Winter 2023

Grants Enhance Education for Marion Students

Marion Foundation Grants were awarded to MISD staff in 2022 thanks to the generous contributions of businesses and individuals throughout the year. A number of educational funds have also been established with the Foundation for long-term benefit of Marion students and staff.

Marion Foundation grants awarded in spring 2022 included:

- Vernon Middle School mini DBQ (document-based questions) binders for the Social Studies department.
- Marion High School staff Roxanne Paulsen and Pete Messerli a commerciallevel heat press and engraver for AMPED, a new math option for students that are interested in business, logistics, engineering and construction.
- Longfellow Elementary the preschool team purchased new classroom rugs. In the final grant report, teacher Jenni Ringwald shared, "staff are able to see all students as they can sit around the outside of the rugs. This helps with classroom management."
- Vernon Middle School music teachers Jennifer Adams and Michelle Waymire a new baritone saxophone for the Middle School bands.

Funding also supported a partnership with Grant Wood Area Education Agency to provide scholarships for eligible Vernon Middle School and Marion Home School students to attend College for Kids. This is a summer program offering advanced level academic and fine arts courses in a college setting to eligible students who have completed 6th, 7th, or 8th grades.



Preschool classroom rugs



Heat press and engraver for AMPED class



Baritone saxophone at VMS



College for Kids participants



Supporting education for the benefit of Marion Independent School District students, schools and the greater community.

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Get more online! www.marion-foundation.org



Class Reunions

If you graduated in a class year ending in 3 or 8, your class is due for a reunion! Zhen E Rammelsberg, the new Alumni Relations Director, has most likely reached out to your class representatives. She is here to assist reunion organizers by providing class contact information, details on hosting events, and helping get the word out by promoting your class social media page.

The new Marion stadium opens this year! Our Alumni Engagement Committee is planning an alumni event for the fall. We can host tours of the stadium, high school or other schools as part of your class reunion activities.

Visit *Marion-Foundation.org/classreunions* for an up-to-date list of reunion details and contact information.



Class of 1979 reunion



Class of 1982 reumion

Help Us Stay Connected – Update Your Contact Info!

Keep us up-to-date with your latest email and other contact info. Use the "Update Your Info" form at *marion-foundation.org/alumni*.

PUT THAT MARION EDUCATION TO GOOD USE!



Thursday, MARCH 30

Pizza Ranch, Marion 6-8 pm

What I should have learned by 7th grade!

Thursday, APRIL 20
Pizza Ranch, Marion

6-8 pm
Fact, fiction and utter nonsense

Thursday, MAY 4
Hilton Garden Inn,
Cedar Rapids

Happy Hour 4-6 pm Name that Tune 7 pm

Sign up and additional info at marion-foundation.org/trivia

Sign up by one week before each event. Walk-ins welcome if space is available. Teams may have up to 6 members.

Everyone welcome – you don't have to be an alum, but it may help!

Extra point if you have a former Marion teacher on your team!



Elisabeth Kissling Named Foundation Executive Director

Elisabeth Kissling joined the Marion Independent School Foundation & Alumni Association in March 2020 as Alumni Relations Director and was named Executive Director in September 2022. Elisabeth is delighted to fulfill the Executive



Director role and continue supporting students, staff, and alumni at Marion Independent School District while preserving the rich history of the district.

"In March, I will have been with the Foundation for three years. I started during the pandemic in the role of Alumni Relations Director. My first day was when the school was shutting

down for Covid... so the Executive Director at the time gave me a laptop and sent me home."

Elisabeth had to figure out how to use the database and hard drive remotely, but was able to video chat with staff who were also working from home to learn her new job.

"Working in the former position has helped with transitioning into the Executive Director position because I was able to participate in planning for both the Marion Foundation Golf Classic and Start School Right," said Elisabeth.

Elisabeth has been a proud supporter of the Marion Independent School District for over 14 years and has over 20 years of nonprofit experience including crisis counseling, marketing, and development. Elisabeth has a B.A. in Music and Psychology with a Minor in Philosophy from Coe College, and an M.A. in Education (Counseling) from the University of Iowa. She is a 2013 Corridor Business Journal Forty under 40 honoree, graduate of the Leadership for Five Seasons class of 2017, serves on the Marion Arts Festival board, and is a Marion Ambassador. She is a Master Trainer in Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) and provides suicide first aid trainings in the community.

