

THE CLASSICAL ACADEMY EXISTS TO ASSIST PARENTS IN THEIR MISSION TO DEVELOP EXEMPLARY CITIZENS EQUIPPED WITH ANALYTICAL THINKING SKILLS, VIRTUOUS CHARACTER, AND A PASSION FOR LEARNING, ALL BUILT UPON A SOLID FOUNDATION OF KNOWLEDGE.

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PALMARIUM

Remembering Our Roots

STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS for TCA MARCHING BAND and CROSS COUNTRY

The 2022-23 school year marks the **25th Anniversary** of TCA. As we progress through this year the pages of the PALMARIUM will touch on different elements of our history, including *character* - which we wrap-up this month with two questions from the Directors of Character interviews earlier this year (see pp. 3-5 in this issue). Beginning in early 2023, we will touch on highlights from some founders and long-time staff. Thanks for being a part of the TCA community and for your support through the years. We look forward to the journey ahead and the next 25 years.

TCA Marching Band recently garnered the **2A Marching Band State Championship** in Grand Junction, CO. This title marks the fourth title overall, and second consecutive championship since first competing in 2015. TCA has finished in the top-3 every year of the competition, including runner-up for the championship in 2019.



TCA's Boys Cross Country recently won both the team **3A State Championship** and **Individual State Champion** title - *Senior Chandler Wilburn* - at the meet in Colorado Springs, CO. The 2022 championship marks the eighth boys title since TCA first took the honors in 2004. The Girls Cross Country team has garnered fourteen state titles over the years and finished 2nd at state in 2022.

See page 8 for more photos and information.



In this month's issue you will find the final two questions from the interview of TCA's former Directors of Character. Additionally, details are provided on upcoming *Beyond the Book Club* studies, Veterans Day, *Wreaths Across America*, and a brief synopsis of the most recent year's state assessment results.

The Editor



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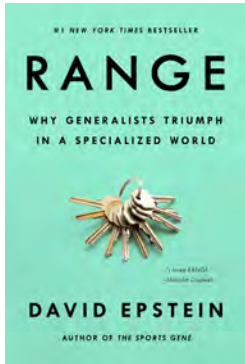
SEVEN SCHOOLS • THREE CAMPUSES • ONE VISION

25 Years - Remembering Our Roots

RANGE

Beyond the Book Club Study

The third *Beyond the Book Club* study of the school year will be during the **February 21-23, 2023** timeframe. The 90-minute study sessions take place at the



TCA North Elementary library from 4:30-6:00 pm. For this study Wes Jolly, TCA's Director of Academic Services,

will lead us through a discussion of *Range: Why Generalists Triumph in a Specialized World* by David Epstein. If you'd like to be added to the RSVP invite that goes out about three weeks in advance of the book studies send an e-mail to me at wjolly@asd20.org and I'll add you to the list for the final details e-mail. Both staff and parents are invited to participate. Thoughts on this book from Amanda Ripley, a previous author we've read - "I want to give *Range* to any kid who is being forced to take violin lessons but really wants to learn the drums; to any programmer who secretly dreams of becoming a psychologist; to everyone who wants humans to thrive in an age of robots. *Range* is full of surprises and hope, a twenty-first century survival guide."



VETERANS DAY 2022

On Friday, November 11, TCA hosted our Veterans Day Assembly after several years of cancellations due to either weather or the pandemic. It was wonderful to gather together again to honor those who have served our great nation. Students from across all school and grade levels at TCA shared the *Pledge of Allegiance*, the *Star Spangled Banner*, *God Bless America*, the *Marches of the Armed Forces*, the *Preamble to the Constitution*, the *Gettysburg Address*, plus other songs and musical interludes. The special guest speaker for the morning was **Chief Master Sergeant (Retired) Bob Vásquez**. He challenged those in attendance with his message on *The Essence of Service*.



CHIEF VÁSQUEZ: ESSENCE OF SERVICE



VETERANS DAY
HONORING ALL WHO SERVED



In May 2022, I had the opportunity to interview TCA's three former Directors of Character: **Dr. Russ Sojourner, Ruth Miller, and Betsy Brown**. Over the course of three PALMARIUM volumes this year we have shared portions of the interview transcripts to provide insight into the development of our Character efforts at TCA over the past 25 years. The questions below will be listed in blue followed by the individual answers.

