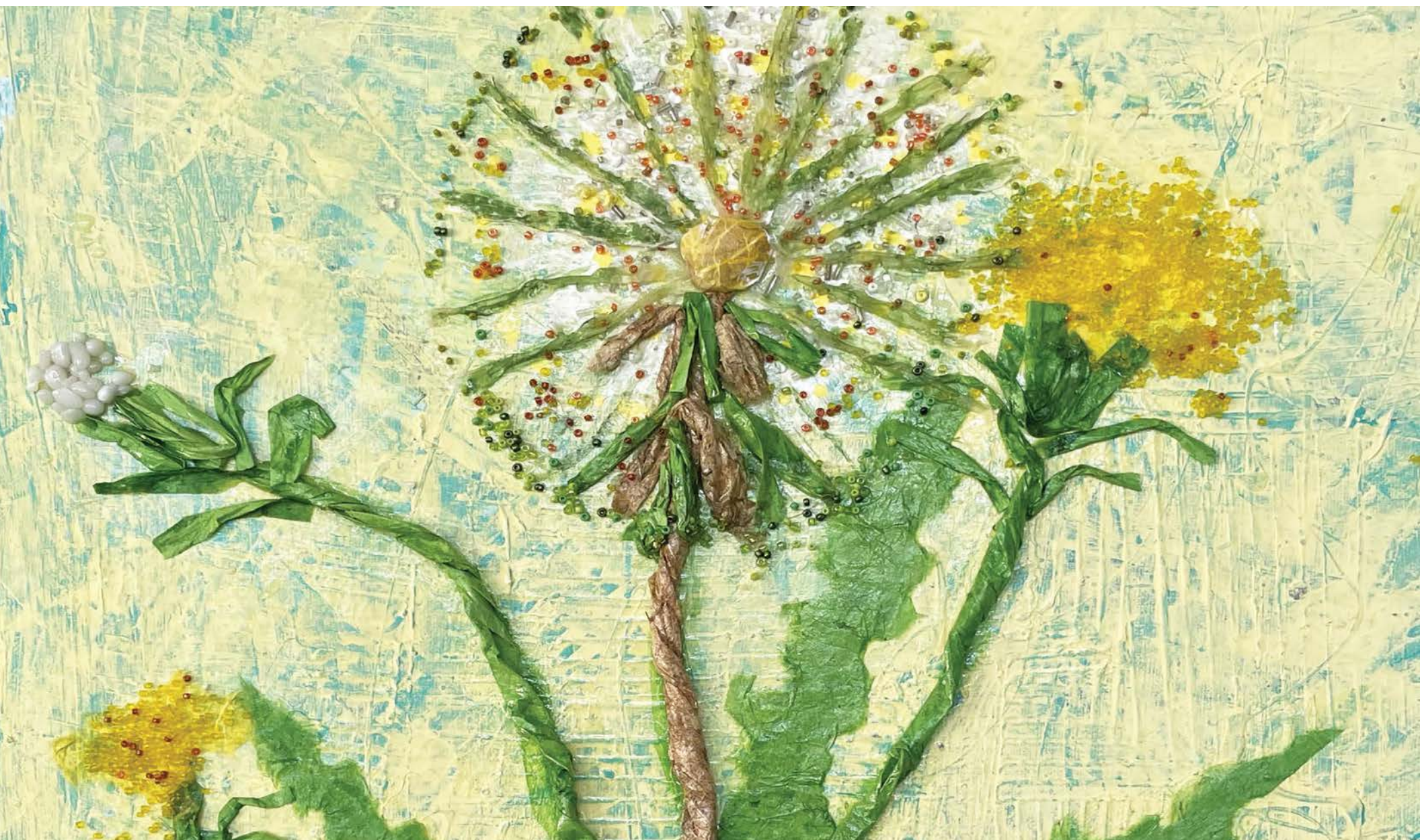


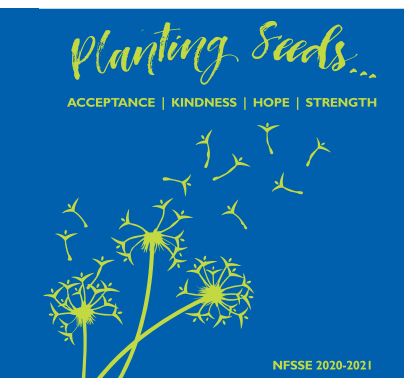
# Planting Seeds...





