

# Spirit

SANTA FE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Making  
**Mentorship**  
Meaningful





# Spirit

SANTA FE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS  
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Dear SFC Friends and Families,

When the Israelites were told to love the Lord with all their heart, that meant their heart, their soul, and their mind – meaning the seed of intellect as well. Many Christians think spirituality only happens in a Bible class, during chapel, or on a mission trip – not in a math class. Yet, that's just not true! As a Christian school, we embrace the opportunity to examine the breadth of God's created order.

Interesting enough, a liberal arts approach to schooling is the best way to teach about this created order. Learning about geometric shapes, scientific experiments, the way colors work together, the beauty of the English sentence, and the amazing structure of a great paragraph are actually acts of worship! These findings inspire a sense of awe and wonder in children as they discover the amazing mysteries of God's universe.

Naturally, during this time of discovery and exploration, kids will encounter moments of failure. Teachers and coaches come alongside parents to help turn those failings into beautiful opportunities for redemption. These adults mentor children through tough moments while instilling wisdom beyond the students' years.

There are over 200 adults that are touching the lives of kids every day at Santa Fe Christian. When you open the pages of this magazine, you'll notice a continual thread of mentorship weaved throughout. It begins with a story of how adults pour into students' lives and their walks with Christ. It continues with how God's order spans all areas and disciplines.

As a Christian liberal arts school, we are best suited to mentor children to love the Lord their God with all their hearts, souls and minds – and to be madly in love with God's created order!

Enjoy the stories of God's handiwork,



**ON THE COVER:** Students from SFC's athletic training program are exposed to the medical field by shadowing SFC parent, Dr. Ramin Raiszadeh, during a spine surgery.



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BY MIKE YORKEY

# MENTORING MATTERS

**Each school day on the Santa Fe Christian campus, more than 200 adults understand they have an incredible opportunity to mentor and guide the next generation.**

## SHORTLY AFTER

the school year ended in June 2003, Santa Fe Christian's high school Bible teacher, Paul Lyons, felt God leading him to intentionally mentor a group of SFC male graduates in the midst of their college years.

"I had this little notebook, and I said, 'Okay, God, you've got to give me the names,'" Mr. Lyons explained.

Over the summer, God provided 11 names of former students who were in their first or second year of college. That fall, Mr. Lyons reached out and asked them to meet with him for breakfast or lunch the next time they came home on a break. Sometimes he drove to their college to meet with them.

"I usually got together with two or three of these young men at a time, and the first thing I said to them was this: 'I have a proposition for you, but I need a yes or a no before we go any further. And if you say yes, then it's for a lifetime.'"

More than a few of the college men gulped. *Where is Mr. Lyons going with this?* But they all said yes and waited to hear what he was proposing.

"Here's what I want to do," Mr. Lyons told the young men, who were in their late teens and early twenties. "I want to be in your life until I die, to hold you accountable and to help you when it comes to the big things ahead of you: courting a young woman, getting married, becoming a father, and raising a family in a godly way. I promise to be in your corner until I draw my last breath."



“I WANT TO BE IN YOUR LIFE UNTIL I DIE, TO HOLD YOU ACCOUNTABLE AND TO HELP YOU WHEN IT COMES TO THE BIG THINGS AHEAD OF YOU...”

PAUL LYONS, SFC BIBLE TEACHER

FEATURE



While his stunned audience needed a few moments to process that far-reaching statement, Mr. Lyons added, “I promise to contact you every Saturday for the rest of my life. Whether you answer my phone call is up to you, but I will leave a message to encourage you. Then every two or three months, I will write you an email and share a devotional thought.”

Instead of a chorus of voices saying, “That’s nice of you to offer, Mr. Lyons, but...” the universal response that Mr. Lyons received from the 11 young men was this: *I can’t believe this is happening. I’ve wanted something like this for a long, long time.*

### Commitment for Life

EVERY SATURDAY AFTERNOON for the last 16 years, except when Christmas falls on that day or an occasional Saturday because of travel, Mr. Lyons has individually called each of these young men to ask how they are, what their prayer life has been like, and if they want to discuss anything in their lives—from triumphs to struggles and everything in between.

His wife, Glenda, has been totally on board with him giving up part of his weekend. “She’s been at my side every moment of this path that we have traveled with these young people,” he said. “She is my best encourager and helpmate.”

Mr. Lyons has a name for this 11-person group: God’s Men. When he

# “NOW TEACH THESE PEOPLE WHO WILL BE ABLE

goes through his list and starts tapping out phone calls on a Saturday afternoon, he never knows if he’ll be leaving a message or whether the conversation will lead to serious topics on the young man’s heart: tough questions about God, a dalliance in porn, or conflict with a spouse.

These men are in their mid- to late-thirties today, all married. Most are fathers. None have divorced, despite living in a culture where half of all marriages don’t last and many of their contemporaries choose to live together anyway. Because of the life stage they’re in, conversations have taken a different tack in recent years:

- *How do I find time to date my wife?*
- *Do I take the promotion even though it means more travel?*
- *What’s the best way to discipline our kids?*

“It’s amazing the intimate conversations we’ve had over the years, and every single guy who’s part of God’s Men is still going strong with me,” Mr. Lyons said. “I’ve been to all of their weddings, except for one, and even married two of them. But then 10 years ago, God said to me, ‘I want you to do this again.’ I replied to Him, ‘Are you kidding me?’ His direction, though, was clear: ‘I want you to do it all in the same class.’”

In June 2010, God led Mr. Lyons to six recent graduates, but this time things were different: they were three young men and three young *women*. He decided to call them the God Six. To get things rolling, he contacted each individual and asked him or her to meet with him and their parents at a friend’s home.

“When I turned to address the parents, I said, ‘I’m committing to your kids for the rest of my life,’ and I described what

I had done with God’s Men. The reaction from the parents was universal—tears and thankfulness.”

This means that on every Saturday afternoon, Mr. Lyons makes 17 phone calls. The weekly effort takes between one and two hours.

“I would be amiss to say that all of God’s Men or the God Six are walking where they should be with the Lord, but the lines of communication are open,” said Mr. Lyons. “They still talk to me. They still receive my encouragement. And when I hear some of them tell me that they’re mentoring someone else because of how I invested in their lives, that brings me great joy.”

### Incredible Opportunities

MR. LYONS IS A sterling example of the mentorship going on every day on Santa Fe Christian Schools’ campus. Each time the first bell rings, more than 200 adults—teachers, administrators, counselors, athletic coaches, and staff—understand that from the moment they step on school grounds, mentoring opportunities will present themselves.

Each adult is fully aware that how they listen, what they say, and the relationships they form with the students—sometimes lifelong—is an incredible privilege as well as one that carries a great responsibility. They grasp that mentors are the people who can lead the next generation into a deeper relationship with God, guide them to make good decisions, and teach them discernment that will become more valuable with each passing day.

Their model is the relationship that the apostle Paul had with his apprentice Timothy when he encouraged the younger disciple to carry on the mentorship

# TRUTHS TO OTHER TRUSTWORTHY TO PASS THEM ON TO OTHERS.” 2 TIMOTHY 2:2



SFC Bible teacher Paul Lyons has a passion for investing in students' lives.

process within the local body. “You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses,” Paul said about Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2 (NLT). “Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them on to others.”

## A High EQ

ROD GILBERT, THE HEAD OF SCHOOLS, says the emphasis on mentorship at Santa Fe Christian is all by design.

“We have teachers and coaches who have a high EQ—high emotional quotient,” Mr. Gilbert said. “They can really read a room and aren’t bothered

when some of the kids color outside the lines. These teachers and coaches are more than willing to let the kid’s failings, shortcomings, and mess-up moments become a beautiful occasion when they can talk things through with that young person. Many times, the kids who fail or struggle feel safe enough to talk about why they acted out or said what they did—even when they don’t know why. Either way, our teachers listen and insert their wisdom in incredible ways every day at Santa Fe Christian.”

Mr. Gilbert, who arrived at Santa Fe Christian Schools during the summer of 2018, said he was pleasantly surprised to

find that mentorship was part of the DNA among the teachers, coaches, and staff.

“I saw people purposely wanting to mentor children and their hearts,” Mr. Gilbert said. “For instance, SFC Athletic Director Doug Miller helps students by goal setting and life coaching in their athletic, academic, and spiritual lives. Many students reach out to him and ask for help, and their relationships continue from high school and beyond. There are many instances where he’s able to give examples from his own life and his struggles that he wants to teach his players.”

Mentoring is not a new concept, of course. The notion of someone older

influencing, guiding, and directing a younger individual entrusted into his or her care dates back to Homer's *Odyssey*, when Odysseus left to fight in the Trojan War and asked an elderly friend named Mentor to be a wise and trusted teacher for his son Telemachus.

Were he alive today, Odysseus would be the first to say that he lived in a simpler era. Instead, as the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century rapidly comes to a close, impressionable pre-teens and teens have no idea what it's like to go through life without a smartphone in their backpacks and social media in their apps.

In addition, more students than ever come from broken homes and lack a male role model in their lives, while others don't see their parents very much because their fathers and mothers are working long hours and dealing with a long commute every day.

Also, as Mr. Gilbert points out, a majority of students are involved in extracurricular programs—sports, drama, and school clubs—which means they are on campus longer. This places them inside a daylong orbit of teachers and coaches who, during the course of their duties, are presented daily—some would say every other minute—with opportunities to impact the students in their care. They never know when a “teachable moment” will present itself and they can impart a life lesson in the classroom or on the ball field.

Kristi Ellis, Santa Fe Christian's Middle School Assistant Principal, said that she immediately noticed the fine line between teaching and mentoring when her three children enrolled at SFC after attending public schools all their lives.

“As a mom, I knew that as my children grew older, they would be out of the nest



**Coach Roberts and Coach Miller love training and mentoring SFC students.**

and be less likely to want to hear from me,” she said. “We all know this is true as parents. So as I watched my three children get settled in, I was asking myself, ‘Who’s speaking into my kiddos?’ That’s when I noticed that the main power in their lives were their teachers and coaches, especially during the high school years. I’ve witnessed firsthand how these men and women have invested in my children

and gotten more out of our kids than they thought they had to give.”

Mrs. Ellis, who taught English in local public schools before coming to SFC as a part-time teacher, is well aware of how teachers need to be intentional when it comes to being good mentors.

“I believe there’s good mentoring going on in the public schools, but there’s something different here,” she said. “The

responsibilities that Jesus gives us, as role models and counselors, is an idea that has really taken hold in our teachers, coaches, and staff. I know the seeds they plant in our students will reap a rich reward over the course of their lives.”

Mrs. Ellis readily recalls the time when the family was sitting around the dining room table and their three children couldn't stop talking about something that Mrs. Rogers said in her English class or a key point that Mr. Jelnick conveyed in math. “Everything our kids talked about sprang from their teachers, not their friends. While the voices of myself and

my husband, Jeff, were still important, we knew the SFC teachers and coaches were speaking loudly into our children's lives and all the kids on campus. For that, we are grateful.”

### Serve Pizza and They Will Come

EVERYONE KNOWS THAT Santa Fe Christian's teachers are the unsung heroes when it comes to mentoring students. Ask administrators for a few stories, and they'll tell you about the teachers who invite students to their homes for study sessions—and pay for the pizza delivery out of their own pockets—or say, “Hey,

student-athletes as well as sit next to Santa Fe Christian students in the grandstands. These SFC teachers understand that mentoring is often unplanned, never scripted, but always impactful and changing.

“What we're seeing now, during the formative years from 9<sup>th</sup> grade to 12<sup>th</sup> grade,” said Mr. Gilbert, “is that kids are being hurried into pre-adulthood faster than when I was a youngster. But it's really weighing upon the younger grades far more than I would have ever imagined. Thirty years ago, we could maintain some type of bubble around them, but today's kids are being forced into more complex conversations at younger and younger ages, and that's because of the technology at their fingertips and the ubiquitousness of social media,” he said.

Mrs. Ellis totally agrees. “You would be surprised about the things that students talk to us about,” she said. “They knock us off our feet as teachers and take our breath away. I spent time with a 7<sup>th</sup> grader recently who had doubts about God. I praised her for spending time talking with me and asked her questions like, ‘How do you physically feel connected to the Lord?’ We had great discussions. And last year, I had a set of girls who would have lunch with me occasionally. We would pick out a piece of Scripture, and I would ask them what they were thinking when they read it. Those were amazing times.”

This is why Dr. Deveau, the Middle School principal, gave the green light to Mrs. Ellis's request to teach a curriculum that she wrote for a girls-only class called Identity & Sisterhood, or I&S for short.

“The curriculum I wrote is built on the backs of other giants,” she said. “Identity & Sisterhood is a semester-long



Mrs. Ellis teaches a girls-only class called Identity & Sisterhood, which presents her with great mentoring opportunities.

let's grab a burrito” when they spot a senior or junior struggling to keep up with his classwork or overcome a bad outing on the ball field.

