

THE HERALD

a publication of *Eastern Christian School*
Volume 65, Issue 2

***Nurturing
students.***

***Strengthening
our community.***

FALL 2024

Dear Eastern Christian School Community,



Greetings to you all as we embark on another remarkable year at Eastern Christian School. It is a privilege to connect with our extended family of alumni, parents, students, and supporters through this edition of The Herald.

This issue is filled with inspiring stories and updates that reflect the incredible journey of our school community. As we continue to embrace our mission of nurturing students and strengthening our community, I am excited to share some of the significant milestones and future directions for Eastern Christian School.

A Journey of Faith and Excellence

Our recent reaccreditation and strategic planning efforts have been a profound period of reflection, celebration, and vision casting. With valuable insights gathered from students, parents, staff, and board members, our five-year plan is now in place, emphasizing our core priorities of faith, excellence, and community.

We are committed to providing a distinctly Christian education that not only meets but exceeds standards of academic excellence. Our new Honors Academy, service-learning programs, and innovative funding initiatives are just a few examples of how we are pushing the boundaries to offer our students unparalleled opportunities.

Cultivating a Culture of Care

One of the hallmarks of Eastern Christian School is our unwavering commitment to creating a nurturing environment where every student is known, respected, cared for, and loved. Our teachers and staff embody this ethos daily, fostering a community of learners who thrive both academically and spiritually.

This year's spiritual theme, "Grow Gather Go," based on Hebrews 10:23-25, encapsulates our focus on spiritual foundations, Christian community, and empowering students to be agents of renewal in our world. Initiatives such as the WINGS program exemplify our dedication to real-world learning, preparing students for their future vocations with hands-on experience and mentorship.

A Community of Support

The strength of Eastern Christian School lies in our vibrant and diverse community. Our partnerships with parents, alumni, and supporters are crucial in sustaining our mission. The generosity of our community, whether through the 1892 society, annual fund giving, scholarship support, or the Athletic Booster Club, is a testament to our collective commitment to the transformative power of Christian education.

As you read through this issue, I invite you to celebrate the many achievements of our students and the faithful contributions of our supporters. Together, we are shaping the future, equipping our students to be Christ's agents of renewal.

Thank you for your continued support and prayers. I look forward to the exciting opportunities ahead and to sharing more about our strategic plan in the coming months. May God bless each of you as we work together to nurture and strengthen our Eastern Christian School community.

In Christ,
Ruth Kuder '84
Executive Director and Head of School



EASTERN CHRISTIAN
SCHOOL

THE HERALD

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EDITOR

Leah (Steenstra) Genuario '97

PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR

Justin Van Dyke '07

ALUMNI COORDINATOR

Kate Schneider

DESIGN & LAYOUT

Laura Hartgerink
Signify

PRINTER

Len Wynbeek '84
Amplifi

EASTERN CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

50 Oakwood Ave.

North Haledon, NJ 07508

Phone: 973-427-9294

Email: herald@EasternChristian.org

www.EasternChristian.org



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Middle school promotion

Corrections from the Spring 2024 Issue:

Tribute Gifts

The gift in memory of Edward Avogardo should have been listed as Edward and Dorothy Avogardo given by Diane and Tony Romano.

The Herald is a bi-annual publication of The Foundation for Eastern Christian School. The purpose of this publication is to share the story of Eastern Christian School and to strengthen the bonds among our extended school community in support of Christian education. **The Herald is mailed free of charge to over 6,500 alumni, families, and friends of the school.**

Our address database is always being updated. If you would like to update your contact information or if you know of someone who would like to receive *The Herald*, please contact The Foundation for Eastern Christian School Association office and we will be very happy to update our database accordingly.

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“The school is to be commended”

EC receives commendations from accreditation committee

In an April meeting, a group of educators and administrators from throughout the nation visited our campuses to evaluate Eastern Christian School for re-accreditation to Middle States Association of College and Schools and first-time accreditation to the Christian Schools International Accreditation Commission.

In a final meeting, the visiting team unanimously recommended the school for accreditation, as well as recommended the school for endorsement in its international student program and educational support services. The full list of its commendations is reprinted here:

- *“The school is to be commended for intentionally modeling the body of Christ by embracing a diverse population: teachers, learners, families, churches, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds and nationalities.*
- *Eastern Christian is to be commended for providing a Christ-centered school focused on academic excellence and faith formation. Parents, students, teachers, and board members reiterated their appreciation for the Godly atmosphere, nurturing care, and supportive culture exemplified at Eastern Christian.*

- *The current Head of School is noted for her passion for Christian education, exceptional leadership, humble and personable approach, Godly lifestyle, and supportive guidance. The Head of School has notably assembled and currently leads an outstanding administrative leadership team who clearly has shared values and communicated goals.*
- *Teachers and staff have cultivated a classroom culture that is characterized by a community of learners who are known, respected, cared for and loved.*
- *Eastern Christian is committed to the education of covenant children. Students with a variety of needs are included in the EC family as they train them to be productive and transformative members of the body of Christ.*
- *Eastern Christian demonstrates a commitment to excellence as noted in facilities that are maximized for student learning, innovative funding streams, academic rigor and a culture of teacher growth and collaboration.*
- *From the admissions standards (entrance) to the graduate profile (exit), and everything in between, EC has as its central focus a desire to empower students to be transforming agents for Christ in a global community. Parents and students stated that it is evident that the school community seeks to be like Jesus."*

Eastern Christian School is, at its core, a community of believers, relying on God's faithfulness and working toward the same mission of providing excellence in Christian education. On the following pages, we would like to present to our school community several examples of why we received these highest acclaims.

EC appreciates its board

"EC has a plan that works. We have been blessed with extremely talented and dedicated administrators who have been strategic thinkers and have had the full support of a board of directors," says Nick Kuiken, outgoing president of the board. "These administrators have surrounded themselves with an amazing group of faculty and staff that is dedicated to the mission of EC."

In addition to the individuals tasked with the day-to-day operations of the school—the administration, faculty and staff—Eastern Christian School's governance model includes a board of directors, a governance board responsible for setting the policy of the school and holding administration accountable according to the school policies and strategic plan.

For the men and women who serve, it is a labor of love for a cause they are deeply committed to. "I don't believe you can put a value on the Christian education that our students receive. They are surrounded by Christian teachers that influence their lives eight hours a day, 180 days a year at a very impressionable age," says Kuiken.

Kuiken joined the board in 2006 as an EC alumnus, an EC parent and as a business owner with a desire to ensure EC's long-term financial sustainability. We thank Nick Kuiken for faithfully serving as president, and with gratitude, thank and recognize Dr. Sandra Westra and Dr. Scott Martin, who have faithfully served on the board and are stepping down this summer.

Dr. Westra joined the board with one child in the high school and two children having already graduated EC and stayed with the position throughout the COVID pandemic and beyond. "I was extremely grateful for the caliber of God-centered education my kids received and decided this was a way I could give back and do my part to help ensure the continued excellence and faith-based focus of the school."

Kuiken adds, "I think it is important to recognize, EC has been around since 1892, a lot has changed around us, but EC has not wavered on its mission, core values or the strong Reformed foundation on which it was founded. I am proud to have been a part of EC for so many years as a student, parent, board member and board president."

“Christ-centered school”

A look inside our spiritual theme

Next year marks the 25th year of the Eastern Christian community exploring an annual spiritual theme. This year's theme, **Grow Gather Go**, is based on Hebrews 10:23-25: *Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

The selection of a spiritual theme is an important process. This spring, 45 proposals came in from parents, staff and high school students. “A spiritual theme must be a key biblical concept that has substantial breadth and depth for a year-long focus. It must also be as meaningful to a three-year-old as it is to an 83-year-old,” says **Dr. Ruth Kuder**, head of school.

From these proposals, a team consisting of 13 administrators, Bible teachers and chapel coordinators from all three campuses met to consider concepts, pray and discuss. After some deliberation, the team chose **Grow Gather Go** for its ability to focus the school's attention on spiritual foundations and habits, emphasize Christian community, and empower others to be Christ's transforming agents in a global society.

“There are several reasons that we believe it is important to focus on a spiritual theme. It provides the school community the opportunity to learn and investigate God's word together. We are able to spend a year focused on a key concept in scripture that we can explore in music, visual art and words. It allows us to meditate on multi-faceted biblical gems. We've often marveled at how the Holy Spirit has used the theme to prepare us for events that we could never have anticipated.”



On the heels of the school's five-year strategic plan, school administrators hope to use the theme this year to engage the greater community of supporters around Eastern Christian School.

Initiatives include a parent academy, an alumni Bible study, community worship nights, and the launch of a community-wide Bible reading app.

Eastern Christian is to be commended for providing a Christ-centered school focused on academic excellence and faith formation. Parents, students, teachers, and board members reiterated their appreciation for the godly atmosphere, nurturing care, and supportive culture exemplified at Eastern Christian. — Accreditation report

Shaping agents of renewal

By Brenna Petersen

This year in Writing Workshop, eighth grade students were challenged to consider what it means to be an agent of renewal in our broken world and to embrace their unique calling to bring about shalom on Earth. Students first studied the biblical concept of shalom. We discussed how shalom, as a verb, means to restore or to bring about universal flourishing.