## LETTER FROM BERT AND SALLY

Our 2020–2021 theme of **Planting Seeds** was a positive way to reflect upon an amazing and successful year! Our school relied on its strong *roots* as we navigated a school year in the time of COVID-19, and students *grew tall* and *blossomed* as they explored the expanded North Florida School of Special Education campus.



As the school year began, we planted seeds of **acceptance** that this year would look different with masks and safety precautions. Our students and staff handled the situation with patience and grace.

We planted seeds of **kindness** through our actions by encouraging our students to participate in service projects. So many in the community are kind to our school, and as we think most of you know, it is in our students' nature to show kindness in return.

Throughout the year, we were grateful for the seeds of **hope** that were planted by you in our community. The addition of the Christy and Lee Smith Lower School Campus and the Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center allowed us to open safely with extra space and find joy in the barn animals and the new sensory trail.

The NFSSE family...students, staff, parents, grandparents, friends, volunteers, and donors... planted seeds of **strength** in the community by rallying around the school, allowing us to remain open and focus on our students' educational and social needs.

Even with the challenges COVID-19 presented, we completed our first full year enjoying the new lower school campus, therapeutic equestrian center, and remodeled upper school campus.

We have more incredible things to look forward to during our 2021–2022 school year—including celebrating 30 years of North Florida School of Special Education serving students and families.

You are the strong roots that allowed NFSSE to flourish through an unprecedented year. Thank you for supporting NFSSE!

Bert Brown  
President, Board of Directors

Sally Hazelip  
Head of School



## MISSION STATEMENT

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

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2020-2021

### EXECUTIVE BOARD

Bert Brown, President  
Michelle Gilliam, Vice President  
Sally Anne Brown, Esq., Secretary  
Ray Van Landingham, Treasurer  
John Macdonald, Esq., Past President

### MEMBERS AT LARGE

John D. Baker III  
Lee Bledsoe  
Claude Collier  
Sheila Collier  
Susan DuBow  
Donald Hinson  
Bashyam Iyengar, M.D.  
Rita Nathawad, M.D.  
The Honorable Virginia B. Norton  
Alayna Oram  
Karen Prewitt  
Erin VanWey





# ART

**EVERY ARTIST HAS  
A PURPOSE,  
A STORY TO TELL.**

*Art With Soul is the art microenterprise at  
North Florida School of Special Education.*

The joy of Art With Soul is working together to discover each other's strengths and our commonalities. Artists explore various mediums for artistic expression, including pottery, animation, painting, mosaics and more. The results are breathtaking pieces of art as unique as the artists who create them.

Transition and postgraduate students meet in the Art With Soul on-campus studio daily. They create works that are celebrated and made available for purchase. Several Art With Soul artists have developed such expertise they are now compensated employees of the school.

In the adjacent room, younger NFSSE students enjoy art class as a weekly resource where they begin their journey in creative expression.

Inspired by the mentors next door, some of the young students go on to develop such a love and talent for art that they become Art With Soul artists.



# BRAXTON BEATTIE

The art created by the artists in Art With Soul is as varied as the students who create it. Some students prefer characters from their imaginations, others like landscapes recreated from books. Some artists work in fine details and enjoy precision with pen and paint, while others create loose, abstract pieces in chalk and clay.

One student works in a medium unique to his craft... Braxton Beattie creates stunning pieces of stained glass art in reclaimed windows with a range of topics from school team logos to sea life. Braxton cuts, arranges, and glues down the stained glass on the window to create a mosaic piece that both authentically represents the image yet is inventive in execution.

Another unique aspect of Braxton's work in Art With Soul is that his work is almost exclusively by commission. Braxton is inspired by the process of creation and happily crafts windows to suit the tastes of the purchaser.

"Braxton is an integral part of Art With Soul," said Art With Soul Manager, Jill Morrow. "He always offers a word of encouragement to his fellow students as his kindness and helpful spirit leads his daily interactions. He is dedicated to his craft, works tirelessly and with intention and is always interested in learning new glass techniques. He is a true craftsman."

