ALUMNI COLE CUNNINGHAM GOES ON JOURNEY OF HOPE

Cole is pictured with his buddy, Adam.
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A marathon is one thing. But running 7 in 7 days – ON 7 CONTINENTS?! Come hear the remarkable story of Faith parent Michael Crome at our Annual Donor Breakfast. SEPT. 24

MS PERFORMANCE OF DR. DOOLITTLE
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HOMECOMING
Come out and enjoy a reception, pep rally, and the football game!
OCT. 4 vs. Cimarron-Memorial

CRUSADER PREVIEW NIGHT
Meet our amazing faculty and staff and learn more about our academics, student life, and unique extracurricular activities and programs!
MONDAY, SEPT. 23

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Faith Alum Return to Teach at their Alma Mater

Leads to the East

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Recently, our first school year in 1979 came to mind both at our all faculty/staff opening worship on July 29 and at our all school opening chapel on Aug. 8. I found myself thankful again for the founding principal Gerhardt Meyer and our first teacher Vera Andersen, along with the 43 pioneering sixth and seventh graders who made up the very first student body at what was then Faith Christian Junior/Senior High School using rented facilities at First Southern Baptist Church near downtown Las Vegas.

As our 201 faculty and staff gathered together in the CPAC to praise God and as our 1,951 students gathered in the Arena for chapel to start the school year, I couldn’t help but think of God’s unfathomable blessings on this school the past 40 years. Past and present board of directors, faculty, staff, students, donors, association churches, parents, and guardians are all responsible for what we are today and will be in the future. Great schools are never about great facilities. They are always about the great people who work in them and the great students and families they serve. To better serve our students and those to come, we are expanding.

This year, we will continue building spaces and places for adults and students to do their finest work. In March, we received the single largest gift in the history of our school to add bathrooms, additional bleachers on the home and visitor sides, enhanced landscaping, and new perimeter fencing to our football stadium. We will feature that project in this magazine later this year upon completion. New exterior fencing and pilasters are already in place, and the remainder of the project will commence during this school year.

This fall, we will be breaking ground on the Crusader Business Center on our southern parcel. It will house our financial, facility, advancement, human resources, board, and executive offices. This frees up much needed space in the main building for school use. We also plan to add an artificial turf standalone infield to the west of the current baseball field for softball, baseball, and PE needs. This also fulfills a requirement by the Howard Hughes Corp. to continue to address undeveloped sections of our property.

The vacation of Homestretch Drive will become official on April 1, 2020. One of the conditions of the vacation was for Faith Lutheran to pay for and build an emergency access road on the southernmost end of our currently vacant parcel south of Homestretch. This will allow fire, police, and EMS to move swiftly between Sandstone Bluffs and Hualapai. Pedestrians and bicyclists are also welcome to use the road 24/7. That project was completed this summer.

We are working to raise money for eight tennis courts on the southern parcel and hope to have those capital commitments in hand later this year. Amidst all the hectic pace of growth, I am mindful that the more things change, the more they stay the same. Faith Lutheran always has been and always will be a family where, in spite of any differences, we love and respect each other, a place that has an unrelenting desire to be better tomorrow than it is today, a place where the very best teachers are recruited and retained, a place where students are prepared to enter the university or career that best fits them, and a place where the Gospel of Jesus is joyfully shared. Those timeless attributes have helped shape Faith Lutheran into the largest Lutheran school in the history of the United States and the largest private school in the history of the state of Nevada. I remain resolute in boldly stating that our best years still lie ahead. To God alone be the glory.

In the 1970s, there was a sitcom called “Welcome Back, Kotter.” In it, Gabe Kotter goes back to teach at the high school from which he graduated. At Faith Lutheran this year, we have eleven Faith Lutheran alumni whom we have welcomed back to Faith Lutheran. We asked each of them why they came back to Faith, what has changed and what has remained constant since they were a student, and why they enjoy serving at Faith.

FROM TIME TO TIME, I RUMINATE ON THE EARLY BEGINNINGS OF FAITH LUTHERAN.