Once students picked an area of passion, they began researching the complexities of their topic. Students wrote about the problem they saw, possible solutions, and why we, as Christians, should care about seeing that area of the world restored. Students were encouraged to see this opportunity as a sort of culmination of their middle school experience and an embracing of God's calling to be agents of renewal in a broken world.

Here's just one example, an excerpt from Ashley Gress's project on youth homelessness:

"Homelessness is a terrible and dangerous situation that a large amount of young adults experience on a given night. Many people and organizations are working to find an effective solution for ending homelessness in young adults and all experiencing it. Too many young adults are homeless, and an approach must be created to prevent and end homelessness because God calls us to take care of each other.....Jesus tells us to care for our neighbors, which in this context is everyone, including homeless youth. How can we better care and raise awareness for young adults struggling with homelessness?"

Students chose a wide variety of topics ranging from plastic pollution in our oceans, deforestation, human trafficking, and the foster care system. After writing their research papers, students presented their findings to the class. Though we anxiously wait on the renewal of all things with Christ's return, we know there is work to be done!



Ashley Gress



Manny Lazor

“Community of learners”

EC WINGS program offers student opportunities that maximize our strengths as a close community

Manny Lazor’s grandfather is an accountant in Scranton, Pennsylvania. During a trip to see him, the high school student had the opportunity to talk about plans after college. “Accounting is in the family, and when my grandfather heard I was interested in the business field, he encouraged me to be specific and go into accounting,” he said.

Bushoven LLC, owned by alumni from Eastern Christian, is an accounting firm. A perennial supporter of Eastern Christian School, they look for “opportunities to give back to our community,” shares Heather Troupos, partner.

And the Eastern Christian WINGS program, a work internship program at the high school, put the two together.

Eastern Christian’s WINGS program is now in its eighth year. What started as a vocational training program for one student in construction, has now expanded to include 86 business partners. This

year, 21 students have successfully completed a WINGS internship, which ranged from law to teaching, to historical archiving, to music production, to cosmetology.

“The mission of WINGS is to help students explore their post-high school plans in a very non-threatening, low-commitment environment. It’s like a taste test. Some students get a taste and say never, other students walk away sure this is exactly what they want to do,” says **Alisa Engelhard**, WINGS program director. “I’m really grateful for our partners because they provide our students an opportunity to see ethical business. Three of our students this semester have been offered jobs and that’s a tribute to the good fit of this program.”

What started as a vocational training program for one student in construction, has now expanded to include 86 business partners.

Admission into a typical WINGS internship starts off the year before. Students make their intentions known in meetings with the Academic and Career Counseling office. From there, they fill out a comprehensive survey. After passing this series of checks, they work personally with the program director to be placed in a right-fit internship. This includes writing their own letter of introduction to a business. There is a grade associated with WINGS, and students are evaluated based on ten performance indicators, which include productivity, communication, and character.

Work times vary, but many follow Manny Lazor's internship schedule, who leaves ECHS a block early, changes into professional work clothes, and clocks into Bushoven LLC Monday-Friday from 2-4 p.m.

For Lazor, the opportunity this year has proven invaluable. His work experience—which has ranged from clerical work to simple accounting in a wide range of areas—has been complimented with intentional mentoring.

"They did a good job mentoring me by teaching me everything. They walked me through all the different pieces of accounting; I was mentored individually by each one as they all have different expertise. I learned each part of a Form 1040, how to fill out a tax return, how to use it. Mrs. Troupos walked me through a 401K. Every question I had they always had an answer. They told me no question was stupid. They love their jobs, and they wanted me to feel that way too," says Lazor, who heads to Cairn University this fall as a business major, with the intent of focusing on accounting and finance.

As for this community of learners, the arrangement represented a win-win. "It was a pleasure having Manny on our team. He

approached each task or assignment with enthusiasm and a great attitude. Manny really made the most of the real-world experience that the WINGS program offered," shares **Doug Bushoven**, another partner at the firm. "It is important for high school students to get a taste of the workplace as it sets them apart when looking for an internship during college or a job after graduation. We are happy to partner with the EC WINGS program."

What's next for the WINGS program? Already, many high school students have indicated a desire to enroll next year. Eastern Christian is looking for CAD engineer partners for six aspiring students. With a few exceptions, partners are not used every semester or every year. "In the last two years, we've doubled the number of partners we draw from and we are grateful for all of them," shares Engelhard.



TEACHERS AND STAFF HAVE CULTIVATED A CLASSROOM CULTURE THAT IS CHARACTERIZED BY A COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS WHO ARE KNOWN, RESPECTED, CARED FOR AND LOVED.

— Accreditation report

Manny's WINGS internship at Bushoven, LLC.

“Innovative funding streams”

A deeper look at camp and club expansion

Eastern Christian School administrators are intentional about making education as accessible as possible. This intentionality has led to an entrepreneurial culture.

This year, efforts to serve our families and communities while being mindful of good financial stewardship have expanded.

At the Midland Park and Wyckoff campuses, more than 76 clubs were offered this year, ranging from cooking to science to dance. “Clubs are a great opportunity for our students to continue their experience at EC,” says **Morgan Malone**, director of extended day programs. “They teach students how to appreciate God’s design and creation in their daily walk, and really learn what glorifying God looks like when we are outside of the typical classroom, home and church environment.”

In addition to during-the-school-year clubs, the school is also expanding its camps. On two campuses, students from surrounding areas attend Eagles Sports Camp. The program, which lasts for six weeks, is an original flagship program and continues to bring in strong attendance. In addition, the school now offers two weeks of Outdoor Adventure Camp and Eagles Day Camps.

“Our Midland Park camps are new as of the 2023 summer season. We have worked really hard this



year to refine our camps to reflect the excellent quality parents expect when they send their child to EC while also embracing summer fun! We have allowed more room for growth this year by adding more camp spots and can’t wait to see how we continue to grow in the next year,” says Malone.

“Eagles Camps help to utilize all three of Eastern Christian’s campuses while the school year is not in session. This helps generate revenue and support the overall mission of Eastern Christian,” shares **Max Harvell**, Eagles Camps director.

“We have truly been blessed with a great school in so many ways, as well as a strong community and really wonderful facilities. We are very mindful of being good stewards of what we have been given. Toward that end, we are focused on providing access to many different clubs, camps and programs, making good use of our facilities in a financially responsible way and generating additional resources to support our growing community,” says **Rick DeBel**, chief financial officer.



Dance team

Eastern Christian demonstrates a commitment to excellence as noted in facilities that are maximized for student learning, innovative funding streams, academic rigor and a culture of teacher growth and collaboration. — Accreditation report

“Facilities maximized for student learning”

Exciting updates out of our Wyckoff campus

Last fall saw a change in programming as the third grade class shifted to the Wyckoff campus. The move enabled the stronger development of an upper elementary division comprised of third through fifth graders, with changes in several areas.

In terms of facilities, the upper elementary wing received a small makeover with carpets in the hallways, the removal of some lockers, and the addition of benches, cubbies and coat hooks. Students in all classrooms were given desks rather than the tables used for younger students, as they are now developmentally ready to begin managing their own materials.

The move also enabled the Wyckoff campus to offer two chapels. At the upper elementary chapel, “students had the opportunity to lead in chapel by leading in worship, sharing testimonies from their study of God’s word and praying,” shares **Dr. Dan Lazor**, Wyckoff campus principal.

The middle school division also underwent some changes, most notably with the addition of a technology class and small group Bible studies.

In terms of wins, students showed strong performance on this year’s MAP tests, and discussion is underway regarding the creation of advanced writing opportunities, as well as increased leadership opportunities for middle school students. With two divisions on one campus, teachers are beginning to build teacher-driven connections. This year, the third and sixth grades piloted a program that tied in elements of hospitality and letter writing. And finally, the move allowed upper elementary musical ensembles to flourish.

Proud of the work that began in earnest last year, the Wyckoff campus will again see exciting change in the coming years. A new turf field, made possible through a partnership with a local soccer club, will provide a better experience for Eastern Christian soccer and softball teams, as well as a home for physical education classes.

Plans are also moving along for a six-classroom addition. Lazor explains, “We are nearing the limit of our capacity on this campus. Adding additional rooms will allow us to have flexibility to accommodate the students and families that are great fits for EC and who are seeking a Christian education. The addition also plans for additional space for our Educational Support Services (TESS) by creating a full-sized classroom for the MS TESS students and a small group instructional space. A planned, multi-use room will be used for STEM classes and enrichment groups,” says Lazor.

“STUDENTS HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD IN CHAPEL BY LEADING IN WORSHIP, SHARING TESTIMONIES FROM THEIR STUDY OF GOD’S WORD AND PRAYING” — Dr. Dan Lazor



University that offers courses at EC, students can also enroll in AP Biology and AP Statistics courses this year as an additional way to earn college credit. AP courses represent a “third party seal of quality,” explains **Jesse Struck**, director of the Academic and College Counseling Center. The course catalog also includes the addition of Entrepreneurship and Culinary Arts electives.

“We are launching the four new courses this year to meet an identified need and the specific goal of increasing our course catalog to include more diverse and more rigorous offerings,” says Struck.

“Commitment to excellence”

A look at changes coming to high school programming

In keeping with the strategic plan goal of strengthening high school programming, this school year opens with a new high school Honors Academy, as well as the introduction of four new courses, two of which are Advanced Placement. The intention is to provide increasing challenge to the school’s highest performing students as well as elevate the culture of academic excellence overall.

