Grayson braves the mud and water to compete for Waripa in the Tough Mudder race on Olympics Day.
Censoring the influence of mass media

We know that our children face exposure to a whole world of media that we as adults didn’t have available to us when we were kids. In this editorial, Jan – Prep teacher and mother of 5 (aged 11-21) - talks about what our role as parents should be in guiding our children through the world of mass media.

Let me start by clarifying that my definition of the term mass media includes anything produced for mass consumption that can be read, viewed or heard, including films and TV, video games, social media, books and magazines.

Our role as Christians

While the ratings on many games, movies etc sometimes suggest parental guidance, Scripture requires parents to guide their children. We are told in God’s Word to be sober and vigilant (1 Peter 5:8) - the ‘head in the sand’ or ‘turning a blind eye’ (what Michael Carr-Gregg calls ‘laissez-faire’ parenting) are not options for conscientious parents. The verse in 1 Peter goes on to say that the devil prowls around like a roaring, hungry lion - a pretty strong image, but when you consider the strength and reach of influence, and the motives and characters behind what can be presented in many forms via mass media, it seems pretty accurate. Media can have lots of positive benefits if used wisely, just as a lion is a beautiful and wonderful creation if viewed through the boundary of really thick glass at Werribee Zoo. Hop on the other side of the glass with no protection however, and it won’t end well! Consider also the concept that ‘It takes a village to raise a child’. When you take into account that the whole world is now available to influence our children, we might want to think about putting some guard dogs and fences around the village, and on some boundary lines, erect some mighty high impenetrable walls!

The developing brain

As Michael C-G explained on Thursday night, while our children’s and adolescent’s brains are still developing (up to the age of about 25) there are times when we have to do the thinking for our children. For example, a five year old doesn’t have the experience to know that watching an M rated action movie could leave them with nightmares and anxiety. Teens will need insight to see that the addictive nature of several kinds of media have far reaching consequences.

We are not just guarding against obvious and immediate dangers, it is also the subtle and gradual messages that shape ideas, attitudes, decisions and character traits that we need to safeguard against. This is really significant when you realize that children and teens are looking around to see what is normal and acceptable, who they are, and how to be accepted and valued. We need to be aware and vigilant in guarding against moral and spiritual desensitization.

Some Ideas

It’s important that we don’t see our role in censorship as just taking things away, but instead as giving our children the tools to use media wisely themselves, and work out how things stack up against what God says.

Rather than open this huge Pandora’s Box, I’m just going to sit on the lid and throw a few thoughts out to get some dialogue going.

In my view, the role of censorship in this area is similar to any other parental role. It involves these things being done with and for our children:

• Develop positive parent child relationships. If our children feel valued and loved, it helps them know this is about being cared for, not just bossed around.

• Communicate well. This involves listening too! Media provides awesome opportunities to explore world views and to provoke discussion about a Christian perspective on things. If we listen to our children’s everyday stuff with interest, maybe they will be more willing to give some thought to our ideas.

• Set clear limits and boundaries. There is software to help with setting boundaries on the use of computers and gaming consoles. There are free resources available on-line. We need to step up and not bow to peer pressure.

And these things behind the scenes:

• Pray. Ask for wisdom. It worked for Solomon! We can also pray for strength, safety for our children, discernment and forgiveness when we get it wrong.

• Think. Think through strategies and reactions ahead of time. Think about what is age appropriate, how things can be managed well and about the issues our children may not be aware of.

• Research. Be informed. This can include reading, talking to other parents who have seen movies, checking out your kids’ face book page, looking at web history, finding filters, reading books they are interested in, viewing lyrics through Google and looking at the games they are playing. There is a program available that emails you a list of what web sites your children have visited each time they log off (Windows Live Family Safety 2011). There is a very helpful site called Plugged In by Focus on the Family which describes the content of movies from a Christian point of view.

Michael C-G has made his power point slides from his talk on Thursday night available to our community on the MECS website. Take a few minutes to read through them if you missed his talk or refresh your memory if you were there. He also mentioned a very helpful 5 minute video on cyber safety: How Cybersmart are you? available on Youtube.

We must be bold, courageous and informed as parents in order to guide our children through the opportunities and dangers of mass media.
**School Notes** from Martin, Principal

**A Fantastic Olympics Day**

Last Thursday we had a terrific, fun whole school celebration. This newsletter tells lots of its stories. We raised over $5300 for the two schools we were supporting in Cambodia and Uganda. Thanks to the SS students for assisting in running the events and to all the wonderful parent helpers who assisted in serving lunch.

**Dancing has started – Deadline extended until Aug 30**

On Monday we started dance lessons in preparation for the 40th Anniversary Ball. The second lesson is tonight. The deadline for purchasing the ‘dance package’ has been extended to 30 August. Thereafter you’ll need to pay $10 a session. Or, why not take up the ‘one-off’ single dance freebie we are now offering, to see if you like it or not. Don’t miss out on this bargain!

