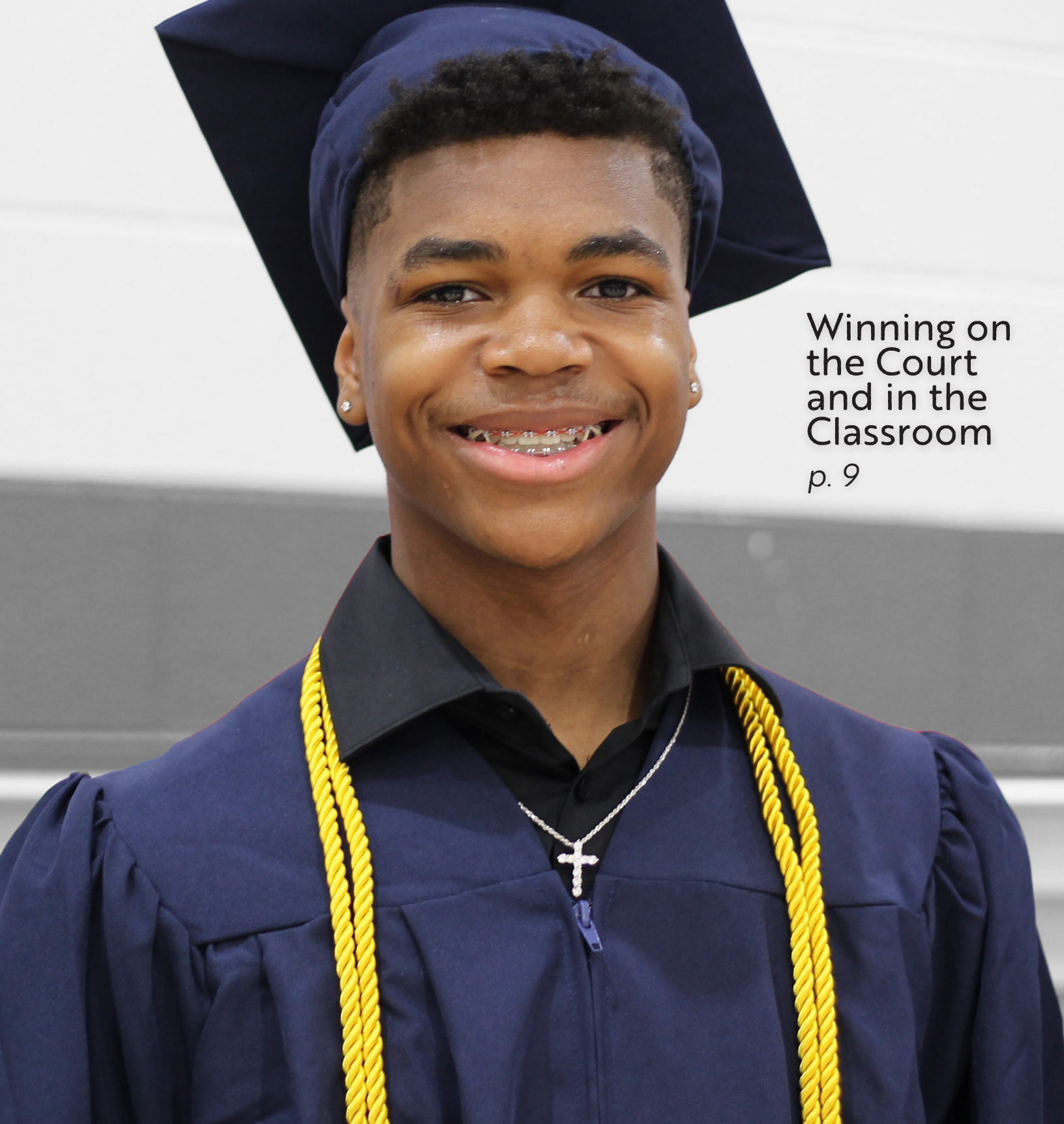


# CATALYST

ST. MARCUS SCHOOL MAGAZINE • SUMMER 2024

Winning on  
the Court  
and in the  
Classroom  
*p. 9*







Center Street Campus (CSC).