“We hope all of our students will not only maintain a strong, Christian worldview, but also leave this place academically fortified, having already experienced a broad compilation of challenging offerings. We want to stimulate their academic curiosity and prepare them well for their future,” says **Dan Cirone**, high school principal.

In addition to Project Acceleration, an undergraduate enrollment program at Seton Hall

This year also sees the launch of the Honors Academy, a program that saw a high number of applicants in its first year. “There is a strong appetite here among students to be pushed farther, among teachers to hold students to higher academic standards, and among parents to see their kids challenged. We are happy with the initial response to this new initiative.”

Accepted students have met with an academic adviser to discuss coursework and will meet industry experts throughout the year. The cohort will also participate in a leadership retreat to foster community and cast a vision for their remaining time in high school.

“We need to be stewards of the gifts we as a community and as individuals have been given,” shares Struck, who is also the Honors Academy adviser. “I’m encouraged that we are improving our ability to meet the needs of our highest performing students without compromising our commitment to meet the needs of all of our students.”

“WE NEED TO BE STEWARDS OF THE GIFTS WE AS A COMMUNITY AND AS INDIVIDUALS HAVE BEEN GIVEN” — Jesse Struck

“Culture of teacher growth and collaboration”

A closer look at some of the initiatives this year

At a recent faculty and staff meeting, Mrs. Sandra Bottge, principal of the Midland Park campus, remarked that the school community experiences more tears on the last day of the school year than the first day. This observation points toward the excellent community that is cultivated throughout the year, which starts with the community of teachers.

In our accreditation commendations, the visiting team noted the culture of teacher collaboration across all campuses. Here are a few examples of educators who served as teacher leaders in that area this year:

ALYSSA WESTRA, Responsive Classroom

For several years, Westra has utilized the school's master teacher program to focus on Responsive Classroom, a research-based approach to teaching that focuses on the whole child. In addition to increasing her own learning, she led collaboration times with elementary and upper elementary teachers as well as facilitated book readings surrounding two texts published by Responsive Classroom: *The Power of Our Words* and *The Joyful Classroom*. “As a staff, we discussed things like the language we use in our classroom, best practices for classroom management, interactive modeling and instilling responsibility in our students,” she shares.

Westra explains that educators are each other's greatest resource. When it comes to Eastern Christian School and collaboration in general, she says, “The teachers at Eastern Christian bring a wealth of experience to their classrooms. We have come from many different teaching backgrounds but have all landed here at EC because we love teaching and are passionate about Christian education. I really believe these varied experiences are what make us such a strong staff. We each bring our own best practices to the table and are able to collaborate with one another to find what works best for each group of kids, each year.”

JESSICA TRURAN, Conscious Discipline

Truran utilized the Nehemiah Mini-Grant initiative, an EC program which enables teachers to submit a proposal and receive funding to complete their projects, to train in Conscious Discipline. Conscious Discipline, as Truran explains, is “an SEL-based approach that trains parents and teachers in recognizing how children's brains operate, and finding the best way to support them with practical skills like assertion, patience and love.”

Finding that it worked well with Responsive Classroom, Truran was able to share her learnings with her colleagues. “It has been helpful to loan out the calming resources to other educators at the preschool through second grade level. We even have plans to adapt some of the tools and create our own for the fall,” she says.

DONNA FURREY, Math Fluency

As part of the master teacher-level program, Dr. Donna Furrey has focused for the past three years on math fact fluency for all types of learners. With an understanding of the critical need to build a strong math base in early grades to ensure future math success, Furrey has worked with other teachers to assess students, collect data, and ensure student growth. Part of this process has included the recommendation for a new math program, which will be implemented in September. Furrey adds, “We piloted a chapter during this school year and feel that the change will continue to build a stronger math program.”

“Eastern Christian teachers work hard and they are dedicated to providing their students with the best education. That makes collaboration a natural occurrence,” Furrey says. “Collaboration is a meaningful way for teachers to share materials, ideas, questions and struggles with an ultimate goal of helping each other help our students. It is a valued tool at Eastern Christian and teachers are encouraged to participate and are provided with the tools and time to make it an effective experience.”

High school graduation

The graduating class of 2024



This year's high school graduation ceremony occurred on Wednesday, June 12.

The 2024 commencement speaker and a high school teacher, **Faith Kerlen**, examined peace from a biblical perspective, challenging students to take steps to both pursue and express the peace of Christ.

"When you enter a room, do people gravitate toward the peace and stability you have through Christ? Or are they repelled by your imminent chaos? God gives us "strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow," something that I've had to remind myself of so many times. This outward extension of peace is a day-by-day journey," she shared.



Faith Kerlen



Steve Gorter and Jayla Lee



SooEun Kim and Alexandra Spalt



Austin VanderPyl

In a similar vein, **Grace Schulster**, the 2024 valedictorian, used the imagery of a garden to address her fellow peers. She reminded her class of the growth they have experienced in their four years of Eastern Christian High School and walked through the stages of a plant, ending with fruitfulness. She began by reminding the audience what it was like to start as a freshman in the midst of a pandemic and encouraged the class by recalling the many ways her fellow peers have stepped into leadership, academically, athletically, artistically, and spiritually, by senior year.

“This is what God, our great gardener, does. What once looked like a hopeless and destitute situation, He turned it around for our good. He turned our chaos into order. He gave us a hope and a future. And isn’t that proof of His continued faithfulness in our class and the legacy of Eastern Christian?” says Schulster.



Grace Schulster

The beautiful night concluded with a faculty benediction: A song arranged by Nick Beverly, titled “Trust in the Lord.”

“THIS IS WHAT GOD, OUR GREAT GARDENER, DOES. WHAT ONCE LOOKED LIKE A HOPELESS AND DESTITUTE SITUATION, HE TURNED IT AROUND FOR OUR GOOD.”

—Grace Schulster





The Class of 2024



Luke Anema



Gianna Angelucci



Joshua Arias



Angela Avolio



Alyssa Baitzel



Daniela Bernal



Natalie Byrnes



Sebastian Castro



Valentina Condegni



Daniel Connolly



Bryan Costa



Stone Davis



Jeremiah Dimetry



Lukas Faasse



Carter Fowlkes



Lucas Genuario



Jennifer Gomez



Matthew Gupko



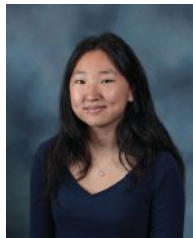
Joshua Heerema



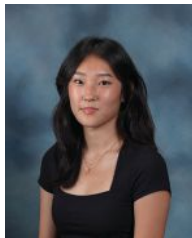
Maya Jackson



Timothy Kang



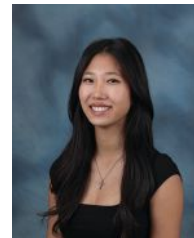
Jamie Kim



Katherine Kim



SooEun Kim



Sophia Kim



Maya Kingston



Timothy La Bianca



Jillian Lamarque



Emanuel Lazor



Sarena Lee



Timothy Lee



Jayla Lee

GRADUATIONS



Daniel Lim



Man Luo



Natalya Morgan



[name withheld at parent request]



JadyN Ninan



Matthew Onove



Sarah Onufer



Ya'Meir Pope



Nehemiah Rhee



Jaden Ritsma



Izabel Segura



Grace Sehulster



Sofia Shevtsova



Garren Sly



Brielle Spalt



Alexandra Spalt



Makena Spatz



Charlotte Steen



Isabella Sutton



Hannah Thomas



Sharyn-Nicole Thomas



Elizabeth Turner



Charlotte Van Goor



Kaitlyn Van Harken



Austin Vander Pyl



Charlie Veenema



Nicholas Vicenzino



Natalie Vincenti



Hannah Visbeen



Hanyang Wang



Zhuorui Wang



James Wiegiers



Mackenzie Wynbeek



Ruizhe Ye



Haoxiang Zhang

Class of 2024 awards

Department Awards

Art Department Award

Maya Kingston

Bible and Life Award

Maya Jackson

The Da Vinci Award (for Excellence in the Art and Technology Departments)

Sharyn-Nicole Thomas

Drama Award

Daniel Connolly

English Award

Jamie Kim

English as a Second Language Award

Man (Ashley) Luo

Journalism Award

Jadyn Ninan

Mathematics Award

Hanyang Wang

Physical Education Award
Mackenzie
Wynbeek

Science Award
Alexandra Spalt

Social Studies Award
Jamie Kim

Technology Award
Sebastian Castro

Arion Award
Timothy Lee

The John Philip Sousa Award for Band
Natalie Vincenti

The National School Choral Award
Sarena Lee

ECHS 2024 Faculty Award
Jamie Kim

NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

Luke Anema
Gianna Angelucci
Angela Avolio
Natalie Byrnes
Valentina Condegna
Stone Davis
Lukas Faasse
Joshua Heerema
Timothy Kang
Jamie Kim
Sophia Kim
Maya Kingston
Timothy La Bianca

Sarena Lee
Man (Ashley) Luo
Jadyn Ninan
Sarah Onufer
Jaden Ritsma
Grace Schulster
Sofia Shevtsova
Alexandra Spalt
Charlotte Steen
Austin Vander Pyl
Natalie Vincenti
Hanyang Wang
Mackenzie Wynbeek

