

# MANE EDITION

 maranatha



summer 2024

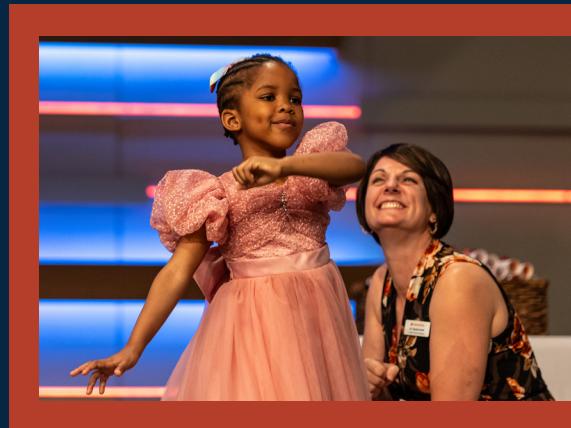
mane edition magazine

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# MARANATHA'S MISSION STATEMENT

We are an influential school of collaborators, innovators, and explorers  
grounded in Christian faith, empowering co-creators of tomorrow.

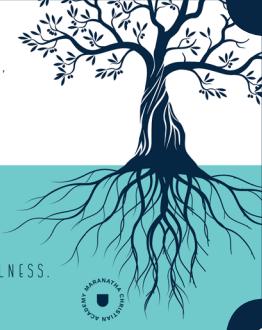


SO THEN, JUST AS YOU RECEIVED CHRIST JESUS  
AS LORD, CONTINUE TO LIVE YOUR LIVES IN HIM.

**ROOTED  
AND BUILT UP**

IN HIM, STRENGTHENED IN THE FAITH AS YOU  
WERE TAUGHT, AND OVERFLOWING WITH THANKFULNESS.

COLOSSIANS 2:6-7



# A Message from our Head of School



## Deb Larson

### Embracing Biblical Rest While Mitigating the Educational Summer Slide

Summer is a season that offers unique opportunities for rest, reflection, and rejuvenation. From a biblical perspective, rest is not merely an interlude from work but a sacred rhythm that fosters spiritual and physical renewal. Concurrently, educators and parents often grapple with the “summer slide,” a phenomenon where students lose academic skills during the summer break. Balancing biblical rest with educational continuity can create a holistic summer experience that nourishes the soul and the mind.

In the Christian tradition, rest is deeply rooted in the Bible. The concept begins with the creation narrative in Genesis, where God rests on the seventh day, setting a divine example (Genesis 2:2–3). The Sabbath, a day

of rest and worship, is a cornerstone of Judeo-Christian practice (Exodus 20:8–11). Jesus Himself emphasizes the importance of rest, inviting His followers to find rest for their souls in Him (Matthew 11:28–30).

Biblical rest involves more than physical cessation from labor; it encompasses spiritual renewal, family time, and reconnecting with God’s creation. It is a holistic practice that integrates mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being.

The summer slide refers to the regression of academic skills over the summer months when students are not engaged in formal education. Research indicates that students can lose up to two months of reading and math skills during summer vacation. This loss can accumulate year over year, widening achievement gaps and hindering long-term academic success.

## Balancing Biblical Rest With Educational Engagement

**1. Structured Relaxation and Learning:** Creating a summer schedule incorporating rest and educational activities can be beneficial. Mornings could be dedicated to light academic work or reading, while afternoons and evenings can focus on rest, play, and family activities.

**2. Biblical Study and Literacy:** Integrating Bible study with reading practice can enhance spiritual growth and literacy skills. Encouraging children to read Bible stories, memorize verses, and engage in faith discussions can foster biblical literacy and critical thinking.

**3. Experiential Learning:** Utilize summer for experiential learning that combines fun with education. Nature walks, museum visits and cultural activities can be framed within the context of God's creation, aligning with the biblical call to stewardship and appreciation of the natural world.

**4. Service Projects:** Engage in community service or mission projects. These activities teach valuable life skills and reinforce biblical principles of compassion and service, providing a practical application of faith that encourages social and emotional learning.

**5. Creative and Reflective Practices:** Encourage journaling, art, and music, which are reflective practices aligning with biblical meditation and prayer. These activities support cognitive skills and allow children to express their understanding of faith and the world around them.

## Practical Steps

- Daily Devotionals:** Set aside time for daily or weekly family devotionals, including reading Scripture, discussing its application, and praying together. It is an opportunity to instill biblical values while maintaining a routine that supports literacy and critical thinking.

- Educational Resources:** Utilize educational resources that have a biblical perspective. Provide summer reading lists, workbooks, and online courses that blend academic and spiritual learning.

- Technology Balance:** Monitor and balance screen time with physical and outdoor activities. Educational apps and online Bible games can be part of the mix but should not replace real-world experiences and family interactions.

- Parental Involvement:** Parents should model a balanced approach to rest and work. Demonstrating how to prioritize spiritual health, relaxation, and continuous learning will provide children with a living example of integrating these principles into their lives.

Balancing biblical rest with efforts to mitigate the educational summer slide is not only possible but enriching. By creating an intentional mix of spiritual, educational, and recreational activities, families can ensure that summer becomes a time of growth and renewal. This balanced approach helps children maintain academic skills while deepening their faith and understanding of biblical rest, leading to a more holistic and fulfilling life.

# PRINCIPALS' CORN

## TAKE TIME TO BE UNPRODUCTIVE

Schools Out!

Our homes have been filled with excitement for all that summer brings. Trips to the cabin, boating, tubing, jet skiing, fishing, late summer nights, and summer sports fill our schedules.

The summer brings its own season of hecticness. However, the summer is really intended to be a season of rest and recuperation for our families and staff.

When seasons of rest come, we often feel guilt and shame, thinking,

**“I really should be doing \_\_\_\_\_.”**

These feelings can often be tactics of the enemy.

Unrelenting busyness — running here and there, late and in haste, always with more to do than we have time for — stifles the life of the heart.

**What if God doesn't expect us to be productive every moment?**

**What if growing comfortable with slowness, quietness, and not filling every moment can help reconnect us to God?**

God's highest value is not productivity and efficiency but love

(Matthew 22:37–39; 1 Corinthians 16:14).

Learning to go slower and maybe even “waste” more time together provides opportunities to grow in our awareness of God's presence and work.

Slowing down—not filling every moment with distractions, opens up the path to prayer and love.

When we step into a season of rest, it affords us the opportunity to become people who can, in the slowness, pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

So go ahead, “waste” some time this summer, allow your kids to “waste” some time, because this allows each of us to listen and fulfill what God is calling us to.

**RACHEL DAVID**  
Lower School Principal





## FOCUS ON THE IMPORTANT

A recent study showed that in 2004 the average worker switched tasks every 2.5 minutes. In 2012, it was every seventy-five seconds, and by 2022, it was every forty-five seconds.

We have an infinite number of external distractions today.

Smartphones give us constant distractions to screens, not to mention smartwatches constantly pinging on our wrists. In an age where adults struggle to stay focused and engaged on a task, how can we support our students raised with all these distractions?

If a student struggles with focus, it can directly impact his learning. Helping students stay engaged at home or school can be modeled and taught.

Ways to encourage engagement and/or focus can vary, but some simple ways might be:

### 1. Sit down for family meals (device-free)

Sitting down together as a family with devices put away encourages each person to engage in conversation with one another as they ask questions and talk face-to-face.

### 2. Work on crossword/Sudoku puzzles or play board games

Encouraging challenging mental activities that require concentration supports focus and engagement in one activity at a time.

### 3. During your own devotional/quiet time, set aside any distractions.

Having a quiet space where you can focus on God's Word and what He is speaking to you models to students the value of your relationship with Christ.

### 4. Model engagement while waiting

How often do you reach for your phone to pass the time when waiting for something? Are there opportunities in those moments to engage in a conversation with your student instead of scrolling through your phone?

Many things are vying for our attention, always have and always will. God's Word has advice for us as we navigate the many distractions the world offers us.

**Hebrews 12:1-2** says, **“Let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.”**

**JOANNA RICHTER**  
**Upper School Principal**

Let's continue to partner together to help our students focus on the important.



# A Look Back

## LUKE HOVEN Class of 2024

As my senior year was coming to an end, I have become more and more reflective of my years at Maranatha.

I started here when I was in Pre-K, and there have been a lot of ups and downs. Yet, as I have looked back, the bad times seem to be significantly outnumbered by the good. A major factor that has led to those great experiences is MCA. There are three things that I think truly illuminate what the school does best.

First, Maranatha teaches people how to connect with others.

I have experienced this mainly through athletics, which has been an excellent avenue for me to build friendships with others. However, there are many other ways for people to connect besides athletics.

