

The Matthias Memo

Issue No. 1 | October 2, 2025

The Matthias Pulse

Liz Pumala

Matthias is actively shaping its future with ambitious plans for expansion and community integration. The immediate path forward includes welcoming three more students in the coming months and building on the 13 already added. Also, opening of Oaks House in Fall 2025, complementing the recently opened Artemis House.

A significant step in the Academy's growth is the 8,100 sq ft expansion of the 83 Campus. While awaiting certification, targeted for late summer 2026, this expansion is expected to accommodate an additional 40-50 students from the extensive waitlist. Although initial plans for a 200,000 sq ft dream Academy on the 83 Campus are no longer feasible due to water and WisDOT restrictions, the five-year plan remains focused on identifying a third campus or additions to an existing campus.



2024 Christmas Matthias Academy Staff Photo

Featured articles

The Matthias Pulse (Continued)

For Matthias Living, the path forward involves the continued opening of two to three residential homes per year. This strategy ensures the maintenance of outstanding staff and compliance with Department of Health Services regulations. The majority of these homes will be established within surrounding communities, allowing adults to thrive and be known within those communities. A small percentage of homes with specialized needs will remain on the 83 Campus.

To support Matthias Living, the acquisition and construction of four-bedroom homes in Wisconsin, estimated at over \$500,000, are entirely dependent on donations, as the State provides no financial assistance for the home, vehicle, or furnishings. All residential donations go into the residential restricted fund specifically for purchasing and building Matthias Living Adult Family Homes. Families interested in making monetary donations are encouraged to do so, as all contributions are greatly appreciated.



Academy Campus - Abbey



Academy Campus - Hwy 83



Atlas, Athena, Apollo and Artemis homes

Featured articles

Visionary Investors

Canice Neary

Equity Creative is a full-service marketing and creative agency, located in Kenosha. Founded in 2007, by partners Dean Helmke and Charles Skendziel, EC was introduced to Matthias Academy earlier this year during our quest for a reimagined website. We talked to Dean about his company's experience with Matthias and why he believes, "Once you see Matthias in person, it changes your perspective. Your eyes will be opened to the possibilities available to these extraordinary adults."

How did you get connected with Matthias?

"My son worked at Strawberry Creek for a golf outing and came home with some Matthias Academy swag. I was curious about the Academy, started following Matthias on Facebook, and began to realize that this was an adult day program unlike anything else I'd seen. All the activities and experiences shared on their social platforms reinforced that Matthias Academy was truly special."

Has Equity Creative done anything like this before?

"We believe in giving back to our

community through pro bono work. It's a big part of our agency culture. In the past, we've worked with Wisconsin chapters of the Boys and Girls Club, 1Hope, Kenosha Dream Playground, Kenosha Achievement Center, and Lemon Street Gallery, among others. My partner, Charlie, heard that Matthias needed to redo their website and we decided it would be a great pro bono project for us. We were motivated to create good work and help some great people with a worthy mission."



Dean, John and Alex

What did you learn while doing this project?

"I spent a few hours at the Academy and the drive home was intense. The experience opened both my mind and heart. Discovering a place like Matthias can be life changing. During my visit, I learned how the system works and how adults with special needs eventually age out of it. I began to appreciate the

Featured articles

Visionary Investors (continued)

number of human resources required to run a program the size of Matthias Academy. I began to see that you can't approach a group setting like this with a one-person-fits-all solution. My visit gave me a sense of what it takes to begin to meet the challenges of such a comprehensive program. Finally, I learned a lot about human kindness and the importance of taking care of others who need our support."

What would you say to other companies thinking about supporting Matthias?

"I would say that whatever your discipline may be, jump in with an open mind and get involved. I made multiple visits to see the facilities, meet staff and students, and found it very rewarding. It's a wonderful chance to help others, and it may touch you in ways you never expected."

EQUITYCREATIVE



Equity Creative Team

Featured articles

The Giving Light

Patrick Johnson

Volunteering at the Matthias Academy Gift & Garden Center is more than just lending a hand—it’s about connection, joy and community. Volunteers quickly discover that while they come to give their time, they leave with something greater: friendship, purpose and belonging.



Matthias Gift and Garden Center

Whether stocking shelves, greeting customers or assisting students, each shift is filled with meaningful moments.

“I’m happy to be part of something that truly makes a difference,” shared Gina Cox, a community volunteer. “I’ve received more than I’ve given.” The shop becomes a space where parents, students and community members support and uplift one another.

Special events, like making blankets, doing crafts or partnering with local groups, further foster that spirit of service and connection. Volunteers appreciate the flexible, low-pressure environment. As Nancy Grindley noted, “We value every shift, however it looks. Volunteers are the heart of what we do”. The gift shop provides a peaceful and relaxing escape for some.



