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A Message from Head of School Dr. Duda

A snow day, teacher in-service, and holiday weekend created a great opportunity to hit pause on the to-do list and find time for mid-day naps, dinner with friends, and a walk outside in the quiet hours of the morning. I was reminded how good it is to rest and have the margin that either unexpected or planned days off can provide.

In his 2004 book entitled *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives*, Dr. Richard Swenson describes a common pattern in his patients who suffer from physical or mental health pain. Each had what Swenson described as "marginless living." Throughout the twentieth century, the United States experienced advancements in technology, wealth, healthcare, and education. This progress had significant impacts on our cognitive and physical environments. The inventions were supposed to make life easier and give us access to more - more facts, more activities, more work, more travel, more communication, more food, and more technology. As we gained access to these things, we also saw more fatigue, more anxiety, more stress, and more overload, essentially creating marginless living that neglected the social (family, friends, and church), emotional (feelings and attitudes), and spiritual (God-given identity and purpose as well as our relationship with the Lord) parts of our lives that we know must be balanced for overall health and well-being.

According to Swenson, margin is the gap between rest and exhaustion and while it may appear some thrive without margin, most find it is a prerequisite for well-being. Margin begins with contentment, simplicity, balance, and rest. Scripture speaks to this in Philippians when Paul states, "I don't have a sense of needing anything personally. I've learned by now to be quite content whatever my circumstances. I'm happy with little as with much, with much as with little. I've found the recipe for being happy whether full or hungry, hands full or hands empty. Whatever I have, wherever I am, I can make it through anything in the One who makes me who I am" (Philippians 4:11-14 MSG). Balance is necessary but it is not easy! When we understand we are finite and accept it is okay to be so, then we can begin to delight in our limits. As parents, it is important we understand this truth and then nurture the same mindset in our children who are growing up in a culture much busier than you and I experienced as teens and young adults. We can model what it means to work hard for our Master and rest confidently in knowing He understands our condition. He made us to be on purpose for His purpose and what we do, we do well but we do not do it all. When we recognize we were not created to do it all, we bask in the leisure time afforded by the opportunity to meditate, listen to God more, and reflect on His priorities and direction for our lives.

As we prepare for what can be a crazy sprint to the end of the year, I am praying for our students, faculty,

school leaders, and community to have moments of rest, balance, and simplicity. May we work hard for our Master and have lives filled with margin. May we have a renewed focus on the One who wants us to sit with Him and enjoy the leisure time that margin provides. May we find great comfort in knowing we were not created to do it all and be content in all He has for us in this season.

Blessings, Rockford Christian, as you seek to create margin for yourselves and your children. I am excited to hear all that God has for us as we sit and listen to his priorities and direction for our school.

Jahna Duda

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Psalm 115:13-15

Strategic Plan Update

I was reminded of the importance of our work this year toward developing a comprehensive strategic plan as I read the following quote: “Few schools do strategic planning well and most operate in a constant state of crisis, lurching from one year to the next much like the nation of Israel wandering in the wilderness - forty days of discomfort and frustration and eventually death - all because of a bad decision based on fear or disbelief” (Pue, 2012, p. 93). I have been so encouraged at Rockford Christian’s willingness to do strategic planning well and not be one of the schools described above. I am excited that we continue to make great strides in our work, and despite our snow day last week which was a scheduled work session, we are still on pace to present a finished plan to the greater RC community by the end of the school year.

The first Strategic Planning Committee meeting was postponed due to the snow day last week, but the leadership team and board committees continued their work by reviewing the SWOT analysis from the community survey and outlining the strengths of Rockford Christian academics, extracurriculars, facilities, and finances as well as the potential for improvement. We discussed ways to distinguish ourselves better in the local community, ensure students are known and loved during their time at RC, and build programs that attract and retain families. With my classroom background, I was most excited about conversations around how to create an academic program that is cutting-edge, innovative, and collaborative while grounded in a liberal arts framework that provides a well-rounded academic experience that helps students formulate compelling arguments, communicate well, and solve problems.

Look for continued updates in my newsletters this spring.

Show Your Heart

ROCKFORD CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

FEBRUARY 23-26, 2023
RC VIRTUAL AUCTION
7:00 P.M. 2/23 - 7:00 P.M. 2/26

TUESDAY, MAY 9, 2023
ILLINOIS BANK & TRUST PAVILION
6:00 - 8:00 P.M.

