



the Voice of VERITAS

April 2017

You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free. | John 8:32

A Higher Goal

www.veritasnj.org



CULTIVATING CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

The entire Veritas student body has a unique opportunity not afforded many other high-schoolers: everyone is invited to participate in a three-day, school-wide Fall retreat. This year's spiritual get-away was held at Tri-State Bible Camp in Montague, from October 5 to 7.

While students may joke that the annual retreat tradition is just a few days' vacation from regular classes, they invariably return with faith-filled "take-aways" that settle into their souls. This year's focus on "Cultivation" was no different. Seeds were planted that continue to be referenced in conversations inside and outside the classroom.

While the daily themes of the "Real Jesus" (day one) and "Radical Jesus" (day two) may seem to oppose simple Christian teachings, the chance to digest pertinent Bible verses in small groups is a rare opportunity for Veritas teens to deepen and water individual roots of faith.

A hallmark of the Veritas retreat is that small discussion groups are organized by male/female and various grades. This enables seniors to disciple underclassmen while underclassmen benefit from the experience of those a few years older.

While at the retreat, Veritas students have the chance — between appropriate activities and built-in-leisure time — to explore ideas with fellow students from a variety of ages and interests.

One senior's comments on day three — the theme of "Radical Jesus" — underscore the worth of this year's retreat: "Jesus doesn't ask us to do anything that he didn't do — He understands everything (small or large) we are going through."

The annual retreat is a gift to Veritas students, giving them the chance to revel in these simple but powerful truths.

STUDENT LEADERS LEARN TO LEAD



On November 20 to 22, about half of the Veritas student body attended the "re: Purpose" high school leadership conference, sponsored by the Association of Christian Schools International in Washington, D.C. The multi-day pilgrimage is a chance for primarily upperclassmen to be exposed to renowned and influential speakers-authors such as Vincent Bacote, Anthony Bradley, Andy Crouch, Bruce Herman, Evan Koons, Bethany Jenkins, Derek Melleby, Todd Wagner, and Ed and Mel Zwylhuizen – all of them professors, authors, professionals, pastors, and church lay leaders.

Those who attended the conference grappled with questions such as: "Does God care where I work?" "What about what I do with my free time or how much rest I get?" "Does God have a clear direction for me?"

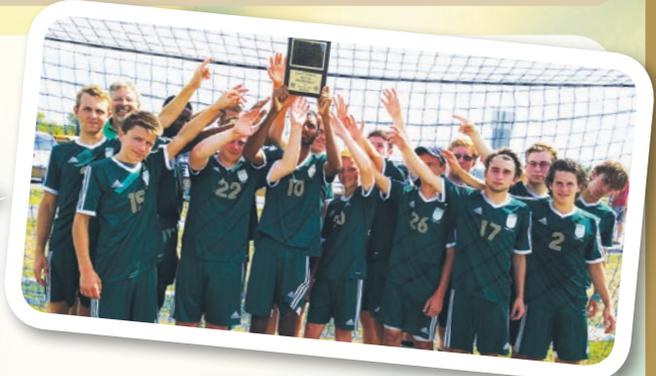
"This event transforms the hearts of students more than any other event in which we've invested," said one Christian college advisor. The accolades continue: "God uses this conference to break the hearts of young people for the things that break the heart of God."



Going To GETTYSBURG

Between soccer and basketball seasons, November 1 to 3, the sophomore class toured the Gettysburg Visitor's Center and Cyclorama, received a two-hour guided tour, and made time for discussions on the battlefield itself.

The students visited the battlefield days before America's presidential election. Seeing the remnants of this historic battle caused the students to reflect on their own responsibilities as Americans and Christians. The actual battle took place in 1863, more than 150 years ago. As the students stood in the historical cemetery, the reality of the tremendous loss as a result of the battle became very real.



"We had big shoes to fill this year," said men's Veritas soccer coach Tim Brinkerhoff, summarizing the 2016 season, which depended on seven graduating seniors, five of whom were starters. "We had a lot of key holes, mostly defensive," said Brinkerhoff, "but the boys stepped up."

A highlight of the men's season was a win over nemesis Calvary Christian 1-0. Other key victories included Sussex Tech, with over 500 students enrolled, and stalwart Eastern Christian, whom Veritas beat 3-2. Juniors Sam Ryan and Kyle Simmen were key scorers for the team, with 27 goals and 9 assists, and 25 goals and 21 assists, respectively.

