



Winter 2009

chimes

WESTMINSTER CHRISTIAN ACADEMY



Embracing Technology

*Westminster students
explore new technologies
in and beyond the classroom.*



features

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Westminster Christian Academy honors Jesus Christ by providing an excellent education, rooted in biblical truth as interpreted by the Westminster Confession of Faith, for the children of Christian parents. Faculty and staff enable students to discover and embrace a biblical view of the world and integrate that view into every area of life.

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Innovation

Throughout Westminster Christian Academy's history, teachers have been instrumental in bringing innovative ideas and initiatives into the teaching and learning life of our community. The Learning Center, Spirit Week, We the People, and the Faith in Action Senior Service program are only some examples of grassroots initiatives that are vital to the Westminster experience.

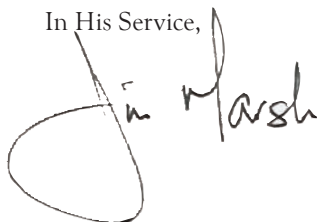
This innovative spirit continues to characterize the hearts of Westminster teachers, who have an important role in fulfilling the Westminster definition of excellence: "the process of becoming better than we once were." This year, each faculty member is equipped with a new MacBook laptop and is being trained to effectively integrate technology into his or her teaching. Innovative lesson plans and assessments are becoming more prevalent as teachers demonstrate a zeal for using new techniques and technologies in addition to traditional methods. Furthermore, we are testing a new course management system – Schoology – that could potentially transform communication between school and home.

Innovation has also impacted our efforts to measure our success in implementing Westminster's vision and mission. A Spiritual Life Task Force has launched an assessment and evaluation process to help us determine the effectiveness of the spiritual climate at Westminster as we seek to help develop and nurture the formation of Christian character in our students.

Finally, our teachers are striving to finalize plans for exciting curricular initiatives designed to provide students with a learning environment and curriculum that will better prepare them for leadership and service in the 21st century.

The faculty at Westminster does not accept the status quo. They continue to seize every opportunity to discover, embrace and integrate innovative new ideas and programs that will better serve our young people and prepare them to engage the world and change it for Jesus Christ.

In His Service,



Jim Marsh
Head of School



First in a Series About Our Core Values

We Seek to Become Better Than We Once Were

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

-Colossians 3:23-24

At Westminster Christian Academy, we define excellence as a process that is measured by individual and organizational improvement, not by a specific outcome. We expect all members

of our community to strive for excellence.

Through the eyes of the world, excellence is often defined as becoming better than we once were compared to others. As Christians, we must move away from this cultural conception, which demands exemplary performance, and instead embrace the notion that as we continually work to improve, we become better servants of Christ.

Today, a student is working to master a new computer skill set and is striving to produce a higher-quality project than his last. A teacher explores multiple methods to help a student grasp and retain an important concept. An alumna is spending hours researching the economic

history of an underdeveloped country to learn how she might make a difference in the lives of its citizens.

We at Westminster Christian Academy habitually seek excellence, focusing on whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely and admirable (Philippians 4:8) to learn from our experiences, to grow in character, and to make a difference in the world for Christ. For as we aim to become better than we once were, we strive to become more like Him.

A complete list of Westminster Christian Academy's core values is available at www.wcastl.org/about/mission.



Students often work together to select photos for school publications. The monthly newspaper, *The Wildcat Roar*, is now online. Visit thewildcatroar.com today!

Changing the World with Laughter

In the remote village of Matuga in Kampala, Uganda, lives a community of intelligent, ambitious young women. These women have a chance to become leaders in their impoverished country because of one alumna who is driven to succeed and make a difference.

Liz Forkin Bohannon ('04) moved to Uganda in fall 2008, intending to use her journalism degree to assist a youth development organization with its communications and fervently desiring to learn. Although her passion for the “least of these” had been growing throughout college, she had never experienced the effects of extreme poverty firsthand.

During her time in Kampala, Bohannon found a community called Cornerstone, where she met a group of young women, mostly her age, who quickly became friends. Bohannon was blown away by their commitment to their education, which they called an incredible gift. “I was amazed at their commitment not only to learning their subjects, but also to learning how to love well, how to reconcile their lives, and how to lead their country,” she says.

The Ugandan school system leaves a nine-month gap between secondary school and university for students to earn tuition money before continuing on to college. However, in an impoverished and male-dominated society, many of these young women struggle to find fair work, and there is no respect for women who are not in leadership positions. “When I learned this, I was thinking, ‘Here are the brightest women in Uganda, but they will never be seen as anything of worth in their country because they can’t find work to continue their education,’” says Bohannon. “This was *not* okay.”

Her first thought to organize a fund-

raiser was interrupted by a friend who said that these women need jobs, not donations. Bohannon wanted to start a business that would accomplish two goals: provide tuition for these women through a sustainable monthly income and contribute to the overall economic development of Uganda. Coming up with a product that American women would buy was key and not at all difficult: shoes, of course!

“It seemed so simple at the time,” says Bohannon. “I sketched a sandal I thought was really beautiful, and then I spent weeks wandering around the city and through the markets looking for materials and anything I could use as a tool to make them,” she says. “I didn’t know what I was doing. I laughed out loud at myself a lot and cried, too. It was so frustrating.” But after several weeks, Bohannon had constructed a prototype: the first Sseko sandal. Sseko (say-ko) comes from the Ugandan word *enseko*, which means laughter. “It is a word that characterized much of my time with the Sseko girls,” says Bohannon. The socially proactive “not-just-for-profit” enterprise recognizes the power of business and responsible consumerism to support sustainable economic development, which in turn affects a country’s official systems. “Although consumerism makes many empty promises, responsible and proactive consumerism can change lives,” says Bohannon. Learning entrepreneurial skills such as how to FedEx mass shipments and how to use a computer empowers the girls to become respected doctors, lawyers, politicians, writers and teachers who will bring change and unification to a country divided by war.

“While charities do have a place and are wonderful organizations, they can sometimes be more of a hindrance than



Top: Liz and Ben Bohannon (Liz is wearing Sseko sandals). Bottom: The first three girls to work for Sseko, Mercy, Mary and Rebecca, who hand-make each pair of Sseko sandals to earn funding for their university educations.

a help,” says Bohannon. “We need to give people in underdeveloped countries opportunities – not stuff.” She says until a country can sustain profitability in business, it will always rely on aid.

