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8th Graders Accepted to Top Private, College-Prep High Schools

Every year, 8th graders across St. Louis spend the last week of January nervously awaiting acceptance emails from the area's top private high schools. And while the admissions process is competitive, each year 99 percent of Access students are accepted to the college-preparatory high school of their choice. This year was no exception.

We're proud to announce that 53 Academy 8th graders from St. Cecilia Catholic School, Most Holy Trinity Catholic School, and St. Louis Catholic Academy were accepted to 18 partner high schools, including Cardinal Ritter, St. Mary's, Rosati-Kain, CBC, SLUH, and De Smet. Students were also admitted to Bishop DuBourg, Chaminade, Collegiate School of Medicine & Bioscience, Incarnate Word, Lutheran

North, Notre Dame, Nerinx, St. Joseph's Academy, Vianney, Trinity, Ursuline, and Villa Duchesne.

Thanks to the ongoing support of donors like you, who recognize the importance of a top-tier, values-based education, the group of incoming freshmen will receive more than \$700,000 in scholarships over the next four years. In addition, Access will cover the costs associated with ACT preparation/testing and college applications, and many students will earn additional money toward their tuition by participating in our Work-Study program.

Access Graduate Support Directors will continue to provide each student with on-going and consistent guidance, counseling, mentoring, and advocacy through high school and into college or other post-secondary institution.

Our Mission

Access propels at-risk middle school students through high school and on to college and career success with enrichment, counseling, and scholarships.

Celebration Dinner Cancelled, But We Need You!

In order to protect the health and safety of our supporters, we are cancelling this year's in-person Celebration Dinner scheduled for June 4th at the Ritz-Carlton, St. Louis.

As you know, the dinner is our largest fundraiser and raises the lion's share of our budget. In its absence, we need your help more than ever to fund our scholarships, graduate and college

support, and enrichment programs.

While our team explores the possibility of hosting a virtual fundraiser and online mission appeal, we'd ask that you please consider matching your donation from recent years by returning the enclosed envelope. As always, thank you for your continued generosity and loyal support for our students and mission.

Fun Night Out: Winter Party Packs McGurk's to Celebrate Access

Thank you for being an integral piece of our students' success. That was the message from this year's Winter Party at John D. McGurk's, where over 130 enthusiastic supporters packed the Soulard bar's 'garden' area to celebrate Access and raise awareness for our mission.

To emphasize the theme, arriving guests were given puzzle pieces — in addition to complimentary drinks and an appetizer buffet, of course — and together the group completed a giant puzzle picturing four of our middle school students. Even more special, the final piece was placed by Access founder, John Vatterott, who shared some inspiring words about the role of Access in our community. Overall, the event was a huge success, and

we couldn't have asked for a better group. Thank you to all who attended, and to Wisdom Wealth Strategies of Raymond James for their sponsorship. It was a fun night out!



Access Introduces Empowering New Enrichment Programs



This semester, Access partnered with two local nonprofits, Artscope and LitShop STL, to bring exciting new enrichment classes to St. Cecilia Catholic School. ArtScope, whose mission is to nurture the next generation of creators and innovators, is providing our students with professional art instruction. LitShop, meanwhile, combines literacy and building to teach girls hands-on skills while fostering leadership and confidence. In their first class, students even learned about power-tool safety! We're excited to be working with both organizations and can't wait to see what our students create in the Fall.

Career Day Inspires 8th Graders

Career Day is designed to inspire and motivate our students by teaching about potential career paths and the education needed to pursue them. More than 120 eighth graders from six middle schools attended this year's event at Notre Dame High School, where they heard presentations from over 25 area professionals in fields ranging from accounting, architecture, and law, to business, medicine, and zoology. We were even lucky to have two Access board members, Ron Wagner, founder of Athleticare Sports Health Foundation, and Cheryl Pettus, Vice President and Head of US Accounting Transformation at Bayer, speak to the group.



Students Visit SLU and Maryville University



More than 125 Access 6th and 8th graders got a head start on their college tours this February when they visited Saint Louis University and Maryville University. In addition to touring campus and learning about the admissions process for each school, the future collegians also ate in the dining halls and heard about college life from current students, including SLU sophomore and Most Holy Trinity alum Damen Alexander. At SLU, the students also participated in a "Reality Store" exercise where they learned about financial responsibility and career choices.

Research has shown that early and consistent exposure to higher education and post-secondary options in middle school results in greater future enrollment. This is why we make college exposure an integral part of our program and fund several visits each year.

"I want to say thank you so much for everything Access has done for my family and me over my first year of college. I am super grateful!"

—Maria Duran-Garcia, Saint Louis University '23, Ursuline '19, STC '15

Access Families Receive Schnucks Gift Cards

To help cover essentials during the Covid-19 crisis, we sent each student a \$50 gift card

While the economic downturn caused by Covid-19 has hit Americans hard, Access families have been especially vulnerable. The vast majority of our students qualify for free or reduced lunches and even the slightest loss of income can make buying food or paying tuition difficult.

To help ease some of the financial strain on our families, we sent the parents of every Academy middle school and high school student a \$50 Schnucks gift card with which to buy groceries and other essentials. Meanwhile, our college students — many of whom were forced to move out of dorms — received a \$50 Target gift card to help ease the transition home or to another living arrangement. In total, we mailed 394 cards and would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Schnucks for providing a discount and all of our donors whose generous gifts made this outreach possible.

In addition, our Graduate Support team is working to connect families who are struggling with available resources. We are committed to ensuring that every student continues to benefit from our entire program — including a values-based, college-prep education — and that no family's participation is disrupted because of this crisis.



“Access Academies truly cares about their students and families. I was pleasantly surprised that they sent all the students a gift card to go grocery shopping during the Covid-19 pandemic. They also made free social and emotional support available to Academy students. They have been a blessing!”

—Kandyce Davis, Access parent

Access Unveils New College Scholarship

In 2018, we launched our College & Career Success Initiative, expanding our formal counseling, mentoring, and support for each student from seven to 11+ years. This fall, we're building on that commitment by adding a scholarship to the program.

Aimed at helping our students achieve their degree, license, or credential on time and with less debt (borrowing no more than \$9,500 per year), the new College & Career Scholarship provides up to \$3,500 per student enrolled in a 4-year program, or \$250 per semester (up to 12) plus a \$500 final loan payment.

Students can apply for the scholarship in their senior year of high school and are required to complete a series of tasks each semester to remain eligible, from completing the FAFSA and maintaining a minimum GPA, to more career-oriented requirements like conducting an informational interview and holding a part-time job.

We are confident that by rewarding these important steps, our students will continue on their path to college graduation and career success.



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OUR IMPACT



99%

ACCEPTED
to private, college-preparatory high schools



98%

GRADUATED
high school on time (compared to 84% nationwide)



96%

ACCEPTED
to college or other post-secondary institution



Access

Every student. Every chance. Every day.

3500 Lindell Boulevard
Fitzgerald Hall, Room 200
St. Louis, MO 63103

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3500 Lindell Boulevard
Fitzgerald Hall, Room 200
St. Louis, MO 63103
314.898.0430