One of which is the multitude of clubs. There are many different clubs for people to join. I was part of a gaming club, chess club, and book club. In these clubs, I may have had one

friend who went to the gaming club. Outside of that, I had to learn to connect with different people over shared passions, and this skill should serve me well in college.

Second, Maranatha does exceptionally well is having teachers who genuinely care about the students.

This caring is displayed in many ways, including the extra time they invest in their students. In the last three months of school, I had long conversations about life with Mr. Van Otterloo, Mrs. Eibes,

Mr. Agrimson, and Mr. Valder.

Third, the level of education and the available options.

Maranatha has rigorous classes that prepare students well for higher education in the future. The opportunities for students also exceed other schools, especially the Associate of Arts degree.

Graduating with an Associate of Arts degree opens many opportunities for students. If they decide not to attend college, they will benefit from having a college degree. If they choose to go to college, many courses will transfer, leading students to pay less as they pursue their bachelor's degree.

These opportunities are not available everywhere, and I have been very grateful for these opportunities.



# Pre-Kindergarten Celebration

**GLENN  
SIMMONS**  
**Pre-Kindergarten  
Teacher**

The Pre-Kindergarten Celebration was a perfect way to highlight and commemorate the end of the school year. Our students were excited to showcase some of their learning throughout the year.

It is especially memorable to watch the students perform their heartfelt actions in the worship songs and have the opportunity to show their love for Jesus by enthusiastically quoting the Old and New Testament Books of the Bible and putting on the armor of God.

My favorite part of the program was observing three classes, totaling 57 pre-kindergarten students, excitedly sharing the Books of the Bible, which most adults struggle to do!

It was an honor to have family and friends join us on this momentous occasion to celebrate our pre-kindergarten

students finishing another academic school year.



# KINDERGARTEN

# GRADUATION

**SAMANTHA  
VALDER**  
**Kindergarten  
Teacher**

The time of year had come when we got to see 60 kindergarteners with red gowns, red caps, red and white tassels, and big smiles prepare to graduate.

The students worked hard this year and are excited for first grade. This year, during what is now a tradition at MCA, we got to look up to more graduates who were also wearing red caps and gowns during a graduate parade. Kindergarten graduates, senior graduates, fellow students, supportive parents, and Stomper (wearing a graduation cap) all participated in making this a memory-filled day.

**It has been a tremendous year of growth.**

The kindergarteners learned to improve reading, add and subtract, skip count, and hold a pencil. They also

grew spiritually as we focused on learning to be more like our Bible characters.

During the graduation ceremony, students recited 26 Bible verses they learned this year, one for each letter of the alphabet. They worshipped together, singing My Lighthouse by Rend Collective, led by Ms. Danielle Jares, our fantastic music teacher, and accompanied by her husband, Mr. Zachary Jares.

During the program, the students also highlighted a few things taught in Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies by singing our academic songs. One of my favorite things was seeing how old they looked in their gowns and watching how much they had grown. The kindergarten teachers are very proud of them!

The ceremony ended with the Kindergarteners receiving their diplomas and enjoying a picture slideshow of some of our favorite school year

memories.

As our students move into first grade, we pray they will continue to build their lives on the foundation of Jesus Christ here at Maranatha Christian Academy. The teachers and staff know each student is called to make a mighty difference for the Kingdom of God.

**Congratulations,  
Kindergarten Class  
of 2024!**





# COMMENCEMENT

## INSPIRED BY MY ROLE MODEL

### OLIVIA LANARI Class of 2026

Being one of six siblings, I have watched three of my sisters and brother graduate from Maranatha. I can confidently say the class of 2024 was unique from the previous graduating classes.

They were inclusive, welcoming, and open to students of all ages joining them in whatever they were doing. Every senior showed the characteristic of inclusivity, which will be deeply missed next year, as evidenced by this year's Spring Splash (similar to Homecoming but celebrates spring sports and athletes).

The student council organized a tug-of-war competition. My sister, Autumn, along with other seniors, asked me and another sophomore to

be a part of their team. This is just one of many examples where the senior class showed their genuine love for underclassmen and wanted to create a community of unity.

Deb Larson started the commencement ceremony with a speech about being rooted in your faith and relying on that faith to pull you through new life experiences. She gave the analogy of when planting flowers, you start by putting them in a small pot, but every time they become too big for that pot, you must replant it into a bigger pot, like when you graduate high school, you enter a whole new stage of your life and will keep growing.

The Salutatorian, Ava Chew, spoke about being bold in your faith. She referenced the "Man in the Arena" by Theodore Roosevelt. She explained that you have to be

different and confident compared to everyone else to show people your faith in God. Ava Chew has been an example for everyone, including on the soccer pitch, where she was one of the captains of our soccer team. She demonstrated godly leadership on and off the field and will attend Crown College as a soccer player next year.

Matthew Singh, the Valedictorian, described how believing in God requires being either all in or all out. There's no being a Christian at church and an unbeliever when at your job. Everyone around you should know that you are different from others.

One of my favorite speeches was given by Mr. Valder, whom the seniors voted to speak at the commencement. He explained how much pressure he felt going up in front of the whole school to speak and stated that the graduates

might feel the same way about going to college or the military. His main advice was, "Being coachable and being teachable is being humble."

The most memorable part of the graduation, in my opinion, was when Autumn Lanari and Ellie Meisner exited the stage by jumping on their brothers' backs (Anthony Lanari and Jacob Meisner, class of 2022) while blowing "confetti guns," which surprised and delighted the crowd.

Overall, the class of 2024 will not be forgotten; they set an example for all underclassmen with their work ethic, not only in the classroom but on the field or the court. I am honored to be the sister of the Homecoming queen, Autumn Lanari, who I have looked up to ever since I can remember.

Thank you, graduating class of 2024!





# CELEBRATION PARADE

## CELEBRATING OUR GRADUATES YOUNG & OLD

**COREY  
BIANCHI-ROSSI**  
**Chief Advancement  
Officer**

Do you remember when you were in kindergarten and you saw a senior? Maybe it was at a football game or a concert, or maybe your school was like MCA, and it housed K-12, so you saw them in the halls. Wherever it was, the seniors were like heroes. They were giants and so mature compared to you and the rest of your kindergarten friends.

Last year, Maranatha started a new tradition. It is called the Kindergarten and Senior Parade and is held on kindergarteners' last day of school. All of the

students gather in the sanctuary. A kindergarten student is matched with a senior to walk the parade route down the covered walkway between the atrium and the lobby.

The best part of the event was witnessing the interaction between our youngest graduates and our soon-to-be alums, which took place as they were preparing to walk.

The parade starts with Stomper, in his graduation cap, leading the students through a tunnel of parents, staff, and fellow students cheering loudly. It is a great tradition that will impact our K-grads as they prepare to enter first grade.

**Go Mustangs!**



# AWARDS CEREMONY

## KYLE GROVES Upper School Assistant Principal

Maranatha held its annual Awards Ceremony on May 23 in the sanctuary. It was a time when we celebrated our students for their academic, athletic, service, and fine arts accomplishments. Among the many awards our students earned, we wanted to highlight a few notable achievements with you.

### Valedictorian and Salutatorian

This special honor is based on the cumulative GPA of seven semesters of hard work. Maranatha awards a scholarship of \$1,500 to our Valedictorian and \$1,000 to our Salutatorian. This year's Valedictorian for the class of 2024 is Matthew Singh, and our Salutatorian is Ava Chew.

### Timothean Awards

Each year, our senior class selects two members from its graduating class, one boy and one girl, and recognizes them with our Timothean Award. In the Bible, Timothy exemplifies a young man who demonstrates maturity, character, and leadership qualities that set him apart from his peers. Seniors are asked to reflect on classmates over their high school years and vote for the two people who, like Timothy, stand apart in those same traits. Maranatha recognizes this award with a trophy and a scholarship of \$500 each.

This year, our Timothean recipients are Ava Chew and Gavin Kirschbaum.

### Community Service Lettering

Our Maranatha families

are known for being a group of giving people, so it is no surprise we have a student body that is very giving as well. Community Service Letters are awarded to students in grades 6–12 who have completed 300 or more service hours during the 2023–2024 school year. This year, 19 students lettered in Christian Service. These 19 students have an impressive combined total of more than 8,917 hours, and we are very proud of every one of them.

biblically-based Christian life, and we are so proud to have each of them on our team! Our amazing staff supported these academic, athletic, service, and fine arts accomplishments!

