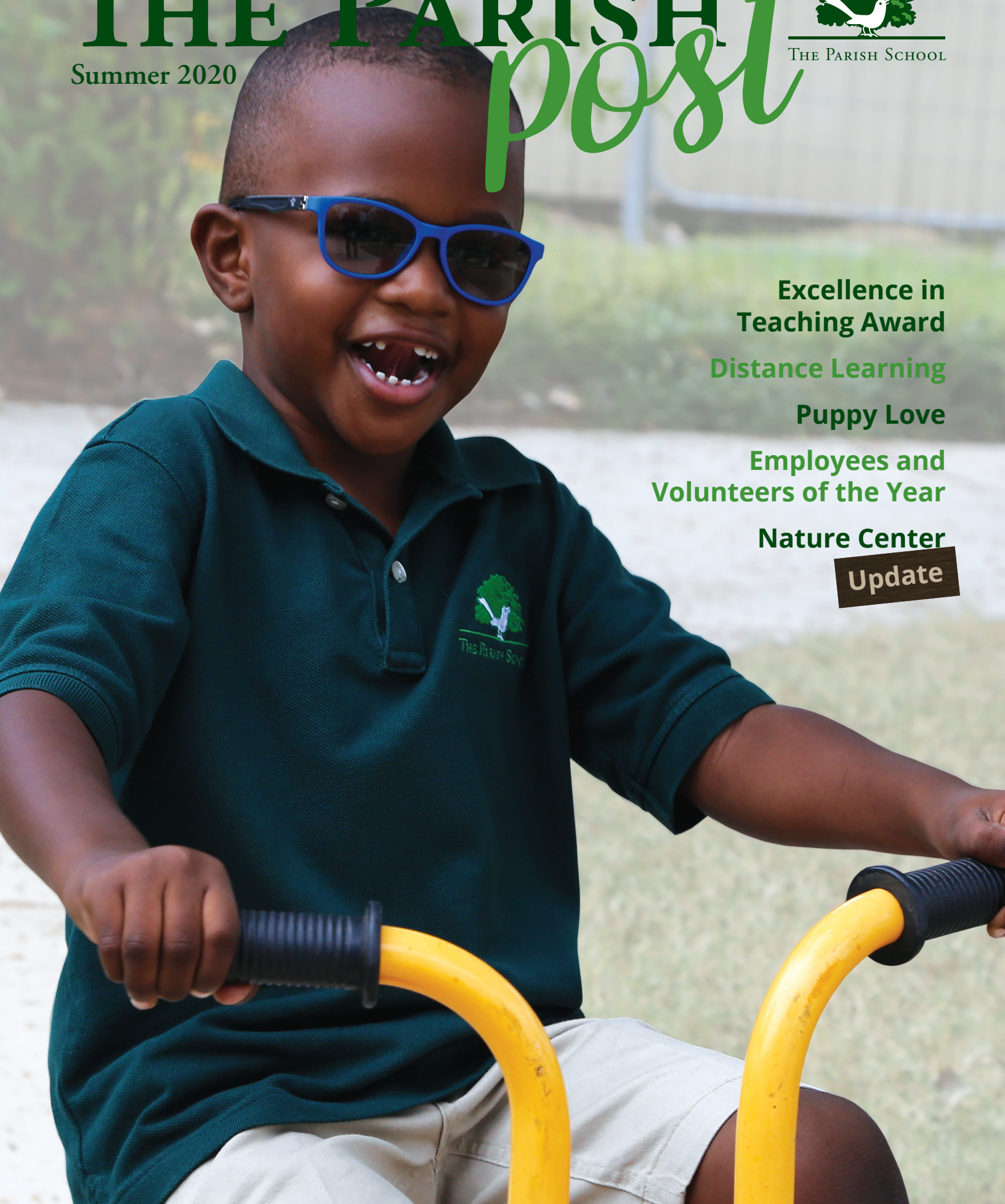


# THE PARISH *post*

Summer 2020



THE PARISH SCHOOL



**Excellence in  
Teaching Award**

**Distance Learning**

**Puppy Love**

**Employees and  
Volunteers of the Year**

**Nature Center**

**Update**

# Our Mission

To educate children ages 2-12 who have communication delays and learning differences, empowering them with the tools to succeed.

