

THE TORCH



God Glorifying

1 Corinthians 10:31

The TORCH is published twice a year with the purpose of fostering strong ties between the school, alumni, and friends in support of Christian education. Published by Kalamazoo Christian School Association. Please inform the Association Office of address changes.

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MISSION

Kalamazoo Christian Schools: an academically excellent Christian community equipping, inspiring, and challenging students to love and serve Christ in the world.



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Moment With Marc

Over the past few years, we have reflected on God's blessings to Kalamazoo Christian Schools. We have been blessed with families who have sought out Christian education for their children in a time of cultural confusion. We have been blessed with students who have come to know Christ as their Lord and Savior who provides a foundation in their life. We have been blessed with quality teachers who love the Lord and love children.



We have been blessed with solid financial operations that have allowed us to eliminate our debt and complete building projects at our Middle School. We have been blessed with increasing enrollment over the past 4 years. We have seen our student body go from 880 students to over 1140 students. For all these things, we feel blessed and give God the glory for the work we are able to do everyday.

Our theme this year is "God Glorifying." The examples above are very tangible reasons to share why we glorify God. As we started the year in our classrooms, chapels and discussions with students, we have shared how we can both collectively and personally glorify God. We have talked about how we can communicate with God through prayer. It is in these times we share our heart, our feelings, our thoughts, our emotions. We look for opportunities to listen for a response to our conversations with God and what He is telling us.

We then glorify God by our responses. We need to come with an open heart and mind to listen to what the Lord is saying. We need to be willing to respond to what we are hearing and follow the Lord's leading. This active listening demonstrates that we are wanting to grow in our faith and obey the Lord's calling.

Engaging with God in prayer, learning how to respond in obedience and following through in love to those around us are other ways we glorify God. Pray that as we go through the year, we may continue to develop the heart and mind of Christ so that our actions and words glorify Him.



Marc V
Marc Verkaik, Head of School

Welcoming 20 New Staff



Left to right: Ben Neal, Brian Norman, Sommer Page, Ruth Vlietstra, Courtney Gelmini, Kelly Hunter, Megan Doorn, Beth Roels, Melissa Bierenga, Sohyen Shin, Kjerste Swope, Talia Feeley, Jessica Voldrich, Fernanda Arriaga, Angie Folkersma, Danielle Ludwig, Erin Koning, Lynnette Lugo, Shantelle DeBoer & Nikki Ebbeler

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*Bringing
quality
education to
students
through an
engaged
faculty who
loves and
glorifies God.*



One Worship Is Back!

Sunday, August 27th was a beautiful day to gather together as one school to glorify God at One Worship. We all joined on the KCHS soccer field as Pastor Richard and his team from Radiant Church led us in worship, and our KCS Leadership Team led us in prayer over our school.

There is no better way to kickoff the school year. Kalamazoo Christian Schools is holy ground and we claim the power of Jesus over our campuses.



Appreciating Patty!

By Chris Batts



Every once in a while, it is great to stop and just say thank you to those who constantly show up, work hard, and work day in and day out on a great project.

Today, we say thank you to **Patty Gruizinga** for 15 years of service at Second Impressions.

For over 15 years, Patty, our small staff, and mass of volunteers have worked in unison to try and move Second Impressions forward in every way possible.

The *total sales* of Second Impressions is sometimes used as a measure of success.

At times that is not the best measure of success, but it is visible and measurable.

For many years, Patty, the staff, and our volunteers have been operating the store with sales around \$700,000. The sales numbers, written on the wall in the break room, continue to show amazing months year after year, but Patty was hoping to reach the \$800,000 sales mark annually.

The Lord has blessed Second Impressions greatly for many years, and in 2022, Second Impressions did over \$800,000 in sales. That is amazing. During 2023, sales have been even more amazing. So far, in 2023, Second Impressions did over \$900,000 in sales for the first time.

If you stop and think about just how much product it takes, donated, sorted, displayed and rung up by cashiers, to add up to that number, it is amazing. The efforts of so many volunteers that make up those sales results cannot be understated.

