

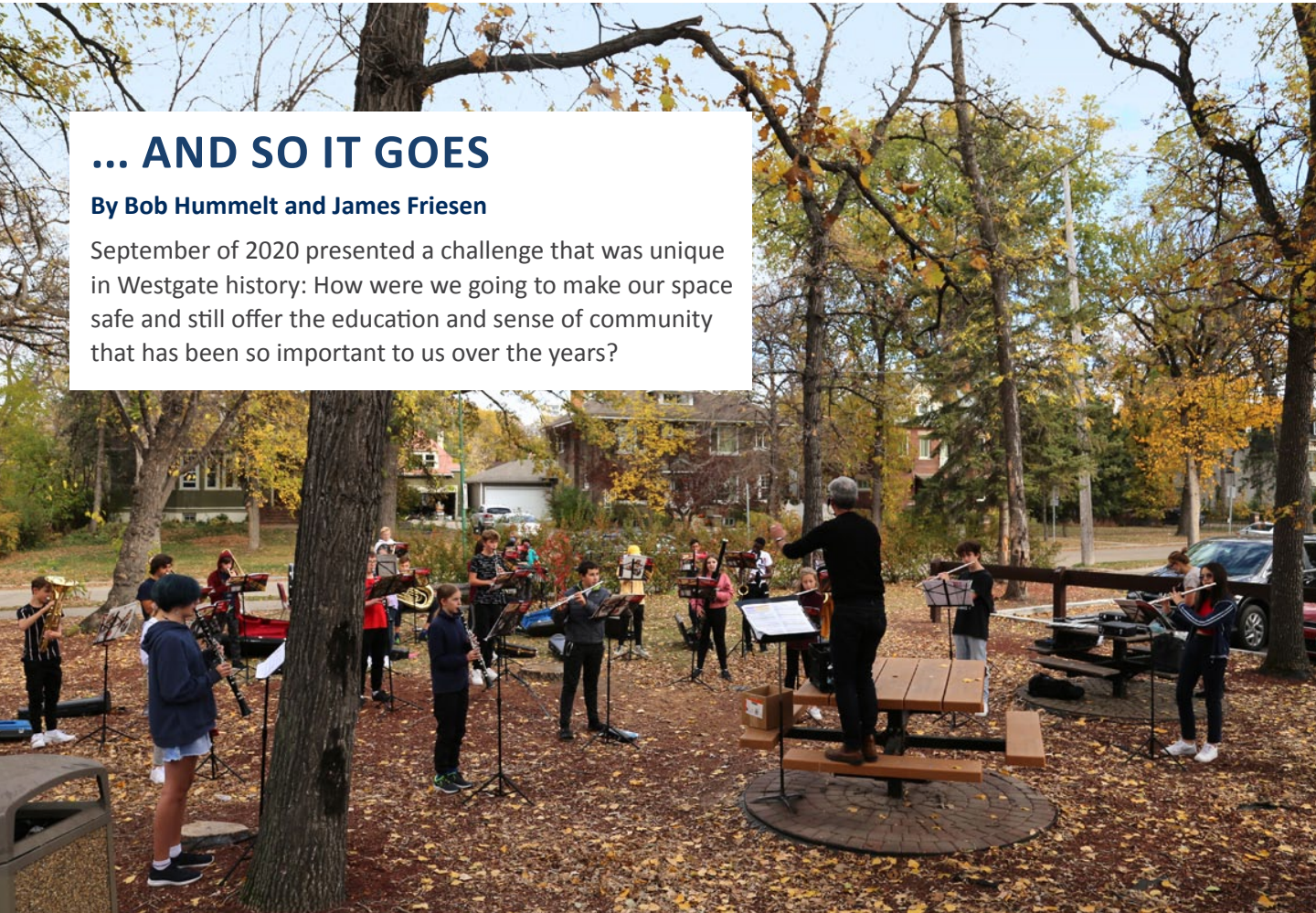
A WESTGATE PERSPECTIVE

VOL. 27 NO. 3 | WINTER 2020

... AND SO IT GOES

By Bob Hummelt and James Friesen

September of 2020 presented a challenge that was unique in Westgate history: How were we going to make our space safe and still offer the education and sense of community that has been so important to us over the years?



