



## IN SHORT

### National Spelling Bee

BCS students will participate in a school-wide Spelling Bee in December and January, as part of the Scripps National Spelling Bee. Students were given grade-level lists of study words this week. Classroom contests will be completed by Friday, Dec. 11, and the school-wide Spelling Bee will include students from grades 1-8 and will be conducted on Wednesday, Jan. 13. Parent Daphne Allen will be coordinating the Spelling Bee efforts.

### Beauty and the Beast

Drama students will present the fall musical "Beauty and the Beast" in the Family Life Center on Friday, Nov. 13, at 7 p.m. and Saturday, Nov. 14, at 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. Tickets are \$8 for adults, \$6 for students and seniors, and \$4 for children 12 and under. The groundbreaking for the Center for Science and the Arts is scheduled between the Saturday shows, at 4 p.m.

### BCS on Facebook

BCS is boldly going where no other school marketing attempt has gone before. In an effort to increase alumni awareness and involvement, director of admissions Deborah Hicks has set up Twitter and Facebook accounts for anyone wanting to find out the latest news on all BCS activities.

### Food Drive

The Thanksgiving food drive will again involve contributing to the Capital Area Food Bank, through which BCS was able to serve hundreds of needy families last year. Any non-perishable food items are accepted from now through Nov. 24. The school's goal is to average 5 to 7 food items per student, and the Student Council will be coordinating the efforts.

## Surfeit of scholars

*Seniors Beach, Gardner earn high honor*

matthew **ARCHER**  
reporter

For the second time in its history, BCS has two National Merit Scholar semifinalists. Andrew Beach and Matthew Gardner both found out in August that they are in the running for this prestigious award.

"I'm very proud of Andrew and Matthew for receiving this high honor," secondary principal Jared Lee said. "Not only is it a testimonial to the high academic standards the teachers at BCS hold, but more importantly it is recognition of the two young men's dedication and

hard work."

Guidance counselor Lacy Dyke announced in all-school chapel on Oct. 15 that Beach and Gardner had both become semifinalists. Dyke also announced that four other seniors were named Commended Students. Brian Lam, Chris Williams, Stephen Yu, and Carlos Zaragoza all qualified for this accolade by scoring in the top three percent in the nation on the PSAT. According to the National Merit Program website, this puts them in a group of about 34,000 American seniors.

see **Merit**, page 8



photo: Jessica Love

**Smile, Boys** Six seniors are either National Merit semifinalists or Commended Students, giving the Class of 2010 the most honorees in BCS history. From left, Carlos Zaragoza, Brian Lam, Andrew Beach, Matthew Gardner, Stephen Yu, and Chris Williams.

## Book Week inspires reading

*Young students looking forward to contest, celebrities, "book-in"*

kailley **RODDEN**  
reporter

As you walk down the halls of the elementary buildings next week, the sound of turning pages will fill your ears. You'll peek inside one of the classrooms; little football players and princesses will be sprawled about, reading a great assortment of books. Book Week arrives at Brentwood Christian, Nov. 9-13. About 20 years ago, Book Week was set up

to encourage a love of reading among students. It is an event in which grades K-6 take time to immerse themselves in literature in a very exciting and fun way. The children will enjoy a plethora of activities, and will even have celebrities and famous authors read to them. Also, students get to enjoy a "book-in," where they take their favorite pillows, blankets, and books, and read by flashlight.

"This is the highlight of the school year," said kindergarten teacher Linda Allen said.

## Rules or no rules, gum is chewed

derek **TRESSLAR**  
reporter

A student ventures into a classroom on the BCS campus. As he prepares to start his work, he drops his pencil on the ground. He bends down to pick it up, and he sees a horrible sight on the bottom of the desk. Gum is everywhere, and he is disgusted.

At Brentwood Christian, and at many schools, chewing gum during school is an ongoing problem. The rules clearly forbid it, yet there are always those who break them anyway. According to secondary principal Jared Lee, the reasons for the rules are simple: BCS shares the campus with the church, and the church has asked that this rule be in place. Furthermore there is the mess that gum makes. Under desks, on the floor, and even on walls, it can damage property and is a pain to clean up.

Detentions are given out and punishments devised, but students still can't help but to pull out that Hubba Bubba anyway. Some students are far better than others at not getting caught and can go all day without any teachers noticing. Then there are those teachers who are known for their ability to catch gum chewers, like Miss Weaver and Mrs. Johnson.

Knowing that chewing gum in these classes is risky, students typically spit it out before class. Johnson attributes her gum-chewer-catching skills to students simply forgetting that they have gum and chewing obviously. Weaver is said to be able to smell spearmint from a mile away.

Since the handbook doesn't specify a certain punishment, another issue for teachers is what to do when students are caught.

see **Gum**, page 2



From the mind of Skylar Haws

## Beware “hobby dating”

I don't know if it's just me, but it seems like there's more than one epidemic going around these days. As I hang out with others my age, I have come to notice that many students develop a chronic case of dating syndrome. Symptoms often include, but are not limited to, insincere and incessant relationships, and an unruly habit of seeking them out.

It's not that I frown upon high school dating (in fact I think it can be healthy), but I am strongly opposed to the multitude of shallow and short-lived relationships resulting from what I call the “dating hobby.”

The most important aspect in distinguishing between hobby dating and sincere dating is the reason for the relationship. Hobby daters enter into a relationship simply for the sake of being in a relationship, which can manifest itself in many different ways. In my opinion, dating someone to get over a previous relationship, dating to impress or make others envious, and dating to avoid being dateless at the Friday night movie are all forms of hobby dating.

Regardless of the reason for a relationship, I have consistently seen two behaviors that turn relationships into regrets.

As we all know, it takes both peanut butter and jelly to make a decent PB&J sandwich. In the same way, it takes two people to make a relationship work. One partner putting in little effort and expecting much in return results in fractured reliability and a breakdown of trust. Please don't make half of a sandwich. Throw it away or finish the job.

In addition to PB&J, I would guess that many of you like videogames. While it's OK to play for a few hours at a time, an obsession that involves staying up hours on end trying to unlock every single extra bonus in the game is unhealthy. In the same fashion, relationships played out too much or too quickly can turn sour. Sometimes it's good to take a break from the Xbox and enjoy some time in nature. Don't be afraid to let a relationship play out at a moderate and enjoyable tempo.

