

Volume 2
Issue 1

The Voice

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Maryville presents at national conference
Honoring the McCaskey Family
Two stories of strength and second chances
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Maryville

Caring for Children. Strengthening Families.

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The Voice Magazine, Vol. 2, Issue 1

The Voice Magazine, published by Maryville once or twice a year, features success stories, news, events, alumni updates and information that reflect our mission of protecting children and strengthening families.

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Maryville

Caring for Children. Strengthening Families.

Together, we transform lives



Sister Catherine M. Ryan, O.S.F.

Dear Friends,

Each new school year brings with it a sense of promise.

It is a chance to grow, to learn and to begin again. At Maryville, education is more than academics. It is a pathway to healing, independence and hope for the children, mothers and families we serve.

Our cover story (pages 4 and 5) highlights Walsh Academy, where diverse learners ages 14 to 22 prepare for life beyond high school through career and technical education. For many, Walsh is more than a school. It is a place where students discover their strengths, set goals and begin to see a brighter future.

The journeys of three recent graduates show what happens when young people are given structure, encouragement and compassion. Their achievements remind us of the transformative power of education when it is paired with care and opportunity.

Education begins early at Maryville. In our early childhood programs, we nurture children we serve, giving them the foundation they need to succeed in school and in life. These programs remind us that learning begins long before the classroom, in moments of play, discovery and trust.

Education at Maryville also extends into the professional community. Through our collaboration with the Stephen Sexton Training Institute, we provide seminars and training (page 15) that equip professionals with tools to better serve

children and families. This commitment ensures that the impact of Maryville's mission stretches far beyond our own programs.

In April, we gathered to honor The McCaskey family at our Night of Hope event, highlighted on pages 10 and 11. Their longstanding support of Maryville helps sustain the educational programs that change lives every day. We are deeply grateful for their example and for all who make our ministry possible.

On page 12, you will meet a mother whose story embodies perseverance and strength. As a single parent raising two boys, her story reflects how education, in all its forms, extends beyond the classroom to embrace life lessons, determination and courage.

“

**What counts in life is not
the mere fact that we have lived.
It is what difference we have made
to the lives of others.**

— Nelson Mandela

”

On page 13, we share the journey of a Maryville alumnus who through resilience and the nurturing environment Maryville provided, is a successful chef today. His career stands as proof that education, when paired with encouragement, can open doors to dreams that seemed unreachable.

Every classroom, every training and every diploma represents more than an accomplishment. It is a step toward healing and a better future. With your continued support, Maryville will keep walking beside our children, mothers and families, helping them write new chapters filled with dignity, courage and success.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for making these opportunities possible. Together, we are shaping futures filled with promises.

With gratitude,

Sister Catherine M. Ryan, O.S.F.

Sister Catherine M. Ryan, O.S.F.

Executive Director

Finding their path:

Three students share their stories of hope, resilience and new beginnings

By Nelia Bernabe



The halls of Walsh Academy hum with quiet purpose at the start of a school day. Staff members were busy greeting each student by name, offering high-fives, handshakes and encouraging words. For many of these young men and women, this is more than just a friendly welcome; it is a reminder that they are seen, valued and supported in ways they once thought were not possible.

Walsh Academy, an educational service of Maryville Academy, offers special learners a safe space to finish high school and prepare for college, trade or careers. For students who have struggled in mainstream settings, Walsh provides not only academics but also stability, care and second chances. This is especially evident in the stories of three students who graduated in May: Rashon Swigert, Tessa Melancon and William Maitra.

Each arrived at Walsh with challenges that threatened to sidetrack their futures. Yet with perseverance and the support of their teachers and staff, they discovered that no obstacle is too great when you have the courage to keep moving forward.

Rashon Swigert: From challenges to ambition

When Rashon first walked through the doors of Jen School, Walsh's predecessor, he was unsettled as he struggled with his emotions. After leaving his previous school, Maine West, because of poor choices, he didn't know what to expect.

"At first, it was hard trying to get comfortable," Rashon said. "You don't know anybody and you don't know the school. But after a while, I made friends and connected with the teachers. That's when things started to change."

Principal Ann Craig remembers those early days. "Rashon felt like he wasn't wanted

anywhere," she said. "Attendance wasn't great at first, but once he built relationships with staff and realized his strengths, everything clicked."

One of those strengths was math. Rashon not only excelled in the subject but also discovered a knack for hands-on learning in trades classes. He explored plumbing, electrical work, carpentry and even bike repair. His time helping in the school's garden sparked an interest in landscaping and design. "They put me in a class here and I found out I was good with hands-on stuff," Rashon said. "That made me want to think about being a technician, engineer or doing landscaping."

