

THE BEAR FACTS

VOL. XXIII NO. 2

BRENTWOOD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

NOVEMBER 2010

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IN SHORT

Scholars honored

Seniors Gabriel Breternitz and Honney Khang were recently recognized as Commended Students by the National Merit Scholarship Program. Another senior, Victoria Stewart, has been named a semi-finalist in the National Achievement Scholarship Program. Her PSAT scores placed her in the top one percent of Black Americans who took the PSAT and requested consideration for the program. Stewart will be notified in January if she is a finalist.

Food drive begins

BCS students have begun bringing food for the annual Thanksgiving Food Drive. Classes are collecting non-perishable items such as tuna, beans, peanut butter, cereal, pasta, canned vegetables, and baby food through Tuesday, Nov. 23. All of the items collected during the drive will be contributed to the Capital Area Food Bank. The Student Council is coordinating the drive, and the goal is to average six items per student.

AIPL volleyball ends

Competing in the Austin Inter-Parochial League for the first time since the 1990s, Brentwood Christian's elementary and junior high volleyball teams have wrapped up their seasons.

Coach Kaylie Loftis led the junior high and elementary "5A" teams, taking the junior high to a 5-7 record in which every loss went three games. Her elementary team finished 8-3.

Led by BCS grads Elena (Worley) Coggin ('04) and Meagan Hines ('04), both "2A" teams had winning records. Junior high was 7-1 in district, and elementary finished 4-3 in district.

Coach Britt James led the "A" teams, with the junior high finishing 5-2 in district, and elementary going 2-5.

Students celebrate books

matthew **ONABAJO**
reporter

From Nov. 8-12, you can expect to see animals, wizards, and other creatures winning awards on homemade books based on places far and wide. You will also see elementary students relaxing in their classrooms with their favorite books. There will also be an appearance by the Biscuit Brothers. All of this is to celebrate this year's Book Week.

This annual event gives students the option to participate in the Young Authors Contest – a voluntary competition in which students submit books crafted at home. Students also participate in activities in the classroom such as book-ins and book buddies, listen to local authors and celebrities read books, and dress up

as their favorite book characters on Friday.

Students in the Young Authors Contest submitted books for judging by a panel of parents and teachers on Nov. 4. All students who participate will receive awards based on the content of their books, according to Book Week supervisor Linda Allen. Books that are deemed of superior quality will be given the "Overall Excellence" award. These books will be displayed in the lower elementary library.

According to Allen, the 179 Young Authors participants are 60 more than have ever entered in the 18 years of Book Week.

Another event next week will be book-ins, in which students read their favorite books with a pillow and a flashlight. Book buddies will also

see **BOOK WEEK**, page 8

Silly Bandz captivate students

kailey **RODDEN**
reporter

A person walking down the hallways of Brentwood Christian will see a plethora of students from first-grade reading centers to high school physics classes with misshapen, brightly colored rubber bands covering the majority of their forearms. If he or she asks the student what they are, the student might grin, pull off a band, and say "It's a dinosaur!" Sure enough, the band has indeed sprung back into its brontosaurus shape.

The Silly Bandz craze sweeping the nation

since the beginning of summer has swept BCS into its dustpan. Like the flu, this infectious trend has been causing problems in schools across the country, and BCS has not been vaccinated. While Brentwood has not seen any major issues resulting from "trades gone bad," teachers say they have been a distraction in classrooms.

As the school year began, students seemed to be captivated by the trendy bracelets, showing them off and playing with them during classes. However, elementary principal Dr. Libby Weed

see **BANDZ**, page 4

Legendary hoops coach speaks tonight

e. j. **SUNG**
reporter

Legendary college basketball coach Don Meyer will speak tonight at the Renaissance Hotel for Brentwood Christian's 20th annual Partnership Dinner & Auction.

Meyer, who is currently the "winningest" men's basketball coach in any division in NCAA history, has recently retired from his coaching career that began in 1968 as an assistant at Western State College. During his time as a coach, he has won an NAIA championship along with his astonishing record of 923 wins and only 324 losses.

Meyer got his first head coaching job at Hamline University in 1972. He then coached at Lipscomb University for 24 years and finished his career at Northern State University. Meyer is also known for his famous summer basketball camps which helped young kids and teenagers to develop as better basketball players.

Despite being involved in a car accident which resulted in the amputation of his leg in 2008, he continued his coaching job which ended in February of this year. Meyer has called himself very lucky for having that accident because during the surgery, the doctor found out that he had cancer in his liver

see **COACH**, page 3

Lady Bears start basketball season with win

megan **MONACELLI**
reporter

Smaller in size and talent than in recent years, the Lady Bears kicked off the basketball season this week hoping to continue the track record of district championships.

Their first game, a 37-33 win against Waco Reicher Christian on Tuesday night, was somewhat sloppy and disorganized, according to head coach Devan Loftis. Still, he said he was satisfied with the team's effort.

Junior Brittany Brunson led the girls with 10 points. Loftis praised the effort of sophomore Brooklyn Merkord and junior Celeste Cole coming off the bench.

The team was not able to have practice with all the girls until Tuesday, Oct. 29, because five of the players were finishing the volleyball season.

With only 15 girls, including one senior and

see **YOUNG**, page 6



photo: Gabriel Breternitz

Huddle up Coach Devan Loftis prepares his team at Monday's practice.

Bretz knows best: Gabriel Breternitz

Make giving blood a regular thing

There are some pretty compelling reasons not to think about blood. Blood is gross. The sight of blood is usually a strong signal that all is not well in the world. It's just easier to ignore blood. Yet, thankfully, there are people out there who don't ignore blood – people who think about blood even when they don't have to. I'm not just talking about doctors and scientists in red-stained lab coats; I'm talking about people like you and me – blood donors.

There is a tremendous need for blood donors and their healthy red blood cells. One in four people will need blood at some point in their lifetime. Cancer patients require eight 500-milliliter units of blood per week, and victims of car accidents need 50 units on average for injuries sustained. Bleeding ulcers require 30 units, heart surgery requires 25 units – the numbers add up quickly. In more abstract terms, someone is in need of blood every two seconds.

To make matters more difficult, human blood is a scarce resource. It cannot be synthesized in a lab or replaced by animal blood; there is no alternative for it, and no easy means of harvesting it, either. The only way to get human blood is from humans, and the only way to get it from a human is with his or her consent.

Enter the blood donors. These everyday heroes save 4.5 million Americans a year by providing the blood necessary for life-saving transfusions. Donors are involved in a huge act of public service, but the number of actual donors compared to the number of eligible donors in the U.S. is abysmally small – about

There is a tremendous need for blood donors and their healthy red blood cells.

five percent – while the need for transfusions increases by nine percent a year. The baffling thing about this statistic is the why: Why wouldn't more people give blood? If you break it down logically, it doesn't make sense. Not only is there a Good Samaritan incentive for giving blood, but there are personal benefits to it as well (besides the free snacks and T-shirt).

Giving blood is good for you. Every time you give blood, you're receiving a mini-physical for free, and getting your blood tested for free.

