



THE PARISH POST

Winter 2024



What's the Buzz?

Research on
**THE KAUFMAN-SPEECH
TO LANGUAGE PROTOCOL
EFFECTIVENESS PUBLISHED**

**WORLDWIDE ADVENTURES
IN PLAYWORK**

2023-2024
ANNUAL REPORT

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Our Mission

The Parish School mission is to empower children who have communication delays and learning differences to thrive through whole-child education, innovative therapy and access to nature.

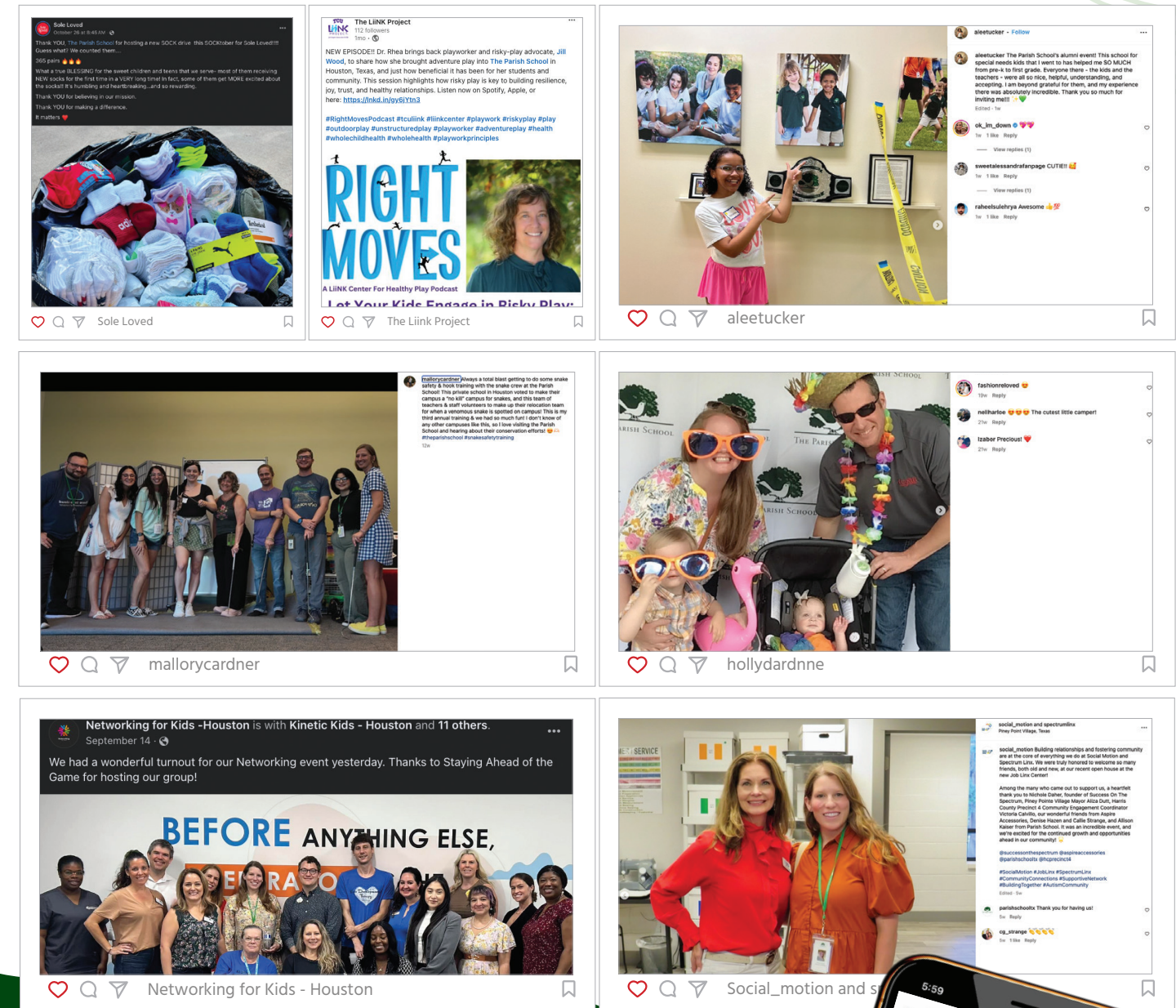
The Parish Post is printed twice a year and is published by The Parish School for students, parents, alumni and friends. For information or questions regarding The Parish Post, please contact the Advancement Office: advancement@parishschool.org

CHECK IT OUT



#TheParishSchool

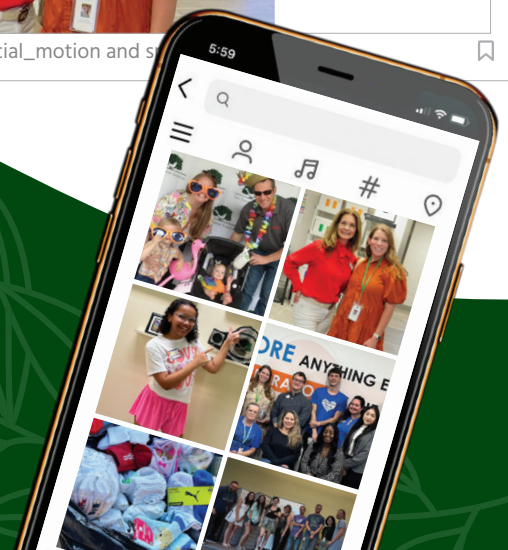
We love to see what our families and supporters are up to! Use the hashtag above on social media to share your favorite Parish moments and photos with us. Photos may be published here in the Parish Post!



