

CATALYST

A close-up portrait of a young Black girl with her hair styled in numerous thin braids, some of which are dyed a vibrant red. She is looking directly at the camera with a calm, steady gaze. She is wearing a dark navy blue sweater over a white collared shirt, with a red sash or ribbon draped across her chest. The background is a blurred wall with a pattern of orange and black geometric shapes.

ST. MARCUS SCHOOL NEWSLETTER • SUMMER 2021



Dear friends,

**WENDY TYSON,
MY MOTHER, IS A
REMARKABLE WOMAN.**
She was born and raised
in Kenya, East Africa, was
twice married, raised six
children, and now has
twelve grandchildren.

Despite spending a decade living in England and the majority of her life in the United States, in her heart and soul she remains African. To this day, she lives in a geodesic dome decorated with all things African.

I was the youngest of six children, and I grew up bilingual, especially pertaining to “less constructive” words. Dad used English; mom used Swahili. I became very familiar with the Swahili word for “BOY!”, and, “What are you doing silly child?” as well as some other words best not repeated, even in Swahili. In general terms, when mom bust out the Swahili it was time to get focused!

There’s one Swahili word that I remember fondly from my childhood, a word that is stacked with meaning. The word “Harambee” [phonetics] means “All pull together.” So whether it was marshaling the eight of us into the Suburban to run an errand, leaving on a family walk, or it was time to pick the weeds out of the vegetable garden, we would often hear the word “Harambee” called out by my enthusiastic and determined mother.

Forty years later, I find myself living in Milwaukee’s Harambee neighborhood and leading two schools within Harambee and a third school directly on its southern boundary. It is a neighborhood full of potential, with a rich history, and a deep resilience and determination amongst its long term citizens. A single lap around the newest campus - the Harambee Campus - also reveals a community with huge challenges as evidenced by rising crime rates,

abandoned homes, and failing schools.

And so the word Harambee means far more to me than the geographic area in which I live, minister and work. Far more importantly it is a rallying cry and a reminder that in order to rebuild and restore our community we will have to “Harambee.” We will have to all pull together - young, old, black, white, newcomers, old timers, the wealthy and the low-income. It will take all of us!

If you are reading this you too are a part of the spirit of “Harambee” that has produced hope, purpose and a future for hundreds of children and families who attend St. Marcus and live throughout our city. With the newest Harambee Campus opening its doors in August to 200 children and the educational carnage caused by the pandemic about to manifest itself, **NOW is the time more than ever to all pull together. God has opened a door that we must walk through with vigor, purpose and urgency. I am reminded of the poignant bible passage from Esther 4:14: “Perhaps this is the moment for which you have been created.”**

I hope and pray that you are encouraged, motivated and inspired by all the ministry stories and highlights described in this issue. More so, I hope and pray that you find yourself thinking, saying and doing “Harambee,” so that we can celebrate together the incredible transformation taking place in the Harambee community.

Sincerely,



Henry Tyson
Superintendent

ST. MARCUS SCHOOL ANNUAL BENEFIT GALA 2021

ready
together

Saturday, November 13th

This year, we'll gather in-person and
virtually. Stay tuned for details!



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

A Reflection on Graduation

“Getting to this moment was not easy. This year and a half, we have all dealt with some type of loss, disappointment or unexpected change, but even through those setbacks we refuse to give up, when times get hard, we may feel our only option is to give up, but that is not the case. The things we have gone through together this year were only a brief moment in a big lifetime ahead of us, but it has shaped us into who we are today. Don’t focus on the negative challenges that are thrown at you, but think about how positive and great God’s plans are ahead for you, even in the midst of suffering.” “The times we have gone through have only equipped us to be more ready for the next challenges thrown at us later on in life. God is preparing us for times we may feel in doubt, times we may turn away from Him, and times we may give up, but without Him we wouldn’t be standing here today.”

- 2021 8th Grade Class Speaker Laila Joshua





Summer Programming Sneak Peek

EVERY YEAR, WE LOOK TO PREVENT THE ALL-TOO-COMMON SUMMER BRAIN DRAIN, OFTEN CALLED THE "SUMMER SLIDE". The summer slide is the loss of knowledge and skill kids accumulated during the school year. It's a very real problem for students, especially urban youth who lack resources to stay engaged in learning during the summer.

