



The Beacon

News to family and friends of Ann Arbor Christian School
2006-2007, Number 2

*Ann Arbor
Christian School
offers a
Christ-centered,
academically
excellent education
that challenges
students to live and
act in society as
committed followers
of Jesus Christ*

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February 2007

Reflecting on AACCS' attributes

Dear Friends,

Always allowing God to lead and teach us—even in crisis—is part of what makes Ann Arbor Christian School so special.

Now well into our second semester, we can look back at successfully averting the first major glitch of the school year: no power for the planned Christmas Gathering. Solution? A rescheduled "Epiphany Celebration." The lesson was clear—Christmas is not only a day in December, but part of our lives that can be celebrated each and every day—even Jan. 11! (*See related story, page 2*)

The cold weather arrived, finally, and with it, our first snow/ice day of the school year. It's a wonderful season to reflect and remind ourselves why we are here and what makes Ann Arbor Christian School the wonderful place it is.

A few weeks ago, that is exactly what the board and staff did together. Here are just a few reasons we cherish AACCS:

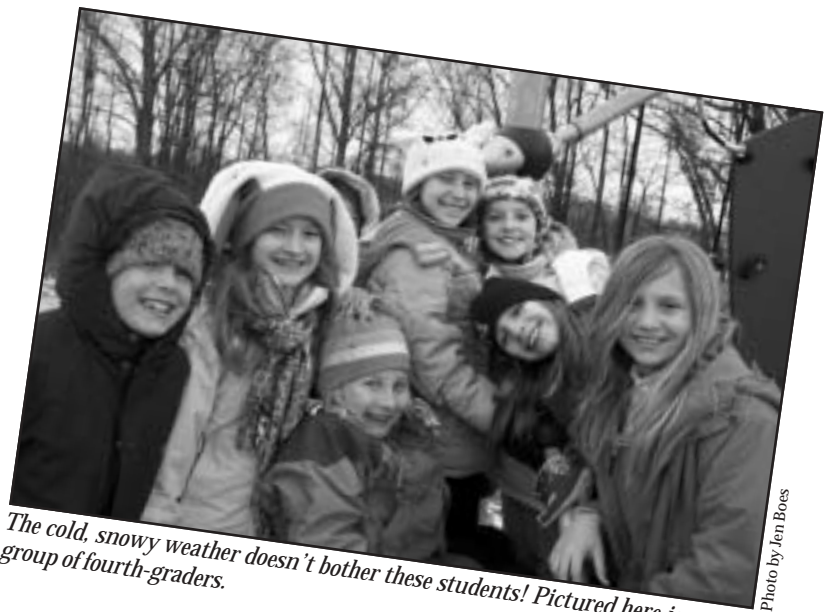
- Jesus Christ is our center and our strength
- The way we encourage our students to develop God-given academic, social, emotional, and spiritual gifts
- A staff that shows a bond of Christian love; challenging, supporting, mentoring, and collaborating with one another each and every day
- Relationships among parents, staff, and students
- The prayer and praise of school supporters
- The culture of love for learning for both teachers and students
- The multi-denominational community

What would *you* say makes AACCS special? Our hope is that you share your love for AACCS with those you come into contact with. Share our vision. Let others come to know what makes us unique.

And may we continue to grow and shine for our Savior and be to God "the aroma of Christ."

Blessings,

Kathy Broege, principal



The cold, snowy weather doesn't bother these students! Pictured here is a group of fourth-graders.

Photo by Jen Boes

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The show must go on!

By Marcia Mitchell, Beacon editor

As families entered the parking lot in December for the Christmas Gathering, it became clear something was not right: an unexplained power outage left the school dark. But after weeks of preparation by students and staff, there wasn't any question about what needed to be done. The program was rescheduled for Jan. 11.

The appropriately renamed "Epiphany Celebration" extended the Christmas spirit into the new year. Music teacher Elizabeth Crabtree, in her directing debut at Ann Arbor Christian School, led the students in a variety of instrumental and vocal music.

Students from kindergarten to eighth grade showed their spirit through traditional carols and joyful—and sometimes rockin'—Christmas songs. Every piece was accompanied by small groups of students playing xylophones, drums, sticks, and other rhythm instruments. Serious-faced seventh graders performed their rendition of "Good King Wenceslas," played on Boom Whackers—long, colorful, plastic tubes that "boom" when they are "whacked."

