

KNOX NEWS

June 2023

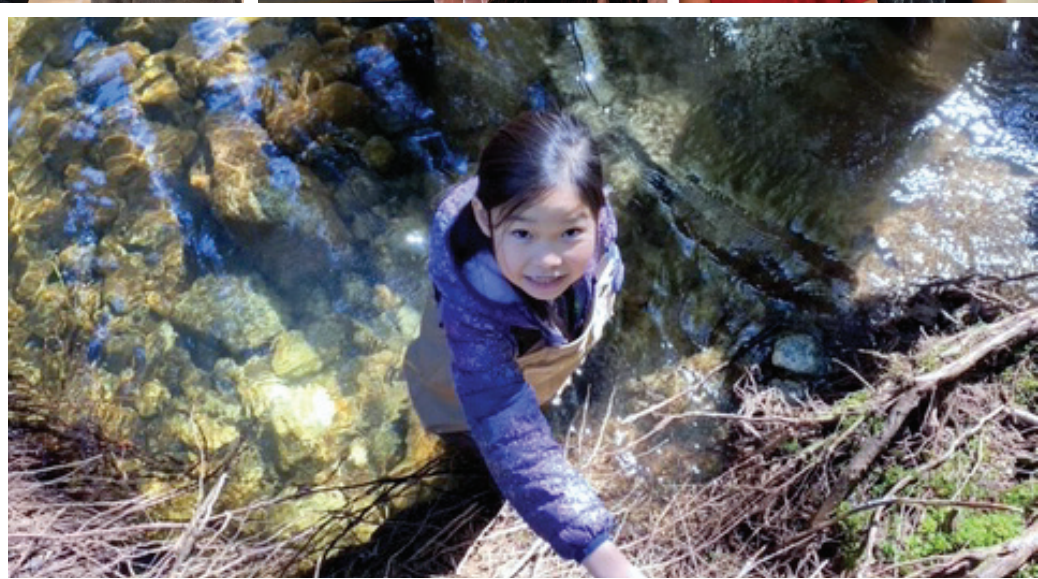
EXPERIENCING THE POWER OF PRAYER

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Grade 5 students visit Burnaby Village Museum (top left), A quiet moment in the courtyard on Grade 6 Day (top right), Twin Day at secondary campus (middle left), Principal Adam Wasik and Mouse the Snake greeting Grade 6 students (middle right), Cultural dress up day (bottom left), Grade 2 class visiting the Seymour River Hatchery (bottom right)

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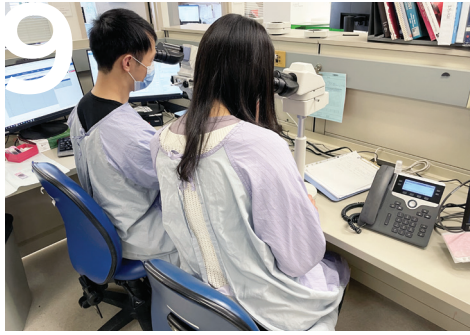
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Letters to the Editor

We invite questions, comments, story ideas, as well as any general feedback you may have to the Knox News. Please email the editorial team at development@johnknoxbc.org

JOHN KNOX
Christian School

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Pictured on the Cover: Grade 2 students Joshua Neufeld, Xavier Cheung, Alex Tenev

Back Cover Photo: Students hiking in Guatemala

Cover Photo: Jamala Mya



EXPERIENCING THE POWER OF PRAYER

By Angie Au, Grade 3 Teacher

I'd like to share a story of God's love and faithfulness extended through our children beyond the John Knox family. It was February when Educational Assistant Mary Kim asked us to pray for her friend's daughter, Danbi, as she was scheduled for complex heart surgery. My entire class prayed for the baby to have a successful surgery as the surgeon had to stop the heart from beating in order to perform the surgery. A few days before the surgery, 3A received the update that the surgery had to be postponed because Danbi contracted a virus and she had to recover from the infection before going through surgery. 3A learned to persistently pray for Danbi and her family for the entire month! By God's grace, Danbi recovered and she was able to go through the surgery in mid-March. Danbi, her mother and her sister

were able to visit us and share with us how Danbi has been recovering well.

Praise God for Danbi's recovery. Praise God that 3A can witness God's healing firsthand and the power of prayer. Praise God that we learned to love and care for others in our community through prayer. Please join us in prayer for Danbi to grow and stay healthy!

