

A WESTGATE Retrospective

2025



INTRODUCTION	2
COMMUNITY	4
IMAGES & MOMENTS	6
SCHOLARSHIPS	8
STAFF	9
LEGACY	10
ACADEMICS	14
MUSIC	16
DEVELOPMENT	18
FUNDRAISING	19
ALUMNI & NEWS	20

Musings on a Donor Wall that isn't just a Donor Wall

BY James Friesen

We are currently enjoying our eighth year in the “newly” renovated Westgate. And in this eighth year, we were able to say that our fundraising campaign for this project has been completed. To mark this important milestone, we put up our donor wall.

Now, Mennonites are a bit weird, and a donor wall is not an easy thing when it comes to a community that believes in Biblical teachings that instruct us to not let the left hand know what the right hand is doing. That said, it is also a community that wants to show future generations the importance of a giving community.

So a donor wall committee was formed. Yes, a committee, another thing in keeping with who we are as Mennonites. That committee

[The] opening lines on [this] panel attest to who we are as a generous community, recognizing the spirit of generosity that goes far beyond financial gifts.

put together something unique: a wall that recognizes our generous community as well as a wall that recognizes who we want to be as a school.

Centred around a panel describing the Vision and Mission of the school, the panels of the donor wall speak to Westgate’s identity. On the left, the panel gives a quick history of the Mennonites, a fitting panel on this, the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism. Atop that panel is the famous etching of

Dirk Willems whose story beautifully and tragically epitomizes our theology of active non-violence. It is always my hope that our students leave our school knowing that name well. Beneath this grand history is our more recent history which highlights the fourteen churches that have supported this school, grounding us in a particular story of the Winnipeg Mennonites. That particular story is on another panel which ends that history with “The building you see here today,” a line



Dirk Willems (d. 16 May 1569), early Anabaptist martyr, depicted here saving his pursuer after escaping from prison — an act that ultimately led to his recapture, torture, and execution. A celebrated story for Anabaptists, he exemplifies following Jesus’ call to discipleship and loving one’s enemies, even in the face of death.



The Westgate Donor Wall.



James Friesen's classroom in the Chapman Elementary building.



Chapman Elementary demolition, which began in January 2025.



Westgate's new entry way under construction in Spring 2017.

that brings the reader right into the space in which the donor wall is situated.

Apart from our history, the wall also speaks to who we are now or at least who we want to be. One panel named “A Faithful School” names three important elements of our school. It begins by naming that we desire to be good stewards of creation, placing Westgate in the story of God’s good creation of our world. Under that, we name our desire to understand our place in a Christian history that at times has forgotten about Jesus’ call to love all people, and names the important work of reconciliation with the Indigenous community. Under that, we state that we want to be a place which follows Jesus’ call to care for the marginalized, specifically welcoming people of “any race, age, ability, income, family status, gender identity, and sexual orientation.”

Finally, the names. Yes, two panels of names grace the wall. These are the names of young and old, alum and guest. It was the committee’s goal for the names not to be alphabetical but to be somewhat random

so they are listed alphabetically by first name, not last, showing the nature of a wide range of givers. Indeed, the opening lines on that panel attest to who we are as a generous community, recognizing the spirit of generosity that goes far beyond financial gifts.

It is here where I pause to remember seven years ago when the redevelopment occurred. It was a year in which our entire school had to uproot and find another place to do school. We landed in Chapman elementary school, a school that had recently been closed. It was a challenging year. I think of Doug Durksen’s back nearly breaking as he tried to use the whiteboard in a class made for kindergarten kids. I think of Lyndon Baerg trying to set up an art room in a windowless, breezeless basement, trying to explain the nature of art as Ross Browlee’s band played right beside him. I think of Wilma Johnson trying to run a library in the same space as student services, the main office, and what ended up to be a busy thoroughfare for students going from one side of the school to the

other. To top things off, Chapman wasn’t big enough for all of our classes. I recall that on Day 6 in the morning I taught period A in the school, period B in the church across the river, and period C in the church beside the school. I think I spent more time on the school bus that morning than I did in class.

But somehow it all worked.

This year, Chapman, that school that was our refuge, was demolished. It was poetic that the end of our capital campaign coincided with the erasure of that building. For many of us, seeing the empty site brought back many emotions. Yes, we remembered the frustration of a bizarre year, but we also remembered an amazing community of staff, students, and parents that were willing to stay with our school beyond our building.

As I walk past our donor wall every day, I think of our history, I think of who we are, I think of who we want to be ... and I wonder what the next redevelopment project will look like.



Studying at Westgate shaped Entrepreneurs

BY Aaron Epp ('02)

For some Westgate alumni, entrepreneurship has led to personal and professional fulfillment.



Caroline Fisher ('05) of Big Sky Run Co.

When Caroline Fisher ('05) looks at the trajectory of her life, it makes sense to her that she is now a business owner.

