



# ECHOES

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## Welcome to Smithville Christian: Doing right by our newcomers

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR



The 2016-2017 school year began very well. The spring and summer were filled with conversations with families considering Christian education, resulting in a Grade 9 class of over 60 students and close to a dozen new students in other grades. That means almost one

third of our students are new. We always feel so blessed that conversations about Christian education result in families choosing to send their kids here and choosing to place their trust in us and in what we do.

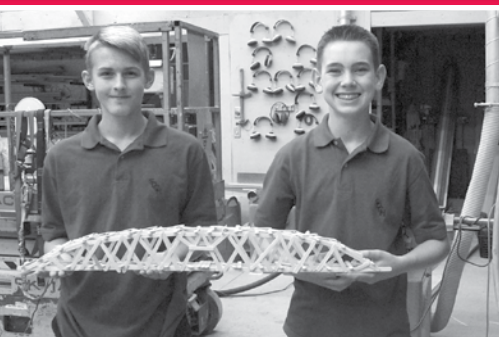
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That trust is a big deal to us. We want to honour such decisions by making the experience of our students excellent. This means we need to be nimble in constantly improving our program and

instruction. In addition to numerous and continuous conversations about how to do Christian high school education better, there are two key things that we are working on this year to help the class of 2020 graduate with 20/20 kingdom vision.

First, we are changing how 'electives' are delivered. All of our students will experience their electives in two blocks this year. There are three teachers working together to teach our "Tech Block" first semester. This course includes three key components: food and nutrition, shop technology and computer studies. The teaching team has been collaborating to make this a rich experience for all students, and one which will inform their choices about electives in the years ahead. In the spring semester, Grade 9 students will take an "Arts Block," consisting of experiences in visual art, music and drama, also delivered by a team of three teachers. It is our intent to allow students to develop a love and appreciation for technology and the arts without having initially to restrict themselves to only two such experiences.

The second major change for this year is the introduction of the 1:1 technology program (1 student







*Grade 9 students in the Integrated Technology Class, building bridges, baking cakes, making longboards and cooking and baking up a storm.*

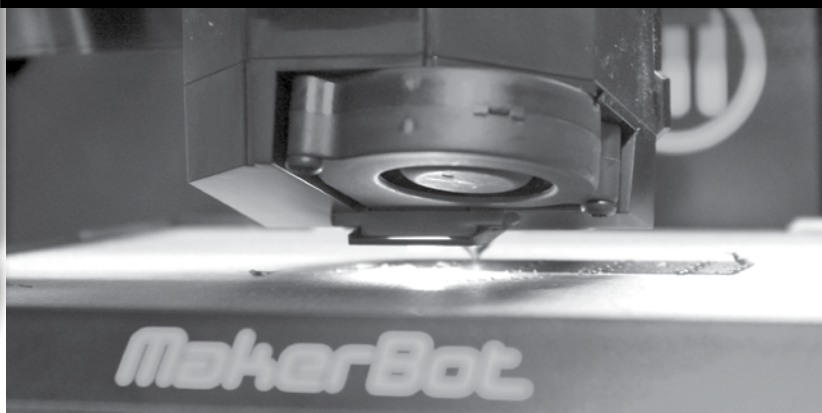
per 1 device). This program has a new 11-inch MacBook Air in the hands of every Grade 9 student. Though this requires expense, we have begun this program as a way of respecting our learners, who will need technology at their disposal much of the time as they work their way through their program over four years. We wish to respect them enough to do away with lengthy transitions in and out of computer labs or waiting for school laptops to become available. It is a treat to see a class of students simply open up their devices for the part of any class for which they are needed. This will open up many learning opportunities for our students and will give us many opportunities to improve and discuss time management and discernment with them.

So why all these changes? First, we don't want students to have the option of missing out completely on beautiful areas of creation, areas of possible giftedness and interest, or skills that will prove useful in further learning and life. It is also clear that learners who are what we call 'digital natives' will have greater success in their learning if the necessary technology and applications are available to them while they learn, whether at home or school.

There are many other aspects to developing 20/20 kingdom vision, but what a joy it is to give our young people opportunity to creatively and even playfully unwrap the wonder of all that God has created and made possible for his image bearers.



