



Making our Mark

ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2014

CHARACTER is a broadly used word, and like many words, people may believe that we all understand character the same way. There appears to be a sort of unspoken agreement about what it means to have character, as opposed to being a character. We all know the danger in assumptions, so I challenge you to consider a few different thoughts. Some may believe that character is a particular set of attributes that define our essence. But I urge you to be cautious of defining; it can come dangerously close to judging. Merriam-Webster's online dictionary says character is "the way someone thinks, feels, and behaves." In *The Genius in Every Child*, Rick Ackerly writes, "To the Greeks, *kharakter* was the imprint the gods put on the soul at birth." Another definition comes from Paul Tough, author of *How Children Succeed*, in reference to a study in which renowned psychologist Martin Seligman, "defined character a different way: a set of abilities or strengths that are very much changeable—entirely malleable, in fact. They are skills you can learn; they are skills you can practice; and they are skills you can teach."

I believe Dr. Seligman's definition of character intersects with our community nicely through a phrase we have coined as a part of our relationship to +Works, "Keeping it Pawsitive, The St. Mark's Way." At St. Mark's, we understand that children are always growing and changing. They are bumping up against the world constantly, trying to determine what is real, what is true, and what can be trusted



4th Grade Girls Tess, Nia, Reagan, Valerie, Hannah and Eliza

“WE HAVE TO BELIEVE THAT CHARACTER IS MALLEABLE, AND THAT WE CAN OFFER A COMMUNITY THAT FINDS THE TEACHABLE MOMENTS IN A CHILD’S EXPERIENCE SO THAT CHARACTER GROWTH CAN OCCUR.”

- Garhett Wagers

and relied upon. It is for this reason that we understand they will make mistakes, and we recognize how our environment plays such a vital role in how they learn from these mistakes. We have to believe that character is malleable, and that we can offer a community that finds the teachable moments in a child's experience so that character growth can occur. I have found that students learn these lessons

when they feel safe to practice integrity, kindness, responsibility, and respect for the dignity of all. It is in our relationship to one another that we create such a special place; a community where connection and the feeling of acceptance and belonging will allow the character of our children to grow and form.

WE ARE EXCITED for the 2014 St. Mark's Gala and Auction. The Southern Soirée will be held at the Houstonian Hotel and Spa on **April 5**. Join us for a fun evening full of festive cocktails, scrumptious Southern fare, good music, and great company.

Check out the Gala website www.stmes.org/gala for more details about the event, or call the Development Office with any questions.

Join Us!



AT FIRST GLANCE, *Grayson* appears to be an average 4th grade boy. He enjoys school, loves to play outside, and competes on swim team. But Grayson's impressive manners, courteous interactions with teachers, and strong character set him apart from other 4th



4th Grader
Grayson

graders. According to Grayson, character is not only who you are, but it's also your inspiration to become who you could be. Grayson shows his character by being himself both at school and at home. He tries to be an authentic and genuine person, and he is committed to "being nice to friends, not bullying, and not name-calling." At home, Grayson

shares, "I try to be as kind to my sister and family as I possibly can, and I also try to help out with chores." Grayson thinks it's important to have character because people want to spend time with those who are true to themselves and kind to other people. Thanks for being a great example of outstanding character, Grayson!

6TH GRADER *Ashley* shows outstanding character in everything she does. Ashley believes that people who have character are usually kind, funny, and able to lead others when necessary. At school, Ashley does her best to use manners and pay attention to her teachers; at home, she listens to her parents and respects them. She also works hard to communicate with her parents, which demonstrates maturity and character. Ashley shares, "It's important to be a follower and not just a leader. I think having character can be demonstrated by being a leader, but it is also being able to

follow others, and not having to be the one in charge." Last year, Ashley worked on the 5th grade Student Design Team Project in English and Science. She said that her group was struggling to work together. Although Ashley wasn't the "CEO" of the team, she learned how to support the leader by being a cooperative



6th Grader Ashley

team member. Ashley's strong character isn't limited to the classroom and home; she also showed great sportsmanship on her basketball team. Middle school is an important time for character development, and Ashley is a great role model to our younger students!

- SAVE THE DATE -

St. Mark's Alumni Reunion on Sunday, April 27, 2014

at St. Mark's campus for High School age alumni.