The former teacher is a lifelong runner who has always had an entrepreneurial bent. Those two passions came together in March 2023 when she opened Big Sky Run Co. with her husband, Josh Markham, and a business partner.

Located in Winnipeg's St. Boniface neighbourhood, Big Sky is a full-service running gear store that can outfit everyone from beginners to people doing 100-mile endurance races.

For Fisher, creating an atmosphere that promotes community and the joy of running has been just as important as selling shoes. About 75 to 100 people connect to the store on a weekly basis for running groups and various workshops.

"I think a lot of people have a strong sense of belonging at the store and that is extremely important and meaningful to me," says Fisher, who placed third in the women's race at the 2023 Manitoba Marathon.

She traces that interest in connecting with others to her time at Westgate. "Westgate is a community place," she says, "and that's where I developed those roots and truly understood the importance of a strong sense of community."

Unlike Fisher, Carolyn Regehr (née Kolm, '00) never thought she would start a small business. Crunching numbers was not her strong suit when she was in school.

"I am not academic — you just have to ask the Westgate teachers," she says.

But a few years ago, the Winnipegger started Prairie Crew Adventures. The business sells a variety of products, and offers helpful information, aimed at getting people of all ages outdoors.

Regehr was a stay-at-home mom during the COVID-19 pandemic and

saw how beneficial outdoor activity was for her family's physical and mental health during lockdowns.

"That really sparked a dream in me and a purpose that I hadn't felt in awhile," she says.

The entrepreneur uses her social media presence at [Instagram.com/prairie.crew](https://www.instagram.com/prairie.crew) to equip people so that they can give overnight camping or cross country skiing a try with their own children.

Regehr's lifelong passion for going on adventures and being outdoors was encouraged at Westgate, where she participated in canoe trips and the European study tour.

"There were so many opportunities that were pretty unique that Westgate was able to provide us, which I think is pretty special."



Carolyn Regehr ('00) started Prairie Crew Adventures.



Nathalie Daudet ('12) runs Fertility Awareness Project.

Like Regehr, the pandemic marked a turning point for Nathalie Daudet ('12).

Daudet was studying for her master of social work at the University of Manitoba when COVID-19 hit. Around that same time, her side hustle—a business called the Fertility Awareness Project—blossomed. It became so successful that after graduation in 2021, Daudet never returned to social work.

Daudet teaches clients how to track their menstrual cycles as an effective, natural alternative to hormonal birth control. Her offerings include one-on-one coaching and online classes as well as workshops for aspiring fertility awareness educators.

Since much of the work is done online, about 80 percent of Daudet's clients are from the U.S. Instagram is key to her marketing.

"My job allows me to wear a lot of hats, but marketing is something I really enjoy doing. Discovering that about myself has been fun."

Daudet's work puts her in regular contact with Catholics and Americans, and she draws on her experience at Westgate during those interactions.

From World Religions class to different travel opportunities, "Westgate gave me an appreciation for working with people with different opinions and views and religious

affiliations," she says. "(It) opened my eyes to a world that was bigger than Winnipeg."

A devastating diagnosis inspired Sashira Gafic ('00) to start a non-profit organization.

At the height of the pandemic in 2021, Gafic's eldest child, Adrian, was diagnosed with a type of brain cancer called medulloblastoma.



Sashira Gafic ('00) helps the non-profit organization Orelia.

A longtime artist with deep ties to Winnipeg's maker community, Gafic decided to start Orelia, an online shop featuring work by local artists that makes a difference in the lives of those impacted by cancer.

People can visit orelia.org to buy art, cards, candles, soap, jewelry and more, and 100 per cent of the proceeds fund research into childhood cancer treatment.

"As a parent, when your kid is potentially going to die, you feel super helpless," Gafic says. "This is just a way for me to use my skills and my connections to try to do something about it."

Adrian is currently in good health. Meanwhile, Gafic continues to make art. She has always loved drawing and painting, and recalls being ecstatic when Westgate added an art class to its offerings.



Jen Loewen ('00) started Sugar Joy Inc.

"Art helps me be my authentic self," she says.

Jen Loewen (née Schartner, '00) has always had a sweet tooth, so when she was thinking about starting an online business after the youngest of her three children was in school, something candy-related made sense.

In 2018, the Winnipeg resident started Sugar Joy Inc., a company that sells a variety of candy online, through retailers and by way of gift boxes and subscription boxes.

The candy is made in Sweden using Scandinavian recipes and high quality ingredients. The tasty treats are free of high-fructose corn syrup, contain no genetically modified organisms and have zero trans fats.

"I enjoy being able to create products I'm excited for people to gift others," Loewen says.

She is part of a group of friends from the Class of 2000 that gets together regularly. A few of the friends, including Regehr and Gafic, are entrepreneurs themselves and they all support one another in their endeavours.

