



MANHATTAN
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

Connections

“For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s shall save it.” Mark 8:35

MAY/JUNE 2025

ISSUE 8

VOLUME 25

Who Is It For?

Josh Sinnema, Graduation Commencement Address



Graduation Photos Courtesy of Oak + Fern

“It’s important to remember where you came from and who supported you along the way.” Josh showed our graduates a moving visual of a room full of parents, family members, pastors, prayer partners, GEMS and Cadet leaders, Sunday School teachers, VBS leaders, teachers, principals, administrators, band and choir directors, coaches, or anyone who has uttered a prayer for a graduate sitting in front. “You didn’t get here by accident. God placed you within your families; He placed you within this beautiful community. There is a lot this group of individuals has accomplished...when you think back on all these accomplishments, I want you to think of this question: who was it for?”



Read more about the 2025 Graduation Ceremony on page 3 and watch the whole thing back on Manhattan Christian School’s YouTube Channel.

Why we love working at MCS:

As we wrapped up the year, it was amazing to see teachers show flexibility to make things fun & enjoyable for students. End-of-year can be chaos, but we embraced it together!

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Class of 2025

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Running with Christ

Thank You, Teachers

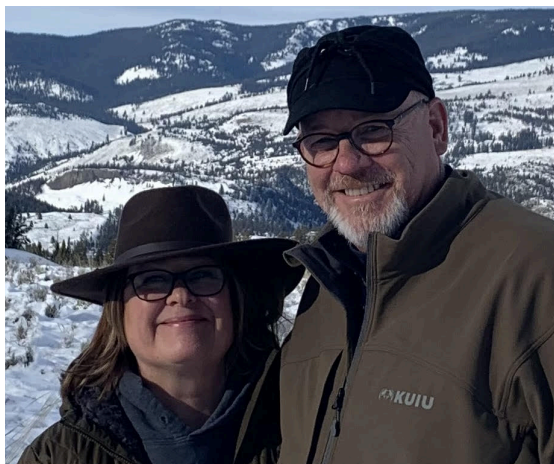
Senior Project Spotlight

Farewell from Your Head of School

Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit"—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that." James 4: 13-15

Joel Westa, Head of School

I was working in my garden last night when a storm front moved in. A sudden gust of wind lifted the pollen off the roof of our house and out of the branches of several large trees. I was amazed at this suddenly visible massive cloud of light green pollen that swept across the fields. In a moment, just as quickly as it appeared, it was gone. The verses from James came to my mind. Our life is but a vapor, a mist that vanishes quickly.



Three years here at MCS have gone by very quickly. Deborah and I have appreciated being invited into this community, and we are thankful for the many friendships we have made over these past few years. There have been tough stretches along the way, as there always are when changes have to be made. My dad always taught me to leave everything better than you found it, and as I examined the past three years, I think we've been able to accomplish many exciting improvements, both visible ones and invisible ones.

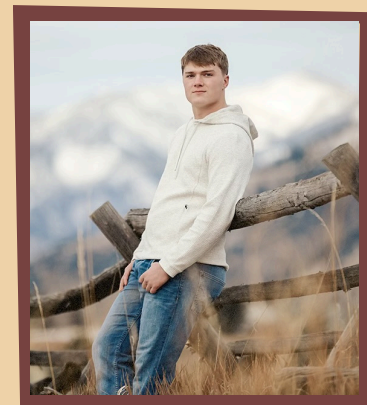
Over the past three years, we have improved academics and reviewed and recommended the purchase of new curriculum for many subjects and grade levels. We have examined and continue to rewrite the school policy where needed. We have improved the financial standing of the school, created a coffee shop for a gathering space, improved music and arts programs, emphasized faculty development, remodeled the kitchen, began work on the salary scale for teachers, created a strategic plan that has been used to guide the school, hired PK-8 Principal, achieved high marks on the new OPI accreditation system, and established new security systems and building entry procedures. We've instituted MAP testing, allowing us to effectively differentiate education for our students, improved our resource room function, raised money for a new building, and have a well-functioning bus fleet with a new activity bus to safely take our students down the road. We established a Spiritual Life Director position, and most importantly, carried out all of this while staying faithful to our mission and firmly grounded in the Word of God.