MU ALPHA THETA (Math Honor Society)

Jamie Kim
Man (Ashley) Luo
Jadyn Ninan
Alexandra Spalt
Hanyang Wang

President's Education Awards (Alphabetical Order)

Luke Anema
Gianna Angelucci
Angela Avolio
Natalie Byrnes
Valentina Condegna
Daniel Connolly
Stone Davis
Lukas Faasse
Joshua Heerema
Timothy Kang

Jamie Kim
Sophia Kim
Maya Kingston
Timothy La Bianca
Emanuel Lazor
Sarena Lee
Man (Ashley) Luo
Natalya Morgan
Jadyn Ninan
Sarah Onufer

Nehemiah Rhee
Grace Schulster
Sofia Shevtsova
Alexandra Spalt
Charlotte Steen
Austin Vander Pyl
Natalie Vincenti
Hanyang Wang
Mackenzie Wynbeek

School and Community Scholarships

Sam Braen Memorial Scholarship
Jennifer Gomez

Lakeland Bank Scholarship
Grace Schulster

Brett Zuidema Scholarship
Man (Ashley) Luo

Smith-Shute Nursing Scholarship
Man (Ashley) Luo

Christine H White Memorial Scholarship
Grace Schulster

Henriette & Kathyne Houseward Vocational Scholarship
Austin Vander Pyl
Man (Ashley) Luo

Passaic County Directors of Guidance Scholarship
Charlotte Steen

Excellence in Creative Writing Award
Jamie Kim

Excellence in Scholastic Writing Award
Valentina Condegna

Excellence in Mathematics Award
Austin Vander Pyl

Athletic Awards

ECHS Athletic Department Varsity Club Award
Lucas Genuario
Mackenzie Wynbeek

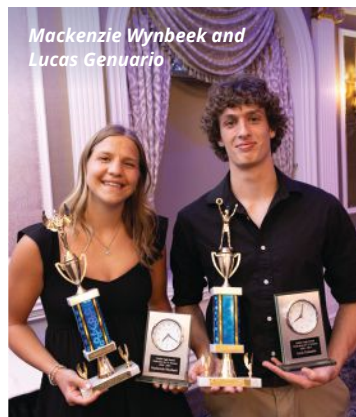
NJSIAA Scholar Athlete Award
Alexandra Spalt

Athletic Department Golden Eagle Award
Gianna Angelucci
Lukas Faasse
Stone Davis
Lucas Genuario
Alexandra Spalt
Mackenzie Wynbeek

PCCA Senior Athlete of the Year
Lucas Genuario
Katherine Kim

NJ National Women in Sport Award
Mackenzie Wynbeek

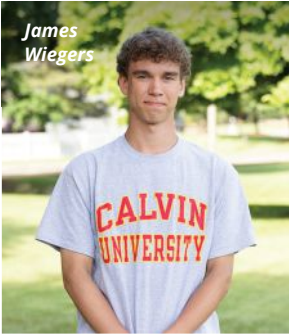
NJIC Sportsmanship Award
Gianna Angelucci
Lukas Faasse



Mackenzie Wynbeek and Lucas Genuario

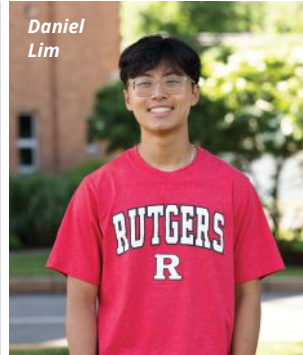
Class of 2024 college acceptances

Adelphi University
American University
Asbury University
Ave Maria University
Babson College
Baylor University
Belmont Abbey College
Belmont University
Bennington College
Binghamton University
Biola University
Bowie State University
Cairn University
Caldwell University
Calvin University



Champlain College
Chapman University
Clarkson University
Clemson University
Cleveland State University
Columbia University
County College of Morris
Covenant College
DePaul University
Drew University
Drexel University
Duquesne University
East Carolina University
East Stroudsburg University
Eastern University
Elizabethtown College
Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University
Fairleigh Dickinson University
Felician University
Florida Institute of Technology
Florida State University
Georgia Southern University

Gettysburg College
Gordon College
Grove City College
Hamilton College
Hawaii Pacific University
High Point University
Hofstra University
Howard University
Indiana University
Iona University
Ithaca College
James Madison University
Kean University
Kent State University
Liberty University
Lipscomb University
Louisiana State University
Loyola University Maryland
Manhattan College
Marist College
Massachusetts College of Pharmacy & Health Sciences
Messiah University
Miami University
Michigan State University
Middle Tennessee State University
Monmouth University
Montclair State University
Morgan State University
Muhlenberg College
New Jersey Institute of Technology
New York Institute of Technology
New York University
Northeastern University
Nova Southeastern University
Ohio State University
Pace University
Palm Beach Atlantic University
Passaic County Community College
Pennsylvania College of Technology
Pennsylvania State University
Pepperdine University
Purdue University
Quinnipiac University
Ramapo College of New Jersey
Regent University



Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Rider University
Rochester Institute of Technology
Roger Williams University
Rowan University
Rutgers University
Sacred Heart University
Saint Anselm College
Salem State University
Salisbury University
Samford University
Sarah Lawrence College
Savannah College of Art and Design
Seattle University
Seton Hall University
Siena College
Southeastern University
St. John's University
St. Thomas Aquinas College
Stevens Institute of Technology
Stockton University
Stony Brook University
Suffolk University
SUNY Buffalo State
Susquehanna University
Syracuse University
Temple University
Texas A & M University
The Catholic University of America
The College of New Jersey
The University of British Columbia
The University of Tennessee
Thomas Jefferson University

Towson University
Union University
University at Albany
University of Central Florida
University of Connecticut
University of Dallas
University of Florida
University of Hartford
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
University of Maine
University of Maryland
University of Massachusetts
University of Minnesota
University of New England
University of New Hampshire
University of New Haven
University of Pittsburgh
University of Rhode Island
University of Rochester
University of Scranton
University of South Florida
University of Vermont
University of Washington
University of Wisconsin-Madison
Vermont State University
Villanova University



Virginia Tech
Washington State University
Wheaton College
Wilkes University
William Paterson University of New Jersey
Worcester Polytechnic Institute
Worcester State University
York College of Pennsylvania

Middle school ceremony

Class of 2024



The middle school promotion was held the evening of June 13, 2024, and featured a surprise by commencement speaker and principal, Dr. Daniel Lazor.

Starting off his talk by riding in on a “backwards brain” bicycle, he reminded eighth grade graduates that

habits become unconscious. He then discussed this in light of scripture, exhorting students from Romans 11 and 12.

“But Scripture tells us to be transformed,” he said. “To put off the old self, and to put on a new self. What does this new self look like? It has new habits and new behaviors that are trained on the truth of God’s word. They are evident in a life that is being remade in the image of Christ—the one who has

the rightful claim on who we are and the purpose for which we have been made.”

The ceremony also involved three student speakers, who were chosen by faculty. Speakers had to maintain a G.P.A. of 3.9 or above and exemplify the following characteristics: creativity, academic integrity, leadership, core values, quality of work, integrity, motivation and evidence of the Christian faith.



GRADUATIONS

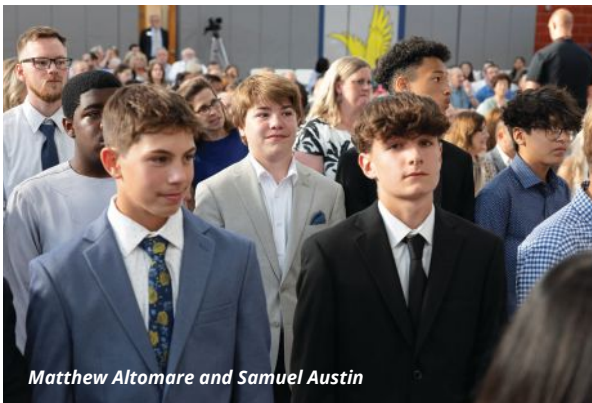


Amelia Pringle

This year **Allison VandeVrede** and **Benjamin Scarnato-Bennett** were chosen for the opening prayers, and **Amelia Pringle** was chosen for the student address.

Pringle spoke on staying on God's path. She added, "God has a plan for each one of our lives. We must seek Him in all that we do. We must live every day in gratitude for all that he's done for us in all that we do. Another great verse to remember as we choose to stay close to God is Proverbs 3:5-6: 'Trust in the Lord with all of your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all of your ways acknowledge Him and He will make your paths straight.'"

"GOD HAS A PLAN FOR EACH ONE OF OUR LIVES. WE MUST SEEK HIM IN ALL THAT WE DO. WE MUST LIVE EVERY DAY IN GRATITUDE FOR ALL THAT HE'S DONE FOR US..." —Amelia Pringle



Matthew Altomare and Samuel Austin

"[New self] has new habits and new behaviors that are trained on the truth of God's word. They are evident in a life that is being remade in the image of Christ..." —**DR. DAN LAZOR**



Matthew Altomare

Fifth grade

Promotion chapel



Representing the first ceremony of its kind at Eastern Christian School, the fifth grade promotion chapel was held the morning of June 13, 2024.