Westgate Mennonite Collegiate
86 West Gate

Winnipeg Manitoba R3C 2E1

Tel: 204-775-7111

Fax: 204-786-1651

Email: westgate@westgatemennonite.org
westgatemennonite.ca

Our staff spent much of their time this summer working to answer that question. Ryan Bemister, our building manager, worked tirelessly to organize the changing of pre-Covid Westgate into a place that would be ready for our students in this new reality. Julia Thiessen, teacher and spiritual life coordinator, envisioned what chapels and other faith activities would look like this year. Ross Brownlee, Vic Pankratz, and newly hired Gabrielle Bishop Wiebe creatively reorganized marvellously effective music classes despite the suspension of singing and wind instrument playing (think teaching a swim class without water in the pool). All of our hardworking staff thought through and developed new instructional tactics, and many were involved in rearranging and moving furniture, making it possible to invite all of our students into the building every day.

*Staff, as always,
brimming with
optimism, continue
to imagine ways
to cultivate what
is unique about
the Westgate
experience...
...think teaching a
swim class without
water in the pool...*

In the end, the school looked quite different as we opened in September. There were arrows on the floors and even spacing dots in the cafeteria line. Our loft area, a coveted senior lounge, became a classroom and teacher desks were moved into other areas to make room for more distance between student desks. With this new format, we worked hard to make sure our students still felt this was Westgate. We continued to meet together in chapels, two grades going down to the gym while the rest of the school watched a live feed of the chapel in their classroom spaces. Junior and senior councils continued to create fun activities for our students. In September, we replaced "Senior Day" with "Senior Dayz," afternoons of fun for smaller groups of students in different grades. We even continued the tradition of a Grade Nine Retreat, as Krista Neustaedter Barg created a day camp held at Camp Assiniboia.

Staff, as always, brimming with optimism, continue to imagine ways to cultivate what is unique about the Westgate experience. Rehearsals for upcoming junior plays and the senior drama, will culminate with online performances this year. Staff, ever hopeful, are already making preliminary plans for our Alternative Education Week that occurs directly after exams. What a delight it would be to have whole junior and senior grades spending time together at various campgrounds safely this June. And, as people of hope, it is good to be prepared for these glorious possibilities.

As Westgate's wider community faces challenges themselves, we also ask for your prayers for strength, patience, good humour and good health for our students and staff as our academic year unfolds before us.



WESTGATE MONTH BY MONTH

ONLINE LEARNING

By James Friesen

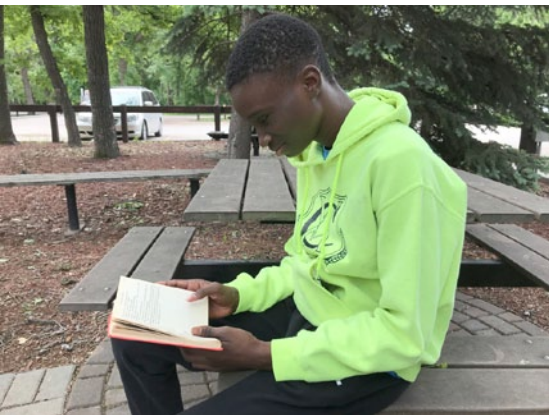
In March, our world turned upside down, and Westgate scrambled to figure out how to continue being who we are without having our students in the building. From the very beginning of our on-learning experience, our teachers worked hard to make meaningful connections and learning happen by meeting with students virtually and guiding them through their education from a distance.

Throughout the months of March, April and May daily bulletins were emailed to our students and included Youtube devotionals recorded by teachers, a photo of the day, word of the day, and even jokes of the day.

