

AMERICAN HERITAGE SCHOOL



2017
GRADUATING CLASS
ESSAYS



"I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels round about you, to bear you up."

(D&C 84:88)

"The house of the righteous shall stand"

(Proverbs 12:7)



Senior Class

Samuel Andersen
Brayden Bailey
Catherine Bigelow
Benjamin Bischoff
Christopher Bowen
Mitchell Breese
Stephen Brockbank
Joshua Brown
Kimberly Brown
Devynn Burnham
John Burton
Zhaoxu Chen
Emily Cline
David Cowley
Yuanzhen "Alan" Cui
Nicole Curzon
Sarah Curzon
Eliza Dalton
Kiersten Fallon
Angela Gerlach
Maxwell Goddard
Daniel Haymond
Joshua Higgins
Alex Hill
Megan Holmes
Nathan Holmstead
Brantley Johnson
Brenna Johnson
Madison Johnson
Daniel Jones
Jens Jorgensen
Josh Jorgensen
Sierra Klinger
Caleb Kohn
Caleb Lee
Erin Hau-Ching Leung
Mengwei "Sophie" Li
Benjamin McMillan
Paige McNamara
Colin Nielson
Elijah Orr
Parker Reyes
Isaac Rickenbach
Alexis Romans
Grant Rutherford
Emma Todd
Valeria Valentini
Charles Valverde
James van der Beek
Jeffrey Wade
Adelaide Walker
Hannah Weyland
Bangyan "Alan" Zhang
Chubo "Bobby" Zhou





AMERICAN HERITAGE SCHOOL

Mission Statement

American Heritage School exists for the purpose of serving parents in assisting in developing the minds, the hearts, and the bodies of students in order that they may:

1. BE USEFUL IN THE HANDS OF THE LORD IN BUILDING THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH;
2. INCREASE FAITH IN AND KNOWLEDGE OF THE PLAN OF SALVATION;
3. DEVELOP A LOVE, UNDERSTANDING AND APPRECIATION FOR AMERICA AND THE FOUNDING FATHERS;
4. DEVELOP THE BASIC ACADEMIC KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS NECESSARY TO BE ABLE TO MAKE SELF-EDUCATION A LIFE-LONG PURSUIT;
5. LEARN TO REASON AND DISCERN BETWEEN RIGHT AND WRONG, TRUTH AND ERROR;
6. DEVELOP CHARACTER AND SELF-DISCIPLINE OF MIND AND BODY; AND
7. CONDUCT THEMSELVES IN ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE AS CHRISTIANS.

All activities, teaching, governance, and administration are to be accomplished in light of the above objectives and insofar as possible in harmony with revealed principles of the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and laws of the land. All teachers, staff, administrators and trustees shall strive to be living examples of the values, principles, and skills taught at the school.





Seven Principles of Liberty

Divine Identity & Purpose

I will learn all I can about Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost and seek to fulfill my divine purpose. I will honor the individuality and agency of others.

Christian Self-Government

I will choose to obey the teachings of Jesus Christ and allow Him to govern my life. I will exercise and honor righteous authority.

Christlike Character

I will come unto Christ and receive His grace to develop Christlike character. I will seek to study and emulate the models of Christian character found in America's heritage.

Conscience, the Most Sacred of All Property

I will educate my conscience by faith, study, and obedience to God's laws and the promptings of the Holy Ghost. I will respect the inalienable rights of conscience of all people.

Accountability & the Christian Form of Government

I am accountable to God for the choices I make. As I govern myself, I will have liberty to develop and express Christian character. I will support and encourage my government in its efforts to protect the rights of life, conscience, and property.

Cultivating Christian Self-Government in Others

I will serve others and encourage them to allow God to govern their lives. I will protect the rights of self-government for others.

Fullness of Liberty through Unity with God and Man

I will keep the covenants I have made with God. I will stand for truth and righteousness and seek unity with the followers of Christ. I will be Christlike in my associations with all of God's children.

Foreword

BY RUEL HAYMOND

*M*y feelings are tender as I anticipate this graduating class of American Heritage School and the end of my time with you. In saying goodbye to you “until we meet again,” I want to echo the simple and few words of Jacob 6:12, “*O be wise; what can I say more?*” To be wise is to become obedient to every command that comes from the mouth of the Lord, and this requires the ability to receive and obey personal revelation.

As we have emphasized in class, knowing how to receive direct guidance and help from the heavens, and avoiding the deception inherent in our five senses, will become increasingly more important. We live in a Photoshopped, virtual world where counterfeit is king and reality is relegated to illusion and regulated by various media and technologies. Learning to receive pure and untainted answers through the spirit of the Lord will become increasingly necessary.

May this poem, written for you, remind you of words of Jacob in the Book of Mormon when he stated: “*Think of your brethren like unto yourselves, and be familiar with all and free with your substance, that they may be rich like unto you. But before ye seek for riches, seek ye for the kingdom of God. And after ye have obtained a hope in Christ ye shall obtain riches, if ye seek them; and ye will seek them for the intent to do good—to clothe the naked, and to feed the hungry, and to liberate the captive, and administer relief to the sick and the afflicted*” (Jacob 2:17–19).

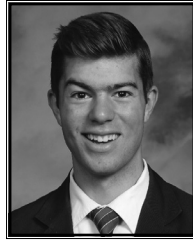
*Knowledge, of learning sought, of learning gained
Sounds of brass and cymbals, His permission not obtained.
For each person has a mission, a covenant long ago,
To waste and wear out life, obedience to show.
For what will facts and figures, truth and tale, in souls make?
If the Father's business, lips revere, yet hearts forsake?
We're born to feed His hungry, clothe His naked, to free
His children, His poor, starting with you and with me.
We are not to "grind" them, nor avoid or be seen of men
But to seek them out, lift them up, as equal, then
Shall we not see more clearly, beaming, meek in heart?
Shall our hope not be in Him, which hope to them impart?
Inequality is real and His poor live to remind,
That we are all beggars, and He, infinitely kind.
What manner of men ought we to be?
Humble, true, and pure, yea, even as He.
For He gives us the poor so Christ we understand
With Him, equal with them, we shall walk hand in hand.*

May the Lord bless you in your personal life missions.

—Ruel Haymond



Samuel Andersen



Samuel Andersen has attended American Heritage for seven years. In that time, he has participated in orchestra, choir, drama, and tech crew. Sam is a master cellist and music enthusiast. He also enjoys most sports and outdoor activities. He has grown up in Mona and Pleasant Grove, Utah, and loves working on his family's land. He runs his own business and is planning on serving a mission. He writes, "Choosing to be grateful to our loving Heavenly Father has, for me, been the number one factor in avoiding discouragement."

The most valuable thing I have gained through my seven years at AHS is a great love for learning. By virtue of the Spirit, and with the help of many friends, family, and teachers, I have matured, and have learned to love studying and finding the relevance of every subject to my daily life. The pattern of learning I have found most effective is the principle-based method of "4R'ing": Research, Reason, Relate, and Record. I have learned to apply this method to every part of life, and I have seen its pattern revealed through scripture and modern revelation. I have also learned that 4R'ing is only effective when applied diligently.

Take my Senior Thesis, for example. The thesis project is a record of research and reasoning with a specific way to apply or relate the content. Senior Thesis helped me to learn how to research on my own without being given every source by a teacher. I had the opportunity to practice organizing my research by recording it in a clear and comprehensive twenty-page paper. Reasoning through my arguments and claims helped me to find and support truth. Through all of this, I found many ways that I could relate and



improve myself by applying the truths I studied. The realizations I discovered and internalized through this process strengthened my testimony and gave me confidence.

Another 4R application I found was through reading books on my own, just because I wanted to learn. This helped me realize that I could learn without being dependent on the assistance of others. Through personal reading, I have learned how to have better relationships with myself, God, and others, as well as how to gain and maintain freedom. To me, 4R'ing is a method that has enabled me to be a lifelong learner.

In addition to Senior Thesis and personal reading, I also found the Golden Rule to be something I learned and applied through the lens of 4R'ing. I am constantly observing the interactions between people including myself. Through this and the words of the prophets and other wise men, I am able to research how to improve all of my relationships. Through all my research, I have found that a principle that everyone with successful and happy relationships lives by, whether they know it or not, is The Golden Rule. The Golden Rule is treating others the way you'd like to be treated, or "love thy neighbor as thyself." When I saw this rule prevalent in all successful people, I began to understand how important it was to change my paradigm—to see others the way God sees them and to strive to understand others' perspectives. In this way, we avoid misunderstandings and misjudgments. We are also able to overcome our pride which is the root of all contention. As we cooperate effectively with people through The Golden Rule, we do not waste energy on anger and strife, but rather we are able to multiply our efforts, thus progressing effectively. I decided that the best way to deepen my understanding, clarify my perspective, and retain remembrance of these eternal truths was to write about them. So, I started a relationship journal. I recorded much of my research, reasoning, and applications for my life. In this way, I was able to enhance my learning, and because it was recorded, I was more accountable for these realizations.

4R'ing is a process of progress. Progress is the essence of happiness; 4R'ing, therefore, is a tool to obtaining lasting happiness.



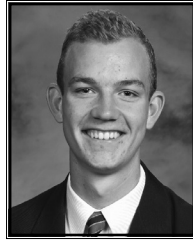
Joy can be measured through the amount of freedom we possess; therefore, 4R'ing is also a path to freedom. My personal definition of progress is "to gain more freedom." In the same way that I realized moral principles embedded in The Golden Rule, I learned about freedom. Freedom is made up of the inseparable components of life, liberty, and property. Increasing any of these increases freedom. If we are not happy in life, it is often because we are not progressing in one of these three areas. I came to the realization that the harder I worked, the happier I would be; the healthier my body was the happier I would be; and the more mobile I was, the happier I would be. The 4R'ing tool, however, must be used diligently and proactively to effectuate progress, a one-time use profits little. It is the small and simple action in 4R'ing that, over time, compounds into happiness.

Work is the first commandment God gave to men. Consequently, it is the biggest determining factor in an individual's happiness. Work is an antidote for most sins because it keeps us sufficiently busy that we have little time to be tempted by the adversary. Work keeps us from discouragement not only because of the property it produces, but also because it boosts our confidence. We are able to see our God-like potential because we see our creations. Work is obeying a commandment and therefore brings blessings temporal and spiritual. We are more in tune with the Spirit when we are laboring than when we are lazy.

My experience at American Heritage and the lessons I have learned here, have motivated me to be diligent and to sacrifice things I want now for things I want more. I also learned that I can choose happiness despite failure. Even when I am laboring and cannot immediately see the product, I still choose to be grateful and enjoy what I do have. Freedom, in the first place, comes from God because it is He who endows us with inalienable rights. All of us will fail often, and the only way to keep from allowing failure to destroy our inner peace is through turning to Christ. Choosing to be grateful to our loving Heavenly Father has, for me, been the number one factor in avoiding discouragement.



Brayden Bailey



Brayden Bailey has attended American Heritage School since Kindergarten. He has been heavily involved with the athletic program of the school and enjoys volleyball, basketball, and soccer. He enjoys hunting, fishing, and spending time outdoors. He says, "This school has made me realize who I am. I am a son of God, with a divine purpose. I know that God loves me and that Christ lives, and He is the only way to return to God again."

*F*rom the first day of kindergarten, American Heritage School has been an inseparable part of my life. Looking back, I would not change anything. The friendships that I have made have changed my life for the better. Each friend that I've made at this school has been such a positive influence on my life. I can honestly say that without these friends, I would not be the person that I am today. I would not have any plans to serve a mission this year. I would probably be so lost as to not have any direction in general for my future.

I am grateful for the athletic program at AHS. Without it, I would not have stayed past middle school. Because of the basketball team, I decided that I wanted to continue here throughout high school. And each year I seemed to add another sport to the list of sports in which I participated. Each of my coaches has blessed my life. Coach Holmes is the one that comes to mind the most. He made it extremely clear that his goal was not to win a championship. His goal was to prepare us for our missions, and to fulfill our promises to our brothers from the pre-mortal life: our promise to bring the gospel to them. And that is what he did. He brought the team together as a brotherhood. He prepared me for



my mission and made me a better priesthood holder. He did all this and still he improved each of us as a basketball player. He brought our confidence to a new level; confidence that we can use into our futures, not just on the court.

Brother Sackett had a huge influence on me as well. One of the first days in his class he challenged us to read a least one verse of scripture every day for the rest of our lives. I took that challenge and have seen the effects in my life. I have been much happier. I have been closer to my Father in Heaven. I have learned the power of the Atonement. I have had a desire to learn more about the gospel. This desire to learn more is what has made the biggest difference. I started to listen in seminary and to participate in the testimony portions of class, and life has gotten much better. Listening in class has grown my testimony to new levels that it has never been at before. With the new strength in my testimony, I have had the ability to turn my life around in the direction that I needed it to go.



Catherine Bigelow



Catherine has attended American Heritage School since kindergarten with exception of her junior year, when she attended Pleasant Grove High School part-time and American Heritage part-time. Catherine is the middle of five children. She has two older brothers and a younger sister and brother. She enjoys playing soccer on her club team and loves to go outside on adventures. Catherine says, "Having good teachers and being able to see my family every day in the hallways has been exactly what I needed in my life. Those things have made all the difference in my high school experience."



American Heritage has been a true blessing in my life. I have been attending AHS since kindergarten except for during my junior year when I went to Pleasant Grove High School part-time for a new experience. Although I loved PGHS, I felt that I should return to AHS for my senior year. I learned through my time at AHS that the environment here is something you don't find just anywhere; it is a special once-in-a-life-time experience. Having good teachers and being able to see my family every day in the hallways have been exactly what I needed in my life. Those things have made all the difference in my high school experience.

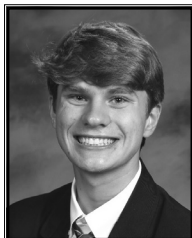
The teachers have taught me lessons that I could not have learned any other way. Some of the teachers will be lifelong friends to me, and they are my heroes. A close friend of mine, Katie Hancock, passed away in the summer after ninth grade. I never could have seen how close I would become with her family. Her father, Mr. Hancock, who was our ninth grade teacher, and his wife, became a big part of my life. I know that for many years to come they will continually be there for me. Mr. Hancock is and always will be more than a teacher to me. For that, I could not be more grateful. My mother is also a teacher here at American Heritage and my two younger siblings attend school here. I see each of them in the hallways every day, and I absolutely love it! They make the hard days bearable and the good days even better.

I am so grateful for the opportunity I have had to attend American Heritage School. It has played a major part in helping me turn toward the Lord in times of need, and to trust in His plan. I know God has a plan for me, and at times when I doubted whether that was true, I had teachers, friends, and family to help set me straight again. School is not all about math and history; it is so much more than that, and American Heritage has helped me see that.





Benjamin Bischoff



Benjamin Bischoff came to American Heritage after he moved to Provo halfway through his junior year. Ben came into this world while his family was stationed on a marine base in Virginia. He was born in raised in Suffolk, Virginia, the peanut capital of the world. He is the second youngest of seven siblings. Throughout his high school career, he has played lacrosse, soccer, and basketball. He loves to learn, and he loves living life to the fullest. He writes, "The role of my teachers was not to give me schooling but rather an education. They were trying to bring about awareness in my mind so that I could truly view the world the way God intended. With this awareness of the world, and with a connection to God, we no longer will be slaves, whether to ourselves or others."

*M*y life experience is not like that of many of my classmates. I was not born in Utah and am fairly new to American Heritage. I will have only gone to American Heritage for a year-and-a-half when I graduate. However, the lessons that I have learned in this short amount of time have surpassed anything that I would have anticipated coming to this school.

When I first came to AHS, I was originally surprised about how relatively less homework I had compared to some previous schools. It confused me at first. At other schools, I had been filled with homework, so the initial lightening of it almost felt like I wasn't learning. This feeling continued for a while until realized that the role of my teachers here was not to give me schooling, but rather to inspire me with an education. They were trying to bring about awareness in my mind so that I could truly view the world the way God intended. With this awareness of the world and connection to God, we no longer are slaves, whether to ourselves or to others.



With this awareness, we can find deep fulfilling truths in the most insignificant and small things in our lives. I came to see things that I had never before seen or even considered.

For example, I read *Lord of the Flies* in the ninth grade at another school, and, in all honesty, I did not get much out of the book, at all; it felt like it was mostly a novel about a bunch of stranded boys who lose their humanity. I could not apply it to myself at the time. I reread it my senior year at AHS with a new awareness I developed here, and it was no longer just a novel about boys losing their humanity; rather, it showed how humans fail themselves when there is no God in their lives. It showed me why we need a Savior.

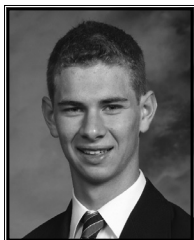
This is the type of education that gives us the awareness of the world around us, that allows us to control our destiny. Without the time invested in our education, and without gaining awareness, we lose the ability to control our future. We become susceptible to others controlling our fate because of their influence, their power, and their knowledge. This form of education with God frees us of influences and powers that attempt to control who we are and what we can become.

I am grateful for my education because it has allowed me to control the trajectory for my future. AHS has prepared me to be a better man, husband, and father.





Christopher Bowen



Christopher Bowen has attended American Heritage School for most of his schooling. Christopher was born and raised in Utah. Being the easiest birth of the family, he made it his goal to be the most headstrong in childhood. He is grateful for the learning and growth he has gained through his experience here at American Heritage. He writes "I feel a great amount of love for this school and for what it represents. It has helped me become the person I know God wants me to be, and it has taught me things that I will teach my children someday. Thank you. Thank you for helping me through this part of my life. Thank you for the memories, and thank you for pushing me to better myself every day."

*A*s I look back on my time here at AHS, I am filled with so many good memories. Of course, there are the not-so-good ones, too, but even those don't seem so bad. I remember my very first day of high school here. My freshman year was by far my favorite year of high school. I was so ready to start high school, and I knew that no matter what happened, I'd be surrounded by my friends and teachers who loved me. Of course, it wasn't easy. Every part of life has its difficulties, but here the difficulties just seemed a little less difficult.

I am deeply saddened to think my time here is over. On the outside, I have sometimes said that I don't like school or can't wait for it to be over. But the real me, the one that I don't let people see too often, will be truly sad on graduation today. I will never forget my experience here. And I never want to.

After my freshman year at AHS, I lost one of my best friends, Katie Hancock, who passed away in a car accident. This



trial was hard for me. I never thought that death would come so early for someone in my life. Starting my sophomore year, I was lost, confused, heartbroken and so many other emotions. If it wasn't for American Heritage School, these feelings may have completely taken over my joyous self, and I may have been changed for the worse. That is one of the reasons AHS holds such a special place in my heart.

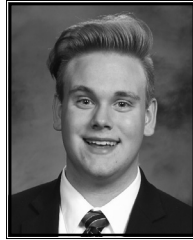
Everyone tries to help one another here. As much as it can be annoying sometimes, there is always going to be someone at school that's going to ask how you are doing. And if you're not doing so hot, the student or teacher will try to help you in any way possible. Without my time here at AHS, my life would not be the same. The principles that I have been taught are principles I will live forever. The knowledge I have received here is knowledge that I will remember for the rest of my life. So many of the teachers and students here are people worthy of respect, and I look up to so many of them. I'm going to miss so many of my friends here. They have been my biggest support when I was struggling. As difficult as some of them can be, there is a place in my heart for every single one of them.

I hope that one day I can find my absolute best friend so I can have that support throughout my life. I have never liked moving on from things. It is one of my biggest fears in life. What if I forget about this time in my life? What if I haven't done everything I needed to do? But life moves on, and it has a way of forcing us to face our fears.

I feel a great amount of love for this school and for what it represents. It has helped me become the person I know God wants me to be, and it has taught me things that I will teach my children someday. Thank you. Thank you for helping me through this part of my life. Thank you for the memories, and thank you for pushing me to better myself every day. As I adventure into the next stage of my life, I know all of you will be with me in some way or another. Most of all, thank you, Katie, for being alongside of me every day since you left, giving me the strength to continue.



Mitchell Breese



Mitchell Sidney Breese came to AHS in seventh grade. He comes from a family of five, and lived in Bellevue, Washington until he was thirteen years old, when he moved to American Fork, Utah where he currently lives. He loves sports, video games, and doing adventurous things with his friends, of course. His brother is eighteen years older than he is and his sister is twelve years older. Mitchell writes, "I try to live by one saying my father taught me which was 'Anything with value or worth doesn't come without struggle and hardship.'"

I have been at American Heritage School since seventh grade. I have felt that my time here has helped me to see further into the world we all live in. I love how we discuss the past, present, and future of our nation and world. It has, in a way, helped me prepare to be in the world but not of it.

American Heritage School has not always been easy for me; in fact, it's been quite difficult. But I've always tried to maintain a positive attitude from the beginning, even though at times it felt unbearable. When these hard times came, I tried to remember something my father said to me, "Anything with value or worth doesn't come without struggle and hardship."

I loved how I could really get to know my teachers and could rely on them. I didn't feel like a number in a classroom. I've loved my time at American Heritage School, and would do it all over again if I could.





Stephen Brockbank



Stephen Brockbank joined American Heritage School in tenth grade. He was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, but did not stay there long, as his family moved eight times within the next eighteen years, including living in states such as California, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, and Washington. He attended seven different schools in his twelve years of school, and every school offered him something that the other schools didn't. He writes, "The curriculum at American Heritage was amazing, but it was because of these people that I kept coming back. They made my high school experience one I'll never forget. They all helped me through high school, and without them, I wouldn't be the man that I am today."