While Braxton has signature pieces like Florida Gator logos and his incredible Christmas trees, he has also the opportunity to create stunning windows for the community like anatomical heart and lungs for Dr. Dale Mueller, a local cardiothoracic surgeon and NFSSE parent; a gorgeous mermaid in appreciation to 2021 Berry Good Farms Weekend Festival Chairs Maren and Paul Bertozzi; and an exquisitely detailed octopus for the wife of Board President Bert Brown. The window prices range from \$250 to \$700 depending on size and complexity.

Braxton has been in the art enterprise at NFSSE since its early days. He began at NFSSE in 2012, and since his graduation in 2018, has been involved in the postgraduate program. Braxton began in the art enterprise making the signature angels and mixed media projects. He found his calling when he began working with the glass windows. Braxton is now a paid employee of Art With Soul, earning commission with each window made.

*Art is the window to man's soul. Without it, he would never be able to see beyond his immediate world; nor could the world see the man within.*

Lady Bird Johnson

*"I feel peaceful and relaxed when I make windows," mused Braxton. "I see myself as a skilled artist who creates my own pieces out of the glass and put them together to create a beautiful piece of art."*





## HOPE, HEALING, AND *art with soul*

Dr. Dale Mueller and the surgeons at Cardiothoracic and Vascular Surgery Associates wanted their office to be a good reflection of their quality work and the wonderful city of Jacksonville. While selecting items for their patient exam rooms, they desired to highlight the talents of artists across the city, including Jacksonville University, University of North Florida, and North Florida School of Special Education Art With Soul. By showcasing these local artists' interpretation of cardiovascular system, the physicians hoped to generate interest and conversation from patients during a stressful visit.

After touring the Art With Soul studio, Dr. Mueller commissioned two large acrylic paintings... one of the respiratory and endocrine systems to be completed by Kenson Frink. He also commissioned Braxton to create windows representing anatomical lungs and a heart. The paintings featured bold colors and contrast while the mosaic glass windows are almost ethereal with pastel colors and subtle grace.

The physicians' intentional choice of art and artists produced the result they had hoped. The pieces created by NFSSE artists have been extensively commented on by patients, physicians, nurses, and hospital administrators, including the Memorial Hospital President & CEO.

The students enjoyed working on such interesting subject matter and are proud to know patients in the office enjoy their art.



## CLASSROOM AND PROGRAM PARTNERS

With an annual gift of \$15,000, Classroom and Program 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.

Classroom and Program Partners develop a special bond with our students, receiving invitations not just to annual fundraising events, but also to class or program activities. Partners' presence is always welcome, but never required.

Thank you to Dorothy and Lee Thomas who, while serving as our Equestrian Program Partners, toured the Art With Soul program and decided to also become Art Studio Partners.

### 2020–2021 CLASSROOM AND PROGRAM PARTNERS

John D. Baker III—Classroom Partner

Josh Lambo—Library Program Partner

Dorothy and Lee Thomas—Art Studio Partner

Dorothy and Lee Thomas—Equestrian Program Partner

Kirbo Charitable Foundation—Pet Bakery Program Partner



# FEATURED ARTISTS

For artists at Art With Soul, a career in the visual arts is an opportunity for meaningful employment. The Art With Soul model supports creative decision-making and experimentation, creating a safe place to take risks while promoting self-confidence, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Transition and postgraduate students gain a sense of inner freedom through their creative practice and professional development.

## SPENCER SEARLE

Spencer was initially involved in the Pet Bakery and worked alongside others on Berry Good Farms. While participating in “postgrad art class,” Grace Williams, art teacher and Art With Soul facilitator, had the idea that Spencer should be in Art With Soul. Spencer made circles...bold, intentional circles that calmed him as an artist, yet intrigued Grace. She worked to recruit him into the art program, struggling to find space for him to work behind screens or between classes in the old art space. It was not until the new studio was built as part of the Christy and Lee Smith Lower School building that Spencer had the space to explore his craft. He has his own worktable and materials. Through his involvement in the Art With Soul program, Spencer has not only made beautiful drawings but is now a commissioned artist.

