, or sprinkling random acts of kindness throughout the community.

Leadership also comes with difficulty and trial. Looking back, my freshman self would never have thought I would hold three leadership positions. She would have shuddered at the idea of standing on a table and speaking to big groups of people. She would have been nervous to step outside of the norm and push for something different. Student leadership pushed me in ways I would never have expected, especially in a year that expects unconventional leadership.

Tyler Doyle '21, a Hildegard House Head, says the biggest obstacle this year was "adapting to running House remotely" since "there are no past examples to look to for guidance, and many things have been trial and error." Henry Humphries '22, ASB Junior Class Representative





Kathryn Sutherland counting food at NHS food drive, November 2019

and Eco Club leader, says it has been challenging to “keep people engaged and committed.”

Nathan Shields '22, Eco Club leader and member of the Athanasius House leadership team, says his biggest success was the plastic bottle service event his club held. “We discovered that the proper way to recycle plastic bottles was to remove the plastic lids and wrapping, put those in the trash, and then place the bottle in the recycling. We thought this would be a great thing for us to do at the school since there were so many plastic bottles being used with the packed lunches. After some planning and collaboration with Mr. Urban, Associate Dean of Students, we opened the volunteering to our club. So far, we have had two days of volunteering with more to come,” says Nathan.

I have seen my peers rise to every challenge and seize every opportunity, which is still just as true during a pandemic. During my years at Bear Creek, I have seen leaders of all ages rise to challenges big and small. I have seen Miya Shimada '23 gracefully lead Student Relations and engage with her peers. I have seen Zoe Smith '22 approach the Robinson House leadership team with vigor, seamlessly handling complicated logistics. I've seen Alysse Quin '21 lead the social committee with determination and passion, putting on magnificent dances and socials.

Jennifer Buckley says her biggest success in YUPP would be



Tyler Doyle (center) during a House challenge, September 2019

“last semester” when “we had a discussion on healthcare in which I heard so many new voices. I am proud when YUPP accomplishes its goal of aiding those who may normally be on the quieter side to speak up and share their thoughts on a topic. Small moments like these—hearing a new person speak in our meeting or receiving a new member—all culminate to form successes and bright spots in my leadership experience.”

Often the effects of good leadership are not always obvious. Sometimes their effects are seen months, or even years, down the road. Despite not always seeing the fruits of one's labor, a good leader continues to work relentlessly.

Leadership allows people to feel welcome. Leadership extends an invitation to everyone to be a part of the community. Leadership holds doors open for others. Leadership loves, cares, and works for others. Bear Creek leaders make people feel welcome and relentlessly work hard for their peers. I am confident for many years to come, there will be more student leaders like Katie Lezynski, Sophie Schroth, and Siena Cysewski welcoming future incoming freshmen, demonstrating not only the power of leadership in an official role but also the power of leadership in action.

**About the Author:** Claire McArthur started attending The Bear Creek School in kindergarten. The founder and editor of the News Team, Claire also serves as co-captain for the varsity girls soccer team and is a YoungLife student leader. Read more by Claire and the News Team on the Bear Creek Blog ([tbcs.org/blog](http://tbcs.org/blog)).

# MARK SCHULTZ REFLECTS ON GIVING TO BEAR CREEK



I had the great fortune of marrying into The Bear Creek School community and in the process receiving an unlooked-for and unanticipated blessing. When I married my wife Emily in 2013, she had already been working for the school for some years, in addition to having significant long-time friendships with members of the school community. So, I came to know the school first through friendships and only later as an employee. I must say that I owe my career as a teacher to my wife and her friends within the Bear Creek community. After the financial crisis of 2008, the ministry world for which I had prepared with a Master in Divinity from Princeton had been seriously shaken financially, and there were very few jobs for an aspiring pastor. Emily suggested that I would

make a good teacher and that teaching could be God's ministry through me. After consultation with Karen Blankenbeckler, a family friend and the school's V.P. for Academic Affairs, I decided to give it a shot and went back to school for a Master's in Teaching. I began teaching history at Bear Creek in 2015 and have never looked back. Teaching has opened a door for my best strengths to serve young people and families for God's kingdom in the world. The Bear Creek School has become a significant center point for God's work in my life.

