

Lynden High Alumni of the Year: Kurt Langstraat is Staying Connected to the Community

Note: The Lynden High School Alumni of the Year is chosen by the Lynden Alumni Association.

This year's Lynden High School Alumni of the Year recipient may have graduated from the high school in 1980, but he's never far from the school. From students in the local schools to the folks attending North County Christ the King, which he has served as pastor of for 22 years, Kurt Langstraat has a desire to connect with as many people as he can by building relationships.

Simply put, Langstraat loves the people of Lynden.

"I love going to sporting events and musicals to watch kids play and perform," he says. "We try to serve our schools by hosting events like baccalaureate, the football banquet and administrative events as they come up. We love to partner with schools and keep the connection strong between school and church if we can." The church supports the mentoring program Be The One, founded by members of the church.

"The community is its people, and I stay connected to the community through relationship with the people," he says.

Langstraat grew up in Lynden and was active in high school, serving as ASB president while participating in choir, jazz band, Whatcom County student council, football, basketball and track. He wrote for the school paper and still has fond memories of daily lunch with Jake Maberry, great friendships with classmates and playing sports alongside teammates. "I learned so much from playing team sports," he says, "and learned how to be a leader from my coaches and mentors."

Langstraat married a Lynden Christian graduate, Gwen Visser, and they served at a mission school in Taichung, Taiwan. He was the chaplain for a school with students and teachers from 18 nations (10% of the students were missionary kids and the other 90% were local Taiwanese kids). The couple moved back to Lynden in 2003, and he's been pastoring at NCCTK ever since.

"My background is in counseling, so its normal for people to call me when they are facing a challenge or difficulty and come in and process it with me," he says. "And then, of course, just serving alongside people of our community to build the best community possible."

Langstraat says that may mean opening the church's doors as an overnight relief center to flood victims from the Nooksack Valley or supporting New Way Ministries, Young Life, Lighthouse Mission, Engedi, Whatcom Pregnancy Center, Be The One and others.

“Our connection to the community is not just about us,” he says, “it’s about helping others who serve succeed in their ministry.”

Part of the community is the schools, a place Langstraat finds himself often. “Students represent families, and families need our support and care, and make up our community,” he says. “As a former athlete and a musician, I really enjoy watching all our kids compete and perform. I love seeing kids maximizing their gifts and abilities and enjoy going to games, musicals, concerts and even watching kids show their animals at the [Northwest Washington] Fair.”

Langstraat was celebrated at a LHS assembly on Oct. 8 and will be recognized at the home football game on Oct. 10. His message to students? “You are a masterpiece, unique, only one of you has ever been made,” he says. “Only you have the set of gifts, abilities, personality and passions that God allowed you to be born with. Discover your gifts, what you love to do and what fulfills you, and pursue that. If you maximize your gifting, passion and calling, you can make a difference in the lives of those around you, and you will have the best chance at enjoying life. Joy comes from serving others with your gifts.”

Langstraat has focused his life on that mission: loving people, whether in Lynden or beyond.

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