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*"I love Escape because of the impact that empowered kids can have in their families and their communities. Pouring into these students positively impact their lives and the lives of the people closest to them ! "*

-- Derrek Sterken, Escape Board Member



FLOURISH IN FAITH, GIVE WITH PURPOSE: 2025 ANNUAL BANQUET



FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KEVIN VAN DEN BOSCH

Dear Friends and Partners,

My wife and I recently visited Sequoia National Park with our kids and grandkids. One of the highlights of the trip was seeing the awe and wonder on our grandkids' faces as they experienced the majesty of the towering trees. A Park Ranger told us that for these giants to flourish, the soil has to be just right. It reminded me that flourishing doesn't happen by accident. Whether in forests or communities, when the conditions are right, flourishing becomes not just possible—but inevitable.

**The theme for Escape Ministries Annual Banquet this year is Flourish in Faith. The theme is based off Psalm 92:12-13 which says, "The righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord, they will flourish in the courts of our God."**

These verses paint a striking picture of strength, stability, and growth that comes from being anchored in one's faith. Being deeply rooted leads to thriving, regardless of life's challenges. For many of us and for many of our students at Escape Ministries, we see challenges everywhere—personal struggles, health issues, and sometimes, even a feeling of disconnection from God. **Yet, these verses give us hope because in God's house, there is belonging and a flourishing that no challenge can steal.**

Trees that are planted in rich soil grow tall and sturdy, producing fruit and providing shelter. **Similarly, we can expect to see wonderful results in the lives of those we serve as we nurture them in their faith.**

As I look outside, I see my young grandkids working in the garden with my wife—carefully watering the bean and tomato plants, hopeful for the fruit they'll soon enjoy. **Watching them, I whisper a prayer—not only that their faith would be nurtured, but that they would flourish in it.** That they would grow strong and vibrant, deeply rooted in a community that reflects God's love. **I pray the same for the young people at Escape Ministries: that as we walk with them in faith, they too will flourish—thriving with purpose and strength, like the mighty cedar tree in Psalm 92.**



2025 HERO IN ME WINNER: EMELYNN CASTILLO

After losing her father, Emelynn faced grief and mental health struggles but turned her pain into academic success and personal growth.

This fall, she will start at Western Michigan University with a passion to pursue healthcare management and help others navigate life's challenges.

Along with two other outstanding finalists, she received a scholarship to further her educational journey. A heartfelt thank you to our generous donors who make these scholarships a reality!





EDUCATION: A.S.A.P. & SUMMER BRIDGE



Alexa and Elena



Hannah

This summer is particularly exciting as we introduce our Summer Bridge program! Made possible by the generous OST grant, we were able to bring on Alexa Bushong for the summer, and we're delighted that she chose to use her skills as a certified teacher at Holland Christian Schools — to help our students grow and thrive. Together with our Youth Program Specialist, Elena Thomas, **they've been working tirelessly (and joyfully!) to design engaging programming that helps students build skills and confidence as they prepare to leap from 8th grade into the adventure of high school.**

We're also incredibly thrilled to welcome Hannah Edgerly as the new Education Director of the Alternative Suspension Accountability Program! A graduate of Cornerstone University with a BS in Ministries and a Minor in Biblical Studies, Hannah is eager to pour her passion into working alongside our youth, staff, and the incredible community that supports Escape Ministries.

We are grateful for our multi-talented staff who care deeply about creating safe, empowering spaces for our kids to learn and grow. And of course, none of this would be possible without the generosity of our amazing donors — **your support helps us expand life-changing programs and invest in incredible staff who make a lasting impact.** Thank you for helping us make this summer (and beyond!) full of hope, growth, and new possibilities!



PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

EMPLOYMENT: CAREER CONNECTIONS



Chase

Chase began his journey at Escape at the age of 16. After being expelled, Escape's A.S.A.P. program provided him with a second chance to complete his education and graduate alongside his peers.

Escape quickly became a welcoming environment for Chase, allowing him to maintain connections with the leaders and youth. He reflects,

**"I appreciated the ability to be vulnerable without the fear of judgement."**

With the passing of time, Chase continued to come back to Escape, and this year began working as a music studio coordinator which eventually evolved into the role of a Career Connections Team Leader.

**"I love the opportunity to create connections with youth who are experiencing similar life situations that I faced. It's important to create a safe environment where they can feel heard and seen."**

Currently, Chase is enrolled at LMC, studying psychology, with a graduation date set for 2028. He aspires to become a school counselor or a probation officer, with the goal of continuing to support and help youth in vulnerable situations.



AN EVENING TO FLOURISH: SPONSOR, SUPPORT, AND CELEBRATE



This year, Escape Ministries invites you to take part in something truly special at our Annual Banquet, themed Flourish in Faith, inspired by Psalm 92:12–13. These verses remind us that true growth and strength come from deep, faith-filled roots — and at Escape, we see this every day as young people overcome challenges and thrive in a nurturing community.

We believe that when young people are rooted in faith and surrounded by support, they can truly flourish. By becoming a banquet sponsor, you help cultivate the environment where transformation takes place—where students are empowered to grow strong, resilient, and full of hope. **Your sponsorship directly fuels the programs, mentorship, and opportunities that allow youth to thrive—not just in life, but in their faith, flourishing into all they were created to be.**

We warmly invite you to join us for this inspiring evening — and we encourage you to take the next step by becoming a banquet sponsor. To learn more or to pledge your support, please reach out to Executive Director, Kevin Van Den Bosch. Together, we can plant seeds of hope and watch them grow into something beautiful for our entire community. We look forward to celebrating with you! **To reserve a seat or become a banquet sponsor, check out the information below!**

**Tickets:** Visit <http://weblink.donorperfect.com/Flourishing> to pay for your individual tickets or sponsorship.  
**Sponsorship:** Commitments must be received by September 8 for guaranteed inclusion in the print program.



Thank you to our early- bird, banquet sponsors! If you are interested in partnering with Escape and sponsoring our annual banquet, contact Kevin Van Den Bosch, Executive Director, at [kevin@escape-out.org](mailto:kevin@escape-out.org)