In my opinion, dating is the precursor to marriage, so I believe that it should be treated accordingly and observed reverently. In all things, take seriously the opportunity to let someone into your life, and please, do it prayerfully – not hastily.



photo: Bear Tracks

Hook 'em BCS students Nicole Petrik, Jenna Beggs, and Rachel Beggs create some artwork at the annual Fall Fest on Oct. 24. Children of all ages enjoyed perfect weather and dozens of activities as they helped raise money for class trips and teacher expenses. Three of the biggest attractions were the maze, pie throw, and dunking booth.

Bretz knows best: Gabe Breternitz

## Hope emerges for actual “hall” singing

Two weeks ago, the longstanding Brentwood tradition of hall singing returned to its rightful place: the halls. Students who have been lobbying for this change are appeased, and I'm sure everyone can appreciate the fact that the name “hall singing” is no longer a misnomer. Though there may still be some logistics to work out, it looks like hall singing will remain in the halls.

This is a big deal. Hall singing is a big deal. If this isn't immediately apparent to you, I'll explain. But first, you need to understand the problem.

There can be no doubt: Brentwood is very serious about the Great Commission: Bible classes, chapels every week, theme verses, morning devotional thoughts, and an overall Christian atmosphere – Brentwood is veritably saturated in all things Christian.

As it *should* be. After all, this is BCS; “Christian” is our middle name! This is how a Chris-

tian school should be, oriented around Christ. Except, there's a problem.

When there are so many planned activities and structured events designed to focus our minds toward Christ, the activities and events tend to work retrograde. It is human nature to lose focus, and what was once an act of faith slowly becomes a routine. It becomes harder to truly pay attention to Christ and easier to go through the motions of worship without connecting to the deeper message. In short, the school's policy unintentionally provides ways for us to simulate faith, while the heart of our belief gets lost in the routine.

Still, that doesn't mean it is impossible to separate the routine from true belief, rote singing from genuine praise. There are plenty of opportunities to take hold of our faith and make it our own. The Spiritual Life Committee is a good example. And until recent years, so was

hall singing.

When it began nearly two decades ago, hall singing was a pretty smart idea. It was a chance for students to take time out every Monday and begin their week with worship. What made it such a good idea was its informal feel. Unlike Bible class, there were no grades; unlike chapel, there were no expectations. You didn't have to go anywhere; you simply sat down in the halls and sang. If you had a song you wanted to start, you started it. It was almost completely spontaneous and student-led.

Another aspect of hall singing that set it apart from other activities was that it was a choice. No one was forcing you to go, so deciding to worship became a personal decision, a true chance to grow your own faith on your own accord. It also gave students a chance to lead

see **Singing**, page 8

## THE BEAR FACTS

Brentwood Christian School  
11908 North Lamar Blvd.  
Austin, TX 78753

The Bear Facts is published monthly by the journalism classes of Brentwood Christian High School. The paper is a learning tool which informs the student body while teaching students to become critical observers of their environment and to validate Truth within the context of the Christian world view.

**Editor-in-Chief**  
Skylar Haws

**Sports Editor**  
Megan Monacelli

### Reporters

Matthew Archer	Charles Kim
Trevor Atherton	Mike Lee
Steven Bailey	Levi Matus
Elena Battle	Matthew Onabajo
Gabe Breternitz	Rachel Orick
Ryan Brunson	Ashtyn Pate
Jacob Cardenas	Kailey Rodden
Travis Clark	Connor Schiesz
Lizzy DuPond	Taylor Shaw
Lanae Hollingsworth	Erica Shultz
Joseph Kang	Derek Tresslar
Kia Khadem	Morgan Vandygriff

**Adviser**  
Jonathan Weed

## Gum sticks

continued from page 1

Some teachers say that stopping class to write out a detention isn't worth the trouble for gum chewing, while others give a detention every time. Some students are given grace and just asked to spit it out, which doesn't interrupt class for long. Teachers admit, though, that if there isn't any punishment for breaking the rule, then students have no reason to stop.

Students who were asked gave a few different reasons for why they chew gum. Many said that they chew it to make their breath smell better. Others said that when they're bored it's something to do. Most students said

that after they are finished chewing gum they spit it out in a trash can. Some said that the only reason that gum ends up under desks and not in trash cans is because when they see a teacher they have nowhere else to put it. If the rule didn't exist, they say, they wouldn't have to worry about getting caught and would be able to spit their gum out in the trash.

Most students who admit to putting gum under desks said that they have only done it one time, and they give different reasons. For one student, it was fear.

“I didn't want to get a detention from the teacher and I thought they had noticed me chewing, so I just stuck the gum under the desk,” one high school student said.

One student said that he was too lazy to get up and spit it out, and he thought it would be funny

to do it. Another said that she just wanted to see what it felt like. Both said that after doing it they felt as if they had done something stupid.

For students who feel like they have to chew gum, science teacher Tasha Walker is a good example to follow.

“I would classify myself as a gum addict, but I still abide by the rules anyway,” she said.

Most students said that they dislike the rule and wish it were gone, but senior Taylor Shaw has a different opinion. He used to attend Pflugerville High School, where he said there wasn't any rule against chewing gum.

“At Pflugerville there was a lot more gum under desks because there wasn't a rule. It's a lot better here.”

# Ropes or no ropes, seventh graders bond at retreat

travis **CLARK**  
reporter

Everyone was taking the opportunity to plan at this point. They had to be very careful in how they did this. A long, horizontal rope was moving in a giant circle, and once they were done planning, they somehow all had to run under it. Oh, and they couldn't talk.

"OK, here's my idea," Michael Lam said. "We all nod our heads at the same time to tell each other when we're going to go. On the third nod, we go."

Everyone liked the idea, and soon the planning was over. And even though Lam's group might not have succeeded the first time, after a few tries they were able to all get under.

The moving rope was just one of many ropes

courses that the seventh graders participated in during their class retreat at Camp Buckner last month. The students left for the camp at 6:30 a.m. on Oct. 22 and returned the next day at 3:30 p.m.

Many students got excited about the retreat days in advance. Heather Hammock, a retreat planner, said the students began planning what they were going to do together when she passed out the information packet about a week before the retreat.

"I'm excited about the retreat because I think I'm going to have a lot of fun, and, besides the fifth-grade Lexington trip, this retreat is the first overnight field trip we'll have," Christian Montgomery said before the retreat. "Plus we get to miss two days of school."