W. Jolly: Over 25 years there has been lots of change in the world in which we live. Many would say the challenges that students face today are different than those TCA students faced back in the late 1990's. What impact, if any, does this have on character education?

R. Sojourner: Just last week, I had an opportunity to speak to all our elementary staff members in staff meetings and our College Pathways staff members in their staff meeting. I spoke to them about the ills associated with social media.

When I think about the evolution of the past 25 years, I suspect that Betsy and Vance Brown couldn't have envisioned, while sitting in a kitchen working... coming up with a mission statement and this idea of, "how will we inculcate virtuous character among our kids?" That the idea kids would be carrying around—what I believe is the largest detriment to innocence and good character development—the handheld smart phone and unfettered access to social media.

And so, this subject is near and dear to my heart, because it shows how significant the challenge is today. And it has always been a big challenge. It is a greater challenge today than it ever has been—partly because of the divide in our country: blue vs. red, Christian vs. non-Christian, black vs. white.

Social media access can lead to all sorts of bad things and that has created a great challenge and problem for us. I am going to reference a recent article by social psychologist and professor of ethical leadership, Dr. Jonathan Haidt. He just wrote this in *The Atlantic*. The title is: *Why the Past Ten Years of American Life Have Been Uniquely Stupid*. I want to read you a couple of quotes.

[Haidt] "It's been clear for quite a while now that red America and blue America are becoming like two different countries claiming the same territory, with two different versions of the Constitution, economics, and American history. But [he refers to the Tower of Babel] Babel is not a story about tribalism; it's a story about the fragmentation of everything. It's about the shattering of all that had seemed solid, the scattering of people who had been a community. It's a metaphor for what is happening not only between red and blue, but within the left and within the right, as well as within universities, companies, professional associations, museums, and even families. Babel is a metaphor for what some forms of social media have done to nearly all of the groups and institutions most important to the country's future—and to us as a people."

[Haidt] "What changed in the 2010s?" (*Sojourner interjects and here is why I am speaking to our staff about the dangers of social media*) . . .

CHARACTER at TCA: Interview

[Haidt cont] "Let's revisit that Twitter engineer's metaphor of handing a loaded gun to a 4-year-old. A mean tweet doesn't kill anyone; it is an attempt to shame or punish someone publicly while broadcasting one's own virtue, brilliance, or tribal loyalties. It's more a dart than a bullet, causing pain but no fatalities. Even so, from 2009 to 2012, Facebook and Twitter passed out roughly 1 billion dart guns globally. We've been shooting one another ever since."

[Sojourner] I just can't describe—and Wes [Jolly] knows this well over the last couple of years - we've talked a lot about social media and how it is dangerous, both for kids and especially for teen girls. We have talked about social media being an avenue to shame someone. We have talked about cyber bullying. We have talked about the distraction of social media. I hate the word, "Hate." I use it all the time now. I hate what social media and device use has done to our kids.

I have just watched this evolution over 25 years, you know the 18 years that I have been at TCA, it is a

real challenge - pushing back on the negative effects of social media and technology is something we embrace around here - and it is a real challenge.

B. Brown: I completely agree. You know, the amazing thing about TCA, and this is where I will say we were different and where we bucked the trend early on is: not introducing technology early. And if you look at all those tech titans in Silicon Valley, if you watched the *Social Dilemma*, you will know they send their kids to schools that do not have tech. That is their number one thing. They know, all of those people in those worlds know, that this is dangerous and they want their kids to have no part in it. A lot of them do not let their kids have cell phones until their senior year in high school. That is because they know what they are doing.

I love TCA. We intuitively know this is not a good thing. When we are talking about all different ways in which things have changed, this whole idea that in the mid 1990s there were still role models—especially in politics and public spaces. We are losing all of our role models in public spaces.

So, where are kids looking to, to say "I want to be like that." I think it leaves historical figures [to fill the gap] in a lot of ways, which makes a classical education even more important because you are teaching them "This is possible." What we see right now, from influencers to politics, is everybody is in it for the "likes." To get their name out there. It's just become very dangerous.

[continued on page 4]



WWW.VIACHARACTER.ORG

And when you talk about this whole idea of a dart gun, when you look at neuroscience - it has proven that these negative thoughts and communication can cause us pain, especially in the area of social belonging, a sustained part of our brain that lights up, we are actually in physical pain. So, you might not say it...but it is the same thing as causing hurt to people if they know they are being left out or they are being talked about.

