

A WESTGATE PERSPECTIVE

VOL. 29 NO. 2 | WINTER 2022



New Admin Team: Deanna Klassen (Student Records), Heidi Koop (Vice Principal/Teacher), Lori Hildebrandt Penner (Administrative Assistant), James Friesen (Principal/ Teacher)

Westgate Then and Now: Some Disjointed Reflections on Who We Are

BY JAMES FRIESEN

September 2022 brought about quite a different look here at Westgate. We began the school year with a new administration team, we welcomed four new teachers and a new counsellor, and we even unveiled a new bouldering wall in the gym.

30 years ago in 1992 marked a different transition, but that was a transition solely for me. That September is when I joined the Westgate community. It feels like a lifetime ago. Indeed, it was definitely a different time: Phone messages were tacked to a bulletin board, our hands were always cracked from chalkboard dust, and the encyclopedias were the prized collections in the library. The one VCR per floor was a coveted item in those days, the tapes showing a blurry image of the film we were using for our classes. I wonder if any of our students today even know that it is kind to rewind.

Although it was a different time in the 90s, it was also eerily the same: the parking lot was too small back then as it is now, but it worked because so many of us rode our bikes or walked to school. That hasn't changed. Back then the staffroom was a loud and boisterous place, with strong theological arguments being posited and political discussions raging. That also is no different than our current staffroom. And I remember being in awe of our small field, packed at lunch with three separate football games going on at the same time, moving seamlessly through one another. Again, that has not changed.

I remember getting to know the school culture, seeing Westgate teachers putting so much time and energy into things like outdoor education and experiences beyond the classroom, and I prayed for the energy to immerse myself in this vision for a school that was



▲ Games Club Now
 ◀ Way back in the 90s



something far beyond an institution locked into traditional forms of learning.

But Westgate was and is more than a school that provides students with

amazing experiences outside the classroom. From the moment I stepped into the school, I found a place in which we could talk about who we are and invite our students to do the same. We continue to this day to talk unabashedly about God's presence in our lives and invite our students to explore that mysterious presence in their own lives. And it is a rewarding and fascinating experience every time.

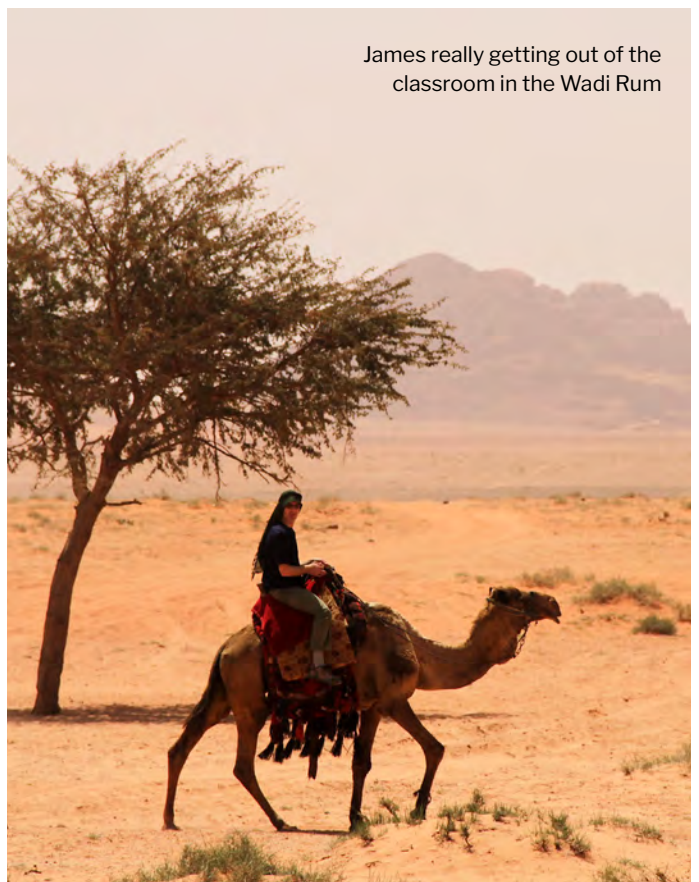
I recall a number of years ago, I tried to start a chess club. It then turned into a more general games club. Then it turned into a place where games sat on the shelf and the students simply ate their lunches, so they called it the hunger games club. But what it really was was a place of exploration that could happen because of what Westgate is.

