

# PWA



Passion Wonder Awe | Celebrating the People of TDChristian

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SPRING 2026 ISSUE



The Power of Cross-Grade Art [Page 8]



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## IN THIS ISSUE

# Note from the Principal

We are thrilled to present this edition of our *Passion, Wonder, & Awe* magazine. In this issue you will read about how current students, alumni, and staff are experiencing life in all its fullness at TDChristian and in the years beyond their time at TDCH.

Highlights include stories about new course offerings at school, high-performance athletics, alumni making impacts in their communities, the launch of our Student Servant Leadership initiative, and much more. As you flip through the pages, it is our hope that you are blessed and encouraged by the amazing ways that TDChristian staff and students, both past and present, share how they respond to their Creator with passion, wonder, and awe in the world around them.



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COVER PHOTO CREDIT: William Groot  
Students share their art. Read more on page 8.

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## Business as Unusual

BY SEAN VAN EERDEN, TEACHER: ENGLISH



Valentina Di Luciano Rangel, Sofia Tassone, Charlotte Allen, Ava Juttla

The law of supply and demand is evident in this year's course schedule, which offers six business-related courses, compared to five last year and four the year before. A new addition is the Grade 10 Business course, taught by new-to-TDChristian teacher Brian Bergsma. Although he describes the process as "building the bridge as we are walking on it," Mr. Bergsma has found innovative and authentic ways to engage students as they help lay the foundation of the course together.

Early in the first semester, Mr. Bergsma asked the class to develop a product to sell at the Fall Market, a one-day event where the school community and neighbours in

Vaughan gather to celebrate artisanal goods. Although it felt like a daunting challenge at first, it ended up being "one of the highlights of the course." Student Sofia Tassone, who sold homemade jam, branded "Jammies" by her and her partner Valentina Di Luciano Rangel, says the experience "helped me



Chrystal Spencer, Connor Marion, and Grace Tan

connect and communicate with people in our community while learning the importance of how to present and sell our product effectively." Along with learning how to brand, market, and price their product, Sofia also realized that it was a chance to integrate her Christian values into doing business.

Experiential learning also played a central role in the Economics class, which put theory into practice by launching the popular TD Café. The café offered a wide range of drinks, including the Falcon, a maple matcha mix that had to be tasted to be believed. Teacher Anneke Gretton explained that her goal was for students to "learn that it's doable". Beyond that, students gained experience in budgeting, logistics, advertising, and product testing—the Falcon itself underwent extensive testing before the flavour was perfected.

Ms. Gretton was surprised by how the "differently talented people" in her class and the "generosity of the community" combined to create a successful business venture. Start-up funding was provided as a loan from the Alice Vanderkooy Fund. Donations of a fridge, branded merchandise, and cups helped increase profits. Students contributed in many ways, including by creating signage, working in the café, managing finances, researching trends, calculating profits, designing sales, and organizing operations.

The impact of the project was clear to students like Troy Elhert, who said he learned "how easy it is just to start and get out there." He recognized that with diligence, hard work, and planning, much can be accomplished. His advice to future entrepreneurs is simple: "Just start." **PWA**



Ryan Visser (second from left) and Brad Biersteker (forth from left) have both worked on renovations to the TDChristian building. Hailey, Ava, Candice, and Ethan Visser have all attended TDChristian.

# TALENTS UNEARTHED

*Unearthed*

■ BY SEAN VAN EERDEN, TEACHER: ENGLISH

**D**uring the summer of 2025, TDChristian underwent a significant renovation, focused primarily on updating the floors. The job was dusty, multi-faceted, and on a tight timeline, but former student Bradley Biersteker, superintending the project for his company Broccolini, was more than ready for the challenge. In fact, he has always enjoyed fast-paced, high-pressure environments and “the feeling of needing to stay on [his] toes.” He credits these potentially stressful situations for teaching him how to think and communicate clearly with the client as well as his colleagues.

He found his work last summer “very rewarding,” not only because he was able to see a project through from start to finish, but because he was able to be a part of the continuing story of the school, a story that passes from generation to generation. His father-in-law, Ryan Visser, worked on the renovation project in 2001, which featured two staircases that Brad is excited “to rip up this March”

service in the light of God’s word.” Brad became a field supervisor right out of high school; he is now an assistant supervisor, which means that he manages the schedule, procurement, budget, and documentation. He credits TDChristian with teaching him how to “show up on time, communicate professionally, take responsibility, and work as part of a team.” However, his learning didn’t end there. In learning for service, he realized that “work is not just about success or productivity, but about serving those around me.” As he collaborates with a wide assortment of people, he strives to do it “with honesty, respect, patience, and compassion. A lot of patience.”

In thinking about the future of his career, Brad says he is interested in project management because he enjoys working with other people, being creative, and adapting to challenges. However, his future is more than work, and he says that he takes what he learned at TD into “every aspect of life.” **PWA**

as a part of the continuing work on the floors. While working at different job sites, he frequently meets people who tell him proudly about work they did at the school—the plumbing they put in or the wall they built as part of a renovation project. Ryan notes this as a difference between TDChristian alumni and graduates of other schools. People “want to be involved after they’ve graduated,” and they remain invested in what’s happening at the school.

Although the physical building needs updating from time to time, the core vision remains the same: “Learning for

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# A Case of Creative Mentoring

BY WILLIAM GROOT '78

Since 2010, the Grade 11 Mentorship Program has been connecting students with alumni, parents, or guardians to help them learn for service in the light of God's word. But mentoring happens in other ways, too.

For the past two years, students have worked with Marissa (Mastenbroek) Idzerda ('90) to create the posters for the school's mainstage plays, *2000 Candles* and *Our Town*.

After TDChristian, Marissa attended OCAD (where she was valedictorian for her class), before working full-time as an Art Director/Creative Director at multinational agencies in Toronto. After the birth of her children and a two-and-a-half year break, she freelanced during the school months of the year, keeping summers free to be with her kids.