Over the past decade, the campus has expanded to serve a total of 350 students, all of our 3-year-old scholars were relocated to Center Street, and the campus has now graduated three cohorts of 8th-grade classes. In short, CSC is thriving!

I’ve often said that one of the most remarkable and fulfilling aspects of my 22 years at St. Marcus is the astonishingly committed group of people with whom I get to work - teachers, administrators, staff, donors, and volunteers. St. Marcus is one of those places that attracts extraordinary, faith-filled people.

A great example of this type of faith, commitment, and talent is Mrs. April Richter. April has been on a 21-year St. Marcus journey from teacher to Director of Kindergarten to founding Principal of the CSC. April planned and launched the campus, and over the past ten years, she has provided steady, focused leadership to the 45 team members who work together to make CSC such a special place.

The most important lesson I’ve learned from April is the importance of caring for, nurturing, and developing one’s colleagues. April’s team at CSC is radically committed to her and more importantly, to the mission, because of the depth and heartfelt nature of April’s commitment to them. Simply put, April personifies the school’s core value of Sacrificial Love which shows up in almost every aspect of her leadership. I couldn’t be more grateful for April and her leadership at CSC.

In the Spring of 2024, after 10 hard-fought years at CSC, April informed me that she would resign as

the Principal of CSC at the end of the 23-24 school year. It’s one thing to lead well for a decade, but it’s another to replicate yourself and leave strong leaders in place to fill the gap. I’m thrilled to report that Brittany Toliver and Sarina Owens will be taking over as co-principals for the 24-25 school year. Brittany and Sarina have taught at CSC for multiple years, served as directors of their units, and will now step into the campus leadership role. These two talented young leaders have been trained and developed by April, and I have no doubt that they are ready and equipped to lead the campus to even greater heights.

Now that the Burleigh Street Campus is nearing completion, lots of people have been asking, “What’s next?” You’ll have to wait for the gala (on November 9th) to hear the full story, but let me give you a teaser by simply saying that it will have a lot to do with the Center Street Campus and growing our capacity to have a much bigger impact on child literacy from birth to age 3. I’m extremely excited about this next critical step in improving outcomes and serving Northside families more effectively.

I’m even more excited about who will lead the charge on this next stage of our work together. It’s none other than April Richter. Who could possibly be more ready, more prepared, and more capable of leading this next initiative?



April, pictured fifth from the left, with the K3 team

Thank you for standing with us. Thank you for your faithful support. And thank you for bringing hope to the children and families we serve.

God Bless,

Henry Tyson, Superintendent



# READING ROCKS and so do our scholars!

written by Lauren Brandmeier, Mission Advancement Team

Early literacy is critical to long-term success. The reading skills our scholars learn at St. Marcus lay the foundation for future educational excellence by encouraging the development of essential cognitive strategies, including attention, memory, and comprehension. Children who develop these skills early on are better prepared to tackle complex concepts that they’ll encounter as they continue to grow.

At St. Marcus, we want to equip our scholars for success as they navigate their educational journeys, so our school is invested in providing early reading opportunities to our scholars, beginning as early as K3. And at our Center Street Campus, some of our K3 scholars are already reading independently.

Our scholars’ success relies on a commitment to read at home just as much as in the classroom. Rachel Guenther, K3 Program Director at Center Street Campus, says this collaboration between parents and educators is one of the most critical partnerships. “When children read at home daily, it builds on the work they are doing at school,” she says.

**“Recognizing letters and sounds and exposure to a diversity of words are fundamental first steps to building early literacy.”**

Please join us in celebrating these **reading rock stars** from our K3 classrooms!



Noah loves riding his bike, and his favorite book is **The Cat in the Hat**.

Curtis loves cupcakes, and her favorite book is **Guinea Pig Party**.



