

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

Make-a-Wish Fundraiser

In 2017, students from across TCA developed a list of organizations for an annual TCA community-wide fundraiser. The plan outlined six organizations to assist starting in 2018-2019. We have focused our efforts in previous years on **Children's Hospital Colorado** in addition to **Wounded Warrior**. After a one-year hiatus last year, this year our renewed efforts will help **Make-A-Wish Colorado**. Check out page 5 of this month's PALMARIUM for a TCA donation link and more information on Mackenzie and her desire to go to Disney World as part of our Make-A-Wish fundraising efforts. We are **approaching \$60,000** raised with several schools still planning their fundraising efforts this spring. Thank you for being a part of this endeavor.

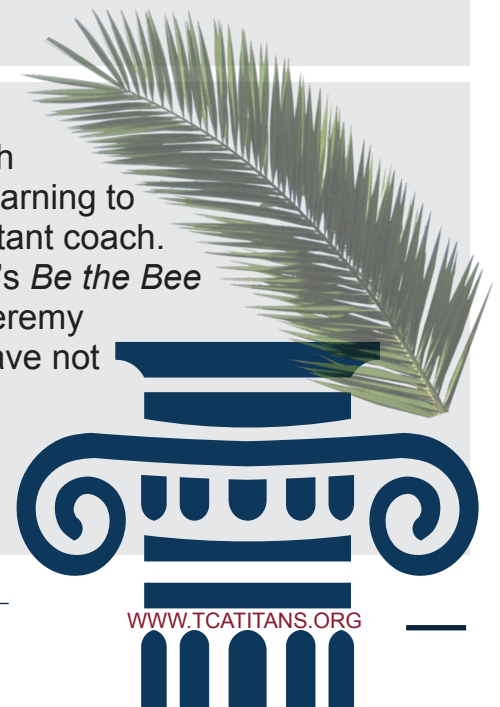
ANNUAL PARENT SURVEY

The annual TCA Parent Survey kicks off on February 1st and will run for the entire month of February. The short survey will be sent out by each school principal for parents to provide us valuable information on how we are doing as a school community. We truly value your insights. Each principal and the leadership team review all of the data and comments provided and in May the TCA Board will be provided a report of the results. Thank you for considering to participate. Again, look for a link at the beginning of February.

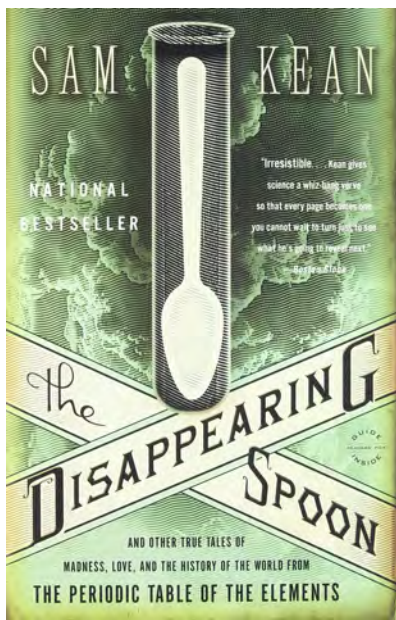


In this month's new **Character: Tell Your Stories** series, Emily Hanenburg, TCA High School Visual Arts Teacher shares about learning to **Choose Joy** as a grateful athlete and assistant coach. It is an excellent continuation of last month's **Be the Bee** speech by High School English Teacher, Jeremy Reed. Go back and read that one, if you have not already.

The Editor



Book Studies



The Disappearing Spoon: And Other True Tales of Madness, Love, and the History of the World from the Periodic Table of the Elements by Sam Kean is the next book in the *Engaging Minds: Beyond the Book Club* series. Two separate 90-minute study sessions will take place on Tuesday and Wednesday, February 22nd and 23rd in the North Elementary Library Pikes Peak Room. Attendees would only need to RSVP for one of the two dates. High School Science teacher, Jen Smith, will be leading the sessions. If you'd like to be added to the RSVP list for this year's remaining studies let me know at my e-mail address: wjolly@asd20.org

A TRIBUTE: CHOOSE JOY

BY EMILY HANENBURG

A few weeks ago, a room was filled with people to celebrate the career and mark the retirement of a coach who made an incredible impact in the world of Colorado distance running. Even more importantly, they gathered there to applaud the influence of a man who cheerfully worked with hundreds of kids. Alan Versaw's career, full of many things worth telling, is a picture of steadfastness in integrity, humility and joy. That, it seems, is a success even greater than the many championships because to hold to such values and to be among the best requires more sacrifice and strength than to just win by any means. It has been over two decades of wholehearted investment of his life as well as selfless support of his wife and sons to lead a program that was run with both high standards and great joy. Because he has made the weighty decision to retire, I would like to tell you a little bit of what I know about Coach Versaw.