To R.S.V.P. and get Google Hangout information visit www.stmes.org/alumni

Alumni

Church



By The Rev. Patrick J. Miller

WHEN MOSES ASKS what he should call God, God says, "I am who I am" (Ex 3.13). This is where we get the word Yehweh. "I am who I am" could also mean "I will be what I will be." I appreciate the name of God as a present and future tense of the English verb "to be."

Who we are as humans is set in the context of the divine. In Genesis, God says, "Let us make human kind in our image" (Gen 1.26). Each person is created in the image of God, in the image of "I am who I am." This is important when we think about who we are.

What I find fascinating is that our hearts are formed before our gender. At our very beginning, we are creatures with hearts. One of the first things we get to do as parents is to listen to the heartbeat of our child. Before we named them, we

listened to their hearts.

It is a sad reality that from time to time, we forget who we are, and we forget who the people in our life are. Unfortunately, we have the ability to see people in categories, and not as people. Too often we see people as objects and not as humans with hearts created in the image of God.

Fortunately, St. Mark's is a community of people working to counter this human dilemma. Who we are is a community of people engaging our hearts and our minds into the work of building up the hearts and minds of other people. This is what we strive to be, and this is what we teach our children. We are a place where the literal and symbolic hearts and minds of the young and old are strengthened.

We do this from memory. We remember that we are each created by

God. We remember that when we go out into the world, our work is to remind the world of God. We remind the world that the world is now, and will always be, full of God's children. At St. Mark's church and school we are stewards of a group of those children. As teachers, administrators, priests, counselors, students, parents, or colleagues, we are a campus full of human beings created in the image of God, and the heart of our community is actually many hearts.

On our campus, we are reminded daily of the basic truth that we are created in the image of God. Subsequently, we go out and recreate the world in the image of God one symbolic and literal heart at a time.



WHO WE ARE

THE ST. MARK'S LION



“THE STEPPING STONES FOR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT ARE IN PLACE AT ST. MARK’S. WE WALK THIS PATHWAY DAILY WITH OUR STUDENTS, GUIDING THEM IN THE SMALL MOMENTS THAT BUILD INTEGRITY. CHARACTER EDUCATION IS INTERWOVEN THROUGHOUT A CHILD’S LIFE AT ST. MARK’S; IT IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF EACH SCHOOL DAY.”

-Bobbie Hicks, Head of Lower School

THE PRIDE OF ST. MARK

Have you ever wondered who St. Mark was? Or why our mascot is the lion? We're here to dispel these mysteries as we share The Pride of St. Mark.

St. Mark was born shortly after Jesus in a small town in current-day Libya. He was one of the youngest followers of Jesus, and he witnessed much of Jesus' ministry as well as his crucifixion. Mark became a close friend to Peter, another of Jesus' disciples. Mark's Gospel is believed to contain the story of Jesus as told by Peter. It is thought to be the first Gospel that was written after the death of Jesus.

Mark, who was known as "The Evangelist," founded the Christian church in Egypt. He was jailed in Alexandria, Egypt because of his faith. One night, in jail, he was visited by an angel in the form of a lion who reassured him with these words, "Pax Tibi Marce Evangelista Meus," which means, "Peace be with you, Mark, my evangelist." The next day, Mark was martyred. The lion quickly became the symbol for St. Mark and is often portrayed with his paw on a book, his gospel, and the words "Pax Tibi Marce Evangelista Meus." The lion has wings in reference to the apocalyptic vision of the four creatures that John witnessed in Revelation 4. Today, Mark's body and some of his relics are in the San Marco Cathedral

in Venice, Italy. However, his head and other relics are believed to be in St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral, in Alexandria, Egypt.

Early Childhood and Elementary School Religion Teacher, Marjorie Connolly, explains that we try to proclaim the gospel, just like



“MARK WAS A TREMENDOUS LEADER...BUT HE ALSO KNEW WHEN TO BE A FOLLOWER.”