You can choose which Monday and/or Thursday evening you want to attend (all this term; skip the holidays; then the week before the Ball). It is possible to get the full 12 dance lessons for this bargain price. And you don’t need to come along as a couple, singles are dancing with other singles. All those reluctant dads - give it a go.

It’s $35 just for the dance package; $75 dance package and the Ball (including dinner); $45 dinner alone. Year 11 & 12 students are cheaper.

**Developing Leaders Conference**

Next week a bunch of our staff will be attending the CEN Developing Leaders Conference in Melbourne. We’ll hear more from Jonny W, Jono B, Melissa D, Brad T, Yvonne V and Shirley G when they return.

**Great start to Kindergarten enrolments**

It’s a tremendous problem to have. We’ve got full enrolments for our 4 year old Kindergarten and now we need to weigh up the possibility of having a 2nd class. Our 3 year old class is also going well with only a few places left.

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**Michael C-G Parent Seminar**

Last Thursday night we had nearly 300 people attend this fantastic evening presentation. Michael shared about 5 key areas that are a challenge to parents presently.

Michael’s power point notes will be available on the school’s website shortly.

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**VCE Biology Excursion**

Recently the Year 12 Biology class visited Melbourne University’s Mendel Laboratory to carry out some experimental work relating to their current study of genetics. The students investigated Mendelian patterns of inheritance in Drosophila melanogaster (the common “vinegar” fly). They investigated a mutation that results in flies with deformed or vestigial wings. They were also able to develop some skills in the bio-genetic technique of Gel Electrophoresis which they used to investigate the structure of recombinant DNA. Several students took the opportunity to sharpen their insights by asking questions of their lab teachers.

Before the lab visit, the class enjoyed/endured a trip down memory lane as this old Melbourne University graduate shared his favourite places and stories about university campus life.

*Dr Roger*

*SS Teacher*

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**Children at Play**

On Friday afternoon we saw close to a dozen young children brave the Senior School grounds and come to face the Year 10s. In their studies of Developmental Psychology the Year 10 students are asked to interview and test the growth and development of small children. Parents and friends have over the years brought in the younger children for this to take place. 2012 was no different and we had some very shy young children come along. But, as usual within a short time all seemed to feel at home and the kids were running all over the place and really enjoying the attention that they were receiving. A big thankyou to the parents who came in. We loved every minute of the time.

*Cliff*

*SS Coordinator*
Q&A
Answering questions that parents ask

“How do we teach students about copyright?”

Copyright and the 8th Commandment

Let me tell you a story... It’s a true story but not mine, fortunately!

Some years ago a novelist in the USA discovered the joys of blogging, and each week would post some interesting thoughts on the life of a writer. She quickly realised that it looked so much more attractive and inviting if she added some photos to illustrate her points, so she found some images on the web and added them, just like everyone else was doing. As she became more experienced and aware of the Internet, she learned to add the names of the photographers who owned those pictures. It was all part of the learning curve that is information literacy.

However, one day last year she had a terse email from the owner of one of the earliest photos, pointing out that she had no permission to use it, and would she remove it immediately. The novelist was quick to oblige and wrote an instant apology for having offended, explaining that had been done in ignorance and she now knew better. She thought no more about it. But then she received the lawyer’s letter! Next came the court appearance and a substantial compensation payout to the photographer in question.

When the case was over, the novelist was free to share her story on her blog, mainly as a warning to us all that it could happen to anybody. It was a powerful message. ‘Don’t assume you have permission – if in doubt, don’t use it!’ ‘Ignorance is not a defence.’ ‘It doesn’t matter if it’s not for profit or you found it on Flickr.’ But strangely, many comments that followed were about how mean spirited the photographer had been. ‘Surely an apology was enough!’ ‘She took the photo down when asked. Isn’t that enough?’ The response from photographers was swift. ‘It’s my photographs that put food on my table!’ ‘What makes it OK to steal my livelihood, and expect to get off with a ‘sorry’? Would I get the same treatment if I ’borrowed’ your car?’

I imagine that many readers of that blog went back and took a long hard look at their own online behaviour. I know I did! One result has been that the library blog now has a password, (which by the way is ‘mecs’) because we have pictures of book covers advertising new fiction, and apparently, according to the Australian Copyright rules, that is acceptable if the blog is password protected.

The new landscape of information and communication technology is both fascinating and frightening at times, but there is no escaping it. We have to become wise in our relationship with it, and make sure our students are well taught in the dos and don’ts, and the why and why nots of the digital world. They appear to know how to make the gadgets work, but are we sure they understand the implications of what they are doing? What do we do online becomes our ‘digital footprint’ and we need to exercise caution in the impression we make. That’s one important message we need to impress on our students.