Christ-like traits seen in each of the 69 children in the grade. Traits included resourcefulness, with a verse from Proverbs 1:5 to boldness from Acts 4:29 to thankfulness from 1 Thessalonians 5:18.



During the ceremony, teacher **Teresa Sippel** expressed the sentiment in the room: "this time is always a little bittersweet," she said. "We will miss them and the gifts they bring to our grade-level community."

Congratulations to the fifth graders!

A time to celebrate students moving out of the upper elementary division and into the middle school division, the chapel opened with **Dr. Dan Lazor** reminding parents this is a time to "recognize the work of God's hand in our children."

The chapel's highlight included the passing out of certificates for each child, as well as the reading of



Scenes from the fifth grade promotion.



Second grade

Celebration chapel

The annual spiritual themes were also highlighted, spanning from “Every Nation, Tribe and Tongue,” based on Revelation 7:9 when the grade was in preschool, to this year’s theme, “Seek Truth, Speak Truth,” based on Psalm 119.

In addition to speaking, students worshiped through sign language, singing, and poetry. A slideshow showcasing events from the year was projected on the screen.

“We are so proud of all of our second graders,” says **Kelly King**, second grade teacher. “We have had a great year of learning together and exploring what it means to seek truth and speak truth. We are praying for each and every one of them as they get ready to enter into third grade.”



Lagerveld & Seitsma families

On June 11, second grade parents were invited to a special chapel to celebrate their children’s final year at the Midland Park campus.

Seventy-eight students participated in the culminating event. Various students took turns speaking, starting with a prayer and then reflecting on their academic progress.



Osae-Twum family

“SEEK TRUTH, SPEAK TRUTH”
Based on Psalm 119

Preschool

Closing ceremonies



The time was 9:45 a.m. and the PK4 Chickadee class, taught by Anna Cingale, was about to make an entrance to the sound of *Pomp and Circumstance*. One by one, students dressed to impress came bounding through the door of the Midland Park campus, complete with a blue cap to signify their new status as preschool graduate.



Theo Hajal

The class recited portions of Psalm 119, and sang songs, such as *Thy Word is a Lamp onto my Feet*. Then it was time for certificates and awards, including awards for kindness, determination and faithfulness.

"We've really had a great year of learning and growth in our Chickadee class this year," says Cingale.

Later that day, another class would repeat a similar process, only this time, they would share career aspirations, including a tooth fairy, a princess, a face painter, and "undecided."

Always adorable, preschool closing ceremonies were held on June 12 this year. This year, five classes had ceremonies.

"Preschool graduation is an important milestone for our youngest learners. Throughout the year, they have been taught the foundations of language, math, social studies and science. They learn social skills and emotional regulation. Most importantly, at Eastern Christian, the preschoolers have grown in the love of our Heavenly Father. Preschool graduation is the culmination of a year of unparalleled growth, and EC preschool teachers are excited to watch these kids soar," says **Sarah Vander Wall**, preschool director.



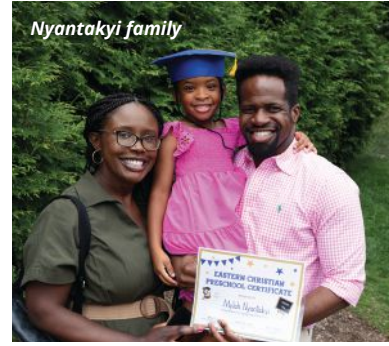
GRADUATION & PROMOTION SNAPSHOTS



Ninan family



Honore family



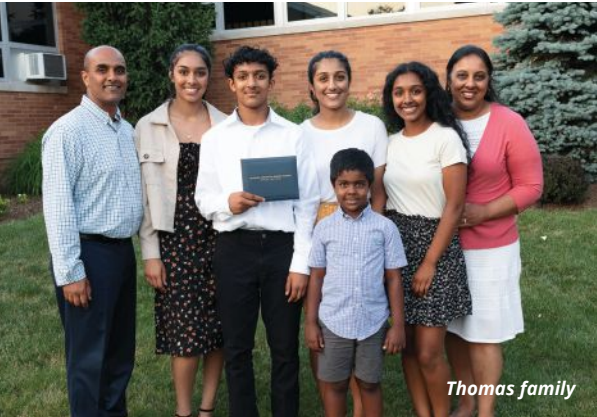
Nyantakyi family



Kang family



Middle school promotion



Thomas family



Veenema family



Thomas family



Choi family



Lee family



Students receive Piet Hein Award

In June, a reception was held on the high school campus to celebrate the students who had competed in the Piet Hein Research Prize. The participants were joined by their parents and guardians, social studies and English faculty members, as well as school administrators.

During the gathering, the guests were told that “Piet Hein” is the pseudonym of the donor who wishes to remain anonymous. This alumnus enjoyed the Humanities as a student at Eastern Academy (the forerunner to our High School), and he wants to reward students who excel in outstanding, in-depth, historical research and write exceptionally well.

Head of School **Dr. Ruth Kuder** opened the festivities with prayer, followed by HS Principal Dan Cirone who described the excellence and rigor of the curricula. Executive Director of the Foundation

for EC **Maura Byrnes** then shared the background of this prize, followed by social studies teacher **Jim Uitermarkt** who thanked his colleagues for mentoring these students and evaluating the papers outside of their usual work.

Uitermarkt awarded the prizes ranging from \$2,000 to \$5,000 to the top three winners. Sophomore **Kayley McLaren** took home the top prize with her essay on “The Horrors of War Captured in Music.” An EC sophomore who was born in the U.K. to South African parents, Kayley wrote persuasively that over the centuries, music has had a unique relationship with war by demonstrating war’s essence through descriptions, sounds and lyrics. She highlighted the Threnody to the Victims of Hiroshima, along with other compositions. **Jamie Kim** and **Rachael De Rooy** placed second and third, respectively, while **Paul Dussard** and **Laura Turner** earned Honorable Mention.

Students selected their own topics, and then crafted and defended their theses. Some of the subjects were: the Salem Witch Trials; Alexander Bell’s invention of the telephone; the Space Race and its lasting ramifications; the role of Katharine Johnson at NASA; the fall of the Berlin Wall and its consequences; the USA Patriot Act and its impact on privacy and freedom; the Aberfan Disaster, its causes, aftermath, and role in environmentalism; and the Model T Ford and how it altered the course of history.

Kayley and her parents expressed how grateful they felt, and they will use the \$5,000 award toward tuition at EC. We are deeply grateful to the Lord for “Piet Hein,” for his kindness and thoughtful generosity. He continually provides inspiring gifts that fuel our mission.

YOUNG ALUMNI PROGRAM TO LAUNCH

If you graduated in the last 10 years (2015-2024), you are one of EC’s hundreds of young alumni and among our treasured graduates. Starting this fall, look for opportunities to stay involved, such as:

- Weekly Bible Study
- Alumni Chapel
- HomEComing 2024
- Young Alumni Dinner and Community Worship Night
- Game Night

These events are free, thanks to Eastern Christian donors.

To update your contact information, please send your information to foundation@easternchristian.org (Parents are also encouraged to provide their children’s addresses, if they have already moved out.)

Blue & Gold Society

One young alumnus, **Zachary Binger**, class of 2013, now lives in Los Angeles, but his heart remains in North Haledon. For several years, Zac has made a habit of donating to the Annual Fund.

Zac recently wrote to the Foundation Office and described why he gives. He explained, "EC gave me much, and I look back quite fondly on my time there. It was an important part of my life, and I am grateful to be able to support what it can be for others."

To celebrate him and all the other young graduates who donate to EC, the Foundation has created the Blue & Gold Society. This group pays tribute to alumni ages 18 through 35 who support the Annual Fund with a gift of any amount.

In addition to young alumni, the Annual Fund is also widely supported by older alumni, parents, grandparents, and other friends. Your gifts are put to immediate use, so together we can:

- **EMPOWER EVERY STUDENT, ON EVERY CAMPUS, TO DEVELOP THEIR GOD-GIVEN GIFTS.**
- **PROVIDE OUR STUDENTS WITH AN EXCELLENT CURRICULUM.**
- **OFFER OUR STUDENTS A WIDE VARIETY OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.**
- **AWARD SCHOLARSHIPS.**
- **COVER URGENT, UNMET NEEDS IMPACTING OUR STUDENTS' EDUCATION.**

FOUNDATION NEWS

A transformative gift establishes the Gerritsen Scholarship Fund

Beth (Gerritsen) Mc Kee, class of 1976 and her brother Jim Gerritsen, class of 1979, along with their respective spouses, Bill and Kathy, have recently given a gift of \$100,000 to Eastern Christian. At their request, we will use it to create a named, endowed scholarship fund in memory of their parents, Betty and Ed Gerritsen.

The Elizabeth "Betty" and Adrian "Ed" Gerritsen IV Scholarship Fund will provide approximately \$5,000 annually in scholarship support to our most financially deserving students. Since only a portion of income generated by the fund will be used for tuition assistance, the fund will be a permanent one.

Beth and Jim's mother, Betty (Sikkema) Gerritsen, was a faithful alumna of the class of 1951. After having earned a bachelor's in education from Calvin College, she joined EC as a faculty member for many years, teaching fifth grade and then English to middle school and high school students. Her husband, Ed Gerritsen, was a valued member of the EC School Board of Directors during the 1970s and 1980s.

