

THE CHIMES

HCA NEWSLETTER • FALL SEMESTER 2024-2025



School Spirit in Full Swing!

HCA's 2024 Homecoming was a day full of fun, fellowship, and celebration. Exciting activities and heartwarming moments captured our community's school spirit!

Read more about HCA's annual Homecoming event on page 6.



HAWTHORNE CHRISTIAN
ACADEMY



Our Mission

Hawthorne Christian Academy is committed to inspire and equip students to **grow** in spiritual maturity, to **achieve** academic excellence, and to **impact** the world for Christ.



Accreditations

Association of Christian Schools International

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools



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Photos by: David Tierney
and the HCA Yearbook Staff

Table of Contents

FALL SEMESTER • 2024-2025

A Word In Season **3**
FROM THE DESK OF THE HEAD OF SCHOOL

HCA Highlights..... **4**
NOTEWORTHY UPDATES

Faculty Features **5**
WELCOME ABOARD!

Homecoming 2024..... **6**
WELCOME HOME!

Annual Golf Classic **7**
26TH FALL FUNDRAISER

School Spotlight **8**
CAMPUS ACTIVITIES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Building a Legacy **10**
HCA LEGACY STUDENTS 2024-2025

Academy Athletics..... **12**
GO DEFENDERS!

Music Notes..... **14**
AND ALL THAT JAZZ

Alumni News..... **15**
WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

HCA Leadership Team



SUZANNE BRUNO
**Interim Lower School
Principal 2024-2025**



JENNIFER EELMAN
Upper School Principal



TODD R. MITCHELL
Head of School



TINA TATUM
**Director of Enrollment &
Marketing** (Chimes Editor)



KEN BURRES
Director of Technology



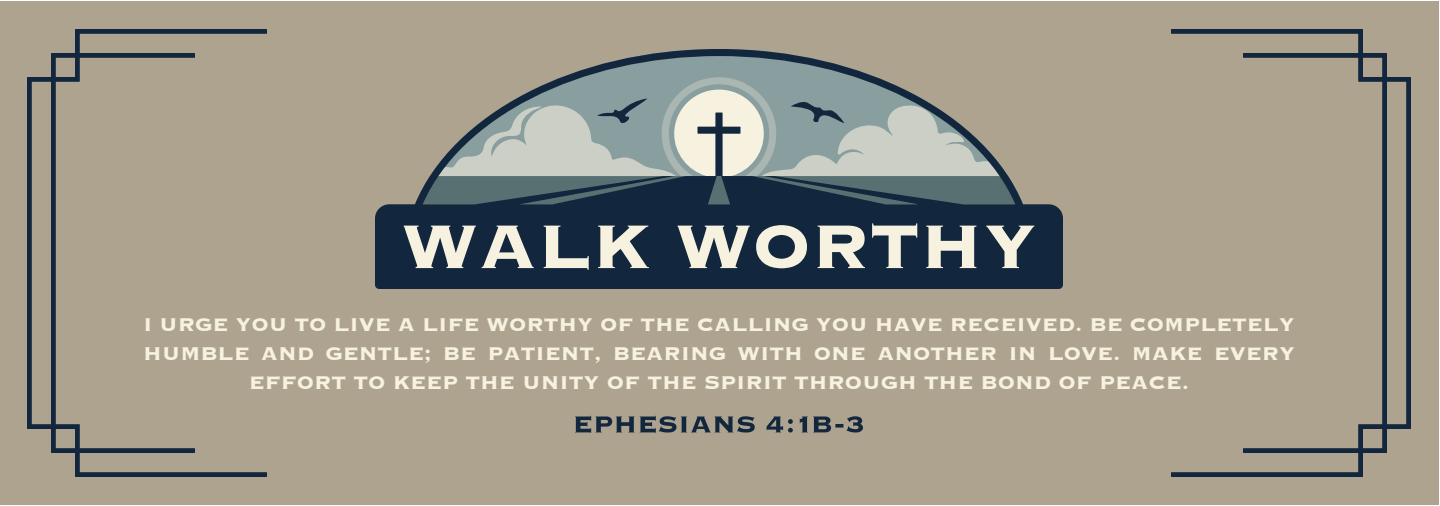
DEBORAH FUCCI
Director of Guidance



TYLER VAN DYK
Director of Athletics

A Word In Season

FROM THE DESK OF THE HEAD OF SCHOOL



TODD MITCHELL
Head of School

Walk Worthy!

