



THE BEAR FACTS

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BRENTWOOD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

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‘Our Town’ production brings laughter, tears

By Emma Ayers

The BCS theatre department’s rendition of *Our Town* last weekend sparked laughter, tears, and everything in between as onlookers were given insight into the daily lives of the fictional residents of Grover’s Corners, New Hampshire. The three performances of the play – one on Friday, Feb. 1, and two on Saturday, Feb. 2 – were prefaced by only three weeks of after-school and weekend practices, after the play was cast in December.

The production starred junior Adrie Gruis as Emily and sophomore Mason Hejl as George. Each part was notably personal, and cast members worked hard to make the characters their own.

Gruis said the play created “unforgettable memories.”

“I was introduced to new emotions that I’ve never felt before, and I was challenged mentally to create a character that I’ve never played before,” she said.

Our Town was written by Thornton Wilder in 1938, and was met with success on Broad-

way, critical acclaim, and the Pulitzer Prize for drama soon thereafter. The story takes place in the year 1901 and centers on the tight-knit community in Grover’s Corners, especially the neighboring Gibbs and Webb families, and their children George and Emily.

Director Joseph Clingan, who performed in *Our Town* as a BCS senior in 2005, said that given the short time frame, he wanted to pick a play with a simplistic set. The play also featured no music and simple lighting, which not only helped in preparation, but it also served to focus the attention of the audience on the words spoken.

“Wilder’s writing has a way of speaking directly to the heart, and I wanted to highlight that as much as possible,” Clingan said.

With a set consisting only of a few chairs, tables, and ladders, performers pantomimed the majority of their scenes. Students not only had to learn their lines, but also how to show what they were doing with clarity – all in only three weeks.

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photo: Alyssa Mancias

George and Emily Sophomore Mason Hejl and junior Adrie Gruis starred in the theater department’s production of *Our Town* on Feb. 1-2 in the school theater.

Witcher wins national award

Mel Witcher, who is in his 30th year at BCS, has been selected as the National Christian School Association Educator of the Year. He will be honored at a banquet in San Antonio on March 7 at the annual NCSA conference.

Witcher, who teaches Bible and social studies, has already won the NCSA Teacher of the Year award in 2014, and the year before that he was named the Texas Christian Schools Association Teacher of the Year. In 1998, when he was still teaching band, Witcher won the TAPPS fine arts award.

His colleagues agree that it would be hard to find a teacher who better exemplifies what Brentwood is all about. Math teacher Michele Broadway said Witcher is not only one of the wisest people she knows, but he is also one of the kindest and most caring.

“He truly loves our kids like they’re his own,” she said.

NCSA is the accrediting body for schools reaching over 30,000 students in 26 states.

Soccer team qualifies for playoffs

By Jackson Baird

With Tuesday’s 5-2 win at St. Michael’s, the varsity boys finished second to Regents in district with a 4-2 record. The Bears also finished the regular season as the ninth-ranked team in Texas for their division.

Brentwood hosted a bi-district playoff game yesterday, Feb. 7, against Mesquite Dallas Christian. The Bear Facts was sent to print on Wednesday and unable to cover this.

“This season has definitely had its ups and downs,” head coach Jesse Jordan said. “We started the season 1-5. We could have given up, but we continued to believe in the process, our system, and each other.”

After a slow start to the season, the Bears found their identity as a possession team during district play, going on a much-needed three-game win streak.

“Although we didn’t have a great start to the season, we really united and stepped it up as a team as the season got going,” sophomore Andrew Geevarghese said.

Senior Adrian Batlle leads the team with nine goals, followed by senior Riley Walker, who has four. Walker leads the team in assists with seven, followed by Baird with five.

Following are the team’s most recent results:

1/11: @ TMI 7-1 L

Brentwood’s last non-district game was a cold, rainy, and miserable game. Straight from kickoff the wet weather led to sloppy play from both teams. BCS went down 1-0 after a wet ball slipped past the keeper. The Bears responded with a 30-yard goal by Connor, tying the game at one. From there on Brentwood let the game slip away from them and went into the half down 4-1. In the second half BCS came close to scoring but could never put the ball in the net, including a missed penalty kick.

1/15: @ Hyde Park 2-0 L

The Bears’ first district game did not go the way Brentwood had hoped. Although they controlled almost all of the possession, BCS failed to find the back of the net. The Panthers took the lead midway through the first half on a free kick. In the second half the Bears fought

to level the score but could not get any good shots off. Hyde Park sealed the win with 10 minutes left on a header off a corner.

1/18: Regents 3-2 (PK 5-4) W

The Knights gained the lead early off of a corner kick. Brentwood responded with a goal of their own late in the first half as Batlle slotted the ball in the back of the net off of a kneed pass from Walker. The momentum shifted going into the half, following the goal from Batlle. Coming out of halftime the Bears gained the lead with a back heel goal from Baird off a long throw in from Walker. Regents forced the game into penalty kicks with a late equalizing goal. In penalties, Walker converted from the spot following a miss from a Knight giving Brentwood their first district win of the year.

1/25: St Michael’s 1-0 W

In this battle for first place, it was an even game until 30 seconds left in the first half, when freshman Davin Ha slipped a ball past

see **SOCCER**, page 3

You Can Believe: Genevieve Graessle

Editor: Through illness, dad's life models joy, patience

In Romans 12, Paul encourages us to be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer. I have always tried to live this out, but the meaning changed for me when I was in middle school. At the end of my seventh-grade year, my father, Scott Graessle, was diagnosed with stage four colon cancer.

