

# OUR VISION AT WORK

TOGETHER. HUMBLE. RESPECTFUL. INSPIRED. LOVED. LOVING

## ASAP

Student Success - Ivan

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## CONNECTIONS

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## WESTSIDE BOXING

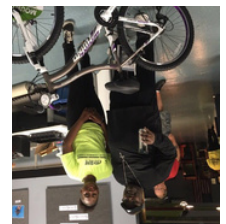
What a year!

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*In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35*

## TOY DRIVE FOR HOMELESS & DISPLACED FAMILIES BEGINS NOV 1



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# CALL OF DUTY

Elijah didn't finish the Jobs Program this summer.



Left: Elijah and Holland Bus Company owner John Dykstra on hiring day.

Below: Caroline receives her diploma from Holland High after graduating early!



After 5 weeks of the 10-week Career Connections Program, he was offered a job at Holland Bus Company, where his ESCAPE team had been working all summer. "One of our staff had a health emergency this summer, so we were pressed for time to get all the busses washed and detailed before the school year." said owner John Dykstra. Elijah was working his second summer there, and was seen as the leader of the group. "He had learned the whole process and was even able to teach some of our newer workers on the team this year." said Butch, his team leader. Elijah gladly took the job, bought a used bike to get himself there by 8 am every day, and worked full-time directly at Holland Bus Company the rest of the summer! He is now in his junior year back at Holland High School where he is excited about starting classes at Careerline Tech Center that will help him on his career path of becoming a Diesel Mechanic.

At ESCAPE, we aim to connect people with relationships, resources, and opportunities that matter. For the 43 youth who completed the Career Connections Program this summer, they earned over \$40,000 collectively, but also gained mentor relationships, connections at 24 different work sites, a camping trip, and various workshops on resumes, skilled trades, and how to THRILL employers and clients. We invest deeply in Career Connections for youth to be able to discover their own worth through work, relationships, and God's love for them. Then the gang life, drug life, and couch potato life start to seem less worthy. Elijah certainly took full advantage of these to help move himself and his family into a better place. Congrats to the TWENTY other youth who achieved perfect attendance this summer, and thank you to all the sponsors, work sites, and collaborators who helped make it happen. THE FUTURE LOOKS BRIGHT!

// AJ Westendorp - Ministry Director //

## A WORD OF SUPPORT:

Holland Public Schools is pleased to partner with ESCAPE; serving youth in our district since 2013. This program directly seeks to support students who require a temporary separation from the traditional school setting.

Through our collaborative efforts, students are able to continue the academic and grade level progression needed on the pathway to high school completion.

In addition to the academic support, students also receive social and emotional support, behavior management, career exploration and community service opportunities through mentoring and goal setting. I have witnessed first-hand the progress that young adults who participate in this program can make as they successfully transition back to the traditional school setting. This program is a gift to young people in our community who consciously make the decision to improve and change the trajectory of their future.

// Brian Davis, Superintendent - HPS //

## A BURSTING HEART

In just one year at ESCAPE I have had the opportunity to work with over 60 students. Ivan Lopez was kicked out of West Ottawa for distributing drugs. I vividly remember the day he came to ESCAPE with a stack of write ups he had received from his school. He was the kid ESCAPE was made for. Within days of working with Ivan I could see that he had a big heart that was misunderstood. This young man would refer to staff members using "Miss, Mr. or Mrs." and speak to volunteers with respect and poise. He knew his audience and what he needed to do to be heard. He **code switched**. According to the Oxford dictionary, code switching is defined as "the practice of alternating between two or more languages or varieties of language in conversation." This is not something that is necessary for everyone to do, but for a person of color, who may not speak in the same vernacular as many standardized English speakers, it's a skill for survival to appropriate in all cultural settings. Ivan is brilliant and brave with this skill!

On our way to his school reinstatement hearing Ivan said, "You know Kristina, for the first time, I feel proud." He was proud of his accomplishments. Proud of his completion of courses. Proud he lined up a consistent job. Proud when he heard his grandma say, "I see a change in my grandson: How he speaks to me and how he acts around the house. He speaks about his teachers at ESCAPE and his Pastor with pride." The principal chimed in and shared that she could see a new confidence about him. This brought Pastor Watt and me to tears. His growth has been evident to all, and encourages us to keep fighting for these kids. Ivan is one example of the many students we see at ESCAPE. We are ecstatic to see the transformation Ivan has made. He participated in the Summer Jobs Program, volunteered his time working at ESCAPE fundraisers, and plans to go on our mission trip to Guadalajara, Mexico. Donating to ESCAPE invests in lives like Ivan's. We need \$135,000 yearly to keep this program going so that he and others like him can continue to have the support of the ESCAPE staff. Will we be a community that invests fully in futures like Ivan's? // Kristina Sage - Education Coordinator //



Education Coordinator Kristina Sage with Ivan.

"For the first time, I feel PROUD."