I I've learned so much at American Heritage. In Mr. Dye's class, I learned the importance of hard work and dedication, especially writing and presenting the TED Talk. There, I realized how fun it can be to learn something. In eleventh grade, with Mrs. Parker, I learned the importance of compassion and kindness. In twelfth grade, with Mr. Haymond, I learned the importance of education, especially self-education and learning for yourself. He emphasized studying for yourself, and studying to learn, not to pass a test. He also taught me that life isn't all about work, but requires playing a little Frisbee as well.

For me, the best part of American Heritage is the people. My classmates taught me life lessons, such as the importance of reaching out to others, which they taught me by their example of reaching out to me. The first people that treated me as a friend were Catherine, Brantley, Colin, Bobby, and Alan Z. Catherine's kindness was why I made the final decision to go to American Heritage. I remember that she ran to me the first time I toured the school, and



told me that I needed to come here so we could be friends. The friendliness she showed me was incredible, an uncommon attribute in high school. Brantley, Colin, Bobby, and Alan Z. accepted me right away as well, though Brantley did pretend to throw up in a trash can when he found out I was from Lehi. They really became my first friends, and showed acceptance to me before they even really knew who I was.

But there were so many others, too. Kimberly, Charles, Angela, Sierra, and Ben McMillan taught me the importance of showing kindness to all. Kimberly would go out of her way to help me with my math when I struggled, and Charles never went anywhere without serving someone. Angela would stay after lunch to help clean up the lunch tables and was a great example to me. Sierra's smile and kind conversations would always brighten my day. Ben McMillan's handshakes, smiles, and conversations showed me that he always has a desire to help and serve. I will forever remember the examples these classmates showed me.

One of the life lessons I learned was that life is too short not to live in the moment and have fun. Chris always had comments in class that would make me laugh, and his acting in *Taming of the Shrew* was awesome. Adelaide is one the most fun people I know. She always made me laugh, and any time with her was a good time, whether it was riding rides at Lagoon or going to prom with her in tenth grade. Alexis always has a bright spirit about her, and was always a joy to talk to. She also taught me that sometimes it's good to sleep during class.

Madi had the best sense of humor. She always knew what to say and when to say it. And I could never stop laughing. She also had a deep understanding of the principles of the Constitution, and I hope to be as knowledgeable as her someday. Nicole, whether she called me her Irish friend or gave me ginger snaps as a way to ask me out, was always having a good time. High school wouldn't have been nearly as fun as it was without JT. Not only were his dance moves awesome, but his soccer skills were off the charts. He constantly made me want to become a better person and more loyal



to those around me. Max and David never fell short when telling me funny stories and just being fun people to be around in general. Parker knows all the good jokes and made me laugh with ease. These people taught me to really enjoy the little moments and just have fun!

Sam was not only a really kind person, but he also helped me understand the importance of asking deep questions. We don't know all the answers, and sometimes we need to ask questions. Brayden taught me the importance of never giving up. In eleventh grade he didn't get as much playing time in basketball as he would've liked, but he continued to work hard, and consequently became a great player this year, and was a joy to play with. Danny Jones taught me the importance of not complaining about your circumstances, and pressing forward. Ben Bischoff always came to class full of knowledge, and I never wanted to challenge him when debating. I've looked up to him since the day I met him, and I still hope I can be as knowledgeable as him someday. Mitchell never caused contention or made contention grow. He is such a good listener and taught me the importance of understanding others. He would listen to my views without debating me. I will never forget these lessons.

Devynn had the kindest voice, and I could just feel the love she had for others. She was quick to forgive when I would make mistakes and was such a joy to be around. Emily and Valeria, being new to the school, were not distant as I would've expected new students to be. Quite the opposite, I found them to be very friendly. They always talked to me with kindness and joy. Alan Cui made some of the funniest comments in class, and even nicknamed me his "Ginger-Ale." He is such an amazing cook and artist, and from him I learned that if I put my mind to it, I can accomplish anything. Sarah is a fun, joyful person who is never lacking in spirit. She is up and about and is someone I can really talk to. Eliza taught me charity as she took time out of her own life to help refugees. Kiersten and Caleb Lee taught me that sometimes it's okay to say whatever is on your mind and to not be afraid of what others may think of you.



Danny Haymond was always a great example to me. He demonstrated a characteristic that I desperately needed to learn, and still need to learn. He was very respectful and caring. He knew when it was appropriate to say something and when it wasn't. I still haven't figured this lesson out. Josh Higgins wasn't just a smart kid in school, but he was definitely a good counselor as well. When he would have something better to do, he still took the time to listen to me and tried to help me. Alex taught me perseverance. He always seemed to be getting banged up and injured in basketball, but he still continued to give everything he had to achieve success. Megan gave me confidence. She was such a loving person that always saw the good in everyone. Whether it was me being awkward at tenth grade Sweethearts or me saying something offensive, she always treated me as a friend.

Nathan, Brenna, Harrison, and Hannah didn't speak much, but when they did it was always such a profound and thoughtful comment. They also taught me the importance of knowing when to speak and when not to. Jens and Josh both taught me if I work hard enough, I can accomplish anything. They both have amazing minds and amazing talents. They excel at about everything they do. School related or sport related, they really outperformed just about everyone. Caleb Kohn, Paige, and Eli always seemed happy. They were always kind, and if they were ever sad or mad, they didn't inflict their feelings on others. Sophie and Erin were always a joy to talk to. Their smiles brightened up my day. Even though they probably thought I was really stupid in math class, they would just laugh at me and help me. This taught me to be patient with others to help those in need. Issac Rickenbach taught me the importance of priorities. He is an amazing soccer player, and he really had his priorities straight as he focused on the future.

Grant was such an amazing influence on me. He wasn't afraid to open himself up and share his feelings. When he sang in the eleventh grade devotional I could just feel his heart being poured out through his words. Isaac Yamada always seemed to be thinking. Although he didn't talk much, I could tell he was engaged



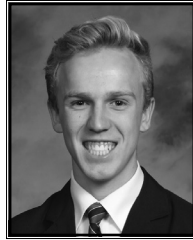
with his mind. His comments showed he was a deep thinker. Sometimes I just need to think and ponder about what I'm being taught. Through my basketball season, James reminded me of the importance of teammates. When I couldn't perform well, I always had James to rely on. I can't do everything by myself, I'll always need to seek help and not rely on my own strength. Emma never seemed to stop smiling while she spoke with love and understanding. She has the amazing ability to make everyone around her happy. It was impossible for me to be sad when I was around her. She lifted my spirits whenever I was with her.

Now you may ask what all these people have to do with my experience at American Heritage. But these people are my experience. The curriculum at American Heritage was amazing, but it was because of these people that I kept coming back. They made my high school experience one I'll never forget. They all helped me through high school and without them, I wouldn't be the man that I am today.





Joshua Brown



Joshua Brown, or as people at American Heritage know him, JT, came to AHS in the tenth grade. Born in American Fork, he is the fourth of six children. He lived in mainland China for two-and-a-half years during preschool and kindergarten. After China, his family settled in Mapleton, and he started playing soccer at age six. He has played on many club and school teams over the years and has continued to improve his skills. He is known for his speed and tenacity, never backing down from bigger players. As a boy, JT loved Legos, Pokémon, and video games. He has a very tactical, strategic mind. His comfort food is white rice and other Asian dishes. Since coming to AHS, he has discovered his talent for art, favoring Prisma color drawings most. He has also discovered his gift for ASL. Josh's mom likes to tease that he is her one kid who will take care of her in her old age because he has always been a kind-hearted, emotionally in-tune person. He is a true friend and has high moral standards. JT has experienced various challenges, but he has become a more empathic person because of it. JT says, "The one thing that made my experience at American Heritage great were my classmates; I love them so much. They all have been there for me, accepting me and all my flaws, and have helped me learn so much about life."

I came to American Heritage School starting in tenth grade. It was a big change coming to a school that had so much to do with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It was a good change though. It helped me understand the importance of the Lord's guidance in my education and having Him a part of it has help me learn and understand things I could never truly understand.

Another great influence AHS provides for me are the loving teachers I've had these past three years. First, there was Mr. Dye,



who help me trust in my own knowledge and helped me see that I can do hard things on my own with the TED talk we did that year. Next, Mr. Swenson taught me to better myself in more ways than just my singing voice. I've enjoyed immensely going on choir tour and being able to sing about God and what He has done for me. My favorite song that I've sung in Mr. Swenson's choir is "Prayer," which we sang this year. It is about all the different names God has; for example, "Foot step in the alley way" and "Choreographer of entrances and exits." It helped me realize the greatness of God. Last is Mr. Haymond, who I have become good friends with. I feel the love he has for me and my classmates, and he has taught me many important lessons throughout my senior year: trusting God, the importance of understanding world events, and discerning good from evil.

There are many other teachers that have helped me through my years that I love: Mr. Adams in science, Mrs. Harris who helped me find my love for ASL, and Mr. Beckwith. The list goes on.

The one thing that made my experience at American Heritage School great were my classmates. I love them so much. They all have been there for me, accepting me and all my flaws, and they have helped me learn so much about life. I couldn't have done it without them. Mitch, Chris, and Caleb: I love you, guys! Thanks for being there through everything, even if I'm annoying sometimes. You guys have helped me in so many ways, by being good influences for me and helping me learn so much about myself. Thank you!

In closing, I would have to say going to American Heritage School has been a blessing in my life, and I'm so excited to take what I've learned and face the world.





Kimberly Brown



Kimberly Brown has attended American Heritage since tenth grade. She often carries books with her, and, when possible, she even reads them. She's one of the few students who finds skipping class a punishment, and long lectures liberating. When she's not locked in a discussion or doing homework, she might be found studying for personal enjoyment at a desk, much to the dismay of her friends who tell her to get outside once every few months. For better or for worse, she's finally starting to listen to them. She writes, "You have to discover things on your own. And guess what? That means making mistakes at times. A lot of them. But it also means finding wonders others never dreamed existed, delights to the soul, treasures to the heart. It's worth it."

There's a sticker on Mr. Haymond's wall: "Think! It's not illegal yet." It's a small thing, printed in a font that reminds me of an engraving on a tombstone. Now, anyone who knows Mr. Haymond knows he has a reputation for the nonconventional, to put it lightly, and those walls are full of crazy things. So, for the most part, whenever I saw that sticker, I'd think, "Ha, ha, Mr. Haymond. Hilarious."

Oh, that was the fun of it: Senior class, senior year, and a senior teacher who proclaimed the most outlandish theories you'd laugh at, had he not been so serious. But as class settled down and we moved on to the next insane concept, I found myself thinking, "He wasn't kidding."

The world would have us follow its trends, keep us spinning in circles, distracting us, entertaining us, anything to keep us from discovering who we are and who we're meant to be—anything to



keep us from thinking. But American Heritage School has taught me otherwise. It's only been three years, but I've gained something more precious than any amount of academic achievement: I've learned to think. And it's a beautiful thing.

I cannot tell you the freedom I feel from knowing that, regardless the subject, regardless the situation, I can reason my way through it instead of blindly stumbling towards a solution. Isn't that liberating? It is! I mean, who wouldn't want to have access to learn anything? What more could I ask for? It's a gift, honestly, to know how to pursue truth independently, to think for myself. We've been commanded to "seek learning," and for the first twelve years of my school life, I was only kept from the truth because I knew not where to find it. Now I can study with all diligence. Now it's possible. Finally, blessedly possible. I know that life is far more complex than this cozy little school I've come to call home, but I can walk forward with the assurance that everything I've learned so far, every principle, every lesson taught from the heart, has prepared me for that wild ride ahead.

I will admit, it's not always easy. Goodness, it rarely is. Because, the thing is, the problem with knowing how to think means realizing how little you actually understand as you step out of ignorance. It means breaking out of the cookie cutter, pigeon-holed way of seeing the world, and that's a scary thing because there are no guidelines for you to cling to, no pre-set path to follow. You have to discover things on your own. And guess what? That means making mistakes at times. A lot of them. But it also means finding wonders others never dreamed existed, delights to the soul, treasures to the heart. It's worth it.

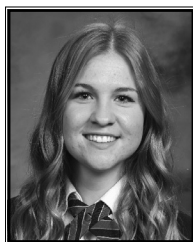
I'll be forever indebted to the teachers here, all of them, who took the time to talk with me, who cared about me enough to let me fail, who showed me where to look but not what to see. They gave me my starting ground and said, "Now go make your own path." It truly has been an incredible three years, bumps and bruises and all.



There's going to be much I remember—a particularly nasty run-in with Senior Thesis comes to mind—but there will always be that little something that stays with me long after these doors have closed for the final time and our names become nothing but forgotten memories. I'll know how to think. I've certainly got a while to go, and, heavens above, I've messed up more than should be possible for one person, but my feet are finally, finally set on the right path. I'll be your 5%, Mr. Haymond. You just watch.



Devynn Burnham



Devynn Mae Burnham began her adventure at American Heritage School in first grade and has never wanted to leave. She is the second oldest of five children and will be the first in her family to graduate from AHS. Devynn is a lover of all things that are good, especially if that good thing comes in the form of a baby. She brings light to every room she enters and always strives to be a positive example. More than anything she wants to be a wife and mother. She loves to create things and doodle. She's made friends performing in the school plays, experiencing hard fought wins and disappointing losses on the soccer field, as well as being a missionary while singing songs of worship with the after-school choir. She writes, "Throughout the twelve years I have attended American Heritage School, the most important thing I have learned and will take away is that God lives! And as you put God first, then everything else will fall into place."



Throughout every experience I've had at American Heritage, through the highs and especially the lows, I have learned something new that has molded me over the years into who I am today. As a young first grader, I learned that even though you may not get along with everyone, there is importance in showing Christ-like love to everyone.

As second grade came along, I felt ready and prepared to be baptized, not just because I had the blessing of learning the gospel at home and church, but also having the opportunity to feel and learn of the spirit at school. Through that I have come to recognize the importance of the gospel in every aspect of life. I learned the value of respect through a funny experience my third-grade year, as half of our class was sent to the office to talk with the principal. Some tears were shed but a great lesson was learned.

My fourth-grade year was what I call my "fun" year. The girls of the class (plus the teacher) played against the boys in football almost every day and the girls' team won our championship. Thank you very much. That was also the year our class pet ate our other class pet over Christmas break, when they were accidentally left in the school the entire holiday. Incidentally, a starving mouse named Nike will most assuredly eat its roommate named Skittles... because who doesn't like Skittles? I learned the importance of working together as a team, the fun of learning something new, and that mice can be cannibals.

Until fifth grade, history was never my favorite subject. That year during class we traveled back in time to different events throughout history. We experienced first-hand how to shoot a rifle and how loud a cannon was when it was shot. Sixth grade stretched my ability to memorize as the whole class learned and recited "The Living Christ." As I memorized those words, they came to life as I studied the life of Christ and when He walked upon the earth.

"You can do hard things" is the seventh grade saying I will remember. It applied most as I worked hard on word studies and studied the life of Emma Smith for my master project.



During my eighth-grade year, I wasn't in the same core class as all my friends and I ended up becoming friends with someone I may not have otherwise. My youngest sister was also born this year with a serious heart condition. I learned that things happen for a reason, even if they don't seem good at the time. Ninth grade was full of laughs and jokes as we acted out *Lord of the Rings*, read *Romeo and Juliet*, and made and had puppet shows. Not only did I laugh, but I learned a lot as I wrote essays and studied the life of Joan of Arc.

The summer going into my tenth-grade year was hard for the whole class, as we lost one of our good friends, and our beloved teacher's daughter, Katie, in a car accident. Katie was the friend that made my eighth-grade year without my other friends bearable. Because of that, I will forever be grateful for the year I didn't get the core class I wanted with all my other friends. Later that summer, we found out another one of our class members was in the hospital due to an explosion and was severely burned. We thought we were going to be losing another good friend that same summer, but through his strength, positivity, faith and miracles, he is still with us and has changed us all through his example. Our class has become closer as we have gone through these trials together.

In eleventh grade, we did an assignment where we interviewed a relative and wrote down their experiences. I gained a great appreciation for what people in history have done for us and gained a great love for my extended family while learning about my great-great uncle's service in WWII.

My last year of high school has been the most significant learning experience of my life, and has broadened my perspective of so many things. My entire way of thinking has shifted. I've learned the importance of time management, and finally learned to take charge of my own education. This last year I really gained a better knowledge and understanding of life in general. I realized that you can be happy no matter your circumstances. I also learned that every single person goes through trials, and that we are here to help others get through their hard times. I learned to always be



kind and loving to those around you because you never know what they are going through.

Throughout the twelve years I have attended American Heritage School the most important thing I have learned and will take away is that God lives! And as you put God first, everything else will fall into place.

John Burton



John Burton has attended American Heritage School since the seventh grade. He was born in Plano, Texas and is the second-oldest of four children. He has absolutely loved his experience at AHS, as well as the amazing lessons he has learned. He has loved the opportunity to learn about history through the lens of the gospel. Being able to apply gospel principles and lessons has greatly helped him to better understand and apply the lessons of the past. It has especially aided him in preparing for a mission, which he will be serving full-time in Brazil starting in July. He says: "Few places in the world could you find a school so close to the gospel or as influential to its students as American Heritage School."

*A*s I look back at my years at American Heritage School, I am overwhelmed with gratitude at the transformation I have gone through. I first joined this school as a small seventh grader, uncertain of myself and the future. I was quickly accepted into the class and began to develop long lasting friendships, many of which



have lasted through my Senior year. Through all my years at AHS, I have learned truths and principles so important that will stay with me forever: patience, kindness, endurance, trust and a lot of faith. These principles will guide me and aid me as I prepare for a mission, as I continue to study at BYU, as I prepare for marriage, and ultimately prepare to stay strong to the gospel.

I have especially enjoyed being able to look at history through the lens of the gospel. Applying the scriptures to my learning has made my understanding so much clearer, and has helped me to see more clearly my mistakes, as well as how to learn from them. This has also helped me to understand the times we live in, and how to resist the “Gadiantons of our day”, as Mr. Haymond would say, seeking to fight against God.

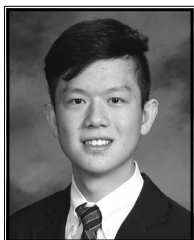
I will be forever grateful for the loving teachers and safe environment that American Heritage has to offer. Many times, it has been a shelter from the storms of the outside world, waiting with open arms to welcome me in. I am so grateful for the wonderful examples that teachers have been to me of loving, caring leaders. They have helped me to understand the importance and value of an education and have guided me to shape my understanding.

American Heritage has also been a great place of learning because of its small class size. A smaller class size has allowed me to better connect individually with each of the teachers as well as to have an educational experience tailored specifically to me. This especially has helped me to become the person I am today.

I also believe that the opportunity to write and present a Senior Thesis was an outstanding idea. As I look back, I appreciate the opportunity to choose any topic I wished to study and to then undertake an in-depth learning and understanding, followed by a written paper and presentation. It has allowed me to take my education into my own hands, and it has developed in me a desire to learn. Few places in the world could you find a school so close to the gospel or as influential to its students as American Heritage School. I will be forever grateful for all I have learned at this amazing school.



Zhaoxu Chen



Zhaoxu Chen came to AHS for his senior year. He was born in Kunming, Yunnan, a city in the southwestern part of China. As lucky as most of the other children born in China at the time, he was the oldest and the youngest in his family. While his parents were very busy with their lives, Chen received much love from his grandparents. He was brought to the United States in the fifth grade. The experience in America opened his sight to the world, which brought him back to the United States for his senior year at AHS. He loves drawing and music, and he particularly likes to do them both at the same time. He wants to be a psychiatrist when he grows up, and maybe, just maybe, he can be an artist at the same time. Chen writes, "So here I am at American Heritage School. I had never heard of Mormons before. To me, even religion itself was a new concept. While some may be bothered, I was happy to find another way to look at the world. American Heritage School has taught me things I would never have learned in China. I had a wonderful time here, and learned much. To me, this school opened a door to a new world, waiting to be explored."

“How does it feel to be surrounded by so many religious people?” I have been asked multiple times. To me, it is another perspective to look at this world. I still remember when I first got to the United States in fifth grade. All the amazement, new language, new people, new food, new everything. Since then I have formed a habit of looking at things in two ways, “What would people in China think about it?” and “What would people in America think about it?” I often ask myself these two questions. Even when I returned to China, the thought of a different view of the world followed me for years. Finally, when I got to high school, and felt that I was able to take care of myself, I told my parents, “I want to go back to America.”



So here I am at American Heritage School. I had never heard of Mormons before. To me, even religion itself was a new concept. While some may be bothered, I was happy to find another way to look at the world. American Heritage School has taught me things I would never have learned in China. I had a wonderful time here, and learned much. To me, this school opened a door to a new world, waiting to be explored.