*Left: A MacBook Air computer and case, issued to every Grade 9 student this September. Right: The 3D printer.*



# GRADE NINE BIKETRIP

NIAGARA FALLS TO  
NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE

SEPTEMBER 2016







# INTRODUCING GRADE NINE



Hope  
Amos



Renya  
Beck



Sophia  
Bezemer



Meagan  
Boerefyn



Derick  
Breukelman



Sydney  
Brown



Janelle  
Buist



Hannah  
Cafazzo



Madeleine  
DeBoer



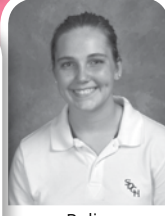
Monica  
DeBoer



Braden  
DeHaan



Esther  
DeHaan



Rylie  
Dekker



Alaynah  
deKleine



Rachael  
Demask



Cyril  
Fu



Patrick  
Ghaly



Hannah  
Goodfellow



Eden  
Griffin



Jayne  
Hanemaayer



Cordelia  
Hardie



Alanna  
Heeg



Katrina  
Heeg



Shawn  
Heerema



Zion  
Hoekstra



Luke  
Junink



Samson  
Iriarte



Chloe Lapenna  
Wierenga



Grace  
Liddell



Michelle  
Ludwig



Sophie  
McMullin



Katrina  
Meinders



# CLASS OF 2020



Julia  
Mellema



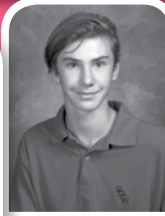
Justin  
Moraal



Christian  
Mushegera



Christopher  
Mushegera



Seth  
Pacquin



Joshua  
Payson



Alayna  
Riddell



Ryan  
Roelfsema



Brin  
Schat



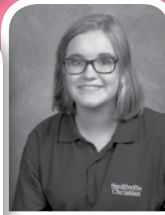
Nate  
Shirton



Elana  
Smit



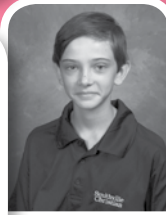
Jayden  
Talsma



Leah  
Teeuwssen



Julia  
Thies



Matthew  
Toohey



Belle  
Tostik



Skyler  
van der Wier



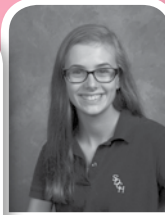
Justin  
Van Geest



Connor  
VanderKuip



Logan  
VanderWier



Morgan  
VanderWier



Charlie  
VanRys



Tony  
VanRys



Emily  
VanStaalduinen



Paul  
Veldman



Kendall  
Voortman



Nicole  
W



Meagan  
Weaver



Samuel  
Woodland



Kurtis  
Zantingh



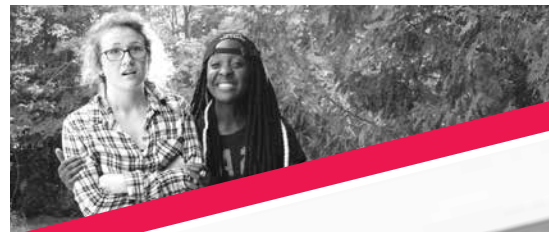
Spencer  
Zondag

# GRADE 12 RETREAT

*Silver Lake  
Camp*







**SEPTEMBER 2016**

# Welcoming New Staff to Smithville Christian

A warm welcome to two new staff members: Alicia Waters and Mark Fluit – both returning alumni, both with stories of coming back to Smithville Christian due to God's leading! Read on to find out what's changed since they were students, and what they like about the school today.

## Alicia Vahrmeyer Waters

(Class of 1997) returns as caterer and food services manager. Here's her account of what she's been doing since she left here almost 20 years ago.

After graduating from Smithville Christian High, I went to Niagara College for Recreation and Leisure Services. I loved this program because it allowed me to try many different avenues of work. After graduating, I worked for Welland/Pelham Community Living, where I worked with adults with developmental disabilities. While working there I met Geoff Waters; we



have now been married 15 years and we have four children: Haily, Quaid, Luke and Evan. Geoff and I have also had three adults with disabilities live with us: Steven, Bruce, and Cory. Bruce, who had Down syndrome, passed away six years ago. This was very sad for our family but I was very grateful for the years we were able to be a part of his life. Cory also has Down syndrome and Steven is developmentally delayed. They have lived with us most of our married lives and they are a part of our family.

