

MODUS VIVENDI

A Way of Life

FACULTY PROFILE:
AYOLEIDA PÁRAMO

MEET OUR MICROSOFT
INNOVATIVE EDUCATOR
EXPERTS

DEVELOPING LEADERS
THROUGH ATHLETICS

THE BEAR
CREEK
SCHOOL
MAGAZINE

WINTER 2023





MODUS VIVENDI

Winter 2023

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.

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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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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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.

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

Senior Rosalind Nordberg reads with kindergartener Claude Yang. Our Upper School athletes forge relationships with Lower School students by visiting with classes. Read more about Reading Buddies and other leadership training on pages 15 – 25.

PHOTO BY JANEEN SORENSEN



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MESSAGE FROM THE HEADMASTER

By Patrick Carruth

I CHUCKLED AS I WALKED AWAY from the copy machine. Lea Hysom, Bear Creek's Director of Health Services, had just handed me a printout from the CDC which indicated a new respiratory virus had appeared in China and recommended that schools and families prepare for major inconveniences to the rhythm of their lives. Specifically, schools should formulate non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) in preparation for this new virus arriving in the United States. I had heard things like this before, and many of them never came to pass, so I advised caution in proceeding.

Lea smiled and walked away, but a week later, we had a very similar conversation and immediately began preparing the NPIs that would become the first wave of our pandemic response. When the COVID-19 leadership team first met virtually on a cold Sunday afternoon in March 2020 to plan and draft communication about remote learning, each member of that team dedicated themselves to doing whatever it took to ensure that the mission of The Bear Creek School continued.

The word leadership has its etymology in "one who has quality or skill in guiding others," and depending on personality and skill set, that guidance may take the form of galvanizing, inspiring, instructing, assisting, or mentoring. However, regardless of style,

the critical element of good leadership is humility. The scriptures explain this, "But Jesus called them to Himself and said, 'You know that the rulers of the Gentiles domineer over them, and those in high position exercise authority over them. It is not this

way among you, but whoever wants to become prominent among you shall be your servant, and whoever desires to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.'" (Matthew 20:25-28)

When I chuckled by the copy machine at Lea's concern about COVID-19, she could have become frustrated at my tepid reply. When I approached the team with what probably seemed like an impossible task,

they could have complained about the extra hours this challenge would require. But each demonstrated the humble and tenacious leadership that helped launch an effective pandemic response at The Bear Creek School.

As you read through the pages of this *Modus Vivendi*, it is our hope you see similar leadership development taking place at The Bear Creek School, as we prepare students to lead with wisdom, compassion, and courage.



BEAR CREEK'S PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE MODEL

BY KAREN BLANKENBECKLER, VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

What makes a great teacher? As with most things it takes natural talent, hard work, and determination. Those who excel at a sport, a musical instrument, or a profession need to work hard and follow a process to target very specific skills to improve. Becoming an exceptional teacher follows this same pattern. At The Bear Creek School, we have a Professional Excellence Model which is a system for intentionally developing excellent teachers.

Our Professional Excellence Model has three straightforward steps that we cycle through each year, supporting our teachers and professionals as lifelong learners. These steps are assessing, coaching, and equipping.

ASSESSING

Teachers are individually assessed based on our Professional Excellence Rubric, which provides 13 items that fall into three categories: philosophy, pedagogy, and professionalism. This rubric gives teachers a picture of what it looks like to be a great teacher at Bear Creek. Each of the rubric categories describes what great teachers do, with detailed characteristics and examples. Teachers are given both quantitative and qualitative feedback on their performance, and they receive individual goals and plans to help them grow in each of the rubric categories.

COACHING

Bear Creek has a feedback-rich culture. Because our teachers are passionate about the school's mission, they

welcome feedback and coaching. Teachers want to be excellent not for their own sakes but so they can nurture students to learn and develop into people of wisdom, compassion, and courage. There are many ways that feedback happens at Bear Creek, including classroom observations, goal meetings, regular one-on-one meetings with supervisors, and performance reviews. Using the Professional Excellence Rubric, we have very specific areas to focus on during the observations and feedback meetings.

Teachers who are new to Bear Creek are matched with mentors who give them additional guidance and support as they integrate into the curriculum, program, and culture of our school. Mentors are teachers with extensive experience at Bear Creek who are experts in specific grade levels or subjects.

Coaching and feedback occur for the many roles a teacher fills including instruction in the classroom, partnering with parents, planning and grading, and investing in the whole school program. The Professional Excellence Rubric keeps the feedback focused on critical success factors.

EQUIPPING

Our professional development is designed to equip individual teachers to grow and improve, targeting specific areas of school improvement and to meet strategic initiatives. In collaboration with their supervisors, teachers establish individual plans for growth in specific areas.

The content in the Professional Excellence Model is taught and practiced during scheduled in-service times and during our Growth and Renewal sessions on Wednesday mornings.

Bear Creek financially supports faculty and staff who attend conferences, access resources, or take classes so they can continue to grow and develop in targeted rubric areas. Bear Creek also has an advanced degree grant program.

If a teacher pursues either a master's degree or a doctorate aimed at improving teaching skills or subject area expertise, the teacher can receive a grant which generally covers about 60% of the fees for the degree.

Each summer we offer courses that help unify Bear Creek faculty with the same heart and mind, designed to help teachers of all experience levels grow in their knowledge and skills of pedagogy and the Christian worldview. Every teacher at Bear Creek must complete two Summer Institute courses to advance through our Professional Excellence Model.

I teach "Where Great Teaching Begins," a course on pedagogy that helps train teachers on methods of instruction that maximize learning. It gives a framework for lesson planning, including writing effective objectives, using successful strategies, and best practices in student assessment.

President and Headmaster Patrick Carruth is the instructor for "Christian Worldview," a course unpacking the philosophy of The Bear Creek School. Our belief in an infinite and personal God and His glorious plan of redemption is the foundational element underpinning what we do in our classrooms and in our school. In this course, teachers grow in their ability to think about worldview and vocation from a Biblical perspective. They will also learn how to integrate the Christian faith into their teaching to help students have a worldview that leads to a unified understanding of reality.



On October 24, 2022, Bear Creek hosted faculty and staff from eight area schools at the Pacific Northwest Classical Christian School Conference.

THE LARGER PICTURE OF BEAR CREEK'S STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The Professional Excellence Model is just part of our professional development. School improvement and strategic initiatives are planned each year and organized into four categories.

Operational/Systems

To develop and maintain best practices in all processes related to the academic program, Bear Creek has embarked on a school-wide project to compile lesson plans, resources, and assessments in OneNote notebooks for each grade level and each subject area.

Professional Excellence

To grow in understanding and the implementation of a high-quality, Christian liberal arts education, Bear Creek hosted the Pacific Northwest Classical Christian School Conference of area classical Christian schools in 2021 and 2022. In the fall of 2021, teachers heard from James K. A. Smith, author and professor of philosophy at Calvin University, and then in October 2022, teachers heard from author and historian Susan Wise Bauer.

Student Life

To develop wisdom, compassion, and courage in



Guest speaker Susan Wise Bauer presented two sessions on the value and application of classical Christian education at the Pacific Northwest Classical Christian School Conference.

ourselves and our students, Middle School teachers are being trained on the developmental relationships framework developed by the Search Institute to build a student culture of dignity and respect. In Upper School, teachers are being trained to lead effective mentor groups through planning small group activities, developing active listening skills, leaning into spiritual conversations, identifying when students are in distress, and creating space for students to guide discussions. Our goal is to develop these groups into powerful and compelling spaces for student growth and relationships where they can seek guidance and see God transform lives.

Institutional Priorities

To understand and implement our core values, mission, and institutional priorities, Bear Creek has spearheaded two strategic programs: No Ordinary People and Beyond Bear Creek.

No Ordinary People: The Bear Creek School values all members of the school community and is committed to recognizing each member as *imago Dei*. Mr. Carruth is conducting a series of training sessions with our faculty regarding ways to care for all members of our community as made in God's image.

Beyond Bear Creek: In this developing initiative, our faculty is looking for ways that technology can take us beyond Bear Creek's physical location in Redmond, WA, to connect with people or resources that enhance our curriculum and increase our learning.