Paul opens the fourth chapter of His letter to the Ephesians by stating, “I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” Incumbent in this exhortation is understanding first, we are not inherently worthy. We are sinners, unworthy of the Lord’s love, forgiveness, and grace. The good news is that God has chosen to love us! Because He loves us, He sent Jesus to die, that through His blood, when by His grace we repent and trust in Him, we are forgiven and we are called worthy. Paul is writing to those who are now positionally worthy and calling us to act like it!

He goes on to tell us what that looks like. Ephesians 4:2 declares, “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.” Volumes could be written about this verse, but to state it simply we are called to the following:

- **Humility:** God is God, I am not; gratefully, obediently submit to His will, love Him, and love others above ourselves
- **Gentleness:** Meekness, or controlled strength
- **Patience:** Endurance of adverse interactions and actions without anger or frustration
- **Forbearance (bear with one another in love):** Patience under provocation; acceptance of mistreatment without retaliation

Paul then calls us to, “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3). The Holy Spirit establishes unity between believers. We then are called to keep this unity through the bond of peace. There should be harmony and oneness among all believers. Certainly, conduct in keeping with Ephesians 4:2 will make great contributions to maintaining unity and the bond of peace.

These teachings are so clear, and are a gracious roadmap from our heavenly father. However, after focusing on these verses this year, it has become evident that, as sinners, we have a propensity to apply these verses in our critique of others, rather than in self-examination. Might I state clearly, this verse was not given as a weapon against others, but as a weapon against our own flesh. We should battle our sin nature. Instead of putting our rights before others, and picking the speck out of our brother or sister’s eye, we are called to willingly deal humbly, gently, and patiently, and lovingly serve our fellow believers in the name and love of Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

May we strive to **WALK WORTHY**, and in doing so, share the love of Christ, keep unity through the bond of peace, and bring glory to His holy name!

HCA Highlights

NOTEWORTHY UPDATES

Fall Worship Night 2024



On the evening of October 31, the Parent-Teacher Fellowship (PTF) put together HCA's first Fall Worship Night, which we hope will become a yearly tradition! Our wonderful school community gathered together for a special time of faith and fellowship. The evening began with a heartfelt praise and worship service led by Mr. Peterson and our talented student and faculty musicians and worship teams, creating an atmosphere of unity and spiritual growth. Afterward, attendees were treated to a delicious BBQ and amazing desserts, made possible by the generous outpouring of the Desire 4 Hope ministry and the Rispoli Pastry Shop, offering a chance to relax and connect. The event was a perfect opportunity for students, staff, and families to deepen their relationships with the Lord and each other. We were blessed with beautiful weather, and the sense of community was evident as new friendships were made and existing bonds were strengthened. To God be the glory!



PARENT-TEACHER FELLOWSHIP
President & Vice President

Be Blessed, Be a Blessing... Be Generous.

God is the giver of all good gifts. He is the provider of all our needs and the sustainer of our lives and souls. He has no need of our feeble efforts to accomplish His great plans. As Paul explained, "...he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else" (Acts 17:25).

And yet, that same God calls us to give generously... Why?

Let us briefly consider that question. As a starting point, we know that God's commands are not frivolous. He would not call us to anything that was not for His glory or for our good. What follows are three reasons we are called to generosity:

First, giving is a form of worship. When we give of the money that God has given us, we glorify God in our obedience, trust, and gratitude. We demonstrate our dependence on God and our contentment in His love over our possessions. Second, giving motivates others to give thanks and praise. Responding to the generous Corinthians (2 Cor 9:12) Paul

wrote, "This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God" (2 Corinthians 9:12-13). Third, giving is a privilege, and by God's amazing grace, a privilege that is also a blessing. When we give generously, God blesses us with more gratitude, more contentment, and more gifts that we can return to Him for His glory (1 Timothy 6:17-19, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11).