Beyond academics, Rashon worked hard to overcome anger issues that once clouded his path. With counseling and patient guidance, he learned self-control, communication and respect. "I realized after I left Maine West that it wasn't time to play anymore," he said. "I had to lock in."

Now 18, Rashon graduated early with plans to work in a warehouse before enrolling in trade school. He envisions a future where he combines his artistic side — sketching and designing — with his practical skills. "It's important," he said of Walsh. "They care for you, so I care for them."

Tessa Melancon: Finding her voice and her strength

Tessa has lived through academic twists and turns that tested her resilience. Diagnosed with ADHD in elementary school and later battling anxiety, she struggled in large classrooms. After her time at New Trier High School and at a boarding school, Tessa arrived at Walsh Academy in January.

"I wanted more one-on-one support," she said. "At my old schools, I got overwhelmed. Walsh was different. Everybody greets you with a smile in the morning. The community here really makes you feel supported."



Rashon



Tessa



William

William Maitra: Seeing his purpose and the path ahead

For William, high school used to feel like sleepwalking. At New Trier, with thousands of students, he often felt invisible. “It didn’t matter if you were paying attention or not,” he said. “It was just such a big school. I didn’t care.”

His lack of motivation led to late nights, missed classes and poor attendance. Eventually, he transferred to Walsh Academy for his senior year. At first, he told his dad he planned to return to New Trier after a semester. But within weeks, his perspective shifted.

“Once I got used to this place, I realized it was a lot better,” William said. “I definitely didn’t want to leave.”

What changed? The smaller classes meant teachers knew him personally and held him accountable. The staff took time to ask about his life and interests, making him feel seen. He also found joy in extracurriculars like CAAEL sports, learning volleyball, bowling and basketball for the first time.

Perhaps the most profound transformation was internal. “I’ve aged a lot in a year because of this place,” he said. “My moral compass has improved. I know what’s right and wrong and what’s expected of me.”

With his sights on his next chapter, William is now at Bowling Green State University pursuing business like his father. “Walsh strengthened my work ethic,” he said. “It made things more real.”

The Walsh Difference

Craig sees these stories as examples of Walsh’s vision in action. “Our goal is not just

to educate,” she said, “but to help students rediscover who they are and who they can become. We create a community where every student knows they matter.”

Teachers echo that sentiment. “The beauty of Walsh is watching students who once doubted themselves step into their own potential. It’s about growth, not perfection.” said Heather Lischett, assistant principal.

Another added: “When our students graduate, it’s more than a diploma. It’s proof of resilience, hope and the power of second chances,” said Kathleen M.L. “Ms. Kat” Samuelson.

A family that believes

For Rashon, Tessa and William, Walsh Academy has been more than a school. It has been a family. Rashon discovered discipline and a love of the trades. Tessa found confidence, creativity and acceptance. William learned accountability and rediscovered his purpose.

Their paths are different, but their message is the same. With determination and the right support, any student can overcome challenges and pursue their dreams. On May 30, Rashon, Tessa and William, together with 14 of their peers, officially graduated from high school armed with the courage to build the futures they once thought were out of reach.

At Walsh Academy, every morning begins with a smile and a handshake. And every year, it ends with stories like these, stories that remind us that with support and compassion, young people transform themselves and believe that possibilities are limitless.

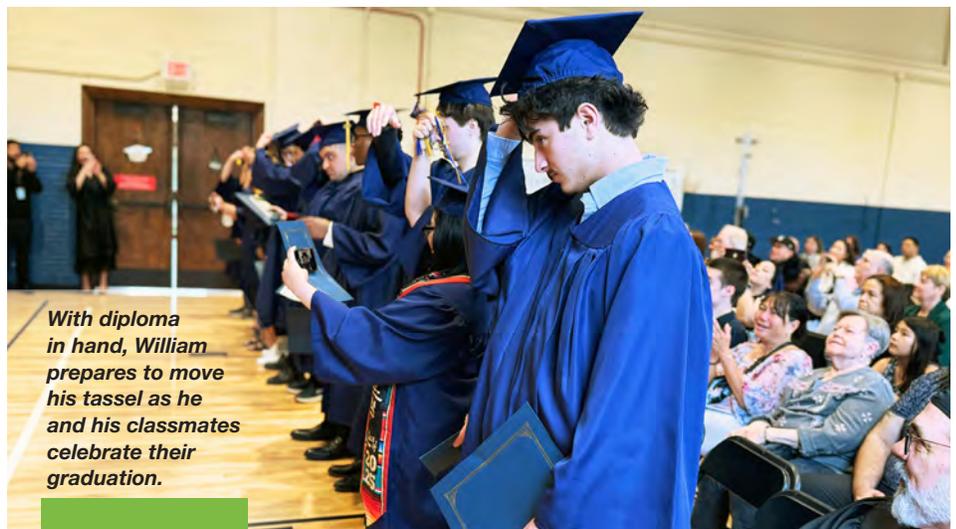
After only a few months at Walsh, the impact is already clear. Tessa dove into career and technical education classes, learning to use tools and repair bikes — skills she admits were once foreign to her. More importantly, she found mentors like Ms. Kat, who became her “go-to person.”