The faculty at Bear Creek is here because they believe in the mission of The Bear Creek School. They are passionate about their work because they see how God is using Bear Creek to make a difference in students' lives as we help them grow to be the individuals God intends. Our Professional Excellence Model gives us an intentional tool to help teachers toward that goal. The impact we have on students and on God's kingdom motivates teachers to work hard and strive to become excellent in all they do.

Administrative Leadership: Growing in Mutual Trust

BY DAVE URBAN

Just like our students, our Bear Creek senior administrative leadership is committed to learning and growing as leaders. Last year we read *Radical Candor* by Kim Scott together as we explored how clear communication and tackling issues head on with one another are critical to having a healthy leadership culture built around teamwork and mutual trust. We are already seeing great fruit from implementing many of the principles we learned together.

Expanding on the theme of mutual trust, the team is now reading through the aptly titled *The Thin Book of Trust* by Charles Feltman. The goal is to dig even deeper into the idea that building trust is not an ideal to hope for but rather a set of skills that can be learned, improved, and practiced. We want to always be growing as leaders, and reading good books together that challenge our thinking and expand our skill sets has proven to be essential to meeting that goal.

Whatever is
TRUE
HONORABLE
JUST
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COMMENDABLE

IF THERE IS

ANY EXCELLENCE

IF THERE IS

anything

WORTHY OF PRAISE

THINK ON

THESE

THINGS.

PHILIPPIANS



FACULTY PROFILE: AYOLEIDA PÁRAMO

By Morgan Jamieson

Photo by Janeen Sorensen

Ayoleida Páramo joined The Bear Creek School faculty in 2017, after spending many years working for Microsoft. She reflects, “My husband and I had a great life thanks to Microsoft, and although I was professionally challenged and successful, there was a point at which it was not fulfilling. After our kids started coming to Bear Creek and I met the teachers, learned the mission, and saw the growth in our kids as people and in their faith. I couldn’t stay away. Every chance we had, we’d volunteer, and we participated in every event possible.” There was a point where Ayoleida had a child in each division, Lower School, Middle School, and Upper School. “We were here all the time,” she says with a smile, “and we loved it!”

“One day I started wondering if I could do that too—make a difference in someone’s life and contribute to the amazing mission,” Ayoleida explained. The mission of Bear Creek aligned with the mission that Ayoleida and her husband wanted for their kids, to become the individuals that God intends.

One day, Bear Creek’s Spanish teacher was looking for a sub, and Ayoleida took the opportunity. “If it’s great from the outside, when you are in here, it is even better. You see all the love and the effort and the work. The passion that the faculty has for their subjects and all of that. It’s contagious.” Ayoleida recounted, “I just knew this was what I wanted to do with my life.”

Ayoleida worked hard and people started to get to know her. God opened more doors, and she was invited to apply for a job with the Office of Academic and College Advising as the Associate Dean. “I was

happy that I could contribute even more to the mission.” After a couple of years in that position, there was an opening for a new Spanish teacher. Ayoleida applied and expanded her job to include that role too. The rest is history. Alongside her new

“**ONE DAY I STARTED WONDERING IF I COULD DO THAT TOO—MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN SOMEONE’S LIFE.”**

role this year as the Dean of Academic Advising, this is Ayoleida’s fifth year teaching Spanish in the Upper School.

Though she has found her home in the Pacific Northwest, Ayoleida is originally from Venezuela. At 20, Ayoleida left her beautiful home country and moved to Mexico with her family when her dad was relocated for work. “[My family] gave me the choice. I could stay in Venezuela...or I could go with them to Mexico. I had never been—ever. However, I am always up for a challenge and adventure. I said ‘Are you kidding me? I’m going to Mexico!’” Leaving your home country and moving from a city of 350,000 to Mexico City with a population of nearly 20 million was intimidating, to say the least. But for Ayoleida, it was a great experience.

Ayoleida stayed in Mexico for five years, earning her

degree in computer science at Universidad del Valle de Mexico and beginning her career with Microsoft. It was there that Ayoleida met and married Javier Páramo, her husband of 27 years. After they were married, the pair moved to Florida in 1996.

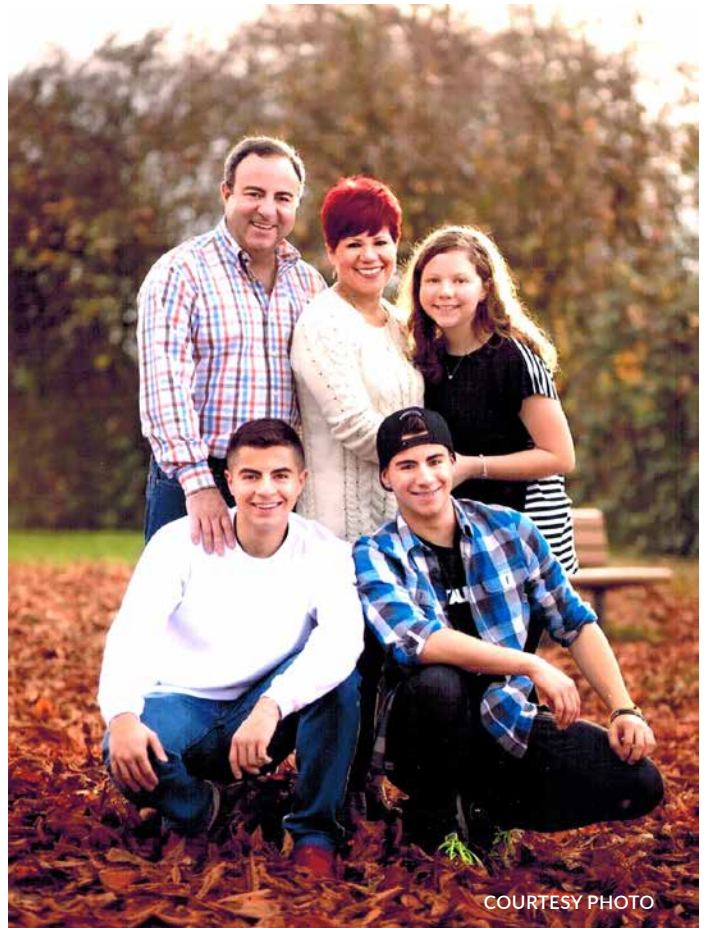
“When we first came to the United States...before we became permanent residents, my husband was with Microsoft and had a work visa, and my visa was as his companion. So, I wasn’t allowed to work at the time. But I cannot sit still.” Ayoleida continues, “I went to culinary school, learned French, and took tennis lessons. I love to stay busy. The busier, the better. The happier, too.” While living in Florida, they also had their first two children, Daniel ’17 and Nico.

Immediately after Nico was born, and as soon as he was old enough to travel, they were on an airplane and moving to El Salvador, again with Microsoft. At the time, El Salvador was just ten years out of its civil war, and it was still not a very safe country. “We had adventures there, but it was also a difficult and challenging time,” Ayoleida recalls, “But God is gracious and loving, and He protected us through the difficult times. He got us through, all four of us.”

Ayoleida notes that their experience in El Salvador helped them to grow closer as a family. “We learned to lean on each other. You grow strong and faithful. It also teaches you to appreciate the little things. I am usually a very positive person, so I can say it was a great learning experience.”

In 2001, after two years in El Salvador, Ayoleida and her family came to Washington to stay. It was in the peace of the Pacific Northwest that their youngest, and only daughter, Ana ’23, was born. Ayoleida has a notable disposition for recognizing the small things that most people forget to be thankful for in everyday life. “When we moved to Washington, we heard people complain about the weather and the gray skies. And I’m thinking...this is heaven. We had been in a country where I couldn’t leave my house without a bodyguard, and now I’m here and I’m free and we’re safe. We’ll take the rain! We’ll take the gray sky!”

Our community is blessed that Ayoleida has found



Ayoleida with her husband and children in 2016

a home with Bear Creek. She describes how in her role as Dean of Academic Advising she guides students on which classes to take. “I listen to them, and sometimes it becomes like a counseling session because they trust me, and they share with me. They come to my office so confused and with many questions, but when they leave, they’re just relieved because they have the answers and are reassured.” She adds, “It just fills my heart to be able to listen to them and help them. It makes my day complete.” Ayoleida describes, “I just love seeing [the students] grow from the first day of school to the last day of school. And just to think that I had a little tiny part in that. That’s priceless.”

