



## AT GLAA, WE'RE FAMILY



*"I know I am part of a family - a family focused on serving God and furthering His Kingdom."*

If you're new on campus, or visiting for an event here at Great Lakes Adventist Academy (GLAA), you will be sure to notice that our school is different. For instance, you might be wondering, why are all the students hanging out in the staff offices? Why do staff and students act like family? When I was a freshman, I asked the same questions. It didn't take me long to learn that staff and students mingle like friends here.

Two short years ago, I was wandering around campus feeling a little lost and alone. My friends and I stumbled around the Administration Building, anxious to find our classes, looking at the numbers on the doors, praying we were in the right spots. Our teachers' faces were stretched from east to west, beaming at us with hopeful eyes.

English I was our first destination, and when we had successfully completed our

mission, we sat at our desks, fidgeting with our fresh pencils. "Most of you know me as the principal here, but for the rest of the year I'm your English teacher, too," Mr. Garcia stated enthusiastically.

Instantly, I felt more comfortable. His eagerness was contagious. My classmates and I listened with rapt attention while Mr. Garcia delivered a Bible study on Jonah. We dove into the ocean of our minds and before we knew it, we were deep within the story. Mr. Garcia outlined and emphasized the life lessons we could find woven into the verses. I could barely comprehend what had just taken place. My teacher had just come down to my level and had taught me something that I could understand and use in my life.

Between classes, I occasionally found myself in the Business Office where

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JOEL NEPHEW

*“Giving out of our abundance is helpful, but giving out of our need is life changing.”*

## THE MOST DIFFICULT SERMON

In 1991 I received an invitation from the New York Conference to transition from the literature ministry into pastoral ministry. I was reluctant to accept this invitation. After turning down the call three times I made a deal with God that if asked again, I would accept. Well, needless to say, that transition and many others were part of God’s plan, and here I am after 28 years of ministry serving Him as your stewardship director for the Michigan Conference.

Over that past 28 years I have had the opportunity to preach many sermons. Some have been easy and joyful, others hard and sorrowful. But there is a sermon that we are all called to preach, whether layperson, minister, or administrator, that we are told is the most difficult sermon to preach and the hardest to practice. What sermon is this? The sermon and practice of self-denial. Listen to how Ellen White expresses it in *Councils on Stewardship*.

“The most difficult sermon to preach and the hardest to practice is self-denial. The greedy sinner, self, closes the door to the good which might be done, but which is not done because money is invested for selfish purposes. But it is impossible for anyone to retain the favor of God and enjoy communion with the Saviour, and at the same time be indifferent to the interests of his fellow beings who have no life in Christ, who are perishing in their sins. Christ has left us a wonderful example of self-sacrifice....” (*Councils on Stewardship*, page 29).

Self-denial. Why is it so difficult to preach and so hard to live? Could it be because we have lost sight of Who really owns everything, including our very lives?

Ellen White goes on to say: “As we follow Him in the path of self-denial, lifting the cross and bearing it after Him to His Father’s home, we shall reveal in our lives the beauty of the Christ life. At the altar of self-sacrifice,—the appointed place of meeting between God and the soul,—

*“I am learning that part of being a faithful manager of God’s ‘stuff’ is to be prepared for the unexpected, unforeseen, unrehearsed times in which we can give.”*

we receive from the hand of God the celestial torch which searches the heart, revealing the need of an abiding Christ.” (*Review and Herald*, Jan. 31, 1907. *Councils on Stewardship*, p. 30)

In stewardship we have our expected management responsibilities, such as; maintaining good health, sharing the gospel with others, taking care of the earth, returning tithe on our increase, giving free will offerings, and the list goes on. I pray that we are all doing these things on a regular basis. But there are also times when faithful stewardship offers us the occasion to give spontaneously. Not planned giving, but a completely random opportunity to give. I am learn-

ing that part of being a faithful manager of God’s “stuff” is to be prepared for the unexpected, unforeseen, unrehearsed times in which we can give. This was impressed upon my mind many years ago one Sabbath morning at the entrance of the Bauer Seventh-day Adventist Church when I was in my early teens. What I saw that morning has made a profound impact on my life when it comes to my relation to God and as a steward of His “stuff.” We had a guest speaker that Sabbath, a student from the seminary. After the sermon the young preacher

was about to head out the door when

I saw my father take out his bill-fold and pull out a crisp, neatly folded, \$50 bill and give it to the seminarian with a pronouncement of blessing upon him. As a young boy I thought “wait a minute, I could use that money.” But as my father explained to me the idea of self-denial and the giving of “unplanned gifts,” my thoughts changed to “I want to be like that.” I was shown a part of management of God’s “stuff” that day that is the icing on the cake of stewardship. Could our family have used that money? Yes. But as a faithful steward my dad planned for a spontaneous, unplanned opportunity to be the hands of Jesus and help another. It took self-denial to set that money aside for such an event. It took self-denial not to spend it on the needs for his family or his own personal wants. It also took self-denial to give it away.

