

SPRING VALLEY ACADEMY^{.ORG} CONNECTIONS

INSPIRING STUDENTS TO KNOW FOLLOW SHARE JESUS

Darren Wilkins Departs, Leaves Behind Legacy

“I always said that Spring Valley Academy (SVA) would be my final principal position because I couldn’t imagine any place better to be.”

This was Darren Wilkins’ message to his staff and community as he announced his departure from SVA for a career opportunity at Walla Walla University (Wash.) as vice president for Student Life. As he prepares for his next adventure, the SVA community feels the loss of the blessing that his 10-year tenure has been for the school.

Wilkins joined the SVA team in 2013, after serving as principal at Mount Ellis Academy (Mont.) for 12 years. He began his time at SVA by promising the school that “nobody has it better than we do”—and he proceeded to prove that.

As SVA’s leader, he made his mark tangibly through the construction of the Fritzsche Center for Worship and Performing Arts in 2018, and the Dean and Trudy Johnson High School Wing in 2023. Enrollment increased from some 300 students to its current all-time high of 515 students, and the student population diversified as Wilkins’ fulfilled his pledge to make SVA accessible to all Seventh-day Adventist students. His vision was made possible by utilizing resources such as EdChoice—an Ohio State scholarship program—and by adding bus routes. Wilkins, himself, got a Class C license to drive the routes when bus drivers were in short supply.

His true legacy is less tangible. Wilkins is a scholar of the world and a chaser of adventure, and he provided his students with a window to the world by offering dynamic trips to Europe. He is interested in every child’s story and in the many cultures they represent. He led mission trips to Kenya and Peru and shared his passion for the Lord, kindness and excellence with every student.

The SVA community recently gathered for a send-off, and many students, staff, parents and community members took to the open mic to share experiences they’ve had with Wilkins. One after another, they spoke of Wilkins’ vision, his enthusiasm, his sense of humor, his compassion and his leadership. Many remembered Wilkins showing up at



their doorstep during the pandemic lockdown with a fresh loaf of Jordan Steffen’s bread. That single act epitomized his impact: a leader who cared for every student and family, who utilized his talents to connect with others, and who believed in SVA—even during the most difficult of times. SVA wishes him well, and he will be greatly missed!—*Lisa Moller, High School English Teacher*

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Aug. 15: First Day of School

Aug. 19: Convocation Sabbath

Aug. 28–Sept. 1: Elementary and Middle School Week of Prayer

Sept. 15: High School Band Vespers Concert

Sept 17: Fall Festival

Sept. 27–30: Senior Survival at Camp Mohaven