



# ECHOES

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## The blessing of disagreement

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

When people discover that I am a high school principal, one of the responses I get is that it must be so difficult to have parents calling or emailing all the time with classroom concerns. I usually say that doesn't happen nearly as often as they might think. I actually do not spend much of my time processing parental concerns. That being said, I do tell parents during admissions interviews that they need to share concerns with us and advocate for their children when this may be necessary; therefore it is only fair that some of my time will be spent discussing challenging situations with parents. When a concern comes, I tell the parents (and it's true!) that I am glad they brought the concern to me instead of just stewing about it. In fact, such expressions of concern are opportunities for dialogue and growth for all concerned.

It needs to be reiterated at this point that when parents have concerns about classroom

matters, they are asked to talk to the teacher, and our parents do a good job of this. Nonetheless I often end up in follow-up conversations about questions or issues that are not easily resolved. Sometimes these concerns relate to varied perspectives on what scripture might be telling us about an issue.

We currently have representation in our school from 46 local churches. If you have 46 Christians in a room who all take the Bible very seriously, it is a certainty that there will be varied interpretations about how our elected leaders should govern, about whether marijuana should be legalized, about whether same sex relationships should be affirmed, about whether a Christian lifestyle can include consumption of alcohol, about the specifics of how God created living things including his image bearers, and about whether non-Christians should attend a Christian high school.



If specific churches wrestle with issues, who are we to pretend that a school connecting Christians from many churches won't have a diversity of perspectives?

I actually consider it a blessing to be a part of a community where sincere Christians arrive at different viewpoints on various issues. If someone thinks differently than I do, then dialogue can happen. If dialogue is not enabled, then engagement and learning will always be limited.

There are things we need to remember as parents who band together as supporters of this Christian high school.

*Continued on page 2 ...*

Continued from page 1...

First, our kids need to experience difference of opinion. They will never be part of a world where people agree on everything. I have enjoyed conversations with my own children as they carried on their learning beyond high school. They have all gone to Christian colleges which have allowed for healthy dialogue about a host of issues.

Second, despite what parents may say when they wonder about the younger generation – sometimes known as “kids these days...” – parents still have the greatest influence on children. If we, as parents, feel uncomfortable with conversations about a certain issue, whether in school, church, or the

community, we need to remember that our potential to direct our children is profound and far reaching.

Third, our school will fight tooth and nail to be true to what we call our Educational Creed, which hasn't changed since the beginning. The truths expressed in that creed continue to form the bedrock of our instruction at Smithville Christian High School.

In helping our young people to discern truth from falsehood and obedience from idolatry, our teachers will always strive to look at the example of Jesus, who *is* the truth. Of course, Jesus did not comment on every issue we will ever face, but we can learn so much from

the way he treated people; his love and acceptance of people was radical. Ours should be too. His prayer to his father for his people is all about unity:

“I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17: 22-23).

So I invite you to visit me anytime to discover what we might disagree about. Thereafter we can figure out how to maintain unity in Christ so that we can continue to serve him together.



## We Believe

*Excerpts from Smithville Christian High School's Educational Creed.*

We believe that the Lord God, by graciously giving us the Scriptures, has revealed to his people ordering principles intensely relevant to education, and demands that the whole Word of God direct the education of our children. The following Biblical principles form the foundation for learning at Smithville Christian High School:

**LIFE:** Human life in its entirety is religious, since God created men and women to serve him everywhere. This requires us to educate our children for his service.

**BIBLE:** The Bible, the written Word of God, is the truth by which the Holy Spirit enlightens our understanding of God, ourselves and the world. It is the infallible authority by which he directs and governs all our activities, including the education of our children.

**CREATION:** We can understand the world rightly only in its relation to God, because the world, in its origin, gracious preservation and ultimate restoration is the work of the triune God, and the glorification of his name is its purpose.

**HUMANITY:** We were created in the image of God to enjoy covenantal fellowship with our Creator and to reflect the excellencies of our Maker, and we were instructed to exercise dominion over the world in loving obedience to God and to interpret all reality in accordance with his design and law.

