



the ACORN

Landmark East School Newsletter • Winter 2024



Welcome to the Acorn, Landmark East School's Annual Newsletter!

Landmark East School empowers students with learning differences and helps them unlock their full potential. Students at Landmark East get the **time**, **space**, and **understanding** they need to get the education they deserve.

Celebrating Mr. Thomson

This year, Kim Thomson retired after 34 years of teaching and changing lives at Landmark East School. Kim embodied what makes Landmark East School such a magical place. His commitment to student success was unwavering throughout his career - he was instrumental in helping hundreds of students start their journey at Landmark East and then continue on to post-secondary. His legacy lives on through many of our altruistic activities including Thank You Day and the Great NS Pick-Me-Up!



Graduation 2024

This year's Graduation ceremony featured remarks from MP Kody Blois, Valedictorian Breanna Mailman, and an inspiring speech from Guest Speaker Quentin Little Wolf Syliboy. Congratulations to the Landmark East School Class of '24!



Landmark East in the Community



The Grade 12s went to see Neptune Theatre's production of *Heathers: The Musical*.



Elementary students hosted a lunchtime movie and asked students to bring in an item for the food bank as the price of admission. They collected 114 items for the food bank (just over 40 kg)!



Many staff, students, and volunteers came together to make Pumpkin Walk in Kentville a success.



Thank You Day 2024 included volunteering at Dragonfly Haven Therapeutic Farm



We once again cleaned up the streets of our surrounding communities through the Great NS Pick-Me-Up, picking up hundreds of kgs of litter.



Local radio station, Rewind 89.3 continues to be a huge supporter of Landmark East School.

Plus, Darrin Harvey has generously judged at Science Fair, MC'ed the Fougere & Friends concert, and read at Family Literacy Festival. Thanks Darrin!



FAMILY LITERACY IS...

- PLAYING
- BUILDING
- CREATING
- EXPLORING
- READING
- COOKING
- TALKING
- LISTENING
- CELEBRATING
- SINGING
- DANCING
- AND SO MUCH MORE

...TOGETHER!

Thank you for celebrating the FAMILY LITERACY FESTIVAL in Wolfville, Nova Scotia!

Sponsor and Location:
AL WHITTLE THEATRE

LITERACY IS A BRIDGE FROM MISERY TO HOPE.

~KOFI ANNAN

Also sponsored by:
LANDMARK EAST | wolfville

Along with The Al Whittle Theatre and Town of Wolfville, Landmark East School hosted a 2024 Family Literacy Day event that involved "local celebrity" story readers and other fun events. The event is growing in 2025, and has become the Family Literacy Festival, with even more amazing performances and ways to promote family literacy! Pictured here is the bookmark that was available for attendees of the event that shows how family literacy can be even more than reading!



Mr. Hayes, often together with The Booker School, was at community fairs to speak about Landmark East and Independent Schools in the Valley.



This year was the 22nd Annual Walkathon and the event continues to be a wonderful chance for our students to proudly show who the "Mighty Oaks" are. It takes a lot of individuals coming together to make this event a success and we appreciate all of them.



Students
Canvassing
and
Fundraising



Generous
Sponsors and
Volunteers

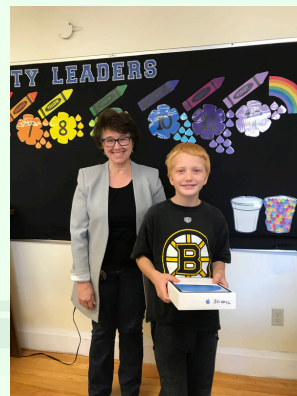
Life-Changing
Funds Raised
for Student
Bursaries



A walk through
Wolfville followed
by events, games,
and more!



