



Alumni Newsletter

by Dave Burdett, Director of Alumni Relations

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Please check the www.wcss.org or Woodcrest Christian School Alumni on Facebook and Instagram to keep current.

Campus News

The '19-'20 school year was going just fine until chaos erupted in mid-March. The faculty met on the afternoon of March 13 and were told that we would begin remote education for three weeks. County health officials extended that (initially) to six weeks. After spending March 16 planning how to accomplish our task, education at Woodcrest Christian left the real classroom and moved to Google Classroom on March 17 and finished the year online. Several teachers had been using that platform already, but most had to learn it very quickly. Apps like Edpuzzle, Book Widgets, Flipgrid, Adobe Spark, and Screencastify quickly became part of our teaching toolbox. While the faculty may have enjoyed only having to deliver (=record) a lecture only once, learning new technologies and figuring out how to do their job remotely ended up making quite a demand on them. Rather than doing a "grade freeze" as many schools opted to do, WCS teachers and students pressed on to make the completion of the '19-'20 year

as close to normal as possible. In the process, we discovered how much we really missed the personal interaction of day-to-day classroom instruction.

In-person classes were gone, but other casualties of the pandemic included our spring sports program. Just as the spring season was getting under way, it was cut off, a loss felt most by our senior athletes who had been so excited about capping their high school athletic careers. Another loss came with cancellation of the 2020 mission trips just a week before they

were due to depart.

Then the question came, "How do you finish the year when public gatherings are prohibited?" On June 15th, the faculty welcomed car loads of student families as they drove around the track to celebrate the completion of the academic year, and about three quarters of the 86 graduates were able to participate in this unique event. Then, as restrictions eased later in the summer, a postponed graduation finally took place on July 21 on the soccer field. The number of attendees was restricted, the fami-



Most of the seniors joined the parade in June celebrating the completion of their high school career. At the reception area at the top of the stairs from the lower campus, the cars would stop, the soon-to-be-graduates would exit, be introduced, and then photographed with their families.

lies of graduates all sat in socially distant boxes, and the graduates themselves were spaced out, but we were able to hold a somewhat normal commencement which almost all were able to attend. After months of restrictions, the graduates and their families greatly appreciated being able to have a ceremony at all.



Even with enough room to keep social distancing, some graduates chose to wear masks.



Harvey Wang spoke of the changes in his life as a result of coming to America, coming to Woodcrest Christian, and coming to Christ.



With a class of 86, there was enough room for families and graduates to maintain social distancing on the upper field. This was the first graduation to take place on campus since 1997 when it was held in the Pavilion.

The question at this point is “What does the fall look like?” While a final answer to that still is subject to change, the WCSS Board of Education met in a special session at the end of July and determined that the opening of school would be delayed from August 19 to September 1, and that classes would begin at school. County health officials might still have the last word on that, however. Faculty are meeting several days earlier than normal to plan how to establish the best health practices in this new situation. We are really encouraged that enrollment is up significantly from last year.

Faculty

The end of this strange year also brought changes to our faculty and staff. After forty years on the job at WCS, **Mr. Charlie Ricards** felt God leading him to retire. Though he began his career teaching eighth grade, he had served as our Athletic Director since 1984, and the

impact he has made of the shape of sports at WCS is incalculable. The big celebration to honor his service was another victim of the pandemic, but we’re hoping to do that later this year. **Mr. Ryan Anderson** ('95) was appointed to take his spot at the helm of the WCS athletic program. Also departing will be our Counselor, **Mrs. Katie Funderburk** who became a mommy when Emily Grace was



Coach Ricards capped off his career at Woodcrest Christian by presenting the Athletic Award at graduation.

born last November 29th. With the difficulties of finding a replacement, Mrs. Funderburk has volunteered to remain as a part-timer to help us out. In the finance office, long-time staffer **Mrs. Jani Musich** also decided to jump into retirement. Middle school math aid, **Mrs. Bree Martinez**, will take her place. Another veteran who wrapped up her career at WCS was **Mrs. Bobbie Brown** who also had decades of service. Taking her spot will be **Mrs. Tamara Haun who currently has four students** in the WCSS system. The only teacher at the high school level to move on was math teacher **Miss Gianina Loza**



Mr. & Mrs. Funderburk rejoiced in the arrival of Emily, and "mom" wants to be with her little one.