“I know I can’t alleviate global poverty, but I can educate people about how to help,” says Bohannon. “I am making mistakes and making a mess, but it’s a beautiful adventure. I dream about the change these women will bring – and about the people who see these shoes as something more than a lifeless product on a shelf, but rather as the lives and dreams of the women who made them.”

Visit ssekodesigns.com to learn more.



Celebrating Student and Faculty Excellence



National Merit Semifinalists are pictured with Head of School Jim Marsh (far left) and Head of Upper School Jim Sefrit (far right). They are (clockwise from back row left): Samuel Bowman, Nicholas Arnold, Leah Younkin, Julie Sharp, Daniel Nixon, Ana Tanner, Rebecca Harner and Grace Johnson.

ACADEMIC

We congratulate the eight 2010 National Merit Semifinalists – **Nick Arnold, Sam Bowman, Rebecca Harner, Grace Johnson, Daniel Nixon, Julie Sharp, Ana Tanner** and **Leah Younkin**. Finalists will be announced in mid-January. The Class of 2010 has the largest number of Semifinalists

and the largest combined number of Semifinalists and Commended Scholars in school history! We also congratulate **Richard Mansfield**, who was recognized as a National Achievement Semifinalist. This award signifies that Richard scored among the top African-American students in Missouri when he took the PSAT.

ATHLETICS

Lauren DeRousse and **Christine Schlafly** are Westminster's first state tennis champs! They secured the state doubles title in a match against Visitation Academy. Coach Nathan Talley says the girls were poised, graceful and confident in every round and carried themselves as true champions, representing our school (and consequently, the name of Christ) with dignity and honor.

The **varsity girls' golf** team celebrated a third-place finish at the State Tournament in Sedalia, Mo. this fall season. Placing only 11 strokes behind this year's champions, the **Wildcats** were led by senior **Kristin Kilpatrick**, whose first-round score of 81 put her in third place overall for the tournament. Kristin became one of only 23 girls in the history of the 35-year tournament to win All-State Honors in each of her four years as a high school player. **Brooke Cusumano** placed 19th out of the 121-girl field, and **Margaret Moore** and **Hillary Franz** each carded good rounds.



The varsity men's soccer team defeated Clayton High School 4-0 to secure the team's first-ever district title.



Juniors **Lauren DeRousse** (top step, left) and **Christine Schlafly** (top step, right) claimed first place in the state tennis tournament.



Varsity boys' soccer won its first-ever district championship in school history.

For the second time in school history, the **varsity football team** won the district title **this fall**.

The **varsity girls' volleyball** team won the district title in late October.

FACULTY

In Summer 2009, upper school science teacher and soccer coach **Warren Smith** spent eight days at Stanford University in Palo Alto, Calif., earning a Premier Soccer Coaching Diploma. Less than one percent of all high school soccer coaches earn this level of certification. Smith was also asked to join the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) staff in order to conduct coaching clinics nationwide for coaches interested in attaining state and regional levels of certification.

Nathan Talley, middle school Bible teacher and tennis coach, has been named the 2009 High School Tennis Coach of the

Year by the Missouri Valley region of the United States Tennis Association (USTA). Talley was nominated for the award by other area high school tennis coaches. The USTA recognized him for his "coaching ethics and integrity, which make him stand out as a professional."

LEADERSHIP

Madison Burke is profiled in the American Heart Association national magazine's August 2009 cover story. The story features Madison, who has dealt with her own family's heart problems by volunteering as a National Youth Advisory Board Member for Alliance for a Healthier Generation. She educates Missouri youth about heart-healthy habits so that they go home and spread the word to their friends and families.

The **Students Working Against Tobacco (SWAT)** team continued to pursue the support of local and state legislators to pass Proposition N to ban smoking from public places. Attending St. Louis County Council meetings and press conferences and participating in pickets encouraging passersby to be smoke free, the group's 34

members recently celebrated the success of their efforts to help pass the bill in November. Advisor Sherry Blough is proud of this dedicated group. Blough says, "As far as I know, no other teen tobacco-prevention group in the area has been as successful or has spread a more powerful message."

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS

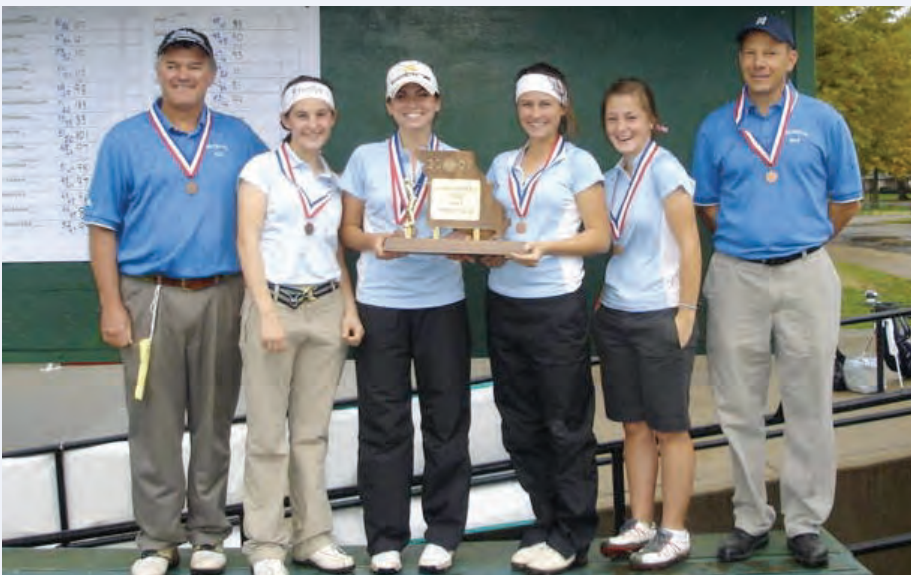
Carolyn Bonacquisti, **Maggie Johnson**, and **Lizzie Nester** were selected to participate in the All-District Honor Choir.

Drew Hillemeier (violin), **Amber Draper** (violin), **Martha Jang** (cello), and **Gordon Younkyn** (cello) made District Orchestra. **Andrew Kouba** (1st chair trombone), **Jake Dwyer** (trumpet), **Aaron Krumsieg**, (trumpet), **Bill Serber** (French horn), **James Richardson** (timpani/percussion) and **Jake Dahl** (baritone horn) made District Band. **Matt Baldwin** (alto saxophone) made District Jazz Band.

