

PASSPORT

magazine



Table of
CONTENTS

04

**SUMMER 2017
AT A GLANCE**

*A look at what is coming up
in the summer of 2017.*

06

A FAMILY ACT

*Alumnus feature: CHS
alumnus Stacy Siewert
and his family share about
their life working in the
entertainment industry.*

09

**BRIERCREST COLLEGE
AND SEMINARY GRAD
CLASS OF 2017**

*A photo recap of graduation
weekend 2017. Congrats to
all our graduates!*

10

**ABORIGINAL
AWARENESS WEEK
2017**

*A recap of a week spent
celebrating Aboriginal
culture and learning
how to move forward in
reconciliation.*

12

BUILDING BRIDGES

*Student story: Kurtis and
Kelsey Hoff are moving to
the Middle East with hopes
of building bridges between
westerners and Arabs.*

16

**UP CLOSE AND CANDID
WITH KEN GUENTER**

*An interview with long-
time faculty member Ken
Guenter. Find out how he
got his first teaching job
and what has kept him at
Briercrest all these years.*

Summer 2017

AT A GLANCE

April

May

50TH ALUMNI CLASS REUNION
APRIL 21-23

COLLEGE / SEMINARY GRAD 2017
APRIL 22

See page 9 for a photo recap of commencement.

EXPERIENCE
MAY 12

A one-day event for students and families to experience the life of a student at High School.

BEAUTY A
MAY

BEAUTY AND THE BE
MAY 11-13

June

July

CHS

CHS GRADUATION
JUNE 10-11

Students and
a day in
Caronport

Join us as we celebrate the
CHS graduating class of 2017!

AND THE BEAST
MAY 18-20

THE GONDOLIERS
JUNE 1-3

BEAST

THE GONDOILERS
MAY 25-27

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
JUNE 8-12

Briercrest Summer Stage presents performances of
Disney's Beauty and the Beast and Gilbert and Sullivan's
The Gondoliers. Contact performingarts@briercrest.ca for
more information or to purchase tickets.



A FAMILY ACT

Alumnus Stacy Siewert shares about faith, family, and working together in the entertainment industry.

ARTICLE BY: **KARA HARMS**



For the Siewert family, work is a family affair. Stacy and Marika Siewert and their kids, Zac, Jaedon, and Zoey, are all involved in the entertainment industry in Canada.

All three kids are active in film, music, and TV, and have been involved in shows that appear on a variety of networks including the CW, Bravo, ABC, and Netflix. Marika is an actor, as well as a recording artist whose songs can be heard on pop and Christian radio across Canada. In addition to being the fifth actor in the family, Stacy also manages artists in the music and television industry.

Despite their many individual accomplishments, the family loves having the opportunity to [work together](#).

Stacy, an alumnus of Caronport High School (CHS '98), shares how the whole family ended up being involved in the entertainment industry.

“Marika being a recording artist for the last 15 years was our introduction into the music side of the entertainment industry,” he said. “The rest of us kind of fell into it.”



“We were living in downtown Vancouver, and I was taking my boys (Zac and Jaedon) out for a walk and we happened upon a movie set. A lady on set stopped us and asked if the boys had an agent because they were so cute and that they should have one. She said that if they didn’t, she had a friend who was an agent and we should contact her. ‘An agent, what was that?’ I had no idea, coming from small town Saskatchewan,” Stacy joked.

Stacy and Marika reached out to the lady’s friend and she became the boys’ first agent. It didn’t take long until Zoey was involved too, and all three kids were auditioning regularly and booking commercials, films, and [TV roles](#).

“Then at one audition they asked Marika and I if we would join the kids as they wanted to see the whole family audition,” he said. “We said yes, and I ended up booking that very first audition!”

Since then, the Siewerts have acted together as a family on a number of projects and continue enjoying the opportunities they have to work together.

“We lead worship together for church,” Marika added, “and most recently got to perform on stage together at Rogers Arena in Vancouver for the Festival of Hope with Franklin Graham, opening for Michael W. Smith and Ellie Holcomb.”