I also worked for a few years at Covenant Christian School as an E.A. I have been a stay-at-home Mom for the past 13 years and never thought that I would be working with food. If you knew me in high school I was the pickiest eater ever! My husband introduced me to so many different foods and I soon developed a love of cooking!

My children go to Fitch Street Public School and I have been volunteering for the past six years as the "Lunch Mom." Every Wednesday, I joined two or three other moms and cooked up something for the kids. I always joked to my kids that I would follow them to high school and work in the cafeteria..... but never did I think this would actually

happen. But as high school was soon approaching for our daughter, Haily, my husband and I really wanted to send her to Smithville Christian. I love that my family has been in the public school system; we were able to have great opportunities in witnessing and showing God's love through our actions. We have a "Moms who Care" group at the school that intentionally meets monthly to pray for the school, the safety of our kids and for the ones who teach them. But for high school, we really wanted Haily to enjoy the benefit of Christian teachers, to grow in her faith, and to meet friends who love God too. But the cost of schooling was going to be a challenge. As soon as Geoff and I gave this struggle to God, I found out that Alice Spyker was leaving the school..... GOD MOMENT!!! "Those who leave things in God's hands, eventually see God's hands in everything" (unknown author). I jumped on the opportunity, God blessed our family, and we give all the glory to him for this blessing!

Smithville Christian has changed in some ways from when I used to attend here. The "look" – well that is quite the improvement. Staff – I'd have to say are the same: kind, caring, go above and





beyond for their students and want to see all of them meet their potential.

Students.....now that has changed! I love that we have opened our doors to the community around us and to students from afar. It's no longer a "Dutch" school but a school with many different nationalities and many different denominations, and that is awesome!! I really enjoy working here; everyone is so nice, and the students make it so pleasurable to come to Smithville. We joke, we tease and I'm starting to get to know more of them every day. It is such a blessing and so much fun to be able to work with my sister too, Tracy Vahrmeyer VanSoelen (Class of 1987). I love my JOB!

---

**Mark Fluit** (Class of 1990) returns as math and music teacher. We catch up with him via a Q&A conversation.

**1) What did you do after you graduated from Smithville Christian?**

**A.** Redeemer University College for my undergrad with a Music Major, Math and Psych Minor. Queen's University for my B.Ed. I later achieved an equivalent of a math major through York University and the University of Waterloo which allowed me to pursue a Masters in Mathematics for Teachers through the University of Waterloo. I just graduated from that this past August. I am married and have three children.



**2) Where did you work before returning to Smithville Christian?**

**A.** Toronto District Christian High School, since 2004.

**3) What made you want to come back?**

**A.** My family and my wife's family are in this area and we wanted to be closer to them. My wife and I had begun playing around with the idea of moving closer to family in January. We opened the door in this area just a little crack, assuming that nothing would happen and that we could remain in our current comfortable situation. God blew the door open, and we felt like a great opportunity opened up before us. It didn't feel like us controlling the situation, but that God was opening up a new path for us.

I am loving the atmosphere that exists at this school.

**4) Have things changed? Like what?**

**A.** Well, the school looks less like a dark jail and more like a learning space – that's a huge improvement.

I feel like the style of teaching was changing in the '90s when I was here, but it was still a work in progress. Today, there is a more holistic approach to teaching and learning. The classroom extends beyond the walls of the classrooms.



**5) Anything else you've noticed about the character or culture of our school?**

**A.** Prayer is essential here, not just to the teachers, but the students ask for it. For example, during the basketball season, we started with prayer before each game. One game, I was in a rush and I told them to head to the court, but a player quickly blurted, "but we still need to pray!" I was reminded of its importance to the culture of our team.

**6) What do you like to do for fun?**

**A.** Sports and music are an important part of my life. I am quick to play guitar or piano when there is spare time. I have played ultimate frisbee for years in leagues in Toronto, completed a Tough Mudder, and other adventure races.