"It's great for us to be able to hash out business and life and everything," Loewen says. "The connections that Westgate offered (is) something that's just so valuable and has shaped me."

CHRISTMAS AT WESTGATE



The Grade 6 & 7 choir performs a Christmas song.



Senior students perform in School Chorus.



The grade 7 clarinets.



Senior Band Brass section.



Juniors make Bannock at Camp Assiniboia over a fire.



Will Kirk and Matteo Aiello help pack Christmas hampers. Westgate students helped 14 families with hampers this Christmas.



Kara Reimer Barkwell narrates a story through knitting at our Christmas Chapel.



Zara Matyas and Noreen Matar enjoy a moment in the snow at Camp Assiniboia.



Juniors race towards Christmas holidays at the Junior Christmas party.

ANABAPTISM AT 500



The Dutch Blitz tournament winner was crowned Mennonite of the Month!



Celebrating 500 years of Anabaptism, Sherisse Spenst and Karina Fast ('92).



Cake for all on January 21 to celebrate 500 years of Anabaptism.



As part of our Anabaptism 500 celebrations, the Concert Choir surprised students with a hymn-flash mob at lunch! The hymns together speak of the joy in loving one's neighbor, and thanksgiving to God - timeless Anabaptist beliefs.

Honoring Westgate Legacies:

The Thomas Epp & Betty and Helen Lozinski Family Memorial Scholarships

BY Natalie Johnson



Thomas Epp (March 20, 1986 – June 22, 2018)

Westgate is built on a foundation of community, connection, and kindness. Two meaningful scholarships, the Thomas Epp Memorial Scholarship and the Betty and Helen Lozinski Family Memorial Scholarship, honour individuals whose lives embodied these values, ensuring their legacies continue to inspire future generations.

The Thomas Epp Memorial Scholarship celebrates the memory of a Westgate alumnus whose passion for life and school was infectious. Thomas ('04) was an enthusiastic ambassador of Westgate, embracing life through sports, music, and volunteerism. This scholarship is awarded to a Grade 10 or 11 student who, like Thomas, brings



Betty (September 16th, 1932 - February 2nd, 2023) and Helen Lozinski (May 4, 1937 - January 9, 2023)

energy, dedication, and warmth to school activities, making a positive impact on those around them.

The Betty and Helen Lozinski Family Memorial Scholarship honours two beloved matriarchs, Betty and Helen, whose kindness and generosity shaped the lives of their families and communities. Betty was a Nana to Madison ('21) and Caitlyn Fast ('24), and Helen was a Baba to Daniel Lozinski ('17). This scholarship is awarded to a Grade 12 student who demonstrates kindness, inclusiveness, and a passion for visual or performing arts while planning to pursue post-secondary education.

Both of these scholarships recognize academic and extracurricular achievements, while also embodying the heart of Westgate. Through these awards, the legacies of Thomas, Betty, and Helen live on, inspiring students to lead with passion and compassion in all they do.

Donate

Donations are always welcome and appreciated.



Welcoming New Staff into a Busy Year

BY Adam Klassen Bartel

At the beginning of the 2024/2025 school year, Westgate welcomed two new staff, Johanna Klassen ('18) as Choral Director and Brianna Neufeld as an Educational Assistant. Each adds their unique gifts to the Westgate community, but there are also some wonderful parallels in their lives.

While for each this is their first position in a school, Mennonite education is not new for either Brianna or Johanna.

Johanna grew up in Winnipeg. After graduating from Westgate Johanna completed a music degree at CMU and an education degree at the University of Manitoba.

Brianna was born shortly after her parents emigrated from Curitiba, Brazil. While her home was filled with multiple languages, German was her first. In her early education she attended German bilingual schools before going to M.B.C.I.

For both, working in education in some form has also long been part of their lives.

"I have always loved teaching, whether in a more formalized setting, or just in the moment," Johanna says. During her time at university Johanna worked at Camps with Meaning as Bible Instructor and Summer Program Coordinator for both Camp Assiniboine and Camp Koinonia.



Johanna Klassen ('18)

Brianna worked as an Early Childhood Education Assistant at a daycare for many years. She appreciated and took seriously being a trusted adult in the lives of children. "I see a real importance in educational staff that care deeply about their students through my experiences with my children's educators. " Brianna has appreciated the opportunity to be that person in the lives of students at Westgate.

When it comes to time away from work, both Johanna and Brianna choose the outdoors.

"I love to experience the outdoors in a sustainable, simplistic, and silly way," Johanna says, with some of her favourite ways to spend what little free time she has traveling or camping with friends.

Brianna, her spouse Jason ('03), and their three kids move out to their cottage on Bird Lake in



Brianna Neufeld

summer, spending time swimming, kayaking, and fishing. In the winters they love to ice fish and cross-country ski. "There is something about being in the woods that makes me feel closest to God....and mosquitoes."

