



gemma
SERVICES

because
you
matter

THE LATEST NEWS
PUBLISHED FOR OUR
FRIENDS & FAMILIES

Fall 2025



The Future Home of Our Martin Luther School

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear friends,

Each year at Gemma, we look forward to the start of the school year with familiar feelings of excitement and possibility. Fall brings to mind courage and hope, but also a sense of trepidation that many children and families carry with them as they step into new beginnings. I remember the restless nights before my own first days of school—wondering if I was ready, if I would belong, if I would be ok. Those memories have stayed with me, especially as I think about the thousands of children and youth who have recently begun this new step in their own journeys.

It is in these moments of anticipation and vulnerability—when children and families are starting something anew or working to overcome an obstacle—that Gemma's mission shines brightest. Grounded in our unwavering belief that every person matters, our devoted team walks alongside those we assist with compassion, expertise, and deep respect. We are honored to help them navigate challenges, celebrate victories, and pursue their goals with confidence.

This commitment comes to life every day across all of our programs. Last year, we were privileged to accompany more than 3,000 youth and families through our 10 behavioral health, child welfare, and prevention programs, as well as our Martin Luther School. Our incredible staff show up with heart, dedication, and deep compassion—meeting each moment with care and purpose. Their work—and your support—shine through in the examples of our mission in action we are proud to share in this newsletter.

Over the past year, we have thoughtfully expanded our programs to better meet the unique needs of those we accompany—ensuring every person feels seen, supported, and valued. A powerful example of this growth is the Martin Luther School's expansion and relocation project, now in full swing. This transformational initiative will allow us to serve more students, and thanks to your support, each student will be met with greater opportunities, encouragement, and the tools to thrive. That's the power of community in action.

As we look ahead, we do so with hope and determination. We envision a year filled with growth, resilience, and success—for every child, every family, and for our organization. With your partnership, Gemma will continue to be a place of strength and belonging for those facing life's challenges. Thank you for walking beside us as we build a world where everyone knows they matter.

With appreciation,



Kristen E.M. Gay, Ph.D.
President and CEO



Your Impact in 2024-2025

We are pleased to share some examples of the impact of your charitable support of Gemma during Fiscal Year 2024-2025. **Your friendship matters!**

“Your expertise and compassionate approach made a world of difference in my son’s life. Thank you for your unwavering support and exceptional care.
~ Gemma Parent”

“We look forward to volunteering at Gemma with the kids every year. It’s so rewarding to spend time with them and see the smiles on their faces and to know that we are helping to improve their lives.
~ Gemma Volunteer”

“We are honored to support the Capital Campaign. The new school campus will provide students and teachers with an exceptional learning environment that is welcoming and thoughtfully designed, and will inspire growth for years to come.
~ Campaign Donor”

“For more than twenty years, I have watched Gemma evolve and grow to reach more individuals in need. Every staff member shares the same mission; helping all those they encounter know they matter. This is at the heart of everything that Gemma does.
~ Gemma Supporter”



\$1.5M

Donations for Gemma’s operations and programs



\$2M+

Raised for Gemma’s Capital Campaign to expand and relocate Martin Luther School



3,000+

Lives positively impacted through Gemma’s programs



762

Supporters contributed funds or gifts-in-kind to support Gemma’s mission and programs



240+

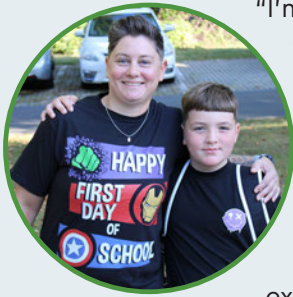
Volunteers shared their time and talents, totaling more than 680 total hours

THANK YOU!

To learn more about ways to advance Gemma’s mission, please contact info@gemmaservices.org.

The New School Year and Beyond

The new school year is underway at Martin Luther School (MLS), and excitement is in the air as we look to a year of continued growth for our students and our school. For the second year in a row, we welcomed a class of 12th graders, as last year the school capped off a four-year period of expansion into the high school grades. This expansion has included the growth of the curriculum and programs, inside and outside of the classroom, and plans for the future MLS campus just a mile away. Renovations are underway at the future school, with the goal to move there in 2026.



"I'm excited for the new opportunities that lie ahead for our high school since celebrating our very first graduating class of 12th grade students last year," said Siobhan Canavan, Assistant Head of School for Pupil Services. Canavan added, "It's exciting to think about the new

school and the fresh energy, resources, and experiences that will allow students to grow, learn, and succeed in even greater ways."

