OUR GLOBAL CONNECTIONS
Introducing our KCSA International Students and Their Host Families

Psalms 119:105
Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.
Introducing Our KCSA International Students

by Dawn Brown, Sarah Dirksen, Robin Dommer, and Debbie Long

The Kalamazoo Christian Schools have participated in a homestay student program for 15 years, hosting students from other countries to live with KCSA host families to be educated in our schools and to become more familiar with our culture and education in the United States. In the process, these students become part of our greater world-wide KCSA family.

Recently our host families were asked questions, which are answered below, to acquaint all of us with the students, why they decide to come here, and what life looks like as a host family.

1. What motivates the students to want to come here to be exchange students?

Robin Dommer: For many of them, they come from countries with less educational opportunities than those in the US. Many of them would like to attend a US college or university after high school graduation. They are usually very motivated to do well in school as they know education here is a way for them to be successful in their future and an American education gives them advantages over education in their own country.

They also are very proud of their native country and are excited to share their culture with us. They really are not scared as they often come from cultures where they are already expected to be quite independent. Vinny was expected to have her English skills developed to a certain level in order to make transition to a US high school easier.

Sarah Dirksen: Lee came to the US to improve his English in order to get into an engineering program in an American University. I think most Asian students are motivated to do well and have studied vigorously their whole school life. Studying in the US was expected and is clearly a way to distinguish himself over other students in his local school.

2. How do you as a host family help your student assimilate into life in the US? Is it a daunting process for the host families?

Robin: To be honest, I think being ourselves and living our lives helps the most. They want to be part of the family and be involved as our other kids are. We have the same expectations for Vinny as our other kids. She enjoys being part of our “crazy, busy American life”.

www.kcsa.org
It is not daunting at all. We laugh together on a daily basis as we learn about her and she about us.

**Dawn Brown:** My advice to other families is to truly accept this child as a part of your family. Benson is my Chinese son and I am his American mom. He will always be a part of our family and has been from the moment we said yes to him joining our family. Families argue, disagree, cry, love, laugh, and worship together. He is treated as any other child in the family is treated.

3. **Are language barriers a problem? How is your student doing in our schools?**

**Robin:** The students are expected to have a certain proficiency in English or they are not allowed to participate in the exchange program. Our student’s English has not been a problem. Sometimes she has different terminology for things and it is fun trying to figure out what she means. She is very motivated and we have the same expectations for her as our own children, which is work hard, always do your best, and school comes first. She has been a good influence on my younger children to be more independent. She has a lot of friends and kids at the high school have been wonderful to her.

**Debbie Long:** Will’s spoken language was quite good when he arrived, but he struggles with the written and reading part of English. I am finding that it is just like having another sibling would be - sometimes they all interact and sometimes they don’t. No fighting, though!

4. **What have been some surprises you’ve experienced that you weren’t expecting?**

**Robin:** I was a bit surprised how much it is just like having another sibling for my kids. They argue, smile, etc. with her just as though she had been here forever.

**Debbie:** Our student is on his phone or computer a lot, which to him is normal, but for us it just isn’t always what we expected. But he’s a nice boy and fits in well. In some ways it is so easy it is almost like he isn’t around.

5. **What advice or encouragement can you give other families who might want to consider hosting an exchange student?**

**Robin:** Think about what little you have to lose if you don’t do it and all that might happen if you do. Our student is a non-practicing Buddhist in her country but has come here for this year with us knowing we are Christians. To me, that is an open door to spread the wonderful word of our Lord and Savior. Only God knows the plan for her and what this experience is meant to be for her and for us.

**Debbie:** You are most likely bringing an unreached person in your home. They see you respond to life. They watch you be the hands and feet of Christ. They listen to your responses, feel your compassion, experience your convictions, and hear the gospel over and over. What an experience to explain Christmas to someone who doesn’t even have the added confusion of Santa.

**Sarah:** Keep your expectations realistic. We all want to build the Kingdom, one person at a time, but you may never know if you did with this ONE student. We just have an opportunity to befriend someone, in our home, with our Christian worldview. Always be honest with them, communicate effectively even if it isn’t easy to do. And you know he has become one of you when his laundry becomes your laundry and he runs to the table with a happy face.
We are looking for a few more homestay families for our incoming international students. Host families offer international students a “home away from home.”

Host families provide supervision and support as well as housing, meals and transportation. They receive a stipend to cover many of these expenses. All host parents must be Christian believers and be committed to setting a godly example by investing in the spiritual and emotional development of the international student placed in their home.

