



# Building Minds... Changing Lives

## WELCOME!

We're excited to present the inaugural issue of the United Schools of Indianapolis Advancement Journal! In this and upcoming issues, we will share information about United Schools of Indianapolis (USI) and promote the financial and volunteer opportunities available to help our schools. Look for the journal to hit your mailbox three months out of the year: April, September, and December.

We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we've enjoyed putting it together. As this is a new project for us, we welcome any questions or feedback you have—they can be sent to Sean Dunlavy, our Director of Development at [sdunlavy@unitedschoolsindy.org](mailto:sdunlavy@unitedschoolsindy.org) or 317.608.0485.

Thank you, and enjoy!

## THE SOARING BLUE HERONS SCORE AGAIN!

An enthusiastic crowd gathered on January 29th to cheer on the Vision Academy basketball team as it battled Lighthouse Charter School East. At halftime, fans and players gathered to pay tribute to Compass Commercial Construction Group for the generous \$5,000 contribution they made to purchase a scoreboard for Vision Academy. Representing Compass at the game was their CEO Bill McCarthy and Partner James Furrer.

Compass became familiar with United Schools of Indianapolis when it represented USI in the completion of construction for Avondale Meadows Middle School. Compass frequently makes donations to local community groups who make monumental impacts in the lives of others each and every day. As such, Compass expressed an interest in donating to a specific USI school project/program. After reviewing a list of options, Bill and his team selected Vision Academy and its scoreboard for their support.

During the ceremony, Bill and James were presented with a basketball signed by the players and coaches and multiple thank you letters from Vision players. Bill commented, "The impact Vision Academy has each and every day is vital to the future of our Indianapolis community." After his comments, USI's Executive Director Kelly Herron, Bill McCarthy, and James Furrer took a picture with the Vision team and coaches.

On behalf of the students at Vision Academy, a huge THANK YOU goes out to Compass Construction!



# HELPING STUDENTS PURSUE THEIR DREAMS

Teachers understand that, for students to be successful in the classroom, it is imperative they create a stimulating and well-equipped learning environment that motivates everyone in the class and tailors to different learning styles and needs. These days, technological equipment plays a large role in helping students succeed.

Brittany Kaelin, a first year 4th grade teacher at Avondale Meadows Academy, felt the lack of laptops available to students in her classroom hampered her students' progress. Brittany mentioned this to her parents, Larry and Colleen Kaelin, and they decided to take it upon themselves to raise funds to buy Chromebooks for Brittany's class. Larry and Colleen began contacting friends and family and asked them to consider contributing \$250 each or enough to buy one Chromebook for the classroom. Within a

few weeks, more than **23 people** responded and contributed more than **\$7,000** in total—enough to buy **26 Chromebooks and a charging station!**

On Friday, March 8th, the Kaelins visited the AMA 4th grade classroom to meet the students. In recognition of their generosity, the students presented the Kaelins with thank you cards and took pictures with the couple.

**Thank you, Larry and Colleen, for your generosity and ingenuity!**

**“My ultimate goal is to be the kind of teacher that inspires students to pursue their dreams, big or little, and help lead them towards a bright and successful future.”**

—Brittany Kaelin



**“By intentionally engaging students in interactive and diverse involvement opportunities, we seek to develop an ongoing commitment to leadership, service and learning that enhances our students' overall educational experience.”**

—Jeremiah Lockett

## Introducing the Eagle Ambassadors!

Under the direction of Jeremiah Lockett, Avondale Meadows Middle School's (AMMS) Assistant Principal, the Eagle Ambassador Program has been created as a student leadership and service opportunity. Recently, sixteen 6th through 8th grade students were accepted into its inaugural class.

To apply, students submit an application that includes a resume, recommendation letters, and referrals. Students must obtain at least a 3.0 grade point average and maintain an exceptional attendance and discipline record. A team of school administrators evaluated credentials and interviewed all of the candidates before selecting the first students for the program.

Eagle Ambassadors perform several important duties, including running morning announcements; leading guest tours of the school; participating in service projects; creating the AMMS yearbook; staffing enrollment, parent, and special events; and managing fundraising activities.