Every day, the students in that so-called club would bring some kind of new existential question to the table. In the discussion that followed, the atheists would try to evangelize, the Mennonites would non-violently express their views, and the agnostics would listen and simply say "But maybe not? Who really knows?" In this space, I truly saw the sacred realm that God has helped us create in this school, a place in which religion and belief is not a dogmatic thing nor a private thing, but an exciting and meaningful experience as we discover God's love together.

My mom's chicken noodle soup was always the best. As a little boy, I recall watching her roll out the dough and cut the noodles. Those noodles would come in every shape and size. I loved the ones at the end of the roll that were wide and doughy. It was a spoonful of surprise every time. But as I loved this soup, my mom always said she was embarrassed about her noodle making ability. Her mom, she said, always made the noodles so perfectly, every one precisely the same as if they had come out of a machine. I told her time and time again that she was wrong, that her noodles were perfect, but I don't know if she ever truly accepted that.

I apologize for the soup metaphor that you can see coming, but I am proud to say that we have a great big bowl of my mom's chicken noodle soup going on here at Westgate. Those noodles, our students, are not machine cut, but are varied and expressive and beautiful and unique but still make up something that is far greater than their individual essence. And we love every one of them, every misshapen noodle, because they are perfect as we see the image of God shining forth in all of them. This is our vision for Westgate and this is the beautiful and wonderful arena of learning that we continue to try and recreate every day.

James really getting out of the classroom in the Wadi Rum



New Staff

Westgate is pleased to welcome these 5 wonderful new staff! These kind folks bring many skill sets to Westgate. Whether it is in the classroom, counsellor's chair, athletics, and other areas we have yet to discover, we look forward to their contributions to our community.

We asked these staff to share a few things with us:

1. A moment of JOY in the first few months at Westgate.
2. Something they are looking forward to!



Sherisse Spentz:

Student Service Resource Teacher & Grade 7 ELA and Math

A moment of joy for me was at the opening chapel when all the students were standing and singing "Not Be Shaken." The sound of folks singing together in worship was amazing, especially since we haven't been able to do this for a number of years.

I am looking forward to directing a One Act Play this year and getting to know the Junior Students better in a dramatic and creative context!



Mark Wiehler:

Student Services Resource Teacher & Grade 6, 7, 8 ELA

Being a new teacher in a new school is always a little intimidating. The uncertainty and newness of everything brings its own challenges, but within all the change, it is always a great joy to begin to connect with students. Playing soccer or ultimate with students (at Senior Day or at recess) has certainly been a highlight. Eating my first oat square from the cafeteria was also pretty fantastic.

I am looking forward to all the various activities that Westgate offers outside of the classroom. I am amazed at how much happens at Westgate and I am most excited for some of the Marsh and Mountain trips that are planned. My own kids aren't quite ready or willing for winter camping so it will be great to join Marsh and Mountain on some trips.



Kara Reimer Barkwell:

Grade 7 & 8 Science and Grade 9 Math Teacher

I have been fortunate to experience many moments of joy since being at Westgate. One particular memory that sticks out to me occurred during the last evening of the Grade 9 Retreat. Everyone organically gathered in the main area and students started challenging each other to handstand and push-up contests and showing off other talents. Seeing the Grade 9 students acting like kids and being silly was fun, and watching them cheer each other on was so heartwarming.

I am looking forward to December and seeing what Advent and preparing for the Christmas season looks like at Westgate. I am especially excited about the chapels leading up to Christmas.



Owen Baerg:

Grade 10 Geography, Grade 11 Science, Grade 9 Life/Work Exploration, Grade 8 Skills, Grade Phys. Ed, Grade 10 Images of Faith

Move-A-Thon was an awesome experience to do something as an entire school population and have a chance to connect as a community in Assiniboine Park. Being new to the school, it was a really great opportunity to get to know some of the students and enjoy the outdoors.

I really look forward to being a part of all the opportunities Westgate has to offer. Be that through coaching sports, going outside for Marsh and Mountain activities, camping, or whatever else there is. I believe that one of Westgate's best features is the opportunities it provides for students to explore, learn about themselves, find some new interests or just have new experiences.



Tessa Nussbaum:

School Counsellor

I have been really energized by how inclusive of a space Westgate seems to be. I get a sense that people (staff) really care for the entire student body and they put forth significant effort and care to ensure that students feel accepted and honoured for who they are.