Supportive
Families, Staff,
and Board
Members



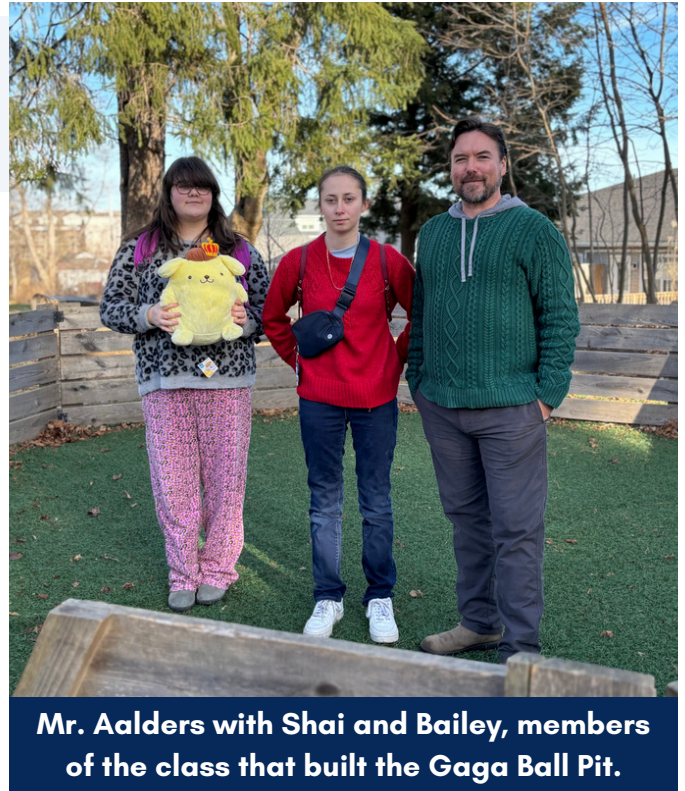
Our top fundraisers
from this year's
Walkathon walked
away with some
fantastic prizes,
including an iPad!

Staff Focus: Mr. Wayne Aalders

Mr. Aalders teaches Citizenship, Social Studies, Intensive Support, Successful Me, and Technology Education. Here's what he had to say about student projects, including our one-of-a-kind Gaga Ball Pit!

The Acorn (TA): *Can you share some of the most memorable projects or activities you've done with your students in Tech Ed or Citizenship over the last few years?*

Mr. Aalders (MA): Some of my most memorable experiences with students have been building the Gaga Ball pit, creating a signpost in the basement for student signatures, creating Christmas decorations and baking sweet treats one year to give back to deserving community organizations, Trips to Province House and recognition from MLA Keith Irving in the House, trips to Town Hall to learn about municipal politics, visits with our local MP, writing letters of advocacy for our Indigenous brothers and sisters to the Prime Minister and other members of government and receiving letters in return. I also enjoy when students advocate for their own projects to raise money and awareness.



Mr. Aalders with Shai and Bailey, members of the class that built the Gaga Ball Pit.

TA: *What specific skills—technical or social—do you aim to develop through these projects?*

MA: In Middle School Tech Ed, I aim to develop students' practical skills in building, planning, and tool safety while fostering an appreciation for the trades. These hands-on projects build confidence and empower students to approach challenges with a sense of curiosity and pride.

In Citizenship 9, my goal is to nurture a sense of community and inspire students to engage with the world around them. Students hopefully learn the importance of collaboration, responsibility, and making a positive impact in their communities.

TA: *You do a number of projects where students have created something that has been used or implemented in the community or school, can you tell us about that?*

MA: We have given back a lot to the community. Within the school the Gaga Ball pit is the gift that keeps on giving and the signpost helps create a lasting memory of former students.

TA: *Are there any projects that have stemmed from your own interests? Are you able to do work with students that you are also passionate about?*

MA: In Successful Me, building shelters in the yard last year was very satisfying for me and building the Gaga Ball pit was some of the most fun I've had. As much as I appreciate the importance of classroom work, I believe that students get even more out of real world experiences outside of the classroom and I am always working to create opportunities to share those experiences with our students.