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LETTER

From the Head of School
Anne Powers



DEAR PARISH SCHOOL COMMUNITY,

The most consistent feedback I hear from families, current and alumni, is that The Parish School's mission not only transforms the life of a child – changing their trajectory, but it also transforms whole families and changes their trajectories, too. This year's Mighty Oak Bash was such a rich reminder of this! I loved welcoming many of you back to campus and hearing your stories of how The Parish Way changed your life. This kind of meaningful and lasting impact takes all of us working together. From donors and community partners to families and staff, we cannot advance our mission without you. I am so grateful for the ways each one of you make a difference in our community. It is why this year as a staff, we are celebrating "Transforming Lives Together." It is an incredible opportunity and a privilege to be a part of this work. Over the past 41 years, this special place has transformed many lives, including my own. Students, families, staff and the community are all impacted by our mission to empower children who have communication delays and learning differences to thrive through whole-child education, innovative therapy and access to nature.

Our incredible staff pour so much of themselves into our mission each day. Their creativity, passion and expertise are on display daily across our campus. I am so pleased to highlight some of their achievements with you. Our Director of Arts and Sciences and Chair of the Margaret Noecker Nature Center, Terri Garth, dreamt of a way to enhance our nature studies curriculum and with the support of Lisa Smith, Nature Studies Educator, and Holly Wilbourn, Director of Advancement, wrote a grant to fund an on-campus beehive. Our campus is now buzzin' with 15-20,000 Italian bees. I am excited about all the learning opportunities this will bring to our students, not to mention the honey! As it is an election year, the students nominated names for our Queen Bee, and staff and students voted on a winner. We are excited to announce our Queen Bee Bumblelina! In this magazine, you will find a wonderful article describing our bee initiative and how it is impacting our students in multiple ways! You may also read about the amazing work of another staff member, Jill Wood. Jill is our Librarian and the Director of Adventure Play. She is a world-renowned expert on the importance of play and Adventure Playgrounds and recently traveled to be a keynote speaker at conferences in Melbourne, Australia and Istanbul, Türkiye! Last, but not least, you will find an article about Mimi Branham, Director of The Carruth Center, and her recent contributions on published research on Apraxia for the American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology. I am very proud of all of our staff and all the ways they transform lives every day!

I would like to extend my thanks and appreciation to all of our loyal supporters of The Parish School. We would not be able to transform lives and fulfill our mission without donors. You will find our 2023-24 Annual Report in this magazine. Of course, this Annual Report cannot possibly encapsulate every extraordinary moment we experienced in our 40th anniversary year, but I was overwhelmed and touched by the gifts we received from alumni families and other donors who were compelled to give for the first time in many years to celebrate our milestone anniversary.

I want to extend my personal thanks and appreciation for your continued support and engagement. I am honored to serve as Head of School, and I invite you to come by and visit The Parish School when you can. You will be amazed how we transform lives together!

BEST,
Anne
Head of School

Alumni Spotlight ALONZO LIMAS

Alonzo Limas first arrived on campus at 3 years old through The Carruth Center. After spending one year at Carruth, he enrolled at The Parish School, where Parish provided the support he needed to become the successful young man he is today.

"I learned to be patient, flexible and learned a lot of speech and how to talk to people and friends," Alonzo said.

Alonzo attended Parish until he was 12, where he then transitioned to a public school, Memorial Middle School. Alonzo's mother, Palmira Testa, along with teachers from Memorial Middle and now Stratford High School, believe Parish gave Alonzo the tools to self-advocate, to be comfortable with being different and to just be himself. Parish gave him the confidence to ask questions when he didn't understand.

"I loved that my teachers were supportive of me and believed in me," Alonzo said. "I loved the school. I loved how loving everyone was. I loved my friends who are still my friends today."

Alonzo is now a senior in high school and will be graduating next spring with hopes of attending the Kolbe School of Innovation and Professional Studies at the University of St. Thomas in Houston. He has a lifelong love for airports and airplanes, and he hopes to work someday at Houston's Bush Intercontinental Airport as an aircraft marshaller.



"Parish was the best thing we could have ever done for our son. His dad and I are forever grateful for the lessons on how to learn and how to make and keep relationships!"

– Palmira Testa



IF YOU HAVE AN ALUMNI STORY TO SHARE, PLEASE CONTACT ADVANCEMENT@PARISHSCHOOL.ORG.



