



Heartside Park receives a fresh clean up.



Pounds of peeled carrots create full stomachs and orange hands.



Sixth grade students serve at Hope Network.

Strong Bonds: Changed by Service

I believe that the Christian community is called to serve God by serving others. Opportunities to be servants of Christ are all around us each day. Through our service to others we build community, become aware of God's blessings, and discover how we can help others around us. Exploring this call to service with 6th grade students at ACS is one of the highlights of my year.

Again this year, with the help of 31 adult volunteers, our sixth grade students spent two days being the hands and feet of Christ at 14 organizations around the greater Grand Rapids area. These organizations included God's Kitchen, In the Image, UCOM, Hope Network, Comprenew, Vista Springs Northview, Seidman Park, Bible for Missions Thrift Store, Grand Rapids Area Parks, The Pantry, Vista Springs Wyoming, Apostolic Christian Church, Soup's on - Meals on Wheels and Kids Food Basket.

Over the two weeks leading up to the service days our students had class discussions and chapels to begin thinking about how we could serve others in our community and how we could live out 1 Peter 4:10 which states, "each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms". We thought about what it would be like to be homeless, to not have snacks in the cupboard or not have the means to stop at a fast food restaurant for dinner. Mrs. Koetje shared with students that, "It's not wrong to be homeless or in need, it's just hard" and that we are called to help them.

Following the days of service, students spent time in class reflecting on the experience and writing thank you letters to the organizations. Because service is not only about helping others, but also about understanding how those experiences have changed us, we reflected individually and as a group on questions like:

- What was the most satisfying part of your work? What can you learn from that?
- What was the most difficult or uncomfortable part of your experience? What can you learn from that?
- Is it important for ACS 6th Graders to serve? Why or why not?
- How has this experience changed how you look at the world?
- What important things do you hope to remember about your experience?

A few reflections from 6th graders:

- "I learned that it is ok to need help."
- "I learned that you don't need to buy or have things in order to be happy."
- "The experience changed how I look at the world because I used to look at the world thinking everyone is the same. Now I know that not everyone is the same, but that everyone deserves to be treated the same."
- "I know that God gave everyone a purpose, even if they have special needs."

As we approach Christmas, 6th graders have an extra sense of awareness of the needs around them. One specific need that surprised many students was that food pantries and organizations helping those in need are almost always very short on toilet paper. Sixth graders will be collecting toilet paper to give to United Church Outreach Ministry (UCOM). Feel free to drop a few rolls off at ACS or directly to your local food pantry. — *Nate Kiser*

“Wait for the LORD. Be strong and don’t lose h

Strong Beginnings: The Simplicity of a Sandbox

As our Outdoor Education program continues to expand we asked our Preschool-1st grade staff to dream about the space outside of their hall. With help from our seventh and eighth graders a sandbox was added to the early elementary playground this fall. What started as a simple sandbox with a few logs and boards has turned into an avenue for imagination and creativity. Each day, during recess and after school, students head to this play space and start using their imaginations. Logs become the foundation for a house and boards are used as bridges.

“It’s a great option for kids who may not like soccer or tag. They have a space to be creative while still being outside,” first grade teacher Miss Bonnema shared. “The sensory experience of sand mixed with the gross motor skills of lifting makes the sandbox a total win. It’s been fun to watch them get excited about the littlest things like finding a new board or making a home for toads and bugs.”

Not only are students learning with their hands but they are also growing their minds. “I have seen kids learning to share and work together in groups while building,” said Miss Bonnema. “My first graders are also getting to know kindergarteners by talking while they play and build. Important relationships are being formed with kids of different ages.” It has been a joy to watch as our youngest students learn through play.



Kindergartens find logs to serve as a good foundation.



Students arrange wooden pieces to create forts and bridges.

Strong Living: Uncovering a Story

What do deer bones, clay pots and several Taino Indian artifacts have in common? Fifth graders uncovered all of these during their two-week archaeological dig this Fall. Former ACS teacher and current archaeologist Neil Bierling planted several artifacts in our 20’ X 40’ archaeology site modeled after early Israeli homes.

Working in groups of six, students first lined out the square in which they would work. Next, working slowly, students used small utensils like brushes and dental picks to remove dirt and uncover artifacts. Once an artifact was found students had to plot the item on their chart and use the proper scale. Items could then be carefully cleaned off and placed on the counter in the classroom for observation.

