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6488 SMITHVILLE RD.
P.O. BOX 40,
SMITHVILLE, ON
L0R 2A0
PH. 905.957.3255
FAX 905.957.3431
www.sdch.on.ca

CONTACT:
MARLENE BERGSMAN
mbergsma@sdch.on.ca

ECHOES

TECHNOLOGY EDITION

Teenagers in a Techno World

This edition of Echoes focuses on technology – the good, the bad and the ugly. As a Christian community – educating and caring for teenagers in rapidly changing world – we need to be intentionally perceptive and discerning about the tools and technology we incorporate into our daily lives. In this issue you'll find a thought-provoking call for discernment, information on how the latest technology is being used at Smithville Christian High School, and an invitation to occasionally get unplugged.



Powerful Tools

BY DR. DEREK SCHURMAN AND
DR. DIRK WINDHORST

Powerful tools have powerful consequences, and when such tools are being used for the first time in human history, it is hard to see the consequences – positive or negative. When the automobile was first mass produced by Henry Ford, who could have foreseen its effect on the economy and ecology of North America, let alone the rest of the world? Similarly, we are just beginning to see how computers and other digital tools will transform our lives for good or ill.

In his recent book *iBrain: Surviving the Technical Alteration of the Modern Mind*, a leading

Continued on page 2

neuroscientist named Gary Small explored how the web and modern digital media are changing the structure of our brains. Although it seems that multi-tasking and web surfing can accelerate learning, they may also lead to attention deficit disorder, Internet addictions, and social isolation. Small writes that the digital revolution has “plunged us into a continuous state of partial attention” and in this state people “no longer have time to reflect, contemplate, or make thoughtful decisions.” Instead, we are driven to distraction.

These changes have a particular impact on the development of younger “digital natives” who have been exposed to digital culture since childhood. Younger people have more malleable brains which are shaped and molded in part by the digital environment in which many of them are immersed. According to Small, brains can adapt to more rapid-fire cyber surfing, but overexposure to online activities can also cause the pathways for human interaction to atrophy. In November 2008, Macleans Magazine published an article entitled “Dumbed Down: The Troubling Science of How Technology is Rewiring Kids’ Brains” which highlighted this same issue.

Our technologies continue to advance, and it seems that as we discover more about the creational laws of computing, we also need to discern more about computing “norms.” What are appropriate and normative ways to use, limit, and balance the use of computer technology?

Like an automobile, a computer is a powerful tool that requires discernment in how it is used.

Parents should place restrictions on themselves and on their children in doing such digital things as surfing the Web, going on Facebook, playing video games or e-mailing their friends. Each family must decide for itself how to maintain a healthy balance between face-to-face and digital communication. This means that parents should strive to spend time with their children whenever they can, and this may well include playing a video game together. The more time a parent spends with a child, the more that child is understood, and the easier it is to set up rules that make sense to both parent and child.

As we discern the need for boundaries and limits in our use of digital tools, and as we re-discover that face-to-face communication is an essential part of being human, we soon

realize that there is another relationship that needs nurturing. Perhaps in a bustling digital world that clamors for our continuous partial attention, we need to re-learn how to take time for the type of undivided attention which is the substance of prayer. As in the story of Mary and Martha, many of us must strive to set aside our many digital distractions to take time to sit at the Master’s feet and listen.



Dr. Derek Schuurman (Computer Science) and Dr. Dirk Windhorst (Education) both teach at Redeemer University College. Portions of this article were previously published in Christian Courier.



THE SMITHVILLE CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL COMMUNITY CHOIR PERFORMS AT GRANDPARENTS’ AND FRIENDS’ DAY, APRIL 1.

TECHNOLOGY AND LITERACY

Has the web killed literacy?



