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# In their own words: The Smithville Christian High School Class of 2015

EXCERPTED FROM GRADE 12 STUDENTS' PORTFOLIO SPEECHES. TO READ MORE ABOUT PORTFOLIO DAY, SEE PAGES 10 AND 11.

## WHAT'S IT LIKE, BEING A STUDENT AT SMITHVILLE CHRISTIAN?

- I absolutely loved it from the moment I first stepped in the door.
- I have been so blessed.
- I am very proud I am a graduate of this school.

- I hope to send my kids here someday.
- I'm really going to miss it here.
- Saying I am going to miss it here is an understatement.
- I am so thankful for this school.
- This place has helped me to flourish.
- I honestly could not have asked for a better high school experience.
- I am so incredibly thankful.
- I wouldn't change it for anything.
- I am grateful.
- I am beyond grateful.
- I will be sad to leave.

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### WHAT WERE THE FRIENDS LIKE?

- This is a place where lasting friendships are made
- There is nothing fake about the love you feel from the students and staff here.
- I love how we all get along no matter where we are or what we're doing.
- God has revealed himself to me through this school and the people that form its community.
- I always feel included.
- I have made great friendships with everyone in my class, which is a true blessing.
- The best part about Smithville is the feeling of belonging.
- I feel so blessed that I have had the opportunity to be part of such an amazing section of the body of Christ.

## HOW WAS YOUR PERSONAL FAITH JOURNEY IMPACTED BY YOUR TIME HERE?

- Smithville Christian helped deepen my faith in Jesus.
- I would not be who I am today and I would not have the relationship I have with God.
- When I first came here, I didn't know about Jesus, but through Bible class, chapels and the teachers and students, I began to find a faith in Christ.
- I can physically feel God's presence in the halls of our school

### WHAT IMPACT DID THE TEACHERS HAVE ON YOU?

- We have amazing teachers and staff at Smithville Christian.
- Teachers were always there to encourage us in our walk with Christ
- The teachers are so supportive and Christ-centred.
- The teachers pushed me academically and helped strengthen my faith.
- I am so grateful to have had teachers who know me and care about me.

### WHAT DID YOU LEARN ABOUT GOD'S CALL ON YOUR LIFE?

- I know that God will guide me and work in my life to fulfill his calling for me.
- I am committed to the path God intended for me.
- I am grateful that God opened my heart and mind to the wonderful things that God is doing in my life.
- School has given me so much more than a diploma: it gave me a foundation to live my life as a God-fearing man who will serve him faithfully.
- I know that God has plans for me and that he can use my talents in a place where I can make a difference.
- I will honour God in what I do.
- At Smithville Christian, I have become one of the best versions of myself the world has ever seen.

### HOW HAS SMITHVILLE CHRISTIAN IMPACTED YOUR WORLDVIEW?

- If I take one thing away from my entire high school career it would be that we need to be out in the world, loving it, not hiding away from it.
- At Smithville Christian I learned to integrate my faith into everything I do.
- I have learned how to glorify God in everything that I do.
- What I cherish most is I learned God is in every subject and in every area of life.
- I feel I am prepared to go out into the world.



# Students practice what they preach

BY MARLENE BERGSMA, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS

#### HELPING OUT A NEIGHBOUR PUTS FAITH INTO ACTION

When Grade 12 World Issues teacher Scott Antonides learned about the plight of a Smithville business owner, he knew his students could help.

Both as a class project and then later, as individual volunteers and as a whole-school fundraiser, students from Smithville Christian High School rallied around Rex and Yafei Ge, local greenhouse owners who were pushed to the brink of bankruptcy by an overdue account.

Niagara Peninsula Energy Inc. cut off the couple's electricity during a February cold snap because they were 28 days late paying a \$359 electricity bill, Antonides said. The disconnect, which came when temperatures were plunging to -22 C overnight, burst pipes in the greenhouses and destroyed the family's spring crop of nursery plants. Damage to the boiler, plants and pipes was estimated at more than \$150,000.

Alerted to the problem by Antonides, who is friends with the couple, Smithville Christian students helped clean up the greenhouse, got new spring plantings ready, helped draw attention to his plight and raised close to \$1,000 to donate to the business's recovery.

Antonides and students from his Grade 12 World Issues class visited G and L Nurseries on Regional Road 20 in March, helping to clean up damage caused by the frozen pipes. Ge broke his leg and was unable to do much work to get ready for the spring growing season, Antonides said.

Student Council also held a dress-down day fundraiser for Rex and Yafei, and challenged Niagara residents and businesses to join them in supporting the couple. The students donated \$840 plus a \$100 donation from Village Square Dental in Smithville.

