

# THE HERALD

a publication of *Eastern Christian School*  
Volume 67, Issue 2

## SERVING *with* PURPOSE

**PLUS**  
*Class of 2026*

FALL 2026

# Dear Eastern Christian School Community,



**As a school community, we look forward to exploring Romans 12:2 together this year: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."**

Paul reminds us that Christian growth is about transformation. As a Christian school, we are privileged to participate in that work. While we celebrate academic achievement, artistic excellence, athletic success, and college acceptances, our deeper calling is to cultivate students whose hearts and minds are continually being transformed by Christ.

We believe every student is created in the image of God and called to reflect His character in the world. Our task is to help students understand God's Story, in the Biblical narrative of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Restoration, and discover how God is inviting them to participate in His work of bringing flourishing to His creation. Christian education is about more than preparing students for college or careers; it is about helping them discern their calling and practice living faithfully as God's image bearers.

The stories in this issue of the Herald offer tangible examples of that transformation in the life of Eastern Christian. They reflect our shared mission of partnering with God to form people of faith, vision, and influence for His glory.

You will read about students discovering that leadership begins with loving and serving others through local outreach and global service trips. You will see them growing in their appreciation for God's worldwide church through relationships with mission-minded partners. You will learn how internships and academic opportunities help students discern their gifts and vocation, and how the arts, athletics, and the daily influence of teachers and coaches shape character, perseverance, creativity, and faith.

Transformation rarely happens through a single dramatic moment. More often, it unfolds through thousands of ordinary ones: thoughtful classroom discussions, meaningful relationships, practices and performances, internships, service opportunities, worship, prayer, and reflection. Each becomes another opportunity for God to renew minds and shape hearts.

Our prayer is that every student who walks through Eastern Christian's doors will leave not only knowing more, but becoming more like Christ, equipped to love God, serve others, and faithfully image Him wherever He calls them to live, work, and lead.

With gratitude,

**Dr. Ruth Kuder '84**  
*Executive Director & Head of School*

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EASTERN CHRISTIAN  
SCHOOL

## THE HERALD



*Middle school students helping at a local garden during Hands Dirty Day*

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*Serving the community by  
stocking food pantry shelves*

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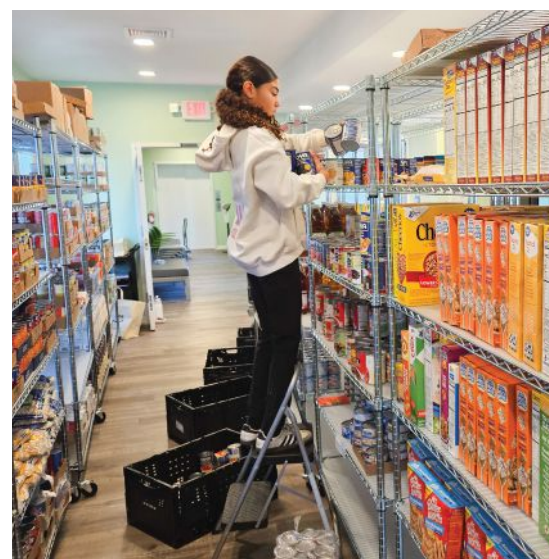
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*The Herald* is a bi-annual publication of The Foundation for Eastern Christian School. The purpose of this publication is to share the story of Eastern Christian School and to strengthen the bonds among our extended school community in support of Christian education.  
***The Herald* is mailed free of charge to over 6,500 alumni, families, and friends of the school.**

Our address database is always being updated. If you would like to update your contact information or if you know of someone who would like to receive *The Herald*, please contact The Foundation for Eastern Christian School Association office and we will be very happy to update our database accordingly.

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## Serving with Purpose in Middle School

**In middle school at the Wyckoff campus, service is more than just an activity—it is an important part of who we are as a school community.**

Throughout the year, students in grades 6–8 are encouraged to grow as leaders, serve others with compassion, and live out their faith in meaningful ways. Through leadership teams, service projects, and Hands Dirty Day opportunities, our middle school students are learning that even small acts of kindness can make a big difference.

### MIDDLE SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE TEAMS

One of the biggest ways students serve at the EC upper elementary and middle school campus, located in Wyckoff, is through our many leadership and service teams. With more than ten different groups available, students have opportunities to use their gifts and talents to support both the school community and people outside of it.

Among the most active groups are the Small Group Leaders, made up of dedicated 7th and 8th grade students. These students meet weekly with teachers to prepare lessons, games, and activities for their bi-weekly small group meetings. Through these gatherings, they help younger students feel included, supported, and connected while encouraging conversations centered on our school theme and Christian values. These student leaders demonstrate responsibility, teamwork, and compassion as they guide their peers.



*Pictured on this spread:  
Middle school students serving in various  
ways during Hands Dirty Day*

Other leadership groups also make a strong impact around campus. The Student Council helps lead chapel prayers, introduce guest speakers, organize spirit weeks, and coordinate school fundraisers. The Yearbook Team works hard throughout the year to capture memories, school events, and milestones that students will treasure for years to come.

### EVERYDAY OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

This year, the Wyckoff campus introduced the new Prayer Team led by **Erik Olson**, our new Social Studies teacher. Olson brings a passion for sharing the gospel through daily events: in addition to twenty-seven years of teaching experience, he also ran a non-profit athletic outreach program for teens.

The Prayer Team has already played an important role in the spiritual life of the school by organizing and leading the “See You at the Pole” event. Throughout the year, they continue encouraging students to grow in faith and support one another through prayer.

Additional service groups provide students with opportunities to help in practical ways every day. The Green Team works to keep the playground and school grounds clean, while the Pizza Box Clean-Up Team helps maintain shared spaces after lunch and events. Teacher Helpers assist faculty members with projects and classroom tasks, and the Merit and Birthday Celebration Team helps recognize and encourage fellow students.

Together, these teams allow students to develop leadership skills, take responsibility, and strengthen the sense of community at the Wyckoff campus.

## HANDS DIRTY DAY: *Serving the Community*

One of the most meaningful service experiences of the year is Hands Dirty Day, where middle school students travel throughout North Jersey to serve local organizations, churches, schools, shelters, and ministries. Students step outside their comfort zones and learn firsthand how service can positively impact others.

This year, students participated in a wide variety of projects that allowed them to serve people of all ages and backgrounds.

### Serving with Compassion

Some groups worked with senior citizens at locations such as Christian Health's Heritage Manor, Sienna Village, and Windmere. Students played games, made crafts, served breakfast, and spent time talking with residents. Many students shared that listening to the stories and experiences of the elderly helped them better understand compassion, patience, and empathy.

Other groups served through organizing and cleaning projects at organizations such as CUMAC, New Hope Ministries, Social Service Association Food Pantry, and Lighthouse Pregnancy Resource Center. Students sorted food donations, assembled care packages, cleaned facilities, and helped prepare resources for families in need.

Through these experiences, students gained a greater understanding of how many people rely on community support and charitable organizations every day.

Several students worked outdoors at locations such as Camp Shiloh, MEVO, Thielke Arboretum, and Church of the Savior. Students helped with landscaping, spreading wood chips,

clearing pathways, raking leaves, and completing fall cleanup projects. These projects taught students the importance of teamwork and caring for shared spaces while supporting organizations that continue serving the community throughout the year.

Students also had opportunities to work directly with children at School 12 in Paterson, YMCA Preschool, Dawn Treader, and Grace Church. They helped teachers, read books, led activities, and supported younger students in the classroom.

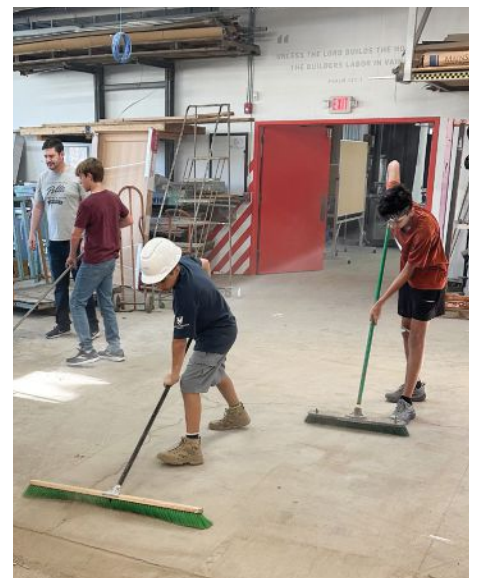
These experiences taught our middle school students patience, leadership, and the importance of being positive role models for younger children. One student commented after the trip, "I grew in faith through serving others and helping people in meaningful ways."

### Growing Through Service

After students spent their time serving, they were asked to reflect on their experience, specifically how the people they served may have changed their perspective. One student responded, saying, "Today I entered an environment that I was not used to in order to help serve others. The children there acted differently and lived under different circumstances than I do, which allowed me to investigate the world through service."

Additionally, a student commented, "I recognized the perspective of self and others by imagining how scared I would feel if I were homeless and had a child to care for. I realized how thankful I would be for organizations like Several Sources Shelters and for the compassion they provide. That understanding gave me even more motivation to help today."

At the Wyckoff campus, service projects, whether organized by teachers or organized by students, model Christ's servant-heart in every aspect of life, and our students learn that serving others is one of the most important ways we can reflect God's love.





# The Church Across Borders and Cultures

## EASTERN CHRISTIAN STUDENTS TRAVEL TO DENMARK

**While spring break brings to mind images of Disney World and Florida beaches, a group of EC students took a different approach this year.**

Partnered with Alterna, a Danish Christian boarding school and missions organization, Eastern Christian offered a week long trip to Denmark, designed to give an opportunity for cultural and historical immersion and learning with a Christ-centered basis. Seven EC high school students attended the trip, with the goal of having a Proverbs 27:17 (“as iron sharpens iron”) opportunity. They fellowshiped with similarly aged Danish students who were attending Alterna and training for global missions trips.

