

The Potter's House Press

Spring 2024

tphgr.org

A young man with dark, wavy hair and a goatee is smiling at the camera. He is wearing a white crewneck sweatshirt. The background is a wall covered with numerous colorful prayer flags in various patterns and colors, including orange, yellow, green, blue, and pink. The lighting is warm and soft.

Enter the Story

Enter the Story

Since our inception over 40 years ago, The Potter’s House has been nurtured by the unwavering support of a community moved by our mission to provide a Christ-centered education for students of all ethnic heritages and income levels, equipping them to serve God and society to their fullest potential. The sincere generosity of our community has enabled us to provide the transformative education we are known for and create a welcoming environment where individuals from all walks of life find a sense of belonging.

During my time at The Potter’s House, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact of God’s love on countless students and their families. Additionally, I’ve been blessed to hear from thousands who have felt enriched by their decision to dedicate their time and resources to our school.

The story of The Potter’s House is a collective one, written through the contributions of many – supporters, staff, and students. As we stand together, we are privileged to witness God unfold new chapters in this remarkable Potter’s House story, transforming individuals, families, and entire communities with His love.

In the pages of this newsletter, you will find inspiring stories from students and volunteers who have each entered the story of The Potter’s House in unique ways. Enjoy discovering the incredible journeys and experiences your support has helped to create.



With deepest gratitude,

John Booy
Superintendent
The Potter’s House



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Discover What's Been Happening at The Potter's House!

The excitement at TPH never stops. Here's a glimpse into the activities and adventures our students have been a part of this year.



TPH welcomed 8 fellow teachers and administrators from other schools to serve on our Accreditation Team this March. We are pleased to share that they had glowing remarks and approved TPH for accreditation.



The early elementary school classes celebrated the 100th day of school with engaging activities—time really does fly when you're learning and growing!



Bowling for Books, our student fundraiser for our reading curriculum books, was a blast! Our students had a fantastic time. A big thank you to everyone who contributed!



Love was in the air on Valentine's Day – students thoroughly enjoyed sharing tokens of appreciation with their friends.



Field trip fun! Our 4th and 5th grade students kicked off the new year with a trip to Lansing. They enjoyed a tour of the State Capitol building and the Michigan History Museum!



Our TPH middle school spring production of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Cinderella* was a tremendous success! We are so proud of our students, teachers, and volunteers for all their hard work.

Stay connected!



TPHGR



ThePottersHouseGR

The Wonder Academy: Inspired Learning at The Potter's House

The Potter's House provides students with a range of learning experiences to accommodate their individual learning styles. Recognizing that not everyone learns in the same way, we've established an environment where diverse learners can thrive. A prime example of this approach is The Wonder Academy, a project-based and place-based learning program designed for 6th and 7th graders at TPH. Our goal is not only to enrich students' knowledge but also to empower them to articulate and apply what they learn effectively. By integrating project-based learning, we bridge the gaps between traditional subjects, fostering a cohesive and practical educational experience that builds competence, confidence, and a Christ-centered worldview.

Discover why both teachers and students of the Wonder Academy find the program so exceptional.



What makes this program so unique?

Kathy DeJong- teacher: "The Wonder Academy is project-based and place-based. We break the year down into five topics and then integrate all our subjects around that topic. We create projects to apply and present what we've learned. We also focus our learning around where we are located. Our 'place,' the area around our school, is our classroom. For example, we partner with the Plaster Creek Stewards because Plaster Creek runs through our playground – so we study the creek. We also team with Calvin University, The Van Andel Institute, and experts nearby in our community to see what we can learn from them and with them. We're very blessed to be able to learn this way."

What are your favorite projects so far?

Ezra: "Last year, one of our topics was water and how we can help improve it, and our presentation was poetry. It challenged my writing skills because I've never written poetry about that topic before. Another topic was vocation, and after researching different vocations, I decided I'm going to be an illustrator."

Lydia: My favorite project was The Wonder Zoo, where we read a book called The Elephant Whisperer. We researched other zoos to learn about them, learn about animals, and how our zoo can be more hospitable to the animals. Then we got to do a presentation about it to teach our family and friends.

Ximena: One of our topics last year was the Engineering Process. We went to our principal to see how we could solve his problem of missing Chromebooks. We designed a prototype, which is a model for a final product. We made a container so he could store the Chromebooks safely in there. It inspired the whole class because we read a book called The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind, about a boy named William who cared so much that he wanted to help his community, and it made us want to help our community as well."