Ed Gerritsen passed in 2021. According to his obituary, he had a 45-year career in engineering and was married to Betty for more than 64 years. Ed had an abiding passion for his reformed Christian faith and a love of history, biographies, photography and gardening. He was an active volunteer for a variety of organizations. Beth treasures the memories of singing with her father in the Calvin College (now University) Oratorio Society.

According to her obituary, Betty passed into glory on November 8, 2022. She was such an excellent student as a child that her teacher had her skip a grade and in her senior year, despite being the youngest member of her class, was named as the valedictorian.

Betty and Ed would wake up very early each morning for a decade to answer a Christian helpline. In addition, Betty especially enjoyed tutoring an immigrant from Somalia, always putting her teaching skills to use. Most of all, Betty desired that her family's future generations would embrace the faith she and Ed treasured.

We are most grateful for Betty and Ed's example of devoted service. The family has our greatest appreciation for allowing us to welcome students to EC as Gerritsen Scholars. Many of these young people will undoubtedly carry out the Gerritsen Family's tradition of loving the Lord, being generous, and serving others sacrificially to help transform the world.

If you are curious about how you can help change the world, one student at a time, by establishing a scholarship fund, please send an email to foundation@easternchristian.org or feel free to call Maura Byrnes, executive director of the Foundation for EC at 973.310.0402.



Dr. Ruth Kuder, Maura Byrnes, Janet Braen and Jenny Gomez

Providing impactful gifts

Janet Braen of Braen Stone continues to change EC students' lives

In memory of her husband, Janet Braen and Braen Stone Industries, Inc. established the Sam Braen Memorial Scholarship at EC nearly two decades ago. Since then, the scholarships committee has partnered with her to award one EC student annually with a significant scholarship so that he or she can attend college.

Typically these outstanding scholars have been not only strong students academically, but they are also devoted to the school, involved as servant-leaders, and have overcome major hurdles in their lives. In addition, they are usually the first in their family to attend college, and they demonstrate exceptional promise for future success.

Jenny Gomez, class of 2024, was awarded the Sam Braen Memorial Scholarship in June. Afterwards, Mrs. Braen sent a note to the Executive Director of the Foundation Maura Byrnes saying, "I would

like to express to you how impressed I am with the superior Christian education your students are receiving at EC. Braen Stone has been giving scholarships to EC students for almost 20 years and we have found EC high school students to be well prepared academically as well as exhibiting a level of spiritual maturity that will guide them through their lives. Thank you EC for all you do to give our children a quality Christian education!"

We thank Mrs. Braen for her faithfulness, commitment to our students and her recognition of their resiliency and determination. Her desire to honor her beloved husband in this wonderful way not only pays tribute to his memory but also conveys to our students that she believes in them. She whole-heartedly cheers them on to live their lives for God's glory. We are inspired by her generosity toward our students, as well as the hope she has in Christ, which she shares with all of us.

2024 Auction Gala

EC Auction Gala breaks records

All previous Eastern Christian School Auction Gala records were broken on April 12, when EC hosted its largest-ever event at the Westmount Country Club.

More than 420 guests gathered to enjoy the extended cocktail hour, play games, and bid on amazing silent and live auction prizes. By the end of the night, EC received almost \$250,000 towards enriching the experience and education of our 954 students. Most exciting of all was this year's Fuel-the-Fund call for student scholarships that brought on a frenzy of fast and furious donations resulting in an astonishing \$112,945 raised for scholarship funding within minutes, bringing our fundraising total to more than \$360,000.

The Auction Gala is EC's largest and most important fundraiser, not only because it brings in essential funding but also because it is a true community building event. The generosity and commitment to EC and its mission are truly inspiring, so we invite you to join us on Friday, April 4 for the 2025 EC Auction Gala!

2024 SPRING GOLF OUTING

Friendly competition and strong community were on full display at Wild Turkey Golf Club in Hamburg on Monday, May 20 for the annual EC Spring Golf Outing. This sold out event of 132 golfers and 50 sponsors raised more than \$83,000 towards refreshing the high school gymnasium with new paint and bleacher replacement.

Dating all the way back to 1987 and thanks to our faithful golf committee, volunteers, and community, these Spring Golf Outings have raised more than \$1.4 million dollars for Eastern Christian School.

Your contributions and participation have provided scholarships for hard working families, enhanced our athletic programs, paid for state-of-the-art technology, and furnished our newly renovated cafeteria. Every dollar has benefited our students. Thank you for being a part of this decades long tradition!

EC Athletic Awards Beefsteak

After a four year hiatus, Eastern Christian School and the Athletic Booster Club were proud to bring back the beloved tradition of the Beefsteak on May 29 at The Brownstone to celebrate EC athletics and honor our student athletes.

For those unfamiliar with this local favorite, the Beefsteak is a celebratory banquet/fundraiser where all-you-can-eat beef tenderloin is served on sliced french bread with antipasto, pasta, french fries, onion rings, and dessert.

With a sold-out crowd of 380 attendees at this year's EC Athletic Awards Beefsteak, there was no shortage of beef or school spirit.

In addition to honoring first time Varsity inductees and graduating seniors for the 2023-2024 school year, other awards celebrating student athletes and coaches included:

NJIC Colonial Division Coach of the Year winners:

Adam Culp (Varsity Tennis)
Nicole D'Augustine-DeLaura (Varsity Volleyball)

PCCA Athlete of the Year

Katherine Kim
Lucas Genuario

NJSIAA Scholar Athlete

Alexandra Spalt

National Girls in Sport Award

Mackenzie Wynbeek

NJSIC Sportsmanship Award

Gianna Angelucci and Lukas Faasse

Golden Eagle Award for at least 12 seasons of participation:

Gianna Angelucci (13 seasons)
Stone Davis
Lukas Faasse
Lucas Genuario
Alexandra Spalt
Mackenzie Wynbeek

Most Varsity Letters Award:

Mackenzie Wynbeek (12 Varsity Letters)
Lucas Genuario (10 Varsity Letters)



Quilts, faithfulness, and generations

The Esther Quilters

At one point in time, the Esther Quilters had quite a production.

Quilt tops came from faraway places like Colorado and Arizona. Some were made from household scraps, others featured ornate embroidery, and others included applique. They received coverage in the Bergen Record, complete with a picture. And for years—generations—the ladies of the Esther Quilters, usually about ten—gathered together on Thursdays at Midland Park Christian Reformed Church to quilt and raise money, but not for themselves.

The first women arrived at 8 a.m. They would break for coffee at 10 a.m. and roll everything up at 11:50 a.m., setting it back in the closet for the following week. While they worked, they chatted. For the women—who came from several different churches—it also functioned as a support system. But there were rules: no gossip, no politics.

After all, they had work to do. Finishing a quilt is a labor of love. The group worked on two quilts at a time. They started by sewing together the edges, rolling the ends, and then quilting the middle. Rows of quilt stitches could never be more than 4 inches apart, and sometimes, were as close as 1 inch. When this was complete, one of them women would finish the binding at home.

Over generations, some things remained the same. But things also change. “Over the years, the quilts got bigger. People got queen-sized and king-sized beds,” explains **Karen Holmes**, an Esther Quilter and the youngest of three-generations of Esther Quilters, a tradition that started in her family with her grandmother Katie Van Der Meer, her mother Garberdina Nywening, and then was passed on to her. “As the quilts got bigger the pricing went up.”

In the heyday of quilting, the money went to Maltbie Elementary School, a predecessor of Eastern Christian

School. When that was torn down in 1960, the group elected to support Eastern Christian Elementary School. At one point in the 1980s and 90s, the group had a three-year waiting list.

And then around the year 2000, the advent of machine quilting put a dent in the fabric, so to speak. Even still, as other quilting groups in the area shuttered their operations, the Esther Quilters moved on.

“We just continued to donate to Eastern Christian. We would call [the principal] Sandy Bottge in November and find out the teacher’s wish list. She’d send us the list and we would choose.”

Through the years, the ladies donated a variety of items, ranging from desks, computers and whiteboards to books. Checks, as routine as the ladies themselves, would usually arrive every December, ranging from \$1500-\$2000.

After more than 100 years in operation, however, the Esther Quilters sent their last donation in the spring of 2023. It represented proceeds from the past two years of work and amounted to \$1557.88.

“When we shut down a year ago, I only had three ladies. There was no work either. People in this area aren’t sewing anymore. We were about the last quilting club to close,” says Holmes.



Appropriately, the very last order came from one of their kin: An extra-long quilt, with quilt tops created by one of their daughters. As the chapter of the Esther Quilters closes, we as a school community are reminded that we are the beneficiaries of the faithfulness of so many, and we have been entrusted to do the same for those who come after us. Thank you, Esther Quilters. God bless you until we meet again.

Alumni updates

Matthew Struyk '94 obtained his Bachelor of Science degree in Strategic Communications from the University of Utah on May 3, 2024. He has now started in a new role as Leadership Development Specialist at Young Living Essential Oils, where he has been employed for 6 years.

Daniel Bruinooge '09 has released his first album, "Sun Blonde", under the artist name of Hot Wheels. Hot Wheels is an ambient/surf rock/hot rod project based out of LA.