### The Global Church: Christian Fellowship at Alterna

The journey began with a day trip from Copenhagen to Malmö, Sweden, where students explored historic sites like the city’s main square, charming old town streets, and St. Petri Church. They also enjoyed local cuisine, including authentic Swedish meatballs, before returning to Denmark. From there, the group traveled to Hillerød and settled into life at Alterna School, where they were warmly welcomed



by Danish host students. Over the next several days, students fully immersed themselves in the rhythm of the school, participating in classes, shared meals, personal reflection time, and even daily cleaning routines.

A major highlight was visiting Frederiksborg Castle and later exploring Helsingør, where students toured the historic setting of Shakespeare’s Hamlet, Kronborg Castle, along with several historic churches. These experiences gave students a deeper understanding of Denmark’s Christian history and a direct connection to their classrooms back home.

### Mission-Minded Learning Beyond the Classroom

Students also engaged in hands-on learning through specialized programs, including music and worship, leadership development, and service opportunities such as caring for the elderly and serving meals to the homeless. Students didn’t learn just in theory, but through direct experience. Crucially, the daily rhythms of the trip emphasized faith formation in the ordinary moments of the day. Caleb Vander Wall, an EC student who attended the trip, said, “The thing that really stuck out to me was learning about how God is working in peoples’ lives all the way around the globe. The students and staff at

Alterna, the school in Denmark where we stayed, were on fire for Christ and really were united together in a close-knit family because of their faith. It is amazing to see genuine and eager brothers and sisters in Christ who I shared experiences with and learned from and who I would never get to interact with besides opportunities like my trip to Denmark!"

Equally impactful were the relationships formed. From being hosted in a Danish home to worshipping together in chapel, students experienced genuine community and shared faith in a powerful way. Another EC student who attended, spoke about her favorite parts of the trip: "My favorite part of the trip was reuniting with Alterna students that me and my friends hosted during their visit to New Jersey. It was so cool to see how different

their day to day lives were in Denmark, and I was most impacted by their value of community, faith, and culture."

## Christian Identity and the Global Church

EC's partnership with Alterna is a testament to our shared vision of participating in God's redemptive work. While this trip was not an explicit mission trip, it was mission-minded and provided students with an opportunity to develop their faith and to fellowship with Danish brothers and sisters in Christ, all against the backdrop of a historically Christian, culturally rich nation. EC strives to help students develop their identity in Christ, and this trip reinforces that this identity crosses borders and cultures.

**"The thing that really stuck out to me was learning about how God is working in peoples' lives all the way around the globe"**

– Caleb Vander Wall



*EC students attend Easter service in a Danish church*



# Local Missions Week

## SEEING OUR COMMUNITIES AS THE MISSION FIELD

**When we think of missionaries, we often think of people leaving their home country and traveling to distant parts of the globe to engage with completely foreign cultures. Overseas missions can feel exciting and intentional, but the mission field really begins at home.**

Over the course of spring break, high school students were challenged to reshape their thinking and their views of what it means to be a missionary. Over the course of three days, a group of students set out to serve communities within a few minutes of Eastern Christian High School. In partnership with Grace Redeemer Church in Glen Rock, students spent three days serving local communities, praying for neighbors, and learning what it means to live missionally every day.

High School Bible Teacher **Mr. Sam Yang**, organizer of the spring break local missions, said one thing he really wanted students to understand was how before Jesus sent His disciples to the ends of the earth, He first called them to minister in Jerusalem and Judea. In the same way, we are

called to be missionaries wherever God has placed us. Sharing the gospel with someone in Glen Rock is just as important as sharing it with someone in Venezuela.

## DAY 1 – Downtown Glen Rock

The week began with students meeting with the youth pastor at Grace Redeemer to discuss what it means to be a missionary in today's world. Students were encouraged to see themselves not just as participants on a missions trip, but as everyday missionaries in their schools, neighborhoods, and communities.

Afterward, students went into downtown Glen Rock in four teams for a prayer walk. Wearing signs that read "Free Prayer," they approached people throughout the neighborhood and asked if they could pray for them. This gave students an opportunity to step out in faith and engage their local community in a meaningful and personal way.

In the afternoon, the group served at EC's Wyckoff campus by completing outdoor service projects, including cleaning windows and helping care for the campus. It was a reminder that serving others begins close to home, even among younger students in their own community.

The evening concluded back at the high school with dinner and a group debrief.

## DAY 2 – Lighthouse Pregnancy Resource Center

On their second day together, Students spent the day serving at Lighthouse Pregnancy Resource Center. Throughout the day, they helped organize and clean the building, cleaned the daycare area, and assembled “father bags” filled with snacks and resources to encourage and support new fathers.

Later, students served at the high school after hours in the courtyard and helping to care for shared spaces around campus.

## DAY 3 – Oasis

The final day was spent serving at Oasis - A Haven for Women and Children in Paterson. Students helped prepare and serve lunch for women and children in the community, assembled care kits, and created Easter gifts for families. Others worked in the kitchen cooking meals and interacting directly with guests who came through the ministry.

For many students, seeing these women and children, who lived only a few minutes from Eastern Christian High School, was an eye opening experience. Real needs exist just right around the corner.

The week concluded with a final debrief at the high school, reflecting on their experiences serving local communities and everything God had taught them throughout the trip.

## A Time of Reorientation

The hope of these days and these local trips is to leave students with an understanding that being a missionary is not limited to overseas trips or special events, but that Christ’s example is to share His love and truth wherever you have been placed.

**FOR MANY STUDENTS, SEEING THESE WOMEN AND CHILDREN, WHO LIVED ONLY A FEW MINUTES FROM EASTERN CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL, WAS AN EYE OPENING EXPERIENCE. REAL NEEDS EXIST JUST RIGHT AROUND THE CORNER.**



*WINGS business partners joined us on campus for a reception and time of student reflection.*

# WINGS Program Offers a Head Start on Future Careers

**Each year, EC upperclassmen participate in our WINGS program as a way to learn on-the-job training, professional skills, and experience different industries of interest. The results? Quite dramatic actually!**

Take Melissa's and Laura's experiences this year: one finished her internship knowing she had found her career path and calling, while the other discovered a new path and completely changed course.

The WINGS program (Work Internship Network for Gaining Skills) offers a customized internship for senior students who want real-world occupational experiences. Students enrolled in WINGS pair with a local business in their industry of experience and travel to a job site to learn technical skills in place of a classroom. Our students have been able to intern with a wide variety of businesses, ranging from the legal sector to marketing to engineering and healthcare. Through these experiences, students not only gained practical skills but also developed a clearer understanding of their future goals.

## A CAREER CONFIRMED, ANOTHER DISCOVERED

For senior Melissa Hurtado, an internship with NPZ Law Group confirmed a long-standing passion for immigration law. Throughout her internship, she worked alongside legal professionals, observed the legal process firsthand, and gained

experience with real cases. "My experience at NPZ Law Group solidified my decision to pursue a career in immigration law," Melissa said. "Being able to work alongside experienced professionals, become familiar with the legal systems, and work firsthand with cases allowed me to immerse myself in the field."

Melissa noted that her academic studies helped prepare her for the experience. While taking humanities-focused courses, she examined topics such as segregation laws in the United States, persuasive communication, and legal systems around the world. Her classroom studies gave her a framework and historical understanding for the legal field that she explored through the WINGS program.

Senior Laura Turner also had a successful and clarifying experience. Laura entered the program with the intent to pursue a journalism or communications program. Through her internship, Laura said, "I experienced the practical application of many principles I've been learning in my

EC classes, and how they apply in a business setting. My interest in consumer behavior and how people think—an area I've explored in school—was reinforced through hands-on marketing tasks during my internship." Her exposure to the marketing aspect of the business led her to change her intended career path. "I went into my internship with a different career path in mind," Laura said. "I came out with new clarity and new interest in a career in marketing."

## BEYOND INTERNSHIP

Though Melissa and Laura had two different experiences, ultimately, the program was a success for each of them. Their stories illustrate how effective hands-on and experiential learning in a business setting can be. Our hope at EC is that through every class, program, and experience, our students continue to discover the path that God has for them, and that they continue to grow more and more Christ-like. As the program grows, WINGS remains an important part of EC's commitment to helping students learn beyond the classroom and prepare for successful futures in college, careers, and service.

*High School Principal Dan Cirone addresses students and parents at a WINGS event*



# EC's Academic Enhancements for the 2026–27 School Year

## A SYSTEM-WIDE RECONSIDERATION OF TECHNOLOGY

**After a year of consideration, discussion, and research, EC has decided to implement several new standards and guidelines regarding technology in the classroom.**

The core of this conversation was EC's desire to improve learning opportunities, experiences, and personal well-being for students at all levels. While technology is an integral part of today's world and education, EC recognizes that students also deeply benefit from sustained work that does not include the use of screens.

For K-8 students and families, they can expect an overall, intentional decrease in screen time both in the classroom and at home. Grades K-5 will utilize shared classroom devices only during teacher-directed instruction, while grades 6-8 will have their own 1:1 devices that they leave in the classroom at the end of the school day. Additionally, grades K-8 can expect screen-free homework assignments. Grades 9-12 will begin using MacBooks instead of Chromebooks in order to better equip students for college and career expectations. Classroom practices will emphasize discernment and ethical use while navigating emerging technologies such as AI.



## Implementing AP classes and period scheduling

As a part of EC's five year strategic plan, we are excited to improve opportunities for our most aspirational students by adding Advanced Placement courses to our course offerings. These new AP courses will include AP Calculus AB, AP U.S. History, and AP Computer Science Principles. In addition to AP, we will be offering courses that appeal to all students such as Principles of Algebra and adding Korean II to our language department. In order to make these additional offerings, the high school will transition from the current semester-based 80 minute block schedule to a full-year 55 minute class schedule. Not only does this allow us to offer more classes and improve educational rhythms from year to year, but it will also eliminate large time gaps between subject classes over the course of a student's high school career. The changes expand course offerings, improve learning rhythms, and deepen student-teacher relationships.