Elisabeth is looking forward to being more involved with supporting students and staff. "I am already looking forward to next year when my son Liam is in high school and it will be nice to be in the same building as he and his friends."

When asked about the new stadium and the other updates to the district buildings, Elisabeth says, "The future of the district with the facility updates is exciting making now a great time to be part of the Marion district!"

Elisabeth lives in Marion with her husband Josh, her teenage son, and their rescue dog Hank. She is passionate about travel, finding a good cup of coffee, and live music.

You can contact Elisabeth at *ekissling@marion-isd.org* or call the Foundation office at 319-377-4691 x1110.

Zhen E Rammelsberg is New Alumni Relations Director

Zhen E (pronounced Jenny) Rammelsberg became the Alumni Relations Director for the Marion Independent School Foundation & Alumni Association in December 2022. As Alumni Relations Director, Zhen E is looking forward to working with



alumni to plan reunions, compiling data on past alumni, planning events, and being a historian of the district.

Zhen E's son Jordan graduated with the MHS class of 2010. Jordan was involved in band and leader of the drumline. "I felt that Jordan thrived in the Marion Independent School District and maintains lifelong friendships that he built from elementary through

graduation. We moved to Linn-Mar district his senior year, but open enrolled Jordan at Marion because we loved the district so much. He lives in another state now and recently had a baby. One of his former teachers sent him a blanket she knitted for his baby because she remembered having him as a student. His childhood friends were the groomsmen in his wedding. This is why Marion was such a great place for him to grow up and why I am ecstatic to be working for the district," says Zhen E.

"Updating the Foundation database, writing newsletter and social media posts, alumni engagement outreach, and planning events for the new stadium and annual Golf Classic have been a few of the activities I have been working on," says Zhen E.

Zhen E has a B.A. in Communications with an emphasis in Public Relations and Social Media Marketing and Journalism, and a Minor in Sex, Race, Gender and Diversity and Performance from Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She also is licensed as a Massage Therapist, Cosmetologist, and recently completed certifications in Medical Coding as well as Covid Contact Tracing. She has many years of experience in planning and hosting events.

Zhen E is an award-winning published playwright who has traveled all over the world to see her plays performed. She has also performed some of her pieces herself. She serves on the boards of some local theatre groups and works with several theatres doing wigs and make-up. She is also very active with several Korean adoptee groups.

Zhen E has lived in Marion for 30 years with her husband Robert, and now five cats. She is passionate about adoptee justice, traveling, hiking, cooking, theatre, writing, art, and anything Hello Kitty.

You can contact Zhen E at 319-377-4691 x 1106 or *zrammelsberg@marion-isd.org*.



Sophomore Mya Walker and Marion Robotics are Making a Difference

Ever wonder how Robotics can help with Mental Health Awareness?

Marion Sophomore Mya Walker (MHS '25) has an answer to this question. She is a member of Marion Robotics Team 5913, Drop It Like It's Bot. Each year the teams plan a project to raise money for a community organization. Last year they raised money for cancer research, but this year Walker decided to combine two clubs she is involved with. Besides being a member of the Robotics Team, Walker is also a Green Bandana student.

The Green Bandana Project is "a program designed to spread awareness of resources for those who live with a mental illness or are struggling to deal with a personal mental health crisis at schools." Marion's Green Bandana Project is a mental health awareness suicide prevention support group comprised of students with staff affiliation.

The group has been around four or five years. To become a Green Bandana, students undergo training on how to council other students who are needing someone safe to speak with about any mental health issue. The Green Bandana Project creates a safe space for students who are dealing with suicidal feelings.

According to MISD Social Worker Michelle Wilson, "The students who have been trained for this program wear the



Green Bandana members (I to r) Sydney Lear, Ashley Lance and Avery Booms participate in the Cedar Rapids HOPEwalk for suicide awareness.



green bandanas and the other students see these and know this is a student they can go to in times of crisis."

Walker states, "Most of the students I've worked with have felt down but were not suicidal. If someone was (suicidal), I feel like I have been prepared because I have talked to people who have been affected by someone who committed suicide and can empathize."