“She’s always there for me,” Tessa said. “She’ll hold you accountable, but she does it because she cares.”

Her passions extend beyond the classroom. Tessa is a dedicated powerlifter, competing at New Trier with impressive numbers: a 180-pound bench press, 185-pound squat and 275-pound deadlift. She also plays guitar and writes poetry. “Sometimes I write from how I’m feeling,” she said. “But often I try to imagine how others feel. I think I’m a very creative person.”

Tessa has started college at Illinois State University and is considering a major in psychology or animal sciences. She dreams of becoming a social worker or pursuing a doctorate, all while keeping her love for writing and music alive.

Her journey is a testament to perseverance. “If someone was struggling at their public high school,” she said, “I’d tell them Walsh won’t be mad at you for needing help. They’ll be proud of you for coming here. They’ll never be mad.”



With diploma in hand, William prepares to move his tassel as he and his classmates celebrate their graduation.



Public works internship helps Walsh grad build career

Career readiness is not just a mission at Walsh Academy. It is the fulfillment of its vision: empowering students to turn their skills and passions into real-world success. This summer, that vision came to life in a big way as one of our recent graduates, Michael from the Class of 2025, began an internship in the auto department of Niles Public Works.

For Michael, this opportunity is more than just a summer job. It is a launchpad.

He is gaining hands-on experience diagnosing, maintaining and repairing municipal vehicles while working alongside seasoned professionals. The internship directly reflects Michael's training and interests in the skilled trades and it helps



“Seeing our students apply their skills outside the classroom is one of the most rewarding parts of our vision,” said Dr. Ann Craig, principal of Walsh Academy. “Michael is a shining example of how real-world experience transforms potential into purpose.”

His success is also a testament to the strength of our community partnerships, especially the collaborative effort between Maryville, Walsh Academy and the Village of Niles to create meaningful pathways for students.

As we highlight Walsh Academy in this issue of The Voice, Michael's story reminds us that futures are built every day, one student, one opportunity at a time.

Way to go, Michael. Your future is in motion and you are in the driver's seat and a future redirected.



him build the confidence and competence that come from doing real work with real responsibility.

“I like that I'm doing real work,” Michael shared. “They're trusting me to get under the hood and figure things out. It makes me want to learn more and do better every day.”

Michael's journey is a clear reflection of what Walsh Academy stands for: individualized support, career-focused education and the power of practical experience. His growth shows what is possible when students are equipped with both knowledge and opportunity.

“**They're trusting me to get under the hood and figure things out. It makes me want to learn more and do better every day.**”





Maryville earns national reaccreditation through 2029

Maryville Academy has once again met the mark of national excellence. This spring, it was officially reaccredited by the Council on Accreditation (COA), a service of Social Current, reaffirming its standing as a trusted leader in providing high-quality care to children and families in need.

The reaccreditation, awarded through April 30, 2029, is more than a milestone. It is a powerful endorsement of Maryville's enduring mission and a testament to the professionalism and dedication of its staff.

"This is a tremendous achievement that demonstrates that your organization has successfully implemented high-performance standards and, as such, is delivering high-quality services," wrote Jody Levison-Johnson, president and CEO of Social Current, in the official notification received by Executive Director Sister Catherine M. Ryan, O.S.F., on April 16.

"We continually strive to learn best practices in our fields and enhance our knowledge through training," said Sister Cathy. "We reflect on past challenges and adapt our processes to ensure continuous improvement. This commitment allows our staff to make meaningful, life-changing differences for those we serve."

The reaccreditation process, which began months in advance, was led by Martha Mann, director of performance and quality improvement. It involved an in-depth review of Maryville's programs, policies and procedures to ensure alignment with national standards in governance, service delivery and risk management.

Staff from across departments contributed to this rigorous process, participating in interviews, site visits and detailed policy evaluations, and even the children in Maryville's care were interviewed, giving voice to their experiences and perspectives. This level of engagement reflected not only procedural excellence but also a deep, shared commitment to Maryville's values and to the children and families at the heart of our mission.