SAVE THE DATES

**Adult Ed
Childhood Apraxia with
Nancy Kaufman**
January 15, 2025

**Adult Ed
Summer Camp 101**
January 16, 2025

32nd Annual Gala
February 8, 2025

Spring Family Garden Day
March 1, 2025

**Pastries with Parents
and Lunch with Littles**
March 7, 2025

Life After Parish
March 20, 2025

Bike-A-Thon
April 4, 2025

Camp Acorn Begins
June 4, 2025



Parish Community Makes a Big Difference through Sock Donations and Food Drive

This past fall semester, Parish staff, students and their families came together to help those in need with the holidays right around the corner.

In October, Parish held Socktober – a week-long initiative dedicated to helping those in need during the colder months by promoting sock donations. Working alongside Sole Loved once again, there was a flood of sock donations in both morning and afternoon carpools, which led to a grand total of 365 pairs of pairs of socks being donated!

The following month, Parish held a canned food drive where all canned food donations benefitted the Houston Food Bank. The Parish community, once again, came through in a big way, donating a total of 473 cans! There was also a special incentive for the team that brought in the most canned goods. Upper and Lower elementaries combined for a donation totaling 169 cans – which got them extra recess!

We want to thank everyone for their incredible contributions this winter season those in need. You have all made a remarkable difference in other people's lives.



2025 Summer Programs

Camp Acorn Registration Opens January 21, 2025.
Camp SOCIAL Registration Opens January 28, 2025.

Visit parishschool.org/summer-programs for more information or to register for camp.



National Teddy Bear Day

In celebration of National Teddy Bear Day, students brought their favorite cuddle buddies, sat and listened to stories and were greeted by our very own campus teddy bear!



Name That Road

Otters' student Amani G. had her name honored with a commemorative street sign following our annual Cyber Auction. Wherever you go at Parish, you'll cross Amani's boulevard!



Commencement

A big congratulations goes to our 2024 Parish Graduates! We're so proud of you all, and we're all incredibly excited about your bright future!



Hispanic Heritage Month

Hispanic Heritage Month was off to a smashing success with a piñata opening and culminated with a "Party on the Plaza!"



Garden Days

With fall in full effect, Parish families came together and showed off their green thumbs to help beautify our campus!



First Day of School

Welcome back students! It was a day full of excitement and eagerness as Parish opened its doors for the 2024-25 school year! Students were buzzing with enthusiasm, ready to take the upcoming year head-on.



Bee Label Winner

Eagles' student Thatcher B.'s vivid honey art label captivated hearts around campus as it was voted as the winning design to adorn our future sweet honey jars!



Bee Election

Parish students fulfilled their civic duty as they voted for the new name for the Queen Bee – Queen Bumbleina or Queen Isabeela, with Queen Bumbleina winning the election!

K-9 Lesson

Primary students wrapped up their community helper unit with a visit from an officer and his K-9 Dotji. He explained to the students how Dotji assists him every day, along with showing the students a few tricks!



Walk For Apraxia

The Carruth Center hosted the annual Houston Walk for Apraxia, which raises money for children's therapy and communication devices along with providing grants for children for therapy and research.



Fall Festival

Students, staff and alumni had a blast at the joint Fall Festival and Mighty Oak Bash, which had an assortment of games, music, pony rides and a petting zoo!





Worldwide Adventures in PLAYWORK

Adventure Play at The Parish School is one of the most unique opportunities for a child to learn and develop. Playwork is an approach focused on where children are free to engage in self-directed play; children are at the forefront, lead the way and create their own space and culture. It allows play to be a fundamental aspect of child development, emphasizing social, cognitive and physical skills.

Parish's Adventure Play offers both the time and space needed for a child to thrive. However, our Adventure Play program is not very common in the United States.

Jill Wood, Parish's Director of Adventure Play, went on an adventure of her own recently. She was invited to speak about our Adventure Play program at two global conferences and in return, was able to learn new ideas from members of the worldwide play community.

"All over the world, there are adventure playgrounds and people practicing playwork. We want to make sure we're doing the best playwork we can, that we're up to date in our practices, but that we are also sharing what we are doing," Jill said. "We're one of very few, possibly the only adventure playground based at a school for children with communication delays and learning differences."



“

It's an incredible thing to be a part of, to watch children making space for each other and discovering one another's talents. And they can only do that if we step back, and we give them plenty of time and space.”

- Jill Wood, The Parish School's Director of Adventure Play

In the spring of 2024, Jill traveled to Melbourne, Australia for the National Play, Playing & Playwork Conference in March and then to the Playwork Campference 2024 in Istanbul, Türkiye in April.

What she learned from both respective regions was fascinating. In Melbourne, Jill discovered that a lot of Australian playwork is occurring in OSCH, or out of school hours care programs throughout the continent.

“OSCH programs are embedding playwork into their statewide practices,” Jill said. “Playworkers there have carefully aligned playwork frameworks with existing OSHC requirements, which was no small task, but benefits massive numbers of children. Knowing about and learning from that is inspiring.”

On the other side of the world in Türkiye, playwork is bubbling up through the municipal government in Istanbul and spreading to surrounding areas. Architectural firm Superpool has been working with the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Parks, Gardens and Green Areas Department for years, organizing thousands of HOPs, or pop-up loose parts playgrounds, in streets and parks (Superpool and MMPGG were sponsors of the conference that brought Jill to speak in Türkiye). They have also organized efforts to support children in regions of the country affected by the 2023 earthquakes.