Despite the fact that marks were baselined, our students bought into what we were doing, and we were so proud of what they accomplished. By June, when we had small groups of students into school for their final assessments, we saw students who were well prepared for their future studies.



MARCH AND APRIL



CLICK
TO
WATCH!



OAT SQUARES

By James Friesen

In May, one of our grade six students, Aubrey Allan, was really missing Westgate's famous oat squares and he had an idea: "why doesn't the staff at Westgate hand out oat squares to Westgate families as they drove through the drop off loop in front of the school?" So, Lindsay Unger, our cafeteria baker extraordinaire, baked over 600 oat squares and day by day, staff handed these out to our students and their parents. It was a wonderful event in which we could have a bit of reconnection with our community after being apart for so long.



VIRTUAL BURSARY BANQUET FUNDRAISER

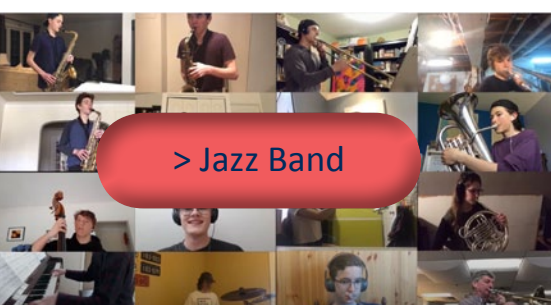
– MAY 28, 2020 By Alexis Dirks

When the news of lockdown measures fell upon us in March, we, like many other charitable organizations, quickly had to reimagine how we could turn a live event, into something else entirely – while still raising the funds needed for our bursary program. With the help of staff, volunteers, our students and the Westgate board, our banquet for 400 people was transformed into our "virtual fundraising event", and featured many of the same elements planned for our original banquet.

The 45-minute video featured beautiful testimonials and stories from our community members and staff. Our Senior Concert Choir, Westgate Wired and Jazz Band each made their virtual debuts with the sharp editing skills of Darryl Neustaedter Barg and then grade 10 student Sophie Reimer-Epp. And, our online prize raffle was a lot of fun, and included some amazing donations from our generous community.

Despite not being able to gather in person for this annual dinner, the support we received from our community was nothing short of outstanding, raising \$64,046 in net profits for our bursary fund - a significant increase from previous years!

Thank you to everyone in our community for ensuring we can help support dozens of students and their families with an education at Westgate. Stay in touch to hear more about our Virtual Bursary Banquet Fundraiser 2.0 in May 2021!





*... we have been
serenaded with
student
performances
before and after
school each day
this week!*

MUSIC IN A PANDEMIC

By Ross Brownlee

What a year! Life on Earth is in the grips of a powerful virus and, in interesting ways, we have a global shared experience like nothing in recent memory.

Musicians and artists are feeling this keenly. On a local scale, we in the music program at Westgate, have significantly altered our normal teaching and performance styles to accommodate Covid 19 restrictions, which disallow both singing and playing of wind and brass instruments - a significant change to the norm around here! As we lament the loss of our beautiful concerts, daily rehearsals, visits to our supporting churches and local hospitals, we also embrace some wonderful additions and changes.

Beginning this challenging year, we were especially thankful for the addition of Gabrielle Bishop Wiebe to our music team. Gabrielle brings her energy and ideas, and allows our music classes to run while still maintaining a safe, two metre distance between students.

Andrea Bell has, thankfully, been able to continue with the regular, all be it physically distanced, strings program, and it is inspiring for all of us to “hear” some sense of “normal.” In the week before Christmas Break, as I write this, there is a guitar and piano duo playing in the atrium, and we have been serenaded with string students’ performances in the atrium before and after school each day this week!

You may be wondering what happens in our Covid-restricted music spaces during classes - and to be honest, all of us in the music department wondered the same at first. But students have been incredibly supportive of our ideas and have adapted to a new way of learning and making music. This has allowed for some interesting alternatives. The choirs have undertaken active listening projects. We have analyzed performances to better understand great music-making. We have also enjoyed delving into the world of film scores, discovering the incredible power of music and how it affects the experience of a movie viewer! Currently, choir students are studying Christmas carols, finding their history and presenting this to their peers.

