

CATALYST

ST. MARCUS SCHOOL MAGAZINE • SUMMER 2025

A Legacy of
Faith, Growth,
and Light

p. 13





150 Years of Faithful Presence

This year marks a remarkable milestone—150 years of St. Marcus Lutheran Church and School standing as a beacon of faith, education, and community

in Milwaukee's Brewers Hill and Harambee neighborhoods. To honor this journey and look ahead with purpose, we've embraced the theme **"Faithfully Present"**—a reflection of our enduring commitment and a vision for the future.

St. Marcus School was launched on January 1, 1874 right where the North Avenue Campus is today on North & Palmer. Eighteen months later, on June 13, 1875, St. Marcus Lutheran Church was formed by a group of school parents. The timing of the church's launch was interesting. In the months preceding the acquisition of the school and immediately prior to the school starting, the financial panic of 1873 led to the Long Depression which became one of the longest periods of economic contraction in the history of the United States. In his new book, *The History of St. Marcus*, Pastor Mark Jeske writes,

"And yet this was the glorious moment that God had chosen for ministry on Palmer and Garfield to begin. Perhaps he wanted the saints there always to remember that it was not by might, not by power, but by his Spirit that his agenda would be accomplished." (p.15)

Over the next 150 years, that small congregation, born during a time of national turmoil, would endure other national challenges such as World War I, the Great Depression, and World War II. It would also endure through more local challenges such as the race riots of the Long Hot Summer of 1967 and the demographic shifts that would have an enormous impact on Brewers Hill and Harambee. By 1980, enrollment had dropped to just 56 students, and the principal feared the school might close within a year.

Through it all, St. Marcus has remained Faithfully Present through times of uncertainty and difficulty and now through a period of relative abundance and opportunity.

The school has grown to three campuses with over 1,300 scholars, graduated a record number of students in 2025, and is poised to broaden its impact through an expanded early childhood program, investment in early childhood literacy, and a series of initiatives to equip and empower parents to achieve greater success and spiritual growth.

The 150th anniversary is both a time to look back and marvel at God's faithfulness and to look forward and consider what it will mean to be faithfully present for the next 150 years. As we continue to navigate the challenges of operating a high-quality, Jesus-focused urban school, we are deeply thankful for all of you; our supporters, faculty and staff, and our faithful congregation members who partner with us in this work.

My greatest encouragement comes from our partnership together and, more importantly, from the fact that "It is not by might, not by power, but by His Spirit that his agenda will be accomplished." To God be the glory!

With Gratitude,

Henry Tyson
Superintendent



Learn more about St. Marcus' 150th anniversary and upcoming celebration events
stmarcus.org/150



Download *The History of St. Marcus* by Pastor Mark Jeske and explore the accompanying photo essay
stmarcus.org/book

Contact sara.roemer@stmarcus.org if you'd like a hard copy of the book

A MOVEMENT OF COMPASSION

Community Service Club at CSC

At St. Marcus' Center Street Campus, a new tradition of servant leadership is taking root.

The Community Service Club, launched in January of 2025, is already shaping how scholars see their role in the world. With a mission to promote kindness, civic responsibility, and meaningful community engagement, the club gives scholars a space to live out their faith and grow as leaders.

Each month, scholars and staff join forces to plan and carry out service projects that respond to real needs. From an expressive picture-drawing initiative for seniors and military service members to a neighborhood clean-up effort, the projects vary in focus but share a unifying goal: to serve others with love and intention.

The long-term vision is for the club to evolve into a fully scholar-led movement where scholars not only identify needs but also design and lead projects that inspire their peers to get involved.

"The Community Service Club was inspired by a desire to put our faith into action and live out the values of compassion, generosity, and service to others," explained Sarina Scott-Owens, Kinder/Primary Director and Principal at Center Street and one of the club's organizers.



"It's about giving students meaningful ways to love their neighbors and see how even small actions can make a big difference."

Over the second semester, the club tackled a variety of projects. In January, scholars partnered with Color-A-Smile, sending cheerful artwork to people in need of encouragement. In February, the club organized a school-wide food drive benefiting Kinship Community Center. March's project supported the Vulnerable Children Foundation, a nonprofit that provides free faith-based education, nutrition programs, and family support for children around the world. In April, scholars helped beautify the neighborhood through a community clean-up.