“It's interesting to see the wide application of playwork, which is possible because people see play as a human right in our profession,” Jill said. “Something children deserve wherever they are — in after school care or in the parks and streets of a city with 15 million people. And when we say play, all of us share this perspective that it should be driven by the child, of course.”



Children's play being driven by the child is the heart of Adventure Play. This sentiment echoed with a fellow keynote speaker Jill encountered while in Melbourne — “Bluey” creator Joe Brumm, who left Jill a bit starstruck when she met him.



“I knew he would have wonderful things to say,” Jill said, “because his show is a testament to what can happen when adults say yes and allow children to take the lead. Bluey and Bingo are funny, creative and supported by their mum and dad in all sorts of adventures and joyful learning.”

While it was inspiring to hear these international perspectives on adventurous play, Jill wanted to share what she has seen on Parish's adventure playground, where children create complex and innovative environments. At both conferences, she highlighted that the Adventure Play at Parish is child-driven, but also integrated, supporting children both with and without disabilities — and that everyone has a place when children are in charge.

It works because children, by nature, are inclusive beings.

“If we give them an opportunity to take the lead on inclusion, they will create a playground that is strengths-based,” Jill said. “It's an incredible thing to be a part of, to watch children making space for each other and discovering one another's talents. And they can only do that if we step back, and we give them plenty of time and space.”

To learn more about Adventure Play at The Parish School, scan the QR code below.





What's All the Buzz About?

There was something in the air at The Parish School on a chilly October afternoon this year. Jubilant music played as Parish students donned bee antennas, wings or yellow and black-colored clothing. Teachers led the way as they paraded – colorful signs in hand – all throughout the school.

Something in the air was a buzz all right, and that buzz was Parish's first ever beehive coming to campus.

"When the moment finally arrived, and the children were waiting around the bee enclosure to see the bees for the first time, it was totally quiet," said Parish's Director of Arts & Sciences and Chair of the Margaret Noecker Nature Center Terri Garth. "The entire school and

every staff member at Carruth and Parish were just waiting for the moment to see the bees.

"The buzz was palpable."

Years in the Making

The opportunity to have a beehive on campus was years in the making. Alvéole – a company who brings nature-based solutions through beehives – reached out to Terri years ago about the possibility of having a beehive on campus. They have worked with other area schools in Houston and in Dallas, and she absolutely loved the idea and was impressed with what they had to offer.



“ I think that it's also really important that our children learn how the bees work as a community, because I think community in our school is a microcosm of the world. All of us need to work together to make a better community.”

- Terri Garth, The Parish School's Director of Arts & Sciences and Chair of the Margaret Noecker Nature Center

"So, my thought was, let's bring the bees on campus," Terri said. "It'll be a great educational opportunity for the kids, and then hopefully it will also incite them to become more environmentally conscious and aware."

But there was one major roadblock for the project: funding. To have a beehive on campus can be quite pricey. Factoring in installation, maintenance, among other costs, the total cost came to \$8,450 for the year. During spring 2024, Terri approached Parish's Director of Advancement Holly Wilbourn to help write a grant proposal to the Grose Family Foundation for funding. She optimistically hoped to have the funding in hand by August and thus, having the beehive installed and ready early in the fall semester.

"The Grose Family Foundation has been a longtime supporter of different projects for the Margaret Noecker Nature Center, and Terri and I felt that this project would be a great fit for their foundation priorities," Holly said. "We incorporated all the research provided by our partner in this endeavor, Alvéole, and we submitted a proposal late spring asking them to consider a \$5,000 grant."

The Grose Family Foundation conditionally agreed to fund \$5,000, but they had a few questions and concerns before everything was fully finalized. They asked how would students with communication delays and learning differences benefit from having bees on campus, have there been other schools that have incorporate bee-related curriculum and how would Parish evaluate the program.

"The Foundation contacted us in July with some follow-up questions regarding the proposal," Holly said, "Fortunately, we answered all of their questions successfully, and they surprised us by funding the entire project with a grant for \$8,450!"

Meanwhile, the Parish administration team also had some concerns.

"There were some concerns about the placement of the bees and how we would keep the kids safe and how we would keep the bees safe," Terri said. "There was a lot of worry about the bees too. You know, we didn't want the landscapers to disrupt the bees."

Terri assured them that the bees being brought in – Italian bees – were the most mild bees and are very unlikely to sting. What helped get board approval were the benefits the bees could provide, learning more about how beneficial the bees are to the planet, how impactful honey is to the food we eat and hopefully, when the students get their first taste of the honey the bees produce, it can open the students' palates.

"A lot of our children eat a very rigid diet. They don't want to try new foods," Terri said. "And sometimes that's about rigidity, but sometimes it's about textures in their mouth. There's a lot of food with different textures that they don't like. And what I know for sure has been proven that children that grow their own food are far more likely to try new foods, so that's the reason we do gardening on campus." Terri added, "What if we had honey? Maybe they would taste the honey, and that's going to introduce another food to their palate. It could help their allergies, plus, they're learning about the environment."