BY ANNELIES DE GROOT-DRÖGE,
LIBRARIAN

Books play an important role in the development of language skills and are a means of survival for children – in the world of schools and, later on, in college and university. Although some pessimists predicted the decline of reading with the arrival of the Internet, the World Wide Web has actually made reading an even more important part of our daily lives. In order to use the Internet effectively and to judge the authenticity and value of the information found there, both reading and critical thinking skills are even more essential.

The library at Smithville Christian High School plays a vital role in supporting teachers in helping students to develop the necessary skills for further education and ultimately, for the rest of their lives. We try to make sure that students have current books available for their research in the non-fiction section so that they will continue to use books for research, in addition to the ever-popular Internet.

A concern is that the number of teenagers who read for fun has dramatically decreased in the 'global electronic culture.' At the Smithville Christian library we continue to encourage students to read just for the love of it. We purchase current Canadian fiction for teenagers and a selection of the newest Christian fiction on subjects that matter to them. This year we purchased some very interesting comic books (also known as graphic novels) and we recently launched a book club.

There are things we can do as parents to help our children develop a love for reading. Lead by example, pick up a book more often yourself, visit your public library on a regular basis and invite your child to come along. Create a small library in your living or family room filled with a variety of books, some magazines of each family member's personal interest, and/or comic books. Reading a magazine about snowboarding is reading too! But don't be on their case all the time; remember it has to be fun!

WHERE LITERACY AND TECHNOLOGY MEET

Members of the newly-formed Smithville Christian High School book club are joining students at Christian high schools across Ontario in an online discussion forum, which even includes comments from some of the books' authors! To view the blog visit: <http://chsbookclub2009.blogspot.com/>

Disconnect to Reconnect

BY MARLENE BERGSMA,
DIRECTOR OF
COMMUNICATIONS AND
ADMISSIONS

Last fall, the country was gripped by a desperate search for Brandon Crisp, a 15-year-old Barrie youth who had ran away from home when his parents cut off access to the popular online video game *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*.

Because Brandon's parents saw that their son's addiction to the game was affecting his school work and his social life, they confiscated his Xbox console. When Brandon threatened to run away, his father helped him pack his knapsack and let him leave, expecting he'd soon be back.

But the teenager vanished, and three weeks after the search was launched, Brandon's body was found by deer hunters near the base of a tree in a heavily wooded area. His death was ruled to have been consistent with a fall.

A few days after the heartbreaking end to the search, Cris Rowan, a British Columbia therapist, writing in the *Globe and Mail*, issued the following appeal:

"Parents of children who struggle with technology addictions have witnessed the Brandon Crisp tragedy unfold. As a pediatric occupational therapist with expertise in child technology addictions, I've worked with families trying to unplug their children.

Continued ...

Elementary-school children use an average 6.5 hours per day of technology (TV, video games, Internet), excluding school use. This excess has resulted in physical, mental and behavioural problems that health and education systems are just beginning to detect, much less understand.

Developmental delay, conflict disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, autism, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, sleep impairment, and learning disability are but a few of the common diagnoses assigned to the 21st-century child. Prescription of psychotropic medication for children is on the rise.

Rapidly advancing technology has hit families like a bomb, leaving in its wake children like Brandon Crisp.

Parents need to "disconnect" to "reconnect" with partners and children. Dust off board games, pull out the cards, have a family cooking night, turn off the TV during meals and ask your kids what was one good and one bad thing that happened during their day. Let's honour Brandon by helping our own families and children "unplug" for a week."

To learn more about the Brandon Crisp story, to hear from his parents and to understand about the seductiveness of the violent gaming world, watch the recent episode of *the fifth estate*, "Top Gun: When a video gaming obsession turns to addiction and tragedy."

The episode can be viewed at www.cbc.ca/fifth/2008-2009/top_gun/

Glorifying God with Technology

BY LINDA BOOY-KORVEMAKER, STUDENT SERVICES



GRADE 10 HISTORY STUDENTS WATCH A GLADIATOR MOVIE ON THE SMARTBOARD IN THEIR CLASSROOM.

