

Thermometers, Masks and Microphones

Welcome to the 2020-21 School Year

To the outside world, Sept. 8 may have looked like an ordinary summer day.

However, for the faculty and staff of Luther Memorial it was a day rich with emotion and excitement as they welcomed students back for the first time since March 12.

“Ordinary isn’t in our vocabulary this year,” says Executive Director Mrs. Nicole Levy. “Nothing is ordinary, but we’re so grateful to have our students back. Summers are always hard as we miss the kids and worry about their wellbeing, but this was nearly a six-month stretch of not seeing them. Much too long.”

For third grade teacher Mrs. Melissa Vodicka, the first day of school was an immense relief. “The first thing I did with the kids that morning was to reinforce that they are safe and loved,” she says. “For some of my students, the staff of LMS may be the only nurturing adults they have in their lives.”

The first month of school has passed without incident due to



Ny'Azia Young was happy to leave babysitting behind and return to the classroom this fall, though she says safety precautions make socializing difficult.



Marcella O'Donnell says goodbye to her children twins Jeffrey and Ireland on the first day of school, Sept. 8.

months of careful planning and preparation.

The school has instituted safety precautions in line with CDC and state guidelines. Classrooms look different with plexiglass shields on desk tops, desks spaced apart and masks for all, except the preschoolers. Meals and arts classes are in the classroom to limit the mixing of student groups; kids keep water bottles at their desks instead of using drinking fountains; temperatures are taken daily; and high-touch surfaces are sanitized several times throughout the day.

“We’re doing everything we can to keep our teachers and children safe,” says Mrs. Levy. “It’s worth the added effort so that we can meet in person. We know how important face-to-face interaction is for teaching and for loving our students.”

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LMS Leans into Technology

Luther Memorial made the decision in August to give school parents the option to have their children learn from home with a “full classroom experience.”

That means that all classes are livestreamed and students at home are able to receive feedback from teachers in real time. The tangle of wires and cords for new cameras, microphones and speakers are now part of the classroom décor.

As of early October, about 20 percent of students are learning from home.

With the new equipment and extensive software training for teachers, especially on Google Classroom, LMS is far better equipped now than it was in the spring for virtual learning.

“Our teachers have really had to be students themselves, as they’ve learned to use new hardware and online teaching platforms,” explains Mrs. Levy. “The positive side is that it’s propelled us forward in technology knowledge and online resources that are proving helpful. I can see us utilizing these things beyond the current situation.”

Much of student work is now completed and turned in online, making it easier for students to stay organized and teachers to grade the work and to give feedback. Students are strengthening their typing skills and without paper, “the dog ate my homework” is no longer a valid excuse for missing work.

While there are very few students learning at home now at the West Campus, Principal Mr. Marty Beckman says teachers will be ready to connect with students online if COVID-19 numbers increase to a point where schools in Cuyahoga County are required to close again.



Third grade teacher, Mrs. Melissa Vodicka, juggles teaching students at home, who she can see on the screen, and in her classroom using new technology.



Aric Olsen LMS '18

When he applied for admission to St. Edward High School in Lakewood, OH, three years ago, Aric Olsen idly wrote on the application that he wanted to learn to play the saxophone.

The staff at St. Edward apparently took that offhand remark seriously. Once admitted to the school, Aric was recruited for the marching band to play an instrument he had yet to learn.

However, music comes easily to Aric and he's enjoying playing the saxophone and dancing on the field at football games—far fewer this fall than normal because of safety precautions.

Aric's love for music was nurtured at Luther Memorial where he learned to play the violin and was a leader in the orchestra.

Now a junior at St. Edward, Aric says he has found his niche in music at a school known for its winning sports teams. Besides the marching band, Aric also plays his violin in the school's orchestra.

The transition to high school was rough in the beginning, he says. He missed his friends and teachers at Luther Memorial. "It was ten years of my life, after all. I missed the familiarity."

He has found friends and advocates among his high school teachers, and he knows they want him to succeed.

Music will likely be part of his future, but computer technology is his "backup plan," he says.

Thermometers, Masks and Microphones (cont.)

Eighth grader, Ny'Azia Young, says she is happy to be at school again after nearly six months of babysitting her younger sisters. She had no trouble completing the class packets that the family picked up in the spring, because she says her mom was strict with her and her sisters about getting the work done.

As for the new school year, she says she feels safe in the building but misses how things used to be. "We can't play sports in the gym like we used to. And I don't feel as close to friends," she says, noting the masks and the desk shields. "But the school is doing these things to keep us safe."

Donors Take Action to Benefit LMS Mission

Sometimes hearing the right words at the right time can be a catalyst for action.