As a member of the Second Impressions board, I would like to thank all of the volunteers who have continued to produce these fantastic results.

All the glory to God for what he is doing for Kalamazoo Christian, through Second Impressions!

So this *Thank You* is specifically to Patty, for her 15 years of tireless work of coordinating all of the other tireless workers!

But also a big *Thank You* to all of the tireless workers who have contributed to these efforts to benefit the families of the Kalamazoo Christian Schools.

Thank you, and may God continue to bless all of the continued efforts of all of the volunteers that make Second Impressions the amazing place that it is.



Nurturing Students Academically, Emotionally & Spiritually

By April Thielemann

If you were to look at our mission statement online, you would see the bold subheading of **"Equipping"** under "Accomplishing Our Mission". It states, "Kalamazoo Christian Schools nurture students academically, emotionally, and spiritually so they possess the necessary knowledge and skills to be productive, Christian citizens of this world." As the Behavior Specialist, it is my job to help support students and families with the emotional portion of our statement. Recognizing that God created all emotions, and that, neither bad nor good but are made for a purpose, is the first step to understanding ourselves and how we can use those emotions to glorify God. Acquiring knowledge on emotional regulation throughout the day helps children prepare for learning and establishes a pattern of healthy emotional well-being. Emotional regulation can be linked to academic success, providing an environment where all students can learn.

The link between non-regulated emotions and lack of academic success that I saw in the classroom led me to become certified in Trauma-Informed Education. I felt called to further my education after seeing success with students using trauma-informed principles. I began a master's program in Clinical Mental Health Counseling at Cornerstone University last year and also began training a therapy dog who currently visits the school twice a week. His name is Beau, and, is always willing to sit with or give a hug to kids and staff alike. You will also find him at the high school once a month. My approach is first to help students understand their feelings and then how to biblically express them. This method helps build emotional self-awareness and resilience in the classroom and provides life-long skills for each child. I am looking forward to bringing emotional and behavioral support to students, teachers, and families.



If you have questions or wonder about how I could support your child, send me an email at athielemann@kcsa.org.

Girls Running For His Glory

Year 2 of our Glory Girls Run Club was fantastic! GGRC is for girls in 3rd-5th Grade. The program combines training for a 5k run with a biblically based curriculum focused on developing important life skills such as confidence, character, teamwork, leadership, and more about how they are made in God's image. This past June, they ran the 5K to end the season. Family and friends came to cheer on the girls as they ran hard for Jesus, and crossed the finish line! The 5K happened to fall on one of the hottest days of the summer, and Oshtemo Township Fire Department showed up to spray the fire hose over the race path. That was a hit! This program has been a great addition to our elementary school clubs, and we are already looking forward to starting back up this spring!



Middle School Million Word Challenge



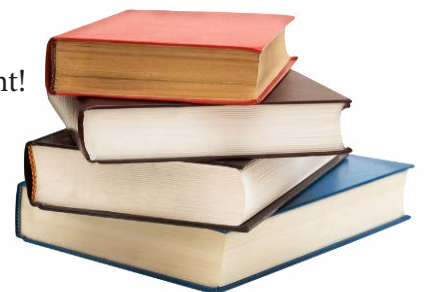
Last year, 8th Grade Teacher Malena Schrauben headed up the One Million Word Challenge.

7th and 8th Graders took part in reading ONE MILLION words throughout the year.

All of these amazing students read at least 250,000 words per quarter and over 1,000,000 words, the whole school year!

They ended with a celebration of their accomplishments by enjoying lunch grilled for them by Principal Joel Netz, cupcakes, and certificates.

That is being academically excellent!



Chamber Singers & The Detroit Tigers

On a cool evening in early August, the KCS Chamber Singers circled up near home plate at Comerica Park in Detroit and performed the National Anthem in front of a live audience at the Tigers' game. The 9-member vocal ensemble was invited to audition for a chance to sing as part of a Tigers' initiative to involve more high school musicians from the western side of the state in anthem performances. "We didn't know how good our chances were, but we embraced the challenge and it worked out! It was an unforgettable experience for our student singers and a great privilege to contribute in this way," said choir director Carolyn Whitaker. The evening was a joyful time of community building among the 100+ KCS family members, friends and fans who traveled to enjoy the game together with the singers.