Throughout her career, Marissa has done countless ad campaigns so helping TDChristian students create these posters has been fun and rewarding. For *Our Town*, she worked with senior students Nina Cheung and Sarah L'Heureux. Each of them shares their experience below.

**MARISSA:** Sarah, Nina, and I met to talk about a concept for the poster. We did a few rough sketches together in the TDChristian commons room before turning it over to them to decide what the poster would feature. They chose to put a couple on a hillside and inside a Mason jar housing the memories that make up *Our Town*.

Nina and Sarah split the duties, each drawing a different part of the poster.

That was brave! They

trusted each other and built each other up. Once done, they sent the artwork to me. I scanned it, adjusted colours, and made the text they had drawn more visible.

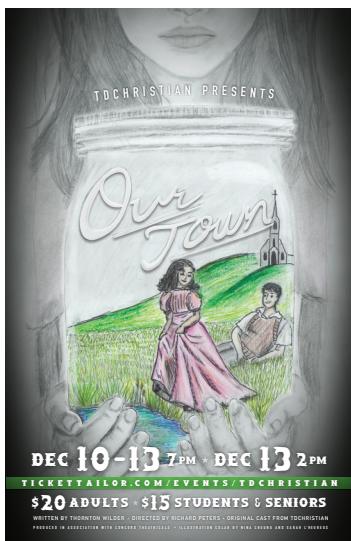
To complete the poster, Nina and Sarah acted as clients to decide what they thought was working and what wasn't.

**NINA:** I learned to work collaboratively on an artwork and

express my own style while considering unity with another person's. Usually when I work on an art piece, I do what I think is best, but for this project the three of us worked on a single poster; Sarah's ideas and mine, even though carried out separately, had to come together in unison in one artwork.

**SARAH:** I learned the importance of patience and open-mindedness for working on a group project. I gained experience adjusting my ideas and working through changes while meeting a deadline. It helped me understand how different perspectives can contribute to produce a great result. It also taught me ways to stay positive and cooperative during a creative process.

TDChristian plans to have keen and willing students work with Marissa to create posters for upcoming shows. **PWA**



Sarah (left), Nina



## The Power of Cross-Grade Art

BY WILLIAM GROOT '78

Cross-Grade Art, offered every semester, grants students in Grades 10, 11, and 12 opportunities to learn from each other in a melded and authentic community. They develop technical skills and grow creatively through presentations and thoughtful one-on-one interactions, supporting and challenging each other with suggestions, encouragement, and critiques.

Art teacher, Matt Brown, has developed a three-year cycle for students to hone their skills, each year highlighting different media. First-semester Cross-Grade Art ended with students completing a summative project in which they chose a previous course assignment and revisited it with the aim of taking it to another level. Students took an element of art or a principle of design and worked through successive iterations to clearly demonstrate it in a final “masterpiece.”

At the end of the process, students presented their artwork to their peers, who provided observations, critiques,

suggestions, and compliments. For example, the class identifies the element or principle each student had chosen to work on.

Maria Martin, Grade 11, and Samara Lecona, Grade 12, expanded their learning using the “Words with Character” assignment.



Maria shared, “Experimenting with brightness, contrast, and the glow of the headlights showed me how different techniques affect how

light appears in a drawing. The style that I chose is very different from what I’m used to and comfortable with, which allowed me to experiment with different colours and techniques. The final piece was more fulfilling to me than my previous artwork.”

Samara, whose artwork symbolizes

romance and love at its fullest, learned that “when you truly want to be good at something, you need to dedicate your time and hard work to it.”



Nicole Saad, Grade 10, created a new art piece based on the “Drawing Your Own Skeleton” assignment. She really enjoyed adding a full storyline to her work by creating a contrast between the hand and arm. The flower, butterflies, and flesh part of the hand show life coming out of death, represented by the arm bone under the water; during critiques, a peer mentioned that it was like new life after baptism. Nicole noted, “I learned that repeating a project can be very beneficial, as it allowed me to grow creatively.”



In a culture obsessed with the new, the mining of past explorations allows students to experience greater depth in their work by reinforcing learned concepts and drawing their attention to aspects that may have been initially passed over. Additionally, it steers them away from the temptation of constantly looking for a novel experience and towards beauty that is found by looking more intently. **PWA**

# WHEN DATA MEETS REAL LIFE

BY KENDRA MENKEN AND ADRIANA VERKAIK



Adriana (left), Kendra

**D**ata Management is a Grade 12 math class that takes a deeper look at statistics and methods for properly analyzing data. It requires that we apply our learning to a specific data set of our choice to achieve a clear end goal or result. For the final independent study project, our goal was to take real data from our family businesses and turn it into something useful—organized spreadsheets that could improve decision making, increase quote approval rates, and simplify client management.

Adriana worked with a batting cage facility, and Kendra with a tree care company. We both had countless data points with uncovered correlations and frequencies; turning that chaos into clean, structured spreadsheets became our objective, with the aim of building tools these businesses could use.

Once we analyzed the data, we realized how much potential had been hiding in plain sight. For the batting cage business, Adriana analyzed booking patterns, peak hours, and customer return rates to help predict demand and plan more efficiently as well as to organize scheduling and team calendars. For the tree company, Kendra focused on the factors that lead to quotes being approved. By sorting, filtering, and applying numerous formulas in Excel, we both organized data and uncovered trends that could improve how each business operates.