Our digital footprint includes how we treat other peoples’ property when online. ‘You shall not steal’ applies just as much online as anywhere else, and that has to be taught, modelled and enforced at home and at school. We can, and should teach students where to find the images and music that are licenced for free use, and how to cite them properly; how not to post unlicensed material to Facebook etc. It’s also an expectation of the Australian Curriculum, General Capabilities (ICT), that by Grade 6 students will ‘apply practices that comply with legal obligations regarding the ownership and use of information resources (for example naming sources, avoiding plagiarism, knowing what may or may not be copied)’ [http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au] And that’s just the ‘legal obligations’ not the Biblical imperative of acting justly towards our neighbour.

Some Senior Primaries have been involved in making a Photostory ‘video’ in the library, and because all the photos taken by the students were saved in one shared folder, some students have used whatever images were available to make up their group’s story. On Presentation day there were howls of outrage when an image had been ‘borrowed’ without permission or acknowledgement of the ‘creator’ of that image. The class suddenly got it! The creator has a vested interest in his or her creation and is rightly jealous of any misuse of it. That led to making the connection to our Creator. He didn’t just create us and is now indifferent to the way we live. We are His; we belong to Him and always will. We are stamped with His copyright.
Coles Vouchers/ Woolworths Stickers
Thankyou to everyone who has supported both these programs. The final tallies were: Woolworths 31,000 pts and Coles 31,658 vouchers!

Olympic BBQ
Thankyou to everyone who helped out on the BBQs last Thursday (Olympic Day). We would not have coped without you. The BBQ raised $1620 for the schools we are helping in Uganda and Cambodia!

P&F Meeting
Our next P&F meeting is on Monday 27 August from 9-10am in the Conference Room. All welcome.

Fathers Day Stall
The Fathers Day Stall will be in Pump Room 2 on Friday 31 August. Gifts will range from $1 - $10. Middle School students are also welcome to come and buy at lunch time.

Evelyn
P&F President

Olympic Day BBQ
It was with pleasure that I was able to help out at the Olympic Day sausage sizzle last week, along with the P&F, who tirelessly do that sort of thing all the time.

I was blessed to be working opposite a young lady of 19 years of age. She was quite a special person. She graduated from MECS last year and is doing a ‘gap year’. Her mother is the P&F President and had just been sharing with me all the things that her daughter is doing. She has filled this year up so richly and selflessly.

Her week consists of part-time work, teaching CRE, mentoring students in local schools and co-directing her church’s music ministry. Due to a cancellation, she had the day off, so what does she do?...comes and helps out at MECS!

She is enrolled to do teacher training next year and I noticed she had marvelous rapport when children came up to her to say hello. What a terrific role model she is.

If that is the kind of young person that this school churns out at the other end, then I am very glad that my family belong to MECS. The fact that her mum is an incredible giver to the school community, has helped to shape this daughter into who she is today as well.

MECS Notes
Thank you from Uganda
Ron and I would like to take this opportunity to thank the school community for your support for Wairaka Christian School and Training Centre in Uganda. The school is presently being built; it will start with students in February 2013 with the first three classes of Primary School. The aim of the school is to provide Christian education, using local resources to teach with innovative methodologies the Ugandan curriculum and provide good education so that students are educated with understanding. It is our aim to develop teaching practices that can be transferable and assist other teachers and schools in the local area. Unfortunately, the present situation is that teachers are poorly trained, with little or no knowledge of ways to assist understanding of material with the use of concrete materials. Teaching practice is by rote, and discipline is often administered (illegally) through the use of a cane. With over half of Uganda’s population under the age of 15, for change to occur, educational practices need to change. We have had unexpected (God given) opportunities for the school in terms of meeting and now dialogueing with Director of Curriculum for Uganda, the land being made available to buy, and people joining with us in this mission.

The money raised will go directly into building the first classrooms which are about to spring from the ground.

We, with our friends in Uganda and the future children and teachers at the school, say a heartfelt thank you. Weberlee Nu (Thank you so much).

Andrea

Parent Seminar (Evening A) Invitation
As new parents Partnering with MECS we invite you to attend the Christian Education Parent Seminar (A) Thurs 23 August 2012

Parent Seminar (Evening A)
An Introduction to Christian Education
• Parent partnership
• Religion
• School Governance
• Community
• MECS Core Values

Seminar begins at 7:30pm and concludes at 9:30pm, in the Main Staff Room.

Supper included.

Next Seminar (B) - Tues 30 Oct

Andrea

The world is in safe hands when a family, church and school can help to shape children into young adults of such calibre.

