

2025 OUR *Pillars* YEAR IN REVIEW

This year has been one of extraordinary growth, learning, and connection across our four pillars: After School, Summer, Early Childhood, and Apples for Students.

AFTER SCHOOL & SUMMER PROGRAMS

Together, our after school and summer programs supported students in building academic skills, emotional resilience, and a love of learning.



AT A GLANCE:

- 103 students (K-5) attended after school in Dubuque & Peosta
- 92% improved or maintained social-emotional skills
- 108 students participated in the Heroes Summer Camp in Dubuque & Dyersville
- 98% improved or maintained literacy skills

WHY IT MATTERS:

Kids gained stability, academic support, emotional tools, and joyful experiences that prepare them for school and life.

"My youngest has benefited the most. His academics, attitude, and behavior have all improved this year overall."
-St. Mark Parent

APPLES FOR STUDENTS

WHY IT MATTERS:

Students started day one of the school year prepared, confident, and free from the stress of not having what they need.

"..it is incredible to see the community come together for this initiative. The effort lets kids know someone is thinking about them and wants them to have a good school year."
-Volunteer

AT A GLANCE:

- 3,600+ children received school supplies
- 100% of Title I elementary students equipped for the first day of school
- Volunteers, businesses, and partners packed and delivered supplies.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

AT A GLANCE:

- The St. Mark Early Childhood Center - opened September 18, 2025
- 35 children to be served, with capacity to grow
- 9 children attending with financial support, ensuring access for working families
- Nature-rich indoor and outdoor classrooms that nurture confidence, curiosity, and emotional growth



WHY IT MATTERS:

Families now have high-quality, full-time early learning care grounded in social-emotional development and nature immersion, setting a strong foundation for kindergarten and beyond.

"From the very start, our goal was to create a place that embodies the wonder of childhood..."

-Danielle Willis,
Director of Early Childhood

ORGANIZATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

The past year also included important recognition and leadership milestones:

- St. Mark was named one of the region's Best Places to Work and took top workplace honors
- Danielle Willis was honored as a Woman of Achievement for leadership in early childhood
- Melanie Dill, now retired Onboarding & Volunteer Coordinator, received the Savvy Over 60 Award for more than 40 years of service to children and families
- St. Mark became a founding member of the Dubuque Nature Everywhere Cohort, which received a competitive national award from the Children & Nature Network. This cohort championed the Dubuque Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights, adopted by the City of Dubuque, the first in the state of Iowa!

WHY IT MATTERS:

These achievements highlight St. Mark's growing role as a leader in education, early learning, social-emotional development, nature integration and they're made possible because of supporters like you.

CONTACT US

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