

CATALYST



ST. MARCUS SCHOOL NEWSLETTER WINTER 2016/17



IT FEELS LIKE ANCIENT HISTORY, BUT IN THE SUMMER OF 2002, St. Marcus owned precisely *zero* classrooms.

The only school building, which had room for approximately 100 students the previous school year, had been demolished. The reconstituted school was preparing to open in a rented, unused, old YMCA building at 12th and Garfield.

Today, St. Marcus Lutheran School serves approximately 900 children on two campuses with 39 classrooms, two libraries, one science lab, two music rooms, an art room and a host of offices and support spaces. The school is not only bigger, but it is better, prioritizing faith and character development and excelling in academic preparation for life.

It's been an amazing journey. *How did we get here?*

God's grace. We wholeheartedly believe that "many are the plans in a man's heart but it is the Lord's will that prevails," (Proverbs 19:21) and that God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us" (Ephesians 3:20).

Sacrificial donors. Simply put, our friends and donors provided the financial resources to build classrooms and sustain high-quality instruction. Some have given over \$1,000,000, others regular, faithful gifts of \$50 or less. Regardless of the number, every gift is valued and has helped us get to where we are today.

Strong, visionary leadership. Pastor Mark Jeske, with over 35 years of service at St. Marcus, had the strength and vision to persevere through two very tough decades, and then boldly pounce on opportunities, such as vouchers, when they arrived. Pastor Mark recruited my predecessor, Kole Knueppel, who possessed the vision and charisma to reboot the school and embark on building the best, urban Christian school in America. Today, the school and church leadership team is broader and stronger than ever.

A supportive church congregation. St. Marcus Lutheran Church has been in existence since 1875 (three years after the school), and provides a wealth of passionate people who give their time, talents and treasure to support the school in a wide variety of ways. Critically, the congregation holds the school up in prayer and possesses a strong, wise board to ensure that the school is soundly managed.

Relentlessly high expectations. Whatever we do, whether it's classroom instruction, building cleanliness, personal conduct, alumni support, or community engagement, we expect excellence. We encourage one another constantly but are not afraid to hold one another accountable and push one another to constant improvement.

Incredible need. The city of Milwaukee currently has approximately 100 K-8, 80/80 schools (schools that are at least 80% African American and 80% low-income) that serve approximately 36,000 children. The average reading proficiency rate is just 9% in these schools. Tragic. The problem is rampant in private voucher schools, public schools and charter schools, with tragic life-long outcomes. We must respond to this need.

Amazing educators. Our lead teachers, support teachers, and special educators are the most impactful people in the school. We are blessed to identify, equip and develop passionate, mission-driven, excellent educators. Without them, there is no progress.

If I had to summarize in one word how we got here, I'd use the word passion. At immeasurable personal expense, God had the passion for His creation to send Jesus to be our salvation. Pastor Mark Jeske and Kole Knueppel had the passion to transform and build the school. The congregation has had the passion for over 140 years to persevere through thick and thin. Staff, friends and supporters have the passion to serve and sacrifice for the sake of children in desperate need of a high-quality, Christ-centered education.

Before I close, I want to share one final thought. Continuing the pattern of strong, passionate leadership, I'm thrilled to introduce you to my new boss and St. Marcus' new Executive Director, Mr. Fred Lautz. Fred brings more than 30 years of business experience as a practicing attorney at Milwaukee's second-largest law firm, Quarles & Brady. For the past nine years, he served as the firm's managing partner. He has served as Board Chairman of Wisconsin Lutheran High School, is currently Board Chair of Schools That Can Milwaukee, and is a passionate driver for high-quality, Christ-centered education in Milwaukee. What a gift that God has blessed us with Fred to lead this ministry at this time.

Let's not lose our passion. Let's continue to work together to transform this city one student, one school, one community at a time.

Thank you and God Bless,

Henry Tyson, Superintendent

P.S. Thirty-nine classrooms is awesome, and we are so thankful. BUT we need five more! **We're out of space for our rising 4th graders at the North Campus next year.** Will you **#SeeLoveBuild?**

A photograph of three third-grade students, two boys and one girl, standing in front of a brick school building. They are all smiling and wearing school uniforms: white shirts, dark ties, and dark skirts or pants. The girl in the center has a red bow with a gold star on her neck. The boys have their arms around her shoulders. The background shows a modern brick building with large windows and a covered entrance.

Love what you see at St. Marcus?

You can see even more children have access to a high-quality education. St. Marcus is expanding its North Campus, and these third grade students need a classroom before school starts again in August!

Will YOU build the last two floors with us?

Make your gift at: <http://tinyurl.com/seelovebuild>

#SeeLOVEBuild



THE ST. MARCUS SCHOOL BENEFIT GALA was held on Saturday, November 12th. Over 500 guests and volunteers "moved in" to experience an intentional evening,

designed for the purpose of serving children and families. As St. Marcus School's largest fundraiser, the gala raised over \$560,000 toward school operations and expansion efforts.

Were you there? If so, thank you for being an integral link in this circle of support. Your commitment fuels all students at St. Marcus to discover their passions and live with conviction, knowing they were created for a purpose.

Thank you for supporting a Christ-centered education where children learn about Jesus. Where the Holy Spirit works in hearts and transforms lives. Where lives are changed because of relationships.

When we move into lives the way Jesus moves into ours, then we can commit and serve radically. With Jesus, we can have it all.

View media from the evening...

<http://tinyurl.com/gala2016photos>
<http://tinyurl.com/gala2016videos>



- SAVE THE DATE - GALA 2017
Saturday, November 11



Dear 3rd Grade Scholar, *Why are you passionate about The North Campus?*

NARIYAH SAYS...