By the end, our ISU felt less like a school project and more like a contribution to something bigger. We created spreadsheets that our families can reference to make decisions, manage clients, and make growth more intentional and efficient. We were able to see first-hand how simply spreadsheets and data management can contribute to the real world. **PWA**

BOOKINGS DATA WINTER 2025/26					
Individual Booking Data			Space Used/Week (Within open hours)		
Week	# of Booking	tot Hours	Week	Percentage of time cages are occup	
Sept 28 to Oct 4	4	3.5	Sept 28 to Oct 4	2%	
Oct 5 to Oct 11	12	10.5	Oct 5 to Oct 11	4%	
Oct 12 to Oct 18	7	6	Oct 12 to Oct 18	3%	
Oct 19 to Oct 25	15	14	Oct 19 to Oct 25	5%	
Oct 26 to Nov 1	16	25.5	Oct 26 to Nov 1	14%	
Nov 2 to Nov 8	44	56.5	Nov 2 to Nov 8	22%	
Nov 9 to Nov 15	44	57	Nov 9 to Nov 15	19%	
Nov 16 to Nov 22	40	55.5	Nov 16 to Nov 22	23%	
Nov 23 to Nov 29	45	49	Nov 23 to Nov 29	19%	
Nov 30 to Dec 6	44	61	Nov 30 to Dec 6	24%	
Dec 7 to Dec 13	44	58.5	Dec 7 to Dec 13	22%	
Dec 14 to Dec 20	38	54.5	Dec 14 to Dec 20	23%	
Dec 21 to Dec 27	38	73	Dec 21 to Dec 27	49%	
Dec 28 to Jan 3	69	76	Dec 28 to Jan 3	27%	
Jan 4 to Jan 10	52	73	Jan 4 to Jan 10	33%	
One Variable Statistics			One Variable Statistics		
Mean	34.1	44.9	Mean	19%	
Median		40 55.5	Median	22%	
Mode		44 NO MODE	Mode	22%	
St Dev		19 25.7	St Dev	13%	

“Kendra & Adriana designed incredible spreadsheets for their Data ISU’s; both of their spreadsheets were for real businesses, and I’m amazed at their work. Professional, useful, it’s at a level that is way beyond a Grade 12 Math or Business course.”

—Ben Freeman, Teacher



## Pursuing Excellence Through Competition

BY WILLIAM GROOT '78



John Veltman,  
Mann Cup 1992

**A**t TDChristian, sports help students in their learning. Besides developing skills, athletes grow by working together and being together. Competitions are avenues for players to develop and display their God-given talents, individually and collectively.

A large, green TDChristian Falcon hangs on the main wall in the gym. Beside it are three aims for our athletic program: HONOUR God in all that you do, RESPECT others and the game, and COMPETE with all of your heart.

We asked TDChristian alumni who made it to the National Lacrosse League (NLL) to share their thoughts and experiences.

### *WHAT ABOUT LACROSSE HELPED YOU ENJOY IT?*

**JIM VELTMAN '84:** It's a high-scoring, fast-paced, and full-body contact game that is fun to watch and a challenge to play.

**JOHN VELTMAN '86:** It taught me the importance of hard work, focus, and consistent practice.

**ADAM WIEDEMANN '14:** It's the speed, physicality, and camaraderie that comes with being on a team.

**LUKE VANSCHEPEN, 2010-13:** It requires you to constantly work on your skill and craft to improve and find new levels of competition within yourself.

### *SHARE A SIGNIFICANT STORY FROM YOUR LACROSSE JOURNEY.*

**JIM:** When I was young, games against Indigenous teams were rough-and-tumble affairs. As I grew older, I began to understand that their passionate style of play came from their culture's history of the game, which is both medicinal and in honour of the Creator; it must be played at an all-out level. This

contact triggered a lifelong goal to reconcile my relationship with Indigenous people. After I retired, I started a charity that ran lacrosse clinics on remote reservations. My last five years of teaching were at a high school for Indigenous students.

**JOHN:** My path to the NLL was not typical. At nine years old, I suffered a serious injury—a broken neck—that forced me to stop playing until I was 19. As the NLL evolved and placed more value on defensive players, I decided at age 34 to challenge myself by attending an open tryout, which led to earning a spot on defence with the Ottawa Rebels.

**LUKE:** Being named captain to the Hill Academy team gave me extreme confidence and made me truly realize I had what it takes to push and go to the next level.

### *WHAT ABOUT YOUR TDCHRISTIAN YEARS HELPED PREPARE YOU FOR HIGH-LEVEL LACROSSE?*

**JOHN:** Playing alongside other skilled students pushed me to become better. It also made me realize the gift that God had given me and



Adam Wiedemann, Georgia Swarm 2025

how to use that gift to compete at a high level in sports.

**ADAM:** I was able to play multiple sports with my friends, learn about different sports, learn how to overcome adversity in games, and have fun while doing it.

**LUKE:** TDChristian staff taught me the right way to lead with my words and actions. Using my Christian perspective even in a non-religious environment enabled me to be an effective leader and strong competitor.

**WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE HIGH SCHOOL ATHLETES?**

**JIM:** Without opponents there is no game, and my respect for them inspired me to put forth my best effort regardless of the final score.

**JOHN:** Remember, when you're working hard, someone else is working harder. When you're getting strong, someone else is getting stronger. When you're getting smart, someone else is getting smarter. Be that person. Use God's gift to its fullest.

**ADAM:** Embrace the grind and truly love what you are doing. Put in as much time and effort as you can to perfect your craft.

**LUKE:** Enjoy the journey. Nothing in sport is handed to you. To achieve your goals and push to be the best version of yourself, work for it. You may face setbacks, but the ability to force the best out of yourself is a feeling second to none.

**WHERE ARE THEY NOW?**

A member of the Canadian Lacrosse Hall of Fame, the Ontario Lacrosse Hall of Fame, the Brampton Sports Hall of Fame, and the NLL Hall of Fame, Jim recently retired from high school teaching after 32 years. He and his wife, Teresa (Dekkema) ('87), have two children.

John is the owner of J&G Machinery Movers. He played in the NLL for one year and is a Brampton Excelsiors Lacrosse Club Life Member. He and his wife, Trish (VanSoelen) ('86), have three daughters who all graduated from TDChristian.

Adam is playing his sixth season for the Georgia Swarm, a team based just outside of Atlanta, which drafted him 8<sup>th</sup> in the 2018-19 Entry Draft. Besides playing, Adam coaches high school lacrosse in the greater Atlanta area.

