

CATALYST

ST. MARCUS SCHOOL MAGAZINE • SUMMER 2022



I am dedicating this 48th Catalyst issue to my friend, mentor, and pastor whose visionary and talented leadership, under the gracious hand of God, has made my last twenty years at St. Marcus possible. After 42 years of service at St. Marcus, Pastor Mark Jeske will lead his final

service on Sunday, July 17, and enter formal, though undoubtedly, partial retirement.

Pastor Mark arrived at St. Marcus in 1980 at a time when the 1913 church building needed renovations, the congregation was aging, and the 100 year-old school was marching steadily towards closure. Shortly after arriving, Mark would meet his future wife, Carol, who would become a legend of love, Gospel, and pedagogy in her own right.

Under Pastor Mark's leadership, the congregation has grown five-fold in terms of membership, the sanctuary has been beautifully renovated inside and out, the church spawned the influential "Time of Grace", and its once-struggling school has become a leader in urban education with three campuses and over 1,000 students. Remarkable as this is, it says nothing of what's truly important - the thousands of lives that have been eternally impacted by Mark and Carol's faithful service at St. Marcus.

As critical icing on the cake, Pastor Mark leaves the next generation of leaders firmly in place: Lead Pastor James Hein, Executive Director Kole Knueppel, and me as school superintendent. We serve under a strong board within a fiscally healthy organization blessed with exemplary people and facilities. Pastor Mark once said, "Henry, my role is simply to remove obstacles out of your way." That was a wonderfully reassuring sentiment to a young leader who didn't really know what he was doing. Pastor Mark was true to his word and did exactly that. I have profound respect and appreciation for Pastor Mark Jeske and attribute the successes of St. Marcus Lutheran School to God's grace and Pastor Mark's enlightened and humble leadership.

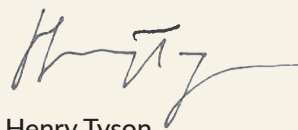
Before I leave you to peruse the rest of this issue, allow me to share a few highlights from the 21-22 school year:

- We successfully, if painfully, made it through the pandemic.
- We graduated our first class from the North Campus, which opened eight years ago.
- We welcomed our first 150 students at the Harambee Campus. We look forward to the oldest of those scholars walking across the stage in just six short years.
- 93% of the St. Marcus class of 2018 graduated from high school, despite pandemic challenges.
- 21 out of 22 administrators will return to St. Marcus for the 22-23 school year.
- The \$31,000,000 Courage to Commit campaign went public with just over \$20,000,000 raised to date.

Thank you, Pastor Mark, and Carol, for bravely leading the way. Thank you, friends, and supporters, who, like me, share their conviction that children must know their Lord and Savior, be disciplined in His Name and deserve access to a life-giving, hope-filled exemplary education.

Thank you for continuing to believe that this is possible and for opening the doors to even more children and families through the Harambee Campus.

Sincerely,



Henry Tyson
Superintendent



Pastor Mark & Carol Jeske

ST. MARCUS SCHOOL ANNUAL BENEFIT GALA 2022

UNWRITTEN STORIES

Saturday, November 12th

For details, tickets, and sponsorships, visit
www.stmarcusgala.com



Celebration of Ministry Senior Pastor Mark Jeske

Thanksgiving Celebration of Ministry

Sunday, July 17

8:00 am and 10:30 am worship services

This will be Pastor Jeske's final Sunday leading worship at St. Marcus.

Coffee and bakery served all morning.

A luncheon to follow the 10:30 am service.

Retirement Celebration

Friday, September 23

5:30 pm Beverages and hors d'oeuvres

6:00 pm Opening program and celebrations into the evening

Both events will be held at St. Marcus



YEARS IN THE MAKING

North Campus Graduates its First Class

by: Sean McNealy, Mission Advancement Team



A reflection from North Campus Principal April Richter

HONESTLY, IT HAS TAKEN SOME “BLOOD, SWEAT, AND TEARS” TO GET TO THE POINT OF GRADUATING OUR FIRST 8TH GRADE CLASS FROM THE NORTH CAMPUS, BUT IT’S AMAZING HOW THE CAMPUS HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED INTO A SCHOOL THAT ACCOMMODATES SCHOLARS FROM AGE 3 TO 14.

