

# Making Our Mark

A Connection to Friends, Families, and Supporters of United Inner City Services  
Home of St. Mark Child and Family Development Center

Winter 2018

## The Power of the First 5

*Early learning at St. Mark Center from birth to age 5 drives kindergarten readiness and life success.*

*Special Feature by Deidre Anderson, Executive Director*

**A** 30-million-word gap: nowhere is the inequity between families of higher education more apparent than in the vocabularies of 4 year-olds.

These differences can be discerned in toddlers as young as 18 months. For children who grow up in a professional family, the average 4-year old accumulates 45 million words, versus 13 million words for a child in a family receiving welfare.

***"...our work today is setting the course for the 21st century workplace and our broader world."***

This pivotal period between infancy and 5 years is when our influences on physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of a child matter most. At St. Mark Center, we focus this effort as much on parents and families, as we do our young students.

Though located in one of the city's poorest zip codes, St. Mark Center's beautiful, arts-infused environment, cultural diversity, and creative philosophy are attractive, as well, to families with far greater economic resources and educational backgrounds.

Our quality education and rich experiences in the arts, music, literature, and history are positioning students for what sound research has proven: children who receive quality early education are more likely to graduate from high school, less likely to become a teen parent, and twice as likely to attend college.

It is a philosophy that St. Mark Center lives enthusiastically, knowing that our work today is setting the course for the 21st century workplace and our broader world.



Norman, age 4, (above) and Prince, age 5, (below) with teacher Gina Pisciotta, benefit from experiences in the arts and reading, among the pivotal influences on physical, social, emotional and cognitive development of our students from infancy to age 5.



**To see our learning in action, please come for a visit.  
Tours are hosted monthly.  
Call 816.994.5400 to schedule yours.**

# ON THE MARK



## *Dear Friends of St. Mark Center,*

2017 was an amazing trip around the sun for UICS!

Our golden anniversary year was spent celebrating, reminiscing, dreaming and planning!

We welcomed more than 200 guests to our 50th Anniversary luncheon last fall - big names in our community with even bigger hearts!



In October, we paid tribute with a special reception honoring our founding executive, Rev. Samuel Mann. We also shined a light on renowned author Tonya Bolden, who shared the story of Sarah Rector. Once known as the richest black girl in America, Sarah's family lived in the Rector mansion, which still stands on the UICS property. It's an historic landmark you'll be hearing more about in coming months as we embark on exciting renovations.

Speaking of our future: it's never looked brighter!

We're fresh off a complete organizational rebranding - a dynamic look and feel you'll sense in all we do, from this Making Our Mark newsletter, to redesigned marketing pieces, to a newly launched and completely overhauled UICSKC.org.

In 2017, we took a deep dive into planning for the next era in our history, crafting a thoughtful and ambitious UISC Strategic Plan - a plan that's already making ripples in our organizational culture and outcomes.

Yes, it is in our looking back that we realize how far we've come! As our new St. Mark Center mantra states: We are where hope flies high, families flourish, and kids can be kids. And it's the perfect place to be.

Thanks to all who have had a hand in helping us reach this special milestone!

In gratitude,

Deidre

## Ways to Help



St. Mark Center welcomes your donations and involvement.

### Donate or Sponsor

- Books
- Diapers
- New underwear - 3T, 4T, 5T
- Gently used/new bibs & socks
- Art Supplies
- Sponsor a field trip

### Get Involved

- Be a guest artist
- Volunteer in a classroom as reader/assistant
- Invite us to speak to your organization
- Come for a visit and tour of St. Mark Center



**All fun and games:** Volunteers Judy Kirk and Linda Landes had a jolly time helping students select toys from the Snow Much Fun! gift table. The toys were generously donated by Terrell Ford of Klassic Transformations Barber Academy.

If you would like to help, contact [bradley.hahn@uicskc.org](mailto:bradley.hahn@uicskc.org) or call 816.991.5400.

Thank you.

## OUR VISION

UICS/St. Mark Center envisions an empowered community where children and families flourish.

## OUR MISSION

Building bridges. Inspiring minds. Impacting futures.