Junior **Ian Farmer** and sophomore **Jessie Owens**, along with alumna **Lisa Hoover** ('08), performed in Missouri Baptist University's production of "Bye Bye Birdie" in November. Westminster Choral Director Allen Schwamb was the music director for the show.

In August, eighth grader **Delaney Haynes** starred as Little Inez in the Mundy production of "Hairspray." This was her fourth summer as a member of the Mundy Kids company. Haynes is also a member of the Duke University Talent Identification Program.

The **Westminster yearbook staff** received the best score ever from the NSPA for the 2008-09 yearbook. Although the staff has received a first-class rating the past four years, this year they additionally received two marks of distinction for original design and photography.



The varsity girls' golf team won third place in the state golf tournament. Pictured from left: Coach Steve Bradley, freshman Brooke Cusumano, senior Kristin Kilpatrick, senior Hillary Franz, sophomore Margaret Moore, and Assistant Coach Rex Janssen.

Digital Learning

Meeting Students in Their Element

After grabbing a snack, Matt walks into his bedroom, tosses his backpack and flips open his laptop. He checks Facebook before visiting his English teacher's blog to see the discussion topics his teacher has posted as homework. He sees that some of his classmates have already joined conversations on the forum and, intrigued by some of their comments, quickly types his thoughts out into a post. These thoughts aren't trivial observations; his are questions that have real-life implications.

Westminster students live in an interactive, digital world that includes texting, social networking and streaming video. Now, some of the same technology they use to interact with friends are similar to those they use to do their homework. Technology Coordinator Doug Butte says today's students live in a technological world. "We still want to be faithful to our curriculum, but we want to deliver it in a more effective, efficient manner that connects with this digital culture and stimulates learning by presenting material via a medium they take interest in," says Butte.

In an effort to move forward in this way, the faculty received new Apple MacBooks as tools to enhance their teaching. Teachers have begun to assimilate technology into their curricula in ways that enhance students' skills, including sustained thinking and professional communication. This assimilation has also allowed several teachers to begin assessing students in new ways. Rather than require students to memorize facts, teachers ask them to apply newly learned concepts to real-life situations in order to assess their grasp of the material. The integration of technology has thus far improved not only teachers' instruction



As a student in Dr. Tim Gibson's Advanced Expository Writing class, senior Adrienne Boyd often records portions of her essays using iSight, a Mac program that records video and audio. Students then listen to themselves reading and self-critique weak sections of their writing.

but also students' understanding and continued application of concepts.

ONLINE FORUMS

Dr. Tim Gibson, upper school English teacher, was inspired by fellow faculty members' innovative use of technology. Gibson says his goal in creating forums for his own students was twofold. "The point for students is to continue to think about these concepts after class ends, and it provides an outlet for them to express their opinions and feelings without the discomfort of speaking in class," he says.

Junior Matt Sugg admits that his English class discussions on Gibson's online forum are often so pertinent that they carry over to lunch table conversations with friends. "The topics posted on class forums are ones that you want to discuss because they have meaning in our own lives," says Sugg. "It's a cool way to share ideas. And through reading those ideas,

you gain other perspectives and learn how to think in different ways as a result."

Sugg says the forums have challenged him to think critically in all of his classes.

On one forum, students use the MacBook's built-in iSight camera to post their writings in digital video format. "The purpose is for students to be able to discern weaknesses in their written and verbal correspondence," says Gibson. "It's an opportunity for students to grow more comfortable in their own skin, so that one day, when they have to give a presentation in a lecture hall or a board room, they're comfortable and equipped."

Gibson's websites provide a place for students to post video assignments, writings, or educational links and also serve as a tool for him to showcase some of his students' best works. "I have been humbled by students who turn their work in and say to me, 'I hope this is good enough for the website,'" says Gibson.

After reading *The Color of Water* in Gibson's 2008-09 American Literature course, seniors Chloe Martinez and Karlton Smith created a documentary on the role race plays in modern education. Martinez said some were skeptical that the book's lessons would still apply today. "Even though the book was written some time ago, the opportunity to interview people of different backgrounds across the city for this project demonstrated that the book's lessons really are applicable today. Whether we realize it or not, the issue of race is something that we deal with every day," says Martinez.

Gibson says he is blown away by his students' work. "Their work, in and of itself, has served as my greatest inspiration in teaching," he says. "They constantly challenge me to do what I do better."

SCHOOLGY

Social networking is on the rise at Westminster, but Facebook is not the only online community to appear on campus. Schoology, an up-and-coming course management program, is a social networking site that enables students and teachers to manage classroom work while cultivating community. Chris Pederson, upper school teacher in The Learning Center, used Google Groups before learning about Schoology's audio and video capabilities. "I wanted to

create a place for kids to get assignments and class information in an inviting, functional way," says Pederson.

The Learning Center focuses on teaching both class content and learning strategies. Pederson says that the allotted class time doesn't always allow students to review these learning strategies. Schoology provides that extra time to review strategies. "I video myself explaining a strategy for that day," says Pederson. "Then, when my students get home and need help in certain areas, they can watch a video of me teaching the strategy, and are equipped to complete the assignment. Videos posted on Schoology allow them to review a strategy as many times as they need to."

The school is currently testing Schoology and will assess the platform at the end of the academic year.

VIDEO INTEGRATION

In his eighth grade Bible classes, Nathan Talley places ample focus on visual learning. Moving away from text-heavy PowerPoints, he has begun embedding relevant video into the presentations. Talley says these videos illustrate biblical truth and pique student interest at the same time. "As a teacher, Jesus shows us the value of illustration," says Talley. "He helped people to see what he was teaching by putting image to concepts with prodigal sons and lost coins."

Showing a video of celebrations around the world helps students consider how David

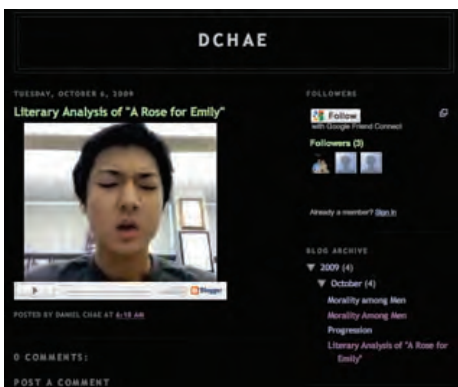
celebrated with all his might (1 Chronicles 13), and videos illustrating modern leaders' confessions parallel David's confession. "When talking about David's confession, my students observed real-life apologies by famous people who got caught in their sin, and we had great conversations about the nature, tone, and sincerity found in true confession," says Talley. "It helped students see that David's situation was real and involved real emotion. We also had great discussions about the fact that even though we might judge a confession by outward appearance, God is looking at the heart." His students' projects are also incorporating video. This semester, each student wrote a devotional on the Proverb of his or her choosing. From that writing, many created an accompanying video using image and sound to illustrate the truth visually.