Many of you might remember Mrs. Musich as the driver of the daily shuttle bus as well as many other activities.



Mrs. Brown has kept the faculty going with supplies, xeroxing, and lamination for decades.

who opted to use her math skills in business. **Miss Tifnie Leverett**, who had been teaching in the middle school, will fill her spot. While not directly replacing any existing staff, **Mrs. Janelle Ludwig** moved over from Calvary Murrieta Christian School to become our new Director of Curriculum and Instruction. One other departure to note, but one at the Middle School level, was that of **Alicia [Rollins] Quan** ('07) who opted to become a stay-at-home mom. Her baby, whom they named Zion Wilson Quan, made his appearance in late July, and we praise God for another new life. Taking her place will be long-time RCDS/WCDS

standout, **Miss Shelly Clayton**. As long as we're talking about new babies, several other babies joined faculty families this year. Besides those mentioned above, the wife of **Mr. Matt Messner**, our new Bible teacher, gave birth to Malcolm Paul Messner back on February 19th this year. Then HS Vice Principal, **Mr. Brandon Imbriale**, and his wife welcomed Leonie Jae into their home, born just this past June 28th. In less joyous news, little Theo Lytle, born last year with major health issues went to be with the Lord in early November.

Sports

Like last year, Jenna Elton (Sr.) ran at the front of the pack for **girls' cross country** through most of the season. She got assistance from fellow senior Skylar Chadwick and an improving Grace Newman (Jr.). In league competition, they consistently ran second to a strong Linfield squad. When they got to post-season competition, the girls ran to a sixth-place finish in Prelims, and grabbed the fifteenth spot in the Finals.



Mrs. Musich's twelve (count 'em, twelve) grandchildren help her celebrate "Nana's" retirement. She may not get much relaxation trying to keep up with this bunch!

The 2019 **boys' CC** squad was a senior laden group. Braulio Alvarez (Sr.) started the season strong, leading the team to wins in the Grant Nunnally Invitational and the first league meet, but then he was lost to injuries. So, James Chebahtah (Sr.), Steven Martinez (Sr.), and Josh Thomas (Sr.) were left to put together the 31st league championship in a row, extending their CIF record streak. In Prelims they coasted to a third place finish and then ran tenth in the CIF Finals, missing out on their attempt to return to the state meet. It's too bad they'll have to wait another year for middle schooler Eyan Turk to come up; this seventh grader dominated virtually every race he ran for our middle school team.

Experience ran a little thin on the 2019 **girls' volleyball** team; only two seniors, setter Elyssa Smith and outside hitter Taylor Huskey, were part of Coach James' squad. Then when Taylor went down with an injury, things got even more challenging. Junior hitter Jaylee Dixon stepped up, but it just wasn't enough. They fared well in the Azusa tournament, but the competition in league proved very strong, and the girls were able to notch just one win and missed out on playoffs.

In almost every way, the **flag football** season was just plain tough. The pattern for this team in years past had been many seniors opting to play, which left very few to return the following year. This was complicated by the death of Theo Lytle, keeping his dad from being able to do all he wanted as assistant coach and with a key po-

tential player losing his dad and being unable to compete. So, the result for the season wasn't what any had wanted. Difficulties even extended to the post season awards party which had been scheduled at the home co-captain Jacob Ivascu and had to be cancelled following his death in a car accident. One standout was Tim Allec (Jr.) who will be key to the 2020 campaign if they are able to play. He should have some younger support coming along, too. Coach Ryan Anderson will be handing the reins of the squad over to boys' basketball coach Joshua Lopez.

Departures from last year's championship squad left the **girls' tennis** team a bit depleted, but their new coach, Miss Loretta Hall, continued to encourage them. After notching a couple preseason wins, the girls battled well, but weren't able to earn too many victories. In the league finals, though, Kaden Richards (So.) took third and Emily Gables (Jr.) fourth in individual play. A strong nucleus should remain to be the core of next year's team.

With Seniors Brandi Meyer and Sofia Atencio leading the charge and Ashley Williams protecting the goal, the **Lady Royals' soccer** team reached the championship game of the Linfield Tournament before earning fourth place in the Ambassador League with a 7-5-2 record. A notable victory came with a 3-0 win in the second-round game against Aquinas whom they had only been able to tie in the first round. Having won a spot in post-season play, they had to travel to Desert Mirage to play

their wild-card match where they were unfortunately edged out by a 2-3 score.