## PASTOR'S NOTE

Hello ESCAPE Families, Friends, and Supporters. We are coming to the end of another year and for ESCAPE this is an important time. Most of our donors are out of town at this time so funding becomes more complicated. Your gift to ESCAPE allows us to continue helping kids like Elijah and Ivan. We pray that you see how hard we have been working on following our mission and values. The same mission and values that you also hold. But we can't do it alone. We need your help so **together** we can help these kids soar.



*Executive Director Pastor Watt congratulating Angel on his perfect attendance in Career Connections.*

Our budget is over \$500,000 this year so that we can address the growing need among middle school aged kids to have a safe environment to continue their education during their separation from school. This means we will need more laptops and classroom supplies. An expanded Career Connections Program will require another van. We are blessed to be able to offer these programs, but we need support of people like you. We pray that you will think about us and help support our plans.

On a personal note, **THANK YOU** for believing in me. **THANK YOU** for believing in the work we are doing for the Lord. We understand how each and every dollar that comes from our donors and sponsors is important to the success of ESCAPE Ministries. We hope you do too.

We have had a wonderful year and I hope that we have been doing a good job keeping you informed. If you don't like a lot of mailings, please feel free to give us your email address and we will email you the newsletter. This simple change could potentially save us \$7,000 a year.

God bless you all!

PASTOR WILLIE WATT JR.

## HERO



Estella is a hero. The two waving hands of her grandkids in the backseat know this, but do we? Estella comes for a food basket from ESCAPE's Provisions Ministry once a month. "It helps me a lot," she says. "I live on a fixed income, and my husband died when I was 30. I worked 25 years before I was laid off at age 60, and I have a limit on grocery spending. I don't qualify for food stamps." She falls through the cracks of the system. So whether it's the snacks and peanut butter she can't afford to buy at the store, or the frozen meatballs and lasagna she gets to take to family Thanksgiving, a food basket provides a helpful boost that helps Estella feel more like the hero that she is. ESCAPE isn't a full-time food pantry, but we've met enough Holland residents who need and deserve an extra boost that we are delighted to offer Provisions to help. And we find, in the process, we meet extraordinary people like Estella, who are heroes, and among the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

## WESTSIDE BOXING Highlights



What a year Westside Boxing has been having! Joseph Sirobbie Nelson obtained his first national championship title in Chicago, Illinois. Robbie has been dealing with a lot of problems in his life and after his loss at the West Michigan Golden Gloves fight, he was filled with doubt. Still, he was able to push through it all and win the King of the Jungle Super Heavy Weight Championship title. Marcel Soto has his own inner demons he has been dealing with but has come a long way since day one. He has participated in two sanctioned fights with a record of 1-1, but in both instances he came away with the trophy for Fight of the Night. In June WSB hosted the Tulip City Battle. It was a great success and we would love to put on another competition. We are searching for sponsors and donors to help WSB reach their goal of \$10,000 so they can host another event, send their boxers to other area matches, and purchase supplies like tape and gloves. Donate online and memo "WSB".

# OUR STAFF



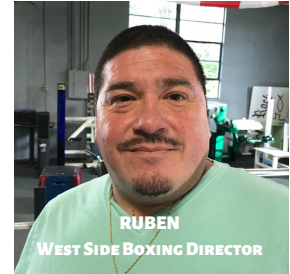
**PASTOR WILLIE**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



**HEIDI**  
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**AJ**  
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**RUBEN**  
WEST SIDE BOXING DIRECTOR



**KRISTINA**  
EDUCATION COORDINATOR



**JAMES**  
LEARNING COACH



**ESPY**  
LEARNING COACH

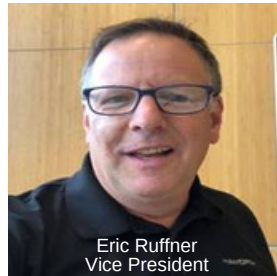


**FRANK**  
FACILITIES

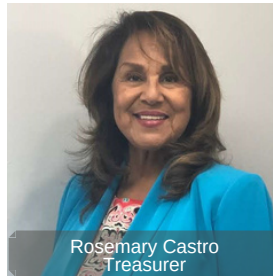
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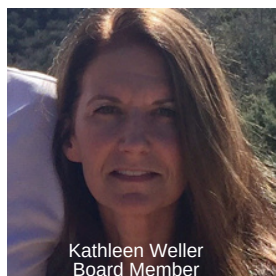
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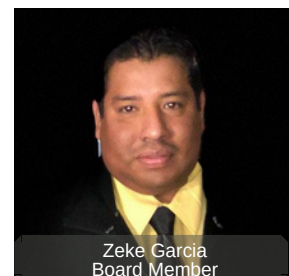


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This is the year to GROW with ESCAPE!  
Please help support us in an even bigger way this end-of-the year.  
Also, if you would be interested in serving our youth or serving on our board, please contact us at 616.396.4481



**Zeke Garcia**  
Board Member



follow us! @escapeyfgk

