



# Building Minds... Changing Lives

## EVENT RECAP BUILDING MINDS...CHANGING LIVES

The third annual “Building Minds...Changing Lives” Gala was held on Thursday, May 12th at Vision Academy – Riverside. The event’s Presenting Sponsor was Gene Zink and his family. Gene Zink, founder of Strategic Capital Partners is a long-time education advocate and led the effort to start our first school, with the belief that every child deserves to learn in a safe, positive and structured environment. We are also grateful to Katz, Sapper & Miller (KSM) who sponsored the event’s dinner. Mike North and his team at KSM have sponsored all three of our “Building Minds...Changing Lives” events.

Donors also took the opportunity to “Adopt a Classroom.” As part of the event, ten sponsors adopted a classroom and named a university for their specific classroom for the 2022/2023 school year. The following is a list of our classroom sponsors and corresponding affiliations:

- Compass Construction: University of Kansas
- Alex Choi & Family: Harvard University
- Marianne Glick: Ball State University
- Mays Chemical: Indiana University
- Rose Mays: University of Evansville
- The Mind Trust: Jackson State University
- National Bank of Indianapolis: Ivy Tech
- Steve Pipenbrink: Purdue University
- Mike & Sue Smith Family Fund: DePauw University
- Matt Tait: Duke University

During the events program, some of our outstanding teachers were recognized with the “Excellence in Teaching” award. The highlight of the event was a presentation of USI’s “Making a Difference” Community Service Award to Dr. Rose Mays for her community leadership during the past 40 years.

The event was successful in raising more than \$70,000 which will be used to enhance the programming at our schools. **Planning for the 2023 “Building Minds...Changing Lives” in March 2023 at Avondale Meadows has begun!**

*Rose Mays  
accepting the  
Community  
Service Award  
from Kelly  
Braverman,  
Chair, USI  
Board of  
Directors*





## 2022 “EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING” AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Teachers are the heart of our schools — educators who are committed to the academic growth of our students. Each year, the Excellence in Teaching Awards honors teachers in each of our schools who go the extra mile each and every day. Their actions and positive attitudes result in academic growth and proficiency among students.

The Excellence in Teaching Award was started as a result of a \$250,000 contribution in 2010 from Anne & David Knall. The Knall’s want to recognize and reward teachers that show passion for education and demonstrate a deep commitment to their schools’ mission. Their gift was put into an endowment fund that allows USI to distribute \$2,500 to each recipient.

Throughout the year, teachers in each of our schools are nominated by their colleagues. This year, we received a record number of nominations and the selection committees had a difficult decision to make. The 2022 Excellence in Teaching Awards recipients are:

### REBECCA RUSSELL

Rebecca Russell, Exceptional Learning Teacher, Vision Academy. Rebecca is in her 6th year serving our exceptional learners. She consistently goes above and beyond in all aspects of her position — making her an exemplary team member. She remains open minded to new practices and collaborates well with the homeroom teachers. Her passion for our students is undeniable and comes out in all of her decisions and actions.

### JE-TAUN FINCH

Je-Taun Finch, Office Manager, Vision Academy. Ms. Finch is finishing her 8th year as Office Manager at Vision Academy. She has mastered the art of making everyone feel welcome and cared for when they are in our building. She wears many hats — registrar, greeter, bouncer, counselor, mentor, friend and security. Je-Taun demonstrates respect and professionalism in all of her interactions with colleagues, students and families.

### EMILY PANICH

Emily Panich, Special Education Teacher, Avondale Meadows Academy. Emily is finishing her 10th year with AMA — serving as a 1st grade teacher before moving to the special education team. She consistently goes above and beyond in all aspects of her position — making her an exemplary team member. Her passion for students is undeniable and comes out in all of her decisions and actions.

### CAMILLE HAYDEN

Camille Hayden, Kindergarten Teacher, Avondale Meadows Academy. Camille has been with AMA for 8 years serving in multiple roles. She has mastered the art of creating a classroom culture where every child feels loved and wants to meet the high expectations set for them. Camille is a consistent team player — moving around wherever she is most needed and demonstrates respect and professionalism in her interactions with colleagues.

## MEET AN EXCEPTIONAL SCHOLAR:

# Ja’Niyah Coleman

During our “Building Minds...Changing Lives” event, we asked one of our exceptional students to speak about their experiences at Vision Academy. Ja’Niyah started at Vision Academy in 5th grade and is a 2022 Vision graduate. She said that her favorite subject is science and plans to focus on science classes in high school and college in hopes of becoming a pediatric nurse or a veterinarian.

While science is her favorite subject, Ja’Niyah mentioned that her social studies teachers, Ms. Allison and Mr. Krulik made the biggest impact on her studies. She said:

“When I came to Vision Academy as a 5th grader Ms. Allison was my homeroom teacher. I felt at home in Ms. Allison’s homeroom because she was very positive and encouraging. Aside from social studies, she taught us how to love and believe in ourselves. She is amazing! Mr. Krulik is very enjoyable. He expects respect and willingly gives it back. He always encourages us to do our very best and challenges us to be the best version of ourselves. He also gives great advice when you need it. He is energetic and brings history to life.”

Aside from academics, Ja’Niyah is also an athlete having played on multiple sports teams including basketball and volleyball. This year, after helping to bring home the girls basketball city championship, she



joined the cheerleading team to cheer on the boys’ basketball team.

This fall, Ja’Niyah is attending Scecina Memorial High School, a private school on the east side of town. She is excited to attend the school because of the science curriculum. She said:

“During my shadow day, I was able to learn that they have a lot of hands-on activities and a science lab where I can do experiments including dissecting animals in biology class. I enjoyed meeting their principal and their president who shared with us what the school was about and gave us clear expectations.”