Giving blood reduces iron build-up in your blood, which has been linked to heart disease. The new, younger blood cells are healthier and more efficient, improving blood flow through your body. And most significantly, giving blood lowers your blood pressure by thinning your blood, which allows your arteries to purge plaque buildup, improving the overall health of your circulatory system.

The most common excuse for not giving blood is a fear of needles, but it's a weak one. If you were sick and a doctor asked you to give a sample of your blood, would you refuse on the basis of your fear of needles? Absolutely not! Your health comes first, not your fears; no pain, no gain. Think of giving blood as a preventive treatment. Giving blood regularly by choice could prevent you from having to give blood out of necessity later on.

I want to say thanks to the 50-plus people signed up for the school's fall blood drive on Monday. With this donation, you're not only helping others, but you're helping yourselves. I hope you'll all consider becoming regular blood donors, especially when you realize that the compelling reasons to think about blood far outweigh the reasons to ignore it.

Winning the Battle: Elena Batlle

A few thoughts upon returning from Italy

After traveling in Italy along with my mother and grandmother for two weeks last month, let's just say that when I came back to the United States, I had a whole new perspective on this land where I was born and raised.

Five months ago, my mother planned a trip for my grandmother to go see the great arts of Italy, since my grandmother is an artist and that has always been her dream. Fortunately I was able to come too, so at the end of September I boarded a plane bound for Italy.

I never even realized such a beautiful place as Italy could exist. All the majestic mountains and valleys that you see in movies come alive in front of you. The history-rich Vatican and Coliseum in Rome make you feel like you're back in the old Roman era. The masterpieces in Florence are unforgettable; then there's Venice, which takes you to another world with its canals running through ancient buildings.

While enjoying these beautiful settings, I noticed many cultural differences. One thing that struck me is that in the United States, we consume so much more fattening, greasy food – and in much larger portions – than in Italy. Europe has a reputation for serving small, sufficient amounts of food in restaurants and in their own homes, unlike in the U.S., hence the major obesity issue we have in our country today.

Another big difference is the vast amount of community transportation in Europe. Here, we drive our big SUVs and pickups that consume a great amount of gas, while Italians drive smaller, more fuel-efficient cars. You also see many Italians riding bikes, walking, and taking buses and trains. In my opinion, people in the U.S. can be very lazy, and certainly wasteful, when it comes to transportation. I know the U.S. also has similar types of transportation in larger cities, but people who have traveled all over Europe say that community transportation is much more widespread there.

Many people in Europe also have a great reputation for their classy and elegant fashion. Here in the U.S. most of us like to keep it simple with our T-shirts and jeans, which I prefer. But in Italy I observed men and women wear clothing like they came out of a Chanel or Gucci magazine. I know there are plenty of people like that in the U.S., but it was more widespread in Italy.

The last thing I noticed was the people. A great influence in our society is the usage of electronic communication 24/7, and it's worse with people my age. I realize that I have this problem too, and I'm not going to say that teens in Italy are innocent of this, but out of all the observing I did – and I'm a

see **BATLLE**, 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
Gabriel Breternitz

Reporters

Matthew Archer	Joseph Kang
Arin Baltaoglu	Kia Khadem
Elena Batlle	Mike Lee
Carter Boyd	Megan Monacelli
Ciro Castro	Jenny Nguyen
Carlos Franco	Matthew Onabajo
Priscilla Glenn	Kailey Rodden
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Lanae Hollingsworth	

Adviser
Jonathan Weed

The Bear Facts is available online at
www.brentwoodchristian.org.



photo: Gabriel Breternitz

Bookworms Seniors Honney Khang and Danielle Kawaja peruse books they find interesting at last week's book fair in the secondary library.

Coach, singer entertain at Partnership

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and intestines, which he probably would not have discovered without a “fortunate” car accident.

Planning for the Partnership Dinner was organized by Brentwood’s secretary in the special events office, Lauren Warner, and director of development, Brandon Tatum. It was Tatum who contacted Meyer last spring.

“He is a great guy, and I feel blessed to have him as our speaker,” Tatum said.

Warner said there would also be a guest singer, Johnny Ray Watson, who will entertain before the speech by Meyer. The former NBA player has been performing at events worldwide for 35 years. He has also sung in churches and weddings across America with his smooth style.

Warner said she appreciates Stephanie Griffith and Kristi Jackson for once again taking charge of the silent and live auction. The live auction will take place after Meyer’s speech and will be led by Jason and Lisa Rzepniewski, parents of fourth-grader Lauren and second-grader Katie.

Before the dinner, the high school band and Encore will provide entertainment. Guests can begin arriving at 6 p.m., and dinner, which is Moroccan spiced chicken and tropical bombe, will be served at 7:15 p.m.

GoodSearch: gaining ground, reaping \$\$\$

priscilla **GLENN**
reporter

Three years after it was introduced as a small fundraiser for BCS, GoodSearch is quickly gaining popularity and beginning to reap great rewards as students and parents conduct an everyday activity. The internet search engine GoodSearch earns BCS a penny for every search done, and online shopping portal GoodShop earns the school money when purchases are made online.

According to volunteer webmaster Jeff Glenn, together they could potentially bring the school thousands of dollars a year.

The GoodSearch website was started in 2005, and two years later faculty member Michelle Mohrmann heard about it when a parent during registration days told her how her son’s band was using it to raise money. Mohrmann said she was excited to know that there was an easy way to help the school earn money. GoodSearch donates one penny for every eligible search performed, and GoodShop donates up to 30 percent of the cost of the item bought to the designated school or charity. In three years, BCS has raised more than \$990, but about half of that total has come since April.

GoodSearch keeps an online record of how much money has been raised, and anyone is able to look it up. According to this record, during the first three months of 2010, Brentwood earned about \$30. Then in April and May, BCS participated in awareness campaigns to get users to download the toolbar via Facebook and email notifications. Since April 1 Brentwood has raised nearly \$500.

Glenn said he believes that if BCS stays on

this trend, \$1,000 should be raised yearly, and if they can increase involvement, the school could feasibly earn several thousand dollars a year.

Encouraged by the potential he saw in GoodSearch/Shop, Glenn added the GoodSearch box on every BCS website page and added the toolbar download on the homepage.

To participate in the act of searching and raising money, there are three different ways to use GoodSearch. People can go directly to Goodsearch.com and designate BCS as their charity. Then they can search to their heart’s content, earning BCS money as they go.

Another way to search and raise money is by using the GoodSearch box at the bottom of each BCS website page.

The last way, and the easiest way according to Glenn, is to install the GoodSearch toolbar, a free download that can be accessed from the BCS homepage.

But more than simply searching, the GoodSearch toolbar will automatically identify sponsor sites and highlight the amount of donation BCS will receive as well as available coupons to save the user money. This is called GoodShop, usable through the toolbar or by clicking the link from GoodSearch.

According to the GoodSearch record, GoodShop has brought in more money for BCS – sometimes as high as \$100 a month.