For this issue of the Echoes, I was asked to reflect on "technology" and the positive and negative effects it has on students. I laughed because I have often said to my students that I was going to write a book about how technology has changed our ability to communicate effectively. Then last week as I watched U.S. President Barack Obama formulate articulate, content-filled, and effective responses to questions by the press, I realized the premise of my book would probably fail, as there may still be hope for the technology addict.

Technology has changed who we are and what we struggle with physically, emotionally, and academically in the 21st century. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome is on the rise with texting, laptops and the like. Cell phones and ear plugs not only prevent us from getting someone's undivided attention, they have begun to impact our hearing and perhaps even our brain cells. We have heard of the risks of video games on personalities, the dangers of desensitization to violence and sex, and the dangers of over-exposure to messages that are in opposition to our beliefs, yet we can now access media almost everywhere with wireless technology. The "privacy" of the internet makes voyeurism and pornography access a temptation that lives in our homes. Students struggle with plagiarism or academic theft because it is so easy to do with the internet. Students are bullied silently, and sometimes publically, online.

But let's not stop there. As Christians we are called to reclaim everything for Christ and I believe we can and must continue to do that with technology. Everyday I see students editing their work to improve it with ease because of the computer. Research is accessible and does not depend on the ability to get a ride to the library. Applications for colleges and universities are mostly done online, ensuring security for the individual student. Resumes can be posted online for potential employers. Email makes questions easy to ask and answers easy to track. And yes, cell phones and blackberries allow us to communicate with ease and perhaps more often. We have been created in the image of our creator and he has gifted us with the ability to create – and perhaps that's the bottom line. Technology is a new way in which we can glorify God not only in how we use it, but in what we create.

Technology in the Science Department

BY WILL LAMMERS, SCIENCE TEACHER



SCOTT VANDERWIER (LEFT) AND ADAM VERMEER (RIGHT) TELL VISITORS AT THE APRIL 1 GRANDPARENTS' AND FRIENDS' DAY ABOUT THE PNEUMATIC ENGINE (SCOTT) AND THE LCD PROJECTOR (ADAM) THE GRADE 11 STUDENTS BUILT AND DISPLAYED AT THE RECENT NIAGARA REGION SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING FAIR.

The use of technology in teaching and learning at Smithville Christian High School aims to make students capable citizens in God's kingdom. Technology has helped to improve the quality of student projects, but it has also changed the nature of the learning process itself in a number of ways. For example, electronic sensors enable students to quickly collect and graph real-time, accurate data on experiments for which data collection and graphing would otherwise be very time-consuming and prone to error. The time saved in these tasks makes it possible for students to gain a deeper understanding of trends in the data, and why they are occurring. The use of computer simulations helps students to see objects in three dimensions, and to understand how objects look and behave in ways not possible using other methods. High-quality microscopes and equipment for making gels enable students to examine the complexities of cells, and to analyze the genetic code of DNA. The use of Lego in robotics studies enables students to create high-quality innovations that could have human or commercial benefit. As a whole, however, technology is used at SDCH as just one means among many to help students more clearly see the tremendous gifts God gives us in creation, and what the Psalmist sees when he proclaims, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands."

TECHNOLOGY BEHIND THE SCENES

How does a high school make sure it's offering students a technologically-rich education?

BY TED HARRIS

Smithville Christian High School has a computer technology committee that works behind the scenes at SDCH. The members meet a few times per year to do the following:

- Maintain and implement an on-going three-year plan for technology directions and purchases.
- Review reports from and dialogue with the technology coordinator, Bob Gerrits.
- Review the status of the school's computer hardware, programs, networks, course offerings and staff needs.
- Help establish a vision and a funding formula for use of computer technology at SDCH.
- Make recommendations regarding budgets and purchases in the area of computer and presentation technology.

Thank you to the following people who have served over the last few years on our computer technology committee, Bob Gerrits, Ted Harris, Henry Hessels, Tim VanHoffen and Liz Witteveen.