During the retreat the high ropes courses

were closed due to weather concerns, but there were low ropes courses, including the moving rope challenge and the keypad game. In this game, the students stood behind a rope and ran up to a giant keypad one at a time and pressed one button. The students had to press about 30 numbers in order.

"It was really hard because everyone kept messing up, but it was a lot of fun," Megan Burcham said.

The class also played several team-building games, such as throwing a ball in a certain order while everyone is in a circle or trying to lower a rod to the ground by everyone having two fingers on the rod and lowering it.

"The students worked well together," secondary principal Jared Lee said. "They really supported each other, and there was minimal

frustration."

According to Hammock, the main purposes of the retreat were to have fun and, more importantly, to develop a sense of community and responsibility among the students. Hammock said the students already had strong unity, and they would build on the skills they already have.

"It was a great time for class bonding," school librarian and trip sponsor Tere Hager said.

The adult sponsors on the trip were Hager, Travis Pollard, Kellsey Smith, Jessica and Joel Love, Marquita Moss, and Lee.

High school seniors who volunteered as counselors were John Alan Archer, Jacob Cardenas, Caleb Geer, Aracely Mora, Tyla Wells, and Jillian Wilson.

# Super seniors celebrate silliness, sob

lizzy **DUPOND**  
reporter

It is a sunny Saturday afternoon, Oct. 17; seniors and parents are arriving at New Life United Pentecostal Church for the ceremony. Nothing can prepare them for the imminent succession of tears, laughter, life lessons, and an endless line of scrapbooks waiting to be signed.

The Super Senior Celebration has been called one of the most meaningful traditions of Brentwood Christian School. The celebration is an event exclusive to seniors, parents, and teachers that allows all seniors to be honored by people they care about. In the past, a senior could be honored by a pair of friends, parents,

and even a teacher, but as this year's class is so large, the rules were: one parent, one friend, two minutes each.

The students used their speeches to recall old memories of their friends, sometimes funny and other times thoughtful, and end with something unique or special about them. Many of the girls ended up crying halfway through their speeches, always ending with an embrace. Fortunately, there was a box of tissues on a Greek pedestal nearby.

When Stephane Montgomery had finished honoring Taylor Shaw and was walking off the stage, he suddenly stopped, ran back, and pounced upon his friend; he had forgotten the hug.

Parents would always give the second speech.

They utilized their time to tell often embarrassing stories and to provide words of wisdom to their "grewed-up" children. It was common for parents to go way beyond the two-minute time limit. This would lose about half the crowd, but by the intense look of the son or daughter, it surely meant the world to them.

"Enjoy the little things," said one parent in his address, "because one day you will realize that they were the big things."

The groups of speeches were divided by brief snack breaks, which everybody used to stretch their legs; try the cookies, chips, and M&M's; talk among friends; and attempt to conquer the scrapbooks that filled four long tables. Some people wrote a message, while others simply autographed. Either way, reaching 55 scrapbooks in one setting was a daunting task.

At one point, government teacher Joseph Walker handed out the previous week's tests for students to do test corrections over the weekend. Students laughingly groaned at the fact that Walker was distributing homework on a Saturday, even at a Super Senior ceremony.

After five hours of speeches, the students went outside to take group pictures before dinner. At the cafeteria, students swirled around the tables, gazing at child photographs and baby pictures of their friends, before getting in line for a dinner of homemade brisket, colorful vegetables, mashed potatoes, and dessert. There were cookies and carrot cake, and one large white cake with the names of all the honored seniors scrawled in blue icing on top.

Post-dinner, the seniors gathered in the chapel to sing hymns and have one final prayer to end the ceremony. Some friends went to party at each other's houses, but most went home, tired but happy from the joyful event.

"It was such an emotional day," Aracely Mora said. "But it was great to experience this with our senior buddies."

# Still time to get that bug

steven **BAILEY**  
reporter

BCS ninth graders will be turning in the annual freshman insect collection project on Nov. 16. The assignment was to collect and identify 10 insects and one arachnid, or spider. Biology teacher Tasha Walker warned the class as the deadline approached that once the weather turns cold, insects will not come out.

The insects they catch must be dead for the project, so past biology teachers have developed their own insect pacification system. The students were told to get a pickle jar, fill it about halfway with cotton balls soaked in nail-polish remover, and place a cut-out cardboard circle on top of them.

Past students have revealed some secrets about their insect-catching methods, including forcing their little siblings to do it, getting help from grandparents, or even buying them from a pet store. A few students have learned not to "catch" a bug by stomping on it. One student said he tried to pass the grade with fake bugs, which did not make the teacher happy. A few students have collected different dead bugs from bus window sills.

Three years ago, senior Trevor Atherton was four bugs short on the day his project was due, so he went outside and caught three insects and found a locust shell. He pinned the locust shell on the display board along with the three bugs, which were still moving.

"I didn't tell Mr. Broadway what I did until after I turned in the project," Atherton said.

Walker said getting help from family and friends is OK, but buying insects from the store is cheating because they do all the classification. She also said that by completing the project, students learn about their environment and begin to learn more about themselves.

"Taxonomy helps you develop appreciation for the complexity of creation and the world around us," Walker said.



photo: Bear Facts

**Ah, the Memories** Amanda Bailey shares some stories about her good friend Hanna Boyd at the Class of 2010's first Super Senior Celebration on Oct. 17. A tradition since Brentwood Christian's first graduating class more than 20 years ago, this event is known for its laughter, tears, and plenty of good food.



**SENIOR SPOTLIGHT:** *Abbie Jane Boyd*

Seniors featured in the Bear Facts were selected by a vote held among the entire BCS Class of 2010.

# More than just a pretty voice

**trevor ATHERTON**  
reporter

With the voice of an angel, adding kindness and laughter in many conversations, Abbie Jane Boyd is a friend to all.

Abbie's small frame, brown eyes, and brown hair are familiar characteristics to most students of Brentwood Christian. Since enrolling at BCS in "Mother's Day Out" when she was three years old, Abbie has developed a reputation from an early age as "the sweetest girl in school." Reasons for this can be readily seen in her Christian character and kindness, along with her easily recognized alto voice that not only brings smiles in the hallways, but also entertains at choir and Encore performances.