I have tried through the years to follow my dad’s example and I can’t tell you how many times my wife, Corina, and I



have had opportunity to spontaneously help someone in need. What a blessing it is to be able to say, when faced with a need, “we can help,” instead of “I wish we could help.”

It is interesting and convicting what Jesus says about all of this. In the Sermon on the Mount He says;

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”<sup>1</sup>

The challenge is not laying up treasure for ourselves. The issue is what we consider valuable and where we are placing it.

And Jesus adds this, “Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”<sup>2</sup>

And in His story about the rich man who tore down his barns and built bigger ones, He says, “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”<sup>3</sup>

Proverbs 13:7 adds this principle. “There is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; And one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches.”

Please understand it is not so much about the amount you give as it is about being ready to give. Listen to this encouraging statement. “The smallest sums given cheerfully by those who are in limited circumstances are fully as acceptable to God, and even of more value in His sight, than the offerings of the rich who can bestow their thousands, and yet exercise no self-denial and feel no lack.” *Review and Herald*, October 31, 1878.

What was it that we read earlier from *Councils on Stewardship*?

“At the altar of self-sacrifice,—the appointed place of meeting between God and the soul,—we receive from the hand of God the celestial torch which searches the heart, revealing the need of an abiding Christ.” *Review and Herald*, January 31, 1907.

God has made an appointment with each of us at the altar of self-sacrifice. Why there? So He can show us our true need of having Jesus with us at all times.

When was the last time you met your Maker at the altar of self-sacrifice?

When was the last time you gave, not out of your abundance, but out of your very necessity? Giving out of our abundance is helpful, but giving out of our need is life changing.

Maybe it’s time to ask Jesus to help us preach this most difficult sermon and live this hardest practice of self-denial. Please remember that at this same altar of self-sacrifice God gave His all to save us. In response to His loving grace let’s not let Him wait a day longer and by doing so we will experience His joy.

May our Heavenly Father richly bless you on your journey in faithfulness.

<sup>1</sup>Matthew 6:19-21

<sup>2</sup>Matthew 26:40

<sup>3</sup>Luke 12:21

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#### Planned Giving and Trust Services



## PRAYER FOCUS

Every Monday morning, the Michigan Conference staff meets for worship and prayer. Here is the list for November/December. Please join with us as we pray for these churches and ministries.

### NOVEMBER 4-8

Edwardsburg/Glenwood  
Pastor Alex Niculaescu  
Eau Claire Elem/Niles Adv School  
Edwardsburg Com Service Center  
Crystal Mountain Marriage Retreat

### NOVEMBER 11-15

Allegan/Gobles  
Pastor Alex Rybachek  
Gobles Junior Academy  
Allegan FP/Gobles Com Service Center

### NOVEMBER 18-22

Battle Creek Tabernacle  
Pastors Robert Benardo/Carlos  
Sotomayor  
Battle Creek Academy  
Battle Creek IRM

### NOVEMBER 25-29

Detroit Romaninan/Monroe/Oakwood  
Pastor Ariel Roldan  
Oakwood Junior Academy

### DECEMBER 2-6

Iron Mountain/Iron River  
Pastor Jim Nephew  
Pine Mountain Christian School

### DECEMBER 9-13

Kalkaska/Traverse City  
Pastor Jeff Akenberger  
Traverse City Elementary  
Kalkaska/Traverse City Com Service  
Centers

### DECEMBER 16-20

Detroit Span Calvary/Detroit Span  
Ebener, Pontiac Span Company  
Metropolitan Junior Academy  
Detroit Oakwood Com Service Center

### DECEMBER 23-27

Hastings/Delton  
Pastor Jeff Dowell  
Hastings Elementary



## LENDING TO THE LORD

In the third chapter of Proverbs, we are counseled against withholding “good from those to whom it is due, when it is in” our “power to act.” In fact, numerous times in Proverbs and throughout the Bible, we are called on to “defend the rights of the poor and needy,” and assured that when we are kind to those in need, we are lending to the Lord and will ourselves be refreshed (Prov. 31:9, 19:17, 11:25). God moves hearts when we begin by meeting people’s most basic needs.

