



Since 1961

# MILESTONES

Helping students with special needs go the distance

The Official Newsletter of St. Elizabeth School

Spring 2019

## “I Would Be Happier If I Could Do It Myself”

### Disability-Accessible Building Project Will Bring SES Students Independence

What is it like to be a student at St. Elizabeth School? On an ordinary school day, SES students with disabilities might find themselves in any number of scenarios. They might be in Ms. Cronin’s social studies class learning about the voting process and the value of peaceful discussion; they might be in the greenhouse learning to plant and nurture flowers for the SES plant sale; or they might even be at a weekly off-campus internship placement at Petsmart or Irvine Nature Center.

The possibilities are endless for students here at St. Elizabeth School, but for our students with mobility challenges, the simple act of getting around the building is a

big challenge. We recently asked SES Senior **Leon Billups** about his daily experience of entering the building. When asked if it was hard for him to get through the front door, Leon responded with an emphatic “Yes! And it’s hard for the other students to get in and out... and the staff.”



SES Senior Leon Billups

Leon then demonstrated how he enters the school vestibule every day. He enters the first set of narrow doors, but only after someone opens and holds the door for him. The second set of doors is locked, and Leon attempts to get the attention of SES Receptionist **Ms. Barbara Chase**, who can buzz him in from the front desk. Unfortunately, the desk is too high for her to see him while seated, so he must wait for a staff member to once again open and hold the door. This set of doors has a beam in the center, so Leon must enter through a narrow single door, which often takes some maneuvering.

Times have changed since 1967, when our current SES building was constructed. The structure has undergone multiple renovations over the years to keep up with an ever-changing demographic of students

with disabilities. Within the past five years, St. Elizabeth School has enrolled an increased number of students with *physical* disabilities. 35 of our 133 students use wheelchairs or have difficulty with mobility. After taking a closer look at what students like Leon go through every day, it became clear that a major overhaul was needed to make SES fully disability-accessible and ADA compliant.

This spring, St. Elizabeth School has broken ground on an exciting multi year renovation to our beloved 52-year old building. **The Disability-Accessible Building Project** will update and beautify our school, but more importantly, it will directly improve the quality of life for our students with disabilities. It will provide them with the gifts of *Independence, Safety, and Accessibility*.

Continued on Page 3

#### Inside this issue:

Disability-Accessible Project	1
Donor Spotlight	2
Disability-Accessible Project (Cont.)	3
Students Release Trout	4
Cooperative Game Design Class	4
Kudos	5
SES Calendar	6



# Donor Spotlight

St. Elizabeth School is so grateful to the many organizations who have supported our school through grants. SES has received generous contributions to its Disability-Accessible Building Project from both **Insperty** and the **Phase Foundation**. Additionally, the **State of Maryland** has awarded SES a significant sum in support of this project. Thank you to **Delegate Regina Boyce**, **Delegate Maggie McIntosh**, and **State Senator Mary Washington** for so effectively presenting our case!

The **Middendorf Foundation** recently awarded SES with a grant to fund the new stage lift. Without this donation, any wheelchair-bound SES graduates would not be able to join their classmates on stage at this year's graduation. We look forward to using the new stage lift at many future school events, including talent shows, fashion shows, school plays, and ring ceremonies.

While the building project has created a major buzz throughout the school, SES also has a continuing need for updated technology. With an ever-changing and complex student population, these needs tend to pop up quickly and without much time to seek out funding. Thanks to a substantial grant from the **Sheridan Foundation**, the Assistive Technology department will purchase two NuEye Tracking Systems for nonverbal students who use eyegaze technology to communicate. This purchase became imperative when the school had to obtain loaner devices to meet student needs. SES will also use this grant to help fund three new classroom whiteboards; and an additional two whiteboards will be purchased thanks to a grant from the **M&T Charitable Foundation**. The Smart Boards SES has used for several years are quickly becoming obsolete. These



Left to Right: Delegate Regina Boyce, State Senator Mary Washington, SES Executive Director Michael Thorne, Delegate Maggie McIntosh, and SES Development Director Kristin O'Ferrall

five new 70" Interactive Displays will have the same remarkable capabilities as the Smart Boards, but can be mounted anywhere (without a projector screen).



New 70" Interactive "Whiteboards"



Examples of what the new SES stage lift will look like

Thanks to the generosity of these organizations along with each and every donor, SES students will continue to grow in a safe and accessible environment complete with state-of-the-art technology. With these gifts, St. Elizabeth School can truly carry out its mission to help students with special needs "go the distance."

# Disability-Accessible Building Project (Cont.)

Specifically, the project will completely renovate the SES school entryway and lobby, creating wider wheelchair accessible doors equipped with accessible openers. The front desk will be designed so that people in wheelchairs can communicate with the receptionist directly. A new heated vestibule will allow guests to be properly vetted prior to entering the building—a huge *security* benefit. The new lobby will also get a complete makeover complete with LED, energy-efficient lighting; a showcase area to exhibit student-made products for sale; and a digital monitor to display school-wide announcements.