## EMILY MORROW

Emily has always been involved in the art program at NFSSE. When she first started attending school in 2004, two of her passions were already clear... art and Disney! When she graduated in 2013, Emily would be a part of the founding class of art enterprise. She has seen the program evolve and she has progressed as an artist alongside it. Through all the change, Emily worked to stay focused on her art and to stay positive. She creates vibrant and lively painting incorporating her favorite Disney characters to spread her positivity.





# VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers are the lifeblood of NFSSE and truly allow the microenterprise programs to work so well. From helping harvest on Berry Good Farms, to lending a hand in the Café...from leading a horse at the stable, to packaging in the Pet Bakery, volunteers assist in countless ways which allow our students to accomplish tasks while also giving the students an opportunity to build relationships with the community. NFSSE is grateful for the many volunteers who give their time and expertise to the school.



**SCOTTEUTHOLD**

Scott Leuthold shares his gentle spirit, kindness, and talent as a community artist volunteer in the Art With Soul program, working alongside artists who are developing their craft. The student artists gain new skills by working with artists of his caliber, allowing them to master difficult skills more quickly like composure and scale. As a retired architect, Leuthold has command of lines and perspective that when applied to student art, elevates the work.

**NATALIECOSTAS**

Natalie Costas truly puts the “soul” in Art With Soul. She volunteers her time and resources in the program as a friend to the students, bringing organization and time management skills. Just as likely to be volunteering at an event as attending one as a guest, Natalie is generous in her support of NFSSE. When Jill first envisioned an art enterprise, she was drawn to the name “Anam Cara” or soul friend...also a perfect description of Natalie.



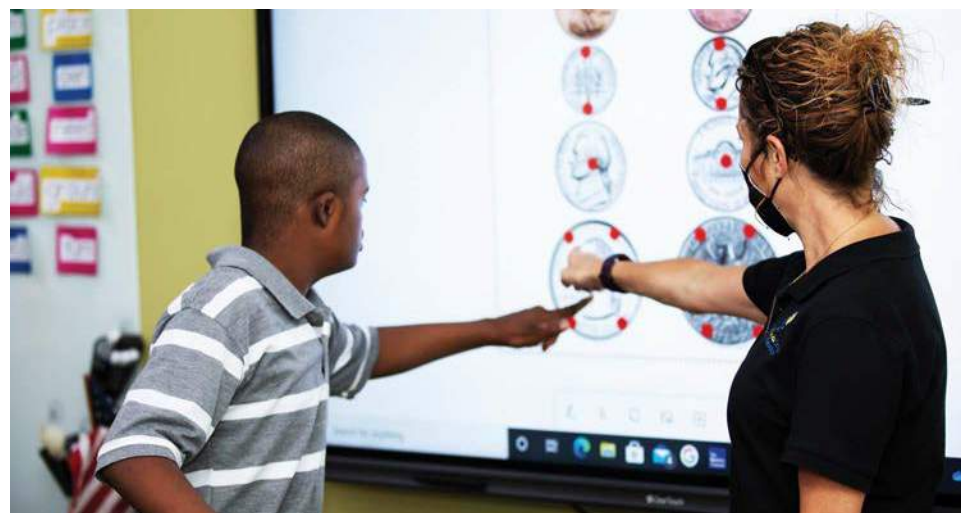


# PLANTING SEEDS

Like a seedling, our youngest elementary students are full of strength and potential. We watch these little ones take root and shoot, cultivated by the care of their teachers, fertilized by the kindness and acceptance of their friends, and supported by an intricate root system of family, teachers, donors, and community. We are overjoyed to watch them become the best versions of themselves as they grow into tall trees, able to withstand and thrive in adversity. They bless us with their beauty and spirit and inspire us by their victories and strength.



**SEEDLINGS**—Elementary students first discover the joy of cultivating produce on Berry Good Farms with garden teacher Mrs. Cooley. Each week, students tend to their little patch of greens until seedlings become healthy, delicious produce that students can harvest and enjoy. Mrs. Cooley encourages students to use all their senses to explore new fruits and vegetables—from mustard greens to kale to mulberries and more. Students grow eager to eventually taste new foods. Garden class is more than a fun resource, it is planting the seeds for a lifetime of health and nutrition.



