

## **CASE FOR SUPPORT**

We are a non-profit organization seeking to build a 24,000 square foot building at Whitehaven High School (Whitehaven) dedicated to course and lab work in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) subjects. Whitehaven is a college preparatory, optional school with approximately 1,700 students, and many of Shelby County Schools' best faculty and leadership. It is in one of Shelby County's strongest working/middle class neighborhoods. 80% of its students go to college or post-secondary training and those students earned \$130,000,000.00 in scholarships last year.

Yet, the STEM infrastructure for Whitehaven's hard-working, college-bound students is arguably amongst the least-adequate of any area high school. University of Memphis science professors note while ours are smart and enthusiastic students, they start college, and particularly their science work, at a serious, relative disadvantage due, in great part, to their inadequate to non-existent high school lab facilities. One noted our science kids are "40 years behind" their peers in lab education. Another noted if one intends to be a college science student, then a physics background is crucial and 90% of our students lack that background; and, insufficient labs are a primary reason.

Memphis is America's poorest large city and we do not have the public funds needed to address this inadequacy. There are too many other competing needs with claims on our limited public resources. As a result, our truly college-bound students - - our future - - start behind their private and municipal school peers in the sciences.

This is an avoidable, completely unnecessary and self-inflicted wound on our community and our children's future.

We have privately funded the privately-designed plans for our Whitehaven STEM Building. Montgomery Martin is our enlisted contractor. DesignShop is our architect. Our friends at the University of Memphis consulted with us.

Our key partner is SchoolSeed Foundation. It is our independent §501(c)(3) and fiscal agent with which we have a tight contractual relationship. SchoolSeed has been the preferred "beneficiary" of all independent donations to SCS from Race to the Top to the Gates Foundation. The 2% of donated funds paid to SchoolSeed for fiscal control is our only administrative expense. Thus, 98% of donations go to this project.

This is the first Whitehaven project of our SCS-approved pilot project to privately design, fund and construct physical plant improvements at our two otherwise thriving college-prep optional schools: White Station (WSHS) and Whitehaven. We completed our very first project at WSHS raising nearly \$250,000.00 to transform a 6,500 square foot unused, drainage-challenged blight in WSHS's center into a beautiful community courtyard. Our model works and it is a success.

Our Whitehaven STEM Building will include: Advanced Placement (AP) labs for physics, biology, chemistry and environmental sciences; honors/traditional lab/classrooms for physics, biology and chemistry; a computer/computational lab; a 1,600 square foot robotics lab; and, three STEM classrooms. Our architect's design is appealing and efficient, blending well with the campus' 70-year-old other structures. Adjacent to it will be a 9,600 square foot landscaped courtyard.

We believe completing this STEM Building for our Whitehaven students is important. It will never be fully funded with public dollars. At best, this will be a 2/3 private and 1/3 public partnership, like our first WSHS project.

Montgomery Martin priced the STEM Building at \$5,761,109.00 from the design development documents. We are adding a \$250,000.00 budget for lab furniture, fixtures and equipment. We also include in our budget a \$250,000.00 maintenance fund which we will privately control through SchoolSeed so that our involvement with this investment endures.

Nothing about our effort is a luxury, but it is an urgency. Thank you for considering it. Our hard-working Whitehaven kids, and their parents, have earned it.

Richard J. Myers