R. Sojourner: I want to play off that comment about technology and [let you know] we have pushed back, just like you (as founders) were hoping we would do. It is in our core values. We are going to limit access to technology, and we are going to cautiously approach the use of the Internet. That is a phrase right

My own daughter, former TCA East elementary teacher, who is now a young mom of a three-year-old, is starting to look at potential Kindergarten spaces. She lives in Parker, CO. She is having trouble finding a school that does not open with, "Oh let me show you how widely we use technology." That wouldn't happen at TCA. I've got people giving tours to prospective Kindergarten parents right now and they are not having that conversation. Once again, that is another victory of what we are trying to do.



R. Miller: Wes, read that question again please.

W. Jolly: Over 25 years there has been lots of change in the world in which we live. Many would say the challenges that students face today are different than those TCA students faced back in the late 1990's. What impact, if any, does this have on character education?

R. Miller: Okay, I am going to see the glass half-full. The world is a scary place. There is so much at everybody's fingertips it is dangerous.

I am going to go back to who we are as human beings and what we all desire...deep within each one of us—glass half full—is the desire for community, desire to be seen, desire to be valued, have a goal, and desire to contribute. So, I believe at the core that is how [we were created] and we must provide students a place away from all of the noise where they can be valued.

W. Jolly: As we look toward the next 25 years at TCA, what do you think our focus should be in the arena of character education?

R. Miller: Well, if what Teddy [Roosevelt] said is right and I believe it is, we educate, but we also must create students of virtuous character. It should be at least 50% of the equation if not more. It has to remain a focus.

And however TCA decides to accomplish that, [they will do well]. TCA is packed with brilliant and amazing people who are paid less and do more. And these people have a heart for doing things right. That is a success. And keeping character at the forefront of their goals—in addition to learning—has to be at least 50% of the equation, I think.

B. Brown: I completely agree. Yes, I think it is just sticking to these important things and not getting sidetracked—not as parents who clamor for more technology or people saying, "We need to have this,"—but really staying true to who we are. And knowing that, by creating this community space where kids can belong, where kids can thrive, where kids can learn, you are doing our world a huge service.

Think about what has happened with Covid and the long-term effects of trauma, especially on the kids... it is just going to be more and more important to create spaces that allow the community to heal. And how can we in community really support each other? That is our mission. We are a school.

We are coming to a point [in the world] that whatever you need is at your fingertips, right? So a lot of this needs to be even more focused on the character and the soft skills and the things that are getting lost much more in our society, I think is even more important. *[continued on page 5]*



R. Sojourner: I mentioned to these ladies before we got started that when we celebrate next year's 25th anniversary, we are going to keep in mind this phrase "Remembering our Roots." I appreciate that two of our "roots" builders—certainly the Browns, with Betsy sitting here—we get to remember what they wished for our school.



I had the recent opportunity to view a video from a prospective parent meeting that occurred 22 years ago. When Mary Kretchman was speaking at that meeting, she was talking to these parents and imploring them to limit the amount of TV that they watched at night. Right out of her mouth, "We are going to ask you to cut down the amount of TV that your children might watch."

And then last week at a kindergarten orientation meeting, our Dean of Educational Philosophy for Elementary was saying, imploring our parents, "Please limit the amount of screen time." She wasn't talking about TV time. She was talking about a different

kind of screen time. Once again, that makes me smile, because we are doing—in a different kind of way—we are doing exactly what our founders, I believe our founders would have wished for us to do 25 years ago.

The language changes just a little bit but there are so many things that we can remember about our "roots" when we focus on the key words in our mission statement, the key words in our core values document, or the key words in our creed. We haven't lost that focus. And I believe 25 years from now—somebody, not me—likely will be leading this school and he or she will be able to say, "We are still focused on what is important."

The language will have changed, society will have changed, but this place is a light for other schools in our community, and in our nation, and we are still focused on the right stuff.

B. Brown: That is amazing to me as I think about this community. You have all these parents who could engage together to say, "We are not going to let our kids have cell phones in third grade." You have this inherent place where suddenly you can make a difference, because you can have parents that will come along side you.