Helping Rex and Yafei was a good way for his students to practice "loving your neighbour, and taking time to get to



Smithville greenhouse owner Rex Ge looks over a support letter from the students of Smithville Christian High School.

know someone's story," Antonides said. They saw first-hand that their action was having an impact.

"Some of the students said that getting to know the Ge family was one of the highlights of the year," Antonides said. "Some of them wrote about it in their portfolio day reflection and some have begun a long-term friendship with them.

"In class, we also talked about grace," he said. "If everyone had to pay for all their mistakes we'd all be in a lot of trouble."

Other businesses donated supplies, labour and money to help the Ges restart their business, and Smithville Christian Reformed Church held a fundraising breakfast.

Continued on page 4 ...

Rex and Yafei were overwhelmed by the support they received and the story was covered by all Niagara newspapers and by CHCH-TV in Hamilton.

"The neighbours are so nice to me," Rex said. "So nice, so nice."



Rex Ge with some of the Smithville Christian High School students who helped clean up the mess at his greenhouse caused by burst pipes; Greg Loerts, Reuben Kikkert, Tyler Vanderwal, Mitchell VanHoffen, Andrew VandenBurg, Erin Veldboom and Hailey Amos.



#### **SMITHVILLE CHRISTIAN IN THE NEWS**

Watch the latest news report on the Ges' plight: www.chch.com/smithville-greenhouse-open-for-business

### Going where God wants to use me

BY KATELYNN FOLKERTS, CLASS OF 2011

Katelynn Folkerts graduated from Queen's University in June with a degree in global development and economics. Here's an update on how God is using her now.

I have decided to spend this next year serving as the Student Ministry Intern at Geneva House Christian Fellowship at Queen's. God is moving in incredible ways at Queen's and there are exciting things happening in Kingston.

Geneva House is the Christian Reformed campus ministry at Queen's. In a house next to the main campus, we run Bible studies, discipleship groups, worship nights, intramural teams, and a weekly Soup Supper. We work to create a community where people can grow closer to God and experience his transformation in their lives. God has been blessing us with incredible growth in the past few years – bringing us more and more people of different backgrounds, denominations and walks of faith.

I have come to realize that Geneva House – and student ministry at universities in general – is so important that I have chosen to do it for a whole year as my full-time job.



Katelynn Folkerts, BA Queen's University

Well maybe "chose" isn't exactly the right word. I wouldn't say that I chose this position at all. In fact, the possibility

of doing ministry was the farthest thing from my mind. Instead, I expected to do a master's degree or get a job. I was confident I could get into a program – I just had to decide where. I was really praying about it, asking God to give me some direction.

### And he did!

When our pastor asked me to be a student ministry intern my first thought was "No way, God! Not that direction – pick another one." It just didn't fit with how I saw my future going. However, to my great surprise, I found myself accepting the offer just a few weeks later.

After trying to figure out why I had accepted a position for which I felt neither prepared nor suited, I am now happy to say that I am more and more certain that this is where God wants to use me. I know God has prepared things for me to do, and that there's something he wants to teach me about what it means to work for His Kingdom.

God has been showing me why Queen's and other non-Christian universities really need ministry. Universities are hard places to be a Christian. We are told that science has replaced humans' need for a higher being, religions are just a form of social organization, and believing in God is outdated. On top of that, we know we're not graduating into the best of economic climates and so we're encouraged and pressured to just invest in ourselves – to take these four years to get the



Katelynn Folkerts, back row second from left, with other volunteers at a drop-in centre ministry supported by Geneva House.



Katelynn Folkerts, second from left, at a recruitment event for Geneva House.

grades, contacts and work experience that will give us the best chance at success. God doesn't even come into this equation.

For four very formative years in the lives of much of today's younger generation this is the biggest kind of guidance we are receiving.

