

Advancement Team Update



COVID-19 AID FUND

#FLAMESSTRONG

Alumni, parents, faculty, staff, students, and friends shared 98 gifts totaling \$26,920 for the April 22 #FlamesStrong Giving Day for our COVID-19 Aid Fund. Additional gifts brought the fund to \$31,448 as of May 11. EMS committed to supporting families experiencing coronavirus related hardships. Gifts are still welcome! easternmennonite.org/support



The engraved brick pavers celebrating students, alumni, businesses, and other supporters are in place between our covered bridge and the lower (elementary) building. Thank you to the 164 people who purchased bricks to help us fund this space where we will gather, play, and learn!

Fore the Flames Golf Tournament Update

We canceled the May 1 Fore the Flames Golf Tournament which would have benefited financial aid and athletics. Many generous tournament sponsors opted to support the COVID-19 Aid Fund instead, forward their sponsorship to the 2021 tourney, or support the fall Harvest Celebration event, which we hope to hold Nov. 6.



Come to Connect: Homecoming Weekend, Oct. 16-18, 2020.

We plan to safely connect. Plans will evolve, given COVID-19 limitations. **Those whose grad year ends in 0 or 5 have reunions this year!** easternmennonite.org/homecoming

“We were strong relationally before COVID-19. And we are able to shine more than ever in this crisis because of that.”

-Justin King, high school principal

Today is written, unless otherwise noted, by Andrea Schrock '82 Wenger, Director of Advancement and designed by Lindsey Kolb. Editorial assistance by Erin Kennedy Hess, Christine Glick '93 Fairfield, and Trisha Maust '95 Blosser of the advancement team. Most photos in this issue were submitted by the teacher or student in the photo. Other photos by Andrea Wenger.

Send feedback to today@easternmennonite.org
Find past issues at easternmennonite.org/today



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TODAY

Volume 37, No. 3
Spring 2020

Dates We Missed

With heavy hearts this spring, we canceled...

- High school play: *Alice in Wonderland*
- E-term and Explore Week
- Entire sports seasons
- Touring Choir's full schedule and Mennonite choral festival
- Middle school play: *The Somewhat True Tale of Robin Hood*
- Elementary dessert theater
- Junior-Senior Banquet in its usual form
- Community Service Day and Field Day
- Fifth grade graduation
- Eighth grade celebration
- Senior "Skip Day" and other traditions
- Baccalaureate
- Summer Touring Choir Europe tour

See details on page 6 on how we are celebrating seniors! Watch for photos in the next issue of *Today!*

Find more about much of the content in this issue at easternmennonite.org/news or by going to YouTube and searching for "Eastern Mennonite School."



Paul Leaman, head of school, walks into an empty upper building, on the first day of closure.

Community Keeps Us Strong During COVID-19 Closure

Nothing I have done in my 30+ years as an educator and school administrator compares to the challenges brought by COVID-19.

As a small private school, EMS was uniquely positioned to nimbly respond to our students' social and emotional well being, as well as educational needs. Thanks to the diligent work and commitment of our teachers, our move to virtual learning formats was nearly seamless, though not without pain and loss. Our students demonstrated resilience and positivity, even as they grieved lost time with friends, athletic competition, performances, and celebrations.

Our resilience as a community in a time of crisis came, in part,

because we are intentional about building relationships in "normal" times. We encourage students, teachers and staff to listen to each other, not just to hear, but to develop empathy and understanding.

This strength as a community allowed us to shine in this dark time. In these days and always, EMS aspires to reflect Christ's light as a learning community **where every student belongs, thrives, and lives God's call.** We remain committed to that vision and join with the broader community in prayer for people of all ages and places as we rely on God's grace in difficult times.

— Paul Leaman, Head of School

MISSION:

Eastern Mennonite School joins home and church in calling students to faith in Jesus Christ, academic excellence, personal integrity, and compassionate service in the world.

VISION:

Eastern Mennonite School aspires to reflect Christ's light as a learning community where every student belongs, thrives, and lives God's call.

FOLLOW US:



CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2020!

Principal Justin King delivered yard signs, caps, and gowns to each senior's home in late May. Senior presentations, an important milestone and culmination of Kingdom Living class, took place this year on Google Meet with invited guests.

Teachers and administrators cheered the seniors on Friday, June 5, as they drove through the auditorium lot to receive a logo blanket, a specially designed class t-shirt, and a unique mug created by ceramist Herb Weaver '75. Read more about the mugs at easternmennonite.org/news.

Commencement is scheduled for Sunday, June 14, in the auditorium parking lot with invited guests in cars and at a safe distance.

Our hearts, prayers and love are with the 39 members of the class of 2020!



EMS is #FlamesStrong

Rapidly changing information, disbelief, fear, and confusion hit EMS in early March as much of the rest of the country began its own journey with COVID-19. Our last “normal” day of school was Thursday, March 12, when students departed for what they thought would be a long weekend, wrapping up third quarter.

From March 18 through June 5, kindergarten through grade 12 classes continued virtually. Teachers, principals, and counselors tuned in first to students’ social and emotional well being, even as they facilitated curricular work.