*We are also
thrilled to be
sending home
a Christmas gift
to the Westgate
community, a full
Christmas concert!*

[> Christmas Concert](#)

The bands are now learning the technique, style and intricacy of the percussion family. I am impressed with how quickly the skills of our wind and brass instruments have transferred to percussion, and we are now playing in ensembles using string instruments, mallets, buckets, and unpitched percussion instruments. The effect is spectacular, and will give a real rhythmic boost to each player when we transition back to our actual band instruments. In the meantime, we continue to hone our theory, listening, rhythm, technique and independence.

We are also thrilled to be sending home a Christmas gift to the Westgate community, a full virtual Christmas concert, created at home and at school, while following all provincial guidelines. Many students and staff from all grades have taken part in an exciting virtual choir - and we are proud to present a Westgate version of *See Amid the Winter's Snow*, sung by over 60 of our community. Both the Senior Band and Grade 9 Band are featured in the Christmas concert as well. You are heartily invited to join us, albeit through a screen, but that is part of daily life for us all in a pandemic in 2020.

We are so pleased to continue sharing our music with the Westgate community!

(The Westgate Virtual Christmas Concert aired on YouTube on December 18, 2020)

AUGUST

GRADUATION



[> Grad Ceremony](#)

GRADUATION

By James Friesen

Graduation is always a jubilant time for our students and although 2020 made our graduation activities much more difficult, we managed to fully celebrate with our students. During their mandatory virtual learning period, staff drove to the students' homes to bring them tasty oat squares and place a "Happy Graduation" sign on their lawns. These were surprise visits, usually accompanied by Kool and the Gang's "Celebration" pounding out the beat as staff stood on the sidewalk. On the planned graduation day in June, students stood on the street close by the school so family members could offer their congratulations, driving by, biking by, or even walking by. Then, in August, we managed to have a full graduation party, with every graduate showing up for the event at the Caboto Centre.





Westgate Mennonite Collegiate Class of 2020



GOLF TOURNAMENT

by Alexis Dirks

With golf being one of the only recreational activities open this summer, we felt fortunate to be able to go ahead with our Annual Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament for the 16th year in a row on August 25th at Bridges Golf Course.

It was fantastic to see some new faces, as well many long-time supporters come out again for a beautiful day of golf and camaraderie. While social distancing measures and safety precautions were still in place, the tournament was a welcome reprieve from the months of pandemic uncertainty and a chance to catch up with old friends, while welcoming new ones. Thank you to all who made the tournament a success and helped us raise \$20,348 in net profits for our Capital Campaign!

Thank you to our generous SPONSORS!

Titanium



Title



Lunch



Eagle



We never stop moving:



Eagle



PAR





SPIRITUAL LIFE

By Julia Thiessen, Spiritual Life Coordinator

Hebrews 12 tells us that we are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, helping us to run the race of faith. In this time of physical distancing and virtual worship it can be difficult to feel the presence of this community of Christ followers, but at Westgate we have had the immense privilege of gathering to worship since September. During these chapels staff have shared the stories of some of their favourite Biblical witnesses, from Deborah to Job, from Cornelius to Mary Magdalene.

While we may not be able to gather the whole school into the gym, or use our beautiful choral space for weekly chapels, we have learned a lot about livestreaming and are able to share chapels live with our whole school weekly. During Advent, students have shared festive hymns on piano, strings, and even buckets! Throughout the year students have read Scripture for one another, and we've made use of many online sources of Biblical storytelling; and, we have all become more comfortable with doing actions during prayers and songs. We've even seen a gym full of grade 8s and grade 11s proudly "walking on the Emmaus Road" to Bryan Moyer Suderman's recent song!