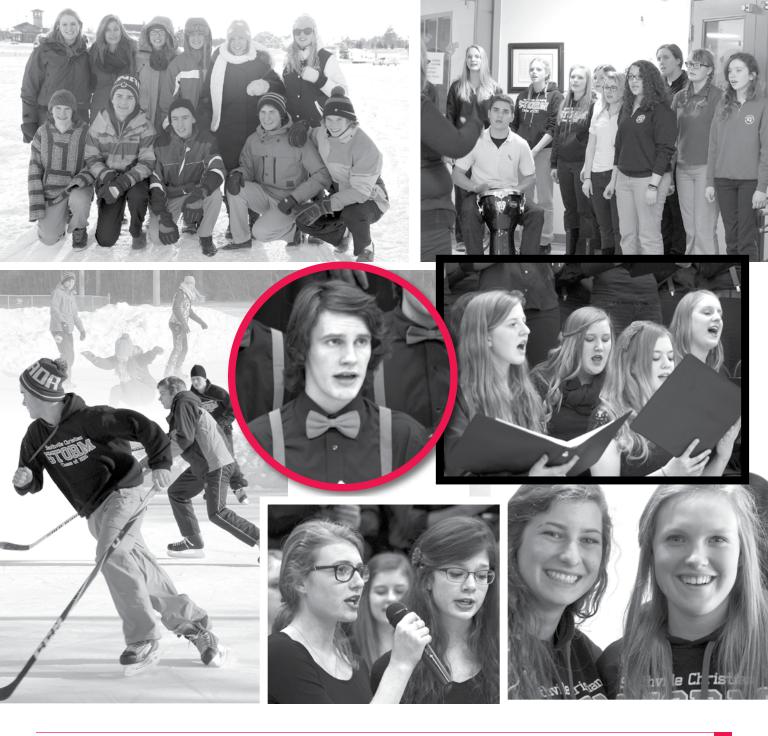
Incredibly, many young people are realizing these promises are pretty hollow. Right in the middle of it all, Geneva House is putting out a very different message. Rather than the world saying "invest in yourself," it is Jesus saying "take up your cross and follow me." And students – both Christian and non-Christian – are listening! Not only are they listening – they are seeking and asking. Geneva House provides a place to encounter the idea that humans are not actually the centre of this story. The message of God's ultimate glory and grace to us through Jesus is being proclaimed anew and afresh. And this is changing things in the lives of students – in our relationships with each other, in how we spend our free time. God is changing how we look at the world and what we want our lives to count for.

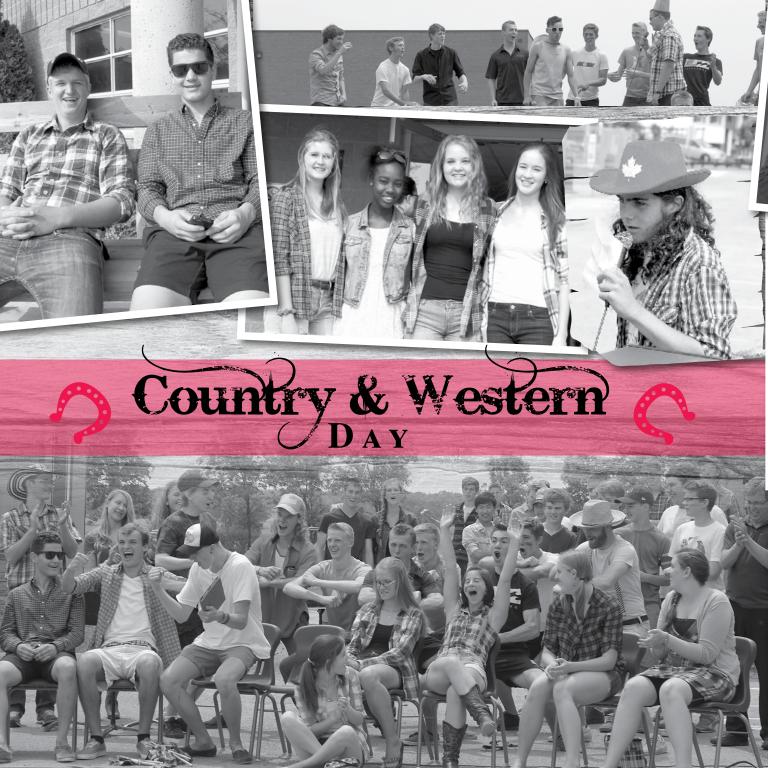
I am still passionate about international development and continuing my studies, but I have already started to re-think my calling in terms of ministry. I may have many different jobs in the future, but in each of them, I want to be doing ministry.

I want to be able to use the gifts that God has given me to work for his Kingdom.















Grade 12 students and guests enjoy lunch on Portfolio Day

### **Good habits**

BY MARLENE BERGSMA AND WILL LAMMERS

Portfolio Day is an annual event that caps off a student's experience at Smithville Christian High School. Graduating students review highlights of the work they have submitted over the course of the past four years and are asked to reflect on what they have accomplished. Each student shares these reflections with a panel of at least three people: a teacher, a board member and a community volunteer. In some cases, a student's parent or parents also join the panel.

The day is a celebration of everything that makes Smithville Christian High School a wonderful experience for every student. No matter what a student's strengths and accomplishments, Portfolio Day gives every student a chance to shine. It's nerve-racking, for sure, but students are also prayed for and blessed by the panelists who are privileged to hear their speeches. And there is great food!