Walker was invited by Wilson to join the Green Bandana Project in 8th grade but couldn't because of Covid. Walker was finally able to join as a Freshman and is now a Sophomore. Walker watched a counseling session, went through training on suicide facts, and learned what to do to help someone with suicidal thoughts.

Since Walker suggested that the Robotics Team raise money for a mental health organization, she asked Wilson for a suggestion and Wilson suggested Foundation 2. Wilson explained "Foundation 2 is a non-profit agency that offers crisis prevention and intervention programs for people of all ages."

To raise money, the Robotics Team put collection cups in about 20 different classrooms. Those classrooms students then filled the cups with change.

Robitics Team 5913 members Mya Walker (center) and Andrew Henriksen (right) drop off the team's donation of \$641 at the Foundation 2 office. The donation was made in memory of Nick Wheeler (MHS '15) who died in 2018.

Walker and Robotics Team 5913 were able to present a check for \$641 at the beginning of January to Katie Curtis of Foundation 2 along with fellow team member Andrew Henriksen (see photo) in memory of former MISD graduate Nick Wheeler '15 who died in 2018.

Walker wants to be a culinary chef in the future because her mom fueled her passion for cooking and she is "surrounded by family chefs" and wants to be able to carry on the family legacy. "My favorite dish to cook right now is birria tacos and any type of international cuisine."

Walker is also involved with the Speech Radio News team, is Vice President in Student Senate, plays tuba in the Concert Band and baritone in the Marching Band.

If you or someone in your life is struggling with mental health or thoughts of suicide, please connect with the Foundation 2 crisis hotline at 319-362-2174 or 1-800-332-4224.

Alumni Spotlight

'97 Alumnae Katy Davis is Sweet on Marion

How often do we ask ourselves "what if"? Or "should we"? And never actually do it? Well, Ben and Katy (Boyer) Davis (MHS '97) are the exceptions that not only asked the question... they leapt and did it.

"We were at a crossroads where we would have to make the decision to leave Marion and didn't really want to. At that same time Gae Sharp Richardson had posted that she was wanting to sell the Marion Chocolate Shop. We joked, let's just buy the chocolate shop, then three days later it happened," says Katy Davis.

Ben, a veteran, was told in April 2021 that he would next be assigned to Davenport, lowa. The Davis' knew they wanted to stay in Marion.

"We love Marion... plus I am the fifth generation of my family that is well connected to and known in Marion," explained Katy. "We wanted to find a way to be more a part of the community and thought having one of the businesses in Marion would be a great way to do that!"

The Davis' opened their version of The Marion Chocolate Shop on June 11, 2021. Gae Sharp Richardson had owned and operated the business since 2004. She still owns the building the business is located in.

There has been a learning curve in not only owning a business, but also in learning how to be chocolatiers.

"I'm not a chef and I definitely wasn't a chocolatier before this... but Gae taught us her recipes when we bought the business. We also bought the recipes for making fudge once Cornfusion closed," said Ben.

Cornfusion was located in Lindale Mall and sold popcorns, homemade fudge as well as other confections.

"We added fudge to set us apart from the previous version of the Chocolate Shop," says Ben. "The fudge has been very popular. It can be purchased in different



amounts and weights, so we can offer it at a lower price point."

Perhaps, the fact that Ben Davis is not a chocolatier and is also a veteran has made him willing to experiment with a variety of flavors as well as cutting edge marketing designs.

"We had been making these custom boxes with logos on them," said Ben. "Then one day they asked if we could put the logo on a chocolate bar and we tried that." The custom-made candy bars have a full-color logo for the tattoo business Neon Dragon painted on the bar with edible ink.

"We love partnering with other local businesses," said Katy. "We have used flavors from local wineries and even a chai from a chai tea maker." Starting their business during the pandemic had its challenges. People were eager for the shop to reopen, but supply chain issues and inflating costs have been tough on this small business, like they have been on most businesses.

Ben said they currently wholesale to shops in Des Moines, Mount Pleasant, and Iowa City. They hope to continue and expand these wholesale partnerships. They are also growing their e-commerce side and expanding into weddings.

"We love the support we get from the Marion Community as well as from our family and friends," says Katy.