You could say that mentoring is baked into Santa Fe Christian's culture and the reason why many teachers will come back to campus for an evening volleyball game or drive to San Juan Capistrano—on a busy Friday night—to cheer on their

SFC teachers are known for having lunch with students who just need to talk.

elective that gives me a unique opportunity for mentorship because I help the girls understand who God made them to be, how they express that in today's world, and what their goals and dreams can be."

"All the different messaging that the world gives to women is very confusing, so we talk about that confusion, how to find our way through it, and how we can take care of one another," Mrs. Ellis said.

"I remember one student who approached me early in the semester and told me the only reason she chose the class was because it fit her schedule. A month later, she said, 'Mrs. Ellis, I need to tell you something. I thought this class was going to be really lame, but it's the best class on my schedule. I love it!'"

The honesty of those types of interactions doesn't surprise Mrs. Ellis. "I had a student last year who stayed after school multiple times to just sit with me and ask heavy questions she didn't feel comfortable asking in front of her peers. I didn't always have the answers, but it's great that we can hang out and have those conversations."

Everywhere on the Santa Fe Christian campus, other teachers have similar stories to tell. Overseeing this mentoring mindset among the staff is Mr. Gilbert, who hasn't forgotten the mentoring he received at crucial moments in his upbringing. "My teachers always said I talked too much, which may come as a shock to those who know me," he recalled with a chuckle. "I think the teachers who appreciated my inquisitiveness got the most out of



me. But it wasn't until I was 22 and in seminary in Memphis, Tennessee, that Clyde Cranford, a minister of music, would meet with me and eight to 10 other young men for an hour or two a week. Clyde was a great discipler of young would-be preachers who really prepared me for ministry. He made me read a whole bunch of books, and we'd talk about the theology of what I read and how best to share God's love," the Head of Schools said.

"I'll never forget something that Clyde said: 'You fill your cup when you walk with Christ, and whatever you do, don't do ministry with an empty cup or you'll burn out.' That's why I have to be filling my cup behind the scenes so that when really crazy things happen, which they sometimes do, I'm working from a cup overflowing with Christ, which helps me and helps the school."

### A Chance Encounter

TEN YEARS AGO, Mr. Lyons had breakfast with one of his God's Men who wanted to talk to Coach—as his God's Men call him—about his recent breakup with his girlfriend. Their relationship looked like it was headed to the altar, at least to friends and family, but the young man felt he wasn't ready to make that lifelong commitment.

"We've decided to break up after a year of dating," the 27-year-old young man told Mr. Lyons.

They talked that through, which was good for the young man. “That’s okay,” Coach said. “Just make sure that you include God in your decision-making process.”

A few weeks later, Mr. Lyons boarded a flight from Denver to San Diego after attending a board meeting for a missionary organization that he was part of. Mr. Lyons was walking down the aisle, searching for his seat when he saw the former girlfriend of the young man who had recently told him that they had decided to break off their relationship.

“Mr. Lyons, what are you doing here?” she asked, clearly surprised. Like her former beau, she had attended Santa Fe Christian and been part of his Bible classes.

“Mind if I sit next to you?” he asked.

“Not at all,” she replied.

For the next two hours, they talked nonstop about relationships and marriage and getting past rough patches in life. Coach wasn’t counseling them to get back together, but he helped the young woman process what she was going through and pointed her to the Lord.

She nodded her head and felt like he really helped her.

Upon his return to San Diego, Mr. Lyons had a breakfast meeting with the young man the following morning—a breakfast that had been scheduled before Coach’s trip to Denver. Meeting at Beach Break Café in Oceanside, Mr. Lyons told him, “You won’t believe what happened on my trip to Colorado. When I got on the plane to come home, I sat next to this good-looking girl. And I’m thinking, boy, this is one nice girl.”

The young man stopped Mr. Lyons. “Coach, you’re killing me. You’re married. Where are you going with this?”

“You know who she was?”

“No.”

“It was—” and then he proceeded to name her.

The young man nearly fell out of his chair since the odds of Coach boarding an airplane in Denver and stumbling across his former girlfriend were next to impossible. “You have to be kidding me,” said the young man, clearly shocked.

“I’m not.”

After the young man caught his breath, Mr. Lyons talked through many of the same issues that he had discussed with the young woman. When breakfast was over, Mr. Lyons imparted this advice: “You know, give it time and see where God leads you, but a girl will not wait forever. I’m sorry, but that’s the way God wired them.”

The young man said he would think and pray about what to do, and over the next two months, he felt that God was leading him to give their relationship one more shot. He decided to reach out to the young woman to rekindle their relationship, and the rest is history.

“They were the first couple I ever married,” Mr. Lyons said, his face beaming. “That was a pretty special day in my life as well.”

And that’s how Johnny Zublin and Andrea Yorkey got married on April 24, 2010. **Spirit**

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*Mike Yorkey is a veteran author and co-author of more than 100 books. His daughter, Andrea, graduated from Santa Fe Christian Schools in 2001 and son, Patrick, graduated a year later. Read more about Mike at [www.mikeyorkey.com](http://www.mikeyorkey.com).*

Andrea and Johnny Zublin were the first couple that SFC Bible teacher Paul Lyons married in a backyard ceremony.



# UPWARD TRENDS IN PROBLEM SOLVING

**BUILDING A FLEXIBLE  
MATH PROGRAM  
THAT EXTENDS TO  
ALL GRADE LEVELS**



# ABOUT THE YEAR 2000,

THE TRENDS IN  
INTERNATIONAL  
MATHEMATICS AND  
SCIENCE STUDY  
(TIMSS) REPORTED AN  
ALARMING DEFICIENCY  
OF PROBLEM-SOLVING  
SKILLS IN THE UNITED  
STATES AS COMPARED  
TO GERMANY AND JAPAN.

A MORE RECENT STUDY revealed an insufficiency in our math education system in equipping students for the mathematical problem-solving needed to succeed at the university level. The study found that across all universities in the United States, approximately 40 percent of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) majors complete their degree – quite a meager statistic when compared to other majors. Yet, those adequately trained in mathematical problem-solving are well prepared for the rigor of a STEM education, and can look forward to exceptional opportunities in the future. SFC's math education teaches students to creatively problem-solve so that they may embrace challenges that yield such opportunity.

## Opportunities in All Grade Levels

TODAY, A POSITIVE culture and curriculum for mathematical problem-solving is present in SFC's Lower, Middle, and Upper School. SFC's math teachers have worked together in building a flexible math program that extends to all grade levels.

The Lower School engages students early on through various teaching strategies that help students see number relationships rather than just digits. For example, Laura Pierson, a first-grade teacher, begins her lessons with story problems that engage all students in critical thinking. From here, she plans different problem types to differentiate her instruction to meet the needs of her learners. There are other opportunities for students to participate in after school math clubs. The fifth and sixth-grade clubs annually compete in the Math Olympiads for Elementary and Middle School (MOEMS). They won a National High Achievement Award, and were 1 point short of scoring in the top 10% as a team, nationally.

The Middle School engages students in math club both at lunch and after school where students prepare for the American Mathematics Competition (AMC), Math Counts, and Math Olympiads competitions. In addition, students have the opportunity to take an elective class called Math Problem Solving. In this course, students learn about combinatorics, a study of advanced counting techniques and concepts that are directly applicable to statistics and computer science.

The Upper School offers a number of high-level classes: from Calculus BC, Advanced Math Theory and Proof, and a San Diego State University accredited Linear Algebra class. The math team participates in formal competitions nearly every month including the AMC and Caltech/Harvey Mudd Math competitions. Upper



School math classes and clubs push students out of their comfort zones while providing plenty of support along the way. Competitions inspire students to train more, particularly when the chance to beat a rival school is on the line. Furthermore, alumni are graduating with degrees in STEM fields from some of the top colleges in the nation and pursuing careers in noteworthy businesses and research.

### Welcome to Everyone

MATH CLUBS are welcoming and fun and attract a wide variety of students. Mr. Maxon, teacher of Linear Algebra, AP Calculus BC, Advanced Math, and the Middle School elective Math Problem Solving, is particularly keen at drawing in

all types of students. Micah Lyle (2013) went on to double major at Berkeley in Applied Mathematics and Computer Science, recalls Mr. Maxon's capability to recruit even the most unlikely candidate. "No one was excluded from math club; it wasn't intimidating or unwelcoming. My friends who had never had any inclination toward math, were suddenly doing the AMC. He made it a culture that was friendly and fun while producing amazing math students out of a tiny environment."

The consistent success of the math program shows that this is not just an anomaly created by a few exceptionally talented students. The program itself is producing students with a comprehensive knowledge of high-level math concepts

Working together to solve difficult problems is a good workout for "mathletes."



Upper School students work with Lower School students using manipulatives to explain math concepts.

and extensive problem-solving experience. As the number of students interested in mathematics clubs, contests, and advanced-level math classes has increased, so has the level of math-related achievement. This robust math program would be impossible if not driven by exceptional teaching and an engaging culture of student participation.

## Teaching with Intention

### *Quality Curriculum*

The TIMSS study with its startling statistics has informed the way SFC designs its math education. Students are not expected to get the answer the first time around, but are encouraged to keep trying with the assistance of questions targeted to recall what they have already learned. SFC's curriculum acutely addresses the need for high-level problem solving by emphasizing a conceptual understanding of topics and giving a

positive perspective on challenges. "It is good for students to struggle with a problem and not fully know how to solve it," says Upper School teacher Mr. Maxon, "because that is the place that they are pushed to problem-solve."

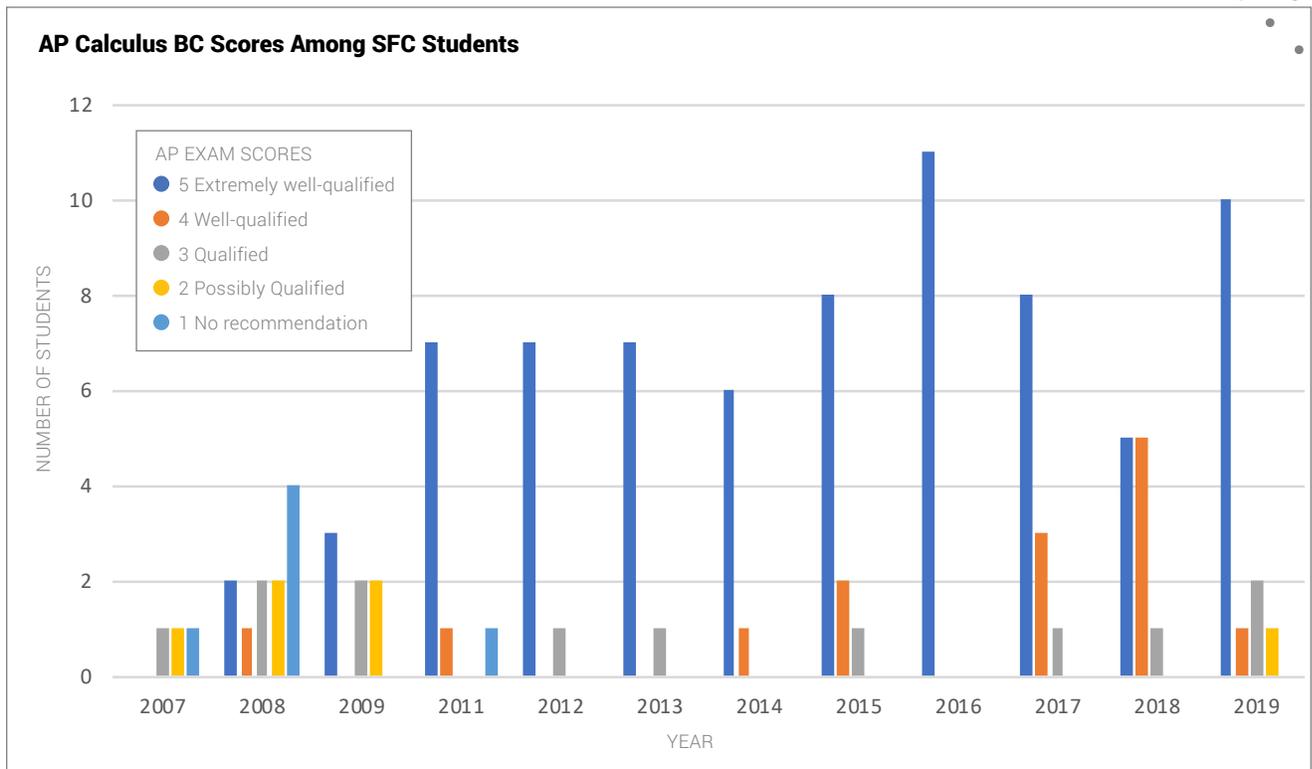
Ryan Gillett teaches Pre-Algebra and Algebra I in the Middle School. He purposefully moves away from requiring students to simply memorize calculations and instead guides them in deciphering which tools they need to solve a problem. Mr. Gillett remarks, "It's much more about being a mathematical thinker as opposed to being a calculator. It's about how they approach the problem, use their tools, and push through."