**Thank you to our staff here at Maranatha!**

While we surely want to focus on our student accomplishments, Maranatha also wants to acknowledge the dedication of our teaching and support staff for their role in raising-up our students! Our staff members do so many things behind the scenes to model a



# VALEDICTORIAN SPEECH

# COMPARTMENTAL

## MATTHEW SINGH Class of 2024

The act of separating something into parts and not allowing those parts to interact.” We, as Christians, are plagued with Compartmentalism! How often do we, as individuals, separate our lives into sections? We live our Christian lives (which mainly come out on Sundays), our secular lives (for the rest of the week), our personal lives, our academic lives, and then our business lives. Each compartment remains isolated and void from one another. As a result, our faith in Jesus—our heavenly Father—becomes compartmentalized. Our faith becomes a segment of our identity rather than the foundation that shapes our entire being.

As I stand here tonight, reflecting on the years I have spent at Maranatha, I find one invaluable lesson that I will never forget—a lesson that has profoundly changed my life. As believers, it is essential to integrate our faith into every facet of our lives, allowing our beliefs to shape our actions, decisions, and interactions with others. I am indebted to those who have guided me in understanding

the value of cherishing my relationship with my Heavenly Father, my firm foundation.

In middle school, life was as effortless as completing bellwork. Making friends was easy; math didn't have letters, and we had all the time in the world. Our biggest worry was remembering our locker combination. Eighth grade was—interesting to say the least. COVID struck, and we were abruptly sent to online school for our last quarter of middle school.

As we entered our first year of high school as freshmen, as if it wasn't hard enough being in high school, we remained online for the first half of the year and then returned to in-person classes with masks for our last semester. In sophomore year, we experience a new normal. While following COVID safety protocols, we could finally attend sporting events, pep fest, school dances, clubs, and extracurricular activities. Junior year was a typical year of high school. We made new friends, matured, and took on rigorous coursework such as our associate's degree, which many of us will receive today. Then came the movement

we had been anticipating our whole lives—we became seniors.

This year we have all shared moments together such as the Senior Retreat, The Senior Sunrise, The Senior Sunrise Part 2, Senior Chapel, Crest View, Senior Day Away, and Senior Sunset. We also experienced the last football games, the last soccer games, the last homecoming, the last dances, the last jazz band class, the last chapel, the last DailyBread, and then... the last day of high school.

Over these past couple of years, the most important lesson that Maranatha has taught me is that we cannot compartmentalize our faith. We cannot say we truly love the Lord one day, but be consumed by the things of this world another. We have to be so desperate and proactive in our faith that there is no “Secular Life” or “Christian Life.” We have to be so in love with God that we simply can't help but show it in our personality. Others should know we're Christians and believers without us even having to tell them.

As we walk into the next chapter of our

life, whether that's college, an internship, the military, or whatever that may look like... We need to be hungry for God's presence and integrate our faith into every aspect of our lives. We need to be desperate. We need You, Lord, we need Your love like we need water. We need Your love like the breath inside of our lungs. In Josiah Queen's song, Die a Beggar he says, "I would rather die a beggar – Than to beg at Heaven's gates – Pack the car and burn the bridges – I didn't need 'em anyways – If no one's riding with me – Then I'll travel on my own – I'd rather lose the world before the world – Can gain my soul."

To the class of 2024, they say you don't know what you've got 'til it's gone. Maranatha Christian Academy has fostered our walks with God. Whether you have been at MCA for one year, five years, or fifteen years, we have been fortunate enough to attend a school where we can worship, deepen our understanding of God, and freely express our faith.

As we walk out of these doors tonight, we are venturing into a world filled with

broken teenagers, young adults, and adults who are struggling and searching for love, joy, and satisfaction, but they are searching in all the wrong places. As we walk out of these doors tonight and embark on our own journeys, it's up to us. It's our job as Christians to show the broken and the lost who God is. We need to be beacons of light and hope in a world that desperately needs them.

My final words to the class of 2024. We can not compartmentalize our faith. We can't love the Lord one day and chase worldly things the next. We need to live out our faith and love for the Lord in everything we do. In doing so, we will not only strengthen our own faith but be lights in a world that desperately needs it. Friends, let's show the world the true source of love, joy, and satisfaction.

My last encouragement and final challenge to you all is to be desperate for God. Rather than compartmentalizing your faith, show God's love in everything you do, and be a light in a dark world that's yearning for something greater. Thank you.



# SALUTATORIAN SPEECH

# DARE TO FAIL

**AVA CHEW**  
**Class of 2024**

“It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows, in the end, the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat.”

These are the words of Theodore Roosevelt in his infamous speech known as “The Man in the Arena.” For the past four years, our teachers at Maranatha have encouraged us to

step out and achieve great things; however, after tonight, it is up to us. You and I now have the choice to play whichever role we wish.

We can choose to be the critic on the sideline. We can choose to be someone too scared to enter into the arena. We can be someone who chooses to ignore the arena altogether. Or, we can decide to be the person courageous enough to try.

My fellow seniors, as we look forward and prepare to go out into the world, I encourage you all to be the man in the arena. In a world filled with timid critics who criticize what they dare not even try, I implore you to be bold enough to dare to fail.

In a world plagued with evil, injustice, and intimidation, I urge you not to be overwhelmed by the enormity of the loud voices in the world. Too often, we find ourselves hesitant, held back by fear of what our critics and accusers might say.

**2 Timothy 1:7 says, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power**

**and of love and of a sound mind.”**

We must remember these fears are not of God but rather from the enemy, and if we choose to live a life of timidity, he wins.

You and I can take heart and have courage in knowing that when we step into the arena of life, we serve a powerful God fighting with us on our behalf. It is easy to feel insignificant in a world dominated by loud voices and opinions, but we must remember that every voice carries the potential to spark change and provide hope.

My prayer is that we would be bold in our faith, speaking truth in love, even when it's unpopular. I wish for us to stand up for righteousness and justice, even when difficult.

My hope for our class is that we might have unwavering faith in the God we serve and not be afraid to step out into the arena and dare greatly. But let us also remember that God honors the courage of those who, even in failure, can hold their

heads high, reminding us that boldness in our faith does not guarantee success as the world defines it, but rather, a deeper, more meaningful fulfillment found in obedience to God's will.

We must step into the arena of life not with arrogance or self-reliance but with humility and faith. We must also strive for righteousness, knowing that our efforts are guided by the hand of a loving and merciful God.

I want to leave you with this final scripture from Deuteronomy 31:8—

**“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.”**

So, to you, my fellow seniors, let us move forward into these next steps of life confident in the one who goes before us to fight on our behalf. Let us enter the arena of life, not as timid spectators but as bold warriors of the faith, armed with the truth of the Gospel and fueled by the fire of

the Holy Spirit. Let us dare greatly, knowing that we serve a God who is greater than any challenge we may face.

Let us be the light in the darkness, the salt of the earth, and the hands and feet of Jesus in a world that desperately needs His love and redemption.



# BASEBALL



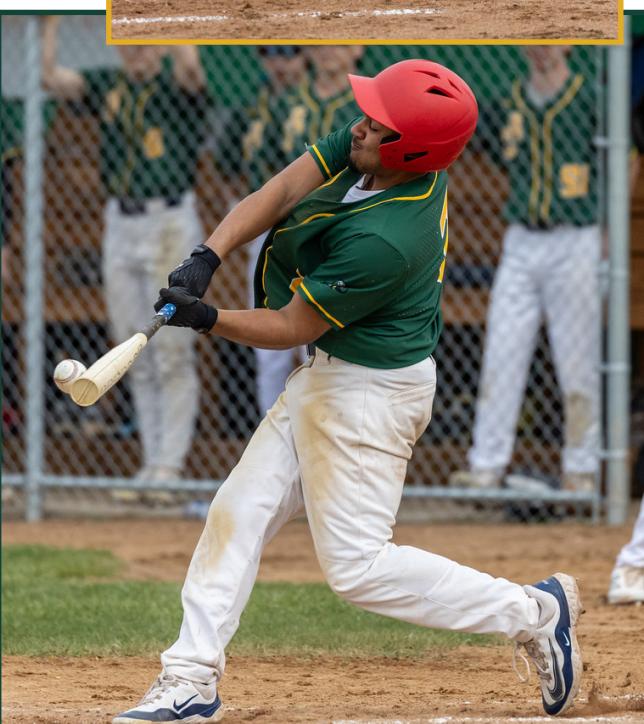
## GAVIN JESSEN Class of 2025

MCA students participating in the “national pastime” do so in a strong coop between Park Center, Maranatha Christian Academy, and Columbia Heights (PCM). This year, the PCM baseball program featured a new roster of skilled players, leading to a significant improvement over last year.

Four MCA seniors, Luke Hoven, William Severson, Gresyn Rennie, and Ty Lovcik, along with the support of varsity assistant

coach Jason Hoven, helped lead the program over the eventful season.