To learn more about the Wonder Program, visit tphgr.org/education/middle-school. 🏠



International Student's Journey of Belonging: Josh

Throughout The Potter's House High School, the word 'community' resonates with vibrant stories of students like Josh, a junior whose journey from Taiwan paints a picture of resilience and faith. His transition from facing religious persecution and bullying for his Christian beliefs to finding acceptance and love within the school's international program underscores the transformative power of a supportive educational environment.

Josh's journey to TPH began with a life-altering decision in Taiwan, where embracing Christianity alongside his mother led to familial conflict. When they chose to follow Jesus, their family and community accused them of betraying the culture and traditional religion. "I got violence from my original family, and my parents divorced. So, my mom and I, we just think about maybe Jesus can save us from that," Josh explains, recounting the abuse that pushed them toward their faith for salvation.

Despite the challenges in Taiwan, where he faced bullying for his faith—"I got bullied in my school because I'm Christian"—Josh's spirit remained unbroken. His mother's determination to give him a better life led her to apply for Josh to enroll at The Potter's House, a place where the warmth of a caring community outweighed his past tribulations. "I appreciate every teacher, principal, everyone here. They just love students and love us so much," Josh says.

Arriving in the United States with little English, Josh found himself immersed in a new culture and language. He was overwhelmed at times, but his perseverance shone as he worked

with ELL teachers like the late Mrs. Fisher and Mrs. Leegwater, whose patience and encouragement were instrumental. "She would always speak slowly to international students because she knew that international people don't know English well," Josh fondly recalls Mrs. Fisher's impact on his language development.

The school's principal, Mr. Clark, also left an indelible impression on Josh. "Every day, he is always patient when talking to students," Josh notes, highlighting Mr. Clark's dedication to each student's journey.

Friendships at The Potter's House have offered Josh a sense of kinship, especially with those who have shared experiences of geopolitical strife. "I have a friend who's from Ukraine,

and we have a similar situation," he shares, acknowledging the solace found in shared experiences.

As he looks to the future and plans to attend Cornerstone University, Josh dreams of various paths, including pharmacy, education, and ministry. He says The Potter's House has empowered him to aim high and chase those dreams with confidence.

If you're interested in learning more about Potter's House High School's cutting-edge International Program designed to provide international students with all the tools needed to build a strong biblical and academic foundation, contact Program Director Curtis Dupree at cdepree@tphgr.org or visit tphgr.org/international-program/. 🏠



Off the Court: Anyieth's Victory at The Potter's House

The stands buzz with anticipation as Anyieth, a senior at The Potter's House High School, dribbles down the court on Senior Night. In the electrifying atmosphere, she's not just playing basketball; she's capping off a high school career that has been nothing short of legendary. "I play basketball, and I run track, but I want to play basketball in college," Anyieth shares, her eyes alight with the same passion that drove her to net her 1,000th point against Hart High School—a milestone she proudly holds as the only person from her school to achieve to date.

For Anyieth, the achievements on the court are just a part of her story. As a child of Sudanese refugees, the vigor and resilience that beam from her

on the court have roots in a deeper narrative—one of a family's journey to hope and stability. "My mom and dad came as refugees to America in 2004," Anyieth recounts. The strength of her mother, who works tirelessly to support her family and those in need, inspires Anyieth daily. "She's going to provide for us no matter what," she says with unmistakable admiration.

The transition to TPH came with its challenges, especially where it intersected with her faith. "I grew up in church, but I had never read the Bible... I wanted to cry because I didn't know what I was supposed to do," Anyieth admits. It was the kind mentors at The Potter's House who helped her weave her faith into her personal tapestry. She credits teachers, including her Bible teacher, Pastor Trice, for making the Bible accessible and engaging, transforming intimidation into enthusiasm.

Anyieth has found guidance not only in the classroom but also from the coaches and athletic faculty, who have consistently been a source of support

for her. She talks of Mr. Hoogstrate, the basketball coach and middle school principal, as someone who "cares about his players... not just as basketball players, but as people."

After graduating from high school this year and completing her college education, Anyieth plans to become a physical therapist. "I want to major in kinesiology and minor in biology, and then I plan to attend Physical Therapy school," she states with resolve.

