



THE  
SOULARD\* SCHOOL

ANNUAL REPORT

2015-2016

# A Connected Community

Dear Friends,

Being The Soulard Stars means pulling metaphors from astronomy, the Milky Way and those associated with unlocking the universe’s mysteries. We have described ourselves as stars shining at different places in time, became constellations connecting in our night sky and we will always be a stellar association. Now, we orbit. Orbiting means we are in constant motion, there are layers to our movement and, of course, a gravitational pull.

When The Soulard School first started in 2005 there was a paradigm shift in education, we started to reject the industrial model of schools and embrace the creative side of learning. Now we are in the midst of a second paradigm shift happening within our communities.

The way Professor John A. Powell speaks to this paradigm shift is with words like “othering” and “belonging” and he says:

*“We need to do things to connect. And on one hand that’s right, but on the other hand, it understates what it is. We are connected. What we need to do is become aware of it, to live it, to express it. The human connection is one about belonging. We simply cannot thrive unless we are in relationship.”*

If we look at our community through this lens and think about how have we moved from connection to belonging it would be, I See You, I Learned From You, I Partnered With You, I Make Change With You, I Belong.

These layers orbit around us as student, staff and parent planets that make up our universe. If we move on this continuum to belonging it means we have done the work to not just noticing someone but seeing and acknowledging them. If you have done that, you are likely in conversation, where you get to learn and listen to a member of our community. Through that you will likely identify where you can partner and work successfully to make change. This entire process has sealed a sense of belonging. Imagine this happening throughout the day for a multitude of reasons, in a variety of settings and all working to belong. This is what has kept our school universe strong and engaged.

This awareness and process has brought new adjectives to our next phase. We are expanding our REDEFINING EDUCATION tagline to say:

We are REDEFINING EDUCATION and RENEWING our communities and building a more SUSTAINABLE practice.

What we see is being called for in education today has been present in The Soulard School’s model all along. The Soulard School’s administration and Board are turning their attention to the next three years and taking action. Building on the bedrock of our success, we have a renewed focus on capacity-building in order to further the school’s mission and to be good stewards of our land, our schools, our city and our universe.

Thank you,

Sarah Christman  
Executive Director,  
Co-Founder

## Short-Term Goals

- Firmly root the school as a community presence & anchor in Soulard
- Expand & scale our innovative educational programming
- Increase access to reach more St. Louis families

## Long-Term Goals

- Engage and empower teachers, parents, and youth
- Transform education in St. Louis and bring about systems-level change
- Build stronger, more connected communities

2016–2017

2015–2016

## Who We Are

20 Faculty  
8 Staff

130 Students  
(Nursery - 5th)

100 Families

137 Students  
(Nursery - 5th)

100 Families

23 Faculty  
8 Staff

# OUR MISSION

*The Soulard School is an independent Pre-K - 5th grade school located in the historic Soulard neighborhood. Our mission is to build a warm, welcoming learning environment that serves as an example of the profound and real possibilities of a community dedicated to educating its children; one in which children and adults are encouraged to ask questions and broaden their understanding of themselves, others and the world.*

## A Year in Review

### ENROLLMENT

Reached our goal of 130 students Nursery to 5th Grade. And growing!

### GRADUATES

Soulard School Class of 2016 Alumni Leilah Miller and Holly Berman-Carter make the most of their middle school experience in extracurricular activities. Leilah joins the debate team and Holly follows her passion for animals.

### MODEL OF BEST PRACTICE

Presented at the Council for Exceptional Children International Conference on our Buddy Circle Program. Recognized as Pioneers in Children's Wellbeing for transforming the way kids grow up in the United States.

### COLLABORATIONS

The Soulard School is chosen as Family Science Night Pilot Site funded by Boeing Global Corporate Citizenship in partnership with COCA and Iridescent.

### PROGRAM GROWTH

Our Total Wellness Project establishes deep cross-curricular connections between our Physical Education, Nutrition and Social Emotional programs.

### STEAM LAB

Now in its second year, our STEAM Lab embraces the Design Thinking Process to turn our students into innovators.

## Where We Come From

*The Soulard School reflects the rich diversity of its neighborhood and surrounding communities. In the 2015-2016 school year:*

- 68% Families qualified for our Equitable Tuition Program
- 36% Students qualified for free or reduced lunch
- 90% Students lived in underperforming districts
- 39% Families lived in the Soulard neighborhood zip code
- Soulard School families came from 29 different zip codes

# SOULARD SCHOOL ALUMNI HIGHLIGHT

## Leilah Miller Joins Debate Club & Communication Helps Her Find Success

Leilah Miller (c/o 2015), a student at McKinley Classical Leadership Academy, discovered early on in middle school a talent and passion for debate. "I wanted to join a club at the beginning of the year," said Leilah. "I decided to do debate because we've done debates [at The Soulard School] and I'm not that bad at it."