I can clearly remember the days leading up to his diagnosis. It was finals review week at Brentwood. We actually had a few Harding Academy choir students staying at our house, because they were performing at Brentwood Oaks that same week. My sister Isabelle was about to graduate from Brentwood. I remember that my dad was in a lot of pain that night, so Jackson, my older brother who was home from his second year at Baylor, took him to the emergency room and stayed with him through the early hours of the morning. He stayed a few days, did some testing, and came home when he was feeling better.

I still did not really know what it meant when he was diagnosed, or how serious cancer really was, because I was still in seventh grade. Even though my dad has been living with this disease for almost four years now, he continues to be one of the most joyful, patient, and faithful people that I know. Even at the beginning of his diagnosis, he was completely unselfish with the way he was reacting to it all. He did not even disturb the Harding students at our house that night.

To tell you a little about my dad, he is insanely smart. He met my mom at Abilene Christian University, where they studied physics. Then he received a master's degree from Rice University while my mom worked at Westbury Christian. Then they moved to Austin, where he received a Ph.D. in experimental particle physics. It was then that my mom began teaching physics and math at Brentwood Christian. After my dad graduated, he decided to go into game development. He has worked for multiple different gaming companies over the years, and I have always felt really cool being able to say that my dad designs video games for a living. He currently works for Zynga, the company that created Words with Friends.

I love spending time with my dad watching

movies, playing board games or video games, or going to the library. I am extremely thankful for the way he raised me, helping me to be culturally aware. He is an avid reader, knows an insane amount about history, and loves all kinds of art. Our dinner table conversations often consist of in-depth cultural or political discussions.

My dad has good days and bad days. Just a few Sundays ago the two of us went to Jason's Deli after church and then did some lingering around Target for no reason other than we wanted to spend time together. This past Sunday, however, he slept horribly throughout the night, waking up with a fever and not being able to get out of bed. He has endured biweekly or weekly chemotherapy treatments for the last four years, while continuing to be an all-around amazing person. Many people would tell us that he didn't even look sick when they saw him, because he carried himself so joyfully through the whole process. He could often be found rocking a fanny pack that contained a pump and chemo medication.

Treatments would work for awhile, but then stop being effective. During this past year, he participated in two clinical immunotherapy trials at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston. However, the cancer continued to grow. This past December, his oncologist advised him to stop treatments and focus on doing what he wanted and what he felt like he needed to do. He stopped working in January. He is taking care of business at home and doing a lot of extra reading, but

his main focus is spending time with us.

This Christmas break we drove to New Orleans together. It was a week filled with video games, beignets, board games, sightseeing, and just enjoying each other's presence. This upcoming weekend, my parents and I are going to New York to spend time together and visit a few colleges. My dad took both of my older siblings on college visits, and I am glad he is getting the opportunity to take me on some as well.

In all that my family does, my dad continues to think of others before himself. He still takes care of me and my mom, and he is an amazing encourager. Ever since I was four years old, my dad has driven me to every single soccer practice. He has come to almost all of my games since I started playing, and that did not change after he was diagnosed. He watched me play in three games in just these past two weeks. I was very emotional this week, because I began to realize that he was going to watch me play for the last time. Knowing that made Monday night's game a much harder one.

Somehow, through the doctors' bad news, the final soccer games, and the constant sickness that my dad still has to face, he is able to keep an extremely positive attitude, and never fails to cheer me up. It is always hard to see my dad, who is extremely strong, have to fight this. However, if you have ever met him, you know that he is a man full of constant joy and calming peace. He will basically laugh at every joke anyone says, which is extremely encouraging, especially if you live with him. He always has something to add in a conversation, but more importantly he is always ready to listen.

The communities that we have – our church, this school, dad's work, and our extended families – continue to be good reminders to find the joy in each day and to be faithful in prayer. People are constantly praying for us and doing anything they can to help. Our church has set up a care calendar, and people bring us meals usually two times a week. One Brentwood mom had Tiff's Treats sent to our house last week. One

of my dad's old coworkers writes crossword puzzles for the New York Times, and he wrote one about my dad. A few Brentwood teachers have been taking some responsibilities off of my mom's shoulders these past few weeks, so we are able to spend more family time together.

1 Thessalonians commands us: "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances." The people around us are continuously helping us do these things better. My dad embodies this verse every single day. The way he acts towards those around him – unselfishly, constantly joyful, and patient – is extremely admirable for someone who has been fighting stage four cancer for four years now. I am and will be eternally thankful for the way my dad embodies Christ in his daily life and how well he has taught me to be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer.



THE BEAR FACTS

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www.brentwoodchristian.org.

Speakers gaining experience

By Hannah Womack

Five students represented BCS at the competitive speaking event at McNeil High School on Saturday, Jan. 19. None placed, but their speech and debate teacher Russell Larson said they improved greatly with each round.

The students participated in a wide variety of events: junior Andrew Russell competed in poetry and prose interpretation; sophomore Riley Banner and freshman Makana Sloan in original oratory; and sophomores Carlie Walters and Noble Wilson in debate. Banner also participated impromptu speaking, and Sloan extemporaneous speaking.