“We absolutely love doing this as a family and very often it is a conversation starter as we build relationships with other actors, directors, producers, crew, casting, and so on,” Stacy said. “It does keep us very busy at times, but we have learned over the years to work hard when we can and ‘be a family’ and enjoy the slower times while trusting God and not being anxious for the next project”

The Siewerts firmly believe that their faith is the foundation of their work.

“Sometimes people ask, ‘How does your faith fit into your business?’ but we believe our business fits into our faith,” Stacy explained. “Every great accomplishment and success, as well as overcoming the obstacles in the journey, we have come through because of the grace of God.”

“Ultimately, God guides, leads and opens the doors no one else can shut, and we just keep believing in His divine favor, grace, and love that we live in, whether we are on set filming, on the radio, performing live, or just being a family in our community. Our hope is that people all around us would be inspired to love big, dream big, and live the life they were made for.”

Stacy says that his time at CHS was an important part of his life and a formative time of solidifying his faith.

“I consider it to be the foundation for my spiritual growth as I was walking into a season where my faith choices would really start to be mine and mine alone to make,” he said.

Stacy went on to say that CHS prepared him and his family to live a life of ministry.

“Myself and then the family has been involved in some kind of ministry or church since. Everyday looks different, and I think it’s exciting.”



*The Siewert family, from left to right:
Jaedon, Marika, Zoey, Stacy, and Zac.*

BRIERCREST COLLEGE AND SEMINARY GRAD CLASS OF 2017

On April 22, we celebrated along with family and friends, our graduating class of 2017! The grads consisted of 115 college and 34 seminary graduates. We are proud to welcome them all into our alumni family.



ABORIGINAL AWARENESS WEEK 2017

Briercrest hosted its fifth-annual Aboriginal Awareness Week (AAW) last month. Many Aboriginal guests joined staff and students to continue the conversation about reconciliation and move forward in meaningful relationship between Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals.

The week was full of sessions, traditional Aboriginal food, music, and events like tipi raising, beading, and the second-annual Restoration Cup hockey game. These activities helped create a greater awareness and understanding of Aboriginal history and culture. The events also allowed space for conversation around issues that many Aboriginals face today.

Marc Levaasseur, an AAW guest, is a Métis from First Nation (Anishnabe, Wendat, and Mi'kmaq) and French Canadian who works and ministers among Indigenous people in Quebec. He works to reconcile the hurt and



disrespect that the separation between western Christianity and First Nations has caused. “A week like AAW is essential to teach students— young women and men that will probably be involved in the work of God in the future— about these things and bring them to consciousness that our Christian ideas have been wrong sometimes,” Levaasseur said.

“Not in order to judge them or condemn them, but in order for those things to stop. Because actually they are still present and this is what most of those people don’t understand. It’s not like the residential schools



and all those things, because those things are in the past. But it's still there today in our theology. It's still there in our missiology, in the way we preach and spread the Good News; that's not sometimes good news because it's done in the wrong way," he continued.

Terry LeBlanc is Mi'kmaq/Acadian who came primarily because of his friendship with Briercrest's Aboriginal coordinator, Kallie Wood. But that wasn't the only reason.

"I come secondly because I believe that institutions like Briercrest need to be more proactive in engaging

First Nations people in the concerns they have, and I believe all of us as followers of the Jesus way need to be more active and engaged in bringing reconciliation into the lives of Canadians. And if Christians can't do it, I'm not sure who can," he said.

LeBlanc summarized the purpose of AAW and other weeks like it:

"To move us another step down the trail towards full and authentic reconciliation and meaningful relationship between First Peoples and the newcomers to Canada."



BUILDING BRIDGES

student story: Kelsey and Kurtis Hoff

ARTICLE BY: KARA HARMS

KELSEY GRADUATED WITH A MASTER OF ARTS IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY COUNSELLING, AND KURTIS WITH A BACHELOR OF ARTS IN GENERAL STUDIES WITH CONCENTRATIONS IN HISTORY AND GLOBAL STUDIES.