Something else they share is that their first semester at Westgate has been both exciting and a whirlwind. With Johanna putting on a full fledged musical in her first year and Brianna learning to support students with a variety of needs in multiple grades, things are busy.

But, whether the joy of anticipating participation in alternative education or the difficulty of mastering the dreaded Westgate Bell Schedule, both Brianna and Johanna have been wonderful additions to the Westgate community.



Krista Neustaedter Barg Retiring:

Learning the True Meaning of Being a Westgater

BY Bob Hummelt

Krista Neustaedter Barg ('87) was in Grade 8 when I began my teaching career at Westgate. She was an energetic young soul who shared her classmates' penchant for preppy clothes and big hair that was *de rigueur* in the early 80s. Not surprisingly, Krista would have a big impact on our school. An early sign in her high school years that Krista's sense of responsibility and emerging leadership skills would be great assets was evident when she took on Student Council duties after both co-presidents had abdicated. Years later, and by then on staff, Krista offered her greatest contribution to Westgate's foundation as a school of faith, through recognizing that she, along with the help of several colleagues, could serve as a catalyst for change, helping the school to evolve to a place where kids could better become people of God.

By hiring agile teachers committed to more engaging practices of instruction and assessment, Westgate had developed an earned reputation. As a new teacher, more than thirty years ago, Krista was a fit, hitting the well-worn linoleum

of the old school's hallways running. She proved effective in class and dove deep into the pool of extra-curricular programs, earning respect from staff, students, and parents.

When Westgate was formed, great value was placed on academics, but the school was also established to foster the Mennonite faith in the Anabaptist tradition, a great challenge in a world awash with secular influences. Here, too, the school widened its effectiveness in nurturing vibrant faith practices among its students, attributed in large measure to skilled and invested staff. As a strong teacher, Krista had "corporate knowledge" as an alum, and some *accoutrements* that were valuable assets to a Mennonite school entering a new century. Krista had spent her teen summers as a "Camps with Meaning" counsellor, where the budding teacher earned her reputation minding a flock of predominantly homesick elementary and junior high kids, while finding a way to blend fun, faith, and early July horse flies at Moose Lake. Her years at Canadian Mennonite Bible College (now Canadian Mennonite University)



Krista leads a prayer in chapel.

provided further knowledge and perspective as she worked with the kids in her classrooms. As committed as she was curious, Krista never stopped searching for methods and modes to cultivate among others a love for Christ, be it in school or in church.

By the early 2000s, Krista and several staff had provided the "form and function" needed to grow a school where faith culture could deepen, questions could be asked, and worship could be shared. School administration agreed to create a Spiritual Life Coordinator unit who would chair a committee which would do much of the legwork of planning chapels, special emphasis weeks, and Lenten practices. Nurturing faith among students would no longer be the sole responsibility of the Christian Studies teachers, but of all the staff. Personally some of the most stirring moments in my faith walk have come from the music and

messages I have heard within the walls of the school.

Perhaps her most profound impact on school culture might be Krista's notion of the importance of becoming a "Westgater", baking an attainable ideal into the adages of "Being the best you can be!" and "Doing the right thing even though no one is watching!" Krista organized the Grade 9 School Retreat in early September so students could integrate early in the year through games and campfires. Theme speakers were salient, music led by Krista's husband Darryl ('86) was lively and kids soon began to understand that the collective whole



Seeing the sights by bike on EST.

was more important than themselves individually. Throughout the school year, Krista continued to develop these important ideals of generous living and inclusivity as ingredients in her classroom as part of her Grade 9 Christian Studies curriculum. Through the teachings of Acts and the church, Krista compelled students to muse about spiritual and social questions in weekly faith journals. Service work was "voluntarily compulsory", and this component often resulted in lifelong involvement with some organizations for students.

Being a Westgater even transcended borders, as Krista coached students how to be travellers rather than tourists when engaging in travel, which meant showing real curiosity and seeking to understand new countries and cultures. Numerous European trips with Krista were impacted by her thoughtful consideration of how a Westgater should and could travel in the world.

I believe the staff and our supporting community have been drawn into Krista's vortex, and I suggest that she made me a better principal for Westgate along the way. There were no passengers on any committee or event she was part of, and while her preference on how things should shake out was usually obvious, she was also a keen listener.

To her, post-event feedback was as important as preplanning.

Krista's indefatigable networking with our supporting churches offered pastors and youth workers understanding that we were partners in faith formation. Parents were gently "schooled" on how to best support their children in a very busy independent school. Krista was either the invisible or the public



Krista with a Westgate group on a European Study Tour.

hand behind the myriad of galas, concerts, banquets, community dinners, reunions, and anniversary celebrations that often helped fund the school and its building redevelopment, thus cementing an understanding that the participants and donors, too, were Westgaters.