I have enjoyed being able to see the school from the outside first, then later from the inside as a teacher. That perspective has allowed me to appreciate better what the school does for the community of students, families, faculty, and staff.

My diverse experience with other ministries, secular organizations, and schools has given me the perspective to know just what a unique and special place Bear Creek is. In all those experiences, I have seen God's work and providence, but I have never worked with an organization as effective as Bear Creek at pursuing its mission. It was truly a no-brainer when it came time to enroll our oldest son for preschool. I have had the pleasure of teaching seniors at Bear Creek, and every day when I am in conversation with those seniors, I find myself thinking, "I want my sons to be like them." Students leave this place able to think clearly and make wise decisions. It strikes me how rare those qualities are in our broader culture. The ability to weigh ideas, hold things in tension, reserve judgment, consider

alternative points of view, make principled decisions, and then act virtuously is so desperately needed for a community or society to function well. It is wonderful to see an educational ministry empower children to become young adults like that.

Faith in Christ is the core of our lives, and Bear Creek provides an education that fully engages the Christian faith with the world. I have seen Christian schools that nominally tip their hats to Christ, and I have seen schools that hunker down in Christ, keeping the world at arm's length. Christ put us in the world to serve the world, and that is precisely the kind of faith in action that Bear Creek trains in its students. That is another reason why I want to see my boys cross that graduation stage in the years to come. When I see how many ways God has put our alumni to work, bringing His light into the world, I cannot wait to see how my children will use their education for Him. For a school to invest so much in children, it needs others to invest in it.

Emily and I believe very strongly that everything we have is from the Lord and for His work in the world, not just to meet our needs but also to empower us to meet others' needs. We do not ever want our money to own us; we want to own and steward our money. The only way I can think of to know whether or not my money owns me is to give it away. I believe that

is why God gave us tithing. It is our fallen nature to worry about the future and to try to create our own security. As understandable a temptation as that is, it is a certain trap. We therefore give generously both to our church and worthy institutions doing God's work in the world. When I think of giving as a means to freedom, for myself and others, I do not want to give thoughtlessly. For me, giving is an investment, and I want to invest in work that will see returns. Bear Creek delivers on its mission. In addition to my personal experience of the educational environment Bear Creek provides, as well as the kinds of students who graduate from here, I am confident in the stability, clear-sighted leadership, and mission-centered community of The Bear Creek School. God has used the school as an instrument of His providence for my family, and so it seems doubly appropriate to reinvest back in the school.

Giving to the annual fund, donating

to and bidding in the school auction, and volunteering time are meaningful ways to invest in what the school is doing. Emily and I are not tycoons, but all contributions, no matter how modest, are significant. I feel a sense of pride when I see my students growing, when I see them graduate, when I see the school weather a crisis, when I see the school thrive even in strange times, and it is a pleasure for Emily and me to partner in that.

Mark is passionate about teaching as a ministry to help youth achieve their full potential as human beings and as scholars. He loves engaging others in conversation to broaden his perspective while seeking the ideals of truth, beauty, and nobility. He also loves reading a good book alone or laughing over a good board game with others. He believes that all truth is in Christ, and all learning should be put to the service of Christ. Mark holds a B.A. History and a B.A. Christian Theology from Whitworth University. He also has an M.Div. Princeton Theological Seminary, and an M.A. in Teaching from Seattle Pacific University.

## A GIFT FOR THE AGES

Gifts such as bequests or trusts are meaningful ways to leave a legacy while helping to educate future generations of Bear Creek students, preparing them to engage the world with wisdom, compassion, and courage. If you have already made a provision for The Bear Creek School in your will or estate plan, please let us know so we may say thank you and recognize your generosity by welcoming you into our Fidelis Circle.

For more information contact Debbie Marchione, V.P. for Philanthropy and Community Engagement, at [dmarchione@tbcs.org](mailto:dmarchione@tbcs.org) or by calling 425-898-1720 ext. 339.