Through their classes and the math clubs, Lower and Middle School students are now solving problems using critical and creative thinking; building an important foundation that will set them up for success. Amanda Burgner, an

Upper School math teacher, notes that by the time students arrive in her class, they have developed the necessary skills for success and have a positive relationship with math. "Both of these make it easier for me to teach Algebra II."

As the teacher for Algebra II (prep and honors) as well as AP Calculus AB, Mrs. Burgner prompts students through questions to find patterns in mathematical situations while encouraging them to collaborate. Instead of a lecture-heavy class structure, Mrs. Burgner relates, "It's not just [about students] finding the right answer, but working through a problem step-by-step and communicating their thought process."

The math department stays up to date with current math education. Mr. Maxon continually puts extra time and investment to reading academic journals and applies his findings in the math clubs and his high-level classes. This translates



into his students enjoying the most cutting-edge technology in learning.

He displays math concepts using dynamic mathematics-visualization software, which makes the topic more understandable and more engaging. His teaching goes far beyond how to simply get an answer. He provides experiences in which students get to develop for themselves the major ideas of mathematics and connect all new concepts to previous concepts and ideas they have learned. Thus, students feel ownership over their learning. When students encounter a tough spot, Mr. Maxon often leads them through questions like, “Tell me how you got that number?” or “What does that

number you just calculated have to do with the context of the problem?” Through this, he teaches them how to think in the moment about how to solve the problem given what they know.

#### *Empathetic Teaching*

The teachers go beyond their curriculum; they care for students and what they teach deeply impacts students.

“If you put in the time, I will put in the time.” This is an invitation Mr. Maxon gives to all of his students. Despite the responsibilities of all the clubs, competitions, and home life, he maintains a willingness to put in extra time helping students who need it. This is not just for the advanced students; it is for all of them.

He teaches from a place of deep empathy, and his intentionality, listening, and patient guidance creates a safe place for students to come with their needs.

Hayley Bennett (2013) reminisces, “Looking back to my Calculus AB class with Mr. Maxon in my senior year, I would consider myself to be very average in math. Yet, even back then, I was struck by Mr. Maxon’s enthusiasm to help me and each of my classmates understand what we were learning. He didn’t just care about the math, he cared about me as a person.” Hayley scored a five on the AP test that year, and attributes it entirely to his teaching.

Everyone can learn, everyone can excel, and for those who want to go even further, they can. Micah shares that Mr. Maxon made it possible for him to start his math degree ahead of the game, thanks to the advanced classes offered. “Maxon was so available, willing to stay after school, and work through problems with me,” Micah recalls.

Thinking back to the encouragement she received from Tyler Gray, an Upper School Pre-Calculus and Statistics teacher,

SFC’S MATH TEAM HAS MORE YOUNG WOMEN INVOLVED IN COMPETITIONS THAN MOST OTHER SCHOOLS THEY COMPETE AGAINST.



Students are encouraged to work together at the board to solve equations.

Sydney (Saunders) White (2014) reveals, “AP Statistics was challenging, but Mr. Gray brought in creative ways to learn difficult concepts. Learning probability by eating chocolate M & M’s was one of my favorite activities, and helped solidify concepts in a visual way that I was able to carry with me to the AP exam. I appreciated how Mr. Gray sought to make learning fun and practical.”

The entire SFC math department has benefitted from collaboration and sharing a common goal. Mrs. Burgner remarks, “I love the collaboration I have with Mike Maxon and Joy Stevenson. When we work together, we move forward. We are all trying to get better and grow in implementing best teaching practices in all of our classrooms. Together we help our students grow into better problem solvers and critical thinkers and challenge them appropriately so they can grow.” This exceptional and empathetic teaching invigorates a culture of math that welcomes all students and inspires them to give back through student mentorship.

## A Culture to Thrive In

### *Building Confidence*

The quality of this empathetic teaching has nurtured a culture of confidence, fun, and commitment among students that propels them into deeper learning and success. Students are taught in an environment that fosters a positive relationship with math that permeates all grade-levels at SFC. Students are prone to doubt their abilities in math, often comparing themselves to their peers. Mr. Gillett remarks, “Already by Middle School they have developed this perception of themselves as a math person or not a math person.” A perception that math is not for them or that they can’t excel in math can prevent them from growing. Teachers intentionally counteract this. Mr. Gillett goes on to describe, “So I let them see success. Throughout the year, I encourage them to look back to where they started, and see how they have already grown.” He also encourages students to take the opportunities like summer school and math camps that are given to move ahead

and excel. Other opportunities are the math clubs and Upper School math team, which further enforce a positive student-to-math relationship.

### *Committed and Excelling*

Yet, as fun as they are, these classes, clubs and competitions carry the understanding of how valuable it is to invest in math. The math program recognizes those who are talented and advanced in their skills, and guides them in cultivating those skills.

In 2010, one of these young, unsuspecting students was a new 8th grader by the name of Luke Vandertie (2015). Luke tells of his initial surprise by the school’s flexibility to suit him in math. He was placed in Geometry, a math class one grade above the normal level. Although in Middle School, he was invited to visit the Upper School math club, and even pulled out of PE to sit in an advanced math class. Luke recalls a moment in high school with Mr. Maxon. “He told me one day, ‘I know you’re involved in varsity sports, but if you put your mind to math, you could be one of the best mathletes in the history of SFC.’ He never let other



## MICHAEL MAXON

### EDUCATION

Cal Poly San Luis Obispo,  
Bachelor's Mathematics,  
Single Subject Teaching Credential,  
San Diego State University Master's Mathematics,  
UCSD and San Diego State Joint Doctoral Program Math  
Education, Coursework

### HOMETOWN

Paso Robles, California

### FAMILY

Wife, Kim, and two daughters, Amber and Mika

### SPARE TIME

Reading at a coffee shop or playing tennis

### WOULD YOU BELIEVE

He paid his way through nine years of college and had no student loans, in large part to the money he made as a Tennis Teaching Professional

### PERFECT DAY

Going on a coffee shop math date, playing games and reading with his wife and daughters

sports get in the way of math. He pushed just as hard as a football or baseball coach would. He gave the feeling that we don't do this half-heartedly. Dive in and see where you'll go."

### *Student Mentorship*

Teacher's investment and personal guidance lends itself to producing leaders who can then tutor others. Maxon introduces student mentorship on the first day of the math club. He explains, "On that first day we usually have 40-something people. And for much of the first meeting, we have them get to know their group leaders, the top 12 students who have participated in advanced classes." These 12 students are enthusiastic to give back and help others through the math club, one-on-one tutoring, and summer math camps.

Luke shares about aiding in a summer math camp. "Over the summer I got to appreciate how much Mr. Maxon invests in the success of every single kid," Luke recalls. "That gave me the confidence to lead other people, working in a group

dynamic, helping people understand their strengths."

### Alumni Give Back

SFC'S MATH PROGRAM empowers students to excel, then give back. Many alumni of the math team have pursued successful careers in STEM fields. So far, each one has completed their degree in a STEM major, shattering the depressing 40% national average completion rate.

It is particularly noteworthy that SFC's math program has more women involved in competitions than most other schools they compete against, and that many of those women have successfully pursued a career in a STEM field.

Madelina Pozas Pratt, a 2014 graduate, says, "I think girls can tend towards perfectionism and be hard on themselves when they don't get it right the first time. Math team taught me to take on challenges big enough where I wouldn't always finish the test but because of the supportive environment, it developed in me the grit to learn and try again."

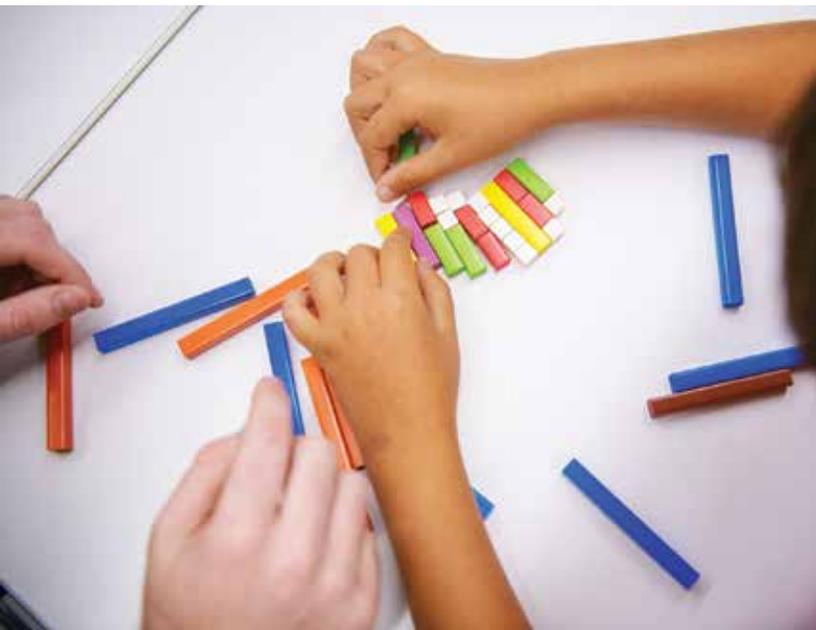


“IF YOU  
PUT IN THE  
TIME, I  
WILL PUT  
IN THE  
TIME.”

MIKE MAXON  
US MATH TEACHER

## SFC MATH ALUMNI COLLEGES AND CAREERS

NAME	CLASS	UNDERGRAD GRADUATE	MAJOR/MAJOR 2/ MINOR GRAD SCHOOL FOCUS	PROFESSION COMPANY
Anthony Georgiades	2012	Wharton Wharton	Economics Computer Science	Finance Innovating Capital
Ariana Perry (Hazery)	2012	Boston College Massachusetts	Biology/Slavic Studies Medical School	Lab Sciences Boston College
Katie Sullivan	2012	Carnegie Mellon Urbana Champaign	Materials Science & Engineering/ Biomedical Engineering Bioengineering	
Olivia Peck	2012	Westmont	Economics	Business SOLOSHOT
Tori Trexel	2012	Rice UCSD	Civil Engineering/Architectural Studies Structural Engineering	Engineer aark engineering
Charissa Plattner	2013	Stanford Stanford	Symbolic Systems Computer Science	
Kade Shoemaker	2013	Pepperdine	Math/Computer Science	Actuary Liberty Mutual
Logan Wilson	2013	Washington and Lee Northwestern	Mathematics/Engineering, Music Analytics	Data Scientist Spotify
Micah Lyle	2013	Berkeley	Applied Math/Computer Science	Software Developer Self-Employed
Yena Choi	2013	UCLA	Economics	Accounting MedImpact Healthcare Systems
Carolie Peck	2014	Claremont McKenna	Government	Legal Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer
Dominique Winfield	2014	UCSD	Pharmacological Chemistry	
Kelly Hoffman	2014	MIT	Math/Computer Science	Software Engineer Pinterest
Maddie Pratt	2014	USC USC	Biomedical Engineering/Spanish Environmental Engineering	Consulting McKinsey
Paige Stehly	2014	USD	Finance Customer Analyst	Bumble Bee Foods
Ali Whiting	2015	Princeton	Neuroscience/Pre-medicine	
Bryce Aggasid	2015	UC Berkeley	Business	
Cole Heflin	2015	USC USC	Economics/Data Informatics Data Science	
Katia Valdez	2015	Northwestern UCLA	Psychology/Global Health Public Health	
Luke Vandertie	2015	Notre Dame	Business Analytics/Applied Math	Tech Consulting PwC
Max Gardner	2015	Cornell	Applied Economics/ Finance and Business Analytics	Finance RBC
Megan Franke	2015	UCSB USC	Math Computational Biology & Bioinformatics	



Madelina went on to get a bachelor's in biomedical engineering and a master's in environmental engineering from USC. She explains that with already so few women in the STEM fields, women tend to place even higher performance expectations on themselves and tend to quickly question if they belong there. The persistence and perspective she gained through math team carried her through these difficult degrees and into her career.

Now, these alumni are giving back to the larger mathematical community. Early last year, former "mathletes" Luke and Paolo Pasco journeyed to listen to past teammate, Megan Franke, speak at a national Joint Mathematics Meetings, one of the largest and most important math conferences in America. It was in that moment that they were struck with an epiphany: "Hey! Why don't we get together more?"

The first math team reunion took place last year and is now an annual gathering. High school students, college students, and young professionals now gather together to share their experiences and wisdom. SFC math team alumni have gone on to attend numerous Ivy League colleges and garner positions in the field such as data analytics, machine learning, software engineering, finance, business consulting, and civil engineering.

The generations of math students encourage and give guidance to each other. These alumni's ability to succeed has drawn upon their years of preparation by the SFC Math Department. Students are emboldened to take on challenges without giving into intimidation. They use the tools they have amassed and observe patterns to creatively solve the problem. SFC's team of dedicated teachers continue to work together to deliver quality math education that equips students to problem-solve. The alumni achievements, math club participation, and math team successes proudly reflect the results. **Spirit**



## ALUMNI *focus*

### FRANKE PURSUING DOCTORATE

*Megan Franke, SFC Class of 2015*

Megan is a second-year PhD student at USC for Computational Biology. She majored in math as an undergrad at UCSB entirely because she loved math so much in high school. She shares that Maxon was very influential in her decision to pursue a doctorate.