Amy Hemmer, the assistant coach the debate team, remembers when Leilah joined the team. "From the moment I met her at our first debate practice, she really demonstrated herself in a way that was super confident," said Amy. "She displayed phenomenal critical thinking skills that were far beyond what I would typically see in a sixth grade student. She took to debate really readily with the characteristics of confidence, critical thinking and just poise."

With her natural talent and some practice and coaching, Leilah flourished in competitions. "I've placed every time I've gone to a tournament," said Leilah. Leilah has participated in eight debate competitions so far, receiving multiple awards for her accomplishments.

Leilah credits her time at The Soulard School for preparing her for debate team. Classroom discussions, including Literacy Circles, provide ways for students to research and discuss a broad range of topics, using evidence from their learning to back their opinions. The curriculum prepares students to become critical thinkers, open to different views and opinions.

Leilah's coach, Amy Hemmer, adds, "Leilah isn't the only Soulard School alum that I have taught," said Amy. "I'm always impressed at how well they transition from this very small environment to a public school setting." Amy also credits The Soulard School with encouraging students to speak their mind eloquently and think critically.

For Leilah, her time on her school's debate team has taught her a lot. "A big thing about debate is working with your partner, to be able to communicate with them easily and to cooperate and make compromises." With her strengths in debate, Leilah is already weighing the possibility of law school in the future.

*"[The Soulard School] helped me be prepared and be flexible with people"*  
*-Leilah Miller (c/o 2015)*



## INVITATIONS

*"Courage starts with showing up and letting ourselves be seen." -Brene Brown*

A few years ago, I wrote an article for Booksource's monthly newsletter about "invitations to learn". Many educators know them as provocations. Invitations to learn are set up using simple materials that are organized beautifully to intrigue or entice students for further exploration and investigation. They begin to build background knowledge and build connections.

If we consider the process Sarah has written about in the steps it takes to go from "being to belonging" within communities, invitations are part of initiating that process in the classroom. It gives students the courage to put themselves out there to be seen and share what they know with others.

This experience can serve as a metaphor for parents at our school, especially for those parents new to our community. I wonder, "What will be the invitation that brings those parents in, encourages them to get involved, entices them to come into the building more often or for the first time?" As adults associated with our school, which values connection, community, and belonging, there are many ways to be involved, invested, and build relationships that extend past the school experiences we are working together to provide for our children. We look forward to finding creative and innovative ways to invite our most treasured partners - parents; you.

Thank you,  
Kerri Fair  
Principal

## STEAM PROGRAM ENTERS SECOND YEAR

### *Full Steam Ahead!*

The STEAM Program at The Soulard School celebrated its second year of priming children's brains to think like inventors, designers, scientists and engineers in order to prepare them for the complex challenges of life and work in the 21st century. The makerspace is equipped with state-of-the-art technology where learners of all ages and abilities use multiple disciplines to develop a love of learning and inquire about their world. Our STEAM Program encourages students to question, wonder, observe and explore.

This year STEAM was integral in establishing several new cross-curricular programs to enhance student learning. We built stronger partnerships in the St. Louis community and motivated others to explore their inner designer or entrepreneur through partnerships with other STEAM-focused organizations and funders.

#### **WITHIN OUR COMMUNITY:**

The Soulard School partnered with COCA, Boeing Global Citizenship, and Iridescent to bring Family Science Nights to the Soulard neighborhood

#### **WITHIN OUR SCHOOL:**

Funded by Monsanto, we co-developed Making Makers with The Disruption Department, a training for Soulard School educators to integrate Design Thinking into the curriculum.

Funded by the Innovative Technology Education Fund, we grew our Culinary Arts, Physical Education and Social Emotional programs by connecting them through our Total Wellness Project.

# FAMILY SCIENCE NIGHTS

One of the The Soulard School's goals is to bring families together through education. With this concept in mind, The Soulard School was excited to host an event which allowed families to learn and grow together. Family Science Nights introduced families to engineers and the engineering design process (EDP). The event was held at the Mad Art Gallery in the Soulard neighborhood in January and February and benefited families served by the program's Community Partners (including The Soulard School, Gene Slay's Girls & Boys Club and St. Louis BWorks).



Families and engineers from Boeing came together to create designs inspired by science and engineering. During the course, engineers taught families how to use the EDP to help them develop their own solutions to the problems presented to them through the design challenges.