I've been thankful to be a part of a great administrative team, with a supportive board and extremely generous and faithful supporters of the school. I am especially thankful for our students who make this place come to life. They are the reason we do this, although sometimes we lose sight of that fact. They will be the ones I miss the most. As I stood outside greeting the kids on the very last day of school, I realized that is what I will miss the most. The smiles, excitement, the families walking their kids in, to give them to us for 8 hours a day. Trusting us to teach them, love them, and model Christ for them. Thank you for your support in that mission, and thank you for allowing the Westas to be a part of this community for the last three years.

ROTARY

student of the month

Please join us in congratulating this month's Rotary Student of the Month, chosen by his teachers, Dominic Holst. Students chosen for this award are known to display high character, leadership, and community mindedness both at and away from school.



Meet Manhattan Christian Senior,
Dominic Holst

How long have you been at MCS? For four years now; I attended Ophir Elementary and Middle school for the six years prior.

What extracurriculars have you been involved in during your time here? I am a part of the MCS Track Team, as well as the MCS Student Council and student government, serving as the Student Body president. I have also in the past been a part of the Varsity football team and the Varsity basketball team. I also loyally attend the local youth group every Sunday. I have also, for the past two years, led my own Bible study with guys from the school at my own house, where we read scriptural books or read through chapters of the Bible.

What awards have you received during your time in those extracurriculars? I have received all-state two years in a row for football as a defensive end, and first team all-conference Defensive End, Tight End, and Offensive guard in back-to-back years. I also received the honor of being named the defensive MVP of the Southern Conference. For Track, I have lettered three of the four years I have participated. I have also lettered in varsity basketball one year. Over all four years of my high school career.

What have some of your favorite classes and teachers while at MCS? One of my favorite teachers at MCS is Mr. Kimm because he really engages with students and makes learning feel more personal. He takes the time to connect, which makes his class more meaningful. I also enjoy classes with Mr. TeSlaa; the subjects he teaches always catch my interest and make me think more deeply, such as Government or legal systems.

What are some of your best non-academic memories? Being part of the start of the football program. It was exciting to help build something from the ground up and see the school rally around a new team and tradition.

What goal have you set for yourself during your senior year? To graduate with a solid plan for what I want to do with my future education.

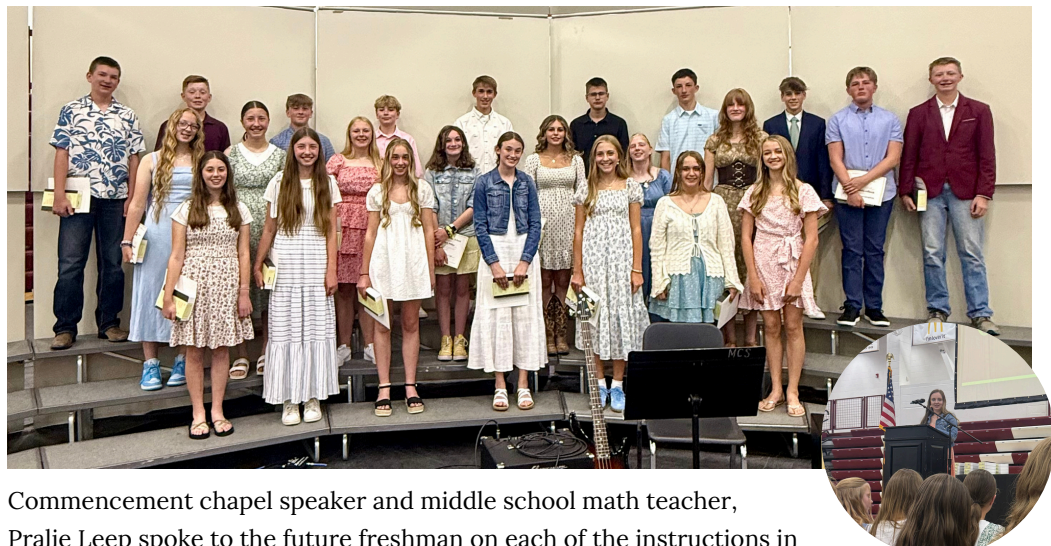
What did you work on for your Senior Project? Little Eagles Football Camp, where I aimed to rally the younger kids in the high school around the newly arising football program and to instill some excitement for the sport. But more importantly wished to give the kids an understanding of what it means to glorify God in sports as sports become more and more integrated into their lives. For my project, I brought 3rd and 4th-grade students out to the football field on three Saturdays across September and October, to work on football skills and ended the day with a devotional about glorifying God in sports.