On Sunday, August 25, 2019, the neighboring Buchanan and Niles Westside Seventh-day-Adventist churches joined together to provide a range of free dental and vision health services to their community. The Health Expo, which was also supported by the Lake Union and the Michigan Conference, took place at the Niles Adventist School gym. The event took months of preparation, and thanks to the efforts of many volunteers, was a huge success. The doors opened at 8:00 AM, and anyone in need of dental or vision care was welcome. Three dentists and two optometrists, as well as hygienists and other willing volunteers helped

to see 89 guests for dental services and 54 for eye exams. Additionally, 42 vision guests will have prescription glasses delivered in a few weeks. Dental services included x-rays, cleanings, extractions, and fillings.

While guests waited to be seen, they were able to chat with volunteers and watch the documentary, *Forks Over Knives*, which celebrates the benefits of a plant-based diet. Guests were also sent home with bags containing toothbrushes and toothpaste along with healthy lifestyle tips, *GLOW* tracts, BibleStudyOffer.com brochures and advertisements for



the upcoming evangelistic series at Niles Westside Church.

Andrea Beckford, one of the dentists serving that day, said the experience reminded her of her work in the mission field and that it was such a blessing to work without having to worry about payment. “We were just helping people, many of whom had never received proper dental care,” Beckford shared.

Shayna Bowman, one of the optometrists and a member of Niles Westside Church, said that “so many community members showed up that it was pretty clear we were serving a big need in the area!” One interaction in particular really touched her. “I had a female patient sit down and begin telling me how excited she was to find out we were offering free eye exams,” Bowman said. The woman had come expecting only dental services, but the fact that she could get an eye exam was an answer to prayer. She went on to explain that she had an eye exam scheduled for the following week and had been saving for that for some time. However, the night before the Health Expo, she had attended a Jaime Jorge Concert on the campus of Andrews University, an event that helps support the Andrews Academy Worthy Student Fund. “I felt impressed to make a pledge to donate to that cause,” the woman said, “but had no idea where I was going to get the money to follow through on that promise. Now I see that’s this. It’s you! I can take the money I’m saving for my eye exam next week and put it all toward the Worthy Student Fund!”

“Her faithfulness, GOD’S faithfulness, really moved me in that moment,” Bowman shared. At the end of the day over \$57,000 worth of health services were provided at no cost to the recipients. The entire event was a beautiful outpouring of God’s love and care for those who needed it most.

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**Alaina Elder-Correa**, member, Niles Westside Church





## COMING HOME: A TEACHER'S EXPERIENCE

**A**s I sorted, packed, and labeled box after box, I reflected on my life and the changes that would surely come. I was an elementary school teacher leaving public education and moving to an adventist school. I had just accepted a position to teach kindergarten and first grade and would soon be a part of the Battle Creek Academy team.

I had grown up in Adventist Education. I began in a one-room Adventist school in the upper peninsula of Michigan, continued to an Adventist boarding academy for high school and then attended an Adventist university. Following graduation, I began teaching in an Adventist school and remained an Adventist teacher for 18 years. It was then my life took an unexpected turn, and I spent ten years in public education.

I had known since the age of four I wanted to teach. I knew if I could teach, I would be content whatever the circumstances, or so I thought. I didn't realize that being content whatever your circumstances would prove to be one

of the biggest challenges of my entire career. I came to realize that challenges cause us to grow if we don't allow them to defeat us. Every teacher faces challenges throughout their career. In the past ten years, I had met unimaginable challenges.

Now, just days away from relocating and starting anew, I was hopeful, a little nervous and wondering just what I would discover. As I began settling into my classroom, it seemed from the moment I arrived, I was appreciated and already loved. The kindness and genuine care of the staff was a much-needed healing balm.

In the first days of school, I was caught off guard several times when students of all ages wanted to know me better. They introduced themselves, had conversations with me, looked me in the eye, and would greet me and shake my hand.

At recess, I observed older students playing with younger students. The little ones were so eager for the attention of the older students and the older students

were so patient and willing to indulge. I had to shake my head; I could barely comprehend what I was seeing. No one told them they had to do this. They chose to do it and enjoyed spending time with the younger children.

In the first week, we came together for chapel. I quickly learned that it is the routine that all students from kindergarten to twelfth grade sit mixed up together. The youngest students spread out, and then the older students come in choosing seats by the younger students. This initially concerned me. I thought my students might feel uncomfortable or intimidated. I was unprepared for what was about to happen.

The program began, and the older students sought out places beside the younger students. I saw tender gestures from the older students to help or assist the younger students. Everyone, young and old, was singing together happily. In some cases, the little kids needed reminding, and the older students were gentle and caring. The older students seemed to understand it was their responsibility to be an example to the younger students. I saw love demonstrated. I heard words of encouragement. I felt an overwhelming sense of Christ's presence there among our students, and I was overcome. Tears welled up in my eyes as I listened to them sing the very same songs I had sang as a child when I attended my one-room Adventist school so many years ago. This was no dream; I was wide awake, and what I was observing made a lasting impression.