The primary goal of this program was to engage families in the Soulard neighborhood and help them develop a curiosity to learn, creativity to explore new ideas and persistence to achieve. Under the expert direction of Iridescent, The Soulard School partnered with Boeing and COCA for the program. Strategies included, but were not limited to: parents and children working together as learners, asking open-ended questions and allowing for failure.



Through the Family Science Nights, students and families became more interested in science and confident, and parents felt more empowered to support their child's education. One family that attended the event felt it was great to have creative time together and it allowed them to "encourage [their child] in problem solving." Another parent said the experience gave their child "more enthusiasm and willingness to learn outside of classroom." This unique format allowed community partners to develop stronger partnerships in serving families together as neighborhood leaders in education.

## THE MAKING MAKERS

program promoted creative thinking through the application of design thinking. Teachers at The Soulard School were trained in the process by The Disruption Department and challenged to incorporate design thinking into their curriculum. In addition, teachers began learning about and implementing technological tools which would help promote the design thinking process in their classroom.

As a result of implementing the design thinking process, both staff and students discovered a new way of thinking which they can use to either teach or more deeply explore concepts. Teachers at The Soulard School enjoyed learning about the process and experiencing the training that went along with it. Comments included "I enjoyed working creatively with a coworker that I rarely work with directly," and, "Working on the project with a partner allowed me to connect with them and strengthen our relationship."



**THE  
DISRUPTION  
DEPARTMENT**

MONSANTO  
*Fund*



Following seed funding that supported lab renovations, the STEAM Lab Program pilot year was graciously funded by Emerson Charitable Trust and Ameren. Looking ahead, the school is thrilled to share the following new STEAM projects for the 2015-2016 academic year:

THANK YOU



## TOTAL WELLNESS



### UNDERSTANDING THE SELF: WHAT FUELS YOU TO BE MOST ACTIVE?

When we think about wellness, we tend to think about eating well, getting enough exercise and taking care of ourselves as separate activities. At The Soulard School, we developed our Total Wellness project to use technology as a tool to integrate these three realms. Through a grant awarded by Innovative Technology Education Fund (ITEF) students, staff and parents used Polar Active fitness monitors to track activity levels and sleep, and we used the data to engage in thoughtful dialogue about wellness. The overall goal of the project was to enhance the health and wellness of students and understand the impact that movement, nutrition and social-emotional wellbeing has on learning and development. The technology used in the program helped connect the existing P.E and Culinary Arts programs at The Soulard School and emphasize social emotional skills and goal setting. As part of the project, students developed self-awareness and self-regulation skills which helped them become more reflective and intrinsically motivated.



## Letter from Jim Holloran, Board Chair

As I stop to pause and reflect over the past 11 years at The Soulard School, I can't help but think of the 6 Core Values of the School; Reflection, responsibility, gratitude, philanthropy, respect and empathy.

I reflect on the growth of the school, how many children's lives have been changed for the better due to the school's integrated education model or equitable tuition system. I'm proud of the responsibility the students take to care for the school, their community and their peers. They feel a responsibility to be philanthropic, from working at the Allen Market Lane Assisted Living Center, to providing emotional support to peers through "Buddy Circles." These students are wise beyond their years and I feel our learning environment has much to do with that. They respect one another and their community. This is what makes The Soulard School a truly unique learning experience. We educate the whole child with lessons they will need both in and outside the classroom. They learn empathy and have an overwhelming sense of gratitude.

That was this report is: A Gratitude Report. Your generous donation and support of our events have helped make it possible for a STEAM Lab to thrive, our students to grow and teachers continuing learning.

Thank you,  
James P. Holloran  
Board Chair

### 2015-2016 Board Members

Jim Holloran, Board Chair  
Sarah Christman, Executive Director  
James (Jay) DeLong  
Michael Harrold  
Dr. Ed Johnson  
Anne Coggan Johnston  
Dr. Theresa Mayberry-Pruitt  
S. Nick Reding  
Dr. Basiyr Rodney, Ed.D

## Revenue

### HOW YOUR SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Built on a philosophy of inclusion, The Soulard School maintains a commitment to socioeconomic diversity. The Equitable Tuition Program is a sliding-scale model\* that enables all Soulard School families to educate their children as equal members of an economically, racially and culturally diverse community.

Because tuition covers only half of the school's operating expenses, meeting the budget each year depends on a combination of funding streams. These include gifts to the Annual Fund, income from fundraising events, corporate and foundation contributions, and generous benefactors who support The Soulard School's vision of socioeconomic diversity.