She says, "I finished my undergrad a year early. When [Mr. Maxon] found out I was finishing early, he encouraged me to think about getting a doctorate. He is one of the main reasons I applied to the programs. Now I can't imagine doing anything else."

Megan worked one summer during her undergraduate with the Research Experience for Undergraduates program, organized by the National Science Foundation. She was paired with a professor at Texas A&M who did computational biology. She researched patterns in neurons and conducted mathematical analysis on how neurons fire together. Megan found that she enjoyed the research and decided to pursue it further.

She states, "I take biological problems and use math to solve them. Specifically, I use differential equations to model how stem cells differentiate. Understanding how stem cells make decisions will add valuable insight into areas like cancer treatment and regenerative medicine." Megan is excited to see where this takes her... and we are, too!



SFC coaches Doug Miller, Carter Roberts and Jon Wallace stand proud with the young men they mentor through the sport of football.



# The Ripple Effect

## REPLICATING THE CYCLE OF MENTORSHIP

AN ORGANIC THEME OF MENTORSHIP is woven throughout the fabric of Santa Fe Christian. To this day, it exists in the everyday moments at the school. Come to a football game; see the helmets pound into each other while pom poms wave to the beat of brass and drums. Watch the crowd chatter and cheer. Then, look down the sidelines and see alumni Carter Roberts and Jerry Harper advising and encouraging players before they return to the action. These two men are back to coach and mentor the SFC football team. Inspired and positively shaped by the mentorship they have received at SFC, they now step into the very roles that impacted them so much as students.

This story of mentorship is not unusual. Rather, it pervades the culture of SFC and is a key component to what makes SFC so special. From elementary school through senior year of high school, this value is modeled by the teachers and continues through peer interaction. Some of these experiences are orchestrated by SFC; others are simply the fruit of organic relationships. This self-giving between students and staff inspires replication, giving way to a beautiful cycle of mentorship.

## Buddy Sightings

SFC CULTIVATES the value of mentorship in the Lower School. For many years now, the Lower School has paired first graders with fifth graders to do activities together. Every other Friday, they meet for some sort of activity. Paper, crayons, and glue could be laid out for the pairs to make Christmas ornaments together. Mysterious ingredients could ignite a science experiment. The playground might beckon for a game. Whatever the activity, the fifth graders give guidance and support as the first graders excitedly dive in.

Mrs. Colleen Bruner, teacher of the first grade, shares of her students' enthusiasm over the mentorship: "It's certainly a highlight, and it is special [that] they are building relationships they may never have come into contact with." Excited reports of "buddy sightings" at the beach or a grocery store cycle back to her, and it is not uncommon for a first grader to request the privilege to walk with their buddy on break. The first graders are undeniably in awe of their older peers and equally inspired by the artistic skills, sportsmanship, and kindness of the fifth graders.

While the first graders receive positive influence from their older peers, the fifth graders experience the gratification of encouraging and mentoring. Many recall having a buddy themselves, and are excited to step into the mentor role.

The Buddy Program fosters a mentality of giving and receiving in a relationship from those in different life stages. This creates a culture of student-to-student mentorship that carries through to Middle School and into the Upper School. When a student has been positively impacted by such a relationship, they often seek out these opportunities themselves.

## Inspiring Confidence

FRESHMEN AND SOPHOMORES are enthusiastic to try new things and take on challenges, but the beginning of Upper School is intimidating. The onset of high school is marked by change and uncertainty. To the new Upper School student, it is daunting because grades carry more weight, and there are more ways to be involved in extracurricular activities.

Kevin Charoensri, now a junior at SFC, shares that his friendship with upperclassman Paul Trotta made all the difference in his participation with theater. "I went to the improv matches in Middle School, but I never thought I would be on the stage," Kevin shares.



The Buddy Program encourages a mutual admiration between first and fifth graders.



Amid the singing exercises of AP Music Theory, a friendship formed between Paul and Kevin. Kevin reflects that Paul was “never afraid to push me out of my comfort zone in a good way. When auditions for Chamber Chorale came around, he told me I should try out. I didn’t want to at first because I

and say ‘now it’s my turn,’ and use it to pour into the underclassmen. That’s what Paul did for me.”

The sadness brought by seniors’ graduation only highlights the impact they have had through their generosity. Every year, many upperclassmen leave big shoes to fill. But to those that so gratefully received mentorship, their time comes to step from mentee to mentor.

### Time Well Spent

ALICE MARTENSON found herself desiring to give back and so she sought to participate in the Freshman Retreat her senior year. “I remember what it was like to be a freshman with all the pressure to achieve,” she shares. “I had to learn that school is not ‘all or nothing,’ but that first I needed to focus on my relationship with God.” While Alice was a freshman, two senior girls blessed her because they demonstrated kindness in how they cared about her. “It made a huge impact to have somebody reach out and take time out of their day. That’s who I wanted to be to the younger classes,” she adds.

At SFC, seniors have the opportunity to apply and join the freshman retreat. During this time, they manage the cabins, help lead worship, and lead service sessions. Innumerable opportunities arise to befriend the freshmen and dive into life with them. Alice enjoyed listening to her freshmen cabinmates and often drew from her own experience to encourage them. She assured them to trust God with the future and not overwork themselves, “because then you’ll get stuck in worshipping your schoolwork and grades instead of God. I see where that fear and stress that I had stemmed from.”



First graders look up to their fifth-grade buddies and love to say hi to them on campus.

never thought I would get in. However, he kept persisting.” Eventually, Kevin took the advice, tried out, and made it. This unexpected success and the encouragement of Paul inspired him to branch out into drama, and try out for the improv team. Soon he found himself on the stage, discovering a new love for drama and performance.

Paul impacted Kevin in more ways than encouraging him to try new things. Kevin shares, “He drew me in. I want to make somebody feel that welcome.” It was sad for Kevin when Paul graduated. However, Kevin shares, “I want to take that sadness



Alice's heart to connect with freshmen has overflowed from the blessing she received as a freshman herself. This cycle of mentorship has carried through so many lives at SFC, but it doesn't just stop there, as students are taking this into life after high school. Students learn to seek both mentors and opportunities to mentor in college. The depth of impact is observed

through the continuation of new students stepping into the role of mentorship—to the extent that some alumni feel inspired to return, just to give back.

### **Football and FCA**

THIS YEAR, SFC alumni Carter Roberts (2015) and Jerry Harper (2014) are coaching and mentoring the young men

Whether in the classroom, on the field, or during a performance, there are many opportunities for older students to spur on those who are younger.



Impacted by those who inspired him, SFC alum Jerry Harper is happy to join the ranks of coaches who invest in others.

of the SFC football team. Both do this in addition to serving with Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) in schools throughout North County. This coming spring, Carter will help coach the freshman basketball team and Jerry will help coach track & field. Both express excitement to give back to the same community that poured into them.

Carter participated in football, basketball, baseball, and track & field throughout high school at SFC. During high school, several teachers and coaches invested in Carter. He recalls, “All those years, these men – who were athletes and loved sports – built me up and challenged me in my faith.” As a student, he grasped on to these friendships. Carter attributes the encouragement and perspective that they gave to setting him on a course of walking in-step with the Lord. From his point of view, the many blessings he experiences today are simply a byproduct of his life with the Lord.

These relationships were instrumental in Carter choosing to attend Wheaton College, a Christian liberal arts school. While playing on their football team, he studied Christian Formation and Ministry. Once again, he found himself receiving the nurturing mentorship of coaches and faculty. In addition, he shares, “I got an amplified picture of a Christian community through my friends and accountability... so many different guys that were so like-minded, having fun together and pushing me in the right direction.”

Jerry shares a similar story. While participating in football and track & field at SFC, he shares that many teachers and coaches “invested in me in a way outside of my sport. They wanted to help me become a better man and student.” SFC football coach, Doug Miller, particularly invested in Jerry. “He became a role model and a father figure to me, which was particularly impactful since I had

an absent father at the time. He realized some of the things I was going through and took me under his wing,” Jerry recalls. He shares how Coach Miller would often have him over for dinner, in addition to coaching him.

## Building an Identity

JERRY, ALONG with a few other students, started the FCA club at SFC. This investment planted the seeds for his involvement in college and mentorship opportunities at summer camps between college. Upon graduating from Ohio Wesleyan, Jerry decided to join the staff of FCA in San Diego. He now mentors student-athletes throughout San Diego, and coaches SFC’s football and track & field teams.

This is the time when high school men are making decisions that matter. They are building habits that will have an impact on them for the rest of their lives. As only God can orchestrate, Carter and Jerry are drawing upon their own mentoring relationship experiences as examples of how to coach, encourage, and build trust in the lives of these high school students.

Jerry shares, “I want them to know there are bigger things to life than football. It’s all about becoming a better man by building an identity in Christ.” Carter expresses the same hope that the young men on the team will truly enjoy playing football while feeling totally unashamed to be who they are. He is working toward cultivating a community on the team of positive friendships, like the ones he experienced. Most of all,

Carter desires to lead these young men through an authentic life transformation, that comes only through following Jesus: “I want each [of you] to know that right now, in high school, you can make an impact. Don’t miss out on what the Lord has for you.”

Indeed, the culture of mentorship that SFC fosters ultimately creates an environment of receiving relationship from those older and younger. Teachers and older students alike who have experienced the gift of mentorship are enthusiastic to listen, share their time, and impart wisdom. This nurtures a community that is impassioned to receive from the more mature and eager to give to the younger students. The impact of a community such as this is deep-rooted and lasting. **Spirit**

Upon graduating from Wheaton College, alum Carter Roberts returns to SFC to help coach the next generation of student athletes.



# GLOBAL IMPACT

**SANTA FE CHRISTIAN** intentionally invests in the spiritual formation of its students. Many students are profoundly impacted by the messages and mentoring of SFC faculty. They themselves become agents of positive transformation in their jobs, communities, and families. Some have brought this transformation even further into the world in sharing Christ's freeing truth and love. *Spirit*

Quinn Leggett | Bercy, Haiti

## *Alumni Abroad*

"I have never felt the confidence of being in the right place more than my time spent in Haiti. The relationships I formed taught me so much about God and His love. I hold them close to me and carry the lessons I learned through my everyday life." Quinn was with Lifesong MBO for a two month internship.





**Hayley Bennett | Bangalore, India**



**Bradley Braun | Ensenada, Mexico**



**Matt Bennett | Bologna, Italy**

**“I spent one year assisting an organization in rescues and advocacy to fight human trafficking. It was so hard at first, but amazing to see what God opened up as I continued to work for Him.” Hayley was in Bangalore, India from Jan. 2018 – Jan. 2019.**

**“As I have been working in Mexico I have learned to stay flexible, as God has worked through me in so many unexpected and different ways. I am seeing that nothing worthwhile ever comes easily and that it is in the moments of discomfort and uncertainty that I have grown the most.”  
June 2019 – present**

**“Living overseas in Italy to work with Cru has been an adventure. People around the world are so different and still very much the same. Jesus transcends culture and it’s been a privilege to show people why He is the good news for them!” Matt is with Cru and in his fourth year of long term missions.**

# AVECO

SFC has sent a student team to France for the past 19 years under the leadership of Upper School teacher Jenny Cattaneo.



# AMOUR

*Building  
Connections  
for Christ*



# LAST APRIL,

Santa Fe Christian Upper School students embarked on a cultural immersion trip to France – a land of ornate châteaux, picturesque villages, majestic mountains, and exquisite cuisine. Yet, ask one who has grown up in France or spent large amounts of time there, and they will tell you of complex cultural challenges amidst the beauty and charm. It may sound strange because France is an economically prosperous country, however, the poverty there is not material but rather spiritual and relational – an affliction not so different from what we experience in America.

## Sharing Lives, Sharing Faith

FRANCE NOW FINDS ITSELF in a clash of historical and modern identities, shifting with the swirling influx of postmodern thought, changing demographics, and conflicting ideas about immigration, religion and politics. It is a country of contrasting narratives in which the socialist government mixes with luxury designers such as Yves Saint Laurent and Louis Vuitton, where kebabs are featured alongside croissants, and majestic beauty and historical traditions are juxtaposed with inner-city turmoil, racial tension, and unemployment. However, after decades of dedicated prayer of faithful believers, France is beginning to experience a renaissance of faith and a resurgence of interest in the claims of Christ.

SFC French teacher Jenny Cattaneo has organized these trips to France throughout the years to address some very specific needs. French teens, like their American counterparts, are inundated with materialism, atheism and stale religion. Both sides are eager to practice their second language and are looking for authentic connections. Students greatly benefit from a chance to move out of their comfort zone, build cross-cultural friendships and



discover more about each other's country. In addition, SFC students often have an opportunity to share how their faith in Christ influences their lives. French students are curious to hear from peers who believe in God, go to church, study the Bible and love to sing worship songs.