Ayoleida’s background with Microsoft and her degree in computer science allows her to also provide technical help to the Upper School staff. She says, “It’s those moments, when you help somebody with the little things, or the big things,” she continues, with a tear, “I go home happy because I helped



Ayoleida with her siblings and their spouses preparing *hallacas*, a traditional Venezuelan Christmas dish

somebody. I helped make someone happy, I'm changing something that's important. That motivates me." She continues, "I think one of the things that gives me joy the most is serving others...I think that's what God blessed me with, a spirit of service."

"I think what I am proudest of is my marriage and my family, and how far I've gotten with the changes in our lives and being a foreigner most of my life while staying true to myself." Ayoleida explains. "We love having meals together. Our meals can last hours because we sit around the table, and we just converse. We have amazing conversations, deep conversations, and silly conversations. We laugh, we cry, we're serious," she beams. "We have such a great time as a family. It is a great compliment that our kids want to be home. They love being together, amongst themselves, and with us at home. Home is our safe place; they can speak their minds. That is my greatest treasure. My family and my home."

Ayoleida is such a gift to this community because

everything she does is from a genuine heart and with all her heart. Ayoleida's colorful look comes from the inside out and matches her personality and warmth of character. "My expression is the color, the accessories. I do this even if I'm home. It's part of who I really am, it's the details. In a way, it is also what I want to give to you." In her style, she communicates her joy, her positivity, and her effort.

"People have asked me if I have any plans after Ana graduates, and I say, 'Yeah! I have plans to stay here as long as they'll have me.' I'm not going anywhere. I just love it. Being here, it just warms my heart." Ayoleida states, "I love the people who are here, and the people I collaborate with. I respect them for who they are as professionals and as people, and I feel it is reciprocated." She pauses thoughtfully, "It makes me feel really, really good, like my personal mission that goes along with the school's mission. I look forward to coming here every day...it's a blessing to belong here."

Meet Our Microsoft Innovative Educator Experts

By Linda Graham, Science Faculty, Math Department Chair, and Innovation Coach

In the spring of 2022, several Bear Creek faculty and staff members decided to take on the challenge of becoming a certified Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert (MIEE) by applying to the program. In September, seventeen educators received the congratulatory email announcing they had been accepted to the MIEE program: Amy Burns, Victoria Butler, Roger Culbertson, Allison Fletcher, Holly Fritz, Catherine Gardiner, Linda Graham, Tony Grant, Lydia Husting, Jeff Morse, Kenny Norris, Brittany Plourde, Doug Ricard, Rebekah Ronning, Katy Steinkraus, Janice White, and Minette Williams. These educators were celebrated at a ceremony in the C.E. “Ted” Kindel Library honoring the new certification.

Microsoft looks for self-driven educators (an educator can be a classroom teacher, a school leader, a professional learning specialist/trainer, an instructional aide, a curriculum specialist, or anyone who impacts teaching and learning in his or her role) who are passionate about teaching and learning, who inspire students with creative thinking, and who work in a truly collaborative spirit to share their learning with the world. MIE Experts share their learning with colleagues and other educators through local training programs in their own school systems, presentations at conferences, blogs, social channels, and more. Resourceful and entrepreneurial, these educators relish the role of change agent and work to achieve excellence in education using Microsoft technologies coupled with their innovative teaching practices.



Bear Creek’s new MIEEs were celebrated at a ceremony in the C.E. “Ted” Kindel Library.

The application process involves joining the Microsoft Learn Educator Center and completing a minimum of two hours of courses. Applicants must pass a short test on the Microsoft education tools. If they pass, they go on to answer longer form questions about their use of these tools to support learning in the classroom with evidence and examples of use with their own students. MIEEs are expected to use at least two of Microsoft’s core tools on a regular basis (Teams, OneNote, Forms, Minecraft: Education Edition, Flip), and are expected to understand and demonstrate how this suite of solutions supports teaching and learning.

Once accepted, MIEEs are invited to monthly one-hour Teams calls with other MIEEs throughout the country and around the globe. Educators network, solve problems, share creative ideas, and point one another to new ways of using technology. Within Bear Creek, these educators share their expertise behind the scenes, helping teachers to use Microsoft tools in their classrooms. Sometimes they are tapped to share a brief presentation in a faculty meeting to demonstrate an innovative use of a Microsoft tool or application.

Bear Creek is proud of these new MIEEs and looks forward to seeing their impact with their students, their colleagues, and the innovations they bring to the whole school community both on campus and beyond Bear Creek.

LEADERSHIP IN LOWER SCHOOL

BY TRACY WHITFIELD, LOWER SCHOOL DEAN OF STUDENTS

LOWER SCHOOL STUDENTS may be young, but they have mighty leadership skills! It is encouraging to watch them foster the gifts that God has given them. At The Bear Creek School, our young learners have many opportunities to practice leadership.

Each fall our students participate in our all-school Hopelink Food Drive. In 2022, each Lower School classroom selected two students as representatives for their class. These kindergarten – grade 4 students helped to create posters advertising the event, speak to their classes about the opportunity, make public announcements, and count the donated items. The enthusiasm that these student leaders shared with their peers helped encourage compassion and giving!

In our Reading Buddies program, two classrooms from different grade levels are matched up and students take turns reading to each other. This nurtures and inspires a love of literature, provides oral reading practice, and gives opportunity to practice communication and public speaking while making connections in the school community beyond their classmates. Often the older students step into this wonderful leadership opportunity and become role models for their younger peers. It is so rewarding to see their care as they help guide their younger buddies in reading and encourage them in their progress.

Throughout the school day, teachers and classroom assistants see leadership demonstrated both in and out of the classroom. For example, some older students have found opportunities to serve without being asked. Every morning before school, during

drop-off supervision, some grade 4 students have started serving the younger students by helping them learn new games, demonstrating the morning routines, encouraging as they play, and helping to clean up. These students are showing their passion to serve by being thoughtful leaders.

Every Tuesday during Chapel, our Lower School students step into leadership roles. Students help lead worship, collect the offering, and lead pledges.



Hopelink Food Drive



Grade 4 and grade 2 reading buddies

Our Growing in Virtue awards highlight virtues that our students demonstrate, and this celebration becomes a terrific example for their peers.

Throughout the year, our young students continue to show their leadership skills. As a school, we love highlighting leadership opportunities and showing

that everyone has leadership potential. We celebrate each individual's gifts and how God created him or her uniquely.

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader."
~John Quincy Adams



Grade 4 leads our Lower School Veterans Day Chapel



Grade 3 and kindergarten reading buddies

LEADERSHIP IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

BY NATHAN PETTIT, MIDDLE SCHOOL DEAN OF STUDENTS

DURING THE MIDDLE SCHOOL YEARS, Bear Creek strives to teach two primary leadership principles and give students opportunities to put those principles into action.

The first principle is that because leadership is tethered to the concept of influence, **we are all leaders because we all have influence.** We discuss this throughout each academic year and key in on some specific opportunities to put this into action.

First, we incorporate team-building activities beginning on the second day of school at our Middle School Icebreaker and continuing throughout the

year. These activities require full participation, clear communication, and problem-solving.

Second, we create space for students to influence the kind of environment they want to have at school in specific ways.



Grades 7 and 8 at SAMBICA, September 2022

For grades 5 and 6, this often involves how to organize and problem-solve specific recess games. For instance, this year we had a group of students who were encountering conflict around the rules for Gaga Ball. Students felt empowered to bring the problem up with administration and then drafted revised rules for the game. These rules were distributed to all students who were regularly playing the game so that they could give input, and we completed this cycle two more times before landing on a final draft. Through the process, we hope students learn they have a voice and opportunity to create the kind of positive, collaborative culture that we all enjoy having at school.

For grades 7 and 8, one of the main ways they influence their environment is through our spring semester clubs. In fall semester, students propose the kinds of clubs they would like to have at school and then take a primary leadership role in their proposed clubs. Last year, some of our exciting student-proposed and led clubs included an Arts and Crafts Club, a Football Film Club, and a Press Club that produced a digital school newspaper.

The second principle we teach and practice each year is that **great leaders serve**. One of our grade 6 students said it best at our leadership retreat at Camp Gilead in September: “Leadership is seeing the needs of other people and doing your best to meet their needs.”

Grades 5 and 6 attend a bi-annual leadership retreat that includes team-building activities and a service project. This year, we made fall-themed encouragement cards and gift bags for a local retirement community. We also discuss this principle during our annual Hopelink Food Drive. Students play a primary role in collecting needed items for Hopelink, then count, sort, and move the items for the Upper School’s National Honor Society members to pick up.

