

Headmaster Search Update

The search committee has been diligently working since last September. About 30 potential headmaster candidates have been reviewed, considered, or interviewed, with the field narrowed down to a few finalists. A new headmaster or interim headmaster will be named over the summer. Please pray for the committee as they seek God's direction on this important decision. If you have any questions or input, please contact Scott Petty 214.228.0343.

Gift Matching Opportunity

Communities Foundation of Texas (CFT) and The Dallas Foundation (TDF) are launching a new online database service entitled Donor Bridge. While funds last, a portion of gifts may be matched up to \$2,500 per donor as detailed below. Go to www.donorbridgetx.org to make your donation and look for the WDCS profile.

- May 19, Launch for CFT and TDF Donors-Donations made through CFT and TDF donor-advised funds will be matched 50 cents per dollar.
- May 20, Public Launch-Donations made by the general public on this day will be

matched dollar-for-dollar. A minimum gift of \$25 is required and the gifts will be processed through CFT with a 5% processing fee.

Barrington Fine Gifts

Friends of WDCS can receive 50% off retail prices by purchasing factory-direct from Barrington, and WDCS will receive 30% of the proceeds. Simply enter the 4-digit code 1009 at www.barrington-direct.com to purchase personalized gifts for your special recipients. Previously, these items have been available only through high-end retailers such as Neiman-Marcus and Macy's.

Noble Boutique and William Noble Rare Jewels

Through May 31, William Noble will give 5% of the proceeds from purchases made by customers who identify themselves as supporters of WDCS. William Noble has the largest new and estate inventory in the Southwest. Please visit Noble Boutique at 18 Highland Park Village, Monday - Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., or call for an appointment at 214.526.3891 or 214.526.3890. Items may also be viewed at www.nobleboutique.com and www.williamnoble.com.



2300 Canada Drive
Dallas, Texas 75212

IMPORTANT DATES

3rd Annual Wild West Sporting Clays Challenge

Friday, August 28
Elm Fork Shotgun Sports

Fall Fundraising Luncheon

Thursday, November 12
Anatole Hotel



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COMMENTS FROM THE HEADMASTER

“**W**here are they now?” is a question I am frequently asked now that the early West Dallas Community School graduates are young adults; or sometimes, given that we only serve pre-k through eighth grade children, “Where do they attend high school?”; and, having announced my upcoming resignation last September, I often hear, “Tom, are you still going to be involved with the school? What are some of your most memorable moments as headmaster?”

In this issue of *Tabella*, I hope to answer some of your questions and share a few of my favorite and poignant memories, both large and small, that have formed, defined, and grown not only me, but the school as well. The years since 2001 have shaped my life in so many ways—most of which have been for the better. While often I have been frustrated and sobered by the plight of many children living in difficult circumstances, at the same time I have been amazed by God’s provision and faithfulness.

Where do they attend high school?

One of the highlights for me over the years has

been assisting our eighth graders and their families with their high school admissions process. Our goal each year is to see them matriculate into the top magnet and private schools in the city. WDCS students have been accepted into the magnet schools of Science & Engineering and Law & Government, and private schools including The Cambridge School of Dallas, Trinity Christian Academy, Bishop Dunne, The Hockaday School, and Episcopal School of Dallas.

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Thankfully, performing well on achievement tests has not generally been our primary challenge. By national norms, 93% of our children score average or above in language arts, and 98% score average or above in mathematics. Still, beyond the obvious financial hurdles, our parents have other issues to overcome such as transportation. Also, how will their child fare socially in a school where the other students live on the “other side of the Trinity River?” How many other minority children attend this school? These are among the obstacles with which our parents grapple.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Amber Kelly and Josh Fellows

Expanding our students' horizons and raising their expectations for themselves are part of our greatest accomplishments. We have eleven graduates who are now 18 years old or older. Of the eleven, eight are in college; two are working; another, sadly, is incarcerated.

Two of our former students, *Amber Kelly* and *Josh Fellows*, are graduating from Trinity Christian Academy this month. Amber was accepted to all seven colleges to which she applied and is now mulling over her options. Josh will be attending Abilene Christian on a football scholarship.

