

The **W**ESTLAKE *Insider*



SUMMER/FALL 2026

TODAY . TOMORROW . ETERNITY



THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT PROVIDES A FOUNDATION FOR HOW WE LIVE, SERVE, AND INTERACT WITH ONE ANOTHER.

BEARING FRUIT FOR GOD'S GLORY

As I reflect on another incredible year at Westlake Lutheran Academy, I am reminded once again that God is continually at work in and through our school. Throughout the 2025-2026 school year, our Bible theme was centered on The Fruit of the Spirit, found in Galatians 5:22-23:

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law."

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to the churches in Galatia as a reminder of what a life transformed by Christ looks like. It is significant that Paul uses the singular word fruit rather than fruits. These nine characteristics are not separate options for believers to choose from; rather, they form one unified whole, reflecting the work of the Holy Spirit within us.

Paul presents this fruit in direct contrast to the "acts of the flesh" described in the preceding verses, selfishness, anger, jealousy, discord, and division. In today's highly distracted, fast-paced, and often divided world, this message is as relevant as ever. The Fruit of the Spirit provides a foundation for how we live, serve, and interact with one another.

THE SAME IS TRUE HERE AT WESTLAKE LUTHERAN ACADEMY.

Westlake is a place where students are encouraged to grow into all God has created them to be. The words of Galatians 5 shaped our vision throughout the year, reminding us that true growth is measured not only by academic achievement or extracurricular success, but by the way Christ is formed within each of us.

As we reflect on where God has brought us, we see countless blessings. We are also reminded of the faithful leaders who have helped shape our school's journey.

In 2014, then Head of School, Mrs. Gerber, challenged our community with a simple but powerful message: **"We must look forward and be bold."** Guided by faith and inspired by Ecclesiastes 3:1, *"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens,"* the LEAH Board and school community embraced the vision of building a middle school. That vision became reality in the fall of 2016.

Today, we find ourselves in another season of boldness as we build our high school program and the new building. We began this school year with five ninth-grade students and ended with six. While the numbers are small, they represent families who believe in the mission of Christ-centered education and the importance of preparing young people to live out their faith in an ever-changing world.

In a world that desperately needs the light of Jesus, Westlake Lutheran Academy remains committed to raising up students who know Christ, serve others, and use their God given gifts for His glory. We are grateful for God's faithfulness in the past, confident in His guidance today, and excited for what lies ahead as we **PREPARE STUDENTS FOR TODAY, TOMORROW, AND ETERNITY.**

IN CHRIST,

Stacey Walter

HEAD OF SCHOOL, Westlake Lutheran Academy

YOUR GENEROSITY IS MAKING AN IMPACT!

The Groundbreaking Ceremony on April 15, 2026, marked the official beginning of the Education Building that will support overall growth and the pivotal decision to expand into a full PreK - 12th grade. This will provide additional innovative spaces where WLA students will be inspired to realize their full God-given potential and be prepared for courageous Christian living in a changing world.

The current phase of our Advancing Westlake for Today, Tomorrow, and Eternity Campaign kicked off in August as we started the 2025-2026 academic year. Our current step includes the 16,821 SF Education Building, advancing academic and extracurricular opportunities, supporting our teachers and professional development. **AS OF JUNE 1, 2026, PROGRESS TO DATE WITH GIFTS AND COMMITMENTS IS \$1,491,000 TOWARD OUR MILESTONE OF RAISING MORE THAN \$1,500,000 TOWARD THIS EXCITING STEP.** This includes individual gifts and commitments, the Annual Wildcat Fund Drive, and the 2026 Gala. This, combined with the 2M LEAH is infusing, and the funding LEAH secured allowed us to move forward with the Education Building! We are still committed to surpassing the \$1.5M milestone.

In addition to the building, WLA is advancing opportunities through generous giving. We're taking a gigantic step forward in our robotics program. Past giving has impacted our flourishing dance program. We have new weight equipment for our athletes, freshmen did DNA fingerprinting using electrophoresis, and our early childhood students and the ABC countdown program have been impacted.

We are deeply grateful for the unwavering support of our incredible community. Through your gifts, volunteer efforts, and faithful prayers, you are making a lasting impact on the lives of our students and staff now and for years to come. Your generosity continues to fuel the mission and vision of Westlake Lutheran Academy.

