

MODUS VIVENDI

A Way of Life

FACULTY PROFILE:
MICHELE WYNER

CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN
SCHOOL CONFERENCE

BUILDING RESILIENCY IN
CHILDREN AND TWEENS

THE BEAR
CREEK
SCHOOL
MAGAZINE

WINTER 2022





MODUS VIVENDI

Winter 2022

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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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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CORRECTION

In our fall 2021 issue article about Lower School technology adoption, we did not properly credit Dr. Suzannah Calvery as holding a Ph.D. We apologize for this oversight.

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

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to see student life at Bear Creek.

LET US COME TO YOU

ALERTS

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

BLOG

For an in-depth view into the happenings at Bear Creek, read our blog at tbc.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 tbc.org/bearfacts.

MyBC

Students, parents, faculty, and staff can find a complete list of role-specific resources on our website. See MyBC at the top of any page on tbc.org and log in.

ON THE COVER

Bing S., grade 2, plays with a hula hoop during outdoor P.E. class. As frequently as possible, P.E. is held outdoors to allow students to exercise and learn without a mask and to enjoy the benefits of fresh air.

PHOTO BY JANEEN SORENSEN



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MESSAGE FROM THE HEADMASTER

By Patrick Carruth

A CHRISTIAN CLASSICAL EDUCATION endeavors to equip students to live well by thinking well about what truly matters—the things which endure.

At The Bear Creek School, we expose students to quality by introducing them to the great minds, great works, great events, great discoveries, and great art of the centuries. We believe seeking and understanding truth is worth student attention; we believe minds of the past help us understand the present and anticipate the future; we believe wisdom is developed by reflectively considering the best ideas from previous generations in light of the Christian worldview.

Such education is neither quick nor easy. It

requires hard work, dedication, fortitude, and perseverance, but it is worth the investment. As C.S. Lewis once wrote:



This very obvious fact—that each generation is taught by an earlier generation—must be kept very firmly in mind. ...None can give to another what he does not possess himself. No generation can bequeath to its successor what it has not got. ...If we are skeptical we shall teach only skepticism to our pupils, if fools only folly, if vulgar only vulgarity, if saints sanctity, if heroes heroism.

Throughout this issue of *Modus Vivendi*, we hope you will see the many ways in which our commitment to a Christian liberal arts education manifests itself in the classroom and beyond.

CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL CONFERENCE

BY KAREN BLANKENBECKLER

At The Bear Creek School, learning is not just about filling students' heads with facts or producing an individual who will be successful in the workforce.

We believe that our educational endeavor has more to do with the type of person we are shaping: a person who will live a life filled with wisdom, compassion, and courage. On October 18, 2021, The Bear Creek School welcomed six other classical Christian schools from around the region to an online conference featuring well known philosopher, author, and Calvin University professor James K. A. Smith. James reminded Bear Creek's faculty and staff of the importance of classical Christian education and the work we are doing to prepare students to bring truth, goodness, and beauty to our world.



James reinforced the idea that we are teaching whole people. We are not just “thinking beings,” but our full humanness is mind, heart, body, and soul. In James' book, *You Are What You Love*, he states,

...a lot hinges on what you think 'learning' is. And what you think learning is hinges on what you think human beings are. We mistakenly imagine, human beings as fundamentally thinking things. ...It's thinking that defines who we are. You are what you think, is a motto that reduces human beings to brains on a stick.

During our in-service, our faculty and staff discussed ways to fill our classrooms and our school with liturgies and habits that both bring knowledge to our students' minds and shape students' loves and desires. We don't want to create “brains on a stick.” We want to develop the whole person.

Jesus is a teacher who doesn't just inform our intellect but forms our very loves. He isn't content to simply deposit new ideas into your mind; He is after nothing less than your wants, your loves, your longings.

Our culture needs people of faith who can engage with others on areas of agreement and of disagreement. This engagement requires us to show up as both thinking and feeling people. We need to be both wise and compassionate in our interactions as we seek to understand others

without compromising on what we know to be true. During conference breakout sessions, our faculty explored how we mentor students and disciple them to grow in faith and virtue to engage culture with truth and love.

Our faculty and staff will continue to explore these ideas throughout the year as part of our on-going professional development efforts which help us fulfill our mission to provide a high-quality Christian liberal arts education in a nurturing environment that enables each student to become the individual God intends.

FACULTY PROFILE:

MICHELE WYNER

BY SINI FERNANDEZ

PHOTO BY JANEEN SORENSEN



“ IT ALL COMES DOWN TO OUR BELIEF IN GOD. HE KEEPS US GOING IN THE DIRECTION HE WANTS US TO GO.”

MICHELE WYNER HAS ALWAYS LOVED SPORTS, but when she was a little girl in the 1970s, community sports teams were only available for boys, and she was relegated to watching her brother play instead of competing herself. All that changed for her when she was in fifth grade. President Nixon had signed the Education Amendments of 1972 including Title IX

into law, and the effects trickled down in the ensuing years to Michele's hometown. She distinctly remembers her dad sitting in the living room, reading the local Shoreline newspaper, and suddenly asking, "Michele, they're starting a brand-new Little League softball league. Do you want to play Little League softball?" Michele was thrilled to play on one of the Richmond Beach Little League's inaugural softball teams! She recalls that the team called themselves the Halloweenies because their uniforms were black and white.