As the first days of school passed, I was so happy, a feeling I had not felt in a very long time. I had been given a tremendous gift. I had come full circle. My journey as a teacher had not been without joy and reward but also not without much heartache and pain.

This is what Adventist education is all about. Students begin their journey learning the gospel of Jesus' love and are taught daily how to live the gospel

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## WE JUST WANT TO THANK YOU

**W**e just want to thank you," is what Pastor Ken Micheff told those of us who were blessed to attend the Golden Years Retreat September 8-12, 2019. The Golden Years Retreat is a retreat for those 50 years old and older. Pastor Ken was thanking us for all that we had done over the years for the church, and for the youth of the church, and Camp Au Sable. Pastor Ken and his team showed us a great time.

The agenda encompassed everything for our "land cruise." There were activities galore, and our aging bodies couldn't do everything.

Each morning began at 7:00 AM with an hour-long nature walk led by Dr. Atkins. At 8:00 AM, the kitchen crew, led by Chef Miguel Larcher, provided delicious and hearty breakfasts.

Elder Jay Gallimore provided the keynote messages that reminded us of some of the types of messages heard at camp meeting.

Activities were also plentiful. There were options to go river canoeing, golfing, fishing, horseback riding, wagon tour-

ing, and even bus trips to Hartwick Pines and a music museum near Traverse City. But there's more—we had the opportunity for massages, and activities like water-color painting, ceramics, go-carting, horseshoes, and ping-pong tournaments.

If none of these met our heart's desire, there were options for digital birding trips by Dr. Atkins, snacks to eat, and opportunities to shop at the new camp store, mingle, and gain new friends!

On one of the evenings, the camp staff treated us to a magnificent banquet. The kitchen team and their children served us by candlelight, with linen tablecloths, and exquisite service. Chef Larcher and his staff really spoiled us. We experienced a vegan, five-course-menu that



included a potato bisque, a cherry rainbow salad, and a scrumptious portabella Wellington potato mousseline, with grilled asparagus. The strawberry and blueberry cheesecake was a great ending to the delicate, but appetizing meal. Who could ask for anything more?

The entire experience was amazing! We delighted in having three full days at this escape. We felt truly appreciated, more than we deserved, by the gracious, hardworking, and loving Camp Au Sable staff.

You won't want to miss this next year! Mark your calendars for September 6-10, 2020.

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**Joy Hyde**, member, Lakes Area Commanity

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### **(COMING HOME)**

of Jesus' love. Even better, they have the opportunity to practice living the gospel of Jesus's love each day.

The students and staff here at my new school are a witness to God's love for me and those around them. I feel the presence of the Holy Spirit here. I sense the power of prayer and believe more than ever that Adventist Education is transformational. I see the difference. It is undeniable.

I was away for a long time. My perspective is one that few have. Adventist education is compelling, beautiful, and transformational. By the grace of God, I have had the privilege of returning to Adventist Education. It feels like I have come home. No, it is better than a home. It's like Heaven!

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**Sean Kellogg**, teacher, Battle Creek Academy





The conference office will be closed Monday, November 18 and the following days over the holiday season: November 27-28; December 24-26, 30-31; and January 1.



Enrollment in our Adventist schools are a financial challenge for many families. One way you can help is by supporting the Christian Education Scholarship Endowment. Last year, over 80 students from 25 different schools received assistance so they could obtain an Adventist education. For more information on how you might contribute, please visit the following link—<http://bit.ly/MIEndowment>.



Have you heard of GYC (Generation. Youth. Christ.)? The yearly gathering will take place January 1-4 in Louisville, KY. Help to spread the word and encourage your church family and friends to attend! Registration and additional information may be accessed at [gycweb.org](http://gycweb.org). Attendees can expect to listen to powerful messages, receive practical training, and meet other like-minded friends.

## (FAMILY)

Mr. Garcia lives when he's not teaching English. On one of my visits, I lifted my hand and gave a short wave in his direction. That small gesture was the start of a still growing friendship. I appreciate Mr. Garcia and his leadership abilities as well as his charismatic charm with the students.