One particularly memorable moment came during February's food drive. "It turned into a friendly competition between classes to see who could collect the most items," said Scott-Owens.

"What started as a challenge quickly turned into something more meaningful. Students were genuinely excited to give. They came in each day with bags of food, proudly talking about how they asked church members or used their own allowance to contribute."

"It was amazing to see the joy they found in giving and the pride they took in helping families in need. That sense of purpose and unity was unforgettable."



The school year ended with a final service project in May: "Birthday Buddies," held in partnership with Kid's Impact Community. In honor of Foster Care Awareness Month, scholars created birthday kits for children in foster care, many of whom don't have the opportunity to celebrate their special day. Scholars chose fun themes and packed bags with party supplies like cake mix, frosting, decorations, a birthday hat, a funny card, and a small gift. The kits were distributed to an organization supporting kinship and foster families. Through this project, scholars reflected on how small acts of kindness can bring joy and comfort during uncertain times.



The club's impact has already begun to spread beyond the projects themselves. Scholars are showing more initiative and thoughtfulness, while families have been drawn in to support and encourage their children's involvement. The result is a school culture that is beginning to reflect the heart of the club's mission.

As Sarina puts it, "What began as us doing simple acts of kindness has expanded into a campus-wide movement, with more organized projects, partnerships with local organizations, and increased student leadership."

Sarina's hopes for the future of the Community Service Club are rooted in faith and purpose. "Last summer, I made the decision that it would launch in the 2024-2025 school year because I recognized how necessary and impactful it could be for our students and community. I am so grateful that the Lord has allowed this to happen."

Looking ahead, she envisions a club that continues to grow as a scholar-led initiative that builds deep partnerships with local organizations and creates service opportunities that connect with what scholars are learning in the classroom.

"Ultimately, my dream is for the club to become a core part of our school's identity where every student feels empowered to lead with kindness, take action, and understand the impact they can have on their community and the world."

For the scholars of Center Street, service is not just an extracurricular activity. It is becoming a way of life.

"I want students to see service not just as a project but as a response to God's call to love and serve others."

A guiding verse for the club, Galatians 5:13, says it clearly: "Through love serve one another."

At Center Street, that call is taking root in the hearts of young leaders.



*through
love, serve
one another.*

CREATIVE CLOSURES

Celebrating St. Marcus
Fine Arts Finales!

In the past few issues, we've provided a glimpse of St. Marcus' fine arts education and how these programs make a powerful impact on scholars' academic and personal growth. As the school year began, their creative journeys were just beginning. At the conclusion, scholars showcased a year's worth of creative pursuits, artistic growth, and personal development in a variety of fine arts events across all three campuses.

Center Street Campus (CSC) art teacher, Jamie Shorts, led CSC's first-ever large-scale art show on May 13. So much more than just a display of work, it reflected a process of critical thinking, problem-solving, experimentation, creative expressions, and skill development built into every lesson behind the artwork on view. But what stood out the most for Jamie was how the show fostered connection and lively conversation between scholars and adults.

"My favorite thing to watch was scholars proudly showing the grownups what they made, and explaining their creative processes and/or the artist(s) that inspired them," she recalls. "It was also wonderful to see the adults engaging with the hands-on art activities. I used these activities in the classroom during the school year to introduce certain lessons. So scholars became teachers, guiding their parents!"



7th-grade scholar Annala is one of Jamie's art students at CSC. Throughout the school year, Jamie witnessed not only Annala's growth as a gifted fiber artist but also her personal growth as she gained confidence through her art-making. "Annala is a very quiet scholar, and it was hard to get to know her at first. But slowly, as I was introducing lessons, I saw her flying through the projects with ease! She would be the first one done with her piece, asking to do more. Instead of allowing her to start a new piece, I challenged her to help other scholars. This wasn't easy for her, but soon I found her coaching peers on their next sewing stitch! It made my job easier, but more importantly, it helped her improve her own skills and process!"