Michele is a local girl, growing up in north Seattle and attending Shoreline High School. When she married, she and her husband Jeff settled in Woodinville, and both her children attended Woodinville High School. In junior high and high school, she was a three-season athlete, playing soccer, basketball, and softball. As a senior, she was even named Shoreline High School's Athlete of the Year!

Michele spent her college years at Washington State University in Pullman. She brought her love of sports with her and studied physical education with the goal of becoming a P.E. teacher. She notes

that there was some adversity along the way, especially when the department chair told her "that I wasn't cut out to be a P.E. teacher, and that I should do something else because I was too shy."

Michele says it was an eye-opening moment which brought out her competitive edge and taught her resiliency. She realized that the professor did not really know her, because she was not a shy person. "I was very involved at school. I was a leader. I even served as an intramural adjudicator making decisions when teams felt the referee hadn't been fair." So, she continued to pursue her dream to teach.

Straight out of college, she taught in the Seattle School District for two years as a teacher and coach at South Shore Middle School in Rainer Beach, where one of her biggest blessings was creating and coaching the double Dutch team. It was one of the few athletic opportunities available for girls in that area. The team not only competed but also traveled around the Seattle area to share the girls' love of double Dutch jump rope. The girls taught Michele so much about perseverance, heart, and rising above



COURTESY PHOTO

Michele (age 14) and her younger brother John (age 12) in their 1977 Richmond Little League All Star uniforms

one's circumstance, lessons Michele still holds dear and uses today while teaching about Jesus at The Bear Creek School. Although her position at South Shore was short-lived, she made an impact on her students. As graduating seniors, those girls named Michele to a "who's who" list of most influential teachers.

After leaving Rainier Beach, Michele taught P.E. in the Shoreline School District for ten years, before taking a break to raise her young children. She returned to teaching in 2006 and began her career as a P.E. teacher at Bear Creek. She started working with grades K and 1 at both Redmond Campus and Valley Campus (back when it was a Lower School campus). In the beginning, it was a part-time position that allowed her to put her kids on the bus in the morning, drive to Redmond to teach her young students, and get back to Woodinville in time to greet her son and daughter as they got off the bus. In the years since, Michele's role has become full-time to encompass teaching P.E. to all our Lower School students, from kindergarten through grade 4. Michele also serves as one of our Lower School math specialists.

She says, "I love teaching at Bear Creek because the faculty is so unified; it's like we are moving together on the same track. It all comes down to our belief in God. He keeps us going in the direction He wants us to go."



COURTESY PHOTO

Michele driving her fishing boat

Michele and Jeff have always been huge Seattle sports fans. In fact, during her interview for this article, she was wearing a Mariners T-shirt in solidarity with the team's unsuccessful run for the wildcard slot in the playoffs. Cheering for the Sounders, Mariners, Aquasox, Storm, Seahawks, and of course, the Washington State Cougars, has been a consistent part of their lives. Michele's children are grown. Her son is a software engineer for a biotech startup in southern California, while her daughter is finishing her degree in international business at Boise State. With their kids having flown the nest, Michele and her husband have moved to the Bothell/Mill Creek area and developed some new interests. A few years ago, they took up bowling. Her husband plays in a couple of leagues, and they play together in a co-ed league on Sunday evenings at Tech City Bowl. In fact, she and Jeff were co-ed champions for the last two years. This year they bought a fishing boat, but Michele was quick to clarify. "I just drive the boat. My husband fishes." Regardless, they love the opportunity to get out on the water to enjoy our beautiful Northwest scenery.

Michele's passion for athletics and for helping children develop and grow through P.E. as well as in their love for Christ shines through her and brings joy and fun to our Lower School every day.

BUILDING RESILIENCY IN CHILDREN AND TWEENS

ONE OF THE PRIMARY GOALS OF A CHRISTIAN CLASSICAL EDUCATION IS TO INSTILL VIRTUE IN STUDENTS, TEACHING THEM TO SEEK WISDOM, NOT MERELY FILL THEM WITH INFORMATION. This is a lifelong pursuit and can often be an arduous path. At Bear Creek, we approach education incarnationally—that is, encompassing the whole child—body, mind, and spirit. Supporting students’ social-emotional wellness is an important facet of what we do.

Bear Creek hired Emily Besaw MSW, MDiv, as a Student Support Specialist in August 2021 to help support our teachers and students in grades K – 8 with their social and emotional learning and mental health needs. *Modus Vivendi* sat down for an interview with Emily about how she approaches her work with our students.

MV: HOW DID YOUR JOURNEY BRING YOU TO BEAR CREEK?