### Integrity, responsibility, forgiveness and compassion

This is an an excerpt from the opening devotions at Portfolio Day for the Class of 2015, by Will Lammers, VP of Program:

In your high-school journey, you have faced many tests and challenges. You may have had an easy time of navigating those tasks, but my hunch is that all

of you have memories of particularly difficult academic hurdles to overcome. As you look back at that journey though, each of you worked toward goals based on your understanding of the word "success." How do we know when we have succeeded?

Perhaps a better way to ask this question is: what priorities do you follow in making decisions and committing to



Opening devotions on Portfolio Day.

courses of action? Some might say that winning is the only priority in life, no matter how many people you offend along the way. Others might say that it's always better to place trust in other people, because they will do a good job of figuring out the answers to the tough questions for you.

#### Whose counsel should we seek for success?

As I was preparing this speech, I stumbled upon the name J-Walkers – a name of one of this year's praise teams. At first I thought they were talking about the other kind of jaywalkers – you know, the kind who cross streets at the wrong places. But no, they said, the "J" stands for Jesus. Walking with Jesus was the identity this group had chosen.

The Bible teaches that when we put our hope and trust in Jesus, we will know true success. This is another way of saying that we will know true success when we allow the Holy Spirit to live and thrive in us.

But really, will that recipe for success work in a workplace that does not know Jesus? Well, you may be surprised to learn that research coming out of the business world would say "yes," that getting return on investment and getting return on good character may amount to the same thing. In his book, *Return on character: The real reason leaders and their companies win*, Fred Kiel writes about a seven-year study he conducted on 100 CEOs and their 8000 employees.

Kiel found that 10 of those 100 CEOs were rated virtuoso leaders because of the character habits they showed in the workplace – habits that could be summarized in four words.

**Integrity.** Telling the truth; acting consistently with principles, values and beliefs; standing up for what is right; keeping promises.

**Responsibility.** Owning one's personal choices; admitting mistakes and failures; expressing a concern for the common good.

**Forgiveness.** Letting go of one's mistakes; letting go of others' mistakes; focusing on what's right, not on what's wrong.

**Compassion.** Empathizing with others; empowering others; actively caring for others; committing to the development of others.

I don't know how many business schools teach these four qualities. But I do know that Jesus lived and breathed them. I can recall many encounters with you Grade 12 students where I clearly saw evidence of these four qualities in action. I dare say that I saw and heard of them often enough that I would call them habits. Way to go, and keep up the good work!

Our prayer for each of you is that, as you enter new places and meet new people in life, may you continue to seek the counsel of others wiser than you, and may you learn from their experiences. And may this desire to learn from the stories of others lead you to the greatest story of good news: God's gift of salvation and the promise of the Holy Spirit. May you be motivated to be true J-Walkers, to walk each day with Jesus, and may you know God's blessing as you do.





Grade 12 student Liam Li presents his portfolio to a panel including staff, board members and volunteers.

### Radical leadership

Members of the 2014/2015 student council capped off their term of service at a chapel in May by reminding the students of Smithville Christian High School to continue living radically. As voting was about to take place to elect next year's student leaders, this year's leadership offered the following words of encouragement and challenge.

Sophia Bradbury: Be Radical We chose our theme for this year – Be Radical – to encourage each other in the ways of Christ. Our desire is to be more like Jesus in how we interact with our student body and those in our communities. We had several subthemes helping us outline what it looks like to live as Jesus did.

To be radical Christians we need to be rooted in Christ. It's important to be connected and committed to Christ and

to keep in step with the Holy Spirit. We can choose to live radically every day by starting with prayer – asking the Lord to empower us to encourage each other. Our theme verse was Hebrews 10:24 which said "Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds." Jesus was a radical who was constantly loving and caring for the people around him, despite the actions of the rulers of the law. He loved us so much that he gave up his life so that we

could be freed from the bondage of sin. For us, to live for Christ – to take up our cross and follow Him – includes sharing the amazing gift we have received in Him with the people we meet. We need to go 'all-in and all-out' with God. So let's continue to encourage each other and be active followers of Christ – even when this school year is over. Spread this love to your communities as you Be Radical in the name of Jesus Christ!



Student leaders at Smithville Christian High School: Sydney Vermeer, Joseph Falzone, Danielle Veldman,

### **Sydney Vermeer: Give**

Jesus was the ultimate example of giving radically as he gave his life for us on the cross.