**SPROUTS**—Teachers know exactly how to inspire intermediate students and nurture their curiosity in state-of-the-art classrooms. Students grow confidence through challenging academics that are guided by individual education plans. Teachers help students develop problem-solving and critical-thinking skills through class assignments and social situations. During the middle school years, students also grow socially—forming deep friendships with peers. NFSSE teachers provide loving guidance every step of the way.





**YOUNG TREES**—Students love music class with Mr. Sontag where they sing, develop rhythm, and play numerous instruments. Secondary students have additional opportunities to explore their creative side through music production club. Both in school and afterschool, secondary students learn to operate audio visual equipment, mix beats, and create lyrics. The entire student body cheers them on when they showcase their original compositions during the annual talent show. Music is just another opportunity to discover gifts and grow in confidence at NFSSE.



**TREES WITH FLOWERS**—Students begin working in the Berry Good Café during Secondary and build upon their skills in the transition program. The Berry Good Farms Café offers many training opportunities that young adults can apply to community employment, from barista skills, to front of house service, point of sale, culinary, and more. Students also learn to solve problems, communicate with coworkers, and provide excellent customer service. We invite you to stop by for lunch and let our students serve you!



**TALL TREES**—Over 40 postgraduates and transition students work in the Pet Bakery where they create all-natural Barkin' Biscuits that are sold far and near. This year, the Pet Bakery team baked and packaged over 600,000 dog treats and added new products—holiday and seasonal treats, Bitty Bite Training Treats, wedding treats, and Bridle Bite Horse Treats! While the daily presence of volunteers and corporate teams was missed due to COVID protocols, bakers kept their energy high with upbeat music and joyful camaraderie.



**ROOTS**—Our donors are the roots that stretch deep and wide, bolstering and supporting the smallest seedlings to the tallest trees on the North Florida School of Special Education campus. Our strong, healthy root system nourishes our students, supports our staff, and allows our little plot of land to flourish and grow. We are humbled to be undergirded by the strength of a vibrant, engaged donor community.



# UNDER THE BRANCHES OF THE WALKING TREE

As we all know our Walking Tree is a treasure trove of knowledge. Located in the woods behind the Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center, her network of roots spans deep and wide, supporting the fruitful land of our campus. Her watchful eye has gazed upon NFSSE from the very beginning. She is as much a part of the fabric of the school as you and me. You can feel her pride as she watches over the students, teachers, staff, volunteers, chickens, and horses, all of whom come together to create a dynamic and diverse family at the base of her trunk.

This year, the Walking Tree witnessed a beautiful year filled with student learning, triumphant riders, joyful parties, and friendships forged.

During school hours, the Walking Tree heard the laughter of students as each class took part in groundwork equine therapy. Students learned teamwork and gained self-confidence grooming and caring for the gentle horses, encouraged by the postgraduates working the barn as a job site through the Project S.A.D.D.L.E. program. The Walking Tree heard the quiet whispers of students who otherwise remain silent as they verbalized their hearts' desires to the horses, unaware their vocal abilities were budding.

On weekends a Special Olympic team of riders prepared for state competition under the shade of her branches. They developed strength, dexterity, and the skill needed to bring home a state trophy!





This beautiful refuge is not just for NFSSE students. Community riders arrive after school and on weekends for therapeutic riding and to explore the sensory trails around the Walking Tree's viewing deck.

Many love it so much they returned to celebrate birthdays. The Walking Tree loves the farm animals she spends her days with, but this year she also celebrated with some real “party animals”! NFSSE was thrilled to be a part of students’ birthday parties at the barn. Guests rode horses, enjoyed pizza, played games, and laughed at these one-of-a-kind parties.

The space can also transform into a magical venue for casual or elegant affairs.



## VENUE RESERVATIONS

NFSSE is excited to offer the equestrian center for birthday parties, corporate events, and other celebrations. Allow the Berry Good Farms catering team to manage every detail of your special day. Contact Donna Fritsche, Special Events Manager, at [dfritsche@northfloridaschool.org](mailto:dfritsche@northfloridaschool.org) or 904-724-8323 Ext. 1085.





# HOLIDAY ON THE FARM



DEC 4 & 5, 2020

The inaugural Holiday on the Farm allowed NFSSE friends and families to safely enjoy the spacious area behind the riding arena where they shopped for holiday gifts, laughed, and took photos with the horses. The Walking Tree watched with delight as visitors spread holiday cheer while finding unique gifts for families and friends.