I'm looking forward to the opportunity to get to know some students really well and being a supportive, helpful presence in their lives.

Canada Games

Eager athletes from across Canada went to Niagara, Ontario in July to compete in the 2022 Canada Games. Westgate was well represented in many sporting events! Take a look through these pictures for Westgate Alumni and current students competing. Congratulations to all the athletes on a job well done!



Rowan Penner ('20) followed in Maren Penner's ('22) footsteps, joining the Manitoba Rowing Team! Gabby Keyser joined them among the rowing squad!



Matthaeus Dyck ('22), a Westgate runner, apparently cycles in his spare time!



3 years of Westgate Volleyball excellence represented on Team Manitoba Canada Games Volleyball Team- Dylan Martens #9 ('23), Harrison Ens #15 ('22), Owen Dyck #10 ('21), Rowan Krahn #13 ('22)

Ultimate Frisbee Update

Many Westgate alumni and current students share a love for the game of Ultimate. There were many ultimate events that happened this summer to keep you up to date.

Enthusiastic players headed down to Lebanon, Ohio July 23-30th for the World Ultimate Club Championship.

To be eligible to play in this tournament, teams needed to come in the top 3 in the National Championship in 2021. The Club World Championship is held every 4 years with many eager players from all over the world.

The following Westgate Alumni were participating in the three divisions:

1. **Women's:** Krista Aitken ('13) played for the Manitoba Provincial Club Team called Fusion
2. **Mixed:** Joe McCallum ('19), Matthew Pagé ('15), Liam Sawatzky ('15), Taya Niessen ('20), Mekiah Yonda ('15) and Hillary Rempel ('15) (player/coach) played with PBHG (Pretty Boys and Handsome Girls). Zoe Dyck ('19) was also on the team but couldn't get the time off work to go to the worlds tournament.
3. **Open (Mens):** Quinn Snider ('16) played with Mephisto from Montreal, Quebec (our Manitoba provincial men's team did not qualify for the tournament so Mephisto asked Quinn to play with them).



Mephisto



Quinn Snider Playing for Mephisto

Fusion finished the tournament 20th out of 40, PBHG finished 26 out of 48 teams, and Mephisto finished 10th out of 40.

Westgate was also well represented competing in the Canadian Ultimate Championships in Brampton, Ontario in August.

Current Westgate students and Westgate Alumni competed (in the following divisions) on several different teams.

Jonas Cheng ('24) played for the Manitoba B team: Manitou



Master of Flying Objects

Melissa Loewen ('24) Jax Correia ('22), and Claire Grisliis ('22) played for the Jr. Girls top team; Masters of Flying Objects, with Assistant Coach Vaughn Rempel Snider ('84)

Jada Kelly ('25) Jr. Girls B team: Red River Rebellion

Caleb Neufeld ('22) in the Jr. Boys division on the top team; MOFO Masters of Flying Objects

Zach Neufeld ('20) and James Williams ('18) on the Men's Manitoba Provincial team General Strike

Joe McCallum ('19), Taya Neissen ('20), Mekiah Yonda ('15), Hillary Rempel ('15) and Zoe Dyck ('19) all on the mixed team PBHG

The Jr. MOFO boys, and General Strike won Gold, and PBHG won Silver



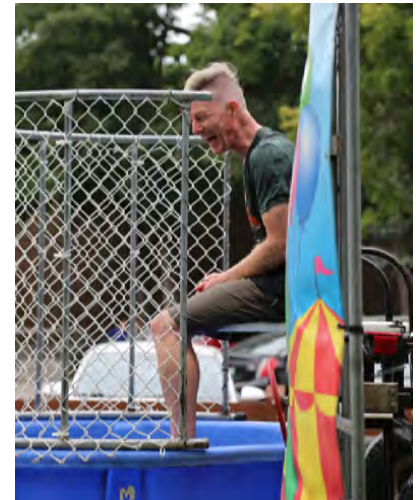
PBHG (Pretty Boys and Handsome Girls)

Congratulations to our current 2023 Sr A Team for being accepted to compete in the Canadian High School Ultimate Championships in May in Ajax, Ontario. A big thank you to Vaughn Rempel Snider for the wealth of Ultimate knowledge!

Westgate Fall Events

Junior Day

Junior Afternoon Extravaganza! A great way to kick off the new year. The Junior students gathered together for an afternoon of fun, silly games, and opportunities to meet new friends and teachers. There were many activities including a petting zoo, dunk tank (with many teachers AND the new administration to dunk!) cotton candy, face painting, dancing, games, and crafts. The students had a blast! Thank you to all the staff that made this event possible.