Being a homestay family is not like hosting an exchange student. This is a ministry opportunity to build a lasting relationship. These students not only need a home-away-from-home, they need a family-away-from-family. We are looking for godly parents for kids who are a long way from home. Leviticus 19:33 says “When a foreigner lives with you in your land, don’t take advantage of him. Love him like one of your own.”

Are there other ways to be a part of the KCHS International Student Program? Yes; you could:

- Be a Prayer Warrior for an international student. Some of these students have never been out of their native country or away from their parents. Some of them have never heard of Jesus Christ or attended a church.
- Be a mentor-friend to an international student. Do you have time to get to know a high school student from a foreign country? What a great way to build a friendship while teaching about our culture and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Serve as a respite family. Don’t want to commit to a full school year? Consider hosting an international student for a weekend or over a school break. Consider taking an international student along on a planned family vacation.

Please consider helping us fulfill the great commission written in Matt 28:19, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” If you would like more information or would like to become involved with the International Student Program, please contact Kirk Evans at 381-2250, ext. 225 or email kevans@kcsa.org.

We are very excited about the excellent, growing International Student Program at KCHS and feel blessed to be part of this team.

WE'RE ON THE RADIO!

by Paul VanderKamp

Have you heard the Kalamazoo Christian Schools being mentioned on WCSG? We would like to thank the donor who is underwriting the cost for this service. It is allowing the school to support Christian radio as well as promote our school. One week a month from December through August, the Kalamazoo Christian Schools will be mentioned on WCSG approximately 12–15 times during that week. Please listen for our name to be mentioned and remember to promote the Kalamazoo Christian Schools to your family and friends!
Over 500 people attended the third annual Christmas Party for people in need at the Second Impressions Thrift Store on Wednesday, December 18, 2013. The store closed early that day in preparation for the party, which began at 4 PM. Guests could have a real shopping experience by choosing five items from the clothing racks.

Shoppers could also choose a storybook for each child on their shopping list and have it gift wrapped. Each child attending the party received a gift bag at the door when they left, which included a Beanie Baby and a candy bar, courtesy of Klosterman Distributing.

Second Impressions sent out invitations to the United Way and the organizations that they are affiliated with, and by public announcements on WWMT television and WKZO radio.

Donors to Second Impressions have been so generous to our store, and in turn have been able to share the blessings with the greater Kalamazoo community. Thank you donors, and a special thank you to the countless hours given by our faithful volunteers!

The Partnership Committee of the Christian School Association organized the construction of a float for the Kalamazoo Holiday Parade, held on November 9, 2013, as a way to generate some exposure for the Christian Schools in our community. The theme was a nativity scene. A large wooden stable was built over our trailer along with a manger. The students were dressed up as Mary and Joseph, angels, shepherds and sheep. In addition to the signage that promoted our school we also mentioned some of our unique educational opportunities, such as iPads, Spanish Immersion and Young 5’s pre-school. We had a sound system playing Christmas carols sung by children, some in English and some in Spanish.

We received a very nice response from the crowd, and it was wonderful to participate in this community event. Many people called out “Merry Christmas” to us.

It was a large undertaking, and special thanks to the Partnership Committee for participating and representing our schools!
Homecoming 2014 is just around the corner! Please join us on Friday, February 14, at our home gym, as we welcome the alumni from the classes of 1954, 1964, 1989, and 2004. The varsity girls and boys teams will take on Constantine, with the first game beginning at 6 PM. Alumni will be receiving more information soon about Homecoming events. We look forward to packing the house on February 14th!

Congratulations to the representatives for Homecoming 2014!

Host/Hostess
Abby Visser
Clayton Meldrum

Freshmen:
Alex Visser
Haley Balkema
Ridge deJong
Maggie Niewoonder
Trey deJong
Hanna Ryan

Sophomores:
Kevin Wunderly
Audrey Bouma
Trevor Jager
Alyson Katje
Isaac DeVries
Emily Brown

Juniors:
Taylor Miller
Jenna Gillespie
David Niewoonder
Renee Maring
Brendan Patterson
Hailey Mulder

Seniors:
Tyler Triemstra
Madison Locker
Ethan VanOosten
Ashley Sussman
Justin Palthe
Cara Knasel
After 18 years of shaping and influencing the girls soccer team at Kalamazoo Christian, Ron Smilanich has decided to step down as head soccer coach. Ron’s influence on soccer helped change the culture of girls high school soccer in the Kalamazoo area. More importantly, Ron formed positive, long-lasting relationships with the hundreds of girls he was privileged to coach at Kalamazoo Christian. Ron is a very humble, soft spoken man who would say he was blessed by having the privilege to coach these young ladies, but it was his players and the Kalamazoo Christian community that were blessed to have Ron as their soccer coach. Ron has all the qualities one would look for in a high school coach at Kalamazoo Christian. He believes in the principles of Christian education, he cares more for his athletes than his own achievements, he respects the game and everything about soccer, and he fights for the cause of promoting soccer in this area.