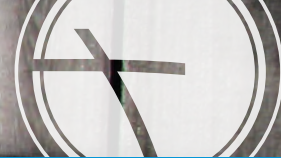
Fifth grade teacher Miss Slauer explained that more than finding artifacts, students are working to “uncover a story.” “Since they spent time beforehand learning about archaeology, the kids were more invested because they knew the why behind it,” said Miss Slauer. Students learned how archaeology could shed light on parts of the Bible that may be confusing. They spent time in class asking, “What questions do we have about the Bible that archeology can help us answer?”

Students also learned empathy for archaeologists when they were working in the intense heat or cold rain. Some commented, “I could never be an archaeologist,” while others embraced the slow methodical process.

Fifth grade student Lily O’Grady used the word “unexpected” to best describe her experience during the dig. “It was really fun to uncover things and to see everything we collected,” she commented. “I was surprised how much I loved doing the charting and scales, too.” From planning and digging, to charting and putting together a story, students were able to experience the full archaeological process.



Deer bones are uncovered by fifth grade archaeologist, Tessa Honholt.



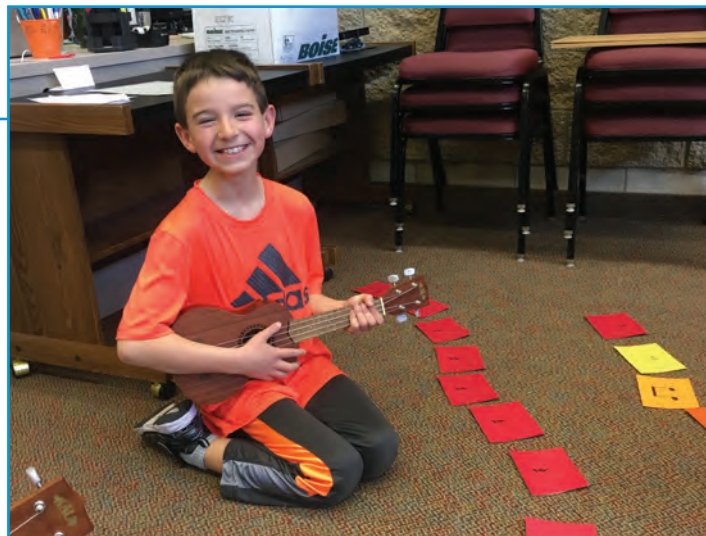
Strong Growing: A Pleasant New Sound

Somewhere over the rainbow, in the elementary music room at Ada Christian School, the sound of strumming ukuleles can be heard.

Last year, when we received a donation to our music program, our music teacher, Mrs. Vruwink, knew right away what she wanted to add: ukuleles. Now, beginning in the second trimester of school, third grade students are introduced to this small stringed instrument. As the year progresses students learn different notes and strum patterns building up to full songs and a performance at Grand Friend’s Day.

Students light up any time you mention ukuleles, eager to share a song they have learned or what they named their instrument. Our third graders were very proud to be chosen as the grade to have this added to their curriculum. One third grader commented, “I thought it was cool to be the first students to play the ukuleles. It was really special to perform on Grand Friend’s Day.”

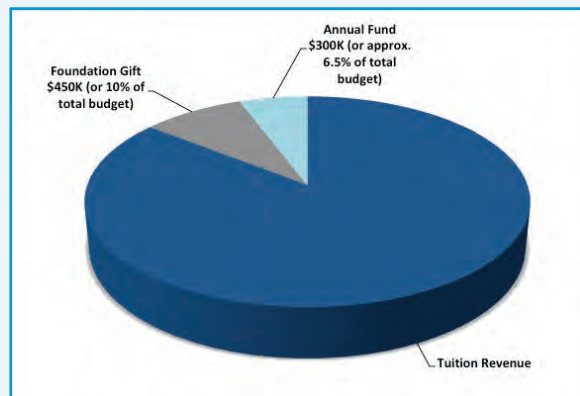
Why ukuleles and why third grade you might ask? Mrs. Vruwink explains, “Ukuleles give students a unique introduction to string instruments as well as develop their ability to read music. Strumming and picking is a perfect way for students to continue to exercise their fine motor skills. In



James VandenBosch proudly strums notes on his ukulele.

third grade, students continue to develop independence and the ukuleles serve as another avenue for problem solving.” Her favorite part of the program has been watching student’s faces beam with pride when they finally play a song all the way through successfully switching chords. “I’m grateful to have the chance to have a ukulele program and for all of the excitement and support around it,” Mrs. Vruwink shared.