Some of these students, and others in Larson’s competitive speech and debate class, have participated in two meets last fall, and they are now preparing to compete in TCSIT and TAPPS this April.

Larson, who first came to BCS as a history teacher in 2016, is a certified speech teacher who has always hoped to teach that subject as well. To his delight, he was given both the required speech class and the elective debate class last fall, which was the first time the latter class has been offered at BCS.

Being known by students for his enthusiasm,

Larson said he has been eager to take on these responsibilities. He expresses concern over the way students today “hide behind social media” and sometimes struggle to express themselves verbally as a result.

“I think it’s a lost art,” Larson said about public speaking. “You see too many times today kids don’t know how to talk in a public forum.”

Many students have enjoyed the addition of the debate class, including sophomore Noble Wilson, who says his favorite part is “getting to tell other people they’re wrong.”

Next year, Larson said his goal is to have a class of 10 to 15 students dedicated to competing in several events. He pointed out that there are plenty of events for those not interested in debate.

Sloan, who participated in extemporaneous speaking last year for the first time during TC-SIT, said she had no idea what she was getting herself into at first, but she was glad she signed up for it.

“The competitions help me get out of my comfort zone,” Sloan said. “All the judges that have judged me so far are really nice about everything, and each time I go to a speech competition I improve.”

Lady Bellas perform at state

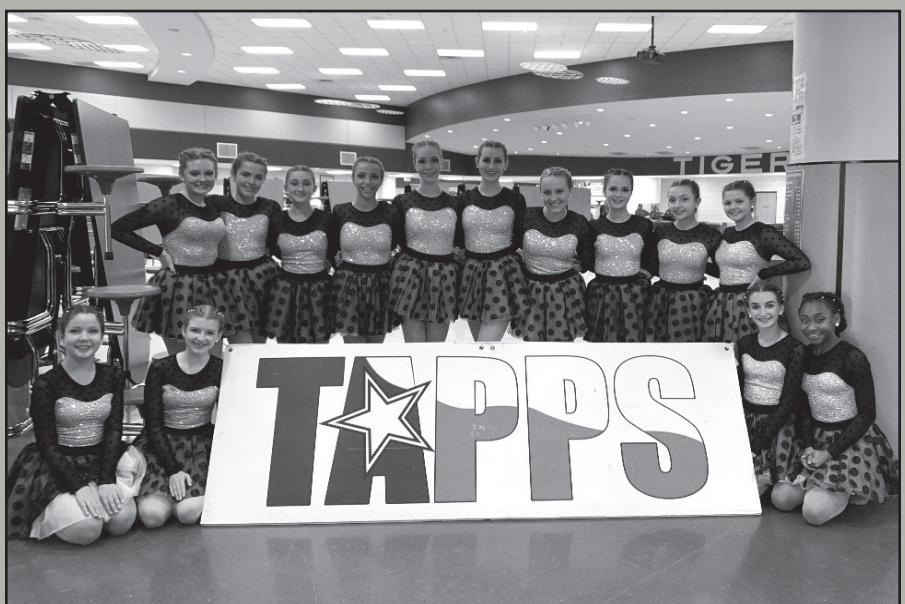


photo: Lisa Warner

All smiles The Lady Bella drill team traveled to Benton on Jan. 12 for the TAPPS dance state championship, where they received high marks. They competed in the Division I small squad classification against 12 other schools. Juniors Taylor Warner and Addison Alberda were named second-team all state. Freshman Lauren Warner received honorable mention. The Lady Bellas will be competing in Leander on Feb. 23 and later performing a 20-minute show at Six Flags in Arlington to show off the hard work they have exhibited through the year. —Natalie Barry

‘Zoo Man’ makes annual visit



photo: Brandy Gauthier

Creepy “Zoo Man” Michael Hicks shows a blue-tongued skink named Sausage to second-graders Xiomara Noriega and Ife Oguntade during his visit last month.

Soccer boys reach playoffs

continued from page 1

the defense to Baird, who then placed the ball in the back of the net. In the second half the Bears kept up the intensity and Baird apparently scored another one. But it was called back because the ref determined a BCS player had run into the keeper, forcing him to lose possession of the ball. Another controversial call minutes later on a penalty that was not given to the Bears kept the game locked at 1-0. Brentwood’s defense held on late and secured their second district win of the season.

1/29: Hyde Park 3-1 W

In a must-win game to stay in district title contention, the Bears came out slow and went down 1-0 following a miscue on a Panther corner. Minutes into the second half, Brentwood evened the score off a goal from freshman Jack Leidlein. The game entered the final minutes level at one, before junior Jose Real scored the breakthrough goal that put BCS ahead. Two minutes later Walker put the finishing touches on a hard fought win with a goal.

1/31: @ Regents 3-2 L

In essentially the district championship game

the Bears went down 1-0 midway through the first half. Minutes later BCS responded with a tap in goal by Real off a corner kick from Walker. Coming out of the half the Knights scored two early second half goals giving them the 3-1 lead. With 15 minutes left Baird brought Brentwood back into striking distance with a goal. Havoc ensued in the last 10 minutes of the game as the Bears piled shot after shot onto the Regents goal but could not get the game tying goal they needed.