-Early Childhood and Elementary School Religion Teacher, Marjorie Connolly

Mark. Additionally, she shares, "We want all of our kids to be leaders, but it's just as important to be able to be a follower some times. Mark was a tremendous leader; he founded the church in Egypt. But he also knew when to be a follower; he followed Peter in his ministry. At St. Mark's, we want our students to feel empowered to lead, but also to have the courage and strength to follow." At St. Mark's, we celebrate St. Mark Day in chapel closest to April 25.



PORTRAIT OF A ST. MARK'S GRADUATE

A St. Mark's graduate is a mindful, active learner who embraces the challenges of a robust educational experience and is ethically and spiritually motivated to make a positive contribution to the community and the world. This is demonstrated through his or her relationship to learning, self, and others.

To read the Portrait of a St. Mark's Graduate in its entirety, please visit www.stmes.org/portraitofagraduate

CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE

As educators at St. Mark's, we celebrate the uniqueness of each child. We are stewards of our students' learning, modeling intellectual curiosity and a passion for discovery. We cultivate joy, playfulness, and growth in a child-centered environment. Our actions as teachers, individuals, and community leaders uphold this ideal.

To read our Characteristics of Professional excellence, please visit www.stmes.org/professionalexcellence

THE ST. MARK'S

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(top left) 8th Grader Alice and 3rd Grader Hannah;
(top right) 4th Graders Lauren and Siler;
(right) Kindergarteners Wheatley, Bella, Jiya, Aarushi and Yasmeen



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(left) 4th Graders Jack and Ryan with Mr. Scott;
(right) 5th Grader Dana with Ms. Davis



2



(left) 3rd Graders Andy and Shreyus;
(right) 8th Graders Austin and Sam;



4

(top) Preschool 2s student Merrick and Mrs. Mandell;
(right) 2nd Grader Mason;



3

(left) Preschool 3s Reese and Castle;
(right) 2nd Graders Sophie, Mason, Richard and Sarah



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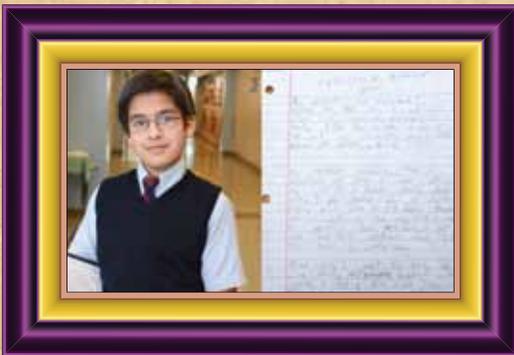


WAY GALLERY

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(left) 1st Grader Charles;
(right) 8th Graders Natalie,
Daniela and Helen



(top) 6th Grader Nicholas;
(right) 7th Graders
Dahlia, Ashley and Katie

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(left to right) Mrs. Sonnier's Pre-K Class
with a bubble in their mouths;
Pre-K students Beckett and Priscilla;
Ms. Williams' Preschool 3s Class

THE ST. MARK'S WAY is a guide that defines the expectations for our students and the way they conduct themselves. It is a way of life that we enforce and practice in our classrooms, on our campus, on the courts and fields, and in our community. Living The St. Mark's Way creates the engaged school climate and culture that is the goal for our students and the school community as a whole.

WITH CLASSMATES:

- 1 We speak to our classmates with kind words, a caring tone and with supportive comments.
- 2 We offer assistance to our classmates with materials, class work and in any other way we can show kindness.
- 3 We include our classmates in all games, activities and conversations with a "one for all and all for one" attitude.

WITH ADULTS AND TEACHERS:

- 4 We follow directions, listen and respond to our teachers and other adults with respect.
- 5 We use manners and polite language when speaking with adults.

WITH RESPONSIBILITY:

- 6 We complete our class work, homework and participate in projects and learning activities following the rules given by our teachers.
- 7 We complete our work independently and produce original writing that utilizes, but do not copy our resources.
- 8 At all times we actively work to control our behavior. We manage talking, caring for materials, and moving through our campus inside and outside of the buildings. We conduct ourselves with manners, focus and proper learning habits when attending enrichment classes, chapel, assemblies, lunch and dismissal.

