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Igniting the flame of Smithville Christian High School's bursary

BY JILL WOODLAND, PARENT AND MEMBER OF THE ANNUAL BURSARY CELEBRATION COMMITTEE

As you read these pages I hope your heart catches some fire about a beautiful bright flame I believe God is holding, one of which our entire school community is already a part.

Together we get to celebrate that more than 10 years ago, this relatively small but growing, private, Christian school, saw a need and decided something had to be done. They decided there had to be a way to include families who wanted to be here but needed some help. They

Continued on page 2 ...



Jill Woodland speaking at the bursary bash



Financial Edition

Seeing Smithville Christian High School's bi-monthly magazine in blue ink is the signal that this is the annual money edition, in which we share information with our stakeholders about the financial health of our school. This year we feature stories about our annual bursary campaign, and the ways in which a supporting community makes it possible for **three** out of every **ten** students to attend this school. It is our hope and our prayer that you will be inspired by our ability to be inclusive – inspired to inquire about enrolling or inspired to help the flame burn brighter.



Continued from page 1...

believed we would be a better school with those students, and they were so right!

Together we get to celebrate that every year since – no matter the enrolment-budget configuration, no matter what building project needed doing, no matter what – this school was going to help many more families attend. And the supporting school community has stepped in and made it happen, every single year. That commitment and determination by our community and school is now consistently helping 3 out of every 10 students, with an annual goal of \$200,000.

Together we get to celebrate that every gift matters and every dollar given to the bursary fund goes directly to helping a family. Do you realize how unique that is? Our school is so blessed to have the budget covered to be able to go the extra mile, believing we can do more together by including someone else. Together, we get to celebrate that we are truly stronger together.

Celebrating our bursary program is so much more than numbers and facts though. It's about real stories being written that we may never hear about. It's about staking our claim so high in the good things happening at Smithville Christian that we are willing to consider pitching in for someone else too.

I remember a conversation with our daughter about Grade 8 Day at Smithville Christian. There is a lot of high school decision-making talk that happens in Grade 8 classes. Our daughter and her friends feel the weight of the financial cost if their family chooses Smithville Christian. But this 13-year-old took something else home with her that day and she believed her friends did too. "You know, Mom, they said they'll help you if you want to go to Smithville; that money shouldn't be what holds people back from going." Do you hear the HOPE in that statement? Can you imagine what that hope means to families who know without a doubt they want to be here but aren't able to make it happen on their own?

If you are a student or family who accepted bursary help, we all say "thank you." Thank you for being at this school and for learning with us. Thank you for sharing your lunch, or helping with homework, or encouraging someone when they need it most. And thank you for sharing the gifts that God has uniquely given YOU. We are truly blessed to experience this Belonging, Believing and Succeeding together.

I hope the story God is writing at this school inspires you to find your place in it, knowing that your part really matters. If you can give, it's awesome to be able

to do something for someone without knowing exactly who will be blessed. And it's equally awesome, if you are one who receives, to be given this gift simply because it is needed, with no expectation of acknowledgement. At Smithville Christian the one who receives the gratitude and the glory is God, and that is exactly where the gift came from anyway: our good God.

Adapted from a reflection given by parent Jill Woodland, a member of the organizing committee, at the Smithville Christian High School 2018 Annual Bursary Celebration.

Guests at the celebration were also invited to participate in the creation of a collaborative art project, under the leadership of sculptor Floyd Elzinga. Each guest could contribute small flames to a large flame created with paper and beeswax on a live-edge slab of wood. Just as each small flame became part of a bigger, brighter flame, so does each contribution to the Smithville Christian bursary fund contribute to the flame that is Christian education. To make your contribution, large or small, send a cheque to the school or click on the donate link on the school website to donate by credit card. Every contribution, large or small, helps the flame burn brighter.



Watch the video shown at the bursary celebration. It's posted on the bulletin board of the school website at www.smithvillechristian.ca or available at this link: <https://youtu.be/gamVr4wxdel>

Building community, building the kingdom

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADVANCEMENT

The donors who support Smithville Christian High School help make my job easier.

For many families and future students, I am one of the first points of contact, and for at least a third of them, **"Can we afford it?"** is one of the biggest questions they need answered.

They have heard about the excellent education students receive, about the intentional community that we create, and the vibrant spiritual atmosphere we enjoy. And while those things sound great, if affordability is a concern, for some it can be even hard to hear about them.