Pictured from L to R: Annabelle Terpstra, Carolyn Whitaker, Rylan Smith, Eliana Rivera, Connor Tuin, Janetta Boel, Eva Halley, Duncan Wheeler, Neorah Oommen and Bryce Altman.

Comet Experiences

Middle School Comet Experience Nights have been a huge **hit!** In Spring of 2020, we implemented an opportunity for 7th & 8th grade boys and girls to "catch a glimpse" of what it is like to play a specific sport at the high school level. It has been amazing to see the excitement it builds for future high school students, all the while watching the high school athletes be challenged in their own leadership skills. We do this for every sport in fall, winter, and spring, and the evening typically consists of the middle schoolers attending the varsity game and having a Q&A with the coach and players, as well as an activity such as joining in on warm-ups. We are intentional about doing this as the transition into high school is an important time, and this plays a pivotal role in putting them at ease and meeting past and present high school buddies to help them see what is right around the corner. Events such as these help students and families look forward to continuing to represent Kalamazoo Christian in the high school years. Do you know a middle school student in or out of the Kalamazoo Christian Schools community that would enjoy an event like this? [Email events@kcsa.org.](mailto:events@kcsa.org)





No Phone Zone

By Dirk Walhout



At its core, Kalamazoo Christian Schools are concerned with the genuine growth and development of young people. It is within the KCS tradition to nurture the "whole" child--body, mind, and spirit. As such, we are continuously reviewing research and evaluating our own practices in order to improve the educational experience for our students. We are grateful for the educational opportunities that technology--Chromebooks, desktop computers, and other electronic devices--gives our students. These devices have become important educational tools allowing teachers to implement the best instructional practices and online learning when they are appropriate. Additionally, our teachers are continually developing their skills and are becoming more adept at using technology as a legitimate learning tool.

However, in recent years, smart phone use in school environments has gained a great amount of attention both nationally and locally. Reviewing research on the use of cell phones by school-aged children has allowed us to reflect on how to best support our students as they develop academically, socially, and emotionally. The research is clear: excessive availability and exposure to cell phones within the school environment has a negative effect on learning and development among school-aged children. Recent studies have linked cell phone use to increased distractibility, lower test scores, depression/anxiety, negative body image, bullying, self harm/suicide, social dysfunction, and insomnia (The impact of excessive cell phone use is especially concerning for adolescent girls).

In addition, research shows excessive cell phone use reduces students' critical thinking abilities, cognitive capacity, and creativity. Recent studies have also shown that students are happier, more socially engaged, experience higher self-esteem and high level of life satisfaction when smart phones are not available.

Since the policy has been implemented, we've seen amazing changes in the building! The hallways are much louder now because students are talking with each other instead of staring at a screen. Teachers report that students are much less distracted & much more attentive. A number of students have been heard saying things like, "Because everyone's phone is gone, I really didn't even notice the change." One of our junior girls said, "I can focus so much better in class now," and another was relieved by not having to worry if other students were taking photos of her & posting them online without her knowledge.

We at the High School are grateful for the support and cooperation of the Kalamazoo Christian School community while initially implementing the policy. It's making a difference!



K-CHRISTIAN COMETS ATHLETICS



Scan For Most Recent Records

Girls Varsity Soccer
State Champions - 2023
Team Academic - 2023



Coach Jay Allen
All State (1st team) Coach of the Year - 2023
Michigan Private/Parochial Coach of the Year - 2023
United Soccer Coaches - Team Academic Award - 2023
United Soccer Coaches - Regional Private School Coach of the Year 2023 (Spring North)

Girls Golf
Regional Champions, 2023
State Runners Up in Division 4, 2023



Boys Golf
2nd in Conference, 2023
2nd at Regionals, 2023
State qualifiers, 2023

From The Desk of Development



Launch /IÄnch/ v to release, catapult, or send off or to send something out

When you hear the word launch, what comes to your mind? A rocket? A spaceship? A boat? How about a catapult? While all of these things are certainly capable of creating launch, here at Kalamazoo Christian Schools (KCS), we are focusing on a different kind of launch. We desire to launch future Comets into a lifetime of Christian impact.