Emily Cline



Emily Cline joined American Heritage School for her senior year in high school. She was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, but has lived in Arizona, Texas, Alaska, North Dakota and Idaho. She has loved making friends and learning in a Christ-centered environment for her final year. She says, "I am so grateful I was able to come to AHS for my final year of high school. Even though moving came with many challenges, I have been able to explore more about myself and get to know others better. The doors that have been opened in my mind and heart are numerous, and I am excited to begin exploring them." She loves her family and is looking forward to going out into the world to spread her wings

*T*ruthfully, coming to American Heritage here in Utah was not something I wanted to do when the idea was originally proposed. I was very happy with my friends and the place we lived, with the memories that had been made there, and I thought that the school I was going to was the place I wanted to graduate from. However, after moving and settling in a bit, and after the new



school year began at AHS, I realized that there was a very large difference between the way I had been treated and taught at my previous school, and how I have been treated and taught here at AHS. The openness and welcoming nature of teachers and students has been a great strength for me; the friends I have made in so little time and the values, memories, and fun times that have been shared are truly precious to me.

Having the opportunity to incorporate more of God's teachings and understand more of what is happening in the world has been an amazing learning process that has taught me many things concerning my life. I am so grateful for the opportunity that AHS has provided, and I am glad I was able to spend my senior year here.

David Cowley



David Cowley has been at American Heritage since seventh grade. He was born in sunny, hot Arizona, and enjoys any adventure including climbing in the mountains, sailing and kayaking in the water, and longboarding down steep hills. Growing up, David has always looked up to his father and older siblings, and has tried to follow in their footsteps. Like his father and brothers, he has learned that he too likes to work with computers, and looks forward to earning a degree in Computer Science after his mission to Montreal, Canada. David feels great appreciation for all of his excellent teachers and kind friends. He writes, "Mr. Hancock proved to me that you learn from fun books. I still have my annotated Lord of the Rings book and have re-read it several times since my ninth grade year. The Lord of the Rings continues to amaze me with how many principles one can learn from it. The principles I learned during this year have helped me through the hard times of high school and will forever stay with me."



The road has been long and hard since my admittance to American Heritage School in seventh grade. During those early years, I was young and ignorant to the world around me, and understood little of how it really works. American Heritage helped, but of course it did not teach me everything.

During my middle school years, teachers like Mrs. Meade and Mr. Griffith gave me essential ations. These foundations included how to work, and the importance of not procrastinating. These foundations were significant to have for high school.

The first year of high school was one of the best years of my life. The first day in ninth grade I learned that Mr. Hancock and I shared the same first name. My respect for him did not stop there. I suspect that few ninth grade programs study Greek Mythology, Norse Mythology, Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome; *Beowulf*, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and best of all, *Lord of the Rings* all in one year. Mr. Hancock is a genius for bringing all of these inspired stories to life and making them applicable to all of his students. Whenever I would explain the curriculum in my ninth grade year to my friends who attended other schools, it seemed I would always walk away from those conversations with my friends wishing that they could join me. Mr. Hancock proved to me that you can learn a lot from fun books. I still have my annotated *Lord of the Rings* book and have re-read it several times since my ninth grade year. The *Lord of the Rings* continues to amaze me with how many principles one can learn from it. The principles I learned during this year have helped me through the hard times of high school and will forever stay with me.

My senior year of high school has impacted me deeply. Who doesn't like food, correct principles, and sometimes wishing you were dead (a.k.a Senior Thesis)? Mr. Haymond brings all of those factors into play while he is teaching his students. Unlike most teachers, Mr. Haymond truly cares about each individual student and their needs instead of focusing on the entire class as a whole. This affects how he teaches. He doesn't let guidelines and rules of



teaching stop him from teaching the topics that his students are interested in. The principles that I have learned in his class have astounded me, and have opened my eyes to what is really going on in the world around me. At the start of almost every lesson, Mr. Haymond tells us not believe a word he says, but to research the topic and to try and find out the truth for ourselves. This does two things for us has his students: one, it teaches us the importance of personally researching topics, and two, we know that what Mr. Haymond is teaching us he is learning along with us, and that we need to learn truth for ourselves. Because of the humility and devotion that Mr. Haymond shows his students, he has my utmost respect.

As I write this, I have no idea if Mr. Haymond knows this is how I feel about him. Those who know me know that I am sarcastic and love to joke around. I am not one of those students that approaches a teacher to describe my respect for him. But ever since I had Mr. Haymond as a P.E. teacher in seventh grade, I have stayed at American Heritage with anticipation to have him as my senior year teacher. Mr. Haymond has not only met my expectations but has surpassed them, so much that he has changed me. One of the best things that he has told me is that if he doesn't teach us the principles and foundations that are necessary to see the errors and traps in the world, and how to make a positive difference, then he has failed as a teacher. Mr. Haymond has succeeded in his goal to prepare his students not only to be prepared for what is to come in the world, but for the rest of their life also.





Yuanzhen “Alan” Cui



Yuanzhen “Alan” Cui came to AHS in the tenth grade. He was born China and has lived in both China and Korea. He describes his talents for art and culinary crafts as gifts from God given to him at the young age. Notwithstanding those gifts and the wisdom of God, Alan feels that the adversary has tempted him with endless trials and challenges, “like a constant ocean wave, stronger and stronger each time, until it hits the shore.” However, God helped Alan stand his ground and fight through his quest, which is Alan’s greatest desire of all. “Here I was taught more than just how to be a man; I was taught how to live with standards, spirit, and faith.”

I entered the American Heritage School in 2015, and it has been almost two-and-half years here now. I love this school with all my heart. It has wonderful educational programs, and I am friends with most everyone in the school. I get to meet them every day, during and between classes. There were happy and sad moments, of course, but these memories, and especially these friends, will forever carry on through my life. Teachers at American Heritage have been a huge blessing in my life. I feel that I learned more in classes at AHS than I would have in other schools or settings. Here I was taught more than just how to be a man; I was taught how to live with standards, spirit, and faith. Because of my experience at American Heritage, I decided to be baptized, and today, I am proud to say that I am a Mormon, and I know that I am a son of God.

I thought that I was never meant to be accepted to American Heritage, but God felt otherwise. Was it luck? After three admissions



tests, I still failed to qualify. So how was I accepted? It was because God answered my prayer. When I was a sophomore, I couldn't seem to catch up or stay current with my coursework. The education program was different and difficult. Sometimes I was depressed, but my teacher noticed, and helped me. In fact, he didn't just help me, he changed my life forever. He told me that maybe I was never meant to be here. I was shocked because I felt it was such a blunt and rude thing to say. But just as I was getting a little angry, he told me that the Holy Ghost told him that I belong here, even though he and even the admissions office might not normally accept a student in my situation. I knew what he said was true. The Spirit told me it was true. From that moment, I worked as hard as possible to catch up with my classmates. That teacher is one of the main reasons I decided to be baptized.

Now I'm a senior. I'm still having some struggles. But am I happy? Yes. Will I ever give up? Never. I'm forever grateful for all the teachers and friends that helped and supported me throughout these years.

I'm going to say again and again that I love American Heritage. Of course, there were some difficult times. But nothing is perfect, right? There were far more good experiences than bad ones, and, to be honest, the bad experiences were mostly of my own creation. The experience and knowledge I gained here is something I would never have had in China or Korea. I have gained more friends than I would ever have imagined. I love the school, the teachers, the people, and the environment. Special thanks to Mr. Haymond, Mrs. Culver, and Mr. Dye. These three teachers supported me and helped me to realize that there is light in my future, and hope in my life. Thank you!





Nicole Curzon



Nicole came to American Heritage in the seventh grade. She was born in Detroit, Michigan, and is the first of six children to be adopted into her family. She came to AHS to learn more about the gospel through her education. She has come to understand the principle that faith in God changes everything. She feels that coming to American Heritage School has been one of the best decisions she has made. She says, "I owe a special thanks to my parents, teachers and friends who were patient with me through my hardships and challenges. You are all amazing!"

I have been attending American Heritage school since seventh grade. I was supposed to be attending American Fork Junior High that year with some of my best and closest friends. The decision to come to American Heritage was a hard one for me because I would have to wear a uniform and the environment was different. Through faith, prayer, and fasting, I was finally able to know for myself that this was the school I needed to attend. This was one of the best decisions I could have made.

From that day on, school didn't feel like school. It felt like home. For the first time, school wasn't boring. It was exciting! I remember sitting in the second row in the front in Mrs. Updike's seventh grade classroom wondering what in the world "sentence diagramming" was, and why it was important. I was confused at first, but with practice I was able to get better and better. Learning became fun!

I have learned more deeply many important principles at American Heritage, such as that God lives and loves me, that I am



a child of God, and that the Atonement is available for everyone. I am grateful to be able to have had the experience to connect the gospel with the curriculum. When I first started going to American Heritage, I had no idea the amount of word studies, diagramming, readings, essays and memorizations I would be learning. None of it has been easy, but it has been worth it, for sure.

American Heritage students are genuinely kind and honestly care about their friends. Whether it is a teacher or a student, there is always someone to turn to for help. Some might say they are “squad goals” or “true friends,” but I think together we make up a family. This loving and trusting environment helped me to better myself. I was able to trust the Lord and know that I could do hard things if I put my faith and trust in Him.

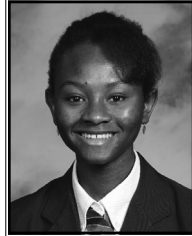
I remember the first day I started at American Heritage. I was nervous and very worried because everyone already seemed to know each other. I was pretty sure I wasn’t going to have more than a couple of friends, but to my surprise, loving arms welcomed me in and I suddenly had many friends. To this day, I’m still great friends with many of those people that originally welcomed me.

While I’m extremely grateful for all my earthly friends, I’d also like to take the time for all the friends on the other side of the veil. They are the ones that have helped me to become truly converted to God. They are the ones that have strengthened my testimony of the gospel and life after death. Katie Hancock was one of those life-changing people. I always saw her in the hall singing loudly with a friend. She had one of the best smiles. Though I miss her dearly, I know that one day I will be able to see her again.

Hooray for the 2017 Senior Graduating class! I’m so excited to go out and make a difference in the world. “Oh, the places we’ll go!” I owe a special thanks to my parents, teachers and friends who were patient with me through my hardships and challenges. Good luck with everything. You are all amazing!



Sarah Curzon



Sarah Curzon came to AHS in the seventh grade and hails from Ghana, Africa. She is gentle in character and bold in spirit. She made many friends at AHS and welcomed hardships as learning experiences. She likes to say that she was instrumental as a free therapist on campus for her friends, and as a star African-American on the soccer team for three years. Many jokes were formed in her mind and remembered for years. She enjoyed the company of her fellow students and the amazing friends she has made as the years went by. She is grateful for the lifelong lessons she has learned that have prepared her to serve a mission, and to help her raise children that will become strong instruments in the hands of the Lord. Sarah feels that American Heritage has helped her heal and become a stronger woman. She can't wait for the next chapter in her life, but she will miss the atmosphere and sacred environment of this school! Sarah said, "Our high school at AHS is not a large one, but sometimes quantity does not always mean quality. I have met some of the most amazing people here, and because of how small the school is, I have been able to get to know people one by one, and not just in the hallways."

*A*ttending American Heritage has been a blessing in my life. The first time I heard about the school was when my parents took us to "The Price of Freedom." I remember walking through the hall and seeing the pictures of the Savior and Apostles hanging on the walls. My first thought was "Wow, they can hang portraits of prophets in their school?" The show was great, and when we got home, my parents talked to us about going to this school. I thought it would be a great idea; but at the same time, I was looking forward to AF High School. We discussed it more, and we decided to come to American Heritage.



Wearing uniforms was not a big deal for me, because that is what I wore to school in Ghana all the time. Our high school is not a large one, but sometimes quantity does not always mean quality. I have met some of the most amazing people here, and because of how small the school is, I have been able to get to know people one on one, and not just in the hallways.

This high school experience was nothing like the High School Musical experience between Troy and Gabrielle, but I have spent time with the guys in my grade that have made me feel special and treated me with respect. They have helped me build my confidence and helped me value myself as a daughter of God.

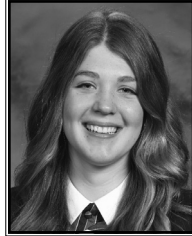
Through books such as *Man's Search for Meaning*, *Les Miserable*, *Jane Eyre*, and *Lord of the Flies*, I have learned the importance of forgiveness, repentance, and growing from the trials in our lives. The spirit in the school provides a safe environment to learn about both spiritual and secular aspects of history and literature. The friends I have made here have helped me want to become a better person, and I will forever be grateful for them.

American Heritage is a place I know I can return to after graduation, after my mission, and even when I have a family of my own. I know that my teachers know me individually, and will always welcome me. I have also realized this is not an easy school to attend, both academically and financially, but it was worth it. I will forever be grateful to my parents to sacrificing and seeing the benefits of this school to let me attend. I hope sometime in the future my own children will be able to experience what I did here.





Eliza Dalton



Eliza Dalton first came to American Heritage in tenth grade and then returned for her senior year to enjoy Mr. Haymond's class and the life-lessons he taught. She is the sister to three younger brothers and lives in Provo, Utah. She writes, "American Heritage has helped me learn not only the topics I have been personally interested in studying, but has also provided a place of spiritual growth and development where I have learned principles necessary to govern myself, my future family, and the government."

I first discovered American Heritage School through the fantastic orchestra programs available there. I began participating in Lyceum orchestras in 2010 and often wondered, at that time, why anyone would want to attend a school that seemed like an eight-hour day of seminary? Then, in 2014, my family moved from Provo to Lehi. My father was adamant I didn't attend Lehi High school for various reasons, and we started exploring our options, one of which was American Heritage. When my mom told me she scheduled an appointment for a tour, I gave her some attitude. I told her I wouldn't attend a tiny, LDS K-12 school with a sports program that didn't compete in the public school league. The day came for the tour, and I went begrudgingly. As we toured the school and were lead to Mr. Dye's classroom, who would be my teacher that year, I was approached by a tall, very cute boy (who will remain anonymous) who said he was a student at AHS and really enjoyed his education there. With a charming smile, he added that he hoped I, too, would choose to attend American Heritage the next year. I was sold.



Although my male and female peer groups have both been a large and influential part of my experience at American Heritage, the spirit and environment here is what really made it special. The beautiful school grounds and the gospel-based curriculum provided by the administrators, as well as the personal mentoring and love I have felt from the teachers has made American Heritage the best of the 13 schools I have attended since elementary school.

I have especially grown both spiritually and intellectually in Mr. Haymond's class. The current events and life-lessons taught, as well as foundational principles from the Constitution, have shaped my perspective of the world and our future. This year we spent time studying principles of home and family, including the roles of fathers and mothers in the home. These lessons have been most valuable to me as I am preparing to find a husband who will help me raise a family centered on Christ in these times.

All-in-all, I am very grateful I have been given the privilege to attend American Heritage School for two years. The friends I have made here, the principles I have learned and applied, and the education of my heart and spirit will guide me for the rest of my life.





Kiersten Fallon



Kiersten Fallon joined AHS for her senior year. She is a free spirit, and loves to be a goof and make people laugh. She is extremely passionate about art and wants to pursue it as her future career in animation, illustration or design. Although she is very intelligent, she feels that she sometimes struggles with vocalizing her ideas and feelings. However, this does not stop her from finding other ways to express herself, and she continues to find various and even unique forms of personal expression. In just one single year at American Heritage School, Kiersten feels that the love, kindness, and friendships with which she has been surrounded have increased her courage, confidence, and opportunities for self-expression more than ever before. She writes, "I know that if I had not acted on the Spirit to come to American Heritage, my life would be very different, and probably not as happy. Being part of the American Heritage family, even for a single year, has changed my life for the better."

People have told me that it's very strange that I decided to go to American Heritage School for the first time for my senior year. It wasn't exactly the plan I had envisioned, so I don't disagree with them entirely. Before I came to American Heritage, I thought everything was fine and dandy. I thought I was happy. Looking back, the truth was, I was not happy.

I had gone to a school where it seemed the culture was quite worldly. God did not seem to matter much to many of the students, most of whom were LDS. It felt like school was mostly about "fitting in," and frankly, that was never something I was really good at. I had some friends, but not very loyal ones. I had friends who weren't exactly an example of kindness. The teachers seemed not to care about me or what I had to say; and it felt that



some were just flat out unkind to me. I felt alone. I felt depressed. I felt empty. There was definitely something missing in my life.

After many years of my parents to trying to convince me to come to American Heritage, I finally had a feeling that maybe changing schools wasn't such a bad idea. It felt like a strong prompting from the Spirit that I could not ignore. So, we immediately went through the process of testing and admissions application details. Throughout the entire summer break, I still wasn't sure if I wanted to go to American Heritage. My parents told me that I could change my mind at any time. Time passed, and by the end of the summer, it was too late.

I did not enjoy the first week of my senior year; I felt scared, lonely, and friendless. I repeatedly questioned if coming here was a good idea. However, the people here were always so nice; I wasn't used to such kindness on a daily basis. In fact, I actually felt a little overwhelmed by it, and didn't know how to react to all the nice people who surrounded me. No one would LET me sit alone.

I started off the year with great teachers who I didn't have too much difficulty connecting with. It felt different having teachers who not only cared about my success, but also about my well-being. Mr. Haymond was always the first to go out of his way in welcoming me; even when I wanted to stay in my own quiet, lonely world, Mr. Haymond would break through my stubbornness and pull out the best in me. Later, I joined the cast of the play, Cinderella, in which I played one of the step-sisters. Normally, performing on stage is nerve-wracking for me. I have always been afraid of being a disappointment or of being put down by my fellow actors or director. I had actually experienced that at my former high school. But here at AHS, for the first time, I didn't feel bad about myself or embarrassed. Mrs. Perry, the Drama Director, and the other students constantly supported me and helped me to feel confident. For the first time, my awkwardness was embraced, even encouraged. And feeling the Spirit so strongly each day in my high school classes? THAT was an incredible new opportunity! I was encompassed by



the Spirit each day in Mr. Beckwith's Principles of Leadership class, and in Mr. Anderson's Family Science class. Whether or not I had any real friends, I certainly was surrounded by amazing teachers!

After a while, I began to grow accustomed to the ways of this new school. I was still a little stubborn and shy, but I was experiencing much better feelings than I had at any school I had previously attended. I was feeling so much better about myself. I even got asked to the Homecoming dance, though I didn't expect it. I was surrounded by kind, happy, fun people; yet, somehow, I still felt lonely and out of place.

One day, I finally engaged in a conversation with a student in one of my classes. We talked about a common interest that we have. We continued talking more and more about other things, and then, before I knew it, I had a best friend. Suddenly I found myself out of my comfort zone of hiding from everyone with fear and shame. I was so much happier, and I felt like I could actually talk to people.

Then it hit me. I realized that it wasn't simply because of this one friend that I suddenly became happy; I became genuinely happy when I finally decided to open myself up to people. I was filled with so much more joy when I decided to make the change in myself.

Yes, the Lord leads us to people who we are supposed to meet in order to better our lives. Those people can't help to change us for the better unless we let them. Nothing is going to get better unless we open ourselves to the promptings of the Spirit and choose to make necessary changes. I know that if I had not acted on the Spirit to come to American Heritage, my life would be very different, and probably not as happy. Being part of the American Heritage family, even for a single year, has changed my life for the better.





Angela Gerlach



Angela Gerlach came to American Heritage at the beginning of her eighth-grade year. She was born in Bellevue, Washington, where she lived until she was seven, after which she moved to Utah. Angela is the third oldest of ten children. She enjoys spending her time with family, friends, cooking, reading, climbing trees, swing sets, and singing. She plans on going on a mission, studying Commercial Music, getting married in the temple, and raising a family. She shares, "I know God lives and that He has a plan. He has control. He loves me, and He loves you. If you let Him work in your life, it will be okay. Howard W Hunter said, "whatever Jesus lays His hands upon lives." Let Christ lay His hands on your lives. Invite Him into your lives. Please let the Atonement into your life. Christ only needs your invitation."

I must admit, I did not want to come back. I was ready to be done with American Heritage School at the end of my Junior year. I felt I had gotten all that I would gain from the school and just wanted to go on to college. But after a lot of praying, I felt I should come back for my senior year. I still dragged my feet and complained, but I came back. And I do not regret it.

This year has been one of the hardest years of my life. I needed what I learned here to give me hope in God. I have struggled with health problems for almost a year. It caused a lot of pain and made it hard to function and think. But I told myself that I had to get out of bed. I had to drag my aching and nauseated self to school each day. I had to write a thesis. I had to do these things because I knew the world was going to pass me by if I didn't. To add to this, many of my closest friends didn't understand what was going on.



My family did not even fully understand what was going on. The people I leaned on in the past to get me through were not there, and I felt I was falling.

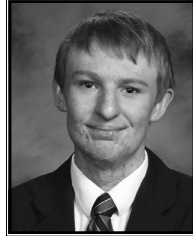
I was angry with God—Angry that I had to go through what I thought was such useless pain with no light at the end of my tunnel, and seemingly alone. Slowly I realized how much I wanted to hope, I wanted to know there was light, not just at the end of the tunnel, but that there was an existence of light. I started to ask God to give my pain meaning, and He did. I started to try to stop leaning on my family and friends for support and started letting God hold me. There were days I still felt I was falling, but as I asked for God to give my pain meaning, meaning came through people. God sent friends to me who were suffering with their own struggles and pain, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I was able to draw and lend strength from them. I prayed for them and thanked God for them. I wanted meaning, and in each experience of serving someone, I was able to feel a small portion of the love of Christ for them. I was also able to feel Christ's arms around me as they served me. Because of what they have struggled through, I know Christ is with them. One day I hope to be like them.