## CONNECT

United Inner City Services  
Home of St. Mark Child and Family Development Center  
2008 E. 12th Street  
Kansas City, MO 64127  
Phone: 816.994.5400  
[UICSKC.org](http://UICSKC.org)  
[facebook.com/UICSKC](https://facebook.com/UICSKC)

Your Support Makes a Difference!  
Donate online at [uicskc.org/invest](http://uicskc.org/invest)



## Funder Spotlight:

# The Early Education Funders Collaborative

**W**ith a big, bold mission to build bridges, inspire minds and impact futures, the faculty at St. Mark Center is committed to lighting the way for our precious students.

Gratefully, we recognize Kansas City's Early Education Funders Collaborative for making these pathways even brighter. Their investment in our teachers enables us to continue strengthening the quality of our teaching and data-driven instructional practices..

The results are many, including:

- enhanced instructional quality, a direct result of increased planning and professional development for teachers;
- intentional coaching of teachers, both one-on-one and in collaborative groups;
- significant family engagement, with 100% of parents completing the Kindergarten Readiness Checklist and a Kindergarten Transition Plan.

"We are proud to support programs such as St. Mark Child Center in providing children an opportunity to start on a strong path toward healthy, fulfilling lives," said Halley French of the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, one of the partnering funders in the Collaborative.

"Through family engagement, teacher development, and proven results in preparing children for kindergarten, St. Mark's is a model program for our Collaborative to support," said French.



Teachers like Amia Walker at St. Mark Center benefit from professional development opportunities provided through the Early Education Funders Collaborative, as do inquisitive students like Kalena, age 2.

## St. Mark Salute!

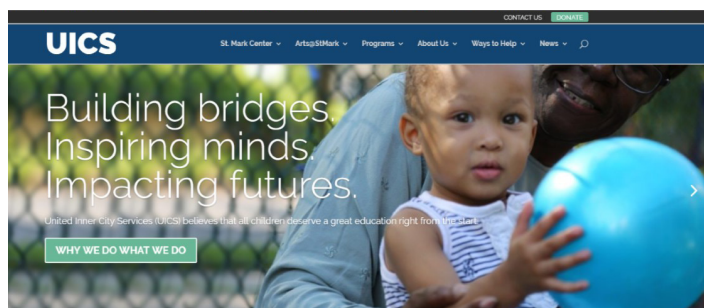
We gratefully acknowledge the Collaborative's partner organizations for their generosity and commitment to early learning:

Francis Family Foundation  
George K. Baum Family Foundation  
Greater Kansas City Community Foundation  
The H & R Block Foundation  
Hall Family Foundation  
Hispanic Development Fund  
Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation  
Sherman Family Foundation  
Shumaker Family Foundation  
Stanley H. Durwood Foundation  
United Way of Greater Kansas City  
William G. McGowan Charitable Fund.

Visit our all-new site!

## UICSKC.org

**O**ur comprehensive rebranding last fall extended to a fresh, new look at UICS and St. Mark Center, including a rebuilt and redesigned website. We hope you'll find the new site informative and engaging.





A fashion show was the culmination of a clothing study, just one example of Project Approach learning at St. Mark Center. Lorenzo, age 4, modeled his clothing line.

## Project Approach is an innovative, authentic style of learning at St. Mark Center

If you happen to be touring St. Mark Center, only to see a fashion show in progress in one of our classrooms, there's a good reason: it is called Project Approach learning.

The Project Approach builds on natural curiosity, enabling children to interact, question, reflect and more. This authentic learning style extends beyond the classroom to teach students about the outside world. Made possible through the ABC<sup>2</sup> grant, an example of Project Approach learning is a recent clothing study. Teachers brought in books, fabrics, and a sewing machine, and a parent posed as a model. Other approaches have included baking, food and camera studies.

This learning style incorporates individualized learning. Even when a student is disinterested in the topic, teachers are encouraged to seek an aspect of the study that can loop in the student. For example, one student was the DJ for the fashion show despite his disinterest in the clothing study. In this way, the unique needs of each student are fulfilled, allowing quality and inclusive learning for all.

## Big bubbles. Big heroes. Big memories!



Batman and his sidekick versus the giant bubbles at Fall Festival. They saved the day!



**Everyday heroes:** students (from left) Autumn, Kyla, Kyli, Brielle, Antoine, Samaria, Saveah and Jamier delight in a visit from the Kansas City Fire and Police departments.



**Dining with Dads and Granddads:** Mark Harmon (left) and Charles Stark (right) take time to join some special kiddos for a Thanksgiving celebration at St. Mark Center.