Our Spiritual Emphasis Week in October explored the topic of Spiritual Resilience, and guest speakers joined us through pre-recorded videos and issued challenges for the students. In response, we practiced journaling, and wrote postcards of support to communities of courage fighting for justice.

To support that resilience here at Westgate, we have made spiritual disciplines a larger part of our community life, as we anticipate a long winter of semi-isolation. On Friday mornings we have practiced meditative prayer and gratitude journaling. On Monday mornings we have listened to different hymns and camp songs, embracing the music of our faith community even when we can't sing it.

As we are entering a time of online learning in January, we hope to continue our spiritual disciplines together. Once we return to school, our chapels will continue to share the stories of our cloud of witnesses throughout Christian history and into the present. We hope that in the presence of these witnesses, we can fix our eyes on Jesus, and find sustenance in our faith. Thanks be to God.



MOVE-A-THON

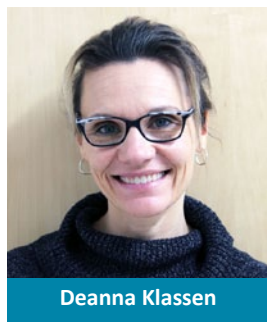
By Lyndon Baerg, Cyclathon/Move-a-thon Coordinator

Westgate “Move-a-thon” was a successful adjustment to our traditional Cyclathon activities. Students were offered a wide variety of physical activities that ranged from challenging to moderate in neighbourhoods and parks around Westgate.

Cyclists could still cycle 100 km, but they could also choose from a 40 km route, or multiple 5 km laps.

Walkers could choose from 5 km to 21 km with the majority of walkers choosing the 12 km route. New this year were the options of skateboarding at the Forks, or canoeing and kayaking down the Assiniboine.

Students were positive and had a great time. Their enthusiasm carried over into the promotion of the fund raising portion of Move-a-thon. Thank you to the students and Westgate supporters for helping the school meet its monetary goals. We’re thrilled that the net total raised came to \$52,145!



INTRO TO NEW STAFF AND EDITH EPP RETIREMENT

By Bob Hummelt

Gabrielle Bishop Wiebe ('08) joined our staff to teach a variety of components within the music department program and German 8. With five years' experience teaching French immersion music in Louis Riel School Division, Gabrielle is sure to become an asset in the French department “en bas de la rue”. Gabrielle fully involved herself in the Westgate school community as a student and we look forward to her engaging kids in a variety of extra-curricular opportunities in the years to come. She has already put in many kilometers as co-coordinator of the junior cross country team.

After 16 years in our front office, lately with Student Records, Edith Epp retired in December. (Look for a longer article about Edith in the next edition of the *Retrospective*.) New to the Office to join Lori Hildebrandt Penner, and new to the “Bob and James Show”, we welcome Deanna Klassen ('94) to assume Edith's former duties.



Edith Epp

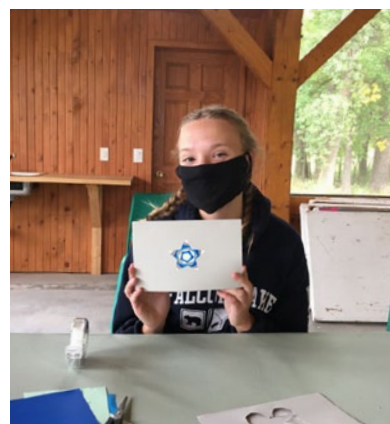
Gabrielle Bishop Wiebe

Deanna Klassen

COHORT DAYZ



GRADE 9 RETREAT



IN CLASS LEARNING



THE WESTGATE GARDEN

By Paul Dyck

It's really tempting to turn "Westgate Garden" into a cheesy metaphor for the school, but the fact of the matter is, we have really fertile conditions at the Westgate Garden.

I'm one of those people who is obsessed with gardening from a philosophical point of view, but with very little experience gardening myself. "Poser", I believe is the technical term. But over the past few summers I've been experimenting with food production in my own backyard, as well as in the garden boxes that a few of my colleagues installed at Westgate.