For Martin and Lauren Fauber, hearing a presentation on charitable giving at their church, Holy Cross Lutheran in North Canton, OH, lead them to act generously towards Luther Memorial.

The Faubers inherited stock from Lauren's parents years ago. "We didn't have any plans for the stock but just figured it would be part of our estate after our deaths," says Mr. Fauber.

Once they heard the presentation, sitting on the stock was no longer an option.

"We learned that we don't have to wait until we die to give. We could gift any portion of the stock at full value without taxes now. That sounded like a great deal," says Mr. Fauber. "That presentation really was providential."

Mr. Fauber called Luther Memorial to get the school's brokerage account information, which he then passed on to his broker. "Such a simple process," says Mr. Fauber. "We're happy to do what we can to help Luther Memorial share the Gospel with their students."

The Faubers were married at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church, the site of the LMS West Campus. After a varied career in computer programming and operations, college teaching, and human resources, Mr. Fauber added "Lutheran elementary teacher" to his resume, teaching math at West Park Lutheran in Cleveland for three years in the '90s.



Mr. Marty Fauber, of Canton, who along with his wife Lauren, blessed Luther Memorial with a charitable gift recently.

Leaving a Legacy to LMS

Now is the perfect time to incorporate generosity into your estate planning. Designating Luther Memorial as a beneficiary of your will, IRA or life insurance can help you bless our school TOMORROW thanks to a thoughtful and loving plan you make TODAY. For more information about legacy giving, contact your attorney or financial planning consultant. You may find that charitable planning provides solutions to concerns you have about your estate.

LMS ARTS GETS A BOOST

Loyal sponsors and donors made our Spring Gala & Auction a success by giving despite its cancellation.

“We are blessed by the generosity of our giving community as we made the difficult decision to not hold an in-person fundraiser in 2020,” says Mrs. Levy.

Many supported “the event” at the same or higher level than in a normal year. We’re grateful for our sponsors: Wally and Joyce Senney, the Cleveland Lutheran High School Association, Norm and Julie Berghaus, Ardis Janke, Walt and Natalie Fischer, Dave and Taffy Pavlick, Scott Berghaus, David Priest of Stifel Nicolaus and Dan and Peggy Sexton.

Special thanks also to Cheryl Parnell, Kevin Smith, Sylvia Wildner, Bernd and Anne Forwick, David Grunenwald, Jim and Marge Schroeder and Nancy Milanich for generous giving.

And thanks to all of our donors who gave toward the event and the Fund-A-Need. In total, we raised more than \$27,000. Without our silent and live auctions and ticket sales the amount was less than an average year but still tremendously helpful as we continue to expand our Arts programming. THANK YOU to all!



Our Arts programming—visual, drama, and music—is funded entirely by donors.

New Teachers Find Their Footing

Starting a new job during a pandemic has its downsides, but LMS is fortunate to have hired two teachers for the 2020-21 school year that are weathering the challenges well. Welcome Mrs. Karen Peterkoski and Miss Nicole Reeves!

Mrs. Peterkoski taught for eight years at the Academy of St. Bartholomew in Middleburg Heights. This is her first year teaching kindergarten. She earned her early childhood education license at Baldwin Wallace University and an English degree from Cleveland State University.

In her first year of teaching, fourth grade teacher Miss Nicole Reeves is a graduate of Bethany Lutheran, Lutheran West and Malone University. Miss Reeves grew up in the Old Brooklyn neighborhood near our Main Campus. “This isn’t how I envisioned my first year of teaching, but I’m still excited to be here,” she says.



Kindergarten teacher Mrs. Karen Peterkoski



Fourth grade teacher Miss Nicole Reeves



Save the Date!

Annual Spring Gala & Auction Sunday, April 18, 2021, at Music Box Supper Club, Cleveland



Ayusha Subba and Subashna Pradhan celebrate after the July Promotion service at the West Campus. They are joined by another LMS alumna Sharala. All three girls attend Lutheran West this school year.



Vroom, vroom... It took more trips to the store and more poster board than expected, but West Campus kindergarten teacher, Mrs. Heather Smith, was determined to add some fun to her classroom by turning her students' desks into school buses—with the plexiglass serving as the "windshield."



Homemade with love—If you come to our spring Gala next year, you will have the opportunity to bid on this beautiful quilt made by Mrs. Alice Strieter of Maumee, OH. Alice is the wife of LMS alumnus Winfried "Joe" Strieter, class of 1950. Mrs. Strieter named the quilt "Emerald Necklace," after the series of parks, trails and nature preserves that circle Cleveland like a necklace of green around the city. Mrs. Strieter is active with the quilting group at her church, Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran, in Perrysburg, OH.

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