A couple of my grandkids have just outgrown their "Growing My Wings" onesies and T-shirts that let the toddler world know they had arrived, a wonderful promotion idea I can lay at Krista's feet. While a tad faded, these tiny garments will now be passed on to the next sibling; however, I know that Krista's contributions to Westgate will not fade. Her fine modeling and generous spirit have ensured that Westgate's true colours will always shine bright!



A grade 9 CST class makes comic strips of the book of Acts.

On the Occasion of Ruth Dyck's Retirement:

Memories of a Student, Colleague and Friend

BY Heidi Redfern ('97)

My first memories of Ruth (née Becker '67) are from when she was my grade 7 Social Studies teacher. She had us draw a map of the main streets of Winnipeg from scratch, because "you need to know where you are and where you come from". This was a huge task for a grade 7 student in 1991, long before the internet was a daily reality. I can still see the map that I produced in my mind's eye, some 33 years later. Another fond memory of this class is of walking through Armstrong's Point, with Ruth explaining the history of some of the original homeowners of the area. I don't remember much else from any of my grade 7 classes, but these two memories are still vivid. Ruth was the kind of teacher that focused on useful and experiential lessons that helped us to understand and appreciate the things that really mattered.

Ruth's history at Westgate goes further back than her 38 years teaching at Westgate. In fact, she was among the first students to attend Westgate back in its infancy. Her parents were huge support-



Ruth Dyck ('67)

ers of Mennonite private religious schools and Ruth started at what would eventually become Westgate in her grade 9 year when it was still called Mennonite Educational Institute. The move to the current location happened the following year and she moved into the residency that existed at that time. Eventually her whole family would move into the residence and would live on the second floor of the mansion. Her mother served as the house mother, and took care of

many of Westgate's first students. Ruth has fond memories of learning from some of Westgate's first teachers such as Elizabeth Peters, Karl Fast and Agnes Friesen, who was Westgate's first female Math teacher.

Ruth started teaching at Westgate in 1986 after spending ten years teaching in St. James School Division. Erwin Strempler, who was Westgate's principal, along with Rudy Regehr encouraged her to leave the public system to teach Math and start the Computer Science program at Westgate. Ruth was a trailblazer in the courses she taught. She taught Math and Computer Science at a time when these courses were almost always taught by males and broke through barriers for future female teachers in these areas. Ruth often found herself at government inservice Applied Math and Computer Science events as the only female among a hundred men. She inspired many females to push the limits and to pursue careers in Math and Science. The success that Ruth had was due to her determination.



Math-themed cookies from a grateful student.

Her husband, Hank, her children, and close friends encouraged and supported her to fulfill her career dreams.

She would remind her students frequently that Computer Science was the future of our world, and she was privileged to see many of her graduates go on to have success in computer-based careers. Over the years these computer enthusiasts have reached out to Ruth to thank her for their successful livelihoods. When I was Ruth's student in the mid-nineties, she tried to convince me to be her first female student to go on to become a computer engineer. She even had me happily attending extra Math classes on Saturday mornings at the U of M when I was in her gr.10 Math class. As I write this I am currently

a teacher at Westgate, teaching mainly high school Science courses. Her attempt to shape my future career may not have quite worked out, but her belief in me, and the belief she showed in so many of her students stuck with me. I never doubted my ability to succeed.

As a teacher, she is remembered most for the care she showed her students, and also for the fact that she saw through their antics, called them on it, and expected their best. She supported all students, no matter their gender or abilities. She made students feel at ease to ask her questions they had about her classes, but also to talk to her about what they were going through personally, or to discuss complex world events. She would bring in cookies and distribute them on test days, tell her own funny stories, and encourage others to share theirs. Many students also received countless hours of extra help from Ruth whether at school, her kitchen table or online. She wanted the best for all of her students and held a special place in her heart for students who struggled, but were willing to put in the hard work required to succeed.

As a colleague, Ruth continued to show her caring nature. She would regularly check-in with those of us on her radar. She was good at knowing when we needed a listening ear or some friendly advice. It was obvious that she cared about us, our families, our parents' well-be-

ing, and even whether our kids were sleeping well.

In the last few years of her career at Westgate, Ruth cut back her teaching load and taught only one Math course to grade 12s. The two of us often joked that she was our staff teacher emeritus. These last students of Ruth were fortunate as they received what Ruth always gave, which was her all, but they had that all to themselves.

As we reflect on Ruth's retirement last June, the Westgate community wishes her all the best. She is deeply loved, fondly remembered, and leaves a lasting legacy of shaping young minds and hearts.



Building thinkers through writing

BY Jason Friesen ('13)

Writing is thinking. Putting words to paper isn't just for the sake of writing, it's a tool to process our thoughts and communicate them.

Westgate spends lots of time fostering that skill with significant focus on academic writing through essays. That process is scaffolded throughout the grades and across

"I love when students come back to me when they're in higher grades or university and they ask to borrow my essay materials," said Fast. "It shows you how important the foundation is."