Turn to page 6 to see more examples of how technology is being used at school.

The wired school

BY BOB GERRYTS, TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR

The Wireless Network

As more and more laptops began travelling to and from school with their owners it became apparent that a school-wide wireless network would be conducive to learning. The old method of running a cable to each computer was no longer feasible, and the decision was made to implement a wireless network.

Initially this network was available to students in the library, but as of the fall of 2008, the network now covers over 70% of the school building. Plans are in place to extend the network to cover the entire school building by fall 2009.

This network allows students and teachers to use laptops in new and innovative ways. Students can collaborate with groups of other students, or use their laptops to take notes. Teachers are able to more effectively use their laptops both in and outside the classroom. For instance, teachers can meet with students at lunch hour in the library and have their laptops on hand. In addition, minutes from staff meetings are now quickly delivered at the end of the meetings.



Smartboards and Projectors

Over the last five years, Smithville Christian High School has made an effort to implement projection and smartboard technology into as many instructional areas as possible. This technology complements rather than replaces the need for traditional blackboards or whiteboards. Smartboards add a new dimension to the presentation of educational content. A smartboard and projector are attached to a classroom computer to allow teachers and students to interactively demonstrate a great deal of content.

Smartboards allow teachers to incorporate a variety of enhancements to their lesson plans, and allow students to enhance their projects and demonstrations. A quick trip around the school will show smartboards being used to teach hands-on learning in math, molecules in science, graphs in English, and autocad drawing in shop.

Visual learning has long been recognized as an effective means of communicating ideas. Smartboards and projectors extend this to a new level by introducing immediacy to what students and teachers can share.

<Grade 11 Phys-Ed student Cameron Dieleman sets up his health presentation on the computer so it can be displayed on the classroom smartboard.

Computer Lab

Students Brandon Vermeer, Trinkia Traver and Stephanie Tiersma, who were enrolled in last semester's Grade 11 computer class, apply their newly acquired web design skills in Smithville Christian High School's computer lab.



The Library

The SDCH school library is home to 30 computers located on two levels. The computers in the library work in conjunction with the existing book collection to provide an excellent area for research and writing. The library was designed to provide a comfortable student work area on both a technical and non-technical front. There are plenty of tables and chairs available for traditional school work, as well as the comfortably designed upper and lower computer areas.

Students are free to use computers before school and at the lunch hour for personal or educational use, however a priority is always given to students needing a computer for school-related activities. Our librarian Annelies de Groot assists and supervises students in the library, and is often seen helping a student complete research, or print out an assignment.

Throughout the regular school day teachers are free to schedule their classes to take place in the library. This allows teachers and students to actively research current events, complete research projects, and communicate with organizations outside the school as they work towards completing an educational task. The interactive nature of the computers, and the quiet learning environment combine to create an excellent learning atmosphere.

From a technical perspective all of the library computers are networked to a central printer, the file server, and a high-speed internet connection. All students and staff are issued a login and password that enables them to securely use these computers for all their word-processing and internet needs. This system, combined with an internet content filter, helps to provide a safe and secure computer experience.

The library computer lab is part of a larger network of computers school-wide, including the staff work room, the second-floor computer lab, the autocad computer lab, and the resource room computer lab. These computer resources all work together to ensure that Smithville Christian High School always remains current with its technology.

< Students Kiera James, Katelyn Stieva and Taryn Vermeer use the computers on the second floor of the library.



Called to Live a Life of Active Love

BY DARRYL LANGENDOEN, CLASS OF 2000



“One of the strongest messages that has stayed with me since my time at SDCH has been to always think critically, not simply living life and accepting things as they are, but instead to hope and work toward a better future for everyone.”

Since graduating from Smithville Christian High School in 2000, I have been on a journey to live out what I believe is one of Jesus’ central messages: to love your neighbour as yourself. One of the strongest messages that has stayed with me since my time at SDCH has been to always think critically, not simply living life and accepting things as they are, but instead to hope and work toward a better future for everyone.

