



Spring 2023

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Celebrating the victories and creating opportunities for success

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

With the arrival of spring comes new beginnings, optimism, and hope. Even in light of today's challenges, there remains much to celebrate.

I thought I would start with the encouraging words of an NEC Parent:

It is the best feeling to send my child to a place that celebrates his every little victory as much as I do. I feel like my child is seen and important. I can literally feel the love he experiences there and I just can't tell you what that means to me as a parent. It's priceless. It's a light when all of this gets hard, it's a comfort, a community, and the absolute best thing I ever did for my child. Thank you and all of the staff there for their tireless efforts and being in my child's corner in this world.

Your support helps our staff be the best they can be, celebrating "every little victory" and creating opportunities for success like:

- Passing the MCAS
- Getting accepted to college
- Succeeding in a new vocational internship
- Playing with a friend
- Participating in an intramural



- basketball or volleyball game
- Helping a peer who's having a hard day
- Using new strategies to avoid having a temper tantrum when faced with frustration
- Celebrating 30 days of sobriety
- Creating a music video or cooking a meal
- Communicating for the first time on a new augmented communication device

It is with the help of the Friends of NEC and the philanthropic funds they are providing, that we can realize these successes. Whether through a variety of enrichment activities for our students in the creative arts, the provision of targeted

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Program News



TRANSITION PROGRAMS (EMBARK AND SOAR)

New Art Studio Opens Doors Our new Art Studio showcases a wall mural of a Penguin Party crafted by SOAR student Dom. The Art Studio provides opportunities for students to explore different art forms and creative entrepreneurship opportunities such as designing, creating and marketing items using the Cricut machine. Students have made items such as water bottles for thank you gifts for the bus companies and T-shirts for students.

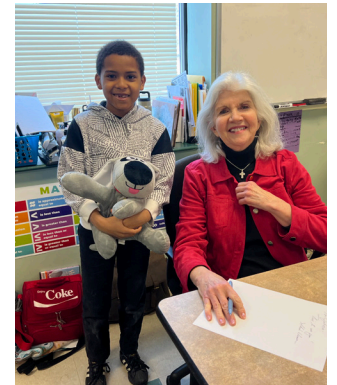
Service Dog Project The Service Dog Project, located in Ipswich, brought a few pups-in-training for a recent visit with the hope of returning in the near future! The goal for these visits is to help socialize the dogs, providing a unique and “hands on” experience for our students who were actively involved in this training process.

A Benefit Of Being On Campus Packing a punch is Embark student Cierra using the facilities at the Gassett Center on the campus of Salem State University (SSU) which is home to our Transition Programs located in the Enterprise Center. SSU is committed to offering typical collegiate experiences to our students as they pursue their academics, employment opportunities and further develop their independent living skills.

NORTHSHORE ACADEMY LOWER SCHOOL

STEM Fridays Are A Favorite The older students have been participating in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) Fridays to grow their sense of community, teamwork, and interest in STEM education. During STEM sessions, students complete a project within cooperative groups with peers and staff members outside of their typical classroom, expanding their socialization skills while actively engaged in learning something new. The students work so hard in these groups, and have become super excited about STEM Fridays!

Read Across America Read Across America Day was a highlight that extended throughout the month of March! Northshore Academy Lower School students had the chance to meet two authors. Lexi Pearson Gunte was a special guest for a morning meeting and read her book *The Adventures of Turbo* to the students. Students also welcomed author Sheila Duncan who introduced the students to “Trouble the Dog,” the main character of her books whose primary role is to support kids sharing their emotions. The students loved getting a chance to meet with real authors. Then to add to the fun, students were invited to wear their animal prints and stripes to school one day in honor of *If I Ran the Zoo* by Dr. Seuss.



Happy Birthday, Dr. Seuss On March 2nd we celebrated Dr. Seuss’ birthday. We started the month off wearing all red and blue to celebrate *1 Fish, 2 Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*. Then we had some *Green Eggs and Ham* served by Sam I Am. Our youngest class took a tally to see who likes green eggs and ham and it was an overwhelming yes.



Program News



NORTSHORE ACADEMY UPPER SCHOOL

Culinary Classes Are Being Spiced Up Advanced Culinary Arts students are offered opportunities to challenge their creativity and skills by using any available ingredients in the kitchen to dish up delicious foods. Rouya enjoys using seasonings to kick her dishes, like the Arancini here, up to the next level.

Stained Glass Class Staff often bring their hobbies to school and share them with students in classes to enrich their learning experiences. This year stained glass classes were introduced. Bobby is practicing glass cutting as he begins to prepare beautiful pieces of colored glass for his suncatcher.

Basketball All-Stars The Northshore Academy Upper School Varsity Basketball Team had a successful basketball season participating in the Greater Boston Basketball League and finishing the season with an 8-4 record. The season culminated with a third-place finish at the end-of-season tournament at Westford. Two of our players (Malik Johnson and Semaj Faust-Warton) were chosen as Greater Boston Basketball League All-Stars. Congratulations!