Strong Future: ACS Annual Fund: Making The Difference



Every year Ada Christian School depends on the philanthropic community to help cover a portion of expenses that are not covered by tuition revenue.

The ACS Annual Fund, Ada Christian’s annual giving program, is the school’s top fundraising priority. When you give a gift to The ACS Annual Fund, you make an immediate impact to the students, faculty, and vibrant educational programs that distinguish our school. Please consider a gift to this year’s annual fund. Your gift signals your confidence in our mission of equipping students for service in God’s world by integrating academic excellence with a distinctly Christian perspective.

Your Participation In Our Annual Fund Helps Us:

- Deliver a leading academic education tailored to students’ unique needs and learning styles
- Supply the resources and support needed to ensure students are equipped to make healthy choices for their own physical and emotional well-being
- Nurture students’ personal relationship with Christ and provide opportunities for them to express and share their faith
- Lead students to a comprehensive understanding of their communities and engage them as agents of change for the Lord
- Provide needed tuition assistance for families who desire an ACS education

ACS Events

- Dec 13 Middle School Christmas Concert
(grades 5-8)
- Dec 18-19 Preschool Christmas Programs
- Dec 24- Jan 7 Christmas Break
- Jan 15 Open House (PK-1st grade)
- Mar 12 Kindergarten Information Night
- Mar 21-22 Dessert Theatre: Aladdin Jr.

For more information on these events,
visit our website at:

www.adachristian.org

Strong Leading: Student Conferencing

It is one thing to say that Ada Christian School nurtures students -- mind, body, and soul in Christian community, but it means much more to see it lived out in so many ways. As I made a loop through the school recently, I simply had to pause in the middle school hallway as I thought, "This is amazing!" and my heart whispered, "Thank you, Lord."

Teachers and students were meeting one-on-one for teacher-student conferences. Each year we bring in substitute teachers so our seventh and eighth grade teachers can meet with their homeroom students to talk about how each young man and woman are doing.

Each student prepares for the meeting by considering where they are currently and setting goals for where they want to be: (Mind) What subjects am I enjoying the most and the least? What kind of grade would I give myself for effort? (Body) Am I getting enough sleep and exercise? Am I building healthy habits? (Soul) What goal do I have for spiritual growth and how could I achieve it? (Community) If I graded our middle school community, what would I give us and why? How have I grown because of my work with others this year? If I have a problem, who do I feel comfortable sharing with?

Each conference ends with prayer and a positive sense that teachers and students know one another a bit better and that, together, we have a faith strong ACS family committed to nurturing the whole child.

– *Principal Brower*



Mrs. Quist conferences with seventh grade student Lindsey Schrock

Strong Journey:

An Excerpt from 2018 Distinguished Service Award Recipient

“Relationship and friendships begin at ACS and they last. When I think about ACS, and the work of the Education Foundation, I think about how blessed we are to have this caring and collaborative Christian community. Over the years, we have seen first hand how the teachers, administrative staff and parents collaborate to nurture each and every student through a Christian perspective.

One can't help but marvel at the projects and opportunities given to our children to grow in their faith, their knowledge of God and His incredible world. From the books they read, to the songs they sing, to the projects they perfect, our children grow in their faith and their knowledge of our Savior through the teaching and opportunities provided at ACS.

Serving ACS has been a joy and a privilege and I am grateful for every opportunity I had to serve. It was through these opportunities that I made important and lasting connections with the amazing staff at ACS as well as the other parents.

It brings me to tears of joy to think of my parent's generation, my generation and now the future generation of this community. These connections and treasured friendships that make our community so strong. We have no doubt that YOU, our community, will continue this legacy of service in God's world. Get out there, make connections, and keep this strong Christian community thriving! Because THAT is what ACS is all about!” — ***Jeannine Lanning***



Ada Christian School
Faith. Strong.

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