

# Athletes in Action

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“My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.”

Psalm 139:15-16

Hello again from the Keefer clan! We hope this letter finds you well. I'm not sure what this February weather has been like where you live, but the past few days around here have been heavenly...mid-sixty degree temps. The kids are outside playing every spare minute (some in flip flops!), you can smell spring in the air, and there feels like renewed energy all around. The gift of winter sun in southeast Michigan, I have learned, is a rare treat, and we have had plenty of it the past few weeks. God has really used this weather to lift my spirits, as sometimes the mundaneness of everyday life can bring me down...another kid to get dressed, another PB&J to make, another errand to run, another bathroom to clean. I heard someone speak the other week about Psalm 139, how God uniquely formed me, crafted me, and ordained my days for me. He knew my life circumstances before I was even born and carefully designed me in a way such that I can live them out. What an amazing truth! By remembering and trusting in His truth, I can go through my busy days of family and ministry with great purpose...God chose me for this and has designed me to walk through it with Him. And for Colby and I not only walking with God through life, but walking through life with *you* makes a difference in our lives. To know that you are behind what we do here at the U of M brings so much encouragement to us. This summer marks 19 years that I have served on staff with AIA (17 for Colby), and some of you have been with us that entire time! Needless to say, you all have a special place in our hearts. We are thankful that you are a part of the days God has ordained for us!

The picture to the right is of me and Kathy, a junior on the golf team, with our crazy Jarius. Kathy has been involved in our ministry since her freshman year, but this year is really catching a vision for reaching out to her teammates. “Sarah, I’ve convinced everyone on my team except one to come tonight!” —this was a text I received from her recently before one of our monthly gatherings. Kathy has been attending a student-led discipleship group each week this year, praying for her teammates to join her. In fact, every week she brings the copies of the bible study back to her team for anyone who might want one. So, she was thrilled when so many of her teammates came to our monthly gathering. While there, one of our student leaders talked to one of Kathy’s friends about the importance of being in a discipleship group...and that friend came the following week! I love how God used the body of Christ to impact this sweet girl!



## Winter Retreat!

The last weekend in January a group of about 175 student-athletes converged upon downtown Chicago for our annual Athletes in Action Winter Retreat. This is always one of the highlights of the year for me, as you get to see students challenged and encouraged in their faith. The weekend consists of listening to talks, participating in discussion groups, taking steps of faith during an outreach with a local youth basketball league, and just having the opportunity to meet athletes from different schools around the region. We asked a few of the Michigan athletes that went to write a few sentences about their experience, and here's what they had to say...

*"Before going on the retreat, I found myself struggling to find time to go to church and small group and I often neglected reading the Word and praying. At the retreat, the talks provided me with a great deal of knowledge about developing my faith, and the experience of sharing the Gospel with a high school basketball player made me realize a need and desire for a closer relationship with God. Therefore, the retreat served as a great reminder for me to refocus and recalibrate my life around Christ and to seek a close and personal relationship with him." ~Matt, football*



Christina and Matt

*"Winter retreat was an amazing experience, and meeting other athletes who also shared a passion for Christ was amazing and reaffirming that I'm not alone in this. I learned how to share the word and Christ's love with others, something I had never experienced before and would not have done on my own. I was able to connect with God over the weekend in a way I was unable to do while at school and surrounded by distractions. I committed myself to a life of pursuing God more." ~Christina, cheerleading*



Marlise, Sami, Clare

*"Especially as a freshman, winter retreat in Chicago was a special experience. I was so thankful to spend a weekend surrounded by athletes who share my values, beliefs, and desire to grow with God. I enjoyed making friendships with fellow Michigan student athletes, but also making connections with athletes from throughout the Midwest. In addition, it was valuable to hear a new perspective about faith. The weekend encouraged me to learn and build my own relationship with God." ~Clare, field hockey*



I realize this picture may be hard to see, but it tells probably my favorite story from the retreat. Nicky, one of our Michigan leaders, invited her brother to come. He said yes, and Matt was the only representative there from his small Iowa college. God moved mightily in Matt's life during the retreat and he committed his life to Christ! Nicky is beyond herself excited about God's faithfulness to her family. Here is Matt "nailing" his old self to the cross.

*You are so, so appreciated by us! Thank you for the faithful giving of your prayers and finances!*

Please pray...

...for Kathy as she continues to reach out to her teammates on the golf team. Pray they would hear the gospel and respond in faith.

...for our spring break service trip to inner-city Detroit 2/24-3/2. Pray the hearts of those going would draw closer to Christ, and that God would use us to be a blessing there.

...for Colby as he juggles the many responsibilities in his life...campus, seminary, summer opportunities, family. Pray he would find wisdom and rest in God.