Senior Day

On September 21, the senior high student body gathered for Senior Day - a day of community building. We started at Westgate, with some food, and took some time to get to know our new staff, new students, and German Exchange students, and then headed to Assiniboine Park to play in the field, and have a Frizzknock tournament. A grade tug-of-war competition settled which grade would eat first, as we feasted on Menno burgers. It was a great day, and we were glad to be together again!



Recess!

Grade 6 and 7 students are enjoying a bit more fresh air every day now that Westgate has initiated a morning recess. In warmer weather, students were playing soccer and ultimate and are now pulling on snow pants to build snow creations. We are happy to have this daily time for play.

Grade 9 Retreat

BY KRISTA NEUSTAEDTER BARG

♪ *This ground, this ground it holds us.*
People around let's notice – the beauty of this place. ♪

For over 20 years, Grade 9 students have retreated away from busy lives of school to soak in God's good creation, worship and play together. Fall 2022 saw the return of this overnight retreat at Camp Koinonia. Students bunked with classmates from their homerooms and spent their days getting to know one another and maybe even more about themselves. Students claimed:

- *I love my family, but it was also good to be away from them for a bit after being bubbled together for so long.*
- *As a new student, I really connected with people there, built bonds with them, those bonds are helping me feel at home at Westgate now.*
- *It was so beautiful – the leaves were so colourful, the weather was still so warm.*
- *It was fun to be with classmates but not in class – just resting, relaxing and having fun with friends.*

Guest speaker Paul Dyck challenged us to understand ourselves as part of creation, as soil, as air, as water; to consider how we could be part of the environment others need to allow the Fruit of God's Spirit to flourish. Darryl Neustaedter Barg led us in time of worship as we relearned the sacredness of raising our voices, in harmony as one.





As staff, we really feel the retreat allows us to help set the tone for the year; to teach the students about many “Westgate-y” things: community, singing, worship, prayer, laughter and integration. Activities at camp encouraged Grade Nines to step into leadership, helped them all better connect with one another and transition into the year. It has been especially good for new students; although it might take a healthy dose of courage to show up, it really is a great way to meet new people.

The group got to sing and dance, to craft and play, to cook and serve food, to paddle and to swim, to build and to shoot bullseyes; to enjoy delicious food and to do dishes: all in a good day’s play!

As we all learn to find the new normal, taking time in creation to contemplate our place and our role in it was a good realignment. As we offered young people the opportunity to be with other young people – in a big crowd, singing and laughing it felt a bit like we were feasting at God’s banqueting table.

“God help me live a life worthy of you – help me show your love in everything that I do!”



Special Congratulations

Congratulations to **Aliya Penner** and **Jane Côté-Paré** on your success with the French DELF exams (2022). Certificates presented by Grade 12 French teacher Loren Brown. On est fier de vous!

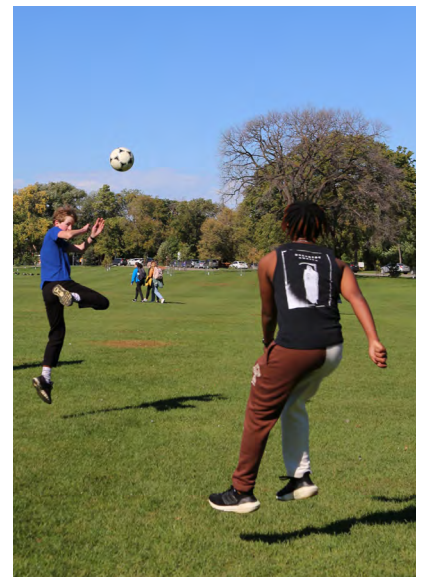
Marsh & Mountain

Senior students got to enjoy God's creation with friends and staff on the beautiful Thanksgiving weekend this fall. Together, they headed out to Whiteshell Provincial Park to camp and hike the Hunt Lake Trail. It was a wonderful time to build skills, gain some confidence in the wilderness, and connect with others.



Move-A-Thon

Students buzzed with excitement around the atrium, tying shoes and clipping helmets as they prepared to head out for the third annual Move-A-Thon event. This event, created to try and meet the goals of the annual Cyclathon Fund Raising Event in a new way, promotes physical activity while raising funds for the school. On a beautiful fall afternoon students cycled and walked multiple distances, and met up at Assiniboine Park for a picnic, time to visit with friends, and games. Thank you to all who made this event possible, and for the many donations that came in to support Westgate!