Photos:

Danbi and her mom visit Grade 3A after her successful surgery (left), Grade 3A made a card for Danbi and her family (right)



SURPRISING LESSONS FROM GUATEMALA

By Jae Shin Lim, Grade 11

In March of 2023, a group of Grade 11 and 12 students went to Guatemala as part of the JKCS Missions and Outreach program.

The gym at Rio de Vida, one of our school visits, echoed with a vibrance and life I had never experienced before. We were surrounded by rows of children in identical blue uniforms, each one of them brimming with energy that filled the entire room. It was so special to see the wholehearted way

in which they worshiped, with their mouths wide open while they clapped and jumped along to the loud music. I never knew a simple devotional could feel so powerful, yet during my time in Guatemala, I would come to learn that it's often the most simple things that can make an impact.

Now let's rewind a couple of days earlier to five in the morning at the Vancouver International Airport, with our team feeling sleep deprived and lacking even an ounce of that

same energy. All of us were feeling inevitably tired, a little homesick, and maybe even a bit regretful about leaving everything behind for the next ten days. We were filled with the uncertainty of heading into a foreign country, yet none of us had any idea of the adventures that lay ahead.

From the moment we stepped off the plane, there was so much to see and take in that our focus became solely on the present moment – we left behind our worries and whatever we had going

on in our lives back at home. In a way, landing in Guatemala felt surreal at first, as we had finally arrived after long months of planning and anticipation. Following a brief overnight stay in Guatemala City, we hopped on a van and drove to Tactic, a town located in the mountainous region of Guatemala. There, we stayed in dorm-style rooms at Impact Ministries headquarters, an organization dedicated to supporting Guatemalans living in poverty. We worked with Impact Ministries for the majority of our trip, participating in various community outreach projects such as children's ministry, construction projects, and prayer ministry at both their home base and locations out in the village. Every day was packed with all kinds of different activities, many of which threw us out

of our comfort zones and challenged us to become better versions of ourselves.

If you asked any one of us about our hardest or most defining experience in Guatemala, there's no doubt that the name Carlos would come up. Carlos was a little, five-year old boy we visited whose pure joy seemed to radiate to everyone around him. He was so cheerful and happy, it came as a shock when we went to visit his house to see that he had virtually nothing. His house was not floored, the roof was made of tin sheets, and his family shared a bed with no mattress. Yet, he was constantly giving us little gifts during our time with him, whether they were small flowers, rocks, or snacks from his backpack. Coming from a consumerist society

that often overcomplicates things, it made us rethink our values and sparked a vital question: How could someone with so little be so happy? Sunshine? The beautiful mountains? The truth is, I think the essence of community is the key. One of the first things I noticed in Guatemala that was different from our North American culture is the way people interact with one other. From every "Buenos dias!" to the easy physical affection from strangers, there is an amazing sense of connection in Guatemala. We noticed this particularly during our school visits. From the moment we stepped inside the school gates, we were showered with huge smiles, enthusiastic greetings, confetti, and colorful flowers. The kids were always so excited to see us, and before we



left, we would form a line in front of the door, while they took turns to give each of us a tight hug. Even though we were strangers to them at first, they didn't hesitate to welcome us. And it wasn't just the children. The adults too at the Guatemalan service we attended filled the church with energy and singing so loud that it put our own chapels to great shame.

Naturally, over the course of our trip, we were able to form a treasured community within the team as well. Spending ten days with each other meant that we all came to know each other well. We shared laughter, tears, stories, and most importantly, countless memories. From blasting Taylor Swift on long van rides and playing card games on the rooftop

to hauling around logs in the blazing sun, being able to grow closer to this group of people was definitely one of my favourite highlights of this trip.

All in all, words cannot even begin to describe the vivid, colourful flurry of emotions we both saw and felt in Guatemala. We embarked on this trip with uncertainty in our hearts; uncertainty of the unknown, and uncertainty about being strangers in a foreign country. Yet, we returned with our hearts newly devoted to God from all the things we learned and experienced amidst the lively devotionals, eye opening visits, and so much more – along with a newfound gratitude for all the little things in our lives. Whether in the place, the people, or each other, one thing that I

can say for certain is that we all found a second home in Guatemala.