Abbie has been singing her entire life. She has been in choir for the past eight years, the last four as a member of Encore.

"I've enjoyed being in Encore with Abbie this year," senior Stephane Montgomery says. "She has a beautiful voice that can be heard in our group really well."

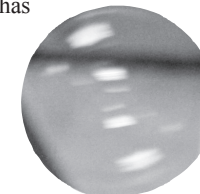
Abbie's twin sister Hanna and brother Carter, a sophomore, both attend BCS as well. Her parents Jeff and Jackie Boyd both graduated from Abilene Christian University, where Abbie plans to attend in the fall and major in "something that has to do with music or animals."

Along with Abbie's involvement in the



photo: Marisol Hernandez

choir and Encore, she also has a talent in acting. She was in "Annie Get Your Gun" in 2007, playing the role of Annie's cute little sister. This year she stars in next week's musical "Beauty and the Beast" as Belle – a role she has been preparing for since



the spring.

In spite of all Abbie's extra-curricular activities and limited time, she is a diligent student who works hard to earn her good grades.

"Abbie studies hard for every test," classmate Joelle Vargas says. "I always see her with flash cards."

Her extra-curricular activities put her in a good position to talk with many different people every day.

"You could definitely say Abbie is a social person," senior Brian Lam says with a smile.

And when Abbie mingles with people her input into the conversation is usually not just small talk to

move on to something else, it's conversations that leave people in a better mood.

"She's funny and she will make you smile no matter what mood you're in. Enough said," Montgomery says.

This cheerfulness is a quality that many seniors have noticed and appreciated while growing up with her.

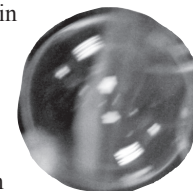
"One of the things I admire most about Abbie is her devotion to God, and she really shows it when she talks to anyone," Amanda Bailey says.

Students across different grades can attest to Abbie's Christ-like character. She has been raised in the Christian faith, having attended Brentwood Oaks since she was born and remaining very active in the youth group.

One of Abbie's favorite summer activities is attending Camp Blue Haven in New Mexico. She first attended this camp in the seventh grade and has continued going every year. The main reason she says she holds this camp as a priority is the isolation from the world for an entire two weeks and the strong relationships that are developed through devotionals and fellowship with other kids that share her beliefs in God. Along with this camp, Abbie has impacted many students' lives in just "being the sweet girl" that she is.

"I can honestly say Abbie has made a lasting impression in my life," senior John Archer says.

Whether it be singing loud enough for the whole chapel to hear or just being kind to others, Abbie's presence is felt through the entire school and greatly appreciated. Her words of encouragement have lifted up many people, her strong voice has entertained, and her Christian attitude has reflected her character.



## Rocks, fossils, minerals, ... reporters?

*Sixth graders interviewed about trash in lake for evening newscast during annual field trip to Pease Park*

**lanae HOLLINGSWORTH**  
reporter

If you were watching the KXAN-NBC news at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 27, you might have been surprised to see BCS sixth graders. While they were on their annual rocks, fossils, and minerals field trip to Pease Park, teacher Becky Stewart and several students were interviewed about trash in Lady Bird Lake and the surrounding watershed.

The news segment was about the tons of debris in the lake following the recent heavy rains. Stewart told KXAN reporter Matt Flener,

"We are realizing that all rivers and watersheds run downhill."

Flener commended the sixth graders for disposing of their trash after they ate lunch.

"Throw it away and recycle whatever I can," Brittney Jones said about her efforts to help the environment.

After studying about rocks, fossils, and minerals for three weeks prior to their trip, the students were very excited about being able to participate in hands-on activities. They saw different types of rocks and touched igneous, sedimentary, and metamorphic samples. They also tested the hardness of different minerals

and classified them based on their properties.

Upon arrival at the park students were split into two groups. While one group looked at rocks and minerals, the other group hunted for fossils in the riverbed; then they switched.

After the tour, students ate their sack lunches at the picnic tables in the park; this is when the TV crew arrived and talked with them. They returned to BCS about 1 p.m. for two more long hours of school.

Students enjoyed different things about the trip. For some it was the hands-on activities, and for others it was hunting for fossils in the riverbed. Natalie Williams and Jones both de-

scribed the trip in three words: "It was awesome!"

Sixth graders have been going on this field trip for more than 20 years. According to Stewart, all of the trips have been to Pease Park, though some were held in the Austin Nature Center due to bad weather.

Stewart recalls that one year the temperature was in the 40s, and the moms brought hot chocolate. A couple of times there were basketball games going on at the courts in the park, and some of the boys joined the pickup game.



# Versatile scholarly musician a BCS treasure

ryan **BRUNSON**  
reporter

Twenty years ago, a talented teacher first took a part-time job as a band instructor as a fall-back vocation at Brentwood Christian School. He swiftly evolved into an exceedingly central constituent to the well being of the whole school.

Mel Witcher began his time at BCS in 1989 as a band teacher. In 1991, he took on the added role of an American History teacher for both eighth grade and juniors and, in time, ran the secondary for a year when he became principal in 2005. Nevertheless, whether involved solely in music or running a school, Witcher has always been hard-working and humble.

Growing up in Lampasas, Witcher says he spent much of his time with family, and activities included cruising to Storm's drive-in restaurant after church. He played football and threw the shot put until his sophomore year, when he determined music was his calling. He even played on the same field as Johnny "Lam" Jones, a former University of Texas and New York Giants wide receiver.

"Obviously I knew any future I had wasn't in athletics," says Witcher, who did coach flag football at BCS many years ago.

With the help of his mother, he even put a band together. Along with a singer, they played mostly light jazz music for nearly three years. "We never made any money from it, but we were able to go and play at a lot of places," Witcher says.

He chose the trombone as his beginning instrument and took lessons with private teachers from UT. He learned the cornet by watching other students play it. When a student once had to drop out of a band competition, Witcher offered to take his place. The teacher skeptically asked him to finger a note, Witcher did so cor-

rectly, and the surprised teacher allowed him to play.

Skilled not only in music but in academics as well, he scored a 1460 of 1600 on his SAT and maintained a GPA of a 4.0 through high school and college. He was also a National Merit Scholar and salutatorian of his high school class in '77.

"I was eight-hundredths of a point behind the valedictorian," Witcher says with a wistful smile. "I'll always remember that."