After completing a bachelor’s degree in social work at Calvin College (Grand Rapids, MI) and a master’s degree in social work at the University of Toronto, I took up positions with a few non-profit organizations in Chicago. My role in this work was to achieve community-developed solutions to problems such as a lack of affordable housing and healthcare, homelessness, gang violence, and a lack of immigrant rights. Many of these problems are rooted in injustice. This work allowed me to work together with those being oppressed to create change at the community, city, and state levels.

Another step on my journey took me to Cuernavaca (Mexico), where I had the opportunity to work at an ecumenical social justice retreat centre to teach Canadian & American university and high

school students about injustices that are evident in Mexico – many of which are a result of actions by governments and corporations in the first world. The goals of the trip were to equip participants with a strengthened knowledge and faith as a result of their experiences on the trip with hope that they would take home and actively pursue change in their own communities and to aim for social transformation around the world.

Finally, my journey has brought me to WoodGreen Community Services in Toronto (www.woodgreen.org), where I am now working with homeless adults facing unique struggles with mental health and addiction. I work to cultivate relationships based on empowerment and trust so that I can work together with my clients toward finding and maintaining a stable home for each person while also attaining the basic needs to survive.

I have been convicted that the call of Christ is to live a life of active love, one that confronts injustice locally, nationally, and globally. For every person this call looks different but I believe it is a call for each one of us, nonetheless. Every day I see the pain of a broken world, a pain that would look radically different if we all tried to live the love of Christ in our lives now.

Girls' Soccer | Smithville | 2009

BY DAVID WONDER, BIOLOGY, GUIDANCE AND GIRLS' VARSITY SOCCER

On June 4-6, Smithville Christian High School will have the privilege of hosting this year's Girls' Soccer OFSAA championship. It will be an event that will not only impact the lives of young girls, their families and coaches from all over Ontario, but it will be an event that will significantly impact the students and community of SDCH. It certainly did last year, when our girls' varsity soccer team travelled to the OFSAA championship in Timmins, Ontario and came home with the gold!

At present, the OFSAA planning committee is composed of teachers, coaches, and friends of SDCH, like Corey Schilstra, a student of Brock University's Sports Management Program and a 2007 SDCH graduate. We have been working very hard to make this event a huge success which will reflect positively on our school and its community. Other contributors will later include the Grade 12 Fitness and Leadership class, Athletics Council, the SDCH Techies, and many others. In addition, we are also very pleased to have Bethany Youth Catering, under the direction of a very capable Sonya Wierenga, contracted to provide for the tournament's banquet on Thursday evening. Another highlight

of the banquet will be our dinner speaker, Olympic medal-winning rower Melanie Kok.

As Christian Schools are becoming more competitive and find themselves participating alongside other school communities across the province, we need to be prepared to show leadership by serving these communities as well.

What an exciting way to showcase not only the academic and athletic gifts the Lord has given to our students, but also the love we desire to share with our neighbours.

For more information and exciting updates, check out the official 08/09 OFSAA Girls' A Soccer Championship website at www.ofsaa.on.ca/girlsasoccer.



FRONT ROW (L TO R) Samantha Koornneef, Colleen Slappendel, Tarin Colyn, Jasmin Elmers, Staci Pols, Tori Vermeer, Kandace Hessels, Amanda Harris.

BACK ROW (L TO R) Kelly Harris, Katelynn Folkerts, Heather Eyk, Sharon Kerkhof, Dawn Elmers, Stephanie DeHaan, Roxanne Rutherford, Justine Schilstra, Dorothy DeBoer, Gwendolyn DeBoer, David Wonder (Coach)

Students Standing Out Strong

BY ADAM VERMEER, STUDENT COUNCIL
ADVERTISING COORDINATOR

"Stand out Strong" is our theme this year, and the students of Smithville Christian High School have been doing an excellent job. The members of Students' Council have been hard at work fulfilling our theme with the planning and hosting of events such as banquets, fundraisers, and Cash for Change days.

