

Crossroads Connection

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www.crossroadslongmont.org

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Congratulations to Crossroads' Largest Graduating Class To-Date!

On Friday, May 20, five students walked across the graduation stage. Each has overcome significant hurdles in their education--or they wouldn't have been at Crossroads in the first place. Now, each of them has not only a diploma, but the hope and confidence to dream big for the future.

Alex Ashley has a job as a security guard, and plans to work for a while and then go to Front Range Community College (FRCC). His brother, Ben Ashley, hopes to work full-time while taking classes part-time at FRCC. Luke McManus will pursue a job in welding, the field he has studied at the Career Development Center (CDC) for the past three years through a partnership between CDC and Crossroads, and will also attend a vocational program to increase his job-readiness skills (check out Luke's story, below). Noah Schlegel, who completed a concurrent-enrollment class at FRCC last fall, will continue his studies there and then plans to transfer to a four-year college. Rizia Swedbergh, who completed four concurrent-enrollment classes at FRCC this year, hopes to matriculate to Simpson University in Redding, California to study nursing and eventually earn a master's in anaesthesiology.

These success stories are what Crossroads is all about: **Changing our world, one life at a time.** Thank you for investing in the lives of our students!

Volunteers Change Lives at Crossroads School: Unusual Ways to Make a Difference

As a private school, Crossroads receives no government funding. In order to be available to all students who need us, we charge only \$100 per month, which covers about 15% of our budget. Donations from individuals, businesses, foundations, and churches make up the other 85%.

One way we keep that budget low, and also make sure our students have opportunity to connect with a variety of role models, is to use lots of volunteers. They help in a variety of ways, depending on their gifts:

- A retired United Airlines pilot who loves math comes in once or twice a week to **tutor individual students**. She discovered that many of them did not have their multiplication facts memorized, a skill which makes higher math easier to learn, so she made it her mission to drill and encourage them until they all had the multiplication facts down.
- A crew of Home Depot staff volunteers **prepped and painted several hallways and classrooms**.
- Several engineers and "computer geeks" donate their time and skills as needed to **keep our computers, our printer, our website, and our network up and running**.
- An emergency room doctor comes in every week or two on his days off. He does dissections with students, **helping students explore the wonders of animals**.
- A professional chef donates his time and skill each year to **cook and serve our annual Friends Dinner**—with the help of some of our students who are studying Culinary Arts, mentoring them in the process.

- A retired guidance counselor from Job Corps meets with students once a week, helping them ***plan for graduation and dream about their future beyond.***
- The staff at Longmont Ford ***donated and maintain a van*** for us to drive students on field trips and to classes at the Career Development Center and the St. Vrain Online Global Academy.
- The managers from Wells Fargo Bank have chosen to start their quarterly managers' meetings at Crossroads a couple of times, ***donating lunch for the students and hanging out to eat with them.***

These are only a few examples of our volunteers. They vary in age, in experience, in profession, and in availability. Most of them are not teachers. But they all have two things in common—they care about students and they are willing to use their gifts and their time to benefit those students. And they are changing lives! **Would you like to join them? Contact Barb Bulthuis (bbulthuis@crossroadslongmont.org; 303-709-9881) to get together for coffee and talk about how your gifts and passions and Crossroads' needs might intersect!**

Thinking Outside the Box: Luke's Story... by Janet Streed

One visit over a cup of coffee is enough to convince anyone willing to listen that Luke McManus would hold his own in a conversation with Dmitri Mendeleev, the Russian chemist and inventor who formulated Periodic Law. The characteristics of the properties of elements fascinates Luke, and perhaps someday he might discover another chemical element. Luke thinks outside the box, and that's why Crossroads has been the perfect fit for him the past four years.

"The world is reality – you definitely have to step in with both feet," says Luke, and that's just what this Crossroads graduate will be doing. His autism plays a major role in his high-level thinking and his fascination with the Chinese culture. He takes welding skills, and much more, with him as he graduates. Welding will allow him to make a living; playing piano, practicing karate, and teaching himself Chinese will enrich that life and maybe help him to "someday live in China and make a new life for myself."



Luke plays piano by ear, so his dad, Jim McManus, arranged for piano lessons so his son could learn to read music. When asked if he liked piano lessons, Luke smiled broadly and said, "I definitely enjoy listening to music." Luke's sense of humor is again revealed when he tells of the time he was listed on the board as Student of the Day. Other students were to write something nice about him under his name. Luke decided to have some fun. He disguised his handwriting and wrote 'you need to take a bath.' The search for the guilty party was on, with everyone under suspicion, except Luke. At the end of the day, teachers were still clueless as to who wrote the message, so Luke confessed to Mrs. Keuter that he was the guilty party!

When asked what he would change about Crossroads, Luke said, "Why should I change it? It's definitely the school for me." Although Luke has trouble focusing, once he is interested in a subject, he will master it. Switching from subject to subject during the school day was stressful for Luke, so his teachers allowed him to devote his time to only one subject each day.

Luke rides his bicycle an average of 16 miles a day to get from home to school, from school to karate, from karate to wherever else he needs to go, and then back home. He doesn't remember a time when he didn't ride a bicycle. After 16 miles of riding, he could easily fall into bed at night with nothing on his mind but sleep. That isn't the case. He might be thinking about the Periodic Table, or dreaming about "ultimate self-recognition everywhere, which is clearly impossible, or maybe not - I just haven't gotten there yet," he says.

Yes, Luke and Dmitri Mendeleev would have a fascinating and stimulating conversation for sure, with Luke holding his own. **There's no doubt, too, that Luke will hold his own quite well as he steps from Crossroads into the world.**