On May 20, the North Avenue Campus (NAC) also presented its first-ever art show, showcasing work from all grade levels. Featuring artwork representing different world regions and cultures, families received a "passport" upon arrival to obtain stamps as they visited various areas of the show. The stamped passports could be exchanged for a sampling of international treats. NAC art teacher Hannah Greene, the visionary behind the event, chose to incorporate judges to award 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and Best in Show ribbons. "Having a juried art show is an exciting learning experience for scholars," she says. "Knowing that professional artists evaluate their pieces elevates the experience and motivates them to do their best work." Three local artists volunteered as jurors, all in agreement that it was a challenging task!



Chrissie Monday, a professional artist and member of St. Marcus School's Leadership Council, was one of the jurors. "It was so wonderful to see the visual arts in action at St. Marcus. I am a firm believer in the importance of integrating art into the curriculum, and I certainly witnessed an abundance here! I was thrilled to participate."

4th-grade scholar Ma'Rena studies flute with CSC music teacher Olivia Reinhardt. "I've been consistently impressed with how hard she has worked," says Olivia. "Flute is a really difficult instrument to learn at a young age because of the challenging embouchure (mouthpiece placement) and tone production. Ma'Rena has really begun to master it!"



Ma'Rena's mother, Moreen, has noticed positive outcomes of her daughter's flute study. "Ma'Rena often likes to rush through things," she comments. "But flute lessons have taught her that you have to slow down, have patience, and persevere to produce a successful sound."

A number of scholars study musical instruments privately with St. Marcus music teachers, and their annual end-of-year recital celebrates a year of dedicated practice. On May 14, more than 40 scholars of varying ages, skill levels, and instruments performed solos in a recital in the church sanctuary. The St. Marcus Junior Choir, directed by Darlene Jones-Grams, also performed.

Olivia Reinhardt, CSC music educator, teaches a number of private lesson scholars. "To be able to perform, they must be persistent, practice regularly, and overcome struggles in order to achieve this goal," she says. "The preparation teaches independence, and the recital gives them a sense of accomplishment. It also gives parents, teachers, and fellow scholars a glimpse at scholars' growth throughout the year. I've witnessed scholars' amazement at their classmates' musical accomplishments, which has inspired interest in learning an instrument or joining a group. One of the best outcomes of private music instruction at St. Marcus is that it builds friendships and a community of encouragement."

Music performance also took center stage during the final weeks of the school year. At the Karl J. Schlueter Campus (KSC), music teacher Paula Adamson led KSC's annual music showcase on May 16. "This year's showcase culminated a year of different instrumental experiences for each grade, with a focus on the classical music genre."

Paula strongly advocates for the incorporation of classical music study into scholars' well-balanced education.

"Classical music fosters healthy brain development and promotes emotional intelligence," she says. "When the students performed a handbell piece, it brought some of us to tears. It's astonishing how music can unlock our emotions and promote human connection in such a profound way."

She also added that the scholars' pre-performance butterflies were a sign of artistic growth. "Growth doesn't happen without a bit of discomfort. Pre-performance jitters reflect emotional investment, and a willingness to be present and alive to the moment. Nervous excitement prepares scholars for life in the spotlight and fosters interest and appreciation for music in general."

The music showcase also featured student artwork displayed by KSC art teacher Liza Goetter, adding a vibrant visual layer to make the event a full-spectrum celebration of creativity.



The youngest scholars at the North Avenue Campus (NAC) concluded their year of music education with a splash—at the "Under the Sea" kindergarten spring performance on May 2. Complete with costumes, set design, and choreography, K4, and K5 scholars transformed into a school of fish, singing Disney tunes and other favorites before a lively audience. NAC music educator, Maria Froman, directed the performance and reflected on the success of this highly collaborative project. "One of the most remarkable aspects of Under the Sea was the deep collaboration from the entire kindergarten teaching team. The dedication, commitment, and creative energy they poured into each of their classrooms' contributions to the performance truly reflected a shared vision. It was clear this wasn't just about executing a performance — it was a heartfelt demonstration of how deeply this team believes in the role music plays in education and growth."