The men ended the 2016 schedule with a final record of 18-6-2, and a cliffhanger game at the league championship on October 28. "A controversial call resulted in double-overtime, and we lost in a shoot-out," lamented Coach Brinkerhoff. Veritas lost to Trinity Christian. It was a disappointing end to a challenging season, but Coach Brinkerhoff used the experience to weave character into the narrative of each student's athletic life. The fact that the league championship game went 100 minutes without Trinity scoring a goal on Veritas is a testament to how strong this year's defense had become.

The tenacity of the women's soccer team helped this year's small team to prevail, ending their season undefeated in their league and league champions over Trinity. The Lady Lions overcame injuries and benefited from the assistance of a few 8th-graders from Sussex Christian and Northwest Christian to help round out the team.

The team struggled outside the league, but held their own against Hawthorne Christian, a first-time match-up, and played well against bigger schools such as Doane Academy and Calvary Christian.

The team, led by the triple senior captains — Elizabeth Publik, Angel Filosa, and Brenley Knakkegaard — stepped up in ways they hadn't needed to in previous seasons. Despite a rough start to the season, the ladies truly modeled the idea of working through adversity and glorifying God. While it might have been tempting to let their season's challenges negatively affect them, the team always looked for and found the good.

Graduating seniors leave behind a legacy on which subsequent teams will continue to grow and, most importantly, continue to glorify God.



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IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME



For the first time in Veritas history, students can now choose Woodworking as an elective. Mr. Tim Brinkerhoff, Director of Worldview, Bible, and Psychology, is the instructor.

Mr. Brinkerhoff, who could have “played it safe” the first time around, did not build the class on cookie-cutter projects. “Students will be more inclined to enjoy the process if they work on something they’ve chosen to do,” he reasoned. The result of this freedom is a myriad of designs: a boat, wall cabinet, shelves, medieval sword, chiseled sign, blanket chest and not one but two corn-hole games.

A long-time supporter of Christian education, the family business of current Veritas junior Micah Kuiken facilitated an off-site shopping trip for the students during the first few weeks of school. The size of Mr. Brinkerhoff’s largest vehicle limited the number who could participate since – in the absence of an on-site woodshop on the Veritas campus – the 10-minute commute to the Brinkerhoff residence is part of the weekly schedule. Logistical hurdles notwithstanding, Mr. Brinkerhoff hopes that Veritas students will now “have an outlet to their studies – a sense of fulfillment – and participate in what their Creator did and does as image-bearers on a microcosm level. God created and built and enables us to do the same.”

For some students, this artistic side is a part of their coach and teacher that they haven’t seen before. Mr. Brinkerhoff describes construction as a process that “connects the person with the project in a very significant way – something very personal,” he says.

For Mr. Brinkerhoff himself, however, the links between biblical knowledge and craftsmanship are obvious. Known to be a passionate teacher of the Bible at Veritas and before that as a pastor, he can be equally inspired when talking about the new Woodworking class. “So much of what God created inevitably was generated by a choice within the Godhead to go in a certain direction,” he says. “God even filled skill laborers of his temple with the Holy Spirit” (Exodus 31:3 and 35:35). “In God’s eyes,” Mr. Brinkerhoff emphasizes, “there are no ‘little people’ even though society loves to label high and low values of worth based on what you do for a vocation.”

Despite the appearance that a few select students are getting off campus to do something fun once a week, Mr. Brinkerhoff is adamant about high standards for this first run-through of a new course at Veritas. “God always expects and deserves excellence in all our work,” he insists. “So too, in how we build whatever we build.”

INTERNATIONAL *Program*



INITIATIVES: IZABELA POSCASANGRE AND THE BECKER FAMILY

During the summer of 2016, Mrs. Nicole Bobby, English teacher and Veritas International Program Coordinator, explored partnerships with organizations that facilitated high-school student exchange programs. One called "Jump the World" matched Veritas with a student from Guatemala City, Guatemala. Izabela Pocasangre, was part of the Veritas student body October 15 to December 9 and stayed with host family Charles and Marylou Becker, and their daughter Mikaela, an 8th-grade student at Northwest Christian School in Newton. Below is an interview with her host family about Izabela's experience.



Q: What were some of the first surprises for Izabela?

A: Izabela was very nervous that she would not be understood by everyone she would meet in America. She found it difficult to understand what her Veritas teachers were saying because "they spoke fast," and English is a language she is still learning.

Q: What did Izabela hope to take away from her experience at Veritas?

A: Izabela hopes to continue improving her English and to learn even more about American culture. While here, she was proud of becoming more independent and managing her own money, and she was especially delighted to share information about her home in Guatemala with those she met.