PUBLISHING SOFTWARE

Encouraged by fellow teachers' efforts to update student assessments, Sara Keeton now incorporates one unique technology project per semester into each of her sophomore English classes. At the conclusion of the fall semester, in place of a test on a Shakespearean comedy, students create projects using Adobe InDesign publishing software to advertise their play and iMovie to produce a five-minute movie. "The movie trailer — a group project — not only requires that students know the plot well enough to act it out, but it also requires them to manage their time and to learn how to work with one another's strengths and weaknesses," says Keeton.

In the spring, students use InDesign to produce a creative book brochure that illustrates their understanding of a novel. "My students enjoy portraying concepts visually and artistically," says Keeton. "And if it's going to be viewed by all of their peers, students will put forth their best."

To experience these and other student video and writing projects, please visit www.wcastl.org/alumni/tech



Left: Senior Daniel Chae posts written works and videos in which he reads his works aloud to his English class blog (left). Right: As juniors, Chloe Martinez and Karlton Smith visited Roosevelt High School and other area schools to film their documentary, *Perception*, which examines the role of race in education.



Assessing Spiritual Life at Westminster

A Different Kind of Greenhouse Effect

The recent spiritual life assessment is a tool that will help administrators determine the school's effectiveness in creating an environment that fosters spiritual growth.

"We are not evaluating the growth of every plant in the greenhouse, but we are evaluating the temperature, moisture, and sunlight in the greenhouse" (Philip M. Renicks, Graybeal and Associates).

Measuring the degree to which the Westminster Christian Academy mission is being accomplished in the lives of students has been identified as a major priority in the school's strategic plan and in its goals for the 2009-2010 school year.

Head of School Jim Marsh says, "The fulfillment of our mission is our most important goal; it is what sets us apart, and to be strong as a school, we must be vigilant in this area of distinctiveness. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary to ask, 'How do we know if we're being effective in cultivating Christian character in the lives of kids at Westminster?'"

Now is a fitting time for the assessment, as Westminster recently welcomed Reverend Luke Davis as school chaplain. Davis now leads the Student Spiritual Life Team and serves as a member of the Spiritual Life Task Force, which is responsible for the spiritual life initiatives included in the school's strategic plan. Davis says the process of becoming better than we once were is an ever-present objective at Westminster.

"We're always evaluating our effectiveness in fulfilling our mission, carrying out our vision, and looking for ways to improve," says Davis. "But although we had been assessing our effectiveness in academics, athletics, and extracurricular activities, we had not yet gathered to sit down to think about how the spiritual formation in students is taking place," he says, noting an apparent call to action. "In order to do what God has created us to do — to prepare and equip young men and women to engage the world and change it for Jesus Christ — and in order to know how to do that, we must know who we are spiritually as a school."

As a first step in the process, Westminster contracted with Graybeal and Associates to complete a comprehensive assessment of the

spiritual life development of Westminster students. This assessment, conducted in September, included an online survey distributed to Westminster parents, students and staff, as well as a series of focus group discussions among parents, students, staff, faculty, Board members and alumni.

Prayerfully, God will use the spiritual life assessment to provide important information and insight that will enable Westminster to better partner with Westminster families and families' churches to positively impact student spiritual growth. Without the time, prayers and thoughts shared by the gracious school community throughout this assessment process, Westminster would not be able to accurately assess the direction in which we are heading nor the ways in which we might improve as



The entire school community joins together in worship at student-led chapel services each Wednesday.

Student Spiritual Life Team

The Student Spiritual Life Team (SSLT) is a committee of driven students that was formed in March 2009 to maintain, organize and structure spiritual life at Westminster. Overseen by Reverend Luke Davis, school chaplain, the Student Spiritual Life Team is made up of seven dedicated, diverse individuals and serves as a chapel coordination committee that strives to promote a high level of student leadership and ownership of chapel. Davis says the team is working to integrate biblical truth into the “street-level” moments of everyday life and to transform the student culture at Westminster. “It’s a great core of students with a passion for their faith and for life,” says Davis.

In an era filled with distractions, the mission of the chapel and spiritual life program is to empower the Westminster community in the lifelong process of experiencing Christian truth, expressing Christian character, and expanding Christ’s kingdom. “They’ve been given the chance to grab the steering wheel and direct chapel in effective ways that will have great impact on their peers,” says Davis.

This fall, the SSLT developed a comprehensive vision and strategic plan for Westminster Christian Academy’s chapel and spiritual life as we look ahead to the next quarter-century. “The strategy in fulfilling the mission of this program, from a spiritual formation perspective, is to figure out how to deliver the biblical message in a weighty and efficient way,” says Davis, who notes it is not an issue of *if* we will have change in our student body but a question of *how much* change. “Material goods and services, as well as technology, will be much more prevalent and will bring out increasing angst, disconnection and need in the spiritual lives of students,” he says.

According to the team’s predictions, future chapels will likely emphasize visual interaction and efficient yet substantive messages, with the potential addition of a chapel-specific drama team and video production team. Davis has outlined a sample future Westminster chapel service illustrating methods that might enable the 2025 Westminster student to process and apply spiritual concepts. Davis says, “This kind of service will allow students to slow down, meditate and digest the gospel in an even faster-paced culture than the one in which we live today.”



The student-led Chapel Band allows upper school students to learn how to lead the school in worship.

a school. With the valuable information gathered from this assessment, Westminster could have one of the most significant opportunities in school history to impact the lives of current and future students. The school’s leadership is thankful for the difference the community will have made in students’ lives as a result of the school community’s participation in this evaluation.

It is helpful to compare this evaluation to the assessment of the climate in a greenhouse, inside which one has control over the temperature, light, moisture and water in an effort to make a positive impact on the plants.