Kurtis and Kelsey Hoff have dreamed about moving back to the Middle East, and in October, it will become a reality. They each have spent time there separately before they were married, but now the couple will be returning together, new degrees in hand, with hopes of investing deeply into cross-cultural relationships and bridging the gap between Arabs and westerners.

Kurtis and Kelsey initially plan to move to Jordan and enrol in language school to study Arabic.

“We want to become proficient in the language to enable us to engage the culture more deeply. We feel that it’s really important to equip ourselves with that in order to be able to engage society at a deeper level,” Kurtis explained.

Both Kurtis and Kelsey have previously studied Arabic and are able to converse on a practical level.

“[But] we want to be able to go deeper—talk about concepts, ideas, and faith; overall, inter-religious dialogue is really a big passion for both us,” Kelsey said.

“A language is the mouthpiece of a culture,” Kurtis added. “We want to know how the values add up, and why things are done this way. The syntax and idioms of a language all point to ‘that’s why they behave this way.’”

Intercultural communication is a passion that Kurtis and Kelsey share and was

something that connected over. The two met in grade 12 at Caronport High School and became friends. Even though they were often in different parts of the world after high school, their paths crossed every summer while on the same tree planting crew, and they would keep in touch during the time in between.

“Usually one of us was either studying, or one of us was overseas doing something. So we would always swap a lot of stories,” Kelsey said.

“We had been talking while I was in Jordan. Kurtis was [at Briercrest] and he was doing a lot of Islamic studies and intercultural communications. So I was someone who was doing what he was studying,” Kelsey explained. “Through those conversations, I told Kurtis about a semester abroad program I had done in Jerusalem in my undergrad and how great it was.”

Excited about Kelsey’s experiences, Kurtis went to Jerusalem to study for a semester. “Briercrest prepared me really well for that,” Kurtis explained. “The classes I took with Alan Guenther, and Cross-cultural Communications with Dr. Catterick prepared me really well to engage that program wholly; it was an enriching experience.”

Many people are surprised when they hear about the Hoff’s plans to move to Jordan, but Kelsey recalls many instances throughout her life that have brought her to this point.

“I’ve been inexplicably fascinated by the Middle East since I was young,” she said. “I think it’s partially because I’ve always felt that there were a lot of assumptions made about that part of the world. And since I was young, I’ve always had an eye out for the misunderstood and the minorities. Not necessarily only ethnic minorities, but people on the margins of society. I’ve always been bothered by the assumptions that are made about people who are different. So one of those, for me, was people from the Middle East. I don’t think what you see on the news is everything, but no one is reporting that.”

Throughout her undergraduate studies at Trinity Western University, Kelsey strategically tailored her assignments to fit with her interest in intercultural communications, Muslims, and women’s issues. Her involvement with the international student program on campus also helped her realize her special interest in Arabs.

“My friend group on campus was very multi-cultural, which I found so enriching and valuable; however, there was something about my friends from Saudi Arabia that sparked a higher level of interest in me—like a small fire burning inside of me that needed to be fed,” she said.

The friendships Kelsey developed with the Saudi Arabian women continued to stir her heart and deepen her interest in Arab culture.

“I studied abroad in Jerusalem and

through this experience came to affirm once again that I need to engage Arabic language and culture further,” Kelsey said. “After graduating with my BA and working in a tree planting camp for the summer, I went independently to Jordan and studied Arabic full time at a school and with a private teacher.”

For Kurtis, his journey to Jordan was less direct. The pull to the Middle East was developed through courses he took at Briercrest and his relationship with Kelsey. Before that particular geographic pull, Kurtis had plans to immerse himself in another culture with hopes of becoming proficient in the language.

“I love modern languages,” he explained. “I love participating in other cultures. One of my passions is intercultural communications—that and religious dialogue. Those are the two things that are driving me.”

While Kurtis and Kelsey are initially moving there to study Arabic, they want to eventually get jobs in Jordan with goal of investing in and meeting needs in the community. Kelsey hopes to someday use her counselling degree to fill the need for mental health services in Jordan.