Andrea

Anne in Ugandan Clothes

Wairaka Christian School is being built

Anne
MECS Olympics Day

Last Thursday, the whole school was swept up in MECS’ own Olympics day. The students were celebrating not only the spirit of the Games but also recognising those countries that aren’t fairly represented. Overall, it was a fantastic day filled with challenging events, patriotic supporters and some very funny sights. Middle and Senior Primary classes, representing their respective countries, were pitted against each other in an array of bizarre and interesting activities ranging from ping pong archery, to slalom bowling.

The day was completed not with a London 2012 sound and light show but, in true MECS style: a muddy obstacle course. It was a day to be proud of, seeing so many of the MECS students and staff joyfully competing in the days’ events and raising money for school projects abroad.

Ali
SP Teacher
MECS Olympics Day

Last Thursday, the entire school took part in Olympics Day to celebrate the recent Olympic Games in London. In the Middle School, each home room represented a developing nation (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Botswana, Cambodia, Iraq, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Timor-Leste and Uganda), and spent some time learning about their nation in the lead up to the event. The day itself was a great success, with students participating in a number of different sporting events, including netball, handball, indoor hockey and a relay. The final event was a ‘Tough Mudder’ obstacle course in which pairs of students competed, representing their sports tribes.

Students were asked to donate money in the lead up to the day, and these donations plus the proceeds from food sold on the day were donated to Rokapoke School in Cambodia and Hope Builders in Uganda.

Brad
MS Teacher

On Thursday 16 August, MECS had an Olympics Day. First we went up to the asphalt to have our opening ceremony. After that we went to the oval to do some activities. Then we had our brain food. Next we had some more activities. Then we had lunch. After that we had Art. Finally we went to the closing ceremony. I felt happy because our class raised the most money. We raised roughly $250.

Tom
JP Student
Mon 20 - Fri 24 August
Preschool Visits and EYCs
Thur 23 August
Parent Seminar (A) in Staffroom 7.30pm
Dance Lessons for 40th Anniversary Ball 7.30pm Gym
Fri 24 August
Yr 6 Positive Boys and Empowering Girls
SP Space Expo in Gym

Mon 27 August
Yr 11 & 12 Interschool AFL & Netball
Preschool Visits and EYCs
Dance Lessons for 40th Anniversary Ball 7.30pm Gym
Tues 28 August
Prep Connect Morning Tea 9am
Wed 29 August
JP Planetarium Excursion
Yr 3 & 4 Hoop Time
Thur 30 August
VCE Music Recital 7pm
Dance Lessons for 40th Anniversary Ball 7.30pm Gym
Fri 31 August
Yr 6 Positive Boys and Empowering Girls
Fathers Day Stall

Sun 2 September
Fathers Day
Mon 3 - Fri 7 September
MS Special Week
Mon 3 September
Dance Lessons for 40th Anniversary Ball 7.30pm Gym
Tues 4 September
Year 7-12 Tribal Athletics
Thur 6 September
Yr 7 & 8 Well Being Program
Bandfest 7pm Theatrette
Dance Lessons for 40th Anniversary Ball 7.30pm Gym
Fri 7 September
Yr 6 Positive Boys - Guest Speaker

Mon 10 September
Dance Lessons for 40th Anniversary Ball 7.30pm Gym
Mon 10 - Tues 11 September
SS Parent Teacher Interviews
Tues 11 September
SP Connect Morning Tea 9am in Staffroom
Wed 12 September
Year 6 Mother & Daughter Evening 7pm

Mon 10 September
Dance Lessons for 40th Anniversary Ball 7.30pm Gym
Mon 10 - Tues 11 September
SS Parent Teacher Interviews
Tues 11 September
SP Connect Morning Tea 9am in Staffroom
Wed 12 September
Year 6 Mother & Daughter Evening 7pm

Music for Young Children
The program was written by Prep teacher Wendy Mason and will be led by Music teacher Rachel Hook on Tuesdays in Term 3 & 4. It aims to present flexible, hands-on sessions which develop music concepts and general life skills through using a combination of activities.
It will be held on Tuesdays (during MECS School Term). 2 Session times available: 9.00-9.30am or 9.40-10.10am.
For a brochure with more information and fees, or an enrolment form see the MECS website under Year Levels - Early Years or contact the Main Office.

Dancing With The (Almost) MECS Stars
Some exciting news from our wonderful Ball committee:
• Dance package now extended until 30 August.
• Unsure if dancing is for you? Take advantage a free trial lesson.
• Come along alone or with a partner.
• Enjoy learning the following: Cha Cha, Progressive Jive, Rumba, Samba, Salsa, Modern Waltz
• Great Exercise but even greater fun!

NOTICES SENT HOME THIS WEEK
(can also be downloaded from website)
• MP Hooptime Letter
• Scoliosis Self Detection Program
• JP Planetarium Excursion Letter
• MS Helpers for MP Hooptime Letter
• JP Camp Information Letter
• VCE Netball notice