## In This Issue

- 3 Check it Out!
- 4 Letter From the Head of School
- 5 Alumni Spotlight: Hudson Gutierrez
- 6 Nature Center Update
- 7 Distance Learning
- 10 Camp Acorn 2020
- 12 2020 Gala Wrap-Up
- 14 Puppy Love
- 15 Unbabbled
- 16 Employees of the Year
- 18 Volunteers of the Year
- 20 Photo Round-Up
- 22 Excellence in Teaching Award
- 23 Save the Dates

### Administrative Team

**Cheval Bryant**, MCD, CCC-SLP  
Head of School

**Mimi Branham**, MA, CCC-SLP  
Director of The Carruth Center

**Terry Clough**, CPA  
Director of Finance and Operations

**Terri Garth**  
Director of Integrated Arts and Sciences

**Meredith Krimmel**, MS, CCC-SLP  
Director of Admissions

**Anne Powers**, MA, CCC-SLP  
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**Holly Wilbourn**  
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# Check it Out!

## #TheParishSchool



fb: Libby Ellwood Hall



insta: @sigma\_veronica



insta: @drpalmtesta



fb: @Maddie Wright



insta: @sarahinthestudio

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! Also, remember to follow us on Instagram @parishschooltx, on Twitter @ParishSchoolTX and on Facebook @TheParishSchool.



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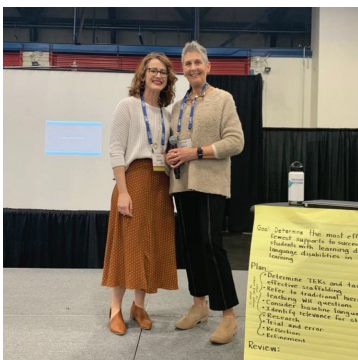
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# Letter from Head of School, Cheval Bryant



Dear Parish Friends:

As I reflect on my first year as The Parish School's new head of school, I can honestly say I will never forget it. The global pandemic, COVID-19, has been one of the most challenging of obstacles our school and our world has faced. I am proud of our Parish and Carruth teams for persevering during these most surreal days. And I would like to thank the board, the parents, the students and the staff for their assistance guiding us through our new reality.

The situation we face is fluid – changing day to day, if not hour by hour. Our goal is to create a sense of routine for our children as we reopen during a global pandemic, and we are prepared to do so, unless state mandates dictate otherwise. I know that these are uncertain circumstances we are facing but please be assured that the professionals at The Parish School and The Carruth Center are committed more than ever to meeting the needs of our students.

We have so many reasons to celebrate! The Margaret Noecker Nature Center's Oak Creek Exploration Zone is fully funded by our very generous supporters! This exciting project will turn the current preschool playground into an outdoor learning environment for our 4- to 6-year-olds. Elementary students are entering into newly furnished classrooms outfitted with updated technology; as well as a new math curriculum and a reading program that will be enhanced by the expertise of two new Reading Specialists.

Due to our current environment, which requires physical distancing, our traditional annual events will likely look very different this upcoming year. We are planning a virtual luncheon in October and will be sharing the details of that event very soon. We hope to continue the success of our annual Gala by planning another amazing (in person) event. Our Gala is currently scheduled for January 29 in downtown Houston with a back-up date of Saturday, May 8, should we need to push in-person events out to the spring. Please save these dates!

I greatly appreciate the understanding and support from all of you - our families, friends, faculty and staff - and I look forward to making this upcoming academic year the most rewarding as we travel this journey together. I suspect we will emerge from this crisis more innovative, wiser and stronger than we were just a mere 6 months ago.

All the best,

*Cheval*



# Alumni Success Story: Hudson Gutierrez

Parish Student: 2006-2009



At 18 months, Hudson was not speaking at all, not even saying mom or dad. While his parents, Laurie and Alfredo, were told to “give him time” and “boys are often delayed,” Laurie knew she needed to act early and persisted with having Hudson evaluated. After a series of tests, the family was referred to a speech therapist.

A friend recommended The Parish School, and the couple enrolled Hudson soon after his second birthday. He loved going to school each day, especially music and art. Eventually, Hudson was talking up a storm.

“Most importantly, the school took my husband and me under its wings,” said Laurie. “We were scared and felt helpless. We attended parent education classes, met with his teachers and his speech therapist. We were given the tools we needed to be one of the many advocates in Hudson’s life.”

After 3 years at The Parish School, Hudson transitioned to a traditional school setting, while continuing to attend speech therapy, occupational therapy and Social Learning groups at The Parish School and The Carruth Center.

Hudson has since gone on to prove he has a talent for being on-stage. He is actively involved in musicals, ballet and even participated in his school’s ComedySportz® Improv. He attends Houston Christian High School, where he joined theater, dance and Model UN. He has also taken Spanish throughout school and will begin AP Spanish this fall. Laurie says, “his accent is excellent!”