The Power of Professional Development

HOW TWO EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS ARE SHAKING THINGS UP

IN THE SUMMER of 2013, Pre-K teacher, **Anne Jackson**, and Preschool 3s teacher, **Cindy Williams**, attended a conference sponsored by the Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools in Fort Worth. The conference showcased the University Child Development School (UCDS), from Seattle, Washington, which was founded in 1911. Currently, the school enrolls nearly 300 three-year-olds through 5th grade students. Every class is multi-age, based on student performance relative to a learning continuum.

UCDS has been gaining attention within the education world for their innovative approach to curriculum, particularly math. Prior to the conference, neither Anne nor Cindy were familiar with UCDS, and both were seeking improvement in their math curricula. Cindy shared, “Math has never been my strong suit. It’s always been something that I’ve wanted to nurture in my three-year-olds, because I felt phobic about it

areas of challenge.” Math is embedded in stories, and manipulatives (such as colored blocks, pom poms, or buttons), which allow students to have a visual and tactile experience. According to UCDS, there are countless correct ways to solve and approach any math problem.

Anne and Cindy returned to St. Mark’s extremely excited about the lessons they had learned at the conference. In early goal setting meetings at the beginning of the year, they were brainstorming with each other and Lower School Head, **Bobbye Hicks**, as to how they could introduce the Math Vitamin into their early childhood classrooms. Anne looked at Bobbye and said, “I would do anything to go visit that school.” Bobbye smiled at Anne and said, “Well why don’t you?” So Anne and Cindy got to work. They wrote a letter to UCDS expressing interest in both an on-campus consultation, and ongoing online correspondence with a UCDS mentor. UCDS replied, welcoming Cindy and Anne to visit their campus for a consultation. Additionally, they offered the online correspondence, usually priced at \$200 per hour, completely complimentary. Cindy and Anne determined the overall cost for the two of them to make a three-day visit to Seattle. After turning in their request to St. Mark’s, they were approved to make their trip. Their excited screams were heard around campus that day after school.

In November, Anne and Cindy made their visit to UCDS. They received a tour of the school, had lunch with the head of school, and were placed in several classrooms to observe lessons and cross-curricular meetings. This year, the school-wide curriculum theme is “Lift,” and it is used as a springboard for every single subject, along with character and emotional development. In the short time that Cindy and Anne were on campus, they saw four through six-year-old students studying wind velocity in science, another group of students reading books about the first African American female pilot, and several students encouraging and “lifting” each



Anne Jackson (far left) and Cindy Williams (far right) pose with two of their hosts at UCDS



growing up.” Anne added, “My method for teaching math has been working, but I haven’t been able to find ways to improve and develop it in the same way that I have grown my language arts program.” Anne and Cindy attended the two-day conference in Fort Worth with no idea how much it would impact their teaching styles and lessons. Anne explained, “I felt completely engaged as an adult educator.” UCDS introduces their math curriculum as a Math Vitamin. According to UCDS, “The Math Vitamin is a multi-disciplinary approach that allows each student to enter a math task from an area of strength and requires them to work in

other up.

Anne and Cindy left Seattle feeling empowered, excited, and ready to introduce new math concepts into their curricula. According to Anne, “The way UCDS approaches math curriculum is revolutionary, and we’re jumping in with help from our UCDS mentor, who we are Skyping with routinely.” This spring, Anne’s class built the number ten, using manipulatives. Each student approached the task differently, and each was encouraged to use his or her own method. In Cindy’s Preschool 3s class, she used manipulatives to introduce addition. These exercises, Cindy explained, “are a window into each child’s learning style and their personality, and it’s also an assessment tool.” Anne added, “Every child is empowered to take ownership of his or her learning.”

By implementing some of the lessons they learned at UCDS, Anne and Cindy hope that all of their kids can find a way to use math that makes sense to them, whether that’s through visuals, stories, or traditional numbers. The pair plans to continue to introduce the lessons and tools that they learned at UCDS, and then they will begin sharing their knowledge with their fellow Early Childhood team members. Anne and Cindy are immensely grateful for the opportunity to visit the University Child Development School, which was made financially possible through the St. Mark’s Annual Fund.



Lions Sports News

SWOOSH! St. Mark's students love basketball. Students in 5th through 8th grade formed nine basketball teams this season. Thirty-two St. Mark's 5th graders participated on three teams. The 5th grade girls and boys teams were fun to watch as they improved each week. The future of St. Mark's basketball is looking bright!

