

# The Matthias Memo

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Issue No. 5 | October 2, 2026

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## The Matthias Pulse

Liz Pumala

Here is a quick update on our recent progress and how we are pacing against our 2026 goals:

- **Squads & Staff:** Squads have all rolled out across both campuses to provide more connections and options for the students and staff. Our exceptional staff continues to bring joy and opportunities to our students every single day, and we are proud to keep our team remarkably stable.
- **Academy 83 Campus Expansion:** The foundation, walls and roof are up, and interior framing is underway. We anticipate construction completion around January 2027, followed by DHS certification. Because of these building delays, we now project welcoming 27 new students in 2026 instead of 40–50 planned with the balance starting after the expansion is open.
- **Adult Family Homes:** The Oaks House has been open and serving four adults since April 2026. Due to DHS delays, opening the Birch and Redwood houses for seven to eight adults is pushed to 2027.
- **Gymnasium & 70 Acres:** Unexpected structural issues with the gym trusses forced a full demolition and rebuild, causing an unforeseen \$600,000 challenge.



Matthias "Birch" House

Thankfully, community generosity is helping but we are still working to raise funds to help cover costs. Housing in a campus setting is in the continued plan. Sustainability through that plan is of utmost importance.

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## Matthias Pulse (continued)

### Advocating & Funding Our Mission

The DHS algorithm labels staying at home with parents and guardians as caregivers is the "most cost-effective" care, completely ignoring critical needs like happiness, friendship and caregiver burnout. We will never stop fighting for the fulfilling lives for our deserving adults.

Matthias has only gotten to where it is today due to the incredible support of thousands of people. To continue this vital mission, and to grow and expand for the future, we need that collective support to continue and flourish.

Opportunities, space, tools and exceptional staff are expensive, and we need your help to bridge our day program and residential gaps.

### How you can help today:

- **Become a monthly donor:** Please consider joining our monthly giving community to help sustain our daily operations and ensure our campus thrives. To those already giving, thank you for your vital support. Online donation link is: [https://onecau.se/\\_c29kk1](https://onecau.se/_c29kk1)
- **Spread the word:** We cannot grow alone. Please share this update with your personal and professional networks to advocate for our students and raise awareness about our incredible work and ongoing financial needs.



Hwy 83 Campus Expansion and New Gym

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## Visionary Investors

Canice Neary

For more than a decade, Carlson Dash has stood beside Matthias Academy - not simply as legal counsel, but as a committed partner in its growth from a bold idea into a thriving community. Kurt Carlson gave us his perspective on Matthias back then and today.

### 1. How did you first connect with Matthias Academy?

Over pancakes, actually. Liz's husband Skip and I coached the same youth hockey team. At a St. Louis tournament breakfast Liz asked if I was an attorney (every lawyer knows what usually comes next, and it was 7 AM), then described students aging out at 22—parked at home, parents quitting jobs, lives shrinking. Her vision: a campus where they could learn, work, socialize and live fully. I've heard thousands of business plans. This was the only one that ever made it hard to swallow my food, and the only one that had me dabbing my eyes with a napkin. When she asked, "Do you think I need a lawyer?" I laughed and said, "At a minimum." And that I'd be happy to help.

### 2. How has Carlson Dash's role evolved?

It began with formation, the lease and legal plumbing. As Matthias grew from 17 students to more than 90, the work expanded. We stopped being the law firm and became part of the team. But I can name the day the relationship really deepened. The tour. That first walk gripped me with gratitude. Being a lawyer forms calluses on your spirit. Every one of them got ripped off during that tour.



Carlson Dash at the Matthias Golf Outing

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## Visionary Investors (continued)

### 3. Carlson Dash has also helped Matthias make connections within the broader community. Why make community introductions?

Legal work solves problems. Introductions create possibilities. A call costs nothing and can move the needle. The growth belongs to Liz, her team and the donors. What Matthias gave me back can't be measured. I got the better end of that deal by a mile.

### 4. Is there a story that made the mission real?

The lease with the Benedictine monks. Father Patrick said, "Why don't you put in a price you think is fair, make it for a term you think you'll need, put in everything that will help Matthias Academy and send it over." It was diabolical, in the kindest way. We proposed the best terms. He changed nothing. Then COVID hit. There was no holding back the force of nature that is Liz. When the doors opened to the first seventeen students, I stopped doubting her. She does not accept "can't" or "shouldn't."