Izabela found the Veritas students to be very friendly, kind, and helpful. They made her feel comfortable and welcomed.

Q: How did you end up becoming a host family?

A: We had been considering becoming a host family for a Veritas long-term international student for close to a year now, and were made aware of this opportunity by Mr. Bevier in September. We decided that participating in this experience for only eight weeks would give us the opportunity to test the host family experience.

Q: What are some of the highlights of being a host family?

A: The first highlight would be the enthusiasm that the family had in getting Izabela's room ready for her arrival. Our favorite memories include: meeting Izabela for the first time at the airport, seeing how well our daughter and she got along, Face-Timing her family and seeing where she lives, and helping her understand our customs as we tried to learn hers!

Q: Would you recommend the host family experience to others?

A: This cross-cultural experience allowed our family to move out of our comfort zone and into a deeper place in our walk with God. We believe that our house belongs to God. We prayed about this opportunity and decided to follow God's leading and move forward with the privilege of opening our home to an exchange student. We are so happy that God led us to this decision and we were abundantly blessed by having Izabela in our home.

INTERNATIONAL SPOTLIGHT: KELLY PHAM

In 2014, Kelly Pham moved from her Grandma's home in the Dong Nai province of Vietnam to live with relatives in New Jersey. "They started to look for a good school for me," says Kelly. "We researched the Internet, and Veritas was the best choice."

As expected, Kelly's English skills have improved since taking classes at Veritas, but she also enjoys other classes including math, Bible, art, psychology, and history. "I've also learned a lot more about



God," she adds, "although I had learned about him back at my home in Vietnam."

Despite Kelly's progress in ESL work (English as a Second Language classes offered at Veritas), language barriers persist. "Language is one of the best ways to connect people together," says Kelly, "but sometimes it's hard for me to socialize with other people."

"People respect each other more here," observes Kelly, which may surprise some of her American peers. "They get to experience technology, policy, and law... all of this is necessary for me to learn." Kelly also compliments the style of American education, explaining, "I feel more comfortable with the American style of teaching. It helps me really learn."

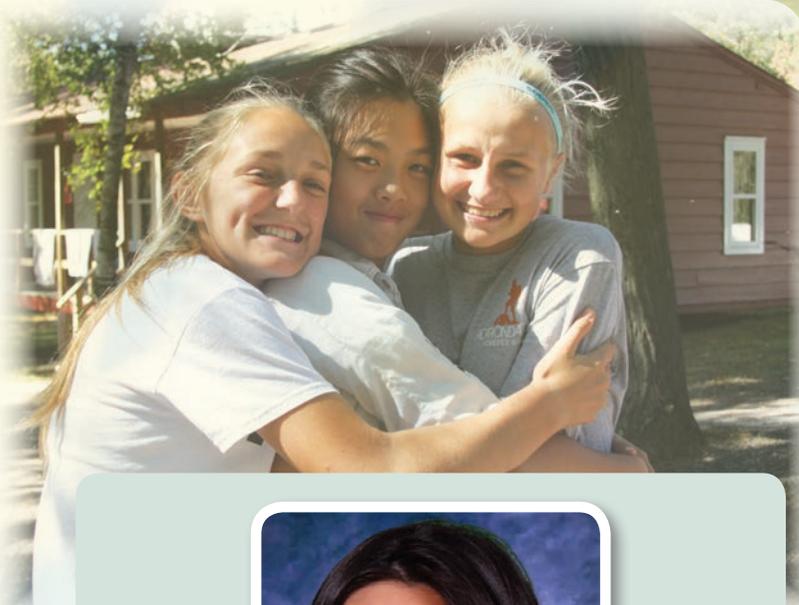
Kelly says her years in America have stretched her faith tremendously. "I am a Catholic," says Kelly. "I learned about God in my country since I was little. God is in my heart. I pray about my time as an international student as well as my whole life! I have struggles, but they are not a big deal to me since I HAVE GOD," she emphasizes.

When pressed about the biggest blessing associated with her time at Veritas, Kelly does not hesitate. "It is my relationship with all of the Veritas people," she answers. "They are great, friendly, and wonderful.

They have helped me a lot during the past two years — giving me not just education but true friendship. Although I don't often share these thoughts aloud to anyone, I want this time to last forever!"



The mask, dragonfly and castle are examples of Kelly's amazing creativity.



IRIS CHEN

Iris Chen, like Kelly Pham, has been attending Veritas for three years. And although her American peers may associate both Kelly and Iris with the other side of the world — Asia — Iris's path to Veritas was somewhat different. A friend of her dad's initially helped her travel from Guangdong City, Shenzhen Province, China, to Texas. From there, Iris relocated to New Jersey, where her family also had contacts.