## Looking to Our Graduate Profile

As always, EC is committed to best support the academic growth, wellbeing, and Christ-centered formation of every child entrusted to our care regardless of academic ability. As our Statement of Beliefs explains, EC seeks to develop well-rounded, Christ-like graduates and we believe these changes will ultimately benefit the service to our students and our mission.



**EC Mission & Vision**





## Eastern Christian School Celebrates the Class of 2026

**The air was filled with joy and celebration on Wednesday, June 10, as the EC community gathered for a spectacular 2026 commencement ceremony.**

It was an unforgettable evening dedicated to honoring the graduates' hard work, marked by powerful reminders of faith, community, and purpose. Those in attendance had the distinct privilege of hearing moving addresses from this year's graduating valedictorian, **Isabella Haney**, and commencement speaker, High School Technology Teacher **William Tantum**.

The ceremony opened in prayer led by Physical Education teacher **Max Harvell** which was followed by the Class of '26 performing their class song, "Can't Steal my Joy."

In her valedictory address, Haney encouraged her classmates to become Christ-like individuals "who walk alongside others, who learn others' struggles, and who love others

unconditionally." Drawing from the apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9 to "Run in such a way as to get the prize," she challenged the graduates to redefine what success looks like in their next chapters. "The world will tell us to run after





achievement, influence, status, and comfort. But those crowns don't last," Haney expounded. Instead, she urged the Class of 2026 to "run after people," step outside of their comfort zones, learn others' stories before making assumptions, and love boldly.

Later in the ceremony, Tantum delivered a powerful message centered on spiritual maturity, encouraging the graduates to take personal ownership of their faith. "Graduates, one of the most important realities of this transition is that you can no longer live on the faith of your parents," Tantum stated. "You must take what they have taught you and cultivate it into your own relationship with the Lord."

He reminded the graduates that their time at Eastern Christian has equipped them with a firm foundation to do just that, knowing who Jesus is and what He accomplished on the cross. Assuring them that they will never be alone if they live

in faith, Tantum concluded with a stirring reminder of Christ's constant presence, urging the graduates to "keep Christ at the center of everything."

After the addresses, each student was presented with their diploma as teachers read their carefully considered individual Spiritual Growth Award. The evening concluded with a benediction sung by the high school faculty, "The Blessing," reminding students that God goes before and beside them as they move into the next chapters of their lives.

**[BECOME CHRIST-LIKE INDIVIDUALS]  
"WHO WALK ALONGSIDE OTHERS,  
WHO LEARN OTHERS' STRUGGLES,  
AND WHO LOVE OTHERS  
UNCONDITIONALLY."**

—Isabella Haney





# The Class of 2026



Yostina Abraham



Tyler Adin



Jason Alicea



Joseph Altomare



Samuel Audige



Kate Austin



Schuyler Boe



Fiona Borzone



Jared Breur



Viktoria Brown



Daniel Bushka



Sarah Castro



Lennox Cederholm



James Clark



Billy Cook



Zoe Correa



Megan Cuellar



Abby Dalton



Paul Dussard Jr.



Brooke Dykhouse



Kayla Erickson



Romina Espinoza



Andrew Genuario



Kaitlyn Grebowiec



Carter Groen



Isabella Haney



Brielle Heerema



Paul Heerema



Franyer Hernandez



Matthew Hernandez



Melissa Hurtado



Luke Jin



Noah Jin



Daniel Kim



Skylar Kuiken



Hannah Leegwater



Judy Li

## GRADUATIONS



Joshua Li



Stephanie Machuca



Kyle Magee



Adam Malasits



Olivia Matthews



Joanna Mbithi



Kayley McLaren



Jayden Medina



Jada Mulder



Andrew Mwirigi



Zachary Ninan



Annabelle Percelli



Avery Peters



Julia Pierce



Albert Pope



Juana Portela



Hannah Post



Azariah Pratt



Caroline Pringle



Kayla Ritsma



Jun Ryu



Abby Schumm



Joon Shin



Gabe Tarta



Emily Torrone



Laura Turner



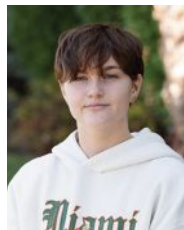
Audrey Van Ness



Paulina Velasquez



Thomas Vicenzino



Sasha Vursta



Handy Wang



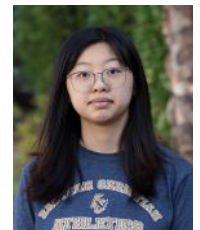
Lynn Weng



Kyle Wright



Hugo Wu



Rachel Yang



Jayden Zheng



Sylvia Zuidema

*"The world will tell us to run after achievement, influence, status, and comfort. But those crowns don't last...run after people."*  
**—valedictorian Isabella Haney, drawing from 1 Corinthians 9:24**

# CONGRATULATIONS!

# Class of 2026 Awards

## NATIONAL HONOR SOCIETY

|                  |                   |                   |                  |                  |               |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Tyler Adin       | Megan Cuellar     | Brielle Heerema   | Luke Jin         | Kayley McLaren   | Yejoon Shin   |
| Joseph Altomare  | Paul Dussard Jr.  | Franyer Hernandez | Noah Jin         | Avery Peters     | Laura Turner  |
| Katherine Austin | Kaitlyn Grebowiec | Matthew Hernandez | Hannah Leegwater | Hannah Post      | Chenyele Weng |
| Fiona Borzone    | Carter Groen      |                   | Adam Malasits    | Caroline Pringle |               |
| Jared Breur      | Isabella Haney    | Melissa Hurtado   | Joanna Mbithi    | Junsang Ryu      |               |

### Art Department Award

Skylar Kuiken

### Bible Department Award

Isabella Haney

### Bible and Worship Award

Kayley McLaren

### The Da Vinci Award (for Excellence in the Art and Technology Departments)

Zoe Correa

### Drama Award

Katherine Austin

### English Award

Katherine Austin

### ESL

Chenyele (Lynn) Weng

### Mathematics Award

Isabella Haney

### Physical Education Award

Adam Malasits

### Science Award

Isabella Haney

### Social Studies Award

Melissa Hurtado

### Technology Award

Joseph Altomare

### Arion Award

Audrey Van Ness

### The John Philip Sousa Award for Band

Yejoon Shin

### The National Choral Award

Katherine Austin

### The National Orchestra Award

Jada Mulder

### ECBS 2026 Faculty Award

Paul Dussard Jr.

### Brett Zuidema Scholarship

Hannah Leegwater

### Christine H White Memorial Scholarship

Kayley McLaren

### Harold Philips Scholarship

Kayley McLaren

### Henriette & Kathryne Houseward Vocational Scholarship

Melissa Hurtado

Hannah Leegwater

Kayley McLaren

Caroline Pringle

### Hoitsma-Jeffer Scholarship

Hannah Leegwater

### Passaic County Director of Guidance Award

Paul Dussard Jr.

Hannah Leegwater

### Sam Braen Memorial Scholarship

Kayley McLaren

### Smith-Shute Nursing Scholarship

Caroline Pringle

### Excellence in Creative Writing Award

Melissa Hurtado

### Excellence in Scholastic Writing Award

Katherine Austin

### Excellence in Mathematics Award

Jared Breur

### ECBS Athletic Department Varsity Club Award

Carter Groen

Andrew Genuario

Hannah Leegwater

Caroline Pringle

### NJSIAA Scholar Athlete Award

Carter Groen

### Athletic Department Golden Eagle Award

Carter Groen

Hannah Leegwater

Caroline Pringle

### PCCA Senior Athlete of the Year

Caroline Pringle

Yejoon Shin

### NJ National Women in Sport Award

Viktoria Brown

### NJIC Sportsmanship Award

Hannah Leegwater

Andrew Mwirigi

### Paterson Old Timers Sportsmanship Award

Caroline Pringle

## The President's Education Award

Tyler Adin  
Joseph Altomare  
Katherine Austin  
Fiona Borzone  
Jared Breur  
Megan Cuellar  
Paul Dussard Jr.  
Kaitlyn Grebowiec  
Carter Groen  
Isabella Haney  
Brielle Heerema  
Franyer Hernandez  
Matthew Hernandez  
Melissa Hurtado

Luke Jin  
Noah Jin  
Hannah Leegwater  
Adam Malasits  
Joanna Mbithi  
Kayley McLaren  
Andrew Mwirigi  
Avery Peters  
Hannah Post  
Caroline Pringle  
Junsang Ryu  
Yeoon Shin  
Laura Turner  
Chenyele Weng

## CLASS OF 2026 VERSE

"I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."