# Say, "Hello," to Nikki Crisman

## *Programs and Education Director*

**N**ikki Crisman has joined the UICS team as the Director of Education and Programs. After nearly 20 years with the Department of Army - Child Youth and School Services Programs, and most recently as Head Start Asst. Director for the Family Conservancy, Nikki brings to St. Mark Center a wealth of knowledge, experience, and passion for early learning.



Nikki Crisman

Nikki holds a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology with a minor in Early Childhood Education from the University of Central Missouri. She will complete her Master's degree in Public Administration from the University of Kansas in December 2018.

Nikki is process-focused and driven by her passion for ensuring quality programming is in place for all children, their families and the professional staff at UICS.

"I am extremely excited to make UICS my new professional family," said Nikki, "Our partnership and support of our students and families brings our mission to life! I'm honored to join an organization that continues to lead the way in early learning innovation."

## *For the love of learning:*

# Coaching and coursework pave the way for new careers in teaching

**O**ne of the building blocks to quality early childhood education (ECE) is ensuring teachers have appropriate credentials. Because excellence is integral to its curriculum, St. Mark Center is committed to employing quality teachers.

It is this high-caliber coaching that helps pave a career path for teachers like Ashley Jones, a trainee in the Child Development Association (CDA) Cohort, a program that provides coursework and coaching to develop high quality teaching skills.



Ashley Jones (in purple) during a coaching session. From left to right, Merrill Hunt, Andrea Scott, Shannon Herder, Ashley Jones.

With their children attending St. Mark Center, Ashley and other participants are also benefiting from parent training that is part of the CDA coursework.

Camerine McGinnie and Myla Thomas graduated from the cohort in December 2016. Following in their footsteps will be Ashley and LaShanna White.

Raina Davis, Early Learning Director at St. Mark Center, encourages CDA credentialing. "By supporting our teachers at St. Mark Center, we are contributing to an even more loving and enriching environment for our students," Davis said.

## *Snow much fun!*

# St. Mark Center brings holiday warmth and welcoming to school families.

**H**olidays can be an overwhelming time for families. Snow Much Fun! is a special event at St. Mark Center that offers our community a safe and welcoming space to play, learn, bond and receive gifts.

Children, parents and community members experienced a variety of fun stations, including a stocking table, tubs filled with "snow," a gingerbread building area and more. One of our favorite performers, magician comedian Reggie Regg and his animals, added to the cheer.



**Sweet recipe:** brother and sister Alonzo, age 2, and Adaline, age 13 months, create gingerbread masterpieces.

We are thankful for all who contributed gifts, volunteered their time and made the event "snow much fun" for our students and families.



2008 E. 12th Street  
Kansas City, MO 64127

## Save the date!

**Tiny Tuesday  
Jazz Storytelling  
February 20, 2018  
11-11:30 am**

**Spring Fling Arts Fest  
April 19, 2018**

**Both at St. Mark Center.**

Visit [uicskc.org](http://uicskc.org)

## Community Spotlight: National Association of Insurance Commissioners

*Unexpected friendships are sometimes the best ones.*

**A**fter connecting at a Downtown Council gathering a couple years ago, Andy Beal, COO of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners (NAIC), and United Inner City Services Executive Director Deidre Anderson became fast friends.

The two quickly learned they share a passion for social justice, and a partnership developed soon thereafter, with NAIC hosting charity raffles and gifting the proceeds to UICS.

This year Beal visited St. Mark Center for story time, reading *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* to the Red Room. The children enjoyed Beal's reading so much he re-read it...four times in a row!

Beal not only left the book for the class to enjoy, but also a piece of his heart. Today NAIC employees read in a different classroom each week.

"The kids are engaged in learning and having a good time," said Jennifer McAdam, legal counsel at NAIC who helps coordinate the volunteer readers. "They have a love of learning and singing and that makes it fun for our team."

To learn more about volunteer opportunities at St. Mark Center for individuals or groups, please contact [Bradley.Hahn@UICSKC.org](mailto:Bradley.Hahn@UICSKC.org) or 816.994.5400.



UICS Executive Director Deidre Anderson (*top*) welcomes Andy Beal, COO of the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, to St. Mark Center. The highlight of the visit: Beal's animated reading of the *Hungry Hungry Caterpillar*.