The Gutierrez family has continued to remain highly involved with The Parish School. Laurie is an active member of the Parish board of trustees, and the family hosted former Head of School, Nancy Bewley’s retirement party in their home last year. Additionally, Hudson has spent his past five summers volunteering in classes at The Parish School’s summer program – Camp Acorn.

“I really like working with the kids at camp,” said Hudson. “It feels nice to provide the help here because I went through the same thing when I was a kid.”

“The Parish School and The Carruth Center have had an instrumental impact on the success that Hudson is experiencing,” adds Laurie. “We are indebted to the school for giving Hudson and us the skills needed to enable Hudson to be successful in life.”

**“Most importantly,  
the school took my  
husband and me  
under its wings.”**

-Laurie,  
Hudson’s mother



# Margaret Noecker Nature Center Continues to Grow



Thanks to all of the generous donations the school has received over the past year, we are excited to announce that the Margaret Noecker Nature Center is fully funded and poised to begin phase two of development, Oak Creek Exploration Zone. Their first step is to finalize the design for the complete renovation of the existing pre-school playground. It's an ambitious task, one that, judging by the success of Little Acorn Park, will allow the school's natural learning environment to continue to flourish.

The old playground will be transformed into an engaging outdoor classroom, a stimulating and magical play environment with tunnels, sand boxes, hills, tree swings, building blocks, loose-parts materials – all designed to give The Parish School and The Carruth Center's young students a place where their imaginations and skills can thrive.

Since its official opening in October 2018, Little Acorn Park has buzzed with the energy of pre-primary students and their teachers. The noticeable hands-on delight confirms, every day, how nature learning can advance attention and imagination, reduce anxiety and expand verbal expression. Oak Creek Exploration Zone will now embrace the school's 4- to 6-year-olds in this same evergreen adventure. 🌿



*Thank you sincerely*

to these generous  
supporters of our vision:

***Oak Sponsor (\$100,000+)***

The Carruth Foundation, Inc  
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Rene Rodriguez and  
Sharon Shipley Rodriguez  
Laura Roth  
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Rachel and Warren von Eschenbach  
Jessica and Matthew Williams

# Key Moments from Distance Learning

COVID-19, the novel coronavirus, has not only taken our community, but the entire world by storm. Following Spring Break, schools across the U.S. pivoted to distance learning, as governors shut down their states to protect against the highly contagious virus. Transitioning a school of children varying in ages from 2 to 12 years who have special learning needs was no small feat. As our community was expected to stay in their homes and remain socially distant, parents and staff were now learning to juggle between the needs of their career and the needs of their own family. Teachers set up laptops on top of laundry baskets with cats climbing over them. Parents were now active participants in morning "circle time." Paraeducators were learning the ins and outs of keeping children actively engaged in Zoom lessons. And weeks turned into months, as stay-home orders remained in place, and plans for beloved Parish traditions were forced to be canceled.

It is no secret that distance learning was challenging for us all, but it's how our community banded together to figure out how to make the most of a difficult situation that continues to reinforce why Parish is so great. There are so many wonderful stories to share from remote learning, including chicks hatching and being cared for from a teacher's home, masks created from Parish uniforms for the elderly, families who lined up outside their teacher's house to show appreciation, support groups that were formed for parents to connect and share concerns among one another, the huge increase in participation by transitioning from in-person adult education sessions to webinars, the list goes on and on. These are just a sample of key moments from distance learning.

## Art Project with Krissy

The Parish Arts and Sciences team created a series of instructional videos each week that students were able to follow along with at their own pace from home. Parents commented on how their children loved spending mornings with Lisa Smith in nature, and welcoming Terri Garth into their home for pretend time in drama, and weekly Zoom dance parties with Karina Hall. Parish Art Therapist/Educator, Krissy Christofakis, wanted to organize a project that students could complete on their own, but would ultimately tie the entire school community together. She requested for each student to decorate a rock with a picture or message to share with the community. When complete, families could drop these "thriving stones" off at the school's outdoor science center for display until they could be relocated to a permanent home on campus. The thriving stone project would serve as a reminder of our community's ingenuity and perseverance during this time.

"Thank you to Krissy, our amazing art therapist, for recognizing how much we all needed this," said Terri Garth, Director of Integrated Arts and Sciences. "The rocks are as beautiful and diverse as our students, staff, and families are."