EB: I have always wanted to be a therapist and felt called to the profession from a pretty young age. I received a master’s in divinity degree from Princeton Theological Seminary along with a master’s in social work from Rutgers University. After graduation, I began working at a men’s trauma program in the Philadelphia area, then later specialized in working with youth with eating disorders. My husband and I moved to Seattle from Philadelphia in the middle of the pandemic, which was rather disorienting! He was hired as a Middle

School teacher for Bear Creek in August 2020, and then a year later, when this position was created, I spoke with Middle School Dean of Students Nathan Pettit and discovered that we shared common goals about how to support students, so I applied. Thus far, my role has been helping teachers navigate conversations with students who are emotionally struggling. I love engaging students about the

“big questions” of life because this incorporates my passions of faith formation and human development. There is nothing more exciting for me than helping students connect their physical-emotional experiences with their spiritual experiences. While I’m still learning more about my role at Bear Creek, I am excited to be here!

MV: WHAT IS UNIQUE ABOUT SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR YOUNGER STUDENTS?

EB: One of my favorite child psychologists, Erik Erikson, laid out a theory related to the psychological challenges of

school age and adolescent children wherein children develop a sense of competency and continuity within their senses of self. Erikson believed each child is continually faced with developmental crises (they’re crises because they involve a child’s psychological need). In theory, successful completion of each developmental challenge results in a healthy personality and the acquisition of basic virtues. His theory is rooted in a child’s social context, which





PHOTO BY JANEEN SORENSEN

Grade 7 student writes a note of encouragement during a mini service project

he believed would contribute to *how* the child goes about “developing resiliency,” thus building a more complex view of the world and developing mutually helpful relationships with others.

Two of Erikson’s stages stand out regarding K – 8 students:

Industry vs. Inferiority: In this stage, typically ages 5 through 12, a child’s teacher becomes more significant in his/her life as children learn to read, write, and build other specific skills. A child’s peers also become more important and play a major role in contributing to their self esteem. If children are encouraged and reinforced for their initiative, they begin to feel competent and confident in their abilities. On the other hand, if initiative is not encouraged, then the child might begin to feel inferior, doubting his or her own abilities. Some failure is necessary to learn, and a good teacher will help students find that balance between taking initiative and making mistakes.

Identity vs. Role Confusion: Adolescents are searching for a sense of self and personal identity (cue the stereotypical dyed hair color, punk music, and deviation from parents!). Adolescents are becoming independent, yet desire to fit into their social context. This stage poses opportunities for teens to “try on” various roles, allowing them time to explore their beliefs, goals, and values. Adolescents tend to re-examine their identities until they sense they have grown into the changes (i.e., changes in their body, expectations amongst peers, etc.). Eventually, this leads to the adolescent developing a sense of fidelity, or rather, remaining true to oneself. Lack of completing this developmental crisis, in theory, results in confusion, insecurity, and unsureness about one’s sense of self, one’s future, and where one would fit in.

MV: HOW DOES A CHRISTIAN CLASSICAL EDUCATION HELP SUPPORT STUDENTS THROUGH THESE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES?

EB: During the stage of Identity vs. Role Confusion, students are constantly “testing” their world, “trying things on,” and seeing “how they fit.” This is where a Christian classical education is essential. During this fundamental stage, Christian education doesn’t just provide another option amidst a myriad of options, it helps students learn how to look for the things that will most fulfill their deepest desires. As James K. A. Smith, a philosopher, author, and professor at Calvin University points out, “we are what we love.” Smith here is echoing the words of St. Augustine who succinctly stated, “Our hearts are restless, until they rest in [God].” In our recent professional development training, James K. A. Smith spoke to this matter and reminded Bear Creek’s faculty and staff of a crucial truth about how and why students believe in God. He said, “The plausibility of belief is often pegged to a person.” In other words, when a student is in this stage of “Identity vs. Role Confusion,” it is more often relationship with Christians that is most compelling in determining whether someone believes in the gospel.

This is also why Virtue Awards are given in grades K – 4. We are not just handing out certificates, we are training students to look for virtue both in themselves and others. Virtues such as perseverance, kindness, patience, diligence, and love are publicly recognized and celebrated regularly in Chapel, with specific students noted as exemplars of each virtue for the week. In grades 5 – 8, the curriculum incorporates skill-building around these social-emotional areas. This stage moves from recognition of virtue to the gradual habituation of virtue. As students begin to experience and learn virtue, they are more likely to desire virtuous role models. This is where the Christian teacher serves as the person to whom the “plausibility of belief is pegged.”

MV: HOW DO YOU THINK THE PANDEMIC HAS AFFECTED THE MENTAL HEALTH AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL WELLNESS OF CHILDREN?

EB: An intentional focus on social-emotional learning has always been important, but it seems imperative now. Kids thrive on structure, and there has been so much unpredictability in the past two years. Many children also missed out on a year of “normal” socializing, and that means we need to work harder to re-orient them towards others and healthy relationship building. We see an increased need to help our students identify their feelings and connect them with their behaviors and how their actions affect other people.

I see this happening every day with the younger students when their teachers encourage them to dance together during a classroom “brain break” or play cooperative games during recess. These activities also build their sense of confidence. All these shared experiences help build healthy relationships.

