

MOUNTAIN MISSION CHALLENGER

The Newsletter of
Mountain Mission School

SPRING 2025



*I CAN DO ALL THIS THROUGH HIM
WHO GIVES ME STRENGTH.*

PHILIPPIANS 4:13

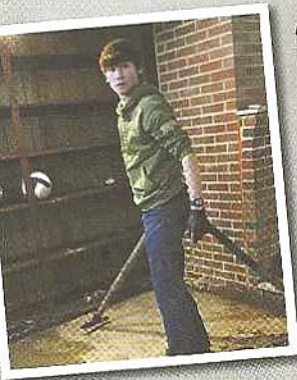
MMS VOLUNTEERS STEP UP

to Assist in Wake of February Flooding

The quick action of Mountain Mission School's Dave Mayer, Corey Earnst and a host of other MMS staff and students on the night of February 15 saved MMS from incurring substantial flood damage.

Some five to seven inches of rain fell in Buchanan County that night resulting in significant flooding throughout the county. At Mountain Mission School, as the rains came down, the water and the mud rushed down in the alleyway between Hurley Hall and Fran's House.

"Corey and Dave worked around the clock to keep the alleyway open," said Kyle Crafton, who helped in the aftermath to organize volunteers and student crews in the ensuing weeks of clean-up after the flood. "They kept the alleyway open, which spared Fran's House and overall, it was a big blessing. We just had a little water under a doorway in Hurley Hall."



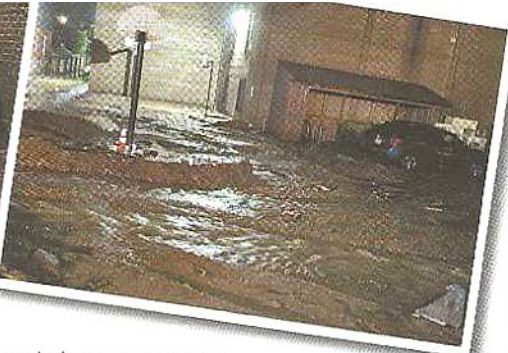
At the entryway to campus, as Slate Creek overflowed her banks and covered Rt. 83 and the floodwaters coming out of the mountains behind MMS rushed out carrying rock and mud, the entryway was completely blocked, as was the roadway. Mayer worked with Danny Hawks the morning after the flooding to clear the entryway and to remove the rock and mud covering Rt. 83 which in turn reopened Slate Creek and the entrance to MMS.

"Ernie Hertzog and Paul Platt were also very instrumental in the cleanup efforts throughout the period," Crafton said. "They both helped me run groups during the clean-up process as we took teams of our older kids for a half day every day in the first weeks following the flooding to help with clean-up. Some of our staff's homes were flooded and they helped to get the mud out of those too."

"We also took crews to Grundy Funeral Home and some local homes to help them with their clean-up efforts," Crafton added.

One such home was the Dave's Branch home belonging to Birdie Stiltner, who had worked at MMS in the past for a number of years, and her husband, Pleas. MMS received a thank you note from her daughter, Jeanetta Santolla, who lives two hours away and who was trying to figure out how to take care of things.

"What a wonderful blessing," she wrote, recounting how her parents' home had suffered some damage from a mudslide which included a tree blocking the door to enter the kitchen which had also bent the service pole for the power going into the house. They were without power for days. In the meantime, her mother was readmitted to the hospital for her safety as she was recovering from pneumonia and with no heat, it created a dangerous situation.



When she was discharged, the snowstorm began. The mudslide was still blocking the door.

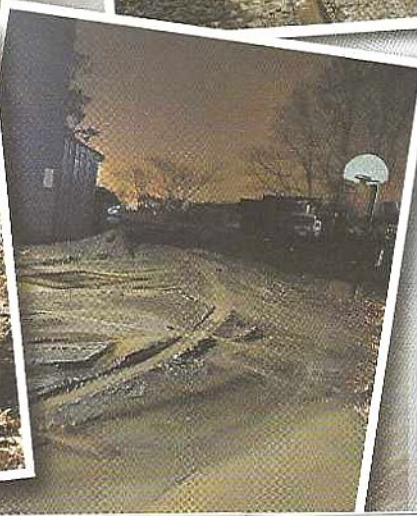
"I got a call that just had me in tears," Santolla said. "Dad called and said that Mr. Hertzog and a couple of other men from Mountain Mission School had come up and brought them groceries. They also went to the pharmacy and picked up some prescriptions for Mom that she needed. But, most of all, they brought equipment and cleared the mudslide. They have no idea how much that means to me. I am two hours away scheming and planning how to get this taken care of and they have blessed me by taking care of it. Not only that, they took care of my parents' immediate needs for food and medication. God's love is pouring out of these men onto my family and I am forever grateful. Thanks just doesn't seem like it's enough. I know they didn't do it for the thanks, but I am so grateful for their help."

"Ernie Hertzog, Dave Mayer and I went to check on Birdie and then Chris Mitchell and I went back to help with the clean-up of their place," Crafton said.

Wanda Beery noted a number of MMS alumni contacted the school offering their help as they learned of the flooding in Buchanan County. The alumni members who contacted MMS offering help included Scottie Graham, Maria Ortiz, Luam Abraha, OJ Gardner, Sara Artin, Beniam Legesse and Kaleab Wolde.

A number of churches and MMS support groups also helped out with clean-up on the MMS campus, including Fairmount Christian Church Youth Group; Croton Church of Christ; Cornerstone Christian Church; Oklahoma Group led by Lonnie Portenier; His House FSU; Trine University; and First Christian Church Grayson.

