



WARRIOR CHRONICLE

Summer 2024



The high school choir performing a 50's-themed song at the 25-annual benefit auction this past March.

A Record-Breaking Year for Grace

Dr. Don Larson | Head of School and Dan Darling | Advancement Director

God desires to bless His people, and we have been eyewitnesses to His goodness this year. The joy and blessing of many accomplishments are a testament to His wonderful grace. We are reminded that God celebrates faithfulness over achievement, so we journey on, that we might please Him.

A memorable night was shared by all who attended the 25th-annual benefit auction in March. The students helped serve a delicious meal and delighted attendees with their music and artwork. Close to \$300,000 was raised for our campaign, with an additional large gift given the week following. Thanks to all the volunteers who helped make this event so special. **Mark your calendar for April 12, 2025, for next year's auction, as we continue to celebrate the history of GCS.**



The professional project crew and volunteer work teams have invested over a thousand hours to make the building ready to put the contractors on the job. A special thank-you goes out to all who participated! There is still much to be done, but each step is a blessing.

The first goal on the new soccer field was scored on April 30th at 4:36 PM by eleventh-grade student Ellie Palumbo! We were excited to see the property come to life with many spectators looking on! Plan to come out this fall and see with your own eyes how the property and building are taking shape.



Gaby Urgo | High School Teacher



Grace Christian School | Class of 2024

Mrs. Gaby Urgo (pictured above) was awarded the Agape Teacher Award, which recognizes a teacher who displays outstanding effort, love, and care for our students. A hearty thank-you to Gaby and all the teachers and staff for their hard work and labor of love.

In May, we celebrated the graduation of twenty-five students at our thirty-third commencement. Four are headed to Liberty University; four to Virginia Tech; and a number of others to local and out-of-state schools. Others plan to pursue training programs for particular occupations.

The plans, processes, and permits are in the final stages for the refurbishment of Cedar Green (CG). Watch for updates as Phase One gets underway. Our hope is to move the high school to the CG Campus during the 2025-26 school year. Please join us in praying for the whole school to soon be together on one campus!



GUIDANCE UPDATE | Mentorship Program

George McNair ('01) | High School Guidance Counselor

In the summer of 2023...

Junior Ava Schmandt began a mentorship at Juniper Lane, a local retail space in downtown Staunton specializing in vintage clothing, including wedding dresses. After her summer mentorship, Ava was hired to run the retail space. She also manages the store's social media accounts and helps with the online portion of the business. Ava plans to eventually own her own business and has been thrilled by the experience she has gained at Juniper Lane. Owned by GCS alumna Breanna Decker Grant ('15), Juniper Lane opened in 2022. Breanna is a certified wedding planner who also owns and operates Atlas and Ember, a planning and design company for small weddings. According to Breanna, Ava is an amazing worker who has added greatly to Juniper Lane's success.

Building upon our longstanding annual job-shadowing day, the GCS mentorship program has been a successful extension of the Guidance Department for several years. A number of Grace students have experienced the practical benefits of mentorships. No matter a student's after-high school plans, mentorship experiences are valuable for students to help form their future plans and gain on-the-job training. Often, mentorships can also lead to employment, as it did for Ava. In addition to Ava, Juniors Aubrey Greenmun and Emily Vogan are being mentored at Blair Made, a local artistic sign studio in downtown Staunton. Our other most recent mentorship partners have included Tasso Counselling Group and DuPont Community Credit Union. Typically, mentorship opportunities are available during Junior and Senior years. Students who wish to participate in a local mentorship should speak with Guidance Counselor, Mr. McNair.



Ava Schmandt | Class of 2025

People of Peace *in Times of Turmoil*

A Devotional by Brian Fitzgerald ('03) | Discipleship Director

Why does the Bible talk so much about not being afraid? Humans separated from God have good reason to fear, because a Godless world is a world without purpose and without hope. In such a world, fear enslaves the mind and emotions, and it dictates actions. How many fear-based decisions and attitudes do we succumb to or see played out in our world? Fear is our default modus operandi when we're separated from our Creator. But God.

God's people, as the Bible repeatedly reminds us, should not fear, because God Himself is with and for His people. He is our peace. Jesus says, "Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (John 14:27, NASB 1995). Listen to what God says through Isaiah: "Do not fear, for I am with you; do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you [...] Do not fear, I will help you" (Isaiah 41:10, 13, NASB 1995). If God is our helper, then who or what should we fear? Perhaps Paul has Isaiah 41 in mind when he asks the following rhetorical question: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31, NIV). When he puts it like that, there really is nothing to fear.