She has a specific interest in the mental health of expats living overseas, whether missionaries, humanitarian aid workers, or military people. She plans to find ways to use her counselling skills in some way, possibly through offering online counselling services for people who do not have easy access. Kelsey also

has interest in teaching, although she is unsure of in what capacity.

Kurtis' degree is less specific to filling a particular need, and more about providing an opportunity to make connections with Jordanians and invest in the community.

"Since my degree is concentrated in History and Global Studies there are a variety of job opportunities that can be potential avenues," he said. "Being proficient in Arabic may enable me to work for Canadian embassies and consulates in the region. There are also a large variety of Non-Government Organizations and International Schools in Jordan where I may be able to find work in administration, tutoring, or humanitarian work. Ideally, I'd love to be there, identify a development project, partner with Jordanians, and start a business that creates jobs. Then when it's time to leave, my Jordanian partners can take over our work and there will be a lasting communal development that transcends the period of time I will invest in the community."

"As long as I'm living there, learning the language, investing deeply into cross-cultural relationships, I want to get to the point where I'm able to engage in a lot of inter-religious dialogue—whether it be with Arab Christians or Muslims. I just want to invest in that community. The work is meant to allow me to stay there. It's kind of a means to an end."

Kurtis and Kelsey liken this step of faith

to diving off a diving board.

"We have these ideas; we have these hopes, and ambitions. Are they going to work out? I don't know. That's part of the faith we're taking in going," Kurtis said.

Although they are unsure of what is in store after this coming year of Arabic study, Kurtis and Kelsey see it as a beneficial and worthwhile endeavor, regardless of whether it is just for a year or longer. Not only is the experience extremely enriching, but knowing Arabic and having the cultural insight can help them to be bridge-builders here in Canada between newcomers and locals.

They are passionate about being a voice for Arabs in Canada and taking a stand against assumptions made about them.

"I lived there. I have relationships with them and I'll stand firm that that's not who they are," Kurtis said.

"I have Muslim friends and they feel completely mortified that what they see on the news is representing Islam to the west," Kelsey added.

"We're doing this because we're fighting against prejudices and predispositions," Kurtis said.

Kurtis and Kelsey want to help Canadians gain a better understanding of immigrants and work to create a culture that is more hospitable. They also desire to help newcomers live well in Canada.



Ken Guenter is the associate professor of Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern History.

How did you come to know the Lord?

When I was a little kid out in Africa—my parents were missionaries. When I was three, I felt convicted of my sin and my need for a Savior. I prayed with my mom, so I don't even remember not being a believer.

Were you born in Africa?

I was born in Chilliwack, BC. My parents went out to Africa when I was two-and-a-half.

UP CLOSE AND CANDID

with Ken Guenter

INTERVIEW BY: KARA HARMS

And did you spend most of your growing up years there?

Yes. Grades 1-8, except for furloughs when my parents came home. And then in grade nine, I came to Caronport High School.

Have you been at Briercrest since then?

Almost, but not entirely. I did high school and Bible school—so seven years—and then went to the U of S and did a BA and a year of education. Henry Budd offered me a job; I never applied. It was really cool because when I was a kid in high school, I chose a verse for my life from Psalm 37, “Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart.” I never even thought of coming to teach here, but one Saturday night in the spring, Briercrest had an alumni banquet in Saskatoon and we went. After dinner, Henry Budd asked me if I’d be like to be interim athletic director for two years. And so I asked Judy what she thought and she said, “Sure.” So on Saturday night, we agreed, and I never imagined how much I would enjoy my work here. The Lord has really given me what I didn’t know I would enjoy.

So how many years have you actually been teaching here?

I think 44—something like that. I came in '72.

What is it that you enjoy about teaching?

There are lots of things. I enjoy studying the Bible on its own. And I enjoy teaching it. I find the challenge of trying to communicate it well to students is really engaging, and I

love being around students. How many old people get to hang around 19-20-year-olds for the most significant part of their work day? It's really good.