Volunteers at the Gift Shop

Featured articles

The Giving Light (continued)

For many, the experience is personally renewing. “It’s brought me joy and helped me focus on something positive,” said Amy Labora. Others, like Mary Paschen, find it a powerful way to give back while building relationships.



Volunteer Testing Gear

At Matthias, volunteering is never just a task—it’s a chance to be part of something truly meaningful. Join us, and you may find the greatest gift is what you receive.

Volunteer Here

Matthias



<https://signup.com/go/YAKgHmr>



Matthias Students Cleaning Area Park

Positive Effect

Christene Kamberis

Matthias Students Give Back is a program dedicated to empowering students to make a positive impact on their community. Through various initiatives, students actively create opportunities to help others in need. Within the past few months, the program has cleaned parks, made blankets, donated to save an owl, kitted hygiene products for the homeless and much more.

This program offers significant benefits to both Matthias Academy and its students. Everyone desires to feel important and to have a purpose,

Featured articles

Positive Effect (continued)

and there's no better way to cultivate that sense of purpose than by helping others. Furthermore, Matthias students actively utilize and develop a wide range of life skills, including comprehension, fundraising, decision-making, planning, mathematical skills, social skills, fine/gross motor skills and organizational skills. While Matthias Students Give Back provides support to the community, the students simultaneously experience the profound reward of helping others while enhancing their own abilities.



Matthias Students Making Blankets



Matthias Tau Fraternity

Fraternity Spotlight

Kathy Przekwas

Tau Fraternity has undergone a significant evolution since its inception over three years ago. Starting as a larger group that eventually split into Pink Tau, Tau, and Zen (Kaleidoscope), the fraternity now operates at the 83 Campus and is a distinct entity from its early days.

Tau students are primarily on the Autism Spectrum (ASD), often managing anxiety, OCD-like tendencies, sensory issues and a preference for routine. The focus within the fraternity is on developing safe coping mechanisms, social skills, life skills, and communication, particularly in community settings. Building trust with staff is a crucial first step for students to engage in these skill-building activities. The group enjoys outdoor activities, walks, community outings and exploring different foods.

Featured articles

Fraternity Spotlight (continued)

The fraternity currently has three full-time staff members: Kiana, Lauren, and Julie, and typically hosts 8-10 students daily. The group is diverse in personality, ranging from those who enjoy being boisterous to those who prefer quiet solitude.

The staff's approach is rooted in the mindset that behavior is a form of communication. They prioritize creativity and demonstrate care through clear boundaries and expectations. Staff members bring prior experience from roles such as special education aides, in-home care, and nursing homes. However, they emphasize the importance of an open mind, recognizing that Matthias Academy presents a unique environment that differs from traditional school settings, requiring an adjustment to an adult day mindset.

Committee Corner

Joy Wojtak

The Matthias Parent Professor Organization Committee (PPOC) is dedicated to fostering a vibrant and supportive community at Matthias Academy, with a clear focus on communication, appreciation and integration.



Staff Appreciation Homemade T-Shirt

The PPOC's initial and ongoing priority is the Matthias Monthly newsletter. This communication tool keeps Matthias families and staff informed about upcoming events, shares reasons to smile, highlights staff and students and spotlights the Matthias Students Give Back Initiative.

The PPOC Staff Appreciation Subcommittee places significant emphasis on staff appreciation events that are funded by donations from Matthias families, friends and the community. They regularly establish monthly events, ranging from large catered lunches to smaller gestures of gratitude. Past events include Car Parades, "Lucky Duck", "Thanks A Choco-LOT" and luncheons. These efforts are deeply valued by staff, who have expressed gratitude for the unexpected kindness and the creative engagement of families and students.

Featured articles



Staff Appreciation Notes of Gratitude

Committee Corner (continued)

The PPOC is actively fundraising to support their 2026 events, ensuring these expressions of gratitude continue.

Finally, the PPOC is now focusing on helping new and existing families with onboarding and understanding

Frequently Asked Questions. They have already rolled out FAQs for new families and are in the process of publishing them for existing families, while also identifying opportunities to help guardians and friends connect. This initiative aims to deepen connections within the Matthias community and ensure all families feel informed and supported.

Event Horizon

- **October 18th - Matthias Golden Gala**
 - At The Club at Strawberry Creek
 - For information or to register, go to https://onecau.se/_azee91
- **November 21st - Matthias Bunco Night**
 - At Antioch VFW
- **December 5th/6th - Christmas Sale**
 - At Matthias Gift and Garden Center
- **December 19th - Reflect and Respond:** Our end of year campaign
 - Stay tuned for more details.
- **February 20th, 2026 - Matthias Trivia Night**
 - At Antioch VFW



Image from Fall Fest & Concert 2025