This reaccreditation reaffirms our mission and dedication to the communities we serve," said Sister Cathy. "I am deeply grateful to everyone who worked tirelessly to uphold the highest standards."

COA reaccreditation also strengthens Maryville's public and private partnerships. Funders, referral agencies and stakeholders recognize COA accreditation as a mark of quality, a guarantee that Maryville meets nationally accepted benchmarks and maintains best practices in service.

Although reaccreditation occurs every four years, Maryville leadership views it as an ongoing journey, not a one-time accomplishment. Through continual self-assessment and growth, Maryville ensures that the individuals and families it supports receive the highest level of care, now and into the future.



Des Plaines campus Office Manager Aleno Johnson proudly holds the plaque recognizing Maryville's national reaccreditation from the Council on Accreditation, now valid through 2029.

About the Council on Accreditation

The Council on Accreditation (COA) is an independent, nonprofit accreditor of the full continuum of community-based behavioral health and human services. Reaccreditation signifies that Maryville meets or exceeds national standards and remains qualified for the trust and support of its donors, stakeholders and partner agencies.



Maryville team presents at national child welfare conference

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Sarah Melgarejo, clinical director, and Jim Eaglin, recovery home operator, proudly represented Maryville at the Child Welfare League of America’s annual conference on April 10, leading a breakout workshop that highlighted Maryville’s innovative, family-centered recovery services.

The workshop, titled “Building Families First Recovery Home Network Model,” featured Maryville’s Saint Monica and St. Josephine Recovery Homes. Melgarejo and Eaglin shared the research and community needs that informed the development of the homes, as well as the crucial role of funding support from the state of Illinois.

They also introduced attendees to Maryville’s Crisis Nursery and Family Advocacy Center, emphasizing how these programs contribute to a comprehensive continuum of care for families in crisis.

Eaglin shared that participants responded enthusiastically, asking insightful questions and engaging in meaningful discussions.

“I had a conversation afterward with one of the attendees who expressed amazement at our ability to not only develop this service line but also successfully work with DCFS for funding to sustain it,” Eaglin said.

Beyond the workshop, Melgarejo and Eaglin networked with child welfare leaders from across the country, exchanging insights and learning from others in the field.

“One thing that stood out in every keynote, breakout session and conversation was the shared passion for serving at-risk children and families,” Eaglin noted.

“Despite the challenges, the message was clear: we have overcome difficult times before and we will continue to provide high-quality care for children and families in need,” he said.

The trip also marked Eaglin’s first visit to the nation’s capital. “It was a great opportunity to explore Washington, D.C., and learn more about our nation’s history,” he said.

The conference was a meaningful professional milestone for the Maryville team, who not only shared their work on a national stage but also brought home valuable ideas and inspiration from peers across the country.



Sarah Melgarejo and Jim Eaglin at the CWLA conference

“Michelangelo has blossomed from a shy, quiet, withdrawn boy to an expressive, social, active child. I have also learned to be a better parent, how to be kind, laugh with him, discipline calmly and use loving words. Receiving support can be scary to a person and I am glad we are here.” - Mom (Saint Monica Homes)





Maryville Mural Project unites campuses through art

Maryville has launched a new initiative this summer aimed at transforming its campuses through color, collaboration and creativity. The Maryville Mural Project, on the theme “Art Brings Us Together,” is bringing staff, youth and volunteers together to create murals that reflect the heart of each program and the shared values that unite Maryville.

With a focus on healing, storytelling and unity, the mural initiative goes beyond art; it is a visual reflection of Maryville’s mission and what matters the most.

“This initiative isn’t just about art. It’s about ownership, healing and unity,” said Brannon Carnes, Maryville’s art and music therapist. “Each mural reflects the people who bring these programs to life and the spirit that ties us all together.”

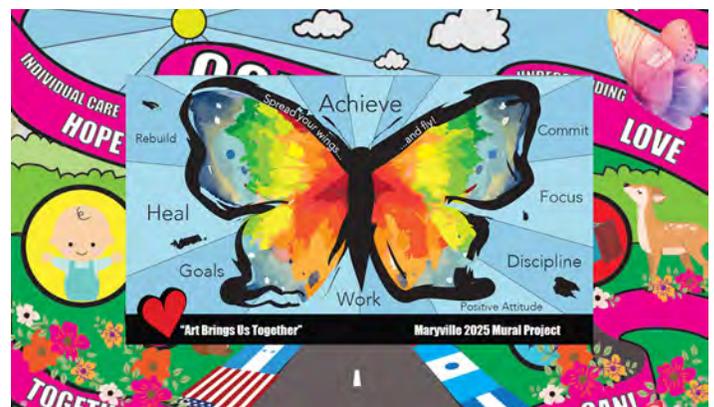
In true Maryville fashion, the project is rooted in collaboration. Youth and staff are working side-by-side to imagine, design and paint murals that reflect the essence of each campus or program. By late summer and fall, murals will begin appearing at nearly every major Maryville site.