Coach Cotsenmoyer led a seasoned team of **boys' soccer** players into the 2019-20 campaign and they came up big. After going 2-2 in the Linfield Tournament, they met strong competition from their Ambassador League opponents. Key contributors for the Royals were midfielders Bryant Dew (Sr.) and Isaiah Pichon (Jr.). The tragic death of Jacob Ivascu (So.) in a traffic accident deeply affected his teammates, but perhaps it also helped draw them closer together as well, for they ended the season with five straight wins. The last of those was a 2-1 victory over Linfield who had blanked them in their first meeting; that win knocked Linfield out of first place. After grabbing second place in league (9-3-2), the Royals defeated Geffen Academy, Gorman Academy, Windward, and Heritage Christian in the playoffs to earn a spot in the semi-finals for the first time ever. Unfortunately, a strong squad from Foothill Tech ended their playoff run.

After missing the previous season with a knee injury, Kaylani Lawrence (Sr.) returned to the **girls' basketball** team and really helped the squad to gel. Fellow senior Ryleigh Carricaburu (Sr.) added strong play under the basket and the girls opened their season with a second-place finish in the Lady Royals Invitational. The higher level of competition in the Big Daddy Tournament helped toughen them for Ambassador League play where they went 10-4

to finish in second place. In the post-season, they cruised to victories over Ramona Convent and Redlands Adventist before facing Bishop Diego in the quarter finals. During that game, Ryleigh had to leave after injuring her knee, and Kaylani was hampered with foul problems, yet the Royals only lost by a margin of 34-39.

With the **boys' basketballers**, rookie coach Joshua Lopez brought real energy to the program, but he had to cope with a squad without any seniors. Returning forward Jackson Flye (Jr.) was assisted by transfer Luke Padron (Jr.) who took the point guard spot, and, (when he became eligible) another transfer guard, Isaac Macias (Jr.), helped out. But the boys could only manage a 1-13 record in league and missed out on any chance to compete in the play-offs.

The pandemic cut short our **spring sports** just as they were getting going, and there aren't enough results to report. One tragic piece of news to share, however, is the death of mountain bike coach Bob Stockton. He and his wife were jogging the Victoria bike trail on May 13th when he was hit by a car near Horace St.

All **summer athletics** were cancelled because of government mandates as part of the battle against COVID-19, and athletic administrators had to wait until late July before CIF announced how high school sports would look in the '20-'21 academic year. The plan begins with the prohibition of all sports during the fall season; but, so as not to lose them for the year (particularly football!), all three



The death of Coach Bob Stockton hit the members of the mountain biking team very hard.

seasons of sports will take place in two seasons: mid-December through March, and April through June. This will cause nightmarish scheduling and facility challenges, and smaller schools may find that fielding teams becomes very difficult. Please pray for our new Athletic Director Ryan Anderson as he tries to guide us through what portends to be a very chaotic year.

The Arts

The arts at Woodcrest Christian just seem to shine brighter. As usual, Mrs. Bickett's **drama** program offered two productions. In November, the MP hosted a stage version of Charles Dickens *A Christmas Carol*. In this familiar story, the effervescent Garrett Haun (Jr.) had the difficult task of portraying the grumpy old Ebenezer Scrooge. Bob Cratchit, played by Alex Duke (Sr.), had the unenviable task of trying to put up with the old miserly curmudgeon. Presley Emig (So.), Ashley Habchi (Jr.), and Michael Pendleton (Sr.) all had the ghostly responsibility to seek a change in Scrooge's character. Of course, their efforts produce a virtual "conversion" in Scrooge so that Tiny Tim (Aidan Kelly) could offer his "God bless us, everyone!" Then in March, the Pavilion was transformed into the undersea setting for the musical *The Little Mermaid*. Sydni Miller (Sr.) got to the play the title role while Avery Atchison (Sr.) starred opposite her as Prince Eric in the



Willful young mermaid Ariel (Sydni Miller), celebrates both having found legs and romance with Prince Eric (Avery Atchison), while her sacrificial father King Triton (Haydn Smith) and sailor Grimby (Elijah Astorga) look on.

ill-fated love story. Notable characterizations were performed by Haydn Smith (Sr.) as King Triton, Micah Suk (Fr.) as Sebastian, Audrey Kell (So.) as Ursula, and Daniel Cendejas (Jr.) as Scuttle. The staging was spectacular, the costumes were impressive, the performances were top notch, and music was delightful, but the production was only able to finish half its run because of the shut-down brought on by the pandemic.

