

CHARGING *FORWARD*

Enriching
Students Through
STEM Learning

Retelling Stories
of Faith

Students
Experience
"PA Trout in the
Classroom"

THE SHIELD  SUMMER 2025



Enriching Students Through STEM Learning

Through science education at Mount Calvary, students are given the opportunity to study God's creation, the laws He has put into place that govern it, and our role as stewards of that creation. Science curriculum requires students to take the scientific knowledge that they learn and apply those ideas to solve problems and explain real-world phenomena. In other words, students take the information that they learn about science and apply that knowledge as they ask questions, analyze data, construct arguments from evidence, and build solutions or explanations to given situations.

STEM activities are an integral part of science instruction at all grade levels at Mount Calvary. The STEM acronym stands for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. All four of these disciplines can be found within a given STEM activity. Whether our third graders are designing a lightning rod that can protect a building in a

thunderstorm or our fifth graders are using their knowledge of simple machines to design and build a lift to move objects from the ground floor to the top floor, students are actively engaged in research, design building, testing, and redesign. Such activities also provide students the opportunity to learn how to respectfully share their ideas, collaborate with peers, and think critically.

However, what you would probably hear most from students is that STEM activities are fun. That is because STEM provides students with the opportunity to take their natural curiosity and explore God's world with their classmates in hands-on, meaningful ways. Such activities are just one of many ways that Mount Calvary seeks to develop students who are critical and discerning thinkers, equipped for every good work, and faithful stewards of God's many gifts.



Jenn Garcia

Elementary Principal & Education Director

Integrating STEM in the Classroom

Although there are a number of competitions and special STEM-related activities throughout the year, there are also a variety of STEM projects, experiments, and learning opportunities happening in our classrooms (and extracurricular events happening outside the classroom as well).

Read more about a few of the many ways some of our elementary classes integrate STEM learning into the curriculum:

2nd Grade

Matter: Students practice their knowledge of properties of water during a simulation where their boats sink, and they are stranded on a desert island in only their swimsuit. They have to create a hat that repels water and protects them from the sun. They can only use materials from a lunchbox that washed up on shore.

Rainforests: Students must design a zipline that can safely carry their scientist across a flooded river.

3rd Grade

Social Studies: While learning about Ancient Civilizations, students work cooperatively to engineer a chinampa (floating garden similar to those used by the Aztecs). This project challenges students' understanding of buoyancy and their knowledge of the Aztecs' environmental resources. Our elementary Spanish teacher, Mr. Herrera, presents about his work restoring chinampas in Mexico.

Science: Students analyze different properties of materials and then design and build a hand that can pick up a pencil. Their designs help us also explore the complexity of body systems and how God designed them to cooperate together with their own unique jobs similar to the body of Christ.

4th Grade

Ancient Rome: Students need to design an aqueduct that carries water six feet using straws and other supplies.

Mars Colony: Students must design a colony that would enable them to live on Mars. It needs to include an oxygen supply, electricity supply, as well as food and water supply. They use recyclable items to creatively design their colony.

5th Grade

Science: For this irrigation STEM activity, students work in small groups to design and create a garden terrace that allows for plants to receive water through irrigation.

Social Studies: Students create a battering ram, working in small groups to create a functioning piece where the battering ram will actually be tested to knock down a "castle wall."



Elementary STEM: At a Glance

October-May: PA Trout in the Classroom

February - IU13 K'nex Challenge

February - Athletics Games

March - IU STEM Bowl

May - Math 24 Competition



Middle School STEM Project Sampling

Paper Rockets - engineering design process

Paper Speaker - electromagnets and sound

Sphero Bolt Robots - Sphero robot maze coding

(Partnership with Elizabethtown College Science in Motion)

Paper Roller Coaster - potential and kinetic energy

"Students love both of these projects, as they get to apply the knowledge learned in the unit about the different topics and work with others to do so. They enjoy being creative and seeing what works and what doesn't work and making changes to their designs. They love the hands-on work, so that they can learn and discover on their own. As a teacher, it's rewarding to watch as students apply what I have been teaching them and reason through things to learn even more."