My Senior year of American Heritage I learned about true Christianity. I studied Christ and following Christ. I studied faith. Because of this, I was able to gain the faith I needed to hang on. I realized that I want to keep pushing on. I want to go to college and have a family. I want to raise children in Zion. I want to be a useful instrument in the hands of God. And I believe I can be. I believe that the teachers I have had and the people I have been with at American Heritage have helped me find the foundation I need to stand on.

I know God lives and that He has a plan. He is in control. He loves me, and He loves you. If you let Him work in your life, things will be okay. Howard W. Hunter said, "whatever Jesus lays His hands upon lives." Let Christ lay His hands on your lives. Invite Him into your lives. Please let the Atonement into your life. Christ only needs your invitation.



Maxwell Goddard



He started at American Heritage in eighth grade after moving to Alpine with his family. He was born in Provo, Utah, and is the eldest of seven children. He loves to learn, spend time with his friends, and study the sciences. He plans to serve a mission for the LDS Church, attend BYU where he will study engineering, be married in the temple, have a family, and be a disciple of Christ. He writes, "The code of honor upheld at American Heritage, and the excellent teachers here, have given me many great blessings which would have been very difficult to receive elsewhere. They have contributed significantly to who I am today, for which I am very grateful."

The great teachers, clean atmosphere, and good classmates at American Heritage School have been a great blessing in my life and have helped me to learn and grow a great deal since I came.

I began at American Heritage in eighth grade and had amazing teachers who taught me valuable lessons about many subjects, as well as learning methods like "research, reason, relate, and record." My ninth-grade teachers taught me to understand and write well-structured and powerful essays. My tenth-grade teachers taught me to love reading not only to do well in school but for my own improvement. My eleventh-grade teachers taught me to love learning for more reasons than what was taught on the surface in the curriculum, and to enthusiastically pursue my passion for knowledge with more diligence and patience. My twelfth-grade teacher has taught me to discern truth from evil. He has helped me to understand why religion and the Eternal Plan is so central to the liberty of our nation and of all mankind. He has



given me new perspective into my own life, as well as into the lives of others, which has allowed me to grow personally and serve more faithfully, for which I am greatly indebted.

The code of honor upheld at American Heritage, and the excellent teachers here, have given me many great blessings which would have been very difficult to receive elsewhere. They have contributed significantly to who I am today, for which I am very grateful.

Daniel Haymond



Daniel Haymond has attended American Heritage School (AHS) for six years. The middle child of seven, he has enjoyed his time at AHS and has had the opportunity to participate in the choir, plays, cross-country, and soccer teams, and has made many friendships that he values very much. His favorite part of his experience at AHS has been to see the change in himself and in his peers as they have gained an education through a gospel perspective. He writes, "At AHS, I have gained a strong testimony of scripture reading and prayer. If I'm ever stressed, I know that if I go back to the scriptures I will remember what is important, and all my other cares will fall into their proper place and perspective."

*A*merican Heritage School has been one of the biggest blessings in my life so far. I've learned and grown here in ways that I feel I couldn't have in any other environment. I've had teachers that I liked more than others, and I will remember my favorite teachers and the things I learned from them. The best teachers I had are the ones that I knew loved me, and who taught

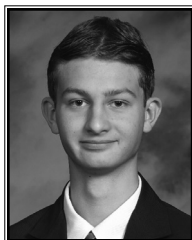


through the scriptures using words of the prophets.

Many things today can be very confusing. It can seem sometimes like there's no answer. It can be especially hard to know what we can do personally to help with all the problems of the world. That's where the scriptures and words of the prophets come in. They really do have answers, and that has comforted me greatly. But the scriptures haven't just helped me think about issues or topics we discuss in class; they have helped me in my personal life. At AHS, I have gained a strong testimony of scripture reading and prayer. If I'm ever stressed, I know that if I go back to the scriptures, I will remember what is important, and all other cares will fall into their proper place and perspective.



Joshua Higgins



Joshua Higgins has been at AHS since seventh grade. He was born and raised in Utah, and has a younger brother and a little sister who attend American Heritage with him. He enjoys music, history, the outdoors, and being with friends. He plans on serving a full-time mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. He writes, "I have found that there is nothing more important than the Spirit. It is because of the Spirit's guidance that I have been able to accomplish many of the things I have pursued."

I came to American Heritage half way through my seventh-grade year. Before I came, I was nervous that I wouldn't fit in, and that I would be "that new kid" that sat in the back of the class.



However, when I came, I was welcomed and accepted. Initially, I was surprised at what I saw as almost “strangely kind” behavior. In time, I learned that the students at American Heritage were just that way, genuinely nice, and I was able to quickly adjust and make friends. Entering Mrs. Updike’s class in seventh grade was the biggest change for me. The learning environment was completely different. I was able to learn about Christ in school, and connect every subject with the gospel. My favorite thing about American Heritage is how we have the freedom to connect academics with religion in the course of the school day. I feel that here I have been taught how and why to think, rather than simply what to think.

Since coming to American Heritage, I have learned about things that are taught in few other places. The subjects may be the same, but new areas of learning were opened to my mind in each subject. Take history, for example. Before I came to American Heritage, my least favorite subject was history. After coming here, that all changed. I think that the reason I did not enjoy history is because I did not see any point to learning it, until I came here. When I started to study the past on a deeper level, and was taught to see the hand of God in history, I saw the great importance of learning from the past. History became my favorite subject. I even continued to read about history outside of class. This is the kind of desire that I found in Mrs. Updike’s class as a young seventh grader. I felt this shift in my perspective of learning was one of the most important things I gained at American Heritage, even to the point that I chose to write my Senior Thesis about why it is important to teach history the way it was taught to me here.

Another thing that has made my time here at American Heritage so great is an environment where I can feel the Spirit, and friends I have found who feel the same way. I have found that there is nothing more important than the Spirit. It is because of the Spirit’s guidance that I have been able to accomplish many of the things I have pursued.

As I look back on the ups and downs throughout my experiences here, I am grateful that I have come. My teachers and friends have made my experience so memorable.



Alex Hill



Alex Hill has been at American Heritage since he was in second grade. He was born in West Jordan, Utah, and has lived in the small town of Bluffdale, Utah, since he was two years old. He is the third child out of four. He is creative, kind, adventurous and is often described as the child who marches to the beat of his own drum. Alex was very shy until the second grade when his teacher helped him overcome his fear of speaking to others. Since then, there has been little fear left, and he has lived his life to the fullest. Alex loves the outdoors, he loves to paint, draw, make furniture, create jewelry, and rebuild motorcycles. If there is something he does not know, he finds out how to do it and he teaches himself. He loves learning and discussing with others what he has learned and what is happening in the world. He is an Eagle Scout and is preparing for a mission. Alex loves American Heritage, and Mr. Haymond is one of his greatest mentors. He has a strong testimony of the gospel and he understands the atonement is real. He says, "I thank God every day for allowing me to go to a school that teaches me truth."

*A*merican Heritage has been a home for me for the greater part of my life. It has been a place where I have learned, interacted, and felt safe. The experience that American Heritage gives is something you cannot get anywhere else. Many people in our world today base whether a school is good or not by the curriculum or scores on the ACT. American Heritage performs well in all of these things, but what makes this school so amazing is much more than that. It is the love for one another, the clean culture, and the learning opportunities you cannot get anywhere else.



I have attended American Heritage since second grade. Over these many years, I have created incredible friendships and memories that will last a lifetime. One of my earliest memories at AHS was when several boys pounded the song “We Will Rock You” out on the lunch room tables. We got in a little trouble, but we learned through the wonderful teachings of our teachers, that self-government and respect for others was truly important. This was an early and important lesson for me about the attributes we should strive for, and those are the kinds of things I have come to remember.

I also remember doing the chicken dance with Mrs. Knight, and learning in the fourth grade about Utah and the beauty of it. In seventh grade, the intensity of studying and learning was increased, but so was the fun. Being an adventuresome boy, I had always thought it would be cool try to put a staple into a paper airplane and then throw it into the ceiling to see if it would stick. I was not sure if it would work, but I really wanted to try. A week later, and 150 paper airplanes later, I found out that it works remarkably well. In that moment, Mrs. Updike taught us an important lesson about stewardship. In a small but important way, our childish paper airplane antics combined with a good teacher’s response became part of shaping who I am today. We had so much fun that year, and I learned valuable life lessons. We also went to Washington, DC and had some life-changing experiences that I hope to someday share with my children.

I have had so many memories at American Heritage that if I wrote them all down it would be a book instead of an essay. Most importantly, I think, is that we were taught how to have fun and enjoy life, but we were also taught when it was time to take things seriously. These are lessons that will last a lifetime. I will remember learning to love God here, and to see His hand in everything. At American Heritage, we can talk about sensitive subjects that many students are even allowed to explore at school, at least not as a class under the teacher’s direction. This makes learning at American Heritage so much deeper. We can really explore a subject without



fear or limitation, and we can relate it to our lives and to our whole understanding. My mind has learned valuable facts, figures, and information. My heart has learned love, kindness, commitment, and a greater understanding of God's plan.

I would like to thank all those who stood by my side as I went through tough times and was stupid. I know that without these people, I would not have made it through. I know for a fact, that I would not be the man I am today without this school and the role models who have taught me how to be a true man. God placed me here. He placed all of us here, including at this school, for a reason, and we need to find that reason and carry out Heavenly Father's plan for us. I thank God every day for allowing me to go to a school that teaches me these kinds of truths.





Megan Holmes



Megan Holmes first came to American Heritage School in third grade and has loved being involved in various activities at the school such as drama, singing and soccer. She is the oldest of eight children, six of whom currently attend the school. She is very hopeful and excited for the future as she plans to serve a mission in the fall and eventually become a wife and mother. She writes, "Gordon B. Hinckley said 'life is to be enjoyed, not just endured.' And I truly have enjoyed my years here at American Heritage School. I'm so grateful for the Christ-like teachers, and Christ-like friends that I have made who have helped me grow closer to my Savior."

*T*he experiences we have and the knowledge we gain are some of the only things we can take with us into the eternities. I am grateful to say that I have had some unforgettable experiences and gained a lot of important knowledge here at American Heritage over the past nine years. I have been fortunate enough to be a part of a school that has become like a second home to me. But it's not just any school. This is a school that has taught me how to reason and relate, a school that has taught me how to identify true and correct principles, a school that has taught me to love others, and a school that has made me a better person.

The future is really exciting and I cannot wait to see what Heavenly Father has in store for me! I am looking forward to serving a mission this fall and using some of the knowledge and experiences I have gained at American Heritage to help me serve God's children. Marriage and family are also something I look



forward to. I feel that I have come to discover at AHS more of who I am and the potential I have. A motto I often refer to is: "Faith over Fear." As I start my life more independently, I will definitely have some fear. But faith and fear cannot exist with each other. As I go forward with faith into my future, I know that God is by me every step of the way.

School is not always easy, but it was not meant to be! There are those times when you fail a test or assignment, or when you just do not feel like being at school at all. But how boring would it be to glide through school or life without any challenges? Sure, the challenges are hard. Sometimes things do not happen the way I plan, but I do know one thing: it will all work out.

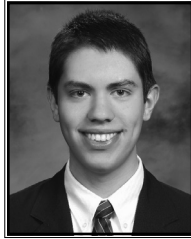
Playing the roles of Dorothy and Cinderella my sophomore and senior years taught me some valuable lessons. Dorothy had the ability to return home whenever she wanted to, but she had to find out for herself that she had it in her. In life, we have the ability to be happy and make the best of our situations. Sometimes we just need a reminder that we are agents unto ourselves. Cinderella was always kind, no matter her circumstances. I have learned that people are not always kind, but that does not give me the right to treat others unkindly. I am grateful for the stage roles I have played over the years, and the positive things they have taught.

Gordon B. Hinckley said, "Life is to be enjoyed, not just endured." I truly have enjoyed my years at American Heritage School. I'm so grateful for the Christ-like teachers and administration, and Christ-like friends that I have made who have helped me grow closer to my Savior.





Nathan Holmstead



Nathan Holmstead joined American Heritage thirteen years ago in kindergarten, one of our dedicated “lifers.” He enjoys technical theatre, reading, quality family time, and having meaningful experiences with his friends, during and outside of school hours. Nathan plans on serving a 2-year mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, attending college, and eventually raising a family as a father. He writes, “These principles and people have changed my views and helped me prepare to be an adult and father in this world. Thank you, American Heritage. This was unforgettable.”

People often ask each other if they remember their first day of school at this building. I honestly cannot remember that day. Then again, it was 13 years ago. I may not be able to remember the day, but the days since then have been exceptionally memorable. I have made lasting friendships and had experiences that have changed me and what I want to be. This school has been a real foundation in my life, and I wouldn't change that for anything.

American Heritage has become a central part of my life. I moved from Pleasant Grove to Lehi between my eighth and ninth grade years, and my new home didn't feel like home at first. This building that I have literally been raised in felt more of a sanctuary than my own bedroom. I have adapted to my new home, but these hallways and these brick walls will always have a special place in my heart.

Some experiences that are especially memorable are the productions and plays the school has put on. I have acted in many musicals and have been involved in the technical theatre aspect



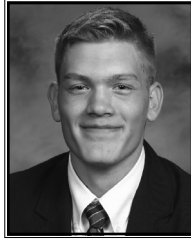
of many productions (lights, sound, props, etc.). Each show has had some meaning or message that I knew influenced others and that was very rewarding. I felt their influence on me and people I am close to. One of the more notable musicals was “The Trail of Dreams”, a play that retold the stories of Mormon Pioneers. I was able to portray the characters of Levi Savage, Ephraim Hanks, and many others whose sacrifices and trials helped to move the work of the Lord forward. I made a very special connection to those characters, and to my own pioneer ancestors, and it became very meaningful to tell those stories to others.

I have grown not only to love this place, but more importantly I have grown to love the people here. I can fondly remember teachers, even from elementary school, that still influence me today. I can vividly recall my experiences in high school, and have made life-long friends here. The teachers I learned from are now mentors and friends who I can talk to and get advice from. The Spirit in this building, and with these people, has nurtured my love of learning and my appreciation of God’s love. Here I have learned many important things in high school such as The Hero’s Journey from Mr. Hancock, Redemption and Forgiveness from Mr. Dye, Truth and its power from Mrs. Parker, and the Purpose of Life from Mr. Haymond. These principles and people have changed my views and helped me prepare to be an adult and father in this world. Thank you, American Heritage. This was unforgettable.





Brantley Johnson



Brantley Johnson has attended AHS since he was in seventh grade. He is the second child of Ted and Kimberly, and was born eight weeks premature. His doctors predicted that he would be skinny, sickly and always have breathing issues. Brantley's faith and drive have proven these doctors wrong, as well as anyone else who tells him something is too hard for him. He is a strong example to his eight siblings. Brantley writes that his experience at other schools were good for him, "but I knew that whenever I attended class [at AHS], the depth of debates and conversations would help me on and off my mission, now and in the future. My experience at [other schools] were good for me on some levels, but they could not have given me this kind of assurance, nor engage me in the kind of interesting debates and learning that I have loved at AHS. I have grown. I know God has a plan for each of us. We each are a tool in His plan."

The experience I have had at American Heritage School has been remarkable. I have attended AHS since seventh grade. I participated in the Shakespeare play in eighth grade and in each of the seventh through twelfth grade devotionals.

As my parents can testify, I have been less appreciative than I should have been of my unique education. In addition to American Heritage, I also attended Pleasant Grove High School, have done City League Baseball and flag football, and wrestled and played lacrosse. I am grateful for the friends and people I meet everywhere. I know the Lord has a plan for his children, I know I was supposed to be at American Heritage School and graduate from AHS. The people here have changed my life.

This class of 2017 has changed me, and for the better. I want to extend a thank you to Mr. Dye. I was in tenth grade, an immature young teenage kid, when I entered his class. I have always had an



interest in history, and during a TED talk assignment that Mr. Dye gave, I dove into learning about the history of political power. It changed the way I speak with family members and friends. Also Mr. Haymond, he is a blessing. My senior year has had its ups and downs, but I knew that whenever I attended class with Mr. Haymond, the depth of debates and conversations would help me on and off my mission, now and in the future. Mr. Haymond would often remind us after especially emotional discussions that “Christ’s plan will always win.” I believe that. His plan will always win. Pleasant Grove High was good for me on some levels, but it could not have given me this kind of assurance, nor engage me in the kind of interesting debates and learning that I have loved at AHS. I have grown. I know God has a plan for each of us. We each are a tool in His plan.



Brenna Johnson



Brenna Johnson has attended American Heritage since third grade. She was born in Murray, Utah, and enjoys English, art, cross country, friends, family, music, watermelon, and the all the little fun things in life. She is incredibly grateful for her time spent at American Heritage, and loves everything it has to offer. She plans on attending BYU in the fall, and hopes to serve a mission when the time comes. Although she has plenty of weaknesses, and a long way to go, she knows that Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will help her on the way. “God gives us weaknesses” she says. “He knows that they can be difficult to overcome or endure, but He also knows of the joy each of us feel when we conquer those weaknesses.”



“Why are you always so quiet?”

Once upon a time, this was one of the most frequent questions people had for me. I would glance up with color rising to my face, shrug slightly, and probably mumble something like, “I dunno,” then look back down with embarrassment. Since time has passed, I also ask myself that question. Why was I so shy? I had never experienced some sort of trauma or abuse as a child. I wasn’t bullied. I didn’t suffer from depression or other psychological health problems. In fact, the way I was raised—with two, loving parents who always told me I was amazing and capable—should have turned me into a bubbly, energetic, friendly child. And at home, I was. But once I got to school, I would turn so still and silent that my classmates would almost forget I was alive. I remember being so shy that I couldn’t even join a conversation without feeling like I was storming, uninvited, into someone’s home while atop a trumpeting elephant. I couldn’t even talk to the people I was closest to at school because I was so self-conscious. I was also afraid to try new subjects. I was terrified of messing up and being laughed at.

I didn’t start to break that shyness barrier until the end of tenth grade. I started pushing myself in ways that were somewhat painful and embarrassing, but ultimately helped bring me out of my shell. By the beginning of twelfth grade (I skipped eleventh), I was euphoric at how much easier I found it to talk to people and make friends. I still struggle with a little shyness, but compared to my past, I might as well be the most social creature that ever lived.

As I look back, I can say without a doubt that my senior year has been my favorite at AHS. Purely golden. Not once do I recall anyone asking me why I’m shy, which is a HUGE accomplishment for me!

But sometimes when I’ve looked back, I get really upset about how much I missed out on. I could have done choir. I could have done more plays. I could have done student government. I could have done ballroom. I could have made more friends. Because of my shyness, I turned down many grand opportunities.



Why was I so shy? Why did I put myself through this? I never realized how much I had missed until my senior year, when it was almost too late. I can never relive my high school days. I could have made them glorious, especially at AHS, but I chose to let those days pass me by without making the best of them.

The reason I have loved my senior year so much is because I wasn't invisible anymore. When you're so used to being shy, you cherish every conversation, every laugh, every hug, every gift, every word you share with another individual. For every new friend you make, you feel as if you've conquered a mountain. Talking and laughing with a group of friends is exhilarating when you knew that less than a year ago, you didn't even have the courage to walk over to a group of friends and join the conversation. I've been shy my whole life. Finally being able to break that barrier has been such a monumental accomplishment that just thinking about it can bring me to tears.

And the more I have thought about it, the more thankful I have become for my shyness. I doubt I would have valued my friendships as strongly as I do if I hadn't had to overcome my shyness to attain them. My senior year has been richer because I recognized my weakness, and I overcame it. That's why God gives us weaknesses in the first place. He knows that they can be difficult to overcome or endure, but He also knows of the joy each of us feel when we conquer those weaknesses.

So, now what? Countless opportunities lay ahead. Countless people I can serve. Countless moments worth remembering. I'm grateful to AHS for granting me a head start, especially since I've learned things here that I doubt I could have learned in other places. And now that I know I can turn my weakness into strength, I want to use that strength to reach out to others, to not be afraid to learn, and to have the courage to try new things.

Thank you, AHS. Thank you to all the wonderful teachers, students, and staff. AHS was a truly unforgettable experience, and I will cherish it forever.



Madison Johnson



Madison Johnson has been at American Heritage since elementary school. She is a 5' 4¾" brown eyed brunette, and she enjoyed most of the time she spent here at American Heritage. She has made friends old and young. She enjoyed being part of a team when playing basketball, soccer and volleyball. She was grateful to be part of student government and enjoyed collaborating with other people. She has come to realize the many opportunities for good amidst all the evil that surrounds us. She is someone with hope for the future. She writes, "I cannot wait to graduate, go to college and begin the next chapter of my life." She aspires to be 5' 5" and a millionaire. She will be attending BYU-Provo in the fall. Rise and shout, Madi is out! She writes, "I know how to address controversial issues with correct principles; I understand the importance of differing opinions; I have learned to love people the way Christ loves; and I understand the importance of adversity in empathizing with others. Thank you, AHS students and teachers, for preparing me for my lifelong mission as a scholar!"

I am no longer afraid to be myself. I learned a valuable lesson early in my high school career: typically, about 80% of people will get along with you; 20% never will, no matter how hard you try. So, stop trying to please everyone; it's not possible. As long as you are pleasing yourself and God, people will be attracted to the person you were meant to be. American Heritage School has helped me on the path to the person I am meant to become. With the help of friends, I know now who I am and who I have the potential to become. Many of my classmates have taught me lessons that have shaped my character. One that I would like to mention is Katie. She



taught me to laugh and enjoy life's little moments. Gossip is toxic, but I never heard any from Katie. She was a great example to me in that way. She was taken from us too soon, and she will always hold a special place in my heart.

