



The

KNIGHTLY NEWS

Columbia Christian School • PreK-12th Grade

Winter 2024-2025

Christmas Music Program

Important Dates:

March 24-28

Spring Break

April 3

Career Day

April 12

Annual Benefit Auction

May 2-4

Spring Musical Production
(weekend 1)

May 5-9

Teacher Appreciation Week

May 9-11

Spring Musical Production
(weekend 2)

May 14-21

High School Art Show

May 15

Spring Music Program

May 16

Night of Knights Athletic Banquet



By Anna Carter, Music Instructor & Jenna Heath, Band Instructor

The North Pole is usually portrayed as a place of joy and efficiency, but this year, Columbia's students explored the idea of the elves having a *Chaotic Christmas*. The head elf, along with her helpers (from our 6th grade class), began the season listening to Christmas songs performed by our 5th, 6th, and MS/HS bands, but immediately encountered one struggle after another... The Pre-Kindergarten class had us believing the snowmen really did want to be rockstars. Our kindergarten reindeer passionately argued that they wanted to be elves instead. The elf choir, filled with 2nd and 3rd graders, tried to rewrite a classic Christmas carol to include something about Batman and Robin laying an egg. In the mail room, there was a complicated request sung by our 5th grade choir – something about a hippopotamus for Christmas?

Thinking that the elves fighting over a real vs. a blue fake Christmas tree in the town square was the worst thing that could happen, the most concerning problem was discovered as the 4th graders energetically sang about Santa's new get fit workout routine. The thought of a lean, buff Santa sent the elves into a frenzy. Thankfully, the solution was found with the 1st grade North Pole bakers enticing him with his favorite Christmas treat: candy canes. All of the chaos led the head elf to contemplate the true meaning of Christmas, as the MS/HS choir sang, "O Come, O Come Emmanuel."

Reflecting on the theme this year, perhaps the idea for this show grew from the chaos we experience while planning, practicing, and performing for such events. In the end, however, seeing the smiles on the performers' faces, the laughter from the audience, and the encouraging words from all, the reasons are clear. The "village" that creates these memories does so with joyful hearts of service, from the teachers who help students practice and adjust schedules for rehearsals, to the Dukes family who help move or clean anything needed, to Mrs. Barrett who uses her decorating and costume skills, Eastside Church of Christ allowing us to use their building, and Mr. Rude who does all of our tech. Thank you to all who use their skills to bring joy!



Newsletter Staff

Mark Beekman
Eli Dukes
Pearl Howarth
Luke Moody

Carrie Rude
Ami Vensel
Laura Walthinsen
Kevin Yaws

Holiday Fair

By Rici Preuit & Debbie Hinkle, Co-Chairs



With the success of our re-launched Holiday Fair in 2023, we decided to think BIGGER for our event this year! Upstairs, in addition to the elephant ears made by our juniors and seniors, we opened a concessions booth with a variety of delicious snacks. Downstairs, however, is where we really expanded! We introduced storytime with Mrs. Claus by the fireplace, added more tables in the Lower JC for new vendors, and our librarian put together a large book sale! The café was opened for the first time with a special Holiday Fair menu – facilitated by our high school student workers. Perhaps most notable was our inaugural Chili Cook-Off, which the junior class helped serve. It was a huge hit!



With a record-breaking number of vendors (30!), and a variety of other entertaining elements, we were able to earn over \$4,700 from this single event! A portion of the funds were designated for the junior and senior classes, and Parent Teacher Fellowship (PTF) will use the remainder to support ongoing activities. The main mission of Columbia's PTF is to encourage and bless our teachers and staff, and to promote unity and spirit among our families. With this in mind, we host and support events such as Elementary Jog-A-Thon, Back to School BBQ, Grandparents/Veterans Day, Annual Auction, and a variety of teacher appreciation activities.



Parent involvement is what makes it all possible! We want to offer a HUGE thanks to everyone who was part of Holiday Fair 2024. We appreciate our fantastic moms and dads who volunteered with decorating, set-up, selling raffle basket tickets, and manning our PTF name-your-price table. We can't do it without you! You're a huge blessing! Also, a big thank you to the senior and junior classes for helping with selling/serving food and Nicole Adams for opening up the cafe and making delicious drinks. As always, a heartfelt appreciation goes to our Columbia community for your support. We have been able to bless the school in some really exciting ways!