There hasn't ever been anything else for TCA's distance program before Alan Versaw. From the beginning, twenty-two years ago when he started the program until this past fall when both the girls and boys won the state championships, every moment has been led and maintained under his care. Twenty-one State Championships - (fourteen for the girls, seven for the boys), eleven individual state champions, multi-time winner of Coach of the Year, Educator Coach of the Year, dozens of League and Regional Championships, induction to CHSCA Coach Hall of Fame (2017), two teams qualifying for the exclusive Nike National Cross Country Championships, and CHSCA Joe Vigil Lifetime Service Award for Cross Country (2015) are just a few of the things he accomplished in his tenure as head coach. Successful in astonishing ways, he also was undoubtedly the actual, living most interesting man in the world... and was confidently himself in that, whether you are talking about his iconic bucket hat, the big camera that he carried everywhere even while running, or his birding hobby. In all of that, there was an absolute commitment to give his very best and to continue to improve what he was doing. From the very beginning, Coach Versaw was committed to excellence in running his program and holding others to a similar standard. This value can be seen in the success but also in the little things like how he wrote his emails and attendance policy to how he ended practice at exactly the right time every day. He used to repeat a phrase at practice, "Aim for perfection but be delighted with excellence." In a phrase, that is a picture of how he did everything. People who do great things, whatever that might be, have a habit of doing small things well, over and over again.

Coach Versaw was gracious enough to have me as an athlete and then as an assistant coach for a combined sixteen years of TCA cross country. I came to TCA as a soccer player and he trained me into being a runner. There is no way that I can account for the reason my life looks as it does now without recognizing that Coach Versaw became my coach when I was 13. We have many good memories together only made sweeter by also knowing the adversity that also comes when people are working and helping others towards goals and dreams. No one could have known that a man who never personally ran cross country would be one of the greatest coaches in the state of Colorado. You would never know that he is a hall of fame coach by talking to him though. Like lots of things at TCA, the cross country team at the beginning was small, new, and unrefined. There were not even real uniforms beyond grey cotton t-shirts. Though TCA did not stay a small school, Coach Versaw's appreciation and voice of support for the often unseen work that small

school programs do in the lives of kids was a point of passion throughout his whole career.

Starting my freshman year, two years after starting the team, Coach Versaw put together the first full cross country team to qualify for the State Championships representing TCA in 2002. Quickly afterward the surprising win of the first league and regional titles led to the girls team winning the first team State Championship in 2003. That was within three short years of starting the program. The success was wonderful, but even more importantly, there were years of the everyday, mundane, and yet precious time of doing practice after practice, meet after meet, and that is where one sees what a person, what a coach, really is about. High standards and hard workouts? Yes. Uncompromising conviction and integrity? Absolutely. Just as clear and constant though was his dedication to leading and living joyfully. There was an obvious sense of enjoyment in everything he did and it influenced the culture of the team. His enthusiasm and grin over a practice well done was just as sincere and encouraging as his excitement for any of his runners willing to take a risk and pushing themselves to improve in a race. You would not believe the excitement he could stir up in a group of teenage boys about explaining the definition of a multi-syllabic word or bird fact that he happened to drop into conversation. Coach Versaw coached because he loved who he was working with and what he was doing. That spread to the members of the team.



Because of Coach Versaw's investment, I, like many others from the team, had the opportunity to run in college on scholarship. My five years on the team at CU Boulder were riddled with challenges of injury and pressure. However, the things I learned on my high school team - especially that we choose to do hard things and we are a part of something bigger than ourselves were foundational values that encouraged me to not give up. I realized at CU, from the stories of teammates and being immersed in the world of collegiate athletics, what a precious and rare gift it was to come from a high school team where the head coach was looking more to the interest and building up of his athletes and team than his own reputation and success. There again humility and integrity exemplified.

I have seen the impact that Coach Versaw has had, firsthand, on so many athletes, not just myself. I also know that even as his assistant coach, there are a lot of amazing things behind the curtain that I had no idea happened. It was not about himself being seen, it was about doing what was right.

What a coach says at the end of his career is interesting to think about. It is when thousands of pieces of wisdom, experiences and risks come together and are distilled down to some of the most important. I am grateful for the two Coach Versaw chose to repeat for his final season. The first is that there is value in doing hard things together and the second, a simple but profound urging to **choose joy** by making it a priority "to smile and say thank you in everything." Both are things I hope always influence how I choose to live; I do not think I am the only one.