For sponsorship opportunities and more information, contact us at advancement@rockfordchristian.org.
Sponsors will be recognized for both events.

Together we can encourage young lives to flourish as we join our RCS families in helping to raise children who know Jesus and understand their God-given identity and purpose.

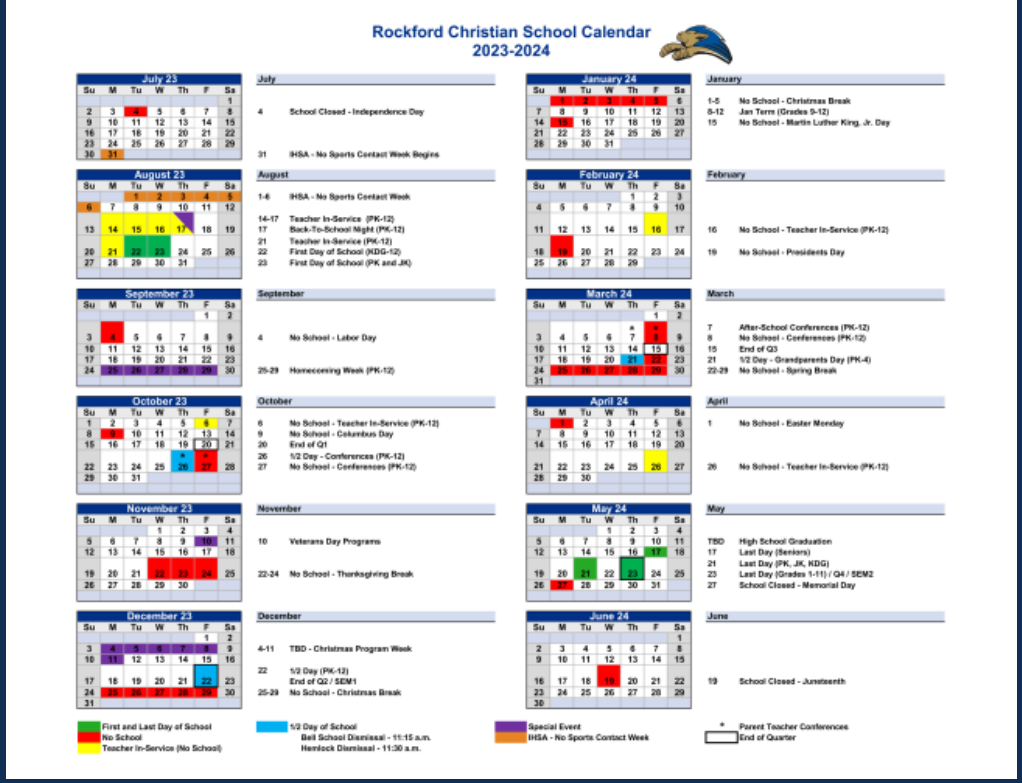
Visit **ShowYourHeartRC.givesmart.com** to place your bid, make a contribution, or become an event sponsor.

Bell School Leadership Structure

With the announcement of Mr. Held's departure as the high school principal, I was afforded the opportunity to reflect upon what I heard this year in focus groups and collaborate with school leaders to map out the best leadership model for Rockford Christian School as an organization.

With a shared campus, shared teachers, and shared resources for grades 5-12, I have decided to hire a Head of Upper School to provide vision and direction for secondary programming that accomplishes the academic goals in our strategic plan. This position will provide a consistent, intentional focus from one voice that enables our middle school and high school faculty and staff to concentrate on unified goals in creating academic programming that is cutting-edge, innovative, and collaborative for our students. The position of Head of Upper School can be found on our website beginning Wednesday, March 1st.

The Head of Upper School will be supported by AmyCarol Bedows as the Director of Student Support and Dean of Middle School as well as Ryan Brown as the Director of Spiritual Life and Dean of High School. Mrs. Bedows and Mr. Brown have both been pivotal in coaching and discipling secondary students in need of spiritual, academic, or behavioral support this year and will continue to do so in their new roles. Specifically, they will ensure events, programs, or schedules are viewed through the lens of what is best for the students at middle school or high school, respectively, and ensure the student experiences in both divisions are being adequately nurtured.



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