As we Walk Worthy, let us also give generously. And, in so doing, let us reflect the generosity of Christ who gave all to reconcile us to the Father. Let us commit to give generously to our churches, to those in need, and to ministries like Hawthorne Christian Academy who faithfully proclaim the truth of the gospel, for our good and for His glory!



TODD R. MITCHELL
Head of School

Faculty Features

WELCOME ABOARD!



Miss Debi Benvenuto
KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

Miss Benvenuto has been teaching since 1993, and has had opportunities to teach multiple grade levels in special education, and Preschool to grade 3 in general education. Recently retired from public school, she is filled with joy at the blessing of joining the HCA Family and sharing the love of Jesus with students and adults in the school community. Miss B. currently lives in Fair Lawn with her two boys, one of whom is an HCA graduate and the other is in 9th-grade at HCA. She and her boys are also members at Fardale Trinity Church where they serve on various ministries.



Ms. Christine Brower
MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC TEACHER

Ms. Brower grew up in North Haledon, New Jersey and is an alumna of HCA (class of 2019), where she studied Music under the direction of Mrs. Anne Paynter. She then attended Montclair State University, where she received her Bachelor's Degree in Music Education. Happily, she was called back to HCA in 2024 by the Lord's guidance and has felt overwhelmingly blessed to be teaching at the school that fostered her passion for music in the first place. Aside from teaching and music, Ms. Brower also loves hiking, reading, and spending time with her family.



Dr. Jonathan Fung
HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE TEACHER

Born and raised in southern California, Dr. Fung grew up in Christian education. Throughout this time, he was inspired by his teachers to be a life-long learner and to critically think about the relationship between faith and science. After graduating from podiatry school and completing a residency program in New York, God called Dr. Fung to use his gifts, passion, and experience to walk alongside and disciple students in their formative years at HCA. His desire is for his students to marvel at the works of our loving sovereign Creator through studying science.



Mr. Stephen Halliwell
MIDDLE SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS TEACHER

Mr. Halliwell came to know the Lord at the age of 5, grew up in the church, and graduated from HCA (class of 2004), where he attended K-12. After working for 16 years on all educational levels for Bergen County Special Services, he is thrilled that God called him to serve as the ELA teacher at HCA for the 7th and 8th grades. When he is not at school, Mr. Halliwell enjoys spending time with his wife and three children who attend HCA, leading worship at his church, writing worship music with Mr. Peterson for their band, Cross & Crown, reading, and spending time outside.



Mrs. Grace Kim
LOWER SCHOOL LEARNING CENTER TEACHER

Mrs. Kim is passionate about providing an educational environment that sets her students up to be successful in the classroom. After many years teaching in Christian education, Mrs. Kim felt called to HCA because of its commitment to build a community that stands apart for Christ and focuses on children's spiritual welfare and academic goals through a biblical worldview. Grace loves going on nature walks and enjoys playing golf with her family. The Kims are active members at Korean Bethany Church where Mrs. Kim serves as a Sunday School Teacher.



Mrs. Anupama Kinatukara
MIDDLE SCHOOL MAKERSPACE TEACHER

Mrs. Kinatukara is a distinguished project manager with years of experience navigating the complex world of information technology. Possessing a Master's degree in Computer Science from IIT Bombay, a robust background in leading diverse IT projects, and a keen eye for innovation, she is now bringing her expertise to a new and exciting realm: education. As a new teacher at HCA, Mrs. Kinatukara is stepping into the role of MakerSpace instructor, where she will channel her passion for technology and creativity into inspiring young hearts and minds.

Homecoming 2024

WELCOME HOME!