GO WILDCATS!

Bret Walter

CHIEF ADVANCEMENT OFFICER



RECOGNIZING HARD WORK AND GROWING CHARACTER

Veritas Award recipient:
Kate Katopodis

Wildcat Award recipients:
Mikayla O. and Carson G.

Teacher of the Year:
Mrs. Cathy Brown



Each month, teachers and staff recognized students who faithfully displayed that month's Fruit of the Spirit, celebrating the ways God was working through them in our school community. Two of the many recipients are pictured here:



Alex V. and Hunter B.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Aug 12: First Day of School
Sept 2: MS & HS Parent Night
Sept 4: Pro. Development - No School
Sept 7: Labor Day - No School
Sept 9: EC/LS Parent Night
Sept 23: Grandparents Day
Sept 21-24: Book Fair
Sept 24: Picture Day
Sept 25: Pro. Development - No School





DEAR WESTLAKE LUTHERAN ACADEMY PARENTS,

As this school year comes to a close, I wanted to take a moment to thank you from the bottom of my heart for allowing me the privilege of serving as your principal this past year. Although my time at Westlake Lutheran Academy has only been for one year, it has truly been a blessing and a season I will always cherish.

I've enjoyed the student's energy and laughter, and most importantly, watched their faith grow each day. I will deeply miss seeing them in the halls, classrooms, chapel, and at school events. Watching them learn and grow both academically and spiritually has always been one of the greatest blessings of my career.

I also want to sincerely thank you for your partnership and support throughout this year. A strong school community is built when families and educators work together, and I am grateful for the trust, encouragement, and prayers you have extended to me and to the school.

As you move forward, I encourage you to continue supporting this wonderful administration and dedicated teaching staff. They work tirelessly each and every day because they genuinely love and care for your children. Their commitment to Christian education, academic excellence, and spiritual growth is evident in all they do, and Westlake is blessed to have such faithful servants leading and teaching within its walls.

While I may be stepping away, I look forward with excitement and hope for what lies ahead for Westlake Lutheran Academy. I truly believe God has wonderful plans for this school, its students, and its families. Please know that I will continue praying for the entire Westlake community and will be watching with joy as God continues to bless and guide the school in the years ahead.

I leave you with this Scripture: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* — Jeremiah 29:11

May God continue to bless your families and keep His presence upon Westlake Lutheran Academy always.

WITH GRATITUDE AND BLESSINGS,
STEVE ZEHNDER

8TH GRADE PROMOTION



I REALLY ENJOYED THIS GROUP OF 8TH GRADERS. IT WAS SO MUCH FUN TO WATCH THEM GROW AS LEADERS, LIKE WHEN THEY LED WORSHIP FOR THE MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT AT CAMP LONE STAR. THEY HAVE A HEART FOR THE LORD, AND THAT WAS SO AWESOME TO SEE EVERY DAY. ANDREW STRUCKMEYER, MS/HS THEOLOGY

We celebrated our 8th graders during a special Promotion Ceremony as they reflected on their middle school years and look ahead to high school. Students shared heartfelt speeches, thanking their teachers, friends, and families for their support along the way.

During the ceremony, we honored our **FAITHFUL WILDCATS**, **BROOKLYN PERRY** and **EXZAVIER SCOTT**, for attending WLA since Kindergarten, and presented the **VERITAS AWARD** to **KATE KATOPODIS** for exemplifying our mission and pillars of excellence: *Walking with Jesus, Loving Relationships, and Academic Excellence*.

The evening concluded with the presentation of roses to each student's mother, celebrating the hard work, growth, and accomplishments of the Class of 2030.





ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15, 2026

West Lake Academy officially broke ground on the new 16,821 SF Education Building. The ceremony was held together with an all-school chapel service. Students, faculty, staff, parents, LEAH staff, members of the LEAH Board of Directors, and distinguished guests gathered to worship, sing, bless the groundbreaking, and celebrate together. Thank you to those that were able to join us and to everyone in the WLA family that has helped to make the new education building possible!

Pastor Dan Schepman, Senior Pastor at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, also a member of the LEAH Board of Directors, gave the message based on **Psalm 127:1**. That verse was read by Osa Esemuede. Addisyn Katopodis, 9th grader and member of our trailblazing class of 2029, read 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ." We also heard groundbreaking remarks and words of encouragement from Mr. Fogo, CEO of LEAH, Mrs. Walter, WLA Head of School, and Mr. Al Hoppe, LEAH Board President. Mr. Hoppe said in his remarks, "Look how far Westlake has come in 17 years since it opened. Just think where it will be in another 17 years."

