

NOV  
2023

# THE SOULARD SCHOOL

## COMMUNITY NEWS

*A message from Shenika Bishop, Principal*

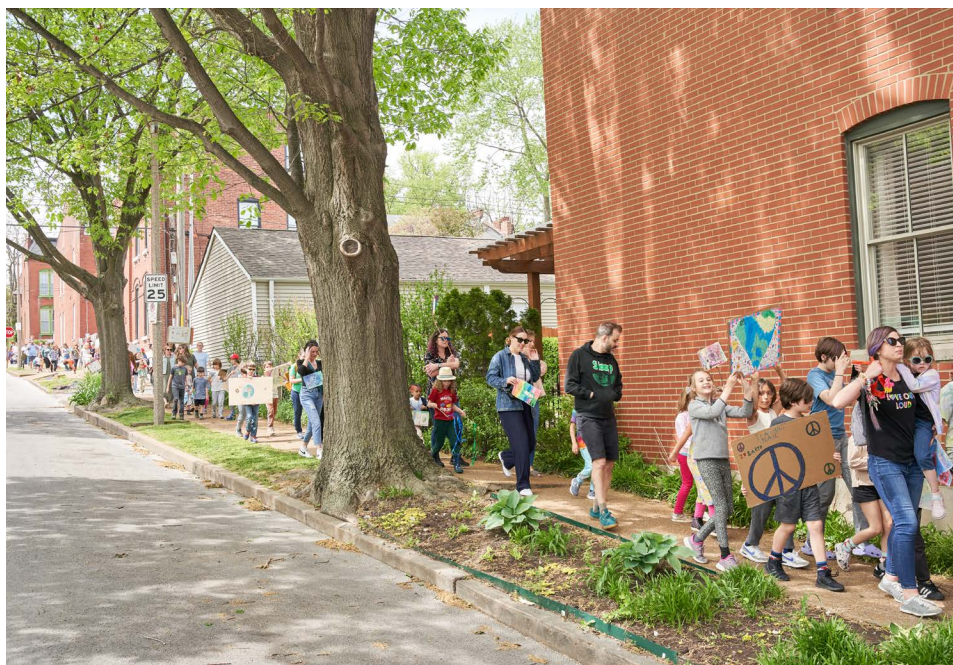
*“Change is the only constant in life,  
and the seasons have their own unique way  
of reminding us of that.”*

*Anonymous*



I hope that this newsletter finds you and your family doing well and that the beginning of the year has been a positive experience. It is hard to believe that we have just closed out the beautiful month of October with the best kids and parents with our fall assembly!

Fall is a wonderful time of year! A time to recognize the change of seasons, appreciate the sun with a little chill in the air. It is also a time to prepare our homes, our families and ourselves for the end of the year. As the seasons change and we prepare our minds and hearts this is also a great time to engage with our school community. It takes a village to raise a child and we are truly a village with teachers, parents, and other community members working together to provide the absolute best educational experience for our students at the Soulard School.



Soulard School Students, Staff, and Families marching as one during last year's Teaching Peace Parade.

Partnering with us and supporting your child will increase his/her success in school and beyond. We appreciate all you do for your child and we want to support in any way we can. We also hope you can support our efforts by becoming involved in school activities, family events and our Parent Association (PA). An active PA provides wonderful opportunities for our students to expand their educational experiences.

As educators, we have the incredible responsibility of not just teaching children but also making a positive impact in their lives instructionally, socially and emotionally. We accept that responsibility and look forward to another amazing year at the Soulard School.

# Reach for the Stars

A Clovers & Stars Event

PRESENTED BY 

The largest fundraising event of the year benefiting The Soulard School and the Soulard Education Center took place on November 10th.

The evening features incredible musical performances, Irish dancers, plus our very own Soulard School Strings Ensemble; and included an Auction of great local goods and services for you to bid on.

To continue to **DONATE** towards our fundraising goals visit: [www.soulardschool.org/events](http://www.soulardschool.org/events)

If you'd like to help **SPONSOR** next year's event, contact [samantha.fisher@soulardschool.org](mailto:samantha.fisher@soulardschool.org)



## our calendar

### NOV

- 3 End of 1st Trimester
- 9 PA Meeting
- 10 Reach for the Stars
- 17 Lunch of Thanks
- 20-21 **NO SCHOOL**  
Parent Teacher Conferences
- 22-24 **Thanksgiving Break**

### DEC

- 2-3 Book Fair
- 14 Board Meeting
- 14 PA Meeting
- 20 **NO SCHOOL, PD Day**
- 21-31 **Winter Break**

### JAN

- 1-2 **Winter Break**
- 3 Classes Resume
- 11 PA Meeting
- 15 **NO SCHOOL, MLK Day**
- 24 Winter Concert (tentative)
- 25 Board Meeting



subterranean  
BOOKS

## BOOK FAIR DEC. 2-3

Looking for a unique way to support The Soulard School? Why not show your support through our upcoming book fair? You can add directly to your student's classroom library or to our main school library by purchasing books on our Class Wishlists.

In partnership with Subterranean Books, this year's Soulard School Book Fair will be held on **December 2-3 for IN-STORE purchases**; as well as, **December 4-6 for continued ONLINE purchases**. All book titles will be available for purchase IN-STORE and ONLINE.

In addition to making the Book Fair possible, Subterranean Books is generously giving back to the Soulard School by gifting us a 20% store credit of all qualifying purchases made **IN-STORE the weekend of December 2-3** during the Book Fair.

*A message from Kristen Hood, Student Support Coordinator*



# Hi, how are you doing today?

Our students have been able to engage with several important topics in our Social Emotional Learning time so far this year.

- Some of these topics include:
- Identifying coping strategies
  - Cooperation
  - Growth mindset
  - The importance of the words we use

Additionally, students have learned about how identifying the size of the problem can help them react to and solve their problems. Students are encouraged to practice identifying the size of the problem for different issues that arise throughout their day.


Older grades may label their problems on a 1-10 scale, while younger grades might label their problems as small, medium, or big. Students are then able to move on to identifying the size of the reaction based on the size of the problem. Who needs to be involved to solve the problem? Is this a problem that the student can solve by themselves or with a friend or do they need outside help?







Learning to identify the size of a problem helps students learn to match the size of their reaction with the size of the problem. You can utilize this strategy at home by asking your child what the size of the problem is when they are dealing with something challenging. Additionally, you can ask if the size of their reaction is matching the size of the problem.

Through utilizing this language, you can help support your student in learning self-regulation and conflict resolution as they grow.

We're so happy  
you're here!

