



## Foothills Community Christian School Athletic Facility Campaign Case Statement



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### **The Campaign for Foothills: Falcons Take Flight**

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Since the fall of 1997, Foothills Community Christian School has assisted parents in providing a Christ-centered education that values exceptional academics, strong moral character, and service to others. Beginning as a K-8 school and later expanding to include grades 9-12, Foothills was founded by a handful of parents who, through planning and prayer, were called to bring a non-denominational Christian school to serve Great Falls. The families were also focused on providing a school that was an integral part of the community.

Today, Foothills annually draws an average of 150 students in grades PreK-12 from Great Falls and many surrounding communities. With recent changes in our nation, we are seeing an increase in interested families and are projecting enrollment increases. In addition to a successful and challenging academic program, Foothills offers daily Bible class and weekly student chapels while encouraging service to others and providing the structure and opportunities to serve. Foothills also offers a variety of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities including varsity basketball, soccer and volleyball, as well as opportunities to participate in golf, Student Council, National Honor Society and other activities. A variety of activities are also available for elementary and middle school age students.

By coupling quality classroom education with a Christian worldview, Foothills offers a Christ-centered community where students grow academically, socially, and spiritually. They are taught and equipped to be image bearers of Christ as students and later, as adults who will serve in our communities.

One of the areas of concern for the school has been access to athletic facilities. Thanks to the support of local families and a partnership with the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB), the school has been able to successfully access gym facilities and host games for elementary, middle, and high school sports. With changes in public usage patterns at MSDB, access has become harder and use for Foothills activities has been more limited. When COVID-19 arrived in time for the fall 2020 academic year, access to the facility was lost for the duration of the school year. While we have been granted approval for use in the 2021-22 year, the recent past has demonstrated that we cannot continue to rely on this partnership for the long-term. We had success in 2020-21 with short-term plans at other local venues but these are not sustainable.

Field access has also been challenging for our soccer program. After paying to utilize the Seibel Soccer Complex for years, we have successfully partnered with the City of Great Falls to use North Kiwanis Park for practices and soccer games. The use is year-to-year and the field is not designed to support soccer or adequately meet needs of fans. The changing dynamic of the park and recreation system in Great Falls provides no secure long-term solution for Foothills. Due to scheduled work in the summer 2021, we are unsure of the status of the field for the fall 2021 soccer season.

Relying on these partnerships has also reduced our ability to generate revenue from athletic events as taking gate admission has been restricted or not possible. Additionally, we have not been able to operate a concession stand at either location which is a way to help offset athletic program costs.

The lack of our own usable space is becoming more challenging each year. In order to grow our programs and enrollment, and expand our reach into the community by offering camps and gym/recreational space, we need to move forward with our own athletic facility that will provide not only athletic opportunities but fine arts space and revenue generating potential.

## **Foothills Impact**

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Foothills Community Christian School's primary focus is on the academic and spiritual growth of students. That being said, we believe the opportunity for students to participate in extracurricular activities is part of the character-building process.

Through our core values of **LEARN**, we cultivate within our students a commitment to Leadership, Exceptional Academics, the Authority of God's Word, and Relationships in a Nurturing Environment. Athletic and extracurricular opportunities enhance these core values outside of the classroom experience.

Since adding the high school program in 2002, Foothills has provided athletic opportunities at various ages starting as early as 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. As members of the Montana Christian Athletic Association (MCAA), our varsity teams have opportunities to participate in competitive athletics. Our teams have won 10 state titles including a three-peat by our girls' volleyball team from 2015-2018.

Many of our student athletes have gone on from Foothills to participate in collegiate level athletics as well as various levels of coaching. Through our athletic programs, our students have been able to receive recognition from local media reiterating the value of combining a Christ first approach to athletics which is uncommon in today's culture. The fact that all of our athletic teams have alumni serving as volunteer coaches in some capacity is a testament to the impact athletic competition has on the lives of our students.

*"This facility is a dream come true for so many athletes; past, present, and future, who have found a family in FCCS Athletics. Having a home gym is just a physical representation of the identity we have felt for a while. But, it truly does feel like proof of the progress, hard work, and dedication that the school and program has poured into the community the past 25 years."*

~Josey Lindseth, Athletic Director, FCCS Class of 2017

## **The Challenge**

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Built in the 1940's as a worship and educational facility for Catholic sisters, the current facility has provided a home for Foothills for nearly 20 years. Over the past five years, significant improvements have been made to the instructional portions of the facility including a new roof and new lights have been installed in the gym. While these are helpful and expand our mission in the classroom, they do not address the challenges of the existing gym. There is not sufficient space on the current property to expand our facility to include a new gym.

***Gym is not regulation size.*** While perfectly functional for physical education classes and limited team sports, the current gym space is not functional for high school basketball specifically and does not provide seating for spectators. While we were able to utilize the space for volleyball in the fall of 2020, the close proximity of the court boundaries to the benches and the walls is a safety risk for students.