Sarah Kirstner

5th Grade Teacher

PA Trout in the Classroom Multi-Level Opportunities

For the past four years, Secondary Science and STEM Teacher, Melissa Risser has integrated the Pennsylvania Trout in the Classroom program with her high school environmental science class. This year, Third Grade Teacher and Upper Elementary STEPS Instructor, Kim Schmitkons, introduced the same program to 2nd-5th grade STEPS students at the MCCS West Campus.

WHY did you want to do the PA Trout in the Classroom program with your STEPS students?

“At MCCS, we are always looking for ways to engage as many students as possible with STEM learning opportunities. Melissa Risser has done the Trout in the Classroom Program with high school for several years and shared some ways that it has been a benefit to them. What was really unique about this program was that we could involve all of West Campus and have different grade levels interacting with the trout to match their learning objectives.”

HOW did the students take responsibility for the trout?

“Our West Campus students were involved in every step of the program. The 4th and 5th grade students had the most responsibility with caring for the trout. They started helping to prepare the tank and equipment in October. They helped identify dead eggs and pull them out of the tank. As the trout grew, they were frequently responsible for testing the water to ensure that our nitrogen cycle was functioning, vacuuming out water to clean the tank, and feeding the fish.

The 2nd-5th grade students were part of our Charger Trout TV episodes with the older students even writing scripts for them. They also designed an app which we used to share information about trout life cycles and habitat and to record information as we cared for the trout.”

WHAT did you and the students learn from this experience?

“This experience was full of learning opportunities! Some of the things were very technical like the flow of the nitrogen cycle and how to test for different chemicals in the water.

Other things were more practical and widely applicable such as persevering in problem-solving when we had a significant number of trout dying and we looked at 6 different possible reasons and attempted to mitigate them. Here are two things that really stood out or had big “wow” responses from the students. Environments are really interconnected and a small change in one part can cause big effects to other pieces of the environment. While watching the tiny eggs develop and grow, we were all amazed at God’s creativity as we were awed by how tiny the trout eggs were to begin with and at how unique each stage of the life cycle was showing God’s perfect design.”

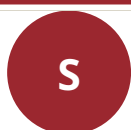
HOW was the collaboration between the elementary and high school students?

“The opportunity to have the older students working with our younger students on release day was amazing. Credit to Melissa Risser and her high schoolers for her vision for how release day could work and the preparation of a variety of really interesting learning stations. The high schoolers who led the stations did an amazing job! It was neat to see some of them with natural teaching ability, some eager to share about topics they are passionate about, and others stepping out of their comfort zone and embracing the younger students. The younger students loved all the different learning topics and activities and were really engaged with the older kids.”



Kim Schmitkons
3rd Grade Teacher & Upper Elementary
STEPS Instructor

The STEPS program supports classroom instruction by giving students more opportunities to build the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed both in student-centered learning and in future careers. STEM education is an important tool in student-centered instruction in all disciplines as well as an integral part of our science and technology departments. STEPS students are also being prepared as leaders for classroom STEM activities. The STEPS program allows students to go deeper into engineering challenges and disciplinary concepts thereby helping us to meet the needs of each individual student.



Students



Thinking



Explaining



Practicing



Sharing

Program Provides for MCCS Students

WHAT have you learned after doing this program for the past four years?

"My biggest lesson has been patience! Every year, when the eggs arrive, I find myself nervous about their acclimation process and survival chances. Over the years, I've learned to let go of some of those nerves and trust the process more. We have been extremely blessed with excellent survival rates, and I attribute that to my amazing Teacher Interns over the last three years: Payton Hilsher and Chad Halterman. They have worked very hard to help me manage the tank from pre-cycling in October to release day in May.