Photos:

Page 5: Team Guatemala

Left page: Matthew Xie poses with one of our sponsor kid and his younger brother (left), Mr. Carey, Jae Shin Lim, and Matthew Xie clearing out a construction site for Impact Ministries (top right), Mr. Carey practices his Spanish with a group of students at the Chamché Vida School (bottom middle), Summer Uy gives one of many hugs during a hug line (bottom right)

Below: Jae Shin Lim, Summer Uy, and Mrs. Duncan enjoying a treat (top left), Patricia Kuo and Summer Uy at a market (top right), Patricia Kuo playing with a toddler (bottom left), Rachel Schouten and Matthew Xie playing with students (bottom right)





ESSENTIALS: SKILLS IN THE KITCHEN AND BEYOND

By Candace Beyer, Learning Support Liaison

Something new has been happening in the Foods Lab! Twice a week, you'll find some of our Educational Support Students (ESS) busy in the kitchen with Ms. Anthony and their support teachers making delicious lunches and baking. Many of these students find it a struggle to learn much needed cooking skills during the large and noisy Foods Class. This smaller, relaxed atmosphere allows them the opportunity to hone their skills. These highschoolers are learning integral life skills such as chopping and cutting; accurate

measuring; correct and safe methods of frying, baking, and stove-top cooking; and the importance of nutritious food. With the professional instruction of Foods Teacher Mavis Anthony and the insightful aid of their support teachers, the ESS group is growing in their culinary skills!

ESSentials not only teaches practical cooking and baking skills, but it also provides fresh, nutritious lunches to the school community on Mondays. Lunches are sold by our ESS learners to classmates and staff, giving them

the opportunity to experience sales and practice their money calculating. These are all valuable skill sets for our ESS group for future employment.

Photos:

Fettuccine Alfredo and Homemade Garlic Bread (left), Sarah Schouten, Sarah Shishido and Support Teacher Jasmine Cruz-Vasquez preparing to serve hungry customers (top-right), Sam Padama oversees bubble tea sales (bottom-right)

GETTING AN INSIDE LOOK AT THE MEDICAL FIELD

By Sydney Choi, Grade 10 Student

In Kindergarten, I decided that I wanted to be a ballerina and in Grade 2 I told everyone that I was going to be an actress. Finally, in Grade 4, at the age of 10, I decided that being a doctor was the way to go—of course, I decided this being oblivious to the years of school and training it would require. Surprisingly, as I near the end of Grade 10, my dream profession remains the same, only now I have an idea on how I plan to achieve it. I also have the education and experience to understand what working in the medical field looks like, much of which I gained in the past year.

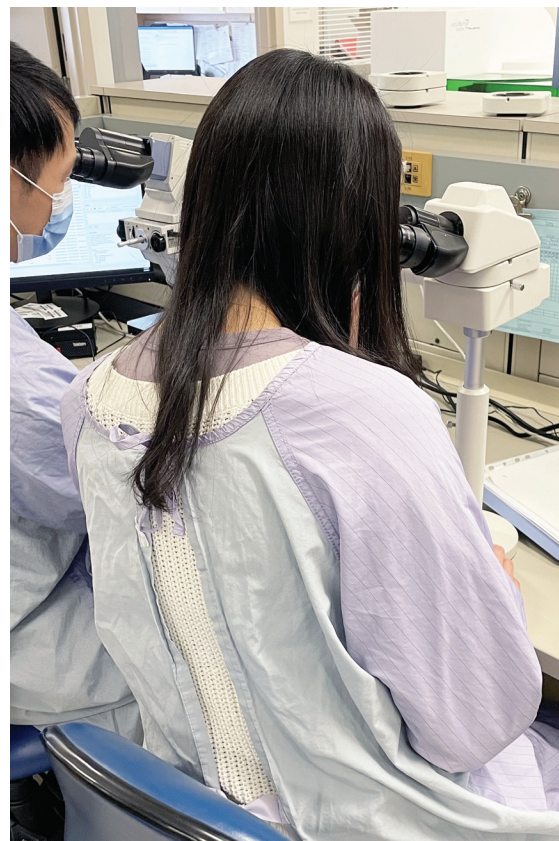
In Career Life Education 10 at John Knox, all students are required to complete a Job Shadowing experience with a profession they may be interested in. While I had the opportunity to shadow a number of professions including a swim coach and software developer, my favourite experience was shadowing a Lab Technician at Royal Columbian Hospital (RCH).