As I sat through long orientations that first week on campus, I became more and more familiar with my new family. I learned that Mrs. Heslop isn't as intimidating as everyone thinks she is. Her class is definitely not an easy A, but with many visits to her office I found that her willingness to help and that South African accent make it all better. Mr. Reichert can be heard from anywhere in the Ad Building, and he has a passion for his students as well as the Gaither Vocal Band. Mrs. Norcross seems to know everyone's name, and whenever someone passes her office, she always has a

warm smile and hello. Mr. Carter can walk faster than I run, and his east coast charm always makes me smile. Mrs. Reichert is mind-bogglingly organized, with many visits to her office I discovered my appreciation for sticky notes and meaningful conversation. These teachers and their enticing open doors are the building blocks of GLAA.

The last two years have been life changing. I've learned about diversity, respect, and friendship. I've discovered the importance of prayer, time management, and kind words. I've explored the world outside my comfort zone, good vegetarian cooking, and a deeper relationship with Christ. I've become a part of the family and I couldn't be more thankful for all of the influential office visits I've experienced.

Even though staff members may change occasionally, and our school is continuously evolving, there is one constant

- a love for Christ. Our staff know that working at a boarding academy is not just a paycheck, it's a lifestyle. It takes commitment, a service heart, and a constant dependence on God. This is modeled to the students here every day in very tangible ways. Going to school here is not a privilege I take lightly. I know I am part of a family - a family focused on serving God and furthering His Kingdom. I hope to continue the example set here at GLAA to love those around me in a genuine way. It is my desire that others will see Jesus' light shining through me and that they will want to know Him better too.

**Faythe Hixon** is a junior at GLAA and has attended the academy since her freshmen year. She comes to us from Wisconsin and her hobbies include reading, writing, and spending time with friends and family.

Do you want to receive the weekly e-newsletter of the Michigan Conference for the latest in news and upcoming events? Subscribe now by copying the following link to your browser: <http://bit.ly/MISDA7>.

## MICHIGAN CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

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## MONTHLY CALENDAR

### November

- 1-3 Public Hi-C Retreat - Camp  
Au Sable
- 1-5 NAD Year End Meetings  
3 Daylight Savings Time Ends
- 8-10 Crystal Mountain Marriage  
Retreat
- 8-10 Personal Ministries -  
Camp Au Sable
- 10-12 LUC Department Meetings
- 15-17 Office Staff Retreat - Camp  
Au Sable
- 17-19 Prayer and Fasting
- 18 Office Closed
- 20 Camp Meeting Directors
- 27-28 Office Closed for Thanksgiving

### December

- 1 Women's Ministries Board
- 3 MI Executive Committee
- 5 Camp Au Sable Committee
- 8 Lay Advisory
- 9 Office Christmas Party
- 10 District Superintendents
- 18 Camp Meeting Directors
- 24-26 Office Closed for Christmas
- 25 Christmas Day
- 30-Jan 1 Office Closed for New Years

## KIRTLAND'S WARBLER

Dr. Gordon Atkins, Camp Au Sable's nature director

Michigan is home to one of North America's rarest songbirds, the Kirtland's Warbler. These little birds are quite particular about where they nest. The Kirtland's Warbler will only nest in young, jack pine forests primarily in northern Michigan. Unfortunately for the Kirtland's Warbler, the jack pine forests where they nest are a precarious habitat. The jack pine can only reproduce when the cone, containing the seeds, encounters fire. In the 1920s, when the United States Park Service decided to promote fire safety it actually harmed the Kirtland's Warbler because the jack pine wasn't able to reproduce as many young trees. The decline of forest fires is not the only threat to the Kirtland's Warbler. The



Brown-headed Cowbird lays their eggs in the nest of the unsuspecting Kirtland's Warbler. The Cowbirds hatch earlier than the Kirtland's Warbler's offspring and therefore get more of the food. This lessens the chances of the Kirtland's Warbler's offspring survival. Due to the many threats facing the Kirtland's Warbler, much effort has gone into the conservation of this beautiful bird. However, even though the population of Kirtland's

Warblers has increased from 200 to 2,500 breeding pairs the species will continue to rely on the efforts of conservation in order to stay off the endangered species list. In fewer words, the Kirtland's Warbler is said to be "conservation reliant."

We as humans also live in a precarious environment and are in desperate need of help. We may not have parasitic eggs in our nests, but we can have parasites in our lives of a different kind. The devil loves to "lay eggs" in our lives that take all

our time and energy away from God and we can end up starving spiritually. Fortunately for us, God already had a rescue project planned from the beginning. In John 3:16 it says that "God loved us so much that he gave his only

begotten son so that we should not perish but have everlasting life." However, although God designed the greatest rescue plan in the history of conservation, we like the Kirtland's Warblers are "conservation reliant." We must ask Him into our lives every day, because without God, our spiritual "numbers" will diminish and eventually become extinct.