I have been blessed to be acquainted with some of the best people on the planet. I have had so many awesome, funny, heartbreaking, and enlightening moments and memories with my friends and classmates. I have never felt so ready to go out and conquer the world as I am now. I have learned of the many evils of the world that should be frightening, but I have come to understand how much good there is to be done, in spite of all these evils. The American Heritage curriculum brought new perspectives to me of how to view people as they can become rather than to view them only as they are acting now.

I left for a time to attend public school, and though I had friends and all of the classes I could ever hope for, there was something missing. I know now that it was the Spirit. Learning in an environment like AHS has been the deciding factor for how I plan to conduct my life. My experiences here have stretched me socially, physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally. Socially, I evolved and became the leader of my own life. Physically, I was pushed to accomplish athletic goals in spite of physical challenges such as insomnia. Mentally, I accomplished many projects, essays, tests, and discussions that shaped my worldview. Spiritually, I learned to reason by the light of the gospel, particularly as I try to make sense of current events and debates. Emotionally, I was tried and tested with mental illness and proven to be stronger than I thought myself to be. Many tears were shed in the past four years of my life, but those tears strengthened me through the difficulties I faced afterward.

Many adults today, I'm sorry to say, have still never learned some of the most basic lessons that I learned at American Heritage. I know how to address controversial issues with correct principles, I understand the importance of differing opinions, I have learned



that I must try to love people the way Christ loves them, and I understand the importance of adversity in empathizing with others. I cannot wait to graduate, go to college and begin the next chapter of my life. I am excited to have more learning experiences and to meet new people. Thank you, AHS, students and teachers for preparing me for my lifelong mission as a scholar!



Daniel Jones



Danny Jones attended American Heritage School for fourth through seventh grades and recently returned as a senior. He was born in New York City and has lived internationally for many years in both Germany and New Zealand. His family, currently living in New Zealand, consists of three boys, of which he is the second, and then three girls. He misses his family, especially playing with his little sisters, but is excited about the educational opportunities provided at AHS. He enjoys playing sports, especially basketball, and piano. He writes, "American Heritage School has taught me so much about myself and how to live a productive, self-governed, conscience-led life."

*A*merican Heritage has been a dream come true. When living in Utah previously, my two brothers, my oldest sister and I all attended American Heritage and loved it. We then decided as a family to make a move to New Zealand for the adventure. We lived there for five years and loved the culture, scenery and people. The



high schools were good but my brothers and I were the only LDS students and the education was very secular. I returned to Utah to work for a few months and was offered the chance to stay and attend American Heritage again. I felt inspired to accept and have been very satisfied with my decision. The teachers, atmosphere, fellow students, and God-centered education have filled a hole in my education. I feel better prepared to meet the world and the challenges a mission and college will bring because of my experiences at American Heritage School.

American Heritage has taught me the value of conscience. The majority of classes, especially core classes with Mr. Haymond, are very self-evaluated and self-governed. A student who doesn't want to learn, won't, but a student who desires to learn will benefit from this system. I have found that when I am self-governed in my study and reporting, I feel more accomplished and actually learn more from assignments. It helps me to be motivated as I feel that I am not just doing this to be able to turn it in for a grade. I am motivated to learn for my own education and learning.

American Heritage has taught me to be a life-long learner. The atmosphere is very focused on self-motivated learning. We are allowed to study what interests us. I have been able to follow my passion for computer programming as part of school projects. This really teaches me that education is not something that is done for a grade but something I can do throughout my life. I can and will continue to educate myself about topics that interest me using skills I have gained while at American Heritage School. I have learned the value of reading good literature and have come to love reading interesting and engaging articles and essays. Our in-class discussions have helped me learn how to think critically and gain life lessons from texts.

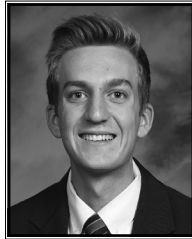
I have found our study of the Declaration of Independence especially engaging and beneficial. We read sections of the Declaration and compared how they applied then to how they apply to current government and social situations. It has helped me to learn that history really can be highly applicable to current



situations. Lessons of morality, conscience, and liberty that the founders understood have been very interesting to learn and apply to my own life.

In conclusion, I have gained much from American Heritage, not only in my few short months as a senior but also from the years previously in elementary school. The teachers there have had a definite positive impact on my life and I am very grateful for them. I will be forever grateful that I had the opportunity to gain a God-centered education at American Heritage School.

Jens Jorgensen



Jens Jorgensen has been attending American Heritage School since first grade. Born in Provo, Utah, he has a twin brother and two younger adopted siblings. Jens loves being outside and playing sports, particularly basketball and soccer. Following graduation, Jens will serve a LDS mission, teaching the people of Chile the gospel. Jens says, "I have come to know that learning is not about what the teacher is trying to teach; it is about what I am choosing to learn. Whether in school or not, I will always be striving to learn. That is the most important thing I have been taught while at American Heritage."

*M*y time at American Heritage has been all that I have been looking for. Since first grade I have participated in athletics, choirs, student government, and more. I have learned so much from the amazing teachers and classmates that I have had. The best thing



though, was the ability to talk about and learn about the Church of Jesus Christ in all my classes. These things have taught me that to be successful for the rest of my life, I must continue to learn both secular and spiritual things, even if I am not in school.

After graduation, I will be serving a LDS mission to Santiago, Chile. I am confident in my ability to teach the gospel and to talk to people because of my experiences at American Heritage. Having Seminary and a morning devotional daily, praying in every class, and involving the gospel in daily lessons has given me the opportunity to grow spiritually while also learning secular subjects. One situation that changed me actually happened this year. I was in Mr. Haymond's history class and we were studying something I had studied many times before, though mostly just from a historical perspective: The Declaration of Independence. This time, instead of learning about the content again, or the historical reasons the American Founding Fathers wrote it, I learned about how it applied to me today, and how the gospel applies to it. This was impactful because I began to see more clearly that everything in history teaches me a lesson and still applies to me today. I am grateful that I could learn this while at AHS.

I have learned so much from my experiences at American Heritage. I am so grateful that I have could participate in all the sports I have. From running cross country, to playing basketball, to playing soccer, and even playing volleyball, I know that American Heritage gave me an opportunity to grow through these things. I have learned what it means to be a leader and how to push myself past what I think is possible. I have developed relationships with my teammates beyond what I thought I could. I know that these relationships have happened thanks to the hard work we all put in, and thanks to the winning seasons that we have had. All of what I have learned through athletics also applies to my learning.

I believe that learning how to push past what I thought possible in athletics helped me with my major assignments as well. With assignments like the Master Project in seventh grade and my Senior Thesis, I felt pushed and it was hard, but I learned that I can



do hard things. I have also learned skills like time management, how to research, and how to critically think. These skills will help me throughout my future at a university and in my future job.

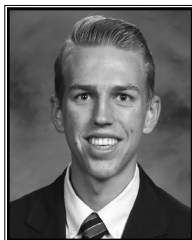
American Heritage has given me an opportunity to learn and grow how I choose to. I could choose what I wanted to learn about in a TED Talk assignment in Mr. Dye's tenth grade class, in an iChoose reading assignment in Ms. Parker's eleventh grade class, and in a Project A assignment in Mr. Haymond's twelfth grade class. I have come to know that learning is not about what the teacher is trying to teach; it is about what I am choosing to learn. Whether in school or not, I will always be striving to learn. That is the most important thing I have been taught while at American Heritage.

I am so grateful for the opportunity I had to attend American Heritage. I know that what I have been taught will stay with me and help me for the rest of my life. I am so grateful for all the friendships that I have developed and I look forward to carrying them on in my future. I have been at American Heritage for most of my life, and I am so grateful for everything that has been given me.





Josh Jorgensen



Josh Jorgensen has been attending American Heritage since first grade. Born and raised in Utah, he has a twin brother and two younger siblings. He loves all types of sports and athletic activities, especially basketball and rock climbing. He plans to serve a full-time mission for the LDS Church right after high school. Josh writes, "Education isn't some project that you work on until it is completed. It doesn't end at a diploma or certificate. My education will never be finished, regardless of whether I am in school, and that is because the most important type of education is the type that is personal. It is a desire to learn more about something and then being able to find a way to actually understand that topic."

Just like most high school seniors, I have many plans, goals, and aspirations. I feel that American Heritage has taught me the things I needed to learn in order to accomplish them. My plan is to serve a mission immediately after high school, and AHS has helped prepare me for that by the type of education I have gained. I have been able to grow and learn about spiritual things in all of my classes, which has helped me strengthen my testimony. I have also learned how to reason. I haven't just learned how to memorize facts or numbers. I have gained the ability to problem solve: to be put in a difficult situation and be able to come up with a viable solution.

After my mission, I plan to go to a university. American Heritage has prepared me for that also. With things like the Master Project in seventh grade and the Senior Thesis in twelfth, I have been stretched and have had to work hard, but I have realized that



I can do difficult things. I have also learned skills like knowing how to manage time effectively and how to research and think with an open and clear mind. I know I won't be discouraged in the face of a hard project because I have the skills necessary to complete it. In addition to those things, I have also learned one other thing from American Heritage that many students my age may not have realized yet: Education isn't some project that you work on until it is completed. It doesn't end at a diploma or certificate. My education will never be finished, regardless of whether I am in school, and that is because the most important type of education is the type that is personal. It is a desire to learn more about something and then being able to find a way to actually understand that topic. Projects at American Heritage that are based on the student's ability to choose what they want to learn about has taught me this. At a university or in my future career, I hope to remember that there is always more I can learn in order to improve my personal education.

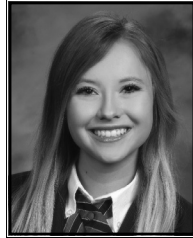
After finishing my schooling, my main goal is to be a good father. American Heritage has helped prepare me for this also. I have learned that a good education includes intellectual and moral preparation. I have learned much about the values posted on the outside of the school, as well as the truths taught inside, and I want my children to learn these things also. I have learned how to create and maintain good relationships with friends and teachers, which will be invaluable in my future family life. I have been taught at home and at school what a good father acts like. I have learned what my duties and responsibilities will be when I become a father, and I hope I will be able to be the best father I can be.

I am very grateful for what American Heritage has taught me. I know the things I have learned at this school will definitely prepare me to be successful in my future. Most of all, I am grateful for the people here that have helped me to be a better person.





Sierra Klingler



Sierra Klingler has attended American Heritage since first grade. She left for part of her seventh grade year, but realizing just how much she missed AHS, she returned in eighth grade. Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, Sierra smiles everywhere she goes and tries to make everyone feel included. She writes, "I am deeply indebted to God, my parents, and the faculty members for the opportunity to attend American Heritage. Each teacher and faculty member at American Heritage has been an instrument in the Lord's hands in shaping me into the person I am today."

I am deeply indebted to God, my parents, and the faculty members for the opportunity to attend American Heritage. Each teacher and faculty member at American Heritage has been an instrument in the Lord's hands in shaping me into the person I am today. They are so kind and Christ-like, and have encourage me to be the kind of person Heavenly Father would want me to be. They have strived to live righteous lives to be worthy and prepared to teach by the Spirit.

American Heritage has a clean, safe environment that is unlike any other school I know. As I walk down the halls and participate in each class, I feel the Spirit. This enriching environment has helped me to learn to recognize the Spirit more in my life, and develop a stronger relationship with my Heavenly Father. Here I have learned how to recognize truth from error. I have learned how to recognize God's hand in my life and in the foundation of America. This school has not only helped me in expanding my knowledge, but also in strengthening my personal relationship with God and establishing true Christian character.



My life-long dream is to be an instrument in the Lord's hands and bring others to Christ. I want with all my heart to help each individual come to know their Savior personally. Attending AHS has nurtured and filled my soul with light, love, and peace every day, and has helped me progress in becoming the most pure, virtuous, and wise daughter of God I can be.



Caleb Kohn



Caleb Kohn came to American Heritage as a senior. Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, he was 2 months old when he and his family moved to Rhode Island where he lived for the first 11 years of his life, after which his family relocated to Utah where he has been blessed beyond measure these last 7 years. One of four children, he loves composing music, singing, dancing, cycling, serving, attending the temple, reading, time with friends, taking photos, making people smile, and meeting new people. He will be heading out in the world this fall to serve a full-time mission. When he returns, he looks forward to college, marrying in the temple, and raising a family unto the Lord. He knows he will never stop learning. He is grateful for the gift of the Holy Ghost which gives him the opportunity to know the truth of all things and see things as they really are. He is forever grateful to his Heavenly Parents and to his Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ from whom all blessings flow. He writes, "I always want to be numbered among the believers and those who were valiant in the testimony of Christ. I know that I will continue to stand with all of you, hand in hand, as we are strong in upholding principles of truth.... As we trust in the Lord and have faith in Him, He will bless us and bring us through our hardships and challenges into a bright future, and it will be more amazing than we can ever imagine."



I grew up in Coventry, Rhode Island. I loved my life there and was sad when my parents felt inspired to move our family to Utah. I lived twenty minutes from the ocean. My house backed up to a forest and everything in my childhood world was lush and green. I still remember flying into Utah for our house hunting trip. I was looking out the airplane window and everything looked dry and brown. I asked my mom, "Where are the trees?" She looked over my shoulder, pointed and said, "There's one." She said they are more special here since there aren't as many. Then the week of house hunting ensued. Fortunately, my brother and I got to stay with my aunt and uncle in Lindon until my parents narrowed down the search. My parents were not having much success. They were heading up the walkway of yet another house and they both felt like this was where they were supposed to be. When my brother and I went through it with them, we all felt that this was a house we could see ourselves living in. We moved in about a month later.

Everything about our move was guided by the Lord, and I didn't even realize all the ways until years later. I had been homeschooled my whole life and our family felt called to continue educating in the home. However, a young man in my ward, Connor Uhl, who became a great friend, invited us to performances and other things at the school he attended: American Heritage School. It was important to my parents and me that I graduate from seminary as well. So, when I turned fourteen we chose to have me attend seminary at American Heritage, just a two-minute drive from my house. It was a wonderful experience to have such amazing teachers like Brother Wilcox, Brother Allen, and Brother Sackett who have helped me strengthen my testimony and fill my life with the Spirit every day.

Though I continued to be homeschooled, I tried to be involved with the school as much as I could. My mom incorporated curriculum from the school and I also took an after-school class on American History at AHS taught by Mr. Gentile. He is a gifted teacher and I learned so much from him and the discussions we



had as a class. The Spirit was always present, which helped us sort through some very challenging topics and principles. His testimony of the Restored gospel was a part of every lesson, and I really came to love history, and applying it in a restoration perspective to my life.

I also started singing with the American Heritage Youth Chorus last year and got to go on choir tour to the northwest over the summer. It was a wonderful experience, and a huge testimony builder. It greatly strengthened my relationship with my Heavenly Father and my desire to serve a full-time mission. In my totally unbiased opinion, AHYC is the greatest youth choir in the world. The message that we share transcends our imperfections in musical technique. Even when we have been able to sing in amazing venues and put on amazing shows, it has never been about that. We have always stayed grounded in the message that we are sharing. We have wonderful teachers who push us to be the best we can be, and as Mr. Swenson always says, “work like its all up to us, then pray like it’s all up to Him.” Singing in this choir has taught me that when we put forth our best effort and then turn to Him and give Him everything we have, He will magnify our efforts beyond anything we could have even imagined. On days when my voice was not perfect, I have felt the Spirit work through me, and my testimony was able to show through even when my voice could not. I will forever be grateful to have been in such an amazing choir and unite in purpose with such incredible people.

Through the years, the students and faculty invited me to various activities and I always had a positive experience. Now, in the second half of my senior year, I have had the opportunity to attend American Heritage School full time. It has been a dream come true to be a part of this school, and to rub shoulders with such extraordinary people. One of the things that impresses me the most about AHS is the culture of “Always Honor and Serve.” The students and faculty at this school exemplify this motto, and the environment that has been created is one that I love to be in. I have learned much from my conversations with Mr. Beckwith and Mr.



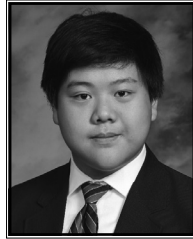
Anderson, both at the front door in the mornings and in classes. They have mentored me in many ways, both as administrators, and personally. Mr. Haymond has been a profound example to me, not only of what a teacher should be, but what a father, a learner, a disciple of Christ and a man of God ought to be. I have learned much from all of the faculty, but especially from these Godly men. I hope someday to be the kind of man that they are, and to point others to Christ with the strength and power that they have. I have been blessed to associate with some of the most amazing friends in the world. The students of this school are strong and valiant in their testimonies of the gospel and in their defense of truth and righteousness. They are filled with the power and love of God, and their strength touches the lives of those around them. I have no doubt they will change the world as they venture out into it.

My hope and prayer is that I will be surrounded by these types of people throughout my entire life. I always want to be numbered among the believers and those who were valiant in the testimony of Christ. I know that I will continue to stand with all of you, hand in hand, as we are strong in upholding principles of truth. I don't believe in endings. Even though our time in school together is almost over, and this chapter of our lives is drawing to a close, this is not the end of our story. Whenever we see a closing door, we can rest assured that the Lord is opening another for us. As President Monson says, "the future is as bright as our faith." As we trust in the Lord and have faith in Him, He will bless us and bring us through our hardships and challenges into a bright future, and it will be more amazing than we can ever imagine.

When I was an 11 year old boy I looked at Utah from the plane and saw a brown desert. I had no idea the blessings that my Heavenly Father had in store for me. I am now an 18 year old young man, and Utah is where I found American Heritage School, a sacred place for me, and I am as a watered garden. May we all trust in His hand to guide our lives, and to be our gardener, "that (we) may bring forth fruit meet for (our) Father's kingdom" (D&C 84:58).



Caleb Lee



Caleb Lee came to American Heritage in the tenth grade from Hong Kong. He was born in the Prince of Wales Hospital to a family with wonderful parents and a patient sister. Born into the LDS church, Caleb was raised in the New Territories of Hong Kong with the principles and values his parents knew would help guide his decisions. He writes, "When I came to the United States, I was thrown into a completely foreign place, and I was bitter about my situation. In time, I decided to try to make sense of why I was here, not just because my parents had decided I needed to be here, but because I sensed that there was a lesson I needed to learn here. I was surprised by how much more peaceful I felt. I now know that my struggle has helped me see how patience can only be learned slowly. It is not a skill that is picked up and used immediately, but rather like a tree, is grown with care."

*M*y first year at AHS was miserable. I was unable to see the value in being here. I was comfortable where I was before, and on the way to an IB diploma. To me, life was good. However, my parents did not see it as such. My grades were dismal, and my attitude even more so. They decided that it was time for me to have a change in environment. I was to go to the United States to finish my education. When I first found out, I was devastated. Then I was angry. I was not the best academic student, but I had always wanted to go to a good university. I knew that the IB program was very well recognized, and I thought that it was my key to getting into a university of choice. Thinking that my chances of getting into university had just decreased significantly, I felt defeated and abandoned.



When I came to the United States, I was thrown into a completely foreign place. I was living with eight others, and going to a school with people who largely shared the same ideas. At home I would hole up in my room and be bitter about my situation. I did not want to see value, nor could I see the value in coming here. I made friends, and decided that I would do just what I needed to get by. The year passed slowly, and I left it at that.

My second year at AHS was a different experience. I decided to try to make sense of why I was here, not just because my parents had decided I needed to be here, but because I sensed that there was a lesson I needed to learn here. I was surprised by how much more peaceful I felt. I had allowed myself to try and learn why I was needed here. I spent more time in this year trying to figure out what I could learn from the previous year. Although the answer to this question would not come until my third and final year here, I was beginning to be more open to the ideas around me, and to what others had to contribute.

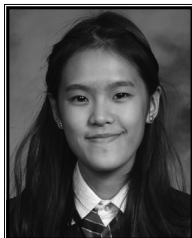
This year I have learned to accept my burdens. My questions were answered when I decided to find out more about the cycles civilizations go through. I have broadened my perspective on the world, having lived three years in a foreign culture. I now know that my struggle in tenth grade has helped me see how patience can only be learned slowly. It is not a skill that is picked up and used immediately, but rather like a tree, is grown with care.

As I move on, I can now see how each part of my years here has shaped me. Although I cannot say that I have learned all there is to learn here, I know that I have done what I can, and it has benefitted me greatly. It is my hope that someday I will understand all there is to understand from my experiences at American Heritage.





Erin Hau-Ching Leung



Erin Leung came to AHS as a senior. This is her second year studying in the United States and she loves American Heritage School very much. Erin was born and raised in a small family in Hong Kong. She has one older sister named Casey. She cherishes the time with teachers who teach her and help her in school life. She treasures the friendships she has made with her classmates here. She loves the religious atmosphere at AHS, in which she can feel the light of Jesus Christ. Erin plans to continue her studies in college. She will never forget the times she had at AHS, which have enabled her to become a grateful, humble and strong person, as well as a faithful daughter of God. She says, "I love the people here, and I can't describe my thankful feeling towards everyone. You have been a great influence and good example for me. I will never forget this precious and indispensable time."