## HEART of the RUNWAY

FEB 8–12, 2021

Instead of gathering at Linda Cunningham's boutique in San Marco for an elegant luncheon, students modeled fashions by Dillard's while walking the red carpet in the barn.

A video showcasing the models was shared with NFSSE friends and family who had the opportunity to make donations.

Linda Cunningham support NFSSE by generously donating a portion of all purchases during the week.



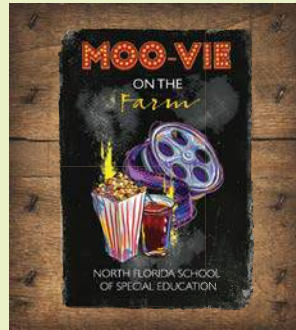
## HOT OFF THE PRESS FARM TO COCKTAIL

The recipes in the new Farm to Cocktail book are a sampling of cocktails that have been served at NFSSE fundraising events. All the recipes include produce grown at Berry Good Farms, the school's one-acre urban farm focused on organic growing techniques and student enrichment. From lemongrass to moringa, fruits and herbs are used in non-traditional methods to complement and enhance classic cocktails.

You may purchase Farm to Cocktail in the Unique Boutique located in the Anderson Smith Upper School Campus, online at [www.JaxFarmtoCocktail.com](http://www.JaxFarmtoCocktail.com), or scanning the QR code with the camera on your phone.







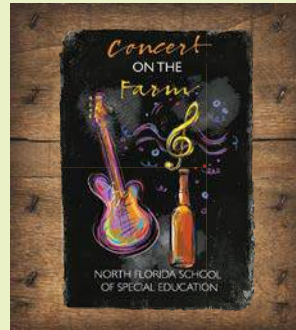
**APRIL 8 & 9, 2021**

The Berry Good Farms Weekend Festival kicked off with two family nights of MOO-vie on the Farm. Families spread out under the branches of the Walking Tree to watch movies, enjoy delicious BBQ prepared by the NFSSE Culinary Team, and spent time with friends. The highlight of the evening was the family favorite Pie or Peck event!





# BERRY GOOD FARMS WEEKEND FESTIVAL ■ CONCERT ON THE FARM



APRIL 10, 2021

Concert on the Farm was a new addition to the Festival. The Band Be Easy had guests on their feet. At the same time, other patrons sampled delicious fare from talented Chef Matthew Medure and the school's culinary department while savoring seasonal signature drinks from the Farm to Cocktail recipe collection. Some say it was just a breeze, but the branches of the Walking Tree swayed along with the music.





# BERRY GOOD FARMS WEEKEND FESTIVAL ■ DINNER ON THE FARM



APRIL 11, 2021

Chaired by Maren and Paul Bertozzi, Dinner on the Farm is NFSSE's signature fundraising event. Supporters gathered under the branches of the Walking Tree. The riding arena was transformed into a gorgeous pavilion where guests dined on a collaborative feast by Allan DeVault and Chef Jon Insetta of Orsay, Black Sheep, and Bellwether, partnered with NFSSE's culinary team led by Chef Carrie Eagle.





# BERRY GOOD FARMS WEEKEND FESTIVAL ■ DINNER ON THE FARM



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

COMMUNITY PARTNER



LIVE OAK CONTRACTING

FESTIVAL PARTNER





# HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR

A NFSSE school year isn't complete without visits from our favorite athletes – Josh Lambo, Jacksonville Jaguars kicker, encouraged students throughout the year and even hosted the NFSSE Special Olympics Soccer Team! Tim Tebow, along with his wife Demi, and the entire Tim Tebow Foundation staff made Reindeer Games under the Walking Tree an extra special day for students.

Although volunteer participation was limited due to COVID protocols, students didn't miss a beat with all 'the extras' staff added to perk up the social aspects of school including class parties, Spooktacular, Reading Week, and more.

This summer, we offered a full camp experience for over 150 children and young adults with intellectual and developmental differences (IDD) along with some neurotypical peers. Campers had fun gaining skills and confidence through horse camp, activities camp, barista camp, therapeutic riding lessons, iCan Bike camp, and so much more.