One particular parent graduated the last of her three children a number of years ago. In fact, her son is the former student who landed in jail. We had a difficult relationship including an instance of her yelling at me for some time in my office one day. I figured she was glad to have the school in her rear view mirror, and I confess I was glad to have her in mine. However, last month, I found this same parent in attendance at our Open House luncheon for prospective parents. She was applying for admission for four more children that she had taken in from Child Protective Services (they were children of a cousin). I smiled as I realized that, despite what I thought, she had appreciated the school and the education her children received even if I did not sense it. Talking with her about her struggles and realizing that she believed in the school was a nice gift from the Lord in my last weeks as headmaster.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

I have learned much about God's divine provision and timing. The most glaring example occurred in early 2004, when we were making plans to construct a new building. We had an adequate piece of land, but ideally we wanted more room for athletics and future expansion. So we decided to investigate acquiring the public school building adjacent to our location. Through the valuable relationships Pastor Wilson had with the school district, we were able to present our proposal that



DISD vacate its existing public school building based on its low enrollment and high expenses. DISD thought it was an interesting proposal, but declined. At this point, we informed DISD that the district did not in fact own the land on which the building sat but had leased it from the Dallas Housing Authority. A few days later, we produced the 50-year lease, which was set to expire in May 2005—precisely when we had hoped to break ground on a new building. DISD graciously decided to allow the lease to expire and vacate the property in May 2005. The Dallas Housing Authority then, in possession of the land and the building, leased us the property for 99 years at \$1 a year. *God's timing was perfect.*

Animals have been a consistent problem at the school over the years. We often have to beware of stray dogs on campus and call the pound on occasion. My cat, Rascal, was birthed under one of our portable buildings.

One day, our original portable science lab began to smell as if an animal had died underneath the building. The foul odor increased over the next few days and finally, following a good rain, the stench was unbearable. One morning, I donned my blue jeans, flannel shirt, and gloves and, with flashlight in hand, ventured under the building. I kept following my nose until I arrived at the logical spot, where I noticed sagging in a black fabric that had been stapled to the floor joists. I pushed my hand up against it. Jackpot! I took a knife and began to cut

the fabric; out poured a mixture of blood and water with the foulest stench I have ever encountered. I escaped quickly for a few minutes to regain my composure before venturing back in for the treasure. I cut the rest of the fabric and out fell a dead possum that had been stewing in stagnant rainwater and feasted upon by maggots. It was quite a sight. Some time later, we had another identical dead possum situation, and I had to repeat the whole thing all over again. Joy.

GOING FORWARD

My love for West Dallas Community School began when I was a volunteer—so now, I am returning back to my roots and rejoining you as a volunteer and supporter of this extraordinarily special ministry. I am not leaving, but simply changing roles.

To you, our partners—volunteers, tutors, mentors, prayer warriors, and donors—goes my heartfelt appreciation. Your commitment and generosity of spirit, time, and resources has humbled and encouraged me. Thank you for co-laboring with me and being such a blessing to our children. Although I leave with great confidence in our staff, your involvement is needed now as much as ever. As we grow, we will continue to look for areas where we can cut spending. However, when 70% of the budget is for faculty and staff, and a large portion of the rest is for insurance and utilities, there is only so much that can be trimmed before it affects the classroom. I will continue doing my part to raise the necessary capital for the school to be all that God intends for it to be. I project next year's enrollment to be 225; we have received over 110 applications for admission. The school, Lord willing, will continue to grow each year until it reaches a capacity of 275 students.

God has provided all the necessities to provide over 200 low-income children each year with a high-quality, strongly academic, Christian education they cannot afford on their own. Will God continue to provide? I have all the evidence I need to believe He will do so. The school's provision of an education is but a slight picture of the promise of grace and mercy that Jesus shows those who trust in Him—the provision of everlasting life in the presence of the King, a provision we can never earn or pay for in our own strength. It is a gift.

In the coming weeks, there will be more personal occasions to thank those who have worked closest with me, such as Pastor and Mrs. Wilson and many others. To my parents, thank you for being there for me and supporting me along the way, for encouraging me, for loving me. To my wife, Flora, thank you for bearing all my burdens with me—always listening, always understanding, always helping. Our dinner conversations will likely not be quite as lively since I won't come home each evening and say "Guess what happened at school today."

Gratefully,

Tom Neuhoff, Jr.,
Headmaster