Exploring the Art of Music Music is an all time student favorite and is offered to those interested in exploring various instruments, singing, as well as how to mix

and produce music using modern equipment and technology. Here Zack is learning the beginning skills of how to play the guitar.

Soup-er Bowl Delivers for its 14th Year Students were involved in every aspect of making this annual event a huge success from set up, to serving to the labor intensive task of cleaning up! There were over 20 homemade soups to choose from (many made by our staff and students) plus rolls made by our Culinary Program students. Some specialty soups were generously donated local restaurants. Funds were raised to support student activities.



NORTSHORE RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL

Health & Wellness Walks Staff have always enjoyed prioritizing Health & Wellness in a variety of forms for their students from “playing” at Build-A-Bear to learning mindfulness through yoga to expressing themselves through creating works of art. The latest addition to the wellness program has been going on nature walks with students. This has been such a great activity reminding everyone that something as simple as walking outside can restore one’s body, heart and mind and help renew a positive connection to the world around them.

Wearable Art Creativity at its best! Here a talented student is painting intricate details on a sneaker.



Program News

TOPSFIELD VOCATIONAL ACADEMY



Student accepted into Montserrat College of Art with Scholarship Joshua is a senior at Topsfield Vocational Academy who has been working hard to get into college. When asked about his hope for the future, he said, “Since I was a child I’ve always wanted to do art for a living. I’ve always been in-tune with my

artistic side.” After months of his teachers and peers encouraging him to apply, he researched colleges and applied to Montserrat College of Art in Beverly. He says, “I was drawn into their small community, and how the staff really felt like they cared about the students as people, and not as numbers which is why I’m proud to say that I will be going to Montserrat in the fall of 2023!” Josh was awarded a Presidential Scholarship of \$21,000 per year for four years. “I’m extremely excited to attend in the fall, and see where my passions will take me.”

Curious Creatures Curious Creatures (CC) in Groveland is a new worksite for our students that has proven to be a valuable resource for both CC and for our students. Students have been participating more frequently as the staff at CC appreciate how hard they work and how well they interact with the animals. Students’ work responsibilities include completion of facility maintenance tasks, cleaning animal cages and socializing with the animals. Some of our students’ favorite animals are the birds, snakes, ferrets, bunnies, guinea pigs, lizards, and alligators....just to name a few.



KEVIN O’GRADY SCHOOL

Swimming, Safety & Snacks Two classrooms at have been going to the YMCA for weekly swim lessons, which have been a huge hit! Students ride the bus to the Y, get changed in the locker room, and practice swimming with the adapted swim instructor at the Y, and our awesome staff. While having a ton of fun, students are also learning some basic safety skills including how to go to the wall to hold on and be “safe” when they are tired or overly excited. After swimming, the students go to the cafe to enjoy a snack before heading back to school.

Spanish Club Kevin O’Grady School has a new Spanish Club that meets a few times per month for a group of students from bilingual homes to speak Spanish, celebrate Hispanic culture, make friends, and have fun.

The Gift of Music Everyone is excited to be collaborating with Arts for Music (formerly, Young Audiences) again this year. They have generously provided us with a grant for two music residencies this spring! Older students have been participating in a residency based on instruments and rhythm, which will culminate in a performance at the end of May. Jammin with You is working with our younger students using instruments and imagination to entertain and engage students to express themselves and learn through music.



WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

At NEC, we not only get to celebrate the milestones students reach while they are with us, we also get to celebrate new milestones with them after they move on!

MEET TREVOR Principal David Mercier recalls when Trevor first started at the Northshore Academy Upper School as a 7th grader. *“Attempts to process the nuances of classroom social dynamics and the stresses of classroom assignments often led to Trevor jumping up and down in the hallway and crying each time he experienced frustration. He would shed tears of anxiety as he struggled to self-regulate his emotions so that he could be free to do what he loved to do best.... learn.”* Trevor’s parents knew that if he could just learn to apply coping mechanisms, focus on his education, and problem-solve difficult situations that his future achievements could be limitless. Fast forward seven years. After taking advantage of every social and academic learning opportunity, Trevor successfully completed high school at Northshore Academy Upper School and was accepted into St. Michael’s College. He is currently following a pre-med track and is set to graduate early. This semester, he is participating in a French immersion program and is living independently in France (shown here at Versailles). He was recently one of eight St. Michael’s swimming and diving student athletes to qualify for CSC NCAA Division II Academic All-District honors. In addition, as a junior this year, he was inducted into the Phi Beta Kappa honor society as well as the Chi Alpha Sigma student athlete honor society. He has also received a scholarship to study in Quebec in May. Congratulations, Trevor!



MEET OWEN A proud graduate of Northshore Academy Upper School in June 2021 followed by his graduation from Northshore Education Consortium’s SOAR Program in 2022, Owen is currently taking two classes at North Shore Community College where his interests lie in animation and the arts. Outside of focusing on his college courses and expanding his knowledge of the arts, he has an impressive appreciation for all genres of music. It seems that wherever he finds himself, Owen creates. Pictured here, Owen is standing in front of his masterpiece titled, *The Earth is All Around Us, Even in Our Fantasies*, which was on display at the June 2022 Youth At Risk Conference at Endicott College. When asked about how he tackled the design and creation of this work of art, Owen shared that it was done in four pieces and took over 80 hours to complete. Thanks to Owen’s generosity, it is now permanently displayed in the Administrative Offices at NEC. Thank you, Owen!