## HOW BIG IS MY PROBLEM?



	<b>5</b>	<b>Emergency</b> Examples: earthquake, fire, car accident	<b>I can</b> Get a grown up, call 911
	<b>4</b>	<b>Gigantic Problem</b> Examples: I am bleeding, have a headache, am sick to my stomach	<b>I can</b> Feel scared or upset. Ask a grown up for help.
	<b>3</b>	<b>Big Problem</b> Examples: lost or broke something	<b>I can</b> Feel sad or frustrated, deep breath and count to 10, ask for help.
	<b>2</b>	<b>Medium Problem</b> Examples: Forgot my homework, don't understand the instructions.	<b>I can</b> Feel worried or confused, raise my hand and ask for help.
	<b>1</b>	<b>Small Problem</b> Examples: Shoe is untied, dropped something, not first in line.	<b>I can</b> Feel annoyed, fix the problem, wait my turn
	<b>0</b>	<b>No Problem</b> Everything is wonderful, I have nothing to complain about.	<b>I can</b> Feel happy and have a great day.

## ADMINISTRATION

### Sarah Christman, Executive Director & Co-Founder



When I began my career in education I started with the youngest age group, preschool. I knew then, and now, how vital and meaningful this foundation was and felt it would be a place to make a positive impact. Little did I know when I found my way to this community years ago what an opportunity for impact I was walking into. As a Co-Founder of The Soulard School, I am delighted every day to see all that we have become, together. It has been an educator's dream to be a part of building a school that has layers of community, integrated curriculum and innovative approaches. I value the relationships built in our connected community of

students, staff and parents and know what we are accomplishing reaches well beyond our school. Becoming a Soulard School parent has been a special experience, my daughter Jude is in the Sr. Pre-K class and I love seeing her thrive in the school. I can't forget a shout-out to my husband, Paul Nordmann, and his amazing photography that you can see throughout the school's website perfectly capturing the Soulard School experience.

### Eleanor White, Communications & Operations Director



I am a St. Louis native, growing up just around the corner from the school, in Lafayette Square. I attended Bard College, then received a Master's in Education Policy Studies from the University of Wisconsin. Returning to St. Louis, I continued my education, receiving my certification in Elementary Education from Fontbonne. After a few years of teaching elsewhere, I discovered the Soulard School, a place that looks just like the progressive elementary school I attended and loved as a kid. I can't believe this is my sixteenth year with the Soulard School! When I began, I taught kindergarteners and toddlers, but I've been in the office since 2010. Both

my kids are now TSS alums - Emmett is a sophomore at Collegiate while Theo is in 7th grade at McKinley! I live in Shaw with my husband Brad, the kids, a big brown dog named Rufus and our little beagle princess, Sadie.

### Amy Cross, SEC Program Director



I am entering my 11th year in this exceptional community. Much of who I am as an educator was shaped over my time teaching pre-k and kindergarten here at The Soulard School, and now I'm happy to support other educators in their journey in my new role as Program Director. I earned a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, and my Master's in Educational Administration from the University of Missouri St. Louis. Before coming to The Soulard School, I lived and traveled in Europe, Asia and Latin America teaching English to students of all ages. Currently, I live in the Soulard neighborhood with my family that includes two TSS alumni.

### Shenika Bishop, Principal



I am extremely excited to continue my journey for the fourth year at the Soulard School. I am a St. Louis native and the 2023-2024 school year will mark my fourteenth year in education. I received my bachelor's degree in Elementary Education from Missouri State University in Springfield, MO. I began my teaching career at Confluence Academy-South City, teaching third and fourth grade. I later moved on to the Kirkwood School District, where I served as a teacher, building mentor and SEL district facilitator. I developed a passion for leadership during my time in the Kirkwood School District. Administration came as a natural transition

throughout my experiences as an educator. For this reason, I attended Lindenwood University where I earned a master's degree in Education Administration. I am excited to share in the Soulard School community's dedication in caring for our students daily. It is my goal as principal to make kid first decisions, foster lifelong learners, inspire and challenge our teachers to continue to be passionate about teaching, embrace change, and lead from a place of compassion and wholeheartedness.

I am a proud parent of a teenage daughter. She keeps me very busy when I am not at TSS! Outside of school, I enjoy traveling and spending any extra free time with my daughter, our fur baby (Nippy), and my family!

### Missy Sandbothe, Special Education Coordinator



I am excited to be starting the 2023-24 school year with the amazing team at Soulard School. I have both undergraduate and graduate degrees from the University of Missouri, Columbia and a second graduate degree from Webster University in Educational Administration. This is year 31 for me as an educator, administrative leader, and advocate of equity for all learners. I am 4 years retired from a blessed and fulfilling career with the Kirkwood School District. My position as Principal at the Kirkwood Early Childhood Center and later as the Director of Special Programs, allowed me to build life-long relationships

with students and families. I look forward to the same opportunity at Soulard. I am a fierce momma bear and cheerleader for 6 grown children...we survived! I now have the honor of being called MiMi by two adorable granddaughters. My husband, Robert Sylvia, and I live in Webster Groves and enjoy weekends at our "happy place" in Porto Cima at Lake of the Ozarks.

OFFICE / DEVELOPMENT TEAM

Samantha Fisher, Development Director



The Fisher family came to The Soulard School in 2015 when our oldest was a Kindergartner. We quickly realized the lessons here aren't just for the students. We learned a lot that first year about our kiddos and ourselves - we continue to learn more every day. I am proud to be a part of this community not only as a parent but also as part of the Soulard Education Center Development Team. I bring nearly 20 years of communications, cause marketing and event production experience to my role as Development Director. I share my life with my husband, Darin, and a wild and wonderfully unruly brood of three children,

Stella, Evie, and Crosby, two polydactyl cats, and Ozzie the dog.

Laura Jacobson, Office Assistant



My journey with The Soulard School began in 2012 when our oldest child started at The Little School when he was just 18 months old, followed shortly by our youngest. Five years later we found ourselves moving to Chicago. The whole time we were away, our oldest would fondly recall his time at The Soulard School and would often proclaim, "I wish I was back at Soulard School." As life would have it, in 2021 we found ourselves back in St. Louis and he was able to graduate 5th grade with all of his old friends. I joined the school staff in 2022 helping out in the front office and have loved growing into my new role. When I'm not at the

front door greeting you and our students, I am a busy mom of 2 boys running around to and from various sporting events. The Jacobsons are Cardinals & Blues fanatics who enjoy socializing and exploring all the wonderful things St. Louis has to offer.

Jacci Ross-Hertel, Development Manager



I'm excited to be back at The Soulard School for my sixth year, this time in a brand new role. Formerly the Studio Arts instructor, this summer I transitioned into the role of Development Manager where I have the opportunity to use my connections and community knowledge to help from behind the scenes. I first learned about the philosophy and teaching methods at the school through a former Soulard School family and am so excited to continue my work with the school. The best part is the continued opportunity to interact with my former students and meet some new ones along the way!

Originally born in St. Louis, I grew up in Columbia, Missouri. I came back to St. Louis, getting my Master's in Ed at Fontbonne. I then moved to St. Petersburg, Florida to teach art at an elementary school, and then back here to St. Louis working in a variety of art education positions. I have worked with Springboard St. Louis, taught summer and afterschool programs, taught private art classes, and spent a few years on the staff of The St. Louis Art Fair.