Another highlight was video clips of kindergarten, first, and second graders responding to questions like "What do angels look like?" When one second grader was asked "What would you

give to Jesus?" he said: "I would wrap him in love and hug him."

Throughout the program, the excitement of Christmas was felt even in January. It definitely was worth the wait.



Photo by Sue Crittenden

Dressed as the wise men, kindergartners Caleb, Colt, and Aidan steal the show!

Going above & beyond

By Marcia Mitchell, Beacon editor

A program like the Christmas Gathering goes by in an hour and seems to run like clockwork. But behind the scenes, the time and talents of many volunteers are needed to make all-school assemblies run smoothly.

Have you ever thought about how many workers it takes just to set up the gym? A crew gives time and muscle to set up stage risers and line up chairs in tidy rows. As our school grows, so does the number of chairs. Harv Vredevelt, grandparent of a former Ann Arbor Christian School student, has collected almost 330 chairs from the University of Michigan's Property Disposition for our assemblies!

AACS parent Darren De Zeeuw and his crew of techies set up and manage the sound system and projectors that display words and video clips. The number of cords trailing from their equipment shows just how complicated this job is!

Have you noticed our talented videographer and photographer? AACS parents Kevin and Sue Crittenden use their camera skills at almost every all-school event. When Sgt. Crittenden couldn't attend this year's Christmas Gathering, Joe Yunkman, professional videographer and grandpa of AACS kindergartner Darian, graciously volunteered his services.

AACS is blessed by the contributions of many volunteers like these. "Everyone goes above and beyond to get the job done," says Principal Kathy Broege.

So consider yourself thanked for every chair you have moved, cookie you have baked, meeting you have attended, and light bulb you have replaced! AACS would not be the school it is without you!

Fundraising Update

2006-2007 totals to date
(does not include general donations)

Apple Pies	\$5,031
Pancake Breakfast weekend	\$8,712
(designated for the mobile computer lab)	
Poinsettia sale	\$1,257
Scrip	\$5,399
Boxtops for Education	\$436
Target Take Charge of Education	\$219
TOTAL	\$21,054

-compiled by Jan Musch, Administrative Assistant for Finance

Beacon

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Big work in the Big Easy

By Jeanette Brooks, AACCS mom

A few days before Christmas, when many of us were switching into vacation mode and enjoying visions of sugarplums, middle-school teacher Janet Jansen's family was in a van headed to New Orleans.

They took tools, work clothes, and 10 "encouragement baskets"—laundry baskets full of personal-care and home-care items. The baskets were from Ann Arbor Christian School students who, instead of exchanging gifts with classmates, purchased necessities for families still suffering from Hurricane Katrina. Once baskets were full, many eager students continued to donate cash to help families buy building materials!

The Jansens delivered the baskets and spent a week working in an ongoing Katrina Relief program through Trinity Church in Covington, La. Their main focus was to remove debris—such as drywall, flooring, trim, furniture, and other ruined household effects—from residences so homes eventually can be rebuilt.

One homeowner they helped lives in her garage with no water or electricity. Dorothy uses candles for heat, walks two blocks to a porta-potty, and sometimes asks neighbors to microwave food for her. She used detergent from her gift basket to hand-wash laundry while a team gutted her home's damaged ceilings.

On Christmas Eve, the Jansens took a break to attend services at St. Louis Cathedral, the oldest working cathedral in the United States. The sermon told how Jesus humbly overcame low means, displacement, and poor governing—and how he is the example to follow for rebuilding New Orleans.

Volunteers like the Jansens slept, recharged, and enjoyed home-cooked southern fare at Trinity Church. Trinity coordinates laborers from dozens of churches across the country. When volunteers head home, they're exhorted to serve their own communities with the same vigor as in New Orleans. "It

makes you think of compassion and service not just as a seasonal project or event, but as a lifestyle that you live the whole year long," said Mrs. Jansen.

"It's so common in our culture to compare ourselves with others around us who have more material things than we do—and doing that makes us focus on things we *don't* have. It makes us focus on *wanting* more. The New Orleans trip really changed our focus by helping us see the contrast between our own lifestyle and the lifestyle of people who have far *less* than we do. It was very humbling."