The team began the season ripping through nearly all competition that came its way. The varsity team started with an impressive nine wins and only two losses. As the season was nearing its end, the team fell into a bit of a slump and ended its run with a section loss to Spring Lake Park. The young men finished 12–10, the most wins in a single season in program history.



# SOFTBALL



## ASHLEY YOST Class of 2025

Heading into this season, the team knew there would be big shoes to fill. We graduated six starting seniors, including all our captains.

Having two conference championships under our belt, we were excited to compete for another one. Dozens of people believed this would be a building year for us, but that couldn't have been farther from the truth.

We started the season strong, winning our first three games, including beating our conference rivals Saint Agnes. This game was crucial, and everyone came to play. Both teams' defenses held strong, and the game ended with a 2-1 victory.

Though we had some rough patches throughout our season, we continued to push through to secure a conference championship for the

third year in a row.

When we faced Saint Agnes for a second time, it ended up being "the game of the season," ending with a throw-out at home plate. Winning that game gave us the push to finish our regular and conference season strong.

Going into the postseason, we were seeded fifth. We beat Maple Lake in the first round before losing to Glencoe-Silver Lake and Southwest Christian to end our season.

Throughout this year, we were led by senior captains Ellie Meissner and Sophie Alm, who were significant contributors to our team.

While this season was one to remember, I have high expectations for our team next season, my last as a Mustang. I cannot wait till next year to see how much we can achieve.



# Boys' & Girls' Golf



## DREW RONGERE Athletic Director

The Mustang Boys' Varsity Golf team, led by first-year head coach Anthony Moscoso, started the season with a massive win as they defeated the defending conference champs, the New Life Eagles. The Mustangs were led by junior Carson Moscoso, who shot a season-best 39, and senior Grant Bennett, who also shot a season-best 41. Moscoso and Bennett competed on the varsity team with Aryan Gubbi, John Mumma, and Erik Jacobson. Although it was not reflected in the team's record, each member showed much improvement throughout the season.

The boys had a good showing during the Section 5AA Tournament. Carson Moscoso advanced to day two but fell a couple of strokes short of making the trip to the state tournament. Moscoso, named Skyline All-Conference, plans to lead this team next season as a senior and make another push to get to the state tournament.

## NORA JASTER Class of 2027

I am grateful I played on the girls' golf team this year. Our varsity team consisted of three players this season: Kate Truax, Ava Chew, and me. I am so thankful for these two and how they've encouraged me this year in my faith and on the course.

One of our lasting memories is the time that we played at Fox Hollow. It was our first beautiful day out in weeks — or at least until rain started pouring on us right before our tee time. We ran and hid behind a trailer tall enough to shield us from the rain. Thankfully, it stopped before we teed off, and

we had a good (mostly dry) match.

I've made memories on this team that I will always cherish. We have a promising practice team, and I can't wait to get to know them better next season. Next year, Ava will play soccer at Crown College, and Kate will play golf at North Central University. I'm so happy for both of them. I know they will be a light to everyone on their teams and at school. I will miss all the times we rode to practices and matches together, our conversations on the putting green, working on our swings at the driving range, and counting all the times the boy's team would use phrases like "lock in" before matches.

# Boys' & Girls' Lacrosse



## **JOSHUA BARBER** **Class of 2026**

The boys' lacrosse team faced some challenges throughout the season but still finished with solid performances.

Joshua Barber's transition to goalie and impressive saves showcased his adaptability and skill on the field.

Tony Miller's switch in position and leadership on defense significantly impacted the team's performance and showcased his adaptability and skill on the field.

Despite limited time on varsity, Tobin Taylor's contributions highlight his potential for the future.

With 13 seniors leaving, including Tony Miller, there will likely be some rebuilding for the team next year. Still, with players like Tobin Taylor gaining experience and stepping up, there's potential for growth and success.

Building on the leadership and solid play of players like Joshua will be crucial for the team's development.

## **LAUREN BUSCH** **Class of 2025**

This Osseo-Park Center (OPC) Girls' Lacrosse season was nothing short of exciting. From the first practice to the final game, it was a whirlwind of emotions, challenges, and unforgettable moments that have shaped me as an athlete.

MCA participates in a coop with the OPC team, and I've been on this lacrosse team for three years. The amount of progress we have made is remarkable.

The team gained a new coaching staff, leading to more wins than the past three seasons. My love for this sport isn't measured by the winning moments

but by the times we all united under our differences to become stronger.

The season's most memorable moment was when our team made candy salad on the bus, and everyone got sick before the game.

I can't help but feel immense fulfillment when I think back on each moment we spent together—the deserved wins, the fierce fights, and the many jokes and friendships built along this journey.

Even though we have put our sticks away for the season, the relationships we've established and the experiences we've had will last a lifetime.

# Track & Tennis



## FAITH LAMAH Class of 2026

Maranatha student-athletes who compete in track and field participate in a coop with Providence Academy. In these past several months, I had the incredible opportunity of being a part of the Providence Track and Field team.

The 2024 varsity team members from Maranatha, featuring Galetta Atoma, Faith Lamah, Zaniah Hunter, Abby Roberson, Nathan Campbell, Ashley Wolford, and Quentin Campbell had an incredible and memorable season.

With Quentin Campbell being a part of the 4x200 section relay as an eighth grader and



Abby Robertson's hot streak at sections—qualifying for state in the shot-put field event with a score of 34 feet 11 inches, and the 4x200 relay, earning 2nd and 1st place medals, respectively—Maranatha certainly showed up during this track and field season.

Returning runners and field-event athletes are looking forward to raising the bar even higher next track season.



## TINASHE CHIMUKANGARA Class of 2029

When I came to MCA in sixth grade, I wanted to play tennis. Mr. Rongere, Maranatha's Athletic Director, said MCA hadn't had a boy tennis player in many years but was happy to get a tennis co-op reestablished with Providence so I would have the opportunity to play.

I was excited to play a high school sport this year and earned a spot on Providence's JV boys' tennis team. Right away, I was able to have a significant impact on the team, and I played much of the season in the #1 singles position. This allowed me to be a team leader and play some tough, older, and



experienced opponents. Finishing the season with an overall 7-4 record, there were some great wins and some tough losses. My favorite match of the season was vs. Hopkins, where I was initially down 0-4 and, after a hard-fought hour-and-a-half match, ended up winning 9-7.

I have to say that my co-op experience as a tennis player was enjoyable; my tennis teammates are some of my closest friends. I plan to continue tennis training in the off-season and look forward to returning with the Providence coop next spring. In the future, I hope MCA will have more boys interested in the lifelong sport of tennis.

# MCA MCA MCA MCA MCA

# Running to State

## COREY BIANCHI-ROSSI Chief Advancement Officer

Many athletes will participate in numerous events on a Track and Field team. In many cases, the athlete will focus on either track or field.

Senior, Abby Roberson, who was a part of the coop with Providence Academy for Track and Field, not only participated in multiple events but qualified for State in the 4x200 meter relay and the Shot Put.

Showing off her strength and technique,

Abby placed 24th overall in the Shot Put with a throw of 32-07. Her speed was displayed in the relay when the 4x200m team placed 9th, earning her All-State Honors.

Additionally, she was an integral part of the team that took third place in the MN State

Class AA Track and Field meet.

This accomplishment was awe-inspiring, especially with only seven girls competing at the meet.

**Congratulations Abby!**



The section meet where Abby Roberson qualified for State.



# MCA MCA MCA MCA MCA

# Signing Day

## DREW RONGERE Athletic Director

Congratulations to our seven seniors who will go on to compete in their respective sports at the collegiate level. We are proud of all these student-athletes for the hard work they invested to excel in their sports and the classroom, as well as their commitment to being spiritual leaders.

Drew Balentine will attend Central Carolina Prep Academy to play men's basketball. Grant Bennett will be attending Crown College and playing men's soccer. Ava Chew will play women's soccer at Crown College. Joshua Gilbert will attend Liberty University to compete on the trap team. Solomon Martin will attend the University

of St. Thomas to play football. Will Severson plans on playing baseball at Hamline University. Destiny Wiggins will play women's volleyball at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

while at Maranatha as they compete next season. Follow our athletics social media accounts to stay caught up with current Mustang athletes and our alums.

We look forward to watching our Mustang alums continue to develop and use the many skills they learned



# Athena Award

## DREW RONGERE Athletic Director

The Athena Award recognizes the accomplishments of top female athletes from local high schools. Eligibility is determined by the number of varsity sports lettered in, academic standing, and awards won at the varsity level. This is the 11th time an MCA student has received this award.

This year's Athena Award recipient is Sophie Alm. Her many achievements that helped her earn this special award included seven varsity letter awards: four in softball, two in volleyball, and one in basketball.

She was a softball team captain for one year, softball MVP for two years, softball all-conference for two years, and softball all-section for one year.