What are your plans for after graduation? Attend Montana State University to pursue a degree in Pre-Med.

What is your favorite Bible verse? Romans 8:28 "And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."

8th Grade Commencement Chapel

"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12



Commencement chapel speaker and middle school math teacher, Pralie Leep spoke to the future freshman on each of the instructions in 1 Timothy 4:12. "I know that you are all perfectly capable of speaking and doing a lot of it. What is important though is that you choose to use these words for good and not for harm. The world that we are currently living in is full of hate, harsh words, and breaking each other down. I want to encourage you to change this: be a leader and lead by example by using your words to encourage each other and build each other up." If you missed this year's chapel, watch it back on Manhattan Christian's YouTube.

More from High School Graduation



Wylie Donaldson

The Valedictorian Award is given in recognition of being the graduating senior with the highest G.P.A. Such an award serves as evidence of the recipient's hard work, diligence, and focus throughout his high school career.



Madelynn Skillman

The Salutatorian Award is given in recognition of being the graduating senior with the second highest G.P.A. Such an award serves as evidence of the recipient's hard work, diligence, and focus throughout her high school career.



Rance Hamilton

The Citizenship Award is given annually to a graduating senior whose life exemplifies what we hope an MCS graduate will be. They exemplify a love for Jesus, solid academic commitment and performance, responsibility, selflessness, a love for their peers, and an active involvement in a wide range of school activities.



Samantha Veltkamp

The Christian Leadership Award is presented annually to a graduating senior by the Manhattan Christian School Board. Seniors are presented with the opportunity to apply for this award each spring. Seniors share with the school board as part of their application. The Board then reviews applications and selects a senior who they feel embodies the criteria of the awards and who represents Manhattan Christian well both inside and outside of our community.

VOLUME 25

R O T A R Y

student of the month

Please join us in congratulating this month's Rotary Student of the Month, chosen by her teachers, Sierra Flikkema. Students chosen for this award are known to display high character, leadership, and community mindedness both at and away from school.



Meet Manhattan Christian Senior,
Sierra Flikkema

How long have you been at MCS?
Since Kindergarten!

What extracurriculars have you been involved in during your time here? Track, Band, and Spirit Squad

What awards have you received during your time in those extra-curriculars?
Superior at State Music for two years.

What have some of your favorite classes and teachers while at MCS?

My favorite class has been Yearbook because I have enjoyed getting to know different students who I wouldn't typically hang out with. My favorite teacher has been Mrs. Adams because she's very caring and makes class fun.

What are some of your best non-academic memories? My favorite memory would probably be the Senior Retreat. We played paintball and stayed up late talking. It was a really good way to start senior year!

What goal have you set for yourself during your senior year?
Use "It's my senior year" as an excuse for everything!

What did you work on for your Senior Project? For my senior project I did a baby clothes boutique with ZoeCare. I was able to give countless clothes, blankets, car seats, and other baby items to moms in need.

What are your plans for after graduation? I am going to Grace Christian University in Wyoming, Michigan to pursue a degree in Elementary Education.

What is your favorite Bible verse?
Romans 8:18 "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us."

Meet Our New School Counselor: Cooper Dixon



What He's Excited For at MCS:

I am very excited to assist in a Christ-centered education for the students and form meaningful relationships with the students, family, and faculty at MCS!

Educational Background:

I attended the University of Sioux Falls for my undergraduate in psychology and am currently enrolled at Liberty University completing my Masters in Education for School Counseling!

For Fun:

For activities, I love to play basketball and golf! I also enjoy singing and playing guitar in my free time.)

Favorite Things:

My favorite food is probably a good burger, and since I'm new to the area I would love recommendations on nearby restaurants! You can probably find me at a local coffee shop drinking black coffee.

Our 2025-2026 School Board

We want to thank Travis Hamilton, Tami Leep, and Jonathan Schutter for their time served on the Manhattan Christian School Board. After this year's Annual Association Meeting earlier last month, members voted Brendan Leep, Libby Triemstra, and Brett Heidema to join AnnaLynn Alberda, Darin Hoekema, Ben Holst, Jason Kimm, Jen Scott, and Kendal Walhof. To learn more about the School Board or the Manhattan Christian Association, visit our website at manhattanchristian.org/about-us.