For older students in grades 5 – 8, students are dealing with external social and academic pressures, as well as significant internal changes caused by puberty. The combination of external and internal



PHOTO BY JANEEN SORENSEN

Kindergarten student worships during Lower School Chapel

challenges often produces anxiety and other “big” emotions. Some of our students are experiencing doubts about their faith and asking big questions about God and their own role in the world. It is important for us to provide space for students to ask those questions and help guide them as they process their feelings and begin to develop their identities. Middle School Advisory classes also focus on how students treat one another with dignity and respect and encourage mutual support for one another and service to others.

The intentional social-emotional learning support, curricular strands, and modeling of Christian virtue unite in a Christian classical school environment to provide a strong scaffolding for children to build their sense of self and ground themselves in Christ as they grow to become the individuals God intends.

CHINESE STUDENT REFLECTIONS ON BEAR CREEK

Bear Creek is a diverse community. International students are an integral part of our big family. Many families choose Bear Creek because of its Christian liberal arts education and its powerful impact on shaping students. For those who grow up in different cultures, where a Christian liberal arts education is unavailable, the effect can be more evident and profound. Some of our Chinese students volunteered to share their experiences.



PHOTO BY JANEEN SORESENSEN

TIANZE (MAXWELL) CHEN (center) senior, National Honor Society President, from Shenzhen, China

I have been at Bear Creek for my entire high school career. Bear Creek has taught me a lot about the world, but what I most benefited from are my critical and independent thinking skills. As a student raised in the traditional Chinese education system, I find it hard to challenge a teacher's opinion. In China, we were imperceptibly taught to refrain from uttering opinions, because doing so may

delay the teacher's instructions. Yes, you do get to ask questions, but once you take more than two minutes, the teacher would simply move on because he/she must attend to the needs of the other 50+ students. At Bear Creek, however, I find it natural to have differing interpretations than a teacher, and more importantly, we are allowed to process the information at our own pace.

It is an accepted practice for a Bear Creek student to point out an error made by a teacher. Students are encouraged to interpret a concept or a literary character from different perspectives. In the process, we are learning that we are human; no one is infallible, even the teachers. And it is normal to have and defend our own opinion. These lessons are invaluable to me. Bear Creek not only nurtures me to pursue the truth but also provides me the critical support for this pursuit. And that is why I think Bear Creek is the place for personal growth and college preparedness.



XIAOTONG (MARIA) LU (front middle, in purple) senior, Bear Creek Student Admissions Ambassador, from Beijing, China

I started in eighth grade at Bear Creek. As a global nomad, I have traveled and studied at different places in China, Canada, and New Zealand. It is an enriching but frustrating experience because just as I began to get to know the teachers and make friends, I had to leave and start from scratch all over again in another place. It's challenging to bond with my peers and fit in anywhere, especially at the beginning of my teenage years.

I am grateful to find a home at Bear Creek, a magical place that I fell in love with when I was waiting for my turn to be sorted for the right House. At age 14, I became like Harry Potter, and Bear Creek my Hogwarts. What I like most about Bear Creek is its House system. We compete and collaborate among the Houses, keep one another accountable, and strive our best to honor our Houses.

Within each House, we have a dean and faculty advisor who supervise senior student heads and leaders. Under their leadership, we engage with one another in structured and unstructured ways

such as games, service opportunities, discussions, and advising. Through such a natural mentoring environment, many older students helped, supported, and championed me. I quickly fit in and have made some lifetime best friends based not only on interests but also on values. In such a nurturing environment, we form a caring community where mentors develop traditions that pass on as each class graduates. Last year, I became a school ambassador, striving to mentor the next younger group.

Through my experience in the House system, my compassion has been nurtured and grown. It inspired me to volunteer to help teen girls from Chinese Yi ethnic groups who face discrimination. It also motivated me to participate in Harvard's community impact project, China Thinks Big Competition, to address the lack of free career and college counseling services available to Chinese high school students. These activities not only expanded my horizon, but also inspired me to embark on a magical and empowering journey. My craving to find viable and sustainable solutions to help the poor girls and Chinese teens led me to take summer college classes at USC on entrepreneurship and business. By helping others, I found my passion and calling.



COURTESY PHOTO

YOU WU (far right) senior, from Qingdao, China

I came to The Bear Creek School in my freshman year. It has been my most challenging yet enjoyable journey. Compared to other schools I attended in China, Bear Creek is more competitive academically in terms of course rigor and breadth. Not completely familiar with American culture and the English language, I felt exceedingly anxious before the school year started. Then at the beginning of the school year, I was overwhelmed by the heavy reading load. Even though I spent all my free time on homework, I still struggled to complete the work on time.

Luckily, Bear Creek provided me all the support and help that I needed. With the assistance of my teachers and peers, I was able to keep up with the pace and I even fell in love with reading. The more I read, the faster and more efficient I became. By the end of the first semester, I was able to complete all the assignments with ease. My English improved significantly. Similarly, with the teachers' guidance and classmates' encouragement, I was able to step out of my comfort zone to challenge myself in rigorous math and science classes.

What I enjoy even more at Bear Creek is its offering

of a wide variety of courses with different rigors. A student can not only tailor the subject and its rigor to his/her own needs, but also have abundant opportunities to trace an idea from its origin and test it through numerous hands-on experiments. As a result, I have had the privilege to explore many subjects beyond minimum requirements. Because Bear Creek offers so many college-level courses, I feel confident about my college readiness. The school is an academically nourishing place for college preparation.