And I, hope this will happen, because the more parents you can support in this endeavor, the better. It is very hard to be the only parent in a class of 20 [because you are swimming upstream]. But if 10 out of 20 kids do not have cell phones in sixth grade, or whatever, that is going to change that whole culture. And I think supporting each other in those places is going to be very important moving forward.

R. Sojourner: It's so cool and interesting that you bring that up, Betsy. The reason I was in front of our elementary staff and our College Pathways staff on Friday and the rest of our high school and Jr. high staff and CSP staff a couple of weeks before that was to reintroduce this idea: could we be a school that either reduces or eliminates kids access to their cell phones during the school day?

Could we be that school? I am planting the seed, just as I did two-and-a-half years ago. We were in this conversation of what might that look like and then we closed our doors for Covid and handed everybody a device. And said, "Hey kids you may need to do all of your learning through this device." And that was so antithetical to what TCA stands for.

And so now, here we are, emerging from a difficult time and we are reengaging in that conversation. Could we potentially do that? And very few schools, not zero schools, but very few schools in this area have tackled that. And I would like to be able to have us lead that.

R. Miller: Wes, I want to say something. I want to thank those teachers and administration who—on a daily basis—are on the front lines of living out good character in front of the students and engaging them in character discussions. I want to thank them for keeping it a focus, for making it a priority, and it is because of who they are.

I appreciate our TCA community, I appreciate the administration, and the teachers. We have the best-of-the-best. And I am grateful for their focus on character. It is not about the [former] character directors. It is about the teachers. And I want to thank them for doing their job and doing it well.



The Titan Pulse: The President's Podcast



For the December edition of **The Titan Pulse**, Dr. Sojourner addresses his retirement, the Digital Health Initiative, and the Sunset Amphitheater development. Click on the image above to listen.

TCA All-School Fundraiser for 2022-23



Last year TCA raised over \$100,000 for **Make-A-Wish Colorado** and this year we will be supporting the **American Cancer Society** throughout the 2022-23 school year. Look for more information from each school and their individual fundraising efforts throughout this coming year.

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA: RECORD CONTRIBUTION



WREATHS — *across* — AMERICA

TCA has supported the “Wreaths Across America” effort for seven years. TCA families and schools were given the opportunity to raise funds to lay wreaths on the graves of Veterans in Memorial Gardens Cemetery on Saturday, December 17. Students from TCA will be participating in this important effort to honor those who have served our nation. For this year TCA students and families **set a record contribution of 438 wreaths**. As noted in our Core Values document “we value that *freedom isn’t free* and honor the sacrifices made by the men and women who serve or have served in the Armed Forces.

COLORADO ASSESSMENT RESULTS: NOTEWORTHY EFFORT

This past school year TCA and other schools within the state received their first full snapshot of academic performance since 2019 (prior to the pandemic). In analyzing the results (*presented to the TCA Board in November*) TCA continues to perform well. **Every grade level from 3rd to 7th grade, in both English and Math, performed better overall in 2022 than 2019** (the last year of complete results). In addition, every TCA school was rated on a ***performance plan*** - the highest accreditation from the Colorado Department of education. We exceeded the district scores in 33 of 39 assessed areas and finished 1st or 2nd in 28 of those 39 areas. Every grade level at high school (*both traditional and non-traditional*) that tested on the PSAT or SAT exams finished in the **top 30 schools in the state out of over 500 high schools**. The Colorado Department of Education School Performance Framework scores would place our **High School at #4 in the state and College Pathways at #12** out of those 500+ schools. The vision for our K-12 classical approach continues to serve our students and community well.



STATE COMPETITIONS | Snapshots



See page 1 for more photos and details on state **Marching Band** competition; and **below** for Cross Country competition.

