



RIDING
INTO THE
FUTURE



NorthFloridaSchool
Of Special Education

Enhance. Empower. Enlighten.

MISSION
STATEMENT

*To discover and
foster each student’s
unique abilities
revealing their highest
potential within an
engaged community.*

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD AND HEAD OF SCHOOL

In deciding the theme for the 2019–2020 school year, we hoped *Riding Into The Future* would convey our optimism and confidence in our school’s transformation.

This was a year of incredible change and growth for North Florida School of Special Education. The completion of the Christy and Lee Smith Lower School Campus, the renovations of the Anderson Smith Upper School Campus, and the incredible addition of the Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center changed the footprint of our campus, but the heart of our North Florida School of Special Education has remained the same.

Academics have always been exceptional, but now they take place in spacious, state-of-the-art classrooms that elevate the learning experience. Berry Good Farms offers opportunities for students to connect with nature which have been enhanced with the addition of chickens and horses at the Equestrian Center.

This year also brought new opportunities to engage with our community through riding programs, our Culinary Team’s foray into casserole catering, additional job sites, and exciting partnerships.

With the opening of the new campus and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the year went from a gallop... to a trot. When the pandemic required students to transition to at-home learning, we rode into a new future that we never expected. Like true champions, NFSSE’s faculty, staff and board of directors met all challenges with determination and grace. For that, we are profoundly grateful.

Lastly, the NFSSE family extends our heartfelt appreciation to John Macdonald. John served as the President of the Board for the last four years, driving us to achieve things we never dreamed possible. Thank you, John, for your expertise and helping us become the leading school for those with intellectual differences. Former Vice-President, Bert Brown has assumed the mantle as President of the Board for the 2020–2021 school year.

“It has been an honor to have served as President of NFSSE’s Board of Directors,” said Immediate Past Board President, John Macdonald. “I am incredibly proud of our accomplishments over the past four years. We have worked tirelessly, raising funds so that we can grow, allowing us to serve more in our community. I am confident in our future and in Bert’s leadership as we continue to enhance and expand our impact.”


John Macdonald
President, Board of Directors


Sally Hazelip
Head of School

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2019-2020

John Macdonald, *President*
Bert Brown, *Vice President*
Ray M. Van Landingham, *Treasurer*
Michelle Gilliam, *Secretary*

At Large
John D. Baker III
Lee Bledsoe
Sally Anne Brown
Claude Collier
Sheila Collier

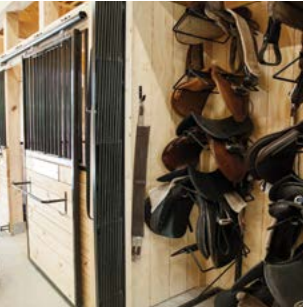
Susan DuBow
Fran Hickinbotham
Don Hinson
Dr. Bashyam Iyengar
Dr. John McKenzie
Dr. Rita Nathawad

The Honorable Virginia Norton
Alayna Oram
Karen Prewitt
Carolyn Richardson
Erin VanWey



THANK YOU TO OUR EQUESTRIAN DONORS

The Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center is a dream come for true for our students, families, staff, Board and community. The dream could not have been realized without the generous support of our donors such as Delores Barr Weaver, Dorothy and Lee Thomas, Emily and Hawley Smith, and the many more who contributed.



THERAPEUTIC RIDING: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR BUILDING CONFIDENCE WITH REVERSE INCLUSION



We sometimes say that our family is genetically diverse and built in the most amazing way. We adopted our oldest daughter, Peyton, at birth. She is intelligent, a bit shy, fascinated with reptiles and has a caring heart. She is especially calm, kind, and friendly when dealing with young kids. Our middle child was conceived with the help of science. Parker is funny, witty, loves art and dancing. She also learns differently than most and prefers activities she can do alone. Our third daughter, Presley, is the sweetest child. She has the most infectious laugh, loves JoJo Siwa and to dance, swim and ride her bike. Presley was also born with an extra chromosome and attends North Florida School of Special Education.

We were so excited to learn about the therapeutic riding program being offered by NFSSE. When the program opened to students outside of NFSSE, we saw it as an opportunity for confidence building and to experience reverse inclusion. We wanted the opportunity for our daughters to gain confidence from being around horses, and to interact and learn in an environment that supported both typical children and those who learn differently.