It is common knowledge that hospitals are sensitive places to work at, let alone job shadow, however I was fortunate enough to have this opportunity through a family friend. Spending just that one day in March at the Medical Labs was so much more than I could have imagined. My day consisted of personal tours by the head of each lab discipline and seeing things like colon samples, malaria in blood, as well as

tendons, plasma and blood prepared for transfusion. I learned how to do ABO and RhD Positive/Negative Typing (testing for blood types) and how to identify cancer in cells. Although being a lab technician is not my primary choice of profession, this experience in the labs solidified my desire to go into the medical field. It also gave me a glimpse into how a medical environment operates.

I had been to RCH on a different opportunity in the past. Each Valentine's Day, all the students (K-12) at JKCS make cards of encouragement to send to RCH staff, and that time, I went with the school to pass out the cards to the healthcare professionals. There was one thing that stood out to me from both visits: the shortage of medical staff. As soon as the COVID-19 pandemic began, hospitals and medical labs were impacted the most. With cases peaking up to nearly 15,000 in a day, the shortage of staff was profound. Throughout my visits to the hospital, the lack of healthcare workers was emphasized often and I learned that training for jobs like Lab Technicians only took two years.

I write this article to share my experiences in the Job Shadowing program, but also to raise awareness for the issue of staff shortages in Canadian hospitals. Opportunities such as Job Shadowing are experiences that I have participated in to prepare myself



for future endeavours as well as become educated in issues such as the healthcare staff shortage. Looking ahead, I continue to seek out unique opportunities and ventures.

Photo:
Sydney using a microscope at Royal
Columbian Hospital



CELEBRATING OUR GRANDPARENTS AND GRAND-FRIENDS

By Arusha Vegt, Development Director

For the past three years Grandparents' and Grand-Friends' Day has consisted of a lovingly made video full of music, prayers, and greetings emailed out to our Elementary students' grandparents. While emails, Zoom, and FaceTime were literal lifelines during the pandemic, nothing beats the crowded hallways, excited students, and coffee-fueled grandparents that make a traditional, in-person

Grandparents' Day a truly memorable event.

Grade 6 students donned their Sunday best as they acted as the key volunteer force on a sunny Friday in April, starting with greeting the 350 grandparents and grand-friends as they poured into the NWCRC sanctuary. Each grade presented a song, led by teachers Rebecca Visser



and Jocelyn Groot, finishing with the perennial stars of any elementary concert: the kindergarten students.

After the concert, guests streamed across the street to the elementary campus where coffee, treats, and a student art show awaited them in the gym. Classrooms were open for guests to visit and spend some precious time with their Grandchildren and Grand-Friends.

Events such as Grandparents' Day remind us that we don't merely welcome individual students to our school – each student represents a host of family and friends supporting them in so many ways. It was a joy for us to thank and celebrate these important people in our student's lives!

“For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.” Psalm 100:5

Photos:

Left page: Isabella Helmus Antia and her grand-friend Mrs. Voogd (left), Amarah Goma and her grandmother (right)

Above: Hayley Liu and her grandparents (top left), Parent volunteers Peon Cheng, Irene Tam and Christiane Sim set up the Grade 5 art display (top right), Grade 4 performs My Lighthouse on ukulele at NWCRC (bottom left), Grade 6 students Carina May and Abigail Zeng welcome guests to the performance (bottom right)





Photos:

Left page: Kindergarten dance lessons (top left), Twin Day at secondary campus (top right), Grade 2 students visit the Seymour River Hatchery (middle left), Cultural dress up day (middle right), Kindergarten Mother's Day Tea (bottom left), Principal Jacob Rodgers spends a day in kindergarten (bottom right)

Right page: Twin Day at secondary campus (top left), SciFair aerodynamics presentation at Grade 6 Day (top right), Kindergarten Mother's Day Tea (bottom left), Grade 2 class visits the Seymour River Hatchery (middle right), Student Council Ramen Night (bottom right)



MAKING MUSIC AND MEMORIES IN WHISTLER

By Cara Lau, Teacher

This past April, the small village of Whistler was overrun with teenagers. Over 2200 students from 45 schools gathered for the annual Con Brio Music Festival, including 35 students from John Knox, representing our Choir and Senior Band. Both ensembles performed very well and had great workshops with the adjudicators. Our choir was awarded a Silver for their performance, and Sr. Band got a Gold! I am so incredibly proud of all of our musicians!