Jonathan Veenstra '16 will serve as a fellow with the General Counsel at the International Brotherhood of Teamsters headquarters in Washington DC. This fellowship is offered by the Peggy Browning Fund. This fund creates opportunities for law students, interested in working in "workplace justice", to gain experience in the field and network with other fellows.

Noah Hagedoorn '18 will be serving as a Judicial Intern for the Honorable Joseph G. Monaghan, J.S.C at New Jersey Courts.

Isabell (Lazor) Portis '20 was awarded the Dan Richner Athletic Leadership Award from Cairn University Athletics. This honor is awarded to "a senior student-athlete who competes with an attitude of Christ-like leadership, exhibits the highest degree of sportsmanship, is both teachable and coachable, and demonstrates dedication, commitment and responsibility.

Join the EC
Community at these
upcoming events

HOMECOMING
2024

OCTOBER 7

Alumni & Friends Golf Outing

OCTOBER 18 & 19

HomeComing Events and Picnic

GIVING TUESDAY

December 3, 2024

AUCTION GALA

April 4, 2025

SPRING GOLF OUTING

May 19, 2025

Mark Your Calendars!

In memoriam

REMEMBERING OUR ALUMNI

ALUMNI

**Harriet (Dykstra)
Fritzsich '48**
6/18/24 Wyckoff, NJ

Lena Tamboer '50
6/1/24 Mahwah, NJ

John Drukker '51
6/11/24 Grand Rapids, MI

Anita (Smith) Hoogstra '51
4/24/24 Oostburg, WI

Albert Huizing '56
4/1/24 Lancaster, PA

Muriel (Kuiken) Tolsma '57
1/30/24 Wyckoff, NJ

Shirley (Ritsma) Folkertsma '58
2/15/24 North Haledon, NJ

Donald Post '62
12/5/23 Berryville, VA

Norman Steenstra '69
1/16/24 Charleston, WV

Margaret Van Dam '73
10/12/23 Hawthorne, NJ

Roberto Howell '96
3/6/24 Paterson, NJ

FORMER FACULTY

**Joyce
Schoonejongen '56**
4/1/24
Grand Rapids, MI
*ECES/MS Teacher,
1962-2005*

Tribute gifts

Gifts given in memory or in honor between January 15, 2024 - June 18, 2024

IN MEMORY OF

Paul A. Beverly
Ken and Linda Beverly

Marion Borduin
William and Beth Schuil

Ellen Bourne
Robert and Adelina Peretti

James Bruinooge
Frank and Betsy Snope

Leonard De Block
Michael and Donna De Block
Thomas and Suzana De Block
Susan and Kenneth Dyer
Tom and Linda Dykhous
Mary Lou and David Fillcroft
Brian and Michele Hubert
Sarah Hilda Herndon Miller
Donald and Marilyn Sporn
Beverly and David Tenhor
Kenneth and Sharon Visbeen

Ralph E. Faasse
Thomas and Suzana De Block

Kenneth Gale
Deborah and Ed Lamoureux

Robert A. and Anita Hoogstra
Robert and Kathy Lynn Hoogstra

Albert H. Huizing
Elizabeth Chappell
Vincent and Carol De Young
Tom and Linda Dykhous
Edward and Grace Hey

Elizabeth Huizing
Annamae Hulsebos
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Recognizing that more of our alumni now turn to social media for information on personal celebrations, Eastern Christian School will be following trends in higher education publications by increasingly shifting toward featuring updates on academics, ministry and career.

Please let us know about the milestones and big moments from your year, like professional accomplishments, church and ministry involvement, and advanced academic degrees. We would also like to hear stories of how the EC community has supported you in your professional and faith journey. Eastern Christian School reserves the right to edit and/or omit submissions.

Submissions can be sent to: Alumni@easternchristian.org

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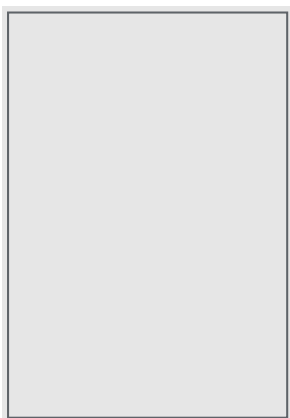
The Herald is a publication printed in spring and fall to keep the school community abreast of recent EC news and events. Each issue includes school updates, alumni news, athletic highlights, and so much more. The Herald is mailed to over 5,000 EC alumni and families, and is one of the best ways to advertise your business locally and nationwide.

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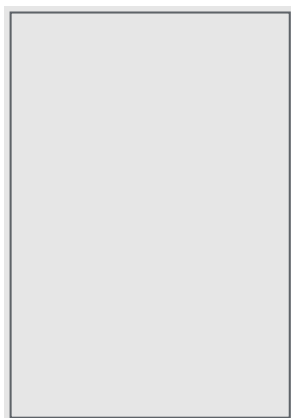
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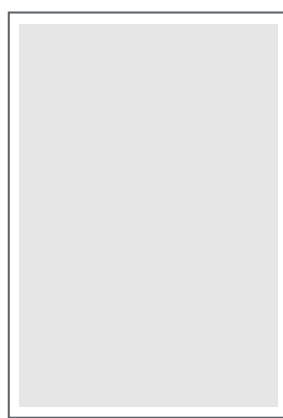
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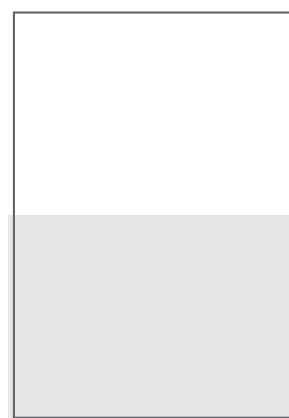
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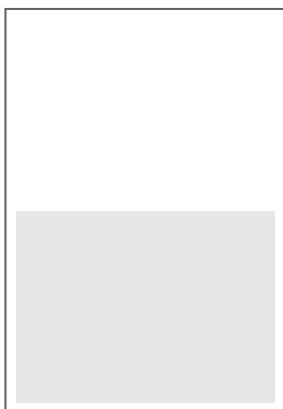
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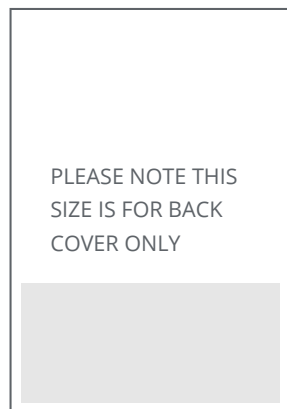
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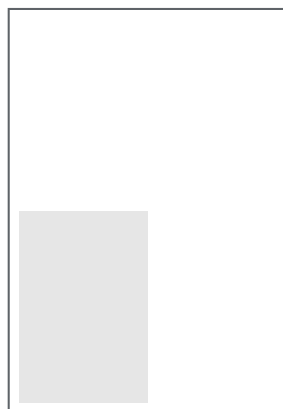
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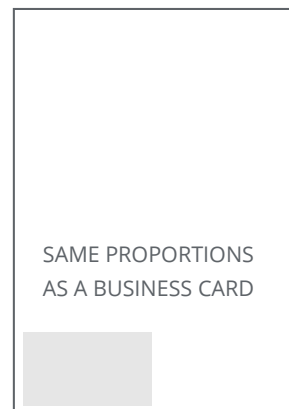
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Winter sports summaries

WINTER TRACK

Both the boys' and girls' winter track teams enjoyed successful seasons that included a number of strong individual performances. **Valerie Portuphy** won the triple jump in the conference championships and the long jump in the Passaic County championships. **Sharyn-Nicole Thomas** placed third at the conference championships and fourth at the state championships in the shot put. Sophomore **Fiona Borzone** had a breakout debut in track and field season and placed fifth in high jump at the state

championships. Freshmen **Alyssa Malasits** and **Jiahui (Nina) Yang** also had promising debut seasons which they will look to build upon in the future.

The boy's team was led by a strong group of upperclassmen which included **Timothy La Bianca, Stone Davis, Alex Culp,** and **Caleb Kuperus**. Timothy particularly excelled in the pole vault and won the state championships in the event! Stone also had a strong performance in the pole vault and placed third at the state championships. Distance runners **Alex Culp** and **Caleb Kuperus** also had standout seasons.



Joseph DeLuccia

(winning all three games) of Pascack Hills, Wayne Valley, and Ridgefield Park. The season concluded at the league championships where senior **Ashley Luo** finished ninth overall with 442 pins, just weeks after she bowled a personal best 189 game.

BOYS BOWLING

After back-to-back league titles, this team finished strong and in second place in the division following a 7-0 sweep of Hawthorne in their final league match. **Muke Jiang** and **David Zhang** shined in the early playoff rounds. Junior **Joe DeLuccia** threw a

personal best 265 in the sectional title match with Kinnelon, which helped earn him a medal for the fifth highest series out of all North 1 bowlers in the championship round.

The team was led all year by the 1-2 punch of seniors **Hanyang Wang** and **Joshua Heerema**.