Anyieth's story at TPH is about more than just a basketball legend; it's the tale of a young woman who has found her stride in a community that champions both faith and education. She attributes the collective influence of The Potter's House—coaches, teachers, and mentors—with helping shape her into the proud athlete, dedicated student, and respected individual she has become. Looking forward to the next phase of her journey, Anyieth is ready to excel not just in sports but in all aspects of life. 🏠





Marlon's Path to Promise at The Potter's House

When Marlon steps through the halls of The Potter's House, it's more than just a daily routine—it's a walk through a door of opportunity that swung open in the fourth grade thanks to a Roosevelt Park neighbor's invitation to play basketball in his backyard. That neighbor, Henry Bouma, not only provided a local hangout spot but also became Marlon's school "partner," investing in his education and future.

"Life changed... definitely for the better," Marlon reflects on the impact of The Potter's House. Henry's sponsorship and investment in his potential as a student and in his spiritual growth have given Marlon a sense of community support. "It allows me to attend the school," Marlon explains, underscoring the life-altering generosity he's received.

Marlon's story with The Potter's House is deeply intertwined with his

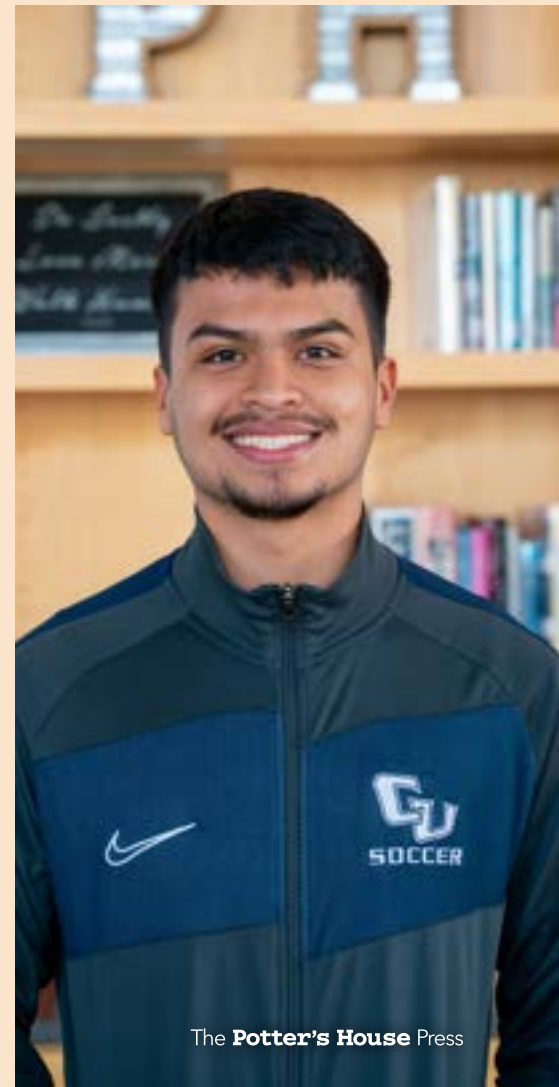
faith journey. Before attending, his knowledge of Jesus was minimal. "This is where I learn about God," Marlon states, acknowledging the school's role in nurturing his faith. This is crucial for him, as attending church isn't a part of his family's routine. The Potter's House serves as his sanctuary and place of learning, both academically and spiritually.

The transformation witnessed in Marlon hasn't gone unnoticed by his family. The shift from uncertainty to a path of education and faith has been profound. "They can see how it's changed my brothers and me, how we're more into God," Marlon shares, hopeful about the positive trajectory he and his brothers now pursue, inspired by the nurturing environment at The Potter's House.

The ripple effect of this change was clear when his brother, a fellow TPH alumni, graduated from Cornerstone University, an event that reshaped Marlon's aspirations. "It showed me

what God can do... It showed me that God gives you opportunities," he reflects with awe. Seeing his brother achieve such a milestone was a beacon of hope for Marlon's own educational ambitions.

With the horizon of his high school years coming into view, Marlon sets his sights on further education. He's contemplating business management and marketing at either Cornerstone University, Grand Valley State University, or Kuiper College. His ultimate goal? To reciprocate the kindness and support he's received. "I want to give other youth the same opportunity I got through the Potter's House." 🏠



From the Shadows of War to a Beacon of Hope: Miran's Journey at The Potter's House

High School Senior Miran, whose journey took him from the war-torn streets of Syria to the peaceful corridors of The Potter's House, exemplifies the profound transformation made possible by Christ-driven generosity and authentic community.

