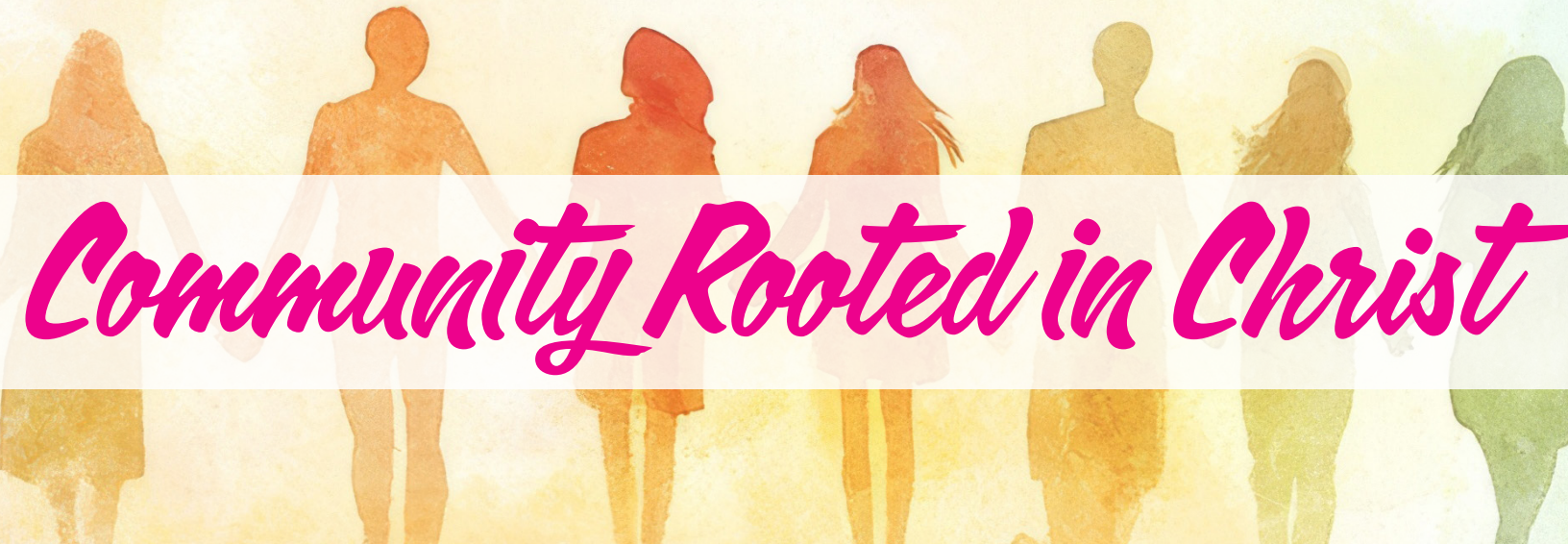




LUTHERAN SPECIAL EDUCATION MINISTRIES

# *the* Advocate

SUMMER 2025



## *Community Rooted in Christ*



A message from  
**Stacy McGhee,**  
President/CEO of LSEM

# A Community Rooted in Christ

As Lutheran Special Education Ministries (LSEM) looks forward to the coming school year and prepares to help new and returning students in partnership schools across the country, I am reminded that we are part of something much bigger than ourselves. We are part of a beautiful, faith-filled network of Christian schools where children are seen, loved, and equipped to thrive.

Just as each of us is a vital part of the body of Christ, each of us is essential to the mission of educating and supporting God's children of ALL learning abilities.

It is a true blessing to have a child in a Lutheran or Christian school. Think of the impact that Christian education has on a child's life. These schools are more than places of learning. They are communities rooted in Christ, where each child is valued, including those who learn differently.

*Community Rooted in Christ*



At LSEM, we walk alongside these schools, helping students with learning needs succeed academically and grow in confidence. But we don't do it alone.

In this newsletter, you'll see the incredible network of connections that you are part of: staff, teachers, schools, churches, parents, donors, prayer warriors, and advocates coming together to support children in Christian schools. Each of us is necessary. Each of us makes an impact on the lives of these children.

