

S U M M E R 2 0 1 0

# The Providence Post

Secondary Newsletter

## Logic Level Math and Science Victories

This year Providence Academy performed well in the regional ACSI Math Olympics, winning first place in every division and first through third place in mathematical reasoning. Ten other private schools from Nashville to Asheville competed. Congratulations, Merritt McKinney, Luke Norton, Averie Blackmore, Sterling Fooshee, Hannah Hollowell, and Ellen Duncan.

The school also placed third in both biological and physical science at the Regional ETSU science fair.



Carly and Regan enjoy the warm weather

## Letter from the Principal

Clear thinking becomes clear writing: one can't exist without the other. It is impossible for a muddy thinker to write good English. He may get away with it for a paragraph or two, but soon the reader will be lost, and there is no sin so grave, for he will not easily be lured back.

Professional Writer William Zinsser

As you may have guessed, our focus for this edition is the English department. While I could write many wonderful things about language arts at Providence Academy, the basic

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## Save the Date!

### Graduation

5/21/10

Our seniors graduate at 7:00 Friday night.

### Last day of school

5/27/10

Remember this Thursday is a half-day

### First day back

7/9/10

Back to school after the long summer break



Caleb Presley and Averie Blackmore pose with ribbons at the regional science fair.

## Its Senior Thesis Time!

The English department at Providence Academy is unique, not following a traditional scope and sequence: basic grammar is mastered by the end of eighth grade; ninth grade English focuses on advanced constructions, including absolutes, and on incorporating those constructions into compositions. English 9 and 10 have a strong literature/composition focus, following a chronology that correlates with the history courses. Juniors takes Rhetoric I, studying classical rhetoric, analysis, and written and spoken rhetoric. All the previous 12 years culminate in the senior year: Philosophy of Literature, which delves into synthesizing understanding of a biblical world view with appreciation of great

literature, and Rhetoric II, fondly known for its SENIOR THESIS.

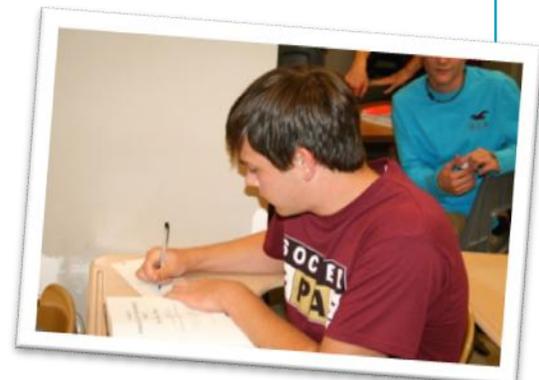
Though first semester of Rhetoric II includes a lot of public speaking, rhetorical analysis of current issues, and refining of rhetorical techniques, every activity has a final project in view—the senior thesis. Each senior thesis begins as an idea, hopefully a topic the senior enjoys and wants to spend the last half of the year researching and writing about. Through the advanced composition stages of Introduction, Review of Literature, and Argument, the senior researches the topic, evaluates it from a biblical framework, and develops a personal relevant argument based on an arguable

thesis statement. Examples of recent topics include the following:

- \* Missionaries should provide their own support.
- \* Missionaries should be supported financially by the body of Christ. (Yes, we don't always agree!)
- \* Auto-tuners undermine God-given abilities.
- \* The complexity of the blood coagulation cascade pathway points to an omniscient Creator, refuting the theory of evolution.
- \* Battery powered cars should replace gasoline powered cars.
- \* The CIA must be allowed to employ whatever tools necessary to safeguard the United States.

After the thesis paper is written, refined, proofread, corrected, and finalized, it is turned in; during the summer all the papers are bound and then housed in the school library. But the final step for the seniors is the oral defense of the argument. This year April 23-30 each senior gave his/her oral defense in a public presentation, allowing parents, friends, and other students to attend. The formal defenses, given to a committee composed of PA board members, local leaders, administration, and faculty, take place this year May 10 and 11.

It is a long, challenging process. But each year graduates return with stories of how the senior thesis experience has well prepared them for college, graduate school, on-the-job assignments, and, most important,



## Why We Are at Providence Academy

There may be many reasons why we have chosen to send our children to Providence Academy for their education. For those of us who began this journey in elementary, particularly in kindergarten, we started full of energy and enthusiasm. We read The Lost Tools of Learning and started to understand the meaning of classical Christian education. However, as time passes, sometimes we may forget why we originally came, perhaps like Jesus told the church in Ephesus in the book of Revelation that they had lost their first love.

Not long ago, I was at a weekend father-son retreat, and during the meeting the fathers were all together and talking about parenting issues. At my table, someone brought up education as a topic. It was obvious several of the dads looked at Christian education as a means to keep their kids away from secular influences, and not much more. One dad quickly pointed out that fellow Christian school parents weren't helpful to him in terms of endorsing movies and other things that he had strong opposition to. Others pointed out that all the secular stuff was readily available through church friends if not at school.

What struck me is that all these folks were missing the point of Christian education – to develop in our children the Christian worldview in all areas of life. We can't block out all the secular stuff (although we may try to limit it by rules, policies, and procedures); but we can instill in our children a Christian worldview that hopefully will, with God's help, give them the wisdom to make sound choices with respect to secular issues.

We may find joy in being at Providence because of strong academics, better behavior amongst the students, a smaller school environment, or other reasons, but our real reason for being here should be to allow Providence to assist us in our mission to instill a Christ centered worldview in our children, in all areas of life. It's a journey through grammar, logic, and rhetoric that continues through the twelfth grade, and beyond.

