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THE BEAR FACTS

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BRENTWOOD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

DECEMBER 2024



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Counts brings back gold

By Ella Kennedy



Victory Junior Harper Counts, above, won the TAPPS 5A girls cross country race on Oct. 28. Counts previously finished second overall as both a freshman and a sophomore.

The Brentwood Christian School cross country team finished out the season on a high note; both the girls and boys teams finished number one in district, the girls had a state champion, and both teams competed effectively at the state level.

Junior Harper Counts completed the state meet in first place, winning by four seconds and crossing the finish line just ahead of the challenger from Regents School of Austin.

After finishing second in both her freshman and sophomore seasons, Harper Counts finally broke through in 2024, finishing under 12 minutes and adding a gold medal to her already long list of accomplishments in track and field and cross country.

“Harper is so amazing in all the ways,”

said sophomore Alivia Villanueva. “Not only is she the fastest and best around, but she also cares about her whole team and continues to encourage and mentor the up and coming runners.”

Junior Hailyn Counts was 14th overall for the Lady Bears; Hailyn and Harper Counts both received academic all-state recognition for finishing in the top 15 and having at least a cumulative 90 overall grade point average.

As a team at state, the girls finished seventh overall. The boys, led by stronger finishes from senior Hollis Harlan (17th) and junior Nico Napper (19th) were 11th overall.

The high point of the season for both teams came at the district meet on Oct. 19. The boys had two runners place top ten; Harlan placed second with Napper in fourth.

The girls had five make the top ten. Harper Counts won the meet, sister Hailyn Counts placed second, sophomore Lynden Worley placed seventh, while sophomore Madi Clark and senior Charis McGaughy placed eighth and ninth, respectively.

Each squad claimed the district title, holding off new-to-the-district Tyler Grace Community School in both varsity divisions.

Throughout the season, the team had impressive athletes and performances, but they also had attitudes of encouragement and perseverance that set them apart from others on campus.

“I would say that they are so positive

see **XC**, page 6

One-act play stuns audience

By Graham Auberger

It has been a year of firsts for the theatre department.

Brentwood Christian School’s one act play troupe went to state for the first time in over a decade this year after winning first place in district for the first time in school history.

Corey Jennings, the director, chose the one-act play, “The Diviners”, to perform in the district and state competition. Jennings said he chose it because it’s his favorite story,

“The Diviners’ is a good story of community and overcoming the past,” he said. “[It] also uses tragedies to become closer together and to grow in faith.”

“The Diviners” is set in a small town in Indiana in the 1930s. The play is about a young boy named Buddy who was left traumatized after a fatal tragedy where his mother drowned and he nearly

drowned as well. After an ex-preacher named C.C. came to town looking for work, he and Buddy formed a bond instantly, and the pair help each other and the town to grow both in their faith and as a community.

The district one-act play competition took place on Oct. 25 and 26 in the CSA building, and it was the first time Brentwood has hosted the event. Eight schools competed, including schools from Austin, Brownsville, San Antonio, and Victoria. Brentwood came out on top, winning first place in district, while Hyde Park won second place.

The dedicated Brentwood cast practiced for weeks, starting all the way at the beginning of September, every week Monday through Thursday.

After winning first place in the district competition, Brentwood advanced to

see **“THE DIVINERS,”** page 3

Faith during the fight

By Isabella Parra

For students and faculty at Brentwood Christian School, Deyra Vivanco is more than just a Spanish teacher—she is a source of inspiration, a storyteller, and a role model. Vivanco is a truly amazing, sweet, persevering, and God-honoring woman.

Since joining Brentwood in June of 2022—during one of the most challenging years in current history—Vivanco has brought warmth, passion, and resilience to her colorful classroom.

Her journey as an immigrant, her commitment to education, her passion for fashion, and her love for her students has left a huge mark on the Brentwood community.

Now, Vivanco faces her toughest challenge yet: pancreatic cancer. Diagnosed this past June, she has been undergoing chemotherapy. Despite the ups and downs of her treatment, her faith and strength remain steadfast and easily recognizable by those who have been to visit.

“She [Vivanco] knows she is in God’s



Deyra Vivanco

see **BELOVED**, page 5

Foster care in the lives of Christians today

What's God calling to each person?

There are times when solitude breaks into minds and seems to sap the energy out of a person. There are times when the joy of Jesus leaps into the heart, and

makes all sorrows dissipate. There are times when nothing can be done, and sitting down and breathing is the only thing that can be physically accomplished. As it says in Ecclesiastes, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens...a time to tear down and a time to build, a time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance..."(NIV, Ecc. 3:1,3-4).