Spiritual Emphasis Week

BY: KARINA FAST

During the week of Spiritual Emphasis, we invited Dr. Neil Craton, proud parent of '12 & '14 graduates, Marcus Rempel ('91) and Allegra Friesen Epp ('14) to address the staff and student body on the topic of humility. These individuals shared personal stories of needing to enter a space with humility. Dr. Craton, author of *Wisdom From The Homeless*; Marcus Rempel, author of *Life at the End of Us Versus Them: cross/culture/stories*; and Allegra Friesen Epp, who recently wrapped up a six-month internship with Mennonite Church Canada and Community Peacemaker Teams (CPT), guided the Westgate students and staff on how leadership based on servant-hood rather than ownership is the key to their experience.



Neil learned humility through his time with the patrons of Siloam Mission.

By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. — John 13:35



Marcus used his gifts to step back and serve the people of the Sandy-Saulteaux Spiritual Centre. Humility is not a competition.

Each one should use whatever gift they have received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. — 1 Peter 4:10



Allegra shared how God's humility has clothed her through life experiences.

All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. — 1 Corinthians 12:27

The daily prayer was taken from St. Teresa of Ávila's, *Christ Has No Body But Yours*

Christ has no body now but yours.

No hands, no feet on earth but yours.

Yours are the eyes through which he looks compassion on this world.

Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good.

Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world.

Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body.

Christ has no body now on earth but yours.





In addition to the dynamic presentations, Darryl Neustaedter Barg ('86), with his trusted guitar, led our students in singing. The students participated like a chorus of angels. At the completion of each All School Chapel, the student body met in cross-grade small groups to share, debrief and reflect on the session. (A few doughnuts and games livened up the discussions too!)

One of the sessions required students to trace their own hand. Students all identified an individual in their life that has reached out to show kindness. The Hands of Humility symbolized Christ and how Jesus is working through others to build community. We were reminded that God desires to be able to use us to God's glory and for God's purpose, and each of us should be aware of this. Humility is that we use our talents and capabilities under God's direction and leading, giving God the honour and glory for what is accomplished in and through our lives.

Westgate by the Numbers

270 

KIDS SLEPT IN A TENT DURING ALTERNATIVE ED



11 LANGUAGES (BEYOND ENGLISH) SPOKEN IN WESTGATE HOMES



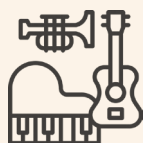
6,739

KILOMETERS CYCLED DURING THE BIKE TRIP



3

TREES PLANTED ON THE SCHOOL YARD IN 2021



53

STUDENTS PLAYED THEIR INSTRUMENTS TO LEAD IN WORSHIP



5 NEW STAFF



251

ORANGE RIBBONS PUT UP TO COMMEMORATE ORANGE SHIRT DAY



40

VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF HELP COACH OUR WESTGATE WINGS ATHLETIC TEAMS

Fundraiser Update

Thank you to everyone that came out to our 17th Annual Alumni & Friends Golf Tournament. It was a gorgeous day for golf and gathering with friends! Thank you for supporting Westgate in raising funds for our Capital Campaign. A generous \$21,552 was raised at the tournament. We could not have done it without you. Special thanks to Bridges Golf Course, our Tournament Sponsors, and the committee for putting it all together. See you on the green next summer!

If you would like to join the Golf Tournament Committee, please reach out to Natalie Johnson (njohnson@westgatemennonite.org) for more information. We would love to have you!



Thank you to the student volunteers!



Save the Date for These Upcoming Events



Sports at Westgate

Even before the doors officially open for the school year, students are lacing up their shoes and getting ready for the start of another full sports year. At the end of August, Westgate greeted eager junior students joining sports camp. During these sports camps, students get the opportunity to learn and practice their volleyball, basketball, and ultimate frisbee skills. Throughout the rest of the fall, students continued to compete and build their skills. Congratulations to the Golf Team, Cross Country Teams, and Volleyball Teams. You made Westgate proud!