Other lessons have included MANY cross-curricular applications such as embryonic development, genetics, food webs, watersheds, aquatic ecosystems, environmental conservation, habitat evaluations, water chemistry, nitrogen and nutrient cycles, and many more! It is amazing how many applications this program has through our curriculum. The best lesson of all is that our students gain a deeper appreciation for God as our creator, His creation, and their role to steward the resources He gave us."

WHY did you want to bring this program to the younger students?

"I have always loved any opportunity to interact with students of all ages! From the first year I started this program, I have frequently invited the lower elementary teachers to bring their classes on mini "field trips" to my room so they can see the trout firsthand. At different grade levels, students study environmental education, watersheds, life cycles, food webs, and so much more. It is so easy to incorporate this experience into so much of what we already do. It is so fun to have the younger students stop in my room, see "the big kids", and take turns checking on the trout in the tank at the back of my classroom. I love their questions, their curiosity, and their love for learning. I had a goal to one day incorporate the program at a much larger scale and partner with West Campus on a different level.

It is said that teachers often become educators largely due to the impact their teachers had on them. This is true for me. Some of my core memories from my own grade-school experiences include being an awe-struck elementary student, completely enthralled with the HS students coming to our school to do science demonstrations. They brought physics, chemistry, and engineering to life for us by leading stations, engaging with us, and simply being present. I looked forward to my opportunity to participate in this when I became a high schooler, and knew that when I became a teacher, this was something I wanted to incorporate when the timing was right. It was so fun to see this dream come to fruition."



HOW was the collaboration between your high school students and the West Campus students?

"When I first began describing the vision for the event to my class, my students were excited about the idea of sharing this experience with the elementary students, but also a bit hesitant and nervous. For some of them, it was completely natural to lead and teach students; for others, it was completely out of their comfort zone.

They led stations on tree identification, habitat evaluation, animals native to Pennsylvania, water quality testing, a macroinvertebrate study, watershed education, and even had a craft for the students. It brought such joy to see the students of all ages actively engaged and working together throughout the day."



Melissa Risser

Secondary Science STEM Teacher



What are students saying?

"As a STEPS student, I liked getting to be a part of the PA Trout in the Classroom this past semester. We got the trout eggs in January. The eggs stayed inside a net in the fish tank until they hatched. Once they hatched and were big enough, I got to dump the net over and release the trout outside of the net into the tank. That was one of my favorite parts of the project--the fish swimming against my hand felt funny. My other favorite part was recording the Trout report videos on Charger Trout TV."

At the end of the project, we went to Conoy Creek for the day to release the trout and also to learn at different stations with some of the high schoolers. I really enjoyed the station where we made a fish out of paper and the station where we got to classify different animals. The pollution station was fun too because we got to spray everyone with water."

William Brennan
5th Grade STEPS student

"I've enjoyed taking care of the trout over the past few years. It's been a cool experience, and I've learned a lot about what it takes to care for rainbow trout beyond what you hear at a hatchery. Although rainbow trout are not native to PA, they are good for the health of our streams. I love animal conservation, and it's something that I take seriously, which is why I liked being a part of this program."

Being a part of the trout program has also been helpful for me as a student to learn more about how important water quality is to the fish, which makes me even more driven to help keep our watershed safer and cleaner."

This year, we released our trout with the younger students from Mount Calvary, and this gave us a chance to teach the students about all the aquatic life in and surrounding the creek. This experience helped to give the younger kids more knowledge on how to care for our creeks and streams."

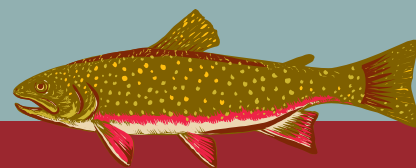
Payton Hilsher
Class of 2025

"This year, our environmental classes were presented with the opportunity for our trout creek release field trip to be joint with the elementary students from the West Campus, who also raised trout in their own building. For about an hour before the elementary students arrived, our two environmental classes prepared stations for us to teach the elementary students about biodiversity in Pennsylvania."