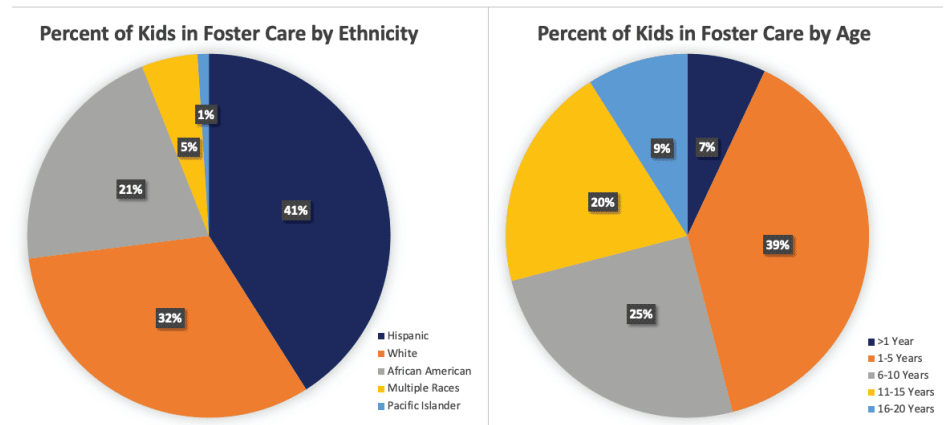
When placing this idea of flowing from day to day living in the timing of God, children that have shouldered the burden of leaving their family don't get to experience the flow of mourning and dancing, and moving on. Children who have been placed in foster care – when a family brings a child into their home for a period of time while their home life is unstable – are trapped in their time of solitude. These children are used to God's timing of tearing down, and have never lived being builds up.

If you ever encounter a foster child, make sure that you show them the timing of God. Soothe a burdened heart that can't seem to take any more hurt, and tell them that you are proud of them, as any child is precious, no matter their background. The book of Matthew says, "Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me"(NIV, Mat. 18:4-5).

Over 369,000 children are placed in foster care systems in the U.S. each year (CAFO, US Foster Care Statistics 2024). This overwhelming number of children waiting to be adopted and placed in homes are caused by unstable home lives, abuse, neglect, poverty, and maltreatment that result in children being taken away from their parents.

Choose to build up a child that has lived in this.

We can find the best way to treat and nourish these children in the Bible, where God's continual calling to love the little children, and to love everyone is repeated. "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world"(NIV, Jas 1:27).



Sad Truths Texas 2036 provided the data above, which shows the breakdown of children entering into the foster care system by age and ethnicity, giving insight to the imbalance.

In this modern society, it's impossible to see through the thick clouds of judgement that linger in our polluted streets and sink into the gutters, as it hangs in the air, heavy. But take a moment to look into the gutter where the clouds lay thick and deep. The abandoned children can be found there. Take the clothes from your back, and the money from your pocket, and help the children out of the gutter.

The facts remain: foster care isn't a perfect solution for all the kids in need of a family and home. While thousands of children are able to be adopted or reunified with their families, children that don't find a permanent home with a foster family can stay in the system until

have been breathing has intoxicated them, and they can't escape alone. Do anything in your power to help the children, whether that is donating to foster care agencies, or supporting a family that is involved in the system, or listening to God's calling to take in a child.

From the book of John, Philip, one of Jesus' disciples, encountered the same question on discerning God's voice over the background chatter of the world. He is able to summarize the words that so many of us struggle to find: "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us"(NIV, Jn. 14:8).

Put faith in God that He will watch over the people of the earth, whether they are the children stuck in the gutters, the Pharisees that continue to roam the churches, or the families struggling to show love to a foster child.

Again, God makes his voice clear when he declares, "How long will you defend the unjust and show partiality to the wicked? Defend the weak and the fatherless; uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed. Rescue the weak and the needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked" (Ps. 82:2-4).

Not only is this a direct call to defend the fatherless, but God speaks to all of mankind when He says this, as He is our Father, and makes known to us that we will never be Fatherless; He is always with us. On earth, where we are all bound by the physical, we can be abandoned.

We will not be abandoned by God.

*Learn to do right; seek justice.
Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless.
plead the case of the widow.*
Isaiah 1:17

they are phased out once they turn 21. According to The Annie. E. Casey Foundation, "...these youth are more likely to experience behavioral, mental and physical health issues, housing problems and homelessness, employment and academic difficulties, early parenthood, incarceration and other potentially lifelong adversities" (Child Welfare and Foster Care Statistics).

The tainted air that the young adults

THE BEAR FACTS

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The Bear Facts is published quarterly by the journalism classes of BCHS. The paper is a learning tool which informs the student body while teaching students to become critical observers of their environment and to validate Truth within the context of the Christian world view.

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Band glides forward on high notes

By Kenton Auburger

Brentwood Christian School's high school band started off the school year strong by winning a division one superior rating and third overall in the field band competition in October. During the competition, which took place in Waco, the band played three songs: the James Bond theme song, "Pink Panther," and "SkyFall."

Brentwood's band has won state the past two years through their hard work, and have high hopes that they make it a three-peat come March.

Caleb Rektenwald, the new BCS band director, was pleased with his first go at competition with his squad.

"They had a solid performance," Rektenwald said. "They put a lot of work and effort into their songs."

"They played their parts well and they were really exciting, but they needed to work a little more on balance. The band is looking forward to good things."

The next performance on the calendar was the annual Fine Arts Christmas concert on Dec. 5th. A good show as always, the band serenaded the crowd with songs such as: "We Wish You a Mambo Christmas," "Green

Sleeves," "Behold Our God," "Christmas Flourish," and more. Continuing to look into the future, big performances later on in the school year include the solo and ensemble competition in February, and the TAPPS state competition on March 27.