Administrators reviewed parent and student feedback, continuously adapting programming. “We were strong relationally before COVID-19,” reflects Justin King, high school

principal. “And we are able to shine more than ever in this crisis because of that.”

One parent observed: “The quick response EMS has had in the midst of the pandemic has enabled EMS students to continue learning and advancing academically in ways their peers in other school systems, unfortunately, haven’t been able to. This is a blessing we don’t take for granted.”

In the next issue of *Today* we will report on scenarios for EMS life together this fall as we remain nimble and ready to respond to public health directives. While it is hard to change, we are grateful for our learning community, ready to adapt to our changing world, and nurture the students in our care for positive and productive futures.

Glimpses of EMS COVID-19 experience



#FlamesStrong Together AND Apart

Teachers and staff shared images with each other from their home offices on the first day of online teaching.

Photos: (clockwise, from top left): Anna Haarer, family consumer science teacher, with Zoey; Maria Lorcás, strings teacher; Jennifer Young, PE, driver’s ed, and first aid teacher; Mr. Elliot, 5th grade assistant teacher; Susan Melendez, 6th grade teacher; Lizzy Miller, math teacher, with co-worker, Owen

Creative Classrooms

Teachers navigated PowerSchool Learning Management System, various video-making tools, Google Meet, Zoom, and other technologies to deliver creative content and engage with students 1:1 and in groups.

See videos from many of these activities on the EMS YouTube channel.

CLASS WORK INCLUDED:

- A smoothie making lab in each person’s kitchen with Ms. Haarer
- Watercolor tutorials using supplies picked up from school with Ms. Gascho
- How to bake a cake, in Spanish, with Ms. Yutzky and Ms. Eshleman-Robles

PE at Home

EMS students stayed active through home-based “Olympics” events and challenges. Weekly videos featured interviews and demonstrations by alumni athletes, area coaches, and fitness experts. Students shared photos and videos with teachers and classmates.

- Real-time AP Lit discussions with Ms. Cranston
- Virtual field trips
- Video messages from the principals
- Elementary “show and tell” Zoom meetings
- Google Meet math work groups
- Presentations of work for peers
- Sixth grade Friday challenges

A Lost Spring Sports Season

Golf, boys tennis, track and field, baseball, girls soccer...

Missing an entire season and thinking about what might have been was hard. Andrew Gascho, athletic director and girls varsity soccer coach, shared an Open Letter with Athletes, and the Daily News-Record ran a lengthy story about the potential of our girls varsity soccer season. See both at easternmennonite.org/news

Meade Slonaker was looking to repeat as individual golf champion in the VIC as well as VISAA. As a team, the boys were well positioned to make a run at both conference and state championships.

The lasting relationships and lessons learned from past seasons became the focus for coaches interacting with disappointed student athletes.



Library Book Exchange

More than 60 students requested books – some as many as 20 titles – for the first library exchange day organized by librarian, Julianne Ross, April 29. A second exchange followed in May. Especially fun, said Ross, was filling requests for “surprise” books based on student interests.



Student Council Stays Active

SCO met weekly to keep the #FlamesStrong spirit high and share student perspectives with faculty sponsors and principals. See results of the Virtual Spirit Week on the playlist by that name on the EMS YouTube channel.



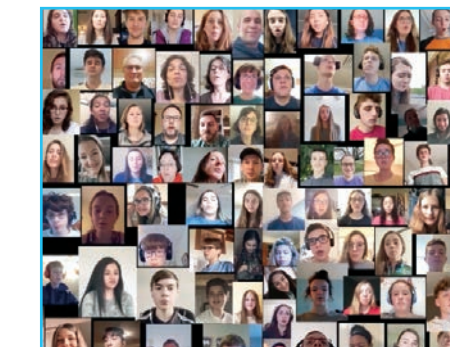
Faith Formation Continues

Faculty met to pray daily for students; counselors met 1:1 and with groups; students had drop in support groups; “mini chapels,” and online K-5 Gathering were posted; the girls varsity soccer team held Bible study; Bible classes continued. See examples at EMS YouTube.



Some Good News from EMES

Fifth grade students created their own version of the popular SGN (Some Good News) series with John Krasinski. SGN saw their Instagram post and wrote: “This is a teacher curriculum we can get behind!” Sample EMES learning videos, including the SGN segment, on YouTube. Search “Eastern Mennonite School.”



Virtual Choir Blesses 1,000s

In the early days of closure, Jared Stutzman produced a video with our choirs, inviting faculty, staff, and alumni to sing along. The message of John Bell’s “Don’t Be Afraid” resonated with more than 33,000 listeners online. Find the link on the EMS Touring Choir Facebook page and YouTube channel. Full story at easternmennonite.org/news



Service in Seclusion

Students in all grade levels served others even from home. Older elementary students read books on video to younger students. Others created handmade cards and wrote notes to first responders, health care workers, and residents of retirement communities. Sixth graders helped out by cooking, organizing cupboards, and taking care of younger siblings.