That's why the spirit of generosity and inclusion conveyed by the Smithville Christian High School bursary fund are so important – important to me in the job I do, important to families, important to the life of this school, and important to the kingdom of God.

Over and over again I can tell families, "It's okay. We got this." I can tell them that our school will

be richer if their child attends. I can tell them that choosing this school will still represent a financial sacrifice for their family, but it will work.

We don't publish our tuition rate on our website. Best practices for recruitment tell us that sticker shock would prevent too many people from even inquiring. But when families do contact me and come for a visit or come for chapel, and they see what we have to offer, more and more of them get excited about what a Christian education can mean for their teenager.

Because of the many gifts, large and small, given every year to our bursary fund, the answer I am able to give over and over again is, "Submit an application. We can make it work." If fact, I can even THANK those people for applying for a bursary because we know that our school is made better because of their presence. It is such a liberating thing for me to be able to tell those families that they are not charity cases, and they are not getting handouts. We fully expect – and statistics bear this out – that the support we can provide now to fill the gap will be paid back in

the future – either in the form of donations they or their children will be making someday, or in the ways in which those teenagers will grow up and each make a lifetime of contribution to their communities and kingdom causes.

The families who receive help today will pay it forward tomorrow.



Smithville Christian's bursary program is not charity, it's an investment.

Smithville Christian High School's bursary program offers and guarantees anonymity. Only a very small oversight committee even knows the identities of the applicants and the amounts they receive. That anonymity makes it very hard to personalize the impact of donors' contributions. But parent Winnie Muchuba offered to share her family's story at the annual bursary celebration.

Telling the bursary story

BY WINNIE MUCHUBA, PARENT

I saw the life of my children in a delicate balance, if not in a decline, when we left our country, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to a new country in Africa. Then again, because of the insecurity when they had to leave for another country for three more years before finally coming to Canada.

In Africa we had also an unstable life because of the political situation and the position that my husband occupied in the opposition, which led to his brutal assassination.

The arrival of my children in Canada after a long period of separation from me was another big issue. They had lived in an orphanage for a long stretch of time, and the way they were treated there brought further trauma into their lives.

I remember one of my children seemed to be giving up and he wondered why I was thinking that God was listening to their prayers because they had prayed so much and had received no answer.

In my life, I have made a commitment to God that I would keep my children in an atmosphere where they could count on the name of God being glorified.

My wishes came true when the children started at Smithville Christian High. Not only does the school offer a safer emotional and spiritual environment, but the school also gave me peace in my mind, free from the worry many had in Uganda that someone would harm or even steal our children.

My children will never have children laughing at them because of different political perspectives. My children were even laughed at because other children heard that their dad had been assassinated.



Today seeing my children go to school in a peaceful and Christian atmosphere gives me great peace. I am so grateful that they are in a school that they are very proud of, one in which they have spiritual support which has such a positive impact on their lives which have been filled with so many difficulties.

Every Wednesday they share about their experience in chapel at school and reflect on what they have been taught. They all have this feeling of belonging in a Christian family where they feel safe and accepted, and this is all only because of the generosity of many of you who have given us an opportunity to be accepted into this school. Thank you for what you have done to rescue my children and bless them with a safe school where God is present, and where they can work through the wounds caused by their loss of their father.

I am very happy that God sent you to us; you are a blessing to us. May he continue to bless and protect you.



Carrying on with our strategic plan

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

We have had more than a dozen years of focused strategic planning at Smithville Christian High School. I often say that the process gives me a headache while at the same time exciting me about what's coming. It's hard work, and it's worth every minute we spend on it.

Echoes issues in years past have recounted many initiatives that had their origin at strategic planning sessions. Strategic planning has been pivotal in how our school has been shaped over the last fifteen years. Changes in governance, in instruction, in facilities, in promotion, in financial development, in personnel development, and in community relations have all begun in focused strategic planning conversations.

This spring, our board is initiating a strategic planning session with the board and members of the staff leadership team. The session will be led by Ray Hendriks of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools. The themes we are focused on at present are as follows:

- **Authentic Faith Development:** We are working toward giving our students opportunity to live out their faith outside of the classroom in connection with one or more of their courses. We intend to move from an idea to a plan in the year ahead.
- **Structuring Leadership in Financial Development:** We are implementing a plan for increased allocation of time in this area, something that will be in place in the fall.
- **Development of Alumni Relations:** We have been working at developing our alumni database, and we will continue to make strides in developing meaningful connections with our alumni.
- **Developing our Transportation Network:** We have been working with our elementary partners to optimize our transportation network. Though this is an ongoing process, we are pleased that new routes have been established in key areas where access to our school was formerly limited.