Rektenwald and student band members expressed excitement about the recent field band competition and band in general.

Trumpet player A.J. Kent, a sophomore, is relishing the opportunity to play and get better each week.

"It was a good experience for the band as we got the superior rating, but it was also good for us to grow and learn," Kent said. "I also had a lot of fun, especially on the bus ride there and back from the competition."

Percussion player Jose Azua, concurred. "It went great but we need to keep practicing and getting better," he said.

The Brentwood band performed at every home football game and several away games to the delight of all crowds.

Competition is sure to ramp up in the months ahead, but the students in the band have already made lots of memories and they are excited for a potential third state title.



Loud and Clear First-year band director Caleb Rektenwald (back to camera) leads the high school band while they play during halftime of the football game on Sept. 27. The group received a superior rating at the field band competition in October.

"The Diviners:" Sixth in state

continued from page 1



In Character Seniors Jocelyn Galvan (left), Karlee Lawrence (middle), and Taia Robinson (right) dramatically show the audience the talent that brought BCS to state!

state, earning sixth in a crowded field.

"It was an amazing experience for the theater to go and perform at the CA Theater," Jennings said.

Although many BCS students contributed to the success of "The Diviners," a few stood out amongst the crowd. Shaye Maleare, a senior who played Buddy,

won All Star Cast at state and Best Actor at district.

"It felt like a really big achievement for me and I was just trying to follow in the footsteps of last year's seniors," Maleare said.

One of Maleare's favorite memories from the play is when he jumped on senior Reid Alexander's back (who played the preacher), as he was walking away.

Other Brentwood cast members that received major awards were seniors Katy Stromberg, who won All Star Crew, and Jocelyn Galvan, who won Honorable Mention All Star Cast.

Congratulations are in order for Jennings and the entire theater cast and crew for their recent success. The latest accomplishments have been a big step for the theatre and fine arts program as a whole, which now turns its attention to the spring musical.

T&F youth go National

By Grey Nyby and Addison Everline

The 2024 Junior Olympics took place this year in Greensborough, North Carolina from July 27 to Aug. 3. Many Brentwood Christian School students participated in this national event, ranging from elementary to high school athletes.

Fourth grader Hendrix Eke, fifth graders Scarlett Smeltzer and Noah Welsh, sixth grader Zephaniah Botello, sophomore Ava Johnson and junior Joshua Gonzales all attended the meet and represented their school and city well.

Johnson took fourth place in the 4x100 relay and eighth in the 4x400 relay. Her goal going into the Olympics was to get on the podium for a relay, similar to last track and field season for the Lady Bears, where she was the third leg in the state champion 4x100 and 4x200 relays, alongside recent alumnae Lyla Kate Jackson, Juliet Booker and Emily Mulcahy.

Johnson has a rigorous training schedule, on the track three times per week in addition to weekly strength training. That grind paid off in the form of her performance at the junior Olympic level.

"It was so fun placing and getting to connect with the girls on my team," Johnson said.

Gonzalez, another state qualifier for the

Bears in TAPPS 4A track and field last season, finished eighth in the decathlon and 38th in javelin. Gonzalez, who trains over 12 hours per week, finished seventh in the discus and fifth in the pole vault at state last season.

Going into the Olympics, Gonzalez's goal was to achieve All-American status, but is looking forward to competing again this upcoming track and field season for BCS and to prepare for the next national opportunity.

Botello, new to BCS this year in middle school, beat her personal record in the 1500, which was her goal going into the Olympics. She plans on training even harder this upcoming track and field season, her first in a Lady Bears uniform, to make another appearance at the Olympics.

From the fourth grade, Hendrix Eke participated in the track and field course. Among his favorites were the 200- and 1w00-yard dash, with long jump - his overall favorite. He trained twice a day for four days a week, along with team practices.

"There were a lot of great runners [at the meet]," Hendrix Eke said.

For Full Article, visit [bcsathletics.com](https://www.bcsathletics.com)

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: Zaniah Williams

THE BEAR FACTS DECEMBER 2024

Seniors featured in the Bear Facts were selected by a vote held among the entire BCS Class of 2025.

Light-hearted senior brings laughter to all

By Anu Oguntade and Ella Kennedy

Not all heroes wear capes. Senior Zaniah Williams embodies this by demonstrating heroism in her daily acts, all while wearing a smile. Williams is constantly making a positive difference in the lives of those around her where it matters most.

Zaniah has been attending Brentwood Christian School (BCS) since third grade. From the moment she arrived at BCS, she has always made a positive impression on those around her. Whether it is offering a helping hand or making people laugh, she is always doing so many good things on and off the BCS campus.

Since her childhood, Zaniah has been playing basketball. Her passion for the sport is one quality that has allowed her to succeed despite the odds. Over the years, Zaniah has proven her skills as a player and as a leader, serving as the varsity girls basketball team captain, and contributing to the team with her positive attitude.