Golf Team



Hitting the greens! Will Sagel Gr.10, Ryan Davidson Gr.10, Cruz Correia Gr.12, Carter Sagel Gr.12

Volleyball



Homecoming: The return of spectators in stands brought a full gym of enthusiastic fans back to the building! Westgate Wings Fans, alumni, family, and friends gathered on Wednesday, October 26th for a double header of Varsity Volleyball. It was a great evening to gather and an opportunity for alumni to connect and see their alma mater.

Cross Country



Westgate's impressive Junior Varsity Boys team brought home the banner this year, winning gold on a cold and windy cross-country course in Killarney.



The Varsity Girls celebrated a provincial championship, with **Lena Klassen** also winning individual gold. The fastest runner & the fastest team-a great combination!



▲ Lena Klassen

Congratulations to the Varsity Girls volleyball team who won AAA Volleyball Provincials! Three Westgate students won awards at the provincials. Go Wings!



TOURNAMENT ALL-STARS

Julia Martens
Finnley Rydman

TOURNAMENT MVP

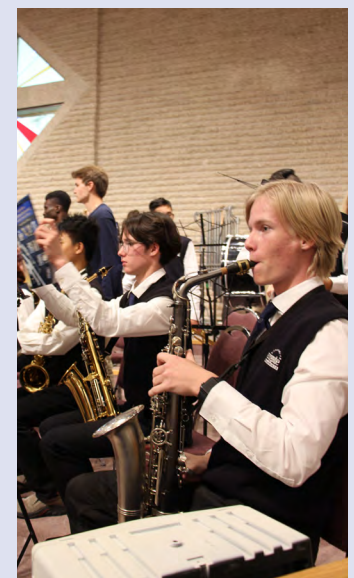
Mia Dasch ▶



◀ Congratulations to **Finnley Rydman** for winning Volleyball Manitoba's MVP Graduating All-Star and Savannah Baird and Jules Martens for winning AAA Coaches of the Year.

Opening Program

Thank you to everyone who joined us at our first in-person Opening Program since 2019! It was a joy to connect, hear from the talented Westgate musicians, and welcome you to the new school year.



Christmas Concert

We were so pleased to be able to once again host Westgate's Annual Christmas Concert! Guests were treated to lively music from the many choirs and concert bands. What a joy it is to gather and sing all together. Blessings as you go into the holiday season.



WESTGATE *worships*

Mark your calendars for the following **Westgate Worship**s! These are times when students lead worship in our supporting churches.

Sunday, January 15th
Springstein Mennonite Church

Sunday, February 26th
Springfield Heights Mennonite Church

Sunday, March 12
North Kildonan Mennonite Church

Sunday, April 16th
First Mennonite Church

Sunday, April 30th
Charleswood Mennonite Church

Sunday, May 7th
Fort Garry Mennonite Fellowship

Sunday, June 4th
Sargent Avenue Mennonite Church

Waters Rising at Westgate

Wednesday, December 7th was a far from ordinary evening at Westgate. If you walked in around 7:20 pm amidst the sound of the pulsating fire alarm, you would have witnessed a new waterfall effect in the atrium as water cascaded from the upper mezzanine down to the main floor. But you would also have experienced the hustle of staff, students, and community members as they tried their best to clean up the mess of water filling the school.

That evening, a sprinkler head in the Choral Room Office failed. The water started soaking through much of Westgate's choral music and made its way through other areas of the school. Water streamed into the library, main offices, and even down to the basement. For more information please read Winnipeg Free Press Article [HERE](#).

Among other things, much of Westgate's choral music has been damaged, some music that has been here over the history of the school. We think about Vic Pankratz, Choral Director, as he works through the inventory of what has been lost and begins to rebuild the library of music.