2/4: @ St. Michael’s 5-2 W

After going down 1-0 early, the Bears responded with a goal from Battle off of Baird’s assist. With two minutes left in the first half, the Crusaders capitalized off of a Brentwood mistake and took a 2-1 lead. But Battle leveled the score and then gained the lead for the Bears, all within 10 minutes. Geevarghese added another goal to the tally for Brentwood after beating the keeper and walking the ball into the net. The finishing touches were put on the game when a Crusader headed the ball into his own net off of a free kick from Walker, resulting in an own goal for St. Michael’s.

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT: *Brayden George*

Seniors featured in the Bear Facts were selected by a vote held among the entire BCS Class of 2019.

Talented but humble musician points to Christ

By Michael Milicia

Seen on the stage singing with fabulous pitch, acting in plays and reading scripts with ease, and playing his beloved trumpet, this friendly and caring individual is easy to become friends with because of his humbleness and love for God.

Senior Brayden George is not the type of person who will seek attention. If he were given the opportunity, however, he would not mind singing or playing a song.

Friend DeanAlan Wiginton, who spends a lot of time taking road trips with Brayden, says his friend is very funny and talented, and he “uses all his talents to let God’s light shine.”

“Brayden is a God-loving man, and he is always finding the best of every situation,” DeanAlan says.

Brayden helps the BCS musical program in many ways, whether it’s singing, acting, or playing the trumpet in band. Since his sophomore year, he has been singing with Encore, and this year he was chosen the leader of the bass section in choir.

“Singing is my favorite thing to do; I grew up in a house full of music,” Brayden says.

When Brayden was young, everyone in his family loved singing except maybe his dad, whose “forte is not necessarily singing.” Despite all the music around him, Brayden was a very shy kid who was self-conscious about his voice, embarrassed of messing up or having his voice crack. Growing up in a family with great voices gave him a lot to live and look up to. After coming to Brentwood in fifth grade, Brayden was eventually able to break through his timidity and make new friends, with relationships lasting to this day.

A big part of this development happened in his freshman year, when he joined choir and “absolutely fell in love with singing.”

“I tried avoiding it as much as possible in fear of failure, but in a weird way I’ve always felt drawn to it, Brayden explained. “If anyone is ever self-conscious or afraid, I would encourage them to try whatever it is with all that they have, because it’s better to try and to love something than it is to hold yourself back.”

New choir teacher Emily Borbon says Brayden is not only an extremely talented musician, but he also has distinct leadership qualities.

“Brayden is definitely a leader,” she says. “He’s also an extremely talented musician. I think because he’s so humble, he doesn’t realize how talented he is.”

Borbon also says Brayden is very easy to work with.

“He always has an optimistic attitude, and I’ve been impressed by this in the short time I’ve known him,” she says.

Brayden’s older sister Morgan (BCS 2017) and younger brother Gavin, a junior, followed their mother’s footsteps in singing, while she directed music at their church, New Life Austin. Brayden also helps sing during worship, but he tries to assist with anything he can.

Just like any siblings, the two brothers would get into fights, but they grew to be closer. In recent years they had a rivalry to see who would end up the tallest, marking their heights on a wall every month or so. For 11 years,

Brayden had the lead, but Gavin had bigger growth spurts. Brayden says initially he was sad about being passed up, but then he looked on the brighter side of things, like “not being asked to grab high objects, not hitting my head on everything, and being able to stand up straight without getting dizzy.”

“After about two years of tippy toeing and trying to stretch myself to become taller, I succumbed to the dawning reality that my little brother was no longer ‘little’ anymore,” Brayden says.

“One day I just passed him up,” Gavin explains.

When Brayden was

younger, he played quite a few sports, like soccer, T-ball, basketball, and even karate, but he stopped doing all these activities over time, despite having some skill in karate.

“The sports I played taught me to persistently practice if you ever want to excel,” Brayden says.

Brayden is recognized as a very effective spiritual leader in school and at church. Bible teacher Dr. Brooke Hollingsworth says that he is respectful and humble, and shares wise thoughts in Bible class. Beyond that, Brayden has helped plan grade-level chapel for three years, and Hollingsworth says he “has defined the position of Spiritual Life Director for BCS.” He even sets the tone for the underclassmen on how to lead their classes spiritually.

“He thinks deeply about God and encourages others to do the same through his words and actions,” Hollingsworth says.

Through the years as Spiritual Life Director, Brayden has grown closer to Hollingsworth and is able to have great conversation about how to become stronger in their faith and “how to be a part of ministry through service to others.”

Brayden says he is fond of many teachers, but history teacher Jimmie Harper is his favorite. As Harper’s aide, he has been able to strengthen the connection, even if it’s through talking about video games.

“He not only taught me to have a love for history; he also exhibits a godly example for the students through his walk with God.”

History and Bible teacher Mel Witcher is another favorite. Brayden says he has loved every class with Witcher, describing his expertise in teaching and Christian values.

“He just gives off joy wherever he goes,” Brayden says. “He truly has a passion for teaching, and wisdom goes beyond knowledge. Most importantly I value his constancy to faith and how he is devoted to God through the way he lives his life.”

But Brayden’s favorite classes at BCS were actually biology and chemistry, which figures, since he plans on studying medicine and the sciences in pursuit of becoming a pharmacist, his dream job. After many thoughts and prayers, he has made the decision to enroll at the University of Texas at Arlington.

“I will be taking every course I have to in order to receive my PharmD,” Brayden explains.

Brayden won’t be leaving his musical side behind, though, and hopes to “continue in music, whether it be in joining a choir, taking lessons, or being in a musical.”