### 5. What excites you most about the future?

Matthias proved the model works—from seventeen students in a pandemic to more than 165 on two campuses. The next chapter is making sure this organization is built to last longer than any of us and I intend to keep helping with that.



Kurt and Samantha Carlson at the Matthias Gala

### About Carlson Dash

We help families with estate planning and special needs trusts, and serve as fractional general counsel for small businesses. Any concern: call first. As Liz can tell you, I'll take the question... even at 7 AM over pancakes.



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## The Giving Light

Patrick Johnson

Matthias CONNECT events are only possible because of the dedication of our volunteers. From the festive Winter Snow "Ball" for Matthias families to public gatherings like Trivia Night, Bunco Night and our annual Fall Fest and Concert, these evenings and weekends bring our community together. For volunteers, what sets these events apart is the flexible opportunity they offer local middle and high school students to accumulate service hours outside the traditional school day.



High School Students Volunteering at 2026 Matthias Trivia Night

Local high schoolers Finn Fredrickson and Riley Gallo discovered Matthias Academy through their school's Key Club and both were hooked after their first event. "I was able to interact with a variety of people and make friends," Finn said, recalling the inclusive spirit of the Winter Dance. "Everyone was having a lot of fun and loved having a place to be themselves."



Mia and Finn Volunteering at the 2026 Winter Snow Ball

Riley felt that same warmth at Trivia Night. "I liked that everyone knew each other—they all seemed like a big family," Riley shared. For Riley, the reward came in small moments: helping with simple tasks brought attendees immense gratitude, proving how far a little effort can go.

Both Finn and Riley can't wait to return, and they're encouraging their peers to join them. Volunteering at Matthias is more than service—it's a chance to build friendships and become part of a family. Know a student looking for meaningful service hours? Email [Outreach@MatthiasAcademy.org](mailto:Outreach@MatthiasAcademy.org) or visit our volunteer signup page today.

**Volunteer Here** **Matthias**



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## Positive Effect

Christene Kamberis

Matthias Academy has long been supported by a community that welcomes its students and staff. This year, Matthias found a new way to give back.

The first Matthias Academy scholarship program awarded two \$1,000 scholarships to local high school seniors preparing for life after graduation. Recipients were not required to be college-bound. Instead, the goal was to support young people taking their next steps in life—whatever those steps might be.



Kiana, Brynn and 2026 Award Recipient

A committee of eight Matthias staff members developed the qualifications and reviewed 56 applications using a scoring rubric created by Kiana Vazquez. To remain impartial, applicants remained anonymous throughout the process.

“We have so many young people in our community who are truly doing great things,” Jen Neideffer shared. Applicants wrote about caring for family members, helping classmates and serving their communities.

Ultimately, Kiersten Miller and Aleksandra Rangel received this year’s scholarships, earning the highest scores on the committee’s rubric and reflecting the compassion, service and commitment to others at the heart of Matthias Academy’s mission.

For Sandy Linna, the experience highlighted the hope these young people represent for the future.

“This scholarship serves the community that serves us,” Sandy explained.

The scholarship will become an annual program, with hopes of expanding in the future and continuing to encourage young people to help others and pay it forward.

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## Squad Spotlight

Kathy Przekwas

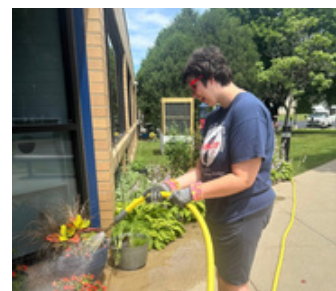
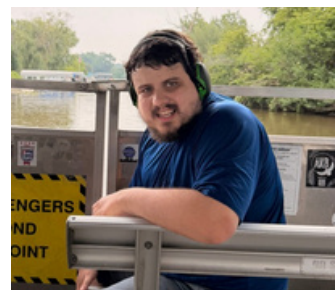
Robin Lane is squad leader for OG Squad. She says the transition from the traditional “frat/sorority” framework to the new Squad model has brought meaningful change for students and staff alike. One of the greatest challenges has been helping non-verbal and highly routine-oriented adults adjust to new routines and expectations while maintaining a sense of safety and predictability.