We are living in troubling times, and it can be tempting to give in to fear and anxiety. But if the Creator of the cosmos is for us, then there's no good basis to fear. If the One who conquered death has called us friends, then we're in good shape. And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us, then we live life to the fullest. Being people of peace in times of turmoil is a powerful witness to the Truth we love and proclaim.

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful."

JOHN 14:27

GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL WARRIORS

Frank Kahrs | Athletic Director

2023-2024

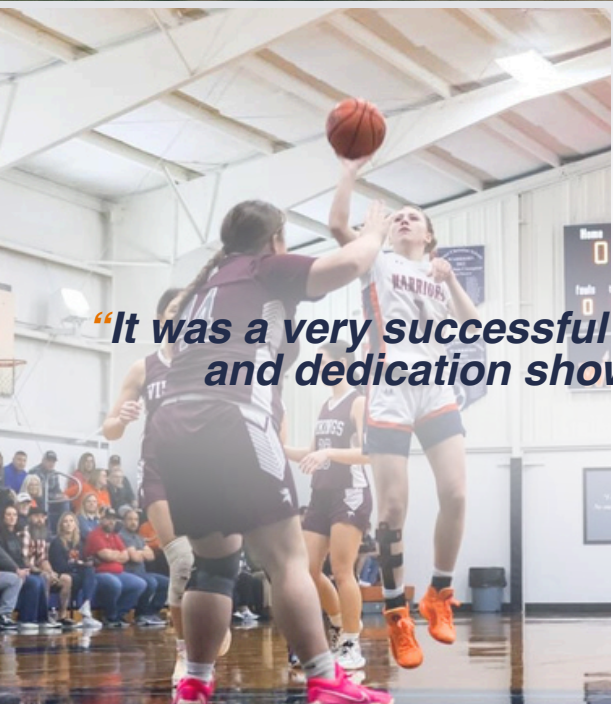
The 2023-24 school year was filled with athletic opportunities for our students.

Starting in the fall, we opened with four cross-country teams, three volleyball teams, and four soccer teams. We had a total of 135 students competing in fall sports. Some highlights were our VG cross-country and VB soccer teams winning VACA State Championships.

The winter season included seven basketball teams, including (3-5) girls and (3-5) boys, MS boys, MS girls, JV boys, varsity girls and varsity boys teams. Our wrestling program included a MS boys team as well as a varsity. Highlights were the VG and VB making trips to the VACA Final Four. Our VG and VB teams qualified for the larger VISAA tournament, with the VG making the Final Four in Richmond. The varsity wrestling team once again won the Best Performance for a Small School at the VISAA State Wrestling Tournament.

The spring season began with much anticipation and included MSG and VG soccer, MS and varsity golf, and varsity boys baseball. Our teams all performed well and finished the season with winning records. Highlights included our VG team playing the first-ever home matches on our new GCS soccer field and that team making a deep VISAA state playoff run to Richmond with a semifinal appearance. Also, our varsity baseball team finished a strong 2nd in the VACA State Tournament, as did our MS golf team.

All in all, it was a very successful year in GCS Athletics, with much hard work and dedication shown by all of our athletes and coaches.



"It was a very successful year in GCS Athletics, with much hard work and dedication shown by all of our athletes and coaches."



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

Davis Reid (GCS Class of 2025 and Statler Brothers grandson, pictured left) purchased the old GCS bus to assist in his music endeavors with his and his cousin's group, Jack and Davis Reid Music.

GET TO KNOW YOUR TRUSTEES | Jan Ingram, Chair

Interview by Dan Darling | Advancement Director

I understand you have been associated with Grace for many years. Will you tell us how that began?

In 1986, when our youngest son was ready to start Kindergarten, my husband and I started looking for a Christian school. At this time, our son was attending a preschool in Waynesboro, and a mom of one of his classmates told me about Grace. She and I spent a morning observing in the classrooms, and I discovered that the school was looking for a Kindergarten teacher. I have a degree in Early Childhood Education and had taught Kindergarten at Bethany Lutheran School prior to having our first two boys. I interviewed with John Morrison and Mary Ellen Barrett and was hired for the Kindergarten position.

Could you share two or three areas of Grace that you find special and have been important to you in staying connected to this ministry these many years?

Several things stand out as special. First, the relationships that I made at Grace have been a tremendous blessing. I believe raising children is the best and most challenging "job" I have ever had. The support of having like-minded parents was a tremendous help during our childrearing years. I learned a lot from working at the school and also from the many parenting seminars and classes that were offered. I believe Grace does an excellent job of teaching children a truly Biblical Worldview. When we were looking for a school for our boys, we wanted a school that would support what we believed and what we tried to teach them at home. I appreciate that Grace sees the parents as the primary educators of their children but supports that role by providing an excellent Christian education.