Witcher was also in the school choir. He says he was naturally better at singing than playing an instrument. As a result, he made all-state choir all but his freshman year. At the pinnacle of his high school fine arts career, he even dabbled in acting when he played the lead character in "Don Quixote de La Mancha." He laughingly says that it must have taken some great acting to pull off the part of the tall, thin, and dark lead role.

Music remained his focus through most of college with the sole distraction of a girl. He married Judy Towell on May 17, 1980, after his junior year of college. He says that their first "dates" were going to church together. She had graduated from high school a year early and they met at ACU, where coincidentally Witcher had been good friends with her older brother.

The Witchers' four children include two BCS graduates: Daniel ('03) and Laura ('05), both of whom graduated from Harding University, became teachers, and have teaching spouses. Freshman Hannah and fourth-grader Emily are current BCS students.

Witcher determinedly pursued his degree and received his bachelor's in music education in '82 at Abilene Christian University. Three years later he had acquired his master's in music education at the University of North Texas by going at night and during the summers. He then taught band at several schools before he

fatefully came to Austin, where he took classes at a local seminary while teaching band at BCS. He earned a master's degree in '91 from Austin Graduate School of Theology.

Witcher says he hoped to become a preacher or teach biblical philosophy at the university level, and he began looking for work in churches. He sent out 100 resumes to various churches in possible need of a young, qualified preacher. He was given only five interviews of the 100 applications he sent, and worse yet, no church hired him.

Eventually, he found Brentwood and accepted a part-time offer to be a band instructor. Since then, he has taught every class in the social studies and Bible departments except for Texas History, Texas Geography, and Letters of Paul. He has taught all levels in band and every secondary grade in academics. He currently teaches freshman World History and Capstone, a senior humanities class.

Witcher no longer teaches band, though he says he misses performances.

"I don't have any regrets," he says. "Mr. Pol-lard is doing a great job. He really took the program and ran with it."

He stopped teaching band when he became the interim principal in 2005. Witcher described it as a rough year which coincided with the year his father passed away.

"That was personally tough on me," he says. "It was a difficult year with a lot of decisions that needed to be made."

As for the future, Witcher has his sights set on staying at BCS. He says he wants to see his daughter Emily graduate from Brentwood and, more short term, continue work on his senior Capstone course to equip students to see the world as it really is through the eyes of faith.

For himself, he says he would love to try his hand again at writing musical pieces, a hobby that has earned him several awards in the past. He has also been working collaboratively on "proof singing" new musical writings for the settings of Psalms. He and 16 others, including his wife, are putting together a hymnal by testing newly written music and deciding how well it fits in a worship setting. Witcher says he hopes it will be printed by ACU Press sometime in 2010.

For years, school president Marquita Moss says, Witcher has been developing the curriculum for the Bible and history departments around a sound Christian philosophy. He won the TAPPS 3A Fine Arts Teacher of the Year award in 1998 as well as The Executive Director's School Spirit award at the end of the year. Witcher said he's more proud of the spirit award, since it was awarded by people who know him.

Many teachers have shared the same opinions of Witcher as being an intelligent, caring, and sincere man of faith.

"The faculty members all know that when something serious is being discussed, we want to hear from Mr. Witcher, because his thoughts on any subject will be informed by scripture, by wide reading, and by serious reflection," elementary principal Dr. Libby Weed says.

Moss speaks highly of Witcher and of his character. She praises his humble and self-

effacing nature, and his earnestness and genuineness toward other people and the students at BCS.

"He has a vision for what the school is trying to accomplish in the lives of the students," Moss says.

## Computer woes being deleted

matthew **ONABAJO**  
reporter

Over the summer, systems administrator Jacob Rotich introduced changes at BCS including a new network security system for computers and upgrades in software. He said the changes were needed to keep the school's technology up-to-date.

One of the changes includes an upgrade from Microsoft Office 2003 to Microsoft Office 2007, which introduces many features and corrects many bugs in the prior version. Rotich said it also corrects issues in which the e-mail software, Outlook 2003, had conflicted with the school's servers. Rotich also said that teachers will find the additions are hard to get used to, but are valuable features to have.

Data traveling through the school's network is now monitored due to a security upgrade. No threats have been detected in the school's networks, but "there is always a potential threat, and it will help to keep out hackers, malware, and viruses," Rotich said.

Unfortunately for Rotich, he will no longer have funds from passbook sales, since school officials made the decision to end the fundraiser that raises money for all things pertaining to technology.

"It wasn't exciting, it's too much work on the students, and sales kept declining year after year," Rotich said.

Since there will be no fundraiser for technology, Rotich said he hopes the school will budget some funds for technology in the future.

Eventually, Rotich said he hopes to add Windows Exchange Server and a "favorite among students," Google Mail, to school computers. Students and teachers would receive Google addresses and would be able to collaborate with others live in Google Docs. That way students could receive more teacher feedback on assignments.

He also added that teachers have received an increasing amount of spam. With the help of Google's filters and unlimited bandwidth, he hopes to relieve the school's servers.

"They will be major changes for our school," Rotich said.



photo: Bear Tracks

**Jazz It Up** In his 20 years at BCS, Mel Witcher has played quite a few different instruments, taught perhaps a dozen different courses, coached, and even been principal for a year. More importantly, the man who once had his sights set on preaching has become the one teachers and administrators turn to for wisdom in all matters.

# Lady Bears going for fifth straight district title

*In spite of obstacles, coach cites senior leadership as reason for confidence in team*

mike LEE  
reporter

The Lady Bears started their season brightly as they defeated Victoria Faith 57-40 on Nov. 3 at Victoria. Seniors Ashley Clement and Joelle Vargas led the team, each scoring 17 points in the game.

Last year, Brentwood lost its game against Victoria Faith.

Today, the Lady Bears will travel across town to play Waldorf School, as they look to add a second victory to their record.

After the Lady Bears won their fourth consecutive district title last year, the expectations of the team remain high. Head coach Devan Loftis said he is now looking forward to winning a fifth-consecutive title.

“Last year I think we met our potential; we met our objectives of winning the district,” Loftis said. “(Our) top priority is to get one more district championship.”

Six girls, including three starters, returned from last year’s team that won the district without a single defeat before losing to Fort Worth Christian in the second round of playoffs. The players are determined to add another title.

“We just want to keep the tradition of winning the district, and we want to go further than we did last year,” Vargas said.