You are an integral part of this ministry, this Christian education community, and the mission of Christ. Your support keeps children of all learning abilities in the schools where they belong—surrounded by faith, compassion, and excellence. I

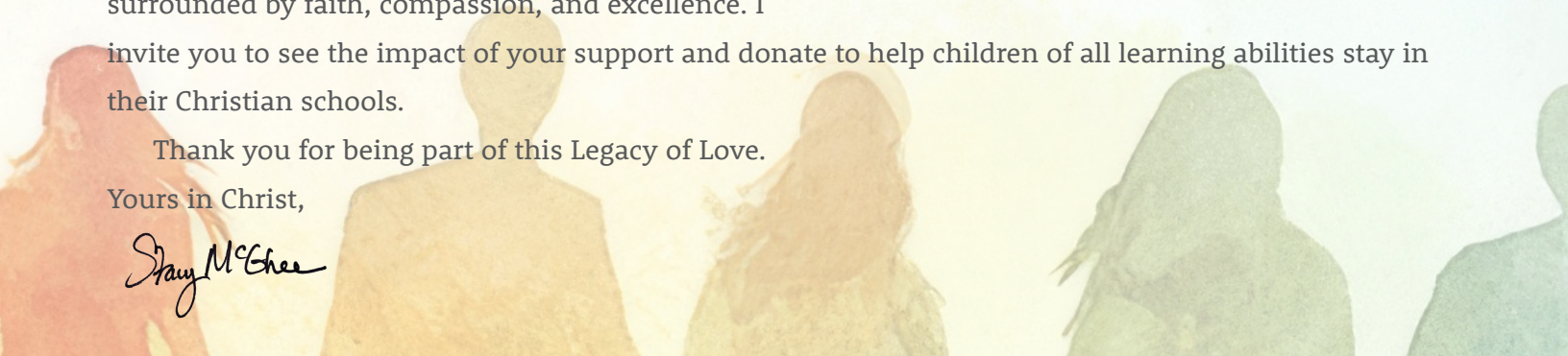
invite you to see the impact of your support and donate to help children of all learning abilities stay in their Christian schools.

Thank you for being part of this Legacy of Love.

Yours in Christ,

*Stacy McGhee*

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# Stories of Confidence-Building

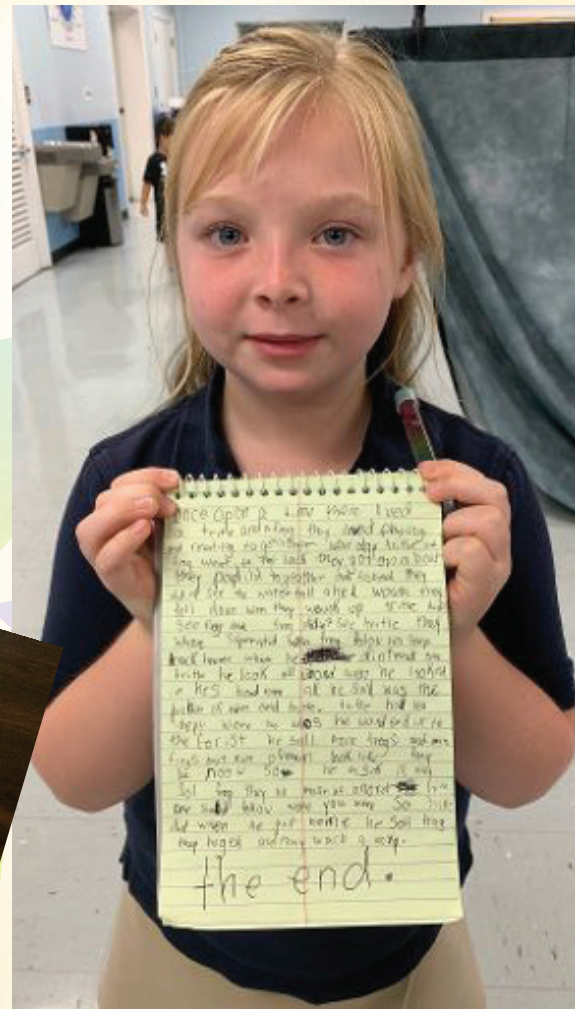
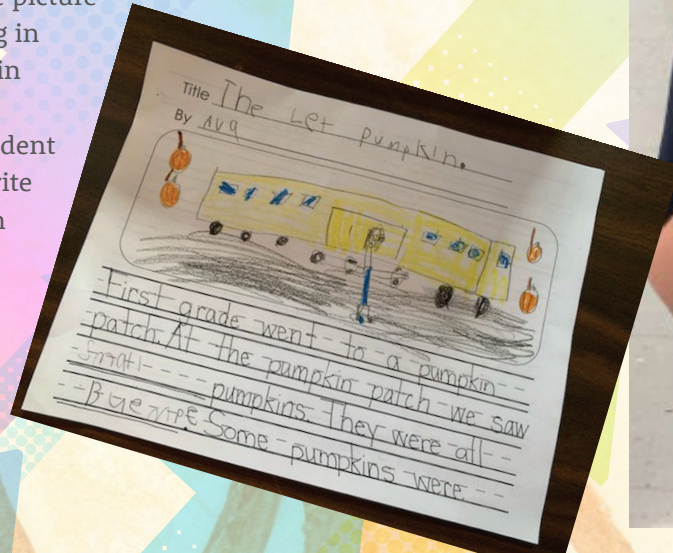
by ANN ZUM BRUNNEN - St. Paul Lutheran School (Catonsville, MD)