# GRATITUDE FOR THE

# gratitude —GALA—

**T**he Philanthropy and Community Engagement team want to give a huge shout-out to everyone who helped make our first-ever virtual Gratitude Gala a great success! Kudos to parent and Board of Trustees member Kristine Shields who demonstrated courage and grace by her willingness to step outside her comfort zone and serve as a co-host for the live event.

Generosity abounded before, during, and after the event, and was a testament to the gratitude our community feels for our dedicated faculty and staff. We extend special thanks to our sponsors: Cornerstone GCI, Propel Insurance, and Bruner Orthodontics.

With more than 180 households tuning in from all over the country, the Gratitude Gala celebrated our teachers and staff, brought together our community, and raised more than \$220,000 to recognize the dedication of our teachers and staff in support of the mission of The Bear Creek School.

We deeply appreciate everyone who donated items, bid vigorously, and served in many ways behind the scenes to make the event possible.



Party boxes delivered prior to the event helped to make the event fun and connected families at home to the celebration.



Dozens of families joined the pre-party to socialize before the event.



Auctioneer Jeff Randall with Kristine Shields



Behind the scenes at the production studio



# ALUMNI NEWS AND CLASS NOTES

## Class of 2006

### Inness Pryor



Inness recently moved to Portland, OR, where she now resides with her husband, younger sister Taite '08, two dogs, and one cat. Somehow, they are all making it work, even with three adults working from home. Their house is nearly 108 years old and makes them happy every day, even with its quirks. They are learning how to garden and tend houseplants (despite having thumbs that are far from green) and find satisfaction in small things: long walks, puzzles, and old records. Inness recently left her position as a program therapist with a mental health agency and plans to open her own private practice. Taite works full time while studying to become a pilot.

## Class of 2007

### Insung Kim



Since leaving Bear Creek, Insung graduated from New York University, served in the Korean Air Force, and attended law school at Boston University. After law school, he went on to PwC in New York, Crowell & Moring in Washington, D.C., and now works as a tax attorney at Goulston & Storrs in New York.

The magazine *Super Lawyers*, published by Thomson Reuters, recently selected Insung as a "Rising Star" of the New York Metro area in the field of tax law. He regularly works on cross-border mergers and acquisitions with an emphasis on real estate (partly due to his trilingual skills, with many thanks to Mrs. Ikeda for nurturing his Japanese skills at Bear Creek), and he genuinely enjoys the complexities presented by the tax code.

Insung now lives in New Jersey

with his wife Hana and their young son Minjoon. He is always thankful for the high-caliber education he received at Bear Creek that prepared him to fearlessly take on new challenges. He endeavors each day to stay the course on the path that Jesus taught.

### Katherine Ross

Katie is currently working as a doctor in Los Angeles, in her third year of a four-year emergency medicine residency. She has continued to work through the pandemic and frequently sees COVID-19 patients as well as the usual non-COVID-19 patients with health problems or traumatic injury. After completing her residency, she will serve in the U.S. Navy.

## Class of 2011

### Gannon and Nichole McCahill





High school sweethearts Nichole (Crews) and Gannon McCahill welcomed their first child Charles (Charlie) Prescott on October 6, 2020. They reside in Addison, TX, where Nichole is transitioning into being a full-time mom while continuing to lead her nutritional therapy Instagram account (@shortandsweetnutrition) from home. Gannon is enjoying his role as an Investment Associate at JP Morgan Chase & Co. in Dallas.

### Timothy Ricard

Timothy is currently working remotely from Washington state on his doctorate in physical chemistry at Indiana University. He plans to return to Indiana once the pandemic ends. Ricard published two articles in the last year contributing to a total of four articles he authored during his doctoral program.

### Adelaide Tillinghast



Adelaide accepted the position of Assistant Vice President with Black Creek Capital Markets, a wholesaler based in Denver, CO, after nearly five years with the firm. Black Creek Group is a commercial real estate investment firm that provides a range of investment solutions for both institutional and wealth management channels across the United States. Adelaide currently covers the Upper Midwest sales territory for the firm. She continues to train and compete in bike races across the U.S. and looks forward to traveling post-COVID.