Preschool Openings for Next Year

There is still time to enroll in our three and four-year-old classes for next year! There are currently spots open in the three-year-old class on Tuesday and Thursday mornings as well as spots in the four-year-old classes on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons or Monday/Wednesday/Friday afternoons. Find registration packets on our website or email admissions@manhattanchristian.org for more information.

WE'RE HIRING!

Open Positions for the 2025-2026 School Year

- Secondary Music Teacher
- Elementary Music Teacher
- Head Girls Basketball Coach
- Spiritual Life Director
- Development Director
- Resource Room Aide
- Bus Driver
- Kitchen Staff



Apply Now or Share These Positions with a Friend!

Visit our website: manhattanchristian.org/employment/



Thank You, Staff Members, for Your Dedication to MCS!

The end of the year is always so bittersweet. This year at our all-staff celebration breakfast, we said goodbye to the following staff members, celebrating them and their unique contributions to Manhattan Christian School:

- **Anna Brewer**, for six and a half years of service to helping our music programs flourish through concerts and leading the Tour.
- **Jackie Van Dam**, for eight years of creating joyful sounds with our elementary students through their voices, bucket drums, ukuleles, and recorders.
- **Miranda Rudd**, for her five years of loving and supporting our K-12 students.
- **Joel Westa**, for his three years of leadership of Manhattan Christian School.
- **Micah Forsythe**, for his year of service dedicated to the spiritual life for K-12.
- **Shayla Van Dyken**, for her year of patience and kindness with our spunky first grade group.
- **Wendy Wright**, for her three years of service with a consistent smile to our kids in multiple different grades and in the lunch room.
- **Nancy Gabel**, for her year of service of blessing our staff with clean facilities (with the help of graduating senior, **Ethan Sytsma** and his four years of work and departing student **Eden Forsythe** for her year of janitorial help as well!)

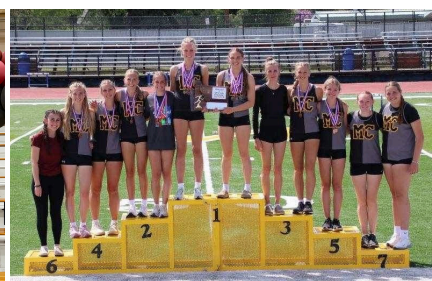
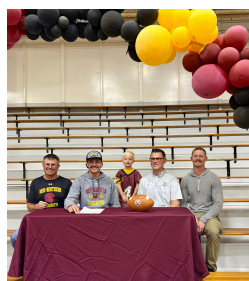
2025 Fun Run was Our Best Yet



Thank you all for another fantastic fun run! This was our most successful year yet, raising \$49,600- and 11 students earned \$1,200 or more! Thank you, students, for your hard work and energetic running! Thank you, donors, for your continued generosity and support of Christian education. Thank you, Kelly and Buffy, for all of your time and dedication to making this event a success and one that kids look forward to every year!

Spring Athletics:

Boys and Unified Girls WIN State Track; Boys Second, Girls Third at State Golf; and Rance Hamilton Signs with MSU-Northern



senior project
SPOTLIGHT

Johnathan Venhuizen: Football 101 Podcast

Podcast Episode

Football 101- Episode 1: General Terminology

Manhattan Christian Network

MAY/JUNE 2025

That's a Wrap on the 2024-2025 School Year: Thanks for Joining Us for All the Spring Fun!



May was Go, Go, GO! Thank you, community, family, and friends for your continued support of Manhattan Christian. What a gift it is to see so many of you continually showing up (or making a special trip over!) for Senior Awards and Senior Project Community Night, Spring Music Concerts, the Art Show, Grandparents' Day, the Fifth Grade Wax Museum, and everything in between. Thank you for walking alongside us to inspire students to live God-glorifying lives by teaching Christ's lordship in faith, learning, and living.

Have a blessed summer!



Manhattan Christian School Foundation

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I wish to join the MCSF in the category listed below.

- ☐ \$100 Maintaining Level
- ☐ \$500 Sustaining Level
- ☐ \$1,000 Embracing Level

Name _____
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**The key to the success of our Foundation is to bring our 40
& 50 year olds on board!**

Are you ready to pay your blessings forward? Please consider including
MCS Foundation in Your Planning.

**Want more information
on the Foundation?
Scan the QR code to hear all
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podcast!**



**Become a member today by filling out the form to the left or visiting our
webpage at Manhattanchristian.org/support-mcs/mcs-foundation.**

Contact Ron Hoekema at (406) 581-1460 with any questions or
for more information.



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