One of my 1st grade students has been working very hard on learning adjectives. She was able to fill in this story about their trip to the pumpkin patch with no problem. It was great seeing the confidence come out in her as she was working on her story. The picture says it all. That is her standing in front of the bus at the pumpkin patch.

I also have a 3rd grade student that has been struggling to write and get her thoughts down on paper since last year. She will usually write as little as she must get her work finished. Recently, I came into class to see her very excited to share a story she had written at

home. You can see from the smile on her face that she was very proud of herself.

Stories of progress like this make our jobs so worthwhile. I hope everyone enjoys seeing their hard work.





# Wow Stories!

by NIKKI SCHWEITZER- Trinity Lutheran School (Traverse City, MI)

I have been working with a young man in 3rd grade who struggled with his reading skills since 1st grade. He is a hard worker and wants to do well, so we've worked a lot on his decoding, fluency, and comprehension skills over the past two years.

This year, he has been excited to be able to complete AR (Accelerated Reader) comprehension tests online for books he's read, just like his classmates. There are posters in the school library celebrating when students in the school reach certain lifetime milestones in their AR goals, with the first milestone being when they reach 50 points. Usually, the goal is 10 points per quarter.

I am elated to say that, for the first time ever, this young man just hit 50 lifetime points and is over the moon to be featured on the poster in the library like his peers!

Seeing his name on that poster made him so proud and giddy — you couldn't help but smile watching him. It has been such a gift to be able to support and assist this young man and I am so proud of all the time and energy he's put into strengthening his reading ability!



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# Wow Stories!

## Never Give Up!

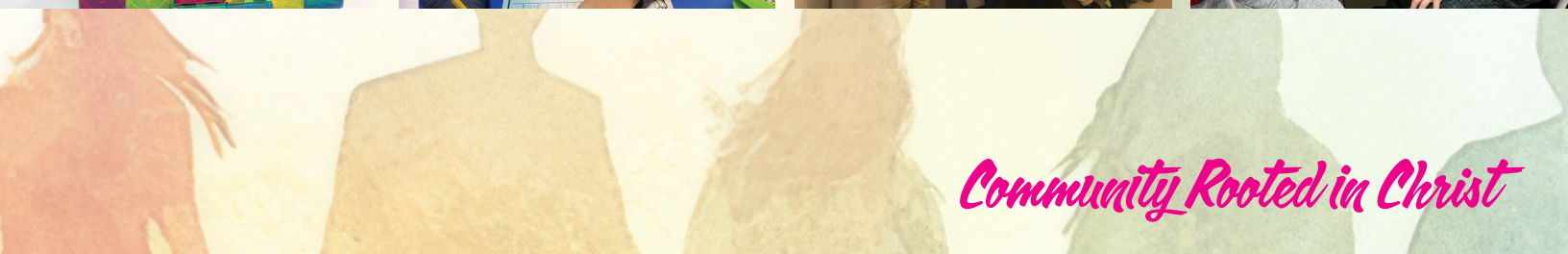
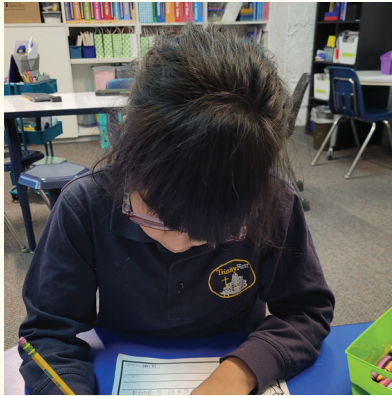
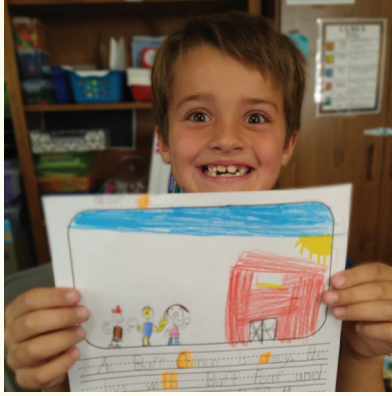
by MEAGAN HARRIS- Ascension Lutheran School (Fort Wayne, IN)