The Davis' have two daughters who attend MISD, plus two dogs and two cats. Ben and Katy are also involved in many Marion and Cedar Rapids community and economic groups.

For more information and hours check out *www.themarionchocolateshop.com*To see the latest flavors and specials follow The Marion Chocolate Shop on Facebook and Instagram.



This private-labeled chocolate bar is printed with edible ink. Custom-printed packaging is also available.

Alumni Spotlight

Life IS a Picnic For '09 Marion Alumnae Carissa Johnson

Whoever says "life is no picnic" obviously hasn't met former Marion Independent School District class of '09 alumnae Carissa (Goemaat) Johnson. Owner of Boujee Picnic, Carissa has been creating luxury picnics in the Cedar Rapids/ Marion area since 2021.

"I follow some social media accounts and saw these picnics were being done in the Arizona area," said Carissa. "I wondered if it would work here. I know that Arizona has warmer weather than lowa, but one day I bought some pillows and just started doing it."

"If you are thinking of trying and doing something... I say DO IT! Try it now because you never want to look back and think what if?"

That type of thinking has obviously paid off for Johnson. The Boujee Picnic has been very popular since it was first introduced in this area. Thanks to Johnson's marketing background and social media reach, her posts get shared all the time. It has really helped spread the word.

Normally, most people think of a picnic as a blanket on the ground and a picnic basket. Boujee Picnic elevates that experience. They provide a rug, a low wooden table, pillows to sit on, all of the table wear, table decorations, a chalkboard sign with custom message, card games, water/sparkling water and even a blue-tooth speaker. Different set-up options are well showcased for customization on their website and social media platforms. For outdoor set-ups a picnic can be for 2-10 people.

The core season for her business is spring through fall, but Johnson has been able to figure out how to have some inside picnic set-ups for winter. She rented one of the shops at West End Diner in Marion for January and February to utilize that heated space. The quaint building can comfortably house 2-4 people. She even provides blankets and coat hooks.



"I just love combining my event planning background along with my love of décor and meeting new people," says Johnson. Her Boujee Picnics have been involved in several marriage proposals. She has also partnered with some local businesses to help create memorable experiences. "Having a picnic at Prairie Patch Farms on a Thursday night in June with the llamas is a fun, unique experience you wouldn't think you could do in lowa," she said. Boujee Picnic also has partnered with Bloomsberry Farm.

One of the things Boujee Picnic does not provide is the picnic food portion. Guests can bring their own food and drink, or Johnson can help with some suggestions. She also partners with a few local food providers such as the Hangry Lady Charcutier in NewBo City Market and The Cheesecake Lady.

"I just didn't want to get involved in catering and food prep or running around getting food for people. This way they can bring what foods they like and have their picnic amongst our luxurious set-up."

Most of Johnson's Boujee Picnics have been set up in the Cedar Rapids/Marion/

Carissa (Goemaat) Johnson poses with one of her Boujee Picnic set-ups at a park in Cedar Rapids.

Robins area. For an extra travel charge she will go farther, like Lake McBride or Center Point. Her closest competition is in the Des Moines area.

"I do a lot of set-ups in the area parks... Morgan Creek, Wanatee, Seminole Valley, Robins Lake, Ellis Park... or even in people's backyards," she says. "Pleasant Creek out by Palo is a hidden gem that people don't think about. When you have a picnic by the lake when the sun is going down it is so gorgeous."

Pricing, set-ups and booking can be browsed and chosen on the website at *www.boujee-picnic.com* or at BoujeePicnic on Facebook or Boujeepicnic_ on Instagram. All picnics are approximately two hours in length.

"Yes, even I have surprised my husband, with a boujee picnic," laughed Johnson. Her husband Nate Johnson is also a Marion alum from the class of 2010.

Do you know of a Marion alumni-owned businesses we can spotlight?

How about any other interesting alumni achievements?

Send ideas to Zhen E – zrammelsberg@marion-isd.org or 319-377-4691 x1106.



Superintendent's Report

Our mission at MISD is to "Foster a community of learners in developing the knowledge and skills to be Future Ready." Preparing students to be Future Ready includes a variety of opportunities across our PK-12 school system. In our elementary buildings, Future Readiness means

supporting each learner in meeting the grade level standards, both academically and socially: understanding how to handle peer conflict, learning early literacy and early numeracy skills, knowing what it means to be a learner and be resilient in the midst of learning struggles. At the middle and high school levels, we continue to build on this foundation of learning, while also expanding opportunities for career exploration.