— John 15:11 (NIV)

# Post-Secondary Acceptances



Abilene Christian University  
 Adelphi University  
 American University  
 Amherst College  
 Arcadia University  
 Ave Maria University  
 Azusa Pacific University  
 Baylor University  
 Belmont University  
 Bergen Community College  
 Binghamton University  
 Brandeis University  
 Brown University  
 Caldwell University  
 Calvin University  
 Carnegie Mellon University  
 Cedarville University  
 Central Connecticut State University  
 Charleston Southern University  
 Chatham University  
 Clark University  
 Clarkson University  
 Coastal Carolina University  
 College of Charleston  
 Columbia University  
 Cornell University  
 Drake University  
 Drew University  
 Drexel University  
 Duquesne University  
 East Stroudsburg University  
 Eastern University  
 Emory University  
 Fairleigh Dickinson University (Florham, Metropolitan)

Felician University  
 Flagler College  
 Florida Gulf Coast University  
 Florida Southern College  
 Florida State University  
 George Mason University  
 George Washington University  
 Georgian Court University  
 Gordon College  
 High Point University  
 Hofstra University  
 Iona University  
 Ithaca College  
 James Madison University  
 Kean University  
 La Salle University  
 Lehigh University  
 Liberty University  
 Long Island University  
 Loyola University Maryland  
 Manhattan University  
 Marist University  
 Merrimack College  
 Messiah University  
 Michigan State University  
 Molloy University  
 Monmouth University  
 Montclair State University  
 Moravian University  
 New Jersey City University  
 New Jersey Institute of Technology  
 New York Institute of Technology  
 Northeastern University  
 Pace University  
 Palm Beach Atlantic University



Penn State University (University Park, Harrisburg)  
 Pennsylvania College of Technology  
 PennWest California  
 Pepperdine University  
 Quinnipiac University  
 Ramapo College of New Jersey  
 Regent University  
 Rider University  
 Rochester Institute of Technology  
 Rowan University  
 Rutgers University (New Brunswick, Newark)  
 Saint Elizabeth University  
 Saint Joseph's University



Saint Peter's University  
 Salisbury University  
 Savannah College of Art and Design  
 Seton Hall University  
 Siena University  
 Southeastern University  
 St. John's University  
 St. Thomas Aquinas College  
 Stevens Institute of Technology  
 Stockton University  
 Stony Brook University  
 SUNY (Albany, Brockport, Buffalo, Cortland, Oneonta)  
 Syracuse University  
 Taylor University  
 Temple University  
 Texas Christian University  
 The College of New Jersey  
 University of Alabama  
 University of Arkansas  
 University of California (Davis)



University of Cincinnati  
 University of Connecticut  
 University of Dallas  
 University of Dayton  
 University of Delaware  
 University of Hartford  
 University of Iowa  
 University of Kentucky  
 University of Lincoln  
 University of Maryland  
 University of Massachusetts (Amherst, Boston, Dartmouth)  
 University of Minnesota  
 University of Nebraska  
 University of New Hampshire  
 University of New Haven  
 University of North Carolina (Charlotte, Wilmington)  
 University of North Florida  
 University of Pittsburgh  
 University of Rhode Island  
 University of Rochester  
 University of Scranton  
 University of South Carolina  
 University of South Florida  
 University of Tennessee  
 University of Toronto  
 University of Utah  
 Virginia Tech  
 Wheaton College  
 Widener University  
 Wilkes University  
 William Paterson University  
 Xavier University



# Middle School Promotion

**The 2026 Middle School Promotion was held on the evening of June 11 where graduates, teachers, board members, and families gathered together for a time of celebration and encouragement.**

The night featured music performances and addresses from Vice Principal **Mary Brain**, Principal **Dr. Dan Lazor**, and this year's valedictorian, **Aubriana Jacobus**.



The ceremony opened with Vice Principal Brain commending students on their accomplishments and hard work. She encouraged the graduates by saying, "As you journey into high school, my prayer for you is that you hold fast to the hope you have in Jesus Christ and that you support and spur one another on to know God's love and faithfulness... and that you would be Christ's transforming agents in this world."

Jacobus addressed her classmates, the middle school faculty, and all the families in attendance, reflecting on the friendships, memories, and faith that shaped their years at Eastern Christian. She described how Eastern Christian became much more than a school, growing into a Christ-centered community where students discovered both their gifts and their identity in Christ.

She encouraged her classmates to trust God's plan, embrace leadership opportunities, and remain firmly rooted in their faith. Drawing from Matthew 5, she challenged the Class of 2026 to be "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world," reminding them that God is not finished writing their story and that their best chapters are still ahead. After delivering her remarks, students performed "Firm Foundation" as their class song.

In his address to the class of 2026, Principal Lazor challenged students to consider what it truly means to place their trust in Christ as they prepare for the next chapter of their lives. Using the image of a slack line, a balance-beam challenge

performed by High School Principal **Dan Cirone**, and the stories of Charles Blondin's tightrope exploits over the Niagara falls, Principal Lazor illustrated the difference between simply believing in something when it is comfortable and truly putting your faith and your life on the line.

Connecting these stories to this year's theme, Abide in Christ, Principal Lazor reminded graduates that true freedom is found not in self-reliance, but in walking closely with Christ and trusting Him with their lives wherever He takes them. Looking ahead to high school, he encouraged students to embrace the calling God has placed on their lives and to use their gifts to serve others and reflect God's goodness in the world.

His final challenge to the graduates drew on an image of Blondin tightrope walking Niagara falls with a wheelbarrow: trust Christ, "get into the wheelbarrow," and enjoy the journey ahead.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, students, teachers, and all those in attendance joined together to sing "Yet not I, but through Christ in me"—a fitting reminder of our reliance on Christ and His work.



**"AS YOU JOURNEY INTO HIGH SCHOOL, MY PRAYER FOR YOU IS THAT YOU HOLD FAST TO THE HOPE YOU HAVE IN JESUS CHRIST AND THAT YOU SUPPORT AND SPUR ONE ANOTHER ON TO KNOW GOD'S LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS... AND THAT YOU WOULD BE CHRIST'S TRANSFORMING AGENTS IN THIS WORLD."** —Vice Principal Mary Brain





# Fifth-Grade Celebration Chapel

## A MEANINGFUL MILESTONE

**Upper elementary students, families, and faculty gathered on the morning of June 8 to celebrate the fifth-grade class as they concluded their elementary years and prepared for the transition to middle school.**

The annual Celebration Chapel serves as a joyous occasion that recognizes the accomplishments of the fifth-grade class over the last three years, and a time of worship, thanking the Lord for his provision and blessings.



In his message, Middle School Principal **Dr. Dan Lazor** reflected on the idea of thresholds: the doorways we cross each day that lead us from one place to another. He reminded students that they are standing at an important threshold of their own, leaving the upper elementary behind and stepping into the opportunities and challenges of middle school.

While acknowledging that the future holds some uncertainty, Principal Lazor assured students that they are prepared for what lies ahead and encouraged them to continue growing in their faith. Drawing from Jesus' words in John 10, "I am the door," he challenged students to make their faith their own and to continue pursuing a personal relationship with Christ.

Principal Lazor also connected the message to this year's theme, "Abide in Christ", reminding the students that just as branches remain connected to the vine, they are called to remain connected to Jesus throughout every season of life.

Overall, the chapel was filled with encouragement, support, and prayer for this year's graduating fifth graders. We look forward to seeing all of the great things the Lord will do in their lives in their upcoming years at EC!

# Second Grade Celebration Chapel



topics that they had studied during the school year such as their Thanksgiving balloon project and learning about the true meaning of Christmas.

Adding an extra layer to their performance, Pre-school Library teacher **Elizabeth Rachuri** taught the students sign language to accompany one of their special songs. Watching the children combine their voices with signing created a memorable experience for everyone in attendance. To conclude, a student prayed a blessing over all of her second grade classmates as they move to the upper elementary school next year, wrapping up a celebration of growth, faith, and community. We praise the Lord for the enthusiasm and joy these students bring to EC, and we pray for the Lord's blessings on them as they continue their education at EC.

## SECOND GRADERS RADIATE JOY AT CELEBRATION CHAPEL

On June 10, the Eastern Christian community gathered for a wonderfully heartwarming Second Grade Celebration Chapel, where this year's second grade students took center stage in celebrating and reflecting on their school journey at EC's Midland Park campus.

It was a beautiful morning of gratitude, worship, and celebration as the young graduates looked back on their favorite elementary school moments.

Among the many fond memories shared, two major highlights stood out for the second graders: the unforgettable experience of hatching chicks back in kindergarten and a thrilling, hands-on field trip to the Liberty Science Center. These milestones helped remind attendees of the curiosity of our young students, and drew bright smiles from both the students and the audience.

Music played a central role in the celebration chapel, highlighting the students' incredible creativity. Under the direction of Music Teacher **Nicole Verrengia**, each second-grade class spent the spring season collaborating to write their very own original songs. The children proudly debuted and performed these unique pieces during the chapel service. Between songs, students gave brief recaps of different units and



# Preschoolers Celebrate a Joyful Year of Growth at EC

On June 9, the Midland Park campus was alive with laughter and music as our five preschool classes gathered to celebrate all that God has done in the preschool this year. It was a delightful milestone event centered on reflection, worship, and pure childhood joy.

During the ceremonies, each class proudly took the stage to sing songs, recite Bible verses, and reflect on this year's meaningful theme, "Abide In Christ." The energy was infectious as the kids sang with all their hearts, danced gracefully with colorful scarves, and even rocked out on inflatable guitars, bringing smiles to everyone in attendance.

**Anna Cingale**, teacher of PK4 Chickadee class reminded her students: "We know that we can trust God because He created us and He loves us, from our head to our toes." **Sara Hook**, teacher of the TK Dove class, emphasized their class conversations on displaying and cultivating the fruits of the spirit by "praying to Jesus, reading His word, and obeying Him."

**"WE KNOW THAT...[GOD] LOVES US, FROM OUR HEADS TO OUR TOES."** —Anna Cingale



A favorite moment for many families came when teachers announced what each student hopes to be when they grow up. The imaginative answers highlighted the big dreams of these little graduates, ranging from traditional aspirations like scientist and princess to unique callings like orthopedic surgeon and monster truck driver.

No celebration is complete without a special treat, and each class wrapped up their big day by cooling down and celebrating with ice pops following the ceremony. We are incredibly grateful for a wonderful year of learning, laughing, and growing together in Christ's love!