Mohrmann said the goal of Brentwood’s affiliation with GoodSearch is to offer the school community a no-cost fundraiser, meaning parents can “give” money to the school without actually giving. Thus BCS has been earning “free money” when parents and students do an

activity they complete every day. PTF receives a check once a year, and this money is used to fund activities around the school like Young Authors Contest entertainment and the Zoo Show.

“People are aware of it, but (sometimes) they don’t take the next step to use it,” Mohrmann said.

As it turns out, a lot of people might not be aware of GoodSearch and GoodShop. Parents at a recent BCS football game were asked, and some replied they didn’t know what it was.

Others know about it but don’t use it. Chemistry and physics teacher Kristen Berry said she doesn’t use it because she believes Google is better. Some students agree.

“GoodSearch is annoying,” sophomore Matthew Archer said. “I don’t use it because it’s not as good as Google, and Google is faster.”

Then there are those who do use GoodSearch. Yearbook adviser Jessica Love says she uses it solely because it earns the school money. Freshman Patti White uses it at her house and has GoodSearch as her homepage.

Mohrmann said she always finds what she is looking for when she uses GoodSearch, and to earn the school money she will put the URL of a website she knows into the search box. She finds her website and BCS gets a penny. GoodSearch is also an option on the high school computers in the library, and Glenn suggested that if students don’t want to search with GoodSearch, one idea is to search Google in the GoodSearch toolbox. BCS gets a penny, and students continue searching on the search engine of their choice.

NHS, NJHS light new candles

joseph **KANG**
reporter

When the clock reached 11:30 a.m., 66 high school students with 48 parents and six teachers left BCS and met at Cool River Cafe for the annual National Honor Society induction ceremony on Wednesday, Oct. 6.

Three weeks later, National Junior Honor Society students celebrated a similar ceremony at the same place.

Most of Brentwood Christian’s 28th NHS induction ceremony went along with tradition, including the Encore performance, candle-lighting ceremony, and the NHS pledge. This year’s ceremony also featured a guest speaker, Dr. Jeff Peterson, father of a Brentwood senior, who spoke on the biblical character of service.

Sixteen sophomores were inducted along with five juniors and four seniors; 20 juniors and 21 seniors returned, making a total of 66.

“Membership is more than just an honor,” NHS adviser Kaleen Graessle said. “It incurs a responsibility to continue demonstrating the outstanding qualities required for selection.”

According to the national guidelines, Graessle said, the initial grade requirement for candidacy in NHS is going to be raised over the next two years. For this year, as in

past years, a student had to have a minimum cumulative average of 90. Next year (2011-12), the minimum cumulative GPA will be 91, and in 2012-13 it will be 92.

Students must demonstrate outstanding performance in the most important four criteria of NHS: scholarship, leadership, service, and character. In September, a five-member faculty council met to review all of the available information and determine which students met all four criteria.

According to Graessle, students who were not selected often had weak evidence of service and leadership. Both on- and off-campus activities and attitudes were considered. Graessle said NHS is planning to work on awareness of opportunities for service and leadership.

“Simply being involved in many activities is not the only thing the faculty council considers,” Graessle said.

Thirty-three NJHS members, all eighth and ninth graders, enjoyed induction at Cool River Cafe on Oct. 28. There are 16 returning members and 17 inductees to NJHS. The induction was similar to that of NHS; the featured speaker was Royce Clark, father of two secondary students.

This is the second year NHS and NJHS have been dining at Cool River Cafe.



photo: Kaleen Graessle

Hands in the air Senior Tina Grogan and a Rosedale student clap and high five during the annual Rosedale Halloween dance at their fall carnival on Oct. 29. Helping with the carnival is one of the National Honor Society’s annual service projects.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: Brett Withem

Seniors featured in the Bear Facts were selected by a vote held among the entire BCS Class of 2011.

Withoutem, senior class would lack kindness, charisma

matthew **ARCHER**
reporter

Ever since Brett Withem came to Brentwood Christian from California in his eighth-grade year he has made his mark and established himself as a kind, funny, and laid-back guy around campus.

Brett was born on Jan. 7, 1993, in San Diego, and stayed there until after his seventh-grade year, when his dad took a preaching job at

“His ability to remain charismatic, no matter ... how high the odds are stacked against him is quite amazing.”

Westover Hills Church of Christ in Austin.

Though now everyone who knows him thinks of him as a likable guy, this was not always the case. When he first came to Brentwood, several classmates say they thought he was a “punk” from California, but over time many of the people who wrote him off got to know him and became good friends with him.

“I’ve made a lot of great friendships here that I would have missed out on had I gone somewhere else,” Brett says. “I’ve had a great time with all of them in high school, and I’m sure that years down the road I’ll still be in touch with them.”

Throughout high school Brett has been involved with many activities. Rather than asking what he does, one should ask what he doesn’t do, because it will take much less time. Brett plays basketball, ran track, has been in many of the school’s plays, is an amateur beat-boxer, participates in StuCo, recently joined choir, and plans to be on the golf team this spring. This leaves many people wondering, is there anything this guy can’t do?

“Brett Withem is a stud,” varsity basketball coach Brandon Tatum said. “We are enjoying his senior leadership on the team and his great work ethic. We’re really

fortunate to have him on the team.”

However, Brett is not completely invincible and says that he is still unable to beat his little brother Ian in the Madden Football video game. Brett has two brothers: Ian and Colin, who are 14 and 10 years old, respectively.

Fairly tall, standing at 6-2, Brett plays post for the basketball team. Many of the girls at BCS say they appreciate his “California blonde hair” and classic good looks.

Aside from all his extra-curricular activities, Brett says he enjoys watching sports – mainly the Padres, Chargers, and USC Trojans. Friends say he is very involved in the youth group at

Westover Hills, including last spring break when he went on a mission trip to Peru.

Brett jokingly says he wants to be known as someone who “lived, laughed, loved, and had no regrets,” but he says in all seriousness he just wants people to think of him as a guy who enjoys life, and people enjoy to be around.

Brett is very well liked by his peers and many people praise him for being a good friend who is easy to talk to and is always there when you need him.