*(Remaining headings include Sin, Jesus Christ, The Kingdom of God, The Purpose of Education, Parents, The Student, The Teacher, and The Christian School. The full creed, which was adapted from the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools' 1966 Principal Guidelines and adopted by the Smithville Christian High School board of directors in January 2007, can be found on the school's website, [smithvillechristian.ca](http://smithvillechristian.ca), under History.)*

# Not so Dutch anymore

BY KAITLIN LUNSHOF, GRADE 11

Smithville Christian High School has often been referred to as “the Dutch school,” but is this true? Just a few years ago, the school was a sea of people of Dutch heritage, but is this still the case?

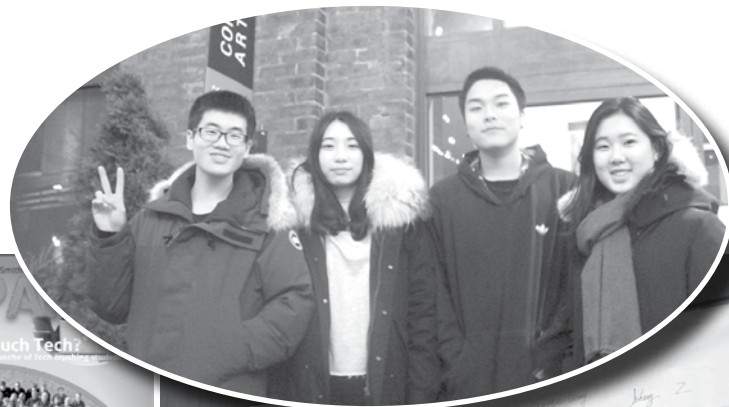
According to many people, the Dutch stereotype is pretty much a thing of the past. When you walk into the school today, you immediately become aware of the diversity. With the addition of many students from other countries, we are able to see a little bit more of what the world around us is like.

The school was originally founded by a Christian church with a Dutch background, and at that time (1980) it was logical that people would assume the school was only for Dutch families or members of the “Dutch” Christian Reformed Church. When the school first opened, it was almost 100 per cent Dutch and only one or two churches were represented. This is not the case anymore.

More and more students from other countries have enrolled at Smithville Christian. With a growing number of international students, and many countries and ethnicities represented, our school is slowly stripping away the stereotypes. The school is also no longer supported only by one denomination. There are now a total of 46 different churches and about 20 different denominations represented in our school's enrolment.

I think it is no longer accurate to refer to Smithville Christian as “the Dutch school.” When people absentmindedly call our school “Dutch,” especially if they themselves are Dutch, it seems to lend itself to a closed environment into which others are not welcome. We don't need to disregard the history of our school but we do need to be careful not to cling to the school's heritage in a way that makes people feel unwelcome. Our school motto is Belong, Believe, Succeed, and it is hard to belong if the school feels geared towards one culture. We need to help everyone grow and thrive, and we need to embrace all of the cultures we represent.

*Adapted from an article by Kaitlin Lunshof in the Spring 2017 edition of the student magazine, “The Spark.” A link to the original article and the entire magazine can be found on the Smithville Christian website under Student Work.*





# What's it like being a student at Smithville Christian?

BY ARNELL DYKSTRA, CLASS OF 2017

When I came to Smithville Christian High School in Grade 10, I absolutely loved it from the moment I first stepped in the door. I am very proud to say that I am a graduate from this school and one day I hope to send my kids here.

This place has helped me flourish as a Christian, as well as a person, and as a peer. God has revealed himself to me through this school and the people that form its community. The teachers and staff are amazing and are always there to encourage us in our everyday lives and in our walk with Christ.

At Smithville Christian, I learned to make faith a part of my everyday life and to glorify God in everything I do. In my high school journey, I have faced many tests and challenges. I didn't always have an easy time, but I overcame many hurdles. As I graduate, I know that God will guide me and work in my life to fulfill the calling he has for me.

*Excerpted from Arnell Dykstra's speech during her Grade 12 Portfolio presentation in May. Arnell and her twin sister, Brittney, came to Smithville Christian High School in September 2014. The students and staff of Smithville Christian High School grieved with Arnell and Brittney when their father, Arnold Dykstra, died in January 2016.*



# Smithville Christian students help welcome a new family to Canada

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

**Smithville Christian students are partnering with a group of local Anglican churches to help sponsor a Syrian family's arrival in Canada.**

In February 2016, a leap year, students at the school were invited to contribute their spare change to a "Leap Year Loonies for Refugees" fundraising initiative. Student Council leaders took that invitation a step further and held a Cash for Change Day, in which students dressed out of uniform and each contributed a minimum of \$5 to the fund.

