

WHAT

MATTERS

MOST



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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

What Matters Most



A not so little secret about me: *I love a good theme.* And if you can apply a good theme to a party, I'm really all about it (see page 13)! But I know I'm not alone, didn't Pinterest build out a \$20 billion business on our collective love of a theme? In closing out last year it really hit me that what makes The Arbor stand apart is that our very mission requires that we constantly refine what it means to do the work that matters most. And there it was – our theme for this year! ***Doing What Matters Most.***

Now, as you step through our campus this year, outside of every classroom and office door hangs a sign that speaks to what that staff feels matters most to their efforts – some speak to vision, to kindness, to teamwork, to perspective, and more. With our student population, there's a host of needs that can be addressed alongside a long list of goals (be it cognitive, social, or physical) that we can chase after – and they would all be excellent goals worth striving for! But at the end of the day, we must always ask ourselves: what matters most? And ultimately, that question must be met with the answer that will create the most independence and success for each student in our care once they reach adulthood. The Arbor's always playing the long game.

Playing the long game isn't an easy one. But it produces incredible results (see pages 9-18). In the last three years alone, The Arbor has experienced explosive growth and has seen its student population grow by more than 50%! And of course, with that comes more teaching and program staff, a greater need for scholarship support, and ultimately, the need to raise more funds to support our mission.

There's a lot to be proud of in the pages that follow, but make no mistake about it – we only get to do this work because of you. Thank you for being a part of our community, it's what matters most.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "JuliAnna Jelinek". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

JuliAnna Jelinek
Executive Director



BELIEVING WHAT MATTERS MOST

OUR MISSION

Founded in 1988, The Arbor stands firm in its mission for over 35 years to enable children with significant special needs to reach their fullest potential by

**EDUCATING,
EMPOWERING, &
BUILDING HOPE**

for our students and their families.



**OUR VISION
IS TO SEE THAT EVERY
CHILD
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS
HAS A PLACE
LEARN & GROW**

DOING WHAT MATTERS MOST

KEY AREAS

The Primary Program (infants-age 12) focuses on academics with an emphasis in 5 key areas to educate the whole child:

COGNITION, COMMUNICATION, SELF-HELP, FINE, & GROSS MOTOR

The Secondary Program (ages 13-18) continues to grow in academics with an emphasis in 4 key areas to prepare for the years to come:

PRE-VOCATIONAL, TRANSITIONAL, LIFE SKILLS, & SOCIAL SKILLS



54 STUDENTS

HAVING NO NICHE IS OUR NICHE!

At The Arbor, we have always said that having no niche is our niche! And that means that children at The Arbor present a wide range of diagnoses, including autism, Down syndrome, cerebral palsy, along with a wide variety of genetic, physical, and neurological disorders. What makes The Arbor unique is that we serve children with a broad spectrum of developmental challenges!

AUXILIARY SUPPORT

Offering a comprehensive education, The Arbor strives to support our students in every area of need. In addition to our therapies on the following page, The Arbor also partners with organizations to incorporate the following classes for our students:

ART, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, AND MUSIC



39 TEACHERS

We have the BEST staff around! With 11 lead teachers and 28 assistant teachers, we are able to provide the most individualized care to each of our students. While classroom student to teacher ratios never exceed 2:1, ALL goal work is always done 1:1. When we asked one of our teachers what she loves most about her job, she replied,

"EVERYTHING! I LOVE THESE KIDS AS MUCH AS I LOVE MY OWN KIDS"

EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD



OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Our Occupational Therapist (OT) works with our students on seating and positioning, sensory regulation, handwriting and fine motor skills, and so much more. Occupational Therapy is high on our priority list because our students have shown that they will struggle if they have unmet sensory needs that are not regulated. We obviously aim to provide the best possible environment for learning to occur and without our OT, this task would feel insurmountable.

SPEECH THERAPY

75 percent of The Arbor's student population is considered non-verbal or have limited verbal abilities. The addition of a full-time Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) has been instrumental for students and families in helping them obtain a communication device and working hand in hand with staff to make certain the students can use their device as they might their own voice. Our SLP also leads classroom lessons that aid in growing our students' vocabulary whether with the use of their voice or their communication device.



BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

Transitioning to a new school environment can be hard! Our Behavioral Support Specialist (BSS) is a brand-new role to The Arbor and has been met with such positive results! The root cause of many behaviors exhibited by our students is a lack of ability to communicate. Working hand in hand with our SLP, our BSS works with students and families to help them learn appropriate ways to communicate. When communication is not the root cause, our BSS focuses on understanding the function of the behavior and working with staff to create an appropriate behavior plan.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Our Physical Therapist (PT) works with students to improve strength, stability, fine/gross motor skills, coordination, functional mobility, balance, and more. All of these skills are critical for our students to reach their greatest level of independence; and while our PT works individually with students, the real magic happens in having a PT on staff that is able to help teachers embed those physical goals into their everyday lessons.