The Jansens intend to return to New Orleans later this year, inviting other AACCS families to go along. Mrs. Jansen said it's family-friendly, safe and well coordinated. "It's a great opportunity for kids and parents to make a big difference in people's lives. It's also a great way to serve God through serving others." For more information, contact Mrs. Jansen at 734-741-4948, ext. 204.



Photo by Janet Jansen

Fourth-grader Elle helps remove debris in a home damaged by Hurricane Katrina.



Photo by Marcia Mitchell

More than 220 grandparents and special friends attended the annual Grandparents' Day event. Here sixth-grader Hannah and third-grader Emil share school experiences with their grandparents.



Photo by Sue Crittenden

In Brief

Thanks to the generosity of parents, grandparents, and school supporters, we are more than half way to our goal of raising \$27,000 to buy a mobile computer lab! Your donation will provide a vital teaching tool, by helping us purchase 25 MacBook computers with wireless networking (\$1,000 each), a laptop mobility cart, a wireless base station, remote desktop software, and a networked laser printer. Consider making a \$100, \$250, \$500 or \$1,000 tax-deductible donation so we can provide one more child with a computer.

Grandparents' Day 2006



Elementary happenings

aRt arT

Reading, writing, arithmetic, & art

By Marcia Mitchell, Beacon editor

When second graders studied habitats, they created chameleons with original camouflage designs, using colors and patterns.

Next time you walk through the school, keep your eyes open for a treat: student artwork proudly displayed on bulletin boards and tables. The creativity and originality are evidence of the effort and expression that went into each piece.

But Ann Arbor Christian School students learn more than just how to use pastels and clay. Art teacher Kristen Kovak thoughtfully chooses projects that connect art with their classroom lessons.

After careful research, Ms. Kovak expands on units of study through discussion and power-point illustration. Her face lights up when describing some of the projects and how the students respond to them.

For example, when fourth graders studied inventors in their class, Ms. Kovak introduced two famous inventors who were also artists: Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo. Students created original inventions to fulfill specific needs. They also used the underside of the art tables to paint their own versions of Michelangelo's "Sistine Chapel."

When second graders studied habitats, they discussed how animals blend into their environment. Then, they created chameleons with original camouflage designs, using colors and patterns.

Recently, eighth graders discussed art-related careers and sketched ideas for an item a professional artist might design. When Ms. Kovak saw how eager they were to create what they had dreamt up, she changed her plans and let them go for it! Projects included fashion design, advertising, and comic strips.

Ms. Kovak says her goal is to give students the opportunity to see the connections between art and life.

"I want them to realize that art can relate to their interests," she says. "Once they value it, they invest in it, they enjoy it."



Photo by Joan Bailey

Lending a hand

Maria, Michael, Joe, and Barrett get creative with a wheelbarrow during the AACs family work day at an apartment building managed by Avalon Housing. The Ann Arbor-based non-profit organization develops and manages housing for those at risk of homelessness.

Every penny counts

By Marcia Mitchell, Beacon editor

Even 6- and 7-year-olds can contribute to others in need.

Every year, Ann Arbor Christian School first graders collect new hats, mittens, scarves, and socks to donate to a charitable organization. This year, the students lovingly gathered two large bags for the Salvation Army homeless shelter.

First graders also discovered a meaningful way to earn money for families still recovering from Hurricane Katrina. As part of a Bible unit, the kids made "Obey Boxes," designed to encourage obedience. Whenever students obeyed their parents, mom or dad put money into the boxes. The students then used their earnings to purchase items to fill "encourage baskets" for Katrina victims. (See related story, page 3)

The first graders said it felt good to help others. "I was glad to bring in winter stuff for them," said Madison. "It made me feel happy."



Photo by Jen Boes

Art teacher Ms. Kovak inspires her students.



When in doubt, shout!

By Dan, eighth grader and Kelsey, seventh grader

In January, Ann Arbor Christian School students, teachers, and staff celebrated Martin Luther King Jr.'s life and ministry at a special chapel with skits, songs, and readings from a pamphlet designed by middle schoolers. The following student-written reflection was read in small groups during the chapel:

The Bible says:

"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the Lord your God goes with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you." —Deuteronomy 31:6

Martin Luther King, Jr. says:

"When the history books are written, someone will say there lived black people who had the courage to stand up for their rights."

We say:

Dear God, thank you for people who have the desire and courage to stand up for what is right. Please give us the courage to do what is right, like Martin Luther King, Jr. did. Give us the strength to stand up for our rights and the rights of others. Amen.