Students tackle research essays in Grade 10 Geography and Grade 11 Canadian History, which draw out the process to help with internaliz-



Westgate students working (and writing) hard!



Karina Fast ('92)



Julia Thiessen



Jeremy Siemens

different subjects, preparing students for university level writing and beyond.

That starts with the fundamentals of essay writing in Grades 8 and 9 English. Karina Fast ('92) has taught both courses and used her Master's degree assignments to prove that the fundamentals Westgate teaches work at higher levels of writing.

ing the steps and getting feedback along the way. Canadian History teacher Julia Thiessen emphasizes that process through grading.

"The final product is really not the point," explained Thiessen. "What I want to see is the process of students connecting an idea to their experience, their research, and their thinking. For many students, writing is the way that they build that."

Jeremy Siemens, who has taught Grade 10 Geography and currently teaches Grade 12 Transactional Focus English, emphasizes the process too.

"There's value in helping students understand the importance of the process," said Siemens. "Nobody creates a perfect draft on the first try, so we draw attention to and break down the steps."



Andrea Sutherland ('19)

The challenge today is ensuring that process happens amidst temptations to use AI instead. There's a place for AI in essay writing, like reducing barriers around reading and research for students with dyslexia or focus challenges. But ensuring students go through the thinking process is paramount, and 2019 grad Andrea Sutherland, a Law student at the University of Manitoba, is grateful she did.

"I only had one professor actually walk through how to write an essay in my undergraduate degree. With the preparation from Westgate, that didn't matter at all."

The teamwork of Westgate teachers makes the scaffolding process possible too.

"I can comment on the structure that's used in Grade 9 English, and senior students get it," said Shelley Dalman Betts, who currently teaches Grade 10 Geography



Shelley Dalman Betts

and Grade 12 Advanced Placement English. "The fact that different disciplines value different essay writing aspects is beneficial too. In geography, we're focusing on research, ELA focuses on structure and persuasion, and in history, they take complex ideas and work at a higher academic level."



Nathan Dueck ('17)

Alumnus Nathan Dueck ('17), who is studying Law at the University of Manitoba while working as an Issues Manager in the Manitoba legislature, is grateful for his Westgate writing experiences.

"It's not enough to memorize or understand case law - you have to articulate it under time pressure. That ability was instilled in me through writing-based courses at Westgate. In my legislature role, I bring together material from across

departments, media, and legislative sessions to help MLAs and Ministers deliver messages during debates or committee hearings. I'm indebted to my social studies and history teachers, who taught the mechanics of incorporating research into writing, and how to do that in a compelling manner that supports your own voice."



Jaymi Fast ('17)

Jaymi Fast ('17) writes in briefer forms now as a freelance social media manager and content consultant, but the process of developing arguments and conveying thoughts through writing is as integral there as in high school essays.

"I try to convey the strongest message in the fewest words to compel someone to make a purchase or join a community," said Fast. "You can have beautifully crafted content, but if there aren't compelling thoughts and the message doesn't get across, it won't achieve a client's goals."

Thanks to Westgate's focus on the writing process, grads aren't just writing words for social media posts, legislative messages, university essays, and more – they're processing their thoughts and communicating valuable ideas.

A Beautiful Helping Hand

BY Anna Martens ('20)

At any given time throughout the school day at Westgate, you will hear not only the sounds of choir and band classes, but also of private music lessons in the three studios adjacent to the band room. Once a week, students have the opportunity to spend thirty minutes learning from one of fourteen professional musicians who come into the school to teach lessons on band and orchestral instruments, piano, and voice.

For most students who choose to take lessons, the individual study is there to help them gain skills and confidence to bring back to their ensembles. "It's like a beautiful helping hand," says Band Director Ross Brownlee. "You've got this warm support that makes you feel comfortable and confident." Students who take lessons are then able to lead by example and lift up their peers. While the majority of students aren't aiming to be professional musicians, there is so much more to be gained from taking lessons. It helps develop skills that make music more fulfilling at any level.

Private lessons support the ensembles in many ways. The instructors have spent countless hours with their instruments, so they have a level of specialized expertise that isn't possible to

address in a large ensemble class. Because of this, the instructors are also a fantastic resource for Brownlee. "I ask them hundreds of questions a year!" he says. Even just popping into band between lessons to answer a question or demonstrate something, the instructors are an integral part of the music community at Westgate. They're amazingly skilled, but they're also down to earth and happy to meet the students where they're at. Brownlee says, "I don't think [the students] realize just how amazing and what a high calibre of folks we have coming into the school a week. They understand the level the kids are at and work with them at that level, but present much higher concepts, and the kids just absorb that." Robyn Bock ('23), a trumpet player now studying music in university, describes the unspoken transfer of learning by example: "The opportunity to hear your instrument being played at a professional level... it's rewarding to hear what that sounds like." From absolute beginners wondering which end of a flute to blow



Teaching with expertise — Leanne Hiebert, Private Music Instructor, at the piano.

into, to highly dedicated grade twelves preparing for university auditions, the instructors are there to support and guide students, whatever their musical goals.