Education is a transformative journey that equips young minds with knowledge, skills, and values. For many, this journey extends beyond the classroom as they seek to make a positive impact in the world. For KCS students, this mission goes a step further, as they are not only equipped for personal success, but are also called to serve and make a lasting impact on others. Launching students into a lifetime of Christian impact is a vital endeavor that empowers them to live out their faith in a meaningful and impactful way. Christian education emphasizes more than just academic excellence. It encourages students to embrace a faith-based worldview that shapes their values, priorities, and actions. Students are encouraged to consider their education as a means to equip themselves for a life of service to others and for the glory of God.

Launching students into a lifetime of Christian impact is about more than just knowledge; it's about instilling a sense of purpose and equipping young individuals to live out their faith through service, love, and compassion. A Christian education provides a strong foundation, opportunities for hands-on experience, and the tools to navigate a diverse world while upholding Christian principles. In doing so, these students become beacons of light, impacting their communities, their nations and the world, all while staying faithful to their Christian calling. Supporting educational institutions has always been a noble endeavor, as education is the cornerstone of personal and societal growth. When it comes to Christian schools, the significance of donating goes far beyond financial assistance; it plays a pivotal role in nurturing faith, fostering quality education, and building a close-knit community. Let's explore the multifaceted importance of donating to a Christian school.

- a. Facility Improvements:** Funds from your generosity can be directed toward upgrading classrooms and other facilities, helping to create a conducive environment for learning.
- b. Teacher Development:** Quality education depends on dedicated teachers. Your partnership can support professional development for educators, ensuring they are equipped to provide the best education possible.
- c. Needs-Based Financial Aid:** KCS offers financial aid to deserving students who may not have the financial means to attend. Your partnership makes these scholarships possible, opening doors to families who would otherwise not be able to afford a Christian education.
- d. Technology Integration:** In the modern world, technology plays a vital role in education. Your partnership can be leveraged to purchase and maintain up-to-date educational technology, providing students with a competitive edge.

Your investment in KCS is a significant and multifaceted. In fact, it reaches far beyond financial support. It nourishes the faith of students, enhances the quality of education, and strengthens the bonds within the school community. These contributions empower KCS to fulfill our mission of shaping not only academically accomplished individuals but also morally upright, spiritually grounded, and compassionate citizens who can positively impact the world around them. Your contributions are not just gifts; they are a vital part of a collective effort to create a brighter and more faith-filled future.

Launching future Comets into a lifetime of Christian impact... together!

Scott Pease

Scott Pease

Development Director





Support KCSF

A Letter From Our Foundation



Just how significant is September 9, 1993?

By Scott Pease & Larry Stehouwer

You may look back on September of 1993 with great fondness. You may have great memories. You may remember exactly where you were and what you were doing. For me personally, I was one month married and learning a whole new way to relate to a brand-new wife. But that was me. For Kalamazoo Christian Schools, September 9, 1993 was the start of something special. A brand-new way to launch future Comets into a lifetime of Christian impact.

More than 30 grateful years ago, Kalamazoo Christian Schools made the decision to grow sustained financial support for our campuses, faculty, and students by starting the Kalamazoo Christian Schools Foundation (KCSF) and looking back we see that God has been good. Through faithful stewardship, ongoing contributions, and wise decision making, the KCSF portfolio has consistently grown. Today, 30 years later, because of generous and thoughtful donors, KCSF oversees more than \$6 million in financial assets, providing annual grants of about \$200,000 per year to the school and its students. The long-term goal of the KCSF is to grow our impact by giving back \$1 million annually.