The girls, however, acknowledge that the team is going to have to work hard to accomplish their objective. Because most of the players were also on the volleyball team, the whole team has not had long to practice together. Loftis said that the offseason practice was not as intense, and that the team will have



**Fire Away** Seniors Ashley Clement, Katie Miertschin, and Tyla Wells launch three-point shots during practice Wednesday as they gear up for Friday’s game at Waldorf. Four seniors – all key players last year – will lead the team into action.

to work more intensely during the in-season practice.

“Offseason was more difficult with only six people,” Clement said. “But I still think it was very beneficial, and it will help us in the long run.”

The graduation of five players – Olivia Brin-

son, Katie Legband, Laura Peterson, Hannah Sinclair, and Rebecca Singleton – is another obstacle. The loss of the tall post players could be especially challenging for the team.

Nonetheless, the Lady Bears are not daunted by the obstacles. Loftis said that while the team has lost some depth and some of the

leadership, four seniors have returned. Two of them were leading scorers – Clement and Tyla Wells – and two others were the best defensive players – Vargas and Katie Miertschin. Loftis said he also hopes for some younger players to step up.

“We have some post players but they’re just young. We’ve got three sophomore posts who just haven’t played much varsity,” he said. “They’ll be a big part of it.”

Strong leadership from seniors is another important factor, according to Loftis.

“(The four seniors) have been district champs three times, and they’ve all been playing varsity since they were freshmen. So they have a lot of experience,” he said. “Taking that experience and passing it on, and keeping the expectation high will be important, because we have lot of younger players that don’t have those experiences.”

TAPPS 4A, the division in which the Lady Bears will compete, went through a subtle change, adding Corpus Christi John Paul II. Loftis recognized that, while it is unlikely to have a big impact, the change should make the district more competitive.

After tonight’s game at Waldorf, the girls will host Thorndale on Nov. 13. The BCS Invitational will be on Dec. 3-5, and the first district game will be at Hyde Park on Dec. 8.

Above all, the Lady Bears said they need support from the entire school. Vargas encouraged students and teachers to come to support them.

“I think we can do well this season and it should be exciting. Everybody should go to every game!” she said.

## Varsity boys feature new faces, new offensive strategy

megan MONACELLI  
sports editor

After a scrimmage against San Marcos Home School on Friday, Oct. 30, the varsity boys officially tip off their season next Friday, Nov. 13, at a tournament in New Braunfels.

Coach David Peyton said before the scrimmage that he wanted the team to play sound fundamental basketball, execute the offense, and give all their effort in the four quarters. When the game ended and the Bears were beaten handily, Peyton pointed out the opportunity the loss gave the team to find areas needing improvement.

The first district game is Dec. 8 against rival Hyde Park. The annual BCS Invitational will be on Dec. 3-5.

According to Peyton, the team is running a “Read and React” offense this season. It is a versatile motion offense which can be used to attack a zone or man defense. The players must

read both the ball handler and defense and then be able to react as a team to what is happening on the court. This offense can be run using anywhere from three to five guards.

Peyton said the loss of 14 players from last season to this season has made games a little tougher. Six graduated, two decided to focus on soccer this year, and six transferred to other schools. This included incoming freshmen.

Despite the loss, Peyton said he hopes many players will take on leadership roles when the situation calls for it. For now, he’s got two players who have stepped up.

“Jacob Cardenas and John Alan Archer are our two captains and have done an outstanding job of leading and motivating the team to perform at peak level,” Peyton said.

Peyton’s goals for this season extend beyond

just playing basketball well.

“My expectations are that all of my guys will represent Christ well on and off the court, but that will start with me being the proper example in that regard for them,” he said.

Last season, the team finished fifth in district. Hopes are high to improve on that and to make it to playoffs this year. The last time the varsity boys made it to playoffs was two years ago, when they were defeated in the first round.

To better help prepare the team for the season, Peyton had the boys write out personal goals that they hope to achieve this season. Peyton said he thinks this is an effective way to get these goals into their heads and hearts and will show them what it will take to achieve these goals.

“The hope is that each player will more clear-

*“My expectations are that all of my guys will represent Christ well on and off the court.”*

ly see the areas of their game that they need to be working on, and even more importantly, to see that this is a team effort that we are all part of, and each of us has a role to play in it,” Peyton said.

As part of their off-season training, the team scrimmaged other teams in the area at Hoop Zone. Peyton said that these scrimmages were not only beneficial, but also gave them a picture of where they were as a team and what they need to improve on this season.

An advantage that this team had was that almost all of the players were in offseason together. This allowed them to prepare for the upcoming season more effectively by starting to work on skills and plays as a team rather than training individually.

“It is not about wins and losses but about being a team that day-in and day-out always strives to do its best,” Peyton said. “That is an athlete at his best, and that is what Christ calls us to be as well.”



## Elementary and JH sports

The volleyball teams participated in the season-ending ACAA tournament Nov. 2-3.

### Elementary volleyball AA \*\*TOURNAMENT CHAMPS\*\*

Coach: Kaylee Loftis

Record: 8-2

Coach's comment: "The girls are doing well working together and are really starting to try and set and hit in games."

### Elementary volleyball A "white"

Coach: Brandie Johnston

Record: 8-18

Coach's comment: "We've played a lot of close games and our fundamental volleyball skills have improved as the season has progressed. These girls have a great attitude and willingness to work hard. I expect great things from our final matches."

### Elementary volleyball A "green"

Coach: Meagan Hines

Record: 1-8

Coach's comment: "With every game and practice, the green team's skill level has improved. We started off with only one consistent server, and now we have almost half of our team stepping up to the serving line with confidence."

### Junior high volleyball AA

Coach: Kaylee Loftis

Record: 7-5

Coach's comment: "We are trying to work together to build each other up. When they do this we have more success. The girls are doing well and learning court awareness and covering."

### Junior high volleyball A

Coach: Brandie Johnston

Record: 4-21

Coach's comment: "The Junior High A team is comprised of 11 girls who love the game of volleyball. They have committed to giving 100 percent at all practices and games and I've seen so much improvement over the course of this season. It's been fun to be a part of their athletic metamorphosis."

### Junior high cross country

Boys coach: Jacob Rotich

Girls coach: Katie Smith

The girls competed in three races this year, and Marisol Lawson has had the team's top time of just over 13 minutes for two of those two-mile races.