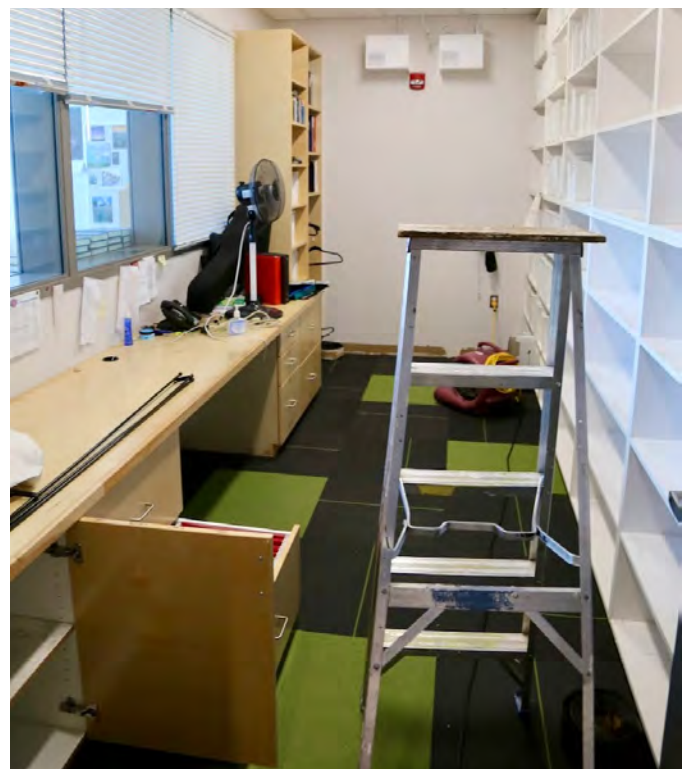
As soon as we could, we called in the support of Winnipeg Building and Decorating. Alumni Brian Thiessen '89 and his crew jumped into action that evening, and are currently busy drying, assessing, and saving all that they can.

The final days of school before Christmas break have not been quite what everyone had hoped for as we work around dehumidifiers, fans, boxes and books in temporary places, but we trust in good time our amazing facility will be back in fine form.

We are keenly aware, especially in these moments, how wonderful our community is. It is clear that many folks consider this place home. Thanks for those who helped on the day of, thanks for the caring enquiries, thanks for the donations to help cover these unforeseen costs.

Over the coming months there will be much to do in this space. Please know that Westgate is graciously accepting gifts towards reparations from the flood, the Capital Campaign, and other areas that have the most need. We hope you think of us during your holiday giving season.

Please visit [Westgate Website](#) for ways to give.



Class Reunions

Thanks to **Lukas Thiessen** and **Ryan Stoesz** for planning and hosting the class of 2002's twenty year reunion at Assiniboine Park this past summer.

Pictured here are members of the class of 2002 and their offspring. (Future Westgaters? 😊)



Members of the class of 2013, 1998, 1973 – are you ready for your reunion?

10 year? 25 year? 50 year?

We are looking for a few folks to step up and help plan a gathering.

Please call or [email](#) the school at your earliest convenience if this could be you!



Births



Erin Braun-Janzen ('08) and Phil Pries welcomed Anderson Pries-Janzen to the world this July.

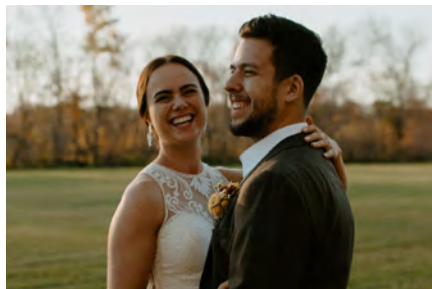


Cory Funk ('08) and **Anneke Hildebrand Funk ('08)** welcome beautiful boy Callum John H Funk.

Westgate Staff Weddings



Lydia Epp, Educational Assistant, married Chance Peloquin in September just a couple doors down from Westgate!



Natalie Johnson, Community Relations Coordinator, married her highschool sweetheart Jared Button, on a beautiful sunny October (2022) day.

Weddings



Joshua Neustaedter Barg ('13) celebrated his love and marriage to Alexandra Denommee in July 2022 with his Westgate crew by his side: Joel Kliewer ('13), Dylan Pate ('13) and Owen Baerg ('13). Friends for life!



Congratulations to **Cassandra Hill ('10)** and Graeme McCombe on their October 2022 wedding!



Congratulations to **Nick Gamble ('08)** and Jenna Schmidt on their August wedding this past summer: surrounded with support and love with dear friends by their side. Pictured here with Cory Funk ('08), Chris Epp- Thiessen ('08), Anneke Funk ('08), Erin Braun Janzen ('08), Anderson Pries Janzen, Phil Pries.

In Memoriam

As a school community we express our condolences to the friends & family of those grieving in the wider Westgate family. We remember with gratitude the lives of those who have gone before us, who have been supportive and active members of our school community – making it what it is today.

Peter Zacharias

Margaret Fast

Zak Hirshman

Keith Brenneman

Heidi Schroeder



If you'd like to share your news with us, please get in touch!

Contact: Krista Neustaedter Barg, Alumni Relations Coordinator at alumni@westgatemennonite.org