We're proud of our Eagle Ambassadors—keep up the good work for AMMS, and...**Fly Eagles Fly!**



## Are you a College Champion?

USI is committed to equipping students with the academic skills, the desire, and the stamina they need to be successful in our nation's colleges and universities.

Each year, all students (Kindergarten through 8th grades) visit a college campus. College exposure helps motivate students to work hard to achieve their educational goals. We want our students to see, feel, and live college life for a day. For kindergarteners, we try to familiarize them with what a college is and why they should go. Our 8th graders take out of town trips and explore questions such as, "how do I complete a college application?" and, "how do I apply for scholarships?"

Last year, students traveled to IUPUI, Marion, Franklin, Anderson, DePauw, Purdue University, Notre Dame, and Indiana University. Recent out of town trips included Northwestern, Louisville, and University of Chicago. Local trips cost approximately \$1,000, and out of town visits (including food and lodging) can cost as much as \$5,000.

Would you like to help a class of students visit your alma mater? For as little as \$1,000, you could inspire a student to pursue their dreams of one day attending college. Consider a one time donation, or become a College Champion—an individual who commits to a gift of \$1,000 each year to support our college visits.

For more information contact Sean Dunlavy at [sdunlavy@unitedschoolsindy.org](mailto:sdunlavy@unitedschoolsindy.org).

## CHARTER SCHOOLS 101

The term "charter schools" is thrown around a lot these days, but it's become clear that many people aren't 100% clear on what a charter school actually is. Are they public? Are they private? Are they part of a school district? How do they get their funding? All excellent questions!

Charter Schools are independent public schools allowed the freedom to be innovative while still being held accountable for improved student achievement. United Schools of Indianapolis (USI) is a network of K-8 public charter schools authorized by the Indianapolis Mayor's Office of Education Innovation.

### CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE:

- Public schools, but operate independently of a school district
- Tuition-free and open to any scholar who wishes to enroll
- Non-sectarian and do not discriminate on any basis
- Publicly funded by local, state, and federal tax dollars based on enrollment (same as how other public schools operate)
- Held accountable to state and federal academic standards

### UNITED SCHOOLS OF INDIANANPOLIS:



### THE NUMBERS

Charter schools receive state funding on a per-pupil basis, but gets 1/3 less than a public school would receive for that same student. The difference is that charter schools do not receive funds for transportation or capital improvement projects. As a result, there is a significant gap between state funding received and the cost of USI's enriched model.

United Schools of Indianapolis created a Development Office to help address this funding gap. The 2019 goal is to raise \$400,000 which will be used to greatly enhance the educational experience at our schools. This funding will provide additional intervention teachers in the classroom, physical education instruction, important classes such as art, music, and theater, and annual field trips.

Would you like to contribute to the USI Annual Fund? Please contact Sean Dunlavy for more information: [sdunlavy@unitedschoolsindy.org](mailto:sdunlavy@unitedschoolsindy.org)



**United Schools of Indianapolis**  
3980 Meadows Drive,  
Indianapolis, IN 46205  
317-550-3363  
unitedschoolsindy.org



## AVONDALE MEADOWS | VISION ACADEMY

### YOU CAN HELP STUDENTS REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

My teachers would push me to my limit, ‘You know you can do it! You know you can do it!’ And when I do, I am proud of myself and I want to do more and more.

—Jasmine, Avondale Meadows Academy Student

Students like Jasmine are why we go above and beyond at USI. We are a supportive community of teachers, families, and administrators who do our very best to instill a love of learning in our scholars that will lead to lifelong success. Our goal is to prepare students for success in high school, college and, ultimately, in life.

USI is a network of charter schools—independent public schools who are allowed the freedom to be innovative, while being held accountable for improved student achievement. However, our schools do not receive public funds to cover the full cost of operation. As a result, we rely on contributions from individuals and community groups to sustain our academic excellence.

#### **GIFTS BY MAIL**

Gifts by check should be made out to “United Schools of Indianapolis” and be mailed to:

United Schools of Indianapolis  
Development Office  
3980 Meadows Drive  
Indianapolis, IN 46205

For additional information, please contact Sean Dunlavy, Director of Development at [sdunlavy@unitedschoolsindy.org](mailto:sdunlavy@unitedschoolsindy.org) or call **317.608.0485**.