Does this sound like the sort of impact within our schools that you can get behind? You can be a part of that vision of providing sustained long-term funds for Christ centered education. One way that you can help the KCSF continue to grow is to make an immediate impact gift to help us celebrate 30 years. Consider it a birthday celebration of sorts. Scan the QR code below to give securely online.

Currently, KCSF donations come primarily from dedicated regular donors who share this vision. KCSF also receives support from unspent retirement funds, from funeral memorial gifts (many of which are tied to KCS alumni), and through bequests from named gifts in wills, trusts and estate plans. For wills and estates, those who make their intent known are invited to become members of the 1877 Society, a committed group of donors who are ensuring a legacy of Christian education going forward.



The original KCSF Board was made up of these visionaries: Ron Betten, Gerald DeNooyer, Andy Huizinga, John Schreuder, John Buckhout, Mary Hahn, Allen Tans, Bill Vandermay, Chet Boender, Ken Langeland, Chris Wenke, Dale VanHamersveld, Doug Elzerman & Ron Baylor (KCSA Board President)

The current KCSF Board includes: Dave Cleveland (President), Dan Huizinga (VP), Tim Schauer (Treasurer and Investment Chairman), Randy Ackerman (Secretary), Dan Alphenaar, Robert Armbrister (Promotion Chairman), John Bartels (Liaison to Association Board), Ron Baylor, Ruth DeNooyer, Jackie VanderKooi, Tim VanderKooy (Liaison from Association Board) along with Larry Stehouwer (volunteer Executive Director)

THE ALUMNI connection

Alumni Babies & Weddings



Sam - 8/6/23
David ('03) & Lydia Bishop



Timothy - 8/10/23
Joel ('16) & Abigail VanderKamp



Xena - 9/9/23
Tafara & Kelly ('08 Haseman) Masarira



Hannah - 10/18/22
AJ ('10) & Whitney Vigen



Ezra - 3/25/23
Rex ('07) & Christine ('07 Knasel) Webb



Jameson - 8/18/23
Luke & Richelle ('11 Hilton) Koehler



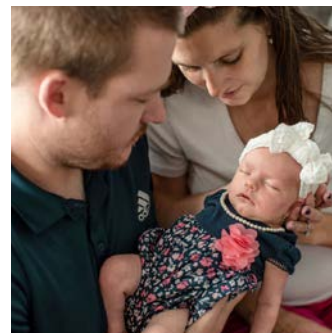
Logan - 3/9/23
Jeff & Kara ('08 VanEldren) Marcusse



Oliver - 6/3/23
Adam & Valerie ('15 Koopsen) DeBoer



Benjamin - 8/31/23
Mark ('08) & Anna Stehouwer



Maggie - 8/21/23
Ben ('13) & Maggie Doorn



Eloise - 2/22/22
Alex ('11) & Reagan DeWaal



Evelyn - 12/17/22
Tyson & Sarah ('11 Wolfe) Cocks



Married 7-22-23
Monica Locker ('17) & Ricky Padilla



Married 8-25-23
Tori Sides ('14) & Ryan Emory

Do you have a story of impact to share with the KCS community? We would love to hear it! Email alumni@kcsa.org



Congratulations to the 2023 Alumni Award Recipients!

In 2023, we introduced our first two alumni awards: *The Kalamazoo Christian High School Impact Award and Kalamazoo Christian High School Legacy Award.*

On May 25th, at the KCHS Graduation ceremony, our first four alumni award winners were honored!