## Key Moments from Distance Learning, Cont.

### Shine Video

For the past 28 years, The Parish School's Upper and Lower Elementary Musical is an annual tradition the entire Parish community eagerly awaits each May. This rite of passage has allowed hundreds of students to showcase their personal growth by standing on-stage and showcasing the acting, singing or public speaking abilities that they developed in their time spent at The Parish School. When this year's musical was forced to cancel, the Arts and Sciences team looked to give students a new way of demonstrating their special talents.

They invited families to record their student singing along to "I Just Wanna Shine" by Fitz and The Tantrums, a song they had been rehearsing for the annual musical while at school. Additionally, they asked parents to provide a short clip of their student doing an activity of their choice to showcase how they "shine." All submissions were dubbed together to create "Shine," a video montage keepsake that may be viewed on YouTube at [youtu.be/SNM2e8G6RY8](https://youtu.be/SNM2e8G6RY8). When viewing, be sure to watch to the very end for a special commercial brought to you by Nicholas F. (age 8).



### Madagascar Hissing Cockroach Race

Parish students are huge fans of Rainbow, Big Daddy Bug, Star and Leila McNibbles, four Madagascar Hissing Cockroaches kept as class pets in The Parish School library and cared for by librarian, Jill Wood. Upper elementary students decided it would be fun to design a cockroach race for their four pets. They used the information they gathered through online research and a Zoom interview with entomologist, Erin Mills, Director of the Cockrell Butterfly Center at the Houston Museum of Natural Science, to help determine their race set-up. Students designed the course, which Jill and her husband, Patrick, built, and streamed the race-day event live from Jill and Patrick's backyard.

**"We loved cheering on those bugs,"** said Parish mom and board member, Ashleigh Rickertsen.

The hysterical race may be replayed on Facebook at [bit.ly/3gJrG86](https://bit.ly/3gJrG86). Community Outreach Coordinator and 2019-20 Sunbeams class teacher, Amy Lerman, serves as the lively commentator heard in the background.

**"That broadcast of the cockroach race was so good,"** said Parish speech-language pathologist, Stephanie Landis. **"It was exactly what everyone needed after a stressful and busy week. The added commentary so perfectly added excitement and information and I loved the homemade signs for each 'contestant'. Honestly, I didn't know if I could actually handle a cockroach race, but I loved it!"**



# Drive-Thru End-of-Year Celebrations

How do we close out the school year in a way that is both meaningful for our students and families, but also follows directives to remain socially distanced? At The Parish School, celebratory parades are held regularly on campus. It only made sense to modify this same concept and have families stay inside their vehicles. These "drive-thru" parades would allow all to remain at a safe distance while still having the opportunity to say farewell to classmates and teachers, and celebrate the end of the school year.

Three separate events were held to space out different age groups and the corresponding staff. Faculty members lined up along the circle drive for decorated vehicles filled with smiling students to drive past, waving to each other, and picking up an individually wrapped treat along the way.

The events ended up being so much fun, that staff commented on how they'd love to make this a regular tradition.


"Thank you for making this so memorable," said Parish mom, Veronica Tucker via Facebook. "What a great way to celebrate!"



# Camp Acorn Opens with COVID-19 Safety Measures in Place

The Parish School welcomed children back to campus with protective measures in place after Gov. Abbott announced that camps could open for summer 2020.

Stefanie Heintz, Director of Camp Acorn, along with her team of administrators, spent hundreds of hours planning together, reading through CDC materials and the Governor's Open Texas Guidelines to develop a plan and procedures to re-open safely. Each morning, every staff member and student followed the same screening method, which included a temperature check, series of questions, and a log-in of results.



"Reimagining camp to be in compliance with local, state and federal guidelines was no small feat," said Stefanie. "As the rules and guidelines constantly changed as the pandemic evolved, flexibility in our programming, while ensuring we maintained the integrity of our program and quality of services, was a concerted effort."

Transparency and communication with families and staff was integral to maintaining the trust of the community. The goal was to not only provide an environment of growth for campers, but to ensure the safety and health of all involved. While enrollment dropped by about 20%, those in attendance were happy to be there, and were understanding of the precautions put in place.



Following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommendations, students stayed only with their class and did not intermingle with other children. Playground times were staggered, and equipment was sanitized between groups. Teaching proper handwashing was highly emphasized throughout all classes, and ample hand sanitizer was provided. Rooms were fogged three times a week and materials were cleaned daily. Due to the program's design, Camp Acorn's afternoon enrichment offering was canceled since it required intermingling of children.





“Parents stuck with us throughout this whole process and complied with our procedures during camp,” said Stefanie. “They did an excellent job modeling for children flexibility and patience during these unprecedented events.”