While the new improvements to the school lobby and vestibule will vastly improve many of our students' day to day experiences at SES, the renovation and addition of 24 new single-stall restrooms will create a very necessary change for students and staff. Several students require more complex toileting procedures, and the new ADA-compliant restrooms will provide a more hygienic and dignified space. Several of the school's current student restrooms contain three stalls—but for several years now, students are only permitted inside one at a time or with a designated staff member (a huge waste of space). Only a few of these restrooms have stalls large enough to accommodate our more severely-disabled students who require extra maneuvering and cleaning procedures. These spaces will soon be used to their full advantage. The restrooms will include advanced Rifton Hygienic Toileting Systems and Support Stations will be added to some restrooms for easier toileting and hygienic needs.

Leon has been a vocal advocate for these changes, and even traveled with school officials to Annapolis last year in an effort to receive funding for the project. Even though he graduates this June, Leon hopes that future generations of SES students might experience a

greater sense of independence with these renovations. Accessibility throughout the school's lobby and restrooms and the ability to independently enter the building will be welcome changes, but *safety* is another major driving force for the project. Should there be an actual fire or urgent need to evacuate, students in wheelchairs are at a much greater disadvantage of getting outside safely. The new disability-accessible main entrance will allow everyone to easily exit the building.

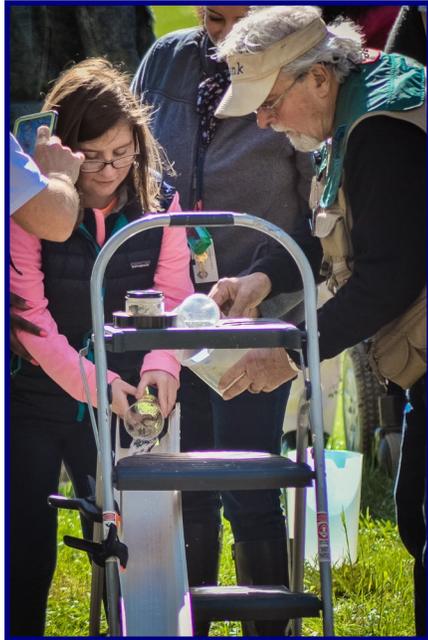
Additionally, thanks to a grant from **The Middendorf Foundation**, a mechanical stage lift is being installed in the school gymnasium, just in time for Leon to graduate.

Phase One of the project has already begun, and the first floor locker rooms are currently being transformed. By September, we will have a brand new vestibule and lobby. These two phases alone will cost an estimated \$840,000, and the entire project will require an estimated \$1.6 million. SES is so grateful to everyone who has already contributed to this important project. To donate, please visit [www.stelizabeth-school/donate-now](http://www.stelizabeth-school/donate-now) or call (410) 889-5054.

Project Timeline		
Phase	Project Description	Anticipated Timeline
I	Renovation of restrooms adjacent to cafeteria, physical education storage area, Development Office storage area and corresponding HVAC work	April-May 2019
II	Demolition of lobby vestibule; construction of new lobby vestibule; renovation of lobby interior	June-August 2019
III	Renovation of restrooms on the main and second floors at the east end of the building; renovation of restroom in Room 200	June-August 2020
IV	Renovation of restrooms on the main and second floors at the west end of the building	June-August 2021

# Students Release Trout in Leakin Park

Students in SES Teacher **Dr. Carlos Almeida's** Environmental Science class recently released the fingerling trout they raised for the past few months. In December, students learned to tend to the 214 Rainbow Trout hatchlings and maintain their tank, which involves a very rigid and precise routine of checking on chemical levels in the water.



SES Student Sutton Clark prepares to send fingerling trout into the wild



SES Student Michael Taylor gathers stream water to acclimate the fingerlings' tank

After watching their trout grow, Dr. A's class was granted permission by Trout Unlimited to release the fish into the Gwynn Falls Stream at Leakin Park. Trout Unlimited is a national nonprofit that helps protect and conserve aquatic habitats. If certain fish are released into any body of water, the fingerlings can permanently damage an entire ecosystem.

Students carefully monitored the water temperatures of both the stream and the fingerlings' tank, and gradually changed the tank's temperature by adding cups of stream water. Finally, the class released the trout into the stream on a gentle slide. Keep an eye out if you're walking along the Gwynn Falls Stream—you might just spot an SES trout!

## SES Gets Creative in Cooperative Game Design Class



Emoji-themed Challenge card game

This semester, students in SES Teacher **Chip Morgan-Riegel's** Cooperative Game Design Class got to put their creativity to work by conceptualizing new and original tabletop games! After designing, testing, and gathering feedback for their concepts, the class created two games that SES professionally printed.

*Challenge*, a card game, was a collaboration from the whole class—particularly SES Students **Libby Rosenthal** and **Kiante Brown**. While any deck of cards will work with the game, it is best played with the “emoji-themed” cards designed by Libby.

*Get Trolled* is a competitive race game with tiles for 2-5 players. This one has a meme-themed design that was primarily developed by SES Student **Alex Hinrichsen**.