By August, the funding had come through and the administrative team was onboard with the beehive being installed. Terri credits the vision of having this beehive on campus to her old friend, and Parish's former head of school, Margaret Noecker.

"Margaret deeply believed that when children take care of living creatures, they learn empathy, and they learn to care for each other and our community," Terri said. "I think Margaret and (founder) Robbin Parish would love that we have bees on our campus."



Building Buzz

With the beehive scheduled to arrive in October, Terri worked tirelessly to map out how to integrate bees into the curriculum. She opened it up to teaching staff right before the school year began, with everyone brainstorming ideas – thus ushering in the Outdoor Learning Environment (OLE) Bee Committee.

“Integrating bees into the curriculum is important because they are nature’s gardeners, and we have such a big focus on nature here at Parish,” said Early Childhood Speech-Language Pathologist and OLE Bee Committee Member Gracie Archer. “The students can learn so much about how bees help us, and since we have them here on campus, it’s so much hands-on learning!”

Gracie puts together the monthly newsletter, “What’s the Buzz?,” letting everyone know all of the upcoming bee-related events on campus, making sure no one misses out. She adds, “I also just enjoy being on the bee committee as it’s such a fun, new thing we are doing this year at Parish.”

Terri stressed to everyone that she wanted to make sure that the teachers ask their students what they already know about bees and what they want to learn more about them. This helped out how to map out activities for the upcoming school year.

Following several teases on Parish’s social media platforms as the school year commenced, the announcement that we were receiving our first-ever beehive through a video on social media on August 30, 2024, which generated a considerable amount of excitement. Students and parents expressed how exciting an opportunity it was for bees to be on campus, as the teachers began integrating bee-related lessons into their curriculum.

Busy Bees

Parish School Art Therapist and Art Educator Krissy Christofakis announced that the school would hold a bee label contest, with the winning design being the label on all of the jars of honey the bees produce. Parish students competed through their artwork as Krissy incorporated bees into the curriculum by identifying shapes and patterns.

“While learning how to draw a bee, we train our eyes to see the shapes first,” Krissy said. “Two circles for the head and the body, then two ovals for the wings. As we look closer, we can start to see patterns and colors, the stripes of the bee. This was a good example of learning how to use our eyes in building our skills in drawing and also our awareness.

“Slowing our brains down to see shapes, colors and patterns is an excellent mindfulness practice. It helps regulate and focus the mind and body, which is one of the main goals I encourage in my classes as an art therapist.”

For Krissy, the bee label contest was a fun, slightly competitive, experience.

“What I loved most about it is that the kids got to express themselves through art,” Krissy said. “Seeing their own art or the art of a peer on a honey jar is an example of how they can share their gifts with the community, they can feel seen, they can be a part of something bigger.”

The winning label was courtesy of Eagles’ student Thatcher B. When the announcement was made, the students expressed their excitement for their fellow classmate and friend.

“You’re the GOAT (greatest of all time)!” said Eagles’ student Luca F. of Thatcher.

The buzz continued through parade day, October 16, as Koalas’ student Cooper K. was crowned King Bee, and he cut the ceremonial ribbon to welcome the bees and their beehive, with their new home

located near the bear cave. This was followed up on October 24 with an Upper Elementary “Bee” Funny Comedy Showcase, as students learned the art of the joke – from set up to punchline – and displayed their comedic chops in front of an audience.

As the bees began settling in, it was announced that Parish, fittingly, would hold an election of its own to name the queen bee of the hive. Students got to experience the process of voting through a primary to narrow the choices down to two and then selecting their choice of name by casting their very own ballot. Coinciding with Election Day, the students voted Queen Bumbleina as the name of their queen bee – which edged Queen Isabeela to win the majority.

Following the election, Alvéole returned to present a workshop for both Lower and Upper elementary students – The Wonders of Beeswax Candle-Making. The students learned more about the science of bees and its wax, along with exploring creativity through hands-on skills.

Continuing the Buzz

As each class continues to dive deep into the bees curriculum, Terri and the OLE Bee Committee still have a lot planned in the coming months. Once the spring semester kicks off, there’s a musical on the horizon – which musical they decide on is still to be determined – and in January, the students will celebrate Winnie the Pooh and his love for “hunny” during the week commemorating his holiday.

In February, Parish will also hold its own spelling “bee,” testing the students’ spelling aptitude. Students will also record their own

commercials as they shake off the nerves and get on camera to sell the honey the bees produce.

All of the fun activities that Terri and the committee have planned puts a fun twist on the curriculum as they learn more about bees and their importance to the world we live in.

“I hope the students understand that bees are our friends and not something to be afraid of,” Gracie said. “I also hope this opens a door of new interests for them, and they learn more about ways we all come together to grow plants in our neighborhood and strengthen the environment around us.”

They are learning that bees shouldn’t be synonymous with just being able to sting as a defense mechanism, but as a creature whose contributions are endless and the sense of community and teamwork they share is something we can all learn from.