Another festival highlight was performing in the Massed Choir of over 350 students and the Massed Band of over 900 students! In addition to their performances and workshop times, our students also had time in the audience - we

watched two performances by other schools, and were treated to an amazing evening concert by vocal jazz group The Marois Vocal Project and the Naden Band of the Royal Canadian Navy.

Students also had free time to spend exploring the Village and hanging out with friends. Many students spent time working on homework assignments, some did an escape room, and one group went on a morning hike with Mr. Wasik (they even saw a bear!)

This was a wonderful return to traveling for our music department, and I look forward to the next trip we can take!



HIGHLIGHTS & TAKEAWAYS FROM THE STUDENTS:

Highlights:

- Hanging out with friends in the Village
- Awesome first workshop, the adjudicator was really encouraging, even though beforehand I thought the workshop would be boring
- The Gala Concert - the trumpet feature was insanely good!
- The vocal jazz performance at the Gala Concert
- Massed band and massed choir! It was so powerful to be making music with so many other people!

Takeaways:

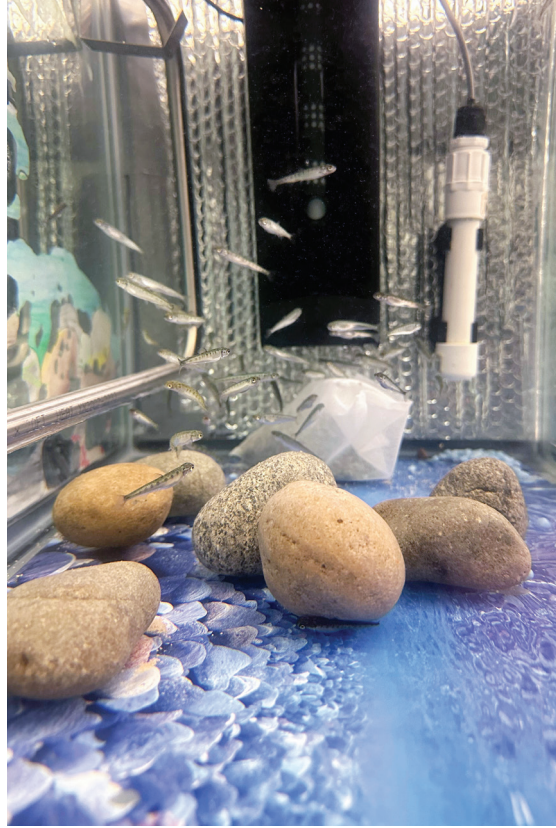
- Look up more when playing
- Breathe together to play together
- Sometimes it's okay to ignore the written dynamics and just play what you feel

- Slow songs require fast fingers
- There are different types of piano [dynamics]
- Always smile when singing
- Focus more on diction and unified vowels when singing

Photos:

Left page: Massed Choir rehearsal (top left), Cecelia Yang, Louis Menco Busch, and Harry Zhang in the Sr. Band secondary workshop (bottom left), Ethan Yeung and Ophelia Lam in the Massed Band percussion section (right)

Above: Group photo on our last day (top left), Sr. Band was awarded GOLD for their performance (left), Sr. Band Adjudication workshop with Dr. Charles Maguire (bottom middle), Ophelia Lam in the Sr. Band secondary workshop (top right), Alan Cheng and Joey Jahanshahi with trumpet section behind in the Sr Band secondary workshop (bottom right)



RAISING SALMON, GROWING STEWARDS

By Liz Johnson, Grade 2 Teacher

Do you know that a fry is not only a delicious deep-fried side dish but also the name for a young salmon? Do you know what an *anadromous* fish is? Could you identify the necessary conditions required for young salmon to survive in a stream? Well, if you are curious about the answers to any of these questions, ask a Grade Two student at the JKCS Elementary Campus.

In 2020, we were given the unforeseen opportunity to reimagine what school could look like with cohorts and social distancing and spending as much time outdoors as possible. The Outdoor Worship Learning and Stewardship (OWLS) initiative was created and teachers were encouraged to take a close look at how we could improve our current practice to better incorporate and represent nature while fostering a heart of stewardship for God's creation.