ANDREW TANG junior, from Shanghai, China

My journey at Bear Creek started at the beginning of ninth grade. Now when I look back, I see that Bear Creek's Christian liberal arts education has not only enhanced my academic skills significantly but also profoundly changed my perspectives and strengthened my faith in Christ. Furthermore, Bear Creek has provided me with plenty of opportunities to develop my leadership skills, which are so valuable and meaningful for high school students. Overall, the Upper School community is so uplifting and encouraging that it feels like a big family because everyone deeply cares for each other.

Teachers care so much about their students'

success and overall well-being. They give us ample opportunities to ask questions, express our views and opinions, and search for answers through discussion, research, and debate. No questions here are bad. No opinions here are wrong. At Bear Creek, we learn to seek knowledge by thinking critically, and we learn to approach problems from each other's perspectives. Through this rhetorical way of learning, we integrate our worldviews with academic content, discovering truths that God has placed in this complex world.

At Bear Creek, abundant opportunities are provided to develop skills and talents according to one's interests, such as leadership, athletics, arts, etc., in addition to academics. For example, last year I had the opportunity to serve on the Hildegard House leadership team. This meaningful experience led me to the privilege of serving on the Upper School Student Council as the Junior Class Representative this year. As I serve and give back to this wonderful community, I have been gaining more insights about Bear Creek and also about my own worldview. My involvement in the Student Life program has taught me how to become a better servant-leader by teaching me to lead with wisdom, compassion, and courage. These unforgettable experiences have been equipping me with many critical life skills and confidence to walk the path that God has placed in front of me.



SIMON LUO junior, from Shenzhen, China

I am currently a junior, and this is my second year here at Bear Creek. I came directly from China to Seattle. It has been quite a new experience for me. My favorite part about Bear Creek is that it is the sanctuary for me to become who I want to be.

I left my previous school because it is all about schoolwork and testing. I had barely any time to exercise, let alone to pursue my passion in computer science. I felt suffocated. Luckily, I found Bear Creek. Here I have more choices regarding which courses to take and at which level of rigor. The best part is that I now have more free time to do whatever I want to do after school. After coming to Bear Creek, I was finally able to start my own independent coding project. I have longed for a computer science project since elementary school, but I was not able to find time because my Chinese schoolwork consumed all my spare time. This is so far the best part of Bear Creek.

I am very thankful for our school's schedule, which ensures we not only do homework every day but also leaves us plenty of time to develop our unique talents. With the time and space that Bear Creek provides, I have been able to explore and pursue what I am passionate about. Coming to Bear Creek is the best decision I have ever made for myself.





COURTESY PHOTO

PARENT REPS ARE OUR SUPERHEROES!

BY DEBBIE MARCHIONE

It's a bird! It's a plane! Look, it's a Parent Rep! While volunteer Parent Reps at Bear Creek may not battle bad guys or save the planet from meteorites, they do have some amazing superpowers which are exhibited in their ability to build community.

The Parent Rep program began in 2006, with a vision to foster collaborative relationships between parents and school and to cultivate a committed community united in creating a welcoming, grace-filled culture. Originally designed just for K - 6 families, the program soon expanded to include all divisions, with two or more Parent Reps assigned to each grade level.

Parent Reps hold dual responsibilities of communication and community building that have a

single desired outcome—to help families connect with one another and the school and feel embraced as part of the Bear Creek community.

Since the pandemic began, our Parent Reps have demonstrated their incredible powers of imagination and creativity in supporting and encouraging our school community through a wide range of activities. Last year, Parent Reps hosted a whopping 48 online events! From family dance parties to a LEGO® master competition and parent coffees, they brought together every grade level in our community to share the fun, frustration, laughter, challenges, and joys in one of the strangest years we have ever experienced.

Their spirit of service has continued despite the

WHAT THE ANNUAL FUND SUPPORTS



Many of the programs that the Annual Fund traditionally supports every year, like the arts, athletics, field trips, community events, and more, look different again this year. The Annual Fund allows our teachers to be creative and responsive to changing or new needs that arise during the year.



The Annual Fund is the most important fundraiser at The Bear Creek School. It provides unrestricted, critical resources that support programs like arts and athletics, technology upgrades, classroom equipment, field trips, school traditions, access to talented students, and more.



ALL IN!

Thank you to everyone who supported the Annual Fund this year.





Creating a Community Shaped Like a Horseshoe

BY DEBBIE MARCHIONE

PHOTO BY JANEEN SORENSEN

“Helping each student become the individual God intends.” For Shannon Malloy, this part of the mission statement is very compelling and the primary reason why her family joined, and continues to love, The Bear Creek School. When Shannon and her husband Rich moved to the Redmond area in 2013, they had no experience with schools. Their eldest son Eldon was due to start

kindergarten and their other son Jack was ready to start preschool. As Shannon spoke with her new neighbors and people she met at church and in the community about schools, she heard Bear Creek mentioned frequently. As soon as they attended that first Open House, they knew this was the place for their family.