Growing up in Syria, Miran was surrounded by the harrowing sounds of conflict, witnessing scenes no child should ever experience. "Bombing, people dying—you could see a lot of that," he recounts with a heavy heart about his life as a six-year-old amidst the Syrian conflict. The war's impact was not just external; it burrowed into his psyche, making him "unsocial," fearful of speaking and trapped in the clutches of trauma.

Miran's struggle didn't end when his family fled the conflict. As a refugee, first in Turkey and later in the United States, he faced immense challenges. In Turkey, survival was tough. "It was pretty hard for us... my sister had to leave her education and work," Miran shares, revealing his family's sacrifices. When he transitioned to the United States, he had to adjust to not only a different country but also a different culture.

Through the recommendation of Christian community members two years ago, Miran entered The Potter's House—a place he now describes with a sense of deep appreciation. Here, he found generosity and a nurturing community that welcomed him as

a student from a Muslim country. "I love this culture. I love to learn about Christian love," Miran says, his voice carrying the weight of newfound respect and understanding.

The Potter's House marked the beginning of a remarkable transformation for Miran. From a boy once paralyzed by fear, he has grown into a confident student excelling in his studies. "I was taking English nine last year, but now I'm taking AP Literature," he declares with pride. The support and unity he found have been instrumental in his healing process, allowing him to navigate his traumatic past for a hopeful and promising future.

Looking ahead, Miran's ambitions are as luminous as his spirit. He plans to study electrical engineering at Calvin University and dreams of pioneering projects that could revolutionize the world. He is particularly inspired by Nikola Tesla's work on invisible ships. Miran's gratitude towards The Potter's House is boundless, and he plans to give back, supporting students who strive to pursue their education at the school. "When I finish college, I'm planning to donate a lot of money to students trying to pursue their education at the Potter's House," says Miran.

Miran's message is one of unwavering hope: "You must never give up hope," he advises. "Look at me. I was born in a country at war, and now I am here, building a future." 🏠



Resilience and Redemption: The Terrence Collins Transformation Story

The Test of Early Years

For Terrence Collins, childhood was a battlefield rather than a playground. Early in life, Terrence learned to protect himself and his family. "Our only thought was survival. We had lots of drug activity and lots of violence in my neighborhood and school. Once, there was a war between gangs, so there was a shootout in front of my house. We just had to lie flat on the floor until the bullets stopped flying."

The essentials of daily living were a struggle. "If the gas got turned off, we had to boil water for a warm bath. We had to borrow from the neighbors if the electricity got turned off. We had to figure out a lot of things for ourselves."



A Glimmer of Hope: Super Saturdays with Urban Family

Yet, amid the turbulence, there were oases of peace and care—Super Saturdays at Calvary Church, where Terrence and other kids from his neighborhood found refuge. It was here that he first felt the touch of unconditional kindness from adults like Noelle Gable. They were treated to arts and crafts, basketball in the gym, a hot meal, and a Bible lesson from the pastor. Best of all – they experienced safe adults who took an interest in the kids' well-being.

after attending a friend's basketball game. "I was saying, 'How do I get into this school?'"

He was disappointed to learn that the eighth-grade class was full. Undeterred, Terrence began asking community members to pray for his admission. Superintendent John Booy recalls, "We were full. Really full. I just said there was no way." But the nudges kept coming: "Once I heard from the third person, I knew I needed to make a space – even though we had no space! It was clearly God telling me to make room for him somehow."

Crossroads and Decisions

By seventh grade and a brush with law enforcement, Terrence yearned for a different path. "I knew where I was headed if I stayed on that path, and I didn't want to get sucked into the abyss." He found hope in the idea of joining The Potter's House (TPH)

Joining The Potter's House

When the acceptance call came (just two days before school started), Terrence was ecstatic. "It was nothing but God," Terrence says. However, his new life at TPH was not without its own problems.



New Trials and New Opportunities

At the end of first quarter, his mother became incarcerated. He then moved in with Ms. Noelle, which was a godsend ... and another adjustment. His heart was heavy with worry, and he suffered migraines. In January, he lost his estranged father who was living in Chicago. In his grief, Terrence found himself carrying burdens too heavy for his young shoulders. But in his darkest moments, the TPH community, including Mr. Booy, stood with him. "I was going through it, but I wasn't going through it alone," he reflects.