The stations included: a craft station for the students to make their own fish from paper, a macroinvertebrates stations in which the students sorted water critters and learned how the macroinvertebrates teach us about stream health, a water testing station to teach them how to measure Conoy Creek's stream health, a habitat evaluation/tree identification station where the students evaluated and learned to recognize different types of trees in the area around Conoy Creek, and a watershed station in which the students learned how our planet's water system works and what we can do as humans to help maintain our watersheds through an agricultural lens. I chose to be a part of the macroinvertebrates (macros) station because I thought handling water insects would help me get out of my comfort zone a bit."

I really enjoyed the passion that the younger students brought to the day. They constantly asked specific questions, were engaged, and enjoyed the process of spending time with the macros. As a senior, I've noticed that as students progress in their grade levels through school, they can lose their curiosity and passion for learning. Spending a day with the elementary students reminded me to keep my own passion and curiosity for learning in check, and to keep my eyes open to the new things God has for me to learn about His creation."

Jasmine Martin
Class of 2025



Let's

Celebrate!

Student Spotlights

A big congratulations to Jordan DeGroft who received a Hershey Theatre Apollo Award (a first for MCCS!) for Outstanding Supporting Actor in a Musical as Cosmo Brown in Singin' in the Rain.

Hershey Apollo Awards are presented annually to recognize outstanding achievement by local high school students in their musical and play productions. The organization has awarded more than \$240,000 in scholarships largely made possible through individual donations.



Isaiah Butler
Class of 2026

Outside of the classroom, MCCS Junior, Isaiah Butler is a gifted drummer and pianist who recently had the unique opportunity to attend "Experience Live" at Rock Littiz. Isaiah has also been using his gifts on the high school praise team for the past several years.

He shared, "I joined praise team being not so sure. My mom probably made me do it at first, but I would definitely choose to do it again. It's been a great experience with everyone on the praise team. We all get along and worship Jesus together. I think it's a really great thing. It's probably been one of the best decisions I've ever made."



Jordan DeGroft
Class of 2025

Faculty Features



Dr. Nick Mini and his wife, Kreestel, welcomed baby Mila on March 22



Abby Singles became Mrs. Stare on April 12



Jenna Lambie welcomed baby Mallory on May 14



Jordan Gates became Mrs. Greener on June 7



Kayley Barnes
Gap year



Jason Becker
St. Joseph's University



Lily Butler
Penn State University



Mariano Camero
Workforce



Adin Carver
Gap Year



Meet the Grads



Bethany Copeland
Bob Jones University



Jordan DeGroft
Anderson University

The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his
face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;