Home Sweet Homecoming

Our homecoming event was a resounding success! The sunny, beautiful weather set the perfect backdrop for a day filled with excitement and joy. As families arrived, vibrant decorations and the cheerful buzz of conversation welcomed everyone. The HCA campus transformed into a lively hub of activities, with booths, bouncy houses, slides, face painting, carnival and lawn games, and even a dunk tank where some favorite teachers got a playful dunk! A big thank you to our amazing PTF for donating both the activities and food. Cotton candy, popcorn, and an ice cream truck kept us refreshed, while junior class parents

and students fired up the barbecue with delicious burgers, hot dogs, and french fries. HCA school spirit shone brightly on the fields and in the gym as we cheered on our victorious soccer and volleyball teams. One of the day's highlights was reconnecting with our cherished alumni, many of whom joined the alumni soccer game. As the day came to a close, our hearts were full after spending a memorable time of fellowship and fun with our HCA family.



BECKY VANDERBECK
Advancement Assistant

Annual Golf Classic

26TH FALL FUNDRAISER

Thanks, Sponsors!

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SPECIAL APPRECIATION

Jim Jobson, Chairman, Alumni Parent

Event Volunteers:

Stacy DiGregorio, Iris Faasse, Matthew Mitchell, Ingrid Nawyn, Eli Slavin, Melanie Vanderbeck, Pastor Howie & Nurse Chi Chi Van Dyk, HCA Advancement Team

HCA hosted its 26th annual Golf Classic on a beautiful October day at Mansion Ridge Golf Club.



School Spotlight

CAMPUS ACTIVITIES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Art Students at the Gallery

During their junior and senior years, high school students in HCA's advanced Studio Art class explore the challenge of creating a cohesive series of artworks that balance unity with evolving ideas. They experiment with materials and deliberate on the message each piece conveys. This fall, students visited the Passaic County Art Center near HCA, examining three exhibiting artists to understand how diverse works can unite under a central theme. Local artist Paul Leibow, whose work was featured, highlighted his creative process and the inevitable role of failure in art. He stressed that embracing setbacks is essential to experimentation, learning, and artistic growth.



ELIZABETH WESTERMAN
4th-12th Grade Art Teacher



This was just one of the amazing experiences through which our students were the hands and feet of our very Big God and saw Him at work. Our other services included running a VBS, distributing food and clothes, painting homes, and praying in villages. We also ran a field day, led discipleship groups, painted a mural at HoH school, and blessed Pasitos de Jesus with food and fun! Our students were surely a blessing, but even more, they were themselves blessed, more than they could ever have imagined!

To learn more or donate, email todd.mitchell@hca.org.

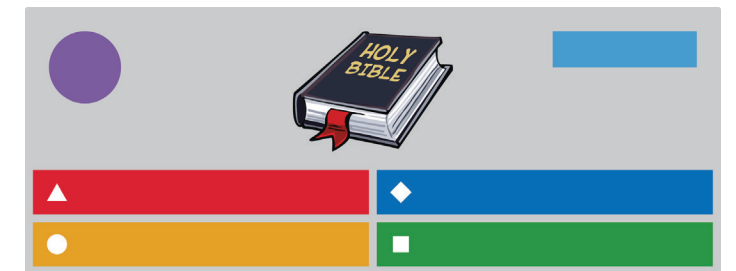


TODD R. MITCHELL
Head of School

Lower School Highlights

What happens when HCA faculty and students combine technology, learning, and a love of God's Word? The HCA Bible Bowl! It is an exciting, intense, and fun way to both study and demonstrate Bible knowledge. Our Fifth Grade Student Council, with the help of their teacher, Mr. Pollard, organize teams designated by colors. On the day of the Bible Bowl, spirited teams arrive decked out in their team color and after a time of worship together, the contest begins! Teams join together to answer questions loaded into Kahoot, a game-based learning platform that makes it easy for our students to create, share, and play learning games. As students representing their color are called up for their turn, large screens present the challenge of answering an involved Bible question.