Ray Hendriks

- **Reimagining of Learning Spaces:** Structuring spaces for learning is a major conversation these days. We have developed a series of plans to adjust our spaces in keeping with the prevalence of project-based learning, the availability of 1:1 MacBook technology, and the constant need to adjust instructional techniques in connection with our research and development.

I give thanks for a board of directors intent on making sure that our school furthers its vision and its program so that a new generation of young people can be blessed with an education that is both excellent and infused with a rich Christian perspective. It should also be noted that our board of directors is always looking for members who have a keen interest in thinking strategically about how our school can continue to flourish. If you are interested in giving leadership toward this end, our board would love to talk to you.

Helping students to become stewards of their financial resources

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

The Grade 11 program at Smithville Christian got a bit richer this year. A new course, known as “Explorations in Stewardship,” is now a requirement for all students. It has often been said that schools do not do a great job of training young people to manage their finances. Granted, the family has a significant role in this as well, but research indicates that young adults are too often ill-equipped to take care of their financial affairs and often get into financial challenges as a result.

The scriptures have plenty to say about our need to be good stewards. How we manage money is an indicator of our faithfulness to God and our willingness to partner with him in caring for our world. If we truly live as if everything is God's (Psalm 24:1) and that we are stewards of all we have been given, then the way we take care of our finances matters a great deal.

Conversations about financial stewardship gave rise to strategic planning in this area. After some deliberating, we decided it would be best to develop a course devoted to this theme. This course is now being taught to the entire grade 11 class at the same time by a team of three teachers. Here are the main facets of the course:

- **The course consists of three units: Financial Stewardship, Accounting, and Small Business and Entrepreneurship.**
- **A speaker series has been put together featuring a variety of guests, who each immerse the students for a day in an investigation of:**
 - **Life's biggest purchases with a local realtor**
 - **Financial legacies with Christian Stewardship Services**
 - **Debt with a debt management consultant**
 - **Starting a small business from scratch**
 - **Building equity by being creative**
 - **Marketing ourselves and stewarding our gifts**



Budget for Jack and Laura		
Rent: \$1,200	Insurance: \$300	Total Income: \$4,200
Heat \$120	Gas/Repairs: \$500	Total Expenses: \$4,175
Hydro \$100	Dance: \$100	Difference: \$25
Water \$85	Soccer: \$100	
Cable \$60	Groceries: \$800	
Internet \$60	Clothes: \$50	
Cell Phones \$200	Grooming: \$50	
Car payment \$350	Entertainment: \$200	

Erin Wiltshire, Estate Manager with MNP Licensed Insolvency Trustees, speaks to Grade 11 stewardship students about successful monthly budgeting.

- **The impact of giving Biblically with representatives of the Christian School Foundation**
- **The benefits of financial planning**
- **A small business project**
- **A final project which involves an extension of one of the main themes of the course**

Since we do not know of any schools taking this approach to instruction about financial stewardship, we are certainly “building the bridge as we walk on it,” but we are enjoying the journey. I invite our readers to find some of our Grade 11 students and ask them about their experiences so far in this course. I can say that, according to the teaching team, it's going great; and there is no intention of turning back. If you wish to participate in the conversation about this course and how to develop it further, we invite engagement with our supporters. Give us a call; we would love to talk some more about this topic.

Let's Play JEOPARDY!

AND THE CATEGORY IS... "AS IT PERTAINS TO THE BOARD"

BY LORRAINE VERMEER, BOARD CHAIR

ANSWER: Darryl Beck, Lisa Scholman, Jen Shirton, Janis Thies, Jason VanHerwynen, Ray VanHuizen, John VanRys, Lorraine Vermeer, Frank Veldman

QUESTION: WHO'S ON THE BOARD?

ANSWER: A five-year document created by the Board, Administration and some staff and designed to guide planning towards specific goals.

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE STRATEGIC PLAN?

ANSWER: Cynthia Buist

QUESTION: WHO IS THE STRATEGIC PLANNING COORDINATOR?