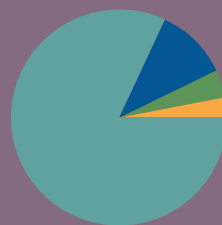
The Soulard School would not be here today without the continued generosity and support of dedicated parents, grandparents, alumni families, and friends in the community. Thank you to all of those who made a gift or attended, contributed, or volunteered at a fundraising event during the 2015-2016 school year. Your support allows The Soulard School to continue to offer unique educational experiences that encourage students to be inspired learners and good, productive citizens in the community. **Thank you.**

### Total Contribution Income\*

Individual Donors	\$257,420
Corporate & Foundation Donors	\$177,195
Fundraising Events	\$155,926
<b>Total Raised</b>	<b>\$590,541</b>

\*for school year ending July 31, 2015

### Expenses



- 86% Salaries & benefits
- 11% Operations
- 2% Fundraising
- 1% Other education programming

### Income



- 50% Tuition & fees
- 50% Community donations



## **Donor Highlight: Jay Shields**

### **Talented at Supporting Our Community**

Throughout The Soulard School's existence, individuals and businesses from around the Soulard area have supported the school and its mission of accessible education. One such person is Jay Shields, President of Schaeffer Manufacturing. Jay became involved with The Soulard School after hearing about it from one of his friends. He was impressed with what the school was doing and proud there was a school like it in the Soulard community. "All the manufacturing that use to be in this area left and you saw a huge redevelopment area in Soulard," said Jay. "And you've had this ground swell of Soulard coming up, but people who are raising young families are going 'There's no schools. Where do I send my kid to school?'" Jay and his business partner Tom Herrmann decided to support The Soulard School because, "The education you get [at The Soulard School] is really much better than what you can get at the city schools and really fills a void."

But more than that, they decided to support the school because they believe it is important to be aware of your community and be involved in it. Both men have been long time supporters of the Soulard community and are actively involved in organizations that seek to make a difference in the area. Whatever he is involved in, Jay strives to use his talents in a way that will benefit the organization and make a difference.

Jay also supports other organizations in the Soulard area. One such organization is the Sons and Daughters of Soulard. Recently, this organization responded to the boiler explosion in the spring of 2017 that devastated the Soulard community. Sons and Daughters of Soulard and 20 of its business partners launched a Go Fund Me page and raised almost \$40,000 for the victims of the incident. Peter Miller, a retired financial executive, expedited the payments to the families of the victims.

In addition to supporting other organizations, Jay founded his own community outreach program, Schaeffer Cares. Schaeffer Cares provides communities devastated by natural disasters with the tools and resources to clean up and rebuild. The organization was involved with the clean up of Joplin, Missouri after the 2011 tornado, providing pallets of buckets, two-cycle oil for chainsaws and bar and chain oil to lubricate the chains in the chainsaws. The supplies were administered by Tina Strange, Client Services Manager of Schaeffer Manufacturing and Paul Katz, Plant Shipping Department Leader of Schaeffer Manufacturing.

In everything he is a part of, Jay tries to make a difference in the Soulard community. He believes in the Soulard community and wants to ensure it is around for generations to come. "As long as I can feel like I'm contributing and doing something using my God-given talents, that's what I think I'm meant to do."



## **FOUNDING DONORS**

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 Nancy Grove & Joseph Tiernan  
 Jeffrey Hochman,  
 Chouteau Building Group

### In Honor of

James P. Holloran  
 Mary Sue Albanese  
 Patricia & Joe Holloran

### In Honor of

Anne Coggan Johnston  
 Gail Fisher  
 Mildred Paden

### In Honor of

Charlene Brown  
 Anna Marie Schumacher

### In Honor of

Henry & Nora Lewis  
 Rosemary & Billy Charles

### In Honor of

Will Reding  
 Patricia & Nicholas Reding

## VOLUNTEERISM AND IN-KIND GIVING

One of the most important ways that families and friends help to support The Souldard School is through volunteer hours and in-kind giving. To those of you who served on committees, prepared food for an event, worked in the kitchen, library or classrooms, or contributed an item, service or time, we thank you. The generosity, creativity, passion and community spirit you bring is profoundly appreciated, and our success is directly attributable to wonderful friends like you.