This year, we explored the Book of Acts as an extension of our theme, **WALK WORTHY**. A clock gives the time and each individual player answers questions in a rotation, earning points for their teams. Scores and ranking are



seen in real time as the program's countdown gives the HCA students a sense of urgency, excitement, and healthy competition. The school spirit is captured in the buzz of the sanctuary, and roars of applause are frequent as students cheer each other on, answering Bible questions as difficult as any Jeopardy category I have watched Ken Jennings ask. I asked a Student Council member what he liked best about the HCA Bible Bowl, and after correcting me with the fact that he "loves," not likes, the Bowls, he also said, "They are energetic and everybody is included. It is a fun way to learn about the Bible." I could not say it better if I tried! In a school devoted to learning while growing in our faith, the Lower School Bible Bowl is a great example of our commitment to provide opportunities to our students to learn and love God's Word together.



SUZANNE BRUNO
Interim Lower School Principal 2024-2025

Lower School Leadership Updates

As an Interim Principal at Hawthorne Christian Academy, I am called upon to serve in this ministry in a specifically temporary leadership position. It requires experience and maintaining the stability of HCA's Lower School, previously built in earnest by past leaders. An Interim serves as a bridge to the next season of leadership for a school. By saying "yes" to the Lord's calling to HCA, I join a community of believers for a short term of service, even if it is hard for me to leave because I grow to love everyone! I have been blessed to maintain the relationships I have built in all of the schools God has called me to serve. It is hard to leave, but a blessing to part as respected colleagues and even more so, as life long friends. Long ago, I left public education as a result of a calling to Christian education when I helped found a small church school. After a number of years I eventually became the Principal and Head of School for 15 years. I never imagined that I would ever be in leadership

at another Christian school. But a call came asking me to consider a position as Head of School in Central New Jersey. I prayed and knew I should be interim, not permanent. It's been several years since that first position and three other schools at three other locations. The work is very challenging. The interim leader has a very short time to do a deep dive in an organization. The expectations are demanding and require focus and commitment. For me, the children are the reason I am willing to be an interim leader. Our kids need strong schools that bring excellence in education on a foundation of Christ. My goal is always to leave a school stronger through the direction and grace of God who is the One who really loves Christian education.



SUZANNE BRUNO
Interim Lower School Principal 2024-2025



Mentors for Minis

We are thrilled to introduce our new Mentors for Minis program for all 1st-graders this school year! Every student is paired with a high school Student Ambassador, each selected for their character, dependability, and personal testimony. Once a month, these mentor-mini pairs gather together to pray, chat, play games, and complete crafts that integrate topics from their recent SEL lessons. We joyfully celebrate the Lord's transformative work as these relationships foster spiritual growth, lasting friendships, and a deeper sense of community.



TINA TATUM
Director of Enrollment & Marketing

Class of '25: World Impact!

At the center of Santo Domingo's historic district stands Parque Colon, a beautiful square where visitors stop to rest, feed the pigeons, and bargain with street vendors.

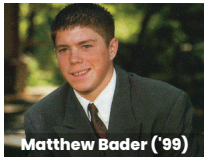
On one special day this November, Parque Colon was also the site where the HCA Class of 2025 praised God and shared the light of Christ! After walking the Conde, passing out hundreds of gospel tracts, 45 students gathered in the center of the park to play instruments and sing praise songs. With a crowd gathering, we sang and danced to songs like *Christo es Mi Superhero* and *Big God*!

Before long, observers joined in on the fun, singing and dancing in the open air of the busy square! The result... we got to share the gospel and pray with several, hand out more Bibles and tracts, and even connect five traveling missionaries from Brazil with the Handfuls of Hope ministry! They later traveled to serve with us at HoH school!

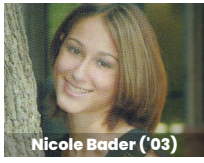
Building a Legacy

HCA LEGACY STUDENTS 2024-2025


Twenty-six HCA alumni have forty-six children enrolled at their alma mater this school year. These mini-me Legacy Students range from preschool to grade 12. Do you see the resemblance?