**7) Do you have a favourite saying?**

**A..** "Wherever you are, be there." Seize the moment.





# Living now

## STUDENT LEADERSHIP AT SMITHVILLE CHRISTIAN

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

This year's Student Council theme is "Living Now" – chosen by the seven members of Student Council who were elected by their peers to plan and implement student activities for the year. The theme was chosen at student council's annual fall retreat and announced to the school at a Wednesday morning chapel in September. Student Council president Hailee Boks introduced the theme by explaining that we all struggle with sin, but just as the spiritual life theme for the year, "Living in the Light", calls us to live in God's light, so we are called to consider the implications of the decisions we make right now.

"As Mr. Park has begun to talk about with the spiritual life theme, we must live now in the

light," Boks said.

"This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him," Boks said, reading from 1 John 4: 9. "It is our job to live out Jesus' love to others."

God is calling each of us, Boks said. "It doesn't matter if you're a high school student, a teacher, a parent, a grandparent. It doesn't matter if you're 13, 17 or 90. God has called each of us out, not just to look forward to heaven, but to bring heaven to earth. I want to challenge you to look in your own life at something you know is wrong that you keep doing, or something that you should be doing."

Boks said the student leaders are going to be focusing on what it means to live now for Christ. "And yes it's going to be hard sometimes, yes we are going to have to do things we don't want to do sometimes," she said. "But we can be sure that no matter what we face, the King of Kings will be with us. And yes I'm going to mess up and make mistakes, but I don't need to wait for tomorrow, because this is living now."



One of the Living Now activities already organized this year was the annual Christmas box program for Rose City Kids. Student Council leaders partnered with staff at the Welland-based agency, which provides programming and support for children ages five to 11, and challenged Smithville Christian students to each fill a box with toys, games and gifts. Close to 100 boxes were filled.

Student Council also hosts monthly Cash-For-Change days, allowing students to pay a minimum of \$5 to dress out of uniform. So far, there have been two: one for West Lincoln Community Care and the other for Rose City Kids. Each Cash-For-Change day raises approximately \$800.

*Left: Members of Student Council 2016/2017 at their fall retreat: From left, Spencer Damm, Mark Sharobim, Brendan Masselink, Elias Ellis, Hailee Boks, Sarah Prins and Hope Amos.*



# Grab on to grace and live now

## STUDENT LEADERSHIP AT SMITHVILLE CHRISTIAN

BY HAILEE BOKS, STUDENT COUNCIL PRESIDENT

*Excerpt from the morning devotion shared by Hailee during chapel at Grade 8 Day 2016*

The Student Council theme this year at Smithville Christian is Living Now, based on the lyrics of a song by Hillsong, called “This is Living Now.”

1 John 4:9 says, “This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.” It is our job to live out Jesus’ love to others. We are called to live out Jesus’ love every day!

But what does that mean? I am a sinner, how can I live for Jesus? Do I have to do it now? Why? Why? Why?

When we choose to live for God, right now, the lyrics of the song say our life becomes filled with colour. So do you want a life like that? And do you wonder about your sin? Or hardships? Because God has this life available to us now! No matter what we’ve done, God will cover all our sins when we come to him. No sin is too big for God.

Romans 8:28 says, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.”

God’s grace can handle any of our sins. We may have things we aren’t good at but God says he will use our weaknesses. Perhaps there are things about you that you wish were not part of you, or perhaps you don’t know who you are yet. Many of you are probably thinking about what high school you are going to go to next year. Or the Grade 12s may be wondering what they want to do after high school. It’s okay to wonder those things but ultimately we are called to live our lives for Jesus, and when we do that, our worries of the future fall away.

This rose has thorns, and, just like roses, we all have thorns. There are things about us that hurt others, or that we don’t like about ourselves. But God can take us, remove all of our thorns, and make us beautiful. At this school, the staff and students work together to help everyone reach their true

beauty through Christ. Because you really do Belong, Believe, and Succeed here.

All we need to do is come to him, because we are called to live now. His grace is sufficient for us.