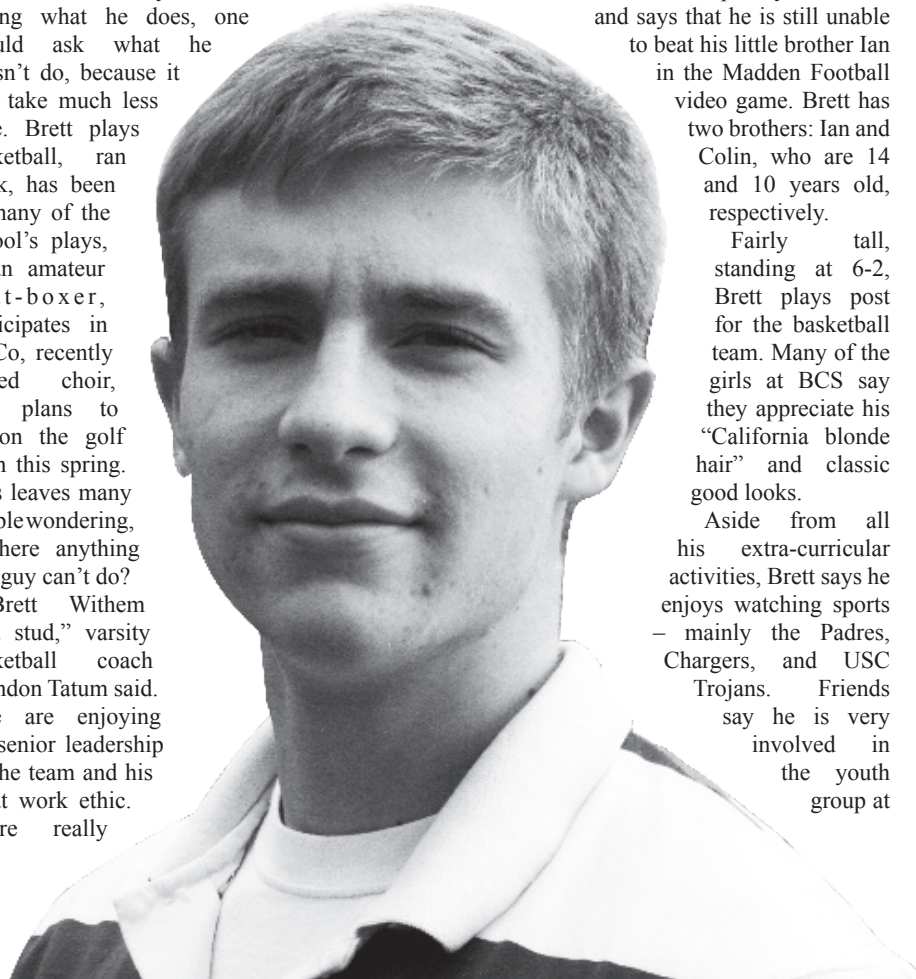
“His ability to remain charismatic, no matter how difficult a task is or how high the odds are stacked against him is quite amazing,” fellow senior James Ramin says. “Mr. Withem always manages to come out on top.”

Aside from his schoolmates, Brett is also well liked by many of the teachers.

“He’s just wonderful,” history and English teacher Craig Moore said. “He’s very enthusiastic, sometimes overly. But he is very helpful to other students and encourages their scholarship and is reasonable on classroom propriety.”

Moore says he remembers when Brett once led a prayer during class and gave a blessing for all of the students in the class. Moore says that it was just an “absolutely marvelous” prayer.

Brett says he is undecided about where he’ll be in college next year, but he wants to eventually go back to California, where his heart never left, and attend dental school at USC.



Bandz policy preventing problems

continued from page 1

says the problem is under control.

“Things have been going pretty well with Silly Bandz,” Dr. Weed said. “I’m very glad they haven’t been a big problem.”

For the uninitiated, Silly Bandz are essentially thin rubber bands molded into a multitude of forms. They can be played with in a variety of ways: “Collect ’em, Trade ’em, Wear ’em!” says the Silly Bandz website. Dinosaurs, bugs, and zoo animals are some of the more common shapes found on the arms of students.

Big corporations have taken advantage of the craze, and characters like Dora the Explorer, SpongeBob SquarePants, Hello Kitty, Barbie, and Yo Gabba Gabba are for sale in Silly Bandz form. Some are thermo-activated – changing color with heat – and there’s even a “Save the Gulf” package that sends some of the profits to help clean up the recent oil catastrophe. Silly Bandz rings and necklaces are also available.

These bands are available in various stores across the country and on the Silly Bandz website. There are also “knock-off” brands that are available, but characters like SpongeBob or Barbie won’t be found in those packages. At the Silly Bandz website, packages of 24 sell

for \$5.95 a pop, not including shipping and handling. Knock-offs generally sell for one to three dollars a pack, and Disney has its own “Character Bandz,” which feature stars like Tinker Bell and Mickey Mouse. There are even Harry Potter bands.

To prevent these rubber bands from being a big problem at Brentwood, a “Silly Bandz Policy” was instated a few weeks ago for kindergarten through sixth grade. Students are instructed not to take Silly Bandz to most electives like music, Spanish, or computer, or to chapel. They can wear them on their arms in class as long as they aren’t a distraction.

Students are allowed to play with or trade them at recess or lunch as long as there are no problems; if any disagreements arise, teachers will take them up from all students involved and send them home at the end of the day. If students have Silly Bandz when they aren’t supposed to have them or play with them during class, the bands will be taken up by the teacher and sent home at the end of the day. If a second offense of any kind occurs, that student will be forbidden from wearing the bands at school, and the parents must pick them up from the teacher.

“The policy has worked wonderfully so far,” Dr. Weed said.

Some teachers have more specific policies. Kindergarten teacher Diane Troutman has her own addition.

“I make them choose their two favorites and put the rest in their backpack,” Troutman said. “I don’t want to take them away completely; those bands are the cutest darn things.”

Other teachers are not as fond of Silly Bandz.

“I can’t stand them,” said first-grade teacher Geri Archer. “They’re so distracting.”

Then there are those who just find the craze inane.

“Those rubber band thingies?” asked high school English teacher Chloe Campbell. “What’s the point?”

Students offer different reasons for why they love these bands.

“I like turtles,” sixth-grader Samantha Mack



photo: Kailey Rodden

Wrists adorned Not just for elementary students, dozens of Silly Bandz are here displayed by girls in the BCS secondary.

said. “They have lots of turtles. They also have lots of other animals I like, and they’re fun to wear.”

Even older students can’t resist the allure of these bracelets.

“People started to give me Silly Bandz in the summer, during camp,” senior Somare Peyton said. “It kept going from there. I like them because they remind me of the great times I’ve had with my friends.”

Coach Peyton, aka "Bible Man," earns respect, adoration

ryan **BRUNSON**
guest reporter

Images of bright summertime weather and sugary snow cones in the mid-afternoon have become commonly associated with Brentwood Christian's very own David Peyton. But even in the dead of winter when his snow cone stand has long been retired, "Bible Man" still brings warmth and satisfaction through his personable, caring spirit toward Brentwood students.

Peyton, who teaches eighth-grade Bible and all levels of PE, and coaches basketball, has been closely involved with BCS since he first landed in Austin in 2005. After 11 years of youth ministry and evangelism in the Philippines, he moved to Austin and Brentwood, where he quickly became recognized for his passionate ardor for his alma mater, Texas A&M, and loved for his amiable presence.

His wife Karen began teaching sixth grade at Brentwood immediately, and he began teaching in 2006. They have three children, all students at BCS: Somare, a senior; Jacob, in eighth grade; and fourth-grader Phillip.

Secondary principal Jared Lee, who came to BCS in 2007, says Peyton has had a very positive impact on Brentwood Christian School.