Outside of my passion for the arts, I love to travel, try new restaurants, see live music, and exercise. Other than that, I am usually wrangling my rambunctious kindergartener or coordinating my 3rd grader's busy schedule.

Debra Cole, UMSL Fellow



I graduated from UMSL with a PhD in Teaching and Learning in August, 2022. I hold certifications in School Administration, Elementary and Early Childhood Education, Middle School ELA, German, Spanish, and ESL. I am excited to be using my new skills as a researcher with the UMSL charter school grant. I am especially thrilled to join the Soulard School team in an advisory role this year through UMSL, having just completed my dissertation on co-teaching effectiveness. I'll be working with the co-teaching pairs to help ensure they are using best practices to support all learners.

Amber Nelson, Events Manager



I'm a proud Soulard School parent and couldn't be more grateful for the welcoming community and diverse curriculum offered here. Although I was raised in St. Louis, this is the first time I've been back since moving to New York for college. Since then, I have lived on both US coasts while studying sustainable architecture and landscape architecture, and have spent almost a decade living in Latin America (mainly Mexico and Brazil) while creating an intentional tri-cultural family with my partner Juanjo and lovely daughters Ramona (2nd) and Albira (Sr. Pre-K). At Soulard School I'm usually working in the Development Office planning events and community communications, but I'm also often found around the school doing odd jobs, sharing our Latino heritage with students, or having lunch with Ramona and all her awesome friends.

## STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM

### Kristen Hood, Student Support Coordinator



I am so excited to be going into my fifth year at The Soulard School! I love being able to create safe spaces for people who may be dealing with a variety of challenges and feelings. I am thrilled to be able to continue helping kids at The Soulard School develop skills to cope with difficult situations. I earned my Master's degree in Social Work and then went on to receive my Clinical Social Worker license. Prior to coming on board at The Soulard School, I worked as a trauma-focused therapist for multiple children's advocacy centers in Missouri and Illinois. Prior to beginning my career as a therapist, I attended Greenville University and Southern Illinois University. Outside of school, I typically enjoy spending time being outside and playing with my two toddler sons.

### Jayne Shadowens, School Psychologist



I am so thankful to be back at The Soulard School for the third year in a row. As the resident School Psychologist, my role is to develop plans to address skill deficits and support students' academic and emotional needs. You probably will be able to find me power-walking through the halls with my trusty fanny pack and walkie talkie.

I received my B.A. in Psychology from Truman State University in 2017, my M.Ed. in Educational Psychology in 2020 and my Ed.S. in School Psychology in 2022, both from the University of Missouri-St. Louis. My passions include: reading, creative writing, student equity, and spending quality time with our one-of-a-kind TSS kids.

### Michael Oranika, Special Education Teacher



I'm very happy to be a part of the Soulard School team this year. A special education teacher should serve as a role model for students while helping them develop their academic and social-emotional skills to the fullest potential. These are standards that I strive to meet every day on the job. I earned my undergraduate degree in special education in 2020 after completing my student teaching practicum at SIUE Charter High School. I then worked as a special education teacher at a different Title 1 high school in Illinois. Through the experiences teaching at this school, I learned the importance of building rapport with students and collaborating with staff members. I also experienced first-hand lessons about fostering a culture of respect and unity. In my free time, I'm usually doing yard work, making art or watching documentaries with my cats at my home in Hartford, Illinois.

### Emily Schlitz, Speech Therapist



I am thrilled to be back for another year at The Soulard School. When I started my career in speech-language pathology, I was driven by the belief that every child has boundless potential in school and in life, and I am more convinced of this each and every year. Here at school, I have the privilege to be a part of helping students grow and flourish in the areas of speech/articulation and language. I received my undergraduate degree from Truman State University, and my graduate degree from Saint Louis University. In my career, I have been fortunate to support students throughout all grades, including early intervention programs for children aged birth through three years, all the way up through high school seniors. These experiences have prepared me to challenge and assist TSS students, while also keeping an eye on the perspective of the "long view." I live in St. Louis City with my two children, Ben and Molly, who are both students at a local public high school, and our 2 chickens, Luna and Henrietta-Petunia. We enjoy watching our chickens with their antics daily.

### Sadie Wise, Occupational Therapist



I am so excited to join The Soulard School this year! As an occupational therapist, I help students develop and improve skills needed for classroom participation, such as handwriting, fine motor, sensory regulation, and more. I earned my undergraduate and graduate degrees from Saint Louis University. I completed my fieldwork at Parkway Early Childhood Center and Barnes Jewish Hospital. After finishing my graduate degree in 2022, I worked at an elementary school in the Kirkwood School District as a teacher's assistant and substitute teacher. While working here at The Soulard School, I also will be working as an OT at Barnes Jewish Hospital. I am looking forward to a great school year!

### DeVonshae Person Instructional Support & Beforecare Teacher



I was born and raised in St. Louis. I graduated from Lindenwood University with a Bachelor's in Human Service Agency Management and from Fontbonne University with a Master's in Teaching, Specialization in Special Education. I will complete my PhD program in 2024. I have over 25 years of experience in Special Education/Elementary Education. My hobbies are art, poetry, sound baths and silent retreats.

## EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHERS

Jessica Braggs, Jr. Pre-K Teacher (Sprouts)



This is my fourth year here at The Soulard School, and my second full year as a pre-k teacher. I graduated from Harris-Stowe State University with my Bachelors in Sociology in 2020. I wanted to take on the role of becoming a full time teacher because of the Soulard School. The environment was very welcoming and unstructured, allowing the child to lead and we follow. I also work at the YMCA doing many things. In my free time I love to spend time with myself, reading books on self improvement and going to the movies. This year in Sprouts we have a group of students who are new to school and I am really excited to watch them grow

individually. Our kids are really sponges and absorb the many things we teach them.

Mollie O'Brien, Jr. Pre-K Teacher (Sprouts)



Hello, everyone! I am so excited to be starting my second year here as a teacher in the Sprouts classroom. I grew up in St. Louis and I have a degree in political science with a focus in community engagement from UMSL, and my background is mostly in education and human services. I am passionate about human connection, and the effect of strong connections in the classroom. I have so much fun getting to know each individual child and understanding who they are. In my free time, I love reading and writing poetry, hanging out with friends, and going to community events. I'm looking forward to an awesome school year and

continuing to get to know everyone!

Rachel Ripper, Jr. Pre-K Assistant (Sprouts)



Hello! I am a teacher in the Sprouts room, as well as an after care teacher. This is my third school year with the Soulard School. I was born and raised in St. Louis and received a degree in sociology from UMSL, where I focused on topics like gender and deviance. It was during my time in college that I became interested in education. When I came across the Soulard School, I was thrilled to become part of a school with ideas on education that were so aligned with my own. In my free time, I enjoy making art, taking walks, reading, and playing with my cat, KitKat. I look forward to this school year and continuing to build connections with friends and families!