Although camp was met with some challenges, administrators were able to grasp and tackle the complexities of opening school in the fall. Camp served as a model to replicate best practices for the upcoming school year. Additionally, an internal task force was formed to transition camp protocols to school year protocols and improve practices to better serve students and staff.

While camp looked very different this year to remain safe, the foundation remained the same. Families praised the efforts of staff and reported progress in their child’s social, emotional, academic and language skills in just a few short weeks of being a part of Camp Acorn.

After 7 years as camp director, Stefanie is stepping down to focus on spending more time with her family. “I never imagined my last summer would look like this, but it’s certainly a summer I will never forget!”

# The Parish School Gala Entertains a Packed House and Strengthens Funding for a Bright Future

The Parish School parents, supporters and friends came together in their finest, most colorful evening dress for “The Future’s So Bright” gala, filling The Ballroom at Bayou Place. The annual gala is The Parish School’s biggest fundraiser and has grown steadily in recent years.

The event broke underwriting and pre-event donation records and raised more than \$100,000 in “Paddles Up” donations, which directly supports the school’s financial assistance fund.

Gala chairs Susan and Brian McConn and Ofelia and Vuk Vujasinovic said they couldn’t be more pleased with the turnout and the generosity of the crowd, seated at tables with rainbow-colored settings, lavish centerpieces and overhead chandeliers of every hue. Underwriters include Kirkland and Ellis, LLP; Fayez, Susan and Lori Sarofim; Adonia & Kevin Cokinos; Kate and Doug Bacon; Mo and Ric Campo; The Ellwood Foundation; Margaret and Ben Morris; Olga and Gerald Balboa; Carolyn and Platt Davis; and Jenny Elkins.



“We do not know where we would be without the early intervention our daughter Camille has received at The Parish School and without the support we have received from the staff and community. It is truly our village,” said Susan McConn in her testimonial to the crowd.

“It is heartbreaking to think of the children out there who desperately need these specialized services but do not have access to them,” added Susan

Emceeding the event was John-Thomas Kobos, who attended The Parish School from 1985-87. John-Thomas overcame his learning and communication challenges and pursued a career in one of the most competitive communications fields, news broadcasting. He is currently a morning news anchor at KIII-TV Corpus Christi.

“The Parish School gave me the tools to take the information in front of me and translate it so I could understand it, and in turn, explain it to others. And that’s what I do every day,” said John-Thomas.





Cheval Bryant, Head of School, welcomed the crowd and spoke of her love for working with children. She joined the The Parish School in June 2019 after overseeing speech therapy and section 504 services in the Office of Special Education for Houston Independent School District.

*"I feel like my passions and experiences are exactly aligned with the culture of The Parish School and the parents I see here at the gala," said Cheval. "This is really my dream job."*

A highlight of the evening was Jill Wood, who was honored for founding the school's unique Adventure Play program and continuing to advocate for child-directed play opportunities in the community. Adventure Play builds children's independence, problem-solving skills and imagination. She received the school's prestigious Golden Oak Award that is given annually to visionaries who support The Parish School.

*"The school has embraced Adventure Play, one of only six in the country, and allowed these ideas to grow into useful challenges for our students to learn. Children know what they need, and they will tell us what they need," said Jill.*

Co-chair Ofelia Vujasinovic told the audience how her son Sava was diagnosed with ataxia, a condition that affects movement and balance. She said his doctors recommended against physical activities. Instead, the parents enrolled Sava in Adventure Play, where he frequently climbs roofs and zip-lines across play structures. The family was recently able to take a family snow skiing vacation, where Sava was able to conquer the slopes unassisted.



*"Our son has embraced the program and, as usual, exceeded our wildest dreams," Ofi said. "The Parish School has given Sava the language and courage to be successful."*



# Save the Date

## The Parish School's 28th Annual Gala

**Friday, January 29, 2021\***

**6 p.m. - midnight**  
**The Ballroom at Bayou Place**

\*Back-up date: Saturday, May 8, 2021

[www.parishschool.org/gala](http://www.parishschool.org/gala)

# The Parish School Welcomes New Puppy to School

There's a new case of puppy love on The Parish School campus. With big, brown eyes, floppy yellow ears and wet black nose, Oriana III has bounced into the hearts of Parish students and staff.

A golden retriever Labrador mix, Oriana is the third assistance dog-in-training to be raised by upper elementary speech-language pathologist and lead teacher, Heather Hillery. Heather is a volunteer puppy raiser for Canine Companions for Independence, a non-profit organization that places assistance dogs with individuals who have disabilities.