Each mural is being designed to capture not just the visual identity of a location but its heart – what it stands for, who it serves and how it supports Maryville’s mission of healing and hope.

“We wanted the youth and staff to tell their own stories through these pieces,” Carnes said. “It’s about seeing yourself in the art and knowing that your voice and your journey matter.”

While the project brings color and life to walls, it also offers something deeper: a sense of pride, collaboration and transformation. Maryville leaders praised the site champions and teams whose passion and creativity are driving the effort forward.

As murals continue to take shape across campuses, they will stand as lasting reminders of the power of imagination, the strength of community and the beauty of coming together while upholding the Maryville mission.



“**This initiative isn’t just about art. It’s about ownership, healing and unity.**”

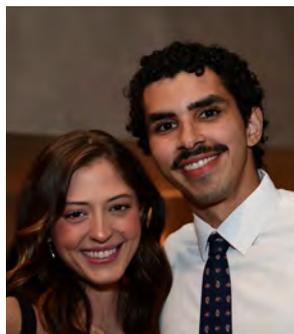
Honoring the McCaskey Family

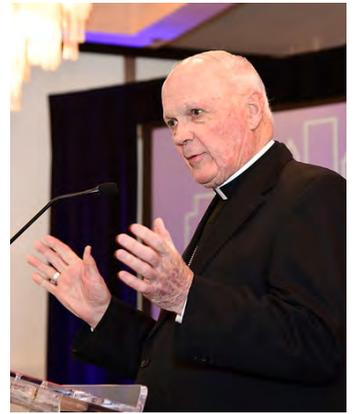
On April 11, more than 250 friends, donors and supporters came together for Maryville's Night of Hope at SKY on NINE in Rosemont. Bishop George Rassas opened the evening with a prayer, setting the tone for a celebration of faith, generosity and our shared mission to protect children and strengthen families.

The evening honored the McCaskey family, whose decades-long support of Maryville has left a lasting impact. Brian and Pat McCaskey shared heartfelt stories about their parents, Ed and Virginia, who raised their 11 children in Des Plaines and instilled in them a deep commitment to service. Brian reflected on welcoming a young woman from Maryville into his home, who is now a thriving adult with a family of her own. Pat spoke of his continued involvement through the Ed Block Courage Award and the Ed McCaskey Scholarship Luncheon.

Guests enjoyed a cocktail hour with city skyline views, a gourmet dinner and a moving video tribute. Several McCaskey family members, including nieces and nephews, joined in the celebration, adding to the warmth of the night. Reverend Michael Shanahan closed the evening with a prayer of gratitude and hope.

We are deeply grateful to all who made the event possible — our guests, the Maryville Board of Directors, emcee Dina Bair of WGN-TV, our sponsors and the outstanding team at SKY on NINE. Special thanks to our event sponsors, Rivers Casino, Lentino Imports, Don and Virginia Reisner, William Blair and Argon Electric, for their incredible support. Together, we created a night filled with hope, gratitude and renewed commitment to the children and families we serve. *(The Voice Staff)*







From crisis to strength: How Maryville Crisis Nursery helped one mother rebuild her life

Gloria Ramirez

When **Gloria Ramirez** stood before a room full of supporters at last fall's Maryville Crisis Nursery Luncheon, she was not just telling her story. She shared the very heart of what the Crisis Nursery stands for: hope, healing and the power of community.

Ramirez, a Maryville alum and mother of two young boys, knows firsthand the life-altering impact of support in moments of deep crisis. "Sharing my story is something I never thought I would do in a setting like this," she began, her voice steady but full of emotion. "But it is because my experience highlights the essential services provided by the Maryville Crisis Nursery and how they truly changed my life."

Her journey is one of courage through adversity. After escaping an abusive relationship while nine months pregnant and caring for a toddler, Ramirez found herself without a home or a support system. "I had no family or friends to help me. I was not working. I had no one," she said. "I was emotionally drained. I was physically exhausted. I was merely living in survival mode."

What followed were months of instability – shelters without space, temporary housing in hotels and constant uncertainty. But through referrals from Family Rescue and DCFS, Gloria was introduced to Maryville's Crisis Nursery, where she found something she had not had in a long time: someone who cared.

