

# **Zion-Belleville Student is LESA's 2021 Lutheran Student Christian Leader**

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BELLEVILLE - Anna Spelbring – who started a charity baking project to help a child in El Salvador – will be honored April 17 during LESA's Cooking for Kids' live online tribute event to support Lutheran education.

Anna Spelbring, an eighth-grader at Zion Lutheran School in Belleville, has been named Lutheran Student Christian Leader of the Year by the St. Louis-based Lutheran Elementary School Association (LESA). The award, which includes a \$500 scholarship underwritten by the Lutheran Church Extension Fund, recognizes Lutheran elementary schools students who demonstrate courage, compassion, leadership, academic achievement and a commitment to their community.

Anna, 14, was selected for serving her faith and her community through Anna Bakes for World Vision, the charity baking project she started to sponsor a child in El Salvador through World Vision, a global Christian humanitarian organization that she learned about at a Christian music concert that she attended with her family.

“They had a speaker at the concert,” said Anna, who was 10 at the time. “I was really moved. I thought, wow, this is really cool.”

After the concert, Anna looked through photos of children in need with her younger sister. They were struck by the photo of a little boy named Marvin who lives in El Salvador. Anna said she decided that day to she would sponsor Marvin for \$40 a month – even though she had no idea where she would get the money. “We had to figure out how to pay for it!” laughed Anna.

She found a solution in her favorite pastime. “Baking has always been my number one favorite hobby,” said Anna.

She started by selling treats to teachers, staff and congregation members at Zion Lutheran Church, where her father, Rev. Chris Spelbring is the associate pastor. She and her mother, Faith, have since started a Facebook page called Anna Bakes for World Vision, where she accepts orders, shares photos and gives video updates on what she’s baking and how much she’s raising each month. As her sales and baking production have increased, she’s added new charities to the mix, including Open Door Ministries and Zion Lutheran Church’s Honduras Mission. Anna says her specialties are Snickerdoodles and Coconut Macaroons Dipped in Chocolate.

“Anna handles all of the communications, transactions and baking all on her own,” said Principal Ananda Baron, who nominated Anna for the award. “Her kindness and servant heart have set her apart as a leader in her classroom, and that leadership extends to our entire student body and school.”

Anna is also Vice President of Zion’s Student Council. In her nomination form, Baron praised the teen for finding “creative ways to connect our community of students” during the pandemic by helping to organize fun events like Favorite Candy Tournament, a Christmas Door decorating contest, dress-down days for chapel offerings, and a March food drive that collected 7,000 non-perishable food items for the Belleville Community Interfaith Food Pantry and a Zion community outreach ministry that will provide Easter Backpacks for kids in need.

“I feel extremely blessed to attend Zion,” said Anna, who plays basketball for Zion and flute in the school’s orchestra. “I feel free to be myself here.”

Anna will receive her award online Saturday, April 17, 2021, during LESA’s annual Cooking for Kids Virtual Tribute Dinner-Auction. The event, which includes an online auction, will be live-streamed at LESAstl.org this year due to COVID-19 precautions. Proceeds from the event will support scholarships and educational resources for students of all faiths at 35 Lutheran schools in the St. Louis area and southern Illinois. Bidding will open online April 10, 2021 at LESAstl.org for hundreds of items, including jewelry, art, sports memorabilia, special event tickets and other prizes.

“Cooking for Kids” is LESA’s largest annual fundraising effort to support and sustain the future of Lutheran Christian education in the St. Louis Metro Area. Last year’s “Cooking for Kids” raised \$257,000 for need-based scholarships and educational resources such as STEM programs, professional development and curriculum guides.

Since 2004, LESA has awarded more than \$6 million in financial assistance to families of all faiths in St. Louis and southern Illinois. To help advance that mission, the Lutheran Legacy Foundation has pledged to provide a generous match for endowment gifts and pledges made in 2020. There is also a \$50,000 match for scholarship gifts raised at Cooking for Kids that is being offered by a generous donor.

## **About LESA & Zion Lutheran School**

More than 8,200 children of all faiths attend LESA member Lutheran schools in the St. Louis Metro Area, making Lutheran schools the second-largest private school system in the Bi-State Region. A Recognized Service Organization of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, LESA represents 31 elementary schools, four high schools and three related agencies. Visit [www.LESAstl.org](http://www.LESAstl.org).

Zion Lutheran School is a nationally accredited PreK-8 school located in Belleville, Illinois. One of the oldest schools in the Metro East, Zion Lutheran was founded by Zion Lutheran Church in 1861 with the intention of providing a Christ-centered approach to education to nurture a child's faith, equipping him/her to use it on a daily basis and to share it with others. Today, Zion, Belleville serves children of all faiths in Early Childhood through 8th grade. For more information, visit <https://zionschoolbelleville.org>, or contact Erica Stelling, Admissions & Marketing Director, at 618-234-0275 or [estelling@zionschoolbelleville.org](mailto:estelling@zionschoolbelleville.org).