# SENIOR REFLECTIONS



*"I'm very thankful that I have found some life long friendships, as well as having a community that is willing to help and serve no matter the circumstances. I am also thankful for the fact that Christianity, God's promises, and His scripture is incorporated into every class regardless of the subject." – Kayla '26*

*"I loved my experience in EC. I'm grateful to be around a community that has the same Christ-like mentality." – Azariah '26*



*"It has been faith-nourishing and so much fun! I'm really most thankful for the teachers. The faculty and staff, in my experience, put so much work in not only caring about our education, but our general well being. I've really enjoyed having deep conversations with some of them." – Fiona '26*





*"I have grown significantly in my faith at EC because of the Christ-centered community of students and teachers, the various Bible classes I have taken, and participation in chapel every week. I feel that these three things have truly allowed me to grow and flourish in my faith, and have set me up to continue my spiritual growth in adulthood." – Jared '26*



*"I would describe my Eastern Christian experience as spiritually, emotionally, and academically fulfilling. I am most thankful that EC provides such a well-rounded education and consistently has my best interest in mind, especially in my journey as a follower of Christ." – Kayla '26*

## SENIOR CELEBRATION & DECISION DAY REFLECTIONS



*My faith has grown through the constant involvement of Christian principles in my education. My teachers have combined material of the class with Bible verses, parables, and concepts central to my faith. I have been able to pursue academics and simultaneously benefit as a Christian as well. – Melissa '26*



*"Joining EC in the ninth grade allowed me to meet more and more people, join a Bible study, and become strongly rooted in my faith. Chapel also helped me because there were some speakers who really stood out, showed me what being a Christian is all about and really showed just how good God is." – Julia '26*



# Building on the Foundation *Together*

Transforming Lives. One Gift at a Time.

## More Than a Gift

**A family found themselves facing an impossible choice. They deeply desired a Christ-centered education for their child, but circumstances had changed and finances were extremely strained. They prayed, leaving the matter with God for His will to be done. Then, through the generosity of donors supporting scholarships, their child was able to enter EC.**

Today, that student is thriving. She is dynamic in the classroom, lighting up the room with her ideas, energy and deep questions. She's growing in faith, excelling academically, and serving at every available opportunity.

But her story does not end there.

A donor who had helped make that scholarship possible recently shared that giving had changed her, too. What began as a donation became something deeper: a renewed sense of purpose. She realized she was investing in a young person's future and participating in God's transforming work.

"Tuition only covers a portion of each student's EC education. When all of us donate, together we can cover the costs completely, ensuring that every student receives the full benefit of this life-changing experience," said **Maura Byrnes**, the executive director of the Foundation.

To accomplish this, the Foundation team invites support from alumni and parents. Also, the Foundation works alongside its

upscale resale business, ditto, which donates its profit to EC. An Endowment Fund helps keep every student's tuition lower than it would be otherwise. In addition, the team leads beloved events such as HomeComing, the Auction Gala, and golf outings.

The most ambitious and inspiring effort the Foundation is leading is the Capital Campaign, Building on a Firm Foundation. This \$4.7 million fundraising drive is more than a campaign – it is an investment in students, in opportunity, and in the future.

Alumni and parents have already shown extraordinary commitment, contributing \$3.4 million specifically toward the Wyckoff campus building project. Their generosity has laid powerful groundwork, but the moment now calls for the next step.

A remarkable opportunity is available: an anonymous donor has pledged to match every new gift up to \$400,000. This is a defining moment to accelerate progress. Now is the time to give.

Fundraising at EC is an invitation to join us in an undertaking far greater than we can even imagine.

"My deep hope is that each of us will joyfully invest in our school, with grateful hearts, so that together we can witness God working through our students to transform the world," said Byrnes.



**Building on a  
Firm Foundation  
Campaign**



# From Tragedy to Transformation

## THE 9/11 ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP MARKS 25 YEARS OF REMEMBRANCE

**When the nation was attacked on September 11, 2001, few could have imagined that years later one person's response to that tragedy would provide Christian education, encouragement and opportunity, changing many lives for the better.**

That horrific day twenty-five years ago continues to have an impact on Americans, particularly in the NY/NJ area. One individual associated with EC was deeply affected yet chose to transform grief into lasting hope through education.

Out of that day, marked by terror and unspeakable loss, came a commitment to invest in EC students. This donor, who wishes to remain anonymous, established the 9/11 Academic Scholarships. This gift typically provides two awards annually of \$2,500 each, one for an 8th grader and the other for a 12th grader, that is used for their EC tuition.

Candidates are recommended to the Committee on Named Scholarships by the school's administrators. In accordance with the donor's wishes, the potential awardees must demonstrate exemplary character and a commitment to serving others that significantly exceeds EC's voluntary service requirement. The candidates must also maintain a strong academic record and have verified financial hardship.

Selected students and their parents must write an essay on the topic: "Why a Christian Education is Important to Me." These essays display the heart and mind of those who greatly

value EC's excellent academic curriculum, wide variety of extracurriculars, and its caring community. Each of the families already makes a great sacrifice in order to send their children to this school.

**Maura Byrnes**, the executive director of the Foundation for EC, has the privilege of reading the essays each year. She shares that there are often themes of growing in faith formation, desiring academic excellence grounded in biblical truth, and the freedom to live out their faith in community with peers who share their commitment to Christ, for instance:

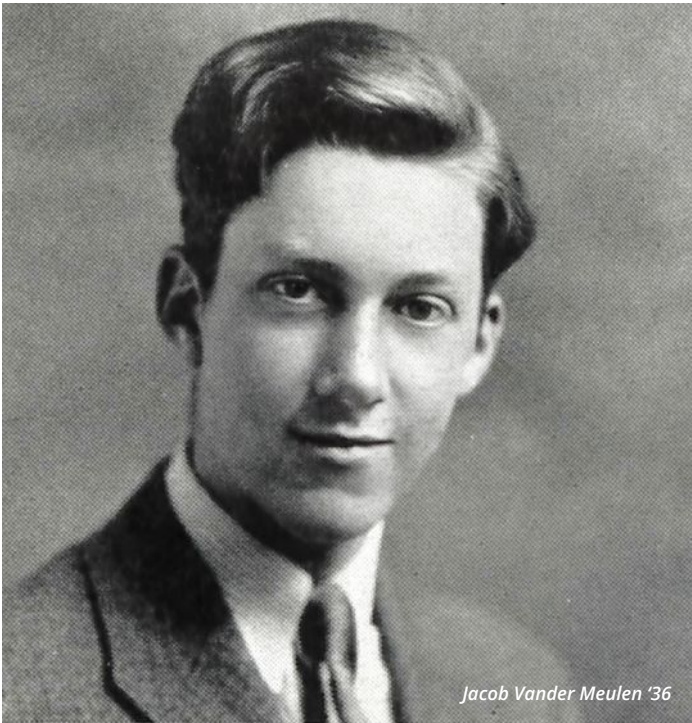
One parent wrote, "...our family believes that God has been answering our prayers to equip our children in Christ through Christian education for their God-given purpose... we believe that Christian education has been instrumental to leading our children to their mission fields, both local and abroad...we believe that it inspired them to lead their service-oriented lifestyle..."

A 7th grade student wrote: "The first thing that comes to mind when I think about the importance of a Christian education is knowing your worth...also, learning, understanding, and being able to share the Word with others..."

There are now 34 EC alumni throughout the world and two current students at EC who are known as the *September 11th Academic Scholars* because one hurting person decided to choose hope rather than despair.

*If you would like to learn more about how you can create a scholarship fund to honor a loved one, please contact the Foundation Office at 973.427.9294 or send an email to [foundation@easternchristian.org](mailto:foundation@easternchristian.org)*





*Jacob Vander Meulen '36*

## A Family Story Intertwined with School History

Bill's family's connection to Eastern Christian School spans more than a century. His grandmother, Jessie Postma Van Hook, attended Amity School in the 1890s (this was the first campus of what is now Eastern Christian); his father graduated from Eastern Academy, the precursor to Eastern Christian High School, in 1936; his sisters and their husbands – Eileen and Sip Hutton (Class of '65 and '61), Diane and William Woolsey (Class of '67) and Carl and Paul Ten Brink (Class of '71) – are all Eastern Christian graduates. Bill graduated in 1980, and he and his wife Shelley's three children attended in the 2000s while they lived in New Jersey.

Bill notes that his family story is not unique. Many current alumni trace their roots back to the families who founded, funded, governed, prayed for, and sustained the school through enormously difficult times. Their unwavering dedication has benefited every student who has walked these halls.

## The Sacrifice That Built Eastern Christian

These early families did not inherit thriving campuses or modern facilities – they created them. Most gave from hourly wages in blue-collar professions. They purchased land, helped construct school buildings, served on boards, developed programs, and established traditions rooted in prayer, stewardship, generosity, and excellence.

Former Trustee and prior Foundation Executive Director **Dave Visbeen** recalled that in the early years his family ate “rice and beans, and then beans and rice.” From these simple dinners, his parents saved enough to send their children to Eastern Christian. To them, it was never a sacrifice—it was an investment.

More than 70 years ago, Bill Vander Meulen's parents shared that same perspective. They sacrificed not only for their own children, but for the generations who would follow.

## The Life-Changing Impact of Christian Education

An Eastern Christian education shapes far more than academics. Many alumni return to teach or serve here so they can pass on the same powerful experience. Others met their future spouses within these walls. For most, the deepest impact was spiritual—building a strong moral and faith foundation that guides their lives. Eastern Christian became more than a school. It became a community that formed friendships, marriages, churches, and families across generations.

# Paying it Forward

## A LEGACY OF SACRIFICE, FAITH, AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

### The Floor Beneath Our Feet

**For earlier generations of Eastern Christian families, providing a Christian education often meant creative sacrifices and solutions.**

“My dad's father paid his senior year tuition by donating the boards and nails for the floor. My great-grandfather, Sam Bosch, worked as the school's janitor to pay for his grandchildren's tuition,” said **Bill Vander Meulen**, Class of 1980.

Parents donated building materials. Others volunteered countless hours. Many served on boards and committees. Still others stretched already-tight family budgets because they deeply believed that Christian education was worth the cost.

**Those sacrifices built more than a school; they built a legacy.**

Today, Bill and Shelley Vander Meulen are helping ensure that legacy continues through the Pay It Forward Fund. “We want to honor the past by preparing for the future,” Bill shared.