St. Marcus hosts several summer programs that seek to prevent summer brain drain and ensure kids are able to pick up where they left off from the previous school year. A notable new program is one designed specifically for incoming Harambee campus scholars in grades K4 through 2nd.

Given the unconventional school year, St. Marcus would be remiss to not acknowledge the learning loss caused by the pandemic as well.

Summer programming encourages scholars to advance beyond the circumstances of the pandemic and find even greater success this coming school year.

INTENSIVE SUMMER INSTRUCTION

Over 200 scholars attended an intensive summer program in early June, instructed by St. Marcus teachers to ensure minimal learning loss between a pandemic-affected school year and the upcoming academic year.

STRONG START PROGRAM

Utilizing pandemic-related adaptations to equip staff and parents, who undergo tech and resource training, STRONG START prepares students for school before formal education starts in August. It is imperative that children entering St. Marcus are as close to an appropriate grade-level education as possible. Between the pandemic, transferring from low-performing schools, or having never been in a formal classroom setting, there are myriad reasons why children will benefit from this new program.

The STRONG START program screens students to identify their academic gaps, provides home learning resources, empowers parents to assist learning at home, and offers in-person and virtual summer school to make sure all scholars are prepared for a rigorous, high-expectations St. Marcus education.

Parents and children submit lessons, usually in the form of a video, to an assigned St. Marcus STRONG START coach. The coach checks the work and provides feedback to the family. Depending on the age of the child, there are up to four levels to be completed in the program.

St. Marcus hopes to share the program with other schools to improve educational outcomes throughout the city.

CfUT SUPPORT

Another program that calls St. Marcus home, managed by CfUT, or the Center for Urban Teaching, is a summer program which takes teachers, from undergraduate students to expert educators, and assigns them to area schools in Milwaukee and Racine during the summer. It's a pipeline of high-quality urban education teachers in training over a four-week period. Dedication of summer school teachers makes a difference in ensuring kids receive an impactful and meaningful four weeks of summer learning to prevent the "summer slide."

St. Marcus provides space for program teachers to gather for professional development and weekly meetings. Scholars might be required to attend the program, but many voluntarily join.

A large number of St. Marcus teacher candidates go through the CfUT program. Real world preparation in developing a classroom culture, prepping lessons, and classroom management provide experience for those serving Milwaukee's students.

Faith-based, high-expectation learning is the mission of the CfUT program, in addition to promoting healthy relationship building between scholars, their teachers, and academics.

SUMMER SCHOLARS CAMP

Throughout the month of July, K-12th graders participate in a "Summer Scholars Camp", at St. Marcus. The program is hosted by St. Marcus' alumni coordinator Jacarrie Carr and his organization Jacarrie Kicks for Kids.

"My program being at St. Marcus means the world to me because we share the same goals to help kids get better academically and bring them closer to Christ," Jacarrie says.

During Summer Scholars Camp, youth actively engage in a curriculum that deepens their faith and empowers them to positively change their lives, families, and communities. Core curriculum in reading, writing, and math challenge and build upon established foundations, prepare students for the upcoming school year, and aim to eliminate the dreaded "summer slide." Because kids should also have time to be kids during the summer, the program offers field trips, sports, and art activities.



Each of the four weeks follows a theme: unity, self, ethical entrepreneurship economics, and purpose-faith in action. Kids will leave the program feeling empowered to make changes in their lives and communities!

THANK YOU!

Our donors and partners make it possible for St. Marcus to host such a variety of summer programming. Thank you for ensuring Milwaukee youth are continuously provided an opportunity to grow.

IN FALL 2020, ST. MARCUS INTRODUCED A NEW ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITY FOR SUPPORTERS: **ADOPT A CLASSROOM!**

Individuals collectively supported a classroom of scholars with a personal investment of \$2,500 each. Donors and individual scholars from the adopted classroom cultivated fun friendships through pen pal correspondence and interactive virtual classroom activities.

Representing the gap between state funding and the actual cost to educate one St. Marcus scholar for the school year, donors' \$2,500 investments ensured that every scholar received the highest levels of instruction for a full academic year.