Other areas of accomplishment for Sophie include being a member of the National Honor Society during both middle and high

school, Lettering in Academics, being Editor of the yearbook, a member of the Black History Student Committee, creator of "Cans and Clothes for a Cause" which is a donation program that benefits teens and young adults, and interned at St. Thomas Law Library last summer.

Sophie is a hard-working student-athlete who wants the best for everyone around her.

She said, "I strive to be the best at what I do. If I don't know how to do something or need help, I am not afraid to ask for help. I feel it is important to work hard, learn from my mistakes, and try to see the bigger picture in all aspects of my life. It's not always easy, but if you put your mind to it, you can accomplish anything."

We are proud of Sophie for everything she has done over the years to earn this award and wish her the best at the University of Wisconsin next year.



# Making a Splash

**COREY  
BIANCHI-ROSSI  
Chief Advancement  
Officer**

Maranatha has a reputation for historic Homecoming Week celebrations. Some years ago, the academy added a Fall Fest and Spring Splash week to honor our athletes in these seasons and bring more school spirit throughout the year.

This year, the Athletic Department and Student Council, under the leadership of Jamie Axelberg, stepped things up. Of course, there were fun theme days for students to dress up during the week, and the upper school participated in the tradition of Tag Day, where girls can't talk to boys and vice versa. Still, this year, they introduced a legendary tug-of-war competition and an already fun-filled week. The high school grades competed to see who would take on the staff during the pep fest. There wasn't a student in the school who didn't want to show up to the staff and take home the

first-ever tug-of-war championship.

Fast forward to Friday's pep fest. The preliminary competition included lower school students taking on the lower school teachers and staff. In a shocking result, the students pulled their way to a monumental victory – much to the delight of the students in the crowd. Next was the "Bad Intentions" team versus the "Good Intentions" team for the right to take on the upper school staff. The Good Intentions team made relatively quick work of their competition and welcomed their next foe.

In a WWE-style entrance, Mr. Agrimson introduced the upper school teachers and staff. They clearly had one thing on their mind – victory to claim bragging rights. The crowd was amped, the teams were ready, and in a flash, the staff pulled their way to an impressive win. It was almost over before the photographers could snap photos.

Earlier in the week, the lower school students were blessed with a special "Candy Chapel." High school students led the chapel with fun games and testimonies, and each of the lower school students left with a small wooden cross to remind them of their walk with the Lord.

The week also included a youth night softball game that featured a free food frenzy catered by Von Hanson's. The girls entertained the crowd with a victory, a dunk tank that showered some of our MCA staff, including Lower School Principal Dr. Rachel David, and Stomper ran the bases with the kids before ending the night with autographs from the team.



# LIGHTS CAMERA ACTION

**MICHELLE  
YACKEL**  
**Event Director**

In a world filled with modern-day glitz and fast-paced trends, one magical night transported students Grades 10–12 and their guests back to the golden age of Hollywood. The venue, transformed into a scene reminiscent of the 1940s and 50s, echoed with the enchantment of black-and-white movies and the allure of classic cinema stars.

One of the highlights of the evening was undoubtedly the fashion. Gentlemen arrived in sleek suits, paying homage to the suave leading men of Hollywood's golden age. The ladies dazzled in glamorous gowns inspired by the iconic actresses of the era.

In the end, the old Hollywood-themed prom wasn't just an event—it was a journey through time, a celebration of an era defined by style, elegance, and the magic of the silver screen. As attendees departed, they carried memories that would last a lifetime, reminders of a night when dreams and reality intertwined under the glittering lights of a bygone age.



# Experience Maranatha





## **COREY BIANCHI-ROSSI Chief Advancement Officer**

If you have ever had the chance to experience Experience Maranatha, then you've experienced an experience unique to Maranatha! It is an art festival, food truck fair, book fair, music concert, theater production, and fun gathering of over 2,000 people!

This year, Experience Maranatha was combined into one fantastic day (rather than the two-day event from the past few years). It was a resounding success, featuring new additions, such as a slick new check-in system, more food trucks and vendors to choose from, a new make-your-own button station, and a new Community Partner Corner. Of course, the

event always features MCA's artistic side with a lower school musical performance, an upper school choir concert, an upper school band concert, visual art displays throughout the building, a studio artist gallery, and four different theater performances.

Other returning features were the display of innovation projects throughout the building,

the makers market (young entrepreneurs selling their products), the book fair, and Mustang Enterprises offering their services.

Another blessing this year was God shining down on Experience Maranatha (literally) as he brought us a beautiful sun-soaked day to enjoy.

# Parents with Purpose

## INTERVIEW WITH SHAWNA MATHESON, PRESIDENT OF PARENTS WITH PURPOSE AT MARANATHA CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

**MCA:** Shawna, thank you for your time. Could you tell us a little about Parents With Purpose?

**Shawna Matheson:** Sure thing! Parents With Purpose, or PWP, is all about building a strong community at MCA. If you're a parent or guardian of a Maranatha student, we'd love to have you join us. Our main goal is to support our students, families, and staff while reinforcing the school's kingdom culture. We do this through volunteerism, organizing events, and praying for our community, to name a few.

**MCA:** Could you tell us about some of the past events that Parents With Purpose has organized?

**Shawna Matheson:** Absolutely! One of our most significant focus points is Teacher Appreciation Week. This event is where

we spend most of our budget and fundraising dollars. The reason for this is simple: we know the staff puts in so much of their time and their hearts. They love our kids, and we genuinely want them to know how much they are appreciated. Seeing the smiles all week makes every second worth the effort.

**MCA:** That sounds wonderful. What about some of your more casual events?

**Shawna Matheson:** We also organize a Moms Potluck, a casual event similar to our monthly moms' coffees. These events are great opportunities to get to know moms with kids of all ages and build a strong community. While we love hosting our large events, these casual gatherings are fantastic for building relationships. It's been wonderful to watch attendance grow every year.

**MCA:** Can you tell us about the end-of-year parties and how they come together?

**Shawna Matheson:** So many hands go into the end-of-year parties. Our classroom parents and grade reps work closely with the teachers to prepare a variety of fun activities to celebrate the end of the school year. We know these same parents do so much throughout the year to help at school, so we love hosting our thank you breakfast to show our appreciation for all their hard work.

**MCA:** The staff BBQ sounds like a fun event. Can you share more about it?

**Shawna Matheson:** The staff BBQ is a fantastic way for the teachers to end their school year and celebrate their accomplishments. The week after school gets out, PWP serves

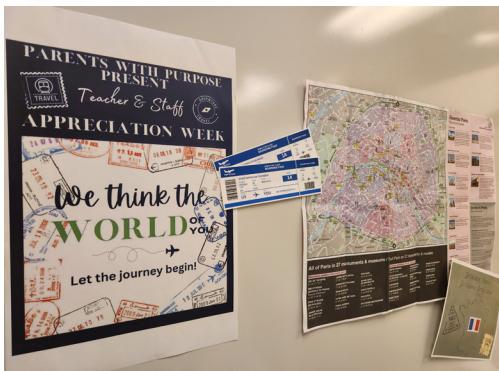
the teachers and staff so they can enjoy their time together. It's a great way to acknowledge all their hard work throughout the year.

**MCA:** How did the Experience Maranatha Day go this year?

**Shawna Matheson:** Experience Maranatha Day was a blast! We hosted a candy store to sell all the kids' favorite treats and raise much-needed funds for next year. It was a great opportunity to see and talk to parents while supporting the school.

**MCA:** Can you tell us about any upcoming events?

**Shawna Matheson:** Yes! We will be at the ice cream socials and the back-to-school night, where we'll have a gently used spirit wear sale that you won't want to miss. These events are a great way to kick off the



school year and unite our community.

**MCA:** How can parents get involved with Parents With Purpose?

**Shawna Matheson:** To learn more about how you can get involved, please send an email. You can also join our Facebook page at MCA Parents With Purpose. We would love to get to know you more!

**MCA:** Thank you, Shawna. It sounds like Parents With Purpose has been incredibly busy and has some exciting events lined up. We appreciate all the hard work you and your team put into supporting our school community.

**Shawna Matheson:**

Thank you! It's truly a pleasure to be part of such a wonderful community.



# Parents with Purpose

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN OUR MCA COMMUNITY

### JENNA GLOEB Member of PWP Leadership Team

As the final quarter of the 2023-24 school year came to a close, Parents With Purpose (PWP) showcased their unwavering dedication and commitment to the MCA community. Here are some highlights of our initiatives:

#### Senior Moms Breakfast: A Heartfelt Farewell

The annual Senior Moms Breakfast was a memorable event, bringing together the mothers of the 2024 MCA graduating class. It was a morning filled with inspiration and camaraderie as the Head of School, Ms. Deb Larson, and guest speaker Trina Outcalt, a parent of four MCA alumni, shared uplifting words. The event was a beautiful tribute to the journey these families have taken and a celebration of the milestones yet to come.