ZaRiyah loves animals, and her favorite book is **The Greedy Rainbow**.

Aubree loves going to the zoo, and her favorite book is **Giraffes Can’t Dance**.



**Way to go, K3 Reading Rockstars! Keep up the great work.**



# MAKING A JOYFUL NOISE:

## THE IMPACTS OF MUSIC EDUCATION

written by Cecilia Davis,  
Mission Advancement Team

Down in the Mission Advancement office in the lower level of the North Avenue Campus, we're pretty lucky.

It just so happens that the primary grades' music classroom is across the hall. Every day, we're treated to the sights and sounds of music education at St. Marcus. When thinking about making a joyful noise, not much can top the sound of a classroom full of scholars singing their hearts out and praising God with joy and abandon.

Integrated into the kindergarten and primary grades curriculum, scholars visit the music classroom weekly, because music education is recognized as a part of an exceptional academic journey. Our music educators are passionate about what they do, for a variety of reasons. We talked to educators across all three campuses to understand why music education is so important, and our eyes were opened to different perspectives from each one.

**"MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE UNTO THE LORD, ALL THE EARTH; MAKE A LOUD NOISE, AND REJOICE, AND SING PRAISE."**  
-PSALM 98:4



### BUILDING BONDS THROUGH MUSIC

For Maria Froman, the teacher at North Avenue Campus, one of the most rewarding aspects of her work is the special relationship she cultivates with scholars during after-school private lessons. She's amazed at how much progress each of her 14 private students makes, but most memorable is her student Joseph's growth on the piano. "At first, I wondered if he would have enough stamina and focus to concentrate on the keyboard. Today, he is one of my fastest progressing students, even without owning an instrument at home."

With private lessons offered in a variety of instruments, including guitar, flute, and saxophone, increased popularity across the campuses has inspired Maria and her colleagues to envision a school-wide primary grade band program. While additional funding would be needed to provide scholars with the necessary instruments and other equipment, our music teachers are excited about this potential opportunity.

**"IT'S EASY TO THINK OF MUSIC SOMETHING THAT'S JUST TO BE FUN, AND IT IS! BUT IT'S MORE THAN THAT."**

Several of our scholars already play instruments in ensembles outside of St. Marcus, such as Wisconsin Lutheran High School's Junior Vikings and Milwaukee Youth Symphony Orchestra. Although these programs provide fantastic learning and performing opportunities for scholars, Maria and her colleagues recognize that a St. Marcus-based program would extend these same opportunities to more families in our immediate community.



### MUSIC'S BRAIN BENEFITS

It's been well documented that participation in a music program can help children strengthen neural pathways and develop cognitive skills that extend well beyond the walls of the music room, improving focus, memory retention, emotional regulation, and creative problem-solving skills.

### CLASS AS SUPPOSED SO MUCH

Olivia Reinhardt, music teacher at Center Street Campus, has seen firsthand the crucial role music education plays in her scholars' spiritual, academic, and personal growth. Specifically, she watched as one of her students had a "lightbulb moment" where he transformed his struggles into leadership in the classroom. When he progressed during their recorder unit, Olivia says he began to model positive engagement for his classmates.

"It's easy to think of music class as something that's just supposed to be fun," Olivia says. "And it is! But it's so much more than that. Learning music strengthens neural pathways and provides a total brain workout. Think about the multiple brain centers scholars have to activate in order to learn to play the recorder. They have to learn to read notes, understand note durations and rhythmic patterns, and coordinate their fingers for proper placement on the instrument, all while maintaining optimal posture for breath management. It's incredible nourishment for their developing brains."



### BUILDING FAITH & CONFIDENCE THROUGH SONG

At St. Marcus, our music education program isn't just a brain builder. More importantly, it's a faith builder. Music has always been an important aspect of the well-rounded education we offer, especially when it comes to praise and worship. Singing in church offers a formative experience for our scholars. The involvement in such an important role during worship helps them develop independence and instills a sense of purpose, responsibility, and community.