I came to the North Campus in 2nd grade. My old school was not a good place to be. Kids would cuss and fight each other. I never got homework. (I used to think that was good, but I wasn't getting any smarter.) Mr. Christensen is a great teacher even though he gives homework on Fridays! I can be having a bad day and need a timeout in the hall, but if I recover and recognize my struggles, Mr. Christensen still lets me have fun at recess. At St. Marcus, I know that somebody always loves me.

AMONTAYE SAYS...

I have a lot of questions about things. School used to be easy, but it keeps getting harder and harder. Mr. Christensen says hard work is important because it's practice that helps you become an expert. So, I keep asking questions because that's how I learn. Would Jesus think it's a sin to lie so that you won't hurt somebody's feelings? Why is China a different culture and how are you supposed to act there? If there is a 4th grade classroom built for me next year, I hope my teacher has a lot of answers to my questions.



JADEN SAYS...

Right now, it's my mom, my little sister and me. I read a ton of books. I really like reading funny things. My favorite is *Diary Of A Wimpy Kid*. I'm so far into the books that we do have at the North Campus and ones that Mrs. Richter gives me from her own library. I would love to have more books to read at the North Campus and really hope they build a library for next school year.

BROOKLYN SAYS...

I came to St. Marcus in 1st grade because my older sister went here. At the other school, kids were fighting on the stairs. My mom likes how hard they make us work to help us reach our goals, but math is so hard for me. I don't like math, but my support and special needs teachers help me outside of class. They help make sense of hard math problems and make it fun to learn. No matter how hard it is, God is mighty and great and I can do anything to glorify Him.

JAZALE SAYS...

Being a leader means showing people how to do things in class and how to do the right thing. In class, Mr. Christensen has us raise our hands if the lesson is too easy and then raise our hands if it's too hard. That way, we know who needs a helping hand. I really like African and hip-hop dancing because my parents taught me, and I've been onstage a lot so I'm not scared. If my school has a dance room next year, I want to show others how to dance by starting a dance club and being its leader.

DENAJA SAYS...

It's my first year at St. Marcus. My favorite class by far is art. When I work hard on a picture of my house or of Jesus, my mom loves it and puts it on the fridge. I'm praying they build a new art room for next year; I know my art will be better than ever! My mom will have to make more room on the fridge.



The Answer is **PASSION**

By: Jessica Pelnar, Mission Advancement Team

What if a normal day at work suddenly turned into a lockdown and you later found stray bullets lodged in your car? What would you do? Would you be on the first bus out of the neighborhood, or give a prayer of thanks that it was just a car and not a student?

This is the exact experience 3rd grade teacher James Christensen faced earlier this year while at the North Campus.

James may be a first year lead teacher at St. Marcus, but his story begins long before this past August. James (also known as Jimmy) completed four years of teacher training through the Center for Urban Teaching (CfUT) and served two of those years at St.

Marcus. Having completed his collegiate journey with a bachelor's in elementary education at Martin Luther College, Jimmy continued to share his gifts as a teacher and as a Christian missionary in China. Because of his dedication and love for the Lord, many children overseas now know reading, writing and also the compassionate love of God. Once he completed his teaching position in China, Jimmy was looking forward to being back in his hometown of Milwaukee and accepted a call to teach the first 3rd grade class at St. Marcus' North Campus.

With great excitement, he prepared for teaching in an urban setting. However, stray bullets were not exactly what he had in mind. When someone encounters a day such as this, what prompts them to stay? Why not go to a calmer community where even locking your door is unnecessary? Jimmy has a simple answer to that question: passion. It has been his passion to work with a community, not just "co-workers." He sees "everyone as family that is brought together by a shared mission" to educate and effect change in Milwaukee.

Here at St. Marcus, Jimmy saw an opportunity to be a part of real change that is happening in our city. He believes, "Children have to break the cycle. Every kid is capable, but they have to want it." The city of Milwaukee has thousands of children ready and waiting to be the leaders of tomorrow. All they need is opportunity, a space to learn and grow and people who believe in them.

The North Campus currently serves 200 scholars in grades K3 through 3rd. Jimmy's third grade class is in need of a classroom for next school year. St. Marcus is seeking passionate partners to help build their classroom. The build-out of the third floor will make space for Jimmy's scholars in addition to four more classrooms. The lower level build-out will also provide music/dance and art rooms as well as a library for North Campus scholars.

Jimmy constantly sees a drive to succeed in his students. Whether it is taking pride in a clean classroom or building each other up during tough times, scholars work hard everyday to make it better than the last. "Students are constantly making art for the classroom and look forward to praising God through music. Scholars need a place that feeds their imagination, creativity and expression of gratitude to the Lord." Jimmy also shares, "the best way to help a struggling child is to pour Jesus into them."

With your support, you can provide a space for Jimmy's scholars to soar and be part of a passionate community, effecting powerful change.



St. Marcus School

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St. Marcus is a Christian, college prep school serving 900 students (K3 through 8th grade) at two campuses. St. Marcus' vision is that every family has access to high-quality education in the city of Milwaukee. As the school continues to grow and expand, it consistently delivers excellent academic results, dedicates itself to community transformation and serves as a catalyst for citywide school reform. St. Marcus believes there is no excuse for failure, and through Christ, nothing is impossible.

**INVEST IN CHRISTIAN LEADERS IN TRAINING
WWW.STMARCUS.ORG/SCHOOL**

**Show scholars our great country
*through the Discover America program.***

WWW.STMARCUS.ORG/SCHOOL/PROGRAMS/DISCOVER-AMERICA

Contact Jessica at jessica.pelnar@stmarcus.org or 414-702-6707 to sponsor a student.

...UNTIL JUSTICE ROLLS DOWN LIKE WATERS
AND RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE A MIGHTY STREAM

