



The

KNIGHTLY NEWS

Columbia Christian School • PreK-12th Grade

Summer 2025

Track & Field State Competition



By Kevin Yaws, Athletic Director

To God be the Glory! I could not be more proud of our Track & Field team and our school. Our athletes all came together this season as new highs were hit for Columbia. We had excellent representation at all of our meets, but especially at the OSAA Track & Field State Competition at Hayward Field in Eugene in late May.

On the first day of competition, thirteen of our Columbia Singers had the honor of kicking off the meet with a fantastic performance of the National Anthem. Landon Reid scored our first point in Shot Put, Abram Votrobeck got our fans excited by running the 3000m, and Jasper Zapp qualified for finals in both the 100m and 200m races. Caeley Saunders blew out a shoe in Discus and still placed 9th for the girl's team.

Friday was finals, and we set out with one theme for the day: "To God be the Glory!" Landon Reid placed 1st and Hayden Arthur placed 4th in the Discus to earn 15 points. Then our 4X100m relay took to the track with Oliver Rude, Hayden Arthur, Evan Bamford, and Jasper Zapp. Let's just say they pushed the team who took first place to a new State meet record! We took 2nd place and earned 8 points with a time of 43.64. Next, Hayden Arthur headed back to the Javelin where he took 1st place and earned another 10 points. Hayden was in 3 events in under an hour!

Jasper Zapp took to the track in the 100m finals where he set another personal record and placed 6th with a time of

11.23, earning 3 points. Then Jasper came back and ran the 200m, taking 2nd place with a big personal record of 22.61, earning 8 points. At 10:05pm, our boys took to the track again for the 4x400m relay and ran an outstanding race – placing 6th with a 4-second season record of 3:34.92, earning 3 points. This finale was the culmination that locked our boys into 4th place overall as a team – earning Columbia Christian's FIRST EVER State trophy for Track and Field. What an amazing achievement and payoff for a season of hard work.

On the girl's side, Caeley Saunders scored her first State medal in Shot Put with a 4th place finish. Emma Zuniga finished the same event in 9th place – just short of a medal. Our other competitors were Evan Bamford in the Long Jump, and Nozomi Carver in Pole Vault. Nozomi was our first girl to ever compete at state in this event. 2025 was definitely a historic year for our athletes!

The Athletic Department wishes to thank all the athletes for their perseverance and sportsmanship, the coaches for their dedication and mentorship, the parents for their ongoing support, and the fans/friends for cheering everyone along to success. To God be the Glory!



Class of 2025 Graduation

By Carrie Rude, Admissions Director



On Friday, June 6, tassels were turned as the 17 students in the class of 2025 officially completed their high school career. The graduation ceremony was held in the Eastside Church of Christ auditorium; a dessert reception followed in the Upper Johnson Center. For the program, Valedictorian Elizabeth Adams shared "Hopes and Prayers." As Co-Salutatorians, Noah Carver gave a welcome message and Ariel Howarth presented "My Younger Self." A moving vocal ensemble performed "For Good" from the musical *Wicked*. Diplomas were conferred by President Ami Vensel and Board Chair Robert Gentry. Lead faculty members, Sam Schultz and Clara Brandt, delivered the senior blessing. Special award recipients included: Mr. CCHS – Joseph Doktor, Miss CCHS – Elizabeth Adams, Spiritual Leadership – Ariel Howarth, and Timothy Award – Anthony Rauda Mandujano.



The grads selected beloved Bible teacher, Jace Schwartz, as their commencement speaker. His presentation left few dry eyes in the audience as he shared an emotional tribute with this memorable group of students. "The class of 2025 was marked by a humble brilliance. Last year's graduates were not overtly flashy or loud, but there lived, under the surface, a remarkable depth of both intellect and heart that had me spelunking all year. The senior trip, and getting to be a part of it, will forever be a cherished memory in my book, and there are a few songs I'll never be able to listen to in the same way without remembering a little Economics-specific choreography that we developed in the spring. For each of them I, of course, wish nothing but the best. I've said it a thousand times over, and I have meant it every single time: I'm in your corner, I'm cheering you on, and I'm always down for a chat as you process your next steps, whether those are happening right now, or whether they're happening ten years from now. Love you forever, class of 2025! Thanks for being my first senior class as a teacher at CCS!"