TEACHING  
*is a work of heart*



Maggie Hurst, Sr. Pre-K Teacher (Quietude)



I'm so excited to begin my fifth year in the Quietude room and my seventh year at The Soulard School! In May 2019, I graduated from Webster University with my Master's in Teaching Early Childhood Education with an emphasis in Special Education. While at Webster, I also studied the Reggio Emilia approach to early education. After graduation, I was able to visit Reggio Emilia, Italy to learn new techniques and observe in their preschools. I live in Tower Grove East with my husband, Hugh, and our almost one year old, Charlie. I believe every child has infinite potential and I can't wait to see what we can accomplish together as a

community this year in Quietude.

Jane Webster, Sr. Pre-K Teacher (Quietude)



I am so excited for my third year at The Soulard School in the Quietude classroom! I graduated from Truman State University with my Bachelor's in English. During my undergrad I took classes in Elementary Education, and ultimately decided to return to St. Louis to pursue a graduate degree in Early Childhood Education at Webster University. It was during this time that I was first introduced to The Soulard School and became friends with my co-teacher, Maggie. I completed my student teaching in the Kindergarten Mums classroom while working as the Nursery Aftercare teacher. In 2018, I had the opportunity to go to Reggio-Emilia, Italy and

study their approach to early childhood learning first-hand. This experience greatly impacted my own teaching philosophy. After graduation I worked for two years elsewhere as an Infant/Toddler specialist. I am grateful to be back at Soulard School and can't wait to see what our class will discover together this year!

## ELEMENTARY TEACHERS

**Jenna Morrison, Kindergarten Teacher (Mums)**



I am beyond excited and grateful to have the opportunity to continue my adventures in teaching at The Soulard School! This is my eleventh year working at TSS: 8 years in Pre-K and now my third as a Kindergarten teacher. My journey to teaching began at Mizzou, where I earned my Bachelor's in Child Development and Education. Throughout my time in Columbia, I was a teacher in a Montessori classroom and in the University's Child Development Lab. Additionally, I completed my student teaching experience at The College School in Webster Groves, where I discovered the school's Reggio Emilia inspired curriculum. Having

been exposed to these various approaches has helped me to develop my own unique teaching philosophy, which I have been able to put into practice and expand upon in the classroom. I strive to pass on my love of learning to the children by encouraging them to explore their individual interests through our play-based, inquiry-based curriculum. I recently earned my Early Childhood Teaching Certification, and will complete my Master's degree next summer through UMSL. In my free time, I enjoy going on new adventures around the city with my family, (including TSS students, Maeve, 1st, and Beau, Sr. Pre-K), playing with our dogs Moose and Pippa, and spending time together outdoors. The Soulard School is like a second home to my family and I'm ready to take on my 11th year here!

**Maya Gross, Kindergarten Grade Teacher (Mums)**



I am thrilled to enter into my second year as a Kindergarten teacher at The Soulard School and the fourth year of my teaching career. I was born and raised in Saint Louis and currently live in the Moorlands with my cat, Luna. I graduated in 2020 from Saint Louis University with a Bachelor's in Early Childhood Education. I am passionate about incorporating different approaches into the classroom such as Reggio Emilia and Project-Based Learning. I believe in inquiry-based education and instilling a love for learning in the youngest of learners. In my free time I enjoy going to farmers' markets, exploring nature, photography and

spending time with family and friends.

**Erika Quarells, 1st Grade Teacher (Enigma)**



Hello, I am excited to join The Soulard School team this year! I graduated from Webster University with my Bachelors in Elementary Education. Since then, I have done a lot in education from tutoring to summer camp, substituting, and working as a paraprofessional and classroom assistant. I am happy to be back teaching First grade as it is my first love since my first job teaching out of college was as a first grade teacher at a private school in Florissant! I love to educate and I plan to continue for as long as I can! In my free time, I love to spend time with my family, including our little dog, Peaches, and hang out with friends!

**Julia Knarr, 1st Grade Teacher (Enigma)**



I'm so excited to be returning for my fifth year at The Soulard School. I have lived in St. Louis my whole life, and I have called University City home for the last seven years. I graduated from Lindenwood University with my degree in elementary education and early childhood. This is my eighth year teaching. Prior to coming to TSS, I taught preschool and second grade. In addition to classroom teaching, I've been a part of the PBS broadcast team for Teaching in Room Nine for more than 3 years. I'm incredibly passionate about early childhood education, and I strongly believe in the importance of building and maintaining close

relationships and creating a warm, loving, and safe classroom climate. When I'm not in school I love eating amazing local food, drawing and lettering. I can't wait to discover and grow together this year!

**Lauren Wadsworth, 2nd Grade Teacher (Alchemy)**



This will be my fifth year teaching at The Soulard School, and I'm so excited to continue to get to know my students and learn alongside them. Prior to beginning my journey into education, I worked with a performing arts company based out of South Africa where I coordinated and taught drama workshops to Middle and High School students. I graduated from Missouri Baptist University in 2017 with a degree in Elementary Education. Though from Memphis, Tennessee, I call St. Louis home. When I'm not teaching, I'm spending time in nature, experimenting in the kitchen, or snuggling my dog, Tsitsi.

**Kurt Despagni, 2nd Grade Teacher (Alchemy)**



I was born and raised in St. Louis. Currently I live in Granite City with my family. I graduated from SIUE in 2022. Last year I taught 7th grade Social Studies but my goal was to teach elementary. I have always had a passion for teaching influenced by multiple teachers and kiddos throughout my life. After many different jobs I got to a point in life when I could finish school. I am familiar with The Soulard School as many friends have sent their children here so I jumped at the opportunity and I am excited to have joined the family. Outside of school I am a huge sports fan and I umpire baseball for all ages.



Katelynn Newsome, 3rd Grade Teacher (Thrive)



I am excited to continue my teaching at The Soulard School this year. This is my second year teaching in the 3rd grade classroom. I graduated from the University of Tennessee with dual degrees in Child and Family Studies, and Family and Consumer Sciences Education with an endorsement in PreK-3 education. Upon graduation, I worked for the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture as a Family and Consumer Sciences agent for four and a half years. I taught research-based classes throughout our community in Tennessee. Since moving to the St. Louis area; now almost two years ago, my family and I have been able

to explore and check out some of the things that this area has to offer. When I am not teaching, I enjoy being outdoors, trying new foods, and spending time with my family.

Rachel Clark, 3rd Grade Teacher (Thrive)



This is not only my first year at the Soulard School, but my first year teaching elementary education. While pursuing my undergraduate and Master's degree in Columbia, I previously worked as a preschool teacher for 3 years. With my emphasis in my education being diversity and equity, it was important for me to find a school where this was being fostered. I believe that Soulard was the ideal setting for me to express this. Creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment that values and respects the various backgrounds of all students is my teaching philosophy and this idea is not only encouraged in my classroom,

but throughout the entire school and community at Soulard. Outside of the classroom, I enjoy spending time with my family, boyfriend, and dog. I also like to experience new things, therefore I try to travel and try new places whenever I have the chance.