#### Teacher Appreciation Week: Honoring Our Educators

Teacher Appreciation Week is always a highlight for PWP, where most of our budget and fundraising efforts are focused. This

year's celebration was no exception. This week, we dedicated our immense gratitude to the staff who pour their time, energy, and hearts into educating our children. The joy and smiles we witnessed throughout the week were a testament to how much these gestures of appreciation mean to our beloved teachers.

#### Eighth Grade Celebration: Bridging Middle School and High School

Transitioning from middle school to high school is a significant milestone, and PWP, in collaboration with the Upper School Administration, made sure our eighth graders felt celebrated. Thanks to Mustang Enterprises, each student received a personalized water bottle marking their graduation year—2028. It was a special way to acknowledge their accomplishments and excite them for the adventures that await in high school.

#### Fourth Grade Pizza Party: A Fun Farewell to Lower School

Our fourth graders enjoyed a fun pizza party as they prepared to

move from lower school to middle school. This celebration was a festive occasion made possible by our dedicated parent volunteers and wonderful fourth-grade teachers. Despite initially mistaking them for cheese puffs, the students' willingness to eat their carrots added a touch of humor and charm to the event.

#### Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast: Celebrating Our PWP Classroom Heroes

We hosted a heartfelt thank you breakfast to honor all our PWP volunteer classroom grade representatives. Whether they could join us in person or were with us in spirit, we wanted to express our deep appreciation for their tireless efforts. Their dedication is the backbone of our success, and we couldn't achieve our goals without them.

#### PWP Men's Top Golf Event: An Evening of Fellowship and Fun

The recent PWP Men's Top Golf event brought together MCA dads for an unforgettable evening of fellowship, food, and

golfing fun. The turnout was fantastic, with many dads coming together to enjoy the lively atmosphere and friendly competition. Participants relished connecting, sharing laughs, and showcasing their golfing skills. The event was a resounding success, and we are excited to announce that more of these gatherings are on the horizon. Watch for future events as we build community and camaraderie among our MCA dads.

#### "Around the World" Potluck: Moms Unite

PWP organized an "Around the World" international-inspired potluck for our moms in the MCA cafeteria in the spirit of community and cultural exchange. This event was an opportunity for moms to share dishes, enjoy fellowship, and participate in fun international-inspired trivia and prize giveaways. It was a wonderful evening of connection and celebration.

#### 7th/8th Grade Field Trip Lunch Tent: Fun at Elm Creek

During the 7th/8th-grade field trip to Elm Creek Beach and Park, PWP





managed the lunch tent, ensuring students were well-fed with pizza, drinks, and ice cream. This event marked the last days of school with joy and laughter, creating cherished memories for our students as they celebrated together.

Through these events, PWP's goal was to celebrate milestones, show appreciation, and nurture a stronger sense of community. We look forward to continuing our mission of service and support in the coming 2024-25 school year.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to making these events a success!



# WE APPRECIATE OUR VOLUNTEERS!

## COREY BIANCHI-ROSSI Chief Advancement Officer

Award. Congratulations to the following volunteers.

- **Linda Schluter**  
Lower School Volunteer
- **Shane Peterson**  
Athletics Volunteer
- **Kim Johnson**  
Development/Gala Volunteer
- **Ginger Kirschbaum**  
Theater Volunteer
- **Marvel Family**  
Robotics, Concessions, Athletics, Theater, Events Volunteers
- **Carolyn Maristany**  
All-Around Volunteer

There are not enough words or events that Maranatha can offer to show our appreciation for our amazing volunteers. We truly appreciate the time and effort so many of our families gave.

This year, we hosted a Volunteer Appreciation event during the last Maranatha Mornings of the school year. There were colorful signs, fun balloons, and complimentary coffee and pastries to help set the stage for a heartfelt thank you. Everyone who volunteered during the school year was invited to pick up a gift.

During the event, a few volunteers were selected by MCA staff to receive an Outstanding Volunteer

A special thank you to the Parents With Purpose organization. This group of volunteers works to build community and serve students and staff throughout the year. Head of School Deb Larson took a minute to thank those on the leadership team and present them with roses during the event.



# THANK YOU FOR Y

## **CHRIS BARBER** **Development** **Director**

In philanthropy, a powerful yet often overlooked tool can double the impact of our charitable contributions: employer-matching gifts. Many of us may not know that our employers are willing to match our tax-deductible charitable donations, amplifying our support of causes close to our hearts. Moreover, some

companies extend their generosity beyond monetary donations by matching employee volunteer hours, further enriching the impact of our collective efforts.

At Maranatha Christian Academy, we recognize the immense potential of these matching gifts to fuel our mission of providing an extraordinary education grounded in Christian Faith to our students. Through the collaboration of our generous donors and

supportive employers, we aim to enhance the educational experiences of our students and empower them to become tomorrow's leaders.

In this article, we'd like to explore the steps you can take to leverage your employer's matching gift program, highlighting the straightforward process of doubling your impact in support of MCA's endeavors. Whether you're a current employee, retiree, or

spouse, participating in this initiative is the key to unlocking greater opportunities for our school community.

Join us as we explore the transformative power of employer-matching gifts and discover how you can maximize your support for MCA's mission. Let's pave the way for a brighter future for our students, families, and staff.



## **Double your impact with your employer's matching gift**

Many employers will match tax-deductible charitable contributions from their employees, retirees, and spouses. Some even provide matching funds to support employee-volunteer hours.

On our matching gift page ([www.habitat.org/support/workplace-giving/matching-gifts](http://www.habitat.org/support/workplace-giving/matching-gifts)), you can use our search tool to see if your employer participates and find instructions for matching your gift.

## **Join an existing workplace-giving campaign.**

Each year, thousands of employees can direct a portion of their paychecks to the charities of their choice through workplace giving campaigns. Through this gift, we can continue pursuing our mission to provide students with an extraordinary education.

Contact your employer to learn how to get involved in workplace giving or if your employer matches gifts to MCA.

# YOUR SUPPORT!



**Your generosity supports the students, families, and staff here at MCA and sets an important example for others to provide the same encouragement and inspiration to tomorrow's leaders.**

**THANK YOU!**

## **Step 1**

### **Search for your employer**

Nearly 10,000 employers offer matching gifts and yours could be one of them. To determine if your company will match gifts to Maranatha Christian Academy, enter your employer's name. Then, follow the steps to have your company match your gift.

Double the Donation | Matching gifts made easy  
(<https://doublethedonation.com/>)

The Matching Gifts database is provided by double your donation.

## **Step 2**

Complete the requirements your company has in place for matching gifts. You may need the following information:

**Employer Identification Number** (i.e. EIN or Federal Tax Identification Number): 41-1392954

**Organization Name:** MARANATHA CHRISTIAN ACADEMY FOUNDATION

**Organization Mailing Address:** 9201 75TH AVE N, BROOKLYN PARK, MN 55428

**Phone:** 763-488-7900

**Email Address:** MCAFund@mcamustangs.org

**Website:** [www.mcamustangs.org/give/ways-to-give](http://www.mcamustangs.org/give/ways-to-give)

**Organization Type:** Education

## **Step 3**

Submit your matching gift form online.

# Garden Party Gala in

**COREY  
BIANCHI-ROSSI  
Chief Advancement  
Officer**

Spring weather in Minnesota is “iffy” at best, but that didn’t stop the Gala Committee from throwing a Garden Party in mid-April. With vibrant colors, fun designs, beautiful flowers, and a heart to help the school “grow,” the committee created a fun, groovy, elegant, yet sassy environment for the 2024 Garden Party Gala.

The night was a huge success, with over 180 guests converging on Leopold’s Mississippi Gardens to enjoy an evening of fun fellowship, delicious food, and heartfelt messages. Upon arrival, guests enjoyed a short social hour with clever mocktails, a delightful charcuterie board, and dinner served at various serving stations. After

a tasty meal, it was time for dessert. As has become the tradition at the MCA Gala, each table participated in the Dessert Auction by offering bids toward its table’s total. The table that raised the most had the first opportunity to choose from the scrumptious dessert table. Once again, our guests surpassed expectations, raising over \$26,400.

The official program started with students singing and dancing to the song, The Rose, rewritten by our very own Jerry Oehler to reflect Maranatha’s mission and values. Once the desserts were delivered, the night kicked into high gear. You could say there wasn’t a “dill” moment. There was a live auction, which raised \$18,400, a silent auction, which brought in over \$27,800, and the exciting fund-a-need, where our

generous donors gave an additional \$53,450—the night also included inspiring messages from senior Cheri Toby and the Head of School, Ms. Deb Larson.