The **6th Grade Girls** basketball team completed a great season, with a 16-2 record. They are the first St. Mark's basketball team to win 1st place in two tournaments in one year. They won first place at our own St. Mark's Lions Tournament, where **Jamesy** and **Emma** won all-tournament medals. Later in the season, the team won first place at the St. Francis Tournament, where **Abby B.** and **Abby L.** were awarded medals.

The **6th Grade Boys** team finished with a record of 6-8. This team won 3rd place in a tough Presbyterian Panthers Tournament. All-tournament players were **Joseph, Duncan,** and **Spencer.** The team also won consolation in the top platinum bracket at the St. Vincent De Paul Tournament. **Spencer** received the all-tournament award.

The **Girls Junior Varsity** team's record was 10-1 this season. The team's only loss of the season occurred at the last game of the year against Trafton Academy. The record is even more remarkable because most of their opponents were from larger Division 1 schools. **Kristiana** and **Caitlin** earned coach's awards for the season.

The **Boys Junior Varsity** team finished the year with a record of 4-7. The team played at the St. Mark Lutheran Tournament early in the season, where **Ethan G.** was awarded an all-tournament player medal. The boys worked hard to be disciplined to run the plays and to rely on each other, and it was exciting to see their progress. We were all disappointed for our boys and girls Junior Varsity teams when the weather forced the cancellation of the Cats Classic Tournament. The team had an exciting win against Holy Spirit in their last game of the season, and we look forward to next year.

The **Girls Varsity** team came in 2nd place in district with an 11-3 record. In the St. Mark's Tournament, **Grace** made

the all-tournament team. The girls also went to the championship game in the St. Francis Tournament and came in 2nd to an excellent Second Baptist team. **Sydney** and **Emily** were all-tournament players.

The **Boys Varsity** team placed third in GHAC, Division 2 with a respectable record of 7-6 in a tough district. The team went through the season short-handed after losing shooting guard **Sean S.** to an injury. In the St. Mark's Tournament, **Austin** received an all-tournament award, and **Joey** received the coach's award for the Episcopal High School Tournament. In the rescheduled game with Holy Spirit, our Lions were picked as the underdog, but they played a tough game, barely allowing Holy Spirit to escape with the win. This was a memorable game with awesome performances from every team member.

We had a great season, and we want to congratulate all of our basketball players for playing hard, showing great sportsmanship, and, most importantly, having fun. Go Lions!



5th Grade Girls Basketball



5th Grade Boys Basketball



6th Grade Girls Basketball



6th Grade Boys Basketball



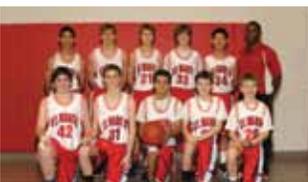
Junior Varsity Girls



Junior Varsity Boys



Girls Varsity Basketball



Boys Varsity Basketball

THE COACHES
ARE PROUD
OF ALL
THEIR TEAMS!
GO LIONS!



The golf, tennis and track seasons have started! Be sure to stay connected by visiting www.stmes.org/athleticsnews



ST. MARK'S EPISCOPAL SCHOOL
A Community Engaged

Upcoming Events

Save the date for the third annual

ST. MARK'S HERITAGE FESTIVAL

This year the Heritage Festival will be a multi-day celebration, focusing on the arts and literature from around the world.



Tuesday, April 22

OPENING CEREMONY

Wednesday, April 23

SONGS OF THE WORLD ARTS DAY

Thursday, April 24

EVERYONE HAS A STORY LITERATURE DAY

Friday, April 25

CLOSING CEREMONY

www.stmes.org/heritagefestival

March	
14	Early Childhood Field Day
17-21	Spring Break
24	In-Service Day
28	Elementary Field Day
31	ERB Testing
April	
1-4	ERB Testing
5	St. Mark's Gala and Auction
11	Middle School Field Day
13-17	8th Grade DC Trip
15-17	6th Grade Trip
16-17	4th Grade Trip
18	School Holiday Good Friday
21	School Holiday Easter Monday
22-25	Heritage Festival
27	Alumni Reunion
May	
22	Baccalaureate and Graduation
23	Last Day of School and Early Dismissal