## Class of 2013

### Connor Thomas

Connor recently celebrated his second wedding anniversary with his wife Maylin, whom he met in college. He is working at Activision/Blizzard/King, the company that makes *Call of Duty*, *World of Warcraft*, and other games. This new job follows Connor's work as an assistant at the oldest movie studio in the world, Paramount Pictures, where he assisted on shows like *American Idol* and *Dr. Phil* and even sold movies internationally at the Festival du Cannes in France.

### In Memoriam: Jeff Rehfeld, Class of 2003

Jeff passed away on October 29, 2020, at age 35 after a lifelong battle with brain cancer. He loved film, television, and video games and worked for NBC Universal at Universal Studios Hollywood for over 10 years. Jeff graduated from Westmont College in Santa Barbara, CA, with a bachelor's degree in religious studies. Jeff most enjoyed time with family and friends, watching films, discussing story lines, studying the Bible, and playing video games with his two brothers. His favorite films were action adventure and science fiction.

Jeff became a Christian at age six and loved learning about Jesus. His faith, endurance, and contentment in life and the Lord, no matter what the circumstances, was an inspiration to his family and friends. Jeff is survived by his parents, Joe and Judy Rehfeld, and brothers and sisters-in-law, Jason '05 and his wife Roxanne, and Jimmy '08 and his wife Abi, all of Los Angeles.

# BENJAMIN LEE, CLASS OF 2015

BY ASHLEIGH ROTH '16

*A 2019 Georgia Institute of Technology graduate, Benjamin has traveled the world working in ministry. He is now a research scientist in a pediatric cancer laboratory at Emory University. I caught up with Benjamin via an email interview.*

## CAN YOU SHARE WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN UP TO SINCE GRADUATING FROM BEAR CREEK?

After graduating from Bear Creek, I moved to Atlanta to study biochemistry at Georgia Tech. While there I became very involved with Christian Campus Fellowship (CCF). Through CCF, I had the opportunity to study and work abroad in Valencia, Spain, for a semester at En Vivo, a sister campus ministry. I also worked for two summers in Seattle at the Ben Towne Center for Childhood Cancer Research and spent a semester doing forensic DNA research at the U.S. Army primary forensics lab outside Atlanta.

## WHAT MEMORY FROM YOUR TIME AT BEAR CREEK DO YOU CARRY WITH YOU TODAY?

One of my favorite classroom moments at Bear Creek was when visitors from other faiths came and spoke during our Senior Capstone class. This experience provided me and my peers with a unique and



Benjamin (right) and a partner ministry intern while working at En Vivo, the ministry in Valencia, Spain

extremely important opportunity to learn from those who are different from us. As someone who, like much of my class, had grown up on the Eastside and lived within the Bear Creek and Eastside “bubble,” that was an infrequent experience. We learned the value and importance of listening to people who were not like us in every way. Bear Creek taught me to recognize how my faith compelled me to see the world differently and to see the people around me as created in the image of God, despite, or even because of, our differences.

That lesson became even more important in college. As an intern, I ministered not just to Christian students, but to all students, whether they were Christian or Muslim, gay or straight, conservative or



Benjamin and the fitness group he led after a 5k on Halloween

liberal. Their characteristics did not change the fact that they were loved by me and by God. CCF's most popular event every year (and one of my favorites) was our annual Thanksgiving dinner that was co-hosted with the Muslim Student Association. We would have upwards of 250 people crammed into the campus house, taking an evening to be thankful together with people who were each unique in their own ways.

Looking back at my time at Bear Creek, I also see a larger thread of tying faith to life, whether overtly in Christian Studies class with Mr. Davison or in a more nuanced way in an AP science class with Mrs. Dunn, Ms. Bell, or Mrs. Graham. While my perspectives have continued to shift and change since then, these were important moments for me as a budding scientist. Now, as I have stepped away from working full-time in ministry, sometimes it can be hard for me to feel like my faith and my work are related, but I remind myself that while the ties to my faith are perhaps more visible when working in ministry, I am not serving God any less as a scientist.