Burleigh Street Campus music teacher, Paula Adamson, couldn't agree more. Having attended St. Marcus school herself, she's experienced the benefits of performing music in church. "Singing in church helped develop independence," she says, "and it does the same for our scholars today."

Director of the Cherub Choir at Burleigh Street Campus, Paula feels like she's doing the work of the Lord by creating experiences for her scholars

to perform in various St. Marcus church services. She believes that the talents and gifts we've been blessed with should be used to outwardly glorify God. "My hope is that making music at church catapults scholars' interest in staying involved at church as they grow."



### MUSIC PARTICIPATION FOR GRADES 5-8

St. Marcus scholars in all grades benefit from field trips to live, professional arts performances, and on-site visits from Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee Rep, Milwaukee Ballet, the Florentine Opera, and more. Middle school scholars also receive more advanced music performance opportunities such as Drumline, Step and African Dance, and Junior Choir.

A grant from Northwestern Mutual will allow our music education team to dedicate time over the summer to refine the curriculum, align standards across all three campuses, and build in teaching modules that can prepare scholars for future, more advanced music participation.

Thanks to an outstanding team of music educators and a commitment to excellence in music education and enrichment, scholars are playing and singing all the right notes from the classroom to the church sanctuary!



**"OUR MUSIC EDUCATION PROGRAM ISN'T JUST A BRAIN BULIDER. IT'S A FAITH BUILDER."**

Stay tuned: We'll focus on St. Marcus School's visual art education in an upcoming issue!



## SUPERINTENDENT TYSON'S GREAT (BUT CRAZY) IDEA

written by Lauren Brandmeier,  
Mission Advancement Team

In February 2023, Superintendent Henry Tyson brought a new idea to the Mission Advancement team with the preface, "This might sound crazy, but hear me out."

Henry's absurdly great idea was to save the school over \$100,000 in construction costs by bringing in volunteer groups to demolish the kitchen, large motor skills room, and the entire 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the Burleigh Street Campus. In order to transform these unfinished rooms into functional, state-of-the-art learning spaces, we first needed to tear down what was there.

In the work, Henry found an opportunity to save critical money and simultaneously created an engagement experience in which individuals, service groups, and corporations around the area could come and interact hands-on with St. Marcus while learning about urban education. The All Hands In project was born.

Over the next several months, groups came from Northwestern Mutual, Kohl's, Quad Graphics, and MLG Capital to work on the demolition project. These groups were organized by one or two friends of St. Marcus who brought many of their friends and coworkers to partake in the fun!

Another crazy idea was proposed when it was time for the 2023 Gala: We have one classroom left to demo. Why don't we auction it off at the Gala? Everyone liked the idea, yet there was a sense of uncertainty. Even our auctioneer, Sherry Truhlar, who is always open to fresh ideas, expressed cautious optimism when she called it a "truly unique idea."

On the night of the Gala, there proved to be a buzz around this unusual opportunity, and the bidding turned out to be robust. Long-time friends and supporters, Maggie and Jim Leef, were thrilled to win the bid for this unique opportunity.

While organizing the demo day, Maggie and Jim reached far and wide, telling their friends and family about the St. Marcus story and why they felt this project was so important. Recruiting demo day volunteers became a form of advocacy for the St. Marcus mission.

On March 23, Jim and Maggie brought 21 friends and family members to the Burleigh Street Campus and took on the **final** classroom demolition with vigor and determination.



Walls came down, dumpsters were filled, and when the dust settled, St. Marcus was blessed by new friends and the chance to commence the final phase of construction.

"It was a unique way for us to support St. Marcus," Maggie and Jim shared at the close of the demo day. **"This experience allowed us to introduce new friends to all that is so special about St. Marcus.** It is a blessing to help St. Marcus reach wider and deeper into the neighborhood as they restore school buildings and impact more families and the community!"