Grades 7 and 8 students participate in a bi-annual service trip to SAMBICA Camp and Retreat Center to assist with various projects at the center. Additionally,

our grades 7 and 8 students put together fall- or winter-themed gift bags each year for Hopelink shoppers. Each student decorates a bag, fills it with items they have chosen as a group, and includes a handwritten card for the person who receives the bag.

We believe God made each of us to steward our gifts and resources through loving acts of service. It should not come as a surprise then that as we give students opportunities to lead and serve, they express joy and gratitude. In November, as we wrapped up another Hopelink Food Drive, and after spending 20 minutes counting, sorting, and carrying heavy boxes, a grade 5 student exclaimed, “This is more fun than recess!”



Grades 7 and 8 Hopelink bags



Grades 5 and 6 encouragement cards

DEVELOPING LEADERS THROUGH ATHLETICS BY ENABLING OTHERS TO ACT

By Sini Fernandez

IN FALL 2022, I SAT DOWN WITH MIYA S. '23 AND SEBASTIAN G. '23, captains of the varsity girls soccer and varsity baseball teams respectively, to talk about what they have learned about leadership through their participation in Bear Creek athletics.

First a little background. Both Miya and Sebastian got involved with their sports at a very young age. In fact, Miya remembers playing soccer with other girls in Mrs. Erickson's kindergarten class on a team called the Green Gorillas before she began playing club soccer in first grade. Sebastian, who goes by Sebas among friends, similarly can't remember a time when he was not playing baseball. They both have traveled extensively with their club teams to play in tournaments. Miya recollects, "I got to travel all over the country playing soccer, becoming super close with my teammates, and developing who I am as a leader and a worker." And she expresses, "I think the lessons that you learn from sports are sometimes things that you can't learn in school because the physicality of sports taps into a different part of who you are besides just the intellectual."

Outside of baseball, Sebastian is a Meitner House Head which he says takes a lot of time. Additionally, "When I'm not playing baseball, I do lots of homework and I like to read. I love watching sports almost as much as I like playing them, and so I do that a lot too." He has also performed in Bear Creek's theater productions throughout high school. Miya is the Associated Student Body (ASB) President, which she enjoys because "it is so much fun organizing all

the different things that go on around the school." She also leads a student group that she formed last year. Lose Your Life meets outside of school and gathers regularly as a Christian community to "talk about faith, support one another, worship, and study God."

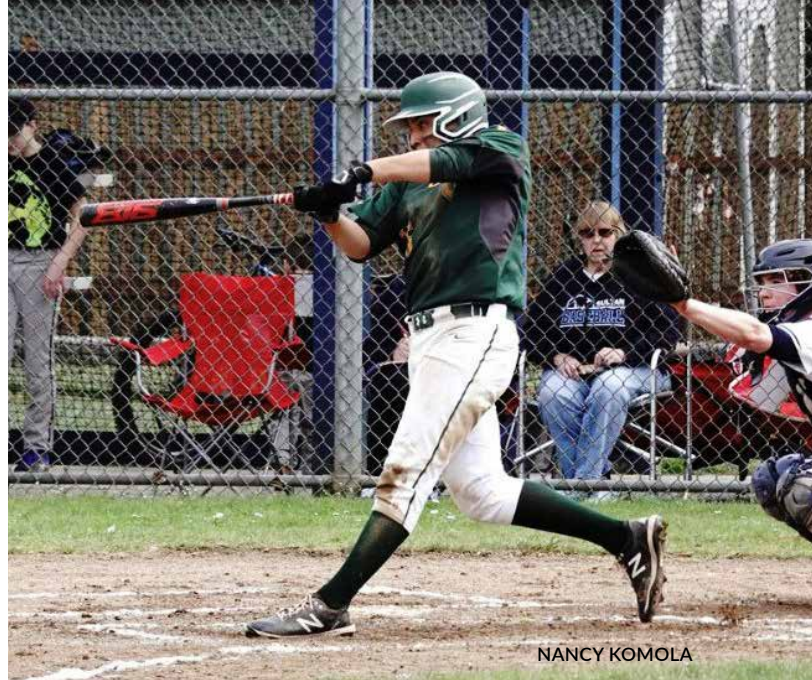
Miya joined Bear Creek's varsity girls soccer team her freshman year and was a starter for the next three years. As a senior, she is not playing soccer due to a knee injury sustained at the end of her junior season. During her sophomore year, Miya ran track, discovering to her surprise, that she was pretty fast. Based on her times, she would probably have a State medal if the spring track season that year had not been cut short due to pandemic-related restrictions. Sebastian's tenure on the Bear Creek-Overlake Growls baseball team was also impacted by the pandemic. He did not have a freshman season at all, but he started on the varsity team during his sophomore and junior years, and he is looking forward to playing varsity again this coming spring.

Getting back to thinking about how these two student-athletes have developed as leaders, I asked them how their roles as leaders have evolved over the years. Miya begins, "Even though I can't play because of my injury, I think the leadership I have developed off the field has been life changing." Then she filled me in on how her off-field leadership experience was kickstarted. She recalls, "I couldn't run track junior year due to my knee surgery, so I decided to coach Middle School track."

"It was a big commitment. I would go to track



HOWARD CAMPBELL



NANCY KOMOLA

Miya playing for Bear Creek's varsity girls soccer team.

Sebas at bat for the Bear Creek-Overlake baseball team.

practice after school every day in the rain to help the kids learn how to run. I had only had one season of track, so honestly, I was not very experienced—and there were 60 kids on the team!" She quickly realized that she had to become someone the middle schoolers looked up to, not just one of their teammates. She says, "That kind of leadership is different, and a lot scarier because you know that what you do and what you say dictates what everyone else is going to do and say."

Miya believes she has been able to translate that experience into her varsity soccer season this year when her team captain role was more like that of a team manager and assistant coach. She says, "I'm still really close friends with the girls on the team, but our team is mostly freshmen and sophomores." Some of the girls she coached on the Middle School track team are now her teammates. "Stepping into my role has been kind of crazy because I'm not just a player anymore, but I've realized I can set the mood of the team depending on how I project my feelings or the attitude that I choose."

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Miya recalls that when she was a freshman and sophomore, some upperclassmen, like McKenna Mullet '22, had been sort of motherly figures to her and now she is in that role for the underclassmen on the team. She notes, "It's really cool but also feels like a lot of responsibility because I want to set a good example for them and make a positive impact."

Sebastian says his focus during his freshman and sophomore years was simple. "I wasn't worried about leading anyone. I just wanted to make the varsity team." Then going into his junior year, three players he admired had graduated, "It felt like someone had to step up, so I applied, and I was named captain. I was super ready. I was going to work incredibly hard in the off season to get prepared. And then while playing at a tournament in Arizona, I tore my meniscus. This was just three days after Miya tore her ACL."

Sebastian continues, "I recovered in time for baseball season, but I lost all that time in the off season when I could have been improving my game." He was frustrated because he hoped to do more for his team,



Miya cheering for her soccer teammates at a home game on Owens Field.

Sebas leading a pep assembly celebrating our fall sports State qualifiers.

but despite the knee surgery, he had a great junior year. “I played well and was named first team All-Conference and first team All-State. The Growls made it to State for the first time in five years. And what I learned was that I should have more confidence in myself.”

“I also learned that my job as a captain is not to worry about my performance. My job as a captain is to be the first guy there and the last guy to leave.” He realizes that the younger players are watching him closely and reflects, “I have to focus not only on winning but on creating a culture where guys want to continue to play baseball.”

Sebastian knows that earning respect as a captain requires intentionality. “It’s also a burden because sometimes I want to mess around with my teammates or make a decision that probably isn’t in the best interest of the team. But I can’t do that because I am held to a higher standard than sometimes even the coach or the other players. I consider the captain to be the bridge between the players and the coach. If I’m not hustling and putting in 110% and

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there and the last
guy to leave.*

getting there early and leaving late, how can I expect everyone else to do that? And that’s what it’s going to take to win. And I want to win. Leadership has taught me that I have to take responsibility.”

Miya concurs, “Transitioning from a player to a non-player emphasizes what Sebas is saying even more. I’m not fighting for playing time. I’m not even fighting to be a better soccer player. I’m purely there because I want to be there with the team, and I want the team to succeed. Putting in the work, even when I’m not playing, is so important because the other players see that it’s not even about the soccer we’re playing. It’s about the team, and it’s about the culture. It’s about having high expectations. I’ve got to be on my guard and make sure that what I’m doing is what I would like other people to do as well.”