Adopt a Classroom originated through a generous partnership with St. Marcus supporter Carl Trimble. Carl's passion for the program inspired a number of additional supporters to join, resulting in the majority of the classroom receiving sponsorship by the end of the school year!

For donors and scholars alike, the best thing about Adopt a Classroom was the personal connection that pen pal letters, video messages, and interactive classroom activities nurtured throughout the school year. Numerous letters were exchanged, and donors and scholars participated virtually in classroom connections including an interactive book discussion, a creative crafting hour, and virtual "brain breaks" from students.



Supporters Yvonne and Jeff Quint were thrilled to participate. "Through this program, we had the opportunity to directly see the impact of our gift," Yvonne says.

"We experienced the students' enthusiasm for learning and highly encourage others to join us in this unique opportunity

to impact a student's education!"

For 4th grade Teacher Kelsi Daffner, the feeling was mutual.

"In a season of isolation and distance, Adopt a Classroom allowed my students to feel connected and valued through pen pal experiences and virtual visits. It was awesome to see the pure joy in their faces every time they received a letter!

Relationships that were nonexistent before the school year blossomed into something beautiful."

We look forward to more pen pal letters and interactive classroom activities next school year! Will you join us?

Your investment of \$2,500 (monthly payments or customized arrangements available!) promises a meaningful, rewarding and FUN experience for you and a 4th grade friend. For

more information, visit www.stmarcus.org/school/get-involved-0



Building Stability and Prosperity for Community Transformation

by: Sean McNealy, Mission Advancement Team

St. Marcus is more than a school for the 900 scholars entrusted to us every year. We are a resource for the entire community; for school families, church members, or those residing in the Harambee neighborhood.

Thanks to our partners, volunteers, and supporters, our community engagement ministry continues to grow to impact even more people in Milwaukee.

Support services are working to build a more diverse Harambee neighborhood, both racially and economically, allowing children and families to thrive. Since 2017, more than 650 individuals have received services through this programming in collaboration with community partners such as Wisconsin Women's Business Initiative Corporation (WWBIC), ACTS Housing, Milwaukee JobsWork, The Joseph Project, and Habitat for Humanity.

Moe Lawrenz, Life Coach, and Maureen Gunn, Community Engagement Specialist, have worked tirelessly to ensure school families and community members are supported.

During the height of the pandemic, Moe identified families' urgent coronavirus-inflicted needs, connected them to nonprofits or distributed micro-grants. In a typical year, Moe hosts resume workshops, financial literacy classes, homeownership orientations, and motivational speakers.

"Working with our community throughout the pandemic has been challenging and rewarding at the same time," Moe says. "Strong relationships were built with families who received support from St. Marcus donors and friends during the pandemic; we will continue to build on the strength of those relationships to find more ways to serve."

The driving force behind St. Marcus' community engagement work is those served by the program. It is essential to listen to community needs and provide resources to foster healed, whole families - we don't want to provide a quick "band-aid" solution, we want to address the underlying causes of instability, lack of resources, and poverty.

Maureen Gunn, a St. Marcus church member and recently hired community engagement specialist, plays an active role in representing St. Marcus in the Harambee neighborhood, spearheading the development of critical community partnerships in Harambee and the city.

Maureen's responsibilities during the pandemic have looked a bit different, but she has worked to engage the community with St. Marcus in several ways: Zoom meetings, virtual tours, and even a virtual town hall.

"The St. Marcus Town Hall is an excellent example of how we provided information to our community discussing Covid-19 vaccine hesitancy and health care inequity," Maureen says. "Our ministry has done a great deal in adapting."

At the heart of this programming is the belief that school and faith communities can and should play a guiding role in transitioning families from a place of instability to prosperity. We believe families have the power within them to make that change, but decades of insufficient access to resources and systemic obstacles has blocked progress.

One way St. Marcus supports families in Harambee is through a partnership with Habitat for Humanity. St. Marcus mom Sha’Nahja worked with Habitat for Humanity to secure a home for herself and her two daughters.

“We won’t have to worry about going anywhere,” she says. “For me this whole process is for my kids to have a stable environment.”

Affordable housing options such as Habitat for Humanity allows families to save money on

housing costs and to refocus financial energy on medical, health, and safety.