GIRLS BOWLING

Highlighted by their second place finish at the county championships, the girls enjoyed an historic season. Individual highlights included top 10 finishes by **Rebecca Ross** and captain **Makena Spatz** (454 pins, third place) who led the tournament's individual competition after the first two games. The second half of the season included three straight 7-0 sweeps

BOYS FRESHMAN BASKETBALL

The boys freshman basketball team concluded their season with an impressive record of 10 wins, 6 losses, and 1 tie. Coach Harvell said, "The most rewarding aspect of the season was witnessing the improvement of each player as they honed their skills and developed a deeper understanding of the game. This growth is a testament to their hard work, coachability, and passion for the sport."

BOYS JV BASKETBALL

The boys junior varsity basketball team had a promising start to the season but faced challenges due to injuries and the movement of players up from the freshman level and others up to the varsity. Most notably, **Andy Genuario** and **Gio Indomenico** transitioned from JV to starting roles on varsity. **Carter Groen** emerged as the most improved player on JV, **Jonmarcus Rodriguez** as



Lucas Genuario

the leading scorer, and **Keith** and **Kevin Osae-Twum** as forces around the basket.

BOYS V BASKETBALL

The boys varsity basketball team started out strong, going 3-1 over the first four games before injuries and absences began to derail the season. One highlight was senior captain **Lucas Genuario** scoring his 1000th career point on a breakaway dunk against Hawthorne at home. Others include junior **Caleb Chae's** 17-point

performance in the county game against Lakeland, the team's mid-season victories against Hawthorne and Passaic Charter, the step-up play of sophomore **Andy Genuario** and junior **Gio Indomenico**, who worked their way into starting roles on varsity during the season, and the state game where **Lukas Faasse** had his best game of the season. Sophomore **Andrew Mwrigi** also made significant contributions in games he played, averaging nearly 10 rebounds.

GIRLS V BASKETBALL

The young Lady Eagles battled through multiple challenges, finishing second place in the league with a 15-9 record. The season featured multiple signature games versus opponents ranked highly in their respective state tournament brackets. These included the opening night win over #3 seed Waldwick, the Christmas tournament victory over 20 win/ #4 seed Becton, the narrow loss to State Sectional Champion Park Ridge, the exciting fourth quarter comeback win in Weehawken, and the well-played victory over a 20 win Leonia team in the season finale. Coach Veenstra notes their man-to-man defense as the team's strength, made possible by the hard work in spirited practices shown by every team member, every day. He describes the team, led by senior captains **Gianna Angelucci** and **Mackenzie Wynbeek**, as "A very athletic, coachable, and dedicated group who accept their respective roles. They love to compete, love each other, and love the Lord."



Mackenzie Wynbeek

FALL 2023 LEAGUE AND COUNTY RECOGNITIONS

Boys Basketball

County

1st: Lucas Genuario
HM: Dan Lim, Lukas Faasse

League

1st: Lucas Genuario

Girls Basketball

County

2nd: Kirsten Braunius
HM: Caroline Pringle, Mackenzie Wynbeek

League

1st: Mackenzie Wynbeek, Kirsten Braunius
2nd: Addison Fleming, Caroline Pringle
HM: Tori Brown

Boys Bowling

County

1st: Hanyang Wang
2nd: Joshua Heerema
HM: Joseph DeLuccia, David Zhang

League

1st: Hanyang Wang, Joshua Heerema, Joseph DeLuccia
HM: David Zhang

Girls Bowling

County

2nd: Makena Spatz
HM: Ashley Luo, Brielle Spalt

Indoor Track

County

1st: Valerie Portuphy (LJ)
HM: Tim La Bianca, Alex Culp, Fiona Borzone, Alyssa Malasits

Spring sports summaries

SOFTBALL

Finishing 7-14, the girls competed in a challenging league and independent schedule put together by first-year coach Jerry Mercadante. Led by senior captain **Gianna Angelucci**, the team earned praise and appreciation from opposing coaches for their play on the field (especially base running) as well as their enthusiasm, sportsmanship and support for each other. Individual highlights included pitcher **Avery Conrad** throwing a no-hitter and reaching 200 career Ks, **Ellie Algarin** playing every position except pitcher and first baseman **Hannah Leegwater** receiving honors after playing a position she never played before. Everyone is excited to see what next year brings on our new field at Wyckoff!

GOLF

The golf team had an exciting and promising season in 2024 finishing second in the NJIC Colonial with a record of 8-2 in league play. The talented group also displayed a strong performance at the Passaic County Tournament finishing fourth with a team score of 360. Low scorers **Nehemiah Rhee** and **Ethan Nashold** were nominated for Second Team All-County honors, posting scores of 82 and 87, respectively at Preakness Valley Golf Course. The duo was followed by **Joey DeLuccia**, **Billy Cook**, **Charles Ross** and **Lukas Faasse** in the varsity rotation.

BASEBALL

Able to stay focused and locked in on the goals they set with each other in the beginning of the season while navigating obstacles, injuries and adversity along the way, the baseball team put together their fourth straight winning season finishing with a 10-9 record and placing third in the Colonial division. Highlights included nail-biting wins vs Lodi and Manchester, a solid performance over Butler, an opening-round county tournament win, and a tight loss to Timothy Christian in the state tournament. With only one senior on the roster, there is cause for hope to build on this year's success and keep the winning streak alive next season!

LACROSSE

With only one senior on a small roster and having graduated significant pieces from previous years' successes, Head Coach Greg Hagedoorn and assistant Mike Reed knew this was going to be a rebuilding year. Half of the team was brand new to the sport and most were underclassmen. The midfield was led by leading scorer, junior **Caleb Chae**, who regularly impacted the game while facing the best defender of the opposition. Sophomore **Zachary Ninan** was the

engine of the midfield and classmate **Daniel Bushka** was a dominant force on faceoffs. The attack was paced by sophomore newcomer **Joseph Altomare** along with junior **Andres Alvarez** and the lone senior, **Daniel Lim**. On defense, first-year player junior **Gio Indomenico** (153 saves) kept the Eagles in almost every game in goal, playing behind returning sophomore defenders **Andy Genuario** and **Kyle Magee** and newcomers sophomore **Dakota Wiechmann** and juniors **Ben DeBel** and **Luke Demosthene**. With 13 of 14 players returning, plenty of valuable experience gained this year will help the team as they take steps forward next season on an expanded roster.

BOYS TENNIS

The 2024 EC boys tennis team gathered with three returning starters, and an exciting group of underclassmen. Senior **Garren Sly** moved to the top singles position. His most significant wins came against West Milford and Lodi, earning him second team honors in the league. Third-year varsity starters, **Peter Wang** and **James Torres**, also moved to singles. The team was rounded out by an impressive group of first-year varsity underclassmen. Freshmen **Zaven Rodrigues** and **Yuha Lee** racked up wins against many of the league's veteran doubles teams. Sophomores **Hugo Wu**, **Handy Wang**, and **Jayden Zheng** grew leaps and bounds, and gained valuable varsity experience, helping to elevate expectations for the 2025 season.

TRACK & FIELD

The girls team posted a winning record of 5-3 in the regular season, finishing second in the NJIC conference meet and ninth in the county meet. The leadership of talented upperclassmen including seniors **Jayla Lee, Sharyn-Nicole Thomas** (shot put), and juniors **Kirsten Braunius, Valerie Portuphy**, along with major contributions from a large number of underclassmen including sophomores **Skylar Kuiken** (hurdles), **Laura Turner**, and freshman **Noemi Irizarry** were keys to the team's success.



Valerie Portuphy

The boys team finished with a regular season record of 3-4, finishing fifth at the NJIC conference meet and was also led by its upperclassmen including **David Cho** (pole vault), **Tim La Bianca** (pole vault) **Caleb Kuperus**, and **Alex Culp**. Freshmen **Hudson Culp, Nathan Im**, and **Ray Wu** made very strong contributions to the team as well.



Tim La Bianca

Sadly, this season marks the end of an era for EC track as coach Joel Apol retires after over 40 years of service.

Our team is grateful for his tireless efforts and incredible time invested in student athletes to build a highly respected, championship-caliber program.

Boys Tennis

County

2nd: Garren Sly - first singles
HM: James Torres, Peter Wang

League

2nd: Garren Sly - second singles
HM: Peter Wang

Boys Lacrosse

County

HM: Caleb Chae, Daniel Lim

League

1st: Caleb Chae
HM: Daniel Lim

Track & Field

County

2nd: Sharyn-Nicole Thomas (SP), David Cho (PV), Tim La Bianca (PV)
HM: Kirsten Braunius, Caleb Kuperus, Alex Culp, Jayla Lee

League

1st: Kirsten Braunius (400m), Jayla Lee (200m), Valerie Portuphy (LJ), Sharyn-Nicole Thomas (SP), Mackenzie Wynbeek (Jav), Hannah Visbeen (PV)

2nd: Lucas Genuario (200m), Caleb Kuperus (400 IH), David Cho (PV)

HM: Skylar Kuiken (100 HH), Jayla Lee (4 x 400), Kirsten Braunius (4 x 400), Mackenzie Wynbeek (4 x 400), Noemi Irizarry (4 x 400)

Softball

County

HM: Gianna Angelucci

League

2nd: Gianna Angelucci, Hannah Leegwater
HM: Elliana Algarin

Golf

County

2nd: Nehemiah Rhee, Ethan Nashold

League

1st: Nehemiah Rhee
2nd: Billy Cook, Ethan Nashold, Joseph DeLuccia

Baseball

County

HM: Jonmarcus Rodriguez



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