Today is our opportunity to accept God’s amazing grace; stop trying to change for this world: **live now.**



### *“This is Living Now,” by Hillsong*

Waking up knowing there’s a reason  
All my dreams come alive  
Life is for living with You  
I’ve made my decision  
You lift me up, fill my eyes with wonder  
Forever young in Your love  
This freedom’s untainted with You  
No moment is wasted  
See the sun now bursting through the clouds  
Black and white turns to colour all around  
All is new, in the Savior I am found  
This is living now

You lead the way, God You’re right beside me  
In Your love I’m complete  
There’s nothing like living with You  
This life You created, I choose  
You take me higher than I’ve been before  
It’s Your perfect love that sees me soar  
God your freedom is an open door  
You are everything I want and more



*Marie and Ike DeKlerk, at the wedding of their granddaughter, Robyn DeKlerk to Ryan VanHoffen, both Class of 2011*

## “Just typical grandparents”

How could “just typical grandparents” work with a Foundation? Isn’t that more for very wealthy people? This is what Ike and Marie DeKlerk of Dunnville have learned about this question over the past few years.



Eleven years ago, the DeKlerks heard they could put some funds in a Revocable Deposit Agreement (RDA) with the Foundation that would support the schools their grandchildren were attending.

“We have 24 grandchildren spread over quite an area now, and we wanted to show our support for their Christian schools,” said Marie DeKlerk. Henry Koornneef, Christian School ▶

## Join the CEA!

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

If you hang around any group of people who share a common history or a common purpose, there’s a good chance you’ll run into a bunch of acronyms. Let’s face it, terms like PBL, POL, AV, SEW or OFSAA are so much easier to say than project-based learning, presentation of learning, audio-visual, spiritual emphasis week or the Ontario Federation of School Athletic Associations.

But what if you’re not part of the group? What if you are new to the job, the school or the sport? Suddenly all those acronyms can be downright confusing or possibly even meaningless.

That’s the reason behind the ongoing effort to get us calling ourselves Smithville Christian High School. It’s not that there was something wrong with the word “district” that required it be eradicated from our name. It’s just that using four syllables to identify our school only identifies us to insiders. If you are new to the Niagara Region, or to the Christian education scene, the four-letter acronym doesn’t tell you very much.

But if you say “Smithville Christian” you’ve used the same number of syllables and communicated so much more about our identity as a Christian school. And if we all get into the habit, we’ll find it easier and easier to do.



True, it takes more ink to write Smithville Christian than it does SDCH, and you could make an argument for saving paper or keystrokes. But the next time you are tempted to use an acronym to refer to our school – whether it’s SDCH, SCH or SCHA – think about the person who doesn’t know about Christian education – yet. As former student Katie Horvath (Class of 2014) once said during a testimony at chapel: when she introduced herself to co-workers at her restaurant job, they were struck by the name of her school – Smithville Christian – and asked her about it.

“I got to share my faith and how God is at work in my life,” she said.

Go ahead. Take the plunge. Join the CEA (Campaign to Eradicate Acronyms). Who knows where the conversations will lead?



► Foundation executive vice-president, made it easy for the DeKlerks to do that for the Dunnville, NACE and Smithville Christian High Schools. With Koornneef's help, the DeKlerks established a fund that gives a gift twice a year to each of the schools their grandchildren attend.

Over the years, "he did a very nice job of keeping us informed about how our gift was making a difference," Marie said.

Then, in August 2016, the DeKlerks were very happy to learn that schools in the London area had also joined the Foundation. Now the couple could easily extend the blessing to the St. Thomas and Woodstock Christian Schools where more of their grandchildren attend. At the same time, Koornneef suggested the DeKlerks add to the fund in order to ensure that each school would continue to receive the same amount.

"We were glad he asked because we had the same idea in mind," Marie said. "We got together soon afterward and Henry quickly had everything arranged."

The DeKlerks say they find supporting the Christian schools in this way to be kind of fun.

"Here we are, really just typical grandparents, and now we are able to make a difference for so many Christian schools! Seven of our grandchildren are married already (that goes so fast!) and so we aren't far from the next generation becoming school-aged."

Koornneef asked the DeKlerks one more question: Would they mind sharing their story?

"We don't think what we've done is anything extraordinary," Marie said. But Koornneef said



*The deKlerks with another granddaughter at Grandparents' Day at Woodstock Christian School.*

that was exactly why he thought the story should be shared.

"It really shows that anyone, even just typical grandparents, can work through the Foundation to bless the Christian schools they love," he said.

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