After looking at our curriculum and brainstorming ways we could encourage environmental stewardship, the Grade Two team began to enquire about raising live salmon at school. We applied for and were provided with a grant from the Pacific Salmon Foundation in 2020. This funding allowed us to purchase the necessary equipment to participate in the *Salmonids in the Classroom* program, supported by Fisheries and Oceans Canada. However, as this happened during the pandemic, the process of beginning to raise salmon was delayed. At last, in January 2023, Grade Two students began raising live salmon in our elementary campus lobby!

Our salmon eggs came from a small local hatchery in Sapperton. The hatchery works in cooperation with Fisheries and Oceans Canada to deliver this program to Burnaby schools. Once the salmon eggs arrived, students were able

to regularly observe and eventually feed the young salmon. Since we kept the salmon tank in the lobby, other grade groups were able to sign-up for viewing sessions as well. While the salmon were busy developing in the lobby, the Grade Twos were busy growing their observation and inquiry skills, gaining a sense of respect and stewardship for their local environment and beginning to understand the cultural significance of salmon in local Indigenous communities. We attended an incredible field trip in which students had the opportunity to put on chest-waders to conduct a stream survey to learn about ideal stream conditions for young salmon. In April, when the salmon had become fry, we applied this knowledge and students were able to release the salmon at Lower Hume Park into the Brunette River.

Why study and raise salmon, specifically? Salmon are a keystone species in British Columbia. A keystone species “defines an entire ecosystem” and “without it’s keystone species, the ecosystem would be dramatically different or cease to exist altogether”¹. We discovered the interconnectedness of God’s creation and how maintaining

our local salmon population is crucial for the benefit and survival of many local animal and plant species. We hope that our small act of stewardship for this keystone species will not only have a physical impact the local environment but will also encourage our students to care for and respect God’s creation. If you missed seeing our salmon at the elementary campus, please stop by next January-April as we plan to continue this project again next year.

Source:

¹ Role of Keystone Species in an Ecosystem, National Geographic, Accessed June 1, 2023, <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/role-keystone-species-ecosystem>

Photos:

Students enjoying visiting the salmon tank in the lobby this spring (left page), Grade 2 students release the salmon in Hume Park (photos below)





BEING THE HANDS AND FEET OF JESUS LOCALLY

By Steve Friesen, Teacher

I just wanted to say to our school community as a whole: Thank you for your prayers and support for our local Outreach team as we served our city this past March. God is so good to bless us with amazing weather throughout and gave us unique opportunities to increase our social awareness and to practice servant leadership.

Over the 6 days, we were able to lead worship, share testimonies, lead a kids' carnival, serve over 400 meals, hear stories from those who are homeless, clean streets and parks in the DTES, pray for the city (including 12-15 people on the street), see the contrast between the rich and poor

and how both need Jesus, learn about creation care and help plant over 30 trees. The students had good attitudes throughout even when they were way out of their comfort zone and for that I'm very thankful!

SEEING GOD IN OUR CITY

By Alison Timmer, Grade 11 student

Every year, the JKCS grade 11 class goes on a missions trip so that students can have the opportunity during our high school years to be the hands and feet of Jesus. In years past,

teams travelled to various places around the world, however, this year our trip was local so that we could learn about and understand the needs of our very own community.

Our first two days were spent with Metro Kids Society where we had the opportunity to lead worship and games on the Friday night, hang out with the kids, and run a carnival on the Saturday morning. Personally, I helped organize our worship team and we spent three weeks practicing and learning songs the kids already knew and some songs we wanted to introduce them to. At times it was stressful and we didn't know if we would be ready in time, but through a lot of hard work by the team and prayer, we were successfully able to share our passion for worship with the kids.

On Monday, we had the chance to spend the day with Jacob's Well in the Downtown Eastside. We walked around the community during a "beauty walk," helped clean up the area, and supported local restaurants by eating there for lunch. My biggest takeaway from our time at Jacob's Well was the type of mindset needed for working in that area. I learned that in outreach, you are not the only ones giving; the people around you have more life experiences and blessings to offer even though they are seen as "less fortunate." This was one of the main points Aaron White, from Jacob's Well, wanted to instill in us before we started to work and walk in the community, and it was something that stayed with me during our entire week of outreach.