*A*merican Heritage School is the school that I wanted to attend a long time before I came. Now the school year is over, and this year has been amazing, stressful, and meaningful to me, all at the same time. I learned how to be a virtuous and valuable person here. Every time I looked at the temple through the windows of the school, I felt goodness and peace. I wanted to become clean and worthy to go there.

Recalling my application process to American Heritage, I remember the principal interviewing me and asking about my perspective towards the mission statement of AHS. Now a whole year has passed, and one of the tenets of the mission statement has been especially fulfilled for me: "Learn to reason and discern between right and wrong, truth and error." I feel that I have kept my moral standards high, chosen the right, and kept away from wrong.

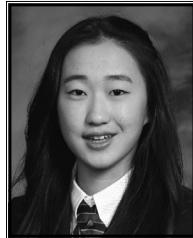


I really enjoyed learning history with an LDS foundation. Everything seemed to make sense to me after applying gospel principles. Teachers, staff, and even students were like a family. We loved one another, took care of one another, and taught one another. I greatly felt the spirit and the love of Christ in this school, which gave me motivation and courage in every hardship. AHS also built and strengthened my spiritual growth. I learned to be a full-time LDS member.

I am grateful for the warmest support from all my classmates and teachers. Thanks for loving me and caring for me. I was happy to be in the classes that I was in. For me, this has been the happiest year in America, and one that I would never want to miss. I love the people here, and I can't describe my thankful feeling towards everyone. You have been a great influence and good example for me. I will never forget this precious and indispensable time.



Mengwei "Sophie" Li



Sophie Li came to American Heritage in tenth grade. She is from China, and has loved her experience at AHS. She writes, "Growing up under the compulsory education system in China, the image I had of a school was basically a place to study and get good grades. However, American Heritage School changed my perspective of what school can be. Here the education focus is placed foremost on the student. The teachers let us try on our own first. They let us ask questions, and then help us to have experiences in a process of finding answers. Here, the answers become our own harvest."



Looking back on the path that I have walked the last four years, I can't believe how many changes have happened to me. I decided to come to America the summer I graduated from middle school, and within a month, I was here in Utah. It sounds kind of ridiculous, but I came to America four years ago quite unprepared.

When I walked into American Heritage for the first time, everything felt different but at the same time familiar. The reason I say different is because the middle school I had previously attended had a totally different environment than American Heritage. The cultures in the two schools were quite different. What made me feel familiar at AHS is that everyone seemed so friendly to me, as if we had known each other from our past lives. And as I got to know my classmates better, I loved the school even more. The new learning methods and concepts opened a new door for me.

Growing up under the compulsory education system in China, the image I had of a school was basically a place to study and get good grades. However, American Heritage School changed my perspective of what school can be. Here the education focus is placed foremost on the student. The teachers let us try on our own first. They let us ask questions, and then help us to have experiences in a process of finding answers. Here, the answers become our own harvest. One of the things that influenced me the most this year has been learning about The Cycle of Civilizations as taught by Mr. Haymond. The perspective that it revealed gave me a better understanding of the human story, and of society. I do not doubt that this was something I would likely not have learned in other schools.

School has been difficult, too. I complained and cried about being so far away from my family, friends, and food. However, I would never complain about two things—the ability of learning on my own, and the gospel. Before I came to Utah, I had no idea of what the LDS Church was about. I started learning about the *Book of Mormon* in seminary, and went to church with my host family. To my surprise, I understood the scriptures a lot faster than I

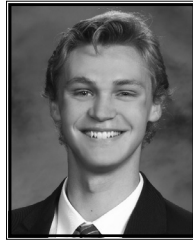


imagined I would, and whenever I sat in church on Sundays, peace was put in me. I soon started to realize part of the purpose for my coming to America. It seemed like all the principles that my mom had taught me before were coming together in a beautiful way.

These four years in American Heritage School have changed me into a better person. The principles I have learned, and the gospel that I have found, have fulfilled my soul. I must still continue to improve myself. I am grateful for the helping hands from my friends and teachers, and the wealth of the precious knowledge that had fulfilled my mind. Thank you, American Heritage!



Benjamin McMillan



With the exception of eighth grade, Benjamin McMillan has attended AHS from kindergarten through his senior year. Benjamin is the last of ten children; he has one brother and eight sisters. He has learned a lot about getting along with others, compromising, and waiting his turn. He is also great at loving and being loved. Benjamin earned various honors while in school and was very involved in extra-curricular activities, including track and field, American Heritage Youth Chorus, and AHS drama productions. Benjamin is also an Eagle Scout. Looking back at his education at American Heritage, Benjamin said, "We search for Truth, no matter the source. The Book of Mormon is the principled source by which all sources should follow after. It is by those principles taught, in that sacred book, that we may discern Truth from any source, document, practice, or declaration sent our way."

I have been blessed by my experiences at American Heritage. I have also had to defend my belief that AHS has been better



for me, in most every way, then other school options I could have chosen. Having attended a variety of schools, I can safely say that American Heritage is one of the best choices a family could make if they want their children taught the principles upon which America was founded, and the importance of the restored gospel.

At an early age, I was taught at AHS how to be self-governed. I studied the lives of many American founders, as well as the lives of great heroes in literature. These heroes possessed the essence of character and integrity that I wanted my life to reflect. I also learned about self-government through difficult trials and challenges due to social stigmas that eventually would refine me. I grew apart from others in my own way, and suffered from the untrue stories that I told myself. Wounds were formed that would not be healed until years later.

I cannot recall much of this early education period, but I now reflect that I learned correct principles that guided my life and built my character as a son of God; principles that I might not have received at such a young age at another school.

But a time came in my life that I fell into a state of exhaustion and depression. As my mind slowly fell into a downward spiral, so did my academic performance. I had to leave AHS, though I wanted to stay. My time spent away from American Heritage was a struggle, but fortunately, the following summer, I was readmitted to AHS. My prayers were answered, and I was allowed once again to learn in this environment that I loved.

My high school experience proved to be even more foundational for me than my elementary and middle school years at AHS, foundational as those early years were. The high school teachers I had the privilege to study under taught me how to be a better person, to love to learn, and most of all, to not let school come between me and my education. I now have a deep thirst for knowledge.

Soon I will be off to make a life for myself. I am eternally grateful for my experience at American Heritage. The lessons I learned here are invaluable to me.



Paige McNamara



Paige McNamara has been at American Heritage since kindergarten, and has loved every minute of it. She has gone through many trials and many struggles, but at the same time, she has come across many friends who have helped along the way. She is very grateful for them and for the Spirit, who helped her through her trials and helped her grow into the woman she is now. She writes, "I've been here for thirteen years, now. I've made many friends through the years, and I hope not too many enemies. Overall, my life at this school has really been the best. The friendships I've made will last a lifetime, not just with students, but also with teachers and administrators. Even some of the janitors are my pals."

I have been at American Heritage since Kindergarten. But I wasn't intended to go here at first. My mother initially wanted me to go to Challenger or some other alternative to public school, but while driving around to look at schools, I shot up from the back seat and pointed to a random building in front of me, not even paying attention to my surroundings. I had felt the Spirit tell me to point right then, and I pointed right at American Heritage. My mom was confused at first, wondering how on earth I knew that was a school. She didn't even know it was a school. Then she found out it was indeed a school, and set up a meeting with the principal so I could be enrolled. So, it was clear to me, from day one, that God needed me at AHS.

I've been here for thirteen years, now. I've made many friends through the years, and I hope not too many enemies. Overall, my life at this school has really been the best. The friendships I've made will last a lifetime, not just with students, but also with teachers and administrators. Even some of the janitors are my pals.



Looking back through the years, I have realized something. When I came to this school, I always thought I was going to make a big difference, that I would change the world. And while those things are somewhat true, I've realized that what I have truly been sent here to do is to be an influence and a friend for others. I wasn't supposed to do anything grand or wonderful. I wasn't supposed to be the smartest person in class, or be the greatest at everything. And though those things are great and I might try to be like that, my true purpose was to be a guiding light. I just needed to be there for others, lift them up, and be a true friend.

American Heritage is the best school I could have ever gone to. Not only did I have a purpose, but others have played a huge role in shaping my life. My friends, teachers, and family have been very influential in helping me learn and grow, and it feels like the Spirit has been ever present in my life at school. If I had not been raised here, I don't think I would be the person I am today.

My experience here has not been without difficulty. I've had some depressing thoughts over the years, and it's possible that I would have seriously struggled at another school. But my best friends, Sierra, David, Kim, Charles, Kiersten, Max, J.T., and Hannah have all helped me through these times. They helped me laugh, they helped me through trials, and they let me help them. When I've been at my worst, they were there. In those moments, I would feel their love and God's love for me, and things wouldn't feel so bad. And it was okay to not be okay. No one judged me for that. They didn't look down on me. They loved me and wanted me to be happy. If I didn't have them, I would never have grown into the person I am. I still struggle with doubts, but I have learned that I can go to my friends and I can go to the Lord, and I will feel peace.

It's not just friends that have helped me through these trials. Teachers have, too. Mr. Randall, my sixth grade teacher, was confident that I could do great things. I was not particularly enjoying school, including his class, and was even failing some of my classes. He started helping me after school, and with great determination, finally got me back into school. I was then able to continue on after his class, and from that trial became good friends



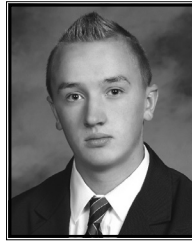
with him for years after.

Another teacher that really inspired and helped me was Mr. Haymond. He helped me see things from a different perspective, and helped me feel the Spirit. He taught me many things about myself and others, and things that I would probably never have learned elsewhere. I thank him very much.

All of the experiences that I've had, and all the friends I've made, have really shaped my life, and I am so grateful to have been able to come here and feel the spirit and learn important principles. Thank you.



Colin Nielson



Colin Nielson has been attending American Heritage School since sixth grade. He was born in Murray, Utah. Colin loves basketball and has a strong testimony in the gospel. He will be serving a two-year mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. Colin writes, "American Heritage School has been a blessing in my life. I know that God has a hand in everyone's life. He had a hand in mine with attending this amazing school."

*A*merican Heritage School has been a blessing in my life. I know that God has a hand in everyone's life. He's had a hand in mine with attending this school. I was in another school prior to coming to AHS, and everything was going horrible. I was learning very little. I was sent to reading institutions, special classes, rarely challenged, and teachers even told my parents that I was basically handicapped with my learning abilities. Years passed and my parents heard an ad on the radio about this school called



American Heritage. I know that it was inspiration from God. My family, and I feel especially I, needed to come to American Heritage School.

The first year we applied, I wasn't accepted. The next year was my sixth grade year and my parents decided to try to enroll me again. At first, the AHS Admissions Office recommended that I repeat a grade; however, I refused to get held back, and I worked through it with my teachers here. For the first time in forever, I had teachers that cared about me. They loved me and worked with me. It was a huge challenge for them because I had developed some lazy habits and lack of attention. With the Spirit and lots of hard work, look where I am today. This school is important to me because I feel that it saved me. It challenged me, and taught me truths that changed by behavior. The teachers here care; they give you one-on-one attention.

Before I came to AHS, I felt a little lost, with no direction. All I had in life to comfort me were the gospel and sports. I love basketball. It has helped me stay out of "the world," and has kept me healthy and taught me many lessons about life. Basketball also kept me at AHS when I was tired of difficult school work and tired of my uniform. In a way, basketball shaped me to become a better person, even a missionary, in God's hands. I learned hard work and I have gained a stronger testimony in God. The coaches at AHS have been amazing influences in my life, and I have learned more than I could have ever imagined with them.

I know that we need to include God in all things, especially in education! When God is taken out, things tend to go downhill. When God is included, it feels like the learning is deeper and moves faster. The spirit is present here. We have freedom of religion and freedom speech, but real freedom comes from obedience, although sometimes it seems like obedience is a burden.

Happiness only comes when we follow God, and this school has given me an opportunity to follow God in a unique way, speak of God, and teach others of truths I have learned. I love American Heritage School, and someday I hope to send my children to this amazing school.



Eli Orr



Elijah Orr has attended AHS for three years. The youngest of seven children, Eli was born in Farmington, Utah. He has grown up there his whole life where he enjoys hiking the mountain trails, playing guitar, and eating blueberry cake donuts. He says, "I'm sad to leave American Heritage School but extremely excited for my mission and the people I'll meet and adventures that I'll have serving the Lord. I'm grateful for the light that American Heritage has given me and the experiences that have prepared me for my mission and my future years."

Every sacrifice has been worth it. From day one, coming to AHS has been a big sacrifice. Driving all the way to American Fork from Farmington every day was hard, and having my new social circles an hour away was hard. But, I've learned important light and truth here that I couldn't have received elsewhere, and I've made friends with many wonderful individuals that I wouldn't have met had I not been here.

And yet I can't talk about sacrifice without mentioning my parents. I am so grateful for the many things they have done so that I could attend American Heritage. They have taught me by their example what it truly means to sacrifice.

It's really hard to sum up my experience here. I've learned so much; however, there are a few things that I'd like to mention. They are just drops in the bucket of what I've gained from attending AHS, but worth a few words.

First, the teachers at AHS are stunning. They have taught



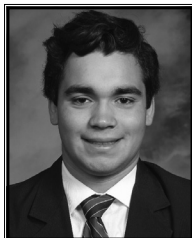
me, or rather shown me, what an extraordinary teacher is like. It has always surprised and impressed me to see how the teachers exemplify Christ's principle of individuality. My teachers all made the effort to remember my name. Even the administration and teachers who I didn't take classes from would greet me on countless occasions with a smile, calling me by name, as I walked to the next class. Here at AHS students soon learn that they are unique, that people know their names, not just another number. In addition, the teachers listen and consider the needs of each student and personalize what is being taught. I remember often talking to Mr. Dye and feeling completely comfortable to share any concerns or thoughts because he was so approachable and caring. He showed genuine interest in all of the students, and often gave us the opportunity to learn in the directions that we wanted to learn. To this day, I still look back fondly on giving a TED talk in class and being able to connect history with psychology, something I was very interested in at the time.

Learning to be involved in my own education and applying it to myself is something I have treasured here. I've discovered that history class, math class, or any other class is just another class unless I apply what I learn to my own life, that it "might be for [my] profit and learning." Mr. Haymond taught me that taking control of my education and applying knowledge to my life is not only useful, but it's crucial. He taught me that without applying history and scriptures to our own circumstances, we are doomed to repeat the mistakes of the past. Entirely new perspectives have been opened to me. I now understand that a good student obtains something of value from whatever class he is in, no matter how interested he is in the subject.

These are just a few of the pearls of great price I've obtained here. I'm sad to leave American Heritage School but extremely excited for my mission and the people I'll meet and adventures that I'll have serving the Lord. I'm grateful for the light that American Heritage has given me, and the experiences that have prepared me for my mission and my future years. Thank you to all who have nourished me with light and truth.



Parker Reyes



Parker Reyes started at American Heritage School in eighth grade and has attended each year since then. He was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, where he lived with his family for the first twelve years of life. His father is an engineer, and due to his work there, traveled a lot with the Reyes family. In addition to Tennessee, Parker has also lived in Ohio, Kentucky, and ultimately Utah. Parker plans on attending BYU-Provo in the summer, and then leaving on his mission right after. When he returns, he plans on finishing at BYU with a degree in biochemistry and going to med school to become a neurosurgeon. He writes, "Ninth grade was when I had my first experience with Mrs. Logan as a Science teacher at AHS. I took AP Biology with her and this helped spur my passion and love for science. She has truly helped me become the person I am today, and has cultivated my interests in medicine."

*T*ime has truly flown by and I can hardly believe that I am finishing up such a major part of my life. I moved to Utah with my family at the beginning of eighth grade. I started with Mr. Griffith, and I remember reading *David Copperfield* and *The Hiding Place*. I still remember those books and the vital principles taken from them. I also still remember *The Family: A Proclamation to the World*. Two people were really kind to me when I first showed up, Ben Bushman and Daniel Haymond, and we quickly became friends that year.

The next year we all had Mr. Hancock. He provided a good and educational year. He laid many crucial concepts and techniques for succeeding in high school. I really enjoyed all we learned and especially history. Ninth grade was when I had my first experience



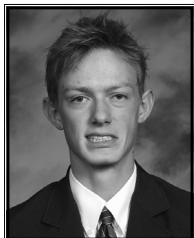
with Mrs. Logan as a Science teacher at AHS. I took AP Biology with her and this helped spur my passion and love for science. She has truly helped me become the person I am today, and has cultivated my interests in medicine. She helped me by giving me information on several camps and programs held at universities. Last summer, I had the amazing opportunity to attend a medical conference in Boston, Massachusetts. It dealt with the future of medicine and I was one of two hundred applicants accepted. It was an amazing privilege to learn from many professionals in several fields of medicine. I learned many valuable insights, and also made many valuable connections.

Then I had Mr. Dye in tenth grade and had an enjoyable time. I found *Les Miserables* and the social entrepreneur project to be highlights of that year. I then had eleventh grade with Ms. Parker. I really enjoyed the project researching someone we knew who had lived through a significant moment in history. I chose a man who lived at the assistant living home where I worked. At this point in time, I was also attending Lone Peak High School for swim team and two classes, and I started my first job as a CNA in Cedar Hills at an assisted living facility. I learned many important lessons about managing time and prioritizing what is important for me to succeed. My senior year has been great so far. I have learned a lot, and Senior Thesis would have to be my highlight for this year. I was able to research things that I had an interest in, and I enjoyed the freedom and experience I had to prepare and defend my thesis.

I am also really enjoying a final senior project we each got to choose as well. I have recently developed a fascination with economy and money, so I decided to invest in the stock market. I have learned a lot, and ultimately the entire process has helped me, and I will be able to apply it later in the future. I have learned that hard work and prioritizing is essential to succeed. Procrastination is a trap many fall into, but it is immobilizing and a dangerous habit to pick up. Try hard in school but still appreciate life, and try to have fun. It is only the beginning of the rest of our lives.



Isaac Rickenbach



Isaac Craig Rickenbach spent his first year at American Heritage in Mr. Taylor's fourth-grade class, and has attended every year since then, besides eleventh grade when he attended Lone Peak High School. Isaac is the oldest of five children. Some of his favorite things to do are fly fishing, rock climbing, rollerblading, camping, and art. Isaac has loved his experience at American Heritage and values the foundation he has built upon the Savior while attending AHS. From soccer and good friends to the seventh Grade Master Project and Senior Thesis, Isaac has experienced it all. He writes, "Don't be afraid of falling. Be grateful for your mistakes and learn from them. If you are on a wide, flat, and nicely paved road, you may not be on the road to success. Sometimes your stupidest decisions will lead to your greatest learning experiences."

As I look back at my seventh grade self and reflect my thought and feelings, I can remember knowing that American Heritage would be the source of some of my happiest memories, and hardest learning experiences. I did not know what the outcome would be, but somewhere wandering in my head was the absolute knowledge that in order to become Isaac Craig Rickenbach, American Heritage School would be a big part of my future. As I have watched friends come and go, I have pondered the question "What really matters?" There have been times when I thought that AHS wasn't right for me, or that it isn't cool, or that it is too hard, or there are not enough people, or that I could make more friends somewhere else. There have been times that I didn't feel worthy to be attending AHS, and that someone else would get so much more



out of the experience than me. I have had times when I have been so distracted by worldly things that I have believed that American Heritage was holding me back or damaging my reputation.

Maybe my reputation and social status have been jeopardized in some circles, and it's possible I could have made more friends somewhere else. I have sometimes been judged for staying at AHS. But in truth, how grateful I am for my choice to push through at AHS, where I have made friends that are true friends, friends that wear the full armor of God, and who will be by my side for eternity. Because of my choice to stay and grow from American Heritage, my reputation may have been misinterpreted by some, but I feel that in a certain way it was sealed by angels in the stars and heavens. As for my social status, I would rather it be numbered with the saints of God. I know that no matter what anyone thinks about me, I have made the right choice, and not only have I endured the difficult times at AHS, but I have enjoyed the good ones, and those outweigh the difficult one hundredfold. In the end, the difficult things have made me strong, and are as pearls and diamonds in my eyes. Viewed together with all the questions and judgments from other peers, and they are all like carvings that form a single, beautiful sculpture.

True joy comes in knowledge, hardship, and true friends. I don't care how shiny or large a school building might be; it does not lead to happiness. Instagram might guarantee that other schools will bring you incomprehensible joy and overwhelming satisfaction. Your friends' stories about parties and attractive boys and girls will prove that you are missing out on so much! The classes are so much easier, the people are so much more adventurous, and the teachers are so much less harsh. But, what happens after you graduate and realize you are not prepared for a mission, marriage, or college? What happens when you realize that you learned very little and that all your "friends" have suddenly vanished? What happens when you look back on the mistakes that could have been so avoidable, but are now plaguing your life?

I am not saying that American Heritage is the gateway to eternal life. I guess you could mess up just as bad at American



Heritage. But if that's your frame of mind, it may be even worse to spend the rest of your time at American Heritage dreaming about life somewhere else, only to find yourself in a similar boat as someone who has traded their education for pleasure, and here you have also wasted significant work, sacrifice, and money of a family who made it possible for you to be at AHS. You will have so much regret, I promise.