At the high school level, it is our goal that each student, upon graduation, has a plan for their future that includes one or more of the 4 E's: Enrollment, Enlistment, Employment, or Entrepreneurship. To support students in identifying the path that best fits their interests and skills, high school students have a variety of opportunities to explore careers through: job shadows and internships, a career and interest inventory, a Planning for Your Future night, Career Pathway Roundtables, a STEM day, as Construction Trades Day, Recruitment night, individual planning meetings with a school counselor, as well as course opportunities on-site and through the local Kirkwood Linn County Regional Center. Additionally, course offerings include a partnership with MEDCO and Mercy where students are able to complete the Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA) program and begin employment at Mercy Medical Center. A partnership with MEDCO, the City of Marion, and MISD supports students interested in construction trades to experience remodeling a home for resale. Most recently, we added Amped Algebra as a course offering that combines

algebra and employability standards in a co-taught course where students start and run a business. Our current students are designing and selling various holiday t-shirts.

Future Ready learners also benefit from future ready learning spaces. With regard to current upgrades to our facilities, there are many exciting projects underway. The Marion Stadium, at the Les Hipple Complex, is in the final stages! Work on the press box, concessions and restrooms continues. The elevator is scheduled to be installed soon. Final site work such as landscaping will be completed in the spring. We excitedly anticipate final completion of this project for our spring activities. Renovations at Francis Marion Intermediate continue, with phase 1 of the new addition completed and students now occupying the classrooms. Demolition of the oldest wing will begin soon to allow for construction of the new secure entrance and office area. Final completion of this project remains on-track for the start of the 2023-24 school year.

We have 2 projects that will go out for bid in the upcoming weeks – Parkview Elementary and a new auditorium. Parkview, a PK-2 building with 2 sections of preschool and 4 sections of K-2, will be located on what was Thomas Park Field. The auditorium is planned as a 750 seat venue, with a storm shelter that will also serve as the front and back of house for the facility. The budget for both projects was revised due to the significant increase in construction costs over the last 1.5 years since the time when our bond was passed in March 2021. Additional funding will come from SAVE funds, which is sales tax revenue. Follow the progress of our construction projects on our website and/or social media – www.marion-isd.org/page/construction-updates

MISD is a busy and exciting place, with an incredibly supportive community. Thank you for your partnership in the district's efforts!

Yours in Education, Janelle Brouwer

Holiday Giving Project Makes an Impact

The 2022 Holiday Giving Project helped 205 families made up of 574 children and 372 adults, for a total of 946 people! With your help, food, winter clothing, holiday gifts and gift cards were delivered to these MISD families.

Hundreds of students helped with the project. High school students unloaded and sorted donations. Vernon Middle School Student Council Members organized gifts for specific families. Francis Marion Intermediate School did a Read-A-Thon fundraiser, and our elementary schools had food drives.

The Marion Holiday Giving Project has been coordinated by MISD Social Worker

Michelle Wilson for 28 years. "I am very grateful, and feel like the community and district have really rallied in support of this project," says Michelle. "I'm thrilled by the new business support we receive each year."

Please, consider donating (even now!) for the 2023 Holiday Giving Project. Donations may be made online at *marion-foundation.org/make-adonation.* (Note "Holiday Giving" in the comment box.) Throughout the year we also accept donations of new winter apparel, new books, non-perishable food items, and \$25 grocery gift cards.



Marion High School students (I to r) Bethany Langer, Alexis Clay, Ayda Besler and Rylie Schutz volunteered for Holiday Giving.



Items collected through a food drive.



2022 Foundation Honor Roll of Donors

The Foundation recognizes this **Donor Wolf Pack** based on gifts received during 2022. These donations help the Foundation fund projects that support students, teachers, alumni, and the greater MISD community. Thank you for your continued support and for making a difference!