ANSWER: Monday, March 26, 2018

QUESTION: WHEN DID THE BOARD HAVE A SPECIAL MEETING TO WORK OUT THE GOALS OF YEAR THREE IN THE STRATEGIC PLAN?

ANSWER: A decision at the beginning of 2017 was made to move towards having just one Membership Meeting in the spring.

QUESTION: HOW OFTEN DOES THE BOARD CALL A MEMBERSHIP MEETING?

ANSWER: Lisa Scholman, Jason VanHerwynen, Lorraine Vermeer

QUESTION: WHO WILL BE FINISHING THEIR TERMS ON THE BOARD THIS YEAR?

ANSWER: Monday, April 30, 2018

QUESTION: WHEN IS THE MEMBERSHIP MEETING?

ANSWER: The framework of boundaries including policy, with which the Board directs the organization we call Smithville Christian High School. The Board sets aside regular meeting time to review these policies.

QUESTION: WHAT IS POLICY GOVERNANCE?

ANSWER: The organization that sets up planned giving to specifically support Christian schools for current and long-term financial help. As a founding member, Smithville Christian High School has been benefiting financially for many years and the funds are increasing.

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL FOUNDATION?

ANSWER: We are members of the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools,



Smithville Christian Board Chair Lorraine Vermeer speaking at the graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2016.





which has been in operation for 65 years. This organization has served as a support for the Board, administrators, and staff in a wide range of areas related to running a Christian school; anything from curriculum to financial advice to management to legal requirements. In the summer, this organization will amalgamate with the Ontario Christian School Administrators Association and Edifide (Christian Educators Association). Another member organization is Christian Schools International (CSI) which has a key role in managing the pension plan for our staff and administrators.

QUESTION: WHAT ASSOCIATIONS ARE WE A MEMBER OF?

ANSWER: An alternative revenue stream for our school. It is governed by this current board.

QUESTION: WHAT IS SON POWER?

ANSWER: Solar panels on the roof of the school.

QUESTION: HOW DOES SON POWER GENERATE REVENUE?

ANSWER: The Pursuit of Excellence Fund. Clear instructions define the "Criteria for Expenditure."

QUESTION: HOW DOES THE REVENUE FROM SON POWER GET DISTRIBUTED?

ANSWER: A designated fund that holds surplus funds from certain fiscal

years to allow for budget stability in more challenging years.

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE FINANCIAL RESERVE FUND?

ANSWER: The Pursuit of Excellence Fund is set up to make funds available to enable our teaching staff to pursue instructional excellence in ways that our normal budget allotments would not allow for.

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE?

ANSWER: Guitars, pottery wheel, MacBooks, teacher MacBooks, 3D printer, classroom iPads, laptops, trips, choir CDs, Grade 11 magazines, robotics program, and much more.

QUESTION: WHAT SORTS OF THINGS HAS THE PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE FUND BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE?

ANSWER: A dedicated team with a wide range of talents and abilities, willing to serve in their role as members, for the flourishing of Smithville Christian High.

QUESTION: WHO IS THE BOARD?

*In the photos in this article:
Board Chair Lorraine Vermeer
congratulates graduates of the
Class of 2017.*

Tuition adjustments for 2018-2019: taking a bit of the stress out of September

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

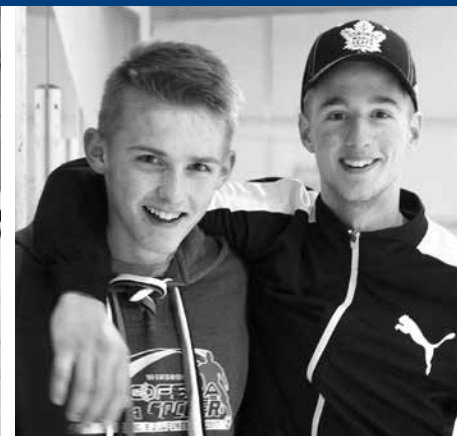
Parents who are used to the routines at Smithville Christian High School will know that the start of the year can be expensive. Tuition payments begin, a fee for transportation needs to be paid up front for those who ride buses, the lease on a MacBook computer needs to be paid at the beginning of the year, and then there are uniforms to be purchased. Parents know that sending a child to our school takes investment, but the beginning of September can be a particular challenge. To help keep September under control, the school will be taking one of those up-front fees out of the mix at the start of the school year.