The 2022 graduating class takes as much pride in being the first class to graduate from the North Campus as I do. We planned a few special ways to say congrats and farewell and I hope they always remember their “roots” and return to say hello or spend time giving back to what was once their learning community.

I have been at St. Marcus for 19 years - initially as a K4 support teacher. After falling in love with the ministry and working in classrooms with teachers and scholars, God called me to teach K4 and go back to school to earn my teaching license and master’s degree in early childhood education. I moved into a leadership role as the early childhood director at the Main Campus in 2010.

In 2014, we were blessed to acquire the building on the corner of Center and Richards streets to start the North Campus. I led the development and expansion of that campus from residing in the original building and guiding the new construction which now houses grades K4-8th grades. My principalship officially started in 2016.

Some of the most rewarding aspects of my role as the North Campus principal are:

Developing the team, building relationships with our families, and watching the “journey” of students as they grow and mature both in their academic learning and their faith “walks”.

I am proud that the North Campus was started with 100 “new to St. Marcus” students who were on the waiting list in 2014. I’m also incredibly proud of the scholar and staff culture. It has a “family” feel and our team members love coming to work to support one another. I get to witness team members and scholars living out the St. Marcus core values every day.

Thank you to everyone who has supported St. Marcus and especially the scholars and their endeavors at the North Campus.

Congratulations to the Class of 2022!

ST. MARCUS CELEBRATES THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 79 GRADUATES

who are moving onto area high schools such as Milwaukee Lutheran, Wisconsin Lutheran, Messmer, Dominican, Augustine Prep, Pathways, St. Thomas More, Kingdom Prep Lutheran, Homestead, Tenor, and Pius XI.

Graduate and rising Wisconsin Lutheran freshman Jayla began her St. Marcus journey as a second grader at the North Campus following a year on the waiting list. Her mother, Vanessa, wanted to send Jayla and her brothers, rising 4th and 6th graders who have attended since kindergarten, to St. Marcus because of the school's Christian values.

"I feel excited to be a part of the first graduating class for the North Campus," says Jayla.

Vanessa has similar sentiments about her daughter's time at St. Marcus. "Jayla has had some amazing experiences and memories while attending St. Marcus that have helped her to be well rounded and bring her out of her shyness," says Vanessa. "The staff is incredibly in-tune with the children and whenever I've had a concern, they addressed it right away. Their culture is 'partner with parents' for their kids' educational journey."

Jayla ended the school year with a 3.4 GPA while balancing sports, such as volleyball, track, and basketball. She has also participated in the Milwaukee Rowing Club and the summer youth law program at Marquette University. Jayla says her time with the law program at Marquette aligned with her career aspirations to be a lawyer and perhaps move into politics. She loved the opportunity to speak in front of a judge and provide a defense.

While attending Girls' Day at Milwaukee city hall this past March, Jayla connected with city employee Bernadette Karanja who offered to mentor Jayla as she moved onto high school.

"My mentor has guided me into thinking in a new light and thinking positively through tough situations, and it all started when I went to Girls' Day at city hall," says Jayla. "I really liked how Bernadette spoke and how she answered questions so I started a conversation with her and we connected."

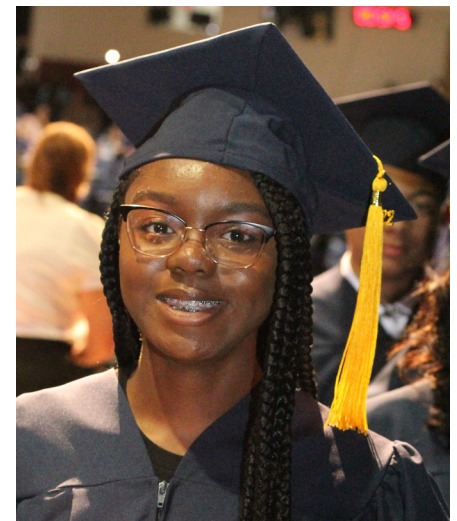


Principal April Richter, for as long as she has known Jayla, says she's always been an achiever - Jayla is consistently on honor roll and was an 8th grade student leader.

