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## **Preparing for a Capital Campaign**

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Coeur d Alene, Idaho

### **Project Summary**

Lutheran Academy of the Master (LAM) is a preschool through fifth grade that started seventeen years ago at an Evangelical Lutheran Church Association (ELCA) church as a preschool. In the past, the church and school have experienced growth in unison but in the last few years, there has been a shift in our visions. The school's lease will be up in 2015. My project is in response to the need for LAM to acquire school owned space.

With a strategic plan newly completed, the goal of this project is to prepare for a capital campaign to begin in the fall of 2012. The goals included being trained to include personal asks on a smaller level in preparation for larger amounts in the capital campaign, as well as shifting our fundraising from events driven to a year round culture of philanthropy.

### **Background Information**

Lutheran Academy of the Master (LAM) is a preschool-fifth grade serving 113 students in beautiful Coeur d Alene, Idaho. We have been located on the campus of Lutheran Church of the Master since the school was founded in 1996. The school was founded by me, Shelly Matthews, as a preschool with twelve children. After being a preschool for many years, kindergarten was added, then in a leap of faith, in 2005, additional space was built by the church and a first/second combination class with just four students, was added. The next year there were fifty families displaced by a local Lutheran school closing it's doors, that asked if we could accommodate many of there students. So, we exploded with growth adding full

first through third grades. From that point, the school has steadily grown to now have stand alone class rooms in grades preschool through fifth grade. For many years, the church and school grew together. But in 2009 the ELCA church made decisions that divided the congregation and resulted in half of their congregation leaving. Since that time, relations have been stressed. LAM board of directors offered twice to enter into conversation with the church to purchase the building on the campus that the school is housed in, but to no avail. The church is wanting it's space back. It has become clear that the school will need to move from our current location so LAM can have long term stability and growth opportunities in a school owned facility. Our current lease will expire in September of 2015 and does not appear that it will be renewed beyond. So, starting this fall, we are looking at a three year window for a capital campaign and relocation.

LAM has an excellent reputation in the community as a highly academic, well rounded Christian education for students.

### **Purpose of Project**

To prepare for a capital campaign to begin in the fall of 2012 for school owned facilities by:

- Broadening our base of income and shifting fundraising from events driven to a year round culture of philanthropy
  
- Continuing to build relationships in the community to communicate the mission of LAM and to see what doors may open for facilities

### **Results of Project**

-Don Distelberg worked with me as principal, the community relations director, and key board members through telephone conferencing on how to do personal asks. He also helped us create a Partnership Proposal to use in meeting with individuals. To date the giving from this source has brought in \$30,000.00.

-We currently have in place personal, event, phone, and mail solicitation opportunities for the 2012-2013 school year

-The school calendar has been shifted to accommodate an annual fund drive, fewer event specific fundraisers and a capital campaign drive for this fall.

-Tuition has increased to cover a larger % of the budget-

The board of directors increased tuition by 15% for this coming school year, for three reasons: to take away a fundraising financial obligation of 750.00\$ per family, and to have fundraisers be specific for extra projects, and to prepare for the capital campaign

-Our visibility/presence in the community has been expanded by having student ambassadors, principal, and the community relations director speak, participate, and/or perform in events including; churches, chamber events, national day of prayer events, etc.

### **What we have learned**

-The principal's job description needs to be adjusted to spend more time in development. This is in process now and a critical piece so I can have the time needed to spend outside of the school. The goals Don and I set to meet with potential donors, this past year, were extremely difficult to meet due to my responsibilities on campus. I am currently looking among my current staff to promote within to cover some of my duties

-This is a process that will continue to be implemented over the next few years with the capital campaign, and continued relationship building with potential individual donors and community partnerships, as well as hiring additional staff to continue implementation

A shift in the income base by raising tuition by 15% initially creates a set back in enrollment, but long term it will create greater stability for the school.

-After much prayer and a couple of attempts to purchase our current facility, it is clear that the capital campaign will be for facilities in a new location.

-Building relationships in the community is a blessing to everyone involved and has helped in molding strong Christian leaders among our student body.

### **On a personal note-**

I am praying that God helps the larger body of LAM to take ownership of this process. My name has been so closely associated with this school, and I have taken such a personal role in the growth and development of the school since its beginnings, I have been purposefully trying to step back to foster ownership by others in the long term success of the school.

### **Challenges-**

Since we are only preschool through fifth grade, and just starting the schools seventeenth year in existence, it is challenging to not have established alumni families, and the family investment in the school is a shorter amount of time than if LAM were a middle/high school.

### **Final Notes-**

God has cracked open many doors this past year, and closed some. Currently our Long Range Planning committee has identified a couple of properties that are within the demographic area of our population, and our goal is to raise enough money to secure a new location by December of this year. The goal to have the money down on property so a bank will loan on the property. This will allow us to continue fundraising and, potentially have the property generate income for us in the meantime. (Through rents on current buildings on site).