***Location of gym prohibits increase in size.*** Due to its location in the middle of the elementary wing of the school, the existing gym cannot be modified to add seating or be a regulation sized court without major construction to the entire section of the building.

***Aging wood floor needs replaced.*** The floor in the gym has been heavily used with physical education classes and indoor recess during the winter months. While fully functional for these activities, the floor needs to be replaced to accommodate any competitive sports activities. A full replacement would come at a significant cost and only benefit our teams for practice use.

***Lack of required gym essentials is an issue.*** As a result of COVID, we had to host a few high school volleyball games in our gym. While the floor is regulation size for volleyball, there were challenges as a result of not having a scoreboard, microphone, seating or even adequate locker room space for teams.

While the gym works for our elementary needs as well as instructional needs, it is not designed to accommodate middle school or high school competitive sports. Those are important extra-curricular opportunities we provide for our students and it is important we address these challenges in a timely manner. This will not only enhance our athletic program but more importantly, will provide a safe location and space for our students to compete within. Additionally, the challenge of space restricts our ability to host tournaments for MCAA activities, camps for our community, or functional space for other local sports teams and clubs.

## **The Opportunity**

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Since its beginning, Foothills has been blessed by our students and families, by our teachers and staff, and by the grace of God. Through these, Foothills has continued to grow and succeed despite challenges presented by our current surroundings. Our opportunity is to build on this success and to grow upon the foundation we've built by constructing a new athletic facility that will foster additional growth in our student population, enrich our athletic programs, allow broader service to our community, and nurture an ever-deeper commitment to our shared beliefs.

***Christ-centered facility for a Christ-centered school.*** By designing our own athletic facility, we can ensure our athletic competitions adequately reflect our values and focus on Christian education. A Christ-centered education extends beyond the classroom and on to the court or field for our student athletes. Having a location we can showcase the importance of this to other teams and our community is important.

***Flexible design will enable future growth of athletics and fine arts programs.***

The facility will allow us to host our own games and competitions as well as run two practices at the same time. The use of two courts will benefit our families and students to better accommodate their schedules.

***Added athletic facilities foster school pride, sense of community, and beneficial partnerships.***

New and current athletic facilities will increase support for our athletic teams by encouraging attendance among students, parents, families, teachers and staff. Moreover, a gym and athletic facilities provides opportunities to partner with community groups wanting to host athletic tournaments and events. The added visibility and additional revenue streams derived are critical to our ability to continuously enrich and improve our programs without increasing the tuition-based financial commitment of our families.

***Location enhances our visibility in the community and provides much needed meeting space.***

The location of our new athletic facility is conveniently located near the Marketplace shopping area. Having a presence in this section of town will help promote our school to our community and be a good opportunity for other groups to utilize our venue for not only athletic tournaments, but for other community-based events. Having a location that can eventually host small fundraising events and gatherings will benefit our community as well as generate additional revenue sources. While these are not intended to fund large activities, the ability to generate revenue will, over time, offset costs of maintaining the venue for our own use.

*“Unless the Lord builds the house, the builders labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the guards stand watch in vain.” ~Psalms 127:1*

## **Falcons Take Flight**

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This campaign is an effort to secure the future of Foothills Community Christian School and our programs. Securing our own venue takes away the uncertainty of our ability to host home sporting events and practices and gives us access to land and space to eventually expand the facility to support more fine arts activities from our school.

Our Campaign Committee is formed of dedicated individuals who are sharing the vision of the new athletic facility around the community and inspiring generosity from those who believe in investing in the next generation of Christian leaders for the Great Falls and our community as a whole.

Today, we ask for your prayerful consideration in supporting this effort and to join us. Your support is not just an investment in Foothills but also in the Great Falls Community.

## **The Facility**

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The facility will be located on a 4-acre parcel at 3400 Flood Road thanks to a generous partnership with The Bridge Church. Through this partnership, we have access to the land to build our facility and use agreement to utilize the existing parking lot for activities and events. This saves us thousands of dollars and mutually benefits the church and our school.

Furthermore, we have access to an additional 1-acre of land that will be a future home for other school related recreational activities.

Falcons take flight will be completed in a series of phases based on resources and most immediate needs of our programs.

**Phase I** – Land ~ COMPLETE

**Phase II** – Soccer Field Construction ~ Anticipated fall 2022

**Phase III** – Construction of athletic facility anticipated by fall 2023

Additional phases may be added in future years to accommodate expected growth in enrollment or in response to additional needs of our community.

**The athletic facility itself will be approximately 17,000 square feet and provide the following:**

- Full size regulation championship basketball court with seating
- Two full size courts for tournaments, practices, camps and more
- Concession area
- Locker Rooms
- Future banquet/meeting space within the gym
- Future location for concerts, plays, or fine arts performances in the gym
- Opportunities to partner with our city, club teams, and other groups to provide a safe space for recreational activity.



*This tentative site plan shows the proposed location for a regulation soccer field as well as an athletic facility. Final locations of the field and facility may be adjusted based on recommendations of our committee and planning team.*