And his friends and teachers from Brentwood expect that Brayden’s humility and love for God won’t be left behind either.



Jillett brings tasty food, fun

By Hannah Womack

Every day at 6 a.m., Corey Jillett and his sous chef open the doors to the BCS cafeteria and begin to prep meals for the day. The food service director and his team make sure all the food comes out of the oven at the right temperature and with excellent taste. Later, he will begin running the cash registers, where students will pay for their food.

Although this is only the second year the stable, family-owned company Taher has provided BCS with cafeteria service, many students and faculty members have expressed satisfaction regarding the variety of freshly made options and quality service available.

Brentwood CFO Jeff Morris said the food is healthy, fresh, and tastes great. He also gives a lot of credit to Jillett.

“He puts tons of energy into making the food the best he can for the students, and he relates to and cares for the kids, getting to know them by name,” Morris said.

Many students have expressed appreciation for Jillett and his personable approach with them. Students describe Jillett as “chill” and “cool,” and many are impressed by the effort he makes to remember everyone’s name. Some have even developed a friendship with him.

“I talk trash about his (Houston) Texans, and he talks trash about my (Tennessee) Titans,” eighth-grader Dylan Nguyen said.

As a part of his job, each year Jillett attends a company conference in Minnesota, where he and other employees from all over the country

learn new information and share ideas. Jillett, who was formerly the assistant food director at Houston Christian, said that each month he tries to introduce fresh new options by having a limited time offer. He says the hardest part of his job is estimating how much of each product to cook. Sometimes they are just shy or just over the amount needed.

Morris said he meets with Jillett each week to discuss how things are going.

“He often tells me about individual conversations he has had with students and how he is taking their input into consideration for things like menu development,” Morris said.

A group of middle school students recently praised the chicken fried chicken meal.

“It’s absolutely perfect,” eighth-grader Kaitlyn Weilemann said.

Jillett and his wife Alyssah have two sons, a three-year old named Henry and a three-month-old named Owen. Jillett was born in Massachusetts, but grew up in North Carolina. When he was 12 years old, Jillett and his family moved to Houston, where he lived until he attended college at UTSA.

Jillett said he hopes to continue to grow the menu, and he also expects to eventually introduce a Kids In the Kitchen program. Children will sign up to come to the cafeteria, before or after school, and work on step-by-step instructions to make things like take-home pizzas.

As for working at BCS, Jillett said he has really appreciates the caring environment.

“I feel like Brentwood Christian is more like a community than a school,” he said.



Cafeteria Cory Food service director Corey Jillett, who works for Taher, has been a key part of the cafeteria’s growing popularity among both students and faculty.



Poignant play Juniors Adrie Gruis and Isaac Copeland perform in last week’s production of *Our Town*, depicting the everyday lives of the citizens of Grover’s Corners.

‘Our Town’ speaks to hearts

continued from page 1

Additionally, photographs depicting various everyday occurrences as well as important events in people’s lives hung from the rafters on stage. Clingan said he did this to show people the value of every moment that goes by in their lives.

Plans for unconventional staging in which some audience members would be on stage with the actors “didn’t pan out,” Clingan said, as blocking the show in that manner proved to be difficult. After talking it over with cast members, they agreed it was best not to try that approach.

Clingan said casting is always difficult, but he was extremely pleased with how things turned out, especially in regards to Gruis, Hejl, and junior Lorenzo Rivera, who was the stage

manager.

“The stage manager was my most difficult role to cast,” Clingan said. “I needed someone who could command the stage for long periods of time alone, had the ability to paint the picture of the town to the audience, as well as memorize enormous chunks of text, and speak them naturally and believably. Lorenzo did a fantastic job with all of these.”

Late night rehearsals, though necessary because of the little time given to pull of the performance, were sometimes tiring for students. Many cast members had to work on homework between scenes or talked quietly with friends to pass the time.

“The timing for everything was perfect,” senior DeanAlan Wiginton said. “It was amazing that we pulled it off with such a short amount of time.”

Sixth grade tours San Antonio museum

By Sophie Orlikoski

Brentwood Christian’s 52 sixth graders left campus at 7:15 a.m. on Jan. 9 to go to the Institute of Texan Cultures in downtown San Antonio, where they viewed exhibits on the many Texans who came from foreign countries to make their new home in Texas.

Starting out their time at the Institute, the students were paired together before being shown around the museum by tour guides.

After their tours, the students were able to visit the gift shop for a few brief minutes, and return to the patio, where they ate their packed lunches. After they finished eating, they played games like football or keep away, while others

sat on the benches and talked to their friends.

Once they finished, they had time to go around the museum in groups of two or three and conduct their own personal research for their projects with teachers Carrie Hunter, Cynthia Davis, Kay Taylor, Carol Neil, Debbie Strickland, and Nancy Meyer monitoring. They returned to Brentwood Christian a little before 4 p.m.

Previously, they had to reschedule their trip from Dec. 7 because of thunderous rainy weather with potential flooding. However, the day they picked turned out to be a day with good weather.

“It was great – it was perfect weather,” Hunter said.

First 5A season a struggle for boys

By Jackson Baird

With one final game remaining in district – a home game tonight against St. Michael’s – the varsity boys are 0-5 (8-20 overall) and will not make playoffs.