Ron never coached with his own agenda as the goal but what best met the needs and skills of his players. Ron became one of the most respected soccer coaches in Western Michigan. His reputation is not only known locally but also state wide. He was Division 4 state coach of the year 4 times and nominated for national coach of the year once. Ron’s 18-year accomplishments are impressive. Ron had 17 winning seasons as his teams compiled a 280-79-17 record with 4 state championships, 6 regional titles, 10 district titles, and 5 KVA championships. He coached 34 individual All-State players and 2 Dream Team players. Several of Ron’s players also had very successful college careers. However, Ron would say he is most proud of the fact that 17 of his 18 teams were All-Academic teams. Ron loved his soccer girls and they loved him.

Kalamazoo Christian will greatly miss Ron. He leaves a lasting legacy in girls’ soccer. Ron will now enjoy more time with his wife Sue and his children and grandchildren. We wish Ron all the best in the years ahead.

The Kalamazoo Christian School Foundation exists for the financial benefit of the Kalamazoo Christian Schools and its students. It receives donor funds and distributes the earnings from those funds, retaining the donated funds as invested assets. The KCSF presently has about $3 million in assets, with $1 million of this held at the Kalamazoo Community Foundation, with earnings distributed at our direction.

The KCSF has many funds dedicated to specific purposes, called donor advised funds, which include: general endowment funds, tuition assistance funds, college scholarship funds for KCSA graduates, a charitable gift annuity fund, and other dedicated purpose funds (arts, special ed, sports).

Grants are made from the funds at an average rate of 5% per year, or less if investment performance is low.

For the school year 2013-14 the general and tuition assistance funds are providing over $100,000 to the Kalamazoo Christian Schools.

Donations come from persons with special interest in the schools and from estate bequests. We are able to provide information to anyone interested in using the Foundation for planned charitable giving through the Barnabas Foundation, which is available to our constituents for expert, free, tax efficient, confidential advice for their planned giving and estate planning.

On March 31, 2014 the Kalamazoo Christian School Association Annual meeting will be held. At this meeting the constituency will vote for new school board/council members to serve three year terms. If you feel called to serve in this capacity or have any questions please contact Chris Pettit at cspettit@yahoo.com or submit your name by March 3, 2014 to be added to the nominees.
ATHLETIC TRAINERS
by Jerry Weesies

On November 6, 2013, six students from the athletic training class at KCHS attended the Student Athletic Trainers Day event at Albion College. The students heard discussions on overuse injuries and what being an emergency room doctor is all about. Free Albion College apparel was also given away.

After being treated to a college cafeteria lunch and campus tour, the students worked with Albion College athletic trainers on how to move an injured athlete. This "hands-on" training proved to be a lot of fun and gave the kids some great take-home skills. Attending along with head athletic trainer Erin Giannotta were Erika Block, Ellie DeKoekkoek, Ashley Miller, Aleshia Wolthuis, Tori Veldkamp, and Hailey Mulder.

MIDDLE SCHOOL SINGERS

Middle Schoolers sang at the living nativity at Lighthouse Community Church on December 14, 2013

BUILDING BRIDGES FROM 5TH TO 1ST GRADE
by Meghan VanLente

What do 5th graders, 1st graders, insects, and native Americans have in common? Great question! As part of our school theme, “Building Bridges”, fifth grade has invited the first graders down to the new middle school wing twice this year to share our learning with them. During the first quarter, the fifth graders went all around Kalamazoo County collecting insects to make into bug projects. The students shared their projects with first graders in small groups and had great discussions about the types of insects found in Michigan. Then, in January, the first graders came back to visit as “ambassadors” representing historical museums, looking for native American exhibitors. The fifth graders wrote speeches, dressed in native outfits, and presented their information to the prestigious museum visitors. Both groups have really enjoyed these interactions and sharing their knowledge with each other. We are looking forward to being together again soon!
Pre-School Dads Night

The Kalamazoo Christian Preschools recently celebrated Dads night on January 16, 2014 with a construction theme, inviting current pre-school students, dads, grandpas, and interested guests to come to Kalamazoo Christian Elementary School and see what pre-school is all about. Everyone had fun, including the teachers and special helpers!