“Zaniah is such a great leader and peacemaker on the basketball team. She does a great job calming strife and bringing peace to the team,” said athletic director and varsity girls basketball head coach, Julie Walker.

Zaniah is a three-year starter and averaged around 10 points a game last year, while also leveraging four steals a game. Williams was second team all district last year and is having a breakout season as a senior, averaging close to 15 points per game thus far.

While being a strong asset on the team, she always maintains a positive attitude that transcends past the situation at hand. Her ability to uplift those around her benefits her teammates and everyone she encounters.

“In basketball, whenever we get down and have a bad attitude she brings goodness to every situation,” said sophomore, friend, and teammate, Ella Crouch. “At the end of the day, she’s always praising God and thanking God for everything.”

“To me, in a person that’s all that matters.”

Her athletic accomplishments away from the basketball court include her

contributions to the girls track and field TAPPS 4A state championship team, and participating as a volleyball manager her senior year.

Zaniah shows

leadership not only to the sports teams she is an active part of, but also other places she goes.

She has been the spiritual life director for her class both her junior and senior year. Williams helps plan chapels and offers spiritual guidance to her peers.

She prioritizes

braiding business. She started learning how to braid during the COVID-19 pandemic due to all the hair salons shutting down, but soon expanded her personal hobby into a business.

“She is so good at braiding hair,” said senior, loyal customer, and friend Bolu Bayo-Ajayi. “I have gone to her a few times and she has always done a great job.”

He isn’t alone in his appreciation for Williams’ skill; freshman Dandarah Xolani couldn’t help but agree.

“She’s a really good hair braider...I believe she will become a famous hair braider one day,” she said.

When asked what her favorite BCS memory is, Zaniah took it back to basketball.

“The basketball tournament in Lubbock...it was very challenging from an athletic standpoint, and we suffered from extremely hard losses,” she said. “Despite this, I had an amazing time with teammates and made memories that will last a lifetime.”

Zaniah attends Horizons Worship Center for church, where her dad is the pastor.

“I would say my biggest role model is my dad,” Zaniah said. “He always shows Jesus in the way he acts and teaches, and is just overall amazing.”

“I am so thankful to have him to imitate.”

Zaniah’s favorite verse is Proverbs 31:30, which states: “Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”

“This is my favorite verse because it reminds me that my true worth is found in the way I revere and praise the Lord,” Williams said. “Not in my outward appearance or in other worldly things.”

Zaniah Williams is truly one of a kind. Her drive to succeed, wisdom, and loving heart are all qualities that distinguish her from the average person.

From a young age; Zaniah has accomplished so much, and as she continues to grow in grace and humility, her future shines bright.

“Zaniah’s relationship with God is one of her qualities that sets her apart from others,” said senior and friend, Elisha Burks. “She has helped me grow in my spiritual life and she brings out the best in me in that area of my life.”

living a life that honors God and serves as an inspiration to those around her.

“She has inspired me to become a leader that people want to follow,” said BCS alumna, and sister Zariah Williams. “She challenges my thinking and exposes areas I can grow in.”

Around campus, Zaniah is known for her fun personality and amazing sense of humor. She is always laughing or making a joke and others really appreciate her positive outlook on everything from sports to grades.

“She’s really funny - she always makes me laugh,” said sophomore Rihanna Lopez.

Outside of school, Zaniah owns a small hair



Beloved Spanish teacher dearly missed

continued from page 1

hands,” shared high school principal Carol Johnson, who visits Vivanco on a weekly basis. “Even on the hard days, she keeps a smile on her face and continues to trust in God.”

Throughout her illness, Vivanco’s faith has been a guiding light. Johnson describes her as a woman who lives out her beliefs, even in the hardest of times.

“She shows her love of God continually in her positive behavior,” Johnson said.

“[I miss] her Spirit, she was always so happy and she would always bring such light and joy to every class,” Maeryn McCormick, a BCS senior, said. “I want her to be able to come back to teaching because I knew she loved it and she just misses the kids and knowing us and learning about us.”

Vivanco’s past shows a bit of her perseverance in her trip to the United States in search of a better life. Born and raised in Mexico, she came to the United States and became a U.S. citizen. She still works tirelessly to learn English, and has created so many opportunities for her family. Today, her children, also U.S. citizens, are thriving in professional careers.

At Brentwood, she shares both her love of Spanish and teaching. A special part of her class is that she mentions some personal

memories. Students fondly remember those moments.

“My favorite memory with [Vivanco] was [when she shared] her story about her quinceanera,” recalled Sofia Geevarghese, a BCS alumna. “It was her favorite story to tell us, and you could ... see the joy in her face when she re-lived that memory.

“She and a few other girls planned their quinces on the same day, at first no one showed up to her party. But then her cousins went running through the city telling everyone to go to her quince and in a huge rush her quince was absolutely filled.

“She really loved telling that story and it was fun to hear about.”

“Ms. Vivanco is a very warm woman who is kind hearted and compassionate.” - Grace Bello

Other students echoed similar sentiments. Senior Grace Bello appreciates her humor, calling her, “one of the funniest teachers I’ve ever met,” while sophomore Ella Kennedy admires her ability to make every student feel proud of their achievements.

