

Advancement Team Update

EMS remained strong this year despite COVID-related challenges and expenses. We are grateful for:

- 689 donors to the **2nd Century Annual Fund**, which includes gifts to the **Christmas Fund Drive**, the **Great Community Give** and **VDOE's tax credit program** for financial aid.
- 28 people who have let us know they have included EMS in their will or estate plan, and joined our **1917 Circle**.
- 128 supporters of special programs like the **COVID Aid Fund and auction**, and 140 golfers and 41 sponsors for the April 30 golf tournament for athletics and student financial aid.

Help us end the 2020-21 fiscal year strong!

Your gifts before June 30 will help us close the gap in our 2nd Century Fund which provides for day-to-day expenses such as financial aid, teacher salaries, and school supplies. You can make an even greater impact that's easy for you by making a recurring, monthly gift to offer sustained support throughout our year.

easternmennonite.org/support

Come to Connect: Homecoming Weekend

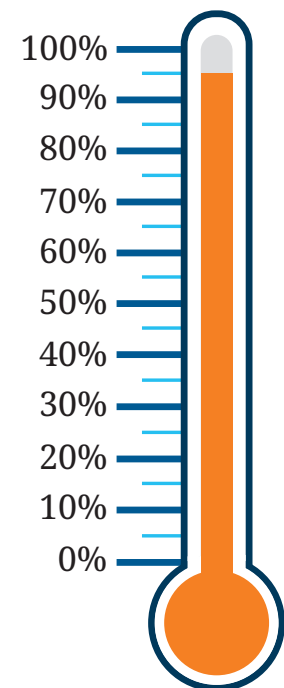
Oct. 15 & 16, 2021

Join us for Friday night volleyball and Saturday:

- Breakfast with alumni awardees.
- Tours of upper and lower buildings.
- Picnic by athletic Booster Club.
- Former faculty and staff gathering.
- 4-6:30 p.m. EMS Music Celebration.
- Reunions for class years ending in 1 and 6.

easternmennonite.org/homecoming

2ND CENTURY FUND 



95% raised

Goal: \$505,000

Raised: \$480,516



Honor a Teacher

Elwood Yoder (see p. 4) taught EMS board chair Jeff Shank '90 and his sons, Ryan '21 and Tyler '24. "Elwood had an impact on hundreds of alumni whose worldview and faith were shaped in his classroom," says Jeff. Consider a gift to EMS by June 30 in honor of Elwood or another teacher. Gifts help make EMS an option for more students.

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. Courtesy photos throughout by EMS faculty, staff, and parents. Banquet photo (p. 3) and center graduation photo (p. 6) by Tiffany Showalter.

Send feedback to today@easternmennonite.org

Find past issues at easternmennonite.org/today

In admissions processes, Eastern Mennonite School does not discriminate on the basis of any race, color, handicap, national or ethnic origin, or religion, and admits students to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school.

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the school's non-discrimination policies, including its Title IX policy: Andrea Wenger, director of advancement, 540-236-6026. For assistance related to Title IX or other civil rights laws, please contact OCR at OCR@ed.gov or 800-421-3481, TDD 800-877-8339.



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TODAY

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Do you know...

- **A student who would benefit from EMS?** While grades K-6 are at capacity for fall 2021, we are able to accommodate a few more students in grades 7-12. Call Marsha Thomas, admissions counselor, to begin the summer admissions process at 540-236-6012.
- **A student interested in admission for the '22-23 year?** Find visit dates and an inquiry form at easternmennonite.org/visit
- People who would make good **hosts for international students?** Students need homes every year! Hosts receive compensation. Read about this year's students and host information at easternmennonite.org/news



State of the School 2021: A New Era

Most of Eastern Mennonite School's 357 students, K to 12, came to school daily throughout the 2020-21 school year.

Our students wore masks, kept distance, wiped desks, ate lunch outside (a good change!), adjusted to new schedules, and limited interactions to smaller groups. Some did classwork from home for the safety of compromised family members, because of a part-time job, or due to involvement in other activities that increased their possible exposure to COVID-19.

It was hard in many ways. But it also brought our learning community together in care, support, and encouragement for one another.

I cannot adequately thank our families who took health screening practices seriously, our flexible and committed teachers, and our students whose attitudes were exemplary. We all felt the encouragement of our alumni and supporters. Read on for more stories of grace, learning, and hope in a time of COVID.

— Paul Leaman, Head of School



CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2021!

The school's 103rd commencement ceremony celebrating 47 graduating seniors was held Sunday, June 6 on the lawn outside the auditorium. Family and friend groups sat in socially distanced sections to cheer on their loved ones.

Deanna Reed, Mayor of the City of Harrisonburg, brought the address. Student speakers were Nicolas Jones, Anna Stempel, Maggie Fairfield, and Emma Myers.