“I so appreciate how everyone at Bear Creek

recognizes that every child has talents and room for improvement. The teachers, coaches, classroom assistants, and other staff all nurture students, making sure no child falls through the cracks, and that all the students have a chance to explore, learn, make mistakes, and grow. They are also free to experiment and learn. This has given our two boys the confidence to try new things like drama, band, and sports.”

Shannon continues, “And it’s not just the students who are accepted here. Every family is welcomed and belongs at Bear Creek.” When they first joined the school, Shannon wanted to get to know what happened during the school day and to meet new people, so she quickly jumped in as a volunteer. Initially, she helped out in the classroom with various tasks, then began serving as a Room Parent and later as a Parent Rep and a Mentor Parent.

“When we were new, several families went out of their way to include us, and that meant so much. I want to pay it forward and help all of our families feel part of this amazing community.”

Shannon also serves on the Advancement Committee, which works behind the scenes to support fundraising initiatives and other projects that advance the mission of the school. For the past two years, Shannon has served as the Chair (and now Co-Chair) of the All-In Annual Fund Campaign.

“We didn’t know anything about independent schools when we started, and I was really confused about the Annual Fund our first year. Another parent explained to me that it was the most important thing we could do for the school as it impacted every aspect of Bear Creek. During the final phase of the *Reach UP* campaign to build the Upper School building, I served as a Campaign Ambassador. It was a lot of fun and very rewarding, and that’s why I was happy to help lead the Annual Fund. I can see the tangible results of my involvement in fundraising for the school. We give every year because we truly feel the impact of our investment in our boys’ education as well as our experience of community.”

As they prepare for Eldon to start Upper School next fall, Shannon comments on how impressed she is with the alumni she has met and read about. “I am looking forward to seeing my boys take advantage of the leadership opportunities in the Upper School and watching them graduate prepared to make a difference in the world as young men of character, approaching problems in a Christ-centered way. We are here for the process and excited about the outcome.”

Shannon sums up her love for Bear Creek by saying, “Bear Creek is a circle of families who love and respect and honor one another. But it’s also so much more than that. I once heard that the best community is not just a circle, but a horseshoe, and that’s the way Bear Creek is. You are welcomed into the horseshoe and appreciated for who you are right from the start. We are so excited to invest in a community that lives God’s word in this way.”

INVEST IN THE FUTURE

Legacy giving is a powerful way to make an impact on tomorrow’s world through the education of future Christian leaders—individuals prepared to engage the world with wisdom, compassion, and courage. Your thoughtful planning to advance the mission of The Bear Creek School will make a difference in the world your children, grandchildren, or even great-grandchildren will inherit.

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 Legacy Circle of like-minded donors.

For more information about making a legacy gift in your will or through life insurance, property, or other assets, contact Debbie Marchione, V.P. for Philanthropy and Community Engagement, at dmarchione@tbcs.org or by calling 425-898-1720 ext. 339.

ALUMNI CLASS NOTES

Class Notes are submitted by alumni and reflect the range of alumni experiences. They may be lightly edited for grammar and clarity.

Class of 2009

Courtney (Wallis) Storti



Courtney and her husband Andrew live in Bothell, WA, and work for Amazon, where Courtney is a Human Resources Program Manager. They recently welcomed their first child, a son, Aaron Peter Storti, on August 11, 2021.

Class of 2012

Danielle Isbell



After studying literature at Belmont University in Nashville, TN, then Theology and Conflict in graduate school at Boston University, and spending a few years living in Kansas City, MO, Danielle has finally moved home to Seattle. She and her fiancé, Mason Pashia, purchased a home in West Seattle in March 2021 and are greatly enjoying the Pacific Northwest. While living in Kansas City, Danielle worked at the Kansas City Chamber of Commerce, where she led a wide variety of community initiatives—including a partnership with *Sesame Street* to increase awareness of the importance of early learning. (Yes, she has met Elmo.) Upon moving to Seattle, Danielle

began working at The Spur Group, a management consulting firm. In addition to her full-time position, Danielle works with a Boston-based dialogue organization, Essential Partners, to facilitate and train communities in dialogue and conflict resolution.

Morgan (Rial) McBride



Morgan married Rick McBride on February 27, 2021, in Clearwater Beach, FL. They had a beautiful ceremony on the beach and reception with friends and family, although some guests were missing due to COVID-19. Their dog Bear went viral on TikTok as the ring bearer! In addition to getting married, she started a new job as a Physician Assistant on the orthopedic sarcoma team at Moffitt Cancer Center in Tampa, FL.

Kendall (Engelstone) Russo



Kendall recently moved to Frisco, TX, with her husband Michael and dog Oliver. They are enjoying being homeowners and are thankful to have a backyard with space to host friends. Kendall is still working at Comerica and recently accepted a position as a Commercial Banker. Michael works at Ericsson in Sales Enablement.

Class of 2014

Kristina Engelstone



Kristina has been living in northeastern Hungary since early 2020, teaching English and yoga. Living there comes with learning the language and the unique culture. This year, she began a job at an international school, working with little ones, aged 3 – 5 years. Most of the children do not speak English, so it is challenging! Her goal is to establish an outdoor program at the school to bring young children and their families out into the natural world. She sends blessings from the land of sweet paprika and goulash!