“It must be understood that WCA is not measuring, grading or comparing the spiritual lives and characters of kids,” says Marsh. “Only the Holy Spirit can control the spiritual growth of our students,

but we can control the school climate – the environment in which students grow, learn and relate – and we are examining the elements of that climate that can either advance or work against spiritual development at Westminster. We want to ensure that we are doing everything possible to improve the climate to better nurture the Christian character development of our students.”

Although the assessment elicited a variety of responses, this constructive, long-term conversation about the best way to evaluate the school’s spiritual climate is now forcing Westminster to examine its identity in Christ, according to Davis.

“This evaluation got people talking,” says Davis. “Spiritual life at Westminster is at the forefront of many people’s minds. I have supreme confidence in school leadership to

scrutinize this question of how we know if we’re being effective and how we can move forward in a clear direction for the good of the school.”

The report submitted by Graybeal and Associates will serve as one part of a comprehensive process that will strengthen the spiritual formation of students as school leaders determine specific steps to be taken.

Marsh says, “My hope is that when we analyze the report, we will have a clearer picture of where we are in developing and advancing Christian character, and that we will have a starting point for identifying the areas in which we are strong and targeting those that need improvement. From there, we will define ways to build on our strengths and improve in our areas of weakness.”

Philosophy of Pedagogy

Out-of-the-Box Learning Experiences

Twelve years ago, the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) suggested that in order to advance the mission of Westminster Christian Academy, the school should examine the content taught at Westminster and the purposes behind teaching that content. From this analysis came the Philosophy of Curriculum – the “What? So What? Now What?” model that has challenged students to discover, embrace and integrate biblical truth into every area of their lives. This has remained the “Westminster Way” of teaching for more than a decade.

In October 2006, having defined the school’s philosophy of curriculum, and in response to a new report submitted by the ISACS visiting team, Westminster began to analyze its expectations for how curriculum ought

“Rather than asking what our teachers can do to make the class more interesting, we should be asking what our teachers can do to enable our students to learn.”

– Academic Dean Scott Holley

to be delivered to students. A task force was formed to evaluate Westminster’s approach to pedagogy – or strategies of teaching – and then to develop and implement a philosophy of pedagogy that would articulate the Westminster Way of teaching. Taking into account the nature of the Westminster teacher, characteristics of the Westminster

classroom and the interactions within the Westminster community, The Pedagogy Task Force has detailed practical methods to guide the future plans of the school.

Head of School Jim Marsh says, “It is important that faculty and staff use the principles and directives in this philosophy statement to guide professional growth, curricular planning, and pedagogical style.”

It is Westminster’s ultimate goal to train faculty to teach in such a way that students (1) have a well-developed Christian worldview that informs their decisions throughout their lives, (2) are shaped by a mentor who demonstrates a clear example of Christian worldview lived well, and (3) experience a learning community that encourages faithfulness, provides accountability and connects worldview to real life. Therefore, Westminster is carefully considering the types of educational organization, practice and methodology that will lead the school toward the fulfillment of these goals.

Upper School History Teacher Chris Knerr and Academic Dean Scott Holley agree that experiential class offerings could potentially meet the unique challenges of the 21st century.

“The entire goal of the move toward experiential learning is to create meaningful experiences outside the normal school approach,” says Holley. “Rather than asking what our teachers can do to make a class more interesting, we should be asking what our teachers can do to best enable our students to learn. Ultimately, education should be all about what the kids are actually learning.”

Knerr adds that as opposed to some experiential education programs that are perhaps over-reliant on activity,

the Westminster program would be deliberate in its integration of activity, curriculum and community.

“While a given activity is an important component of experiential education, I believe that this falls short of the complete educational experience,” says Knerr. “As Craig Dunham, one of our faculty, related, the best experience is guided experience.”

In the near future, Westminster students will enjoy three new experiential programs that seek to further the Westminster Way of teaching.

THE SEMINAR PERIOD: A CURRICULUM WITHIN A CURRICULUM

Seminars, weekly 60-minute periods, will offer students in grades 9 to 11 a wider variety of non-core courses that will enhance the current curriculum and will open opportunities for additional electives. Seminar course offerings will include Personal Finance, Economics, Issues of Science and Faith, Personal Inventory and Study Skills.

Because the Seminar Period focuses on experiential learning, it will yield authentic assessments. Students taking the Personal Finance Seminar will design budgets. Students who are beginning to contemplate college and career choices will be given activities that help them to understand their learning styles, personality types and college searches.

Seminar Period will allow Westminster teachers the opportunity to work across departments and grade levels to make the programs about which they are passionate work effectively. They will get to know students and teachers who they might not otherwise have a chance to know, thus helping

kids connect with each other and with a wider range of the faculty.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING DAYS

Experiential Learning Days (ELDs) will create opportunities for students and teachers to interact in alternative settings, during which students would have meaningful experiences beyond the traditional classroom walls. Teachers would develop mini-courses that explore a particular topic on ELDs, which would take place once each quarter and foster community among students in grades 9 to 12. ELDs would provide (1) the opportunity for faculty members who share a common interest to create an uncontrived community of engaged learners from all upper school grade levels, (2) opportunities for students who might not have room in their schedule for an elective in an area of study that interests them, and (3) opportunities for creativity and collaboration among Westminster faculty members.

Ideally, the creative spark and collaborative impulse generated by Westminster faculty members in planning these courses might carry over into the mainstream curriculum and thus improve pedagogical methods.

THE SUMMER INSTITUTE

The Summer Institute, a series of voluntary courses offered during the summer months, will involve domestic and foreign travel to various destinations. These destinations would be the settings for 10-day, interdisciplinary seminars built upon a specific theme approached from a variety of disciplines. Westminster teachers will create and implement a variety of summer courses offered biannually and for one elective credit upon completion of an assessment preapproved by the academic dean.

These travel opportunities remove



In July, a group of upper school students and faculty members traveled to Washington state for an 11-day backpacking trip and interdisciplinary course dedicated to the study of beauty. This Summer Seminar program is paving the way for a proposed Summer Institute, which would similarly allow students and faculty to travel in order to learn about and experience various interdisciplinary topics.

students from the school setting so that they might better connect real life to the ideas discussed within the classroom context. On a trip to the East Coast, for example, bike tours could be designed specifically to visit Civil War battlefields, where students might study the leadership strategies of Civil War generals and learn how they could make a difference if they were to apply those same leadership principles today. Because the Summer Institute will allow students to learn while reaping the benefits of experience, it will create valuable connections between curricular content and the outside world, both during the school year and during the summer months.