What is Gaga Ball?

Gaga Ball combines dodging, striking, running, and jumping, with the objective of being the last person standing. Players hit the ball at each other with their hands, and are eliminated if the ball strikes them on or below the knee. The game can be played by a group of individual players or with teams, as well as in one-on-one matches.

Staff Focus: Mr. Wayne Aalders

TA: *How do students typically respond to these projects? Are there any that stand out as favorites among them?*

MA: Students love to get out of the classroom as well. We still tell stories about visiting town hall and province house. It helps connect with real life when an election comes along, or there's news about "politics" which students generally couldn't care less about. When you make it real with those connections, they are much more likely to engage with it.

Any time we get to build, there are students who are all for it and those who shy away from it because tools are dangerous and can be loud and scary. It's always my goal to make them less scary to students and teach students to respect them.

Students have made lots of memories with the activities we've done. I think the gaga ball pit has made the biggest impact.



TA: *Landmark East focuses on supporting diverse learners. How do you adapt your projects to ensure all students can participate and succeed?*

MA: It's a lot of keeping a slower pace and being there with them every step of the way. If we talk about a gradual release of responsibility, here it is an even more gradual release of responsibility. I also look for student leaders in the classroom and ask others to help and to look out for each other. It is even more impactful for peers to provide assistance than for me to do it.

TA: *How do you incorporate discussions of sustainability, ethics, or global citizenship into your classes?*

MA: Citizenship lends itself to these concepts through the design of the curriculum. We also constantly look for connections to current events to bring what we learn to life. There is no shortage of issues in the world that connect to these concepts. It is important to point students in the direction of positivity because they easily get bogged down in the negative news they hear in and out of school, and are bombarded with on social media and television. They can lose sight of all the great things going on in the world, as we all do sometimes, so it's important to celebrate the good stuff too.

TA: *What exciting projects or activities do you have planned for the future?*

MA: I would love to teach students how to build mini-homes/shelters and sheds, and take them through the whole process of building, wiring, insulating, weatherproofing, and finishing a small building. It would be incredible to raise enough money to visit Parliament. I would also like to connect with our local First Nations communities to visit and learn about their governance.



Upgrades at Landmark East

This past year saw many changes to our campus. Among the upgrades are a beautiful new sign out front, an updated facade and front lobby, and a repaved parking lot. We also updated the lighting and furniture, and added SMART Boards in many classrooms, thanks in large part to support from the R. Howard Webster Foundation.



Landmark East Acknowledged at Province House

Honourable Keith Irving took time at the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to welcome our Grade 9 Citizenship class and acknowledge 45 years of Landmark East changing lives!



*Member's Statement
Keith Irving
M.L.A. Kings South*

*Nova Scotia House of Assembly
Assembly 64, 1st Session*

Landmark East School

I rise today to congratulate Landmark East School in Wolfville as it celebrates 45 years of transforming lives. Since 1979, Landmark East has been a beacon of hope for students with learning differences such as dyslexia, ADHD, and other challenges. Through individualized programs, small class sizes, and a nurturing environment, the school has empowered students to achieve their full potential, both academically and personally.

I want to thank the dedicated staff, board members, students, and families of Landmark East for their commitment to educational excellence and inclusion. Over the past four and a half decades, the school's unique approach has had a profound impact, fostering confidence, resilience, and lifelong success. Many graduates have gone on to achieve incredible accomplishments thanks to the solid foundation laid by Landmark East.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Landmark East School on 45 years of life-changing impact, and best wishes for continued success in the future



*Honourable Keith Irving
M.L.A. Kings South*

** Excerpt from NS Legislature Hansard - September 18, 2024 pg. 9267*

New Mural

Evelyne, a talented former student (now a Fine Arts student in university), painted a mural in our front hallway that captures the essence of the student body at Landmark East. It will be an admired source of inspiration for many years to come!