Other schools are not horrible. Some of the best kids I know attend other schools, and are fulfilling their missions exactly the way they are supposed to. Some of my friends that left American Heritage are also fulfilling their life's mission. I am not saying that everyone who goes to another school is inferior to those at American Heritage. What I am saying is that if you have the opportunity to be at American Heritage, TAKE IT! IT'S WORTH IT! Last year, I went to another local high school, and it was one of the best choices I have ever made. I met people that have changed eternity for me. I have gained so much experience and grown so much from that. In fact, one of the most important things I learned from that experience was how grateful I am for American Heritage, and how excited I was to come back! Leaving American Heritage was the only way for me to realize how much I really appreciated it. This does not have to be the case for everyone, and it would be wise to learn from what I went through and save the trouble of losing a year of precious learning time. You don't get this time back.

In all of life, follow the Spirit in honesty. God has a mission for you and it is different for every single person. You have a set purpose that you agreed to before you came to this earth. Find that mission, and make it your highest priority to fulfill. The faster you find your mission, the faster you will find joy and understand what really matters in life. Discern right from wrong. Align your will with His. This life is a preparation for eternity, and you will reap what you sow. Don't be afraid of falling. Be grateful for your mistakes and learn from them. If you are on a wide, flat, and nicely paved road, you may not be on the road to success. Sometimes your stupidest decisions will lead to your greatest learning experiences.

I know that you are a son or daughter of God and that you



were created to become exactly like Him. You were born to become one of the most powerful beings in the universe. That is what He wants! He doesn't give us trials and problems because He is trying to keep us out of Heaven, but because He loves us enough to get us there. Hard things give us the strength to return to Him, and with the help of our Brother Jesus Christ, who died so that He can know exactly how to help you return to Heaven, we will return if we are faithful. Not one of God's children was destined to fail. Jesus Christ has the exact map and blueprint of our path back to Heaven, and it is a valid path, possible for us to return on it because He has traveled it and walks it side by side with us every single step of the way. Grab His hand and He will lead us safely back to the fold.

Alexis Romans



Alexis Romans transferred from Westlake high school to American Heritage School during the middle of her junior year. She has enjoyed being a part of the volleyball and basketball teams at AHS. She loves the many friendships she has made as well as the closeness of her class. Alexis loves having the gospel integrated into her learning. She will hold AHS dear to heart as she heads to UVU in the fall. She writes, "Here I have learned truths about the world that I may not have learned anywhere else. I will never forget my time here at American Heritage, and I will always carry the lessons and the truths I have learned with me close to my heart."

I can't believe my high school career is coming to an end! High school has been a crazy rollercoaster of emotions and trials, but I wouldn't trade it for the world because of the memories



I have made and the friends I have gained. I came to American Heritage during the middle of my junior year, and even though I've only been here a short time, I have learned invaluable lessons about myself, others, and the world around me.

This past year I made friends with many people that are all completely different and amazing in their own way. They have made a tremendous influence in my life, and I wouldn't be who I am now without them. I have learned how to love myself because of the love they have shown me. They have shown me what it means to truly care about others, and to selflessly serve those around me. Because of the example my friends have set for me, I will continually strive to be better every day.

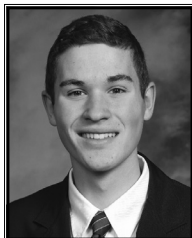
I had the great opportunity to be on the volleyball and basketball teams my senior year. I was inexperienced with both, but it just made it that much more fun learning! I learned about the importance of putting yourself out there and trying new things. If I had been too scared to try out, I wouldn't have some of my best friends that I do now. I gained so much more self-confidence by being on a team and feeling united with the girls that I played with. I will never forget my teammates examples of positivity and perseverance.

Perhaps the most important thing I learned here at American Heritage is to always put my trust in God. A year ago, I would have never imagined that I would be here now, but God had a plan for me, so I trusted him to lead me where I needed to be. It was a very good decision. Here I have learned truths about the world that I may not have learned anywhere else. I will never forget my time here at American Heritage, and I will always carry the lessons and the truths I have learned with me close to my heart.





Grant Rutherford



Grant Rutherford has been attending American Heritage School for six years. Grant is planning on attending at least one semester of college before his mission and is preparing daily to become more involved in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Grant is hard working, very discerning of the needs of those around him, passionate for learning, and willing to take time to expand topics of his personal interest. Overall, Grant loves to enlighten and deepen the thinking of the entire class. Grant is aware of his weaknesses, but does not allow them to overpower his strengths. He thinks deeply about topics and continually applies them to the world around him and to his personal experiences. Grant enjoys choir, psychology, and dance, and plans to study Psychiatry in college. He writes, "I am grateful for my school, the students in it, and the opportunities that I now have because of it. I can't wait to see where the rest of my life takes me."

*I*would not be the same man that I am today without this school. In my childhood, I was scared, awkward, and I shut out the world entirely. I had many personal struggles that caused me to feel unwanted and useless. But once I came to American Heritage, I found a new light. I became confident, happy, endearing, social, and my lifestyle improved as a whole. I learned to love people for who they are, not who they ought to be.

This was not immediate though. It was a very gradual process. I have specific memories of things that I did in the school to build my character and maturity. One of my most treasured experiences was in our Principles of Leadership class. The course went into detail on the book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* by Stephen R. Covey, explaining how to make progress in the world,



not only financially, but in the general home and work place. We learned how to build ourselves and the people around us. When we reached the end of the semester, we had a project called the Last Lecture, where we would individually go up in front of the class for about five minutes and tell them what we would like them to know if it were our last chance to speak with each other.

This impacted me greatly, and I took the project as a chance to present a side of me that no one else knew. When the time came, I went to the front and told everyone my struggles in my childhood, how it affected me, and how I wanted it to change. This was very difficult for me, but I knew that it would change my world around me. I continued working to become more comfortable with my trials, to express myself more freely, and to no longer put on a mask in front of my peers.

Now, looking back, I can happily say that I do not regret a single experience, that my decisions involved in this school have prepared me for many things to come in this life. I am grateful for my school, the students in it, and the opportunities that I now have because of it. I can't wait to see where the rest of my life takes me.

Emma Todd



Emma Todd has been attending American Heritage since seventh grade and has loved every minute of it. Emma has participated in choir, drama productions, and philharmonic orchestra. Emma will be attending BYU Provo this fall. She writes, "Because of American Heritage, I feel that I am more comfortable with my beliefs, and I feel free to share them with teachers and friends. Instead of the gospel only being a part of my life on Sunday, I have an eternal perspective every day of the week, and I know I'm blessed because of it."



When I was younger and imagined myself in high school, American Heritage wasn't the image I had in mind. For one, I didn't think I'd be at a private school: having to wear uniforms, following an honor code, and having a graduating class of about fifty seniors. And I most definitely didn't imagine that I would learn the gospel in every class I took. The image I had in my head was the stereotypical high school you'd see in a movie: you had the cheerleaders that would hang out with the varsity football team and you'd have band geeks and math nerds and everyone else in the spectrum. There, of course, would be the under-appreciated nerd girl (I'd be the nerd girl obviously). I would strike some kind of deal with the starting quarterback to help bring his grades up so he could play in the state championship game. Though we'd be annoyed with each other at first, I'd find out that he actually was a really kind, sensitive, and loving guy that just put on the tough guy persona in order to please his dad or something like that. (I didn't really work out all the details.) But by the end of senior year, we would fall in love and go to senior prom together, despite the hate from the high school. We would be crowned prom king and queen, and would live happily ever after. That was pretty much the plan. That's not how it went.

American Heritage doesn't have a football team or a cheerleading team—so I had to cross those parts off the plan. I didn't tutor the super popular athlete at school, in fact, it was usually me that had to get help from others with homework—cross that off the plan as well.

No, no. Instead, my high school life consisted of *The Lord of the Rings*, musical concerts, deep conversations, quiet basketball games, many laughs, and lots of homework and studying.

High school wasn't perfect, and we lost some pretty amazing people along the way. We had our hardships, we most definitely had our drama, but we had some really fun times too. I'll never forget the countless chick nights with some of my best friends that would usually result in a room full of crying girls. I'll never forget the many summer choir tours where we'd share the gospel around the



country and gain new experiences and build friendships stronger than they could in any other situation. I'll never forget the days and nights when I'd feel the lowest, and my friends would know exactly what to say and how to make me feel loved. I've made great friendships at American Heritage, and I know that I would not have been able to get through some hardships I've experienced without them.

I'm so grateful for the teachers and administration that have incorporated the gospel into every subject. Never would I have thought science, history, or even math could be tools to learn about and glorify God. Had I gone to public school, I suspect that my testimony would not be as strong as it is now. Because of American Heritage, I feel that I am more comfortable with my beliefs, and I feel free to share them with teachers and friends. Instead of the gospel only being a part of my life on Sunday, or in a few seminary classes throughout the week, I am given opportunities for an eternal perspective throughout each day, and I know I'm blessed because of it.

Before my senior year, I had a lot of dreams and expectations for the future, and now as I come to the end of it, though I still have dreams and expectations, they've shifted a little bit. Since I was a little girl, it was my dream to become a film score musical composer. That was my plan since I was seven years old. I imagined myself composing for all the big movies and television shows, earning awards and being regarded as one of the greats. But after this senior year especially, I've realized my whole life doesn't depend on a music career, and my goals have shifted from being super successful in a career, to being a mother and a wife. I see now that I may have more in store for me than what I originally planned. Maybe I still will become a film score composer, but I have a clear vision that my life goals should be focused on a family.

My Senior Thesis especially helped me have this shift. My topic was on traditional roles of fathers and mothers and husbands and wives. While I had a spiritual knowledge of the importance of these roles, Senior Thesis helped me to gain a temporal knowledge of these things. I feel like one of the strongest areas of my testimony is of family, and its importance as the fundamental unit of society.



Living 20 feet from the school (right across the street) sometimes got a little hard; it didn't really feel like I could come home from school when I could see it from my bedroom window. Even in the summer, I'd see the school every day. But I see that it was a blessing, because the principles I learned at school would stay with me throughout the whole year, and the same goes the other way. I could see part of my front yard from the hallway windows, and the principles I learned at home would stay with me during school.

I don't know what the future holds; I don't know who I'll stay in contact with; I don't know where my path will lead, but I know that I have a foundation that will help me through any hardship I come across. Thank you to all of the many teachers, friends, and family members who have helped me since the beginning. As this chapter in my life ends and a new one begins, I can't help but feel bittersweet. I'll miss this stage in my life and some of the people in it, but I'm excited for what will come next.





Valeria Valentini



Valeria Valentini came to American Heritage from Italy for her senior year. She was born in Bari, Italy. Her parents are Ettore Valentini and Gabriella Violante, and she has one younger brother. She has lived in Bari her whole life. Her hobbies include reading, watching movies, writing novels, travelling, singing, music, swimming, taking pictures and videos. She started speaking and singing in English when she was a little baby. When she was 13, she made a goal to attend one high school year in the United States. So, she did everything possible to reach this goal. She plans to get married in the temple. She loves the Lord and her family. She said "One of the things that really surprised me about American Heritage was that I could relate the gospel in every class. I had spiritual experiences even in math and chemistry. I learned how some people think that the world sometimes relates to the gospel, but in fact, it's the gospel that relates to everything in the world. Everything we do, observe, listen, and create has the light of Christ, which chases the darkness, and always wins. American Heritage changed me, it gave me a different perspective of life."

The first time I encountered American Heritage was my Senior Year. I grew up in Italy with my family, and when I was seven, I decided I wanted to study abroad because of the movie High School Musical. But when I turned thirteen, I discovered I needed to change something in my life. Sometimes it was hard in Italy trying to fit in at my old school. People were not members, and I was the only Mormon in a school of two thousand students. I found myself trying to connect the gospel to our class conversations, but people didn't like my questions. I needed to change something, and this brought me to American Heritage. Coming here has been hard, leaving family and friends, but it has been worth it.



I am a proud Italian who likes being loud. With my family, it has always been like this. My hand gestures are something I decided to never give up. My accent and my “craziness” are not optional. When I arrived here, I experienced the worst culture shock ever. My first thought when I arrived for orientation was “There are more LDS people at this one school than there were in my whole stake” and I was very happy about it. I loved this school. People here are special: students, teachers, administrators, and all the faculty. Even after being here for a while, it still surprised me. I remember walking in the hallway thinking that everyone was so calm. No pressure. No mental breakdowns about school. Then I met Senior Thesis. Now I noticed not everyone was as calm as I first imagined, but at least they showed their stress in a different way. I discovered and had the opportunity to meet people that will always be in my heart and mind. I love to understand people from different cultures, and I am sure I had the opportunity to learn from everyone. I learned how to create a true friendship in a relatively small time. I have always been an open person who likes talking (I think everyone has noticed this), laughing, and making people smile; however, everyone has off days, and I learned here that people really care to make you happy, to talk with you, and to make you feel loved. Through their love, you can feel the Savior’s love for you.

One of the things that really surprised me about American Heritage was that I could relate the gospel in every class. I had spiritual experiences even in math and chemistry. I learned how some people think that the world sometimes relates to the gospel, but in fact, it’s the gospel that relates to everything in the world. Everything we do, observe, listen, and create has the light of Christ, which chases the darkness, and always wins. American Heritage changed me, it gave me a different perspective of life.

My senior year rocked. I expanded my knowledge, and in Mr. Haymond’s classes we had probably the best discussion I have ever had in a school year. We talked about families, the importance of mothers and fathers, abortion, adultery, Isaiah, and gender



equality. We studied communism, socialism, and the scriptures. We learned about the Tytler cycle, and how society can go through phases of faith, courage, liberty, abundance, selfishness, complacency, apathy, dependence, and bondage. Without God, societies collapse. In Philippians 4:13 it says: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Every person, every society, must understand that God is the truth and the light we should follow to reach happiness and freedom. The pride cycle is applicable in our lives, not just in societies. Where are we? In which part of the cycle can we find ourselves? These questions should make us understand our lives better; it helped me to understand mine.

I could go on and on talking about every teacher I had the opportunity to work with, but I am just going to mention something they have in common: love for their students. Teachers here view each student as important, and they help you recognize your identity and worth in little things. They understand your problems, and they don't judge you, but help you to overcome them.

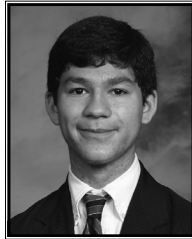
I am grateful for the opportunity that I have to know God and His plan. I am grateful for my family and the love that we share. I am grateful for the gospel, and the possibility that we have to share it through service, love, and missions. I will always be grateful for the kindness and patience that people showed me when I came, and I will always be grateful for the experiences and memories that I have had because of American Heritage. In this school, I didn't just learn, but I received a true education.

Next year is going to be hard and different. I will be back in Italy to attend my thirteenth grade in High School, and then I will go wherever our Lord wants me to go. Yes, I will miss this unique kind of "bubble" that American Heritage can be, but it is just the strength I needed, and I know that the Lord will always be with me, and with every senior in this class, past and the future.





Charles Valverde



Charles Valverde has a passion for reading life-changing literature, and learning and understanding the mysteries of this world (and the next). He loves to engage in outdoor activities, and enjoys that wondrous invention called "the chocolate bar." He's had the best of times with the best of people, and will forever cherish those memories. Trusting in God, and looking forward in faith on the future ahead, he leaves these words to those who follow: "Believe in God. Believe not only that He is there for all men, but that He is there for you."(Mosiah 4:9)

*M*y time at American Heritage has been truly incredible. I can honestly say that it has had one of the biggest impacts on my life, beside my family and the gospel. The things I've come to know here, and the people I've met, make me feel that this truly is a holy place. And it is my hope that it ever remains so.

It is my hope that as the world grows darker, people will be drawn to the light. My prayer is that all those who find themselves drawn here will feel of the Spirit of God, and the spirit of unity, and that as fear increases around the globe, that our faith will increase; and that faith, founded in Christ and in truth, when acted upon according to correct principles, will sustain the human soul through these latter days. Truly, there is none other name by which we can be saved.

Now, I know we are not a perfect school; far from it. But, I do believe that we have opportunities here that are hard to find in other places, and though it can be found in other places, it is found



most abundantly here: that is, a culture of inspired self-education; a culture that promotes a deep desire to learn by being shown how to find truth, and how to learn for ourselves; a culture that inspires us to make the accumulation and practice of truth a lifetime pursuit.

I also have faith in the people here. I believe that, united in Christ, the people that walk the halls with us here are some of the strongest people you will ever meet. Yes, you students of American Heritage are being prepared to be lights upon a hill, a standard for the nations, truly a radiant light in an ever-darkening world... and you get to not only walk among such people, but become such people as this. Despite stress or distractions or disagreements, I hope that you never lose sight of that, or take this wonderful gift for granted.

That being said, there are a couple other things I'd like to say before I go. And if you've read this far I appreciate it. First, school is not just meant to be endured, but enjoyed. Find joy in the day-to-day moments of life. Even when, and especially when, you feel swamped with homework or discouraged or frustrated, take a moment to stop and appreciate the simple things in life: Family. Friends. The temple just outside the window, the sun rays hitting the Angel Moroni just right, making him glow. The simple flower growing between the blades of grass. The kind word someone gave to you as you walked down the hall. Or the kind work you gave to someone who needed it. Take a moment to smile, regain perspective, and press forward in faith, especially in the hard times, but also when your life is going well. Let thanks to God be in your heart continually, and thanks for the blessings He's given you, and peace in the knowledge of the comfort and joy He so abundantly and freely extends.

One of the best ways to regain perspective and find reasons to smile is through service. People say all the time that serving makes you happy. Wanna know why? Because when ye are in the service of your fellow beings, ye are only in the service of your God, and He will bless you, ten-fold, for every act of kindness and service you give. And when you serve others, not only do you make those around you happy and ease their burdens, but you will



find that the more you forget yourself in the service of God and the service of others, you will truly be blessed for your service; yea, your burdens will be made light, and you will find more strength to face your own challenges; you will receive and recognize more unexpected, tender mercies, from God and through others; and you will truly feel peace and joy in your heart. Of course, it isn't always easy to serve. It can be hard sometimes. But it is most definitely worthwhile. And you will be most tremendously blessed.

I would invite anyone who reads this to take this challenge: pray for guidance each day, to know whom God would have you serve. Pray to be an instrument in His Hands. Then, go and do. You will find that God will put people in your path that He would have you serve. It may be as simple as saying "Hi" to someone as they pass by. Or taking a moment to stop and ask someone how their day was. Maybe it's waiting for your friend who's finishing their lunch after the rest have left. Or helping a friend with a homework assignment. A kind smile, a thoughtful gesture, an encouraging word. Truly, service can be simple, and oftentimes it is the simple acts of service that have the greatest impact on the lives of those you serve, and on your own life as well. Some things you may do, and never remember them again, but it will mean the world to that person who really needed what you did, and they will always look back on it in fond memory. Or other times, you may do something you thought to be simple, or something that required great sacrifice, and afterwards, having seen the results of your actions, you will be taught a powerful lesson that you will remember for the rest of your life as a defining moment in building your character and truly discovering who you are, and who you can become.

If you do this, Heaven will smile upon you, and that smile, and that light, will start to show on your face. Others will notice, but it matters not, because you serve not for personal glory, but for the glory of God. And, not only will you make many true and lasting friendships in this way, but others will see the light in your eyes, and they will be drawn to you, and, most importantly, they will come to know the love of God more fully being manifest in their lives because they knew you. They will see that they can truly



love God, because He has loved them first. He loves them so much that He sent you.

Never forget that God loves you enough to give you the chance to be an instrument in His Hand for the manifesting of His love unto His children. What could be grander than this? And He has promised that whosoever is faithful unto the last day shall be lifted up into the kingdom of God, and eternal life and happiness shall be their reward. O the beauty of the feet upon the mountain top that proclaim the gospel of Peace. We are called to be His messengers to the world. Let us do so faithfully and joyfully.

Okay, a few last words to the wise, and to those following in our footsteps here:

1. Have tons of fun. School won't last forever. Ups and downs will. You'll miss school once it's gone (some things more than others), but regardless, make the most of the opportunities you have now to try new things. Be adventurous, make new friends, and get to know the students at school you don't know very well. In short, make the most of each day.

2. Be Happy. A good friend once told me that life is too short to be anything but happy. She's passed now, but I'll always remember her words. Truly each moment, and each person, is precious. It won't last forever, but don't be sad for it. Love it while you've got it, and when it is long past, you will be able to look back in fond memory of the joy you had, the people you met, and the truly profound experiences that have changed your life for the better.

3. Be Positive. This can be a hard one, especially when school gets hard, or family situations are rough, or friendships struggle (and they do sometimes, and that's okay). Just remember that God is watching out for you. Believe that He has all wisdom and all power, both in Heaven and in earth, [and that] . . . man cannot comprehend all the things which the Lord can comprehend." Even if you can



do no more than believe, believe. He will take care of you. He will bring you blessings through raindrops, and healing through tears. And truly, I can promise you this, that He will never forsake you, even and especially when it feels that all hope is lost. He will never forsake you. So, smile. And know, that even if the worse is yet to come, that you'll be okay. Just trust in Him, no matter what. It's all good, for the Lord is good, and will be on your right hand and on your left, and His angels will be round about you to bear you up. There is always reason to smile, even when it's hard to see. And you never know, your smile might just help someone else smile, too.