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MISS LAUREN GATEWOOD (10) teaches dance and art, Japanese, coaches MS track, and serves as the Student Council advisor; she has been at Faith since 2016. “I came back because I have always wanted to teach with my sister Joanne, who has been at Faith since 1987. Everything has changed! When I went to Faith, it was on Robin Street. The school was extremely small. In my graduating class, I was one of 17. All our sports teams struggled to compete and rarely if ever won. We had to travel out of town for all of our games because we couldn’t play any of the high schools in town due to our small size. If a student went out for a sport, they were automatically on the team. We did not have a theater program or a football field. We did not wear uniforms or have an indoor cafeteria. All driving high school students had the option of leaving campus during lunch back then. The one thing that is the same is the fact that Faith is a school built on Christ. The Gospel message has always been the number one priority. The only other thing that is the same is Joanne Krafft and Elaine Washington were teachers when I went to school here, and they are both still here. I love, love, love my students. They are the best and the reason I love my job. I also really enjoy teaching with my sister! One of my favorite things so far was the opportunity I was given to create a new theology class for students who have little to no experience with Jesus. The Earn and faith is called Foundations: I can’t wait to teach it each day. I feel that this is my mission field and one I absolutely adore.”

MR. DAVE ANDERSON (07) is a high school social studies teacher and head varsity baseball coach and has been at Faith since 2015. “I love baseball and Coach Blair Negale asked me back to help. I placed and helped me grow up, and I always kind of felt like it was pulling me back. So much has changed, but the campus is the most dramatic... 1. Cafeteria 2. CPAC 3. Arena 4. Weight room 5. Football field (had more rocks in it than blades of grass when I was a student).”

MISS BRIANNA DAGDAGAN (15) is the technical director and is new to Faith this year. “I wanted to give back and help with the theater, and the theater coach approached me. She explained it to me, and I reached out to me, she caught me right when I came back from graduating college and it felt like it was meant to be. Even though I only graduated four years ago, the campus is bigger and the buildings got improved. The CPAC is the same, but the sound system [my main focus this year] is brand new, so that was a learning curve. The people and feeling of a community and family is still there, and I’m glad to be a part of it again. The feeling that this is a family, and everyone is willing to help each other is what I like most about Faith. I like teaching the kids and teaching them, along with the variety of work I get to do as part of my job.”

MRS. MELISSA SUNDAQUIST (01) teaches high school theology and has been at Faith since 2018. “After being away from Vegas for 16 years, I moved back. There is no better school in the valley!” She jokes that not much has changed. “I think those are the same portables as when I went to Faith. I love that so many of my teachers are still at Faith. It is a testimony to the incredible family-like and supportive atmosphere teachers and staff receive from those in leadership. It is a unique experience to see so many different students have the opportunity to excel at what they are passionate about. Students who might usually detest going to school or may struggle academically, find at Faith something for themselves that gives them confidence and a sense of belonging. In short, I think as a teacher it is an honor to see students empowered. Students make teaching the best profession.”

MR. CHRIS ZOIS (06) serves in the information technology department as a senior computer technician and was a network administrator as a student while at Faith; he has been in the IT department at Faith since 2006. “I’ve known I wanted to do IT work since sixth grade so when this job came up, I jumped at the chance. I love the kids, and I like being able to share the Gospel with them. I actually like their naivete toward the world, life, and technology. They are still moldable and teachable. I also enjoy our department; we have the best team we’ve had in years.”

Our faculty and staff have started a scholarship fund for any of our graduates who are interested in pursuing vocations in Lutheran churches and schools by studying at a Concordia University. Several of the Concordia Universities also offer generous scholarships for students who wish to teach in Lutheran schools or serve in Lutheran churches. While only God knows who they are, it is exciting to think that some of our current students will come back and teach at Faith. Once a Crusader, always a Crusader!
How does a guy whose only bike riding experience had been cycling to class in college at Boise State University go to riding 3,800 miles across the southern United States in the middle of the summer a month after he graduates? MEET COLE CUNNINGHAM, a 2015 graduate of Faith Lutheran High School and a 2019 graduate of Boise State University with a degree in marketing and a certificate in leadership.

Cole joined the Pi Kappa Phi (PKP) fraternity at Boise State and quickly became the philanthropy chairman. Cole joined because of PKP’s national charitable organization, The Ability Experience. The Ability Experience is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, was founded in 1977 and remains the exclusive philanthropy of PKP. To date, The Ability Experience has raised more than $15 million to benefit people with disabilities and organizations dedicated to their service.