### Junior high soccer

Coach: Devan Loftis

Record: 3-2-1

Coach's comment: When playing Wells Point, a rain-out caused the game to be called off 15 minutes into the game. Afterward, the team had fun "mud sliding" on the field.

# Cross country finishes strong at state meet

connor **SCHIESZ**  
reporter

The BCS girls' cross country team came back with seventh place at the TAPPS 4A cross country meet in Waco on Oct. 17, while the boys' team was 16th.

Leading the girls was sophomore Brittany Brunson, who placed ninth and had a time of 13:28 on the two-mile course. For the boys, freshman Steven Bailey came in 89th place and completed the 3.1-mile course in 21:10.

Girls' coach Katie Smith said her girls competed very hard and were very competitive. She said that the girls' times were good, but not their best.

"They have a lot of talent and potential, and I am expecting great things over the next few years," Smith said.

Brunson said she met her goal for the meet by placing in the top 10. She prepared for the meet by running her hardest at practices and at home on top of that. She said her goal is to get faster and hopefully continue her running career in college.

Boys' coach Jacob Rotich said he wasn't expecting the boys to do as well as last year's team because most of the best runners graduated, leaving young and inexperienced runners. After the meet, he called their performance "acceptable."

"I think the guys did very well," Rotich said,

"but they came short of my expectation time-wise and place-wise."

The winning school for the boys was Houston Awty International, while the individual's winning time was 17:29. For the girls, the top school was San Antonio Christian, and the individual's winning time was 12:55.

The previous weekend, junior high and high school teams had a meet in Georgetown. Bailey, who got 43rd, was the top runner for the high school boys, and seventh-grader Jonathon Reich took 47th to lead the way for junior high boys. Eighth-grader Marisol Lawson, who placed 18th, led the junior high girls, and freshman Morgan Vandygriff, in 32nd place, was the top girl runner for high school.



photo: Ashley Clement

**Long-lasting Ladies** Cross country girls who finished seventh in state last month in Waco include (from left) Morgan Vandygriff, Rachel Orick, Brooklyn Merkord, Jennifer Quinn, Brittany Brunson, Katie Clement, Katie Miertschin, and Priscilla Glenn.

## Soccer kicks off in Houston today

jacob **CARDENAS**  
reporter

Brentwood Christian's soccer team heads to Houston today to take on powerhouse Awty, followed by a contest with the defending state champs, Northland, on Saturday.

After a first-round playoff loss last year, the Bears are determined to meet their potential this season with 11 seniors leading the way.

"We expect to be in the mix to win it all," head coach Joseph Walker said.

However, the team's ultimate goal, according to Walker, is to bring glory to God on the field. It's a goal he "firmly expects" to be met after witnessing the team's attitude, effort, and leadership during the offseason.

The Bears finished third in a competitive district last year that ended up putting San Antonio Christian in the state championship. Brentwood tied with that team in the regular season.

From last year's team, BCS has only lost four players, including graduates Nick Sterling and Ben Lancaster.

"(The season) is going to be really good. Better than last year because most of our players are returning and we've been working hard," senior Ben Kim said.

Classmate and captain Caleb Geer agreed.

"We basically have the same team," he said. "The only real change is that we've lost Ben Lancaster at goalie, but Scuba (Stephen Yu) has been consistently improving and I think he's going to do a great job. I'm excited about our potential."

District kicks off on Dec. 8 against Victoria St. Joseph. The Bears look to face a competitive district with SACS and San Antonio TMI as the two toughest teams. BCS has never beaten SACS but hopes to win this year.

"I think we definitely have the heart and talent to beat them," senior Brian Lam said.

The Bears' leading scorer from last season is junior David Ko. Other key players include junior Gabe Breternitz and seniors Alex Georgulas, Carlos Zaragoza, Geer, and Lam.

In December, BCS will be hosting the BCS Shootout, a soccer tournament similar to the volleyball and basketball "BCS Invitational."

The focus of this offseason, according to Walker, has been to "get more athletic." Specifically, the team has been working to get stronger and to develop the core muscles through the use of Plyometrics.

Brentwood hasn't advanced past the first round of playoffs since 1998.

## Season ends; future bright for volleyball

taylor **SHAW**  
reporter

Brentwood Christian's volleyball season came to an end on Friday, Oct. 23, when they lost in a playoff match to Tomball Concordia Lutheran, a team that won their district.

Tomball was a very good team, according to Lady Bears' coach Efrain Contreras, who said his girls did a really good job and played hard despite the loss.

On the Wednesday preceding this game, BCS defeated San Antonio Christian in a tie-breaker to see which school would advance to bi-district playoffs. After the arrangement to have the game at a neutral location fell through, TAPPS officials flipped a coin to see who would be at home, and San Antonio won. This did not keep the Lady Bears from winning the match in four games.

The girls worked really hard this year, according to Contreras, who said he was impressed with how hard they played and that they won the last three games of the regular season. That streak made the team 9-6 in district, tied for fourth place, against what Contreras called some really tough competition.

Contreras said the team featured some strong leadership from the four seniors: Katie Miertschin, Laura Torres, Joelle Vargas, and Tyla Wells.

"The seniors have all been very competitive and shown a lot of leadership this season," Contreras said.

Contreras expressed confidence that the team will be able to go far into the playoffs next year. In two years, he said, they could even win a state championship in the smaller 3A district.

"In a few years I think we'll be putting up a few banners," he predicted.

Wells also thought that the team did well this season.

"We had a pretty good season and I think we did the best we could."



## Book Week

continued from page 1

mandatory and can be drawn, painted, cut out, or pasted. Students in second grade and above must do the writing themselves. If a student writes a book and turns it in on time, he or she is given the privilege to attend the Young Authors' Party on Friday. At the party, students will get to enjoy refreshments and watch magician Glen Elkins perform.

"I really like Glen Elkins," said Allen who is coordinator of the Young Authors' program. "He puts a Christian perspective on the magic tricks he does. The kids just love it – there's always the excitement of what's going to come next!"

For many, the favorite part of Book Week is Character Day, where students dress up as their favorite book character. Teachers as well as students dress up. Second-grade teacher April Hejl is dressing up as Miss Nelson and elementary principal Dr. Libby Weed is carrying on her tradition of dressing up as Mary Poppins.