4. Trust in God. "Trust in the Lord with all thy heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths."

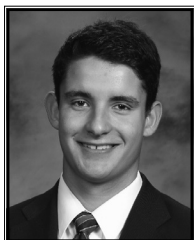
My friends. All of you who have come, and will come, and will join me on this great journey of life— if you will put your trust in Him, listen to the prophets, pray and read the Book of Mormon daily; if you will make the most of your time here at this school, through service and through smiles as well as true learning; if you will love the people and always treat them with kindness; if you thank your friends and family for standing by you and for their positive and life- changing influence – you will see the salvation of God, and your time here at this school, like mine, will be an adventure you'll never forget.

Thank you for everything you've done for me. I'll be forever thankful.





James van der Beek



James Van der Beek has attended American Heritage since fourth grade. He is the oldest of nine children, many of whom attend AHS. James writes, "This final year I am preparing to be a positive influence as I attend American Fork High School next year, and then serve the Lord on a mission. I look forward to my future with faith, hope, and lots of excitement!"

*M*y parents were guided to move to American Fork to raise their children in the most fertile of soil, which included AHS. The Lord blessed us with a home where the Temple shines through the eastern windows, and the school is a three-minute walk! I could not comprehend then the abundant upbringing I look back on now. The environment and opportunities I have experienced, the mentors and friends I have loved, and the education I have obtained, have left no doubt in my mind that the Lord has a plan for me and my family. The environment at American Heritage has been such a blessing to me. I feel the Spirit every day within those walls.

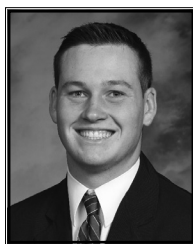
Though we all need refining as students, the school's powerful mission and its foundation of sacrifice inspires change. Looking back on the many opportunities I have had while attending AHS, I have fond memories. Choir tours, athletics, plays, dances, experiential learning, and field trips are connected to memories and skills I will cherish forever. My mentors and teachers have become my close friends. As I strive to mature into the man they envision me to be, I am motivated by their advice and encouragement. Their sacrifice and influence has taught me to cherish the role of teacher.



I have also been blessed with wonderful friends and peers. I was greatly influenced by the good examples and friendships of young men who have now moved on in life. My appreciation for them increases as I seek to fulfill the role of example and leader to those who now look up to me. My education has been the essence of the scripture, "The glory of God is intelligence, or in other words, light and truth" (D&C 93:36). It has been difficult at times to lay the foundation higher learning requires, but the process has been rewarding and it has ignited a hunger for truth and knowledge within me.

American Heritage School has been a necessary stepping stone on my path to obtaining a fullness of joy. This final year here, I am specifically preparing to be a righteous influence as I attend American Fork High School next year, and then serve the Lord on a mission. I look forward to my future with faith, hope, and lots of excitement! Through the Grace of God, the time and sacrifice of His earthly angels, and a willingness to give my will to Him, I will obtain a fullness of joy.

Jeffrey Harrison Wade



Harrison Wade has been at American Heritage School since the fifth grade and has loved the school atmosphere that comes from going to this school. Harrison loves being outside spending time with friends. He is also looking forward to serving his mission. He says, "Throughout all my years at this school, I have had the opportunity to learn the importance of living with Christ at the center of my life. Just like it says in Helaman 5:12, He will help defend me against the mighty whirlwinds of the Devil. Having a strong foundation, which is Christ, whereon if men build they cannot fall."



Throughout all my years at this school, I have had the opportunity to learn the importance of living with Christ at the center of my life. Just like it says in Helaman 5:12, He will help defend me against the mighty whirlwinds of the Devil. Having a strong foundation, which is Christ, whereon if men build they cannot fall.

I have learned here how to apply the gospel to my life in day-to-day situations. I am grateful for my opportunity to come to American Heritage, where I was privileged to have Mr. Dye as my tenth grade teacher. Mr. Dye has had as much impact on my life as any teacher I have ever had. He caused me to really want to do well in school. I am grateful for him, and for the Christ-like example he has been to me through his actions.

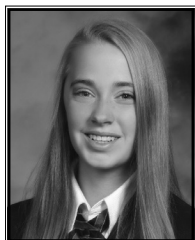
Another person who shows Christ-like characteristic is Brother Sackett. He has helped me change my attitude to wanting to live the gospel. I now can see the importance of daily scripture study. I have appreciated having Mr. Haymond as my final teacher here at the school. He has taught me the importance of being able to discern right from wrong, and the importance that of needing to prepare myself physically and spiritually for the future. I am also grateful for having small classes where I am able to connect more personally with teachers and friends, something I would otherwise not be able to do.

Because of my opportunity to come to this school, I have been able to make some pretty amazing friends that I will never forget. They have been such great examples in my life. They have been able to teach me of the importance of good, faithful friends that lift you up and support you in times of need.





Adelaide Walker



Adelaide Walker came to American Heritage in the eighth grade. She was born in Wynnewood, Montgomery, Pennsylvania. She is offspring number five of her Brady Bunch six, with three brothers and two sisters. Adelaide enjoys playing the cello with the Lyceum Philharmonic Orchestra, singing, playing ukulele, soccer and Frisbee. When not at home, you can almost always guarantee she's somewhere in the mountains, and is always down for a spontaneous adventure. More than anything, Adelaide loves learning. She writes, "Learning is what every creature on this planet does best. In fact, that's why we've been sent to this earth. We are here to learn to live by faith and to be taught by, and through experience, to which we must choose right from wrong. One of my favorite scriptures is 2 Nephi 2:11-12, which says there is an opposition in all things, and without opposition 'it must needs have been created for a thing of naught'. It is our job to learn, here on this earth, how to discern for ourselves between the opposing voices, and then teach others how to do the same."

I think it may have started with curiosity. Curiosity was the feeling I felt walking into school my first day of kindergarten. I didn't cry like many of the other kids saying goodbye to their mothers, nor was I necessarily excited; I was simply full of wonder and many questions. Who was I going to meet? What was I going to learn? What was homework and why did kids not like it?

Today, I can stand before you with various answers to those questions, but as graduation is upon me, and I'm getting ready to jump off the high dive into the swimming pool of life, I find myself with the same feeling and asking myself similar questions: Who will I meet? What will I learn? What are taxes, and why do people not like them?



Coming to American Heritage School has helped me learn two very important lessons. First, I have been taught how to see and notice God's loving hand in every aspect of my life. I have felt His love in the music I've played with the American Heritage Lyceum Philharmonic Orchestra. I have seen his careful care in the beauty of the mountains I've climbed. I have been inspired by the people He has placed into my life. And He continues to influence me with the best teachers. Second, I've learned about the importance of being self-reliant. Marion G. Romney once said, "Without self-reliance one cannot exercise these innate desires to serve. How can we give if there is nothing there? Food for the hungry cannot come from empty shelves. Money to assist the needy cannot come from an empty purse. Support and understanding cannot come from the emotionally starved. Teaching cannot come from the unlearned. And most important of all, spiritual guidance cannot come from the spiritually weak." "Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?" (Luke 6:39)

It's not hard to notice that in a world such as ours, full of confusion and opposing voices, many people are falling away from the one thing they've known best, their faith. I now understand that in a world of so much chaos, I need to stand as a beacon of light and a source of clarity. I must do this by diligently seeking out the best books and continue learning wisdom while still in my youth. "And as all have not faith, (I will) seek diligently and teach (my fellow brethren) words of wisdom . . ." (D&C 88:118, Alma 37:35) I will then not be ashamed of my knowledge and my God, for how would it be possible for me to remain silent when many people are asking questions to which I have the answers?

I have been to numerous schools before arriving at American Heritage, and I have run into a great variety of people during that time to which none have been able to compare to those at AHS. It wasn't hard to fall in love with the Christ-like atmosphere found up and down these halls, enriched by the individuals who attend here. The friendships I have developed here have never been temporary ones, but instead lifelong.



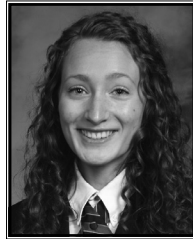
I am especially grateful for every member of the administration and faculty who have always worked hard to make every student feel loved individually by giving the best of what they have to offer: their time. Here, every teacher has impacted and taught me some of the greatest lessons of my life. I am particularly grateful for Mr. Hancock and Kayson Brown. I am grateful to Mr. Hancock because he has remained my teacher throughout my high school experience, and has taught me how to learn effectively, think logically, remember almost completely, and how to steal dumplings from his desk. I am grateful to Kayson Brown because he taught me the true meaning of faith and how to have faith in others. He has also taught me how to love what I do, even though sometimes it may mean I'll have to work a little harder to get the ideal result.

Saying that American Heritage School has always been a second home to me just doesn't seem to cut it. The last five years have been my best and hardest, but I would do it all over again in less than a heartbeat, if given the chance. I can't wait for the day that I'll be able to tell my own children about my experience at AHS, and the great feeling of love here. And, who knows, one day they may even attend this wonderful school.





Hannah Weyland



Hannah Weyland has thoroughly enjoyed her time at American Heritage School since seventh grade. She will always remember what she has learned at this school that combines the gospel with various learning topics. She loves that she can feel the spirit at American Heritage School and that students and teachers can openly discuss gospel topics. She said, "Throughout my years at American Heritage, I have learned of God's providential hand in history and in my own life. I know that He is in my life and that He is in charge. I love that we can pray freely at American Heritage and have the Spirit guiding the lessons and curriculum. I cannot say how many times I have gone to school, and the books and lessons were exactly what I needed. I know I was, and am, supposed to be at this school, and every day I see the reasons why."

Ever since I joined the American Heritage family in seventh grade my life has been blessed tremendously. Since then, American Heritage has become like a home for me.

I am amazed at how many times I came to school and we discussed in classes exactly what I needed that day. I am so thankful that we can pray before class and can have our education directed by the Spirit. I am so thankful for the teachers and administration that seek to know what God's will is for this school.

I can honestly say I have no idea who or where I would be without American Heritage. I am grateful for the principles that are taught here by the good teachers and students and for the clean culture here that we constantly strive for. I love that our honor code for AHS is For the Strength of Youth standards. These standards are something every person should strive for, and to have a school



striving for those standards together as a community is incredible. It would be hard to find that at another school. I have also gained amazing friends here who have helped me strive to be better.

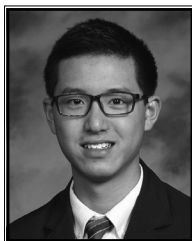
I have attended the Patriotic Program at least five times now. But this year, my last year, I realized what the message really is: that God's hand is in history and has lead every step of the foundation of America. The message is that we are a blessed country, and that we need to do all we can to support the principles written in the Constitution, and that we need to make America proud of us. We need to leave our footprint on America. I am so thankful that we can learn, study and be filled with a zeal for freedom, and to be able to "sniff out tyranny" as Mr. Haymond says.

I love this school and thank all of the teachers and administration. I'm grateful for God's hand in helping this school become the school it is today. I am so thankful for truths and principles taught here that have helped me learn to discern truth from error. I have been so blessed to go to this school, and have an obligation to teach the world what I have learned.





Bangyan “Alan” Zhang



Bangyan “Alan” Zhang came to AHS from China in ninth grade. He loves his soccer team. In his heart, he does not discriminate or hate, with the exception of orange chicken, which he despises. He plans to attend McGill University in Montreal. Prior to coming to AHS, Alan was a faithful communist pioneer in China. He writes, “Many people have asked me, ‘Why did you come to American Heritage School, and why Utah?’ Honestly, I didn’t know the answer to these questions until the end of my senior year — when I learned the thing that I might never have learned elsewhere: truth.”

When I first came to America, everything was a little weird. It is weird that school is out before dark. It is weird that it is not crowded everywhere. It is weird that Kungpao Chicken is sweet. English was a struggle. During my first semester of school, I was always confused, so was everyone who talked to me. I never knew my potential until I was desperate for extra credit. In a few months, with faith and persistence, I wrote my first 1,000-word essay for Mr. Hancock.

I assumed that everyone in America knows everything about China, just like everyone in China knows everything about America. The fact is, the best chance that students had of learning about China was in Mr. Dye’s class during a unit on the Chinese Cultural Revolution and communism. That was my opportunity to fulfill my duty: to make China great again. In the process, I learned to debate and argue for the truth as I saw it. Today, with faith and persistence, all my dear American comrades now love Chairman Mao, just like me. :-)



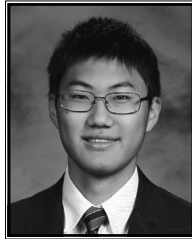
In eleventh grade, apart from working tirelessly for my SAT and AP tests, our soccer team won the state championship. With coach Sackett, I learned what happens when we work hard, what happens when we get arrogant, and what happens when we change our ways and unite as a team of Patriots. I learned that when we all have faith and persistence, we can be champions. Good times, and go Patriots!

In my senior year, I killed a beast called Senior Thesis. I vividly remember the first day when I struggled with my thesis statement with my mentor, Mr. Hale, and the day I finished my presentation and oral defense. We also went on some unforgettable field trips, including to the state capital, a mine, and Arches National Park. And, I made lifelong friends. Today, I am glad that I can sincerely celebrate Paul's words in 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." With truth learned from Mr. Haymond's class, I am prepared to go out to the world and work miracles for friends, families, and the whole world. I know that with faith, persistence, and His strength, I can do all things.





Chubo “Bobby” Zhou



Bobby Zhou came to AHS in the ninth grade from China. The oldest of two children, with one little sister, he was born in Qingdao, China. Bobby plans to attend business school. He loves chess, and he is eager to have more competition. Bobby writes, “Studying at American Heritage School has changed my perception on the purpose of life. Before coming to the States, I believed that the purpose of this life was to be successful in my career, have influence over people, and have respect from everyone. After four years at AHS, I have learned that to have a meaningful life, I don’t have to influence everyone in the world, and I need to focus more on my own family and the education of my own children.”

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I want to teach my children to respect and protect their own conscience more than anything else. I love the fourth principle in the Seven Principles Liberty that states “Conscience is the most sacred of all property.” I believe that conscience is a gift to every human being to distinguish from right and wrong. Personally, I hold this property sacred. Through the years, I have made many mistakes, small ones and big ones, and I have at times violated



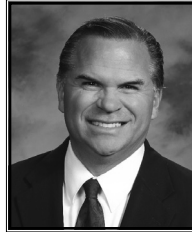
my own conscience. I know the feeling when I violate it, and I have worked hard to repent and rebuild my conscience. Because of my experience, I will teach my children the importance of their conscience, and through education, I hope they will have few times that they violate their conscience.

In addition to conscience, I want to teach them about sacrifice. I learned about sacrifice the most during my senior year. I know that sacrifice is the main ingredient of love. Through sacrifice, you will appreciate and eventually love more. My ideas about sacrifice came first to me when Mr. Haymond asked the question, "Why do mothers love their children so much?" I did not recognize immediately that mothers love their children so much because of their great sacrifices for their children. During pregnancy, mothers need to experience inconvenience. During birth, they suffer extreme pain, but through pain comes great joy. Mr. Haymond shared the story of his daughter giving birth, and he testified that after the baby was delivered, then his daughter experienced the greatest joy because of her previous pain. I want to teach my kids to love laboring, suffering, and sacrificing for everyone. I want them to focus more the inner treasure. In addition, I want my children to have faith in mankind. American Heritage taught me that there is great potential in everyone in the world, and I want to be able to teach my children to be less judgmental, and try to love everyone they meet. I believe that through the education in America Heritage School, I am more prepared to be a good husband and father.





The 4R Method



by Ruel Haymond, 12th Grade Instructor

The 4R Method of Research, Reason, Relate, and Record (in the scriptures, search, ponder, pray, and act) is not only the method of personal scholarship, but it is the key to personal revelation. There may not be a better way to “record” than to “act.”

In the Book of Mormon, in Moroni 10:3-5, the prophet Moroni outlines the personal 4R method perfectly as follows:

RESEARCH (SEARCH)

“Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them.”

At AHS, you have learned to research by studying original source materials, considering varying perspectives or accounts of events or facts, and carefully comparing these sources with reason and revelation (revelation includes the words of ancient and modern prophets and direct and personal revelation through the Holy Ghost). Always remember, empirical data that contradicts these three tools for determining truth should be considered with caution.



REASON (PONDER)

“... Remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.”

As you reason and ponder, in your search for truth, it is essential that you take time to remember all that God has done for His children throughout history, including yourself. As you recollect and ponder the miracles in your life and the lives of others, your heart will be softened, better prepared to receive that which He desires to give you.

I am reminded of the great Tongan patriarch Lohani Wolfgramm praying over the dead body of his six year old daughter Tisina, pleading with the Lord to restore her to life. Before he requests God’s intervention, he shows his gratitude by specifically remembering how merciful He has been from Adam until now:

“I reminded the Lord of how he saved the Israelites by parting the waters of the Red Sea, how Christ raised people from the dead, and of the simple faith of a missionary who just had his daughter run over by a car and had been killed, you can understand of my love for her. I reviewed how Lazarus was raised after being in the tomb for four days, through faith and the power of the priesthood. I prayed and thanked the Lord for those great prophets of old and their faith and special callings in the church from Adam down to the prophet Joseph Smith” (Lohani Wolfgramm: Man of Faith and Vision, 1911-1997, compiled by Tisina Wolfgramm Gerber).

Following this prayer and a sacred priesthood blessing, little Tisina was recalled back to life.



RELATE (PRAY)

“... And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.”

Following your research and reasoning, with a heart softened and prepared for personal direction and application, you now begin to apply the truths you are learning to your own situation, to your own understanding. One of the great tragedies of human history is that we tend to learn the facts and events in history, but we rarely relate them specifically to ourselves. We want to blame those foolish Nephites for their neglect of God’s laws, or those Germans for not recognizing Hitler for who he really was.

We must do what is necessary to become like great men and women in history and to avoid doing what wicked men and women have done to bring misery upon themselves and a nation. We must relate what we learn to ourselves and then with Heavenly Father’s guidance, do His will, allowing the consequences to follow.

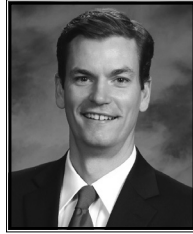
RECORD (ACT)

“... And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.”

John Witherspoon, James Madison’s mentor, said that right reason is akin to revelation. Once truths have been recorded on our hearts through the power of righteous researching, reasoning, and relating, we are in a position to act in accordance with God’s will. We will go and do as the Lord has commanded and we will waste and wear out our lives in His service. How blessed we are to have so many records from the Constitution to the Federalist Papers to Anna Karenina, where right reason written with pen corresponds with revelation from heaven.



Tribute to the Class of 2017



by Grant Beckwith, Principal

Occasionally we catch a glimpse of the divine majesty of the rising generation. We see our children not as children, but as kings and queens — and we are moved for a precious moment to kneel. These are my feelings as I pour over the thoughtful and sacred words written by each of you, the Class of 2017, in your essays. You write to each other, but you also write to those who sacrificed before you, and to those who must sacrifice after you. May the Author of All Blessings guide you in your righteous endeavours, and may you always believe His Story. Truth has a name, and it is Christ. You have each brought me nearer to Him through your powerful examples of love and discipleship. I honor you. I love you. Faithfully yours.

—Mr. Beckwith



Tribute to the Class of 2017



by Blaine Hunsaker, Assistant Principal

What an outstanding group of youth you are! As you go through life continue to follow the theme you have helped us to remember throughout this year to “choose unity”. Also the focus areas you have modeled so well of friendship, gratitude, positivity and patience. As you strive to remember each of these attributes in your life you will be blessed beyond measure. May each of you choose to lift where you stand in preserving, protecting and defending principles of truth and freedom as did the founders of this blessed nation.

Remember the lessons you have learned during your time at AHS. Choose to give heed to the promptings of the Spirit to reason and discern between right and wrong, truth and error, and to stand firm and immovable in your faith and convictions. Remember the Lord has promised that he will be with us, he said “I will go before your face. I will be on your right hand and on your left, and my Spirit shall be in your hearts, and mine angels around about you, to bear you up.” (D&C 84:88).

I echo the advice that Paul gave to Timothy “Be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12) May choose to “remember that it is upon the rock of our Redeemer, who is Christ...that you must build your foundation. (Helaman 5:12).

You are truly a talented and gifted class. Each one of you will bless countless number of lives through your light and service.

—Mr. Hunsaker



Tribute to the Class of 2017



by Elizabeth Jacob Acuña, Assistant Principal

As the doors close on your time at American Heritage School, we hope that you will never forget the first point of our mission statement; you have a unique purpose and mission to fulfill on this earth. As you look forward with anticipation to the exciting future before you, we pray that you will always remember those who have sacrificed for you. May each choice be one that will honor those who have served you, prayed for you and taught you.

You have an exciting future ahead of you. It will be full of greater happiness than you can now imagine. It will have greater challenges than you have yet faced. There will be moments of great success and times of disappointing failure. The test in life will be in how you respond to both your successes and your failures. In your success, I pray that you will always remember, as the great composer Bach wrote on each of his compositions, "To God only the glory." In your failure, I hope that you can trust that God can make "...all things work together for good to them that love God..." (Romans 8:28).

As I look into your bright faces, so full of hope for the future, I am reminded of D&C 78:18-19, "And ye cannot bear all things now; nevertheless, be of good cheer, for I will lead you along... and he who receiveth all things with thankfulness shall be made glorious."

May you always choose to let God lead you into the bright, beautiful future that He has in store for you. May you always choose to walk with Him.

—Mrs. Acuña