This vision, while clear, will require time and faculty training. “We are

taking a reflective look at what we do and how we do it,” says Head of Upper School Jim Sefrit. “The goal is for teachers to become better teachers – not just for them to teach more effectively, but rather for students to learn in the most effective ways. That is key,” says Sefrit. “In everything we do at WCA, we need to honor God and give teachers everything they need to do their job better for our kids – each of whom is someone’s son, daughter, grandchild, and best friend. If we do those two things, we can fulfill our purpose.”

Focus and Faithfulness

“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen.” 2 Corinthians 4:18a

We walked through shifting sands in our world this past year. At Westminster Christian Academy, we sought to honor Jesus Christ by keeping our focus and our faithfulness. We kept to our priorities by holding fast to our mission and our commitment to the families we serve. We made tough decisions that were needed to stay strong over the long haul and advance our mission, worked to implement our strategic plan for the future, and moved forward as a Christian school.

I know many of us are tempted and tried by the day-to-day needs of this world and by the economic challenges of the times. There can be a tendency to retreat and shrink back from doing our best for God and for other people. I'm thankful that by God's grace and through the prayers and giving of so many this year, we are continuing to move forward with an unwavering focus on our vision to see more young men and women prepared and equipped to engage the world and change it for Jesus Christ.

Highlights of God's provision:

We are experiencing a record enrollment of 898 students. You may recall that we had anticipated a possible drop in enrollment this year. More and more, Christian families see us as a great educational value and partner.

We were able to offer \$1.3 million in financial aid to 22% of our students. We stayed strong in our commitment to the families we serve even as we saw requests for financial aid for current families double because more than 10% of our families faced profound income adjustments.

More than \$4.9 million was given — the third-highest sum in our school's history.

Even though the annual giving available for school programs was down, we have been able to utilize cash reserves from a history of faithful stewardship to finish our year in the black. Significant gifts were made toward capital commitments, and we have aggressively lowered our debt, which is now the lowest it has been in a long time. In two years' time, it has been reduced from more than \$11 million to less than \$6 million.

The possible sale of the Ladue Road campus continues to move forward as potential buyers have considered the opportunity. New timelines for moving forward with the Town & Country campus are being reviewed and drafted.

What are we working on this year?

It is obvious that God has blessed the school and has been merciful during these difficult days. We are now asking difficult questions: God, how would you have us respond? How can we become more effective? How can we be a greater blessing?

In 2009-2010, we have very specific priorities and projects. Each is designed not only to achieve the goals of our Strategic Plan but also to help us grow stronger and more effective, as well as to move steadily toward our vision. We will continue to innovate and recognize that we must be sustainable and affordable while we stay true to our core values as a Christian school community.

Spiritual life assessment and initiatives

Today's world and culture are bent on the destruction of families and the

captivation of the hearts and minds of our students, and we are exploring new ways to determine how we can best fulfill the mission of Westminster as it impacts the spiritual life of our students. This will not be easy, but we are gaining insight into our effectiveness as a Christian school and identifying barriers to fostering a Christian community of young people growing up to love God and love others.

Becoming the #1 Christian school choice in America for great teachers

This is one of the most compelling goals of our Strategic Plan. We desire to be highly competitive with salaries and very aggressive in hiring and retaining the finest Christian educators. We know that attracting and keeping great teachers goes far beyond salaries. Teachers value dynamic professional development, supportive leadership, innovation and creativity, and the right tools in the classroom. We are in the beginning stages of establishing a Center for Teaching and Learning that strengthens our ability to equip teachers to teach effectively from a biblical perspective and grow the professional learning community that is a significant aspect of our school culture.

Becoming a Christian school for today's learners

This year we've taken our most significant steps ever in technology integration by implementing a wireless campus. Every teacher is equipped with a new MacBook and is a member of ongoing faculty training and professional learning teams. Teachers challenge each other in the creation of curriculum that develops and broadens 21st-century skills such as video and audio production, web content



writing, and communication in a more global educational environment. This year, we are working to improve future access to technology for students and parents and are moving toward a more ubiquitous use of technology in the classroom and school community, as we “prepare students for their future, not our past” (Daniel Pink, *A Whole New Mind*).

Establishing the Center for the Advancement of Christian Education

Westminster is blessed to be located in a metropolitan area with many quality Christian elementary schools. We are building upon our partnerships with Christian schools in our region, across the nation and now around the globe. During such a challenging economic time, we want to bring experience, information technology and resources to bear in key areas that strengthen Christian schools. We are taking steps that could impact curriculum development, communications, grant writing, leadership development, teacher training and technology implementation at schools across town or across the United States.

Zach Clark serves as director of advancement at Westminster Christian Academy. He enjoys meeting with parents, alumni and other members of the Westminster community to discuss the school’s mission and progress toward its strategic goals. You can e-mail Zach at zclark@wcastl.org.



“We need Christian leaders who are first and foremost Christians and who understand the full impact of that commitment. I believe Westminster provides the platform for that understanding to occur. That’s why my children attended, that’s why my grandchildren are attending, and that’s why I am engaged in the Westminster community!”
Larry Collett, volunteer, former parent



“I’m involved at Westminster because I deeply believe that we must prepare our children in a faith-based environment for the real-life issues they will face in the world. I want to support and grow an environment from which tomorrow’s leaders will emerge, grounded in the teachings of Christ.”
Craig Doiron, volunteer, current parent

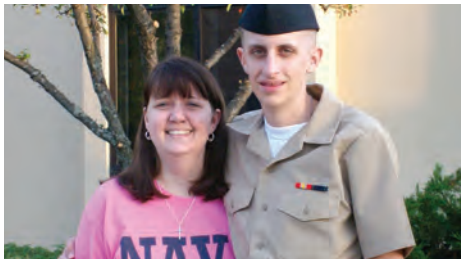


“I’m committed to Westminster because I believe in investing in today’s youth in order to see them come to know Christ. Only then will they be able to build the strength needed to live out that faith. My hope is that this growth will be displayed as the students mature into adults and take on influential roles both personally and professionally.”
Greg Dosmann, volunteer, current parent



“I believe that God has His hand on Westminster and will use it to prepare young men and women for His work in this world. I have seen firsthand how the school prepared our two sons to be ambassadors for Christ. I pray that there will always be a place at Westminster for the families who desire to attend.”
Joe Schluchter, volunteer, former parent

Class of 1987



▲ **Laura Shepherd Volner** is extremely proud of her son Daniel, who graduated in May 2009 and now serves in the U.S. Navy.