### Joseph Falzone: Care

Christ cared for the poor and crippled. He healed them of their ailments and he forgave them of their sins, even when others rejected them.

### **Danielle Veldman: Love**

In February our theme was love. Jesus showed love through healing the sick, raising people from the dead and feeding the five thousand.

#### Owen Van Huizen: Follow

Earlier this year, Grade 9 students did a scavenger hunt, and we all had to hang on to a rope. When we all tried to go our own way it obviously did not work. But once we gave someone the job of leader and followed him, things went a whole lot smoother. God calls us to follow him in whatever we are doing. Whether we are having a good time at a party or having the

worst day of our lives at school we need to follow God, which could mean making hard choices or pushing through those last couple of hours. God calls us to follow him and to give him all the glory.

### **Alex Boekestyn: Live**

Jesus lived radically by helping everyone and never pushing anyone away. Jesus also died for what he believed in. We are to live by faith and put our relationship with Jesus into action – by encouraging others and helping them.

#### Sean DeBoer: All-In

Jesus wants us to be all-in for Him and His word. He wants us to go all-in in Christianity. We need to create a relationship with God and be rooted in him.

### **Sophia Bradbury: Serve**

Jesus is the perfect example of servanthood. He is the king of kings, yet he became the lowest as he took our place – bearing the sin of the world – on the cross. We are to serve those in our community with passion – just as Jesus has taught us.





Owen Van Huizen, Alex Boekestyn, Sean DeBoer and Sophia Bradbury.



## Ontario Secondary School Diploma

### The bright side of government inspections

BY TED HARRIS, ADMINISTRATOR

When you mention the Ontario Ministry of Education to a Christian high school teacher, the response is almost automatic: Stress. We normally receive a visit from the Ministry once every two years. We must be inspected in order to offer the Ontario Secondary School Diploma, which our graduates all receive.

These inspections are quite rigorous. A couple of months before the visit, we are asked to produce a multipage outline for every course we teach, in addition to a host of other documentation. They go over what amounts to hundreds of pages of material before they come to the school. When the inspector visits the school, he or she begins by reviewing everything that may need adjustment in what we have submitted. Then the inspector visits classes to inspect whether the work of the teachers complies with Ministry expectations. In most cases we are deemed to be compliant, in some cases there are additional steps to take.

Here are some of the areas in which we must demonstrate compliance:

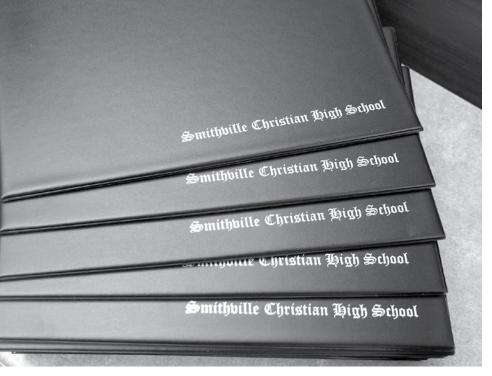
- Assessment of student achievement must account for their gains in Knowledge, Thinking/Inquiry, Communication and Application (KTCA).
- Our course outlines, units and

lesson plans must demonstrate that students are achieving all of the specific expectations for each course, of which there are typically around seventy.

- Learning Skills (responsibility, organization, independent work, collaboration, initiative and self-regulation) must be assessed several times (but never graded!) for each course and must be the subject of ongoing conversations between the student and the teacher.
- Each class must have many examples of assessments that are specifically "for learning" (diagnostic), "as learning" (self and peer assessment) and "of learning" (for the grade book).
- Each class must have specific learning activities that are assessed toward a "term" grade (70% of each course) and a "culminating activity/exam" (30% of each course).
- The list goes on...

There is no question that this is something we would rather not do, but there is a bright side to it. On the one hand, we can be upset that publicly funded schools, which have no external reviews, do not have to go through the process we go through. On the other hand, the fact that we routinely submit to demanding reviews of our instructional practices can give us and our supporters a clear indication that they are not settling for second best. Our teachers take what the province asks them to do very seriously, and they go well beyond it by infusing their instruction with a Christian worldview

We have spent plenty of time becoming compliant with Ministry of Education directives, more than most publicly funded schools do, and certainly more than our teachers or I would choose to, but there is a bright side. The province has put together a very good series of instructional directives, and becoming compliant with them has improved our



practice. I invite parents to compare the quality of instruction at Smithville Christian with any other school in the region.

It's not surprising that clouds form when one mentions the Ministry of Education, but there is certainly a silver lining. If you have earned an Ontario Secondary School Diploma from Smithville Christian High School, you can be confident you have received a topnotch education.





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