# PROM



NFSSE upper class students enjoyed a brief return to normalcy celebrating prom and graduation! Prom goers made a grand entrance, strutting their stuff down the red carpet and through the barn. They were delighted to see the open-air riding arena transformed by decorations fitting the theme Boots, Buckles, and Bling. DJ Sontag keeping the party lively and the dance floor hopping.



# GRADUATION

There was no masking the pride in family's faces as they watched 14 students achieve the important milestone of graduation. The gymnasium was transformed to host a socially distanced ceremony while family at home enjoyed the celebration via livestream. We are so proud of our graduates, whether they become part of the workforce or continue to be a part of our postgraduate program. It is our greatest joy to watch their transformation from tiny seedling when they first arrived at NFSSE to the mighty oaks they are today.





# ICAN BIKE



When Jacksonville Jaguars kicker, Josh Lambo was nominated as the Jaguars 2020 Walter Payton Man of the Year, he chose NFSSE as one of the beneficiaries of this award. Lambo's gift made it possible to bring the iCan Bike program to Jacksonville for 50 NFSSE students and community-based riders. Over 100 volunteers—from all five counties and even Georgia—logged hundreds of miles running alongside riders!

Learning to ride a bike is more than a feel-good moment, it is physical fitness for all ages. It gives children with IDD the ability to keep up with siblings and friends in the neighborhood. We can't wait to bring this program back to NFSSE's campus.





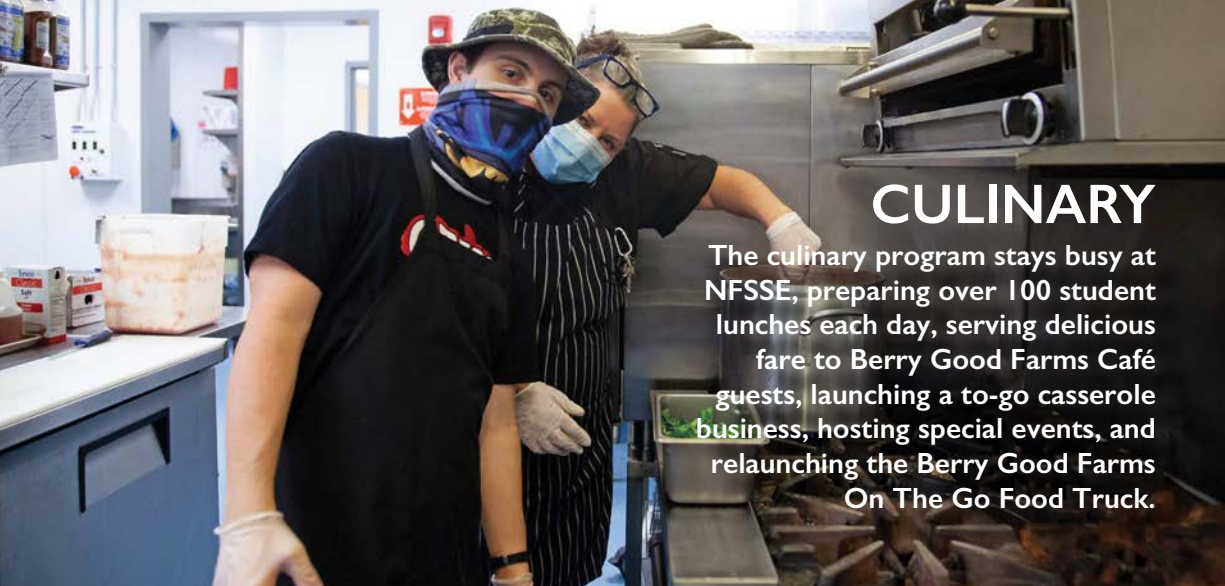
# TENNIS IS FOR EVERYONE

NFSSE also partnered with Tennis Is For Everyone to hold multiple clinics for children with intellectual and developmental differences (IDD) this summer. Tennis pros and volunteers arrived bright and early with portable nets, hundreds of tennis balls, rackets, and swag galore. They transformed the gymnasium into a pop-up tennis clinic, teaching children and young adults the fundamentals of tennis. Many developed a newfound love of the game.

Some students discovered a natural knack for tennis! Tennis Is For Everyone made sure these students could continue to explore the sport by sponsoring tennis lesson scholarships to Deercreek Country Club and donating the equipment and supplies to NFSSE for PE and afterschool programs.