“She brought happiness and excitement to the classroom,” Kennedy said. “Her presence made a difference.”

“[I also liked] how personal [her classes] were,” added Geevarghese. “She knew each of us really well and adapted lessons to our strengths and weaknesses.”

Since hearing the news of her cancer, the Brentwood community has rallied around Vivanco during this time of need. Students have been writing heartfelt letters and cards, which bring her immense joy.

“She lights up when she receives those cards,” said Johnson, who regularly visits. “It reminds her how much she is loved and missed.”

In addition to sending notes, Brentwood has kept Vivanco in its prayers, asking for healing, strength, and peace.

“I pray for the divine healing of Ms. Vivanco and I hope that she becomes healthier, stronger, and happier than she ever was before,” said Bello.

As she focuses on her health, Ms. Vivanco’s absence is keenly felt at Brentwood. Students miss her style, her smile, and the joy she brought to the classroom.

“She always dressed to impress,” said Bello. “Her fashion reflects her vibrant personality.”

Even though she has been recovering, some things about Vivanco do not change. One of those is her well-dressed self.

“And yes, she still dresses up very nicely when I go to visit her,” Johnson declared.

Her students miss her a lot.

“One of the things I miss the most is her comforting presence,” said Bello. “She was always there to help her students and she was also very transparent, which was one of the things I deeply appreciated about her because it demonstrated her genuine character.”

Vivanco misses her students a lot too.

“She misses us and wants to be back at Brentwood,” shared Johnson. “But she knows she has to take care of herself first.”

The community will continue to support, celebrate, and pray for this remarkable woman who has given so much. Please continue sending letters and encouragement and keep Vivanco in your prayers as she battles her illness.

Verse of the year convicts, spurs action in faith

By Grey Nyby

Every year, BCS chooses scripture to inspire staff and students to walk a life of faith in Christ. This year, the Bible verse is 2 Timothy 1:7: “For God gave us spirit not of fear but of power and love and self control.”

This Bible verse heavily affects the

Brentwood community, highlighting the individual nature of our decisions and the importance of being empowered in Christ.

In the face of this verse, one feels compelled to make the morally right decisions when approached with an

opportunity, and this feeling is mutually felt throughout the school.

Community members such as high school math teacher Jazzmyn Hollister, high school history and Bible teacher Jimmie Harper, juniors Jose Azua, Luke Sheth and Addison Everline, feel this impact as well.

“It gives me peace and takes

away my fears with stress and anxiety,” Hollister said. “I feel like others are capable of hearing and reflecting this verse, but only when told.

“I feel that non-Christians should read it more carefully and acknowledge what it truly means.”

Students, such as Everline, referenced the comfort of Christ for anyone who hears it.

“This quote makes me feel safe when I put my trust in Him,” Everline said. “I believe others have the will and power to reflect this verse upon others.

“This quote can apply to everyone, regardless of them being Christians or not.”

“This verse is very encouraging,” added Harper. “I think others could reflect this verse if they love others as Jesus loved...to Christians especially, it’s a call to take action.”

Others see it on a more personal level.

“This verse connects to my relationship with God because it shows God gave us a spirit that

we use to show goodness, power and love,” Azua said. “Everyone has a spirit that shows their way of peace and goodness.”

The essence of God himself can be seen in this verse, a connection to the understanding that God made us in his image.

“The Holy Spirit gave us power and love so we don’t need to be afraid in fearful situations,” Sheth said. “God gave everyone, not just Christians alone, the power and love and self-control.

“He loves and protects those who don’t even know of his existence.”

The message of Christmas will be loud this month. May the message of 2 Timothy 1:7 be, too.

*“...the Holy Spirit is not timid, but it’s a calling.”
- Jimmie Harper*



Gifts from Above BCS student Grey Nyby brings insight into God’s power and strength that all staff and students at Brentwood can implement when meditating on and applying scripture such as this year’s verse of the year.

XC proud of season

continued from page 1

and encouraging with each other,” said Smith. “They get along with each other so well, and do such a great job of including new and old runners all around.

“They really seemed to have fun together and enjoyed being around each other, yet they knew how to encourage and challenge each other to work hard.”

Both the boys and girls grew deep relationships and learned how to run as a group.

“I learned teamwork, and even though cross country is an ‘individual’ sport, I learned how to build relationships and run as a team,” said sophomore Xavier Parra.

The conclusion of the season also brings sadness, both in the form of no more races and the loss of four seniors near and dear to the program. Those seniors include Hollis Harlan, Gino Burke, McGaughy and Afton Harlan.

“I am really going to miss the seniors and the way that they worked hard... and took ownership and included the younger and newer runners,” said Smith.

The seniors reciprocate this feeling towards the runners. When asked what he was going to miss the most, Burke made it

about the collective.

“I’m going to miss the team and just getting to run with them everyday after school,” he said. “I loved being able to talk and get closer with everybody.”

The cross country program continues to impress and represent BCS in a positive way.



Ready to Run The boys cross country team gets together to pray before starting their race at the BCS Invitational on Oct. 5.