When in doubt shout:

Be Bold! Be Brave!

Take my life and let it be....

During a recent Bible lesson, fifth-grade students composed original verses to the well-known hymn, "Take My Life and Let It Be, consecrated Lord to Thee." Following are a few excerpts:

Take my ears and let them be,
listening to others problems and needs;
Take my money and let it care
for those in trouble or despair,
for those in trouble or despair.

By Michael DeZeeuw

Take my voice and let it be
singing praises all for thee;
Take my body and let it be
using all my abilities just for thee,
using all my abilities just for thee.

By Grace Johnson



Photo by Sue Crittenden

A day in the life of an insect

Julia, disguised as a butterfly, presents her "insect interview" during the third-grade insect unit.

Five Godly gifts help explore the world

By Marcia Mitchell, Beacon editor

Ann Arbor Christian School kindergartners know how difficult it is to navigate their classroom while blindfolded. This activity helped them appreciate their sight.

Experiences like this make the kindergarten unit on the five senses come to life. Through hands-on activities, students develop an awareness of the usefulness and importance of our senses. At a "tasting party," students learn to discriminate between bitter, sweet, salty, and sour foods. They giggle as they manipulate unknown textures in a "feely box." Mystery scents help them discover just how much the nose really knows!

This unit is a perfect opportunity to integrate faith into learning. Teacher Barb Dick emphasizes that the five senses are gifts from God to enjoy all he has created. She challenges the children to honor God by caring for their bodies.

Mrs. Dick also talks to the kids about physical disabilities and how we can help others with special needs.

At the end of the unit, the class takes a trip to the Ann Arbor Hands-On Museum, where they can let loose and touch, see, and hear just about everything!



Photo by Marcia Mitchell

Kindergartners gain an appreciation for their sight. Here Darian (right) helps her classmate Sophie identify objects while blindfolded.



Circle-of-life lessons in science

By Kathy Ann Moilanen, Beacon copy editor

In life and in death, critters teach our sixth and seventh graders.

Science teacher Mark Wiersma's classroom is home to a delicate spotted salamander, an aquarium full of pond life and a Florida corn snake for students to care for and observe. At the other end of the spectrum, dissection also is part of Ann Arbor Christian School's middle-school curriculum.

For the first time, students this year took tiny, living shrimp home in screw-top jars to observe. When many died prematurely, they discussed what might have kept them alive longer. It was a hands-on lesson in life, death and the scientific method. (They hypothesized what variables to change and what to keep constant for next time.) It also was intended as a motivator for science fair projects, Mr. Wiersma says.

If a mouse has to die for trespassing, at least the trapped (and quickly frozen) rodent can nourish Elmer, the class snake. Students can then view the fascinating way a snake eats—its dinner moving as a lump down the reptile's lean body for up to 10 minutes. (Rodent donations accepted.)

A clam and sea star recently fell under the knife of Mr. Wiersma and two student helpers. The dissections were video-cam projected so the entire class could watch. After learning to use instruments like sharp razors safely, the students were divided into small groups to dissect frogs.

By coordinating the sixth- and seventh-grade life-science curriculums, Mr. Wiersma can offer weekly labs in an economical and manageable way. Next year's focus: earth science.



Photo by Marcia Mitchell

Seventh-grader Eric demonstrates the dissection of a sea star.

A niche for math whizzes

By Kathy Ann Moilanen, Beacon copy editor

It all just added up.

An Ann Arbor Christian School student spotted a math trophy during a summer Spanish camp. His mom mentioned it to math teacher Xan Morgan. She mentioned it to her middle-school students. They advertised to find a coach. Parent Kim Garber stepped forward and the AACCS Math Club was born!

The first meeting—on a Saturday morning in December—attracted a couple students from each middle-school grade. Between bites of bagels, the reserved group puzzled over various story problems for well over an hour.

The club uses the "Math Counts" curriculum, which calls participants "Mathletes" and includes "warm-ups" and "workouts." Here's one: *A day can be divided into 86,400 periods of 1 second; 43,200 periods of 2 seconds; or in many other ways. In total, how many ways are there to divide a day into "n" periods of "m" seconds, where "n" and "m" are positive integers?*

Your brain hurting yet?

These kids seem to love it.