Next, I asked Miya and Sebastian to reflect on the hardest part of leadership as well as what they like best about their roles as leaders. Miya jumped right in. She says, “Being on board with something that you don’t necessarily want to do but know is best for the



JANEEN SORENSEN

Miya giving the student address at Upper School Convocation.

team is the hardest part about being a leader.” Miya noted that the same principle applies in setting the culture. Even when she was upset about something, for example wanting to yell at a ref or react negatively towards an opposing player, she knew that as a leader she could not do that, or everyone would follow suit. She says, “And so it’s suppressing those emotions or desires that would lead to harm for the team because you know, if you go down, you’re taking the entire team down with you.”

At the same time, she says that is also the biggest blessing of being a leader: seeing others follow suit. “In the moments when you choose to triumph over your emotions or your sinful desires and see everyone else follow that example—that is probably one of the coolest things ever. Because you have the chance to turn around a practice, a game, or maybe an entire season.”

Sebastian also starts with the hardest part of leadership: “I think the biggest problem I had, especially starting out, was sometimes as a leader

Being on board with something that you don’t necessarily want to do but know is best for the team is the hardest part about being a leader.



JANEEN SORENSEN

Sebas playing the part of Wally Huntington in the fall 2022 Upper School production of *The Little Dog Laughed*.

you have to take responsibility for things that you didn’t even do wrong. There’s a saying that when you win, it’s the players’ success, and when you lose, it’s the coach’s fault.” He feels that as captain, he is part of both groups. “If I mess up, I have to be the first person to take responsibility.”

He says the best part of team leadership is “watching players work super hard and take responsibility for getting better, even if they don’t play regularly or are struggling.” Sebastian feels like he is making a difference when those players get their moment to shine. He says inspiring others is key. “I feel like my habit of getting there first inspires players to get there early as well, and that’s one of the reasons they are able to step up.” He recognizes the importance of talking everyone up when the team is struggling, making little speeches between innings, and getting everyone hyped up. He says, “When you see guys going out and succeeding in part because of your leadership, there’s nothing better in sports.”

Finally, I wanted to hear what these two have learned

about leadership through their participation in sports that may be different from other leadership training, and how that has impacted their leadership styles. Miya points to the leadership principles she learned as part of Bear Creek's student leadership training program. She explains, "All of them apply to both sports and other situations, but I think the principle that shows itself most in a team sports setting is 'enable others to act.' When I'm in ASB or when I'm leading in other places, if the job doesn't get done, I can always do it myself. One of my weaknesses as a leader is I tend to try to take things over instead of letting other people try to succeed or even letting them fail."

"With a team sport, you can't do that because you need all eleven players on the soccer field, and you can't be all eleven players at once." She realized when she was team captain that "even if I do my best, I can't do everything. I need all my teammates and so therefore I need to enable them to perform. It can't just be me." She believes the principle of enabling others to act is significant because "in most aspects of life we can just live or die by our own performance. Most of the time, there's something that we could have done better. But in a team sport, it's not just you. In soccer, you're only one-eleventh of everything that you need to succeed. And so, you have to work to develop the other ten people even more."

Sebastian also learned to enable others to act, but his story is different. He admits, "I had a little bit of the exact opposite experience when I was in baseball. Selfishly, especially when I was first named captain, my mentality was more like, 'Can we get the ball to me again? Can I get another at-bat?' Because I have faith in myself that I'm going to deliver. But that's something I'm trying to work on."

"What leading Meitner House taught me is that you don't get to do everything." Sebastian recalls that when it was time for freshmen to join the House leadership team, he initially wanted to conduct the interviews himself, but then he realized that his term as House Head would end in just three months. The younger House leaders would be the ones who would work most closely with the new freshmen leaders in the coming months and years. "So, I let my leadership

team do the interviews without me. And I was scared. I wasn't sure if they were going to ask the right questions, but I had to let them do it because that's part of growth. A leader is sometimes the scariest job in the world because you're basically grooming your replacements a lot of the time, especially in high school, where you've only got four years."

He concludes, "I can't do everything, but I trust that my work and my encouragement can get other people very far, and their own work will get them even farther. And that's what it takes to win in a team sport, because in baseball I'm one of nine; in House, I'm one of 55."

"At the at the end of the day," Sebastian sums up, "my House or my team won't succeed or fail because of how I perform. Sometimes I have to sit back and be the best cheerleader there is. And that's hard. But when you learn how to do it and it works, it's the greatest feeling."

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Sini Fernandez has been a part of the Bear Creek community since 1999 when her twins entered kindergarten. Elizabeth '12, Lucas '12, and younger sister Catherine '14 all played varsity sports for the Grizzlies throughout Upper School. She served for ten years as a Grizzlies Booster Club board member.



CINDY MCCAHILL

ALUMNI REFLECTION ON LEADERSHIP: THE VIRTUE OF FUN

By Emma Firminger '21

IT IS SURREAL TO REALIZE how much I learned in my experience at Bear Creek, especially in Upper School student leadership. I attended Bear Creek from kindergarten through grade 12, graduating spring of 2021. As a kindergartener back in 2008, Upper School felt ages away. I was stunned by the intensity and spirit of it all. I remember the fun the big kids had: the Green Guard cheering loudly at the basketball games, the neon green Lucas Peterson '11 Fan Club (LPFC) T-shirts, the roller coaster on those beige metal bleachers, Mr. Paylor as Titus the mascot, and the warm chocolate chip cookies at the DoubleTree in Spokane when we watched Pete and my brother Josh '11 play in the 2B State Basketball Tournament. Bear Creek was a 2B school and certainly too cool for the Eastside.

But entering ninth grade, I distinctly remember my frustration over the attitude of the students. The “vibe” did not match those vivid memories from a

decade before. It felt lifeless, and we took things so seriously. I wanted to have *fun* at school. I determined the best way to do that was in creating fun for others.

Inspire a Shared Vision

Fun is empathetic in nature; it spreads and unifies. I wanted to create an atmosphere of fun for my peers, and I saw that opportunity in serving on the council of our student government. The Associated Student Body (ASB) helped determine the environment of our peer community. The student council’s mission was to promote unity in Upper School by representing, leading, and empowering students to live their lives in submission to Christ. The ASB was the place to be. Their goal of unity complimented my ulterior motive—an innocent embrace of the fun of youth.

Challenge the Process

Freshman year, I served as a class representative.

I networked within the class and aided ASB communications. That year and the following years, I learned firsthand how important it is to challenge existing processes, especially when they function inefficiently. We underwent a constitutional review to improve the diversity of ASB, both in its ability to represent well and to maximize student participation. For me, this was an education in creating structures that are just.

I also gained exposure beyond the class representatives and cabinet leadership positions. The ASB's unified vision is carried out via five committees: Social, Community Service, Grizzly Pride, Student Relations, and Brothers and Sisters in Christ.

Encourage the Heart

Sophomore year got exciting. I served as head of Grizzly Pride, the school spirit committee. This was the satisfying fulfillment of my personal conviction: my desire for fun, rooted in a nostalgia for the past.

But I soon realized that the measure of school spirit I carried in memory was in the lens of a child—innocent and idealized. Ten years later, I struggled to identify just what the “product” of Grizzly Pride was.

Am I selling fun, nostalgia, love, immaturity, competition, vanity? The core question I faced was how school spirit served submission to Christ. In yelling chants in the crowd at the Dig Pink volleyball game, how could I possibly be channeling the Christian mission to love?

I admit I sometimes struggled to maintain that Christ-like commission in moments of terrible referee calls. But balancing the tightrope of righteous anger is a cathartic step in adolescence. Without proper outlets, independence can become indignation. That is why sports, the arts, and school spirit are a necessary expression for youth. They keep you sane. They mature you.

I quickly figured out what the Grizzly Pride product was: dopamine. I am not a neuroscience major, but dopamine is essentially the brain's perception of



Emma speaking at An Evening of Honors in 2021

pleasure, motivation, and satisfaction, and its sister is serotonin, the happy chemical. It was about the art of maximizing the thrill of the crowd in the final moments of the playoff qualifier or the excitement when the lights go out at school during a pep assembly. With those fun experiences, people become tempered toward joy. They are oriented to better receive the work of the other committees. People are more apt to serve others or attend a dance or participate in a prayer circle if their minds feel good, and healthy, constructive dopamine can prepare people for fellowship and empathy. With school spirit, we were encouraging people toward Christ's loving community after all.