“I think that it’s also really important that our children learn how the bees work as a community,” Terri said. “Because I think community in our school is a microcosm of the world. All of us need to work together to make a better community.”

“If bees can do what they do, surely human beings can too.”

To continue keeping up with the buzz at Parish, scan the QR code below to visit the hive.



“Margaret deeply believed that when children take care of living creatures, they learn empathy, and they learn to care for each other and our community.”

BIG & BRIGHT

DEEP IN THE HEART OF

Parish



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Carly & Sebastian Filgueira
Sapna Patel & Arpan Gupta
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RESEARCH ON THE KAUFMAN-SPEECH TO LANGUAGE PROTOCOL EFFECTIVENESS PUBLISHED



The Carruth Center's Clinic Director Mimi Branham, along with an international research team, worked for several years to get a research project regarding the efficacy of the Kaufman-Speech to Language Protocol (K-SLP) off the ground. While there were many team members involved in the project, there were also many bumps in the road along the way, yet the hard work and perseverance made it all worthwhile. The team's research finally got published on October 1, 2024, in the American Journal of Speech-Language Pathology — an international outlet for research in the field of communication sciences and disorders.

"We understood the importance of this research to our field," Mimi said. "The K-SLP is widely used and accepted in our field, but little research exists to its efficacy. When the publication went live, I was so excited and proud of the work The Carruth Center team does!"

The project dates back to 2021 when Mimi and the team set up the design of the study — which would take place during The Carruth Center's annual Kaufman-Apraxia Boot Camp, with the camp participants

being the subjects of the research. All research had to go through an Institutional Review Board (IRB), which they knew would take some time, as the IRB vets numerous research studies. The research team got IRB approval right before camp started, but the team couldn't, in good conscience, ask families to sign a consent for research without having the time to fully explain their participation and commitment to it, despite wanting to get the project off the ground.

"We had done so much work ahead of time, training, setting up people to come in for extra help, and all of a sudden, everything was stopped. Completely," Mimi said. "It took me about a day to get over it. And then, you realize, by the time we'd get to 2022, we'd really be ready to go."

The project officially commenced the following year with six children, five of which met inclusion criteria for the study. All children had to have a pre-assessment which included standardized testing and several other assessments, along with a measure called FOCUS, a parent questionnaire that gauges the impact on intelligibility of speech that the intervention made. All assessments were recorded and uploaded to the research

"What we found is four of the five children made significant gains during the boot camp and then continued to hold on to those gains three months post. They progressed significantly at basically every benchmark. These results are on par with or better than similar treatment methodologies."

- Mimi Branham, The Carruth Center's Clinic Director

team to review and analyze. As part of the research project, every child had three sets of words assigned to them; words they were practicing at camp based on their pre-camp assessment and goals set for camp, similar words and some words they wouldn't expect them to be able to say like "hippopotamus."

The children were reassessed immediately following camp, then returned three months later for a final reassessment.

"What we found is four of the five children made significant gains during the boot camp and then continued to hold on to those gains three months post," Mimi said. "They progressed significantly at basically every benchmark. These results are on par with or better than similar treatment methodologies."

The research was published in October 2024 through the hard work of the research team from all across the world, which included Dr. Aravind K. Namasivayam, Karina Cheung, Bavika Atputhajeyam, Julia Petrosov, Dr. Vikas Grover and Dr. Pascal van Lieshout.

A big help to getting the research published was the Kaufman-Apraxia Boot Camp staff, which included Carruth staff members Brittney Fertak, Taylor Kopycinski, Wendy Wiseman, Caroline Moreland, Kate Wasserman and volunteers.

The research being published puts a spotlight on the developer of the K-SLP, Nancy Kaufman, a respected, world-renowned speaker in the treatment of childhood apraxia speech who developed this methodology before apraxia was even recognized as a disorder that can affect children. Nancy, who lives in Michigan and is a frequent speaker for the Parish Adult Education series, has also been a key mentor to Carruth staff.

“

"My hope is that this research will now open a door for more research in her methodologies, as well as research into which methodologies best fit which kind of child," Mimi said. "So a clinician can better be able to tailor their treatment from the start, something that they feel will be more likely to be successful, which means less time in therapy for kids."

Mimi also hopes this research puts a spotlight on her hardworking, dedicated team at The Carruth Center and how hard they work with children with childhood apraxia of speech.

"I really think that our apraxia specialists have the training and have the experience to help these kind of children," Mimi said. "Maybe we'll be approached to do more research."

Mimi added, "I wouldn't not do it again."

You can read the full research article "Effectiveness of the Kaufman Speech to Language Protocol for Children with Childhood Apraxia of Speech and Comorbidities when Delivered in a Dyadic and Group Format" by scanning the QR code.



Nancy Kaufman continues to offer her mentorship to Carruth staff and will present her "Adult Education – Childhood Apraxia Of Speech: Top 10 Tips To Empower Parents With Nancy Kaufman" on January 15, 2025. To register, visit parishschool.org/event/adult-education-nancy-kaufman/.