We are looking forward to another successful event this year in 2025. Seeing the Columbia community come together and support one another is a beautiful thing to witness. Mark your calendars for Saturday, November 22, and invite your friends and family!

The Sound of Music



By Carrie Rude, Admissions Director

Columbia's winter drama production was simply incredible! Director Sam Schultz, supported by his wife Christine – as choreographer, decided to take on an impressive show this year: *The Sound of Music, Youth Edition*. From the acting and dancing, to the set, costumes, lights and sound, it was truly captivating. Including six performances over two weekends in December, this memorable show was enjoyed by many friends and family members.

Director Sam Schultz commented, "This play was a delight and an honor to direct. The students committed to their roles with enthusiasm, and the audience reception was extraordinary and humbling. The biggest highlight for me was seeing hidden talent come to the surface, both in terms of new performers, and experienced performers challenging themselves in new ways. The kids were amazing. They rose



to the challenge and delivered a masterful performance. I appreciate all the work they did in rehearsals, as well as the work they did on their own practicing their songs and choreography at home."

Many individuals pulled together to make this an amazing show. Mr. Schultz extended special appreciation to just a few of the specific adults who supported the program, "Daniel Carver and Erik Walthinsen are invaluable assets for their work on the set and lights. I couldn't have done this show without Carrie Rude, Christy Barrett, and Laura Walthinsen working behind the scenes."

Stay tuned for more information about the drama department's spring show: "Singin' in the Rain, Jr." Performances will take place in May; it's sure to be another excellent production!

IT'S KNIGHT SEASON

Get your Columbia Christian merch and rep the Knights in style!

From hoodies and hats, to T-shirts and drink tumblers, we've got something for everyone!

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QR code linking to the School Spirit Store.

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The event you don't want to miss!

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COLUMBIA CHRISTIAN *High School*

CAREER DAY!

Thursday, April 3rd



To raise awareness about different career pathways and apprenticeship opportunities, Columbia is hosting its Annual Career Day.

8th-12th grade students will hear from industry representatives throughout the event and learn about various avenues they can pursue after they graduate from high school.

Homecoming



By Carrie Rude, Admissions Director

At the end of a fun-filled spirit week, including dress-up days, class competitions, and a pep assembly, Columbia's Homecoming took place on Friday, December 20. In a gym filled with current families, alumni, and other friends of the school, our boys varsity basketball team took on the Damascus Christian Eagles – defeating them 54-52 in an exciting match. At the midpoint of the game, however, we paused to dim the lights and set the stage for our traditional crowning ceremony.

The event took on a unique flavor this year as nine senior girls were represented on Columbia's Homecoming court. Following a *Chronicles of Narnia* theme, rather than crowning a singular queen, each of the ladies was honored as queen of a particular virtue. This new element was a special way to individually recognize the young women for their essential qualities of good character, and for the way those traits are exemplified in our school community. Congratulations to all our queens!



Queen Adia Klobas
"The Determined"

Queen Ariel Howarth
"The Compassionate"

Queen Athena Tran
"The Creative"

Queen Elizabeth Adams
"The Servant-Hearted"

Queen Hieu Nguyen
"The Peaceful"

Queen Imani Poole
"The Fearless"

Queen Lavinia Dolinska
"The Diligent"

Queen Lexie Godwin
"The Cheerful"

Queen Mila Sheek
"The Kind"

In the News: Girl Scout Project



By Carrie Rude, Admissions Director

Our own Caeley Saunders (10th grade) was featured in the news in December 2024 for her Girl Scout Gold Award Project here on campus. Earlier in the year, Caeley spent many hours researching, designing, setting up, and equipping "A Place of Peace" at the North end of upper Sanders Hall. With approval from school administration, this space was created as a calming retreat for middle and high school students to go when they feel overstimulated, or as a private space

if someone needs to focus on their mental health. Inside are elements like comfortable furniture, fidget toys, coloring/writing materials, sensory items, motivational posters, stuffed animals, adjustable lighting, and a sound machine. Along with the room, Caeley created a website with instructions to guide others in creating "A Place of Peace" of their own. Caeley's hard work was featured in an interview on KPTV FOX 12 and in a story with the Portland Tribune. Great job, Caeley!