In February 2016, a choir concert at Pelham Community Church collected a freewill offering and the choir donated its share of the proceeds to the sponsorship initiative. In February 2017, the choir and a school praise team participated in another concert in the Mountainview Music series in Grimsby and once again, dedicated the proceeds of the freewill offering to the sponsorship.

In total, students have contributed over \$3,500 to help welcome the new family. The funds were used for new mattresses, cell phones for the parents, stocking the kitchen, and the first grocery shopping trip. In addition, Grade 9 student, Patrick Ghaly, who speaks Arabic, offered to serve as a translator.

In June 2017, our partnership family arrived, moving into the former Anglican parsonage in Grimsby. The mother, father, and three young children were enrolled in English classes, signed up for medical appointments, and slowly introduced to a new life in Canada. Part of that new life included meeting people from their home city who were already settled in Hamilton. With the blessing and support of the newcomer team, the family moved to Hamilton in August, in time to enrol their children in new schools and adjust to a new life with shopping, transit, and people in a support community they already know.

The sponsorship agreement requires that the identity of the family not be publicized, but one of the newcomer team members, who visited

with the family shortly after they arrived in Canada, said the visit was lovely. "The kids are delightful, sitting on my knee and showing their toy cars like any other kids. We had delicious sweet tea poured over walnuts," said the team member. "They are lovely. They wished us peace and we did the same."

Rev. Leslie Gerlofs, the priest of St. John's Anglican Church in Burlington and Jean Ruttan-Yates, Deacon at St. Andrew's Anglican in Grimsby, were at a Smithville Christian High School chapel in May 2016, participating in worship and explaining the importance of the sponsorship. Then student council president Gemma Ricker presented them with the first fundraising cheque. Afterwards, Gerlofs said they wished "every day could start like that."

"Jean and I thoroughly enjoyed our visit. I left the school with an energy and enthusiasm that carried me through the rest of my day," Gerlofs said.



Gerlofs said the school's participation has been important to the success of the sponsorship. "Having the students' involvement as a partner was very inspiring for us. It gave us hope."

Smithville Christian students are pleased to have had a chance to contribute, and look forward to future opportunities to share the love of Christ.