One of the chief ways that money is raised for The Ability Experience is through The Journey of Hope. The Journey of Hope is an annual cross-country bicycling trip with three routes beginning in Seattle (TransAm), San Francisco (North) or Santa Barbara (South) and all ending together 59 days later in Washington, D.C. The event builds men of Pi Kappa Phi into servant leaders and raises funds and awareness for people with disabilities.

Cole was on the southern team, which left Santa Barbara on June 13. Their journey took them through California, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia before arriving with the other two teams in Washington D.C., on Aug. 10. While riding through these states in the middle of the summer was a daily challenge, Cole recalls the “ride from Twentynine Palms, California, to Parker, Arizona, was the most difficult because of the intense heat and elevation changes.”

“I knew the ride would challenge me in every way, but I felt I was called to ride the Journey of Hope. It kept me up at night. I knew it was something I needed to do.” Since most of the guys who rode were not cyclists at all, it proves what can be done when one arrives at the intersection of his/her passion and purpose. Cole was joined by teammates who were fraternity brothers from other universities such as Purdue, University of North Carolina, University of Washington, Vermont, Rochester Institute of Technology, and the University of Colorado Boulder. Though they came from different schools, they all bonded in a common mission.

“We started each day with prayer, and the conversations with my teammates during the rides made the time go by much more quickly,” Cole noted.

As a junior in high school, Cole was a mentor in Faith Lutheran’s Mark 10:14 program, which provides an excellent education for middle and high school students with intellectual and developmental disabilities in an inclusive Christian setting. “My experience with the Mark 10:14 program definitely sparked my passion for helping individuals with different abilities and is one of the main reasons why I joined Pi Kappa Phi and got involved with Journey of Hope in the first place.” In March, when Cole made the decision to ride in June, he began training by running and by spending hours on his Cannondale Synapse riding on flat and elevated bike routes in Idaho. Additional mandatory training included bike maintenance, gears, pacelines, hydration, hand signals, and nutrition which kept Cole busy prior to the trek across America.

Since this event has been held annually since 1987, many of the people and organizations look forward to the cyclists arriving in their town along the way. Though his team would bike an average of 75 miles in a day, they would also stop at various organizations along the way serving people with disabilities. The cyclists would have a dance party, go ice skating, bowling, or just hang out with the special people they were riding to support. These frequent stops “reminded us why we were doing this. Our whole mindset would change when we’d stop and hang out with these special people and organizations.”

Cole recalls several people he met with deep fondness, among them was his buddy at Miracle League in Spartanburg, S.C. “Miracle League is an event where we each get partnered or ‘buddy’ up with an athlete and play a game of baseball with them. Adam was my buddy for the night. We had fun playing catch in the outfield and running the bases together after he got a hit. This was one of my favorite friendship visits because it enabled everyone to be a star baseball player for the night and allowed the parents to cheer on their child from the sidelines, which some parents may have never had the opportunity to do before. Seeing the smile on Adam’s face after he hit the ball was something I’ll never forget.”

Cole and his cycling mates made an indelible impact on those they met along the way. He recalls one organization telling him, “This is the day we look forward to every year when the Journey of Hope comes to town. It’s like our Christmas.”

Although most nights were spent sleeping on the floor at a local church or high school along the way, Cole excitedly stated that “the southern route eats the best food. We ate very well!”

Cole individually raised the second most amount of money ($13,421) so he got to be at the front of the riders as the teams rode into Washington, D.C., and finished on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol with friends, family, and guests cheering their completion of their amazing ride. In all, the three teams raised more than a half a million dollars this summer making it truly a journey of hope.
TAKING SCORES OF MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY ON ANNUAL TRIPS TAKES A SPECIAL KIND OF COURAGE. MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER MRS. TISH CARROLL HAS WHAT IT TAKES TO DO JUST THAT. In just the past five years, she has led one trip to Washington, D.C., for a presidential inauguration, five sightseeing trips to Washington, D.C., with seventh graders in May, and two sightseeing trips to New York City in February with eighth graders. The New York City trip was borne from the idea of some previous seventh graders who loved their trip to the nation’s capitol the year before. Both trips were quite the whirlwind tour over five days which include transcontinental flights on two of those days.

Nicolas Bohlander stated, “I chose to go on the NY trip because my friends were going, and I’ve never been to New York City. Plus Mrs. Carroll was the main chaperone and she’s awesome.”

