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Eastern Star Church The ROCK Initiative and The Mind Trust announce partnership to support innovative schools in Eastside neighborhood

Partnership represents more than a $1 million investment to improve public education in the Arlington Woods, 46218 community

INDIANAPOLIS— (Sept. 26, 2019) – Eastern Star Church (ESC) The ROCK Initiative and The Mind Trust today announced a major partnership that supports the education component of The ROCK Initiative, which was launched in 2017 to improve the quality of life among residents in an Eastside Indianapolis neighborhood. The partnership is designed to expand high-quality school options at all grade levels and support public schools located on or in close proximity to the church campus.

As part of the partnership, a new public middle school, opening as early as 2022, will be located in the Arlington Wood’s neighborhood and will serve 7th- and 8th-grade students. The Mind Trust is seeking candidates for an Innovation School Fellow. The selected Fellow will engage in a two-year Fellowship with The Mind Trust, during which they will design the middle school, engage with a strong cohort of educational leaders, and access individualized leadership development opportunities. The Innovation School Fellowship selection process will open Oct. 1, 2019.

A new high school, opening in fall 2020, will be located on the Eastern Star Church campus and will serve 9th-12th grade students. Eastern Star Church The ROCK Initiative has selected Rooted School Indianapolis to serve as its high school partner. Rooted School Indianapolis seeks to address local talent gaps by partnering with companies to identify in-demand jobs and skills and supporting students in obtaining relevant credentials to obtain those jobs. Students will graduate from Rooted with work-based experience, certificates, a high school diploma, and a path to post-secondary education.

“The tech industry in Indianapolis is growing at a tremendous rate,” Indianapolis Mayor Joe Hogsett told about 75 people gathered for a press conference at the site of the new high school. “Thousands of jobs will be added in the next few years alone. The only way these added jobs can be counted as a success is if they are accessible to residents in every zip code in Indianapolis. To do this, we must address the inequities in our city and in the education of our children. We must promote better options in areas where they are most needed. Today, that is just what we do.”
Ma’at Lands will serve as the founding school leader of Rooted School Indianapolis. Born and raised on the Eastside of Indianapolis, she is a graduate of North Central High School, Tennessee State University, and Marian University. Lands has 13 years of teaching and administration experience in Indianapolis schools. She is currently a Charter School Design Fellow with The Mind Trust.

Rooted School Indianapolis is a mayor-sponsored charter school. Enrollment for the 2020-2021 school year will open on Nov. 1, 2019, through Enroll Indy. To learn more about the school model and enrollment, visit www.rootedschoolindy.org.

Currently, the community is served by an existing Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) school, Arlington Woods Elementary School 99. The school will continue to serve students in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. Principal Tihesha Henderson, who has led the school since 2012, is a master educator who has spent the past 18 years teaching and leading in various capacities in Indianapolis. Her passion for trauma informed care has led her to create innovative ways to address the social emotional needs of students. Henderson, a fellow of The Mind Trust, is redesigning how students learn and develop in school using mindfulness practices and social emotional learning. Arlington Woods Elementary is located less than a quarter of a mile from Eastern Star Church.

IPS Superintendent Alesia Johnson also commented on the importance of working together to address social and economic inequities. “We can never lose sight of the fact that we have a community of children who are waiting for us to do the right thing by them,” she said. “Ultimately, we are depending upon them to become the people we aspire them to be.”

Eastern Star Church, which has invested more than $1 million in educational initiatives during its 99-year history, considers quality education at all grade levels an essential pillar in its goal to build a thriving stable community. The partnership, according to ESC Senior Pastor Jeffrey A. Johnson, Sr., is critical to the enhancement of the Arlington Woods 46218 community.

“We know our children can learn. We know they can produce,” he said. “Working together, we can make that happen. The Mind Trust has the expertise to make that happen in a community that has been overlooked for far too long. We need to come alongside this community to provide children with the education they need to be successful.”

“Eastern Star Church’s ROCK Initiative represents a unique approach to transforming a community,” said Brandon Brown, CEO of The Mind Trust. “We are honored to support Pastor Johnson’s vision to provide a quality education to students across the K-12 continuum. I’m convinced that this approach will be a model for other neighborhoods in Indianapolis and other cities across the country. The Mind Trust plans to invest more than a million dollars in this education initiative to ensure that every child who lives in the 46218 zip code has access to a life-changing education.”
Interested applicants for The Mind Trust's Innovation School Fellowship should contact Amber Audrain, Director of Alignment and School Investments at The Mind Trust, at aaudrain@themindtrust.org. Learn more about the Fellowship and the selection process at: www.themindtrust.org/growing-great-schools/fellowships.

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**About The Mind Trust**
The Mind Trust is an Indianapolis-based education nonprofit that works to build a system of schools that gives every student in Indianapolis, no exceptions, access to a high-quality education. The Mind Trust does this by building a supportive environment for schools through policy and community engagement, empowering talented educators to launch new schools, and providing existing schools with the supports they need to hire world-class talent and achieve excellence. Since 2006, The Mind Trust has supported the launch of 29 schools and helped place more than 1,500 teachers and school leaders in Indianapolis classrooms. More information can be found at themindtrust.org.

**About Eastern Star Church and Affiliates**
Eastern Star Church, where “Jesus Exalted + Word Explained,” is a ministry based on evangelism and discipleship, and that shares the word of Jesus Christ through more than 40 ministries and three Indianapolis-area locations. Eastern Star Church is rooted in Biblical standards that provide quality service for all who attend and has been blessed to assist in the transformation of thousands of lives. JEWEL Human Services, Inc., the outreach ministry of Eastern Star Church, helps meets the needs of the less fortunate and individuals in need of emergency services. The ROCK (Renewing Our Community for the Kingdom) Initiative is the community development initiative in which numerous JEWEL programs are implemented.