Recently, we ended our annual Magazine Campaign. Although we began slowly, when faced with the prospect of budget cuts, the student body was able to pull through and exceed our goal of \$25,000! The three top sellers did an exceptional job of selling magazine subscriptions and received well-deserved prizes; 1st place was Ivan Heeg with 50 subscriptions, 2nd place was Crystal Elmers with 44 subscriptions and 3rd place was Sarah Duck with 42 subscriptions. There were many incentive prizes along the way, including PLINKO, 3 ipod touch draws and a limo ride. All in all, every prize was well-deserved and the students did an amazing job of supporting our extracurricular budget.

We have two fundraising events for students to Stand Out Strong coming up fast. On Tuesday, March 31, students who have raised \$35 or more will have the opportunity to bowl as part of the Bowl for Kids' Sake, Big Brothers Big Sisters charity. It promises to be a super-hero exciting time! The second event is the 30-hour Famine for World Vision. As a small school we have a big reputation for supporting these two charities and we hope to continue the tradition this year.

With our past success with the Valentines Banquet, we are looking ahead with high hopes at this year's Spring banquet. Taking place on April 17th, the theme for this year is a Tropical Getaway. Being a dinner and dance, this has become a popular event and we're planning hard. A decorating committee has been established and the ideas have been flowing. We've been planning for a good turn out, so we hope to see many students there!

We've been faced with a very busy past few months, but planning and persistence have been key tools that Students' Council has used throughout this year. With the events coming up, we all have a great opportunity to Stand Out Strong!!

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BLUE OCEANS AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

What do they have in common?

BY LIZ WITTEVEEN, BOARD SECRETARY

Members of the Smithville Christian High School board have begun studying the book "Blue Ocean Strategy" written by W. Chan Kim and Renee Mauborgne. It emphasizes how thinking and planning in an organized and creative manner are necessary for any organization. A blue ocean is untapped market space and an area available for growth. We had a lively discussion at our last board meeting, wondering where there may be new market space for Christian education. Our discussion will continue on this subject.

On Saturday February 28, strategic planning consultant, Brenda Tindale, of Peterborough, led 15 volunteers of the Smithville Christian High School community in a day of thinking and planning known as a Stakeholders' Consultation day. After brainstorming our hopes and dreams for the school, we listed the things that the school is doing well and those things that we'd like to see improved. We ended up with seven key issues that will become the focus of our strategic planning over the next five years. See the list of key issues in box (right).

Theresa Van Oenen has been our faithful strategic planning coordinator for the past three years and has done a great job of attending board meetings, keeping our strategic plan updated and ensuring committees are focused on target dates of

implementation. Theresa is now retiring from this role and we thank her for her dedication to SDCH! New to this position is Karen Tilstra, who already joined us in planning on February 28. Welcome Karen! Karen and Theresa will both join us at the board table for a few months, and in June, Karen will assume the strategic planning coordinator position.

Now the board wants to know what your thoughts and plans are with regard to the school's future. The next Strategic Planning session will be held June 11. This session will focus on setting priorities, devising plans to implement the goals, and identifying accountability. Watch for details of this event in the next few months. Please call a board member and offer your time that day.

Seven Key Issues for Smithville Christian High School to tackle in the next five years.

1. Limitations of Financial Resources
2. How do we market ourselves?
3. Identity Crisis
4. Nature of Program
5. Lack of Commitment (Community of Support)
6. Outside and Inside Facilities
7. Student Lifestyle Issues



Some of the participants at the February strategic planning session. From left: Marilyn Hogeveen, John Klomp maker, George Lindeboom, Wayne Schilstra, Rick Batenburg, Al Korvemaker and Karen Buitenwerf.

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