In April, an autoimmune condition brought another challenge, causing then eighth grader Terrence excruciating pain and more than two agonizing weeks in the hospital. Mr. Booy's hospital visit with other TPH community members showed Terrence once again that he was not alone. "They poured into me and showed me a lot of love." Upon his return to school, staff and classmates overwhelmed him with support. He was able to join the class trip to Mexico to help build houses. Later, he was voted as the speaker at eighth grade commencement.



Terrence's subsequent years at TPH expanded his horizons – from service trips, to traveling to Washington, D.C, and eating in the U.S. Capitol cafeteria, to whitewater rafting in West Virginia. "It is amazing what travel does for your perspective. I had friends who passed away without ever leaving their neighborhood in Grand Rapids."


Full Circle: Mentor and Family Man

After graduation, Terrence attended Grand Valley State University. His journey has now led him back to TPH, as a mentor and permanent substitute teacher. "I emerged out of all that darkness, so I wanted to go back and

give back," he says. "Initially I wanted to make money so I could give back financially, but then I realized that my time and my experiences were worth more than money."

But it's not just his work that fuels Terrence's passion – intentionally leading his active young family gives Terrence new inspiration.

A Life Transformed

Terrence Collins's life, once mired in the shadows of chaos and danger, now stands as a beacon of hope and service. He reflects often on Principal Clark's daily charge: "The greatest among you must be a servant. Now go be great!" 



The Power of Christ-Centered Mentorship

At The Potter's House, we go beyond traditional education by integrating Christ-centered teachings into our curriculum, shaping young lives far beyond the classroom. Among the many initiatives fostering growth and empowerment, the High School mentor program stands out for its support and guidance for students from various backgrounds and with a range of career aspirations.

Spearheaded by Sungjin Yoo, a local investment professional, the mentor program began with a simple yet powerful vision: to provide students with meaningful connections to professionals who reflect the diverse landscape of their school community. Sungjin, reflecting on the program's inception, shares,

“I had a heart to start a program where we could mentor students with a diverse group of professionals. I wanted this group to reflect what the Potter's House student body looked like.”

*Sungjin Yoo
(shown to the left)*



Since its inception in 2019, The Potter's House mentor program has flourished, now involving 42 high school students and 15 mentors. These mentors, like Chelsea Austin, an attorney, find their participation deeply rewarding. Chelsea shares,

“Being a mentor has allowed me to share my personal and professional experiences with students. It's not just about guiding them; it's about walking alongside them as they navigate life as young people.”

*Chelsea Austin
(shown above)*



The impact of mentorship goes beyond academic or career guidance; it fosters meaningful relationships that can significantly influence a student's life path. Reflecting on his own experiences, Matt DeVries, a local investment professional, says,

“The positive influence of adults in Young Life during my youth had a profound effect on me, making it important for me to offer the same support to the Potter’s House student community.”

*Matt DeVries
(not pictured)*

The call to mentor echoes loudly for anyone who wishes to give back to their community and make a tangible difference in the lives of young people. Whether it’s through sharing professional expertise, offering encouragement, or simply being a supportive presence, TPH mentors play a vital role in shaping the next generation of leaders who go through our school.

If you’re inspired to become a mentor for a high schooler, contact The Potter’s House at **616-241-5520**. Your willingness to invest in students’ lives can make a profound and lasting impact, aligning with the school’s mission to equip students to serve God and society to their fullest potential. 🏠



NOW ENROLLING!

PreK - 12 Grades

616.241.5202
tphgr.org









In Memory Of:

David Vlasman

James Schipper

Donna Fisher

Scott and Karol Tiemersma

Rivertown Artists Guild

Gordon de Jong

John Fisher

Doris Tebos

Richard and Mary Herrema

The "Verse Listening Ladies"

Patty Stoner

Becky Nagurski

Beth Gordon

Carla Pearson

Glennys Kuperus

Jan Pylman

Laurene Deters

Mary Herrema

Rose Byle

Sharon Ritter

Doris Tebos (cont.)