Matthew Bader ('99)




Nicole Bader ('03)




MacKenzie Bader (6)




Michael Egbert ('98)




Callan Egbert (9)




Jerry Jacob ('07)




Lael Jacob (PS3)




Chris Cilderman ('95)




Sara Cilderman (4)




Leigh-Ann Gordon ('96)




Levi Gordon (7)




Nicole LaGrotteria ('03)




Maddy LaGrotteria (5)




Landon LaGrotteria (2)




Kirk De Boer ('01)




Connor De Boer (6)




Morgan De Boer (4)




Sadie De Boer (2)



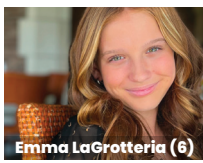
Angel Grant ('03)




Mia Grant (10)



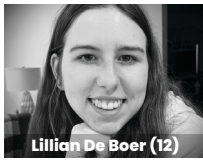
Julie LaGrotteria ('03)



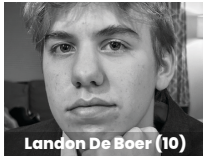
Emma LaGrotteria (6)




Kyle De Boer ('94)




Lillian De Boer (12)



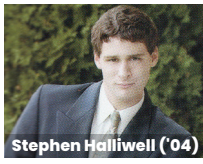
Landon De Boer (10)




Wade De Boer (7)




Everett De Boer (5)



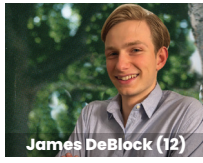
Stephen Halliwell ('04)



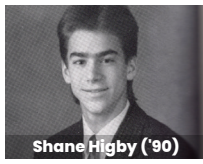
Grace (7), Elijah (4), Joshua (PS4)



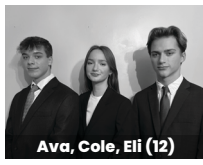
Rachel DeBlock ('96)




James DeBlock (12)




Shane Higby ('90)




Ava, Cole, Eli (12)




Jacob Minnema ('04)



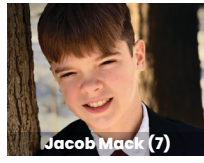
Caleb Minnema (3)




Ellie Minnema (3)




Russell Mack ('00)




Jacob Mack (7)




Kevin Stanford ('95)




Jennifer Stanford ('95)




Olivia Stanford (8)




Sienna Stanford (6)




Jordan Minnema ('06)




Laityn Minnema (5)




Evan Minnema (3)



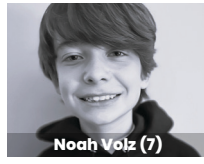
Mason Minnema (1)




Jennifer Volz ('92)



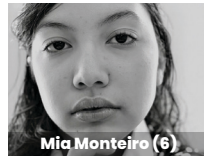
Emily Volz (10)




Noah Volz (7)




Jaylene Monteiro ('94)




Mia Monteiro (6)




Bryant Weiss ('07)




Briana Weiss ('07)




Brooklyn Weiss (6)




Braelyn Weiss (5)




Rebecca Quinn ('07)




John Quinn (1)



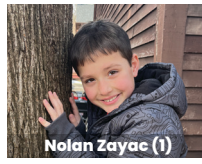
Micah Quinn (PS4)




Anna Zayac ('05)




Bria Zayac (4)




Nolan Zayac (1)




Gavin Zayac (PS4)




Emily Stanley ('06)




Gideon Stanley (3)




Lydia Stanley (2)



Hannah Stanley (1)



Titus Stanley (K)



Silas Stanley (PS3)

Academy Athletics

GO DEFENDERS!

Fall 2024 Defender Athletics

The fall of 2024 was an exciting and successful season for HCA Athletics, with steady participation in Varsity, Junior Varsity, and Middle School sports. Our student-athletes’ dedication shone through as they garnered recognition at multiple levels: 13 Defenders earned All-League honors, 11 were named to the All-County team, and 9 Cross Country runners qualified for the NJSIAA State Championship Meet.