Luke played four seasons in the NLL for four teams after being drafted 16<sup>th</sup> in the 2018-19 NLL Entry Draft. He and his wife, Allison VanderWier ('15), live in West Niagara. Luke is a Toronto firefighter. **PWA**

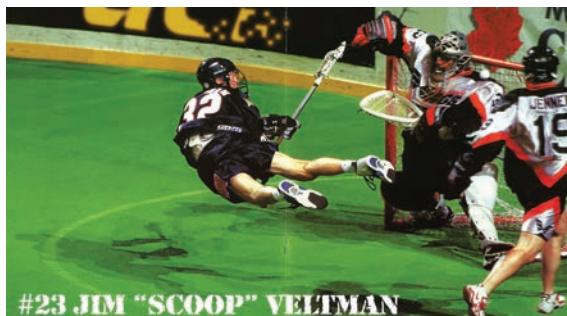


Photo from "The Rock Report," April 1999

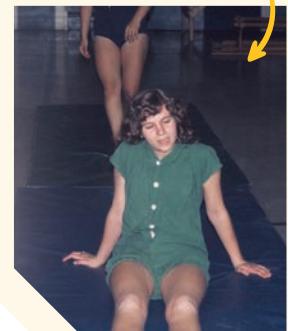
**FROM THE ARCHIVES**

*Student Becca Lewis holds up a 1970s girls' gym suit from our archives.*



Becca Lewis in Grade 11

*Do you recognize this colour photo from a gym glass in the 70s?*



## HOSPITALITY FORWARDED



The photo above features two professional counsellors who ended up working at TD including Tara Van Halteren (purple sweater top row) and Megan [Piccolo] Kooy (bottom row second from left). Full photo description left to right, top row: Ben Freeman, Joel Zondervan, Joshua Baker, Kristin Claydon, Karen Martens, Deanna Schaafsma, Tara VanHalteren, Evonne Downer, Adeoluwa Adesina, Sylvan Mostert, Alice Vanderkooy. Bottom row: John-Mark Giancola, Megan Piccolo, Janita Grift, Mitchell Vanermeij, Nicole Veldhoen, Evan Kooy.

### BY SEAN VAN EERDEN, TEACHER: ENGLISH

During the 90s and 2000s, TDChristian ran a program called Peer Counselling that trained Grade 10 students in the skill of communication. The communication skills it taught were not designed for presentations, debates, or centre-stage at assemblies, but for a type of communication that practiced the art of listening well, asking good questions, and being present in conversation. Originally founded by Alice VanderKooy and carried on by Ben Freeman, Matt Heinbuch,

Evelyn Dengerink, Judy VanSchepen, and Megan Kooy, it was interrupted by COVID after being an essential part of the school's leadership for many years. In 2026, under the leadership of two former Peer Counsellors, Colin Hoving and Rachael Weening, the program will be reintroduced.

The desire to begin again is a testament to the lasting impact it left on Colin and Rachael. Rachael remembers being “blown away that there was an art and science to conversation that could take it deeper and further,” and Colin

remembers “that it helped him build his confidence.” As much as the program offers support to those who need to talk, it is a revelatory experience for those learning the skills as well. The fact that at least ten current or former staff members went through the program and are now thriving in a relational-centric career shows its usefulness for all participants in the rich conversation it instigates.

Rachael specifically remembers being a Grade 9 student who, in those first scary weeks of newness, was taken out for lunch by a Grade 12 student, Carolyn (Breukelman) Ages, a peer counsellor at the time. Though she can't remember the details of the conversation, she remembers how it gave her a sense of belonging and made her feel seen. This small act of kindness remains vivid in her mind many years later and was a part of her inspiration for being involved in Peer Counselling as a senior student. She “loves the bridges it made” back then, and she loved “being able to give back.”

An ideal Peer Counsellor is not necessarily an outgoing leader, an academic superstar, or an event organizer. Instead, they need an openness to learn, humility, and empathy for others. As the peer counsellors begin their work in our school, whether it be on location at our Grade 10 trip to Beacon, or in the hallways, classes, and lunch hours, they establish a legacy where spaces of belonging are intentionally and thoughtfully made for all students. In both Rachael and Colin's lives, they have been called into community and have then sought to call others. It is incredible the way God can grow harvest after harvest of good fruit from a simple act of human kindness. **PWA**

# Raising Up Servant Leaders

BY RACHAEL WEENING '98, TEACHER AT TDCHRISTIAN



This year, TDChristian launched a new program called Servant Student Leaders (SSL). By combining intentional discipleship, hands-on leadership experiences, and personalized mentorship, the goal is to raise up servant-hearted leaders equipped to influence their communities for Christ at TDChristian and wherever else the Lord leads them. The core values are clear: putting faith into action, focusing on service, embracing authenticity, choosing integrity, and developing a growth mindset.

The branch of the program dedicated to cultivating Trip Leaders is open exclusively to Grade 12 students. Each applicant submitted a written application and was interviewed by Colin Hoving (VP of Student Services) and me. This year, more than 30 Grade 12 students stepped forward to be part of this leadership stream, a remarkable response that reflects both courage and commitment.

Colin and I oversee key moments in the life of our school community, including Grade 9 Orientation Week, Grade 10 course selection, and the Beacon trip. Senior student involvement has always been important to us, and now we have a team of students who have intentionally chosen to serve in these formative spaces.

So far this year, our Grade 12 Trip Leaders have led devotions, worship,

games, and small group conversations, while also simply spending meaningful time with younger students. During Grade 9 Orientation, they participated in on-campus sessions and led off-site rotations at Scott Mission, offering a beautiful introduction to the heart of the TDChristian community.

The Grade 10 Beacon trip was especially powerful. Not only did senior students lead worship, but they also facilitated large group sessions, volunteering to prepare and deliver their own messages. Colin and I simply ensured the themes were distinct; the initiative and preparation were entirely theirs.