Adan and Therese Armijo

Jeff and Cherie Schierbeek

Mark Westmaas

Kay Rotman

Edna Greenway

Judy VanDalsen

Marcia Schutte

Bill and Carol Dearing

Edward and Wilma Meyer

James McNamara

Thea Beebe

David and Judy Hopkins

Carol A Davies

Caledonia Christian

Reformed Church

Lois Gort

Robert and Kim Workman

Anonymous gifts

Ruth D Wierenga

Doug and Merrie Mulder

Robert and Barb Waalkes

Mary Warner

Edward VanDyke

Dolly Warner

John Kuieck

Anonymous gifts

Fred and Kathy Cook

Mike and Karen Hondorp

Michael and Sherri Lind

Michelle DeYonker

Rick and Barb McQuigg

Roseanne Jasina

Nancy Castiglione

Mark Wassink

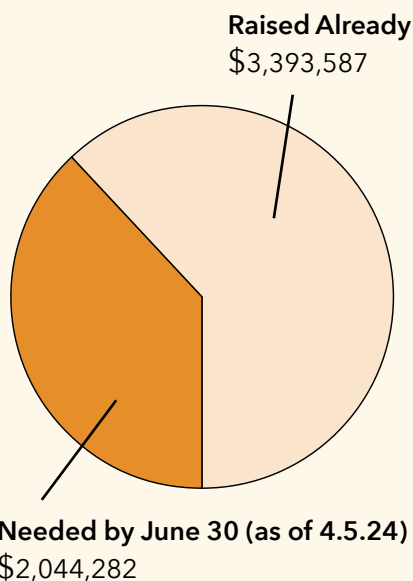
An Investment in the Future

We are continually reminded of the significant impact your generosity has on changing lives within our school community. By working together, we are building a community that develops fully devoted followers of Jesus, welcoming students from every income level, race, ethnicity, and background.

With your help, this year we have...

- Enrolled 662 students from Pre-K to 12th grade, providing a strong foundation for their educational journey.
- Replaced and upgraded the middle school campus gym floor.
- Expanded our preschool program to include full-time options for working families.

Donors like you make this possible. As we approach the close of the 2023-2024 school year, we kindly ask for your continued partnership to raise an additional \$2 million by June 30.



“I love school because I have so many different subjects! I love being busy, plus I can see lots of my friends!”

Vivian, fifth grade

Changing Lives for Generations to Come

A gift in your will to The Potter's House is so much more than a financial transaction.

First, it communicates gratitude for all God's blessings as you pass on your most cherished values to your loved ones. Second, it's a legacy that changes lives—meeting needs and restoring hope to the people we serve both now and in the years to come. You might be surprised to discover an in-will gift does not have to be large to make a difference. Just a small percentage of what is left after providing for your loved ones can make a lasting difference in the lives of many.

Perhaps you have already included The Potter's House in your will or estate plan. If so, thank you for being a significant part of our story. Your gift makes it possible for this ministry to continue for generations to come!

Is the thought of leaving an in-will gift new to you? The process of creating and updating a will is simple, and when you include a ministry gift in your will, it's also a meaningful way to change lives for generations to come. To explore your next step, visit our special will website at tphgr.legacywill.org and learn how to bless your family with an up-to-date will.



Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs)

Did you know that if you're over 70 ½, you can donate from your IRA to charity and get tax benefits? Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) are convenient, tax-efficient, and ensure your entire gift supports your favorite ministries.

Here's how you can qualify!

- Must be 70 ½ or older
- Donate directly from your IRA to a charity (donor-advised funds are not permissible)
- Distributions made only from traditional IRAs or Roth IRAs, with up to \$100,000 per year for singles or \$200,000 for couples. Other retirement accounts are not eligible.

If you have questions about making a Qualified Charitable Distribution to The Potter's House School, **please reach out to Tim Swiney** at **616-818-3745** or via email at tswiney@tphgr.org. Your continued support is invaluable as we strive to meet our 2023/2024 goal of \$4.8 million, which is crucial for advancing our school's mission.



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tphgr.org



Transforming Lives Through the Partner Program

We are thrilled to share the success of our recent Spring Partner Day! During the event, Partners had the opportunity to hear students share the exciting activities that took place on campus this school year. Additionally, Partner Day offered Partners a chance to enjoy a delightful meal with their students, fostering meaningful conversations.

Expanding our community of Partners is essential for The Potter's House as our student body continues to grow. If you're passionate about making a positive impact and are interested in learning more about joining the Partner Program, we invite you to reach out to Karen Bobo at **616.818.3702** or kbobo@tphgr.org.