\$5,000-\$9,999

Claudia Cahalan **Dorothy Fisher** Farmers State Bank Giacoletto Foundation GreenState Credit Union Iowa Giving Crew John K. Castle Rosie & Don Shepard

\$2,500-\$4,999

Theisen's Home, Farm, Auto

\$1,000-\$2,499

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Lutheran Church of the Resurrection

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Walmart (Marion and Blairs Ferry Road Locations)

\$500-\$999

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Greater Cedar Rapids Community Foundation

Greg Hapgood Jr. Hanna Plumbing & Heating Hardwood Design Joshua Plein

Marion Christian Church Marion Firefighters Association

Mark & Julie Barnd Mick Cahalan

Murdoch Funeral Home **Network Computer Solutions OPN Architects** Pizza Ranch St. Andrews Apartments

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Rogers Ready Mix

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Dennis Novak

Dennis Schmuecker **Douglas Walker** Doreen Zumwalt **Edward Reed** Frana Potter Fred Weber Jr. **Greg Grant Greg Weiss** Hubbell's Auto Repair James Meggers James Sauer Janet Moeller Janice Zoet Jav Kacena Jeff & Sam Kost

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Onalee Arnold Paul Brauer Patricia Webster Quinn Equipment

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Vernon Middle School PTO Wayne Huebener William Nash

In-Kind Over \$250

Bonnie Raasch **Branded Apparel** Brick Alley Pub & Sports Bar Capri College Casey's General Stores Cedar Rapids Country Club **Corporate Branding** Cost Cutters

Daisy Grieve Days for Girls

First Presbyterian Church Goldfinch Tap & Eatery Goodwill of the Heartland

Hv-Vee I Support the Girls Jimmy John's Joe Photo

Leadership for Five Seasons Class of 2023

Lil' Drug Store Products Inc. MAC - Midwest Athletic Club Mike Young

Northway Well & Pump

Prairiewoods Franciscan Spirituality Center St. Joseph's Catholic Church

Taylor and John Lillibridge Veridian Credit Union Zio Johno's

In spite of our best efforts, errors and omissions may occur. Please contact the Foundation office regarding any inaccuracies.



Some of the many Start School Right volunteers take a break from sorting to pose for a photo. More than 370 Students received school supplies and other items for a positive start to the school year.



Wall of Support is Filling Up!

Looking to do something special for a loved one in your life? Maybe you'd like to promote your business while also helping your community? Would your class like to leave a lasting note?

Share your message while supporting the Marion Foundation by purchasing a brick on the Wall.

The Foundation's Wall of Support pays tribute with over 600 memorials, honorariums and achievement highlights. It is located in the school district's administrative office wing on the south side of the high school. The Wall and adjacent MISD history displays are a favorite stopping point for reunion groups and school board meeting attendees.

The Wall of Support is over 95% filled. Order your bricks soon. There are about 70 red and only a few gold bricks remaining!

Engraving includes up to three lines of text with 15 letters/ spaces per line. Red bricks are available for \$300 each and gold bricks for \$1,000 each. Bricks are engraved about once per year. If your brick is a gift we are happy to provide a certificate about the brick before it is engraved.







Leadership for Five Seasons and Iowa Giving Crew Make Generous Donation

On November 4, Nick Dusil, President of Iowa Giving Crew, invited Marion Foundation Director Elisabeth Kissling to speak to the Leadership for Five Seasons Adult Class of 2023 during Human Services Day.



Nick was a member of the Leadership for Five Seasons class of 2021 and Elisabeth the class of 2017.

After learning about the Foundation's Start School Right and Holiday Giving Project, the class shared a generous donation of food items. The gift was so large that it filled Elisabeth's mini van! This Holiday Giving donation helped MISD families meet nutritional needs over the holiday break. Thank you to Nick and the Leadership for Five Seasons class for this wonderful gift.

Stadium... School Buildings... Auditorium...

Project photos and updates on all MISD construction projects can be found at *marion-isd.org/page/construction-updates*

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 	☐ In Honor/Memory of
Address	Other (school, program, etc.)
City/State/Zip	Total contribution \$ Thank You!
Phone	☐ My employer
	offers a matching gift program
Email	☐ Please contact me about planned giving
Credit Card Number Expiration Securi	ty Code Marion School Foundation, 777 S. 15 th Street, Marion, IA 52302 319-377-4691 x1110 or marionfoundation@marion-isd.org