"The first meeting I had with him was about the emotional health of some of his students that he was concerned about," Lee says. "I look back on that conversation and am very thankful and impressed. I could see that he was very much concerned for his students' welfare. You can tell he loves the kids and enjoys his job, two very key qualities to being a teacher."

Bible class is where Peyton first developed his connection with the student body. He says that his much loved title "Bible Man," given to him in his first year of teaching, was very special to him.

"It is my daily interaction with the students that I love," Peyton says. "I love the kids here at BCS, and I love seeing them and visiting with them throughout the school week. It is the student body of BCS that makes this such a special place to work."

Peyton has always been sensitive to the concerns of his students. He has comforted students by simply listening and letting them open up about their distresses.

Tina Grogan is one of Peyton's "daughters,"

a term he uses for friends of his actual daughter with whom the two of them have grown close. Grogan speaks highly of Peyton's gift for listening and consoling.

"He's definitely one of those people that have the ability to touch anyone's heart, through anything he does. And he gives great advice," she says. "He really knows how to make you feel like everything will be OK and that God has a reason for everything, no matter how difficult."

Peyton has also blessed BCS with his uncommon adaptability in times of a less-than-certain future at the school.

"One thing I'm always impressed with is his ability to be flexible," Lee says. "He has filled in in some pinches where we needed someone to stand in and not only stand in but taken the job responsibly and has done well at those times."

Peyton's contribution to the athletic department is highlighted much by what others say about him. Senior and varsity basketball player Brian Peterson further delineates Peyton's good character.

"He has definitely been accepting of roles. He has always stepped up and done his best to fill the roles that are needed," Peterson says. "As for basketball, I think he's the perfect JV coach. He's an encourager and has great insights into the game."

Varsity coach and close friend Brandon Tatum concurs.

"He is a good coach and a good teacher. He really understands the game; he is a huge asset to the team."

In Peyton's first year, he taught four different grades of Bible classes and began his years as a BCS basketball coach. At this time he enjoyed a nearly undefeated season for the JV team. One year ago though, a schedule change was made at BCS and all high school Bible classes were focused in a single period. Unfortunately, this presented Peyton with fewer classes and the consideration of leaving BCS.

He and his wife were offered positions teaching and coaching at Northland Christian in Houston, which happens to be Peyton's alma mater.

"It was an exciting opportunity for us," Peyton says. "But we felt that BCS is where we belonged."

Remaining at Brentwood will allow Peyton



photo: Gabriel Breternitz

Listen up Teacher David Peyton shoots his P.E. class a look as he teaches them the fundamentals of basketball. This lesson was on chest passes.

and his family to continue to touch the lives of nearly everyone associated with BCS.

"It's been very rewarding to get to know Mr. Peyton and his family since they moved to Austin," says Nancy Tindel, BCS registrar and friend of the Peytons. "He is a godly man and I think a fine example to the students here and to those of us who work with him. I really appreciate the time and care that he gives to his

family. He is a good family man as well as a good teacher."

Peyton will rarely appear stressed or frazzled, instead expressing daily satisfaction in his work.

"I truly find happiness and peace in my relationships," Peyton says. "Building relations with the students at BCS is one of the joys of my life."

Seventh graders bond at Buckner on their retreat

kia **KHADEM**
reporter

For two days last month, BCS had fewer Silly Bandz, fewer Justin Bieber references, and quieter halls.

Seventh-grade students went to Camp Buckner from Monday, Oct. 4, to Tuesday, Oct. 5, for the annual seventh-grade retreat.

According to sponsor Travis Pollard, the students went to build unity, to grow in strength, and to build bonds of friendship.

"It went great. The students got along together well, and they had a blast," Pollard said.

At the camp, students participated in a multitude of activities, including a high ropes course that was designed to test students psychologically and to give them courage and confidence. Students also participated in various other games focusing on group cooperation, such as the low ropes course. Students also threw footballs, hung out at the play area, and made up group games.

One of the main objectives of the high ropes course was to climb and then stand on top of a pole 25 feet in the air, then leap and grab a trapeze. Only Dane Foster and Zach Washington accomplished the daunting task.

BCS president Marquita Moss said these students would receive a T-shirt that explained their achievement.

"It was fun," Robert Lesko said. "The high ropes course was my favorite part because it was challenging mentally and physically."

Students also participated in a balloon tower building contest in which they were given a set amount of time, 40 balloons, a roll of tape, and were told to build the tallest tower they could that held for at least 20 seconds. Students also had devotionals in which they would read scripture and sing songs.

"The devotionals were my favorite part,

when the seniors prepared scripture and songs, because we bonded together and became closer to God," Emily Wagner said.

The staff sponsors for the seventh-grade retreat were Tere Hager, Pollard, Moss, secondary principal Jared Lee, and Michele Broadway.

The seniors who volunteered as counselors were Ryan Brunson, Garrett Burkhart, Brandon Jones, Somare Peyton, Alison Riedesel, and Mariah Robinson.

"I really enjoyed it," Jones said. "I enjoyed spending time with the seventh-graders; they weren't as obnoxious as I thought."

Young team optimistic about season

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one freshman, the team will have to work hard, developing their fundamental skills, according to Loftis. There will be a junior varsity team; however, this team will play fewer games than it has in years past.

"Having only 15 players is not ideal for fielding two teams, but we'll make it work," Loftis said.

Returning varsity players include junior guard Brittany Brunson, junior post Megan Gum, and sophomore guard Morgan Vandygriff.

Sammy Dillon ('06) will be assisting Loftis, coaching the JV. An all-state guard her senior year, she helped lead the Lady Bears to their first final four trip in the program's history. She is a Harding University graduate, and Loftis said the assistant coaching will probably be a one-year commitment, as she plans to attend graduate school.

"I wanted to find someone who had played for me, and she was interested," Loftis said.

Loftis said the program is in a developing stage after losing four seniors who led BCS to third place in district last year. The team will have to work more on fundamentals and basics because they are young.

"We have less-talented players than in years past, but the team is young so that is OK," Loftis said.

Loftis said the girls will work on gaining intensity and scrappiness on defense, because this is where the team's strong point will be. Man-to-man defense will be the key to getting easy, fast-break points, according to Loftis.

Offensively, Loftis said having only one senior, Tina Grogan, will allow him to introduce new ideas to the team which will be more fast-break focused as opposed to past seasons, in which the offense was mainly running set plays.

The school moves from 4A to 3A this year, according to TAPPS re-districting rules, and this brings a new set of opponents. The new district includes Temple Central Texas, Round Rock Christian Academy, and Waco Texas Christian.

"I expect it to be a competitive district, but not over our heads," Loftis said.

Loftis also said winning the district championship is a viable goal. However, his main goal for the team is steady improvement, and he believes weekly improvement will yield a successful season.

The girls have expressed eagerness to get the season underway and see how much they can improve.

"I think it will be a tough season, but I hope we will grow as a team and in our skill level," Gum said.

Varsity boys look to seniors for leadership

mike LEE
reporter

The varsity boys officially tipped off their season on Nov. 2, losing to a solid San Marcos Home School team that forced a lot of Brentwood turnovers.