"It was the first time I found out about the life-changing resources the Crisis Nursery offers to mothers like me," Ramirez said. "They don't just provide child care. They provide hope, compassion and a path forward."

With support from the Maryville Crisis Nursery staff like Caroline Belensky, Ramirez was able to take critical steps forward, whether



attending court appointments, gathering documents for her divorce or simply catching her breath. "For somebody who has no one, they have become my family," she shared.

The Crisis Nursery also connected her with the House of the Good Shepherd, where she completed a nine-month recovery program focused on healing, financial literacy, parenting and independent living. From there, she transitioned to stable housing and began pursuing her professional goals.

Now, years after her lowest point, Ramirez is thriving. She earned her master's degree in social work from the University of Illinois at Chicago and currently works part-time as a medical social consultant at the University of Illinois Hospital. She also supports children in early intervention through private practice. Recently, she and her sons Henry, 4, and Conrad, 2, moved into a two-bedroom apartment, a space filled with growth and laughter.

"I am standing here today not just as a mother who survived a difficult chapter in her life, but as someone who feels empowered and supported," Ramirez said to a visibly moved audience.

Ramirez's story illustrates the critical role the Maryville Crisis Nursery plays in the lives of families in need. In moments when parents have nowhere else to turn, the Crisis Nursery becomes a lifeline.

"I speak for all the single mothers and fathers you have helped," Ramirez concluded. "Thank you for giving my children and me more than just a safe place. More importantly, you have given me hope."

“**They don't just provide child care. They provide hope, compassion and a path forward.**”



Maryville alum shares story of resilience at Ed Block Courage Award Luncheon

Gerard Bonner stood at the podium not to relive the past, but to honor it and to thank those who made his future possible.

In front of guests at the Ed Block Courage Award Foundation Luncheon in March, Bonner, a Maryville Academy alumnus, delivered a moving speech filled with both heartbreak and hope.

He began by expressing his gratitude to the Foundation and the Chicago Bears for their support of at-risk youth. He also paused to honor the legacy of Virginia McCaskey, the beloved Chicago Bears matriarch who passed away earlier this year.

"Her legacy of compassion and generosity will live on," he said. "She will be deeply missed."

Bonner's story, shaped by a childhood of instability, was raw and honest. "Courage isn't the absence of fear," he told the audience. "It's about taking one small step forward, even when the path ahead seems impossible."

One of his earliest memories entering the child welfare system, he recalled, was being called to the school office with his siblings, thinking they were going home. Instead, they were picked up by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

"We didn't know we weren't going back," Bonner said. "From that moment on, I was never given back to my family again. It was just ... the way it was."

Over the next eight years, Bonner lived in multiple foster homes. By the time he arrived at Maryville Academy, first at its North Side campus and later in Des Plaines, change and uncertainty had become routine. But Maryville, he said, was different.

"There was a rhythm to life there – wake up, school, chores and a point system," he said. "And you know what? I think that was a good thing."

The structure at Maryville helped Bonner begin to understand the connection between choices and consequences.

Still, his journey was far from linear. He ran away more than once, overwhelmed by frustration and convinced that nothing would ever change. But each time, he returned.

"Resilience isn't about never failing," he said. "It's about getting back up, every single time."

He credits Stacey Smith, his teacher at Nipper Career Education Center while he was at Maryville, as someone he considers family and who changed the course of his life. She saw his potential even when he could not see it in himself.

Bonner said that Smith showed him what it meant to be willing to accept love and to show love and doing so is natural.

"She showed me that I could be better. That I was more than my circumstances, that there's a different way to be than what I had grown up with and what I was shown," Bonner said. "That small act of kindness – it changed everything."

That belief became a turning point. With consistent encouragement and accountability, Bonner began to grow. Even the difficult moments at Maryville, he said, taught him who he did not want to be. However, it was the positive reinforcement, the simple act of someone believing in him, that made all the difference.

"It gave me the courage to strive for more," he said. "And that's a lesson I carry with me to this day."

Now a husband and father, Bonner said he works every day to instill that same belief in his own family and community.

"To any young person today who might be facing challenges, you can take that small step forward," he said. "You can believe in yourself, even when it feels impossible."

Before ending his speech, Bonner shared a quote from poet and author Maya Angelou that captured the heart of his message.

"You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them."



Gerard Bonner



Supporting children and families, new website highlights Maryville's mental health services



Parenting Coach Katrina Ivory, left, meets with a mother from Saint Monica Homes, where residents use Family Behavioral Health Clinic services to support their recovery. The new FBHC website helps families like her access counseling, parenting support and other behavioral health resources.