### **WHAT IS IT LIKE TO BE A RESEARCH SCIENTIST? DID BEAR CREEK CLASSES SHAPE YOUR PASSION FOR SCIENCE?**

I had my first taste of "real science" when my AP Biology class toured the lab of the Ben Towne Center for Childhood Cancer Research at Seattle Children's

Research Institute in downtown Seattle during my junior year. Fast forward a couple years and I was in Atlanta studying biochemistry in college. The summer after my second year at Tech, I had the opportunity to intern in the same building and lab that my AP Biology class toured three and a half years earlier.

My work as an intern centered on innovative, pivotal treatments for children affected by leukemia. Now, even as I work full time in a different research lab, I continue to use many of the techniques and practices I learned in that first summer at Ben Towne.

The thread of scientific research in my life started all those years back in AP Biology, nurtured by the passion and care of people like Mrs. Dunn and Ms. Bell, and continues to my work today. Much like my time at Ben Towne, my work now is fraught with failure and success in equal measure. Each outcome is one step closer to furthering treatment and outcomes for kids ravaged by rare, high-risk cancers.

### **WHAT LESSON HAS STUCK WITH YOU THROUGHOUT YOUR JOURNEY?**

Fail at full speed. It is better to fail because we were trying our best, because we were giving our all, than because we had held back out of fear of making a mistake. The story of both my time in ministry and science is a story of things not working, even while taking every moment as an opportunity to learn and to try again.

As I continue to make decisions ranging from how best to proceed with an experiment at work to what I should do with my life moving forward (the plan is medical school), I have had to learn and train myself to push past my fear of uncertainty and failure and make the best decision I can and fail at full speed. I am learning to trust God's plan for me and God's continued presence, even when in retrospect I think a different decision might have panned out better. I can't waste my time worrying about the what-ifs. Each moment, each interaction, is an opportunity to learn something new, to widen my perspective, and to love a bit more.



# MICHELLE PATTEN, CLASS OF 2018

*Michelle is currently attending The University of Texas at Dallas, pursuing a B.S. and M.S. in Mathematics.*



Since I left Bear Creek, I have been at The University of Texas at Dallas studying mathematics, simultaneously working toward my bachelor's and master's degrees. I became really involved in rock climbing my freshman year of college, but a few months after that, in June 2019, I suffered a stroke that cost me much of the feeling in the right side of my body for a period of time. During that period, I continued climbing, and God used my commitment to this sport to help me in my recovery both physically and mentally. This significant event in my life caused a big shift in my career plans and life goals. I had originally planned on becoming a college math professor, but after my stroke, I could feel God pushing me in a direction that would utilize my experiences for His good. I found myself drawn toward pursuing climbing as a career, working as an adaptive climbing guide with the goal of helping people with disabilities around the country access outdoor experiences and showing people the glory of God's creation.

My experience working as a guide in Alaska last summer was life changing. While I had known God was pushing me toward a career in the outdoor industry, I still felt fear regarding making a job out of what had just been a hobby. I was afraid that I would not be able to make enough money or maybe that I was making a mistake pursuing such an "abnormal" career. But one specific experience guiding on the zipline proved to me that this was the right decision.

