



## **Why Family Chose Lutheran High School of Sioux Falls**

By Laura Heckmann



Making the transition from middle school to high school can be a daunting task for any student. For a student who has been home schooled his entire life, the decision becomes a bit more involved, for both student and parents.

For Micah Tjeerdsma and parents, Brent and Denise, choosing a high school after a schooling career made up entirely of home schooling meant a lot of agonizing and prayerful consideration...consideration that eventually led them to Lutheran High School of Sioux Falls.

Brent and Denise explained their initial reasoning for home schooling their children was rooted in their faith and the moral foundation they experienced while they were growing up.

"We wanted for our kids the values and the morals that we were taught in our home from our parents," said Denise.

Having a background in education, Denise and her husband decided teaching their children at home was the best option for instilling the spiritual foundation they wanted for their kids.

"She's always had a passion for teaching," said Brent of Denise, "but it's about that worldview and consistency. We controlled what we taught and had the kids more focused on academics and were still able to involve them in activities."

They also appreciated the pace they were able to teach at. The personalized attention allowed for more time spent on less understood material and breezing through what came more easily.

The decision to enroll Micah in a high school, whatever the choice ended up being, was not always

a sure thing. In fact, Brent said they were still considering home schooling Micah up until three months before he chose Lutheran High.

"I kind of liked the idea of going to a high school," Micah said, "just to get a feel for the classroom and prepare myself for college."

The search began with the criteria of a place that was an extension of their home. Having educated Micah to their exact specifications for his entire life, handing that responsibility over to someone else was not a decision they were taking lightly.

"We wanted something that would be a continuation of the last eighteen years," Denise said.

"We really agonized over the decision of what the Lord was leading us to do," added Brent.

They admitted they knew almost nothing about Lutheran High initially. Previously established connections sent them looking at another school as well, but Lutheran High stuck out.

The family had several conversations with Mr. Waterman, the principal, prior to their decision. They also had several conversations and tours with another option, giving them a lot to distill. It was not until about two weeks before enrollment that they finally decided they knew where the Lord was leading them.

Ultimately, they said, Lutheran High proved to be a better transition for Micah. They also saw the continuation of the values they were so prominently seeking.

"We felt comfortable that we'd have that same basis in all the classes there. And we really appreciated the mission vision," said Denise. "They had really thought out their philosophy of Christian education, more so



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a than a lot of schools we had visited."

They also appreciated the school's dedication to missions. "That really struck us because that is what we wanted for our kids," said Denise. "I don't think there's anything better than to get involved in the community."

Investing in such a new project was a leap of faith they never second-guessed. Any concerns they may have had were readily dispelled by Mr. Waterman, they said. And so far, they have not regretted their decision one bit.

"It's really nice," Micah said of his experience thus far with the high school. "I really enjoy it. The classes are kind of similar to home schooling. We're moving at a much faster pace and I like all the attention that we get."

Denise said they knew a week in that they had made the right decision, "just because of how happy Micah was."

Micah came home and he wanted to do his homework," Brent laughed. "He didn't want to leave school!"

Whatever they're doing, they're doing something right. It's such a positive peer group and good environment."

The school has offered an overwhelming flow of encouragement, they said, for both students and parents. Denise noted how much she appreciated the encouragement from the teachers, affirming that she had adequately prepared him for this step.

The staffs' passion for the students shines," Brent added. "They have formed their own little family; they've really bonded." He said every student is doing exceptionally well, challenging each other."

"We can get a little competitive," Micah laughed.

The environment, passion, dedication and vision are all aspects of the high school that have given the Tjeerdsma's much to be thankful for.

"We're very thankful for Mr. Waterman, and for what Jessica [Grams] does, too," said Denise. "Our prayer is that the school grows because it is an outreach and it is a blessing for Sioux Falls and we hope that people can see that."

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