Vera Judd, 4th Grade Teacher (Mosaic)



Originally from Boulder, Colorado. I have a long history of teaching in my family, all the way back to "The Judd School" in Tonbridge, UK. I began my passion for teaching in high school by working and teaching alongside an 8th grade math teacher while also volunteering at an Americorps program teaching art. After graduating high school I lived in various places around the US and internationally. Eventually I completed my degree in Psychology at UMSL and immediately began to work towards a career in teaching. I taught everything from 2nd to 9th grade math in East Saint Louis, and then began working in St. Louis. This year is my second at

Soulard School and fifth in teaching in general. I am currently pursuing my Master's in Elementary Education while raising two boys, ages 5 and 7. The joy I get from watching a student mentally connect the dots is unmatched. In the little free time I have, I enjoy viewing or reading anything dystopian future-related and cooking from scratch.

Phillip McFarlane, 4th Grade Teacher (Mosaic)



This is my tenth year at The Soulard School. Prior to coming to TSS, I had been a professional actor working primarily with children's educational programs, violence prevention, AIDS education, and children's literature. I also worked as a Montessori educator for 15 years, teaching both elementary and middle school students. I was also a theater director for 8 years during which I wrote, produced and directed 3 operettas with 70 little Montessorians. I have my BA in Applied Behavioral Science from National Louis University, a certificate of study from NAMTA in the Montessori Orientation to Adolescent Studies, and my Master's in

Arts in Elementary Ed. from Webster University. When not teaching, I enjoy playing the guitar, gardening, adding to my vinyl collection and working as an advocate for children.

Anna Elwood, 5th Grade Teacher (Explorer)



This is my eighth year as part of The Soulard School community, and I absolutely love getting to teach, grow, and learn alongside our fifth grade students. I love project-based learning and focusing on the uniqueness of all learners. I have BAs in Elementary Education and Spanish from William Jewell College, as well as a Master's degree in Elementary Education with a focus on Reading from UMSL. After finishing undergrad, I was fortunate to teach abroad for two years in southern Spain. I love spending time with my husband Nathan, our daughter Hazel, and our sweet pup, Raven. I also enjoy speaking Spanish, traveling, and cheering on

the Cardinals. I look forward to new adventures awaiting us and hope to ask questions, take risks, and dream big with everyone at The Soulard School.

Brad Gordon, 5th Grade Teacher (Explorer)



I can't say enough times how happy I am to be part of The Soulard School. I have taught for 20 years now, and I can honestly say that this is the most caring and nurturing environment for kids I have ever been part of.

I grew up in Southern California in the suburbs of LA. I moved away and graduated with a degree in Elementary Education from the University of Tennessee. From there, I spent nearly a decade teaching in Las Vegas. I have been in St. Louis for nine years now, and have grown to love it here. I live across the river in Collinsville with my wife, Lorrie, and our kids (Scott, Ryann, Ethan, and Emma).

## EXTENDED CORE TEACHERS

**Sarah Kate Buckles, Culinary Arts Teacher**



This will be my ninth year teaching at The Soulard School. I have worn many hats during my time here and this is my fourth year in la toque blanche as Culinary Arts and Nutrition Instructor. I love cooking delicious, healthy, from-scratch meals with your kiddos as they explore the world through food. Our work in the Culinary Arts Kitchen Classroom is based around social-emotional education and food is the lens we view it through. I'm excited to be able to expand on this during our family-style lunches and to watch our kiddos' self confidence grow as they build skills in class that will last a lifetime.

My background is very diverse. I have a degree in Culinary Arts and Restaurant Management, but I spent ten years working with not-for-profits in many different capacities. I've been a roller derby league president, a booker for an all-ages nightclub and art gallery, and a grocery co-op manager. I have worked as a caterer, a camp director, and a restaurateur. All these different jobs have given me an appreciation for the ever-evolving organism that is the city of St. Louis and a strong drive to be involved in changing this city for the better and helping bring colorful and exciting events to the community.

I live in Fox Park with my husband Matt Thenhaus, our son and TSS alumnus Joss, and Charlie the dog. I love New Orleans, reading, painting watercolors, and cooking for my friends and family.

**Stephanie Hayes, Physical Education Teacher**



I am so grateful to be a part of The Soulard School family again this year! I grew up in Georgia and completed both my undergraduate and graduate studies in Health & Physical Education at Columbus State University. While earning my degrees, I played soccer at CSU and got involved with the community through Adapted Physical Education. I have been a part of Camp Abilities, a sports camp for students with visual impairments, for 7 years now. Following my graduate studies, I taught Health & Physical Education for two years at a middle school in Columbus and coached a variety of sports (Flag Football, Soccer, Track & Field, and Basketball).

I am looking forward to this year, teaching a variety of sports, and navigating new skills with all of the classes! My hope is that all students find various ways that they enjoy moving their bodies and form a healthy relationship with movement. My husband, Robert, and I are so excited to be here in St. Louis and love exploring the area!

**Alex-Anne Troxel, Strings & Performing Arts Teacher**



As a second generation musician and third generation youth educator, I'm so glad to be a member of The Soulard School staff as Strings and Performing Arts Instructor. Having come from a diverse teaching background, I believe The Soulard School creates the ideal environment for students' emotional growth, learning, and achievement.

I received my Bachelor of Music in viola performance in 2014 from Southeast Missouri State University. Post-graduate studies in the Suzuki Violin Method include registered training for Books I, II, and III at the University of Memphis (2014-15) and Book IV at Otterbein University (2016). I completed Orff Schulwerk Level 1 at the University of Missouri in summer of 2018, and later that year became certified in Elementary Education. In my spare time, you can find me escorting my daughter Tallis around, researching ancient cultures and quantum mechanics, and skipping straight to dessert.

**Courtney Keefe, STEAM Teacher**



I am incredibly excited to tackle the role of STEAM Instructor yet again this year! Collaborating closely with classroom teachers and students alike, I am looking forward to the awesome learning experiences and projects we will be creating together as we continue to embrace the Makers Movement as we engage in both Design Thinking and the Engineering Process. Think, Design, Make, Build, Tinker, Improve!

It's hard to believe that this is my twelfth year with The Soulard School and my tenth as the STEAM instructor! I feel extremely lucky to be a part of this special

community and have the opportunity to work with such remarkable children. I attended undergraduate at Loyola University in New Orleans where I received a Bachelor's degree in Psychology. After Hurricane Katrina, I migrated to Miami for two years before returning to St. Louis to attend graduate school at Lindenwood University where I received my Master of Arts in Teaching in Elementary Education.

One of my goals as an educator is to inspire a love of learning in my students, as I share my passion for learning with them. I believe that teaching is more than a sacred responsibility; it is a privilege. When I am not at school, I can be found spending time with my family, friends, and beloved canine companion Jewel, tending to my garden, chasing my 4 darling chickens out of the aforementioned garden, trying out new recipes, or exploring anything that piques my curiosity.