As students who have a history of difficulty with expressive and receptive language, reading, executive functioning, social competence and emotional regulation, the success of the puppy raising program is one to be celebrated on The Parish School campus.

The puppy accompanies Heather to school each day and interacts with students in the elementary classes. On a typical day, students sign in, empty their backpacks, check the daily schedule, and collaborate with peers on how to prepare for their next activity. Their attention then turns to the corner of the room where the puppy is focused on the action, eagerly wagging her tail and waiting to be "dressed" for the coveted morning class walk. The students greet the puppy, check in on how her previous evening was, inquire about her training progress, and comment on their feelings about her. They begin working together to assemble items for the morning walk.

Children routinely work on a "puppy book" filled with

poetry, narrative, artwork, letters and photographs to document the puppy's progress. The exercise positively influences vocabulary development, written composition, comprehension, critical thinking, problem-solving and teamwork.

One of Heather's puppies was brought into a therapy session for a child with apraxia who was unmotivated to work on her therapy goals. The child was drawn to the puppy and frequently requested to pet the puppy using her limited verbal communication skills. Her SLP determined dog training commands that used speech sounds the child was targeting in therapy and brought the dog to a session. Not only did the child produce more targeted speech sounds than in any previous session, but in subsequent sessions, the SLP and child co-authored a book about the puppy that the child proudly read to her family.

Andrew T., an upper elementary student with a genuine love of dogs, takes a special interest in Heather's puppies. His family bid the highest on Heather's contribution to the annual Parish Cyber Auction – the opportunity to plan Oriana's welcome party. Andrew took the job seriously and developed a plan to introduce the puppy to the wider school community.

*Oriana III*





He created an informative presentation on the rules that surround having a working dog on campus.

"It's important to not talk to Oriana because it could distract her while she's training," explained Andrew to a library filled with his younger peers.

After Andrew went over the rules, the group celebrated with cake together. The occasion not only taught Andrew about how to plan an event, but he also worked on important technology and public speaking skills.

Oriana will be raised by Heather for 14-18 months, after which, she will return to Canine Companions for Independence for additional training. Eventually, the goal is for her to become a skilled companion for a person with disabilities.

# The Parish School Launched a Podcast!



Navigating the world of special education, communication delays and learning differences can be a challenge. Tune in to hear Stephanie Landis and Meredith Kimmel, two Parish speech-language pathologists, as they interview guests from parents to industry professionals. Each episode covers a different topic related to education or child development and provides guidance, insight and hope to those touched by children who learn differently.

## Topics and Guests Include:

- Understanding Childhood Apraxia of Speech with Expert Nancy Kaufman
- Explaining Learning Disabilities with Libby Hall
- A Parent's Perspective with Justin Keller
- The Importance of Early Intervention with Anne Powers
- Autism Spectrum Disorder 101 with Dr. Cathy Guttentag
- High-Risk Behavior in Children and Teens with Dr. Crystal Collier

**And More!**

Listen online at [www.parishschool.org/podcast](http://www.parishschool.org/podcast) or subscribe to "Unbabbled" for free in any podcast player, such as Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts or Spotify. Please give us a rating and review, too!



## Recognizing Four Outstanding Parish and Carruth Team Members!

The Parish School is unique and innovative thanks to our amazing team of teachers, paraeducators, therapists and administrators. Each bring their own unique skills and talents to our school and clinic to transform the lives of children who have communication delays and learning differences.

Every year, staff vote for the employees who stand out as going above and beyond, demonstrating the school's core values of creativity, nurture, passion, ethical and people. We are excited to announce the following exemplary staff members who were selected as The Parish School and The Carruth Center's 2019-20 employees of the year.

We  our  
fantastic  
staff



### *Teacher of the Year* Jessica Brock, MEd

Since joining Parish in 2012, Jessica has worked as a paraeducator, a playworker on the school's adventure playground, and a nature studies educator. Additionally, she was an upper elementary lead teacher for the past 5 years. Jessica is constantly researching and learning about best practices in education, and channels that knowledge into her classroom daily. She helped pilot the inquiry-based learning program at The Parish School and has helped other educators implement the method in their classrooms by speaking at the Houston Branch of the International Dyslexia Association, South by Southwest (SXSW)® Edu, and Texas Speech-Language-Hearing Association conferences. She is also passionate about the role of play in shaping a child's development and spoke about the benefits of playwork at the 2019 Playwork Campference.