Enable Others to Act

After my two years in school spirit, the art of fun took a new form senior year. I was elected student body President alongside an amazing cabinet: Nick Coy '22 as Vice President, Lily Parker '21 as Secretary, and Jennifer Buckley '21 as Treasurer. We took office the fall of 2020. The pandemic was still in full swing, and the school year began totally online. If our goal was unity, total isolation was quite an ironic obstacle.

The Upper School had also had quite the turnover, with a brand-new Dean of Students, Associate Dean of Students, and Division Head. There was a lot new to me. As a cabinet, we faced those changes and challenges head on. Our focus moved to our fellow leaders. We were now leading individuals over Microsoft Teams instead of in person. I realized quickly that my jurisdiction was now localized. It was time to invest in the team, my peer leaders on student council. My personal goal, the goal of fun, became dedicated to them.

As always, ASB meetings were Thursday mornings at 7:05 a.m. Not the cheeriest of times when you are a 15-year-old. I am twenty now, and it is still not a cheery time of day. As President, I decided that we would end every meeting with something fun that gave people an opportunity to be creative. These moments inadvertently became known as “funny-ha-has”—a piece of vernacular I regrettably picked up from my dad. Funny-ha-has would happen like so: one of our team would come up with a fun question and then everyone would send their answers to the ASB Teams chat. A personal favorite of mine was, “If your love life were a song title, which song would it be?” Our team was harboring comedians. Everyone left our meetings and went to first period with smiles on their faces, which was by far the most valuable contribution I could give them every week. Productivity and logistics were important, but my primary job was simply to make the meetings fun.

The 2020 – 2021 school year was the time of transitioning back to campus. I could spend pages praising the incredible creativity and flexibility of our student leaders; they truly stepped up to the plate. This was largely due to our ASB advisor Dave Urban, the new Associate Dean of Students. His encouragement, wisdom, and friendship provided an environment of dignity and respect. It was his presence that empowered the team.

Bear Creek’s ASB is guided by the five principles of The Student Leadership Challenge®: Inspire a Shared Vision, Challenge the Process, Encourage the Heart, Enable Others to Act, and Model the Way.

These five steps are ASB’s ingredients for unifying the community. They are also a recipe for systemizing fun—an oxymoron that sounds impossible, but I assure you is true. And it starts with the individual. Fun is a function of empathy, and as student leaders it was our responsibility to encourage it. I have one last piece of advice for how to do that.

Model the Way

My tip to student leaders is simple: be willing to embarrass yourself. Everyone is insecure. In a sea of insecure teenagers, risking embarrassment is the most courageous thing you can do. And if you are going to be a leader bold enough to influence others, courage is a necessary virtue. You can’t cheat it. If you don’t take action, embrace opportunities, and have fun, then don’t expect the student population to do the same. It is your responsibility to model the way.

To students who are not in leadership positions, my tip to you is no less annoying: although it’s difficult, you must make the choice to not be passive in high school. Community must be fostered from all sides, so get engaged. There is so much offered to students, but if you don’t know where to start, ask an ASB member. Ask Mr. Urban. There are people in the community seeking to love and know you.

And to all the students—if you want to have a great Upper School experience, then make it happen. Fun is a virtue. It brings goodness to communities. It can be habituated and fostered. Savoring the Bear Creek community and having fun in class with your friends and teachers may be the best thing you can do here. It was for me, at least.

Emma Firminger is currently a sophomore at Baylor University in Waco, TX. She is a University Scholar studying philosophy, religion, and professional rhetoric.

Every School Needs the Love and Power of Praying Moms

BY KAREN FIRMINER

At The Bear Creek School, we are fortunate to have mothers who humbly gather each week to pray earnestly over our children, faculty, staff, and any upcoming school events or initiatives. In fact, Bear Creek mothers have gathered to pray weekly for over 23 years.

The reason we still have praying moms meeting each week is due to faithful volunteers who utilize the structure provided by a non-profit organization called Moms in Prayer International™.

Applying the model provided by Moms in Prayer, the one-hour meetings start on time and end on time. The group uses a weekly themed agenda of Praise, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Intercession to keep the focus on God and prayer:

PRAISE – Praising God for who He is with a weekly themed attribute.

CONFESSION – Silently confessing our sins and missteps to the God who forgives.

THANKSGIVING – Thanking God for what He has done.

INTERCESSION – Coming to God in prayer on behalf of others. (This time of engagement is in partners, each mother with another.) Each mom intercedes for:

Her Child: Each mom chooses one of her children, inserts his or her name in a verse, and then prays for a specific need for that child.

Teachers/Staff: Each week a group of teachers or staff are prayed for by inserting their names into a verse along with any other specific prayers moms feel led to pray.



School: Our moms ask for blessing over upcoming events and special projects or initiatives.

Moms in Prayer: As participants in the worldwide organization, our Bear Creek group recognizes the moms across the world who share this conviction.

One of the secret sauces of the group's prayer time is their use of Scripture to pray for their children.

Here is an example using 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. A mother just inserts her child's name:

Father God, may you comfort _____ in all his/her troubles, so that _____ can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort he/she receives from you.

By doing this, even mothers who are not comfortable praying out loud can read the Scripture prayer and insert a child's name. And a Moms in Prayer motto, "what is prayed in the group, stays in

the group,” ensures the honoring of others in confidentiality. Best practices like these provide a safe, grace-filled environment. Moms in Prayer is a place where mothers can come together, focused on Christ, to pray with one another over the needs of their children and Bear Creek.

At the end of the meeting, mothers leave with smiles, some a tear, and all with added hope knowing God is with them in the journey of motherhood. Mothers also leave with a list of scriptures read aloud during the meeting based on that week’s theme. These verses are tucked away in each heart providing strength and joy in the week ahead.

VOLUNTEERS KEEP THE PRAYERS FLOWING

Today, Moms in Prayer is led by two volunteers: Claire Mars and June Ro. These women were mentored by Liz Holtzman, long time MIP prayer warrior, and carry on her legacy and that of other dedicated praying Bear Creek moms like Tanya Button, Joan Pittman, Linda Huston, and Joy Chong. Their devotion, planning, and leadership have ensured that our moms can gather each week for prayer and fellowship together. Bear Creek greatly values the efforts of Moms in Prayer and provides a meeting space on campus for mothers to pray and supports the group through sharing Moms in Prayer opportunities in *The Bear Facts*, the school’s weekly newsletter.

THE PANDEMIC DIDN'T STOP CLAIRE AND JUNE

The COVID-19 pandemic and stay-at-home orders could have easily disrupted Moms in Prayer, but it did not stop June or Claire. June pivoted, taking the group onto Zoom. Then during the hybrid year, Claire welcomed a small number of moms into her home while June continued to meet with moms on Zoom. Through their faithful perseverance, the group grew. They even used break-out rooms to pair up moms during the intercession time.



June Ro and Claire Mars

In post-pandemic life, they continue to serve our moms by providing two formats. Mothers may choose to meet either in person (on campus each week) or hybrid (on campus the first Wednesday of the month and online the other Wednesdays). You will find Claire leading mothers in prayer each Wednesday morning in the Upper School’s Marguerite D. Alleva Band Room while June is leading a group of mothers in prayer on Zoom. Then on the first Wednesday of the month, all moms are invited to gather on campus with Claire and June leading the group together.

Prayer is critical to the well-being of our school and its families. Moms in Prayer is an investment that blesses not only our community’s students and teachers, but also our mothers.

Are you interested in learning more about or joining Bear Creek’s Moms in Prayer group? Contact June Ro at AiLuvMusic@gmail.com or Claire Mars at claireelizabethmars@gmail.com.

Nate and Barbara Chinn: Modeling Generosity for Their Daughters

BY MEGAN JAMIESON

Nate and Barbara laugh as they recount the many ways they have volunteered at Bear Creek during the past few years. “Volunteering is by far the best way to get to know the school community.” They describe, “What better way to get to know someone than by getting covered head to toe in cotton candy together!”