**Luna Schneirla, Studio Arts Teacher**



This is my first year teaching art with Soulard School! I've taught in several different districts since I graduated from UMSL and I'm so thankful to share my love of studio art and art history with The Soulard School. Soulard School is unlike any school I've ever worked at. The Soulard School is so caring, hard working, and I'm appreciative of the opportunity to become a part of the community. I also teach wheel throwing at South Broadway Art project if you're ever interested in getting your hands dirty with some clay!

My goal this year is to learn as much as I can about our students so I can help them meet their goals and adjust my lessons to their interests. I focus on art history, contemporary practices, and interdisciplinary studies, which means I incorporate reading, science, and math into my projects as well! My personal goal is to continue learning about new practices around the world so I can bring them to the classroom.

## EXTENDED CORE TEACHERS

Bill Dement, Culinary Arts Assistant



I am excited to continue in my second year as a member of The Soulard School staff! Before joining The Soulard School, I had a diverse career, including work as a paralegal and chess instructor. Additionally, I have worked in a number of different culinary environments, including a steakhouse, a cheesecake café, and a fine foods market. A Missouri native, I grew up in the Ozarks and attended Southeast Missouri State University where I earned degrees in both philosophy and psychology. I subsequently lived in Chicago and earned my paralegal certification from Roosevelt University. Returning to St. Louis, I attended the

University of Missouri-St. Louis and earned a master's degree in psychology. I am a Soulard School parent as well - my son Gabe is in the second grade. When not busy with other activities, I enjoy cooking, a bit of gardening, and reading about topics in psychology and philosophy.

Cass Blackwood, Extended Core Assistant



I'm very excited about my new role this year in Extended Core and working directly with classroom teachers. Ames, my wonderful spouse and partner of 14 years, and I live in Fox Park with our plants, pets and kids. Both of our kiddos, Owen (3rd grade, Thrive) and Arlo (kindergarten, Mums) are thriving at The Soulard School. My background includes a Substitute teaching certification and a degree in Studio Art. I have decades of experience working in design and technical theater. I'm a huge animal lover, all the way down to the bees, spiders and caterpillars in the yard. I love to garden, especially native plants and edibles. I enjoy spending

time doing all types of crafting, building, cooking and fixing. This is my fifth year working at the Soulard School and I cannot express how wonderful it is to have found such a remarkable and supportive community.

## ADDITIONAL STAFF

Maureen Gieseler  
Miriam Part Time Special Education Teacher



I have been a special education teacher for more than 40 years. In those years, I worked with severely behaviorally challenged students in a residential setting for 25+ years and with students with autism from very severe to mild. I have enjoyed almost every moment! I have been married for 37 years, have three grown children and six grandchildren. I am so very happy to be a part of the Soulard Family this year through a partnership with Miriam Learning Center.

## AFTERCARE STAFF

Candace Burgess, Aftercare Assistant



I am very excited to continue my journey here at The Soulard School. I have grown to know and love the children here. I enjoy looking after them. I have been working with little kids for over 11 years. I was with one family for 9 years and worked at Carmelite Child Development Center for 2 years.

Alice Watson, Aftercare Assistant



I am excited to start my first year working with The Soulard School. I have had so much fun with the kids so far. In my free time I love to sew and crochet. I love to embrace creativity and express it in the things I make. I also love working with children - previously I have worked with a variety of ages including as an assistant teacher at Soulard School summer school last year. It has been wonderful and I am looking forward to continuing my work with the Soulard School kids this year.



# magic in the trees?

At the beginning of the year, the Quietude Sr. Prek class dove into a class wide interest in dinosaurs by reading *Dinosaurs Before Dark*, the first book in the Magic Tree House series. We continued the series, noticing that students' interests aligned with each books' topic. Students were also interested in tree-houses themselves.

During a neighborhood walk, we passed a tree-house in someone's backyard. The students were filled with so much excitement and curiosity. Was it filled with books? Was it a magic tree-house? With all of these questions and wonderings, we knew we had to provide an opportunity for them to explore a tree-house. The Quietude class took a field trip to the Botanical Gardens Children's Garden, which has two tree-houses for the students to explore!



Quietude students building a tree-house in STEAM.



The Quietude class exploring a Botanical Gardens tree-house.

Leading up to the field trip, STEAM Teacher Courtney worked with the class in STEAM to create their own model tree-house.

They used their knowledge from the Magic Tree House books and their imagination to create a structure to be displayed in our classroom.



Quietude students working with Courtney in STEAM.

All of these experiences together created a well-rounded study for the class as we started our year! They practiced their story comprehension as they reflected on the books, worked on developmental writing as they drew their favorite scenes, and science thinking as they built their tree-house replica. We are excited to continue reading the *Magic Tree House* series and see where else their interests take us!



Alchemy students working on their Nature Color Wheel.



Alchemy students learning how to match their Nature Color Wheel.

# Naturally Mindful

In October, Students in the 2nd grade Alchemy class took a field trip to the Litzsinger Road Ecology Center (LREC) for an afternoon of outdoor exploration! Mindfulness is a big part of our everyday routines and we've been adding strategies to our self-regulation toolbox. The 5 Senses Exercise is simple and effective - focus for 30 seconds on one thing we can see, touch, taste, smell, and hear. This can help bring us back to the present moment and move through uncomfortable emotions. At LREC, we focused on our sense of sight for the majority of our field trip by collecting different nature objects that matched colors on our color wheels. We noticed how spending time in nature and focusing our minds on specific things made us feel, and we talked about how and when to use the 5 Senses strategy in different scenarios.



Alchemy students exploring a fallen tree at LRC.



Alchemy students exploring the water's edge at LRC.

We the People



The Mosaic class are joined by Alderwoman Cara Spencer at St. Louis City Hall.

The 4th grade Mosaic class has been studying the US Constitution from the Preamble, through the seven Articles, and finally, the Bill of Rights and the rest of the Amendments. The kids in the Mosaic room have learned how to pass laws, are in the process of writing their own class constitution, and will be actively participating in one of the three branches of government in the classroom. Some of the students have written speeches in order to rally support for themselves as they run for class president. The students have learned about the three main branches of our government and how this is reflected at different levels from the federal government to state, county and local government. In support of our government study, the Mosaic classroom took a field trip to the hub of our local government at City Hall in downtown St. Louis. There we met with former Soulard School parent and present alderperson, Cara Spencer. We were guided through City Hall and got to see our local government in action. We met other alderpersons, sat in on one of their sessions, and spoke at length to Cara about her responsibilities and how our government operates. We also took the city bus and learned that it is subsidized by our local government.

*Look out! These students will be running the world soon!*

Mosaic students riding a Metro Bus on their way to City Hall.



The Mosaic class learning about St. Louis City Hall.



The Mosaic class getting a chance to sit in on a session at City Hall.

Mosaic students learning how local governance works from Alderwoman Cara Spencer.