"Jessica invests so much of her time and her heart in her students' lives," said Amy Richard, Director of Elementary. "She helps to find the students' strengths and build on them, empowering them to be independent and successful learners. She is a leader in our elementary team and I could not be more proud of her for winning this honor!"



## Paraeducator of the Year

Madeline Wright

Maddie joined the Parish team as an early childhood paraeducator for the Dinosaurs class in 2018-19, and since then, has continuously brought so much joy to the classroom and to her team. She is always ready to take on new challenges and pushes herself to grow in new ways. When assistance is needed, she is willing to help in any way she can, from filling in when others have been out, to serving on staff committees, to volunteering to work the annual gala (now, two years in a row!).

“Even on the hardest days, Maddie can be found smiling, stepping in to help others, and meeting whatever needs arise,” said Anne Powers, Director of Early Childhood. “Her professionalism, passion and expertise make a difference in our community and most importantly, in the lives of our students.”

## Therapist of the Year

Amy Lerman, MS, CCC-SLP

Amy came to The Parish School in 2006, when she started as a lead SLP in an early childhood classroom. This past year, she has simultaneously juggled roles as community outreach, Social Learning clinician, Sunbeams teacher, SLP, even a cockroach race announcer! And for all of them, she pours her heart and soul into at 110%. She is constantly seeking ways to promote the school and clinic in the community and collaborate with other organizations to further our mission. Through her efforts, Parish has partnered with several leading experts to present adult education sessions for



families, participate in podcast interviews, and provide training for staff.

According to Clinic Director, Mimi Branham, “Amy is a therapist with outstanding dedication and compassion. She is creative and thoughtful in all her interactions with children, and truly exudes The Parish Way!”



## Therapist of the Year

Rosie Herlihy, OTR/L, MS

Rosie joined the Carruth team during the 2017-18 school year and quickly became well-known and loved among clients and co-workers. She is always open to professional growth as demonstrated by becoming a DIR Floortime practitioner in 2018 and supervising two occupational therapy graduate students last year.

“Rosie has become a confident, skilled OT who demonstrates creativity, devotion and flexibility in her work with Carruth and Parish clients,” said Clinic Director, Mimi Branham. “She is first to come up with ideas and plans to better our services, and her dedication to her clients and to The Carruth Center has been outstanding!”

# Celebrating the 2019-20 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 moms, event chairs, office helpers, and more. Our staff narrowed down the many nominations to the following individuals. Please join us in wishing them each a sincere “thank you” for supporting our school and students.

## *Above and Beyond Award*

**Claudia Soto**

Overwhelmingly nominated, Claudia has been a top volunteer for years. She could be found many days of the week helping in administration with data input, sorting spirit items, combing through yearbook photos, printing and distributing PTO reminders, helping to set up for The Village parent socials, putting together student birthday gifts, helping with mailings, the list goes on and on... Not only that, but she also was frequently found helping in the classroom and re-shelving books in the library.

“Although the Soto-Barreda family has transitioned to a new school, they have left an indelible mark on The Parish School forever,” said Janice Straker, Events and Volunteer Coordinator. “Our hearts are overflowing with gratitude!”



## *Board Member of the Year*

**Tommy Jamail**

Tommy, a Parish alumnae grandparent, joined the board of trustees in 2016. Since then, he's been instrumental in securing donated office furnishings for the school, including some very nice workstations for the modular building. Speaking of the modular building, Tommy engaged Gensler, a global architecture, design and planning firm, to provide consultation on the school's newest installation and to re-develop the campus master plan. “Tommy really came through for us on the modular,” said Cheval Bryant, Head of School. “Adding the extra space was a pivotal change for Parish and will forever be a part of our history!”



## *PTO President & Vice President*

Meghan Peterson & Elise Lammers

Both Meghan and Elise have served two terms as PTO President and Vice President. They have been ready to step in and help as needed, faithfully leading all PTO meetings, and have spent countless hours responding to emails, phone calls and text messages from Event & Volunteer Coordinator, Janice Straker. They actively keep parents informed of school activities via the school Facebook group – The Parish Parents Forum, recruited other key volunteer and event host positions, keep room parents updated on school activities, and even hand-delivered gifts to Parish community partners across the city during the holidays.



## *Volunteer of the Year*

Tracie and Chuck Bates

Second year Parish parents and room parents, Tracie and Chuck Bates are always looking at ways to support their class (the Engineers) and the greater school community.