I have a 4th grade student who has dyslexia and has struggled with reading for as long as she can remember. Previously, she attended a public school and struggled with reading so much that her mom chose to homeschool her. Her parents decided to put their trust in Ascension this school year. I have seen tremendous growth in this student's reading and confidence since the beginning of the school year!

Even when she gets stuck decoding a word, she takes her time and never gives up. She has discovered a strength in using context clues to help with her comprehension, especially when she is unable to fully decode a word. I am so proud to say that this student not only passed her assessment but has found a new joy in reading!

***"I have seen tremendous growth in this student's reading and confidence since the beginning of the school year!"***





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# Stay Connected So We Can Help Even More Kids!

*We want to make sure we stay in touch with you in the best way possible.*

When you fill out and return the enclosed remittance envelope with your contact information, it helps to keep our records accurate and our communication meaningful.

The more efficient and intentional we are with our communication, the more time and resources

we can devote to what matters most—supporting the incredible children we serve in Christian schools across the country. Thank you for helping us do even more good, together!





# Make Your Voice Heard!

*We share lots of stories from our teachers and students but now, we want to hear from YOU!*

Your voice matters, and it helps shape the future of our ministry. By taking a few minutes to complete the survey, you're helping us better understand what matters most to you and how we can improve our communication and engagement with our important supporters.

You can find the survey on our homepage at [www.luthsped.org](http://www.luthsped.org) or scan the QR code for direct access. **For every survey completed, an LSEM supporter has offered to make a donation.** Not only does your feedback guide the ministry forward, but it will directly help a child.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and being such a vital part of this Legacy of Love!



# Teachers' Conference

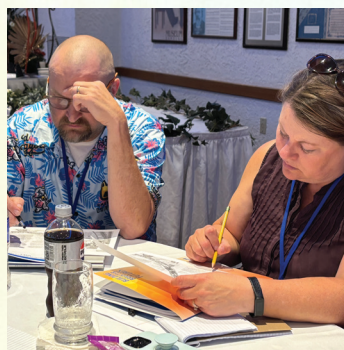
In June, LSEM held our biannual Teachers' Conference, where we gathered our educators from 13 states across the country for a conference full of professional growth, encouragement, and hands-on learning. Our teachers learned from keynote speaker and industry professional Annie Palmer, and were able to connect with and learn from each other.

This is a highly valued and well-loved event for our teachers — a chance for them to share their own knowledge and experience with each other, see what has worked in other classrooms, and be encouraged in their faith and the knowledge that they are connected and supported in often challenging work of teaching children with additional learning needs.

These educators left empowered, emboldened, and encouraged as they begin to prepare for the school year ahead.







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# Symank Receives Outstanding New Teacher Award

LSEM's Rebekah Symank was selected to receive Lutheran Education Association's 2025 Outstanding New Lutheran Elementary Teacher Award.



When asked about her joys in teaching, Rebekah said, "The greatest joys I encounter are watching my students succeed academically and grow in their confidence. I love watching my students reach new milestones, especially those who face educational struggles. Watching the smile that

comes from a student as they realize that they read their first sentence independently, were able to write a paragraph, or could use scissors correctly helps me see just how incredible this calling is. I also get to watch my students become more confident in their abilities. As they progress, they start to recognize that they are created as reflections of God's goodness, creativity, and love."