# YOU'VE GOT A FRIEND IN ME!

We love engaging with our neighbors in the Soulard area. This was the first time the 5th grade Explorer class has been able to visit senior residents at Allen Market Lane Apartments since before the start of COVID. We were thrilled to be able to get back to our monthly visits and make connections with new-to-us residents. These visits are a great opportunity for our students to practice social skills and learn from older community members! We played games, did art activities, and even enjoyed a drum circle led by Allen Market Lane resident, Lee! We hope to bring our violins and perform on a future visit!

In October, the 5th grade Explorers spent an extended day at Washington State Park. We enjoyed exploring, hiking, using found objects to build forts, and strengthening our relationships with one another. To connect to our new unit of study about Osage Nation and indigenous people, an interpretive guide led us through the petroglyphs (symbols carved in rock) that are 1000's of years old. We returned to our base camp and made our own petroglyph necklaces. Explorers also cooked hot dogs for dinner, and for dessert, we had s'mores! We are extremely grateful to our parent and grandparent chaperons for making this trip such a wonderful time!



Explorer students & Allen Market Lane residents enjoying each others company.



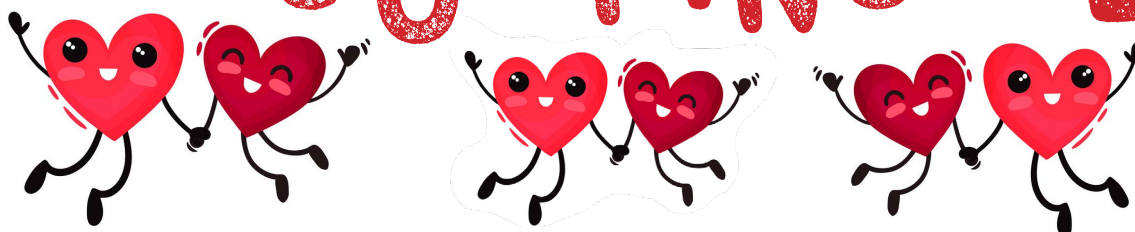
Explorers growing their bonds while out on the trails of Washington State Park.



The Kids Heart Challenge from the American Heart Association took place over the course of three weeks in October! We kicked off the challenge by having our first, whole school assembly of the year. During this assembly, we met the characters of the KHC and learned about various ways to have and maintain a healthy heart.

Students listening to the kickoff of the Kids Heart Challenge assembly at Gene Slay's Boys & Girls Club.

# OUR JUMPING HEARTS



During our Physical Education classes, students participated in Jump Rope Ninja and had the opportunity to earn their belts by completing various jump rope challenges. The posters were hung on the perimeter of the gym, so friends were able to reflect on all they had accomplished throughout Jump Rope Ninja. We also learned a choreographed dance created by the AHA. We followed along with the step-by-step video and enjoyed learning from the dancers! Completing the Dance Challenge was a great reminder that dancing is a way to have fun, move our bodies, and keep our hearts healthy!



Enigma (1st) & Thrive (3rd) grade students signing their names on the challenge completion boards.

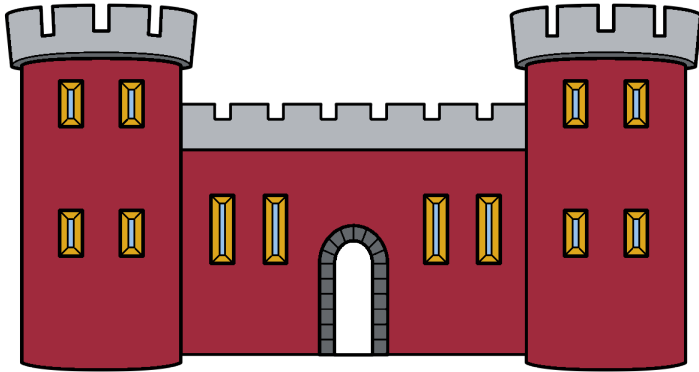


1...2...3...PIE! The Extended Core teachers being pie'd by the winners.

We closed out this fun event by coming together as a school to celebrate all that we accomplished throughout the Kids Heart Challenge! It was a super exciting assembly, as friends who raised over \$50 the American Heart Association were able to pie the Extended Core teachers and Principal Shenika in the face!







*Hear ye! Hear ye!  
Behold the  
Explorer Fortresses!*

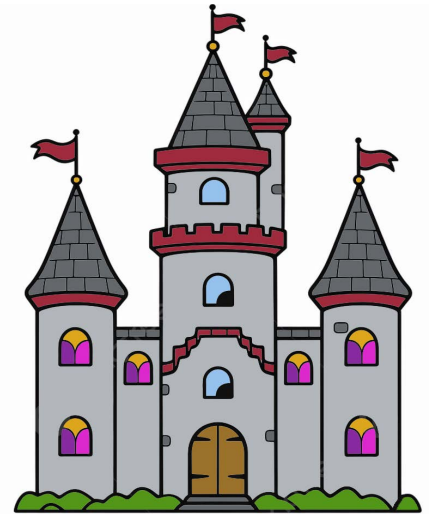
The 5th grade Explorer class has started the year strong with some heavy engineering projects that focus on middle age defense and architecture. The students started with an in-class catapult design challenge that coincided nicely with their castle study in STEAM. They utilized the Engineering Design Process with their catapult construction with an initial test on a model castle and assessed the strengths and weaknesses of their prototypes. They then redesigned and improved their weapons and participated in a Cheeseball barrage as they came back with a vengeance.



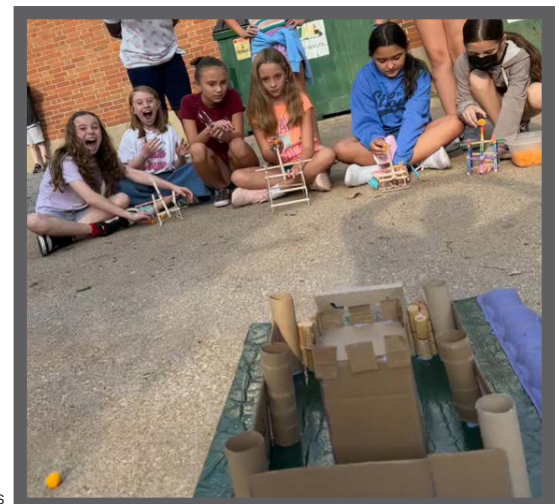
A student shows off the intricate stone work of her castle's outer gate.



A student works on the landscape detail by her stonekeep castle's portcullis and moat.



This led us to our second stage of the study - Castle Design and Construction. Students learned about the history of castles and evolution of their makeup and configuration. From motte and bailey to stone keep and concentric, students compared and contrasted castle elements and weighed the pros and cons of each before selecting the model they wanted to construct. The engineering components of these castles are to be admired with functional drawbridges and portcullises and detailed stone work on exterior walls and watch towers. Students have one STEAM class period left to put the final touches of their designs. The completed designs will be showcased in a museum walk where other grade levels and parents will be invited to see the finished products.