Kaden Feucht
Cedarville University



Grace Fisher
Workforce



Austyn Flora
Gap year



Micah Fortney
Thiel College



Rachel Fowle
Rowan University



Jackson Fox
Workforce



Benjamin Gerlach
Cedarville University



Joshua Guion
Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology



Chad Halterman
Workforce & Trade School



Hudson Hess
Blackbird Studios



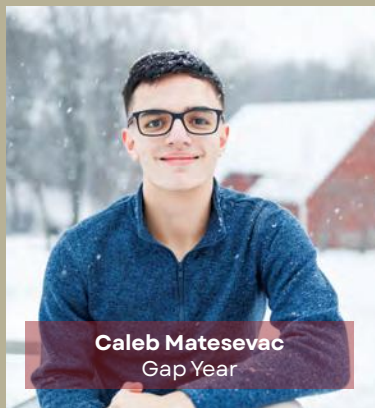
Payton Hilsher
One Life Institute



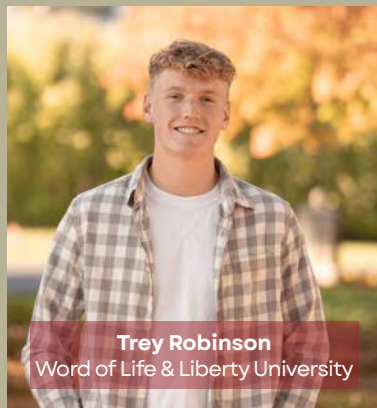
Mason Mack
Liberty University



Jasmine Martin
One Life Institute



Caleb Mateševac
Gap Year



Trey Robinson
Word of Life & Liberty University



Malachi Shenk
Workforce & Missions

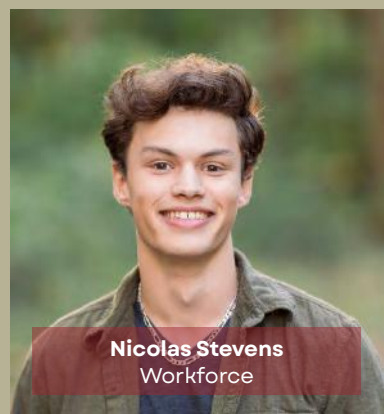
the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give
you peace. Numbers 6:24-26



Brooke Shope
Workforce



Kathleen Smucker
Messiah University



Nicolas Stevens
Workforce



Brian Taylor
Workforce



David Zamora
Messiah University



Evan Zeager
Liberty University



Nina Zinn
Liberty University



West Campus Dedication & Celebration

Dedication Event Draws Local Officials, Students, Friends, & Faithful Supporters

On Friday, May 16, following the recent completion of our West Campus Campaign, students gathered with a group of former Mill Rd. administrators, local officials, Mount Calvary church and school staff, trustees, and supporters to officially dedicate the West Campus to the Lord and thank Him for all He has done.

The rain held off, and students gathered with their teachers outside to pledge together, with the attendees, to the American flag, the Christian flag, and the Bible. The pledges were led by West Campus Principal and K-12 Education Director, Jennifer Garcia.

Superintendent, Jared Griest, began the event with a welcome and prayer. He shared that in 1955, God knew that the Elizabethtown Area School District needed an elementary school in which to entrust the children of its growing population. Men such as Arthur G. Spickler and Vincent O' Conner whose names are listed on the original plaque dedicating the elementary school in 1955, probably couldn't have imagined that 70 years later their investment would continue through this school.

Jared shared, "Today, we come together as a different group of leaders with a very similar objective. We are fire fighters, philanthropists, civil servants, educators, councilmen, and board members — committed to the Lord and to education.

May our impact of this dedication extend far beyond the days of our leadership; far beyond the days when our names are inscribed on a wall for passersby to see. And may the name of the Lord be glorified through the future use of this building."

Matt Watson, Lead Pastor at Mount Calvary Church, shared some of the history of our journey to West Campus:

"In 2020, we began to pray as a church and a school; with prayer, we started planning and brainstorming on how to lead this ministry with all that God was doing here. I can tell you, this property wasn't even on our radar. We had several other ideas on how to build and expand our school. But as those doors closed and we weren't exactly sure what to do, it was then that God made it abundantly clear that this was the direction He wanted us to go.

As we look back on the past and how we got this campus, I cannot help but be so thankful for God and how He led us every step of the way."

Pastor Matt challenged the church and school community in the following areas:

- That we would be a light shining in the darkness.
- That we would be building up families in the name of Jesus.
- That we would be preparing the next generation to love and walk with Jesus.
- That we would even be a blessing in this town and neighborhood.

"With God as our guide, we dedicate this school to His service and to the glory of His kingdom."

After a prayer of dedication, students resumed their classes, and attendees were invited inside to hear the beginner band, enjoy a light breakfast, receive tours of the school, and share in fellowship with one another.



Retelling Stories of Faith

Following our morning dedication event, the Mount Calvary community gathered behind the West Campus school building for an evening of gratitude and praise, remembering and retelling stories of faith surrounding the school property.

Led by Megan Jordan, we gathered and sang of the goodness of our God.

Superintendent, Jared Griest, challenged us to retell the stories of our faith. "We are to retell the mighty acts of God on a regular basis to our children." Jared reminded us that students at Mount Calvary not only learn the stories of God's Word but the embedded values present in the Holy Scriptures which are woven into their lives as well.

We heard three stories about West Campus that remind us of God's faithfulness.