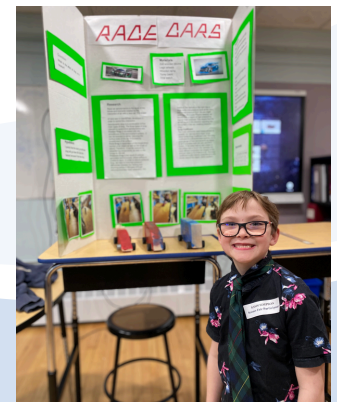
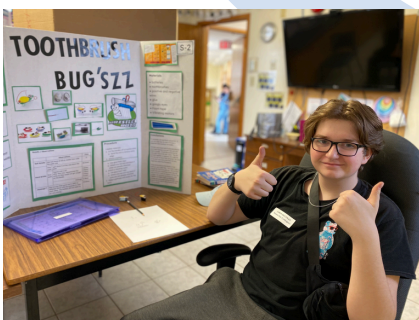
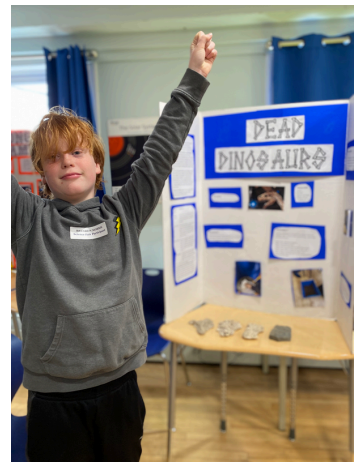
2024 Science Fair

Landmark East School's oldest tradition continued this year, once again thanks to the hard work of the staff, judges, and especially the students! Among the fascinating projects were Colson and Brenden who went on to win medals at the Regional Science Fair!



Ms. Callaghan in Bermuda

In May, Ms. Callaghan travelled to Bermuda to catch up and connect with alumni, see the sights of Hamilton, and visit some other schools with similar programming to Landmark East. Thank you to all of the alumni who were able to reconnect!



Alumni Focus:

Marc-André Delisle

In September 2024, we had an online contest for alumni to win a Landmark East Mighty Oaks Alumni t-shirt. One of the winners was Marc-André Delisle, who was kind enough to share his Landmark East journey.

I began attending LME in 1997 at the age of 13, my parents stayed in Hong Kong due to my father's work commitments. I was in the 2003 graduating class - we were the largest graduating cohort in LME's history at the time of our graduation!

After high school, I attended Saint Mary's University in Halifax. I then spent about seven years working in the payroll and HR sector. In 2015, I made the move into the IT industry, where I worked for the majority of my career in the healthcare informatics space.

A former manager contacted me on LinkedIn in 2022 when the position I have now opened up, he knew I would be a perfect fit. I was selected as one of the successful candidates after multiple interview rounds. In addition, I have the honour of being among the first members of my department to be hired externally for a permanent position after the transfer of our business unit from the federal to the provincial government in 2008.

Managing employment-related interventions across HRM is my day-to-day job. My team and I help people break free from the cycles of poverty and precariousness that are caused by chronic dependence on Income Assistance and Employment Insurance benefits, as well as during mass layoff events and major work interruptions such as during the 2023 wildfires. My job is something I genuinely LOVE doing! Although the work can be challenging at times, it is incredibly rewarding!

Outside of work, I have been a part of the Halifax Search and Rescue team for almost a decade.