*"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."
Joshua 1:9*



4th Annual Night of Knights Athletic Awards

By Kevin Yaws, Athletic Director

The number of students participating in athletics at Columbia is climbing and our teams are gaining traction as we maintain consistency. In May, we dedicated an evening to celebrate the accomplishments of our athletes during the 2024-2025 school year. Coaches and participants (and their families) were invited – from middle and high school volleyball, soccer, cross country, basketball, and track & field. We had great attendance and energy as awards were presented for hard work, improvement, and embodiment of our department's "3 Cs": Christ, Community, and Culture.

We were blessed to have alumnus Mark Brown as our guest speaker. His engaging presentation focused on motivation for our athletes. It was great to have him come back to his alma mater to share his wisdom. Mark Beekman was our emcee – keeping us entertained and on task. The *Knights of Honor* recognized this year were Frank Adams, Jeff Womack, and Robby Chandler. Congratulations to these well-deserving members of our school community. God is doing great things at Columbia and deserves all the praise.



Spring Music Concert



By Carrie Rude, Admissions Director

Don't get the seasons confused! In anticipation of the fun ahead of us, our spring music concert this year was titled "Columbia Christian's Summer Vacation." Music Director Anna Carter, and Band Director Jenna Heath, put on a great show including many memorable moments! The fun started when the preschoolers donned their umbrella hats and sang "Rain, Rain, Go Away". Kindergarten and 1st grade teamed up to sing "Summer Vacation". Next, the bands (5th grade, 6th grade, and middle/high school) performed "Mickey Mouse March," "Circle of Life," and "You've Got a Friend in Me." More vocal numbers included "Walkin' on the Beach," "Swimmin'," and "Ode to a Marshmallow." For the grand finale, all the students joined together for "Summer is Coming."

East Coast Exploration

By Natalie Bishop, Secondary Teacher

Columbia hosts a week-long educational field trip to the East Coast every two years – typically in the spring or early summer. This experience focuses on aspects of early U.S. History and includes 8th and 9th grade students. I've conducted 5 of these excursions for Columbia Christian, and 10 similar trips for other schools. This year we had 15 students and 10 parents join us for 6 days and 5 nights. We primarily visited Washington DC and New York, with some travels through other states. Notable sites we checked off our list this year included all the main buildings in Washington DC, Mt Vernon (George Washington's house), Statue of Liberty, financial district, Times Square, the MET museum, and a Broadway show. For the first time we went to the new 'The EDGE' at Hudson yards – including a wonderful view of the New York City skyline. Students shared with me that they were especially excited to see the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Anne Deidrich, one of our School Board Members, and parent of an 8th grade student, attended as a chaperone. She shared some thoughts about the experience. "I have been to DC and NY many times and each time I have a different favorite, but I continue to come back to enjoying Mt Vernon the most. There is something about seeing where George Washington started so many things that have helped shaped so much about our country and lives in general. It is also an amazing view of the Potomac River! The tidal basin is another favorite of mine. Not only can you walk around it and see so many memorials, but also look out across the water and see many other monuments. Reflecting on the historical aspects of those monuments is quite moving."

Anne continued, "Our students learned many important lessons on this trip. Being able to navigate travel without mom and dad is a valuable experience for these students. They have to pay attention, know where they need to be, and be responsible for all of their things. This trip is a great way to help guide them towards learning how to navigate travel in a safe and supported way. These kids also learn to manage their money and food choices. While it sounds simple and straightforward, learning to order what they want and advocate for their food choice is a skill a lot of children don't develop early enough. This isn't a family trip, and instead kids are embarking on somewhat of a once-in-a-lifetime experience. These kids will always remember the 'DC trip they took in 8th grade' which is what makes it so valuable. Trips like this where you have a tour guide, are with your peers, and you get to make your own decisions are what help shape amazing experiences for young kids."