The **choir** continues to be blessed with amazing vocal talent. The Broadway concert in October offered an amazing variety of soloists that shows that talents runs deep in the program. Many selections were new to my ears, but it was fun to hear an oldie like the Rock Island number from *The Music Man*. Director Mr. Ben Halsne had the choirs performing in top form and the little pastries are always delicious. Calvary Presbyterian again hosted the Christmas program, and the acoustics in that facility always add to the



Another amazing bit of technology produced during the quarantine time was the spring band concert. One of the most intriguing aspects of it were the appearance changes by the Director, Mr. Ken Rasner.

ambiance. The traditional way to end the year with the outdoor "Concert in the Park" was waylaid when classes went remote, but Mr. Halsne showed his digital ability by putting together an impressive virtual choir concert. You can still view it on the WCSS website.

In typical fashion, the Christmas offering from the **band** not only featured great musicians, but plenty of technology with smoke machines, video screens, and la-

ser lights. The concert kicked off when the Royal Sound took the stage. This group stole the show in their inaugural performance the previous spring and were a high energy way to get this December performance going. They closed their set by performing "Royals on Fire," a custom arrangement of worship tunes written for them by Ray Chase. Numbers from the Beginning Band, the Middle School Band (conducted by their new Director, Mr. Braden Sapp), the Royals Orchestra, the Symphonic Winds, and the Wind Symphony followed. And, the concert concluded with an amazing number of musicians joining together for a carol medley in which Band Director, Mr. Ken Rasner led the audience in singing. Like the choir, the band's Master's concert (a planned performance of challenging music) was cancelled in light of the national health emergency. Mr. Rasner and his musicians were not to be denied, though, and their virtual video performance can be found



As part of the choir's virtual concert, Hannah D'Arc performs a solo number "surrounded" by fellow songsters. Choir Director, Mr. Ben Halsne, spent hours putting the individual recordings together into the unified video.

on the website as well.

The **visual arts** have been riding a crest recently with many awards being won by Royals' artists. If you remember, in last year's Riverside Public Utilities art contest to design labels for water bottles, two WCS students' efforts were selected. This year that number doubled to four: all this year's winners were Woodcrest Christian artists! Madeline Chaffin ('19) repeated, and she was joined by three senior girls: Klaudia Blaszczyk, Elyssa Smith, and Ella Whitehouse. Similarly, last year's 41st Congressional District Art Competition was won by Megan Sorokowski with Matt



Ella Whitehouse, Klaudia Blaszczyk, and Elyssa Smith show off their winning designs for the Public Utilities water bottle art contest.



The local Congressional Art Contest winner, Matt Stoffel, displays his winning painting.

Stoffel taking third place. This year it was Matt who grabbed the top spot and Megan who came in second!

Alumni News

Normally at this point, I would move to alumni news, but this newsletter won't contain any. Alumni rarely send in items for publication, and I get the data by scouring social media for weeks, a very time-consuming process. As I began to try and collect information during our time of quarantine, however, personal news seemed to have given way to sociopolitical commentary. In addition, if most alumni newsletter items had already been posted on the social media sites, maybe there is no need to be redundant. I really appreciated, however, the almost fifty of you who sent pictures of yourselves in your various jobs in the fight against COVID-19 which were posted on our alumni Instagram and Facebook platforms. We appreciate your efforts to care for the rest of us. One thing I will include is that Jen Habicht ('94) had to be taken to the ER in late July. If you remember, she was severely injured in a car accident many years ago. Please be in prayer for her. I trust that all of you are safe and well and that you have been as minimally affected by the pandemic as possible. If someone in your circle was affected by the virus, we grieve with you. If there are needs, please call the school (951-780-2010) and leave me a message or email me (mr.burdett@wcscs.org),



When Jenn went into the hospital, surgery was potential. No news, so keep praying.

and I'll see that we add you to our prayer list. If your need is practical, it may be that one of our students could help as part of fulfilling their service requirement.