



Spring 2021

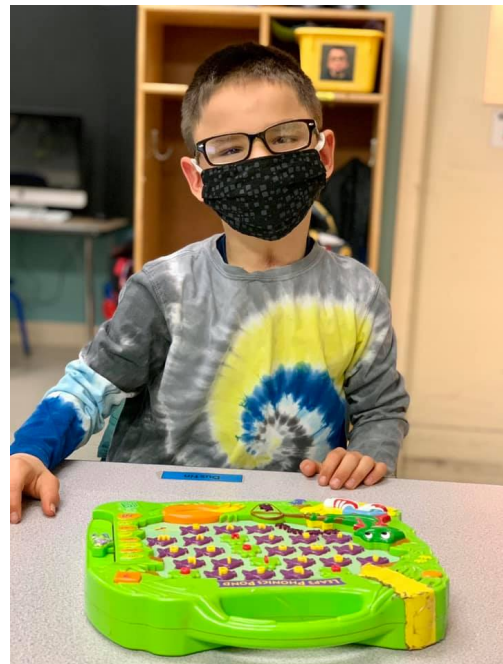
## NEC Pulling Together!

### A Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends;

**NEC is joyfully planning for year-end events and graduations after a most unusual and challenging year.** Although these events will be smaller than usual and adhere to safety guidelines, we will be able to gather and have abbreviated “live” ceremonies to celebrate the accomplishments of our graduates.

One of the “silver linings” of this year of crisis has been the outpouring of support from the NEC community which has helped our educators adapt activities and specialized programming to better serve our students. While we all missed the usual activities like field trips, enrichment opportunities and vocational experiences, **NEC staff found creative alternatives that kept students engaged and learning.**



Thanks to the Friends of NEC Board, we have been able to effectively shift our fundraising focus. Several individual donors and foundations allowed us to use restricted donations to support COVID related expenses like PPE for our staff, air purifiers for our classrooms, additional technology

for those working remotely, as well as increased mental health support for our own students/families, staff, and district partners. **This generosity made a critical difference in empowering NEC to serve students and families through such difficult circumstances.**

While we have made many steps back toward normal, the tragic loss of one of our

students in April due to complications from COVID-19, was a stark reminder that we are still grappling with a serious global public health crisis. Stever was a beloved twelve-year old boy with a huge smile that lit up the room. He will be missed. As always, I am so proud of the ways in which the Kevin O'Grady School team has come together to support one another and Stever's family as they dealt with their own grief.

### Diversity and Equity Work:

Our Diversity Task Force has done wonderful work this year. All of our employees participated in required diversity training last fall led by experts from local organizations, and a group of staff have continued to meet after school each month to tackle conversations about topics related to race and how to bring current events into the classroom. Several students of color have spoken up and shared how they appreciate and feel supported by this work. As one perceptive educator said after a training, **"The biggest takeaway was an awareness of my own need for growth in this area. I look forward to more training"**.



### Strategic Planning

As we move past the pandemic, NEC leaders are renewing strategic planning with a lens on the experience of the last year. What should NEC look like in 2025? How do our programs need to change, grow, and evolve as we continue to serve our students? It is exciting to speak with staff in various roles, hearing their passion for their work, their pride in NEC, and their visions and goals for the future. I have started to meet with internal peer leaders from our various programs to ask these

questions. Stay tuned!

### Member Districts and the Larger Community: Giving and Receiving Support:

Given the strength and stability of NEC during the past year, the Consortium has continued to offer regular support and training to educators in our member districts through job-alike groups, seminars, consultation, and professional development. **Much of this has been offered free of charge thanks to generous philanthropic support.** I have also been able to devote some of my time to supporting other educators on a regional and statewide level further expanding NEC's ability to address our mission. In addition, through my role on the [MOEC](#) Board (Massachusetts Organization of Educational Collaboratives), I have been able to provide support to other Collaborative leaders and have participated in several state-wide conversations on issues related to special education and rising mental health needs.

We have all lived a year that we will never forget. Standing together with you, our NEC

family, has definitely kept us together! I am grateful and I am hopeful! Thank you!

With thanks, as always, for your support,

*Francine H. Rosenberg*

Francine H. Rosenberg, M.Ed.  
Executive Director

Support NEC

## Program News

### Northshore Academy Lower (NSAL)



NSAL student celebrating 100 days of school

#### 100 Days of School

Students at the NSAL really took to celebrating 100 days of school by standing tall, smiling and showcasing 100 feathers!