Like Kelly, Iris's family supported her desire to study in America, and she plans to graduate with her class in 2017. "There is so much to learn — even in addition to schoolwork," says Iris. When asked about comparisons between the two cultures — Chinese and American — Iris is open about what she calls the "emotionalism" in America: "I lived in a region where people were not so emotional," she explains. "I did not learn how to handle that until now!" she laughs.

When asked about what she misses most about home, however, Iris is quick to answer: "the food." She adds that "there were lots of restaurants in my city — some were so special that I visited them only several times a year. Maybe only once." Iris notes that a key difference between China and the U.S. is the price of food and housing; she will gladly try to illustrate the exchange rate between yuan and dollars for anyone who is interested.

The Veritas schoolmates of both Kelly and Iris appreciate these perspectives, and the contributions of all international students — visiting or otherwise — add much to classroom discussions.



FLYING *High*

Even as a young boy, alumni Bryan Stankovich (Class of 2010) knew he wanted to be a pilot.

His dad, Dennis, was not a pilot but served in the U.S. Air Force and loved being around airplanes. His parents took Bryan to air shows when he was as young as 20 months.

Bryan attended Northwest Christian School in Newton, from kindergarten through 8th grade, and found a fellow aviation enthusiast in then-principal, Mr. Howard Hatton. Bryan and Mr. Hatton loved talking about airplanes and flight every chance they got.

Outside of school, family air shows continued, and Bryan would always want to see every plane on display. Better yet, he wanted to speak to each pilot. On more than one occasion, these pilots would be so impressed with Bryan's knowledge of and respect for their field that they would allow him to visit areas of the planes that were off-limits to the public.

After graduating Veritas in 2010, Bryan began attending LeTourneau University where he found the theoretical classes challenging but remembered his mother's encouragement and frequent Scripture: "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future" (Jeremiah 29:11). Patricia, Bryan's mother, "believed in him with all of her heart," she says, reminding her son often that flying was what the Lord created him to do.

Although he was pursuing a degree in Professional Flight while at LeTourneau, Bryan decided to add classes to become a certified flight instructor to gain the flight hours required for applications to work at an airline. He graduated from LeTourneau University in 2014 with a BS in Professional Flight with additional certifications as a flight instructor. Weeks later, Bryan married Lauren Touchberry, whom he met at LeTourneau. Bryan then began teaching others how to fly, first at Monarch Air in Texas and later Aerosol in Florida. By July 2016, Bryan secured a first officer position at Skywest Airlines in Los Angeles.

Bryan's God-given talents and interests — and the spiritual encouragement he received from school and family — have resulted in a career and life that honors God in all aspects. "Veritas definitely helped grow my faith and made it a foundation in everything I do," says Bryan.

Veritas is proud to call Bryan Stankovich one of its first graduates; and his diligence and ongoing participation in communities of faith are testimonies to all who follow after him.



VERITAS REACHES *Women In Morocco*

Megan Gieske, a 2013 graduate of Veritas now studying at Asbury University in Kentucky, took a Semester at Sea in Morocco as part of previous studies at Taylor University. Today, Megan works as a professional writer for the American Cancer Society and Newstime Africa. A small part of her got stuck in Morocco when her heart reached out to gifted artisans who remain woefully unconnected to the fruits of their labors.

"I got the idea for my own NGO (non-government organization) when I noticed that there were a lot of female artists who made rugs and carpets and wall tapestries — some of which can take a year to make — but did not get paid for their work," says Megan. The women use what small monies they typically receive to pay for daycare while they work. They find it difficult to help their children get into the better schools they desire for them.

This sad plight was particularly the case in Morocco. Although Megan enrolled in her Semester at Sea through large public universities (Virginia and now Colorado) and visited countries up and down the coasts of Africa and the Mediterranean Sea, the Moroccan women seemed to trouble her the most. "Using what I learned during my Semester at Sea, I started my own company to try to help the hurting people I met. The name of my organization, Aadala simply means 'justice' in Arabic," says Megan.

Megan is the CEO of Aadala, running her own small team, staying connected with Semester at Sea alumni, and arranging Skype meetings with several cooperative organizations in Morocco. Her current majors are Creative Writing and Teaching English as a Second Language, a background that contributes to her awareness that "a critical need is English learning." A mission-minded friend of Megan's, Christian Lowe, is COO (Chief Operating Officer) of Aadala; both he and Megan are enthusiastic, ad-hoc English tutors, forging productive partnerships between America and the Middle East whenever opportunities present themselves. "We've had positive feedback from business contacts in Morocco," Megan says modestly.