SFC's nineteenth trip to France broadened the students' perspective of the world and deepened their own faith as they crisscrossed the south of France. From the cathedrals in towns to the quaint French countryside, French listeners delighted in hearing our students sing French worship songs for a Palm Sunday service, for the mayor of a small village, and during Holy Week observance with nuns. Although the French are naturally reserved, the singing sparked conversations in which students could share the joy of Christ's love. One night in particular, after dinner with French friends, SFC students had an unusual request: to sing for the chefs who had prepared the meal. The songs led to a lengthy conversation about what it truly means to be a follower of Christ, and left a lovely open door to continue future discussions.

## School Partnerships with France

SFC HAS INVESTED significant time over the past ten years at Lycée Pasteur, a professional high school in the south of France, and in particular with English teacher Caroline Wolberg. While there have been partnerships with schools north of Paris and in Provence, the twinning (sister school) with Lycée Pasteur has been particularly fruitful. This year, SFC and French students bonded while exploring a French market, kayaking under the Pont du Gard, and playing language games in class. A genuine bond was formed and Christ's joy naturally moved through the friendships.



# “WHAT I NOTICE THE MOST IS

The School Director of Lycée Pasteur, Thierry Pretot, expressed in an interview, “You can see it in your students – they smile, they are at ease, [and] it’s not difficult for them to express their faith.” Pretot added, “What I notice the most is your commitment to the Lord, as you say. It’s impressive. You show Christian values, which escape us more and more in our country. Religious values are a bit trampled at the moment.” The long-term

relationship with Lycée Pasteur affirms the deeper impact that SFC students have had over the years. “[SFC] students’ love awakened a part of us that we hadn’t necessarily wanted to show, but they were the only ones who could encourage it,” shared Aurélien, a former student from Lycée Pasteur and long-time friend of SFC students.

Through building relationships, SFC students have ministered to the

deep longings of postmodern culture. Aurélien explained, “Actually, I could say before knowing you and hanging out with your groups, I had absolutely no connection with God, with belief, with Christianity. But I could also say that there is a connection deeper than Catholic or Protestant, that unites us more deeply as the years pass. What is the goal of this connection, I don’t know, I’m waiting, [and] I’ll continue to wait



# YOUR COMMITMENT TO THE LORD. ”

until I have a clear answer.” Whether they provide a definitive answer, or simply stoke a yearning for more of Christ’s love, SFC students have certainly left a lasting impact on the French people. Simon, another Lycée Pasteur student who has stayed connected with SFC for the past six years added, “You [all] helped me understand so many things and helped me to be a better person. You helped me become who I am today.”

SFC student Claire Bassett expressed her delight at how freely the French students responded once the Americans reached out. About the experience, she said, “They started out shy but as soon as I said one thing to them, they opened up. I connected with one student named Ali. There was an instance where she started singing a song in English, and I started to sing it with her. We ended up becoming good friends and have kept in

touch through social media.” SFC student Nathan Haug remarked on how the trip widened his perspective. “There were definitely some kids who had never heard of Jesus or what He has to do with our lives,” Haug said. Students were positively challenged in their relationship with God by being placed in situations where they were compelled to answer questions, build relationships, and share their faith.



## MISSIONS



While practicing English and French, students discover they have a lot in common.

### A Journey as Pilgrims

IN ADDITION TO SPENDING time at Lycée Pasteur, this year – for the first time ever – SFC students experienced France through walking on the Chemin de Saint Jacques de Compostelle, an ancient UNESCO pilgrim route through France into Spain. Their goal was to intentionally connect with the Lord through individual and team devotions as well as process all they had experienced in the first part of the trip. This experience made for rich conversations as they trekked through rolling hills, between farms, around lakes, and through medieval villages. The walk was filled with the fragrance of flowers and the breathtaking beauty of the Pyrenees

mountains. Sore backs and feet left a sense of accomplishment and connection to those pilgrims who had walked the same path for over a thousand years.

The group stayed in several different places, including an abbey in Carcassonne and a Dominican monastery in the village of Prouilhe. About that experience, Claire remarked, “I had never been to a Catholic church, so seeing how much these nuns

devote their lives to God was amazing.” Students participated by singing worship songs in French at vespers (an evening service) and served at the monastery by helping clean and garden. They were struck by the contrast of the empty, half-ruined monastery and the warm beauty of the chapel at its side, standing, in a sense, as a metaphor of the cold shell of “religion” next to the vibrant faith in

Fun times walking the Chemin de Saint Jacques de Compostelle.





Christ that still lingers in France.

Even short-term interactions yielded deep conversations during whimsical chance encounters. In one town, “We were waiting [at a train station] and Madame Cattaneo initiated a conversation with some students,” explained Claire. “There was a girl [named Lisa] who happened to be [getting] on the same train and so I sat next to her. We connected over how we were both dancers. We still stay in touch.”

Even after only one year in French class, Claire was able to share about her faith as the girls conversed haltingly in both languages between stations. Through another spontaneous conversation, the group met two teachers who were teaching French to refugees. SFC students eagerly embraced the opportunity to visit the school and that same day, shared worship songs to a class full of refugees.

At the end of the trip, French and SFC

friends reluctantly parted ways, each challenged, each mutually encouraged, and each knowing God more deeply. As always, the time in France yielded beautiful God-given opportunities that no one could have ever planned for... but then again, isn't that how God works?

**Spirit**

A smile is understood in every language.



# THE ELEMENTS

Need a caption to go here in this spot.



# OF CREATIVITY

WHETHER THROUGH FINE ART, DRAMA, CHOIR, OR BAND, THESE TEACHERS DIRECT STUDENTS TO HONE THEIR CREATIVE SKILLS

Teachers Kalli Hendrickson, Matt Corsaro, Vladilen Bgatov and David Hall come together to unpack the elements of creativity in artistic disciplines. They openly discuss how creativity can single-handedly form a connection between us and God, between each other, and between ideas. They have witnessed creativity work in tandem with skill development—watching first-hand as students devote themselves to refining their skills in a discipline. As students refine their ability to communicate through that medium... creativity blossoms.

## Q How does creativity fit in the arts?

**DAVID:** There is a skill set that must occur before creativity blossoms. You can't just go up to a kid and make her play the trumpet beautifully at first. We develop skills in order to unleash their creative potential and ability. Kids either embrace that or realize it is more work than they thought. But the kids who embrace it get to enjoy an experience that is rewarding.

**KALLI:** Like many people say, "You have to learn the rules to break them."

**VLAD:** In choir, we first practice breath support, vowels, and other elements of technique. Often there comes a moment when it clicks, and then creativity comes in. It comes with how to perform a



specific piece of music. The skills that have been practiced bring quality to the music, but creativity pulls the individual's unique style into the piece. It brings a humanness to the music that creates human connection.

**MATT:** The arts are the one discipline that the teacher does not teach out of a textbook. Instead, students must critically think about their choices, and why they

are making that choice. The arts bring together preparation, critical thinking, and improvisation all into one place.

## Q How does creativity connect us with God?

**DAVID:** Well, we are all created and made in the image of God. We are created beings.

**VLAD:** And we have a Creator who is very creative. Out of all the different amazing creations, we are the only ones that are blessed to be in His image. When it comes to art, it is something that comes out of our souls and our minds. Our gifts bring glory to our Creator. And so creativity is ultimately a direction that is opened up from the Lord. It is a gift that is most rewarding when people want to pursue it because it is a blessing from God.

**KALLI:** I think there's a lie people believe that they're not creative. But when they realize they are, God uses it to heal them. I have especially seen this when I taught art classes to adults who were coming off parole. It's so interesting to watch people as they begin to create and then as they end the process. This is because it is a way for them to get outside of what they feel. When they finish creating, they are able to





see what they feel, and talk about it. It is as if they are holding these difficult things in their heart, and as they create, God brings His light into those places. Creating art allows God to come in and bring healing to those areas.

## Q How does creativity connect people to one another?

**KALLI:** As a teacher, I can see what is going on in students' lives by what they have created. A person's painting gives people a window into who the artist is, and it is a way for the artist to give the viewer a window into who the viewer is. I spent seven years working in ministry in Australia and used art to share God's love. I would take students to the beach to draw portraits of people. One day I drew a picture of a man who looked very sad. He told me that he had lost a child a year ago. I took a risk... I drew him smiling. Then I shared that this was how God saw him and created him to be because in Jesus there is joy. The next day he brought his family to see me. He had begun to smile again.

**MATT:** Within the school setting, drama helps students to connect with each other by finding common ground. Throughout the course of working on a play or

musical, the team meshes as a family. We focus on treating each other as a family; consistently working for the benefit of each other and our production.

**VLAD:** Yes, students must develop teamwork, comradery, respect, and humility in order to work well with each other... which is crucial to perform well together in choir and band as well.

## Q How does creativity inspire innovation?

**MATT:** In drama we are always asking, "How do we present something with new flavor and energy?" That is our way to have fun with the show. We must be creative and think outside the box, doing something that hasn't been done before in order to capture our audience. The creativity of the arts forces us to look at something from multiple angles and re-envision it.

**DAVID:** From a collaborative stance, the arts are amazing because they open kids' eyes up to a huge wealth of experience. It gives students a framework to understand new experiences. And



rather than being stuck in a myopic and focused perspective, they come to the table with a wide range of experiences and understanding.

**MATT:** We ask students to answer a question that doesn't already have the answer. We teach students how to have confidence in themselves and their instincts in order to answer hard questions.

**VLAD:** In that, our students are encouraged to be bold. When they put in the hard work and respect that is demanded, they have something amazing to share.

**KALLI:** I think about how many movements were begun by the arts because somebody painted the future instead of the problem. We don't teach people how to rant, but how to solve the

problem. The arts teach how to pitch an idea and make it clear in a way that would move people. I am excited to get my students to think about how they can use art to propel communities.

## Q How do you teach in the creative space?

**KALLI:** The most vulnerable thing you can do as a creative person is putting your art out there for people to react to it. A student must trust someone enough to let them come alongside with something so precious to them. This requires a teacher who is knowledgeable and kind. As a teacher, it is beautiful to come alongside those who don't realize their potential yet and bring it out.

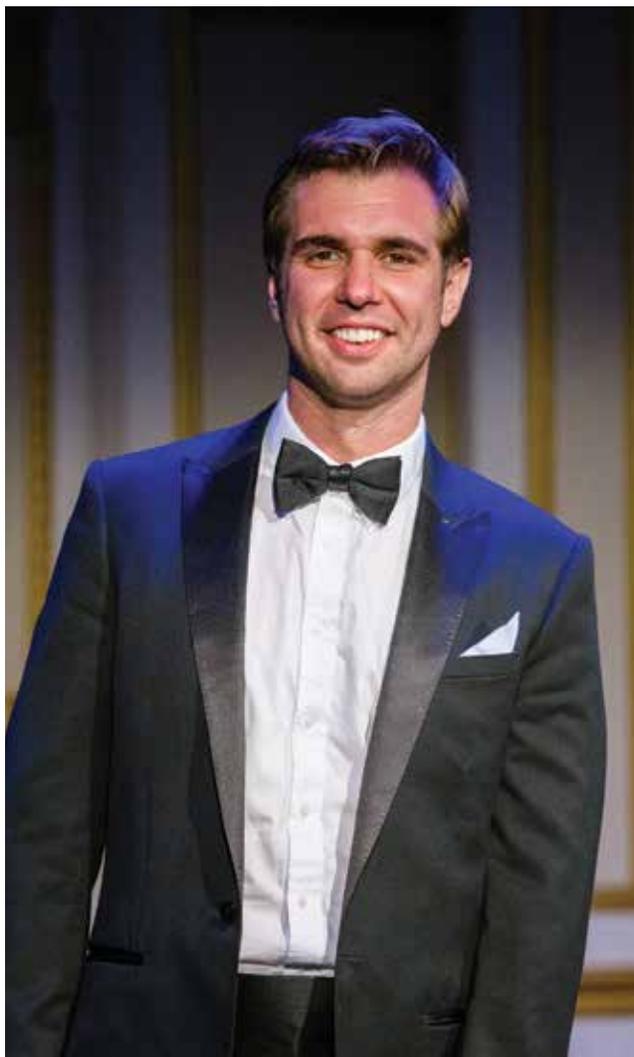
**VLAD:** There is something unique and personal about working with the students'

instruments. In choir, the instrument is their own voice. I keep myself available to work with students who want extra coaching. The students are so responsive, which shows in their success.

**MATT:** As teachers of the arts, we don't live by the philosophy that students need to keep to one thing. We're about taking what the students have, finding those gifts and strengths, and finding the best way to showcase them.

**VLAD:** Every moment I encounter in life is a blessing... I know that everything happens for a reason and that God is in control. His will is the best decision, and when I'm in a classroom, I always try to look at the bigger picture and see if there is any way—not just through music, but with my character—that I can shed light on their current situation.