As we have built out the high school, the academic programming has expanded at MLS too. "I look forward to the continued growth of our curricula, such as the outdoor learning opportunities at the new school campus," shared Declan French, Assistant Head of School for Teaching and Learning. "Students have already begun planting a garden and creating walking paths there," French continued. "When we move, they will get to fully utilize the outdoor spaces they are cultivating."

"This year, I'm excited for specials and math because I am a mathematician!"

~ 3rd Grade Student

"This year will offer so many new and inspiring opportunities for our students," says Head of School and Vice President of Education, Eva Morrison. Canavan captured the excitement for the future of Martin Luther School perfectly: "I can't wait for what's next for our students!"

To learn more about Martin Luther School, our school expansion and relocation project, and how you can support our Capital Campaign, please visit www.gemmaservices.org/capital-campaign.

Celebrating Our First High School Graduates



Martin Luther School (MLS) was thrilled to celebrate its first class of graduating seniors this past spring! "Today is about growth, purpose, potential, and community," said Eva Morrison, Head of Martin Luther School and Vice President of Education at the ceremony in June. "We challenge our

students to be their best selves. Even when it is hard, our students find joy. We are immensely proud of our graduates and all our students!"

Creating a high school over the last few years required planning, coordination, and vision by the talented MLS leadership team. "When we first decided to build a high school program, we didn't have a blueprint," said Sasha Gachelin, Principal. "We built slowly, thoughtfully, and with love." The high school program now includes new classes like Family and Consumer Science, German, and high school-level history and math classes. Students also have access to a host of activities outside the classroom, from e-sports to varsity sports through the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association (PIAA) and Penn-Jersey Athletic Association.

The MLS team is helping students look beyond high school, too. "The transition to the 'real world' can feel intimidating," explained Katlyn Carpenter, Transition Coordinator, who helps students envision and solidify plans for after graduation. The class she teaches focuses on essential life skills such as budgeting, time management, and work readiness. "Every student's journey looks different," she said. "What matters most is that each student leaves with a plan that reflects their goals."

We are looking ahead to the future of MLS, too. It will include an expansive new school campus just one mile from the school's current location. Renovations are well underway to create a bright, modern, and comprehensive school building and campus for our students.



To learn more about Martin Luther School, please visit www.gemmaservices.org/mlschool.

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN UPDATE

The Road to Our New MLS Campus!

“ We are honored to support the Campaign and help Gemma create an exceptional school campus for their students where they know how much they are valued and have many opportunities to grow and thrive! ”

~ Campaign Donor



WINTER & SPRING 2025:
Groundbreaking & Renovations Underway



SUMMER 2025–SPRING 2026:
Interior Renovations Continue



FALL 2025–SPRING 2026 (TENTATIVE):
Construction of Addition



TBD
Track & Field Construction

Spring 2026 (TENTATIVE):
Move in!

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

Help us reach our
\$3M campaign goal!

\$2.5M raised so far!
\$500K left to our goal!

Thank You!

Learn more at www.gemmaservices.org/capital-campaign.

All future dates are tentative and subject to change.

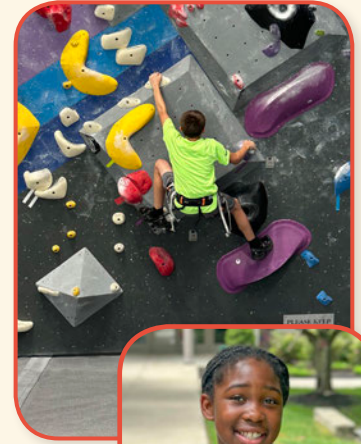
Summer Memories at Gemma



It was a summer to remember for youth at Gemma this year! Summer months included countless opportunities for joy and discovery: indoors, outside on Gemma's campuses, and at offsite locations. Nearly 175 students at Martin Luther School participated in the five-week Extended School Year (ESY) program, keeping their skills sharp with academic work in the morning followed by fun-filled afternoons. They also discovered skills and talents during field trips to a climbing gym, fishing, and even an aerial ropes adventure course. "I had only ever climbed a tree," shared one student about the climbing experience. "The rock wall was much higher and a lot more fun!"

Youth in residence at Gemma made lifetime summer memories, too. Days were filled with activities like swimming, gardening, and playing outside. Off-campus adventures included trips to a wildflower farm, the Franklin Institute, and more. A group of children even had the chance to attend Sebastian Riding Associates' equestrian camp where they spent a week riding, caring for horses, and participating in lots of horse-related fun. "My favorite part was riding my horse through the creek!" one camper exclaimed.

From ESY to equine camp, it was a summer of unforgettable experiences!