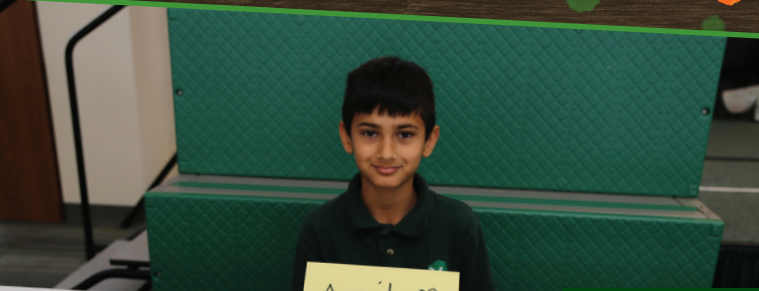
"They supplied us with tools for our makerspace, indulged us with chocolates, items at the beginning of the year, and even lunch for our fairytale picnic," said Engineers Teacher, Meagan Rosales. "Both have been so thoughtful about supporting our teaching team throughout the year."

Additionally, Chuck led Junior Achievement activities with all lower elementary classes and has volunteered to speak with parents on how to financially plan for their child's future. For Mother's Day, he coordinated an upcycled frame project for the Engineers class that he distributed to families across Houston, due to the COVID-19 closure.

Tracie co-chaired Teacher Appreciation Week and was ready to implement her ideas when the in-person event was canceled. She has many great plans in the hopper though, as she plans to chair the event again next year! She was also a huge help with unloading and distributing the hundreds of plants from our annual poinsettia fundraiser. 🌿



THE PARISH SCHOOL



We  our Parents







## Amy Rapp Recognized with Teaching Excellence Award

Early childhood speech-language pathologist and lead teacher, Amy Rapp, MA, CCC-SLP, recently earned the Margaret Noecker Nature Center Teaching Excellence Award. This grant is awarded to a Parish educator in recognition of their commitment to teaching.

In year's past, this award allowed recipients to receive further outdoor education training at the annual Nature Explore Leadership Institute National Conference in Nebraska. Due to the conference's cancellation from the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's grant may be used at Amy's discretion.

Named in memory of longtime Parish Head of School and beloved first teacher, Margaret Noecker, the award is managed and funded by her husband, Nick, who remains active in the Parish community and serves on the Margaret Noecker Nature Center's council. With a grateful heart for all teachers, Nick remains committed to growing and sustaining the award.

"Margaret had a special gift for teaching and an enduring belief in the ability of teachers to reach Parish children in ways that help them succeed," said Nick. "I always knew she was right, but more so now than ever before."

Margaret was deeply committed to the teaching of the whole child, an approach that supports the cognitive, social, emotional, physical and talent development of children.

"Amy was selected for the award for her continued commitment to honoring the whole child, whether through gardening, raising classroom butterflies or collecting and providing loose parts for her students to learn through play," said Terri Garth, Chair of the Margaret Noecker Nature Center.

***"She is creative and passionate in her work to find the voices of her students."***

Amy has been a speech-language pathologist in the early childhood program at The Parish School since 2014. From the beginning of her career, Amy has been inspired by the opportunity to provide a quality early childhood experience through functional, integrated communication intervention that supports students' communication, social-cognitive and pre-academic skills. 🌿



# Save The Dates

## Cyber Auction

Opens: Wednesday,  
September 16 at 3 p.m.

Closes: Wednesday,  
September 23 at 10 p.m.

[parishschool.org/cyberauction](http://parishschool.org/cyberauction)

## Virtual Luncheon

Thursday, October 1

[parishschool.org/luncheon](http://parishschool.org/luncheon)

## Poinsettia Fundraiser

Sales run October 1-31

[parishschool.org/poinsettias](http://parishschool.org/poinsettias)



## Fall Family Garden Day

Saturday, October 10

[parishschool.org/fall-gardenday](http://parishschool.org/fall-gardenday)

## 2020 Houston Virtual Walk for Apraxia

Saturday, November 7

#VirtualWalkforApraxia

## The Parish School's 28<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala

Friday, January 29, 2021\*  
The Ballroom at Bayou Place

[www.parishschool.org/gala](http://www.parishschool.org/gala)

\*Back-Up Date: Saturday, May 8, 2021



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THE PARISH SCHOOL

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## About The Parish School:

Since 1983, The Parish School has educated children ages 2-12 who have communication delays and learning differences, empowering them with the tools to succeed. This nationally recognized, special needs school in Houston provides an education for the entire family within the environment of a nurturing and safe 17-acre campus with on-site pediatric therapy clinic, The Carruth Center. Our personalized academic approach – with a focus on communication skills, social learning, nature, independence and the arts – allows children not just to grow, but to thrive.



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online with just a few clicks