#### Movin' & Groovin' in the Hallway

There's no holding the students back at NSAL as they move and groove down the Movement Hallway! Designed to allow students to safely move their bodies, acknowledge their feelings, think positive thoughts about themselves, and leave feeling better than when they came in, this hallway has drawings of animals in their habitats that inspire ways of moving. There are dolphin twirls, elephant swings, bear crawls, etc. for students to imitate and there is no wrong way to move! Then, each habitat has its own weather element associated with a feeling reminding us that sometimes our bodies can feel sad like rain, angry like thunder, peaceful like clouds, or happy like the sun. Positive affirmations are also hanging throughout with sayings like "I am strong, I am kind, I am brave." As the students flow through the hallway, they end at a paper chain rainbow where they are invited to write a positive affirmation about themselves on a strip of paper and add a link to the chain.



Rachel movin' and groovin' in the school's new Movement Hallway



## Northshore Academy Upper (NSAU)



### Listen In: NSAU Podcast

Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Kelley, along with some creative and eager upperclassmen, have launched a podcast! Students have taken on critical production roles including writing, performing, and producing the podcast jingle (Isabella, Marisol and Troy), writing questions and conducting interviews (Eve and Julia), and researching as well as presenting interesting or funny facts (Troy). There was also a duet with Marisol and Isabella, including piano playing by Marisol. In a new role, Joe has created a graphic design poster to draw attention to this great new venture! [Listen Here](#)



### Soup-er Bowl - COVID Style

In March, NSAU held it's 12th annual Soup-er Bowl, modified to ensure COVID safety. Instead of soup donations from students, families and local restaurants, the school's Culinary Program prepared 6 soups for all students and staff to enjoy. [Gordon Food Service](#) donated rolls and crackers to round out the offerings. This year, all students were given a free soup of their choice and many ordered more soup to enjoy at school or to take home. It was a successful and, most importantly, safe event, but we are hoping to be back in our full Soup-er Bowl glory next year!

### Building Bridges:

Students in Mr. Donlon's class are creating geometric bridges using popsicle sticks and glue. The goal is to see which student's bridge can withstand the most weight. Students have already created some very impressive designs as they continue to work diligently on this project! (photos below)



## Transitions: Embark & SOAR



### Holten Street: Creative Spaces

Delving into the arts is a priority for Embark & SOAR students! At [Holten Street Creative Spaces](#), our students are not only taught a variety of techniques and processes used to make beautiful art, they are given the opportunity to design, create, and share that art through their own expressions.

(above) Kayla stenciling a spring sign at Holten Street: Creative Spaces located in Danvers, MA



### Community Internships Continue

While many community internships were suspended due to COVID, a few continued and a few new ones were even launched! These internships facilitate strong, reciprocal partnerships between our programs and area businesses and have established a variety of instructive, growth-driven work opportunities for students.

(above) Sean stocking shelves at [Karl's Sausage Kitchen & European Deli](#), a new community partner



Cierra caring for "Rosie" the cat at her internship at [Northeast Animal Shelter](#)



Brian using The Ride to get to his internship at [Trident Electronics](#)



Jacob stenciling a spring sign at Holten Street Creative Spaces

## Kevin O'Grady School (KOG)

### Adaptations to Vocational Programming = Continued Success

This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic most of our community-based vocational opportunities at KOG came to a complete stop for our students. In addition, a flood in our school building resulted in our students having to be relocated to a temporary location from October to December. These challenges made it difficult for our students to access vocational routines and activities that were familiar to them. Thanks to





ongoing support from [New England BioLabs](#) for our vocational programming, we were able to change the track of our vocational grant to purchase new materials to create a lending library of vocational task boxes that students could have access to in their classroom or at home for remote learning keeping a bit of normalcy in the midst of COVID related uncertainty. *We are also so happy to announce that we again have the support of [New England BioLabs](#) to launch a small-scale vocational print/copy center in our Clerical Center!*

[Click Here](#) to see a video of KOG student internship in action

### KOG Spirit Week

Students at KOG celebrated school spirit week with various daily themes including pajama day and character day! And in-between all of the fun, work still got done! (photos below)



## Topsfield Vocational Academy (TVA) & STEP



### SAP to Syrup:

The students at TVA & STEP are proud to showcase their homemade syrup! This has been a true "farm to table" experience, from tapping the trees to learning the process of transforming raw sap into syrup, to packing it and enjoying



### All Aboard! Essex Ship Building Museum:

In collaboration with the [Essex Ship Building Museum](#), students are building their third boat, a Garvey Skiff! The TVA Garvey Crew has been working diligently since last fall to design and craft this skiff with a little help from Harold Burham

it!

himself!