Class of 1988

David Workman has just published his first book, *The Bare Bones Guide to Buying and Selling Your Home*. In February 2008, David and his wife Stephanie welcomed their second child, Jacob. Their daughter, Hannah, is 3 years old. They live in Hickory, N.C., where Stephanie is a stay-at-home mom and David is working in marketing and writing his second book.

Class of 1993



▲ **Brian Bendick** and **Abby Boeddeker Bendick** ('95) welcomed baby Anne Marie on August 12, 2008. Annie joins big sister Amelia (5). Brian is a partner at Hearne and Bendick, LLC in Clayton. Abby is a special education teacher in the Parkway School District.



▲ **Matt Erkmann** and **Paige Nath** were married on October 3, 2009, in Scottsdale, Ariz. **Mike Erkmann** ('95) was best man, and sister **Libby Erkmann Harris** ('97) was a bridesmaid. **Reid Elliott** ('93) and **Jim Beckemeier** ('95) were groomsmen.

Class of 1994



▲ **Simon Brobbel** married **Ann Ryan** on October 10, 2009. The couple met in 2008.

Class of 1995



▲ **Maria Svolopoulos Feay** lives in Fairfield, Conn., with husband **Josh** and their five kids, **Eli** (7), **Zoe** (6), **Ian** (4), and twins **Ava** and **Ivy** (2). She is a full-time nanny and a stay-at-home mom.



▲ **Mike Erkmann** and his wife **Rachel** welcomed **James Robert** into their family on February 14, 2009. Mike works in commercial real estate development and brokerage in the Pacific Northwest. They live in Boise, Idaho.

Class of 1996



▲ On January 31, 2009, **Aaron White** married **Jessica Smith**. Aaron works at an insurance company in Indianapolis, Ind.



▲ **Nate Preg** lives in Birmingham, Ala., with his wife **Whitney** and their sons **Jones** (5) and **Fisher** (2). Nate is a senior exhibit designer at Expo Displays. Nate recently started taking classes at Birmingham Theological Seminary.

Class of 1997



▲ **Julie McReynolds** Joggerst and her husband Scott celebrated their 10th wedding anniversary in March. They live in Fenton, Mo. with children Luke (8), Drew (5), Audrey (3) and Ryan (1). Scott is on staff at Southgate Church, and Julie homeschools their children.

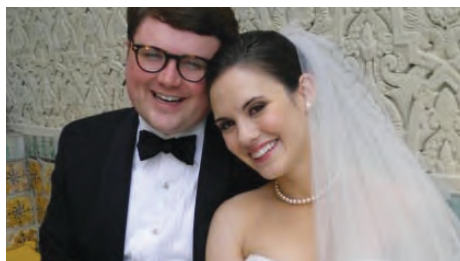
Class of 2000



▲ **Jeremy Borage** and **Lyndsay Stegmann** Borage recently celebrated their fifth wedding anniversary. After four years in commercial banking, Jeremy is now in his second year at Saint Louis University Law School. Lyndsay formerly taught at The Kirk of the Hills Christian Day School, and now stays home with their two children, Chase (2) and Ellie (1).

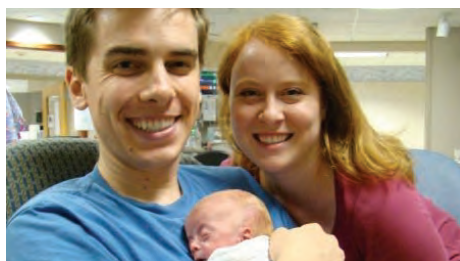
Remembering Dan Trulaske, Class of 2002

Dan Trulaske died suddenly and unexpectedly on Thursday, September 24. He was 26 years old. Please continue to pray for his parents, Jim and Kim Trulaske, and siblings Michael and Beth.



▲ **Francis Joseph Michael Goldkamp** and **Kate Ellen Michelson** were married August 1 in San Francisco. The couple lives in the Upper East Side of Manhattan, where Joseph is in his second year of graduate study in American religious history at Yale.

Class of 2002



▲ **Matt Bear** married **Susan Williams** on September 9, 2007. The wedding party included **Christi Bear** Provost ('98) and **Katherine Bear** ('06), **Nathan VanValkenburg** ('02) and **Stephen Kruse** ('04). Matt and Susan live in Columbia, Mo., where Matt works for Shelter Insurance. On June 11, 2009, they welcomed baby Theresa Susan.

Class of 2003



▲ **Molly Boggs** married **David Cover** on Dec. 27, 2008, in Columbia, Mo. Molly and David are both on staff at The Crossing Church. Molly is director of early childhood programs. The wedding party included sister and maid of honor **Betsie Boggs** ('05) and brother **Peter Boggs** ('08) as a groomsman. **Libby Lothman** Dowdall ('03) was a bridesmaid.



▲ **Stephanie Renaud** Hullinger graduated from Maryville University in May 2007. She met Michael Hullinger of York, Nebraska at First Evangelical Free Church at the 2007 Christmas Eve midnight service, and they married on December 6, 2008. They welcomed son Caleb Zadok to the family on September 10, 2009.



▲ U.S. Air Force First Lt. **Brian McReynolds** married **Rosemarie Moxley** on September 26, 2009, at West Point, New York. The wedding party included **Nathan Koller** ('03) and **Sarah McReynolds** ('06). Brian received his wings from the Air Force on Sept. 4. They will live in Dover, Del., after Brian completes C-5 aircraft training.

Class of 2004



▲ **Emily Reed** and **Joe Schnitzler** ('03) were married June 21, 2008. The wedding party included **Melissa Reed** ('06), **Abby Schnitzler** ('04), **Tim Reed** ('10), **Rebecca Keffer** Kruse ('04), **Elizabeth Simon** ('04), and **Doug Keesling** ('03). The couple met in Touring Choir at Westminster, where Emily works in communications. Joe works in the brokerage business at Stifel Nicolaus.



▲ **Jon Wilkinson** married Linda Gonzalez on June 5, 2009, in Orangeburg, S.C. Jon and Linda met while attending Covenant College. Attendants included **David Stair, Stephen Kruse, Steve Vitale, Mason Allbritten** and **Dan Beldner**. **David Ottolini** and **Michael Shaw** were ushers. The Wilkinsons live in Charlotte, N.C., where Jon works at PricewaterhouseCoopers.