The Student Fee, currently \$220 per student, has been assessed at the beginning of the year for many years. This is a fee that covers a number of programs that could be considered co-curricular, or activities and resources that go alongside the regular program of learning. The fund generated by student fees has been governed by our elected Student Council and the staff who oversee their work. Student Council goes through a rigorous plan of devising a budget and monitoring it in consultation with our school's bookkeeper and their staff advisor. It is a wonderful leadership opportunity for students to be given responsibility for stewardship of this fund.

Our approach to the management of this fund will not change. What *will* change is how the funds are collected from families. Beginning September 2018, the fund will be included in tuition. Tuition rates have

been adjusted to allow for exactly \$220 per student to be allocated to the student fund. The need to have this amount included in tuition is reflected in the tuition increase for the coming year, which contributes to the operating budget, which will be brought to our membership for ratification at our annual membership meeting on April 30. The rates will be made available in the enrolment packages distributed in May.

We cannot guarantee that September won't bring some financial strain, but we can say that we are doing what we can to even this out. As we talk about financial matters, it is good to be reminded that we have a bursary program which also does a great deal to alleviate financial obstacles for families that need financial support in order to send their children to Smithville Christian High School. Families can contact the school office for more information about tuition rates or bursary applications at any time.



Smithville Christian students skating at the West Lincoln arena during a recent spirit day activity, organized by Student Council and funded by student activity fees.



Student leadership & finances

BY EDEN GRIFFIN, STUDENT COUNCIL SECRETARY

Every year a Student Activity Fee of \$220 is collected for each student who attends Smithville Christian High. This fee is managed by Student Council for the extracurricular programs offered. In September we create a budget and this money is carefully allocated to extra-curricular activities within the school, such as athletic teams, choir, yearbook, art club and much more. The remainder of the money is put toward events that the Student Council plans for the whole student body to be engaged.

Starting this upcoming school year of 2018-2019, administration has made the decision to transfer the Student Activity Fee into tuition costs. As it is part of Student Council's mandate "to be stewards of student resources, in particular the funding of all extra-curricular activities and athletics at Smithville Christian High School" many questions arose, as we were concerned

that we would no longer be counted on to allocate these funds.

We arranged a meeting with Mr. Harris, and asked him if he would explain how administration made this decision and how it would be carried out. Mr. Harris told us the decision was made because there were an overwhelming amount of fees for a family to pay when they chose to come to this school. To make this easier for families, administration made the decision to move at least one of the fees, the Student Activity Fee, into tuition. Student Council was assured by Mr. Harris that we will still be responsible for the extra-curricular budget. Student Council would receive the funds, likely in installments, and continue to manage these funds as in the past.

Student Council has been responsible with managing the Student Activity Fees since the school began. Although how it is collected will change next year, we are thankful that our role and responsibility will continue as usual.



Plant a seed, grow a tree

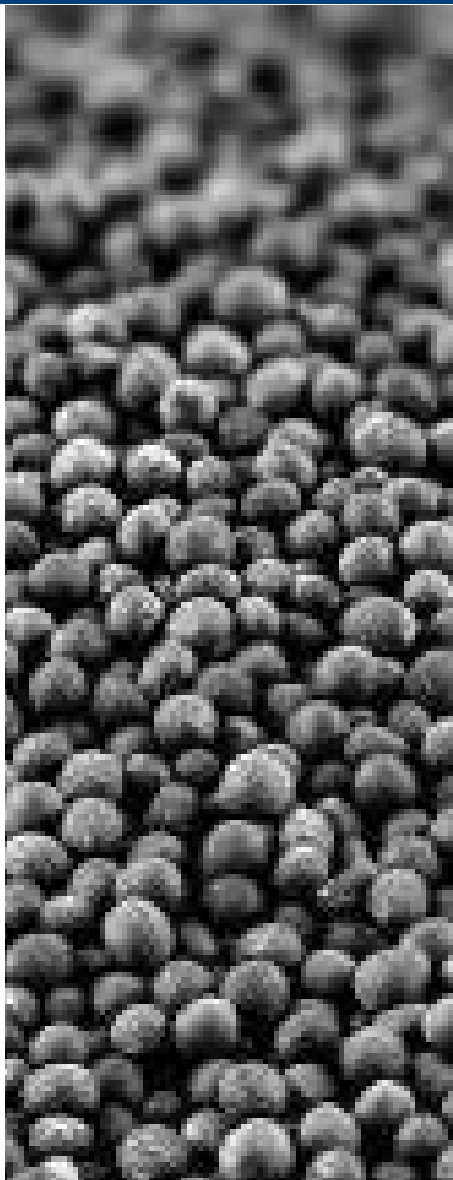
BY TONY KAMPHUIS, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER,
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL FOUNDATION