VB nears 30-win mark

By Ava Cavada

The varsity girls volleyball team finished off their memorable season with numerous wins. The team included ten players, consisting of six seniors, two juniors, and two sophomores. This team excelled in many things, including their outstanding athletic ability and skill on the court, but also represented the school and themselves well by maintaining Christ-like attitudes in every event they partook in.

The girls had a remarkable 2024 season; overall they were 29-13 with a 6-1 record in district play.

“Watching the team compete was my favorite part of coaching those girls,” said head coach, Paula Trejos.

After a close loss to Regents in their first meeting, the Lady Bears defeated the same squad, 3-2, in the district title match to earn the championship.

The team moved up to TAPPS 5A this year, and despite having harder competition, the girls dominated their opponents in a great number of games. They did not drop a set to a district opponent in the regular season besides Regents.

The team was honored heavily from an awards standpoint. Junior Claire Montgomery,

the district MVP, also achieved her 1,000th kill this season. Senior Rayen Flandes, the Outstanding Setter of the Year, notched her 2,500th assist for the program.

The duo and senior middle blocker Abigail Kampman were first team all district and all three were also all-state selections.

Sadly, in the TAPPS area round playoff match vs. Lubbock Trinity, they faced a tough loss and their season came to an end. Even though their season ended earlier than expected, the team fought hard until the very end. They played strongly in every game and had Christ-like composure towards every team they encountered.

The team will lose six seniors from its roster: Flandes, Kampman, Elisha Burks, Asia Anderson, Quinn Kirchoff and Ariba Mohammed.

Kampman, for one, wants to see the program continue to hold each other accountable and work hard.

“Don’t be afraid to speak up and stand your ground,” she said. “Your voice matters, especially in a sport like volleyball.”

For Full Article, Visit [bcsathletics.com](https://www.bcsathletics.com)

Basketball on the move

By Cam Cunningham and Karlee Lawrence

The Brentwood Christian varsity girls basketball team added nine newcomers to this year’s roster, hitting the 12-player mark for the 2024-25 season.

The team’s motto this year comes from Romans 8:38-39, which showcases that “God is greater than the highs and lows.”

The team has tried to embody the phrase through the ups and downs of any sport season.

“To me personally it means that even through wins and losses, we will still have to act as Christian people...on and off the court,” said sophomore Ella Kennedy.

The team captains are Kennedy and senior Zaniah Williams; both have been playing basketball for their entire high school career. Williams is a three-year starter for the Lady Bears and averaged close to 10 points per game as a junior. Sophomore Anu Oguntade is the team’s other returner; newcomers include sophomore Ella Crouch, junior Rachel Walker, and seven freshmen.

While the team is preparing for tough competition in the form of new district rivals Hyde Park, Tyler Grace Community and Brook Hill, the girls have already won against Austin LBJ, New Braunfels Christian Academy and TMI Episcopal. They went one and three at the Lake Country Classic tournament over Thanksgiving break and 2-2 at their host tournament, the CenTex Invitational.

The defending state semifinalist boys basketball team opened their season with big wins versus Houston Westbury Christian, St. John XXIII, and UIL 6A Hutto, as well as some tough close games against area and state-ranked Round Rock Stony Point and St. Michael’s Prep.

The boys have started this season off with an incredibly competitive schedule with big games that have set them up for future success.

The latest of those was a victory over Leander Rouse at home on Dec. 3, which showcased the depth and talent of the squad.

“Of course our long term

goal is state, but we focus on a mentality of getting better and competing everyday,” said head coach Dustin Karrer.

The new district brings further competition in Dallas and Tyler, giving Brentwood some challenging opponents.

The Bears have many strengths serving this year’s team, those being a strong defense, trust in each other, and experience across the board.

With returning starters in seniors Blake Petty, Jake Elvin and Coleston Allen, along with junior Marcus Zelee, the stage is set for a big season. The team also has recently added junior Zach Czerlinsky back in the fold after football season concluded.

The boys next hit the road for the Marble Falls Faith Academy tournament starting Friday, Dec. 20. District play begins Jan. 3 in Tyler.

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Swish Junior Bryant Herring (24) swishes it into the net for BCS, hyping up the crowd and contributing to the boys basketball team as they fight for a win. Herring, new to BCS this season, has been a big boon for the team thus far.

Football winds down, ready for next year

By Alex Schehl



DOWN, SET, HUT! Junior Brayden Jennings (2) dodges two Grace Prep players to complete the play, showing his determination to secure a win for BCS. Jennings was named honorable mention all-district quarterback at the conclusion of the season.

The BCS football team finished the 2024 season with a 5-5 record, with the Bears going through highs and lows but producing a quality campaign amongst a strong group of opponents.

The Bears practiced every day, growing better with each game that passed. Early blowout wins over Legacy Prep and Manor New Tech were high points. However, as the season continued, the games continued to elevate by way of competition.

The Bears went 2-4 in district play, missing the postseason, but close losses to Tyler Grace Community and Hyde Park have the team optimistic about the future next fall.