These achievements are a testament to the hard work of our athletes, the guidance of their coaches, the support of their teammates, and the gifts bestowed upon them.

A highlight of the season was HCA’s Annual Homecoming games. The day was filled with school spirit as both the Varsity Girls and Boys Soccer teams secured impressive wins in front of large, enthusiastic crowds. The presence

of alumni on campus added to the festive atmosphere, reinforcing the strong bonds within the HCA community and setting high expectations for 2025.

Another standout event of the season was the annual Defender Beefsteak, held on November 7, 2024, in the HGC Fireside Room. This marquee event not only celebrated the Athletic Department’s accomplishments, but also provided a platform for fellowship and served as a key fundraiser. The evening featured heartfelt testimonies from seniors, graduates, and a former Booster Club President.

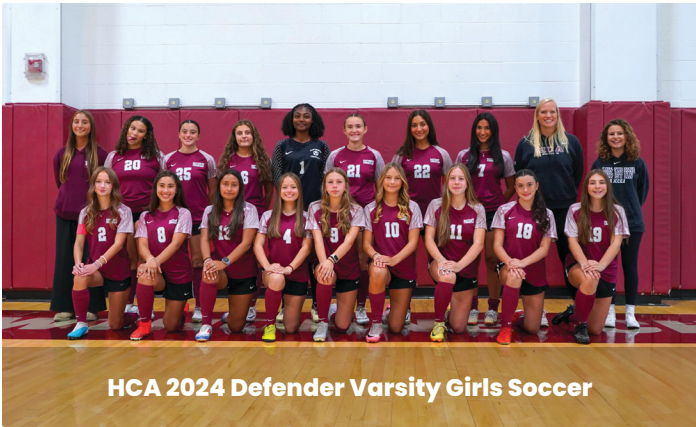
We extend our sincere thanks to our coaches, student-athletes, families, faculty, staff, and supporters. Your continued support and prayers empower HCA Athletics to use its gifts and abilities to bring honor and glory to Him.



TYLER VAN DYK
Director of Athletics



HCA 2024 Defender Varsity Boys Soccer



HCA 2024 Defender Varsity Girls Soccer



HCA 2024 Defender Cross Country



HCA 2024 Defender Girls Volleyball

Defenders... It is God who arms
you with strength and keeps your way
secure. (Psalm 18:32)



HCA Defender Beefsteak Dinner 2024



HCA Defender Beefsteak Dinner 2024: Eli Higby (12)

Thank You, Triple Play Sponsors!



Fall Sports Awards

- 🏆 HS CROSS COUNTRY
 - Grace Cintron (12)**
Honorable Mention All-League
Honorable Mention All-County
 - Cole Higby (12)**
1st Team All-League
2nd Team All-County
 - Isaac Lee (12)**
Honorable Mention All-League
Honorable Mention All-County
 - Colby Oostdyk (11)**
Honorable Mention All-League
Honorable Mention All-County
 - Joya Prairie (10)**
Honorable Mention All-League
Honorable Mention All-County
- 🏆 VARSITY BOYS SOCCER
 - Zacharias Burre (12)**
2nd Team All-League
 - Samuel Harris (11)**
Honorable Mention All-League
 - Chase Hawthorne (10)**
2nd Team All-League
 - Peter How (12)**
2nd Team All-League
Honorable Mention All-County
 - Matthew Mitchell (11)**
1st Team All-League
 - Nathanael Slavin (10)**
Honorable Mention All-County
- 🏆 VARSITY GIRLS SOCCER
 - Baobab DeLorenzo (10)**
2nd Team All-League
Honorable Mention All-County
 - Ava Hartung (12)**
1st Team All-League
Honorable Mention All-County
 - Ava Higby (12)**
Honorable Mention All-League
- 🏆 GIRLS VOLLEYBALL
 - Jordan Ng (11)**
2nd Team All-League
Honorable Mention All-County
 - Mia Morales (11)**
Honorable Mention All-League
Honorable Mention All-County

Music Notes

AND ALL THAT JAZZ



Servants of the King's Fall Festivities

HCA's Servants of the King kicked off the 2024 fall season at some favorite community events, singing at the annual Golf Classic and Autumn Craft & Vendor Expo. At these gatherings, HCA seniors, Ryan Jones and Neha Venugopal, shared their personal testimonies and the message of the Gospel. The students' heartfelt performances exemplified a steadfast commitment to proclaiming the love of Christ through inspiring worship and song.