In a scrimmage against San Marcos Baptist on Oct. 28, the varsity suffered a narrow 31-28 defeat, while the JV secured a comfortable victory 26-6. Senior Ryan Brunson led the varsity with 12 points, and sophomore Matthew Archer led the JV with 8 points. Being a floater, Archer also played in varsity game, in which he scored 11 points.

The second game of the season is on Tuesday, Nov. 9, against Waco Vanguard, also at home. The BCS Invitational will be held on Dec. 2-4, and the first district game will be Dec. 7.

Under the guidance of a new head coach, the boys' varsity and JV teams have been practicing intensely throughout the off-season, preparing for the tip-off.

"(Coach Tatum) works us really hard," senior Garrett Burkhart said. "He pushes us farther than we think we can go."

Tatum said that he believes in hard practice, insisting that the harder the team prepares, the better it will be. In order to help the players maintain their focus during intense drills, Tatum said that he uses many creative drills, trying new things to make it "fun for the guys."

One of the challenges for the varsity boys this year is the graduation of six players, including last year's top scorers. However, the team is optimistic that it will overcome the loss, according to senior Brett Withem.

"The young guys will step up, and we didn't

lose any height, so we can do it," he said.

Withem also emphasized the importance of senior leadership. He said the responsibility of a senior "comes with the title," while Burkhart agreed, stating that he feels like the team "rests on our shoulders."

Tatum agreed that the loss is unlikely to affect the team in negative ways, thanks to this year's seniors stepping up and filling the shoes.

"I think that we have a bunch of seniors who are very talented and who are excited about their senior years," he said. "All my seniors are good kids, and they have already shown signs of leadership."

There are seven seniors on the team this year, and four of them have been on the squad since their freshman years. This helped the team build a strong chemistry, according to Patrick Carlin, who said that the team is close both on the court and off the court.

"We can talk to each other about anything – it almost seems like a family," he said.

With only 14 boys playing, Brentwood may face difficulties in maintaining a JV team. Since seniors are not allowed to play on JV, seven seniors will make up the varsity team, while there will be two floaters and five JV players. According to JV coach David Peyton, keeping players healthy and eligible will be important in order to keep the JV team running.



Triple threat Senior Immad Qussad looks for a pass during the opener versus San Marcos Home School Nov. 2.

This year, Brentwood moved down a division into 3A. Some players said that they see the change as an opportunity to win more games and advance to the playoffs. However, the opportunity will only be grasped if the players give their best, according to Tatum.

"We have some teams in our district that are really good, and one of the teams was in the final four last year, so it's still going to be tough," Tatum said.

There are seven teams in the new district, and the Bears have to finish fourth or higher to make the playoffs, which begin Feb. 12. The Bears have reached the playoffs only once since 2002. However, reaching the playoffs is not the team's primary goal. The players agree that they will play "to be the best that we can be."

Girls' cross country team fourth in state meet

carlos FRANCO
reporter

The BCS girls' cross country team took fourth place at the TAPPS 3A state cross country meet in Waco on Oct. 16, while the boys' team got 12th.

Leading the girls was junior Brittany Brunson, who placed sixth and ran the two-mile trail in 13:04.

Brunson said she felt happy that she was in sixth, but she also said she felt disappointed to know that, ironically, she would have placed higher if the Bears had remained in 4A.

Leading the boys' team was junior Marcus McCormick, who placed 37th out of 135 runners, with a time of 19:41 on the 3.1-mile route.

Boys' coach Jacob Rotich said the runners struggled with the weather.

"Running at 12 o'clock means you get the sun in the face, and the sun makes you tired," Rotich said, explaining why some of the times were slower.

Brentwood's top four boy runners were McCormick, sophomore Arin Baltaoglu (21:13), sophomore Steven Bailey (21:47), and junior Jimmy Lidgley (22:04).

The top four girls were Brunson, sophomore Rachel Orick (14:41), sophomore Morgan

Vandygriff (14:52), and injured freshman Marisol Lawson (15:45).

Rotich and girls' coach Katie Smith said they expect the runners of both teams to do an even better job next year. They said both cross country teams have great potential since they ran great this year and still have one year – two years for some runners – to improve and probably get one of the first three places.

Coach Smith said she was proud that each of her runners was able to improve more than one minute from last year's time. She also said that the improvement was due to the seriousness given to training this year.

"The girls were really motivated to win," Smith said. "At the end they were a little disappointed since they were so close to first place, but they will do better next year."

Two weeks before state, on Oct. 2, Brentwood's competition included 4A and 5A public schools in the 17th annual McNeil Cross Country Invitational at Old Settlers Park in Round Rock.

Junior high and high school runners met at BCS at 7 a.m., and all the runners traveled to the meet together in order to cheer on the teams that ran first and to walk the trail for runners to know the way.

McCormick led the boys with a time of 18:52, getting 257th place out of 536 runners.

Brunson led the girls with 12:36, getting 61st place out of 531 runners.

Michael Lam had the fastest time for the junior high boys, while Haley Hutson led the girls.

This was the first meet for BCS in which times were tracked through electronic chips given to the runners; each runner had to tie this chip to his or her shoe. One of the runners said there were too many people at the starting line, and he feared that if someone fell he could get seriously hurt.

A week later, on Oct. 9, the teams ran at the Georgetown Invitational Meet.

This meet had about 80 runners per category, making it quite smaller than McNeil's meet, and the teams ran against private schools.

McCormick finished in 26th place, running the 3.1-mile trail in 18:26, followed by Lidgley, in 36th place at 19:07.

"The team has improved a lot since we started running, and this is mostly because of the training we do," Rotich said after the race.

The girls were led by Brunson, who finished fourth, running the two-mile trail in 12:23, and sophomore Priscilla Glenn, who finished 21st, in 13:35.

Coach Rotich said the trail in Georgetown was fantastic, and the weather was perfect for running, about 70 degrees.

Lady Bears' soccer team kicks off first season in BCS history

arin **BALTAOGLU**
reporter

On Oct. 18 the first official practice of Brentwood Christian School's first-ever high school girls' soccer team began. Since then, the girls have been training every day for the first game in the history of Brentwood girls' soccer, which was on Nov. 4 at San Antonio Christian.

A girls' soccer team has been of interest to Brentwood for more than 10 years, said athletic director Devan Loftis. Over the years, he said numerous schools similar to Brentwood's size have been adding girls' teams. Last winter was when Loftis said Brentwood began considering the idea more seriously and ultimately decided having a team would be an opportune decision.

The girls will be competing in TAPPS 3A, just like the boys, against district opponents as close as Round Rock and as far away as Pharr. The team's first district game will be at home against St. Dominic Savio on Nov. 30.

"I believe this will be a good opportunity for the girls to learn both commitment and

teamwork," junior Schuyler Hagen said. "We're going to do our best."

Hagen, senior Alyssa Legband, and sophomore Courtney Flores are the most experienced players on the team. For a short period of time the team did not have enough girls to have an official team in order to play games. Luckily the girls already on the team solved this problem by talking with almost all of the girls in the high school. With positive encouragement and determination, the team was completed and is now ready to play.