Other than teaching in the classroom, were there other activities and areas of interest while at Grace?

I was a part of a group of parents who organized the first parent organization at Grace, called the PTO (Parent-Teacher Organization). The purpose was to provide help to the teachers in the classroom and also provide opportunities for parents to fellowship and support each other. Joanne Kinder had heard about the idea of hosting a Grandparents' Day at the school, and I helped her plan that event. I have many happy memories of my parents and in-laws attending that event with my boys.

Did you ever serve in administration?

I never officially served in administration. When the school was considering starting a preschool program, I was asked to do some research about other programs in the area and present my findings to the administration. After our preschool program began, I oversaw the process of keeping our program up-to-date with the state licensing requirements.

I'm curious that after many years of teaching why you would want to continue in this capacity of leadership. What led you to consider such a role, and what has that meant to you?

I loved teaching at Grace. I still miss the children and the fun of learning with them. I had wonderful support from my principal and others in the administration. It was a joy to go to work and have the freedom to teach what I believed and pray for my students and their families. I continue my involvement at Grace because I want to see future teachers, parents, and students have the same opportunities to grow and learn that my family experienced. I am privileged to serve on the Board of Trustees with an amazing group of dedicated individuals who truly understand the school's mission. We have something very special at Grace; it is a work that the Lord began and sustains. My prayer is that He will continue to bless His school for future generations.

"We have something very special at Grace; it is a work that the Lord began and sustains."



On April 27, ninety-two GCS singers, under the direction of Karen Palumbo and Charissa Wines, participated in the Busch Gardens Music in the Parks choir competition. The GCS choir family is blessed to be so well supported by our parents, who packed the house for this competition! Schools throughout Virginia, as well as surrounding states, participate in this event each year. Choirs are awarded a rating of Poor, Fair, Good, Excellent, or Superior based on various music elements. The schools are then evaluated against the other choirs performing that day. Our elementary and high school choirs were given a Superior rating and earned first place in their division for their outstanding performances. The elementary school choir was also awarded overall Best Elementary School choir. The middle school choir was given a rating of Excellent and won first place in their division. In addition, fifth-grade student Lily Vaughan was awarded the Outstanding Vocalist Award for her solo with the high school choir. What an honor!

After competing, the students enjoyed the rest of the day riding coasters in the park. They traveled from England to Germany and beyond, dragging their weary chaperones along the way. The memories built on and off the stage will be lasting for these students and their families. Fifth graders Lilyanna Bennett, Charlie DeLeon, Brielle Kitchen, Lucy Persian, and Caroline Thorne said, "It was a great day of making memories with friends. The competition was nerve-wracking, but we also got to overcome our fears of riding roller coasters. It was SO FUN!"

As image-bearers of our creator God, engagement in the arts deepens our understanding of Him as the Creator and furthers our relationship with Him. At GCS, it is our goal to nurture student-artists from preschool through graduation and beyond. Students will develop artistic thought and skill, be challenged to articulate effectively through various artistic media, and practice their skills to engage the culture and redeem it for Christ and His kingdom. This event was a beautiful representation of all that we endeavor the arts to be at Grace Christian School.





CLASS OF 2024

WHAT'S NEXT?

Lauren Adams | Blue Ridge Community College
Nolan Brown | Covenant College
Samuel Cashion | James Madison University (ROTC)
Sidney Dickerson | Virginia Western Community College
Jessica Dryer | Liberty University
Abigail Erdman | Liberty University
Finnegan Gray | Sales
Justin Hain | Law Enforcement
Maddie Harper | Virginia Tech
Brooklyn Keene | John Brown University
Bennett Kricorian | Blue Ridge Community College
Samuel Lum | Virginia Tech
Cailey Morris | Blue Ridge Community College

Emma Prochaska | Roanoke College
Joseph Riddle | Virginia Tech
Corban Schmandt | Military
Trevor Schwartz | Mary Baldwin University
Carter Smith | Liberty University
Anna Weaber | Liberty University
Lucy Wells | Blue Ridge Community College
Gavin Wightman | Blue Ridge Community College
Erin Williams | Blue Ridge Community College
Tylor Windley | Virginia Tech
Vivian Wirth | St. Vincent College
David Wunder | Gap Year in France

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OVER 40 YEARS OF PROVIDING QUALITY EDUCATION AND
EXPERIENCES FROM A BIBLICAL-WORLDVIEW PERSPECTIVE.



GRACE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL | CLASS OF 2024



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