Habitat for Humanity aims to build 80 new construction homes and 160 home repairs in the Harambee neighborhood over the next four years. St. Marcus is working to secure additional partnerships with school families and Habitat for Humanity.

In the meantime, scholars took time out of their art class to decorate and sign 50 studs to welcome families that will be used to construct nearby Harambee homes. Congregation members even got together in May to work on a nearby Habitat build. The community engagement work will meet the increased needs of St. Marcus families and the community as a whole. Only with partners like you is this possible. Thank you!





Thank You, Siebert Lutheran and We Raise Foundations

A big thank you to the Siebert Lutheran Foundation and We Raise Foundation who jointly awarded a \$300,000 grant to St. Marcus for community engagement work on June 10th, 2021. Their partnership provides support services for school families and the Harambee neighborhood.

“Under the extraordinary leadership of Henry Tyson and his team, St. Marcus sets the highest standards of academic performance and then creates innovative solutions to help its students meet them. We are proud to support their work and equally proud to be a leading voice for foundation partnerships like the one designed with Siebert. We believe we are stronger when we work together to create healthy communities and encourage other funders to consider how they could do more through partnerships.”

- PAUL MILES, PRESIDENT AND CEO OF WE RAISE FOUNDATION

“This collaborative grant to St. Marcus embodies the Siebert Lutheran Foundation’s core value of educating youth while sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The partnership with We Raise reflects our shared value of aligning resources to create additional collective impact. We are grateful for the time and attention St. Marcus gave to developing its three-year vision for this program and are excited to see the positive impact it will have on the community for many years to come.”

- CHARLOTTE JOHN-GOMEZ, PRESIDENT OF SIEBERT LUTHERAN FOUNDATION



Harambee Campus is scheduled to open in fall to serve 200 new scholars, who are excitedly waiting to join the St. Marcus family. Thanks to you and our generous God, renovations are now underway.

Phase I renovations are underway at Harambee Campus, preparing a floor of classrooms for new students who will arrive in August. Renovations and additions will be completed in phases to limit the impact on scholars' learning. Funding is possible thanks to a dedicated group of individuals and foundation friends who are passionately driven to educate more students in Milwaukee as quickly as possible.

The completion of classroom spaces is a top priority. Renovations of the full site, which includes furnishings, is slated to continue as gifts and investments are secured.

Future phases will include:

- A new entryway for a safer scholar drop-off/pick-up
- Refurbishment of the gym
- A courtyard in-filled with new learning spaces
- Another floor of classrooms
- Libraries
- STEM labs
- Special education spaces
- Art & Music rooms
- Motor skills room
- Wellness wing
- Updates to the cafeteria and kitchen
- Play structure, fencing and signage



This phasing approach will provide flexibility for growth planning and culture building, adding 60 new scholars a year - mostly at the K4 level. Once we have fully grown into the facility (by 2027), Harambee Campus will serve 600 students in K4 through 8th grade.



Courage
TO
COMMIT
All in with St. Marcus

June 17, 2021
Harambee Campus renovations

An ongoing \$11 million capital campaign for acquisition, renovations, and additions has raised just over \$5 million, thanks to dedicated partners.

The *Courage to Commit (C2C) Campaign* is designed to create a community of connectedness and safety anchored by three high-performing schools, located just ten blocks apart.

This community will have access to quality education, safe affordable housing, home ownership opportunities, health promotion and disease prevention, and cradle to college programming held together by an overarching commitment to “doing what it takes” for Milwaukee’s central city students and families.

Individuals will be empowered to positively impact and change their communities through faith, knowledge, and initiative.

Your involvement and investment provides a future of hope, opportunity, and positive change.

Thank YOU for your partnership and prayers. We ask you to continue to walk alongside St. Marcus in this critical venture. Come visit! Grab a hard hat and a cup of coffee and witness faith in action.

To take a virtual tour of the renovated Harambee campus visit:
tinyurl.com/harambeevirtualtour



St. Marcus School

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Milwaukee, WI 53212
(414) 562-3163

St. Marcus is a Christian, high-expectations school serving over 1,000 students (K3-8th grade) at three 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.**



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I ♥ ST. MARCUS

St. Marcus volunteers gathered on Juneteenth to celebrate and promote enrollment for Harambee Campus. Harambee means, "All Pulling Together."