The gala’s success would not be possible without our committed gala committee and generous sponsors.

Additionally, we would like to thank our auctioneer, Cary Aasness from Fladebo Advancement, and our master of ceremonies, Corey Bianchi-Rossi. Their “unbe-leaf-able” chemistry worked to blend the elements of the entire night into a fun and successful gala.

## THANK YOU

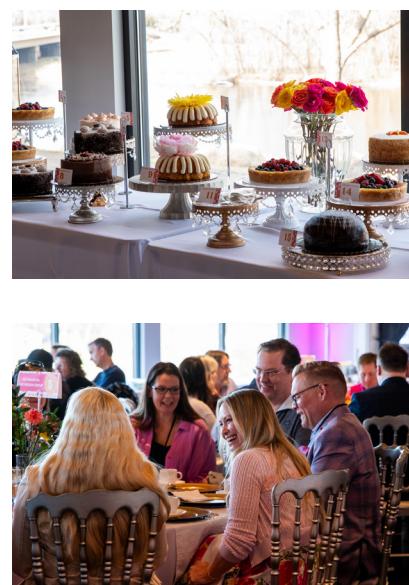
to our event sponsors



GARDEN  
● PARTY  
GALA



# Full "Bloom"



# Wonder Awaits



## MARANATHA'S NEW PLAYGROUND BECOMES A REALITY



**JOHN SZWAJA**  
**Chief Business and Operations Officer**

We are thrilled to announce the grand opening of our brand-new playground. This exciting project began taking shape in May 2023, thanks to the incredible fundraising efforts at our 2023 school gala.



Our playground underwent a thrilling transformation from May 27 to June 5, 2024. Thanks to your generous support, we installed a vibrant playscape packed with opportunities for exploration, imagination, and fun!



The new playground boasts a variety of equipment designed to engage children of all ages and abilities. Here's a sneak peek at some of the highlights:

- **Soaring Adventures:** The Hemisphere Climber provides a challenging ascent, perfect for budding adventurers.
- **Whimsical Exploration:** The Wobble Pod and

TopsyTurny Spinner offer a delightful mix of movement and sensory experiences.

- **Thrilling Rides:** The Alpine and Roller slides provide a taste of exhilaration as kids zoom down and around.
- **Sensory Symphony:** A range of interactive panels—including Gear Panel, Image Panel, Bongo Panel, and Marble Panel—stimulate the senses with sound, textures, and visual interest.

More than just fun, this new playscape isn't just about physical activity; it was designed to nurture a well-rounded development in our children. The equipment promotes:

- **Motor Skills:** Climbing, balancing, spinning, and rolling all contribute to gross motor skill development.
- **Cognitive Skills:** Problem-solving and strategic thinking come into play as children navigate the various structures.

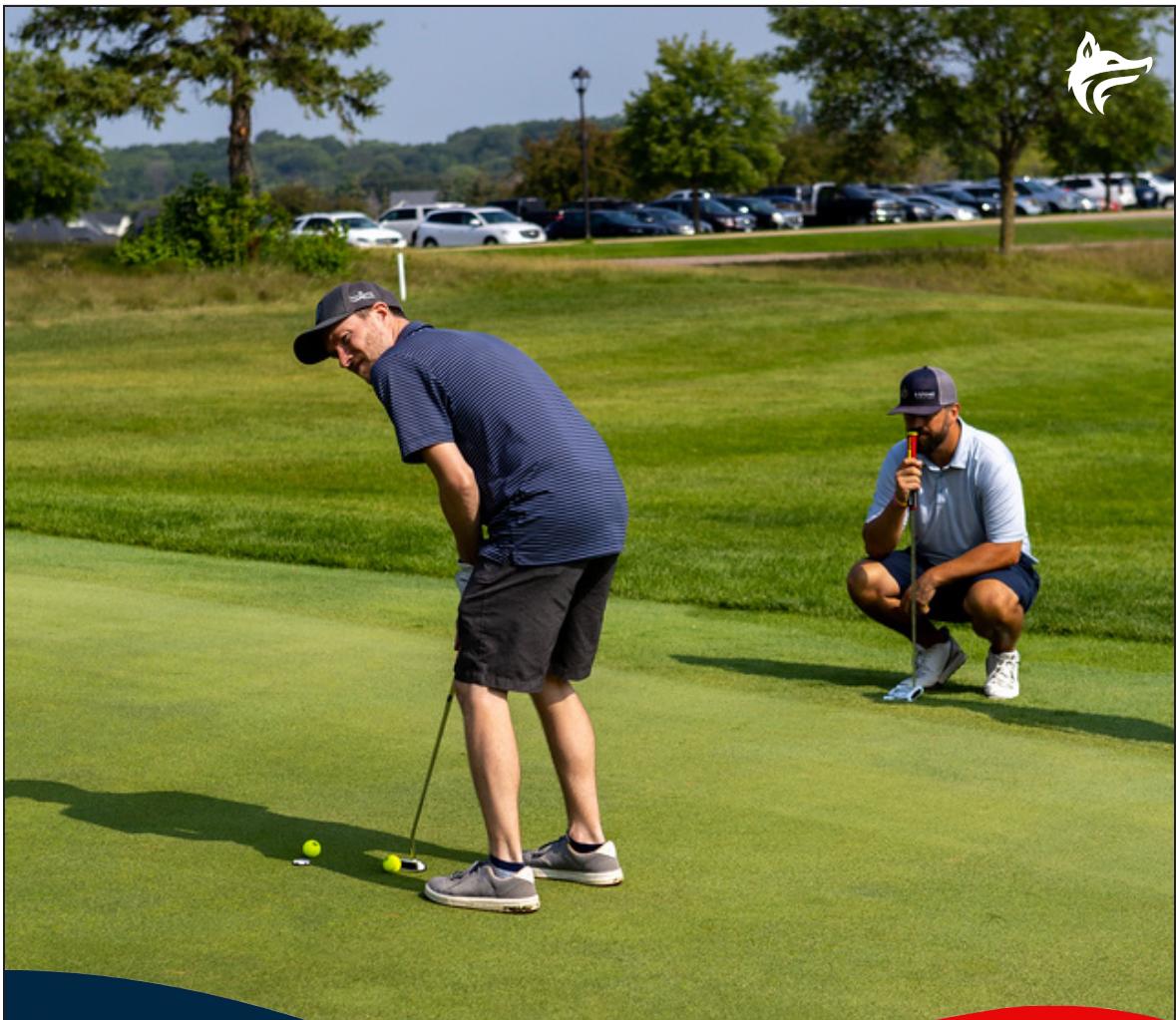
- **Social/Emotional Skills:** Cooperation, imaginative play, and social interaction all flourish in this dynamic environment.

We invite you to experience the joy of our new playground firsthand. See the smiles on your children's faces as they explore, climb, and create lasting memories.

This playground is a testament to the power of the Maranatha Christian Academy community and the importance of investing in our children's future. Thank you for making this dream a reality!

We can't wait to see you and your children out there!





# SAVE THE DATE



**Monday, July 22, 2024**

**9:00 a.m. Shotgun Start**

**Fox Hollow Golf Course**

Scan the code to register today.

Sponsorships are available.



# Decision Day

**"OH, THE PLACES THEY WILL GO..."**

**RACHEL BLOCK &  
DEBORAH  
MEINERS  
College and Career  
Center**

Each year during College & Career Week, we celebrate National Decision Day for our seniors with a catered lunch. During this celebration, our seniors share their plans after graduation with staff and their peers - 90% of this year's senior class plan to attend a 4-year college or university.

Twenty-eight are staying in Minnesota, while twenty-seven are venturing out of state. Three of the senior class are headed to a 2-year community college, one into the military, two into ministry internships, and one venturing into entrepreneurship. We pray blessings over each one as they embark on their next steps in God's calling on their lives.

We also celebrated twelve seniors who had been with us for 13+ years (PreK or Kindergarten to graduation), noting that they had completed their Maranatha

Marathon. Each Maranatha Marathoner received a racing bib and a marathon medal while the "Rocky Theme" played in the background.



# Alumni Past & Present

This Mane Edition alumni section features a few of our international student graduates. Over the last decade or more, Maranatha has had a robust International Student Program, welcoming students from China, South Korea, Vietnam, Spain, Italy, the Czech Republic, Venezuela, Japan, Laos, and more. These students have made an indelible impact on the culture here at the Academy. Additionally, the individuals who hosted these students were

touched by these students as they welcomed them into their homes and families. Many have remained in contact with their students over the years. A good number of students attend MCA for multiple years, intending to graduate and enroll in a university here in the United States. As you can see from these updates, they continue to be passionate about learning and pursuing their passions.