A senior-heavy group, the Bears will certainly miss the contributions of the class of 2025. The seniors accounted for five starters on offense and five on defense, and the group will go down as one of the better classes to take the gridiron for BCS.

"I'm really going to miss every senior," said junior quarterback Brayden Jennings. "I've built a pretty good friendship with all of them. The seniors have been a huge part of what we did this year."

The group, which had three differ-

ent coaching staffs since entering high school, helped stabilize the program and set it up for future success.

Senior Caden Shockey's favorite memory of his football career at BCS was how they "dominated Boerne Geneva." He is also proud of all of the memories he made with the team and all of the friends he made.

Shockey was one of seven Bears who made the all-district team, along with fellow seniors Victor Koncaba, Conor Schehl, Nathan Czerlinsky, Jennings, and juniors Esteban Gutierrez and Zach Czerlinsky.

Koncaba, the bruiser up front on both sides of the ball, was named Offensive MVP of the district as well as all-state.

Koncaba and Zach Czerlinsky were all-district on both sides of the ball for BCS. The latter, starting at wide receiver and free safety, led the team in receptions, yards and touchdowns on offense and tackles on defense.

Elsewhere, Jennings and Schehl both ran for over 1,000 yards. The dynamic duo combined for 27 rushing touchdowns.

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Winter brings soccer fun

By Ava Cavada and Addison Everline

Girls soccer is off to a fresh start, with a new group of girls contributing to the team for this season. Head coach Emma Hinson is in her third year coaching the program.

The girls were district champs for the first time in school history two seasons ago and are looking for a third straight playoff appearance.

Although Hinson cited inexperience as a potential weakness as the season gets underway, she is thrilled with the group she has to work with. That confidence was on display in the first home match of 2024, a 1-1 draw with a strong Veritas Academy team on Dec. 12.

Alongside the rest of campus, the Lady Bears have moved up to TAPPS 5A, removing some familiarity with opponents.

Don't expect that to change their style of play.

"We plan to be aggressive no matter the opponent," said senior Mia Robertson.

Overall, goals this year for the program include a district championship and playing a style of soccer that they are proud of.

Looking to the boys soccer team this year, they kicked off their season with tough prac-

tices and determined attitudes. Long-time head coach Cash Miller leads the group, consisting of three seniors, 11 juniors, five sophomores, and three freshmen.

There are many returning players who have been eagerly awaiting the start of games and are excited for the challenges ahead and the memories to be made.

"My favorite part about playing soccer at Brentwood is how well the team gets along and how much effort they put into the sport and friendships with each other," said senior and returner, Gino Burke.

"I am looking forward to better competition," Miller said. "Playing better teams makes you better."

"We want to play the best so we can measure ourselves and work to improve."

Expectations are high with the 14-0 district record and area-round playoff win last season. The first test toward equalling that mark was passed with flying colors, as the team took down Veritas, 2-1, on Dec. 12 with header goals from juniors Liam McGaughey and Jacob Valladares leading the charge.

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Swim records broken

By Isabella Parra

Brentwood Christian's swim team has a lot to look forward to this year. With a brand new middle school team, new indoor practice pool, and excited attitudes, the swim team has high expectations for 2024-25.

Last year, they faced much adversity. Despite the early morning practices, swimming outdoors in winter weather, and inconsistent practices, they pushed through and made it to the TAPPS state meet and performed well in individual and relay races.

Although they still have the early morning practices, the team has a new indoor facility: Waterloo Aquatics in Round Rock.

The program has also grown this year. On the boys side, returning members are senior Reid Alexander, senior Gus Ebner, and junior Gavin Edmondson. New members include freshman Chayce Lee and junior Will Kurtz.

"The boys teams have some very advanced talent," head coach Jason Montier said. "[Reid and Gus] have placed in all of the state meets in different events. With such a small but talented team, we will probably concentrate on relays this year."

On the girls side, returning members are

senior Jennifer Montier, sophomore Rachel Ngyuen, sophomore Natalie McGee, sophomore Valeria Sandoval, and sophomore Zoe Ruiz. New members include freshman Abira Briseno, freshman Charlotte Kurtz, and freshman Ali Nelson-Cook.

"I want to just grow as a stronger swimmer and grow closer to my teammates," Kurtz said. "[I will achieve these goals] by working hard and going to practice."

Other members have higher hopes.

"[My goal is] to win state," Edmondson said.

The team started off strong at the Battle for the Crown on Nov. 9 in San Antonio. Jennifer Montier took second in both the 100 butterfly and 100 backstroke. Nelson-Cook took third in the 200 freestyle, and Lee placed second in the 200 individual medley. Overall the team placed eighth. Meanwhile, seven members set new personal records: Alexander, Lee, Briseno, McGee, Nelson-Cook, Nguyen, and Ruiz.

"I am happy the [girls] team has grown so quickly," Jason Montier said.

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After rebrand, Running of the Bears a hit

By Alex Schehl

Running of the Bears (ROTB) was a marked difference for some, but with one of the community's biggest fundraisers in the rearview, Brentwood Christian school-goers view the event as a success adjacent to its predecessor (Jog-A-Fun).