"It's nice to see their enthusiasm," says Jan Blomberg, mom of trophy-spotter Jonathan, seventh grade.

To mix things up at meetings, club members play math-related games—like cards and Yahtzee—during breaks. And, they've done things like tossing coins to liven up the solving of probabilities problems.

"But these kids, they just do it intuitively, which is cool," says Coach Garber, a Ford automotive engineer by day.

Competitions—like a Math Olympiad—may be in our young club's future. Even beyond this, college scholarships exist for those who join high-school math clubs.

The Math Club meets at the school every other Saturday, 10:30 a.m.-noon. New members welcome.



Photo by Kathy Ann Moilanen

Sixth-graders Gabrielle and Garrett use brain power to solve lengthy math problems.



Middle school sports post winning season

By Melanie Bolhuis, physical education teacher and athletic director

Go Eagles!

Middle school athletes tallied a winning fall season and are off to an exciting winter.

The boys fall soccer team nearly went undefeated, losing just one game. Then, they placed second at the Trinity Lutheran Tournament. Girls won six of 10 basketball games.

Winter sports brought participation to a new high. Thirty boys signed up for basketball, dictating the need for three teams, one at each grade level. Girl's volleyball boasts 23 players divided into two teams: Blue and White. The boys already posted their first victories. The girls' matches are just getting underway.

All this couldn't happen without the commitment of our coaches. Please remember to thank them for their time and effort: Boy's soccer—Ben Wildeboer and assistant Bart Wise; Girl's basketball—Darren De Zeeuw and assistants Doug De Vries and Steve Mayotte; Boy's basketball—Steve Mayotte and assistants Dan Hartman, Doug De Vries and Darren De Zeeuw; Girl's volleyball—Paul Gottschalk; Coed track and field—Cheryl Chenault and assistant Laura Bowen. Coaches make many sacrifices for our teams! THANKS, COACHES!



Photo by Marcia Mitchell

Middle school students work together during a team-building exercise at Leslie Science Center.

Check the weekly blue note or our website for the scheduled games and matches (www.annarborchristian.org/calendar/month.php), then come on in, buy some popcorn and a drink, and cheer on the Eagles!

A taste of the Middle Ages

By Sue Postema Scheeres, Public Relations chairperson

As trumpeters heralded each entrance, queens, lords and ladies, monks, knights, and peasants paraded to their places at a banquet table in Gath Ring Hall.

While this might sound like a scene from a book about the Middle Ages, it actually describes an evening when Ann Arbor Christian School's seventh graders transformed the school's gathering space into a medieval yuletide feast complete with candelabra, costumes, and music.

The three-course meal of authentic foods and beverages culminated a unit on the Middle Ages. Middle-school teacher Janet Jansen started the annual event two years ago with the help of parents Dawn Geldermans and Cherie Egedy.

"For most of the Middle Ages unit, we focus on the medieval society struggling with superstitions, faulty theology, and corrupt government and business. The yuletide feast allows the seventh graders to celebrate some of the highlights of the Middle Ages: the lord's responsibility to his manor," said Mrs. Jansen.

Students introduced each food or drink, which included salat, garlic soup, baked cheese, Venyson Y-Bake (a venison pastry), spiced chicken legs, verjuice (a vinegar and water drink), and tarte of cherry. They ate using only a knife or their fingers,



Photo by Sue Postema Scheeres

Mrs. Jansen presents the main course to "Queen" Blaire.



Photo by Marcia Mitchell

Jake and Christian—sporting a monk-like hair-do—try unusual medieval cuisine.

since forks were considered barbaric in medieval society and spoons were only for soup.

Perhaps the most daring student was Christian, who grew his hair for four months, then shaved the top of his head to look like a monk. "People couldn't believe that I had actually done it," Christian said. "It was fun doing something that different."

Christian said the feast made the material he was learning more real. "When you read something, it's not the same as actually doing it," he said.



Photo by Joan Bailey



More than 25 AACS parents, students, and teachers spent a recent Saturday cleaning up the grounds at a low-income apartment building. (See related photo on page 4)

Upcoming AACS Events

February

26-27 Winter Break - No School

March

21 Parent/Teacher Conferences - evening

22 Half Day - 11:45 dismissal
Parent/Teacher Conferences - afternoon and evening

23 No School

April

6-13 Spring Break - No School

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