With three girls at Bear Creek, the Chinn family stays busy with homework, sports, band, drama, clubs, and other activities. Despite many demands on their time, Nate and Barbara remain committed to help out as much as they can. They describe, “If there is ever an opportunity to host a get-together, bake a few dozen cookies, attend a field trip, or drive kids somewhere, we usually step up.”

The family chose Bear Creek when their oldest daughter was starting high school. They explain, “We felt that a smaller school community would serve her, and ultimately her sisters, better.” Bear Creek checked off a lot of the boxes in terms of what they were looking for. It had smaller class sizes with more opportunity to get to know teachers as well as rigorous academics and a dynamic student life program. Nate and Barbara appreciated that Bear Creek’s school culture supported opportunities open to any student to pursue sports, music, theater, and arts—all within a Christian environment. “One of the things we love about Bear Creek is that our kids are being taught to think critically while their faith is being supported by their teachers and by what they are learning in class.”

As volunteers, Nate and Barbara have developed an appreciation for the people who work behind the scenes to make the school possible. “Our best experience has been getting to know the people



Nate and Barbara at Cross Country Senior Night

who make up the school—faculty, staff, students, and parents. There are so many wonderful people at Bear Creek!” They also comment on the dedication of those who work to make Bear Creek possible. “It is the people who are right up front who you see every day, but also people behind the scenes. The women who work in the lunchroom, the parents who tirelessly run the Grizzlies Booster Club, the upperclassmen who welcome new kids onto their sports teams and mentor their younger peers.” They also describe the experience of looking around at a soccer game or school play and seeing so many teachers in attendance. “You can tell their hearts are really in what they are doing.”

Clearly, the Chinns put their heart into all they do for the Bear Creek community. Currently, Nate and Barbara are working to run the Grizzlies Booster Club’s Hungry Bear. Along with Siri Pannell, another parent volunteer, they plan, prepare, and sell concessions at basketball games and other school events. “Hopefully, by watching our involvement in school events, our kids are seeing that we are invested in their lives and that our family values service and building community.”

A great inspiration for their service to the school is the example they want to set for their children. “As a family, we believe in the biblical example of generosity. It requires time and talent, as well as treasure.” They describe, “Though there is a sacrifice involved, there is also a great reward! And we hope that by modeling this for our kids, they will become more generous as they move into adulthood.”

Jeff Davis: Happiness to Give

BY MEGAN JAMIESON

On his son Harry's last day of kindergarten, Jeff Davis helped clean up after the class party. Standing in the empty, messy classroom he remembers realizing, "Time was passing by so quickly, and I wanted to take in as much as possible before the school years were gone." Jeff's commitment to being involved in Harry's school continues to be a strong thread in their family, even as Harry looks toward graduation in 2024.

After a few years in public and Montessori schools, the Davis family was looking for a place where Harry could not only learn and thrive but also where they felt a sense of belonging for the whole family. He remembers, "Bear Creek checked all the boxes. First and foremost was the classical Christian education. Bear Creek's academic reputation and not too big, not too small class sizes were exactly what we wanted. Plus, it offered us the opportunity to be an active part of the community."

"It's such an amazing blessing to be a stay-at-home dad," Jeff notes. When Harry started Bear Creek in grade 5, Jeff "jumped into volunteering with both feet. I was pleasantly surprised at how genuinely welcoming everyone at the school was, from parents to teachers to staff."

Jeff helped in Harry's classroom testing poem and verse, chaperoning field trips, and serving as a room parent. He soon became involved with various PTF activities including Walk-a-thon, Fall Carnival, and annual holiday decorating. He then became PTF Treasurer, "which really pushed me out of my comfort zone and gave me the opportunity to work with and become friends with many of Bear Creek's administrative staff."

When Harry started grade 7, Jeff was selected to serve as a Parent Rep for the Class of 2024. In that



Jeff serving pancakes after a band concert

role, he organized class gatherings, supported school events and initiatives by sending reminders to his class parents, and collaborated with administration. Jeff continues to look for ways to stay involved. "I've loved the opportunities to come alongside the teachers and staff to help pull off great events for the students. From making pancakes for the band after a concert to helping with Middle School's Clue Night Social to building games for the Fall Carnival, it has been an amazing time."

As Jeff reflects on his family's time at Bear Creek, he states, "Our hope, in the beginning, was for Harry to get a well-rounded education that kept him engaged in learning while giving him the tools he will need to be a lifelong learner. We are more than confident that Bear Creek has met this goal already." This confidence leads the Davis family to invest in the school not only with their considerable time and talent, but also financially. "We donate to the school because we believe in the mission. We want Bear Creek to have the ability to add in the extras or navigate the unexpected. For me, generosity means a happiness to give. From donating money or material things to the most valuable of all—my time."



COURTESY PHOTO

Meeting an Important Need

BY MORGAN JAMIESON

For Roy and Frances Simperman, grandparents of Aidan S. '22 and Ella S. '24, giving is straightforward. Says Roy, matter-of-factly, “I don’t think of the world in terms of generosity at all. I think of the world in terms of need, and it’s a question of finding that need and bringing the proper resources to take care of that particular problem.”

For many years, Roy and Frances have been quietly uncovering and meeting the needs of the community around them. They met in 2000, after both were widowed, and found much in common, including the experiences of running their own businesses and their mutual interest in education.

Roy’s approach to giving stems from his early exposure. Growing up in Butte, MT, a rough and tumble mining town at the time, he began working

early and saw plenty of need. As a young man in graduate school, he got his first taste of meeting others’ needs quietly and with little fanfare. “My future wife’s mother would give me envelopes of cash for the hospital or baskets of food and ask me to deliver them to various families throughout the community, particularly during the Christmas season. That was my first exposure to philanthropy.”

As longtime supporters of Christian education, Roy and Frances began giving to Bear Creek in 2010, with gifts to the Cornerstone Scholarship Fund and the auction. Frances says, “From the time my grandchildren started [attending Bear Creek], I realized it was an excellent school because of its emphasis on morals and Christian values. I also saw the level of education and the care taken to know the children, ensuring that each child was treated as an

individual, accepting all differences. I came to various events and presentations which made a big impact on me in respecting the school. The first auction I attended was raising money for the art program. My granddaughter Ella was very interested in art, so I thought it would be a good area for me to support.”

In the ensuing years, they have learned more about the financial structure of Bear Creek and the importance of donations. Frances notes, “Because Bear Creek is so well run, it took a little while for us to realize the school really needed funds. Due to our involvement at other schools, we realized every private school needs donations, especially when the school offers a high degree of academics coupled with attention to the needs of individual students. Frequently, the cost is more than can be covered by tuition alone. We especially want to help students whose families would not be able to afford [the cost of tuition] to attend.”

In response to the need they saw for supporting current families who experienced a financial setback making them unable to keep their children enrolled at Bear Creek, Roy and Frances recently established the Frances and Roy F. Simperman Scholarship Fund and the Angel Fund at Bear Creek. Frances credits Roy for coming up with the idea. “We were speaking with Sue Diamond, who serves on Bear Creek’s Board of Trustees, about a scholarship fund she helped established for new students. We have supported scholarships at other schools, but Roy felt we should address those families at Bear Creek who need help and might otherwise have to leave the school. The Angel Fund is for emergencies that just come up and need to be taken care of immediately.” Roy concurs, “It was evident to us since we heard Sue talking about the school that there was a gap here, and that gap should get filled.”

When asked what impact they hope to make with their donations, Roy reflects, “Education and Christian values are so important to us. I look at the world today, and sometimes I’m very discouraged. I don’t want to talk about political things here at all, but I think that religion has become less important

to the American lifestyle. And I think that is a big, big problem.”

Frances sums up their decision to establish the Scholarship Fund and Angel Fund by saying, “We do not seek to be self-aggrandizing by being generous. That is not the way my husband and I look at it. We are not looking for a thank you. We look for results. The reason we agreed to this interview is because we hope other people will be motivated to do the same. We want to help Bear Creek spread the word that there are needs. And hopefully, those who can, will contribute.”

Bear Creek is indeed grateful to Roy and Frances Simperman and the many other donors who recognize the need for philanthropic investment in the school and step forward gladly to help meet the need.

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 Mariana Keller, Senior Director for Philanthropy and Community Engagement, at mkeller@tbc.org or by calling 425-898-1720 ext. 340.

WHAT THE ANNUAL FUND SUPPORTS



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, scholarships, and more.



ALL IN!

Thank you to everyone who supported the Annual Fund in 2022.