## A Growing Challenge—and a Timeless Solution

As costs have risen, some legacy families now find it difficult to provide the same experience for their children. In response, the Pay It Forward Fund was created in 2019 with a generous gift in honor of Bill's parents, **Janet and Jacob Vander Meulen**, and all the legacy families whose sacrifices shaped the school. **Tom Dykhouse**, now Head of School Emeritus, and Dave Visbeen, now former Executive Director of the Foundation for EC, worked with Bill Vander Meulen on crafting this scholarship fund.

The fund provides scholarship assistance to students who:

- Are direct descendants of Eastern Christian alumni
- Demonstrate financial need
- Meet admission standards

The name "Pay It Forward" carries deeper meaning. Today's students benefit from sacrifices made decades ago. The fund encourages recipients to one day help future students in the same spirit. Each generation receives the gift—and then becomes responsible for extending it to the next.

The donated boards that became floors. The tuition paid through janitorial service. The parents who chose rice and beans. The families who prayed and gave faithfully. All of them helped create the Eastern Christian we know today.

The Pay It Forward Fund is more than a scholarship. It is a living reminder that Eastern Christian has always been built and sustained by people willing to invest in something larger than themselves.

Because someone paid it forward for us, now it is our turn.

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Today's students benefit from sacrifices made decades ago. The fund encourages recipients to one day help future students in the same spirit. Each generation receives the gift—and then becomes responsible for extending it to the next.

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***Today is the day to  
Pay It Forward!  
Your gift will  
be immediately  
directed to the  
Pay It Forward  
Fund.***

## WAYS TO GIVE

### IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD)

Individuals age 70½ or older can transfer up to \$11,000 per year directly from their IRA to the Foundation. Consult your tax advisor.

#### By Mail

Use the envelope included in this issue.

#### Online

Visit our website at [www.easternchristian.org](http://www.easternchristian.org) to donate securely.



## ALUMNI PROFILE

## *From Ashes to Beauty: Helping Injured Athletes Rebuild Their Lives*

For alumna **Dr. Emily Maura Kriesel**, Class of 2015, serving others has never been just a career choice; it has been a calling. Today, Emily works as a Doctor of Physical Therapy at Olympic Sports & Spine in Washington State, helping young athletes recover from injuries and regain confidence in their abilities. However, her passion for serving others began long before graduate school or professional certifications. In fact, when asked in her Eastern Christian yearbook what she wanted to be when she grew up, Emily's answer was simple: "A physical therapist to help wounded warriors."

That desire to serve was shaped by her generous mom and dad. Her parents lovingly focused on family and joyfully welcomed students into their home.

While attending EC, Emily's passion was horseback riding, which she did competitively. She also volunteered for years handling horses and assisting with physical therapy sessions for people with disabilities. During summer break from college, she traveled to Guatemala and Costa Rica to help rebuild a school, teach vocational skills, and lead a youth camp.

Each experience reinforced a lesson she continues to live out today: serving others often means stepping into difficult situations and helping people find hope.

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Through her work, Emily demonstrates that when we use our God-given gifts to serve others, the Lord can bring beauty from ashes and restore hope where it had once seemed impossible.

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Emily specializes in working with young athletes. Many of these patients are facing the most challenging seasons of their young lives. She is passionate about helping them recover from injuries that can threaten their athletic dreams.

One patient stands out in particular. A high school wrestler underwent major reconstructive surgery following a devastating injury, and for nine months, Emily worked alongside him through the rehabilitation process. Together, they celebrated small victories, such as first steps, increased strength and renewed confidence. Eventually, he returned to competition. Emily and her husband were invited to attend his Senior Night, where they had the privilege of watching him win his matches. Experiences such as this remind Emily that healing is about more than physical recovery. It is about restoring hope.

"When working with teenagers, setting expectations is critical," she explains. "Focus on what is happening today and what will happen tomorrow. Celebrate the small wins."

She also believes that listening is one of the greatest ways adults can serve young people. Too often, students feel overlooked or underestimated. Emily treats every athlete with dignity and respect, recognizing that young people often understand their bodies, struggles, and goals better than adults realize.

Her advice to today's students reflects the same encouraging mindset: "Leave and explore the world. Pursue hard things. The easy way is never satisfying. Don't shrink your goals to fit your world; grow your world to fit your goals!"

Through her work, Emily demonstrates that when we use our God-given gifts to serve others, the Lord can bring beauty from ashes and restore hope where it had once seemed impossible.

# EC Athletic Awards Beefsteak

The EC Athletic Booster Club (ABC) hosted the Athletic Awards Beefsteak on May 27 at The Brownstone to celebrate our high school coaches and student-athletes' achievements throughout the 25-26 school year.

ABC Vice President and EC parent, Bryan Pringle, opened the evening with prayer and emphasized the role athletics plays in developing character, faith, and a commitment to glorify God in all they do. Bill Van Hoff, ABC President, then shared ABC updates and accomplishments from the past year, including the completion of the all-new Fitness and Wellness Center.

Athletic Director Seth Stadtlander led the awards program, recognizing our coaches and student-athletes. EC Coaches were first on the list to be highlighted:

- Greg Hagedoorn, Boys Lacrosse, received the Coach of the Year Award in Spring 2025 in the NJILL Dowling Division.
- Erik Olson, Girls Basketball, received the Coach of the Year Award for the 2025-2026 season in the NJIC Meadowlands Division.

Student-athletes awards were presented to our 47 first-time varsity letter recipients and recognition of student-athletes for outstanding contributions to their sports with All-League and All-County honors.

Senior student-athletes were honored with the following notable awards:

- Paterson Old Timers Award: Caroline Pringle
- PCCA Athlete of the Year Award: Caroline Pringle, and Yejoon Shin
- NJSIAA Scholar Athlete Award: Carter Groen
- National Girls in Sport Award: Viktoria Brown
- NJIC Sportsmanship Award: Hannah Leegwater and Andrew Mwirigi

Carter Groen, Hannah Leegwater and Caroline Pringle were awarded The Golden Eagle Award for participating in at least 12 athletic seasons.

And finally, the Varsity Letter Award for most varsity letters in their high school career was given to Andy Genuario (9), Carter Groen (9), Hannah Leegwater (12) and Caroline Pringle (12).

Congratulations to all of our athletes for a strong and competitive year of EC athletics! It was a joy to celebrate all of their accomplishments with family, friends, and alumni.

*A special thank you to all of those who sponsored tickets and tables to help cover the costs of athletes and coaches so that they could attend the event for free.*

## EC AUCTION GALA

Over 350 parents, alumni, and friends of Eastern Christian gathered at Westmount Country Club on April 17 for the 2026 EC Auction Gala raising more than \$300,000!

Guests enjoyed a cocktail reception, silent and live auction, dueling pianos, and favorite activities such as Heads or Tails and the Wine and Spirit Pulls. During the evening, attendees gave more than \$60,000 in just 10 minutes to support scholarships for students facing significant family hardships.

The program concluded with an update on the Building on a Firm Foundation capital campaign, including the announcement of a generous \$400,000 matching gift from an anonymous donor.

*Thank you to all our sponsors, donors, and volunteers who helped make this inspiring evening a tremendous success.*

## EC GOLF OUTING

### A Record-Breaking Day on the Links

Despite temperatures soaring above 95 degrees, a sold-out field of 128 golfers gathered at Wild Turkey Golf Club on May 18 for the annual EC Golf Outing. Participants enjoyed a fantastic day of golf, fellowship, and friendly competition while helping raise a record-breaking \$93,000.

One of the highlights on the course was the "Beat the EC Golfer Challenge", where current EC golfers Billy Cook and Jack Magee impressed participants with multiple tee shots landing within just a few feet of the pin.

*Thank you to all of our golfers, sponsors, volunteers, and supporters who contributed to the success of this year's event.*

## NEW CHANGE IN THE WORKS FOR NEXT YEAR:

Mark your calendars for **Wednesday, January 27, 2027** for The EC Community Beefsteak supporting the Athletic Booster Club. The entire EC community of students, parents, alumni, and friends are invited to this beefsteak dinner in support of the ABC. Stay tuned for more information.

## IN MEMORY

### James Abma

Karel E. De Waal Malefyt  
Mary Lou Filcroft

### Henry J. Atema

William and Lisa Soodsma

### Margaret Balkema

Dorothy Balkema  
Gary and Donna Balkema  
Charlotte Brandle  
Deborah and Paul Braunius  
Richard and Maura Byrnes  
Joanne and Hans de Bruyn  
Thomas and Linda Dykhous  
Ruth Flechsig  
Marianne Houghtaling  
Carole and Bruce Jacobs  
Mark and Karen Knorr  
Lori J. Lansey  
Michael and Tanya Minatelli  
Diane and Tony Monterisi  
Mark and Pamela Reitsma  
Gregory and Ruth Rhodes  
Ruth Roughgarden  
Jeffrey and Sarah Vander Molen  
David and Cynthia Visbeen  
Leonard and Ruth Wynbeek

### Paul A. Beverly

Ken and Linda Beverly

### Roger Bosma

George and Carol Bosma

### William Cook

Ann Dambach

### Leonard Dykstra

Edward and Susan Renicker

### Ruth A. Dykstra

Robert and Laura Dykstra  
William and Lisa Soodsma

### Lois Beverly Faber

Roberta Gackowski  
Dennis Rose

### Gerard Fridsma

Beth and Nick Karanicola

### Sharon Rose Gordon (Peters)

Katie Rose Inspired LLC

### Ernest J. Hoitsma

David V. Hoitsma  
Bernice Houseward

### Gys Kooy

Karel E. De Waal Malefyt

### Lenora Malefyt

Alan Burns  
Richard and Maura Byrnes  
Karel E. De Waal Malefyt  
William and Marcia Heerema  
Richard and Ruth Kuder  
Cheryl and Robert La Fleur  
Ray and Julia Martin  
Ken and Sue Miller  
James and Constance Moyer  
Garret and Florence Nieuwenhuis  
Mary and Robert Postma  
Henry and Lois Schuurman  
Ronald and Karen Steiging  
David and Cynthia Visbeen  
Lisa Visbeen-Hollows

### Rick Martin

Karel E. De Waal Malefyt

### Daniel and Beatrice Minkema

Richard and Lynn Ver Hage

### Wilma Oliphant

David and Beverly Vandergoot  
Edward and Jill Nyland  
Donald and Fanchoise Nyland  
Jo-Ann and Fred Bouwkamp

### Richard and Doris Ver Hage

Richard and Lynn Ver Hage

## IN HONOR

### Neal and Ethel Baum's 70th Wedding Anniversary

Ruth Heeringa  
Janet and Craig Klammer

### Linda A. Brock

Anonymous

### Ethel De See's 95th Birthday

Barbara Kuiken Davis  
Annamae Hulsebos  
Beverly and Peter Ten Kate  
Betty Youngsman

### Ruth Kuder

Daniel and Susan Grimm

### Peter and Beverly Ten Kate's 50th Wedding Anniversary

William and Lisa Soodsma

### David A. Visbeen

Anonymous

# Reunions

## Class of 1966 – 60 Year Reunion

Alumni from the Class of 1966 are invited to join fellow classmates on Friday, October 16, 2026 at the Village Inn in Wayne at 5:30 p.m. For payment details and to RSVP, please contact June Fisher-Markowitz at jfish4601@gmail.com.