# Graduating Class of 2017

Hunter Amos



Ayden Beck



Daniel Benjamin



Makenna Bezemer



Lucas Blyleven



Caleb Boerefyn



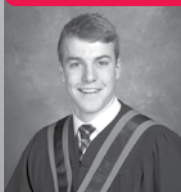
Larissa Bos



Miranda Bos



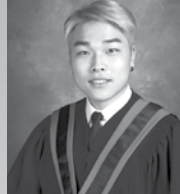
Jonathan Buist



Krystal Chen



Vincent Chen



Victoria Clayson



Anna Crinson



Sean DeBoer



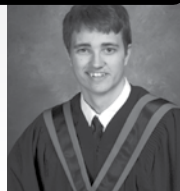
Kayla DeKlerk



Brandon Dieleman



Curtis Dykstra



Arnell Dykstra



Brittney Dykstra



Mariah Ellis



Robyn Folkerts



Morgan Glasbergen



Samuel Goodfellow



Erin Groff



Alexandrea Haas



Devon Haas



Erica Hessels



Sam Hong



Tamara Ngambi



Alanna van der Beek



Byron Horinga



Chris Noh



Kiersten Van Hoffen



Sean Houwer



Lexi Plante



Sarah VanderKuip



Jared Jackson



Sarah Prins



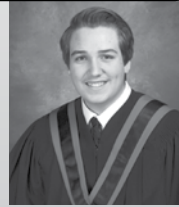
Reuben Vermeer



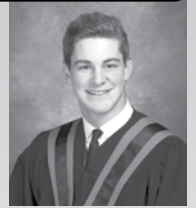
Ian Kang



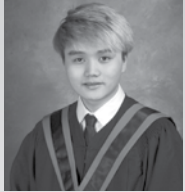
Adam Riddell



Tyson Wagter



Sam Liu



Benjamin Schat



Nancy Wang



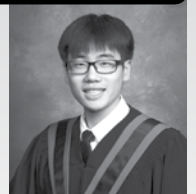
Katharine Luo



Dylan Schilstra



Bill Wu



Nathan Mans



Damian teBrake



Paul Zhang



Brendan Masselink



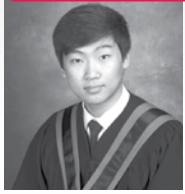
Kyle Thiessen



Tony Zhang



Jay Min



Zaria Thompson

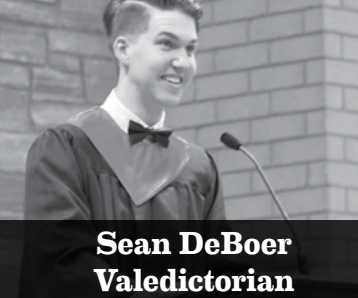


Wesley Zwier

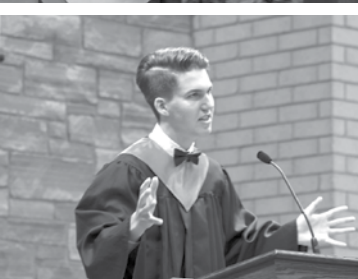


*Congratulations Graduates!*





**Sean DeBoer**  
**Valedictorian**



*Graduation 2017*





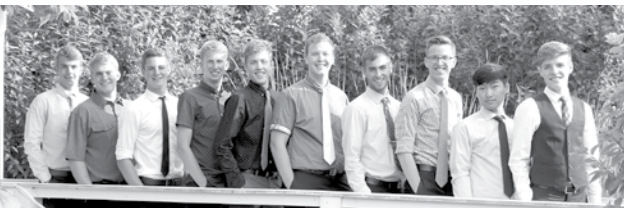


*Congratulations!*



# In their own words: Thoughts from the Class of 2017

EXCERPTS FROM GRADE 12 PORTFOLIO SPEECHES.



**I loved every second of it.**

*Smithville Christian has been a great experience, and I would recommend it to anyone.*

**Thank you for making Smithville a great place to have spent the past four years. There was never a moment when teachers weren't willing to help and I will ever be grateful for that.**

*My experience at Smithville Christian High has helped me turn myself around. The teachers and my classmates helped me find the real me.*

**I am a very different person than I would be if I had stayed at (my previous school). As I got older and got less sheltered and began to ask questions, and a Christian school had the answers that a public or Catholic school would not.**

**Teachers really do care about their students and want us to grow up to know and develop a close relationship with God.**

*Our teachers want us to thrive.*

**It's okay to be vulnerable and show a different side of who I am.**

*It was a great community to be a part of. You feel welcomed and a part of something when you attend this school.*

**I appreciate the open atmosphere here; you could always express yourself.**

**The community is amazing.**

*The greatest thing I've taken from my years here is knowing I am blessed with a purpose.*

**I have learned that God has a path for us all to travel and sometimes that path is difficult, but that through the good and the bad he is with us and helping us become the person he created us to be. I am so thankful for all the staff and my fellow classmates, as well as all the connections of people and friends I have made at Smithville Christian High. I am thankful for their patience and kindness in accepting me and helping shape me into the person I am today.**

**I learned I need to be myself and to look to God for answers in what to do.**

**I've grown in my faith.**

*Smithville Christian has helped me grow in my faith through the Wednesday morning chapels and the way that Christian perspectives are woven into our everyday classes.*

**I will miss the chapels and times of praise every Wednesday. Those times challenged me in my faith.**

**I grew in so many ways at Smithville Christian. I not only gained wisdom, but I also learned how to be a better Christian and what it means to be a servant of God in our everyday life. I learned how in every aspect of our lives God is present. He is the creator and master of all things and in everything we do, we should do it to his honour.**

**My worldview was pushed, questioned, explored and revised a thousand times, and that caused tremendous growth.**

*God is a big part of my life and I thank Smithville Christian for teaching me more about him. I am truly blessed to have been taught at a Christian school and for how well I was prepared for my life to come.*