Grade 12 Trip Leader Jonas Alkema reflected, "I think for me, a big part of what made the trip great was watching the Grade 10s get close as a group, but also doing that with my friends at the same time. Helping other people get close is just cool. It's really neat how, just by leaving the building, you can hang out with your classmates and peers in a more vulnerable way, which teaches you so much more in a much shorter time."

In February, 20 Trip Leaders volunteered to

help facilitate Grade 10 roundtable discussions for course selection and Beacon follow-up. This definitely makes the experience richer and more impactful for participants.

These students are leading boldly and growing deeply. Every interaction between our Grade 12 leaders and younger students is a win, strengthening connection, deepening faith, and building a stronger TDChristian community. **PWA**



Peyton Ages, Emmy White, Rachel Wong, Chiara Laboni, Carla Shamoon, Carolina Santos



Large Group session led by Jake Galotti, Sebastian Ainley, Sean Christianson, Noah Kim

GREG VERKAIK '15

## From Marsh Muck to Peatlands

BY WILLIAM GROOT '78

The youngest of three, Greg attended elementary school at Holland Marsh District Christian School, now King Christian School. His favourite subjects were science and math. He also enjoyed hockey, swimming, and camping—including playing with fires.



At TDCristian, Grade 10 Environmental Block and Grade 11 International Block were critical to Greg's growth as a person and learner. The first expanded his interest in God's creation, revealing numerous possibilities in fields he found compelling. The second, featuring an eight-week trip to the Dominican

Republic, inspired Greg to travel more to learn from other cultures while developing his interactive and collaborative skills. Earning credits as a teacher's assistant for both blocks provided Greg with ways to share his quiet passions and considerable knowledge through presentations and cross-grade interaction.

Greg chose the Life Sciences program at McMaster University because first year was broad. Exposure to an exceptionally interesting Environmental Science course, coupled with his love for biology, led Greg to study ecohydrology, a combination of ecology and hydrology that focuses on the dynamic interactions between water cycles and ecosystems.

Near the end of second year, Greg was recruited by Dr. James Michael (Mike) Waddington, a Canada Research Chair in ecohydrology and a professor in the School of Earth, Environment & Society at McMaster University. Greg was offered a summer research assistant position, but was already committed to a summer job at the Muck Crops Research Station in King, Ontario, which he enjoyed.

Greg's renewed connection with Waddington during third year resulted in a heightened interest in ecohydrology, especially as it relates to peatlands (wetlands with more than 40 cm of organic soil) and their interactions with wildfire.



2015 E-Block: Emily Amos-Wood, Ben Freeman, Greg Verkaik, Dylan Knibbe

After completing an undergraduate thesis under Waddington, which involved extensive field research in Parry Sound and northern Alberta, Greg wrote his master's thesis, *Wildfire Impacts on the Hydrological Connectivity of Peatlands*, from 2019 to 2021. Although passionate about collecting field data, Greg was pushed by the pandemic to explore modelling techniques rather than complete his field studies.

Since then, under Waddington's supervision, Greg has focused on his PhD thesis, which primarily consists of three articles on peatland wildfire hydrology. The first, "Fuel loads and peat smoldering carbon loss increase following drainage in a forested boreal peatland," was published July 2025 in the *Journal of Geophysical Research: Biogeosciences*.

If all goes well, Greg will defend his thesis this year before embarking on a career as a university professor or as a researcher with an organization such as Natural Resources Canada or the Canadian Forestry Service. **PWA**



Luke Klein Horsman (Photo on Film)

# An Unexpected Legacy

■ BY TIM BUWALDA, TEACHER: COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

When longtime TDChristian teacher Alice Vanderkooy retired in 2017, she had many plans to travel and to spend more time with hobbies like cycling and photography. Unfortunately, her time was short: Alice passed away from cancer in 2022, but not before ensuring her love for learning, and her love of the school, would continue. Before she died, Alice established an annual fund to support innovative learning initiatives at TDChristian.

Alice's family also decided to donate her old Nikon film camera to the school. As our photography program's cameras are completely digital, we weren't exactly sure what to do with it. It sat on a shelf in a shoebox for a while until one day it was discovered by Grade 11 Photography student Luke Klein Horsman.

Luke loved the possibilities and challenge of using an old piece of analog technology for his final project when everyone else in the class would be using digital. To his surprise, when he looked in the shoebox, he saw not only the camera but also two rolls of unopened, 25-year-old colour film.

This gave Luke the idea to focus on the theme of nostalgia by taking photos of

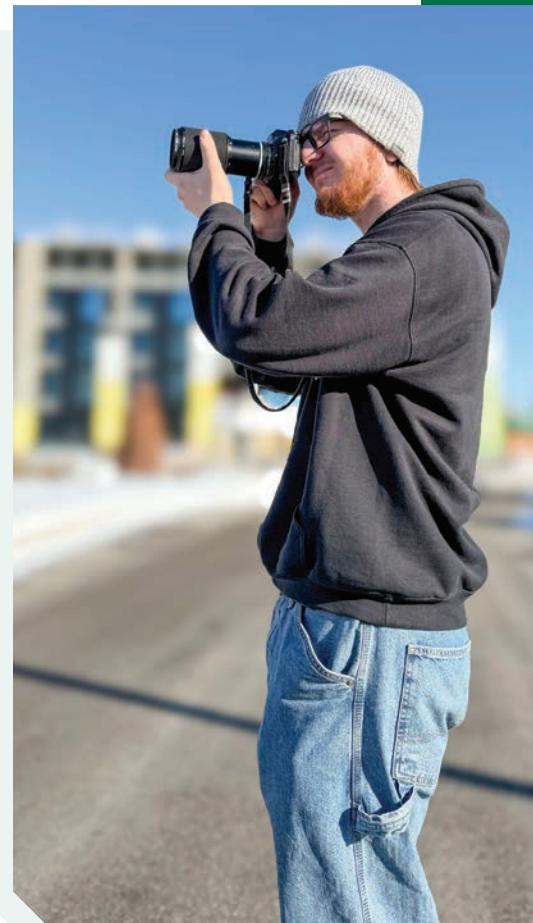
favourite childhood haunts around his hometown of Newmarket. Using old, expired film doesn't always work—it can produce results with abstract streaks and higher amounts of noise, or even fail completely—but Luke was undeterred.