As a beginner myself, it's been fun to learn alongside students as we try to make this garden work. Grade six students have helped me research when to plant which seeds, how deep to plant them, and when to harvest. We've worked together to figure out a small local composting system. And, I've been consistently inspired by watching students toil in the dirt, planting seeds and harvesting vegetables with joy.

Despite the fact that for many of us, this is our first gardening experience (or perhaps because of the luck that this provides) the garden has been producing comically large vegetables over the last few summers.

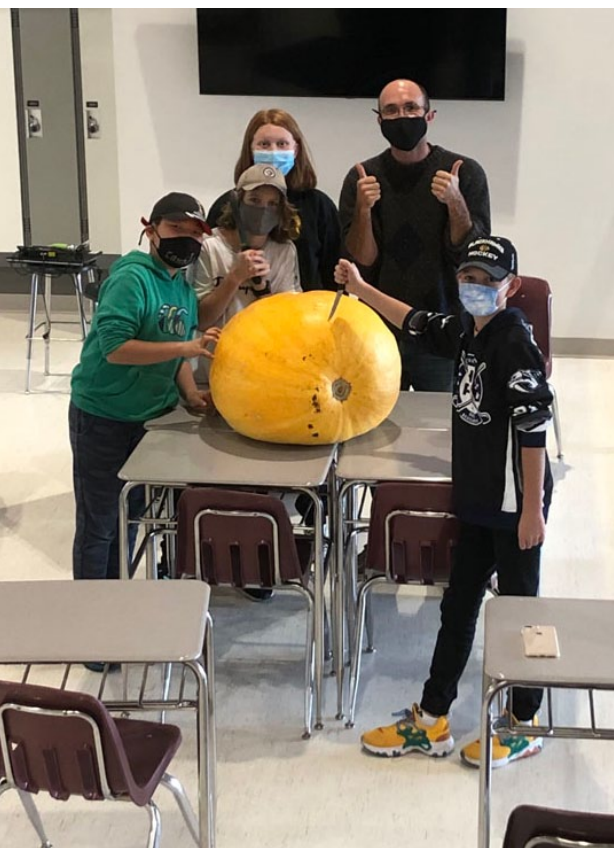
In the summer of 2019, I was keen on beet production, specifically pickled beets. Despite my laziness on summer watering duty, we were able to harvest, pickle, and consume some of the largest beets I have ever seen. It's good soil.

Last summer we planted lots of squash and pumpkins, and the same story played out. I've enjoyed eating squash flowers with students at lunch, hauling one hundred pound pumpkins around the field with tiny eleven year olds, eating seeds and squash, and contributing some produce to the Westgate cafeteria.

There's definitely a metaphor here. Something about small seeds, and bountiful harvests. Something about growing and learning together. But, I'll leave that up to you.



I've been consistently inspired by watching students toil in the dirt, planting seeds and harvesting vegetables with joy.



PICK UP, DINE AND DONATE

By Krista Neustaedter Barg,
"Dine and Donate" Committee Chair

As fall shifted to more and more restrictions it became clear that we were not going to be able to welcome 500+ friends from the community for dinner. The Dine and Donate committee grappled with their two main mandates: draw the Westgate community together and highlight the need for donations toward the completed redevelopment project. How could we do this and still have fun together, bringing a bit of hope into all our lives?

Many on our committee remembered fondly and gratefully the times when a meal showed up at the door when our family was in a state of stress. We also believed there could be a sense of togetherness just doing the same thing, even while apart. So, "PICKUP Dine and Donate" was born.

On November 11 volunteers came into an empty school building to prep for the event and then on November 12, volunteers put on their ski pants and toques and came and worked outside all afternoon packaging 350 meal bags. In the end we distributed enough food for at least 1400 people. The event was well received with families across the city enjoying a perogy dinner complete with artistic prayer cards, invitations to remember our school's history with toasts and an invitation to be generous. And people were: over 200 donors helped pay down the building debt with over \$40,000 in donations. Many thanks to all who were involved!