Many of the students are excited about dressing up.

"I'll probably be Josephina from the American Girl books," second-grader Genevieve Graessle said. "She's my favorite out of the whole series."

Many celebrities and famous authors are coming to read books to the students. Statesman columnists Kirk Bohls and Cedric Golden, Round Rock Express CEO Reid Ryan, and KXAN's Roger Wallace are some of the many celebrities scheduled to visit.

"We hope the students get interested in reading and writing," Allen said. "We want them to have a great learning experience through Book Week. With the Young Authors' contest we give them the chance to experience and appreciate the time and effort that goes into writing a book. We really hope that they develop a love of reading by the end of Book Week."

## Feeding BCS

*Family Nights a success*

**rachel ORICK**  
reporter

Once a month, many BCS students and teachers, along with their families, gather at Culver's for Brentwood's Family Night. Dozens of people come to enjoy the custard and burgers while raising money for the school. On these nights, BCS gets 20 percent of the proceeds.

"The best part is eating custard and hanging with friends," sixth-grader Keely Hardin said at the Culver's event in September. "It was also cool that they had a 'Welcome Brentwood' sign."

Family Nights used to be only once a month, but starting this year, PTF has decided to do it twice a month, adding Chick-Fil-A to the monthly Culver's event.

At Chick-Fil-A in September, one of the cashiers said that it was "really nice to get all those customers and earn a lot of money." More than half of the families there that night were Brentwood families.

"It was really fun to eat the chicken and then have a good milkshake," sixth-grader Tori Troutman said.

Four years ago, PTF members were looking for "effortless" ways to earn more money for the school. Cherie Wilson, the PTF president, said they needed "fun ways to earn money, while also bringing families together."

The money earned from Family Nights can be very large or very small, depending on how many families go. Two months ago, BCS earned a total of \$519, which included \$219 at Chick-Fil-A and \$300 at Culver's.

Wilson said all of the proceeds go to programs for the school. Last year, all of the money went to the new elementary playground. This year PTF has decided to spread it out among a fluency program started by teacher Geri Archer, contests, and scholarships for students.

In the future, Wilson said they might add other restaurants like Mimi's.



photo: Marisol Hernandez

**Halloween at Rosedale** Forty-five National Honor Society members from BCS went to Rosedale on Oct. 30 to participate in the annual carnival. They supervised wheelchair races, face painting, and cupcake decorating, and students from both schools had lots of fun, according to new NHS supervisor Kaleen Graessle.

## Merit Scholars

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"We are extremely proud of them – not surprised, though," BCS president Marquita Moss said. "This award recognizes that they have been strong students their entire academic careers."

In order to be considered for a National Merit Scholar semifinalist spot a student must have a score in the top 16,000. An application will then be sent to be filled out by the student, whose SAT score and application will then determine whether or not he/she may become a National Merit Scholar finalist. Only 15,000 students are able to achieve this position.

Beach and Gardner will be told in February whether or not they become National Merit Scholars.

The other time Brentwood Christian had two students in the same graduating class earn this honor was in 2006 when Laura Miller and David Runyon both became National Merit Scholars.

In Brentwood's history, there have been nine National Merit Scholars and 25 Commended Students. As a comparison, secondary principal Jared Lee said that Pflugerville High School has the same number of semifinalists this year as BCS, despite their enrollment of more than 2,000 students.

According to Moss, Gardner's score was number 100 on the list of highest scores in the nation. This is the highest ranking any BCS student has ever made on the PSAT.

Gardner said he plans to go to Baylor to study engineering, and Beach wants to go to the University of Texas to study either electrical or mechanical engineering.

## Singing

continued from page 2

spiritually, and not just the type of leadership wherein a teacher decides you'd make a good leader, but true leadership, wherein you actually decide to take the initiative and step up or sing out.

But hall singing also had its share of problems. Hallways made acoustics difficult; the opposite ends of the halls were often out of sync and one end would finish before the other. The junior high was separated from the high school; there was no opportunity for the younger students to learn from the example of the older students. The halls simply became too full, because the student body had grown tremendously.

Furthermore, the informality and lack of structure made students take the time less seriously; it was easy for irreverent students to ruin the veneration of worship for the whole. And because hall singing was not mandatory, the study halls were also continually overfilled.

Why should the faculty take time out of the curriculum to make room for a Monday worship if a good portion of the students weren't even taking the opportunity?

So, for all these reasons, hall singing was moved from the halls. Encore members or select seniors began leading every song. The alternative to worship became a devotional thought. It became just another Christian-school activity.

But now there is hope! Hall-singing-in-the-halls has returned, and it is being given a second chance. More specifically, we – the student body – are being given a second chance.

Most of the reasons hall singing didn't work in the past stemmed from one main problem – the waning student interest.

Why were the study halls overfilled? The student body used an opportunity to worship as an opportunity to finish homework that should

have already been completed.

How did the jokers and smart-alecs manage to ruin hall singing? The student body didn't value the worship enough to stop them.

Why were certain students designated to lead songs? The student body was not willing to step up and lead its own songs.

The administration noticed all this and changed hall singing, because the students proved through their lack of interest that they needed guidance. But now we are being given a second chance. We can go about things differently. We can go about hall singing with a sense of responsibility.

We can finish our homework punctually. We can step out in faith and lead our own songs. We can quell the distractions, hush the distracters, and resist the temptation to become distractions ourselves. We can take advantage of the chance to worship in our own way. We can encourage younger students to follow our

*"The students proved through their lack of interest that they needed guidance."*

example so that they too will realize hall singing's true virtue.

This is why hall singing is a big deal. It represents our ability as a student body to command our own spiritual journey.

As for you students I've labeled irreverent and called distracters: Perhaps hall singing doesn't matter to you, perhaps Christianity doesn't matter to you, but it does matter to somebody. If I can't appeal to you spiritually, then at least I can appeal to your sense of decency. Hall singing matters to me. When you cut up during worship, it's hard for me to focus. In fact, sometimes I'm influenced by you, and I end up causing trouble too. I don't like that; I hate catching myself being hypocritical. So for the sake of myself and others like me, please refrain.

If we give hall singing the respect it requires, it can be an instrument for good as well as proof that the student body cares about God on its own accord. But if we treat hall singing like it was treated years ago, then it must change again, for we will have proven ourselves incapable of personal, unguided, spiritual growth.