## Class of 2002 – 25 Year Reunion

The class is working on organizing a get-together in the fall of 2026. Please email Heather Bushoven (hbushoven06@gmail.com), Sara Mickens Rivers (sara.rivers426@gmail.com) or Julia Smith (juliasmith15827@gmail.com) for more information.

## Class of 2016 – 10 Year Reunion

You're invited to join the class of 2016 at The Glen Rock Inn in Glen Rock at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, November 21, 2026. For more information and to RSVP, please contact Emma Hagedoorn at emma.hagedoorn@gmail.com or 201-421-6507.

## WE WANT YOUR NEWS AND UPDATES!

Please let us know about the milestones and big moments in your life, such as professional accomplishments, church and ministry involvement, and advanced academic degrees. We would also like to hear stories of how the EC community has supported you in your professional and faith journey. Eastern Christian School reserves the right to edit and/or omit submissions. **To update your contact information, submit your milestone moments, or ask questions about planning your reunion, email alumni@easternchristian.org.**

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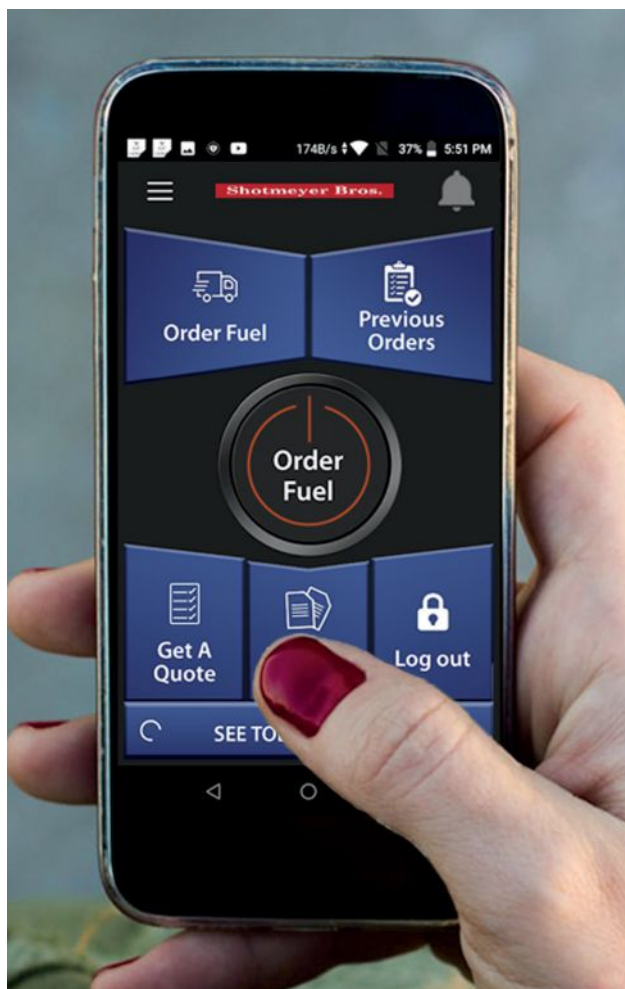
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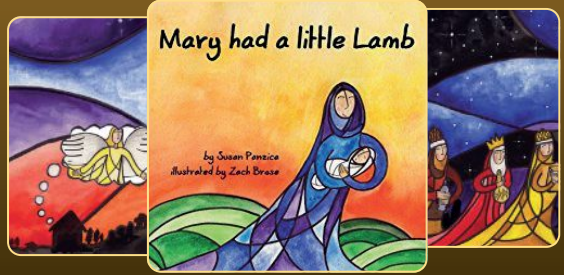
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## Winter season summaries

### GIRLS VARSITY BASKETBALL

In his first season leading the program, Coach Olson guided the Lady Eagles to a strong 16–9 record, finishing just one game out of the league title after splitting the season series with both teams that ultimately shared the crown. EC captured the Garfield Christmas Tournament championship and spent eight weeks ranked in the North Jersey Top 25, climbing as high as #18. The Eagles also earned the #5 seed in both the county and state tournaments, the program's highest seeding in several years.

The team was led by standout performances from **Addie Fleming** and **Caroline Pringle**, who anchored the offense and controlled the tempo throughout the season. **Tori Brown** and **Hannah Leegwater** also made key contributions on both ends of the floor. With a strong returning core and younger players continuing to develop, the future remains bright for EC girls basketball.

### BOYS VARSITY BASKETBALL

The boys varsity basketball team entered the season determined to build momentum and produced several exciting wins and memorable moments along the way. Early highlights included a home victory over Hawthorne Christian and a win over Abundant Life in the EC Christmas Tournament. One of the season's most dramatic finishes came when Joe Virga was fouled on a three-point attempt and calmly made all three free throws with no time remaining to defeat Harrison. Later in the season, **Andy Genuario** delivered another thrilling moment with a game-winning three-pointer against Butler.

**Andrew Mwirigi** anchored the team in the paint with an outstanding stretch in the second half of the season, while Genuario provided steady leadership as a three-year starter.

**Justin Blands-Pearson** also made a strong defensive impact throughout the year. The senior class set an excellent example through their leadership and commitment, helping establish a strong foundation for the program moving forward.

### WINTER TRACK

The EC winter track team experienced a season of growth and perseverance as several new athletes joined the program and developed their skills throughout the winter. Despite challenges that included cold weather, injuries, meet cancellations, and limited outdoor training conditions, the team continued to show steady improvement from the first time trial through the final meet.

**Adam Malasits** led the throwers with a strong season in the shot put, while **Kyle Wright** contributed in the sprint events and 4x400 relay. **Ben Scarnato-Bennett** helped set the tone in practices by leading warmups and competing alongside distance runner **Manny Vera**. The program also saw encouraging progress from a talented freshman class, highlighted by strong improvements from **Mia Gonzalez** and **Zhiamlys Lozano**, along with **Jon Lawrence**, who recorded the team's fastest 200m time of the season. With many young athletes gaining experience, the future looks promising for EC track and field.

### GIRLS BOWLING

The girls bowling team qualified for the North Group 1 sectional tournament, capping a season focused largely on development. With six of the team's eight bowlers competing in the sport for the first time, the Eagles showed steady growth in both skill and confidence as the season progressed. Several bowlers delivered strong performances throughout the year. **Brooke McLachlan** and **Rayne Davis** emerged

as consistent contributors, while freshman **Olivia Calaski** recorded the team's highest single-game score of the season with a 190 against Wayne Hills. Despite the challenges that come with a young roster, the team continued to improve in match play and gained valuable experience. With many returning bowlers, the program looks forward to building on that progress next season.

## BOYS BOWLING

The 2025–26 season was another strong one for boys bowling at Eastern Christian, as the Eagles finished second in the NJIC Colonial Division. The result marked the program's sixth consecutive season finishing in the top two of the nine-team division.

Underclassmen **Ryan Belanus** and **Harry Shi** stepped into key varsity roles and made immediate contributions. Nathan Im delivered one of the season's top individual performances, placing third at the Passaic County Championships while finishing with the highest average in the NJIC Colonial Division at 198.

Team highlights included a first-round state sectional victory over Midland Park and a program-record 1,058-pin team game against Glen Rock. The Eagles thank senior **Yejoon Shin** for his leadership and look forward to having a strong returning core next season with goals of competing for a division title and another deep postseason run.

## GIRLS JV BASKETBALL

The girls JV basketball team put together a strong season, finishing with a 7–4 record while continuing to develop younger players in the program. The team competed hard throughout the year and showed steady improvement in both games and practices.

**Kallie Thomas** stood out with strong scoring and defensive play, while **Allie VandeVrede** anchored the boards with consistent rebounding. **Karina Lazor** continued to grow as a decision-maker and shooter, and Kaitlin provided valuable energy and rebounding in the paint. **Anna** contributed as a capable ball-handler and passer at the point guard position, while **Henas Nabih** embraced her role and worked hard in every opportunity. With continued offseason development, the group looks forward to building on this progress next season.

## BOYS JV BASKETBALL

The boys JV basketball team finished the season 7–8, an encouraging result for a young, sophomore-led roster. The group showed strong dedication to improvement and competed hard throughout the season.

**Caleb Virga** and **Daniel Susana** led the offense with consistent scoring, highlighted by a 28-point performance

from Virga and a 22-point outing from Susana. **Matthew Blaize** stepped into the point guard role midway through the season and helped guide the offense, while **TJ Bednarz** regularly defended opposing post players in the paint. **Jaden Rodriguez** contributed on the boards and defense, and **Brennen Talsma** provided energy and timely shooting off the bench. Several other players gained valuable minutes throughout the season, giving the program optimism for the future.