Megan is also Chief Creative Officer of Aadala: "A big part of it for us is just telling their stories."

The quickest way for interested others to learn more about Aadala is to visit: www.aadalajusttrade.com and www.gofundme.com/Aadala.

NEW ADDITION!



Karisa (VanderGroef) (2009) and **Emil Talen** welcomed the addition of Ezekiel on November 10, 2016. He was 8 lbs. 15 oz. and 22" long. The Talen family now lives in Newton where Karisa is a stay-at-home mom and Worship Coordinator at Sussex Christian Reformed Church.

God bless you, Ezekiel, and welcome!

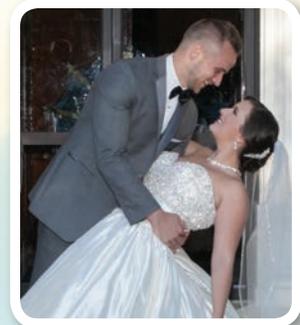
ENGAGEMENT

Class of 2011 graduates, **Jeffrey VanderGroef** and **Ambur Smith**, were recently engaged. A November 2017 wedding is planned.

Jeffrey graduated from Lincoln Technical Institute in 2013 with an applied science degree in truck and diesel technology. He is currently employed as a diesel mechanic for Intercounty Paving in Hackettstown, NJ. Ambur is currently finishing her last semester at Liberty University Online and interning at Northwest Christian School. She will earn her bachelor's degree in Elementary Education.



Weddings



Rianne Van Wingerden and **Zachary VanderGroef** were united in marriage on Wednesday, July 6, 2016 at the Sussex Reformed Church. A celebration followed at The Barn in Andover Township. They honeymooned at Montego Bay, Jamaica for five days.

Rianne is teaching general music to Pre-K through 8th grade at Northwest Christian School. She is also conducting after-school choir on Wednesdays with students in 5th through 8th grade. In addition, Rianne oversees chapel music every Friday, which entails choosing music and organizing student leaders. Zachary is working on the family farm. He is the "right-hand man" to his father. He also has his own firewood business. The couple now reside in Wantage, NJ.

Holly Nicole LaTorre and **Isaac Delbury** were united in marriage on October 9, 2016 in Scotch Plains, NJ. Holly attended New York Film Academy, County College of Morris, and currently, Fairleigh Dickenson University, where she will graduate with a Bachelor of Arts in Musical Theater with a concentration in directing. She currently works at the Mayo Performing Arts Center in Morristown, as choreographer for Veritas Christian Academy's *Crazy for You*, as Production Stage Manager for Fairleigh Dickenson University's play, *The Idiot*, and as Intern/Assistant Director at the County College of Morristown's production of *The Little Mermaid*.

Isaac attended Sussex County Community College and graduated from Mountainside School of Nursing, Montclair, NJ in 2016. He currently works full-time as a Registered Nurse in Newton Medical Center. The couple resides in Flanders, NJ.

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Calling All Alumni! Do you have news to share? We'd love to hear about it. Please send all alumni news to VCAOffice@VeritasNJ.org.



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A New Season
**OF HONORING
GOD'S FAITHFULNESS**

There is a
time for everything,
and a season
for every activity
under the heavens.

Ecclesiastes 3:1

On November 10, several hundred people gathered at Perona Farms in Andover to share a meal, listen to original worship arrangements from Veritas' Contemporary Ensemble, and receive updates and challenges for the next decade of ministry at Veritas Christian Academy.

"This is what I needed to hear," said one prospective parent, whose three children currently attend Northwest Christian School in Newton.

Administrator Sean Bevier welcomed guests and the evening was then opened with prayer. After the meal and slide show, Board Member

Dr. Paul Vincenti assured guests of the financial health of Veritas while outlining the Board's aspirations for the future, such as a mobile science lab and more funds for scholarships.



Mrs. Donna Bentson, who wears a variety of hats at Veritas as Director of Curriculum and Accreditation and guidance counselor, explained

course expansions and opportunities with dual-enrollment options in English, Speech, Psychology, and Math. Perhaps most invigorating, even though at the end of the evening, was Board Member Mr. Ken Fowler's heartfelt encouragement to keep the exciting mission of Veritas centered upon Christ.

"I really think I can see my kids here," said the prospective parent mentioned above. "It's not that I wasn't considering Veritas seriously before, but being here and meeting the people and hearing the plans — it's exciting."