GOING THE DISTANCE

BY ERIN ALLEVA '14

I GRADUATED FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA with a degree in computer science and cognitive science in 2018. After graduation, I worked as a backend software developer on an event management application for almost three years before quitting my job to hike the 2,650-mile Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail (PCT).

At Bear Creek, I was encouraged to follow my passion for the outdoors. For my Senior Capstone Project, I planned a sea kayaking trip in the San Juans. My mom and I did a 3-day circumnavigation of Shaw Island, camping along the way. The skills I learned planning that trip and the fun I had executing it influenced my future decisions to go on more trips in Washington and to complete the John Muir Trail before I decided to hike the PCT.

I hiked the Pacific Crest Trail because I thought it would be a challenging experience. It is something that requires perseverance and some planning. I liked the idea that completing the trail is an accomplishment that does not involve luck, outside influence, or skill. Most of the PCT is walking, and depending on the time of year, snow levels, and other weather, does not require a high level of outdoor skill, though it is a good idea to have knowledge of the outdoors before heading out! In addition to those reasons, I also love hiking and camping. Spending an entire summer in the outdoors and walking through some of the most diverse and beautiful scenery in the United States was an appealing idea and a motivating factor in wanting to thru-hike.

Though the PCT is a challenging endeavor, I did not extensively train for my venture. I walked around Portland with my backpack filled with approximately



Erin at the Southern Terminus of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail on the California/Mexico border

20 pounds, which was the average weight of my pack with food and water throughout the hike. I ran about 10 miles a week and worked out at the CrossFit gym where I belonged for the past few years. All this activity was mostly stuff I had already incorporated into my daily routine. It is a good idea to be fit before starting the trail, but you can also get in shape as you go. The trickiest part in the beginning is making it far enough each day between long stretches without a water source. I started hiking on April 29, 2021, and on the first two days I did 20 and 21 miles to make sure I could get to the next water sources, but other hikers made it work with 10 – 15 miles a day to start. After that, I settled into around 17 – 20 miles each day for the first two weeks. As I got stronger, I could hike longer days, and by the time I reached Oregon, I was able to hike over 30 miles each day. In Washington, I lowered the mileage back down to around 25 miles due to more elevation gain and loss each day.

Hiking the PCT was both very rewarding and very challenging. In general, the most rewarding parts were the relationships that I formed along the way. I met many people in towns and on the trail. The incredible generosity of strangers was astounding



COURTESY PHOTO

Erin's early-September campsite in the Alpine Lakes Wilderness north of Snoqualmie Pass

at times. People would offer generous things to me for no reason other than their kindness and love for the PCT community. I was offered couches to sleep on, hot showers, food, and more, from people I had only just met. Friendships on the PCT form quickly. This year, because Canada was closed at unofficial border crossings, instead of hiking into Canada, all the hikers had to backtrack after hitting the northern terminus. This meant that after crossing the last point in Washington where hikers can exit the trail, I began seeing hikers returning from the Canadian border, before reaching it myself on September 13. I ran into people whom I had only met briefly, and we all embraced like we were long lost best friends. One such person was a girl with a trail name of “Gweeg” whom I had just met a few days before and only for an hour or so. When she saw me, she started running and yelling my trail name, “Ebay.” People that hike a long-distance trail agree: it’s the people, not the trail, that makes the experience.

Along with the many rewards, came many

challenges. The first 700 miles of the trail go through the desert, and the constant heat and lack of water were immense challenges. As I got further into the hike, battling boredom and loneliness became wearisome. Walking all day becomes tedious. There is only so much that podcasts, music, and audio books can do to alleviate the boredom. Towards the end of the hike, I learned to meditate to make time pass faster. Time turns into miles. At my pace, approximately 20 minutes equaled one mile, so I would constantly be doing math to see how far it was to the next water, top of the next climb, or temporary relief. Sometimes the challenges were weather and fire related. Through much of Northern California and Oregon, I was walking in smoke and managing the risk of walking near areas with active wildfires. I even had the crazy experience of escaping the Dixie Fire as it was just starting. I spent five hours trying to get out of a tiny resort town that is now only ashes. Though the challenging experiences were painful and, at times, scary, I am proud of overcoming them.

Sometimes it was difficult to continue, but I had inspiration along the way. I was inspired by the beautiful scenery and the wonderful hikers around me, including my friends on the trail. After a while, even the most incredible views grew a little stale. The friendships I grew while hiking were often the ones that kept me going. They were the people who told me, in my lowest moments, that it was okay to skip ahead or get off the trail. They also gave me encouragement and pushed me because they knew I could keep going. Having people around who reminded me this journey was my own undertaking made it easier to keep going when I was having a rough day. The most difficult parts of the trail were when I was alone and camping by myself. When I had a group around me, we commiserated, laughed, and enjoyed the terrible parts and the good parts together. It almost always made everything better to be with other people.