Photo (left): Maria Archer (center), K-8 principal, with class of '21 graduates who attended Eastern Mennonite Elementary School. Photo (right): Emily Garcia receives a bear hug from a beloved uncle, celebrating the first member in the family to earn a high school diploma.

See coverage, including a photo gallery and video link, at easternmennonite.org/commencement



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E-Term and Explore Week

“Slavery in Rockingham County,” singing together for the first time, and learning from area streams were among the experiences offered to students in mid-April. The days were a COVID-adjusted and safe alternative to the usual week-long spring experiential learning offered for grades 6-12 known as E-term and Explore Week.

The group experiences included:

- Advocacy and Affirmation with Shannon Roth
- Day Mountain Hikes with Paul Leaman and Jennifer Young
- Dungeons and Dragons with Malea Gascho and Jodi Hertzler
- Fishing in the Valley with Andrew Gascho and Justin King
- Fly a Plane and Hike a Cave with Mary Cranston
- Golf: Business and Service with Chad Seibert

- Jewelry Crafting with Anna Haarer and Julianne Ross
- Mountain Biking and Service with Sarah Mitch
- Online Ultimate Smash Brothers with Kevin Carini
- Service, Silence, and Solitude with Curt Stutzman
- Touring Choir at Highland Retreat with Jared Stutzman, Christine Fairfield, and Jesse Blosser

- 6th and 7th grade at Riven Rock and Lake at Cedar Hill
- 8th grade in downtown Harrisonburg and at Camp Brethren Woods

“We were so grateful for the chance to learn to know each other and God’s world in different settings, including the glorious springtime of the Shenandoah Valley,” said Paul Leaman, head of school, who led two hikes in Shenandoah National Park.

A Nod to “Normal”

As COVID-restrictions began to ease this spring, students enjoyed versions of some long-held EMS traditions.



Fourth and fifth graders put on a play outdoors for the elementary school’s annual **dessert theater**.



Community Service Day in outdoor nearby settings with small groups revived the tradition which took a hiatus last spring.



Juniors and seniors enjoyed a **banquet and party** at the outdoor venue, On Sunny Slope Farm, May 1. Masks and distancing didn’t dampen the fun.



A May 26 whirlwind **senior trip** to D.C. included the Smithsonian’s National Zoo and Museum of African-American History and Culture. The day ended with a (rained out) Nationals game.



Senior presentations for Kingdom Living class – relegated to Zoom last year – took place in the auditorium with masked and distanced family and friends.



Touring Choir sang together for the first time at Highland Retreat during E-term, shared a parents-only program in mid May, and a few outdoor church programs.



Belonging

This year we reflected on belonging and our aspiration to be a “learning community where every student belongs, thrives, and lives God’s call.” Students, staff, and guests shared stories of belonging via video during elementary gathering and upper level chapel.

We learned that everyone struggles at times to feel that they belong. Talking about it can help to make it a little safer for people to speak up when they feel left out. See EMS chapel YouTube channel.

Photo: Students on site helped distance learners feel connected.

Flames News

Varsity athletics teams had a chance at competitive play this winter and spring with masking and distance learning while in season.

Spring highlights included:

At the Virginia Independent Schools Athletic Association (VISAA) state-wide meet, **Gabriel Albers ’21** was named Athlete of the Meet and Most Valuable Runner for DII. He broke two school records in both hurdle events. Overall, the boys team finished 6th with 53 points, and the Flames had 17 top 10 finishes.

Ryan Slonaker ’24 shot a 68 (-4) at Williamsburg National Golf Club to claim the VISAA Division III state title. He finished with an eagle, four birdies, 11 pars, and just two bogeys. He won the individual championship by one stroke with a birdie on the 18th hole.

The **girls varsity soccer team** had two thrilling wins in the first



Gabriel Albers '21



Ryan Slonaker '24



and quarterfinal rounds of VISAA state play, winning both games in penalty kicks, the second in a sudden victory knockout. They dropped 0-2 in the final game of the season to Covenant in the state semifinal.

Throughout the whole year, JV and middle school teams met for skill-building activities. Middle and high school intramural teams competed in pickleball, disc golf, volleyball, spikeball, and cornhole to stay active.

Farewell

After 33 years of teaching history and Bible classes at EMS, **Elwood Yoder** is moving on to write a Virginia Mennonite history book. Family who joined a May 3 recognition were: Philip '10, Elwood and Joy, Maria '06 and Aaron Billings, and grandchildren. Son, Nathaniel '04, lives in



Kansas with Maggie and their children. Read more about Mr. Yoder’s contributions at easternmennonite.org/news

Chad Seibert transitioned away from teaching PE and coaching boys varsity basketball. He led the team to three consecutive Virginia Independent School Athletic Association (VISAA) state semi final appearances, finishing



as state runner up in 2019 and 20. The 2019-20 team won the Division II Virginia Independent Conference (VIC) championship. More at easternmennonite.org/news

Laura Hershey Herr will focus on full-time motherhood after six years teaching mathematics and, the last two years, as middle school team leader.