2023-2024 Staff of the Year

(From left) Rachel O'Reilly Tovar, Amanda Medrano, Whitney Morelli, Meadow Scanio



Rachel O'Reilly Tovar, MOT, OTR/L CLINICIAN OF THE YEAR

"Rachel O'Reilly is a warm, compassionate and enthusiastic occupational therapist who embraces our core values and mission. Her creativity was further enhanced this year through her training in DIR/Floortime and HWT. I am so proud of Rachel for being therapist of the year at the end of her first year at The Carruth Center!" - Mimi Branham, The Carruth Center Clinic Director



Amanda Medrano ADMIN OF THE YEAR

"Amanda is often the first person visitors meet when coming onto our campus. She always greets them with a positive attitude and courteous demeanor. We are so glad to have had Amanda at the Parish front desk for 15 years!" - Anne Brown, Head of Early Childhood



Whitney Morelli TEACHER OF THE YEAR

"Whitney is known community wide for her generous and kind spirit. She is unfailingly compassionate and patient with her students. Her therapeutic excellence and expertise is an asset to the entire Parish community." - Terri Garth, Director of Arts & Sciences and Chair of the Margaret Noecker Nature Center



Meadow Scanio PARAEDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

"Meadow is such a talented paraeducator! She has been a member of the Early Childhood team for the past two years, and she has grown so much in that time. Meadow is creative, funny, and kind. She forms wonderful connections with her students and colleagues and it is clear that everyone she encounters loves her! Congratulations, Meadow!" - Maddie Fielding, Early Childhood Coordinator

Celebrating THE 2023-24 VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR!

An important annual Parish tradition is to celebrate the parents and volunteers for their support of the school this past year. From helping in classrooms to organizing events to beautifying our campus, there are so many people that make this school better - our room parents, event chairs, office helpers and more. Please join us in wishing them each a sincere "thank you" for supporting our school and students.

We announced our annual award winners in May, and they are:



Ann Neyland Hurt BOARD MEMBER OF THE YEAR



Sarah (not pictured) and Jeff Lewis ABOVE AND BEYOND AWARD



Ellen Conner VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR



THE 16TH ANNUAL “Giving Voice to Children” Luncheon

The 16th Annual “Giving Voice to Children Luncheon” was once again a rousing success, raising more than \$50,000 to support children who have communication delays and learning differences.

The luncheon, which took place on October 2, 2024, at The Junior League of Houston, is held annually to support The Parish School and its financial assistance fund, which helps make a Parish education possible for families who may otherwise be unable to afford this specialized learning environment.

The event opened with a welcome from Head of School Anne Powers and emcee Casey Curry, who would then introduce The Parish School Choir. They performed a rendition of “Blowin’ in the Wind” and “If I Had a Hammer,” which brought the guests to their feet with a standing ovation.

Following the captivating choir performance, alumni parent chairs Zoey and David Stringer gave a passionate testimonial on their daughter Gigi, who attended Parish from 2017-2023, after previously attending a school that “didn’t have the resources to accommodate Gigi’s speech needs.” Over the years, Parish, The Carruth Center and Gigi’s outside dyslexia tutor had provided a means for Gigi to thrive to where she has now transitioned to the Briarwood School.

“That’s the thing about Parish — through love and care — and tailored therapeutic interventions, the school helps children blossom by meeting them where they are and accepting them for who they are,” Zoey said.

The Stringers chaired the event alongside current parents Ellen and Bobby Conner, who gave a testimonial about their own on their son John, who is currently in the Cowboys class. The Conners have a unique story, first introduced to Parish through Camp Acorn, in hopes of giving John a fresh view on how to overcome some of his learning differences. They were living in Midland at the time, but came to Houston for the summer, which proved to be life changing.

“Our time at Camp Acorn in 2019 was truly magical, we could not believe such an incredible place existed, it felt like a school that was built just for John,” Ellen said.

They returned to Midland following the summer, and John began to experience frustration at school. It became clear that he needed to enroll at Parish, so they made the move to Houston and John was enrolled for the fall 2021 school year. He has seen an exceptional amount of progress over the last three years.

“John’s teachers and therapists over the years have pushed him to do things that we didn’t know he’d ever be able to do,” Ellen said.

Following the parent testimonials, the over 240 guests in attendance had the chance to hear from keynote speaker Dr. Carol Westby, an internationally-renowned expert on play assessment and development in children and longtime colleague of Parish School Founder Robbin Parish, who presented, “Telling Our Stories: Developing Children’s Identity and Emotional Well-Being,” which detailed the importance and value of personal stories and reminiscing with your children, as she encouraged guests to share their family stories.

Following Carol’s keynote, the school honored two individuals and one company with our annual awards of achievement. Legacy Asset Management Inc. (a OneDigital company), an Independent Registered Investment Advisory firm that has managed Parish’s endowment and provided retirement consulting services to staff since 2011, were honored as the Community Partner of the Year. Michael A. Assel, PhD, was then honored as the Robbin Parish Award recipient. A professor and neuropsychologist, Michael has also been a longtime supporter of Parish, taking time to visit Parish classrooms and recommending patients to look into Parish. He understands that the foundation for learning is laid in the development of strong speech and language skills and has been an invaluable resource for many years. The luncheon culminated with Melanie N. Seigle, MA, CCC-SLP, LSCW, receiving the Golden Oak Award. Melanie is a speech-language pathologist and clinical social worker who has worked with Parish since the ‘90s and previously served as director of admissions. She was also integral in expanding The Carruth Center to include neuropsychological testing, behavioral therapy and play therapy and has been a board member since 2011.