We are so proud of Rebekah for her work on behalf of LSEM at Abiding Savior Lutheran School in Lake Forest, CA, and pray that God continues to bless her and all LSEM teachers as they continue to do God's work in Christian schools across the country.



# One Historical Gift Transformation for a Lifetime



The [1873 Legacy Society](#) acknowledges individuals and families who have given Lutheran Special Education Ministries (LSEM) the highest compliment – including the ministry in their estate plans.

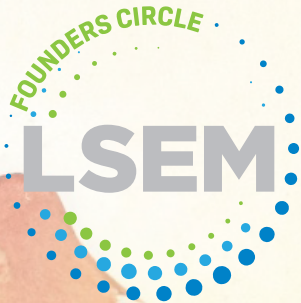
Membership in the 1873 Legacy Society is open to individuals who designate a gift of \$10,000 or more to LSEM through a will, trust, or other planned gift. Individuals who make an outright gift of \$10,000 or more to the Endowment Fund are also invited to join.

## **Benefits include:**

- A permanent legacy at Lutheran Special Education Ministries
- Recognition on Lutheran Special Education Ministries donor wall
- Annual listing in the Annual Report
- Recognition annually at a special event honoring you for your gift during your lifetime
- Invitations to other LSEM events
- Legacy Society lapel pin

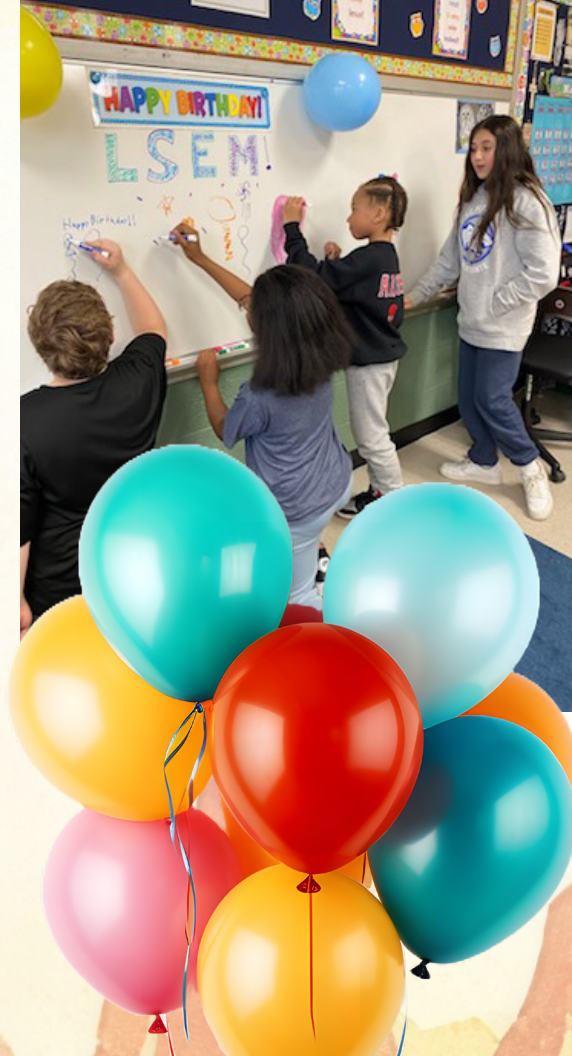
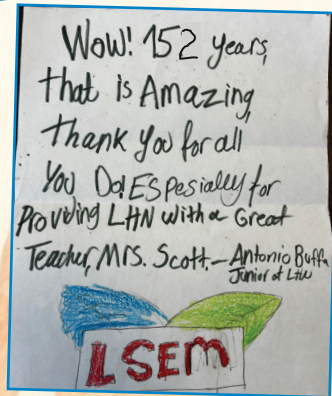
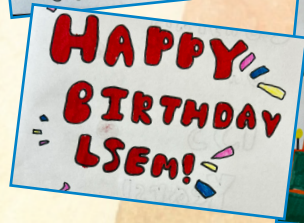
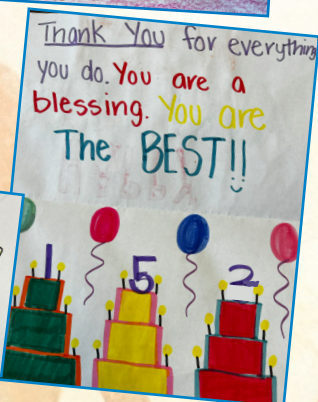
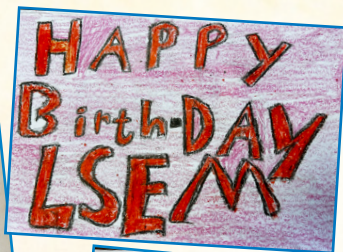
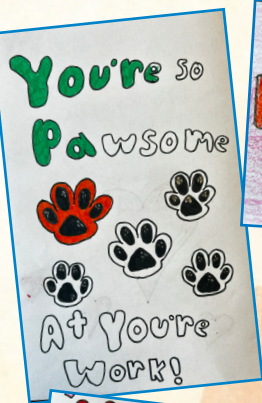
[The Founders' Circle](#) recognizes donors who have enriched the Ministry through lifetime gifts of \$25,000 and above.