## BOYS FRESHMEN BASKETBALL

The boys freshman basketball team showed resilience throughout a season filled with competitive and closely contested games. Several matchups came down to the final moments, including multiple overtime contests that tested the team's composure.

Despite a shortened schedule, the Eagles recorded five wins and continued to grow in confidence as the season progressed. Leadership came from across the roster, with **Carson Turner**, **Jonas Culp**, **Jariah Gomez**, and **Danny Cook** helping set the tone through their effort and encouragement. Several players were new to the sport and showed significant improvement as they learned the fundamentals of the game. The team embraced the program's offensive and defensive systems and gained valuable experience that should serve them well moving forward.

## WINTER 2025/26 COUNTY & LEAGUE HONORS

### Girls Basketball

#### County

1st: Addie Fleming  
HM: Caroline Pringle,  
Tori Brown

#### League (Meadowlands)

1st: Caroline Pringle,  
Addie Fleming  
2nd: Tori Brown  
HM: Hannah Leegwater  
COY: Erik Olson

### Boys Basketball

#### County

HM: Andrew Mwirigi,  
Andrew Genuario

#### League (American)

1st: Andrew Mwirigi  
2nd: Andrew Genuario  
HM: Justin Blands-Pearson

### Boys Bowling

#### County

1st: Nathan Im  
2nd: Yejoon Shin,  
Kevin Korogodon  
HM: Ryan Belanus

#### League (Colonial)

1st: Nathan Im,  
Kevin Korogodon  
2nd: Ryan Belanus  
HM: Harry Shi

### Girls Bowling

#### County

1st: Brooke McLachlan  
2nd: Rayne Davis  
HM: Olivia Matthews,  
Olivia Calaski



# Spring season summaries

## SOFTBALL

The varsity softball team's record this year does not paint a true picture of the successful season they had on the field. After losing seven starters from last year's team, they entered the season in full rebuilding mode. Through hard work and strong leadership from returning players, this young and inexperienced team made tremendous strides and finished the season playing its best softball.

The offense was led by sophomore **Allie VandeVrede**, who finished the season with 26 hits and a .542 batting average. The team also received outstanding offensive contributions from leadoff hitter **Annabelle Percelli**, who recorded 21 hits while batting .404. Highlights of the season included a 10-run victory over Dwight-Englewood, Annabelle's grand slam, and pitcher Allie VandeVrede recording her 100th career strikeout. Senior captains **Hannah Leegwater** and **Annabelle Percelli** provided invaluable leadership to the young squad and will be greatly missed.

## GOLF

EC's 2026 golf campaign was a true rebuilding year, with a young squad gaining valuable experience, learning to battle through difficult rounds, and laying the foundation for the program's future. Veteran leadership from senior

captains **Billy Cook** and **Carter Groen** kept the team steady throughout the season, providing experience, composure, and strong clubhouse leadership to a developing lineup.

The Eagles carded a 41 to place 10th at the NJIC Championship, where senior Billy Cook paced the team with an impressive 85. **Jack Magee** elevated his game throughout the season, earning the team's No. 1 spot after consistently posting lower scores and stepping up in key matches. Freshmen **Carson Turner** and **Ethan Olsen** gained meaningful varsity experience and showed flashes of the consistency and shot-making ability that should keep EC competitive for years to come.

The 2026 season highlighted the team's growth, depth, and increasing confidence—evidence that while the Eagles may have been rebuilding, the program is trending in the right direction and positioning itself well for future success.

## BASEBALL

The EC/HCA boys baseball team took a major step forward this season, demonstrating significant growth in performance, leadership, and competitiveness. The Eagles finished the regular season with a winning record, accomplishing the primary goal established at the beginning of the year.

While the team's success was truly a collective effort, several players stood out throughout the season. **Matthew Altomare** led the pitching staff, earning multiple wins along with both league and county honors. Behind the plate, catcher **Ben Ross** made an outstanding varsity debut and quickly established himself as a key contributor. **Andrew Nelson** also emerged as an important utility player, delivering impactful performances on the mound, at the plate, and throughout the infield.

This year's lineup was heavily EC-driven, anchored by key contributors **Jose Barbosa**, **David Wiegers**, **Jaden Rodriguez**, and **Danny Cook**. Each of these athletes played a vital role in the team's success, and with all of them returning next season, the future looks bright for EC baseball.

## BOYS VARSITY TENNIS

The Eastern Christian boys varsity tennis team battled through a difficult preseason filled with wintry weather and numerous indoor practices. However, Coach Culp's experience and creativity paid dividends through effective indoor training sessions and competitive practice circuits that helped prepare the team for the season ahead.

The Eagles faced additional challenges early in the season with a demanding schedule, opening with a 2-5 record. Despite the slow start, the team continued to improve, quickly adapting to varsity-level competition

and making significant strides in overall competitiveness. EC rebounded to finish with a 6-6 league record and advanced three positions to reach the county semifinals.

The team leaned heavily on the leadership and consistency of senior **Joshua Li**. Junior singles players **Zaven Rodriguez** and **Yuha Lee**, along with freshman Jonas Culp, regularly competed against the league's top players and each finished the season with a winning record. With several key contributors returning, the future remains bright for EC boys' tennis.

## BOYS JV TENNIS

Eastern Christian was excited to field a boys JV tennis team once again this spring. While several players returned with prior experience, many others were brand new to competitive tennis. This created both opportunities and challenges as the team worked to develop foundational skills and gain match experience throughout the season.

Practicing frequently alongside the varsity squad, the JV players worked hard to improve their technique, understanding of the game, and overall competitiveness during the spring months. The team's primary goal was to compete to the best of its ability while demonstrating strong sportsmanship throughout the season.

The Eagles showed tremendous growth both individually and collectively, and the program looks forward to continuing to build on that progress in the years ahead.

## BOYS VARSITY LACROSSE

The boys varsity lacrosse team had a successful season, finishing with an overall record of 8-7 and a league record of 5-2. Defensively, the team was backstopped by sophomore goalie **Nick Bolten**, who played behind a unit led by seniors **Adam Malasits**, **Andy Genuario**, and **Kyle Magee**, along with sophomores **Adam Peters** and **Sean Leegwater** and freshman **Ezra Francis**. Strong faceoff performances from seniors **Thomas Vicenzino** and **Daniel Bushka**, along with wing player **Daniel Kim**, helped the team maintain possession during key moments. The offense was paced by seniors **Joe Altomare** and **Zach Ninan**, as well as a supporting cast that included sophomores

**Patrick Wierzba**, **Anthony Urbano**, and **Matt Kameno** and freshmen **Paxton Bale-Pena** and **Peter TenKate**.

Team highlights included overtime victories against league opponents Paramus Catholic and Lyndhurst, as well as a big win over Hawthorne on Community Night in front of an outstanding home crowd. Individual highlights included **Joe Altomare** surpassing both the 100-point and 100-goal career marks while also breaking the program record for most goals in a single season with 72. In addition to his Eastern Christian record-breaking point total, Joe Altomare was named the Kirt Division Player of the Year.

The foundation established by this year's influential senior class, coupled with the experience gained by the returning players, provides a positive outlook for the program moving forward.

## HIGH SCHOOL TRACK & FIELD

The boys and girls track & field teams experienced both successes and challenges throughout the 2026 season. After graduating a strong senior class the previous year, both programs relied heavily on a talented but relatively inexperienced sophomore class to step into leadership and scoring roles.

In regular-season competition, the girls' team finished with a 4-4 record, while the boys posted a 2-6 mark. Both teams faced stiff competition at the conference and county championship meets but continued to show growth and development throughout the season.

The girls' team received strong performances from upperclassmen **Laura Turner**, **Fiona Borzone**, and **Nora Lazor**, while underclassmen **Kaitlyn Deblock**, **Sophia Eftychiou**, and **Olivia Calaski** made significant contributions as well. On the boys' side, upperclassmen **Yejoon Shin**, **Gabriel Tarta**, and **Hudson Culp** delivered standout performances throughout the season. Underclassmen **Benjamin Scarnato-Bennett**, **Josiah Hytrek**, and **Jon Lawrence** also emerged as important contributors and showed strong potential for the future.

Both programs gained valuable experience this season and will look to continue building momentum in the years ahead.

# SPRING 2026 COUNTY & LEAGUE HONORS

## Boys Tennis

### County

2nd: Jonas Culp

HM: Zaven Rodriguez, Yuha Lee

### League (Colonial)

2nd: Jonas Culp

HM: Zaven Rodriguez, Yuha Lee

## Boys Lacrosse

### County

2nd: Joseph Altomare

HM: Adam Malasits, Zachary Ninan

### League (Kirt)

1st: Joseph Altomare,

Adam Malasits

2nd: Patrick Wierzba,

Andy Genuario

HM: Zachary Ninan

Boys Lacrosse Coach of the Year:

Coach Greg Hagedoorn

## Track & Field

### County

HM: Yejoon Shin, Hudson Culp, Laura

Turner, Fiona Borzone

### League (Colonial)

2nd: Katelin DeBlock (disc),

Olivia Calaski (PV), Issachar Yang (HJ),

Hudson Culp (LJ)

HM: Yejoon Shin (PV),

Nora Lazor (disc)

## Softball

### County

HM: Allie VandeVrede,

Annabelle Percelli

### League (Liberty)

1st: Allie VandeVrede

2nd: Annabelle Percelli

HM: Hannah Leegwater

## Golf

### County

HM: Billy Cook, Jack Magee

### League (Colonial)

2nd: Jack Magee

HM: Billy Cook

## Baseball

### County

2nd: Matthew Altomare

HM: Ben Ross, Andrew Nelson

### League (Liberty)

1st: Matthew Altomare

2nd: Andrew Nelson

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