"The girls who have never played soccer before are catching on really fast," said sophomore Elena Batlle. "The coach has been supportive and willing to teach."

The team was fortunate enough to receive an experienced coach, Stephen Colwell, who played at York University, a small Christian college in Nebraska. Colwell has done play-by-play sports broadcasting on the radio and sports editing for a daily newspaper. He currently runs his own freelance photography company and is now Brentwood Christian School's first-ever girls' soccer coach.



photo: Gabriel Breternitz

Stretch for it Sophomore Courtney Flores fires a shot during after-school practice. Because several members of the team are inexperienced, the team has been focusing primarily on fitness and the fundamentals of soccer.

Boys' soccer has new coaches, opponents

Team eager for district to begin after opening loss at Victoria St. Joseph

ciro **CASTRO**
reporter

The varsity boys opened their soccer season with a trip to Victoria, where they lost to former district rivals St. Joseph 2-0.

The Bears played San Antonio Christian, another former district rival, on Nov. 4. Their next game will be at home against St. Stephens on Tuesday, Nov. 9. Their first district game,

also a home game, will be against San Marcos Baptist on Nov. 16.

This season brings many changes for the Bears, including new coaches, a new district, and a new set of opponents. Jesse Jordan, who was the assistant coach for three years, became the head coach this year after former head coach Joseph Walker moved to Tennessee.

This year's new assistant coach, Gifton Noel-Williams, came to Brentwood after retiring from playing professional soccer. Originally from England, Noel-Williams played professional soccer there for 11 years and played two and a half years in Spain before coming to the US to play for the Austin Aztex. He coached Forza FC, one of the best clubs in Austin, and is currently working with his own club, the Austin Gunners. He said he applied after he heard about the opening at BCS because he wanted to work with kids and coach soccer.

Players agree that Noel-Williams brings a lot to the table with his proficiency in both the technical and tactical aspects of the game of soccer.

"The new assistant coach is amazing," sophomore Stephen Bailey said.

Along with different coaches, this season also brings many different players. Eleven seniors from last year graduated, two people left the team, and ten new players

came, leaving this year's team with 22 players. The team has six seniors, six juniors, seven sophomores, and three freshmen.

One other important difference from last year is the district in which the Bears will compete. Moving from 4A down to 3A brings a new set of opponents. The team will not travel as far as they did last year for the games, but they do have a district opponent in Pharr, which is about five hours away, in South Texas.

After-school practices for the season started on Oct. 18. The regular season ends Jan. 22, but playoffs run through Feb. 20.

As the season begins, Coach Jordan and athletic director Devan Loftis explained some important things about their expectations for the season.

"We will learn a new style and continue on the good tradition," Loftis said.

Jordan said that his first major expectation is winning, and his second is learning life lessons. However, he said he wants every one of his players to give their best effort in practices and games, to have a learn/improve mindset, and to not worry about making mistakes.

The players are excited about their upcoming games.

"My expectations are for us to build a stronger team, fight our hardest through all our problems, and be the best," junior Jimmy Lidgey said.

"We do have a good team, but our touch is terrible," Bailey said. "We need to do more drills focused on handling and agility."

"I hope that we play our best in every single game, and my dream is for us to be undefeated in district and state champions," junior Daniel Pando said.

Volleyball team finishes third, loses playoff

lanae **HOLLINGSWORTH**
reporter

The BCS varsity volleyball season came to a close as the Lady Bears lost to New Braunfels Christian in the first round of the playoffs on Oct. 19 in New Braunfels. The team started slow but kept coming back to keep the games close: 25-18, 25-20, 25-18.

"They had rowdy fans and a talented outside," sophomore Morgan Vandygriff said. "We played well with such a young team and had a learning experience."

The Lady Bears finished third in district with a 5-5 record. To clinch a spot in the playoffs they had to win one of their last two district games against Temple Central Texas Christian and Bryan St. Joseph.

With a noisy crowd behind them, the girls locked up their playoff spot in the match against Temple on Oct. 7. They won the first two games and lost a close third before coming back to win the fourth game.

Head coach Efrain Contreras said that this year the team lacked experience and had trouble finishing games. However, he was encouraged by the team's disposition.

"People stepped up and were willing to do whatever for the team," he said.

Several players earned all-district honors: junior Brittany Brunson earned first team; senior Jennifer Quinn, junior Megan Gum, and freshman Avery Westerlund earned second team; and Vandygriff received honorable mention.

"This was a developing year; it is a team built for next year," Contreras said.



photo: Gabriel Breternitz

Half time pep talk Coaches Jesse Jordan and Gifton Noel-Williams speak to the team during their game against Victoria St. Joseph on Nov. 2.

Kindergartners enjoy fun-filled field trip to firestation

carter **BOYD**
reporter

Fifteen eager kindergartners filed into AFD's Fire Station 30, crammed onto a pair of expansive suede couches, and sat as patiently

as 15 eager kindergartners can, all excitedly awaiting the opportunity to meet one of the big, brave heroes that saturate the dreams of children everywhere.

Since firefighters have been around, countless generations of young people have shared the dream of one day joining the ranks of this great profession. For as many years, Brentwood Christian's kindergarten classes have been given a head start and granted the golden opportunity to meet the famed firefighters, tour a fire station, and even climb inside a gleaming red fire engine. Each of the three classes visited the Austin Fire Department station on Braker Lane: Mrs. Howard's class on Oct. 19, Mrs. Troutman's on Oct. 21, and Mrs. Allen's on Oct. 25.

When Mrs. Howard's class arrived, firefighter Chris Throop greeted the students and shared a few facts about fire stations. After educating the class on the basics of life as a firefighter, Sgt. Throop set to work on the inevitable safety speech. Pulling a smoke detector out of a bag, he asked the children how many of them recognized the bulbous

beeper. The whole class excitedly raised their hands, interjecting statements like, "THAT'S A SMOKE ALARM!" To prepare the kids in case their smoke alarm went off, the firefighter pressed the Test button and startled the students and parents alike with a piercing bleep. The safety speech meandered through familiar "stop, drop, and roll" territory, explored the "run outside, THEN call 911" wilderness, and charted previously unexplored "don't jump out a third-story window" frontier.

After the kindergartners were fully informed on how to act during a house fire, Throop took them back to show off the living quarters. The students admired the vintage stove, longed to operate the firemen's outdated Atari Flashback, and attempted to decipher the enormous maps on the walls. They proceeded to tour the sleeping quarters, awestruck by the cramped dormitories and small beds occupied by such large, heroic men. From there, the class headed to the fabled Engine Bay, far beyond excited to see the big red machine of their dreams.