*These rising 5th grade scholars are excited for their new classrooms! The final construction plans at the Burleigh Street Campus include completing the middle school on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, which will eventually serve 300 scholars.*



*Scholars in the newly renovated kitchen*

The 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> floors are now finished with the recently completed kitchen, large motor skills room, and the Dr. Robert Kebbekus Wellness Resource Center. The playground is being completed this summer and will be ready to welcome scholars back in the fall.

The middle school construction will begin in late fall and will be completed by August 2025. By 2027, the campus will educate 584 (K4-8th grade) Milwaukee children, who will have access to state-of-the-art facilities and high-quality educational resources thanks to many friends like you!

**Thank you to all the volunteers who joined hands to prepare these spaces for learning!**

If you want to tour the Burleigh Street Campus, please contact [cecilia.davis@stmarcus.org](mailto:cecilia.davis@stmarcus.org).





## GRACING THE OPERA STAGE

written by Cecilia Davis, Mission Advancement Team

Outside of my work as a member of the St. Marcus Mission Advancement Team, I'm a professional, classical singer with a passion for opera. Naturally, I jump for joy any time I hear strains of Mozart or Puccini coming from one of our music classrooms. So when the Florentine Opera invited St. Marcus scholars to appear in its upcoming production of Puccini's *La Bohème*, I couldn't contain my excitement. As a member of the Florentine's opera chorus for the production, I couldn't wait to share the stage with some St. Marcus superstars.

Through a partnership with the Florentine's "Schools on Stage" initiative, 13 St. Marcus scholars in 4th-7th grades were able to perform in the Florentine's April 2024 production of the world-famous opera. This one-of-a-kind production reimagined the story by setting it in Milwaukee's historic Bronzeville—the same neighborhood St. Marcus calls home!

St. Marcus music educator Darlene Grams led scholars in this extraordinary immersion. As Director of the Junior Choir at North Avenue Camus, Darlene trains middle school singers in a wide range of choral repertoire, from classical and Gospel to contemporary styles and much more. Beginning in fall 2023, Darlene held weekly after-school rehearsals to prepare the scholars for professional chorus and stage rehearsals with the Florentine artists in the spring. Rebecca Steinberg, a veteran music teacher and a current private music lesson instructor for St. Marcus, also helped train the participating scholars. It was a triumphant accomplishment for the scholars, who had to memorize challenging music, perform it in Italian, and project it over a full symphony orchestra, all while carrying out complex staging in one of opera's most intricate and famous scenes.

"My biggest smile occurred during our first rehearsal with the adult chorus," Darlene joyfully recalls. "The sheer shock and awe on the student's faces, when they heard the volume of the adult singers, was priceless! It became a teachable moment for them about vocal projection and stage presence."

(By the way - I echo Darlene's joy in that memory! I also witnessed that delightful moment during that evening's rehearsal!)



"It was incredibly valuable for the scholars to experience how so many moving pieces come together to make a show. They interacted with theater professionals in the costume and make-up departments, other adults in the opera chorus, the principal artists playing the lead characters, the symphony orchestra and conductor, the stage management and crew, and the stage director."

Malia, entering 8th grade at St. Marcus this fall, was one of the opera participants and was also a featured soloist. "Being in the opera was an amazing experience!" says Malia. "It was an honor to sing for the Florentine Opera because I love being able to show off my talent of singing, which God has given me."

One of the most significant benefits for the opera scholars was their witnessing of the professionalism and life skills required for success in the production. Malia's mother, Priscilla, also valued this for Malia. "Malia enjoyed the experience! She loves to sing and share that gift with others. She accepted the challenge of learning to sing in a foreign language and being committed to the rehearsal process. I hope she gets another opportunity to sing with the Florentine Opera again!"

Throughout the process, scholars were held to the same, high standards of excellence and expectations as any adult in the opera world, including preparedness, precision, punctuality, reliability, focus, and collaboration. And they delivered! Scholars received their own curtain call with thunderous standing ovations at each performance.