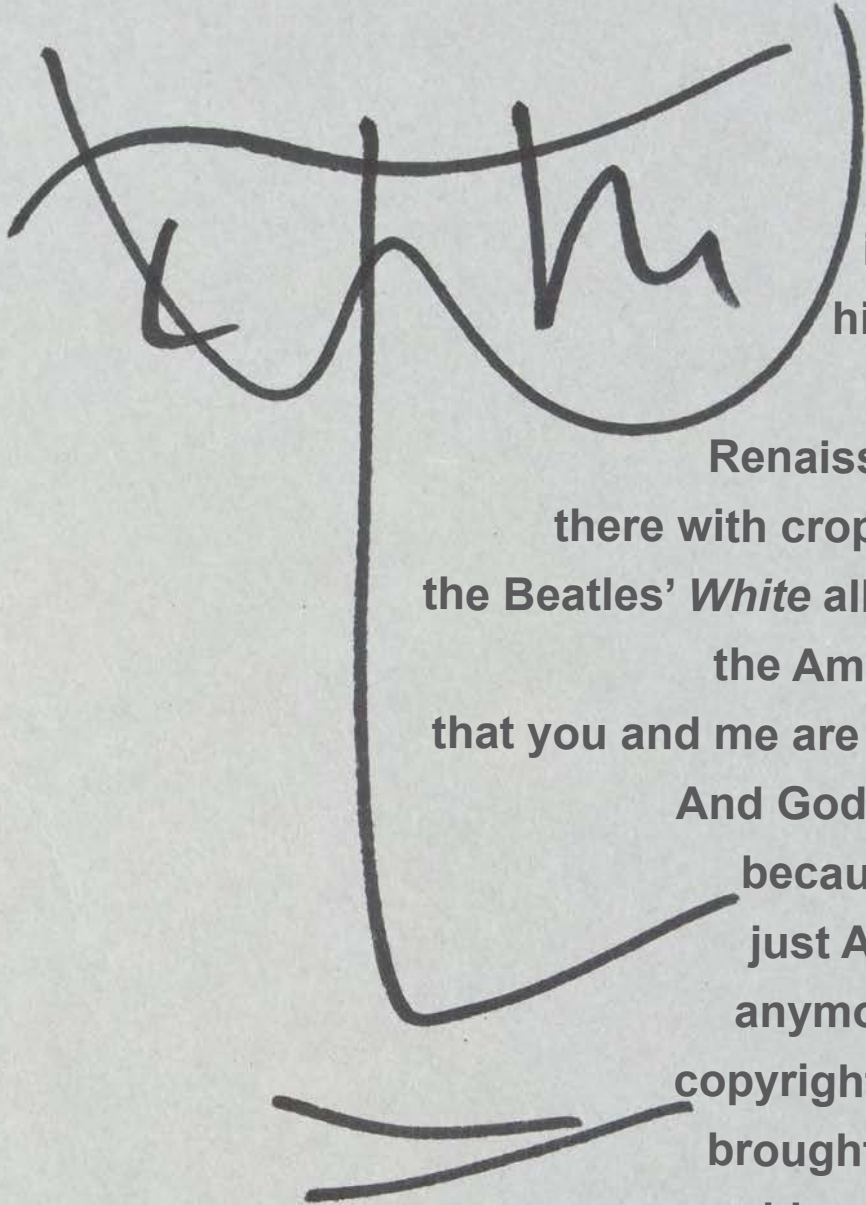


Chandler Wilburn (below) being interviewed at State.



The cross country team finished its regular season at the end of October in the state championships. The girl's team (pictured left) had its best race of the year as 6 of the 7 girls ran their best time on a very challenging course. They finished second as a team to a great Alamosa squad. **Cassidy McDonald** was 11th overall and freshman **Jessica Thompson** finished 16h (she was the 10th-fastest freshman in all classes). The boys (see picture on cover page), led by **Chandler Wilburn's** individual (shown above) state championship and **Matthew Edward's** third place finish, won the 3A championship with a very low 47 points, its second straight team championship. When combining the results of all the teams from all classes, the Titan girls were the 11th-best in Colorado this year, and the boys were 4th best in the state, very close behind larger schools Niwot and Valor Christian. Many of our varsity runners will compete in prestigious national meets in Phoenix, AZ and Huntsville, AL over the next month.

Ireland's a great country, but it's not an idea.
Great Britain's a great country, it's not an idea.
That's how we see you around the world,



as one of the
of the
greatest
ideas in human
history - right up
there with the
Renaissance, right up
there with crop rotations and
the Beatles' *White* album. The idea,
the American idea . . .
that you and me are created equal.
And God love you for it,
because these aren't
just American ideas
anymore. There's no
copyright on them. You
brought them into the
world . . . These truths,
they're self-evident
in us.

Paul David Hewson
Irish Singer-Songwriter
from 2012 speech
at Georgetown University