The therapeutic riding program has provided all of our girls an activity that they can each do independently yet together. Peyton loves to ride by herself but now has found new skills in leading her sister while on the course. Parker enjoys riding and is gaining confidence while learning to work with her little sister and others on the course. Presley is growing stronger and stronger and continues to be all smiles while proudly riding Ranger and Izzy! Our girls have been very blessed to be a part of the therapeutic riding program at NFSSE and we are proud of the progress they are making.

Corkey and Pam Harvey

“ There is much
we can learn from a
friend who happens
to be a horse. ”

Aleksandra Layland



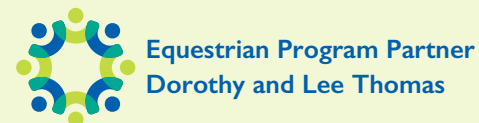


CLASSROOM AND PROGRAM PARTNERS

This new and exciting giving opportunity allows students to experience a caring community where they are supported in embracing new challenges, mastering new skills, developing life-long friendships, and learning how to view themselves as capable and competent young people.

With an annual gift of \$15,000, Partners help provide the dynamic resources and innovative curricula that guide every aspect of the educational journey to enhance and empower students to become the best versions of themselves...and that is priceless!

Classroom and Program Partners develop a special bond with our students. Invitations to special activities and events are extended where they are welcomed, but not “required” to attend. Partners also receive special recognition throughout the year.



MEET OUR HORSES



EAGLE SCOUTS

Four Scouts from Troop #136 chose NFSSE to be the site of their Eagle Scout Service Projects. They volunteered to add some of the most memorable finishing touches at the Equestrian Center.

Ethan Luker built a chicken coop for eight chickens who have been providing fresh

eggs and a work site for Transition and Postgraduate students.

James Mickler constructed the hay feeder that the horses eat from when they are enjoying their ample pasture time.

Bryce Kirkwood designed and built a sensory trail around the perimeter of the

pasture. Students can walk the trail with their teachers as a part of student life and riders can guide the horse through the trail which provides sensory stimulation for both rider and horse.

Ryan Spinelli built a firepit that is just waiting for cooler nights and events

to be the perfect spot for s'mores and conversation.

Thank you to these dedicated young men for giving of their time and talent to turn the Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center into a dynamic space for our students, riders, and animals.



VOLUNTEERS

From local high school students and NFSSE postgrads, to community volunteers with a passion for horses, the Equestrian Center has added an exciting new way for our community to get involved.



A DAY IN THE LIFE AT NFSSE



Elementary and Intermediate students are dropped off in front of the Christy and Lee Smith Lower School Campus.



60

BOOKS READ
DURING
COVID-19
SHUTDOWN



“Our small class sizes allow for teachers to differentiate instruction based on student needs. Student assessments are given regularly and in a variety of formats, which, along with data tracking, ensures students are making progress towards reaching their IEP goals. It is so rewarding as a teacher to see how students progress throughout the year.”
Jessica Ricordi, M.Ed.



During his first visit to NFSSE, Classroom Partner John Baker III participated in a Calm Classroom exercise with our elementary students. He was hooked and knew that he found a new circle of friends!



Elementary 3–4 Classroom Partner
John Baker III



Students love playing in the Scott Bledsoe Courtyard.



Lunch!

9:00 AM

9:15 AM

9:20 AM

9:30 AM

9:45 AM

10:00 AM

10:15 AM

10:30 AM

11:00 AM

12:00 PM



Time for a pick me up from the Berry Good Farms Café!



231

CUPS OF COFFEE
PER WEEK



From COVID-19 guidelines to medicine distribution, school nurses are working to keep students and staff healthy.



“One of the things we appreciate the most about NFSSE is the individualized curriculum. Each student is challenged to their ability level; the approach is adapted to the student’s needs and goals. Caleb is learning on a level that pushes him and holds him accountable, but also takes into account his unique abilities.”
Karen Prewitt



Move your body in Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy!



BGF CAFETERIA
SERVED

3,000

MEALS FROM
JAN. 13–MARCH 6



Culinary students are busy preparing lunches for our students and staff in the new Chartrand Culinary Complex.



Young artists work with lines and paint when right next door, *Art With Soul* artist Braxton Beattie creates a custom bird bath as a part of NFSSE's art enterprise.



Pick up a book at Library Resource time!



Berry Good Farms serves as a vocational training site for students as well as a micro-enterprise feeding the community.



 **50 LBS**
BLUEBERRIES
PICKED LAST YEAR



After school riding lessons are a great way to finish your day!