"We very much appreciate all of these groups and alumni, who reached out to help us in the aftermath of the flood," said MMS President Chris Mitchell. "We also really appreciate the dedication of our faculty and staff in helping to prevent damage to our buildings as the flood event was ongoing; and their willingness and that of our students to assist in the clean-up efforts both on campus and in the community in the days and weeks that followed."



MMS CHOIR COMPLETES

— *Three-State Performance Tour* —



March saw the Mountain Mission School Choir embark on a three-state performance tour in South Carolina, Florida and Georgia.

The tour began with a performance at River Hills Baptist Church in Columbia, SC; followed by performances at Legacy Christian Church in Clearwater, FL; North Florida Christian Camp in Keystone Heights, FL; Englewood Christian in Keystone Heights; and Real Life Christian Church in Woodstock, GA.

The choir stayed at North Florida Christian Camp during their Florida performances and also enjoyed a day at Universal Studios, due to the generosity of a donor.

"Our kids performed great and were very well-received," said MMS Choir Director Kyle Crafton. "They performed in five places in 10 days in three states and were very well-received."

"They represented Mountain Mission well," Crafton added.

Members of the Mountain Mission School Choir include Hanna Admasu, Selome Alemu, Nebu Amedmariam, Bethel Banko, Isaiah Beery, Feben Belay, Sarah Belay, Yoseph Burusi, Anna Chacha, Cole Corey, Elawi Dawit, Hildana Dotele, Gelila Fikru, Elleson Hackney, Dorca John, Atete Kabuto, Mariamawit Kebede, Hearnli Kemal, Biruk Kifle, Emmanuel Maginga, David Mayer, Yohana Mesfin, Jesca Mungare, Ivan Ndahiriwe, Yves Ndahiriwe, Ashley Umuhire, Aaron Negussie, Alvin Nkusi, Edwin Ntakirutinka, Alexandra Nyakemori, Evezzer Paulos, Gladness Peter, Ezekiel Peters, Chloé Rucogoza, Ian Rudasunikwa, Elijah Rusagara, Promise Sisay, Noah Taame and Eleni Tasew.

MMS Commencement Set for May 23

Mountain Mission School will graduate its 13 members of the Class of 2025 on May 23, 2025 during commencement exercises at the school.

At press time for this newsletter, the commencement speaker had not yet been confirmed.

Baccalaureate services are planned for May 18. Paul Potter will be the baccalaureate speaker.

Seniors who will be receiving their diplomas include Hanna Admasu, Isaiah Beery, Anna Chacha, Cole Corey, Elleson Hackney, Dorca John, David Mayer, Autumn Mullins, Jesca Mungare, Yves Ndahiriwe, Gladness Peter, Rediet Teshome and Alliance Umugwaneza.

MMS TEAM EARNS 4th STRAIGHT Sportsmen for Christ Title

Mountain Mission School's varsity boys' basketball team won the Sportsmen for Christ (SFC) Tournament this year for the fourth straight year.

"I was very proud of them," said Coach Josh Peters. "We graduated five really good players and still had a very competitive year. We will be even better next year."

Three MMS team members received recognition during the tournament and were named to the All-Tournament team, including Sophomore, Yoseph Burusi; Junior, Emanuel Maginga; and Junior, Alex Nyakemori.

Nyakemori was also named the tournament MVP.

The road to the SFC championship saw the MMS team defeat Appalachian Christian (Afton, VA) in a close 59-58 game; and the Boys' Home (Covington, VA), 68-61. The championship game was against Jefferson Christian (Rural Retreat, VA) and saw MMS beat Jefferson, 72-54.

The MMS team also went to the NACA national tournament.

"We went there with the intent of defending our division three crown, but the team was placed in a new division 1/2 group that had us playing against schools that recruit and prepare boys to play on the collegiate level," Peters said.

The team lost all three of its games, but still came home with an award.

"We brought home the Sportsmanship award," Peters said. "I was proud of our boys' effort and attitude."

One MMS team member, Junior Elawi Dawit, was named to the NACA all-tournament team.



ALUMNI

S P O T L I G H T



Luam Abraha

When Luam Abraha first came to Mountain Mission School from the Washington, D.C. area in 1997, she was nine years old. What she found was a lot of happy moments, hope and a safe place in which to grow up.

She still recalls the day her father dropped her off at the school, which at the time she said was a traumatic moment. As an adult, however, she said, she now knows everything that happened leading up to the difficult decision her parents made to remove her from the violence in the area of the city in which they lived and to send her to MMS was part of God's plan to save her.

Mountain Mission School introduced her to the Bible, which in turn she said prepared her to be out in the world.

One of the things she said she is most thankful for of her years spent at MMS was getting baptized.

"That changed my life," Abraha said. "It was a pivotal moment for me.

"Looking back, I have a lot of happy memories there," Abraha said. "Some of the best friends I made there are still friends of mine today."

While at MMS, Abraha was involved in choir, basketball, track, cheerleading and Girl Scouts where she earned the Golden Award. She said during that time, she did a lot of camping and tree planting and helping in the community. She also played a little soccer and helped

with communion prep for church.

Abraha graduated in 2005, but stayed on an extra year, attending Southwest Virginia Community College and helping out with Hurley Hall girls while she went to college. She later transferred to King College where she planned to major in biology, but after a year there, transferred to the University of Maryland to be closer to home and her parents.

At the University of Maryland, she earned a degree in public health in 2010 and then went on to complete a Masters Degree in health administration in 2012 from Strayer University.

Abraha worked for awhile after that, but said she felt like she had missed her calling.

"I felt something was missing," she said. "Something was off and I knew I was not where God wanted me to be."

She heeded that voice telling her to be involved not in health administration, but in hands-on patient care and returned to the University of Maryland in 2016 to complete her registered nursing degree.