Caring Hours: A Blessing

By Carrie Rude, Admissions Director



A positive school community is reinforced when families are involved. We know that when parents actively engage in their child's education, it fosters a stronger partnership between home and school, creating an environment where students can thrive both academically and in their faith journey. When parents actively participate in school activities – whether it's volunteering, attending events, or simply staying connected with teachers – they set a wonderful example of commitment and service for their children.



Here at Columbia, we have incentivized parent participation through our Caring Hours program. Caring Hours, or similar programs, are common among Christian schools in the U.S., and they've been a valuable part of Columbia's history for decades. This year, our families were tasked with completing 24 hours of service over the course of the school year. These hours can be logged by the parents themselves or by other relatives who want to be plugged-in. Support from extended family is a blessing as well!



There is a plethora of opportunities for folks to satisfy their hours. Whether it's helping with reading centers in an elementary classroom, chaperoning a field trip to the zoo, taking tickets at a drama performance, or monitoring hot lunch in our cafeteria, there are a variety of ways our parents contribute! Some parents like to serve behind the scenes – preparing projects at home for a teacher or donating snacks for high school finals week, while others fill more public roles – like serving on our Parent Teacher Fellowship team or participating in our twice-monthly prayer mornings. Various events and activities at the school depend on the help of volunteers: Holiday Fair, Benefit Auction, Elementary Field Day, Open House, and Homecoming, just to name a few.



Regardless of the specific avenue of service, parental involvement is a true blessing. We all “win” when parents are part of their child's education at Columbia – helping build a strong foundation of love, faith, character, and academic excellence, ensuring a well-rounded, Christ-centered experience for their children.

Winter Gallery



Book Fair in the Ida Partlow Library



Buddy Event: Charlie Brown Thanksgiving Party



High School Service Day



Festival of Trees Field Trip



All-School Caroling Assembly



Preschool Gingerbread Hunt in Mrs. Vensel's Office



Winter Service Project for Refugee Families



High School Finals Breakfast

Veterans Program & Grandparents Day



By Ami Vensel, President

What a beautiful day! Our Grandparents/Veterans Day celebration was an amazing success. The morning started with snacks, coffee, and a short program in the Upper JC. A heartfelt thanks to Christy Barrett, Debbie Hinkle (and her three girls), and Rici Preuit for decorating and planning the menu, and to our middle school servers who graciously welcomed and served over 125 guests.

After breakfast, grandparents and special friends moved to Eastside Church of Christ, where we shared our Veterans Day program. Under the direction of Anna Carter (music teacher) and Jenna Heath (band), the students performed their songs while high school students narrated the program. Middle school students served as our greeters, including passing out homemade cards to the veterans as the *March of the Armed Forces* was played. (We appreciate Ms. Yeager and her talented art students for their very hard work of creating those beautiful cards.)

From the youngest preschool students to our high school choir – the kids were FANTASTIC! Thanks to Mrs. Carter and Mrs. Heath and to all who supported the production of an important and meaningful message. We are grateful to those of you who attended; thank you for spending the morning with us!



Supporter Spotlight: Linda Moody



In Memory of Linda Moody

Linda Lou Moody, born on December 4, 1941, at Emmanuel Hospital in Portland, Oregon, passed away peacefully surrounded by her loved ones on October 23, 2024. Linda was raised in Portland, where she attended Cleveland and Wilson High School before moving with her family to Mexico City. There, she spent her junior and senior years at the American School Foundation, where she became fluent in Spanish—a skill she cherished and eventually taught at the high school level.

Linda pursued her education at the University of The Americas in Toluca, Mexico for two years and then transferred to the University of Oregon and then ultimately graduated from Portland State University with a degree in English and elementary education. Her life was defined by a passion for hospitality, design, and helping others. With her gift for creating beautiful spaces, Linda transformed her own home and delighted in sharing her talents, often lending a hand in friends' and neighbors' gardens and homes.

Linda's faith as a follower of Christ was evident in all she did as she brought hope and encouragement to all those around her. She was an avid supporter of Columbia Christian Schools where her children attended. She served on the Women for Columbia committee, chaired multiple auctions, volunteered regularly, taught Spanish, and helped design and remodel the student center.