The end-of-year fine arts showcases cast a spotlight on just how far St. Marcus scholars come in a single school year of creative expression—and how deeply the fine arts enrich their academic experiences. The showcases represented not just a product, but more importantly, a culmination of learning. The true meaning of this past spring's scholar artwork and musical performances lies in the journey of learning that led to them.

We can't wait for another school year of scholars' artistry!

"I FEEL LIKE A LEADER"

KSC Fifth Grader Reflects on the Move Upstairs to Middle School

This coming August, the final phase and newly completed third floor at the Karl J. Schlueter Campus (KSC) opens its doors to middle school scholars for the very first time. Since the building welcomed its first cohort in the fall of 2021, the third floor has been a work in progress, patiently awaiting its full potential. Now, thanks to years of planning, persistence, and the generosity of donors like you who believe in the future of our scholars, that potential has been fully realized. The third floor will host 225, 5th-8th grade scholars when completely full by 2027. More than just a new space, the third floor is a launchpad for leadership, academic growth, and character development, reflecting the heart of St. Marcus' mission to equip scholars for success in high school, college, and beyond.

For scholars like **Rylan**, a rising sixth grader who began his St. Marcus journey in K3 at the Center Street Campus and transferred to KSC in second grade, the moment carries real weight.

"I've been at this campus since second grade, and I love it here," he says with a grin. "The teachers are great. I've learned so much, especially in math. We've studied Pi, decimals, fractions, and now geometry. I've always loved math."

Rylan, like many of his classmates, has been watching the third-floor transformation unfold for years. This fall, he and his peers will finally get to experience the space fully finished and designed just for them.

"I've been upstairs a few times to help. It looks phenomenal. It makes me feel like a leader."

This new floor isn't just a renovation. It's a transformation. With two dedicated STEM labs equipped for Project Lead the Way (PLTW), scholars will now work with real-world tools like saws, drills, and sanders. They'll develop practical skills while diving into hands-on learning that sparks imagination and confidence.

"These classrooms give students experience with trades in a way that opens doors in high school and beyond," says Middle School Director David Menk.

In addition to STEM labs and eleven dedicated middle school classrooms, at the center of the third floor is the Learning Commons, a flexible, open-concept space that will anchor academic life and community-building alike. It's where scholars will explore creative projects, staff will gather for collaboration, and families will connect during meetings and celebrations.



Rylan receives his honor roll tie



In just one quarter, the percentage of middle schoolers scoring proficient on the ELA Interim Assessment more than doubled, and those performing at the lowest level were cut in half. In math, over half of scholars recently reached proficiency on a standardized quiz.

It's a space designed to reflect and reinforce the culture of leadership and excellence growing across the school.

This shift couldn't come at a better time. Scholars like Rylan aren't just moving upstairs, they're leveling up in every way.

"My teachers say I've grown a lot here since second grade," he shares. "I've been getting more CIAs and fewer demerits. I've been doing really well in school, and I made the honor roll."

At St. Marcus, CIAs, Character In Action awards, recognize scholars who live out the school's values through everyday acts of kindness and integrity. Rylan recalls several moments that earned him that honor.

"One time a kid was about to drop his lunch tray, so I grabbed it and put it on his table. Another time my friend was crying and I stopped what I was doing to help build him up."

These everyday moments reflect something bigger: a culture of growth that is becoming more deeply woven into daily life at KSC.

Scholars are making academic gains too.



But as Menk points out, the momentum isn't just academic.

"Our students are growing as leaders. They're showing more focus, a clearer understanding of the importance of their education, and real ownership of our community. They're welcoming parents into the building at events like Men That Matter and mentoring younger students in the hallways."

Rylan is ready to step into that role. "I want to be a leader for the little kids and show a great example," he says. "I want to play basketball, do well in school, and be someone others can look up to."

This spring, he had the chance to meet several donors who helped make the third floor possible.

"We thanked them for donating to the school and asked why they gave," Rylan recalls. "One person said her husband used to go to school in this building and wanted to help us grow. That meant a lot."

For everyone who has invested in this vision, and who waited patiently alongside our school community, the impact is already visible. Scholars like Rylan are entering middle school with more confidence, stronger skills, and a deeper sense of purpose.