“Modern digital cameras are a little less magical; you see the results right away,” says Luke. “I just liked the idea of taking photos and not knowing for weeks if, or how, they'd turn out.”

Many of Luke's photos didn't turn out perfectly, but then again, our memories of the past are never perfect anyway, so they fit with the theme. The expired film and its slight grain made the photos look like they were taken long, long ago. The project was a success!

Hands-on learning and old-school tech continue to appeal to Luke. Next year, he hopes to be accepted into the Heritage Carpentry and Joinery program at Algonquin College in Ottawa.

Thank you, to the Alice Vanderkooy fund for finding ways to inspire students! [PWA](#)



For more information and to donate to the Project Fund for Deserving TDChristian Initiatives go to our website.

EVELYN GODDARD '25, AND DANIEL LEWIS '25

# REFLECTIONS ON CANADA SUMMER GAMES

■ BY WILLIAM GROOT '78



Daniel (left)



In August 2025, Evelyn Goddard '25 and Daniel Lewis '25, competed as members of Team Ontario at the Canada Summer Games (CSG) in Newfoundland: Evelyn on the Artistic Swimming team and Daniel as the starting setter on the Men's Volleyball team.

Daniel shared the thrill of being on the field with peers during the closing ceremonies, especially exchanging team gear with them and listening to Alan Doyle, former lead singer of Great Big Sea. Earning the bronze was rewarding, but being in the village with other high-level athletes from across the country was equally memorable.

Evelyn, whose team nailed its routines but narrowly lost the gold to the favourites from Quebec, enjoyed the entire experience, from learning cheers at the initial Team Ontario rally to interacting with people from other sports to walking in the procession as a member of the victorious Team Ontario during the closing ceremonies. Evelyn loved how the organizers gave participants the freedom to “be teenagers instead of athletes.. CSG was a time to bond and to trade provincial team pins, as well as compete.

Currently, Daniel is studying kinesiology at the University of British Columbia (UBC) and playing for the Thunderbirds. His team is close-knit and the coaches are supportive, a word Daniel also used to describe the people at TDChristian. He deeply appreciated how his peers and teachers encouraged him to pursue his love of volleyball. Evelyn shared the same:

“TDChristian was a great community, like a family. They welcomed me daily when I came late, smelling like chlorine. They supported my learning despite me being absent a lot.”

Evelyn is thriving in the Design program at Concordia University. Besides graphic design, marketing, product design, and advertising, she is spending time in the wood shop weekly and learning to weld. Evelyn sees parallels between her artistic swimming, where she creates routines—she is also swimming solo again—and product design, where she creates solutions aimed at the optimal use of products.

So, what's ahead?

Daniel hopes to make the Canadian U21 team this summer. Tryouts are in June. If all goes well, he'll continue to play for the UBC Thunderbirds while he completes his degree and prepares to make volleyball his full-time work, playing professionally in Italy or France.

Evelyn has her sights set on competing as a member of the Canadian Junior National Artistic Swimming Team in Budapest, Hungary, in August. The Senior National Team tryouts are in November; making the Senior team could lead to the Olympics in 2028 and/or 2032! Evelyn loves “dancing and doing gymnastics in the water” and hopes to travel the world. When she retires from artistic swimming, she may be ready and equipped to share the sport with others from an insider's viewpoint. **PWA**



# Not Your Typical School Sport

## Inside TDChristian's Polo Story

BY JOEL DYKXHOORN, TDCHRISTIAN'S PRINCIPAL AND SPORTS AFICIONADO

**T**DChristian students participating in youth sports is not uncommon. Many of our students and alumni have competed at very high levels in sports like hockey, volleyball, basketball, and soccer. But there is one sport that most readers likely would not expect TDChristian students to excel at: polo.

I dare say that Grade 12 student Troy Elhert is the most successful polo player in TDChristian history. When I found out that Troy and fellow student Max Hanlon were polo athletes, I was excited to learn more.

Troy began his polo career in 2020 when the opportunity to play most other youth sports was disrupted by the pandemic. As Troy was learning how to ride and jump horses, his equestrian coach found out that he was a hockey player and suggested he try polo. In Troy's words, "I never looked back."

For the last four years, Troy has been part of the Toronto Polo Club Interscholastic team, representing his club in tournaments throughout North America

and Europe. This year, Troy is the captain of his team.

Troy shared that the world of polo is very complex. It is not uncommon for the parking lot of a polo match to be filled with luxury vehicles and even the odd helicopter. In short, polo is typically a sport for the wealthy, making access challenging for athletes like Troy. This is why networking is so important to him. He works to find sponsors or sympathetic barn owners who will sign him up to represent their barns for free or for a discounted rate.

Troy says that these networking skills were developed and honed through his time at TDChristian. "I have definitely used my people skills to find success in work and communicate in the classroom, to speak more clearly with teachers, and make more lasting and meaningful friendships."

I asked Troy what impact his education at TDChristian has had on his faith journey, specifically as it relates to playing this sport. He said, "Because the polo world is so driven by money and

worldly things, I think my faith has been strengthened through abiding in Christ during times of testing. I think that polo has opened my mind to make more opportunities for myself, learning how to be a light in a world full of dark. It has shown me that I am perfectly and wonderfully made."