[> Jericho's Video](#)

YOUNG HISTORIAN WINS AWARD

By Bob Hummelt

This past spring, *Canada's History* magazine created a virtual heritage fair for students across Canada. *Canada's History Challenge* invited students to create and enter videos highlighting an important aspect of Canada's history. Jericho Jones Strachan submitted a built-upon version of a human rights project he had presented in Ms. Dalman Betts' Grade 7 Social Studies class and he was delighted to find out that his efforts won a substantial cash prize directed to future education and a deferred trip to Ottawa when travel permits.

Jericho's winning video documents the facts and stories of Africville, a black settlement in Nova Scotia, that was demolished in the 1960s. His informative and entertaining video features his little brother Kamil in a supporting role, and includes an interview at a Black Lives Matter rally at the Manitoba Legislature. The message of respect and equality of all people regardless of colour is clear to Jericho, and he adds that, "As a Black Canadian I have more opportunities to use my voice and be heard and people are starting to listen to our concerns."

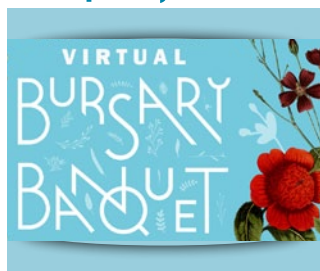
WESTGATE BY THE NUMBERS



\$365,390

Total amount raised since our Capital Campaign Debt reduction fundraising began in 2017 and includes funds raised from events like our Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament

\$64,046



\$20,348



\$52,145



\$41,433



ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIRTHS



CLOVER RAIN KAMPEN to parents Kevin ('06) & Erika Kampen and big sister Willow on July 21, 2020



MARTHA LOUISE to parents Adam (staff) & Sarah Klassen Bartel and older siblings Jeremiah and Lydia on Dec 4, 2019



ISLA CLARE LINDA PANKRATZ to parents David Pankratz ('00) & Darcie Meighen Pankratz ('02) on Jan 5, 2020



AMBROSE PHILIP PETERS to parents Zach Peters ('05) and Julie (Daniels) and younger brother to Otto on Oct 20, 2020

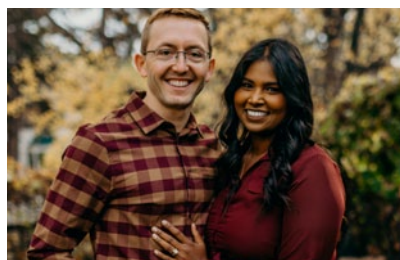
WEDDINGS



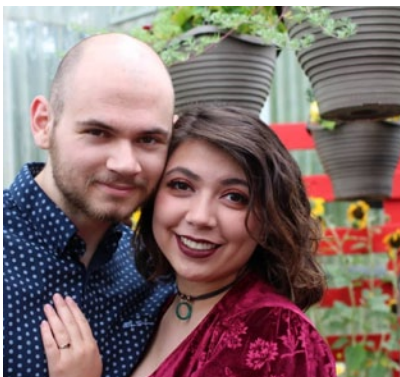
JOHN KLASSEN ('07) & Jesse Thomaschewski married on Sept 18, 2020



ARISTA RYBACK ('10) & Justin Saj married on Oct 20, 2020



JOSHUA EWERT ('07) and Rhema Prathipati married on Nov 11, 2020



ADRIAN ZACHARIAS ('14) and Raven Rickner married on Feb 29, 2020

IN MEMORIAM



GAIL SCHELLENBERG, Principal of Westgate from 2001-2005 passed away on Dec 4, 2020. Look for a longer article in the Retrospective journal this spring.



BERNARD THIESSEN, past board member passed away on Nov 23, 2020



JOHN ZACHARIAS ('61), past board member and alumni passed away on Nov 16, 2020

If you'd like to share,
please get in touch!

Contact Krista Neustaedter Barg:

> knb@westgatemennonite.org