Explorer students bask in their ambush glory as they fire cheeseballs from their redesigned catapults



With Autumn upon us we are embracing soup season at The Soulard School. This hearty black bean soup is a favorite of all ages because kiddos love to choose their toppings and dip the chips in the soup. This soup also freezes beautifully, so make a double batch and heat it up later for a quick lunch over the weekend.

Let your kiddos choose which toppings to add to their soup, encourage them to stir everything together and then dip the chips into the soup.

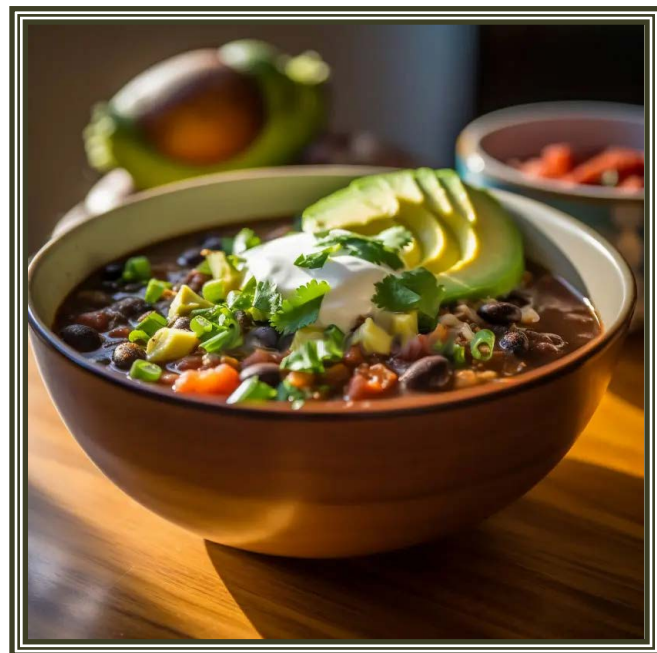


### Ingredients:

- 1 Tbs Extra Virgin Olive Oil
- ½ cup chopped yellow onion
- 1 cup diced bell peppers, any color
- 1 tsp roasted garlic puree or 1 Tbs minced fresh garlic
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp dark chili powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 cups canned black beans, drained
- 2 cups vegetable stock
- Tortilla chips for dipping

### Toppings:

- 2 roma tomatoes, diced
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
- ½ small red onion, diced
- Sour cream & salsa
- Fresh chopped cilantro



### Directions:

In a large stock pot, saute the onions, peppers and garlic in the olive oil until onions are clear.

Add cumin and cayenne pepper, saute for 2-3 minutes.

Add stock and beans. Bring to a boil.

Salt and pepper to taste.

Remove from heat, let cool about 10 minutes, then puree with hand blender.

Serve with your choice of the toppings above and a bunch of tortilla chips for dipping.

**Thank you  
for your  
support**



**Ascension**  
CHARITY CLASSIC  
presented by EMERSON.

In September, volunteers started the school year off with a bang in our participation at the Ascension Charity Classic golf tournament.

Our staff, parent and community volunteers **RAISED OVER \$3,000** for the school over 3 days of working concession stands.  
**THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS!**

## Want to join a Club?

Soulard School students participated in a variety of interest based afterschool clubs and extracurricular activities through school this fall including Theater Club, Girl Scouts, Chess Club, Capoeira, and Mexican Folkloric Dance Club. Clubs give our students a chance to make friends across grade levels as they explore new interests and talents. This year we were able to offer clubs for students pre-k through fifth grade. Our clubs are run by parent & teacher volunteers and often partner with outside organizations such as the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, B-Works & Girls On the Run. Clubs are a standing tradition of community building at The Soulard School and we look forward to some exciting opportunities we have coming with our next round of clubs this spring.

The 2023 Volunteer Rally was a great success due to **YOU**, our wonderfully supportive, talented and resourceful community.

Our goal since the school was founded is 100% family involvement.

Your investment of time demonstrates to your children the importance of giving back and the significant role each of us plays in building a community.

**THANK YOU** to everyone who has signed up for volunteer roles and to everyone who has already jumped into the work.

Signature programs like Culinary Arts, and fundraisers like Oktoberfest wouldn't be possible without the help of our dedicated volunteers.

**WE APPRECIATE YOU  
VERY MUCH!**



Pictured, you can see our students engaging in Capoeira club. Capoeira is a Brazilian cultural expression that combines movement, gymnastics, and music. It's a fun game and a challenging non-competitive activity that will help everyone develop balance, coordination, intentionality, and self-confidence. During club, students learned to move their bodies, create music and even picked up a little bit of Portuguese language skills.

**MEET YOUR PA**

--- WHO'S WHO 23-24 ---

**OFFICERS**

**Presidents**

Virgil Hall & Denise Heinz

**Former Presidents**

Becky Biermann & Erin Turner

**Vice President**

Brandee Zahner

**Treasurer**

Dionna Hall

**Secretary**

Amber Nelson

**Social Events**

Dionna Hall & Kimberly Loyd

**DEIB+**

Liz Frymire & Vanity Gee

**Lead Parent Coordinator**

Zinnia Ron-Ferguson & Carly Main

**FRIENDLY NOTE**

-- FROM THE PA --

The mission of the Parent Association is to enhance the educational experience of Soulard School students and their families by helping with initiatives that facilitate parental or family involvement, encourage strong relationships between home and school, and provide resources that supplement the school's curriculum.

One way we accomplish this is by providing lunch for teachers and staff each Records Day. This month our appreciation lunch was a little extra special. In partnership and support of the DEIB+ committee, we asked families to showcase their cultural and/or family favorite meals with the teachers. Each dish was accompanied with a note as to why it was special to the family. Thank you to our families for all that you do to make our teachers & staff feel loved and appreciated!

**PA FALL EVENTS**

-- WATCH FOR DETAILS --



**FALL PARTY**

THURS \* NOV 2  
ROLLERCADE

Our traditional Harvest Party underwent a transformation into a Fall Skate Party in honor of Día de Muertos. Families grooved to a mix of Disney Latin songs, traditional Latin tunes, and some popular hits. In the spirit of inclusivity, DEI+B shared traditional treats to commemorate the holiday.



**Pasta Sale**

online shop coming soon

THE SOULARD \* SCHOOL  
**Tee & Sweatshirt Sales**

THE ONLINE SHOP IS NOW CLOSED

If you missed the purchase window, no worries there will be another chance to snag your swag in the spring.



**PA MEETINGS**

-- ALL ARE WELCOME --

EVERY

2ND THURSDAY AT 7PM

(watch Friday Notes for locations)

DECEMBER 14TH

JANUARY 11TH

FEBRUARY 8TH

MARCH 14TH

APRIL 11TH

MAY 9TH

JOIN US, ASK QUESTIONS  
& BRING YOUR IDEAS!

**PA FUNDRAISING**

--- UPDATES ---



THANK YOU TO ALL THAT HELPED WITH OKTOBERFEST!

Even with the rain, it was a success because of your support.

Funds raised go towards enhancing the educational experience of Soulard School students.