Troy's future in polo is somewhat unknown. After high school, he is no longer able to play for the Interscholastic team, which means his playing career relies on sponsorships from barns and teams. He is hopeful that his networking and the relationships he has built will extend his career, and wants to encourage others to "learn from my experiences, by looking inward at their own lives and passions. On the polo side, I think people should just book a riding lesson, hop on a horse, and see the beautiful and complex world of equestrian riding and the passion and energy that drives these majestic animals." **PWA**



# More Than a Role: Growing Through ShowPro

BY JOEL WESTERHOF, TEACHER: ENGLISH



Juliette as Mrs. Webb



*Our Town* full cast and crew

## JULIETTE HARRISON

This year, TDChristian's ShowPro class staged the play *Our Town*. Working with Mr. Peters, students from Grades 10 through 12 worked together on all aspects of dramatic production: acting, stage management, costuming, makeup, set construction, and lighting and sound design, to bring this show together successfully. Through this collaborative process, students are pushed to learn and grow, not just in terms of dramatic talents but as human beings.

Juliette Harrison is a Grade 10 student and a member of ShowPro. Since the show was double-cast, she was able to play two different characters—mother Mrs. Webb for half of the performances, then sassy little sister

Rebecca for the other half—an experience she found both demanding and rewarding.

“It was a bit challenging, because I’m obviously not a mom, so I don’t exactly know what moms feel and how they think,” she admits. “But I was able to learn more about that. I talked to my own mom, and I was able to mimic her, but then also put my own spin on how I think I would be as a mom.”

She also found it invaluable to be paired with a Grade 12 student, Shekhinah Slolski, who played the same roles as Juliette did and was “like my mom” for her in the class.

“She really helped me, guided me, mentored me. And because she’s done other plays at TDChristian before, she was very familiar with how it all worked. She calmed my nerves all the time. Just by working with her I was able to learn so much, and almost take some of the things she did. Through this close collaboration, Juliette believes, “We were both able to get the best final product perfect.”

Although Juliette arrived in ShowPro with a great deal of theatrical experience under her belt, having done half a dozen shows with Marquis Theatrical Productions in Aurora, she found working under Mr. Peters’ direction very different and very fulfilling.

“My previous directors told me what to do, how I should act, what movements I should do, how I should say things. I would completely have to copy what they were saying and doing. So I was actually playing someone else’s version of a character, not my own. And I’m really grateful for that experience. I was able to learn a lot from it, but I don’t think it was necessarily very authentic to who I was. I wasn’t able to show myself through my character; I was showing my director through my character.”

By contrast, Mr. Peters allowed her much more room to explore and create her characters. “Right when I did my first scene, he coached me to think, What does this character want? What’s she like? What are her motivations? If I’m her, what’s my past? Who’s my family? I never got to investigate my character so hard before.”

This newfound creative freedom, though initially daunting, stretched Juliette and proved inspiring. “Now I got to make my own choices, which was really, really scary at first, because what if my vision is wrong? What if I’m doing this wrong? But Mr. Peters said, ‘No, it’s not wrong. There are so many different choices you can make.’ He got me to explore these different choices and choose the ones I thought were best. So it was me playing Mrs. Webb, which was really cool.”

## CLARA WEENING

In TDChristian's production of *Our Town*, Clara Weening played the role of Stage Manager, the central character who narrates and guides the audience through the fictional town of Grover's Corners and beyond.



Clara as Stage Manager with cast

Taking on this pivotal role required months of dedication and preparation. "I started learning my lines in the summer," Clara noted. "When the school year started, I would read them on the bus ride to and from school. But learning the lines was only the first step. I had to figure out how to make the character my own."

Doing so turned out to be a formidable task, but meeting this challenge proved to be edifying and enjoyable.

"In the recorded performances we watched in class, I saw the Stage Manager played by old men. So I was unsure how

I, a 17-year-old girl, was supposed to play the character. But Mr. Peters told me that good actors are good because they make the performance their own, not by copying someone else's rendition. The raw, poetic truth in the Stage Manager's lines was

my favourite part about the character. The most rewarding moment was the end of each show, knowing I had done my best and spoken life into Thornton Wilder's words about life and love."

What made her performance as the Stage Manager all the more special was that her father, Brandon Weening, played the same part in this play at TDChristian. Twice, in fact: first in 1999 when he was in Grade 11, then once more in the 2011 alumni production.

Even though Clara never saw her father's performances, they still proved inspirational. "Knowing

my dad performed this role was one of the things that made me audition for it in the first place."

According to Clara, her dad found his experiences were "overwhelmingly fun. He noted how fun it was to be in a supporting community of other actors, and to play the leadership aspect of the Stage Manager. He loved being on stage and engaging with the audience, knowing he could make them laugh or catch their breath or even cry."

Watching his own daughter perform this same part years later was equally delightful. "He mentioned how proud he felt watching me," Clara revealed, "and he saw how I owned the role in my own way." **PWA**



Brandon Weening 2011 Alumni Show *Our Town*

Awe

# The Road to TDChristian: A Daily Journey of Community

BY VICTORIA VEENSTRA, COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR



Every school morning, before the sun has fully risen, something remarkable is already in motion: the TDChristian bus network. Seventeen buses crisscross neighbourhoods, towns, and city blocks (together covering 972 kilometres one way) to bring students to school for a day of learning for service in the light of God’s word.

For some families, this transportation system is more than convenience:

joining TDChristian next fall, the Martins say, “Choosing a high school involved balancing values with practical realities. The busing TDChristian offers was an integral part of that decision, making Christian high school a realistic option without the barrier of transportation. Over time, we’ve appreciated how reliable the service has been and how clearly communication is handled.”

The Martins are far from alone. Each morning, two students lace up their shoes

in the Beaches, hop on the TTC, and meet a downtown bus. Across the city, Amanda and Milena make their way to 407 Station to join different classmates heading west. Ashton comes from Thornton, and other students from mid-town Toronto, from tiny country roads, small satellite towns, and bustling neighbourhoods—each journey contributing to a larger story of commitment and belonging.

it’s what makes Christian high school education possible.