## VLADILEN BGATOV

### EDUCATION

Point Loma Nazarene University,  
Bachelor's in Vocal Performance,  
Master's in Teaching

### HOMETOWN

Krasnodar, Russia

### FAMILY

Wife, Marina and one-year-old son, Eli

### SPARE TIME

Trying new food and coffee

### WOULD YOU BELIEVE

He has mastered a series of  
impressive magic tricks

### PERFECT DAY

He would wake up at 9 a.m.,  
take a walk along the beach, get lunch,  
and enjoy a serendipitous  
moment of spontaneity

## TALENT FROM ABROAD

NOVEMBER 1993: Soviet Russia had fallen, corruption was rampant, and four-year-old Vladilen (Vlad) Bgatov was preparing to move to America with his family. At that time, it was not uncommon for gangs to case large families who were financially stable, kidnap one of their children and hold them for ransom. When a family that Vlad's father knew lost a child in this way, Vlad and his family packed up. Leaving all they knew behind them, they immigrated to the U.S.

Music was always an integral part of Vlad's family. His siblings completed musical conservatory in Russia, and Vlad quickly followed in their steps. Vlad's father worked as a handyman to provide his children with a solid education. When Vlad began to take violin lessons, his father would work odd-jobs for Vlad's teacher so that the family could afford the lessons. At thirteen years old, Vlad began to take voice lessons and refined both his vocal and violin talents throughout his high school career.

At Point Loma Nazarene University, Vlad honed his musical skills further whilst playing in a quartet and singing for the San Diego opera. He won various singing contests that landed him a slot in the Metropolitan Opera Competition. Vlad graced stages throughout San Diego and Los Angeles with his pure, operatic voice. While the stage lights beckoned to him, Vlad was also discovering his passion for teaching. As graduation neared, Vlad found himself more and more conflicted about his true calling. Upon graduation, Vlad decided to pursue education and completed grad school at Point Loma Nazarene. Eventually, he made his way to SFC.

When reflecting upon his journey, Vlad says, "I look back on the whole process and see how God orchestrated everything. I look back to my parents' leap of faith, hoping and knowing the promises of the Bible are true – they don't die away."

If you were to walk into his classroom today, you would be greeted with the resounding harmonies of students' voices, rhythms, and laughter. It would not be unheard of for Vlad to be cooking crepes for his students or performing an impressive comedy routine. And if anyone ever had a mishap with their bow tie, rest assured, Vlad always has an emergency replacement on hand. **Spirit**



### ALUMNI focus

## HUFFMAN OPENS PRODUCTION COMPANY

*Ryan Huffman, SFC Class of 2009*

In 2009, Ryan addressed his classmates as the student body president. He urged them to try new things and pursue what interested them. Do musical theater; join a club; take on a new hobby; don't be afraid of those things. As he looks back on that moment, Ryan sees how that speech serendipitously foretold his own story. He sees that the activities he engaged in during high school unearthed passions and refined skills that led him through his professional career.

Ryan expresses how he learned to inspire others, to work as a team and bring glory to God during his time in high school. In addition, he discovered a love for creating experiences. "SFC taught me how to turn ideas into a reality," he shares.

After graduating from Chapman University with a degree in Film Production and a minor in Business Administration, Ryan became an Associate Producer on a National Geographic show called "Showdown of the Unbeatables." He eventually moved to Revolt TV in which Ryan wrote and produced two shows a week for one of their flagship music news shows called Revolt Live. From there, Ryan worked as a Freelance Producer and has now launched his own production company named Huffman Creative. Ryan, along with his three-person staff, creates engaging stories and content including commercials, music videos, documentaries, and photo shoots.

As you tour through Ryan's robust portfolio, you will find a short documentary that captures the real-life challenges and determination of Nike athletes. In another, the lead singer of Bastille sings "World Gone Mad" through provocative scenes of social injustice burning with the wreckage of a riot. A commercial for Northwell Health captures lighthearted moments of life with an old man teasing his granddaughter and a young woman knocking on a door with flowers behind her back. "I am drawn towards watching people be happy, moved, or intrigued by something I have created," Ryan shares. "I want to create content that promotes change and encourages others to be a light that this world needs."

The Upper School spring musical is the embodiment of creativity. Actors, musicians, and artists alike join forces to put on a spectacular performance – "Newsies."





# UNLOCKING THE MAGIC OF THE UNIVERSE



**“I LIKE THINGS THAT EXPLODE,”**

says 8th grade science teacher *Missy Schick*. A square from the periodic table placed at the entrance to her classroom sets the tone of the class for all who enter. It’s an element yet to be discovered— “Ah,” the element of surprise.

THERE IS NOTHING LIKE WATCHING the lightbulb go off in a student’s mind to invigorate her teaching. “I want to make students feel like science is attainable to them,” Mrs. Schick says. Rather than teaching science through memorization, she fills class time with labs to allow the students to make the discovery. Through this, she teaches her students how to think, ask questions, and explore. This is a crucial foundation for these students to carry into Upper School science.

Mrs. Schick resides in Carlsbad with her husband and Terri-Poo, Wally, and loves any time spent in nature with her now-adult son and daughter, and her daughter’s family. There is nothing better than going grunion hunting on Pacific Beach, or a campfire under the stars roasting hot dogs and s’mores.



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## Missy Schick enjoys showing her students the intricacies of God's creation of the world.



At one point in her career, Mrs. Schick created a business founded entirely on the principle called "Science-2-U." She created and taught science experiments to homeschool groups and charter schools. She ran and grew the business for 15 years until deciding to return to full-time teaching. She has certainly refined her ability to "sell" science through stirring inspiration in her clientele. It also means that her students today get to experience some of the most well-designed science labs.

A personal favorite is the "candle experiment" in which students are asked, "What is actually burning?" Students are guided to follow the evidence where it leads, often contradicting what they thought initially.

Rather than lecture, Mrs. Schick's science lessons are driven

**MISSY SCHICK**

**EDUCATION**  
Long Beach State,  
Bachelor's in Biology, Minor in Chemistry,  
Master's in Curriculum Development

**HOMETOWN**  
Palm Springs, California

**FAMILY**  
Husband of 32 years, son, daughter and son-in-law,  
and a Terri-Poo named Wally

**SPARE TIME**  
Spending time with people,  
getting coffee, going to the beach and reading  
romance novels by Jane Austen

**WOULD YOU BELIEVE**  
She is an expert grunion hunter

**PERFECT DAY**  
Campfire on Ponto Beach with friends and family  
at night under the stars

by discovery. She believes that when the students make the connection, they command ownership over what they are learning and are not only more likely to retain what they have learned, but also want to learn.

Mrs. Schick leads her students through realizing the beauty and intricacies in how God has created the world, forces such as gravity, which are mysterious, yet predictable through mathematical equations. She fondly quotes Galileo in saying that "Mathematics is the language in which God has written the universe." She then continues to explain how even the smallest nucleus of protons in an atom are held together by a great force and will release extraordinary power when broken; God is holding all things together (Colossians 1:17).

Mrs. Schick's science class never fails to inspire awe in its students. "By teaching science," she says, "I get to teach magic. It's a way of discovering God's creation, and there's magic in that."

**Spirit**

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# SNACKS AT SFC: SUSTENANCE FOR



## SANTA FE CHRISTIAN'S NEW MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT STORE




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## THE BODY AND SOUL

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is a cornucopia of two-dollar VG Donuts still steaming in the crisp morning, two-dollar cookies baked from scratch the night before, and coveted one-dollar pop tarts, sitting in their glistening silver packages. The best part is that every purchase generates a profit that goes directly to providing weekend meals to underserved second-graders at a nearby school. What started as exploring a potential partnership has bloomed into an entrepreneurial feat, fueled by audacious middle schoolers with a heart to help other students.

## The Idea

“TITLE ONE” is a designation given to a school that has a sizeable population of students from low-income households. Students who qualify are provided with breakfast and lunch during the week. However, due to their unstable situation, it is questionable if these students will be provided meals over the weekend.

Care House, a non-profit organization in San Diego, provides these children with snack-filled bags to ensure nourishment over the weekend. Early this school year, an opportunity arose for the SFC Middle School to form a partnership with Care House where the Middle School would provide 24 bags of snacks for a class of second graders.

The possibility enthralled the SFC staff; however, they wanted to form the partnership in a way that would foster student ownership. The idea of a student store arose. Grant Stephenson’s leadership class stepped up to take on the project. The class meets twice a week—on Tuesdays and Fridays—and could manage the shop on those days.

The students enthusiastically took ownership of the idea. “The kids were Pop Rocks of ideas,” shares Middle School Assistant Principal Kristi Ellis. Mr. Stephenson describes that he simply took the initial steps by arranging initial connections and coaching his students in the basic fundamentals of running a business. Soon, the students of his leadership class were running with the idea. He asked a student who loved to sew if she would want to contribute somehow, which quickly resulted in the donation of homemade scrunchies for sale. Other students volunteered to bake at home to contribute.

## The Store

SINCE THE FALL of 2019, the Middle School has operated this self-sustaining student store. Every Tuesday and Friday before school and during snack break, the goods are displayed around tables under

a pop-up tent. “It’s madness over there for half an hour,” says Mrs. Ellis.

Mr. Stephenson leads the students of his leadership class by calculating the cost to get items and the cost to run the shop for the entire school year. The students of the leadership class are simultaneously learning entrepreneurship, responsibility, and proactive pursuit as they conduct all the operations of the shop. This includes stocking merchandise, tracking profits, staffing and closing the shop. The leadership class works hard to find the best prices of goods to stock the shelves



and also reach out to corporations to request donations. “They can be really bold at this young age. They’re fearless!” Mr. Stephenson shares.

The profits made from the student store, are used to purchase snacks for those in need. Each month a couple of advisories will take time to pack twenty-four bags with granola bars, cookies, and more. Then they pray over the bags and send them to the elementary school where the class of second graders will receive them.

## Helping Kids in Need

AFTER THE FIRST set of bags had been sent, SFC received pictures of the second graders. Their faces were filled with joy as they beheld the snack bags. One child had a grin from ear to ear. The pictures serve

as a reminder of why the entire process is meaningful—from running the shop, to choosing which items go in each bag and packing the bags—because the work produces a simple gift that brings joy to a second grader. Mr. Stephenson shares that he pictures particularly moved him as he is the father of a second grader.

Mr. Stephenson shares that “more than the skills of opening the store, I hope these students open their eyes to see others and the need that is around us in such proximity. Sometimes we get busy and we don’t look towards other’s needs. So, it may

help them to see a need that they wouldn’t have known was there before.”

Mrs. Ellis adds, “It astounds me that this is actually happening. It started with the need to help some children in San Diego, then we had to think through how to address this need, [and then] figure out a way to get the kids to feel this and have a part in it. Our kids are being blessed. It’s very special for our kids to know they are loving kids who are just like them, but for whatever reason, are in different situations.”

Santa Fe Christian Middle School looks forward to continuing this partnership with Care House and building a friendship with the second graders that they are privileged to serve. **Spirit**

# Intentional Acts of Kindness

Working in small groups, Lower School children find ways to live out the habits of respect, responsibility, and resourcefulness.

## Mission Possible

OVER THE COURSE of one week, mysterious events occurred throughout Santa Fe Christian's Lower School. A guard's booth was suddenly adorned with notes of kind words. Chalk decorations appeared in the parking spots of some SFC volunteers. A bus was inexplicably cleaned and inundated with encouraging letters. That previous week, the Lower School PODs had each received a manila folder labeled "Mission Possible" holding a secret assignment. Now they successfully executed their missions in surprising acts of kindness. Such small acts yielded a huge impact.

## PODs

PODs are groups of Lower School students – ranging in grades from kindergarten through fifth grade – who meet to apply a theme that had been discussed in the chapel. Lower School Assistant Principal Amanda Walker describes, "We wanted to find a way to allow the kids to explore what we were learning. They actually want to live it out, so we give them the opportunity." Each POD meets on average once a month and is composed of students from different grades and led by one staff member or teacher.

Each POD activity is designed around an Eagle Essential, which is a small, applicable value that builds a habit based on one of the three "Rs." These

"Rs" are respect, responsibility, and resourcefulness. Eagle Essentials could be "saying please and thank you" or "open the door for others." One such task highlighted "thankfulness." Each POD was assigned to show gratitude to a staff member who tended to operate behind the scenes. Through writing thank you notes the students gained awareness of all the people who work in the background to bless them as students.

The PODs involve the students in the process by giving a degree of freedom in how they apply the Eagle Essential. Mrs. Walker shares that "you never know the direction it will take. It's a blessing to hear students articulate ways to show gratitude, kindness, and compassion to others in a way that they would not have been able to grasp before."

## Living Out Faith

THROUGH THIS, students are guided and encouraged to live out their faith. They are shown how they are capable, even at their young age, to step outside of themselves to pursue respect, responsibility, and resourcefulness. Showing love doesn't have to take a lot of time or cost money. When all is said and done, Mrs. Walker shares, "I hope that they take away that the small things matter." *Spirit*





“THROUGH THIS, STUDENTS ARE GUIDED AND ENCOURAGED TO LIVE OUT THEIR FAITH.”