Please contact us if you have already designated an estate gift to Lutheran Special Education Ministries so that we might appropriately recognize and thank you for your generosity.



# LSEM Turned 152!

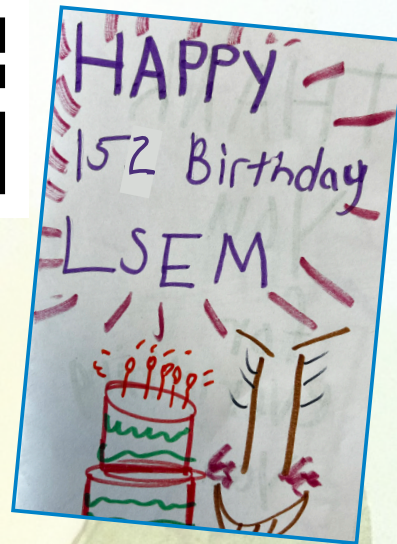
June is LSEM's birthday month, and our teachers and students took some time to celebrate the ministry and all the great work they've accomplished this year. Festivities culminated in our annual Day of Giving on July 5th when we came together to honor this Legacy of Love and raise funds to ensure the coming school year is full of more smiling faces and successful learning! Save the date and join the celebrations in 2026!







Scan the QR  
code to make a  
donation!



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## LSEM on the Road!

LSEM is attending conferences across the country this season to connect with educators, church and school leaders, and partners who share our mission.

These gatherings are an opportunity to share the impact of our programs, learn from others, and strengthen the network of support for children with learning needs in Lutheran and Christian schools.

Keep us in prayer as spread the word about the difference we're making together!

Follow us on socials to see where we're headed and stop by our table to snap a photo and say hi!

# UPCOMING





# EVENTS



**Season 8 of The Lutheran Education Podcast begins on August 26.**

Hear real stories, helpful insights, and meaningful conversations from Lutheran educators about Lutheran education. Don't miss it—subscribe today on your favorite platform!



**Scan the  
QR code to  
listen!**





Scan the QR code  
to register!

Cherry Creek Golf Course in Shelby Twp., MI



# 20th Anniversary Golf Outing

We're celebrating the special 20th anniversary of the LSEM Golf Outing on Monday, September 15, at Cherry Creek Golf Club in Shelby Twp, MI! Join us on the green for a great cause. Register your team today.

Not local? Not a golfer? You can still be a part of this special event! Sponsor a hole in honor of a teacher, a school or church, or someone special. Join the fun and raise funds for kids starting this new school year.

<https://luthsped.org/2025-lsem-golf-outing/>







# Christmas Tea

LSEM will once again return to where it all began on December 4, at Historic Trinity Lutheran Church in Detroit, MI, for our annual Christmas Tea. We will honor our legacy supporters and share personal testimony from students impacted by your support.



## Board of Trustees

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LUTHERAN SPECIAL EDUCATION MINISTRIES

**Leaving**  
A LEGACY OF LOVE  
**for future generations**

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