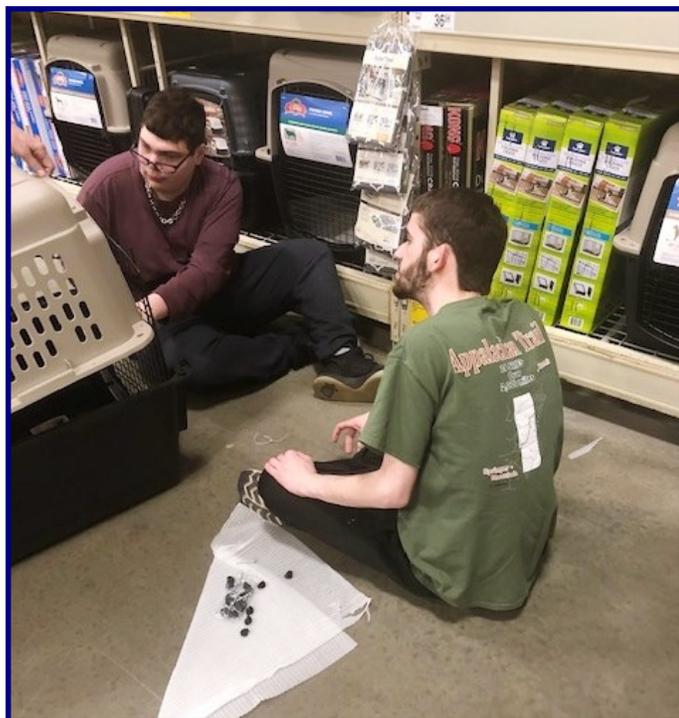
Meme-themed tile race game designed by Alex Hinrichsen

Both of these games are available for students and staff to play in the SES Media Center. After getting more feedback from the school community, Mr. Morgan-Riegel's class hopes to make both *Challenge* and *Get Trolled* available for purchase—stay tuned!

# Kudos to...

... SES Senior **Darby Taylor** and SES Student **Josh Cignatta** for receiving the “Volunteers of the Month” award at their work-based learning placement, the **Carrie Murray Nature Center**. Their certificate reads, “This month, we would like to celebrate Josh and Darby for being fantastic volunteers at the Carrie Murray Nature Center. They are both students at St. Elizabeth School in Baltimore and enjoy spending time in Gwynns Falls and Leakin Park. Josh and Darby are also very friendly and love to learn about nature. Together, they work hard to make the Nature Center warm and welcoming. Their service has had a huge, positive impact on all of the Nature Center’s visitors. We appreciate all of their help!” Keep up the amazing work, Josh and Darby, and thanks for spreading the SES joy!

... SES Students **E.J. Heine** and **Ridge Lipinski** for doing exceptional work at their work-based learning placement! E.J. and Ridge started out stocking shelves at Petsmart, but soon their manager noticed how well they were doing and decided that they could handle more responsibility. He put them in charge of assembling dog and cat crates for the store—not a typical task for a work-based learning placement. Great work guys—oh, the places you’ll go!



E.J. Heine (left) and Ridge Lipinski getting the job done at Petsmart

## Volunteers of the Month

Giving special thanks to Josh and Darby!



Copy of Josh Cignatta and Darby Taylor’s “Volunteers of the Month” certificate

... SES Student **Diego Krueger** for scoring a passing grade on his Government HSA Assessment! Kudos as well to SES Teacher **Mr. Robert Galassi** along with all the staff who help prepare students for these challenging state exams. We are cheering you on, Diego, as well as all of the students who are taking their exams this quarter.



April’s swanky SES Fashion Show

... All of the SES students who participated in this year’s Oscars-themed Fashion Show, which took place on April 12. You all looked *fierce* as you strutted down the runway (staff, you all looked pretty phenomenal too)!

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**High School Prom**  
May 17

**Memorial Day**  
School Closed for Students and Staff  
May 27

**Talent Show**  
June 6, 12:30 PM

**Graduation**  
June 11, 2:00 PM



**Summer Break**  
School Closed for Students  
June 13—July 7

**School Reopens For Students**  
July 8

**August Break**  
School Closed for Students  
August 2— August 25

*Please be an ambassador for SES and pass this newsletter on to others.*



## ST. ELIZABETH SCHOOL

Helping Students with Special Needs Go the Distance

801 Argonne Drive, Baltimore, MD 21218-1998

*St. Elizabeth School is a ministry sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis of Assisi*

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
**U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID**  
BALTIMORE, MD  
PERMIT #2947

## Donate to the Disability-Accessible Building Project



Are you excited to see a more accessible SES in the future? Be sure to read our cover story about this much-needed \$1.6 Million project.

**Donate Online at**  
**[www.stelizabeth-school/donate-now](http://www.stelizabeth-school/donate-now)**  
**or call (410) 889-5054**

We still need your help! Give the gifts of *Independence, Safety, and Accessibility* to St. Elizabeth School students by contributing to the multi-year Disability-Accessible Building Project. Visit our website to learn how **your name can be engraved on a piece of this project!**

### Stay Connected with SES!

Find us on these Social Media Sites at /SESBMORE or under St. Elizabeth School