**I am now prepared spiritually and academically to do my part in the world.**

**I am grateful to my parents for all of their hard work and sacrifice to make this happen for me.**

**I am truly blessed to attend Smithville and I am glad my parents chose Smithville for me.**

*I am overwhelmed with thanks to God for placing me here. I have grown in my confidence, in my ability to express myself, in the empathy I have for others, and in my love for God.*



# High School trends and welcoming the Class of 2021

BY LINDA BOOY-KORVEMAKER, HEAD OF STUDENT SERVICES



As we prepare to welcome a new class of Grade 9 students to our school we are thankful that so many families have chosen Smithville Christian for their teenagers. This year we are welcoming 54 Grade 9 students from 15 different schools and learning situations.

Last spring, our students participated anonymously in a survey conducted by researchers at the University of Waterloo. The Cancer Risk Assessment in Youth Survey (CRAYS 2017) provided us with significant data about high school culture in general and about our school's culture in particular. The data revealed that we need to be aware of and work with our students on a number of topics, and there is always room for improvement. Parents of our students have received the summary results along with information on what they can do to help. Two of the key areas that our Student Services department hopes to focus on to ensure all students belong, believe and succeed at Smithville Christian are School Connectedness & Bullying Prevention.

Here are some of the ways in which we will work to connect students with their school and to enable them to prevent bullying.

**Grade Nine Blast** – this happens at the end of the first week of classes. Grades 10-12 have a home study day and Grade 9 students and teachers work at school. We work on learning more about each other and breaking down barriers so that students can meet new friends and have a new beginning.

**Bike Trip** – a few weeks later the Grade 9 bike trip happens as an extension of the Grade 9 Geography class. Cycling along the Niagara Parkway with their classmates is a great opportunity to grow community.

**Bullying Prevention** – in Grade 9 Physical Education, this mini-unit is an important part of the curriculum and the PE teacher and Guidance counsellors work closely together to

educate our students on what bullying is and how to work against it.

**Belongers** – with the leadership of a few grade 12 students and myself, this “open group” (meaning anyone can join and be a part of it) has been developed with a simple, but important mandate “to ensure school connectedness.” We are still working out the details, but please keep this new group in your prayers as we work hard to ensure every student finds the space they need to belong at Smithville Christian.

No high school is perfect, and we acknowledge that there are challenges in our culture at Smithville Christian as well. It is my hope that at Smithville Christian we can honestly open our eyes to see our brokenness and that we can respond, as we journey together, to be the hands and feet of Jesus.

## Class of 2017 Award Winners

**Victoria Clayton** – Canadian Citizenship Award

**Robyn Folkerts** – Top Marks Scholarship

**Sean Houwer** – Royal Canadian Legion Branch 393 Bursary

**Lexi Plante** – Royal Canadian Legion Branch 393 Poppy Bursary

**Alanna van der Beek** – Royal Canadian Legion Branch 393

**Most Improved Student Award**

**Samuel Goodfellow** – Ontario Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award

**Ian Kang** – West Lincoln Town Council Citizenship Award

**Brendan Masselink** – Poultryfest Niagara Scholarship

**Jay Min** – International Student Award

**Mariah Ellis** – Michael VandenDool Award

**Makenna Bezemer** – Groff's Photography Bursary

**Jonathan Buist** – Smithville Garden Club Award

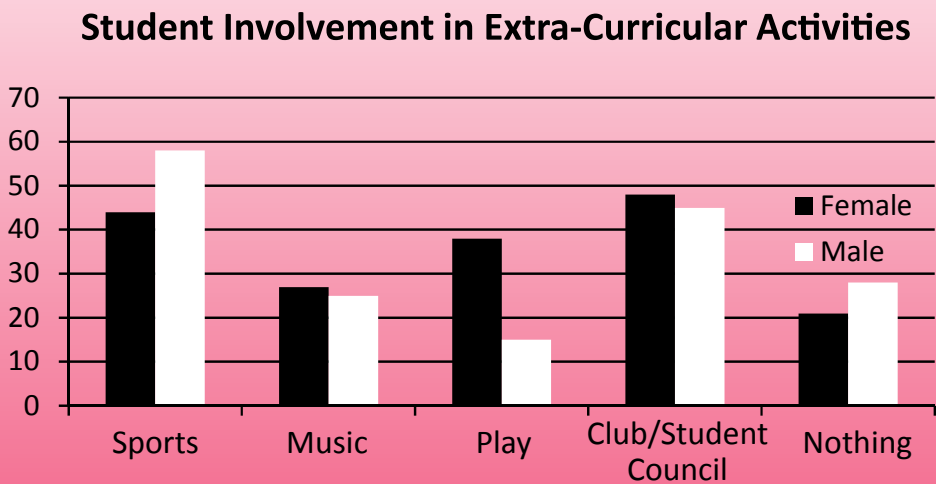
**Wesley Zwier** – Niagara Peninsula Energy Student Award