Please scan the QR code to visit the FBHC website

The Family Behavioral Health Clinic (FBHC), part of Maryville's ministry to protect children and strengthen families, has launched a redesigned website to expand access to care and raise awareness of its vital services.

The website refresh reflects Maryville's commitment to meeting a growing mental health crisis with hope, compassion and evidence-based care. For children and families facing trauma, adversity and behavioral health challenges, FBHC offers critical support on the journey to healing.

"Families in our communities are carrying enormous burdens," said Fred Smith, director of community services. "The Family Behavioral Health Clinic is one way Maryville walks alongside them, providing the care and connection they need to heal and thrive."

FBHC is a cornerstone of Maryville's continuum of care, offering a full range of outpatient behavioral health services for children, adults and families. Services include individual, family and group therapy;

trauma-informed care for children and adolescents; psychiatric evaluations and medication management; parent education and support; and bilingual, culturally responsive services. Telehealth options ensure families can access care conveniently and safely.

In partnership with schools, pediatricians, child welfare agencies and community organizations, FBHC strives to address mental health needs early and comprehensively. The clinic accepts most insurance plans, including Medicaid, to reduce barriers to care.

As demand for mental health services grows, FBHC is helping more individuals build resilience and find hope. It is also a vital, revenue-generating program that helps sustain Maryville's mission of protecting children and strengthening families. Families seeking help are encouraged to visit the website or call **847-390-3004** to learn more about Maryville's Family Behavioral Health Clinic where compassionate care, dignity and healing are at the heart of every service.



ADVANCING HEALING THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS

Maryville hosts three-part seminar series on early relational health



A staff member shares a playful moment with a child at the CHC.

As part of its mission to protect children and strengthen families, Maryville, through its partnership with the Stephen Sexton Training Institute, recently completed a three-part seminar series on Early Relational Health (ERH). The initiative underscores Maryville's belief that ministry is not only about providing services but also about fostering healing relationships that help children and families thrive.

The ERH framework emphasizes the foundational role of early relationships between infants, young children and their caregivers in supporting lifelong development, emotional well-being and resilience. For Maryville, this approach reflects a core ministry value: that healing begins in relationship, and that every child deserves compassionate, developmentally informed care, particularly those who have experienced trauma or instability.

"Maryville's ministry has always been rooted in the belief that we meet God through the children and families we serve," said Sister Catherine M. Ryan, O.S.F., Maryville executive director. "Early Relational Health is one way we put this belief into action, ensuring that families receive not only clinical expertise but also care filled with dignity and hope."

The series opened Nov. 14, 2024, with Dr. Dorothy T. Richardson, Ph.D., IECMH-E, presenting strategies for supporting families by understanding how early experiences shape future outcomes.

On March 12, 2025, Andrea Bushala, MSW, LCSW, RPT-S, and Christie Mason, Ph.D., LCSW, RPT-S, NMT Level II, offered practical tools to strengthen caregiver-child bonds and support families healing from trauma.

The final session, held June 26, 2025, featured Dr. Claudia Gold, MD, who highlighted reflective listening and the importance of humility in understanding family dynamics.

Nearly 170 professionals attended the final session, praising the series for actionable strategies and its focus on elevating parents' voices in care planning.

Through this series, Maryville extends its ministry beyond its own programs, equipping professionals to strengthen families, build resilience and nurture hope, beginning at the earliest stages of life.



Maryville expands ministry in Austin with new youth center

In June 2024, Catholic Charities of Chicago transferred ownership of its gym at 5022 W. Madison St. in Chicago to Maryville, marking a major step in the organization's ministry to expand year-round programming for youth in the Austin and West Garfield communities.

With the new facility, Maryville extended its summer youth programming into a 12-month initiative, creating a permanent presence for athletic, educational and enrichment services.

"With its own gym, Maryville can now offer year-round services to youth in the Austin community and surrounding neighborhoods," said Sister Catherine M. Ryan, O.S.F., Maryville executive director. "This expansion is a direct response to community needs and opportunities."

Building the Program

The year-round program launched shortly after Chicago Public Schools concluded the 2024 school year. Four community-based coaches began leading athletic programming in the gym, operating the summer schedule through late August. The gym officially opened its doors in June to local youth, providing an open gym, mentoring, tutoring and enrichment activities.

Programming has since expanded to include arts and crafts, STEM activities and computer access for youth who may not wish to participate in athletics. Cheerleading sessions are also offered on select days.

Kim Williams, director of the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO), under which the Maryville Youth Center operates, provides leadership and support to the site and its growing list of programs.