# Legos, Games & Learning



**Lunch break at Santa Fe Christian's Lower School is a delightful hive of activity. But in a particular room, one may find a crowd of kindergarteners swimming through a gigantic sea of Legos or a group of fourth graders in an intense game of Connect4.**

## Changing Perceptions

THESE WEEKLY GAME days have been orchestrated by Kristine Trumble, director of the learning center that provides academic support to students K-5, focusing on children who face difficulty in learning, often, but not limited to, working through dyslexia and ADHD. These game days have become so popular that students even outside of the learning center have joined in. This is just one of the many ways that Mrs. Trumble builds up the self confidence of the children she works with and combats the stigma children often feel about academic support.

"I'm not smart." This is the all too common phrase that students coming to the learning center tell themselves. Oftentimes, they have felt the shame of

falling behind, or from needing extra help to grasp something while watching their peers excel.

Mrs. Trumble works to reverse this mindset. She finds their passion and what they are good at, then uses it as a point of connection. So, whether it is having students practice writing about a topic they are passionate about, or simply playing with Legos, Mrs. Trumble cultivates confidence, curiosity, and helpful strategies for the children to excel. Through this, Mrs. Trumble creates an environment that is both fun and empowering.

## Overcoming Challenges

HER MOST EXCITING MOMENTS are when a child "gets it"—when they, too, realize that they are smart, capable,



“EVERY STUDENT IS EMPOWERED TO LEARN DURING ONE OF THE MOST CRUCIAL DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES OF THEIR LIVES.”

## KRISTINE TRUMBLE

### EDUCATION

Biola, Bachelor's in Speech Pathology  
National University, Master's in Special Education

### HOMETOWN

Concord, California

### FAMILY

Husband, Blair (4th grade teacher at SFC),  
son Justin, 15, son Taylor, 13

### SPARE TIME

Cycling, reading, and traveling

### WOULD YOU BELIEVE

Before she and her husband had children, they traveled the world for 13 months through the Pacific Islands, Tahiti, Fiji, Cook Islands, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Spain, and all throughout Europe

### PERFECT DAY

She loves being outside, relaxing, bike riding, reading a ton, and playing games with family, like table tennis (crazy competitions of table tennis since they're all on the same level)

and can overcome any challenge by studying a certain way. The subsequent payoff is being able to bear witness to their scholastic and personal success. Then she watches them excel. Recalling a recent experience like this, Mrs. Trumble shares, “Last year, I had a group of first-graders [who were] very below grade level, and suddenly, a bunch of them just got it. Their confidence and everything about them changed.”

Mrs. Trumble has always possessed a passion for working with kids facing difficulty from a young age. During high school, she worked with students who were deaf or hard of hearing and discovered a deeper desire to understand what they went through. While working towards her undergrad at Biola, she specialized in language disorders. After working in a hospital practicing speech pathology, she realized her true calling was to work with kids in a school setting. She counts her opportunity at SFC as an added blessing, because “you can pray with [the kids]. It's so much better because it's not just therapy, you have God.”

As students work through and overcome their challenges, they bring laughter and joy with them. “Every day is different,” she shares, “we get a kick out of their stories. They say the funniest things, and always make you feel like you're the most important person in the world.” While the children bring the energy to SFC's academic support program, Mrs. Trumble is certainly the backbone. Although her work largely operates behind the scenes, it is an underlying foundation that makes sure every student is empowered to learn during one of the most crucial developmental stages of their lives. **Spirit**

# ***RUNNING***

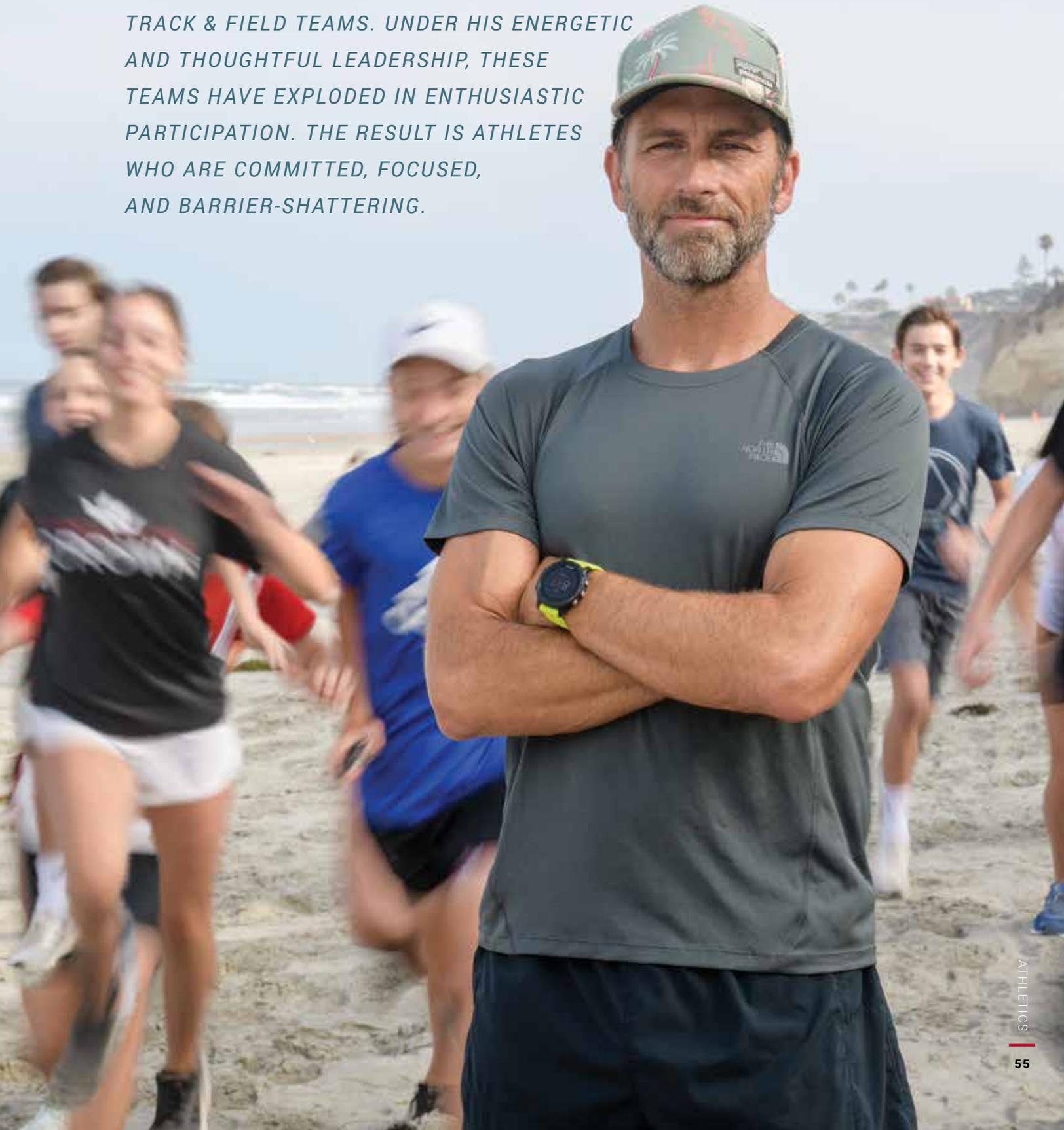
*TO STAND*

# **STILL**



**FOUR YEARS AGO,**

*DEMIAN KLOER TOOK ON THE ROLE OF COACHING SFC'S CROSS COUNTRY AND TRACK & FIELD TEAMS. UNDER HIS ENERGETIC AND THOUGHTFUL LEADERSHIP, THESE TEAMS HAVE EXPLODED IN ENTHUSIASTIC PARTICIPATION. THE RESULT IS ATHLETES WHO ARE COMMITTED, FOCUSED, AND BARRIER-SHATTERING.*





**BREATHE IN, BREATHE  
OUT... WITHIN 18 MINUTES  
IT WILL ALL BE OVER –  
THE PAIN... BUT ALSO  
YOUR CHANCE TO BEAT  
YOUR BEST TIME.  
COOL MORNING AIR  
FLOODS YOUR LUNGS.  
THE SHOT FIRES.  
IT'S TIME TO GIVE  
THIS YOUR ALL.**

**FOR THE** first time in 14 years, the SFC girls' cross country team placed first in CIF; the boys team placed second. Additionally, the track & field team has become the strongest in school history, having never won a league title prior to 2017, and now hold six back-to-back titles for both boys and girls.

### **BEGINNINGS**

THE GROWTH OF THESE TEAMS began in 2016 when Demian Kloer exuberantly took the opportunity to coach. "One thing I love about running," Coach Kloer says, "is that everybody can excel and find tremendous value in it. They don't have to have God-given athletic ability. If they can commit to long term personal growth, they can have an unbelievable experience." Coach Kloer sought to make SFC Cross Country and Track & Field encapsulate this.

"I had a vision for how we could change," he shares, "*attract* and *impact*." Coach Kloer set a goal to attract students to join the team by getting to know them. He visited academic classes, worked with PE classes and offered running clinics, demonstrating how accessible the sport was to anyone who wanted to learn.

Past SFC student Caleb Johnson (2019) said he never considered track & field until Coach Kloer visited his science

class. Football had been his focus, but upon the visit, he decided to join track & field and discovered a love for the sport. He excelled, and today competes in track & field at the collegiate level. This first stage of “attract” has nurtured a welcoming environment that sees potential in every person and calls him or her into it.

Many on the team begin with little experience, some having never imagined themselves as runners; yet, they are quickly impacted by their own improvement. As they buy into the challenge, they are led through calculated, focused training.

## BREAKING BARRIERS

STUDENTS DESCRIBE COACH KLOER as “passionate,” “personal,” and “motivating,” a personality that has ignited a powerful team culture. Their motto is “GOUPPIE”: grit, optimism, unity, perseverance, passion, integrity and excellence. This acronym applies to all they do, on the course and beyond.

“In high school, cross country and track & field gave me the confidence to break down barriers and run through them,” says Coach Kloer. He fosters this confidence in his athletes and uses statistics to create clear goals and methods to achieve them. Removing unnecessary ambiguity helps athletes focus on specific challenges. Their hard work, tenacity, and consistency translate into confidence and success.

Running is painted as a lifestyle, not just a seasonal sport. Workouts become an enrichment to their daily lives as they explore local trail runs and take initiative to practice with teammates in the off-season. Consistency is emphasized over raw talent as the key to improvement.



Senior Kennedy Necoechea describes one of her proudest moments in track & field, “My sophomore year of track I pushed myself in the off-season and the winter. I wanted to specialize in the mile and got a 5:36. It proved that even though I don’t have automatic talent, the hard work I put in paid off.”

## CELEBRATE SUCCESS

AS PERSONAL RECORDS are broken, the celebration comes in the form of a sweet, juicy mandarin orange. During the race debrief, Coach Kloer tosses mandarin oranges to the athletes who achieved a personal record and his enthusiasm certainly carries back to the students. This intentional celebration further invigorates the team. Coach Kloer himself admits that his inspiration for coaching continually grows by watching these athletes realize their potential and exceed their expectations. Caleb remarks, “He helped give us excitement in our own success.”

## DEMIAN KLOER

### HOMETOWN

East County, San Diego

### FAMILY

Wife, Sherin, and two daughters, Summer and Ruby

### IN HIS SPARE TIME

Running, biking, swimming or climbing a rock face somewhere

### WOULD YOU BELIEVE

He is an entrepreneur and co-owner of Prana apparel and ran the company for 20 years

### PERFECT DAY

Wake up, trail run with friends and teammates, come home for a huge breakfast, then have a beach day with the family

## ATHLETICS

A happenstance first meeting of NFL vet/SFC dad Drew Brees and SFC alum/NFL rookie Jake Bailey



### ALUMNI focus

## ONCE AN EAGLE, NOW A PATRIOT

*Jake Bailey, SFC Class of 2015*

The first time Jake donned a football jersey was when he graced the field as a freshman at Santa Fe Christian. After punting and kicking for Stanford, the NFL's New England Patriots drafted Jake just after his college graduation.

Jake recalls that his favorite moment of Draft Day was when his former SFC head coach, Nick Ruscetta, called him. Coach Ruscetta congratulated him and wished him the best of luck. The encouraging call reassured Jake of the strong foundation that SFC helped build and will continue to carry him through this next step in life.

He shares, "The SFC football coaches showed a caring but tough love that taught me to push through adversity. Their love made me a better football player and a better man. They gave me the tools needed to be a strong leader for Christ. I applied all those lessons to my time at Stanford, and will continue to apply them to my time in the NFL."

Jake expects that it will be tempting (in the NFL) to get ahead of himself by focusing on lofty goals rather than the task at hand; yet the lessons he learned and the relationships he made at SFC have cultivated a strength of character to live for Christ and take on the challenges of the NFL.



