



## **Marian Middle School Welcomes Veronica Edwards, Normandy Graduate, as New School Counselor**

Oct. 19, 2022 (St. Louis) – Marian Middle School is pleased to announce Veronica Edwards has joined their staff as School Counselor. Marian is a Catholic middle school serving girls in grades 5 through 8, with a focus on breaking the cycle of poverty through exceptional education. Marian’s Graduate Support Team continues to support students with social, emotional, financial, and mentoring support from high school, college, and into their careers.

In her new role, Edwards will be part of Marian’s Care Team that supports the mental health and wellbeing of girls and families. The team responds to students’ heightened needs, providing ongoing counseling to students and alums, and connecting their families with acute wraparound services.

“Veronica has years of experience in social service and a strong belief in the power of education for young girls,” said Mary Elizabeth Grimes, President of Marian. “She shares our belief that a girl’s success should not be limited by her zip code. She is a valuable addition to our mission to Light the Way for Marian Girls with high potential but limited resources.”

A St. Louis native, Edwards graduated from Normandy Senior High School and obtained her Bachelor of Science degree from Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi. She earned a Master of Arts in Christian Ministries degree with an emphasis in Pastoral Counseling from Missouri Baptist University. Her 23 years of experience in social services includes positions with Madison County Urban League, MERS/Goodwill, and the Salvation Army.

Edwards is deeply involved in her church and brings a strong Christian faith to her professional duties.

“I believe God has placed gifts in each one of us,” she said. “We must use these gifts to build one another. I consider myself a spiritual cheerleader – I live to serve people by connecting them with resources to help them meet their most urgent needs in a manner that empowers them.”

Up to ninety percent of Marian students face poverty and travel from up to 30 zip codes to become a Marian Girl. They face traumatic experiences such as homelessness, unsafe housing, the loss of a parent from gun violence, and depression and thoughts of suicide. The pandemic has exponentially increased these inequities and challenges, and shined a light on mental health, especially in communities of color.

According to the National Library of Medicine, less than 15% of children experiencing poverty and in need of mental health services receive support.

Access to the quality mental health services provided at Marian empowers students to safely process and overcome obstacles so they can reach their full potential, and ultimately find career success. Mental health and wraparound services are now available to all middle school students, graduates, and their families, regardless of how long they've been away from Marian. Marian's trauma-informed counseling and wraparound services help students and alumnae build coping skills and adaptive behaviors; improve problem solving skills and increase their ability to connect with others; mediate between students; decrease disciplinary incidents; and improve grades and attendance. As a result, Marian Girls and alumnae become equipped to succeed in academics, form healthy relationships, adapt to high school and college environments, and excel in the workplace.

Marian's full Care Team consists of School Counselor, Licensed Therapist, and Family Resource Advocate. The School Counselor assists girls in middle school with everyday needs at school. The Licensed Therapist provides counseling and therapy for more intensive social emotional needs, trauma and crisis. The new Family Resource Advocate links families to community resources to stabilize the families, including when in crisis.

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### **About Marian Middle School**

Marian Middle School is a Catholic school for girls that is committed to breaking the cycle of poverty through education. Founded in 1999 and located in the Tower Grove South neighborhood, Marian provides a life-altering experience for girls in grades 5-8 by focusing on each student's spiritual, academic, social, moral, emotional, and physical development.

Up to 90 percent of students face poverty and travel from up to 30 zip codes to become a Marian Girl. Students attend extended hours each school day and a longer academic year. The staff provides ongoing support to alumni through high school and post-secondary education to ensure career success. Over 316 girls have graduated from MMS with 100% of them recently entering post-secondary institutions.

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