## CULINARY

The culinary program stays busy at NFSSE, preparing over 100 student lunches each day, serving delicious fare to Berry Good Farms Café guests, launching a to-go casserole business, hosting special events, and relaunching the Berry Good Farms On The Go Food Truck.

Under the leadership of Chef Carrie Eagle, students are gaining front and back-of-house restaurant skills as part of NFSSE's vocational training program for secondary and transition students. Some NFSSE postgraduates are paid culinary employees.

The culinary program did not slow down when summer began. Chef Carrie opened the kitchen to campers of all ages as they learned to cook and tasted new foods, including sushi! Stop by the Berry Good Farms Café for lunch Monday-Friday to enjoy the menu and service.



### Chef Carrie

Chef Carrie Eagle joined NFSSE in April of 2021 with a passion for farm to table dining and as a winner of Food Network's Chopped and contestant on Beat Bobby Flay.



## MOBILE MARKET

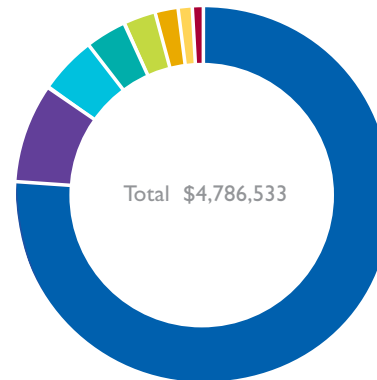
Mobile Markets continued to focus on pockets of town with food scarcity, but this year we implemented measures to guard the health and safety of postgraduates. Instead of hitting the streets, the Mobile Market stayed on campus providing lush, organic produce and casseroles to our Arlington neighbors. Each morning, postgraduates harvested the greens for market and set up the tent, preparing for a steady stream of shoppers throughout the day. We are proud of the leadership and skills postgraduates are gaining through employment with the Mobile Market, and even prouder that this microenterprise is meeting a community need. We look forward to growing the program in the years to come.





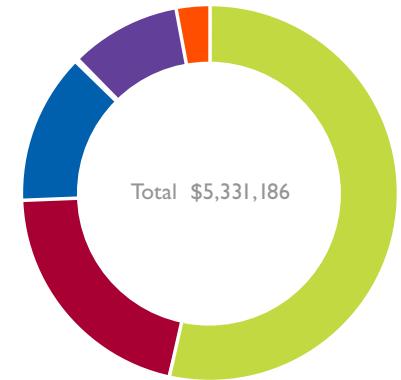
## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS FY 2020–2021

Expense Summary



Insurance	1.5%
Curriculum & Program	1.8%
Depreciation	2.0%
Fundraising	2.6%
Financial Assistance	3.3%
Microenterprises	4.3%
Office/Administration	8.9%
Salaries & Benefits	75.6%

Income Summary



Miscellaneous	3.0%
Microenterprises	7.2%
Fundraising	11.9%
Grants	19.0%
Tuition & Fees	58.9%

## NFSSE AT A GLANCE FY 2020–2021

**140**  
STUDENTS  
AGES 6 TO 18

**45**  
TRANSITION  
STUDENTS  
AGES 18 TO 22

**65**  
POSTGRADUATES  
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.



## 2021-2022 UPCOMING FUNDRAISING EVENTS



**Nov 6, 2021**

The exciting new family event will bring NFSSE families and friends together to celebrate the beginning of the school year and the culmination of the Giving Tree Campaign. There will be delicious food, games, and everyone's favorite fundraising challenge...Pie or Peck!



**Dec 3 & 4, 2021**

See the farm in a different light as the Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center transforms into family-friendly farm festivity! Shop for holiday gifts at the stores featuring Art With Soul, culinary treats, and farm offerings. There will be photo opportunities, s'mores, games, and more!



**April 9 & 10, 2022**

Join us for our signature weekend festival filled with delicious food, live music, entertainment, and a celebration of the NFSSE community. Kick off the weekend with a rocking good time at Concert on the farm featuring The Band Be Easy and tempting food and drinks from local vendors. Celebrate the 10th Annual Dinner on the Farm with fine dining under the stars at the Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center.



**Stay tuned for details...**