News Around The Schools

KCMS Thank You Video!

Our technology coordinator, Mr. Daniel Cooke, recently created a video to commemorate the completion of our new Kalamazoo Christian Middle School as a way to say "thank you" to the countless donors and contributors to the successful project. The video can be seen on YouTube at the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JeZnRbppkws

Sixth-Grade Snow Fun

6th graders at KCMS recently welcomed the newest member of their class. He was a little frosty at first, but is gradually warming up to his new-found friends.

KCHS Digital Media

See what the high school digital media class is producing on YouTube!

http://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFt07yzhMzlz9oJ06_JkFg
BOYS CROSS COUNTRY
by Jeff Offringa

The boys cross country team knew they were a solid team coming into the season and trained hard over the summer in preparation. At the midpoint of the season at the Otsego Invitational, Joe Brouwer ran the fastest time of his high school running career. The following week, his brother Sam Brouwer ran his season-best time at the KVA race at Schoolcraft. The next week Ryan Wunderly had a season-best time at the Portage Invitational, and the following week at the Dowagiac Invitational, Doug Hollett, Justin Richardson, and John Stehouwer all had season-best times on the beautiful wooded course. The boys team ran solid at the KVA Championship meet to take 3rd in the league this year, and when hosting the Comet Invitational in late October, took home the 2nd place trophy and Brendan Patterson ran his best race of the season. The next week at the Regional Championships, Hunter Perrin ran the race of his life by placing 2nd and his teammates, Geoffrey Mallett and Daniel Baljeu ran season-best times as well. The boys team placed 2nd at Regionals and qualified for the State Finals where they put in a solid 9th place performance. Doug Hollett earned All-State honors for the second year in a row and Hunter, Geoffrey, Daniel, Ryan, and Justin all ran great races on the muddy course. During the season, members of the 1981 State Championship cross country team were asked if they could meet with the boys team to give them some advice and extra motivation. Ken Fouts and Andy Kromminga both stopped by after practice one day to talk with the boys, and it was great for them to hear about the 1981 State Championship cross country team. It gave them a little more motivation to work even harder throughout the season, paying off when they placed in the top 10 at the state finals! Congratulations, Boys!

GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY
by Jeff Offringa

The girls cross country team was a small and tight knit group of young women this year. They were a diverse group with 2 seniors, 2 juniors, 1 sophomore, and 2 new freshman runners. The girls worked their way through the first part of the season facing some very hot weather and one very hilly course at Galesburg. During the second part of the season, all of the girls started running fast times. In mid October, Kate McLain won the Dowagiac Invitational then proceeded to have a season-best time at the Comet Invitational the next week. Teammates Alison Dunlap and Katie Patterson also ran season-best times at the Comet Invitational on the muddy course. At the Regional Championship race the next week, Elena Van Loo ran her fastest time of the season and Kate McLain proved she was the fastest girl in the region by winning the race for the 4th year in a row. The girls team placed 3rd at the Regional Championships and qualified for the state finals. The following week at the State Finals the girls placed 22nd and Samantha Beebe, Jodi Stoffer, and Kirsten Welborn ran their fastest races of the season. Kate McLain placed 12th at the State Finals to earn All-State honors for the 4th time. Congratulations, Girls!
The Boys Varsity tennis team had another successful season this year. At the beginning of the season, there was one team that loomed as a threat to Kalamazoo Christian’s chances of winning the conference, Regionals, and the opportunity to go to the State tournament. That team was none other than Hackett. We played Hackett toward the end of the conference matches, meeting with comparable records of KCHS 4-0 and HCC 3-0-1. We tied Hackett that day with a big comeback win by Tyler Meyer and Nate Herder, which secured our lead in the league standings. We proceeded to win the KVA conference and the conference tournament and moved on to Regionals. Our biggest competition in the Regional tournament was Jackson Lumen Christi and Hackett. Tyler Boes won a very important match early in the day against Battle Creek Pennfield that gave us a shot at the title. We ended up tying Jackson Lumen Christi for the Regional championship. A week after Regionals, we traveled across the state to Holly to play in the State tournament. We played well, winning many matches and finishing in 10th place overall, which is quite an accomplishment and we should be very proud of our tennis players. Andrew Klein, our #1 singles player, received All-State and All-Conference honors. We also represented All-KVA Conference with Cordell Engbers, Andrew Long, David Niewoonder, and Dean VanElderen. Great season Boys!

