

## Field Trip Sparks Student-Initiated Change

After standing on top of the mountains of trash at Midland landfill, the students in the Sustainability class realized that they must take action.

They returned to the classroom to learn about various waste streams, including those that exist around Valley Lutheran. The culminating project? Choose one and create a plan that would help mitigate it.

To begin, students interviewed a variety of staff members who shared about various areas of waste that exist. From unused paper copies to yard waste to doing a deep dive into the dumpsters, multiple options quickly surfaced. The one that struck students the most was the styrofoam and plastic trash coming out of the cafeteria. "The kitchen was short-staffed and so it was difficult to serve students and wash dishes. Single use items were the easy, convenient solution," explained **Mr. Cooper**, teacher of the Sustainability class. "The three large trash cans in the cafeteria had to be emptied twice per lunch hour," **Dara Bukoffsky (VL '24)** remarked, "that's a lot of trash!"

"We chose the kitchen as our focus because it felt the most attainable," said **Rachel Piechotte (VL '23)**. Dara expanded, "and from our interview with Mr. Seidel, we could tell he was really passionate about the problem too."

The class presented their findings and rationale to the student body through a chapel service about creation care and invited them to be a part of the solution by signing up to help in the dishroom during a portion of their lunch hour. With student volunteers manning the dishroom, the kitchen could transition back to reusable dishes and silverware, significantly reducing the daily waste.



"Students are more willing than I thought they might be," Dara admitted, "It's great to see people come together to help fix this problem."

Frequent volunteer **Travis Scharich (VL '23)** shared his motivation for getting involved. "Why not? I have the time and it is something different to do. It keeps me busy and it's rewarding knowing that I got it done in the end!"

Participating isn't without extrinsic rewards as well. Volunteers receive a daily snack treat and points toward a school wide competition that includes a pizza party at the end of the year. The Sustainability class is grateful for grants from Thrivent Financial and WE Schools for covering the cost of these rewards.

In fact, this project received one of only 30 grants from WE Volunteer this year. The grant announcement stated, "We were so impressed by your students' efforts to volunteer in the dish room and reduce solid waste, while serving your kitchen staff."

And that's exactly how Food Service Coordinator **Karl Seidel** feels. "We have an excellent group of students who volunteer a portion of their lunch period. This is a tremendous help to us working in the food service! With their help we have reduced the use of foam and plastics and are now able to use mostly all reusable cutlery and dishes, [which] is a definite cost savings to the environment and to VLHS."

"We believe that God calls us to care for His world and serve each other, and this project accomplishes both," Mr. Cooper said. So far, around 20% of the student body has volunteered in the dish room at least once. "There are certainly regulars, who go above and beyond to help. We would love to see more students give it a try as well. It only takes about 15 minutes, but the service it provides to our kitchen staff, and the impact it has to reduce our solid waste is huge. We continue to encourage new students to sign up, not out of guilt or compulsion, but as a tangible act of worship to God who has given us so much."



# Touring the Road of Faith

After two years of being unable to tour, Valley Lutheran was blessed to once again be able to share in the celebration of God through music and voice as our Symphonic Band and Golden Voice Choir travelled and performed throughout Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Wisconsin for their 2022 Lenten Tour. Many students had reflections on their time and experiences throughout the tour to share.

**Tyson Hook (VL '24)**, a sophomore at Valley Lutheran, said, "During the tour we touched the hearts of many and opened the minds and eyes of everyone we performed for. We took God with us wherever and made sure to spread his message to all, no matter who they were: black, white, old, or young. God used us to show the message to all. We definitely had some exhausting days, but God helped us to stay strong and firm through Him. As described in 2 Corinthians 6:16, we are the temple of God and He dwells within us and walks with us. No matter what we are doing, who we are, and how sinful we are, we are God's people.

Many people came up to us to tell us how great we did, even when we thought we had the worst performance of the tour. God showed through us and through Valley Lutheran as a whole. We thank the Lord for everything, and the opportunity to shine his light on people we have never come in contact with before. It is a great feeling. As a part of the Valley Lutheran family, image, and community, we thank you Lord. We also thank everybody who listened to the performances, which our Lord, Jesus Christ blessed us with."



"The most significant way my faith was strengthened was through people. My eyes were opened to other people's faith lives and how they worship and see things, which might not seem huge, but I find it interesting. I think that having a bond with others that also have a foundation in God's Word makes a big difference as well. It's something I used to take for granted, but now I realize how important it really is." - **Brianna Pike (VL '22)**

"I have a lot of favorite memories from the tour. One of the most fulfilling memories was when a member of the congregation at St. Peters (I think), came into our bus and told us how we touched more people than we knew with our music. I also will always remember the very end, after the home concert I hugged my parents and they told me how they were proud of me." - **Claire Neumann (VL '24)**

"The first thing that popped into my head was the nearly crying grandma from the Valpo congregation who demanded that the whole congregation join her in giving us a standing ovation. As tour went on, it became even more apparent to me just how powerful our music really was because our performance still elicited that reaction from her even though we fumbled through each and every one of our lines. Again, when Bethlehem's pastor was tearing up in the front row during "Old Irish Blessing" at our home concert and then we received an exuberant standing ovation, that proved just how powerful our music combined with our message was." - **Ezekiel Pearson (VL '23)**

 **Upcoming Music Events**

**Spring Handbell Concert**  
Sunday, May 15 | 4 p.m.  
VLHS Gymnasium  
Featuring: Four area handbell choirs

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**VLHS Spring Music Concert**  
Tuesday, May 24  
Location TBD\*  
Featuring: VLHS Bands & Choirs

\*Check our Facebook page soon for details! 

 **Summer Camps**



**JUNE**  
**14-17,**  
**20-23,**  
**27-30**

Offerings in sports, technology, and the arts

Information and registration at [www.vlhs.com/camps](http://www.vlhs.com/camps)



## Winter Sports Awards

Valley Lutheran is proud of our student athletes – who not only excel in the classroom, but who perform to the best of their God given ability in their sport. VL winter athletes received high honors during the 2021-2022 season for their efforts in academics and athletics. Congratulations to those student athletes! The full list of winter athletic awards can be found at [www.vlhs.com/2022wintersportsawards](http://www.vlhs.com/2022wintersportsawards).