Robert Smith  
Board Chairman



## Alumni Highlight

### Will McQuain

Although graduating from Providence feels like a few short months ago, the reality of the matter is that I have only one short year left before graduating from college. It has been a whirlwind experience of tough classes, great friendships, and amazing opportunities, and I am still faced with the increasingly intimidating question of "what do I want to do?" It is a question which I have been prayerfully considering for some time now, as I seek to understand how I can continue to "think and live in a manner which brings glory to God" after my education and on into a career.

At Wake Forest, I am pursuing a degree in Business Enterprise Management with a concentration in Non-Profit Management and Marketing. One specific area of interest and research has been in the field of microfinance. Microfinancing is a movement, which seeks to provide poor entrepreneurs in developing nations with access to credit, so they can borrow money at a reasonable rate to fund small business endeavors and generate wealth. This summer I have been blessed with the incredible opportunity to intern with Dvelo.org, a start-up microfinancing firm in South Africa, for six weeks and learn about this method of poverty alleviation and international development.

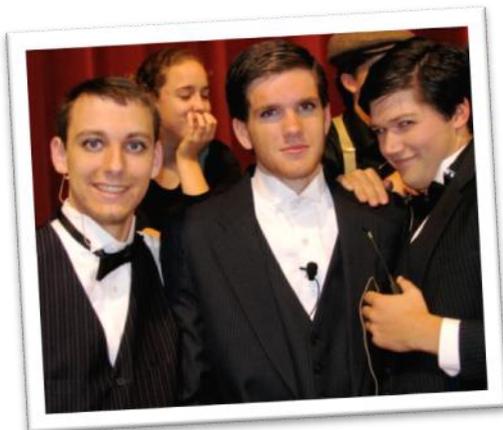
Please pray for my time in South Africa this summer, that I will approach my tasks with academic excellence and spiritual maturity as I attempt to show the love of Christ to the poor.

## Seniors Mentor Younger Girls with a Bible Study

Everyone knows seniors like to sleep in late; but this year four seniors, Diane Harmon, Elizabeth Brown, Bekah Presley, and Mariah Herington, woke up early to host a Bible study for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade girls every Friday morning. A typical Friday morning included talking, laughing, eating, hearing a lesson prepared by the seniors, sharing testimonies, and concluding with discussion and prayer. The Bible study was a great opportunity for older girls to mentor younger girls, as well as a time for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students to come upstairs and experience secondary life once a week. One 7<sup>th</sup> grade student remarked, “I love getting to know the seniors and hanging out with them this year.” The Bible study finished last week with a good-bye party for the graduating seniors—they will be missed!



Girls get together at Bible study before school.



Performers enjoy musical’s success.



Former student Neal Brantner sings in hit school musical.

## Letter from the Principal cont.

truth is this: we desire for our students to show their ability to think with clarity by writing and reading with clarity. To that end, we challenge them with the great writers and thinkers of the western world, and we encourage them to see their own writing through the lenses of truth, beauty, and goodness. In addition, we teach our students that language is a gift from God, and language is way for us to create, to challenge, and to persuade.

I hope you have enjoyed the 2009 – 2010 Providence Post. We have enjoyed putting the articles and pictures together for you. We are hopeful that more parents will become aware of this publication, and you can help us “spread the word.” If you have found this publication to be beneficial, share your enthusiasm with someone else. Have a great summer!

## The Biblical and Classical Approach to Literature

What does an English class look like in a Christian school? How is literature taught “classically”? Two distinctively classical and Biblical approaches to teaching literature are the mock trial and the scored discussion. The ninth grade English class has learned to integrate their faith and synthesize a year of learning through both methods. After reading *The Iliad* last fall, the class put Achilles on trial in a mock court martial. Prosecution and defense lawyers prepared arguments, witnesses wrote statements, and jury members weighed the evidence, charging Achilles with dereliction of duty. The mock court martial trial was an excellent opportunity for students to demonstrate their rhetorical skills and perfect logical and argumentative techniques.

This week the ninth grade was able to discuss issues of faith illustrated in *Robinson Crusoe*. Instead of a traditional written test, the class participated in a scored discussion, where smaller groups of 4-5 are provided with several discussion prompts to analyze and debate. Some of the topics discussed were Robinson Crusoe’s spiritual

conversion, his attitude of gratitude, his rebellious youth and subsequent maturity, and his repentance from a slave-owning past to a love for his fellow man. Students concluded the discussion with an evaluation of the novel according to Biblical standards and a comparison of Crusoe’s character with other heroes studied this year, namely, Achilles, Odysseus, and Beowulf. One student remarked, “Achilles and Odysseus wanted glory and recognition from men, but Robinson Crusoe gave all the glory to God.”

Debates, scored discussion, and mock trials allow students to demonstrate logic-level skills while providing them with the opportunity to integrate their beliefs with the literature they read and enjoy. The lessons learned during preparation of debates and trials as well as issues developed during a scored discussion reach both the heart and intellect, a hallmark of classical, Christian education.

Melissa Huisman  
Secondary English Teacher

# Mission Statement

Providence Academy equips students to achieve academic excellence and spiritual maturity through a biblically based, Christ centered, classical education, so they will think and live in a manner, which brings glory to God.

## Coram Deo



8<sup>th</sup> graders practice using the triple beam balance.

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