1:00 PM

1:30 PM

2:00 PM

2:10 PM

2:15 PM

2:30 PM

3:00 PM



Sing and dance with Mr. Sontag in music class!



Secondary 12 students learn about Rules and Laws with the help of the Florida Highway Patrol.



 **ONE MILLION**
BARKIN' BISCUITS
MADE LAST YEAR
SHIPPED TO 15 DIFFERENT STATES

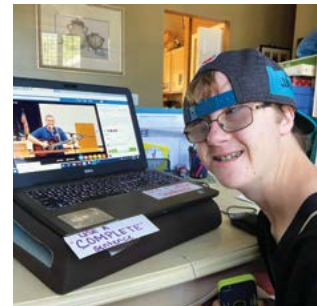
Wrapping up a busy day in the Pet Bakery making Barkin' Biscuits!

Thank you to our Barkin' Biscuit corporate clients like Pet Paradise, Chick-fil-A Marsh Landing Parkway, First Coast Scoopers and VyStar Credit Union who support our program by giving our treats to their customers.

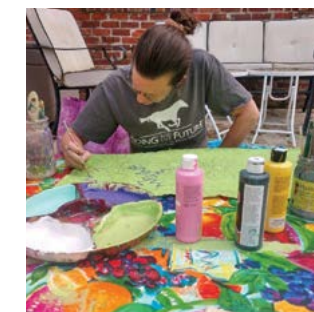
SILVER LININGS OF COVID

While we never anticipated how our world would be changed when the COVID-19 pandemic forced students and staff to transition to at-home learning after spring break, we knew that NFSSE's community would remain focused on academics and supporting our students. In fact, we found silver linings in the situation that should be celebrated.

- Students and teachers connected in a whole new way with virtual learning. From Zoom classes to resources on Facebook, NFSSE teachers found innovative ways to stay student focused.



- We were able to safely execute our first summer camp! Campers had so much fun with the horses and seeing friends they missed.
- Renovations of the Anderson Smith Upper School Campus were completed ahead of schedule. Secondary and Transition students now have their own building to better meet their academic needs.
- We held a socially distanced graduation ceremony to celebrate our 10 graduates. We are so proud of them!



COVID SILVER LININGS CONTINUED

- ✓ A vital way we were able to help serve our community was by selling Berry Good Farms fresh veggie bags and ready-to-eat casseroles.
- ✓ Knowing how hard everyone was working from home and impressed by our students' Good Deeds, Head of School, Sally Hazelip, recognized **every** student as April's Student of the Month!



NFSSE EVENTS



HEART of the RUNWAY

Showcasing high fashion, student art, and Berry Good Farm's culinary team, the annual Heart of the Runway event was an exciting fundraising event with a glamorous twist. Student and community models wore the latest in Spring designs from Dillard's children's department and event partner, Linda Cunningham Boutique. Attendees were delighted by a delicious meal and generously supported Art with Soul with the purchase of stained glass windows, decorative angels, and hand drawn notecards.



\$44,813
RAISED AT THE
HEART OF THE
RUNWAY EVENT



North Florida School of Special Education made the difficult decision to cancel the 2020 Berry Good Farms Weekend Festival, the school's premier fundraising event.

Thank you to the many sponsors and partners who deferred their sponsorships to next year's event and to the incredibly generous donors who allocated their sponsorships into scholarship funds. Their generosity allowed NFSSE to distribute more in financial aid for the 2020-2021 school year than has ever previously been given.