Donor Support Makes Us Stronger Together

Development Office Update



In today's world, there is wisdom in acknowledging the tension we experience when balancing the beautiful moments with the tragic moments impacting our world, our communities, and our own families. At NEC, we recognize that an essential part of living with this tension is acknowledging the hardships but also taking time to celebrate the moments that are life giving... like sharing notes on Valentine's Day, honoring our NEC founder, Kevin O'Grady, by wearing green on St. Patrick's Day, wearing fun socks on World Down Syndrome Day, celebrating the 100th Day of School, enjoying being together on a Family Art Night, to name a few.

Much of the levity NEC can embrace is a result of the generosity that we have graciously received from those supporting our work through their gifts of time, talent and finances. Over the years, philanthropy has been a complementary component to bringing opportunities to our students and programs that would have otherwise passed us by. Present day reality has now reframed the role of philanthropy here as essential. Budgets are tighter; expenses are higher; the portfolio of student needs has broadened and the resources available to meet those needs have slimmed.



We have often mentioned our gratitude to the individuals, companies, foundations that readily give to help us provide the absolute best learning environment, both academic and experiential, for all of our students. Outdoor programming, fundamental technology needs and new initiatives, out-of-school/ after school activities, "the arts," outdoor play and



athletic spaces, a recording studio, a rock climbing wall, numerous workshops, conferences and professional development opportunities for our NEC community and regional colleagues are all a direct result of a decision made by a person, a company, a board or a review committee to invest in NEC. This has a direct impact on our tuition rates which has a direct impact on our member districts. Since the Friends of NEC is committed to raising dollars to support vital NEC programmatic needs, the more dollars raised/ granted to support these needs the more budget relieving for NEC, thus supporting more affordable tuition rates for our member districts.

The words of Helen Keller ring true today, "Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much."

Thank you! Your giving matters...

Friends of Northshore Education Consortium, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization (#61-1479553).

If you would like to learn more about our giving opportunities, please contact:

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Giving in Action



For the second year in a row, the Salem Police Patrolman & Superior Officer's Associations provided iPads and other communication devices, switches and apps to KOG students. Sgt. Kevin McDonnell and Lt. Eric Gagnon of the Salem Police Department spent a morning visiting with and gifting students devices individualized to meet their communication needs. This gift is monumental, providing these students with their own personal devices tailored with appropriate switches and apps

enabling them to communicate with the world around them. It should be noted that receiving the popular Salem Police Department patch was equally exciting!



Executive Director Message, Continued

curriculum and vocational programs or continuing to move forward with the integration of new technologies, these programs all help our students succeed. In addition, we are able to provide our employees with outstanding professional development on topics ranging from Teaching Diverse Learners to Youth Mental Health First Aid, Restorative Justice, and more. And, we continue to support the region through grant-funded professional development, consultation, and wrap-around services.

Every year I look forward to our June graduations. It is remarkable to look at our graduating students and think about how far they have come. Approximately 70 students will receive their diplomas this June in highly personalized ceremonies, and head off to college, continuing education, work, or adult services.

Sometimes our colleagues “graduate” as well. This summer, after 10 years of dedicated service to NEC, our Chief Financial Officer, Glenn Bergevin (pictured bottom right), will be retiring. Under Glenn’s leadership we have come a long way in stabilizing and solidifying NEC’s financial situation and improving our infrastructure. He will be greatly missed! We are thrilled that Larry Fleming will be joining our team as our new Director of Finance.

I wish you all a happy and healthy spring. Thank you for your ongoing investment and belief in our mission which helps us enable our students to hit benchmarks and achieve their best success once deemed beyond their reach!

With gratitude,

Francine H. Rosenberg

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Upcoming Events



GRADUATIONS/MOVING UP AND AWARD CEREMONIES

- Northshore Academy Upper School — June 7
- Topsfield Vocational Academy — June 8
- Transition Programs (Embark & SOAR) — June 9
- Northshore Recovery High School — June 14
- Northshore Academy Lower School — June 15



NORTHSHORE RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS AT THE WANG CENTER

SPLASH, Thursday, May 25th from 7:00-9:00pm, Boch Center Wang Theatre
Express Yourself and the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health present SPLASH, a free show including Northshore Recovery High School students and staff, 300+ Express Yourself Youth, along with: Ricky Duran (The Voice S17), STOMP, and many more performers.



12TH RUNNING OF FESTIVUS 5K FOR AUTISM

December 10th (date to be confirmed) in historic downtown Salem, MA
The Friends of the Northshore Education Consortium Festivus 5K has raised over \$204,000 used to purchase technologies to assist and educate children with autism at the Northshore Education Consortium.

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