"She pursued opportunities that provided her with challenges and experiences that will contribute to her goals," says April.

St. Marcus prioritizes faith education and opportunities for scholars to explore their relationship with Christ. This is a foundation Jayla says she will carry on for the rest of her life - to "always have Christ-like behavior even when no one's around."

We are incredibly excited to witness what Jayla and her classmates accomplish as they move onto high school and beyond. Teachers, staff, dedicated partners, and scholars make stories like Jayla's possible.



Thank you!

The Return of Student Activities

by: Regan Parbs,
Mission Advancement Team

WHEN COVID HIT AND FIELD TRIPS STOPPED, ST. MARCUS STUDENT ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR JAMIE SHORTS PIVOTED.

During this time, Shorts was able to tap into her passion of yoga, mindfulness, and meditation. Realizing how beneficial this was to her and her family's life, she wanted to bring it to school. She started teaching K5-4th graders at the North Campus.

"We focused on important social and emotional skills like deep and calming breaths, along with mindful movement through yoga poses," says Shorts. "It quickly became one of their favorite times of the day".

Shorts has heard from multiple teachers that scholars will use some of the breathing techniques they learned to self regulate their emotions during the school day. An amazing moment Shorts witnessed was a K5 scholar standing in tree-pose outside his classroom in order to "get his focus back."

"It has been such a joy and honor to connect to our scholars in this unique way," says Shorts. "I hope they carry these skills with them for life, and maybe even teach a few others along the way!"



Finally, this past March, Shorts got the green light to start booking field trips and experiences for scholars again.

Shorts coordinated a field trip for a group of North Campus third graders to visit Sherman Phoenix for a healthy lunch provided by Funky Fresh Spring Rolls. The scholars got to explore the other businesses and learn about entrepreneurship. After their lunch they took an hour long yoga class at Embody Yoga. Shorts received many hugs and smiles that day, with the cherry on top being the many scholars telling her it "was the best day ever!"



Shorts also coordinated a couple overnight camping trips for the end of the year. Some of the 4th and 8th grade classes stayed overnight at Camp Phillip and Camp Anawa. Ms. Daffner's 4th grade class had the opportunity to have an overnight experience at Camp Phillip in Wautoma, WI.

They explored the woods and freezing cold lake, enjoyed team building exercises, built a shelter, and even caught a couple frogs.

The day ended with a campfire and s'mores which according to scholars was the best part!

This spring our middle school scholars had the opportunity to participate in Video Club on Fridays in association with the "Healthy Habits" initiative led by Becky Sappington. "Scholars were exposed to potential career paths through guest speakers from the community and had the opportunity to learn new skills in videography, project management, teamwork, and performing in front of others and public speaking," shared Sappington.

Thanks to supporters like you, our annual operating budget contributes to the cost of these hands-on, experiential learning opportunities.

We are looking forward to bringing back even more opportunities like this next school year!



Kiani: A *Shining Star* at Harambee

by: Cecilia Davis, Mission Advancement Team

Five months ago, Kiani, who just completed 2nd grade at the Harambee Campus, became a big sister. She can't WAIT for her baby brother to come to St. Marcus. "I'll be in middle school when he starts!" she says with a wide-eyed grin.