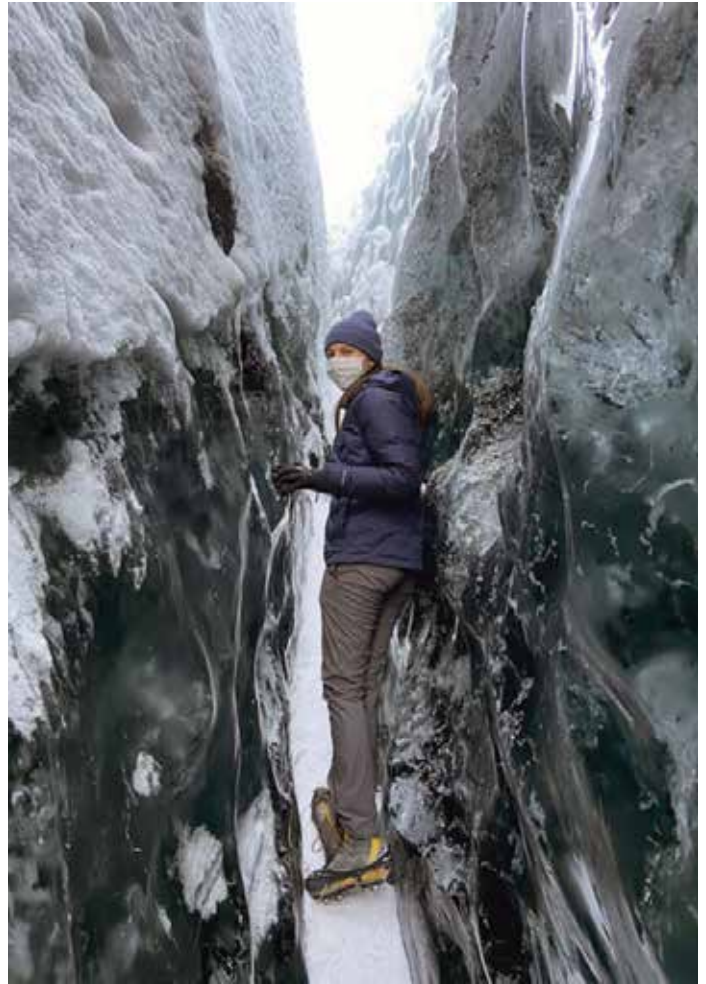
I was standing on the tower of the zipline with a mother and her young son, going over all the rules to keep everyone safe. The young boy seemed distracted at times, while also asking questions about every single aspect of the zipline experience. The mother apologized to me saying, "I'm sorry he's a lot to handle, he has autism." I responded with: "Don't worry, I completely understand. I am autistic, too!" The boy's face lit up upon hearing that and seeing that a person like him could have such a cool job and be an adventure guide! I could feel God's blessing on that moment, bringing peace to my anxieties. I am meant to be an outdoor guide because my disabilities are what allow me to connect with other disabled people like me. And I can change lives and show God's love in such a powerful way.

In addition to that specific story, there were so many instances last summer that pushed me toward my current career path. I think my favorite personal memory was during my one-night backpacking trip alone on a glacier. The Matanuska Glacier is probably my favorite place on this planet. I have never seen another place that so perfectly demonstrates the hand of God in creation. I woke up in the middle of the night to use the restroom, and upon looking up, I saw the clearest stars I had ever seen in my life. Then I turned to look over the glacier, and the Northern Lights were glowing green in the distance. At that moment, everything felt right. I had been stressed out about all the decisions



I needed to make that week, and right then I felt God's answer to each one of them. It was the most peaceful moment I had ever experienced and the closest to God I had ever felt.

Bear Creek helped prepare me for my outdoor adventures by providing me with a background of faith and the resources I needed when I was searching for direction. In high school, I was very academically focused. Everyone knew that I would major in math and would likely accomplish great mathematical achievements in the future. As I felt God pushing me a different direction in college, I was afraid, because it was a different plan than anybody had anticipated. I reached out to many of my former Bear Creek teachers, looking for advice, prayers, and direction, and these were some of the people who pointed me back to God in my times of anxiety. If it were not for the relationships that I had built at Bear Creek, I would often have found myself drifting further from God because of my anxiety, rather than finding myself pulled closer as I have over the last few years. Even now, I find myself closest to God in the outdoors, and through my theological studies at Bear Creek, I realized that often the ways you learn the most about your relationship with Christ are not through Biblical teachings, but through observing His creation. This is a lesson that has stuck with me through all my adventures in the outdoors; I am constantly learning more about God's love for me and for the world.



My advice for current Bear Creek students is to form relationships with people of faith and find mentors who will help guide you, no matter whether your direction is one you anticipated or something completely different. Accept that change is going to happen, your current perfect plan is likely quite different from the plan that God has for you, and He is going to show you a way to take your trials and anxieties and connect with others and make a difference in His world through your own difficulties. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord. "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29:11) There were a lot of times that difficulties with my health and my disabilities made me feel scared. Terrified even. But being reminded that the Lord has a good plan for my life, a plan that even utilized those trials of mine for good, helped me grow and become the person I am today.