▲ **Lane Anderson** and **Daniel Koch** were married on April 12, 2008. Daniel works at The Shane Company, and Lane works for Senator Christopher Bond. The bridal party included **Morgan Anderson** ('07), **Avery Anderson** ('12), **David Koch** ('99), **Nancy Maxwell** ('04), **Slade Johnson** ('04) and **Stephen Kruse** ('04).

Kate Tepper graduated from Truman State University in May 2009 and has entered her first year of medical school at Creighton University. She recently became engaged to **Andrew Thomas Forrester**.

Lauren Waeckerle Hunter and her husband **Matt** celebrated their one-year anniversary in May 2009. That same month, Lauren graduated *magna cum laude* from the University of Missouri with a degree in early childhood and elementary education. The couple now resides in Fort Worth, Texas, where Lauren is a teacher.

The Kansas City Royals drafted **Josh Worrell**, who graduated from Indiana Wesleyan University in May 2009, as the #902 pick in the 2009 draft.

Class of 2005



▲ **Stephen Kruse** and **Rebecca Keffer** were married on July 25, 2009. The couple began dating at the end of high school and continued the relationship long distance throughout college. Rebecca attended Indiana Wesleyan University and Stephen attended the University of Missouri. They now live in Manchester, Mo.



▲ **Jeff Christianson** and **Megan Schmidt** were married July 25, 2009. **Michael Christianson** ('08) was the best man and **Daniel Serber** ('05) was a groomsman. Jeff and Megan live in Madison, Wis., where Jeff is pursuing a PhD in physical chemistry at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Megan is the associate director of accounting at Blackhawk Church.

Class of 2006

Sarah Breeding and **Timothy Gee** plan to be married in May 2010. Sarah is a third-year pharmacy student at University of Missouri-Kansas City. Timothy is finishing his degree in physics and math at Indiana University.



▲ **Sarah McReynolds** and **Kevin Frick** are engaged to be married in June 2010. Sarah is currently finishing her degree in nutrition and dietetics at Carson-Newman College, and Kevin is serving with the Navy Special Forces in South Africa.



▲ **Michelle Scott** is engaged to **Simon MacFarlane**. The couple met while attending Oral Roberts University.

Grady Powell, now a sergeant in the army, graduated from Special Forces training at Fort Bragg and is now a Green Beret.

In June, **Mike Rohlfing** and **Alex Docekal** ('07) participated in their fifth St. Louis 48-Hour Film Project. Their film "Super Ben's Super Day" won awards for Audience Choice and Best Sound Design and was screened at the St. Louis International Film Festival.

Summer Flashback Winner

▼ Congratulations to **Abby Boeddeker** Bendick ('95), who won a \$25 iTunes gift card for being the first to correctly identify our Flashback Rex and Regina as Brian Bendick ('93) and Leisa Bononi Covelli ('95). She also correctly guessed that the photo was taken during the May 1992 Toga Day.



Remembering Christmas Banquets of Years Past

▲ Styles may change and classes may come and go, but the memories of Christmas Banquets past live on. If you are the first Westminster alumnus/a to correctly identify the two young men above and the year this photo was taken, you will win a \$25 iTunes gift card. E-mail your answer or guess to Emily Schnitzler, *Chimes* editor, at eschnitzler@wcastl.org.

Class of 2007



▲ **Emily Sheehan** and Brad Oliver plan to be married on June 26, 2010. Both plan to graduate in May 2010. Emily is working toward a degree in family and human services from John Brown University, and Brad plans to apply to medical school.



▲ **Evan Sherman** and **Robyn Dabler** plan to be married on July 11, 2010, in St. Louis. The couple began dating during their senior year at Westminster. After the wedding, they will live in Columbia, Mo., where they both attend the University of Missouri.

Class of 2009

Kendall Vanderslice is seeking to glorify God by serving the less fortunate as she works with Mercy Ships, a global charity that operates traveling hospital ships in developing nations.

Jacob Turner signed with the Detroit Tigers in August 2009 and was the #9 overall pick. Turner expresses humble gratitude to each teacher, coach and friend at Westminster who has challenged him to be a godly example on and off the mound.



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Christmas Banquet: The Tradition Lives On!

Although butterflies have always begun to flutter in the stomachs of Westminster's young men around Thanksgiving each year, asking a girl to Christmas Banquet was at one time a much less complicated task. Asking her by her locker after school once seemed perfectly appropriate. Over the decades, however, the much-anticipated CB invitation has demanded weeks – and occasionally months – of creative planning from Westminster men, many who still ask their dates in the most elaborate fashions. While the competition is fierce, the boys have made this joyous season even merrier for hundreds of Westminster girls through the years.

"For Christmas Banquet 1979, I wanted to invite Cheri Michaels. My dad said that I should ask her but that I would have to call her father to ask his permission first. Oh, the agony of it all! It was bad enough having to ask her! So, I wrote out on a piece of paper exactly what I would say on the phone to her dad – word for word. Every day after school, I would pick up the phone and practice with the dial tone. After what seemed an eternity, I worked up the courage to actually dial her number and ask to speak to Mr. Michaels. But when he picked up, I panicked and hung up! When I finally went through with it, Mr. Michaels asked if I had asked Cheri yet. I said, 'no.' He said that it was fine that I take his daughter but that he didn't know if she'd agree to go! He put Cheri on the line – my heart pounding out of my chest! She graciously agreed, and so we went. Of course, being a normal 14-year-old boy, I was captivated by her beauty and kindness but had no idea what to talk about!" – John Hudson, member of the Class of 1984



Clockwise from top left: Karen Johnson Buchanan ('84) and Mike Preston ('84); Natalie Dixon ('02), Eric Dalbey ('02), Matt Bear ('02) and Colleen Potter ('02); Steve O'Neal ('86) and Kathy Golden O'Neal ('86); Charles Salassa ('98) and Matthew Taylor ('98) with teacher Susie Pike; Laura May ('90), Beth Kleinecht Iadarola ('90) and Susan Weber McMillan ('90); Jeremy Huffman ('95), John Moss ('95) and Julie Biebel Moss ('95)

To read more Christmas Banquet invitation stories, please visit wcastl.org/alumni/cb.