One out of every 38 people living in the United States lives in New York City. It is more than twice as large as the next largest U.S. city, Los Angeles, CA. New York City has more people living in it than 40 of the 50 U.S. states. A visit to the City That Never Sleeps provided a seemingly unlimited array of things to do and see. The eighth grade New York City trip included Top of the Rock, ice skating at Rockefeller Center, Greenwich Village, NBC Studios, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, Times Square, Statue of Liberty, Wall Street, St. Paul’s Chapel, U.S. Customs House, 9-11 Memorial, China Town shopping, Little Italy, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Central Park Zoo, Fifth Avenue, Radio City Music Hall, St. John’s Cathedral, Upper Manhattan, Columbia University, Grant’s Tomb, Harlem, Hamilton’s Yellow House, and two Broadway shows.

"It is hard to choose my favorite memory about the trip because there are so many! But I would have to say, eating in a local Italian restaurant with all the tables pushed together, with all my friends and singing karaoke has to be one the best dinners of my life," Sophia Bonner recalls.

Olivia Taylor echoes that. “This is a really hard choice choosing the best part! I really loved all of the theater-related things we did, but I also had some really fun conversations with my teachers and got to know them better. I also talked to some people in my grade whom I hadn’t met before.”

continued on page 12
Faith Lutheran students are provided many opportunities to travel for athletics, arts, academics, clubs, and pure fun. “It was so much fun to go out of state because it made me explore outside of what I’m used to, and it definitely got me out of my comfort zone in a good way,” Natalia Caruso admitted.

Emma Camper stated, “The best parts about traveling out of state is being closer friends with some classmates and learning or going to places you might never see.”

The seventh grade trip to the nation’s capital began in Philadelphia as students saw City Hall, JFK Plaza, Museum row, the famed “Rocky Steps,” Liberty Bell, Betsy Ross House, Christ Church, Carpenter’s Court, Franklin Court, and Franklin’s Grave. The group then headed to Valley Forge before traveling to Gettysburg and the Museum of the Civil War. The bus then took them to Washington, D.C., where they see the monuments, Museum of the Bible, Capitol Hill Tour, Library of Congress, Smithsonian Museums, Holocaust Museum, Mt. Vernon Tour, and Arlington National Cemetery.

Jack Cape said, “I didn’t have a favorite memory because all of it was so cool, but if I had to choose one it would be the Bible museum. The best part about traveling out of state is that I am going on a trip with my friends. I would definitely recommend going on this trip, it was so fun!”

“I think certain teachers have a nature of wanting to go out and explore. I’m one of those. You can’t live your life in fear. I’m not afraid of how kids are going to act,” reflected Carroll.

Prior to the trips, the students met after school several days to learn how to act with good manners. “The guys know that they will get all the luggage on and off the bus for the girls and stand aside until all the girls have boarded the bus. Everyone is reminded to say please and thank you at all times, to not run and off the bus for the girls and stand aside until all the girls have boarded the bus. Everyone is reminded to say please and thank you at all times, to not run and off the bus for the girls and stand aside until all the girls have boarded the bus. Everyone is reminded to say please and thank you at all times, to not run and off the bus for the girls and stand aside until all the girls have boarded the bus. Everyone is reminded to say please and thank you at all times, to not run and off the bus for the girls and stand aside until all the girls have boarded the bus.

Donor Profile:
Shane & Melissa Victorino

COURAGEOUS  
GENEROSITY

Shane and Melissa Victorino have been helping to make the lives of others better even before the day they were married almost 10 years ago.

The two met at a Las Vegas 51s game on Memorial Day 2004. They went on a lunch date the next day, and the rest as they say is history. Five years later, they married in Shane’s native Maui, Hawaii (Melissa was born and raised in tiny Soldotna, Alaska) on Nov. 14, 2009. However, two years before that, while they were still dating, Shane and Melissa began their legacy of giving back in a big way – by pledging $1 million toward the renovation of one of the original Boys and Girls Clubs in Nicetown, PA.

Shane was playing for the Philadelphia Phillies at the time – he played a total of 10 years in the majors, won two world championships with the Phillies and Boston Red Sox, and was a two-time All-Star and a four-time Gold Glove winner – and he and Melissa were told the club in the high crime area in North Philadelphia was about to close due to lack of funding.