Music of any kind teaches a variety of life skills, and private lessons just take that to another level. Lisa Penner, one of the piano teachers, describes the process of learning music as a system for how to approach life: "Okay, what can I do and what can't I?... What steps do I need to take to get there? Then they apply that to everything, whether they know it or not," she says. The skills you learn from practicing an instrument are valuable in any career. "Anyone who's pursuing music at any level has got a certain amount of persistence, patience,



Private Music Instructor Colin Mehmel and student practicing scales on the clarinet and bass clarinet.



Private Music Instructor Kyle Wedlake guiding a student on the saxophone.

and an understanding that not everything is instantly gratified," says Brownlee. These independent study skills are something Westgate values, according to Penner. "It just fosters their whole personality," she says.

Taking lessons can also open doors for students who want to get involved in music outside of school. Instructors present opportunities like honour bands and youth orchestras to students who are looking for an extra challenge, as

well as letting students know about concerts they're playing in. The students then have access to a broader community of musicians. "We have a very good thing here at school, but there's more, and you have to be out there in the world to experience it and bring it back here," says Brownlee. "Our community is just broadened because instead of just music happening here with our students, families, and faculty in this building and concerts, we're now bringing fourteen people in with

their communities and then they take us out to their community. The community always grows when you invite people in and ask them to share."

The ability to run this program is not something the instructors take for granted. "It comes from the ethos of the school," says Brownlee. Westgate values music enough to say that a student missing thirty minutes of class time every week is worth it. It also requires a level of responsibility from the students to catch up on anything they missed, as well as to communicate with their instructors if they have a test or a field trip. "Westgate students are independent," says Penner, "the kids are responsible." The amount of communication between students and their families, administration, faculty, and private instructors speaks to the close-knit community at Westgate. "There's a tremendous amount of support from my colleagues," says Brownlee. "We're all part of the same team, we have the best interests of this community in place." To be part of a school that is so supportive of the arts is, as Brownlee put it, "the biggest gift."



Golf Tournament Leaves a Legacy

BY [Karl Langelotz \('83\)](#)

It's been said that the game of golf is "a good walk spoiled". While that may be the case for some, others may argue that the leisurely pace of the event lends itself to camaraderie and socialization. Perhaps that's one reason why Westgate Board members came up with the idea of hosting a Golf Tournament to raise funds nearly 20 years ago. Not only was it a method of fundraising, it also gave the opportunity to build the extended Westgate community.

In 2005, Derek Loewen ('89) and Cindy Epp ('88) spear-headed the first annual Westgate Golf tournament held at Bridges Golf Course. The intent was to raise money to pay for some above budget "specialty items", such as new computers, team uniforms and even a 23 passenger bus. The financial goal for this first event was simply to break even (which was easily achieved). After the 2006 tournament was cancelled due to inclement weather, it was decided to change venues and build up interest in the event.

From 2007-2009, Southside Golf Course provided a more intimate venue where the event could grow to become a more intentional fundraiser for the school. After 2009, where numbers were high and the event had outgrown Southside, it was decided to return to Bridges and invite major sponsors to help raise the financial profile of the tournament. In 2010, prof-



Westgate Supporters at the Westgate Golf Tournament. Tom Ewert, Westgate staff Jeremy Siemens, Luke Snider, and alumni Joshua Ewert ('07).

its instantly went from four to five figures. The 2012 and 2013 tournaments recorded peak profits of approximately \$43,000. Over the 20 years, Westgate Golf has raised over \$440,000 to support school programs and even help with the more recent Capital Campaign.

Perhaps more important than mere profits, the Golf Tournament brought alumni and supporters together and created a new community of support for the school. One such new supporter included David Unruh (Century 21 Real Estate).

As a long-time organizer of the MBCI golf tournament, David was initially approached by Westgate organizers, asking for ideas or suggestions on how to run a successful event. David was immediately interested in this venture as well. "I've always been a big supporter of Christian education", Unruh shared, so his involvement at a sister Mennonite school seemed logical to



Family of Westgate Supporters Jackson Gustafson-Fish ('14), Erika Gustafson-Fish ('16), Nancy Gustafson, and Ed Goertzen join us at the Westgate Golf Tournament.

him. David's Hole in One sponsorship, including a table with prizes and homemade rollkuchen, has always been popular with golfers throughout the years.

As we pause from the tournament this year, we look forward to new and creative ways to engage Westgate alumni and friends in the future, inviting others to join in this adventure of Christian education.

PUTTING UP BIG NUMBERS



THE NUMBERS LEAD TO GOOD THINGS

Thanks to your continued generous support, Westgate recently made two important upgrades to our infrastructure.