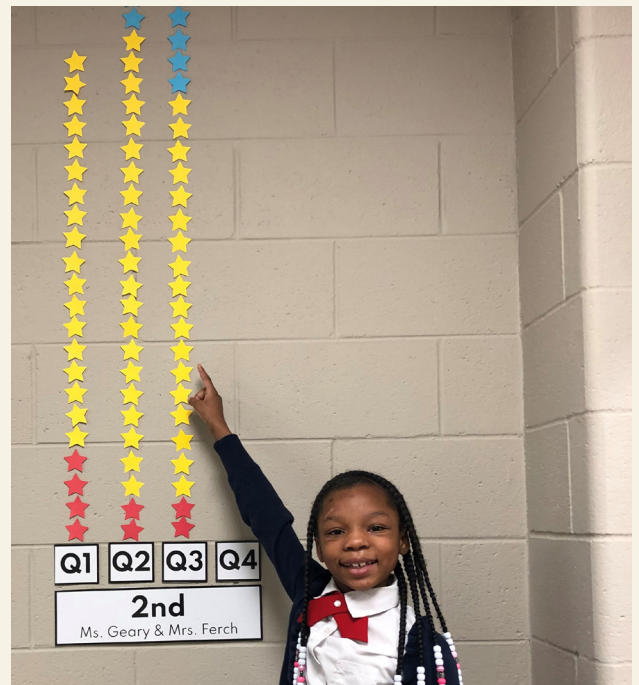
Kiani can't stop smiling when she talks about school.

Last fall, she joined St. Marcus along with the very first group of scholars to attend the newly opened Harambee campus. It was a welcome and much needed change from virtual learning the entire previous school year.

"Kiani spent 1st grade learning remotely, and it was extremely challenging," recalls her mother, Nakia. "At the time, she was attending a district school and really fell behind. She's so smart, but she wasn't progressing through remote learning. Her school was undecided about returning to in-person learning, so I knew then that we needed to find her a new school."

A relative encouraged Nakia to consider St. Marcus. "Kiani has four cousins that currently attend St. Marcus, and I have seen how much they have gained," she says. "Their mother strongly advised me to switch because of its commitment to in-person, high-quality education." Nakia didn't hesitate and enrolled Kiani at St. Marcus last fall.

"Since Kiani started, her progress has more than made up for the previous year's setbacks," says Nakia. "Last fall, her classroom test scores in reading and math were only in the 1's and 2's. Now, she's earning 3's and 4's on these tests and has become one of the top-performing students in her class. Kiani has really blossomed this year."



St. Marcus uses STAR Assessments to measure reading, math, and early literacy skills. These assessments are short tests that provide teachers with ongoing learning data to track scholars' proficiency levels. In one of the Harambee campus hallways, quarterly STAR growth for every classroom is charted on a large wall display. Stars representing each individual scholar show the current proficiency levels achieved in each classroom. For scholars, the STAR growth wall display is a daily nudge to help motivate and remind them to keep climbing. Kiani's blue star shows just how far she's come!

"Kiani is a great example of STAR growth," says Lauren Geary, her teacher. "She started 2nd grade requiring urgent reading intervention. Now, her reading skills have tremendously improved, and she is performing at the top of the class. Her work ethic, independence, emotional maturity, and perseverance have all developed throughout the year. Her excellent attendance and homework completion have both been major factors in her success and growth, which is the result of a supportive parent partnership!"

Nakia feels absolutely blessed to have joined the St. Marcus family. “At first, I was nervous because I knew it was a brand new campus,” she says. “But very quickly, it became obvious to me that the staff and teachers were extremely experienced and committed. Everyone is incredibly interactive. Teachers and administrators have even shared personal cell phone numbers with me to make it easy to reach them. Even though I can track Kiani’s progress on the classroom app we use, Ms. Geary still takes the time to personally message me almost daily about Kiani’s work and accomplishments.”

“I’ve made lots of new friends,” Kiani says. “My favorite subject is math. I also really like drawing in art class, and singing and playing instruments in music class.”

Nakia has also noticed another significant gain at St. Marcus: Kiani’s personal faith development. “We have always been people of faith, but it wasn’t necessarily a consistent presence for Kiani. Now that Christianity is part of her daily education, I have seen her faith grow and deepen. She often comes home singing songs from chapel!”

Now that Kiani’s first school year at St. Marcus has concluded, she spends her summer going to the park, swimming, and making lots of drawings. She is also attending summer school at St. Marcus. She is very excited about starting 3rd grade this fall. Her advice to any new scholars? “Don’t worry—you’ll have a lot of fun at school!”

“St. Marcus is an awesome environment,” Nakia adds. “Kiani has advanced so quickly and opened up so much. Enrolling here is one of the best decisions we’ve ever made. I see excellence in her future. She’ll be here to stay through 8th grade, and as soon as we can enroll her baby brother, he’ll be here, too!”