(above) Justin holding the final product after taking the lead on tapping the trees for sap



**What Pennies Will Do:  
Hope Academy to Reopen in June**  
[Hope Academy](#) opened its doors over eleven years ago thanks to former TVA teacher, Siza. His vision for the children of Plumtree, a town in Zimbabwe, is changing lives and instilling hope in our own students at TVA. Each winter, the staff and students engage in “Penny Wars” with the goal of raising money to support the children of Hope Academy which feels much like a “sister school” to TVA. Team comradery and spare change

have revolutionized what Siza and his small staff have been able to offer their students. Solar panels, computers, and funds to support staff expenses have all been the result of a lot of fun and a deep desire to help others. Last year, COVID-19 forced the closure of Hope Academy and as a result, contact with all 118 students in the village was lost. The proceeds from the most recent Penny War has allowed a worker to reconnect with families and re-enroll many of their former students. The school will re-open once the government allows the children to return. They are hoping for a date in June. A grateful Siza describes this as “a miracle.”

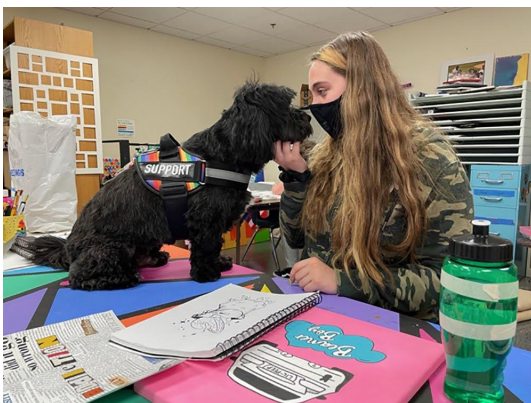
*“In a time of a crisis of faith for me and my team, your contribution brought needed hope.” -Siza*

## Northshore Recovery High School (RHS)



**"It's My Family Here": North Shore Recovery High Students Look Forward To Full Return To Classrooms**

[Click Here](#) to read the the full article from WBUR



### Franklin, On the Move

In addition to supporting students, RHS's emotional support dog, Franklin loves to visit, play, get treats and pets as he zips through the hallways! He now has his own GoPro, which documents all of the good work and unconditional support that he gives to our students (& staff) everyday!

[Click Here](#) to see Franklin's latest GoPro footage

### Diruhi Mattian Memorial Award:

This year, Michelle Lipinski (right photo) will be the recipient



of the Diruhi Mattian Memorial Award. Diruhi Mattian was an extraordinary social worker who devoted her life to making a difference in the lives of young people. Her life was tragically cut short in 2008. Each year, the [Youth At Risk](#) (YAR) conference honors the person she was and the work that she did by recognizing another individual who has made exemplary contributions supporting the youth in our communities.



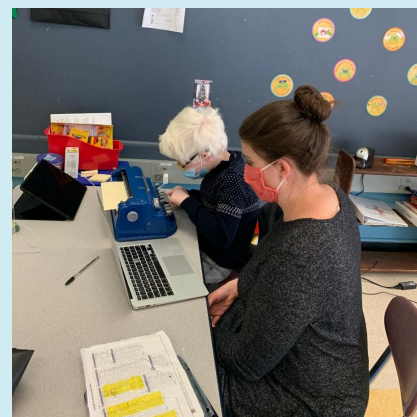
For those of you who know Michelle, you know she is fearless when it comes to advocating for students both in and outside the walls of RHS. While her entire professional career has been devoted to serving youth, she has worked tirelessly since RHS began in 2006 supporting high schoolers as they navigate the throes of addiction and their journey to recovery. From the steps of the State House, to the home of a student, to the hallways of the school, to filming a documentary, to traveling the country speaking at conferences (and more), you just might catch a glimpse of Michelle as she blazes trails in the field of addiction, recovery, and reaching youth struggling to overcome the challenges they face that place them at-risk. Congratulations, Michelle!

## Department Spotlight: Vision Services



Learning to focus a monocular telescope

The role of the TVI is to make sure visually impaired students have access to their education. They travel between schools to work alongside classroom teachers helping them identify the best methods to connect their students to their instruction materials. This can include enlarging materials, teaching students to use technology with speech output options, and providing instruction in the reading and writing of braille. TVI's may also provide information using raised line drawings or maps instead of visual ones.