Our next two days were spent with YWAM Vancouver where we were able to compare the business district to the Downtown Eastside and explore both. We were encouraged to share lunch with someone and to talk to people around us and hear their stories. During our time with YWAM, we spent a lot of time praying for the city, businesses, government, health care, education, and individual people. This was one of

my favourite days because I was able to pray for a mother and her young daughter who had recently moved here and were facing a lot of challenges. They shared with me how hard it had been and how they were looking for support and were so happy that someone was willing to stand on the corner and pray for people. We were able to encourage and pray for them. It was a little scary at first but I was surprised by the peace I felt in that moment, peace that could have only come from God.

Our last day was with A Rocha, where we were able to help them out with some setup for the planting season and to learn about caring for God's Creation. Throughout the week, small teams had the chance to work with Nightshift, prepping and handing out food. The whole week was really inspiring and I know despite how tired everyone was that we all had lots of fun and made many memories.

Grade 11 student Logan Cheung created a video about the Local Missions and Outreach Trip. Watch the video at:

johnknoxbc.org/knoxnews

Photos:

Left page: Logan Cheung leads worship at Metro Kids (top left), Market in Chinatown (bottom left), The team exploring the Downtown Eastside (top right), Viewing the memorial to residential school children on the steps of the Vancouver Art Gallery (bottom right)

Right page: Offering prayer with YWAM (left), Talking with residents of the Downtown Eastside (middle), Students working at A Rocha (right)





JOHN KNOX HAWKS UPDATE

By Christian Loro, Athletic Director

At John Knox, the athletics program offers student athletes and their supporters the opportunity to develop their God-given talents and also to worship God through their character, attitude, and desire for excellence in sport. Through Christ-centered coaching, our students can practice integrating sport and their faith, and experience personal development in community with others.

This past school year, we were thrilled that 50% of our student body at the

Secondary Campus participated in at least one sport. It's our goal to increase this to 60% next year. Next year we also have a few alumni events in the works and we're looking forward to inviting JKCS and Carver alumni to join us.

BASKETBALL

This year our basketball teams joined our local association league and played games against mostly public schools. It was tough competition

and a positive learning experience for our students. A few highlights were our Senior Girls team finishing 2nd at the Fraser North 1A Senior Girls Basketball Championship, our Senior Boys finishing 3rd in the BCCSSAA Div 2 Basketball Championship, and our Junior boys finishing 3rd at the BCCSSAA Tier 2 Championship.

BADMINTON

Our badminton athletes performed very well this season, competing at

a very high level. A few highlights from the season were our Junior Badminton Team finishing 3rd in the GVISAA Championship, our Bantam Badminton Team finishing 1st in GVISAA Championship, and our Senior Badminton Team finishing 2nd in the BC Christian Schools Badminton tournament.

ULTIMATE

Our Senior Ultimate team had an excellent season. They finished 5th at this year's BCCSSAA Sr. Ultimate Championship which was hosted in our backyard of Queen's Park. The team also competed in the BC School Sports 2A Ultimate Championships in Surrey at the end of May and finished 13th place.

VOLLEYBALL

We were able to put together a Grade 9 boys volleyball team this year and they experienced significant improvements from the beginning of the season to the end. They played great games and it was a positive learning experience for the team.

GOLF

Our Senior Golf team placed 5th in Burnaby, narrowly missing the playoffs. But the team did qualify to play in the Provincial Championships at Qualicum Beach at the beginning of June.

ATHLETIC BANQUET

At the end of the school year, we host our annual Athletic Banquet to

celebrate all the athletic achievements from the school year and enjoy a meal together. It's a chance for us to hand out athletic awards, recognize all the athletes, and show appreciation for all the teachers and coaches who have been a huge support for our student athletes. We are so proud of each and every athlete!