There’s no question that Kiani’s future is bright at St. Marcus.

Shine on, Kiani!



On June 7, we were thrilled to gather with St. Marcus donors and friends to publicly announce the **Courage to Commit** campaign, a \$31 million comprehensive campaign aimed at continuing to provide the highest level of academic and spiritual programming for our scholars through operating, capital, and endowment support. The quiet phase of the campaign began in 2018 and to-date has raised 66% of its total \$31 million goal. The capital portion of the campaign includes renovations of our Harambee campus.



PEOPLE Goal: \$10.4 million
Annual operating support that continually funds the \$2,500 gap between voucher funding and the actual cost of providing a 5-star education to one child.



PLACE Goal: \$19 million
Capital gifts support the renovation of the Harambee Campus. This campus opened in August 2021 and will eventually support 600 students.



PROMISE Goal: \$1.6 million
Endowment gifts provide the sustainability and promised future for St. Marcus scholars for generations to come.

“We’re incredibly grateful for our generous donors, both past and present, who have supported St. Marcus. This is a new chapter for our school community – the scholars, their families, the faculty and staff and the alumni – and we couldn’t be more excited,” shared Henry Tyson.

Their commitment was honored with the naming of the Mardak | Vandenberg Campus Gateway, located on the northeast entrance of the school. Keith and Mary’s original challenge led to commitments of over \$5 million to the project. Through this additional match, Keith and Mary are walking alongside other St. Marcus supporters, like you, to provide an additional \$1 million by July 31.



“We believe in the mission of St. Marcus School, and we want to be involved in the effort to serve even more children in Milwaukee,” said Keith and Mary. *“They are the future of our city. Every child we can provide with a solid foundation from which to grow means a brighter future for them and for Milwaukee.”*

Milwaukee-based couple Keith Mardak and Mary Vandenberg also revealed a \$500,000 increase to their original \$2.5 million challenge match for the Harambee Campus expansion.

All gifts and pledges made to the Harambee project through July 31 will be matched until the challenge is fulfilled.

Those wishing to contribute or to learn more can visit www.couragetocommit.org.



August 2021



June 2022



Future

Phase II of construction began at our Harambee Campus in March 2022. With school out for the summer, construction progress is ramping up!

The primary projects are first floor renovations which include completion of the gym, cafeteria, art and music rooms, and the Health & Wellness Wing. If you have driven by recently, you will notice that the First Street entrance looks dramatically different. The former east entry vestibule and wall panels have been removed to make way for the new, three story Mardak | Vandenberg Campus Gateway. *(above)*

The much anticipated courtyard infill will also be a focal point of construction this summer. The infill will eventually house our Kindergarten/Primary School Library and Middle School Learning Commons. *(right)*



Original



May 2022

I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me and also about the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us arise and build." So they put their hands to the good work.
- Nehemiah 2:18



Future



May 2022



Future Dental Suite



Future Counseling Suite



Future Health Room

Another exciting project underway is the construction of the Health & Wellness Wing. (above) The wing will include a dental suite, counseling suite, multipurpose room, and a health room to serve scholar, family, and community health-related needs.

Phase II work is scheduled to be completed in September. Phase III construction will begin as funding is secured.

We continue to be amazed by the future impact of serving an additional 600 scholars and their families and the friends who walk alongside us who are making this possible.

If you are interested in learning more or scheduling a tour, please contact Michele Kitson in our Mission Advancement Office at michele.kitson@stmarcus.org or 414-562-3163 x 7556.



St. Marcus School

2215 North Palmer St.
Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 562-3163

St. Marcus is a Christian, high-expectations choice school serving students from grades K3 to 8th.

Using a proven urban education model, St. Marcus seeks to instigate change and provide a community of learning where children and families live, grow, and thrive.

St. Marcus' driving vision is that **every family has access to excellent education in the city of Milwaukee.**



WWW.STMARCUS.ORG/SCHOOL

Address Service Requested



*Scholars perform at the June 7
Courage to Commit Public Launch*