“I don’t think our record is indicative of how well we played,” head coach Brandon Greene said.

Moving up to 5A in TAPPS this year made it difficult for Greene to form any expectations for how they would finish in district. Knowing that their three new district opponents would be tough, he made the non-district schedule as difficult as he could.

“We’re not going to shy away from competition,” he said. “Top to bottom, I think this is the toughest schedule any Brentwood boys’ team has ever played.”

The Bears have been led by five seniors, whom Greene praised for their work ethic, which was on display every day at practice.

Senior Micah Best said he is thankful for his coach and teammates, and all the work they put in.

“We did what we could to prepare for district, it just didn’t go our way. We fought hard until the end,” he said.

With only one game remaining, Best reflected on his BCS basketball career.

“I’ve had such a fun time over the past four

years, and basketball has helped shape me into who I am today,” he said. “I’m thankful for every moment of it.”

Following are the team’s district results:
1/22: Hyde Park 83-78 L

Brentwood opened up their district play in controversial fashion. Many first-half turnovers put the Bears in a 30-26 halftime deficit. In the second half BCS fought back into the game with Hickl leading the charge with 12 second-half points, and they were down only two points heading into the fourth quarter.

With two seconds left and the Bears down by one, Troutman lobbed a full-court pass to Hickl, who shot a 10-foot fadeaway jumper which rolled around the rim before dropping through. But referees said that some Brentwood players had stepped on the court celebrating before time had expired. A technical foul was called, and the Panthers tied the game at 62 with a free throw, forcing overtime. Eventually a second overtime was required, and that’s when Hyde Park pulled away. Hickl led the Bears with 26, followed by Ging with 17.

1/25: @ Regents 65-28 L

In their second game in district play, Brentwood faced an extremely tall and athletic opponent. The game was close early on with the Bears down 13-11 at the end of the first quarter. The Knights exploded in the second quarter for 20 points, going into the half with a 33-20

lead. The struggles continued for BCS in the second half, as they were outscored 28-8 and held scoreless in the fourth.

1/29: @St. Michael’s 54-41 L

Ging’s three-pointer was the Bears’ only basket in the first quarter, and BCS trailed 33-11 at the half. In the second half the Bears picked up the scoring and made the game close in the fourth after holding St. Michael’s to only seven points in the final quarter. Junior Isaiah Davis led Brentwood with 14 points.

2/1: @ Hyde Park 62-55 L

Missing two players who were performing in the school play that night, the boys got into foul trouble and found themselves down by 16 at halftime. But the Bears “played their hearts out” in the second half, according to Greene, and cut the deficit to only three points with just under a minute to go. Final shots would not fall, and the Bears

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photo: Darnell Mack

One point Senior Micah Best takes a free throw during a road game last month. Best is one of five seniors who coach Brandon Greene says lead by their work ethic.

Softball team ready to roll

By Natalie Hargrove

The Lady Bears softball team is hopeful as they start out with new foundations after closing out last season with a 6-11 record, not making playoffs. Their first game will be later this month.

Like their friends in volleyball, basketball, and soccer, the girls face the added challenge of competing in their new 5A district this year. The team only lost one senior from last season and will have three all-district players returning: senior Laurn Williams, who made first team; junior Alyssa Mancias, who made second team; and sophomore Caroline Griffith, who made honorable mention.

Head coach Paul Sladek said he has several expectations for the team.

“I expect us to be fighting for a top-two spot in our district. I expect our defense to be arguably a top-five defense in the state. I expect us to have a good pitcher/catcher combination, and lastly I expect to score a lot of runs this year,” Sladek said.

He said the team really needs to be gelling at

the right time.

“The goal for this team is to be playing our best ball at the beginning of our district season,” Sladek said.

Helping Sladek with the coaching again this season is Phil Koehler.

“I was a bit apprehensive at the beginning of last season, but after the progress we have made, I am really confident in this team,” Koehler said.

The infield will be led by the gloves of Williams and senior Kori Howell. On the mound will be sophomore Molly Stewart, and catching for her will be sophomore Natalie Hargrove. In the outfield, senior Christi Snow will lead with her strong defense.

“I look forward to seeing the team conquer different challenges, and growing in team chemistry,” Williams said.

Sladek said he is looking forward to a good season.

“We have to have coachable players who trust the process and understand we need every single player to be ready to be “the one” when the time occurs,” he said.

New coach leads baseball

By Emma Ayers

Under new coach Jeffrey Doege, the BCS varsity baseball team opens their season on Saturday, Feb. 9, at 10 a.m. at Thorndale. The team began after-school practices on Jan. 14, as they prepare for their first season against TAPPS 5A competition.

After finishing last year as district champions under head coach Mike Bando, several players made the all-district team, including graduates Dillon Smith and Diego Escobedo, and current players Jack Oberwortmann and Travis Whitaker. Without Escobedo, who was the ace of the pitching staff, this year’s team will have to rely on Whitaker and sophomore Riley Keesy to step up and take the mound.

“We have a lot of new players this season,” said Whitaker, a junior. “I’m excited to see how we hold out in a new district.”

Doege says that the team is working a lot on structure and community this year. He also says that he has always been a huge advocate for the value of connection between members of the team.

“It’s all about what each player can do for the team, whether you’re a starter or not,” he said. “As long as you put in 100 percent and love what you’re doing, that’s what I’m asking for.”