◆ WESTGATE WHEELS ◆



◆ NEW WESTGATE BLEACHERS ◆

Alumni & Community News

Share your news with us!

If you'd like to share your news with us, please get in touch with our Alumni Relations Coordinator:

✉ alumni@westgatemennonite.org



Ayla (Manning) Berry ('12) and husband **Liam** were thrilled to welcome a baby girl into their lives this summer. Beatrice Margaret Berry was born July 2024.



Mariette Koop ('12) and her husband **Dawson Neufeld** welcomed their exciting new addition Johanna Aspen Neufeld in July 2024.



Cory ('08) and **Anneke (Hildebrand) Funk** ('08) together with their son Callum welcomed their daughter Signe in August 2024.



Rebekah (Koop) ('10) and **Jacob Miller** ('10) are excited to share the arrival of their second child, Sofia Janice Miller. Sofia was born on June 25, 2024, and her older brother, Luca (born 2022) couldn't be more thrilled.



Jocelyn Hummelt ('11) and **Cale Mogg** welcomed their first baby Shay Alison Mogg on October 11, 2024.



Melanie Reimer ('94) and **Kenton Friesen** ('92) were married September 14th, 2024 surrounded by dear family and friends at a simple, but beautiful ceremony on the Nutimik Lake beach in the Whiteshell.



Congratulations to **Natalie Friesen** ('18) who married **Ben Kroeker** on December 28, 2024. The couple now resides in New York City where Natalie is practising as an Occupational Therapist.



Joshua Neustaedter Barg ('13) and **Alexandra Dénommée** were thrilled to welcome Jacob into their lives this past summer. (Oma Krista '87 is loving the new title too).



Sara Litz ('11) and **Kevin Ramlakhan** welcomed their son, Miles Ramlakhan on December 25, 2024 at 9 lbs 2 oz. They are loving this new chapter of life!



Erin Braun-Janzen ('08) and **Phil Pries** welcomed Elliot Richard Pries-Janzen on September 25th, 2024. Erin reports that he has been nothing but relaxed in the face of a busy year, including a temporary relocation to Auckland New Zealand!

Nancy Loewen (current teacher and '88 grad) and her husband **Steve Ens** would like to announce that they are grandparents! Nancy's son **Logan Runke** ('16) and his partner **Lindsay Dumonceaux** had a baby April 1, 2024! We can't believe nearly a year has already passed with our little grandson!



GET YOUR WESTGATE ANABAPTISM AT 500 T-SHIRT!

This Westgate Anabaptism at 500 T-shirt also pays homage to the Westgate peace pole!

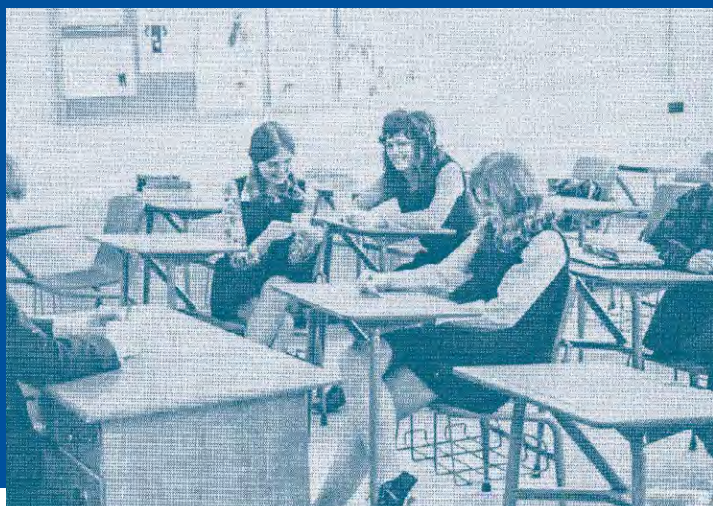
◆ Order online by May 15th ◆

westgatemennonite.ca



CLASS REUNION

1973 / 1974 / 1975



Save the date!
Saturday August 9th

Westgate Mennonite Collegiate

To learn more, please get in touch with our
Alumni Relations Coordinator:

✉ alumni@westgatemennonite.org

How's it going,

Alumni?

You're important to us.

We want to keep in touch and learn about the good things that are happening in your life and share what's happening at Westgate.

Members of the class of 2015 or 2000, this is your reunion year!

If you are interested in helping plan the 10 or 25 year reunion, please reach out to the Alumni Relations Coordinator.

If you have stories, births, weddings, or other announcements to share, please let us know. If you want to participate or volunteer in any of our events throughout the year, please let us know. If you have an updated address, email, phone or other contact information, **please let us know.**

Please reach out to our Alumni Relations Coordinator to stay in touch.

✉ alumni@westgatemennonite.org

Inspiring and empowering students to live as people of God

westgatemennonite.ca