Linda's generous spirit shone brightly alongside her husband, Paul, with whom she loved to celebrate life. Together, they were known for hosting joyful gatherings and taking friends and family on plane and boating adventures. Linda and Paul truly relished sharing their love for life and experiences with those they held dear.

Linda will be dearly missed for her warmth, kindness, and boundless love for family and friends. Her legacy of faith, love, and generosity will be remembered by all who knew her.

Facilities Truck Donation



By Eli Dukes, Facilities Director

Since the beginning, Columbia Christian School has been blessed by generous donations in diverse forms. From auction items to classroom supplies, people who believe in the Kingdom-work at Columbia have always stepped up and supported the school when there was a need to be met.

The school's current work truck, graciously donated by Ralph and Dixie Bever, has been effectively serving the campus for decades. As it approaches 30 years of age, the vehicle is beginning to seriously show its wear and tear with transmission and engine issues. In response, the facilities department and the business office began looking for an opportunity to find a replacement. Mark Beekman received word of a fleet of trucks being sold by a company that was going out of business. He was simultaneously in communication with an anonymous donor wanting to bless Columbia in a tangible way. What great timing and opportunity! God works all the time!

Columbia has now replaced the old work truck with a 2021 Ford F350 Super Duty diesel pickup. This capable vehicle will provide many years of service to the school. The facilities department is deeply thankful to be blessed in this way by individuals who love the school and by the ever-present providence of God.

Vensel's Voice



President Ami Vensel

At Columbia, we are big believers in the value of partnership with our parents. This relationship offers parents the opportunity to provide valuable feedback concerning our efforts in pursuing excellence. We seek to gain clarity on what we are doing well, and areas we need to focus on developing.

We are grateful to all who participated in our Annual Parent Survey this past winter. The results were encouraging, affirming, and insightful. It is clear our school community sees Columbia in a very positive light. Out of 900 Christian schools who also completed this survey, Columbia ranked in the 60th percentile (solidly above average). The data tells us that our parents find the following items highly important:

- Christian program elements (Biblical worldview, Christian character development, etc.)
- Leadership (administration provides staff oversight, parent concerns are addressed, etc.)
- Teacher quality (care & concern for students, up-to-date on teaching methodology, etc.)

We were pleased to see strong scores in these particular areas. Despite the changes we've experienced in our administration over the past year, we have worked hard to establish a strong team of leaders among our faculty and staff. We are grateful to see these efforts are producing measurable results!

Other areas of strength included: administration provides educational vision for the school, teachers are engaging, positive school community, staff is customer-service oriented, curriculum is up-to-date, and the financial stability of the school.

Another important piece of the survey is addressing concerns that were shared. Following are some areas that parents highlighted for improvement: high behavioral standards for students, addressing concerns of bullying, reinforcing parental values, spiritual disciplines are learned, and school safety. We are glad to be aware of these perspectives. Our team is using this information to identify and prioritize specific methods for growth.

Our first area of focus relates to behavioral standards and discipline consistency. We are now in the process of talking with students and parents regarding their experience and perspectives, learning the specific issues that need to be addressed. Additionally, we are revisiting our Student and Parent Handbook to ensure that expectations and policies are clear and purposeful. We will also make a concerted effort to better communicate with students and parents when social, behavioral, or academic concerns arise.

We are also moving forward in the other areas of needed improvement. We will be taking a closer look at our teaching of spiritual disciplines. We intend to highlight this as a focus in our curriculum and instruction across grade levels. Our Safety Committee has been recently expanded to help evaluate and respond to issues related to campus safety. This is an ongoing need in our local community and something we take seriously.

Survey results this year revealed additional details specific to our three school segments: elementary, middle, and high school. We were thrilled to learn that our high school program was rated at the top end. Among over 400 Christian high schools in the U.S. included in the survey, Columbia ranked in the 80th percentile. That means we are in the top 20% of satisfaction! Biblical worldview was indicated as a notable strength in our high school. Our elementary program ranked in the 60th percentile (above average), and our middle school program ranked in the 43rd percentile (slightly below average). This data is helpful as we further determine areas of strength and focus.

Overall, the survey process is a very helpful tool for our organization. As key stakeholders of Columbia Christian, your feedback is always welcome, appreciated, and taken seriously. May God continue to bless the work and ministry of Columbia Christian School!

"This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples," John 15:8.

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