This Blue Edition of the Echoes features more facts and figures than other Echoes editions. And while the work of Smithville Christian's Foundation has generated some really interesting facts and figures over the past year – such as the fact that we now have 60 member schools in three provinces, and the fact we now have over \$13M in assets under management, and the fact that in 2017 we distributed \$1.4M to our member schools – I'd like to zero in on one number. That number is 50.

The Christian School Foundation believes that identifying and establishing 50 planned gifts arranged for the benefit of Smithville Christian High School will, in the long run, be one of the most important statistics of them all.

That may sound odd coming from the Foundation, because to be honest, many of those gifts will come through our partner organizations like Christian Stewardship Services, or as the result of co-promotion of certain initiatives. Likely, the Smithville Christian High School Foundation may not even get any recognition for this work. But we don't care! A key part of the Foundation's mandate is to strengthen the financial picture of Smithville Christian High School in the medium and long term. And nothing will prove to be more important to that goal than motivating the establishment of planned gifts – with most of those being Estate Gifts.



Mustard seeds

In 2013 among Canadians who gave charitable gifts, the average amount they gave was \$531. In 2013, the average gift given through a Last Will and Testament was \$35,000. People are able to give on a larger scale when they approach certain key transitions in their lives. And people love to support the charities that build on the values they hold.

That is why the number "50" is important to us.

Would you help us identify gifts that have already been arranged? If you have arranged a bequest for Smithville Christian, would you consider joining our Mustard Seed Society? This is a group of Christian school supporters who recognize that if we each bring our mustard seed-sized gift, God can bless these gifts so abundantly that they will have an impact far beyond what the size of those gifts could accomplish on their own. Check out www.mustardseedsociety.ca and help us reach – and transcend – the number "50."



"Where there's a will"

HELPING SCHOOLS MOVE FROM A FEAR OF SCARCITY TO
A CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S PROVISION



Canadians who donated in 2013 gave an average of **\$531**.

The average will bequest in 2013 was **\$35,000**.

Requests will far outweigh other means of support.

WHY SUCH A DIFFERENCE?

- Annual giving comes from the income pocket, which has other demands.
- Bequests come from the net asset pocket.

PROBLEM:

- 50% of people over 50 don't have a current will.
- Over 90% of regular direct mail donors said they would consider leaving a gift but 51% said no one ever asked!

SOLUTION:

We Need to Ask!

PROBLEM:

"Our school needs 'today' dollars, not 'tomorrow' dollars!"

RESPONSE:

Of all the will gifts given in 2015, 43% were put into place between 2011-2015.

The impact of these gifts is not as far away as you think.

Who is Most Likely to Give a Will Bequest?

IT'S NOT JUST THE WEALTHY:

By far the greatest percentage of will bequests are from estates valued at under \$2 Million.

There is no correlation between income levels and giving by bequest.



CHILDLESS HOUSEHOLDS:

Childless households include elderly couples, empty nesters and single adults. 58% of Canadian households are childless.



Childless households are the most likely group to donate estate gifts.

If people see that others, just like them, are making bequests, they are more likely to do so as well.

Consider joining the Mustard Seed Society!
www.mustardseedociety.ca

GOLF TOURNAMENT



The students of Smithville Christian High School are blessed by the support of bursary donors, church donations, and an annual golf tournament, organized by volunteers in partnership with the Niagara Association for Christian Education. The tournament takes place in the fall, and golfers of all ages – including many Smithville Christian alumni – enjoy a day on the fairways in support of a good cause.

Proceeds from the 2017 edition were \$28,000, split between NACE and Smithville Christian High School.

Want to join us on the fairways next fall? Watch the Smithville Christian website and Facebook pages for info on how to register. Want to join the volunteer organizing committee? Contact Principal Ted Harris at tharris@smithvillechristian.ca.





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Find out how you can be included in the next issue of Echoes.

Contact Marlene Bergsma at
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