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February 2022

Mount Paran Christian School

On the Cover

Freshman Aiden Gilmore and fourth-grader Annabelle McGill are involved with the MPCCS robotics programs, which are housed in the new Murray Innovation Center that opened last month. Beck White, right, also is a MPCCS student.

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Cover photo provided by MPCCS.



12 Winter Reads

Visit one of Cobb County's 21 Little Free Libraries or check out a book recommended by our friends at North Cobb Regional Library.

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Celebrate Black History Month with a look at the history of Sardis Missionary Baptist Church, a Kennesaw fixture for more than 140 years.



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NorthStar Church celebrates its 25th anniversary the only way it knows how — by giving back and blessing others.

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A New Era for MPC

Murray Innovation Center Opens to Students

Last month, Mount Paran Christian School (MPCS) ushered in the spring semester with the opening of the Murray Innovation Center, a 23,000-plus-square-foot expansion of the high school building. The opening is the result of careful planning and perfect timing, as the center offers spaces for enhanced programming and instruction, nearly doubling the size of the high school, originally built for 250 students and now housing nearly 450.

For the 2021-2022 academic year, enrollment at MPCS grew to approximately 1,255 students, up from 1,180 in August 2020. Enrollment is capped to maintain small class sizes, so each student is known and loved.

The school, founded in 1976, serves students in pre-K3 through grade 12 and is a fully accredited, non-denominational, covenantal Christian school. The college-preparatory program offerings demonstrate a commitment to excellence in academics, arts and athletics. The school's goal is to prepare servant-leaders — in the classroom, on the ball field, on the stage and, ultimately, in the community.

Outside-the-Box Lessons

MPCS offers a blend of proven curriculum and innovative, outside-the-box instruction, including student-led initiatives. Such is the case with Roost Coffee Co., a student-run coffee shop launched from the school's business and entrepreneurship courses. Zachary Fors, a 2021 graduate, began the Roost after he was challenged in an MPCS business class to identify a need at the school and find a solution. He shared the Roost business plan with Head of

Upper School and Associate Head of School Tawanna Rusk, requesting a trial investment. The trial was so successful that Fors sought additional funding to expand.

Fors, who is now studying business management at Tulane University, said, "No other school would've taken a chance on a student."

Fors and former classmate Antonio Hundley, also a 2021 graduate, applied concepts from their business class to the business, eventually growing to cater on-campus meetings and events. When COVID-19 hit, the students developed an ordering website and became a fully digital operation. The class initiated a partnership with Dale Hughes, a father of two MPCS alumni and owner of Apotheos Roastery in downtown Kennesaw. This allowed the Roost to purchase additional equipment and expand its offerings to include baked goods and popular items, such as cold-brewed coffee.

These new features are on full display in the new Roost retail storefront, located inside the Murray Innovation Center, providing a central community meeting place in the new building's Graham Commons.

Supporting Success

In addition to the Roost, the new Murray Innovation Center supports design thinking through improved layouts to enhance student experiences in every STEAM discipline. The building provides space and technology for innovative education, designed to equip students with the career skills they will need for their future, including



new science labs; collegiate-style, technology-rich collaborative areas; and classrooms suited to the engineering design process.

Outfitted with dual monitor design stations for computer-aided design (CAD) and computer-aided manufacturing (CAM) design work, the digital lab provides space to inspire students through collaborative instruction. Students in Project Lead the Way® (PTLW) courses such as Introduction to Engineering Design, Business Marketing and Foundations of Engineering dream big ideas, which are carried to the Maker Space. Within the Maker Space, students can prototype their designs with electronics/soldering workstations, 3D printers, a laser cutter/engraver and a desktop computer numerical control (CNC) milling machine. Students are given



Students serve customers at Roost Coffee Co., left, inside the Murray Innovation Center, which has room for Tade Idowu and Jillian Empie, top left, to work on their robotics project. The building, above, is 23,000-plus square feet.

“Our hearts are full of wonderful memories, cherished friendships and the knowledge that we will always be part of the MPCS family. The prayers, life lessons, education and examples that have been provided have helped shape and develop our children into the young people that they are today, while providing the tools needed to succeed in the next phases of their lives.”

— Joel Pugh, parent of two MPCS alumni

the freedom to try, fail, learn and try again — building resilience and confidence. Project designs then move to the fabrication lab, the final space in the engineering design process. In the “Fab Lab,” projects are refined and construction is finalized, using a CNC router for computer-controlled wood cutting and carving, as well as an array of additional power tools for hands-on manufacturing. The two-time state championship-winning Eagle Robotics program also calls the Maker Space home, with a dedicated robotics field.

Looking to the Future

MPCS supports all learners through various programs, including directed studies in grades K-12, a lower school ENCORE gifted program, advanced courses in grades 3-12, and 59 AP/

Honors courses. MPCS boasts a 100% college acceptance rate for graduating seniors, with a dedicated college counseling team. The class of 2021 earned more than \$8 million in scholarships, not including the HOPE or Zell Miller scholarships.

Students are encouraged to challenge themselves to seek a higher level of accomplishment, whether in the classroom, the theater, on the court or in the community. Award-winning performing arts programs and countless state and regional athletics championships are a testament to the school’s commitment to excellence.

As MPCS looks to the future of education, it stands ready to continue its vision of being a national school leader that provides an innovative education to

a diverse community of learners within a liberal-arts framework, all for the glory of God. MPCS graduates will be well-prepared for the 21st century, with the necessary skills to make an impact in the world.



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School News



Murray Innovation Center's digital lab.



MPCS students Will Duncan and Caitlyn Ealey offer a tour of Murray Innovation Center's technology-enhanced active learning classroom.

Mount Paran Unveils Murray Innovation Center

On Jan. 5, Mount Paran Christian School (MPCS) dedicated and unveiled the Murray Innovation Center (MIC). The building, named after a generous lead gift from the Stuart and Eulene Murray Foundation, is a much-needed 23,000-plus-square-foot addition to the current Dozier Hall high school, originally built to house just 250 students. With enrollment continuing to grow, the expansion allows MPCS to offer innovative new learning spaces for its 450 high school students.

The MIC includes a digital design lab and a fabrication lab, a collegiate-style technology-enhanced classroom, two new science labs, high school administrative offices and additional classroom and gathering spaces. The building offers a permanent storefront for Roost Coffee Co., a cafe run entirely by MPCS high school entrepreneurship classes. Because of this student-led venture, MPCS added and refined course programming in personal finance, business management, marketing and entrepreneurship.

Former Owl Wins Wrestling Title

Former Kennesaw State University running back Bronson Rechsteiner won the WWE NXT Championship Jan. 4, defeating former champion Tommaso Ciampa at the NXT New Year's Evil event.

Rechsteiner, who competes under the name "Bron Breakker," played for the Owls 2016-2019, and currently holds the single-game record for rushing yards, tallying 221 against Missouri State in 2019. He began his NXT career on Sept. 14, 2021.

NXT features the next generation of wrestlers battling to become superstars in the WWE.



Former KSU football player Bronson Rechsteiner won the WWE NXT Championship as "Bron Breakker." Photo courtesy of the WWE.