**Robyn Folkerts** – Governor General's Award

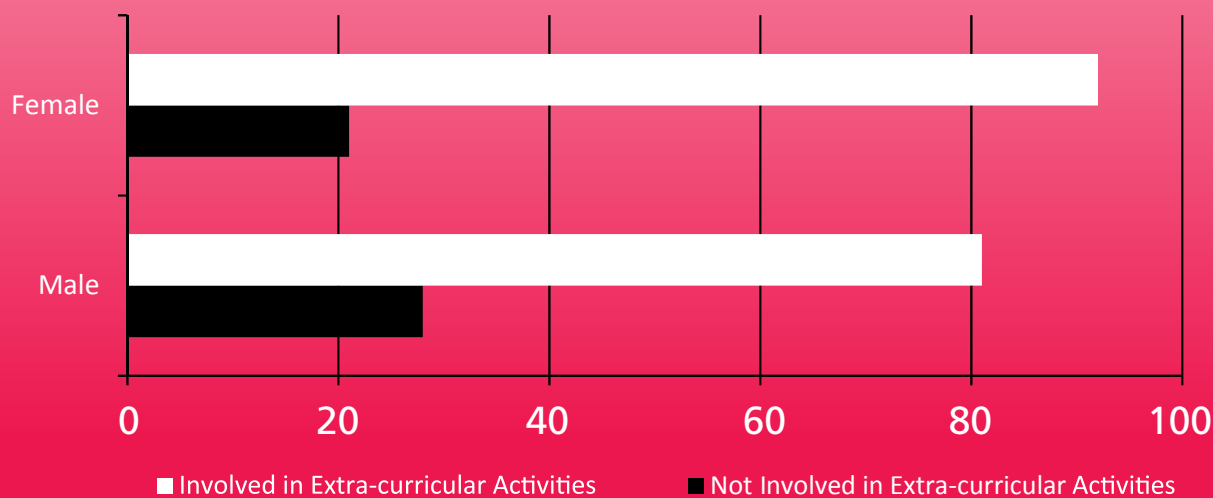
# Measuring student participation in extra-curricular

A DATA MANAGEMENT PROJECT BY JAY MIN, GRADE 12

## Student Involvement at



Smithville Christian High School is a private educational institution where students learn everything from a Christian perspective. Our school provides a welcoming and friendly environment. Students are very involved in school activities and this includes the extra-curricular activities. Based on data from 2016/2017, **78%** of the school's population were involved in extra-curricular activities. That's **173 students out of the 222 students!**



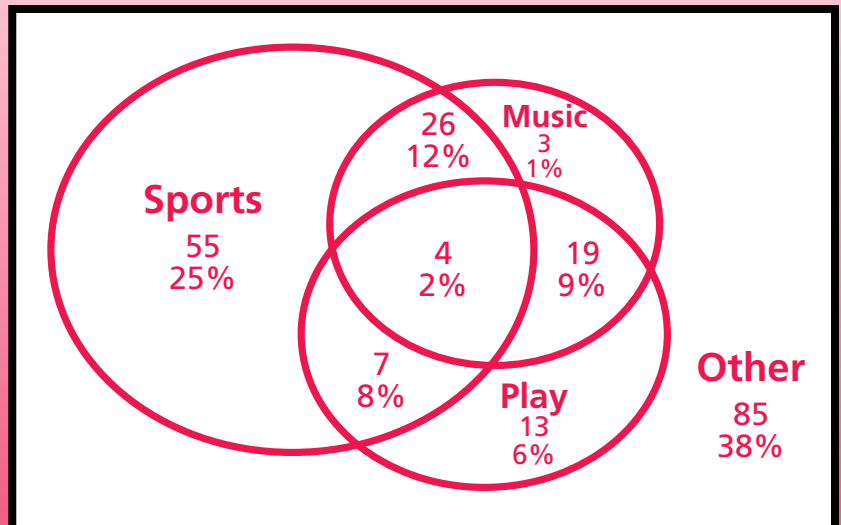


# activities at Smithville Christian High School:

## Smithville Christian

Extra-Curricular activities  
available at Smithville Christian:

- Badminton
- Basketball
- Cross Country
- Ski Club
- Soccer
- Track & Field
- Volleyball
- Yearbook Club
- Choir
- Praise Team
- Play/Drama
- Student Council
- Ambassador
- Art Club
- Badminton Convenor
- Book Club
- Computer Club
- Culture Club
- Photography Club
- Scorekeeper
- AV Crew
- Sports Team Manager



Smithville Christian encourages  
students to be well-rounded.  
**Over 31%** of Smithville Christian  
students were involved in multiple  
types of extra-curricular activities.



# Alumni update

BY MIKAYLA VELDMAN, GRADE 11

Over the past 37 years many people have walked in and out of Smithville Christian High School's doors. Over 1,800 people have graduated from Smithville Christian and there will be thousands more.

This school has definitely had an effect on the lives of our alumni—ones from many years ago, as well as from more recent years. High school can be a tough time—trying to figure out what classes to take, getting good grades in them, and actually getting into a career you like. Here are updates from a few of them.

**Marlene Petrovitsch** came to Smithville Christian from Austria in 2012. She wanted to become a flight attendant but needed to know more English. "I was scared to come to Canada, but I knew that Smithville had a great record for having exchange students," she said.



"My teachers in Austria told me that if I wanted a welcoming school then this school would be a perfect fit for me. Smithville Christian welcomed me with open arms." Marlene says that because of her time at Smithville, she was able to get into a career as a flight attendant because her English skills were quite advanced for an Austrian. "Smithville Christian helped me get to where I wanted to go, and I'm forever grateful that I went there."

Marlene wants to come back to Canada just so that she can visit Smithville Christian students and teachers—as well as show off her English skills.

**Mark Khoury** (Class of 2014), came to Smithville in Gr. 10, after having one year at Beacon Christian High School. Following his high school years he went to Brock. Going from a small Christian high school to a big secular university can sometimes be a challenging thing to do, and one's beliefs can be tested.

"I feel that Smithville has absolutely prepared me to defend my beliefs," Mark said. "It's important to know not



only what you believe, but why you believe it!" Mark is currently in his third year in the Pre-Med program for health science at Brock University.

"I always knew what I wanted to do ever since I was in grade school and I was fully supported in my choices every step of the way at Smithville Christian. I was able to take every class that I needed."

Mark said Smithville Christian teachers continually helped and supported him to make his career dreams come true.

**Sandra (VanGeest) Buys** (Class of 1986), went to Seneca College in Toronto, where she followed her dream to be a floral designer.

"Having gone to a Christian high school helped me to gain confidence in myself in general and as a Christian," Sandra said. "I was a very quiet kid, but finding good friends in high school helped me to gain confidence and to speak up for myself." Although Sandra knew what she wanted to do, she said she had struggles in high school. "I really struggled in math and had a friend who would help me every morning with my homework on the bus." Along with her friends helping her, Sandra also went to her math teacher for extra help. When she finally had to do the exam, she aced it—thanks to those who believed she could do it.



The alumni of Smithville Christian all have positive things to say about their years here. Although they all had their personal struggles—grades, friendships and where they wanted to go after high school—they all said that they wouldn't have wanted to go anywhere else but Smithville Christian. Whether they graduated five years ago, or fifteen years ago, they say the environment has always been friendly and supportive and the teachers always helped them through their struggles. Smithville Christian continues to be

a great environment in which students can belong, believe and succeed.

*Adapted from an article by Mikayla Veldman in the Spring 2017 edition of the student magazine, "The Spark." A link to the original article and the entire magazine can be found on the Smithville Christian website under Student Work.*



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