Eric Stone shared the first story, "As we consider God's faithfulness to us through the purchase, renovation, and daily use of West Campus, we look back and remember...we remember how families sat around the radio, near their phones, listening, waiting, praying – on their knees, praying for the purchase of the building in our favor. We remember how it felt to hear 'WE WON! WE GOT IT!' and to praise God, together, for providing all we needed for the purchase."

We heard from 5th grade student, Caroline Norris, who shared, "After moving in, we heard many wonderful stories, including the incredible news of a student in Mrs. Burd's class, who, after hearing her teacher's testimony, went home that night and told her parents that she wanted to accept Christ as her Savior. We rejoice that her teacher emphasizes academics AND a relationship with Jesus Christ."

Tammy Patrick, one of our West Campus staff members shared our final story. "Most recently, thanks to the generosity of our donors, we installed verse plaques outside the door of each room at West Campus. What we thought was a random selection of verses on our part was actually orchestrated by God. He knew what each teacher needed to see outside their room each day."

Shortly after installing the plaques, we received an email filled with emotion from a teacher who shared that the verse outside her classroom 'stopped me in my tracks.' She shared that this is her life verse that has carried her through many difficult times in her life. She expressed her gratitude for the way the Holy Spirit worked through our donors and shared how grateful and blessed she feels to be here at Mount Calvary.

The storm held off until after these sacred moments of remembrance and worship, and families shared a meal together in the Champatorium.

Praise God for all He's done!



MCCS Art Students Represent Well at Cairn Fine Arts Festival

This spring, a group of high school and one middle school student participated in the Cairn University Fine Arts Festival. Students experienced a college-level art critique of their pieces with Cairn University professors and participated in two workshops.

Congratulations to all of our participants and to the following students for placing first in their category:

Aubrey Kyllonen (10th) - Sculpture 1
Bethany Mushett (10th) - Sculpture 2
Ayla Watts (9th) - Commercial Design
Aderyn Forney (7th) - Sculpture 1



Stringfest

This spring, two of our talented young musicians, Janara Creary (8th grade) and Makiah Kopp (5th grade) represented MCCS at Stringfest.



Spring Musical | Singing in the Rain

Audiences were dazzled by this year's spring musical. What a phenomenal performance! And yes, it really rained!





Varsity Baseball: CCAC Champions

This remarkable team not only clinched the league championship but also advanced to the PIAA state tournament.



Middle School Track & Field

The boys finished 2nd at this year's CCAC conference track meet, placed 2nd at the MACSA (Mid-Atlantic Christian Schools Association) and ECCS (East Coast Christian Schools) track meets.

Every middle school track & field school record was broken by this year's team.



Varsity Track & Field

25 Varsity Track & Field school records were broken by this year's team!

CCAC All-Conference



Basketball:

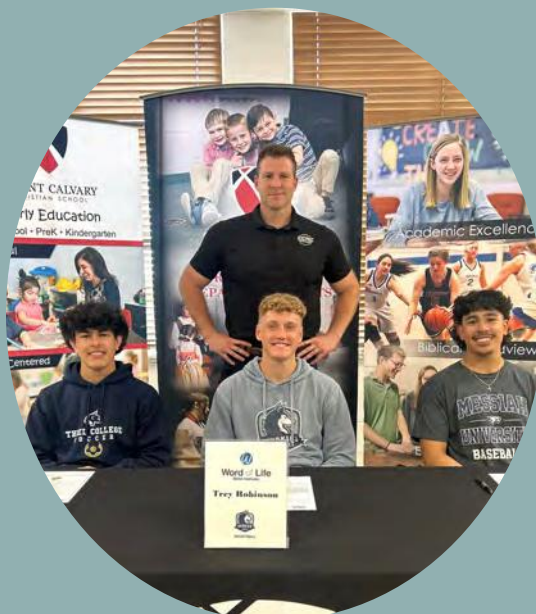
Josiah Masters
Kylie Masters
Kayley Barnes
Trey Robinson



Baseball:

Logan Stewart
Ben Gerlach
David Zamora

College Athletics Signing



Micah Fortney
Thiel College
Soccer

Trey Robinson
Word of Life
Bible Institute
Basketball

David Zamora
Messiah University
Baseball

Students of the Month

Each month, we recognize a senior who is nominated by MCCS faculty and staff based on spiritual leadership, character, academic achievement or improvement, perseverance through trials, and other aspects of a student's life and academic career. *Scan the QR code to read the full interviews.*



Evan Zeager



February

"Throughout my 10 years here at Mount Calvary Christian School, I've thoroughly enjoyed my time with teachers and friends. I'd like to thank my parents for helping me through school, the teachers, and the many friends I've made. I will miss my time here and am truly grateful for everyone who's influenced me."

Kathleen Smucker



March

"One of my favorite memories was our fall senior trip. I thought that was really amazing – as a class, we got to dive into God's Word together, and I would say that really drew us close. I'm really happy that we split up the senior trip this time, so we could draw close at the beginning of the year and have just a better year all together."

Jordan DeGraft



April

"The teachers at Mount Calvary have made a very big impact on me, in my spiritual life and as a person. You can tell that they're very, very committed and that they love their students and have a very strong faith. They're very easy to look up to and have helped guide me."

Malachi Sherk



May

"Over the last four years, praise team has been really impactful for me; it's helped me grow in my love for music but also for worship ministry for a potential career choice of music production or ministry."

Charging *FORWARD*, together!



Funding Key Improvement Projects Through Charger Giving Events

Earlier this spring, we brought the entire Mount Calvary community together to Charge Forward and raised \$75,000 for key improvement projects at both of our campuses. This year's Charger Giving event combined our elementary Charger Giving Read-a-Thon and our schoolwide Charger Giving Day.

Our elementary students read voraciously and raised funds for three weeks, earning a variety of special prizes during this year's Dinosaur Days read-a-thon. One 4th grade student raised more than \$1,000! Spirit Days also brought an added element of joy and laughter to our campuses.

Charger Giving Day, our 24-hour giving marathon, brought another burst of energy and excitement to both campuses with giveaways, fun surprises, Champ appearances, and student updates on our giving total.

Through the generosity of many individuals and a significant matching gift, we raised a total of \$165,535 for MCCS!

We praise God for every giver and gift given for us to steward and use for His glory!



MOUNT CALVARY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Mount Calvary Christian School

629 North Holly Street
Elizabethtown, PA 17022-0508
mcchristianschool.com



School Trustees

Jared Griest
Jonathan Witmer
John Bardakjy
Micah Eaby
Chuck Fernald
Karl Feucht
Lonnie Kopcha
Erikk Masters
Michelle Reaggs

MCCS exists to partner with families to provide a quality education and encourage students to grow into faithful and mature followers of Christ.

MCCS is a Ministry of Mount Calvary Church.

Mount Calvary Christian School admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin, or handicap to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin, disability or handicap in administration of its educational policies, administration policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic or other school administered programs.

If you have received this newsletter in error or wish to be removed from the mailing list, please call 717.367.1649 or email development@mcchristianschool.com.

LOOKING AHEAD

July

July 31: MCCS Clothing Sale (MCCS Family Night)

August

August 1-2: MCCS Clothing Sale
August 19: Kindergarten Orientation (1PM)
New Student Orientation - All Campuses (2-3PM)
Meet & Greet for grades 1-12 (3-4:30PM)
August 20: First day of school (K-12th grades)
August 29: No School

September

September 1: No School
September 3: Moms in Prayer (8AM)
September 11: PTC Meeting (8AM)
September 26-27: MCCS Auction

October

October 1: Moms in Prayer (8AM)
October 2-3: No School
October 6: No School (Preschool -5th grade)
October 9: PTC Meeting (8AM)
October 24: Early dismissal (11:15AM)
October 27: No School
October 31: MS Fine Arts Production

See our website for a full calendar and back-to-school event schedule.