**High School
Service Day**



**Annual High School
Art Show**



**Middle School
Midnight Madness Party**



**High School Spring
OverNight Retreat**



**Elementary Summer Camp
Creation Fun**



**Local Mission
& Service Week**



**Summer Youth Rally
on Campus**



**Elementary Summer
Playground Play Days**



**Japanese Students'
Summer English Program**

Spring & Summer Scrapbook

End of Year Events



PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN HONOR NIGHT

Mrs. Blachly, preschool teacher, and Mrs. Haney, kindergarten teacher, presented their students with special awards; the children performed several delightful songs and memory verses.



ELEMENTARY BANNER NIGHT

First through fifth grade students marched their class banners in a lively processional before being presented with honor awards, enjoying a photo slideshow, and receiving words of blessing and reflection.



ELEMENTARY FIELD DAY

From the colorful parachute and water slide, to the gym relays and BBQ lunch, this beautiful sunny day was full of entertaining activities. The senior dunk tank was one of the highlights brought back this year!

End of Year Events



MIDDLE SCHOOL OAKS PARK DAY

Not everyone goes for the biggest thrill rides, but all of our 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students enjoyed a day at America's oldest continually operating amusement park. It's a blessing to take a day to play!



8TH GRADE PROMOTION

For our 36 middle school grads, it was time to say goodbye to junior high and hello to high school! The 8th grade class put together a delightful promotion ceremony including an entertaining photo slideshow, thoughtful student speeches, and presentation of awards and certificates.



MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL AWARDS ASSEMBLIES

In the final week of school, students from 6th grade through 12th grade were recognized by their teachers and administration for their academic accomplishments and evidence of growth in faith and character.

New Role on Campus: Spiritual Life Director



By Carrie Rude, Admissions Director

Although he's not new on the campus, Andrew Martin has transitioned from "just" being an adjunct Bible teacher to the new role of Spiritual Life Director for 2025-2026. A native Oregonian, Mr. Martin has devoted his life to ministry since a transformative mission trip to Honduras at age 15. Andrew earned a bachelor's degree in Bible & Missions from Cascade College (1998–2002), served at PUMP Church of Christ in Portland (2002–2007), and lived in Uganda as a missionary for 12 years (2007–2020). After returning to the Northwest, Andrew served as Youth and Worship Minister at Vancouver Church of Christ (2020–2025). Through Mr. Martin's 20+ years of ministry experience, his focus has been disciple-making and spiritual formation by building authentic Christ-centered relationships.

Andrew was happy to share a bit about his passion for guiding young people in a process of discovering their purpose in Christ at Columbia Christian.

What most excites you about this new position?

I am excited to have the opportunity to be with the students more regularly this year. I'm looking forward to having more time to develop relationships and build connections within our community. In my experience, Columbia's spiritual climate over the past few years has been healthy and growing. The teachers and administrators' care and concern for the students' spiritual development are evident. I have been encouraged to see how the students are "leaning in," asking good questions, and responding positively to opportunities to learn and serve others.

What challenges are young people facing in the world today?

Today's generation faces unprecedented challenges, navigating a rapidly-evolving world shaped by social media, artificial intelligence, a relentless negative news cycle, constant digital notifications, and the lasting effects of COVID. They are growing up amidst chaos and uncertainty. That's why it's crucial for young people to have spaces where they can learn and grow, surrounded by compassionate, spiritually mature adults who guide them toward stability and purpose.

What do you anticipate being your main focuses (at least at first)?

At the start of the year, my primary goal is to foster meaningful relationships with students and enhance the school's culture. I aim to build on Columbia's existing foundation to further cultivate a vibrant, authentic Christian community.