The 2013 JV volleyball team consisted of seven sophomores and six freshmen and a unique blend of experience. As the season progressed, it became apparent that one of the most important lessons to be learned could be summed up in one word: FINISHING.

Finishing in terms of winning rallies, sets, and ultimately, matches - not easy at the JV level. The team finished with a match record of 14 wins and 21 losses, and a 6 and 3 record in KVA dual matches. So, even more importantly, finishing came to mean ending the season as a group of thirteen players, a manager, an intern coach and a coach, all certain of their value as a member of the group, and all believing that coming to practice each day and working hard to improve, is a pretty cool thing to do if you love what you’re doing.

Team members included sophomores Brooklyn Block, Gabby Brandt, Jasmine Czajka, Brooke Leep, Allina Plemmons and Anna Vanden Heuvel, and freshmen Dena Baker, Leann Gasaway, Megan Hoekstra, Rachel Long, Maggie Niewoonder and Cassidi Triemstra.

As our year-end t-shirts attest in Catalan, “Jugadors Seguidors Tots Units Fem Forca!” (“players all together we are strong”).
IMPORTANT EVENTS

Buggies & Battlefields
Featuring Moses at Sight and Sound Theater

Sept. 29 - Oct. 4, 2014
Monday-Saturday

Your Trip to Ohio/Pennsylvania Includes:

- Transportation via deluxe motor coach
- Five nights accommodations at first-class hotels
- Visit the site of "The Living Bible" in Mansfield, Ohio and do two of their well known tours, the Life of Christ and Museum of Christian Martyrs
- Tour to shop in Ohio's famous Amish community, eat in an Amish home and have a guided tour and education of the Amish culture and lifestyle.
- See a narrative performance of "Hall Stacked," the musical, an exciting tale about turning around the troubles in our lives.
- A guided tour of Winter's Carvings by Sadie; the hobgoblin lady, with a special "freak" touch following our tour.
- A visit to Gettysburg featuring the new Visitor Center, a guided tour of the Gettysburg Battlefield and a walk through the cemetery where President Lincoln gave the famous Gettysburg Address.
- See the epic performance of "Moses" at Pennsylvania's famous Sight & Sound Theater.
- Enjoy a guided tour of Pennsylvania's Amish community and sample homemade soft pretzels and homemade root beer.
- Visit the Flight 93 memorial where the plane went down on September 11, 2001.
- Step back in time to Sauder Village, Ohio's largest living, history village.
- Total meals included: 6 breakfasts, 4 lunches and 6 dinners
- Baggage handling for one piece of luggage per person.
- All taxes and tips included.
- Dennis Roestema (former KCHS teacher) will be our Tour Director as well as bus driver.

Departure Point & Time:
7:00 am Kalamazoo Christian
1201 Stadium Drive, Kalamazoo

A Countryside Tours, Inc. custom tour prepared for Dennis Roestema
All profits go to Kalamazoo Christian Schools

Trip Price:
$409.00 per person based on double occ.
$499.00 per person based on triple occ.
$519.00 per person based on quad occ.
$110.00 single occupancy

COMET BOOSTERS HALL OF FAME

The Comet Booster Club welcomes nominations for the KCHS Athletic Hall of Fame. Please send an email to Jerry Weesies at jweesies@kcsa.org for nomination forms.

FEBRUARY

8 ES Father/Daughter Dance 5:30PM
13 2nd-4th grades Winter Program 6:30PM
10 - 14 HS Homecoming Week
15 HS Air Jam and Dance
27 HS Play
28 HS Play
28 ES Pastors' Chapel
28 ES Carnival 5 to 8PM

MARCH

5 HS conferences 6-8PM
6 HS conferences 1-3, 6-8PM - 1/2 day school
7 HS no school
10 8th Grade Night at KCHS
13 No School - Professional Development Day
14 No School - Professional Development Day

APRIL

4-13 Spring Break

Contributing Photographers:
Daniel Cooke, Sarah Dirksen, Patty Gruizinga, Kalamazoo Gazette, Dave Koning, Jeff Offringa, Cheryl TenBrink, Paul VanderKamp, Jerry Weesies

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