The center has quickly become a safe and welcoming space for children. In recent weeks, it hosted youth for lunch, movies and backpack distribution. Williams said the children enjoyed the meals, the fun atmosphere and the excitement of receiving new backpacks filled with school supplies.

"It's wonderful to see the children having fun and feeling supported as they prepare for the upcoming school year," she said.

The center continues to foster a sense of community and joy, ensuring every child has a memorable experience.

Community Support

Support for the Maryville Youth Center continues to grow. The annual CYO golf outing on Sept. 8 benefitted the center and raised funds for programming, equipment and staff development.

In January, WGN-TV's Emmy Award-winning reporter Erin McElroy featured the Maryville Youth Center in a televised segment highlighting its impact on the West Side. The story aired multiple times, helping raise awareness of Maryville's growing presence in the Austin neighborhood.



Mealtime with the children at the Maryville Youth Center.

“It’s wonderful to see the children having fun and feeling supported as they prepare for the upcoming school year.”



Maryville Academy

Helping children thrive, one gift at a time.



A young mother, once overwhelmed and uncertain, now feels at peace knowing her daughter is safe and thriving at Maryville. With the support of caring staff, her little girl has stability, encouragement and a safe space to learn and grow, giving the mother confidence to focus on building a stronger future for their family.

You can help more children and families find that same peace of mind. Gifts of cash, stock, retirement accounts, donor-advised funds or in-kind donations provide the resources Maryville needs to deliver stability, healing and hope. Your generosity makes all the difference.

See details on right.

● Gifts of Cash

Beyond gifts of cash, there are many creative ways to make a gift to benefit Maryville's children and families- ways that may also help you.

● Gifts of Stock

Beyond gifts of cash, there are many creative ways to make a gift to benefit Maryville's children and families- ways that may also help you.

● Gifts from Retirement Accounts

If you are 70 ½ or older, you may directly transfer your required minimum distribution or up to \$108,000. Although a tax deduction is not available, the transfer will not count as taxable income.

● Gifts from Donor-Advised Funds

Donor advised funds are an excellent resource to consider when making a gift to us. Call our office to learn more about the advantages of creating such a fund.

● In-Kind Donations

Maryville Academy gratefully accepts in-kind donations of goods and services that support our programs and the children and families we serve. From school supplies and clothing to hygiene kits and holiday gifts, your contributions help meet essential needs and bring comfort and joy to those in our care.

● For more information, please contact Megan Biasco, Director of Development, at 847-294-1717 or biascom@maryvilleacademy.org. **Please scan the QR code to donate.**



Making a Difference

Since beginning our 142nd anniversary year on July 1, we have been reminded that it is the people who walk alongside us — our donors, supporters and grantors — who help bring Maryville's mission to life.

To our generous friends, thank you for making a difference in the lives of the children, families and individuals we serve.

Your support doesn't just sustain our programs, it creates hope, healing and brighter futures. We are honored to recognize some of you in this issue of The Voice and deeply grateful for your continued commitment to Maryville.

Your belief in our mission empowers us to meet children and families where they are, offering care, compassion and the tools for lasting change. Together, we are not just marking another year, we are building a legacy of love and service that reaches far beyond today.

- A. Montgomery Ward Foundation
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Thank you!



Let Your Light Shine Through the Eyes of a Child

“

What we give to the poor for Christ's sake is what we carry with us when we die.

”

Peter Maurin's words invite us to reflect on two timeless questions: How will I be remembered? What legacy will I leave behind?

By including Maryville Academy in your estate plan, you can help ensure that children in need of hope, safety and opportunity will find a brighter future, one made possible by your compassion and generosity.

Through your estate plan, you can make a gift to Maryville Academy in several meaningful ways: by designating a specific dollar amount, a percentage of your estate or the remainder after your loved ones have been provided for.



Even a modest gift can have a lasting and profound impact on a child's future.

To help you get started, we are happy to offer a complimentary copy of our guide, **“10 Helpful Tips for Planning Your Estate.”** This easy-to-follow resource outlines key components of an estate plan in clear, accessible language.

To request your copy, contact Megan Biasco at 847-294-1717 or biascom@maryvilleacademy.org.

When you include Maryville Academy in your estate plan, you will be enrolled in our Visionary Society, a lasting tribute to your generosity. Please let us know your intentions so we may thank you today.



The Maryville Foundation was established to help individuals and families enhance their legacy through a planned giving bequest with Maryville Academy as the designated recipient. Please let us know if you would like to discuss all the options that are available to you in remembering Maryville in your estate plan.



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