"I just want to say thank you," he says. "Because of you, we get to keep growing."



"St. Marcus is a family. Everyone there has poured into my son! His teachers and administrators have instilled righteousness in him, built character, and shown him how to make good decisions that affect his life. St. Marcus is also a community that teams up with the parents to keep their child in line and on the same accord at home. Rylan has definitely benefited from the school's structure and nurturing!"
- Rylan's father, Richard



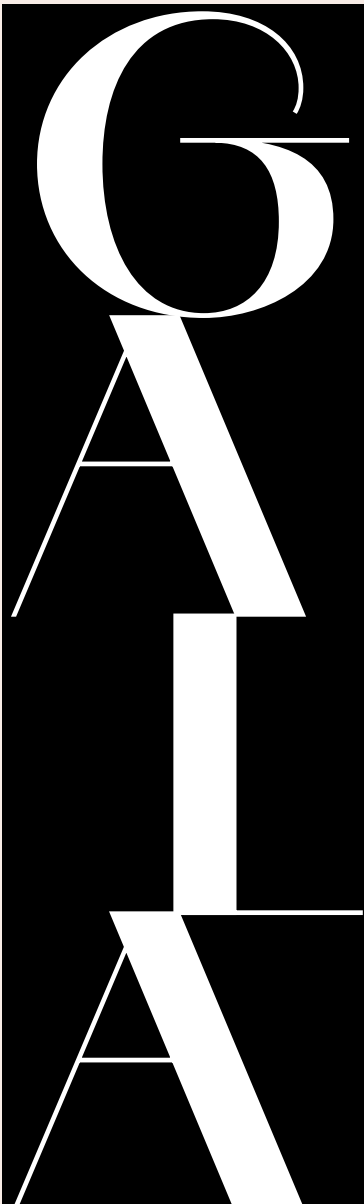
SAVE THE DATE

Karl J. Schlueter Campus Dedication

Join us for celebration and gratitude as we officially dedicate the completed
Karl J. Schlueter Campus

Dedication Weekend: September 20 & 21, 2025
Community Ribbon Cutting Ceremony: September 23, 2025

Watch for more details coming soon! We look forward to celebrating with you!



SAVE THE DATE

St. Marcus School Gala
November 8, 2025

This is more than a moment—
it's a movement.

Together, we stand with
purpose, courage, and love.

Join us as we celebrate the
sacred act of showing up—for
our children, for God's calling,
and for one another.

Reserve your seat now and see
sponsorship opportunities
at stmarcushgala.com



CELEBRATING THE ST. MARCUS CLASS OF 2025

A Legacy of Faith, Growth, and Light

St. Marcus celebrated the accomplishments of 85 graduates who are moving on to area high schools such as Martin Luther, Milwaukee Lutheran, Wisconsin Lutheran, Kingdom Prep, Pius XI, Tenor, Nicolet, Dominican, and other area high schools.

The ceremony featured reflections from two student speakers—Faith from the Center Street Campus and ShaRonn from the North Avenue Campus—both who began their St. Marcus journeys as K3 scholars. They shared powerful testaments to the faith, growth, and community that define the St. Marcus experience.

Faith shared how her middle school years at St. Marcus shaped her character and highlighted the importance of her class Bible verse, 1 Peter 5:7-8. She reminded her classmates to continue to “cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you,” and urged them to stay vigilant in faith as they face new life challenges. “Let us remember to cast our anxieties onto Jesus,” she said, noting the strength she’s drawn from her faith, her mom, and time at St. Marcus.

ShaRonn reflected on Ephesians 5:8, “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.” She recalled how her class grew from moments of struggle into a supportive community that spread the gospel.





Drawing parallels between her St. Marcus basketball team's success of winning state and taking second place at nationals and her classroom experience, ShaRonn emphasized the importance of unity, accountability, and spiritual growth. "We were not only teammates but brothers and sisters in Christ," she said. "We know how to find—and be—the light in the Lord."

As the Class of 2025 embarks on this new chapter, their words leave a legacy of faith, resilience, and hope.

CONGRATULATIONS SCHOLARS!



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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 to be a national model of Biblical living, transformative community impact, and educational excellence.



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