### GIFTS-IN-KIND

4 Hands Brewery  
Adam Estep  
Amy Cross  
Annie Killeen  
Barbara Spelman  
Be Lovely Photography  
Bed Bath & Beyond  
Benton Park Café  
Bethany Bures  
Big Muddy Dance Company  
Bill & Diane Keaggy  
Blues City Deli  
Booksource  
Born  
Budweiser Brew House  
BWorks  
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Caleres (Brown Shoe)  
Camp Souldard  
Cantina Laredo  
Cardinals Baseball  
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City Museum  
CityFit Studio  
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Meredith Murray  
Metro Lighting  
Metro Theater Company  
Midwest Pasta  
Missouri Botanical Garden  
Missouri History Museum  
Mitchell James Salon  
Modesto

# 4,000+

volunteer hours contributed by families, friends and businesses

Mokabe's  
Moneta Group  
Nebula Coworking  
Nestle Purina  
Nikki & Mark Caito  
Off Broadway  
Paul Nordmann  
Photography  
Paisley Boutique  
Peacemaker  
Peg Fetter  
Penzey's Spices  
PestShield  
Phillip McFarlane  
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Retro 101 Cherry Bomb  
Vintage  
RIO Syrup Company  
Robbler Vineyard  
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Sarah Christman & Paul  
Nordmann  
Sarah Kate Buckles & Matt  
Thenhaus  
Schlafly  
Sephora  
Shaved Duck  
Shawna Climer & Joe Ploch  
Sheri Mancuso & Larry  
Harris  
Southtown Yoga  
Southwest Diner  
STL Cinemas  
STL-Style  
St. Louis Art Museum

St. Louis Blues  
St. Louis Blues Society  
St. Louis Bread Company  
St. Louis Cardinals Baseball  
St. Louis Football Club  
St. Louis Symphony  
St. Louis Wings Co  
Stacked Burger Bar  
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Strange Donuts  
Subterranean Books  
Sweetart  
The Cakery Bakery  
The Munny  
The Porch  
The Royale  
The Souldard School  
Theresa Mayberry-Pruitt &  
Walter Pruitt  
Third Degree Glass Factory  
Tiny Little Monster  
Tony Caradonna  
Tonya Renee Anderson  
Touchstone Crystal  
Tower Grove Creamery  
Treehouse  
Tremendousness Collective  
V. Vegaz Salon  
VanElla Studios  
Vin de Set / Eleven Eleven  
Vincent's Market  
White Box  
YMCA, Carondelet Park  
Rec. Complex  
Yaquis

# \$75,000+

Creative Resources – in-kind contributions by families, friends and businesses



## Community Partnerships

American Eagle Credit Union  
BWorks  
Boeing Company  
Booksource  
Disruption Department  
Forest Park Stream Team  
Gateway Greening  
Gene Slay's Girls & Boys Club  
Innovative Technology Education Fund  
Interchange/COCA  
John D. MCGurk's  
Left Bank Books  
Litzinger Road Ecology Center  
Mad Art Gallery  
Mercury Labs  
Metro Theater Company  
MiSci  
Missouri Botanical Garden  
St. Louis University  
Subterranean Books  
Webster University

Special Thanks to Paul Nordmann for the photography.



## *Alumni Spotlight:* *Holly Berman-Carter Pursues Unique Internship*

Holly Berman-Carter (c/o 2015) has known from an early age that she wanted to be a marine biologist. "I find the ocean to be a very interesting place," said Holly. Her mother, Lisa Berman, explains viewing a dolphin show on a family vacation years ago sparked Holly's interest in the marine biology.

As Holly entered middle school, she and her mother were excited to find an internship opportunity for Holly at the St. Louis Veterinary Clinic where she could gain experience learning about animal care.

During her sixth grade year, Holly went weekly to the Clinic. During her time there, she shadowed several doctors and was even given the opportunity to observe surgical procedures. All of her experiences at the clinic affirmed Holly's intuitions about working with animals and becoming a marine biologist.

Holly credits The Soulard School for her sense of curiosity and passion to learn. "I feel like The Soulard School helped me not be afraid to ask questions," said Holly. "If I had a question [at the clinic] pertaining to a surgery, I could just go up and ask. I'm glad I asked because it helped me learn so much."

Lisa agrees that her daughter's time at The Soulard School was a positive one and helped prepare Holly to transition to middle school. "At The Soulard School, every kid is noticed, enjoyed, appreciated and cared for."

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## THE SOULARD\* SCHOOL

*2015-2016 Soulard School Graduates*

**Tedda Bock**- St. Frances Cabrini

**Gavin Christopher**- McKinley Classical Leadership Academy

**Sophia DeFord**- Grand Center Arts Academy

**Sorena Keagy**- St. Margaret of Scotland

**Brenden Scott**- McKinley Classical Leadership Academy

**Riley VanBuren**- Hawthorne Leadership School for Girls