CHARACTER IN ACTION

"Smile and Say Thank You in Everything"



**Find the good. It's
all around you. Find it,
showcase it and you'll
start believing in it.**

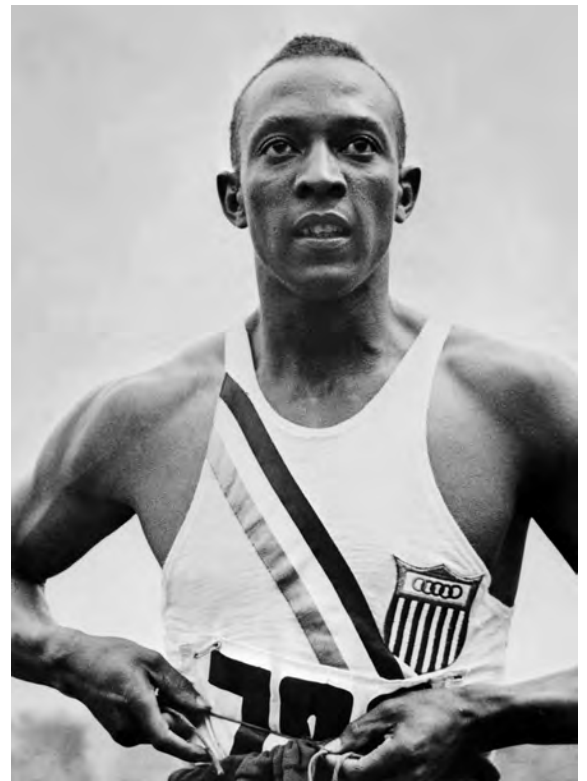
JESSE OWENS

four gold medals 1936 Olympics

I always loved running I wasn't very good at it, but I loved it because it was something you could do by yourself and under your own power. You could go in any direction, fast or slow as you wanted, fighting the wind if you felt like it, seeking out new sights just on the strength of your feet and the courage of your lungs.

JESSE OWENS

in talking about his youth in *TRIUMPH* by Jeremy Schaap



TCA WELLNESS UPDATE: **VALUE UP RETURNS**



Just over four years ago, Mike Donahue, from **Value Up** spoke to our TCA students about each of us having our own story. Our *Wellness Task Force*, since this school year started, has been discussing potential speakers to bring in for our junior high and high school students to hear. Student members of the committee talked about Mike's impact several years ago and the task force group collectively thought it time for him to return. Mike's powerful message focuses on valuing one's individual intrinsic worth and striving to do the same with others. He has spoken to more than one million students in the past decade plus, and has over 30 years experience working with young people. On January 20th, all of our secondary students were able to listen to Mike's story in two separate assemblies.

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Make-A-Wish Colorado: TCA Fundraiser

Make-A-Wish.
KiDS
 FOR WISH KIDS®
 COLORADO



I wish to...go to Disney
 World
 Mackenzie, 3
 leukemia

The Classical Academy, meet Mackenzie from Colorado Springs!

Mackenzie's favorite things are:
 The color red, chicken nuggets,
 Raising Cane's, painting, water
 color, The Jurassic Park series on
 Netflix, PJ Masks, Merida, Elsa and
 Anna, Toy Story, all animals, and
 jumping on trampoline.



**Click Here for
 TCA Fundraiser Pages**

Character at TCA: A History

Character at TCA Brief Historical Overview

- 1997 TCA founded and **Mission Statement** developed
- 2004 TCA awarded **National School of Character** award (1 of 10 schools nationally); Dr. Sojourner travels to DC to accept award
- 2006 **Director of Character** position officially begins with Ruth Miller (2006-10) transitioning to Betsy Brown (2010-16)
- 2010 Original **Character Education** policy created
- 2010 TCA **Core Values** document adopted (two-year process)
- 2013 TCA adopted **24 Character Traits** outlined in **Character Strengths and Virtues** by Peterson & Seligman and viacharacter.org
- 2014 Four meetings (two each) with TCA Senate and TCA Board regarding **Character/Relationship development** at TCA
- 2014 TCA adopted **The Titan's Creed** (year long development process)
- 2014-18 Four-year **PALMARIUM** focus on **24 Character Traits** (all still available on TCA website)
- 2015 Director of Academic Services Guidance (**DASG 2015-13**) created detailing Character efforts at TCA - forerunner to future Character policy
- 2015-17 **24 Character Traits** mapping across all of our grade levels (incorporated into new policy IHAK-TCA)
- 2016 ALT/Cabinet book study **The Road to Character** by David Brooks
- 2016 **TCA Board Working session** (2-hours) discussing Character at TCA
- 2016 **Transition of Director of Character** duties into Principal and Dean responsibilities
- 2016 **All-staff October Conference discussion on Character** in conjunction with **Washington's Circle** book study
- 2017 Current **IHAK-TCA Character Education** policy created (12 measurement areas for annual board report - strategic plan)
- 2017-19 Beginning of two-year **Core Values** focus with staff and TCA board; included monthly articles in PALMARIUM
- 2019-21 **Why I Teach: Stories from the Classroom** articles featured for two years in the PALMARIUM
- 2021-22 Returning to **Character topics** in the PALMARIUM and Board Development sessions at each board meeting

As a kickoff to the first TCA Board meeting this year a historical overview was provided on Character efforts at TCA. We thought you may find it of interest.





Nelson Mandela
1918-2023

Running taught me valuable lessons. In cross-country competitions, training counted more than intrinsic ability, and I could compensate for a lack of natural aptitude with diligence and discipline. I applied this in everything I did.

photo from 1937