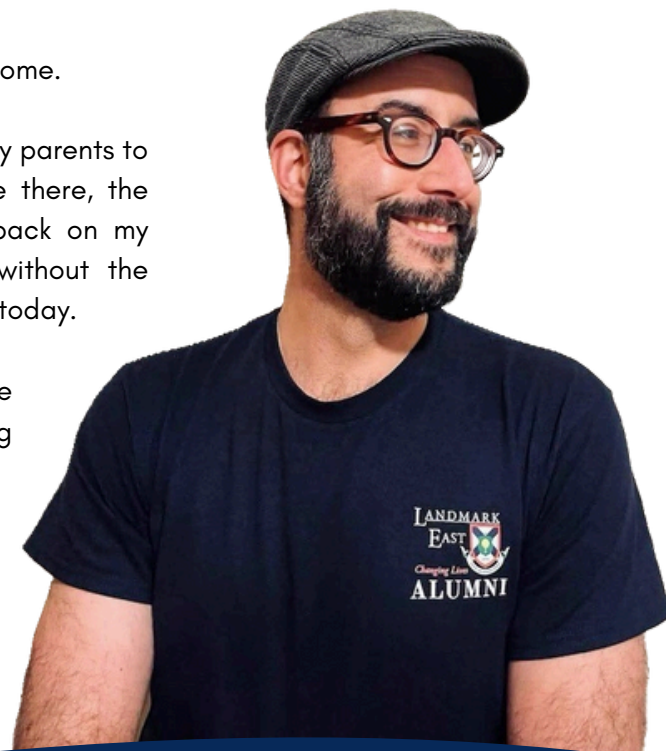
Together with our kids, my wife Anuli and I call Lower Sackville, NS our home.

As a parent, I can now attest to how extremely challenging it was for my parents to send me to Landmark East. I am incredibly appreciative of my time there, the friends I made, and the numerous lessons I learned when I think back on my experience now, as an adult. I can state with confidence that without the instruction and assistance I received at LME, I would not be where I am today.

Also, with support from my work, and most importantly my family, I've decided to return to SMU part-time to finish my degree! As the saying goes, better late than never!

Salutations,

Marc-André



If you'd like to order your own Mighty Oaks Alumni t-shirt or other Spirit Wear, follow us on Facebook or head to www.LandmarkEastApparel.ca



The Fougere and Friends Concert to benefit the Student Bursary Fund was held at the Festival Theatre in Wolfville. It included performances by a band of staff members led by Ms. Fougere, and music from Landmark East student, Gemma.



This year we held our first ever "GrandFriends Day", which was a chance to connect with people who care deeply about our students (and in some cases the same people who get them to and from school), tour the school, and learn more about what happens at Landmark East.



The 15th Annual Golf Tournament was again generously sponsored by MacKay Real Estate. This year we also had a Landmark East staff team, who proudly sported their Spirit Wear at KenWo!

There were plenty of other excellent fundraisers this year, including raffles, dinners, and more!



Ms. Pothier's Elementary students successfully hatched chicks again this year, and continued the incredible tradition of creating a calendar with fun background sets. Here are a few of last year's "monthly models" -





We have a new **Student Leadership** initiative this year, which includes getting points for doing great things like setting and achieving goals, acts of kindness, and positive contributions to the school community. Students also get points for showing grade level spirit by wearing their team colours every Friday.

Elementary



Grade 7

Grade 8



Grade 9

Grade 10



Grade 11

Grade 12





Along with being the guest speaker at graduation, Quentin Little Wolf Syliboy did an art workshop with our students where he helped them produce some incredible work.

We are fortunate to have a Health and Wellness Committee who organize events such as Smoothie Day, and the Parents Association who organize delicious meals for special occasions! We also had some excellent PD this year on topics like Executive Functioning and Zones of Regulation.



Some of our local advertising efforts have been displayed at Acadia Arena and in Grapevine Magazine.



LANDMARK EAST SCHOOL



We are serious about literacy education.
Also, Gaga Ball.

Our students learn with world-renowned literacy programs like the Orton-Gillingham Approach in their daily schedule. To find out more, contact admissions@landmarkeast.org.



Landmark East School empowers students with learning differences to unlock their full potential.



There's lots happening at Landmark East, **follow us** on **Facebook and Instagram!**

@LandmarkEast