Braille lesson

The role of COMS's is to teach visually impaired students how to maximize their independence as they navigate their surrounding communities. They work with students in their schools and in their home neighborhoods, teaching them to create and maintain orientation to their whereabouts, plan routes and develop skills to safely cross streets and become independent travelers, including the use of public transportation.





Practicing cane skills

Students learn to use tools such as a long white cane, a monocular telescope for those with low vision, and smartphone apps for wayfinding and re-orienting. If you see a person walking with a long white cane with a person following behind them, it could be an Orientation and Mobility lesson in progress!

[Click Here](#) for more information about NEC's Vision Services Department

## Taking Care of NEC



### Development Office Update

**“Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.” –Melody Beattie**

As we moved into uncharted waters a year ago, there was concern that pandemic related expenses might compromise NEC’s ability to stay connected to our students. **Yet, day after day, with a spirit of optimism and strong community support we found the silver lining!**



KOG student Luna receiving a handmade blanket donated by Project LInus

Foundations continued to support grant requests adapted to navigate the financial challenges related to the pandemic. Our faithful sponsors and loyal runners, supported our virtual [Festivus 5K for Autism](#) raising almost \$17,000! **Vital gifts from donors enabled us to say “yes” to staff employing innovative ways to normalize and adapt learning spaces for**



Festivus 5K for Autism

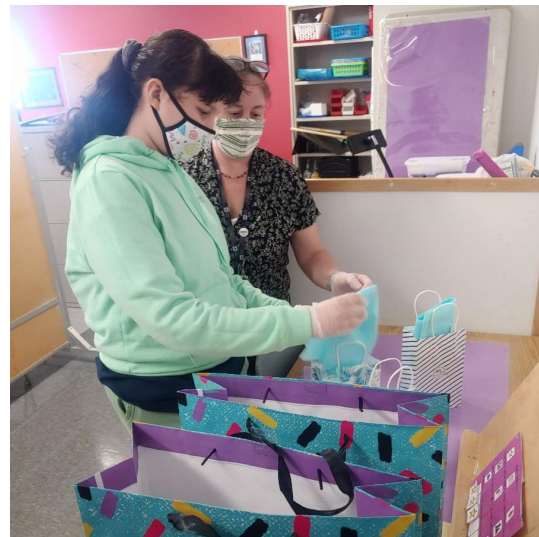
Community friends and families went the extra mile with notes of encouragement pouring in from Easton Middle School, homemade blankets donated from [Project Linus](#), relief baskets funded by [Gifts that Matter](#) and assembled and delivered by our students to families in need, and candy bags donated from [Indulge!](#) for students, families, and staff.

*You, our friends, made this all possible.*

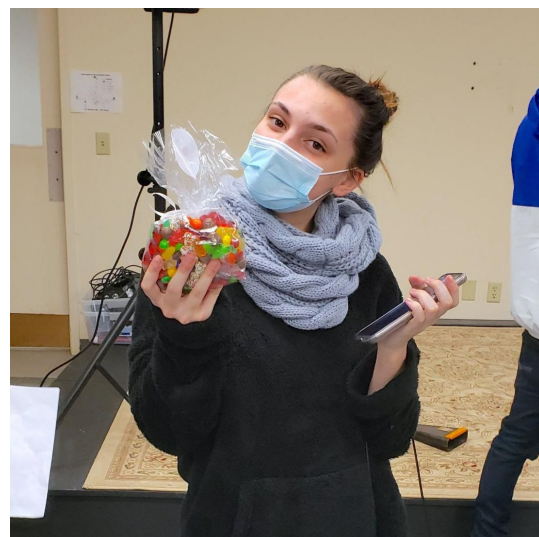
At NEC we strive to provide innovative, quality, and targeted education and services to our students challenged with a variety of complex special needs. We do this in the most cost effective way possible to best support our local school districts. How do we do this? Philanthropy and community support.

**It is with full hearts and a deep sense of gratitude, we say thank you.** Generosity had carried us through our yesterdays, into today with hope and vision for tomorrow.

our students whether virtually or in person.



KOG student and teacher assembling COVID relief baskets for school community families funded by Gifts That Matter



In February Indulge! donated "Love & Healing" candy bags to RHS students

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**This year your investment in the work we do and, most importantly, the students we serve will be more vital than ever.**



Thank you for standing with us.  
"Every student. Every day. Whatever it takes."

Support NEC

## Stay Connected & Share

You now have a few ways to follow us on Facebook:

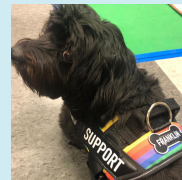
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