Photos:

Left page: Senior Badminton Team (top left), Junior Boys Basketball Team (bottom left), Senior Ultimate Team (top right), Senior Girls Basketball Team (bottom right)

Right page: Junior Badminton Team (top left), Bantam Badminton Team (top right), Senior Boys Basketball Team (bottom)





A GRAND CELEBRATION OF THE ARTS

By Arusha Vegt, Development Director

Students in the arts were celebrated at the first-ever JKCS Fine Arts Gala this past May. The entire secondary campus building was taken over by art teacher Holly Johnson and her students, who filled almost every hallway, classroom, and public space with a wide variety of art. Grade 7 students presented thought-provoking studies of slums from different parts of the world, which, as the evening

progressed, became hauntingly beautiful as the lights hiding inside became visible in the darkened room. Ceramics from “Family Style,” the collaborative project between Senior Arts and Senior Foods that was shared in the February 2023 edition of the Knox News, was another highlight sharing the importance of hospitality, “slow food”, and how we eat with our eyes first!

Many techniques and mediums were learned this school year as the wide array of artwork on display demonstrated. Art using collage, paint, pencil, pastel, ceramics, photography, and more were professionally and beautifully showcased. Short videos written, directed, filmed, and edited by Grade 8 drama students were played on loop in two classrooms. Two special workshops – Bear Buns and Cookie Decorating – allowed guests to get creative themselves!

The student commons was transformed into a coffeehouse complete with an intimate stage for many talented music students. Highlights included fabulous performances by the JKCS Vocal Ensemble group and Strings Club, as well as the Moon family and pianist Matthew Cheung (read more about Matthew's journey below).

JKCS has so many uniquely gifted students and we are thankful for our outstanding teachers skilled in the arts for guiding them on their path. Art teacher Ms. Johnson says, "(Art) roots me in my identity in Christ – art for me is worship. It is not in addition to. And it is the lens that I welcome others to the art room."

REFLECTIONS OF A PIANO (NON-)PRODIGY

By Matthew Cheung, Grade 9 Student

As I stood awaiting my name to be called, dressed in a resplendent robe, in the vast and magnificently decorated halls of the Chan Centre at UBC, my mind suddenly flashed back to the day when I took the final exam for my diploma (Associate of the Royal Conservatory in Toronto – ARCT) in piano performance. The waiting area that June was small, dim, cozy and warm, but my fingers were freezing as my thoughts were a raging pit of worry, anxiety, and excitement. Five years of dedication would depend on my performance in those coming moments. I was quickly snapped back from the past as my name was boldly mispronounced by the emcee and it was my turn to receive my congratulations and diploma from the heads of the Royal Conservatory of Music.

Playing the piano produces a very unique sense of pride and fulfillment for me: when a challenging piano piece is perfected after much time and effort, it gives me a sense of achievement that can be compared to the elation of a snail after it finishes a marathon. I came to the piano relatively late; I was ten years old when I started this instrument. After half a year of practicing, I found myself pushing myself hard to perfect Mozart's famous piano Sonata K331 third movement, Rondo Alla Turca. In this case, I was the snail who spent 2 months finishing the marathon.

The John Knox community is a powerhouse of talent and ambition, with people of all ages pursuing similar musical endeavours. Meeting so many other devoted musicians (more than a quarter of those in my grade are musicians!) truly helped me feel less alone in my musical journey. It was a place for me to form relationships with other people where I also shared and received knowledge. This mutual encouragement and appreciation from the many people at JKCS really helped motivate me to continue striving through times of despondency. Many a lunchtime my friends and I would hang around the piano in the music room, our laughter and music bouncing off the sound-proof walls.

JKCS housed the opportunities for students like me to not only develop our musical skills, through avenues like band and choir, but to use them to contribute back to the community. It was a pleasure for me to participate in activities like leading chapel and performing at the recent Fine Arts Gala, and to watch fellow students go to Whistler for their award-winning band and choir trip and perform in recitals and competitions alike. The presence of other individuals around me who also enjoy music turned our struggles and bottlenecks into memorable moments that brought us together.

I find it quite amusing when I am called a piano prodigy. True prodigies manage techniques a lot quicker and with less effort, and all my technique has been slowly chiseled from my hard work and practice. I find that being called a prodigy erases a lot of the effort and the time both my teachers and I put into the instrument, yet it intrigues and delights me at the same time. No matter how many prestigious and magnificently decorated halls one may perform at, trophies one may win, or certifications one may achieve, passion is the only source of vitality and fuel for us to keep going and to keep improving as people.

Photos:

Grade 7 slum project (top left), Matthew Cheung performs during the art gala (bottom left), Ceramics displayed at the art gala (top right), Guests enjoying a music performance (bottom right)

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