Doege is also trying to put a focus on pitching and defense above anything else, in order to achieve his goal of winning 15 games this season.

“I think you have to have those two things down before you can work on situational hitting,” he says.

Oberwortmann, a senior who plays catcher, is excited about the season.

“Coach Doege is a seriously experienced baseball coach. He used his connections to develop a 30-game schedule this year. Along with the new batting cage gifted by the parents, this is shaping up to be a fun season,” he said.

Doege is also implementing the first BCS junior varsity baseball team.

“It’s all about seeing where the players fit as individuals and as a team,” Doege says. “I think that the JV team is capable of seeing a lot of success, and I hope they will put the work in to make that happen.”

Lady Bears need win tonight for chance at playoffs

By Natalie Hargrove

Tonight's home game with St. Michael's scheduled for 6:30 p.m. will determine whether or not the Lady Bears qualify for playoffs. With a victory and a Hyde Park loss to Regents, BCS would be in a three-way tie for second in district. If the tie-breaker system comes out in the Bears' favor, they would have a playoff game next week.

Brentwood is currently 1-4 in district (16-13 overall) and has found their new TAPPS 5A district challenging. They no longer have easy wins on their district schedule, and new coach Mike Milligan said this has been a difficult adjustment for the team.

"Our girls are learning we have to play hard the whole game," he said. "Our margin of error is very little."

As a new coach coming into a successful program with a "different way of doing

things," Milligan says there was an adjustment period that "hurt us at the beginning." But he is pleased with the progress the girls have made.

"We have good enough players – if we all work together and play as a unit – to beat any team," Milligan said. "When we do what we're supposed to do for 32 minutes and play together, we should win."

Regardless of whether the team makes playoffs, junior Jenna Riley said she is excited to keep working during off-season and is hopeful for what the team can do next year.

"I'll be disappointed if we don't get to go to playoffs, but I think that through this season we became closer as a team, and we made memories that I will never forget," Riley said.

Following are the team's district results:

1/22: Hyde Park 35-25 L

The Lady Bears had a back-and-forth run in the first half, as Riley and senior Nyna Vazquez both had 7 points. The game was tied as the

fourth quarter began, but the Bears struggled with turnovers and gave up too many easy shots.

1/25: @ Regents 60-34 L

Playing in front of a noisy crowd, the Lady Bears started the game with eight turnovers and bad shots, and Regents took a large lead. The girls played a better second quarter but had trouble against the press and could not keep up with the Knights' speed. Vazquez led the team with 14 points, and senior Jaclyn Wishard had 8.

1/29: @ St. Michael's 40-39 L

The Lady Bears started out strong with a 14-point lead in the first quarter, and by half-time the girls were up 29-11. After halftime, St. Michael's began to dominate with offensive rebounds, getting lots of second-chance points. Brentwood struggled with turnovers, and the game slipped away.

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photo: Darnell Mack

Triple-team Senior Kayla Mayo looks for help in a recent non-district game.

Girls' soccer team shows unity, gains experience for future

By Genevieve Graessle

Though the girls' varsity soccer season did not look promising, with a small roster full of new players, the team has been encouraged by its performance in its last several games. They finished the season with a 0-6 record in district.

Moving up to 5A made this an unusual season for the team; there are only three other schools in the district, so they had a total of six district games.

With a roster of only 13 girls, it was hard for the team to fill up a field for a full game at the beginning of the season. The girls played a few games with only 10 players, and they even went up against Hyde Park with only nine players on the field for a majority of the game.

"I was very proud of the girls' attitude and positivity throughout the season," head coach Shelby Strong said. "They never blamed each other for any mishaps and always lifted each other up. I thought it was a beautiful example of Christ-like love."

Each game, the team gained experience and learned how to connect better.

"I have liked soccer a lot this year," junior Jillian Hamilton said. "Our new coach is super fun, and I loved getting to help the new players familiarize themselves with the sport."

With the team made up of many newcomers, there are a few standout players. Sophomore Julia Glenn scored three goals as forward this season. Holding up the defensive end were sophomores Celeste Metayer and Hailey Reich. Making a difference in the midfield was junior Genevieve Graessle, with two goals.



photo: Dorothy Walters

Stride for stride Sophomore Julia Glenn, the team's leading scorer, leads the charge downfield for the Lady Bears during a chilly 3-0 loss to Hyde Park on Jan. 29.

Having such a young team is encouraging for those looking toward next year. The team will not lose any seniors and will hopefully continue to gain eager and willing players. The team is working hard all year to stay in shape and be ready for next year's season.

"On the whole, we improved immensely throughout the year," Strong said.

Following are recaps of the team's most recent games:

1/11: @ Texas Military Institute 1-1

Although the conditions were not looking good for the Lady Bears on this cold, rainy night, they fought their hardest and were able to maintain a tie against TMI. Glenn scored in the first half, and the team was able to keep the lead till the second half. Sophomore Caroline Griffith made many great saves in her first game with the team.

1/15: @ Hyde Park 7-0 L

Playing with two fewer people than their opponent, the team had a hard first district game. The Panthers controlled the ball most of the game, and the Bears were not able to get a good shot off.

1/18: Regents 1-0 L

In probably the team's best match so far, Brentwood controlled the play of this game. Regents took an early lead in the first half, and the Bears were never able to get their own.