Alumni Impact Award: Jennifer Benefiel DeKryger (1989) & Joel 'Joey' DeKoekkoek (1987)
Alumni Legacy Award: John Schaap (1946) & Richard Van Donselaar (1967)

Scan or follow this link to nominate for 2024:
kcsa.org/advancement/alumni-awards



Class Of 1973 Summer Reunion



Row 1: Bob Sopjes, Pat Triemstra Huizenga, Sue Haak Vlietstra, Donn Lemmer, Dave Short

Row 2: Ron Koning, Karen Kloosterman Bennett, Sharron Dykstra Lemmer, Vicki Slager Thompson, Ginny Ipema Hoekstra, Jane Mejeur Short, Esther Balkema Uramkin, Joan Rooseboom DeVisser

Row 3: Ruth Dykhuis Lubbers, Arlene Apotheker Kiel, Kathie DeVries Wolf, Kathy Klosterman Bartels, Diana Batts Stewart, Jill Tellma Vroegindewey, Salle DeVries Barre, Marion Koster Pridgeon, Ruth Bushhouse Wiersma, Cindy Smit Gero, Kathy DeVisser Hurst, Sally DeNooyer Day

Row 4: Dave DeVries, Tom DeHaan, Bob Stuut, Jim Koning, Stan VanDerSlik, Dennis Kiel, Steve Smith, Lee Swets, Stuart Ekema, Robert Jager, Dan Mejeur, Steve Terpstra, Bob Voss, Todd DeWolff, Joan Tuinstra VanElderen, Todd Talsma, Dirk Holkeboer, Fred Vlietstra

RAVING REVIEWS

Biblically themed learning that involves diversity of language, exposure to different cultural norms, celebration of uniqueness in God's creation and security to speak of where true hope is found. I truly believe that my children are seen as worthy of love, education and encouragement from each staff member they interact with and that the school fosters such an environment within the student culture. I love the buddy systems and all-school chapels that incorporate unity despite age difference, as well.

-Elementary Parent

Every interaction I have had with someone within the KC community continues to impress me- from the office ladies being so on top of literally everything to meeting a new bus driver when I was walking in to school yesterday to help with recess/lunch duties.

We would be amiss to not share how full our hearts are that our children get to spend the next 10+ years in such a wonderful Christian, academic environment.

-Elementary Parent

I just wanted to tell you all, THANK YOU! I try to be a witness to my children everyday. I try to teach them God's love. But, I am one person. To have you all as part of our family. To have you all speaking God's love into my children and praying for them, teaching them. It is invaluable. And, on days when your jobs are hard or negative, I just wanted you to know what you are doing has eternal value.

-Elementary & Middle School Parent

THIS is why we choose christian education!! When our daughter can explain and define these terms (secular humanism, biblical worldview) and they echo what we're teaching from home, we know we're in a pretty sweet partnership. We recognize some shifts and areas of intentionality already this year and are grateful for all the ways work is being done to pour into our kids academically, socially and especially spiritually. We want to be a voice of encouragement in this partnership and are pleased to share this feedback!!

-Middle School Parent

**Undeniably Christian.
Academically Excellent.**

THE COMET FUND



MAKE IT MONTHLY

Our monthly Comet Partners are an incredibly important group of people within Comet Nation, who believe in bringing about God's Kingdom through our "Undeniably Christian. Academically Excellent." mission. Would you consider joining this special group and becoming a monthly donor? Here's how monthly giving can make a greater impact...



LONG-TERM IMPACT

Your monthly impact allows us to take a planned, long-term approach to making KCS the best it can be for our students and community. Your gift allows us to make long-lasting improvements.



ONGOING MISSION

The Kalamazoo Christian Schools mission is a Kingdom mission. Whether it's in the classroom, on stage, or on the court, our students are encouraged to grow in character, faith, and knowledge and leave our campus with a firm foundation upon which to build their futures.



COST-EFFECTIVE

Your monthly investment allows even more families to attain Christian education.

Will you join us to accomplish our mission, and to reduce tuition cost by investing monthly?

JOIN TODAY! [KCSA.ORG/COMET-FUND](https://www.kcsa.org/comet-fund)



**KALAMAZOO
CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS**
2121 Stadium Dr.
Kalamazoo, MI 49008

The future
starts here

KCHS 2024 Spring Musical



- *March 21-23 at Comstock Community Auditorium*
- *Thursday 7pm, Friday 7pm, and Saturday 2pm & 7pm*
- *Tickets on sale February 5th*