Take Maria Martin. Her bus pulls up to her home at 6:50 am, long before most alarms ring. Her family lives almost an hour north of the school, but for them the distance has always been worth it. With another child

Our international students join this tapestry as well. We have students who travel all the way from China or Vietnam (thankfully not every day!), often experiencing Christian community for the first time. International students like Sam (Grade 12) and Frank (Grade 10) are now deeply involved in school life. Together they embrace friendships, service projects, and the daily adventure of riding the bus.

All these routes, steps, and morning routines add up. Last year, TDChristian buses travelled more than 326,000 kilometres—the equivalent of circling the globe over eight times! And each kilometre reflects a powerful reality: families believe in the mission here.

Every day, our buses don’t just move students from Point A to Point B—they carry stories, dreams, prayers, and possibilities. They’re part of how we make Christian education accessible to families from near and far. And the moment those doors swing open each morning? That’s when the real journey begins. **PWA**

# SALT of the Earth

BY ALYSSA LAROCQUE, SALT TEACHER, AND ANNEKE GRETTON, VP OF LEARNING

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells the crowds who are listening, “You are the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13a). To the people who first heard Jesus’ sermon, salt was highly valuable: without salt, the fish that Jesus miraculously provided in Simon Peter’s nets (Luke 5) would have been wasted, rotting before it could be distributed and enjoyed. Salt was essential for both preserving and flavouring food, bringing life by ensuring healthy and delicious nourishment. Jesus calls us—and our students—to be the salt of the earth, and Jesus works through our students to bring life to those around them.

Last summer, students learned more about being the salt of the earth through a program called SALT, which stands for Skills And Leadership Training. TD Christian partnered with Muskoka Bible Centre (MBC) and their summer camp location, Widjiitiwin, to offer a Healthy Living and Outdoor Activities course credit as a component of Widjiitiwin’s SALT program.

The SALT program ran for four weeks in July at Camp Widjiitiwin. As learners in this leader-in-training program, SALT students explored many forms of leadership in the camp context. They observed, reflected on, and practised leadership skills during games and activities, worship sessions, and out-trips. In partnership with TDChristian, nine SALT campers also earned the Healthy Living and Outdoor Activities (PAD30) course credit as a part of their program. In this course, taught by Ms. Alyssa LaRocque, students gained competence in swimming techniques and endurance, canoeing skills, navigation, emergency first aid, and more.

Reflecting on his experience, TDChristian student Ethan Lee said, “I really enjoyed being there and being with the kids. I learned leadership qualities like communication, taking initiative, and handling each situation—not just based on your own mood, but respecting how other people are feeling.” When describing the impact of the SALT program on his faith, Ethan shared that “being constantly in nature, and constantly worshiping and



Ethan Lee (left)

doing Bible study, you can really connect with God every day. And also, you’re in a community with people who are trying to grow their faith, which helps a lot.”

This summer, the SALT program will run from July 5–31 for students aged 14 to 16. **PWA**



# Awe

## Using TDChristian's Building as a Blessing

BY VICTORIA VEENSTRA, COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

# Blessing



Most people know TDChristian as a vibrant place of learning during the day, but many would be surprised to discover how alive our campus becomes after the final bell. One of the goals of the 20/20 Building Project was to create a facility that would bless our wider community, and today that vision is being lived out in meaningful and unexpected ways.

On weeknights the gymnasium fills with the energy of Venom Volleyball.

Three times a week their league arrives, greeting coaches, setting up nets, and turning the court into a place of skill building and community connection.

Across the hall, the Commons transforms into a training studio. Tarkwando teaches taekwondo from Tuesday to Thursday, the space offers an effective blend of functionality and warmth. Practitioners line up in tidy rows, practising discipline, confidence, and focus under the warm lights of a room that offers hospitality and flexibility.

Our Presentation Centre, imagined during the 20/20 project as a space for both school and community, has become a hub for artistic and public events. Merriam Academy regularly fills the room with proud parents and young musicians during their local recitals. Degazon Music does the same. The space has also hosted charity events for the Lighthouse, Camp Widjiwin, and Canadian National Baptist Women. Even local creatives have found a home

here, including Christian artist C Dot who recorded a music video inside the school.

Church communities also find space to gather at TDChristian, meeting throughout the year for worship, prayer, and special events. The Well runs a summer camp in our building, filling classrooms and hallways with laughter and active learning.

This steady rhythm of activity tells a powerful story. Our building is more than bricks, rooms, and facilities. It is a living place where education, community, artistry, sport, and ministry meet. By opening our doors beyond the school day, TDChristian continues to serve in ways that reflect our mission and extend our hospitality. As a result, our campus remains a blessing to students and to the many neighbours who now call this place part of their story. **PWA**



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## EVENT LIST

### NEW MEMBERS MEETING

APRIL 9, 2026

### ONLINE WILL CLINIC

APRIL 15, 2026

### SPRING MEMBERSHIP MEETING

APRIL 23, 2026

### GRANDPARENTS DAY

MAY 1, 2026

### TALENT NIGHT

MAY 14, 2026

### SPRING CONCERT

MAY 21, 2026

### GRADUATION

JUNE 24, 2026, 7PM

- Faith Gospel Tabernacle Ministries,  
140 Salvation Road, Brampton



Always get the most up-to-date details and RSVP at [tdchristian.ca/events](http://tdchristian.ca/events)



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### ALUMNI UPDATES

## We Love Sharing Your Updates

Email [alumni@tdchristian.ca](mailto:alumni@tdchristian.ca) to have your details included in the next mailing.

- Kristen Ferkranus (07) and Andrew Barrington welcomed Joel Callum Ferkranus Barrington on July 4, 2025.
- Rebecca Van Soelen (Vos) (07) and Kris Van Soelen (07) welcomed Callia Gray on July 3, 2024. A sister to Carson and Coen.
- Madeline and Seth Weening (14) welcomed Eliza Rae on August 27, 2024.
- Sarah Routley (Vos) (15) and Sam Routley welcomed Simone Amelia on May 5, 2025.

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J3567



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