Christmas in July at Gemma



It was truly "Christmas in July" at Gemma thanks to our friends from the Hogs and Honeys Foundation for Kids and the Centurions Motorcycle Club of Montgomery County,

who once again selected Gemma as a stop on their annual summer holiday ride. On a Sunday afternoon in July, more than one hundred riders roared onto our Plymouth Meeting campus with their motorcycle engines revving, horns honking, and saddlebags full of gifts for youth in residence.

Smiles were bright as the boys and girls greeted the riders, which included local law enforcement officers and even Santa Claus! They were thrilled to

check out the bikes, honk a few horns, and receive a collection of toys, games, and other presents. "I can't believe they donated all of these toys just for us!" exclaimed one child.

"The children really enjoy this event each year," shared one Residential Life Manager. "They loved seeing the motorcycles come around the bend of the driveway and especially liked seeing Santa arrive in a sidecar. The gifts the riders brought for the kids were a bonus!"



Thank you, riders!

Setting Students Up for Success

For the third year in a row, Gemma's Family Empowerment Center hosted its annual Back-to-School event in August at our Preheim Center in Southwest Philadelphia with more than 300 students and their families in attendance! Students were able to pick up a donated backpack full of school supplies to help them prepare for a great school year, and attendees enjoyed refreshments, fun activities, and learning about available community resources while visiting resource tables hosted by area social service providers.

Thank you to the dozens of supporters for donating more than 880 backpacks to help so many students begin the school year ready for success! They were distributed to students who participate in Gemma's 10 programs, attend our Martin Luther School, as well as those who live in the communities where we accompany families. Special thanks to the following friends for their contributions to this effort:

- Abington Presbyterian Church
- Advent Lutheran Church, Harleysville
- Bryn Mawr Presbyterian Church
- Chambers Memorial Presbyterian Church
- dakota
- Ellucian
- Gwynedd Square Presbyterian Church
- Messiah Lutheran Church, Downingtown
- Newtown Square Presbyterian Church
- Ridley Park Presbyterian Church
- St. John's Lutheran Church, Melrose Park
- St. John's Presbyterian Church, Devon
- St. Luke Lutheran Church, Devon
- St. Matthew Lutheran Church, Chester Springs
- Strata Company
- Victory Church
- Zenith Insurance

Your support matters! In the words of one parent who attended the August backpack giveaway event: "I love that you do this for the community. It means so much to us." Thank you to everyone who helped Gemma ensure that so many students in our shared communities know how much they matter!



Welcome to Dennis Picorelli, Food Services Director



Gemma Services is excited to welcome Dennis Picorelli as the new Food Services Director! Picorelli has significant food service management experience in both public and charter schools, most recently at Upper Dublin School District and Antonia

Pantoja Community Charter School. Prior to these roles, Picorelli served as a food and beverage manager in San Juan, Puerto Rico. He earned his BA in Hotel and Restaurant Administration at the University of Puerto Rico.

In his role at Gemma, Picorelli oversees the preparation and delivery of nutritious meals for youth

in the Residential Treatment Program and students attending Martin Luther School and also manages food and refreshments for organizational special events. "I'm excited to join Gemma Services and have enjoyed learning about the kids and their nutritional needs," said Picorelli. "Making sure they have healthy options and ensuring they have access to nutritious food is important to me. The kids deserve the best, and I have been immersed in collaborating with staff to provide them with just that."

Neil Clark, Vice President of Operations shared, "Dennis' comprehensive background within various venues of food service is a welcome addition to the Operations Department and Gemma. We look forward to what his vast experience will bring to the role."



Help Create Holiday Joy for Gemma Youth & Families

Here are ways you can help!

- ★ **Make a financial gift to Gemma** in the spirit of the season.
- ★ **Encourage friends or family to make a gift** to Gemma in your honor.
- ★ **Donate a gift card** to assist Gemma's youth and families.
- ★ **Assemble an "Everything but the Turkey" bag** to help a family have a festive holiday meal. More info can be found at <https://bit.ly/EBTT2025>.
- ★ **Provide a present for a child.** Our wish list can be found at <https://bit.ly/GemmaNeeds>.

Questions? Contact us at (610) 825-4440 x3307
or info@gemmaservices.org.



SAVE THE DATE

The Vogt Foundation's
Chefs for gemma

APRIL 10, 2026
6-10 PM

FEATURING
CHEF ALEX KEMP
Executive Chef of My Loup
Co-Owner of Libbie Loup Hospitality

Tickets and Sponsorships Available!

<https://bit.ly/Chefs2026>



Photo by Nicole Guglielmo