Anything else you want to add?

I believe one of the greatest gifts we can offer a young person is to kindle a deep desire to explore and nurture a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which is my goal here at Columbia Christian.

Andrew's wife, Aimee Jo, is entering her second year of teaching 2nd grade at Columbia. Together they have five children who are enrolled at the school: Anaiah, Evan, Naomi, Aaron, and Madelynn.



Partner Spotlight: Camp Yamhill

By Carrie Rude, Admissions Director

If you've been around Columbia Christian for any length of time, you have no doubt experienced, or at least heard stories about, a wonderful ministry called Camp Yamhill. The connections between our two organizations are numerous – and they go way back to the beginning. Columbia Christian started in 1947, and Camp Yamhill began in 1957, so both have served the greater-Portland area across the same decades – providing spiritual education to students. Governance of each of the organizations is by a volunteer Board of Governors, consisting of members of various churches of Christ. With their similar shared heritage and mission, and the close proximity of their properties – less than 90 minutes to drive between them, Columbia Christian School and Camp Yamhill have established a strong relationship over the years.

The school and the camp have enjoyed the benefits of their joint efforts of providing a place to gain Biblical teaching. Joel Davis, current board member and former administrator of Columbia Christian School, was happy to share about the ongoing partnership between the two ministries. "As I remember, Columbia began going out to Camp Yamhill for school retreats in 1998. Andy Williams was teaching our Bible classes at that time and his parents were the directors of Camp Yamhill. Those retreats lasted yearly until 2009, when the Williams left the camp and Mr. Williams left the school to teach in China. The students of Columbia Christian have continued going to the camp for school retreats on occasion since 2009 as well as utilizing other camps in Oregon and SW Washington."

"The Outdoor School program for 6th grade students has been another long-running relationship with Camp Yamhill. This Christian-based environmental science camp started in October 2001 and it hosts a variety of local schools each year – including Columbia Christian. Outdoor School currently consists of a four-day program with field studies during the day and overnight accommodations for the students and their chaperones. In addition to our middle school participants each fall, many of the high school students from Columbia continue to serve as counselors for this program in both the fall and spring."

Beyond the school retreats and Outdoor School program, other overlaps exist. Students from Columbia Christian are involved as volunteer counselors at the church camps conducted during the summer months. Faculty and staff from Columbia also assist as directors, co-directors, and counselors at these camp sessions. Camp Yamhill has supported Columbia's auction by donating certificates for children to attend their camps and retreats. Both organizations have also enjoyed support from the churches of Christ in the area – through service, finances, and prayer. The connections between Camp and Columbia continue to expand as the number of people, especially children, who are blessed by both organizations grows each year.

What is Camp Yamhill?

In 1954 C.H. George donated 160 acres of pristine forestland on the banks of the Yamhill River with a desire that the land be used as a summer camp for young people. He wanted to create a place where campers could experience



Summer Projects on Campus

By Eli Dukes, Facilities Director

Columbia Christian is situated on approximately 12 acres of property in NE Portland. While the grounds and buildings are beautiful and a huge blessing, they do require a lot of work and upkeep. This summer Columbia was blessed to be able to complete several major projects, and a lot of routine maintenance around campus, to keep things looking good and running right. Some of our more notable projects included:

- a deep cleaning of all the classrooms and fresh paint in many areas
- a complete remodel of the concession stand in the gym
- the parking lots at the Outlaw Center and Sanders Hall were resurfaced and striped
- a complete CMU restoration on the south exterior wall of the gym
- over 16,000 square feet of carpet cleaned
- 25 units of playground cedar chips installed at the Outlaw Center
- the foursquare courtyard at the Outlaw Center was resurfaced and repainted
- the court floor of the gym was screened and recoated
- over \$25,000 worth of donated surplus school furniture was installed in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms

Columbia is very blessed with the consistent financial ability to maintain and operate the physical campus through God's providence, dedicated volunteers and donors, and the hard work of so many individuals across our beautiful campus.