"This opera experience really illustrated that children benefit from seeing things outside of their regular lives," Darlene adds. "It opens avenues they never thought to exist. It was also an inspiring bonus for them to work with so many professional artists of color." For our young singers, *La Bohème* was certainly a peek at what's possible. Who knows? Maybe God designed this experience just for a scholar with opera stardom in his or her future!

**Bravo, St. Marcus scholars!**



# WINNING ON THE COURT AND IN THE CLASSROOM

written by Lauren Brandmeier, Mission Advancement Team

This past year, the Mustangs basketball team progressed to Nationals in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The team not only had the opportunity to represent their Christ-centered community, but also notably placed third – an accomplishment the team can be proud of. For recently graduated scholar Caden, it was the perfect way to end his middle school basketball career. But his success on the court didn’t stop him from impressive achievements in the classroom.

It’s obvious to coach Josh Metzger that Caden has grown and matured into a “young soldier for Christ” who values classroom discipline. Even through intense basketball seasons year after year, he remained diligent in his studies and maintained a high level of academic and behavioral excellence.



Caden also acknowledges the rigorous discipline he learned at St. Marcus. Throughout all of his academic, athletic, and extracurricular involvement, he learned the importance of hard work and resilience. Having found a brotherhood on his basketball team, one of Caden’s motivations to aim high off the court comes from his coach. “We placed such an emphasis on looking out for and taking care of the brotherhood,” Coach Metzger says, “about not being content but striving forward and staying focused.”

Even in childhood, Caden found the need to be challenged. His mother, Jessica, knew his daycare wasn’t cutting it anymore when he quickly outgrew and outsmarted the curriculum. She knew he needed opportunities that would foster and grow his talents. She found them here at St. Marcus, where Caden’s intellectual curiosity has flourished ever since K4.

One of the ways in which Jessica has seen firsthand the effects of Caden’s education is his “I’m third” mindset.



A phrase taught early on, St. Marcus scholars learn to put God first, others second, and themselves third. Leaning on what Jessica says is “a good heart and Christian-like behavior,” Caden models this mentality every day by practicing consideration and thoughtfulness towards the people around him.

An intrinsic leader, Caden stepped up in several ways this past year. After he was baptized in the spring of 2023 by Coach Metzger, Caden’s unapologetic love for his Lord influenced a handful of his friends to also partake in this spiritual milestone. Later that same year, Caden was asked to lead the prayer at the annual gala. Caden’s outward



exhibitions of integrity, grit, and self-discipline made him a natural choice to represent the North Avenue campus class speaker at the 2024 graduation ceremony. When he looks back on his time at St. Marcus, he values the authentic care the teachers have for each scholar. He realizes everything they do for their scholars, including discipline, comes from the heart.

In the fall, Caden is continuing his education at Wisconsin Lutheran High School, where he’s planning on continuing his basketball career. But when the season is over, Coach Metzger says it best: “There are bigger and better things that God has called us to. Success on the basketball court is just a bonus.”

## You can make her future part of your legacy!

By including St. Marcus in your estate plans, you can create a legacy of love for scholars just like her for years to come. To learn more about legacy giving, contact Courtney Schultz at [courtney.schultz@stmarcus.org](mailto:courtney.schultz@stmarcus.org) or 414.562.3163 x 7558.

## LEGACY of LOVE



Already have St. Marcus in your plans? Please let us know so we can welcome you to Legacy of Love!

Did you know that all new gifts to the Amy Madsen Endowment are eligible for a **20% match** from the Lutheran Legacy Foundation?

# next

ST. MARCUS SCHOOL ANNUAL GALA  
November 9, 2024

Be inspired by what is **next**.  
Tickets & sponsorships  
at [stmarcusgala.com](http://stmarcusgala.com)

The gala





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

Address Service Requested



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.



[STMARCUS.ORG/SCHOOL](http://STMARCUS.ORG/SCHOOL)