The results have been encouraging. Students are showing fewer distress-driven behaviors and greater functional participation. With the Squad structure, staff can provide proactive sensory regulation, individualized communication support and one-on-one assistance before challenges escalate.

The OG Squad brings a unique energy to campus—expressive, authentic, routine-loving and deeply connected. Students have embraced sensory-rich activities, adapted vocational projects, outdoor movement, tactile arts and music therapy. Along the way, staff have discovered remarkable problem-solving skills, strong memories, fine motor abilities and meaningful ways students comfort one another without words.

Behind the scenes, OG staff provide extraordinary patience, intuition, teamwork and creativity. As Holly L. Professor shared, “Our staff is so fun and authentically ourselves,” creating an environment where students’ personalities can shine.

Looking ahead, the goal is continued growth, greater independence, and expanded opportunities—always balanced with safety, trust, dignity, and individualized support. **GO OG SQUAD!**



Omega Gamma Squad



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## Committee Corner

Joy Wojtak

The Staff Appreciation Subcommittee at Matthias is a dedicated parent group committed to recognizing the hard work of Matthias Academy and Living staff members. Through monthly activities, treats and special celebrations, this committee ensures staff feel truly valued.

For members like Amy, Beth, Kathy and Jodi, joining was a way to give back to the team providing daily care to their children. Whether organizing pizza lunches, writing encouraging notes, crafting small gifts, or coordinating car parades, the work is rewarding and fun.

Beyond supporting staff, the committee offers a powerful space for parents to connect. Working toward a common cause allows them to bond, laugh and share experiences. Julie, a newer member, highlights the staff's incredible compassion and her eagerness to brighten their days. As Pam notes, spending just one morning a month with the subcommittee leaves parents feeling fulfilled, proving that many hands make light work.

These events are entirely funded by the generosity of Matthias families and the wider community. If you have ideas for future events, contact [Outreach@MatthiasAcademy.org](mailto:Outreach@MatthiasAcademy.org). To support their mission, you can donate directly at [onecau.se/\\_c358h1](https://onecau.se/_c358h1).



Staff Appreciation Subcommittee working on the September 2026 "Thank-a-Bucha" Kombucha event

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## Event Horizon

- **October 3rd from 1-4pm - Matthias Fall Fest and Concert**
  - Salem Community Park, 9410 256th Ave, Salem, WI
  - Featuring live music from the Judson Brown Duo.
  - Come one, come all to enjoy free music, games, snacks and community!
  - Learn more here: <https://signup.com/go/PdgyTyB>
- **October 18th from 3-5pm - CONNECT Bags Tournament**
  - Learn more here: <https://signup.com/go/bxRwOLH>
- **November 7th - Annual Matthias Gala**
  - The Club at Strawberry Creek, 14810 72nd St, Kenosha, WI
  - Featuring live music from the Judson Brown Duo.
  - Register or learn more here: [https://onecau.se/\\_msbh81](https://onecau.se/_msbh81)

## Past Staff Appreciation Monthly Events



Staff Baby Pictures



Caramel Apple Day



Pizza Food Truck



Staff Sweatshirts



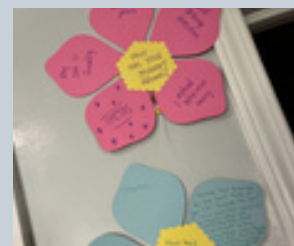
Sandy's Poppers Treat



Trail Mix & Raffle



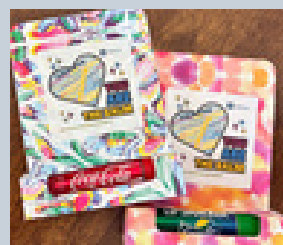
Lucky Duck



Helping Us Bloom



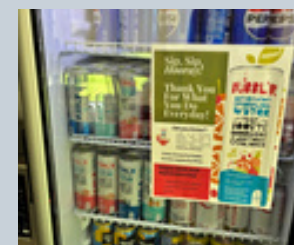
Cup O' Joe Coffee



You are the BALM



Car Parade



Bubbl'r