The trip had its surprises as well. I was surprised by how much I enjoyed visiting the small towns along the trail. Throughout the hike, I was off the trail approximately every four days and got a taste of small-town America. I enjoyed the slow, friendly vibe of the places I visited. One man graciously picked us up and transported us around a fire closure and then offered to take us to a restaurant. He then made sure to pick us up an hour or two later when we were done eating. Another instance, in the town of Agua Dulce, I got into town late, after the kitchen and restaurant's normal hours. I sat down with my friends, and the manager came out to give us hiker burritos on the house. He said he knew we were probably hungry, and he wanted to help us out. He even confessed that he loved hikers because they are more interesting than his usual customers!

Though my friendships were influential, I learned to focus on my own experience instead of comparing myself to what others were doing. There's a saying on the trail to "hike your own hike" (HYOH). This means not worrying about another person's gear, mileage, time in towns, or other things in comparison to yours. This is something a lot of people struggle with, especially at the beginning of the hike. People want to do what other hikers are doing, or they are concerned other hikers will



Erin at the Northern Terminus of the Pacific Crest National Scenic Trail on the Washington/Canada border

judge them for their gear or how fast or slow they are going. There is a lot of discussion of your stats on the trail, but the point of HYOH is to encourage hikers to not force their opinions on others and to not worry about what others think. Learning how to hike my own hike throughout the course of my walk from Mexico to Canada has helped me apply a little bit of that attitude to life outside the trail. It is the same idea as making what you want of your life and not focusing on where others are at in their lives or what they are doing. By learning to embrace HYOH, I am learning to focus on where I want my life to go instead of what I feel might be expected or what others around me are doing.

My advice to others would be to not worry too much about what you "should" be doing. Quitting my job was scary, but the entire experience of hiking the Pacific Crest Trail opened my eyes to all the possible ways you can take your life. If there is something that you really want to do or pursue, you should go for it.

ALUMNI PROGRAM UPDATES

This past summer, Bear Creek welcomed Whitney Isbell '15 on staff as our new Alumni Relations Manager. Whitney graduated from Abilene Christian University in 2019 with a B.S. Psychology. After college, she moved to California and worked as a nanny and a reading comprehension coach. Then she returned to Washington and worked at Trader Joe's before starting this position. In addition to serving the alumni community, Whitney is an assistant coach for the Bear Creek varsity girls soccer team. She has a beloved cat and enjoys watching anime, hiking, skiing, and playing intramural soccer. You are most likely to run into her eating out at Jinya Ramen Bar or buying coffee. She is excited to continue building our alumni programs and meeting more alumni.

Although the pandemic has made our traditional alumni gatherings impossible, there are still plenty of ways that alumni can be involved. Already this year, alumni have spoken to our senior class, at a prospective parent event, and at a Veterans Day Chapel. In addition, many alumni have connected with current juniors and seniors about their college experiences. The Alumni Office also sent out care packages to the Class of 2021.

BUSINESS DIRECTORY LAUNCH

As a service to our alumni community, we are launching a business directory on our dedicated alumni platform. If you are looking for a product or service, why not consider supporting a fellow alum? Go to alumni.tbcs.org to view the directory or add your company to the list.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Do you want to help develop the alumni program? We would love to have you join the Alumni Leadership Committee. This group meets online on a quarterly basis to discuss the program and plan ways for alumni to engage with the school.

As our seniors look ahead to graduation, and our juniors begin their college application journey, we invite you to consider being a College Connector. Share your college experience, give a Bear Creek family a campus tour, or even welcome a new freshman to your college campus.

Share your Bear Creek or career experience. The Admissions team and Upper School periodically request alumni panelists to share their experiences with current and prospective families or students. Most of these panels occur online.

If you are interested in any of the above volunteer opportunities, please let us know by emailing alumni@tbcs.org.

ALUMNI SPORTS DAY

We are working on a plan to hold our annual alumni soccer game in June and may add some more sports this year. Watch your email and social media for more information!

STAY CONNECTED!

Did you know you can catch Bear Creek sporting events live on NFHS Network? Or stream an Upper School Chapel? No matter where you are, you can still root for the Grizzlies or worship with students. Our donor-funded Pixellot S camera in the gym streams all games and matches on NFHS Network. Follow along on Facebook or Instagram for links to some of the Upper School Chapels.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Our Bear Creek alumni social media consists of Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Instagram ([@bearcreekalumni](https://www.instagram.com/bearcreekalumni)) provides fun updates about what is currently happening in school, features throwback pictures, and occasionally highlights alumni. Facebook ([Bear Creek Alumni](#) private group) provides more updates on the school and ways to get involved. Our LinkedIn group ([The Bear Creek School Alumni](#)) allows you to connect professionally or post to other Bear Creek alumni on that platform.

We love to hear from our alumni. If you have a story to tell, a suggestion for our program, a Class Note, a volunteer idea, or just want to say hi, please reach out to Whitney at whitney.isbell@tbcs.org or via one of our social media channels.



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#GRIZZLIESTOGETHER



The Bear Creek School is proud to announce our new podcast *Bear Conversations*. President and Headmaster Patrick Carruth will be talking with members of the faculty about how teaching at a Christian liberal arts institution shapes discussion and learning in the classroom. The first episode will air in January 2022. You can find *Bear Conversations* on The Bear Creek School's website at tbc.org/podcast or wherever you listen to your podcasts.