Discovering a Career in Collegiate Athletics

**DARRYLN MCDONOUGH,
CLASS OF 2015**

Darryln McDonough studied psychology and neuroscience at Baylor University in Waco, TX, but discovered a passion for sports management through her involvement with Baylor women's basketball. She has since completed a master's in sports management and began her career with a job as the Director of Basketball Operations for the women's basketball team at Western Carolina University. She stayed with that program for a year, until receiving an offer to join the women's basketball team at Rice University in the same role. Darryln agreed to share about her experience in the field with *Modus Vivendi* via an email interview.

MV: TELL ME ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH WOMEN'S BASKETBALL AT BAYLOR.

It was a blast! I became involved with Baylor women's basketball as a junior in college when I was hired on as a student-manager for the team. Student-managers are responsible for things like laundry, equipment, travel packing, practice and game-day set-up, and general operational support. Immediately, my world changed. While my classmates were at tailgates on Saturday, I was at the arena setting up for recruiting visits. When they went home to spend time with their families during Thanksgiving or spring break, I was traveling for tournaments with the team. While they were at the library late cramming for an 8:00 a.m. exam, I was 1,200 miles away on a tarmac in Morgantown, WV, loading the plane taking the team back to Waco. My life revolved around basketball—in a good way. Actually, in a great way. I had the opportunity to travel the country and



the world with my best friends and even experience a few championships along the way.

MV: HOW DID YOUR ROLE EVOLVE ON THE TEAM AND WHAT LED TO THIS SHIFTING OF POSITIONS?

The team had some injuries my first year, so mid-season I went through the process with the NCAA to become eligible to play and got on the court during “garbage time” in a few games. It was a neat experience, but I was more than happy to get back to helping the team behind the scenes.

In the spring of my senior year, I was preparing to apply to graduate schools in a couple of different disciplines within the field of psychology but still had not nailed down exactly what I wanted to do with my degree. My then-boss at Baylor had been pestering me for a while, asking if there was anything the program could do to keep me around after graduation. I finally told her that if they could

help me get into graduate school at Baylor (the deadline was about a week away), I would consider sticking around. They did, and I spent another two years with the team.

MV: HOW DID YOUR COLLEGE EXPERIENCE AT BAYLOR LEAD TO YOUR CURRENT JOB AT RICE?

The staff at Baylor poured into me during my four years with the team and made sure that when I graduated, I was equipped to be successful in intercollegiate athletics. There are so many moving parts in college athletics, and they exposed me to as many as they could, from ordering gear from Nike and equipment contracts to athletic compliance, facility management, and all of the things in between. I am forever grateful to the coaching staff, and they remain some of my closest friends and advisors.

When I graduated from Baylor, I took a job as the Director of Women's Basketball Operations at Western Carolina University. The campus is nestled in the Appalachian Mountains in the small town of Cullowhee, NC. In June, I was sitting in a WCU team meeting and received a text from a number that I did not recognize—it was Lindsay Edmonds, the head coach at Rice University. She asked me if I had any interest in talking about moving to Houston to be her Director of Operations. I was not familiar with her or her staff, but I did some research and became excited about the opportunity. A few days later, I accepted the job and had less than two weeks to move to Houston. It was difficult for me to leave WCU because of the relationships that I had built there, but I knew that Rice was a great next step.

MV: WHAT DREW YOU TO THIS ROLE, AND WHAT MADE YOU DECIDE TO GO INTO BASKETBALL OPERATIONS?

I had always loved being involved in sports growing up but knew I did not want to be a coach, as I find recruiting, watching film, etc., to be a bit of a slog. I actually did not realize that operational roles within teams existed until my time at Baylor. I went

to college with the intention of having a career in some area of psychology but developed a love for basketball operations during my time as a student-manager. More importantly, I had always dreamt of wearing shorts and a hoodie to work, so naturally, this job was a perfect fit.

On paper, my role is budget management, equipment purchasing, compliance, academics, facilities, meals, travel, alumni and donor relations, housing, and really everything that is not on-court coaching. However, my most important responsibility is to take care of our student-athletes. This makes my job look different every day, and some days I am out on the side of the highway helping a student-athlete with car trouble or reviewing off-campus apartment leases. Taking care of our athletes is far more important than any budget concern or facility issue that I encounter and is the most gratifying part of my job.



COURTESY PHOTO

MV: WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU THE MOST ABOUT THIS JOB?

Without a doubt, the scope of college athletics. When casual fans turn on ESPN to watch a game, they have no idea how many people and how much work is involved in making sure that the game is played, broadcast, and completed without issue. The number of people involved is astronomical.

An aspect of my job specifically that surprised me is the amount of time that I spend working with the facility director at our arena. On an average day, I will have 7 – 10 conversations with her and exchange numerous text messages, emails, and phone calls throughout the day. It turns out that successfully running an athletic facility is more involved than throwing a couple hoops on some hardwood.

MV: WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING PART? THE MOST CHALLENGING PART?

The most rewarding parts of my job are the relationships that I get to build along the way. I have such rewarding friendships with coworkers, student-athletes, student-managers, practice squad guys, and other members of each athletic department that I have worked in. Due to the nature of the job and the hours necessary to be involved in college athletics, they are truly friends that become family. It is not the championships, trophies, and rings that matter; it is the ability to do what I love with the people whom I love.

Oh man, there are innumerable challenges. There are challenges specific to the job, specific to each university, and ones that are specific to the time of year. Each day presents a handful of new challenges, but I do my best to shift my focus from the challenge to my attitude while overcoming the challenge. I cannot control everything that gets thrown my way during the day, but I can control my attitude.

MV: WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED SO FAR FROM WORKING IN WOMEN'S BASKETBALL?

Tons—I learn every single day! The things I learn inform the decisions that I make in my role and allow me to work increasingly effectively. I especially enjoy learning about how our department interacts with the campus and the greater Houston community, and in turn the different ways in which that relationship impacts funding and policies.

MV: DID BEAR CREEK HELP PREPARE YOU FOR THIS JOB AND YOUR EXPERIENCE AT BAYLOR?

My Bear Creek education was instrumental in preparing me for a career path in collegiate athletics. The ability to communicate ideas effectively and to manage time well are two foundational skills that Bear Creek encouraged me to develop. More importantly, though, Bear Creek gave me an appreciation for what a loving community looks like. The sports world can be cutthroat. It can be superficial and manipulative and unethical. Bear Creek showed me the elements of a healthy community and those characteristics are something that I look for in the programs that I choose to join. I have had great experiences at Baylor, WCU, and Rice because I found those markers of a loving culture and community.

MV: WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO CURRENT STUDENTS WHO ARE UNCERTAIN OF WHAT CAREER THEY WOULD LIKE?

Do not worry! Invest your time in the activities that bring you joy. Do not feel pressure to conform to what others are doing, achieving, studying, etc. You will find your fit.

ALUMNI NEWS AND CLASS NOTES

Share Your News

BEGINNING 2023, Class Notes may be submitted on our alumni site any time and will be viewable right away—no waiting for the next issue of *Modus Vivendi*. See a preview here of two submissions that are already online. Go to alumni.tbcs.org to submit a photo and class note to share what is happening in your life with your Bear Creek classmates.

Class of 2015

Mason Easley



Hey Everybody! My name is Mason, and I graduated from Bear Creek in 2015. After 4 years at Texas Christian University (TCU), I graduated in 2019 and moved to Chicago. I just recently moved back to the Seattle area and will be starting a new job as a sales development representative with a startup named Shiftboard. I am excited to be back in the area and interested to see what this new chapter holds!

Class of 2018

Sophie Schroth



Hey! I'm Sophie Schroth, and I graduated from Bear Creek in 2018. I recently graduated from the University of Notre Dame with a degree in Industrial Design, and have moved back to Seattle. I work as a product designer for a startup, and have been exploring the city as much as possible. Great to be home!

ALUMNI AND PARENTS OF ALUMNI STAY CONNECTED

MORE THAN 60 ALUMNI AND PARENTS of alumni gathered to share stories, hear about the latest happenings at Bear Creek, and rekindle friendships at The Woodhouse Wine Estates in Woodinville during the annual Parents of Alumni Gathering on October 7, 2022. Photos by Cindy McCahill.







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2023 Gratitude Gala

Save the Date: March 25, 2023
Online Auction opens March 20, 2023
www.tbcs.org/support-us/gala