During the Christmas season, the choir continued to shine as a beacon of hope by visiting local senior citizens on their annual Nursing Home Tour. The students presented

a concert of favorite carols interwoven with Scripture, leading a joyful sing-along that brought warmth and encouragement during challenging times. A special collaboration with the North Jersey Home School Choir at Grace Bible Church further enriched their ministry. The season culminated in a memorable evening, "An Irish Christmas," with Keith and Kristyn Getty at Carnegie Hall—a worshipful celebration honoring the birth of our Lord!



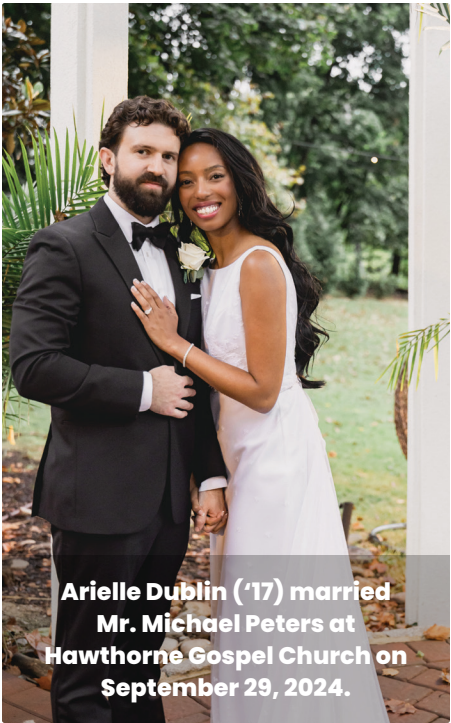
CHRISTINE BROWER
Middle & High School Music Teacher

Alumni News

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Jessica Barragan ('15) and Chris Cardona happily tied the knot, celebrating their beautiful wedding on June 21, 2024.



Arielle Dublin ('17) married Mr. Michael Peters at Hawthorne Gospel Church on September 29, 2024.



Jody Lamb ('12) and his wife, Alyssa, welcomed baby boy Patrick on October 8, 2024, in Albuquerque, NM.

A Spiritual Reflection: Fall 2024

Recently, during a faculty devotion, I shared with several teachers and administrators a quote from Blaise Pascal's *Pensees* (thoughts). Pascal states, "Knowing God without knowing our own poverty produces pride. Knowing our poverty without knowing God produces despair. Knowing Jesus Christ strikes the true balance, because in Him we know both God and our own poverty."

There is much here that rings true to the mature Christian. In what seems absurd to the world on its face, the reality is that true life is found in dying to oneself. The way up begins with humility. It is a strange but true reality that as we mature in the faith, we think less of ourselves. The reason for this is that we become increasingly aware of the sin remaining in us. To quote C.S. Lewis, "Good people know about good and evil." This is true because the one who is being sanctified sees his or her own faults more and more

clearly. This reality is not to lead us down a road to despair. On the contrary, this is our greatest hope. Why? Because it causes us to cling ever more tightly to our great Savior.

If we are honest, when we look at ourselves, we may not always like what we see. We are impatient, we act selfishly, and we say and do things that we regret. Indwelling sin is a reality throughout the Christian life. But our Savior is bigger than our sin! So, as you reflect upon these truths, confess and look up. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins..." (1 John 1:9) The gospel is not only for the unbeliever. It is a beautiful reminder that "as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12). Amen and Amen!



MICHAEL LAMITOLA
HCA Chaplain • MS & HS Teacher



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