LOOK HOW FAR WESTLAKE HAS COME IN 17 YEARS SINCE IT OPENED. JUST THINK WHERE IT WILL BE IN ANOTHER 17 YEARS.

—MR. HOPPE



"UNLESS THE LORD BUILDS THE HOUSE, THOSE WHO BUILD IT LABOR IN VAIN." – PSALMS 127:1



THE GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY WAS ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS WHERE YOU HAD TO BE THERE TO EXPERIENCE IT. WORDS WON'T SUFFICE. THE PRESENCE OF GOD COULD BE FELT THROUGH THE WORDS OF THE LEAH GUEST SPEAKERS, AND THEIR MESSAGE MADE ONE THING ESPECIALLY CLEAR: WESTLAKE IS MORE THAN JUST A SCHOOL OR A BUSINESS, IT IS A PLACE WHERE GOD IS THE FOUNDATION.

— ELISE ARNWINE, PARENT OF 2034 CLASS



5TH GRADE CULMINATION



Fifth-grade students and their families gathered for our annual 5th Grade Culmination Chapel Service, a special tradition celebrating the completion of their elementary school journey as they transition onto middle school. During the service, each student shared a meaningful Bible verse and why it was important to them as they move onto middle school. Families joined their children for a special blessing as the Head of School prayed God's continued guidance and blessings over them. The celebration also featured several Westlake Lutheran Academy alumni who are graduating seniors. These seniors were asked to share words of wisdom and encouragement with both the 5th graders and their parents as they prepare for the next chapter of their educational journey.

THIS SCHOOL HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PLACE WHERE YOU CAN FEEL GOD WORKING IN AND THROUGH HIS PEOPLE.



KINDERGARTEN PROMOTION



REBECA GIBSON & ASHLEY WOODRIDGE

Our kindergarten class was full of curiosity, creativity, and excitement for learning every day. The students grew so much this year as they built friendships, gained confidence, and explored new skills through hands-on activities and fun experiences. It was a joyful year filled with laughter, teamwork, and many special memories together.

A very special activity we did this year was the "runaway gingerbread" adventure with our gingerbread stuffies, Snowflake and Ginger. Our students had so much fun chasing them all over the school, following clues and working together to figure out where they had gone next! We also really enjoyed going to the Houston Children's Museum, where we explored many different exhibits and hands-on activities together.

IT WAS A JOYFUL YEAR FILLED WITH LAUGHTER, TEAMWORK, AND SPECIAL MEMORIES!



W ROARING 20S GALA

SAVE THE DATE FOR OUR NEXT GALA: APRIL 3, 2027



166 Guests
1185 Bids
59 Sponsors & Donors
12 Volunteers
10 Raffles
121 Baskets



\$
\$263,417

THIS BRINGS US TO \$1.4 MILLION RAISED
TOWARD OUR GOAL OF \$1.5 MILLION!



Thank you!

FOR THE UNENDING SUPPORT AND VIBRANT COMMUNITY THAT YOU
CONTRIBUTE TO WESTLAKE. WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!

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WESTLAKE LUTHERAN ACADEMY

**PREPARING STUDENTS FOR TODAY,
TOMORROW & ETERNITY**



CHECK OUT OUR
WEBSITE, AND FOLLOW
US ON SOCIAL MEDIA!



WWW.WESTLAKELUTHERAN.ORG



WESTLAKE'S DANCE PROGRAM *takes off!*



IN JUST THREE SHORT YEARS, WESTLAKE LUTHERAN ACADEMY'S DANCE PROGRAM HAS GROWN FROM AN EXTRA CLASS INTO A THRIVING AND IMPACTFUL PROGRAM. This year's Spring Dance Recital was one of the highlights of the school year, showcasing the incredible talent, dedication, and faith of our PreK-high school dancers.

We were also excited to launch two competitive dance teams this year. The **How Great Thou Art Dance Ministry Team** beautifully shared the love of Jesus through dance. Their hard work and commitment were recognized with multiple awards. We are incredibly proud of these dancers and feel blessed to see God working through their gifts and talents.