Partner Spotlight: Camp Yamhill (Cont.)



nature and learn Christian values. Three years later, his wishes were honored when Camp Yamhill opened as a Christian youth camp.

Camp Yamhill continues as a Christian youth camp that also welcomes groups with other backgrounds, affiliations, goals and sizes including nonprofits, corporations and church groups. Recently, they have hosted corporate groups, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H clubs, The American Lung Society's Camp Christmas Seal, and The American Cancer Society's Camp U Kandu.

Since its inception, Camp Yamhill has expanded to 240 beautiful acres supported by modern lodging and meal facilities. In 2000, the Yamhill Challenge Course was installed to facilitate experiential learning and team building for campers of all ages and backgrounds. With 30 elements of high and low challenge levels, it is one of the largest, most adaptable ropes courses in the Pacific Northwest and still growing.

Camp Yamhill has hosted thousands of camps over the years. It is their hope to help all of the groups to: experience nature, learn team building skills, build interpersonal relationships and develop personal character. It is their mission to serve the community and help Christian campers mature spiritually and socially by developing a personal character that reflects the image of Jesus Christ. (Source: CampYamhill.org)

Columbia Christian School's

Parent Teacher Fellowship



Presents

HOLIDAY FAIR

Saturday, November 22nd 10am-3pm



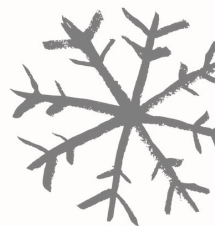
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with

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Vensel's Voice



President Ami Vensel

The Importance of Christian Education in Today's Culture

In a world increasingly shaped by rapid technological advancements, shifting moral values, and cultural pluralism, the role of Christian education has never been more vital. As society grapples with questions of identity, truth, and purpose, Christian education offers a timeless foundation rooted in the truth of Scripture and the life and teachings of Jesus Christ.

One of the key challenges of our modern culture is the erosion of absolute truth. Relativism — the belief that truth is subjective — dominates much of today's discourse, particularly among youth. Christian education stands in direct contrast to this mindset by affirming that truth is not only knowable but is found in God's Word. This grounding helps students develop a clear moral compass and equips them to navigate life with discernment, integrity, and conviction.

Moreover, Christian education emphasizes the holistic development of a child — intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and socially. Unlike secular education, which often separates faith from learning, Christian education integrates biblical principles across all disciplines. Whether in science, history, or the arts, students learn to see the world through a Christ-centered lens, promoting a deeper understanding of God's work in every area of life.

In today's cultural climate, where confusion and anxiety are common, Christian schools provide a community rooted in grace, truth, and love. This nurturing environment fosters strong relationships, encourages service to others, and prepares students to be courageous witnesses of Christ in a broken world.

Ultimately, Christian education is more than just academic excellence with a spiritual touch — it is a calling to form disciples who will impact culture rather than be shaped by it. As our world continues to shift, the need for educational models that raise up Christ-centered leaders is not only relevant but essential.

As I serve as President of Columbia Christian, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to walk alongside our students and families in this sacred journey of Christian education. Every day, I see the transformative power of Christ-centered teaching — not just in the minds of our students, but in their hearts and character.

Our commitment is to nurture a generation that not only knows the Truth but lives it boldly and compassionately. Thank you for trusting us with your children, and for partnering with us to raise young men and women who will shine the light of Christ in every corner of our culture.

Important Dates:

September 26

Elementary Jog-A-Thon

November 7

Veterans & Grandparents Day

November 22

Holiday Fair

November 24-28

Thanksgiving Break

December 5-7 & 12-14

Winter Drama Performances

December 18

All-School Christmas Program

December 19

Homecoming

December 22 - January 2

Christmas Break

Mark Beekman
Eli Dukes
Pearl Howarth
Luke Moody



Newsletter Staff

Carrie Rude
Ami Vensel
Laura Walthinsen
Kevin Yaws

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