## LIN CEN

Since graduating from Maranatha in 2016, my journey has had its ups and downs. I earned my master's degree in accounting from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, graduating with high honors. After passing the CPA exam, I began

my career in public accounting—working at two Big Four firms in various groups. I soon realized that the corporate accounting world wasn't the right fit for me, which led me to pursue a career change. I am now studying for a master's degree in computer science

at the University of Pennsylvania.

On a personal note, I traveled to Japan last winter and fell in love with the food there. The photo is one of me during my trip. To current students, I encourage you to explore as much as possible during your

college years and pursue your passions. Don't settle for just any job – find something that excites and fulfills you. College is a unique time to discover what you love. Don't be afraid to try new things and take risks. You never know where they might lead you.

## XUJIE YAN (JACK)

I am an international student from China who spent four years at MCA, graduating in 2022. I am currently attending the University of Washington, preparing to apply for one of the engineering majors, and looking for internships. Although Maranatha does a good job preparing students for college, it wasn't an easy transition for me. Once arriving on campus, I struggled in many aspects. I faced academic challenges, time management issues, the sudden change of living environments, friendships, and even mental health. However, I did learn a lot while facing these challenges; I have learned how

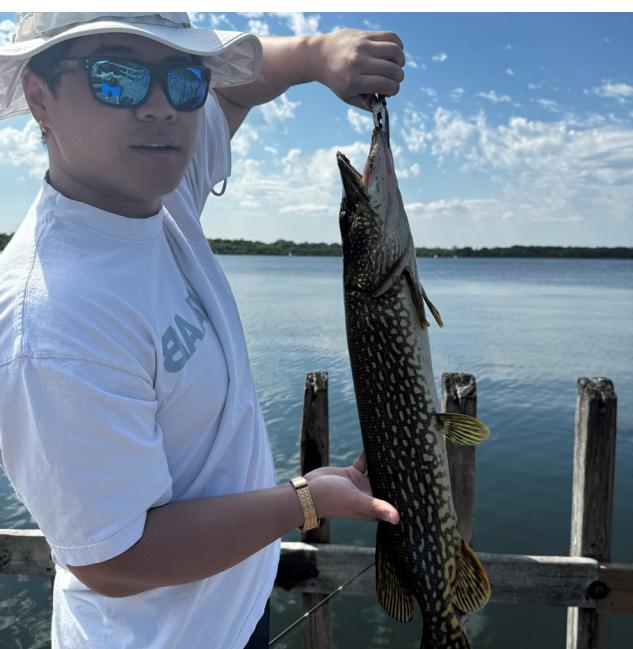
to manage my time better (which helps me with my academics) and how to cook, and I have explored various hobbies, such as photography, billiards, golf, etc.

I also joined a few student clubs; one is called ChanceSee, and the other is Visual Art Society. ChanceSee is a Chinese international student educational club. I am the HR of the club. My job is basically to keep everyone happy and recruit new members for the club. We organize various activities to demonstrate the meaning and value of education to other students. We also donate to schools in rural areas in China that lack sufficient educational resources,

such as school supplies, textbooks, etc.

Visual Art Society is a student-run photography and graphic design service club. I am one of the photographers and the club's one and only drone pilot. Other clubs or organizations can hire us to take photos or videos for them. I enjoy seeing the smiles on my clients' faces when they look at the pictures I took.

Some advice for current ISP students: Don't be afraid to talk to English speakers and make friends with them; it can REALLY help you improve your English skills. Cherish the time you spend in High school.



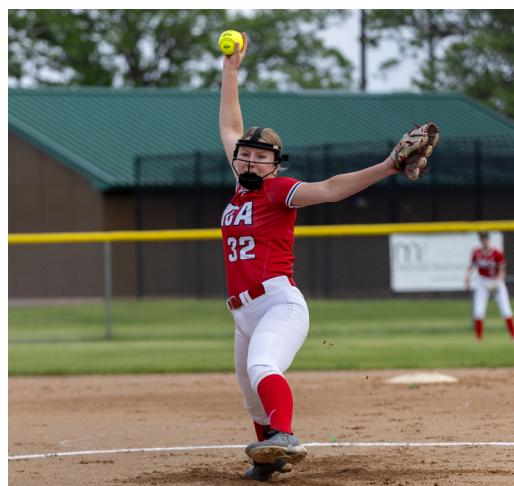
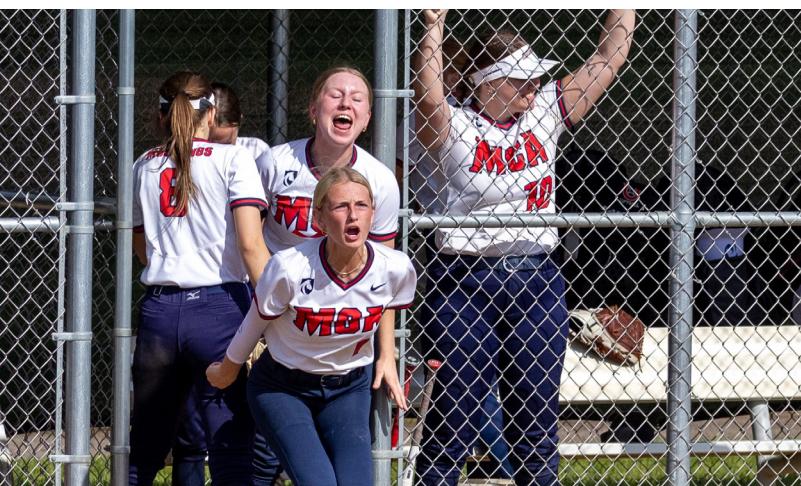
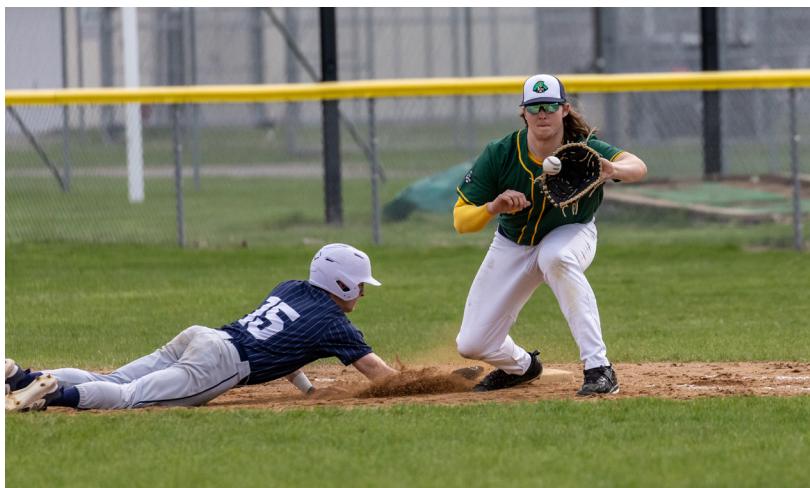
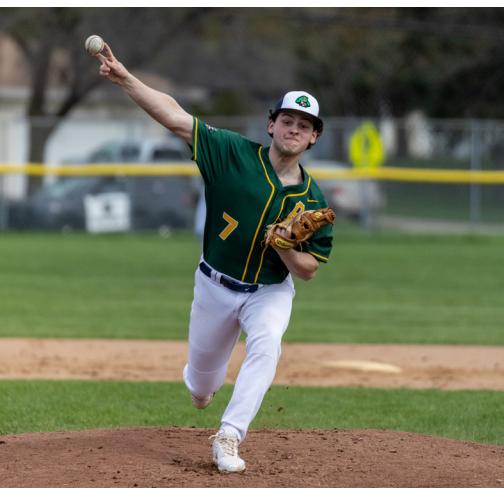
## LIXIN XUE (HARRY)

I attended Maranatha from 2016 to 2020. After high school, I was accepted to the University of St. Thomas, where I graduated with a psychology degree in December 2023. I am planning on pursuing my master's degree in counseling psychology.

Currently, I am working as a behavioral therapist at the Minnesota Autism

Center. I have been living in St. Paul by the riverside for the last four years. During my free time, I have grown to love golfing and fishing.

To any new international students at MCA, I recommend taking advantage of Minnesota's natural environment. Go outside. Have fun.





A Ministry of Living Word Christian Center

## UPCOMING DATES

August 1 - Parent Social for All New Families

- Band Open House

August 8 - Lower School Ice Cream Social

August 12 - Welcome to MCA for New Upper School Families

- Band Open House

August 19 - Back-to-School Night

August 26 - First Day of School Grades 5-12

August 27 - First Day of School Grades PK-4