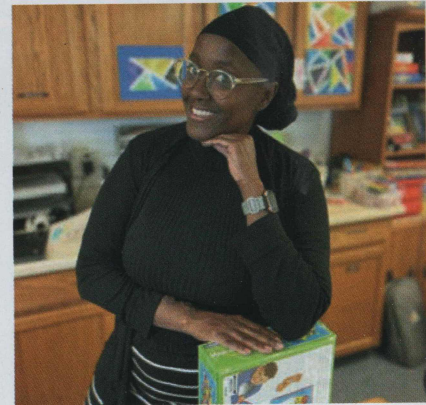


“It was the simple, sweet prayer of a child—exactly what we needed.”

Shining for Jesus

A SELF-REFLECTION BY TEACHER EDITH SUBER

August 2023 marked the start of my first year at Maricopa Village Christian School (MVCS). I had spent 16 years as an elementary music teacher within the Arizona public school system. So, I was not entirely sure what to expect transitioning into the role of a general education, multigrade lead teacher. However, I was intrigued and excited about serving in the Adventist school system, having grown up as an Adventist and being an alumnus of Oakwood University. Surprisingly, I had been unaware of this school’s existence despite my years in the state, but I am reminded that God’s timing and planning are always perfect.



Edith Suber incorporates music into every aspect of her teaching.

MVCS has a rich, long-standing legacy of over 80 years of service to the Gila River Indian Community in Laveen, Arizona, just southwest of Phoenix. Through many ups and downs and intermittent closings, the school still stands as a beacon of light and hope. It is very inspirational and motivational to see the multiple generations of community members who were students here. Many of our students have relatives, including parents and siblings, who attended MVCS, demonstrating the generational impact of this small mission school.

Finding our theme: Letting the light shine

I recall being asked if I had a theme for my classroom. At the time, I did not have an answer. However, in retrospect, a single verse perfectly captures our year: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16, KJV). This was the first scripture song I taught the children, and as time unfolds, I have had the privilege of watching them do their best to shine. These students are reflecting the light of Jesus through their actions and hearts.

Serena: A leader in prayer

Transitioning from a public school setting to one where I could openly teach children about God was both a blessing and a challenge. My assistant, Shawna, and I worked hard to teach the students that prayer isn’t a formal ritual; it’s simply talking to God as a friend.

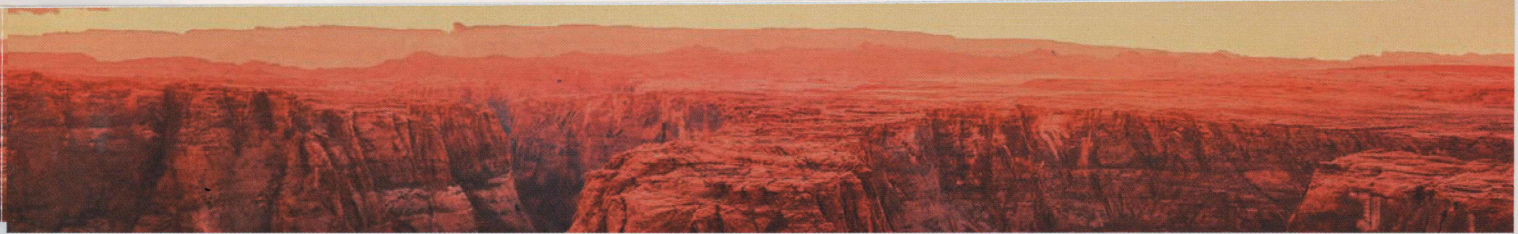
It took some time for the students to grasp this, but then one day, Serena raised her hand to pray. It was the simple, sweet prayer of a child—exactly what we needed. Serena modeled what prayer could be, and it changed everything. Now, most students pray or ask for prayer daily. Serena also often invites friends to church to “spend time with Jesus and people she cares about.” We trust in the seeds being sown by her bright light.



The original Maricopa Village Church testifies to the legacy of mission work in the Gila River Indian Community.



Serena has a heart for fellowship and sharing her love for Jesus.



Lauryn: A heart of compassion

Lauryn is one of our youngest students. She has a remarkably kind and compassionate heart. I vividly remember a visit to the Caring House nursing facility, where our students sang and made crafts with the residents. One resident admired a trinket Lauryn had, and without hesitation, Lauryn gave it to her, simply because the lady liked it.

That same kindness extends to our bi-weekly tutoring sessions. One of our volunteers had been away for a while, and when Lauryn finally saw them again, she didn't hesitate to show her heart. She walked right up and asked, "I missed you tutoring! Will you be returning soon?" Hearing the genuine concern in her voice was a heart-tugging moment for everyone there and a reminder to the member to keep her commitment.

Mark: A surprising leader

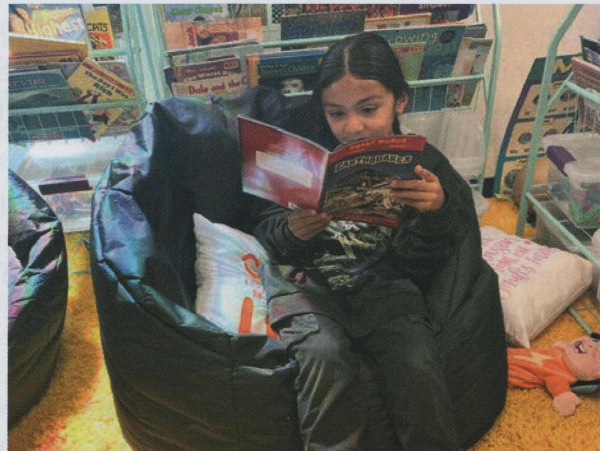
Mark is another student who started school with us at a young age and has progressed quickly. Learning to read with remarkable speed, he displayed leadership skills that were quite unexpected for his age.

At MVCS, we incorporate the Adventurer Club program into the school day, and every fourth Sabbath, the students lead out for "Adventurer Sabbath" at the Maricopa Village church. They lead out in every aspect of service, except for the sermons. During one of these programs, we needed someone to lead the song, "I'm Gonna Sit at the Welcome Table." Mark was the first student to step up. He led the song with such confidence, poise, and energy. Although he can be reserved at times, he isn't afraid to use the talents he's been blessed with. His enthusiasm for Jesus shone so brightly that it gave the other students the confidence to try, too.

Each child brings unique value to our community. The Bible tells us that the very hairs on our heads are numbered, illustrating how intricately God is involved in our lives. It was by divine design that He brought us all to MVCS to be a light. We teach our students to love, care, serve, pray, and be like Jesus and do what Jesus told us to do: "Let your light so shine."



Lauren (left) works on a craft with a resident at the Caring House nursing facility.



Mark demonstrates his love for reading in the reading nook at the school.



Students work collaboratively to solve a memory verse puzzle at the start of their Bible class.