**We have high expectations for Ja’Niyah and look forward to learning about all of her high school accomplishments.**

## YOUR GIFT CAN IMPACT A STUDENT’S LIFE!

Our goal is to prepare scholars for success in high school, college and, ultimately, in life. We are a supportive community of teachers, families, and administrators who do our very best to install a love of learning in our scholars that will lead to lifelong success.

Our schools do not receive public funds to cover the full cost of our enhanced programming. As a result, we rely on contributions from individuals and community groups to create sustain our academic excellence.

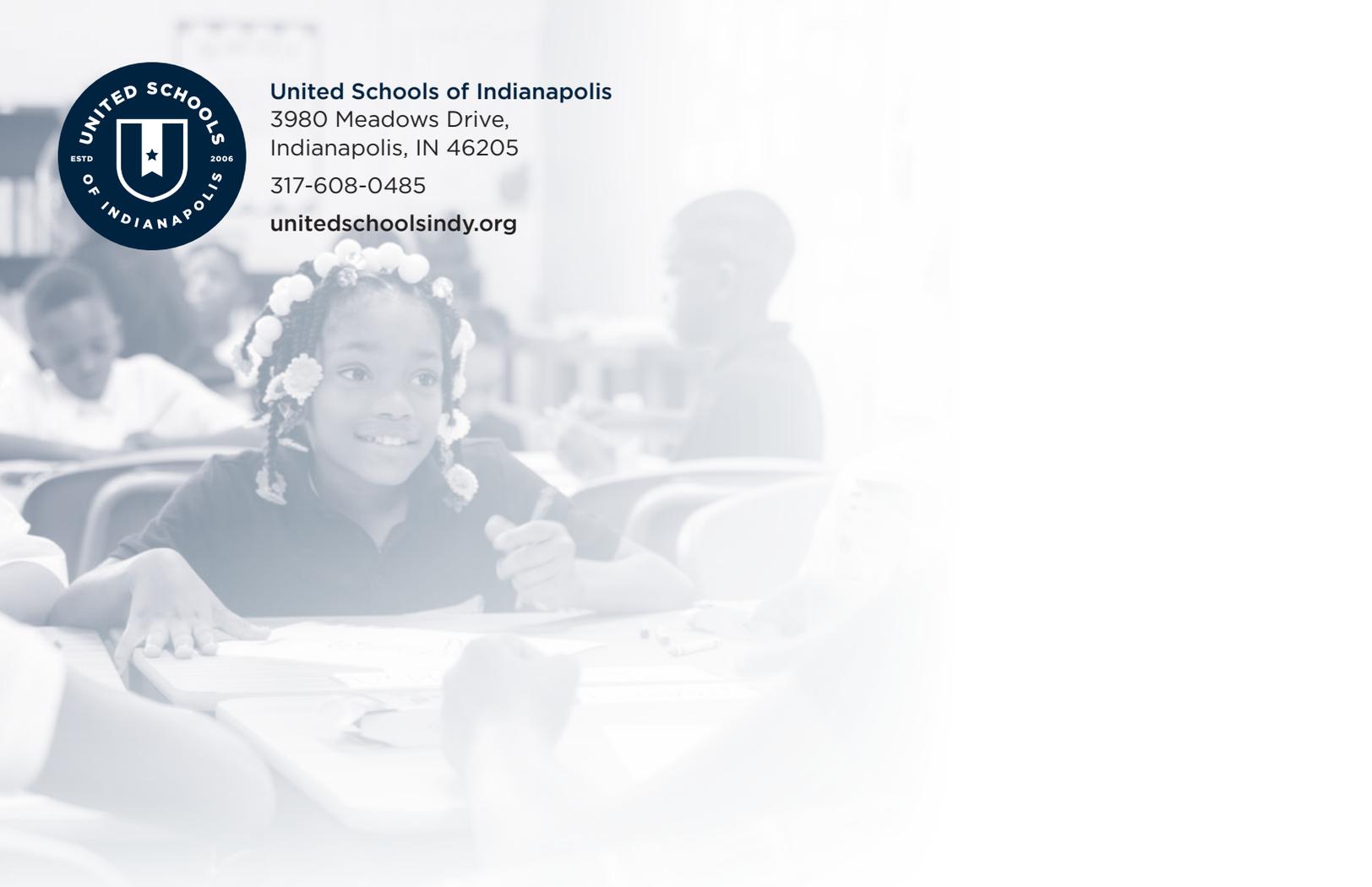
A gift can impact a student’s life. Consider supporting a specific program like: adopting a class; supporting a tour of a college; providing a uniform for a student; or a backpack of books for summer reading.

### CONTACT US

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



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## AVONDALE MEADOWS | VISION ACADEMY

### AMA AND VISION ACADEMY RECEIVE FACILITY GRANTS

Recently the Indiana Department of Education offered Indiana based charter schools the opportunity to apply for competitive grants that provide schools with facilities financing assistance. The Indiana Department of Education: Charter School Facilities Incentive Program provides funding for rent, purchase of a building or land; construction, renovation of an existing school facility, leasehold improvements or debt service on a school facility.

A total of \$3.8 million was made available for this program and forty Indiana charter schools applied. Avondale Meadows Academy and Vision Academy each applied for a grant to cover general insurance expenses and bond interest payments during 2022.

In May 2022, we were informed that Vision Academy received a **\$235,000** grant and Avondale Meadows Academy **\$215,000**. These grants will help defer interest payments on a bond that was taken out to finance the building of our school buildings. This bond will also pay insurance expenses for property insurance, general liability and other insurance premiums associated with the schools.

#### VISION ACADEMY

**\$235k**

#### AVONDALE MEADOWS ACADEMY

**\$215k**