TITLE SPONSOR
J. Wayne Weaver In Honor Of
Delores Barr Weaver

COMMUNITY PARTNER
DuBow Family Foundation

HONORARY WEEKEND CHAIRS
Nancy and Gary Chartrand

DINNER ON THE FARM CHAIR
Susan DuBow



LOOK FOR REIMAGINED EVENTS IN 2021

GRAND OPENING

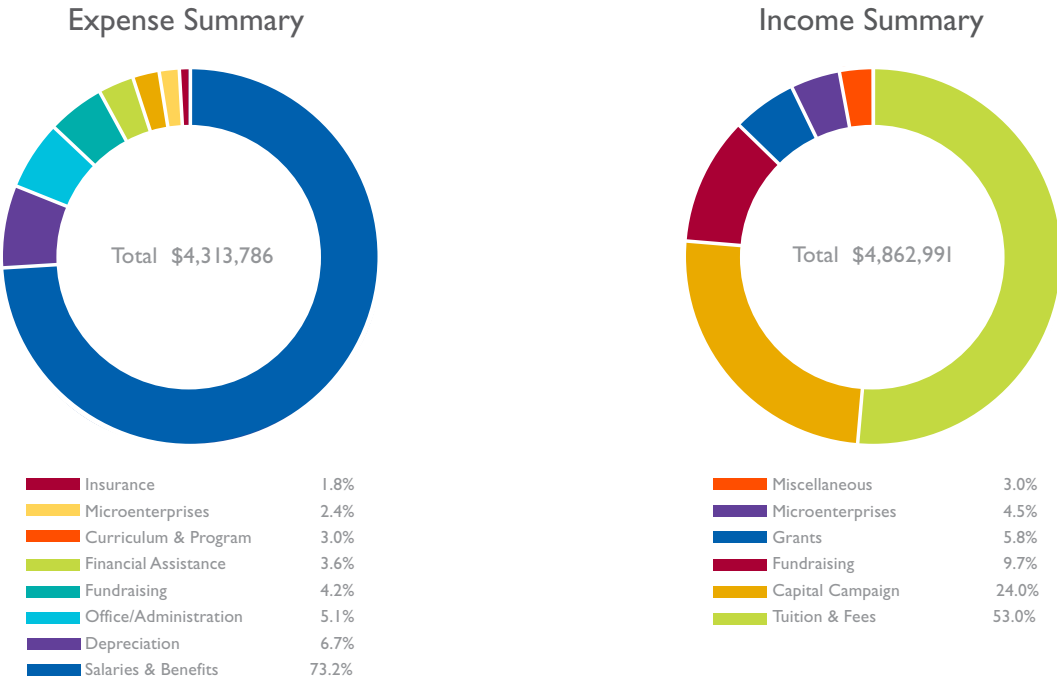
Hearts were full at the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony celebrating the completion of the campus expansion including the 32,000 square foot Christy and Lee Smith Lower School Campus and the Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center. Mayor Lenny Curry, dignitaries, and donors joined North Florida School of Special Education students, families, Board of Directors, and staff in the DuBow Family Physical Education Complex for the momentous occasion. Completed just 11 months after breaking ground on the project, the expansion allows more students to attend NFSSE, enhances enterprise opportunities, and elevates the daily experience for our students by allowing them to learn in an environment designed specifically for their unique needs.



\$7.5 MILLION
RAISED FOR THE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN



FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS FY 2019–2020



NFSSE AT A GLANCE FY 2019–2020

132

Students
ages 6 to 18

43

Transition Students
ages 18 to 22

65

Post-graduates
22 years of age and older



82 STAFF MEMBERS
AND A
1:6 TEACHER TO
STUDENT RATIO

Due to printing deadlines, the financials listed above are based on unaudited financial statements.
Please refer to NFSSE's 990's for audited financial reports.

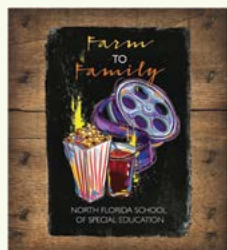


2021 UPCOMING FUNDRAISING EVENTS

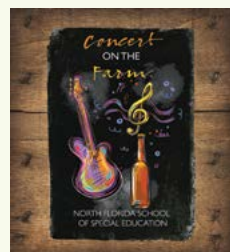


APRIL 8–11, 2021—NFSSE Campus

The Reimagined Berry Good Farms Weekend Festival will dish up a culinary weekend filled with live music, delicious food, entertainment, and a celebration of the NFSSE community. Equally fun and innovative, the four-day fundraising event will allow guests to safely enjoy the NFSSE campus highlighting the exquisite Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center. Funds raised at Berry Good Farms Weekend Festival support NFSSE academics and programs.



Farm to Family
Thursday, April 8 &
Friday, April 9, 2021



Concert on the Farm
(formerly known as Farm to Tap)
Saturday, April 10, 2021



Dinner on the Farm
Sunday, April 11, 2021



February 8–12, 2021

Linda
CUNNINGHAM

designer fashion. redesigned event.

Ten exclusive dining and shopping experiences are available at the re-designed Heart of the Runway. Sponsors have an opportunity to host a table of 10 guests for a preview of Linda Cunningham's spring fashions while enjoying either a luncheon or cocktail party in the San Marco boutique.