Coach Kloer has certainly been a role model, encourager, and motivator to his athletes on and off the track. It does not take long for students to emulate his enthusiasm and commitment. The athletes carry a culture of positive tenacity which drives the team's energy. A close bond is forged as cross country runners sweat together on the long courses, and as track & field athletes cheer each other on in the many individual events. The Mount Sac meet is a cross country team favorite as the teammates take on the hardest race of the year, then spend the night together, share devotions, and bond at Disneyland.

This vibrant team culture carries lessons from the racecourse into everyday life. Most notably, it is learning to be "comfortable with being uncomfortable" as Kennedy describes. The difficult practices and team sentiment to stay positive "instills a unique place where people build each other up." She



contributes this personal development to aiding her through challenges in academics and life outside of school, setting the mindset that she will always be able to get through the challenge. These athletes will certainly carry this culture of encouragement, tenacity, and commitment with them for the rest of their lives.

With 39 athletes on the cross country roster, this season is the biggest in SFC's history. Partway through 2019 cross country season, boys and girls have been ranked #1 in their division for San Diego and aim to snatch the first-ever boys and girls dual CIF title this November. The past three track & field seasons are also the largest in school history, with 56 athletes per season. Track & field has become the largest SFC varsity sport. We're excited to see the results of these new seasons. Go Eagles! **Spirit**

## 2018-19 SFC LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIPS

Avocado Champions Girls' Swim  
 Coastal Champions Boys' Lacrosse  
 Coastal Champions Boys' Track & Field  
 Coastal Champions Girls' Track & Field  
 Coastal Champions Boys' Basketball  
 Coastal Champions Boys' Soccer  
 Coastal Champions Boys' Cross Country  
 Coastal Champions Girls' Cross Country  
 Coastal Champions Football  
 Coastal Champions Girls' Volleyball

## SFC 2018-19 ATHLETICS ACHIEVEMENTS

According to the NCAA (2017-18 national survey), 5.8% of high school students go on to play collegiate sports. In 2019 at SFC, of the 68 seniors who played sports, 28% (19 students) signed to play in college. That's nearly five times the national average.

2019 SFC grads will play a variety of sports at various colleges and universities:

### Baseball

Biola University  
 Loyola Marymount University  
 Washington State College  
 Westmont College  
 Wheaton College

### Basketball

Caltech

### Beach Volleyball

USC  
 Stanford University

### Football

Yale University  
 UCLA  
 Johns Hopkins University

### Golf

Westmont College

### Hockey

Mercyhurst University

### Soccer

California Lutheran University  
 University of Richmond  
 Point Loma Nazarene University

### Track & Field

Biola University

### Volleyball

Baylor University  
 Liberty University



# GIFTS THAT INSPIRE

Santa Fe Christian thrives as a result of the selfless generosity of its community. Financial gifts and volunteering enrich the scope of learning opportunities for students. Two parents give financially and by sharing their time and expertise with SFC students. Dr. Ramin Raiszadeh and his wife, Dr. Gwendolyn Henao Raiszadeh, open their medical practices for students to experience the medical field.



“LET THEM thrive by stimulating their minds and let them think about what they can do,” shares Dr. Ramin. Dr. Gwendolyn affirms, “So many people have the potential to do all of this, and they need to just be told that they can.”

A knee injury and a second-grade lesson on the kidney are two seemingly random moments, but these individual experiences ignited a passion within Dr. Ramin and Dr. Gwendolyn. This passion carried them through the challenges of medical school and into the honored white coat of an M.D. Now they welcome SFC students to experience the medical field first-hand in hopes they may encounter the same passion and vision that they did so many years ago.

Dr. Ramin is an awarded M.D. and the director of clinical research for minimally invasive spine surgery at the Spine Institute of San Diego. Dr. Gwendolyn leads a private practice in women’s health and mobile and clinical aesthetics. Students are welcome to observe the inside of the two practices, from surgeries to patient reception and overall care. SFC’s Athletic Training Program has partnered specifically with Dr. Ramin’s hospital, sending each student to experience his work. As the doctors take the opportunity to encourage them, students come away with a unique experience and that gives insight into what they may want to pursue as a profession.



## Dr. Ramin Raiszadeh

“THE MEDICAL FIELD IS INCREDIBLE,” Dr. Ramin shares. “I love it because you are affecting these lives with surgical technique and caring for someone before, during, and after.” The route to becoming a surgeon is certainly challenging. It took Dr. Ramin 13 years after graduating college to become a surgeon, and that truly is a lifetime commitment to learning.” Even still, Dr. Ramin expresses deep love for the field.



“I FIND PASSION IN GETTING TO HELP OTHERS IN AN INCREDIBLY SPECIALIZED AND IMPACTFUL WAY.”

Dr. Ramin takes SFC students under his wing while encouraging them to explore the world of medicine.

His parents, both doctors, exposed him to the medical field when he was a child. However, it was not until he had knee and shoulder surgery that he actually experienced medicine first-hand. He recalls how the surgeons who worked with him were so happy about what they were doing. Moreover, their work tangibly transformed his life; after having an injury that disabled him from doing certain things, he could finally do what he loved again!

Why the spine? Dr. Ramin explains, “When we were trained, we were taught everything about bones, but I loved the micro-level of working. [Spine surgery] is very meticulous. I love the exactness that is necessary and the minimum margin for error.” Dr. Ramin finds passion in helping others in an incredibly specialized and impactful way. Every patient’s life has been encumbered with pain, and in the end, he gets to positively transform their lives by alleviating some (or all) of their pain. It is this passion that fueled him through school and sparked his enthusiasm to share his experience. Dr. Ramin’s goal in having students shadow him is to help them see what fits. He believes every young adult needs to choose which field is best suited to their personality.



### Dr. Gwendolyn Henao Raiszadeh

AS A COLUMBIAN second-grader, Gwendolyn walked into her class, not knowing that day would change her life. The topic was the human kidney. Her teacher held up a coffee filter, then explained that the nephron of the kidney acts similarly to filter wastes in the body. Her Columbian family had taught her the utmost importance of coffee.



## THE GIVING DUO

Dr. Ramin and Dr. Gwendolyn are giving an incredible gift to students. This generous husband and wife duo understand how experiences shape dreams, so they encourage students to explore the medical field. Their expertise and enthusiasm to welcome and mentor students helps them discover if the medical profession is indeed a fit.

The analogy mesmerized her and ignited her imagination. “I became a little crazy about the kidney when I was younger,” she shares lightheartedly. She did a school project on the kidney the following year and became further entranced with the complexity of the human body.

Dr. Gwendolyn first started practicing as a gynecologist and developed a love for performing surgeries. Now as the doctor of a private practice in aesthetic medicine, she loves to holistically guide clients in feeling better, both on the outside and on the inside.

Dr. Gwendolyn welcomes students into her practice to watch cosmetic injections and biopsies. She lets the experience fire up the students and encourage them toward their dreams. If that dream includes medical school, she assures them that, “It is hard, it is challenging, but it is so doable. You surround yourself with others that are like-minded and you get through it. If I had to do it again, I would. I hope that they can see that passion in

me.” Being the mother of two daughters, she adds, “People think you can’t do it and be a family person but you can.” Her journey began as a second-grader, writing in her journal that she wanted to be a teacher and a doctor. Today she is a doctor that gets to teach patients how to take better care of themselves and teaches students about the medical field.

Claire Needham (2017) shadowed both doctors in the summer of 2018. She reached out to Dr. Gwendolyn particularly to see how she manages her own private practice.

Claire was able to view each facet of private practice, from checking in patients and organizing appointments, to one-on-one consultations, surgeries, and cosmetic treatments. Dr. Gwendolyn brought Claire deeper into the process by asking her questions. “It was most valuable to see how she interacts with patients one-on-one,” Claire shares. “Whether they are nervous or hopeful, she would calm their nerves and present the facts in a way that was understandable [to] the patients.”



Claire also took the opportunity to shadow Dr. Ramin for a few days and was similarly amazed to witness how encouraging and uplifting he was with his patients. These two experiences gave her unique clarity in regard to her own future. “It gave me more direction in the kind of patient contact I want to have,” she shares. “In the general hospital setting, there is not as much one-on-one time of patients with doctors. Flexibility and the time I would get to have with patients was a deciding factor in me wanting to go to Physician’s Assistant (PA) school.” Claire Needham is currently on the pre-PA track and a neuroscience major at USC.



### SFC’s Athletic Training Program

KRISTAL PETERSON, head athletic trainer at SFC, has orchestrated the Athletic Training program to include two opportunities to shadow doctors. The first is at the general orthopedic practice, the second is with Dr. Ramin in specialized spine surgery. This past year she trained 13 students, all of whom are considering the medical field.

Shadowing Dr. Ramin’s practice is an invaluable opportunity for them to experience the field itself and see every facet in action. Kristal says, “They see everyone from the check-in person to nurses, PAs, med-tech, anesthesiologist, surgery, how long the doctor is in there, [and] recovery time. They get to see the whole process.”

Students return to her and describe the experience as incredible and amazing, and say, “I can’t wait until I get to go



# TAKING TO THE FIELD



back.” Senior Kirsten Drake took the opportunity to shadow Dr. Ramin during a spinal surgery which involved the removal of disks between the vertebrae. She describes the surgery as “initially nerve-racking because you want to make sure you don’t mess anything up. But Dr. Ramin and especially all the other nurses gave the feeling that they wanted you to be there and learn.” She particularly loved watching the nurses reassure patients and build a relationship with them. “The nurses were so kind. They wanted to expose us to something they truly loved,” Kirsten reflects. This generous enthusiasm was contagious.

Having participated in SFC’s Athletic Training program all four years of high school, Kirsten has had her sights fixed on the medical field for some time. This experience has helped her narrow her pursuit to either nursing—a career inspired by her interactions with the nurses who work with Dr. Ramin—or athletic training, as inspired by Kristal Peterson and SFC’s program. **Spirit**



## ALUMNI *focus*

### NEUROSCIENCE KEEPS HER ON HER TOES

*Claire Needham, SFC Class of 2017*

Claire graduated in 2017 and now studies neuroscience with a minor in dance at the University of Southern California. While her dance minor fosters her childhood passion and is a wonderful outlet for creativity, her major in neuroscience puts her on track to become a Physician’s Assistant. Inspired by the desire to encourage and pour into patients, Claire shares, “What I am most excited for is being able to enter into such an intense and incredible field of work, but all while sharing the love of Jesus!”

# One Word: LOVE

## A TRIBUTE TO MRS. HUEY

“OH WELL, HONEY, THAT’S EASY, it’s just one word – love!” That is the secret to Mrs. Evelyn Huey remembering thousands of students who have passed through the arches of SFC. On a daily basis, you’ll find Mrs. Huey reading articles, looking for names of former students or calling to check in on others. It is her love for students that keeps her at SFC. “I love each and every kid that comes through [SFC] right where they’re at. It’s not a hard thing to do – loving them for who they are. You know, we don’t all agree with everybody, but I do just love people.”

When Mrs. Huey first joined the staff of SFC in 1979, she didn’t have a specific title, yet the various roles she held spanned campus-wide – secretary, nurse, event planner, historian, registrar – the list goes on. “I did everything. I was right where the kids came in [when tardy]. I became very famous because [the administration] wouldn’t take my excuse notes anymore – I excused everyone!”

She looks back fondly on the days of the school’s humble beginnings when the campus was adorned with just a few old motel buildings, an old swimming pool, and a few token plants. They were simpler times to be sure. Times of hard work, sacrifice, and perseverance, a coming together of people, both collectively and individually, to invest in SFC. Yet from it, an undeniably remarkable community was born. From day one, Mrs. Huey knew SFC, the students, the faculty, the community, was her purpose. “You know, I never questioned being here. I mean we were surely never here because of money. We were here because of purpose. I never questioned, never thought, of being anyplace else. This is my family. Absolutely, this is my family.”

As the school grew, so did Mrs. Huey’s responsibilities. “Ev,” as she’s known to colleagues, moved to the Middle School and focused on being the secretary. “I love Middle School – that was my favorite! I love everything about the kids – their age – they’re



Mrs. Huey loves seeing former students and delights in hearing about their lives.

so spongeable! They’re able to listen to you and you’re able to make a difference in their lives. They come to you with their problems. And it was wonderful [to be with them]!” After Middle School, Mrs. Huey went on to work in the counseling department where you’ll still find her loving on students.

Mrs. Huey, a refined, classy, genuine, humble, detailed and determined woman, ends with this: “Be true to yourself, have a purpose, do the hard things, and keep going.”

Thanks for the advice, Mrs. Huey. We love you, too! **Spirit**

# Catch the Spirit!



*Santa Fe Christian's mission is to partner with Christian parents within a Bible-based community, in order to disciple students to embrace biblical truth, strive for academic excellence, and model Christ-like leadership to influence their homes, churches, and communities for Christ. [www.sfcs.net](http://www.sfcs.net)*

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