“We just couldn’t bear to see that happen, to see a place that gave hope to kids just be closed forever,” Shane says. “We put up $1 million and got a match for another $1 million, and today that club is thriving.”

Indeed, the Shane Victorino Nicetown Boys and Girls Club offers computer training, home and life skills, nutrition classes, sports, tutoring and homework help, and visual arts programs to under-served students from kindergarten to 12th grade. For the Victorinos, it’s all about giving in ways that will impact young people in the long term. “We want to see long-term results,” Melissa says. “We want to leave a legacy, and also help our own kids see the joy of putting the needs of others first.”

It’s a big reason that Shane and Melissa enrolled their two children, Keenan and Kali’a, at Faith Lutheran. Keenan began at Faith as a senior and played for the 2014 state champion football team, and Kali’a is a seventh grader.

“We believe in Faith’s vision for students, as well as their long-term missions,” says Melissa. “You’re not just a number here; you’re part of a family environment. Faith creates a community by involving students in so many great activities. The school is so warm and inviting, and does a great job not only transitions from one school to the next, but also from grade to grade.”

The Victorinos also believe in helping fund Faith’s vision plan. They have been big supporters of the annual Crusader Knight benefit, giving both personally and through their foundation (which was established in 2010 and has awarded millions in grants and scholarships, and has helped fund the construction of batting cages throughout Hawaii, and have also given to Faith athletics.

“I love how Faith has faith – that the school provides guidance and affirmation of who the students are in God,” Shane says. “A religious foundation is so important, and we believe in helping fund what the school provides to mold and shape kids.”

Their children have benefited tremendously from all that Faith provides, according to Melissa.

“We knew when Keenan was attending Faith as a senior that we wanted Kali’a to be here, even though she was still in third grade” she says. “Shane and I are big believers in a school being a good fit for your kids. Kali’a is certainly a good fit; she works hard in class, she’s kind, and her family values and morals are totally conducive to Faith.”

“Kali’a just wrote a paper about her Foundations class, and when I read it I was impressed with how much she’s grown in getting to know God and His Word,” Melissa continues. “She learned so much about Christ during her first year at Faith, and now her goal is to be in Applied and lead chapel. She’s made a great group of friends here and really finding herself.”

The “1 and 1” can completely change the trajectory of a game. Countless times the “bonus” shot has meant the difference between winning and losing the game.

As we embark on our 40th year of preparing souls and minds, I’d like to invite you to take the “1 and 1” challenge – to completely change the trajectory of Faith Lutheran. But I need to warn you: It may be uncomfortable. Making the second shot in a 1 and 1 is never automatic. There can be tremendous pressure, especially if it’s the end of the game with hundreds or even thousands screaming at and mocking you.

Jesus took the “1 and 1” challenge when he died for our sins. In Mark 8:31-35, Jesus was teaching His disciples that He “must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that He must be killed and after three days rise again” (Verse 31). He was predicting the way He would die – but also prophesying that He would come back to life.

His challenge came a few verses later: “Then he called the crowd to Him along with His disciples and said, ‘Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow Me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for Me and for the gospel will save it’” (Mark 8:34-35).

What is Jesus’ challenge in a nutshell? Giving up to gain. It’s really that simple. For Jesus, it was automatic. He took the shot – death on a cross – and when He rose from the grave, we received the bonus – eternal life.

The lesson for you and me is when Jesus gave, we gained. In the same way, when you give to Faith Lutheran – whether for Build Faith (which helps fund all building and new program costs), the Annual Fund (which helps with technology and many things outside our budget) or Immediate Tuition Assistance (which helps the one in six students who would otherwise not be able to afford to attend Faith) – you gain the joy and satisfaction of changing the trajectory of the lives of students for eternity.

In short, YOU can be a game changer for Faith Lutheran. If you give 10 percent to church and/or charity, consider giving 1 percent of it – or even an additional 1 percent – to your child’s school. If you do, the reward will be off-the-charts. But remember: Someone will try to talk you out of it. And the first person to try will be you. Mark 8:32-33 says Peter took Jesus aside to rebuke Him, but Jesus said to Peter and His disciples, “Get behind Me, Satan! You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” When all we do and give is for God, He blesses beyond measure!
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