“I am more grateful than ever for her vision that led the way for us to be equipped and respond to the needs of our students,” said Anne Powers, who introduced Melanie. “You are a true champion for The Parish School and for the children we serve.”

Please make plans to join us for the 17th annual “Giving Voice to Children” Luncheon, to be held at the Junior League on October 9, 2025.



The Parish 2023-2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Publishing an annual report reminds each of us of how fortunate we are to have individuals and families who care so deeply about The Parish School. The hundreds of names on the following pages represent far more than a donation. All of the individuals listed have a specific reason — and perhaps even a personal story — that has motivated them to support our school financially. We continue to grow stronger every year because of the incredible support — beyond tuition dollars - we receive from our parents, grandparents, board members, alumni parents, alumni, faculty and staff, and friends. We are grateful and thank you for your support at all levels — whether it is \$1 or \$1 million, you make a tremendous difference in the lives of our Parish students.

THANK YOU.

The Parish Children’s School and Subsidiaries Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

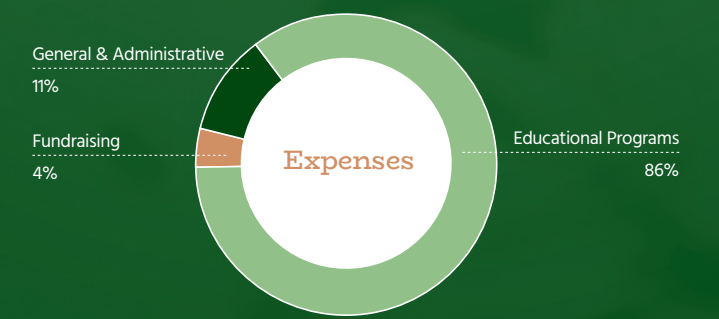
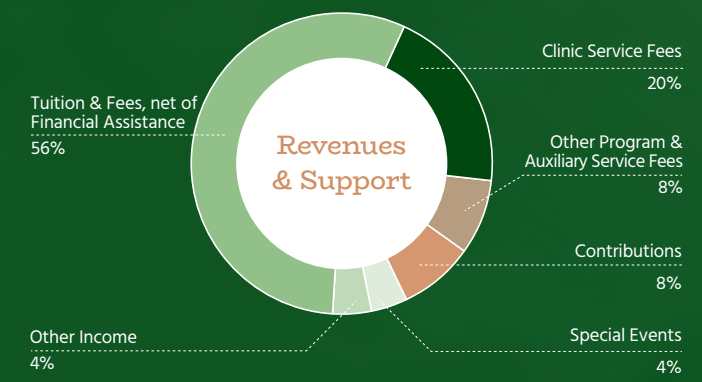
As of July 31, 2024

ASSETS	
Cash and Cash Equivalents	\$ 8,330,771
Property and Equipment	5,030,523
Other Assets	757,194
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 14,118,488
LIABILITY AND NET ASSETS	
Accounts Payable & Accrued Liabilities	\$ 222,039
Deferred Revenues	1,666,490
Notes Payable/Capital Lease Obligation	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES	\$ 1,888,529
Without Donor Restrictions	\$ 10,768,119
With Donor Restrictions	1,461,840
Total Net Assets	\$ 12,229,959
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 14,118,488

Consolidated Statement of Changes in Net Assets

As of July 31, 2024

REVENUES AND SUPPORT	
Tuition and Fees, net of financial assistance	\$ 4,816,689
Clinic Service Fees	1,701,720
Other Program & Auxiliary Service Fees	708,355
Contributions	718,582
Special Events	341,089
Other Income	322,688
TOTAL REVENUES	\$ 8,609,123
EXPENSES	
Educational Programs	7,290,636
General and Administrative	913,647
Fundraising	309,498
Total Expenses	8,513,781
Change in Net Assets	95,432
Net Assets, beginning of year	12,134,617
NET ASSETS, END OF YEAR	\$ 12,229,959



2023-2024 Donors

THE PARISH SCHOOL RECEIVED THE FOLLOWING GIFTS BETWEEN AUGUST 1, 2023 AND JULY 31, 2024.

SEEDS FOR GROWTH, THE ANNUAL FUND FOR THE PARISH SCHOOL

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August 1, 2023 to July 31, 2024

SEEDS for Growth Annual Fund

\$589,452

2023 Luncheon

\$105,365

Gala

\$402,452

MNNC

\$18,084

Poinsettias

\$16,814

Capital Campaign

\$50,000

UnBabbled Sponsorships

\$5,000

Cyber Auction

\$28,420

TOTAL \$1,215,587

Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this report to recognize gifts received. If any errors or omissions have been made, please accept our sincerest apologies and notify us at advancement@parishschool.org or call us at 713.467.4696.



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