At first, many at BCS were distressed at removing the nomenclature that has been around for decades. However, after seeing all of the improvements, the end result was similar: a day of fun aiding the school in its fundraising goals of providing financial support to students in a Christ-centered learning environment.

"There were some folks who did not initially like that a long-standing tradition was changing, but once the day got here and were able to see all the upgrades, I think everyone left happy," said Jay Burcham, president of Brentwood Christian School.

Using the school mascot, along with some improvements and adjustments to the process and course, ROTB aimed to deepen the connection between the school and the event.

"Jog-A-Fun was rebranded as Running of the Bears as there was no tie to our com-

munity," said Jennifer Smeltzer, Director of Development. "When you talk to people outside of campus, they have no idea that Jog-A-Fun was with Brentwood Christian School."

ROTB featured many new upgrades and a different track from Jog-A-Fun. The website for ROTB donations was selected so that it would be easier for friends and families to support through giving without the need for an email tie-in.

The cross country course itself was also shorter and included upper elementary, with an obstacle course and Kona Ice at the end to add something new and exciting. Even with all of the improvements, wheels are spinning for 2025.

Next year, a rolling start will be added instead of a timed start to improve the overall flow of the run. The Kona Ice location is also up for debate. Additionally, more incentives for students are being discussed.

"Mrs. Smeltzer is always planning how to do it better," Burcham said. "I think next year you will likely see a larger gladiator course ...there might even be more food options."

Feedback from parents and students mentioned difficulty adapting to the new technology for giving as one of the kinks to be worked out moving forward, but all parties on the Brentwood side see the constructive criticism as positive and essential for con-

tinuing to produce one of the most fun days of the year for all students pre-K through 12th grade.

"There should have been difficulties but again, Mrs Smeltzer's hard work and planning made for a great day," said Burcham.



Fun to Run Students from all grades race through the archway of the starting line, supporting the annual Brentwood Running of the Bears fundraiser, while having fun in the process.

Fall Finals Schedule

Wednesday - Dec. 18

English: 8:00 a.m.- 9:55 a.m.

Science: 10:05 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

Thursday - Dec. 19

History/Speech: 8:00 a.m.- 09:55 a.m.

Math: 10:05 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.

High School Make up opportunity: 12:15 p.m.- 2:00 p.m.

Friday - Dec. 20

Bible: 8:00 a.m.- 08:55 a.m.

Spanish/Economics/Government/Computer Science: 9:05 a.m.- 11:00 a.m.

Holiday Spirit in Austin

By Anu Oguntade

1. Peppermint Parkway: If you're looking for a fun and quick way to get into the holiday spirit, Peppermint Parkway is the place for you. This affordable drive-through experience started Nov. 22 and ends Dec. 29. The price of the tickets vary depending on the time you wish to visit.

2. The Nutcracker 62nd Annual Production at the Long Center: If you appreciate the arts and are looking for an entertaining way to spend your day, you should look into the Nutcracker production. This classic Ballet tells the story of a young girl named Clara who becomes friends with a magic nutcracker on Christmas Eve. The tickets for shows price ranges from \$20-\$125, and the show will be running from Dec. 6-23.

3. Austin Steam Train Association: Located in Cedar Park, the Austin Steam Train Association offers a family friendly, North Pole experience. This event includes a two-hour train ride with a visit from Santa Claus and Mrs. Claus. Prices vary from \$49 to \$65, but the opportunity for the train is limited. The

starting date for this Christmas activity was Nov. 30 and it wraps up on Dec. 15.

4. Austin Trail of Lights: The Austin Trail of Lights is one of Austin's biggest Christmas traditions. Held in Zilker park, this event is filled with holiday displays, lights, and tunnels. All ages are welcome to this extravaganza, and the general admission costs \$8, which is a small price to pay for the memories you'll make there. The trail will run from Dec. 10-23.

5. Ice Rodeo at the Four Seasons: This Ice Rodeo is available for people of all ages and provides a luxury experience for people with its outdoor ice skating rink, dining lounges, pop up lounges. Access to the ice rink is free, but all the other amenities price varies depending on the day and time.

6. Luminations at the Wildflower Center: This Christmas event is a combination of the beautiful scenery of the central garden with beautiful lights and brilliant displays. Tickets have to be purchased in advance and the exhibit will be open until Jan. 5.

7. Mozart's Lake Austin Festival of Lights: If you are looking for a fun event filled with Barbecue, live music, and hot cocoa, Mozart's Lake Austin Festival of Lights is the event for you. Tickets are available now, and the general admissions price is \$7.00. This event lasts through early January.

8. A Christmas Carol at the Zach Theatre: Whether you're scared of the ghost of Christmas past, present or future matters not - make plans to see this Charles Dickens classic at the Zach Theatre, located at 202 S. Lamar Blvd, until Dec. 29.

9. Operation Blue Santa: This event helps make sure that kids of all ages get gifts on Christmas day. People donate and deliver unused gifts to warehouses all over Austin.

For more information, visit www.blue-santa.org.

10. Armadillo Christmas Bazaar: Don't leave anyone off your shopping list - swing by the Palmer Center from Dec. 14-23 for a gift extravaganza.