1/25: St. Michael's 5-1 L

The Bears finished the first half confident, with the score at 2-1 after Graessle scored off of a free kick right outside the box. However, the team was not able to prevent three more goals from St. Michael's in the second half.

1/29: Hyde Park 3-0 L

The score of this game shows just how much improvement the team is making. Although Hyde Park was able to get three goals, the Bears held them back for almost the entire second half. It was yet another freezing night for the team.

1/31: @ Regents 3-1 L

The Bears went into this game optimistic, but had trouble working against this team during the rainy game. Reich was able to score in the first half off of a corner.

2/4: @ St. Michael's 5-1 L

In the first game in good weather of the season, the Lady Bears fought hard to the end. Glenn scored a strong goal late in the second half with an assist from Graessle. The defense did their best, but St. Michael's managed to score multiple goals on their senior night.

Kolagani wins second bee in three years with ‘ziti’

By Quentin Fowler

Fifth-grader Michael Kolagani took home the gold with the winning word “ziti” in the 17th round during this year’s annual school-wide spelling bee on Jan. 15 in the auditorium. In order to secure his win, Kolagani defeated seventh-grader Renne Cooper, who was the runner-up.

The event began at 9:30 a.m., and Kolagani ended the bee at 10:58 with the correct spelling of the championship word. It was Kolagani’s second time to win the school bee, which he also won in third grade.

“Since it was my second win, it was pretty normal, because after I lost in fourth grade I studied much harder for this year’s,” Kolagani said.

The beginning of the bee consisted of 24 elementary and middle school students, including a surprising six eighth-graders.

Last year’s winner was seventh-grader Mia Fluitt, with Kolagani coming in third. This year he got his redemption and will be proceeding

to the state competition. The national bee will take place at the Gaylord National Resort and Convention Center in National Harbor, Maryland, from Sunday, May 26 to Friday, May 31.

Kolagani said he is not very nervous about the state bee because the only difference in the two bees is that the state bee has a more professional feel.

“I don’t really study harder for the state bee, because I already study extra extra hard for all of my bees,” Kolagani said about his study habits.

Crowd favorite Jason Tukunang, a second grader, placed third in the bee and received the special award for poise. Other students given special awards were sixth-grader Conor Schehl for spirit, third-grader Tobi Olasode for enunciation, and Cooper for sportsmanship.

Certain adults were in charge of making sure various aspects of the event ran smoothly. Those adults were event coordinator Sharonda Cooper, pronouncer Dr. Brooke Hollingsworth, and judges Mara Ashley, Carrie Hunter, and elementary librarian Tere Hager.



The champ Fifth-grader Michael Kolagani, with classmate and competitor Tanner Hunka, won this year’s spelling bee over runner-up Renne Cooper on Jan. 15.



Super Seniors! Tuesday, Feb. 5, was the traditional Super Senior celebration, held at Westover Hills Church of Christ. Pictured are Esther Shin, Jade Wright, Max Cooper, Joslyn Hoffmeyer-Gay, Anam Mohammed, Corrie Hager, and Christine Jo.

Basketball stories continued

continued from pages 6 and 7

Boys

fell short again. Hickl led Brentwood with 17 points, and Troutman had 15.

2/5: Regents 66-42 L

Determined to play the district leaders closer than before, Greene planned to slow the game down and force Regents to hit shots from the outside. The Bears were able to hold their opponent close until midway through the second quarter, when they got into foul trouble. Down by 16 at halftime, BCS opened the third quarter by picking up the pace, which played right into the hands of the Knights. Best, Ging, and Hickl each scored 10 for the Bears.

Girls

2/1: @ Hyde Park 40-36 W

After a strong first half, Brentwood led 20-15. A Hyde Park run in the third quarter put Brentwood behind 28-27. But the girls refused to lose again, making big plays and winning the fourth quarter by five. Wishard led with 14 points and 11 rebounds; senior Kayla Mayo had 15 rebounds, and Vazquez totaled 5 steals.

2/5: Regents 54-45 L

The Lady Bears played it close in the first quarter, but were down 31-18 at the half. They fought back and actually outrebounded Regents, but they had too many turnovers.

Cooper wins geography bee

By Quentin Fowler

Seventh-grader Renne Cooper won Brentwood Christian’s annual National Geographic Bee on Jan. 16 in the CSA theater, defeating fellow seventh-grader Nathan Thom in the championship round.

One day earlier, Cooper had finished second in the school spelling bee.

“It felt like if I got in second again like I did in the spelling bee it would be really lame, but then I redeemed myself, which was great,” Cooper said.

Cooper and Thom were in the championship round after being the only contestants to make it through seven rounds.

The championship round consisted of three questions, and the champion was the one who answered the most questions correctly. First, Cooper correctly answered a question about tourism and Lake Huron. Next, Thom correct-

ly identified the location of the Alpine World Ski Championships in Sweden, which tied the score. Finally, Cooper correctly identified Panama as the Central American country in which Darién National Park is located.

“The answer to the last question was a complete guess, and I was really surprised I got it right,” Cooper admitted.

The theater was mostly full, including students from third through eighth grades, as well as a few high school students and several parents and grandparents.

Cooper took an online test last week to see if he qualifies for the state GeoBee. Whether or not he advances will be announced on March 4, and the actual state bee will be held on March 29. The winner of that bee advances to the national GeoBee, which will be held on May 19-22 at the National Geographic Society headquarters in Washington, D.C.