Firefighter Chris and his comrade Firefighter Jorge opened the doors to the Engine Bay, and 15 kindergartners rushed in past enormous workout equipment and scattered tools, eyes fixed on the gleaming red fire engine. The vehicle dwarfed the children; kids ran under open doors without ducking, and pictures were taken of tires taller than them. Throop asked for guesses as to how much water the engine held. Little voices threw in estimates ranging from "SEVEN!" to an unsure "one million?" but the fireman informed them that it could store 500 gallons. After quieting the students, Throop began to show them a fireman's uniform, reinforcing that even though the suit is big and intimidating, "whoever is inside is there to help

you."

To prove this point, the fireman asked for a volunteer to wear the protective suit. Fifteen little hands shot up, and Throop apologized, pointing out that kindergartners couldn't fit, and inquired of the parents for a model. Kindergartner Sonia Spitz immediately grabbed her father, who was chaperoning, and brought him into the spotlight. The mildly reluctant parent began to don the heavy apparel, evolving from professional businessman to medieval soldier to astronaut to fireman in the course of a long three minutes, at the end of which his daughter yelled, "Daddy, you look silly!"

The students then toured the inside of the fire engine, sitting in the grand seats, wearing oversized headsets, and playing with a vast arrays of knobs and dials. After all the children had made the journey through the truck, they were led outside and told to sit quietly and wait for a "special surprise." Once they were all safely seated, the fire engine rolled out of the enormous bay door. The firemen unrolled the smallest hose, which nearly matched the diameter of some students' arms. The kids were given the opportunity to hold the hose and saturate a distant tree, and the pressure of the hose nearly toppled some of the kindergartners, but two formidable firemen held them upright.

At the end of the trip, the crew of AFD Station 30 had made a lasting impression on Mrs. Howard's kindergarten class, and vice versa. The little learners filed to their vehicles, smiling and thanking the firemen on their way out. Firefighters Chris, Jorge, and the rest of the team high-fived or handshook each student, grateful for the opportunity to teach proper fire safety, and for the excuse to put down the Atari Flashback controllers.

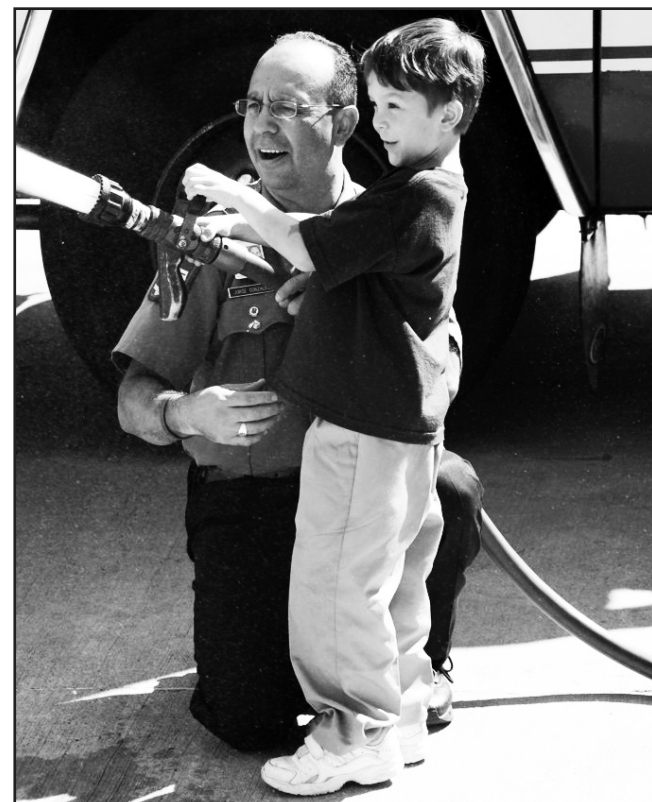


photo: Nicole Ryan

Steady now Kindergartner Aden Mann sprays water from a firehose with assistance from a firefighter, from Fire Station 30. Several kids were allowed the privilege.

Book Week begins Monday

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be assigned, meaning older elementary students will read books to younger elementary students.

Throughout the week local authors and celebrities visit classrooms and will read books to students. Some of the yearly visitors who plan to return again are sports writers Kirk Bohls and Cedric Golden of the Austin American-Statesman, and sports caster Roger Wallace of KXAN.

The Biscuit Brothers will be the entertainment at Friday's Young Authors party for students who submitted books. Allen said this is the most well-known performers Brentwood has ever brought in, and that the kids would really enjoy the performance.

Allen said she hopes that Book Week will prove valuable for all the students.

"I hope that Book Week encourages them to increase their writing abilities, and that the students will have a love of books and a love for reading," Allen said.

Third grade travels to farm

Annual trip to Jersey Barnyard yields rural lessons

jenny **NGUYEN**
reporter

Brentwood's third-grade classes enjoyed their trip to Jersey Barnyard in LaGrange on Oct. 7, where they learned more about farming areas. It was the day before fall break, and 47 students eagerly climbed into their parents' cars at 8:15 a.m. to go on their first field trip of the year.

Teacher Evelyn Ellis said the purpose of this trip was to help the students learn more about rural areas, since most students live in urban or suburban areas. Furthermore, she said it complements the lessons about different types of communities that the students have been learning, and it was a good opportunity for them to learn not only through words and pictures, but also through realistic experiences.

Even though the 74-mile trip took nearly two hours, the driving and patience paid off. At the farm, participants were guided through a tour by the farm's owners, Ralph and Faith. First, they took a hay ride to gain an overview of the place. Then they milked the Jersey cows and played in a hay maze.

Ellis said there was a pig as huge as a teacher's

desk. In addition, she said the guide told the students that the first toothbrush was made out of pig's hair, which made the students grateful they were not born back then, and debating whether or not they would brush with pig's hair. They also fed the farm animals, including ducks, chickens, goats, calves, and rabbits.

"They bite you!" Travis Whitaker said, retelling his experience with the animals during the trip.

Students said they also liked their new field trip T-shirts, which had Brentwood's distinct green color and white font. B'Smith said it was helpful to distinguish Brentwood's students from among others, helping the adults supervise their children well.

Despite the hot and sweaty weather, students said they had a lot of fun.

"It was awesome!" said Madison Barker, a student in Ellis's class.

B'Smith said the trip to the farm has been a tradition for six years. This year, the class will have four more trips: Longhorn Dam, Marble Falls, Amy's Ice Cream, and Bob Bullock Texas History Museum.

Battle: Italy trip

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good observer – I noticed that texting is not that popular in Italy. In our country many people have grown accustomed to mostly communicating through text. Here we see teens constantly texting away, not noticing anything around them, but only the little words on their phones. As a result, many of my peers can't talk to someone face-to-face, making eye contact at all. In Italy I saw something very different. I rarely saw one kid take out a phone to text – honestly. That sight was kind of beautiful, in my opinion.

Like everywhere else in the world, Italy has its faults. For one thing, things are a lot more expensive there. And of course, Italy has its rude and unpleasant people like the U.S. and the rest of the world.

But being in Italy was one of the best experiences of my life. The opportunity I had and the experience it gave me to go to Italy was an unforgettable one. I hope to have more opportunities to travel around the world so I, as a young person, can become more open-minded about the world around me.