Do you remember your first day of teaching?

My first two years as athletic director—they were a blur because I was teaching 19 hours a week. I was the athletic director, and I was the Cougar football coach, and the Clipper hockey coach. And I took care of the rink and the gym. But back then, that's just how things were, and we made a go of it as best as we could. So, no, I don't remember it.

What's kept you here all these years?

It's interesting that when I least expect it, I get notes from students telling me how much they really appreciate what I'm doing. And it's not only when I least expect it, but when I most need it. It's been very confirming in that way. And we like it here. I really believe in what Briercrest is about. We've also enjoyed having great friendships here over the years and our kids loved growing up here.

If you had to teach a different discipline, what would you teach and why?

I've never thought of teaching anything else. Because I taught art for over 32 years and I've taught history on and off for over 40 years, and I've taught Bible for about 40 years. There's one discipline that isn't technically offered and if I could teach that, it would be Old Testament biblical theology—which I sneak into my Bible Synthesis course.

What's one piece of advice you would give to every graduating student?

The first thing that comes to mind is to remind them to keep reading their Bibles for the rest of their lives. And to keep praying. Those two go together. And they're the foundation of our spiritual lives.

Is there one thing that has been significant for you in persevering in your faith?

I started off as athletic director, and then became a history teacher. Henry Budd asked me to teach ancient history, so I went off and got a degree in it. When I came back, he asked me to teach Old Testament. And they gave me so many classes to teach that all I had time to do was read the Bible, in terms of class prep. I remember just trying to put together a class on five chapters of Isaiah and five chapters in the Pentateuch, day after

day. Ultimately, it ended up that we just read the Bible, and talked about it, and read it, and talked about it. And if you do that with Pentateuch OT historical books, and the Prophets, year after year, at least once for 30 years, you get to know them. And that's what happened to me. So all that reading that we did—and especially reading together out loud in class. There's really something powerful about that. Because when you do that, you pay more closer attention to the text, and you know the students are going to ask you about what you just read. You learn so much. And because I had to teach all of these diverse courses... each class was like prep for the other classes. It was crazy, but it worked. And the other thing is that the power of reading the Bible out loud is more significant than the great wisdom we have as instructors. We tend to forget that. That's what really made my first 30 years work. Lately, I've had a lot more time to do class prep.

What role has your family, or Judy specifically, played in your career as far as sustaining you?

Well Judy made us all look good. And she took really good care of us. She really dedicated herself to raising our four boys. That's been by far the biggest factor in supporting me.

What does semi-retirement look like for you? What do you hope to do in your future?

I'm trying to come in for a long, slow landing. I teach two classes every semester now. If I can teach [my four one-and-a-half-year-old grandchildren] as freshman—I'll be pushing 90, but I'd love to do it. Then I could die happily like Job, you know what I mean?

It's really nice not to be horribly busy, which I've been all of my career. I feel guilty if I sleep in to 8:00 and don't get to work until 9:30, because all these years I've just been flying and working so hard. It's really a nice time of life where financially it's easier for us; we have fewer expenses, and we have more time to travel to visit our kids and grandkids. And I spend more time doing pottery in my free time, which I really enjoy.

Is there anything else you would like to add?

I still coach football in the high school and I really love it. I hope I can keep doing that for a bit yet. It's great to have relationships with high school kids still. Every once in a while, I drop by the art room—kids are working away at the wheels and it's fun to help them. So I've had a really good life. If you go back to Psalm 37, I really have had a better life than I could've planned.

ALUMNI CONNECTIONS

coming to a city near you!

We are in the planning stages for our Alumni Family Connections for the **upcoming year** and would love to hear from you if you would be willing to help us **host an event** in your city.

Please contact Marilyn Muller, chief advancement officer, at **306.756.3295** or **mmuller@briercrest.ca**.

Has your contact information changed? Not receiving the information you need from Briercrest? Update your alumni information at **briercrest.ca/alumni/**

Find out more online

BRIERCREST.CA