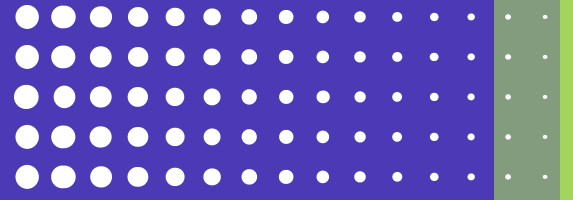


HONORING WHAT MATTERS MOST

WELCOME AND CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR INCOMING SENIORS!

Thanks to the growth of our campus and the incredible support from our community, our Secondary Program, for students ages 12-18, continues to grow and reach new heights. Through the pages of this report, we've had the opportunity to highlight some of our greatest areas of impact and nothing speaks more to the impact of our mission than looking ahead at our inaugural "senior class" of students moving into the coming year. These students will all turn 18 this year and have averaged well over a decade with us. We could dedicate an entire impact report to the best moments and achievements made by just the three students on the following page, so their families helped us by outlining a few of their best!

OUR FIRST SENIOR CLASS



2014



2024

LILY KATE

*Most likely to...
be found on the
dance floor!*



2014



2024

GRAY

*Most likely to...
throw a good party!*



2014



2024

LILY

*Most likely to...
be in charge!*



LILY KATE

Lily Kate holds the title of the longest tenured student at the school. She's been at The Arbor since the tender age of 2. It's hard to believe that she's called The Arbor her educational home for nearly 16 years! There are so many moments that stand out to me in her time at The Arbor, but most of them center around her birthdays and class celebrations because if I were to be honest, with a child as beautifully complex as our Lily Kate, as a parent you begin to barter with reality and part of that was that perhaps friends and parties weren't going to be a thing for Lily Kate.




GRAY

What seems like a right of passage as a young child, riding a bike, took YEARS for Gray to learn. We had bikes with pedals that he had to strap his feet into so he'd learn to pedal. We had bikes without pedals so he could just push himself along. We finally were able to move to bikes with training wheels that were low enough to the ground so he could pedal or push himself along. Then on May 31, 2020 our boy began riding an adult size cruiser bike and he hasn't stopped since. The peace he finds riding around on his bike is such a blessing.




LILY

Because of The Arbor School's fantastic secondary program, we've discovered that Lily really enjoys the opportunity to learn and improve her job skills. From folding pizza boxes to placing bar code stickers on items, she's a woman with a clear purpose. She even got Employee of the Month last April! Most of all, you can tell she takes pride in a well-done operation, and we love seeing this side of Lily!




But, in her time at The Arbor we've realized how wrong we were! We've come to see that our girl is so social – just not with her words and that's okay. Instead, it's the perfect way she smiles and lights up when her favorite pop hits are played. It's being told by her teaching staff that she serves as The Arbor news reporter in her class with her active listening skills that bring joy, laughter, and the use of her motor skills to participate in every conversation in her immediate space. I love knowing that she's in a classroom that understands her nonverbal cues and her facial expressions that are spot on when they give her news about a friend or that when she's fully aware of fellow student in need of redirection, she engages into laughter and vocal sounds.

Lily Kate is also acquiring job training skills by refilling the school's coffee creamer jars with increased independence. So while she might prefer the dance party, she's helping keep The Arbor staff caffeinated and happy, because we all know they go in that order. We're so proud of our girl!



We have a big family who loves to get together, but it was often just too taxing on Gray. Being able to attend family functions and enjoy them has been one of our biggest wins in his time at The Arbor! With help from his amazing teachers, Gray overcame his anxiety in these situations and not only does he go now, he has fun! This holds true for church as well; he loves his Sundays at church! Speaking of family and community, Gray has really come out of his shell when it comes to celebrating others. This kid used to cry at the very sight of a slice of cake and the Happy Birthday Song or shy away at loud noises; he now wants to celebrate everyone's birthday, anniversary, whatever to the fullest!


We've seen Gray come alive as he's been able to find purpose in ways to help others – Gray loves to be helpful. When your son is largely non-verbal, it is amazing to see him learn to use his communication device to truly interact and converse with people as well as show his sense of humor. He is funny! And so very observant. He's also made recent strides in learning to read, and honestly, we never even had this on our radar! It just continues to show us that he's not done yet and has so much more to show us!



Lily surprised everyone at church recently by spontaneously writing her name on her paper all by herself with no prompting from anyone. The only reason this even happened at all is due to the patience and diligence of her Arbor teachers who keep encouraging her day in and day out.

Because Lily is the oldest at The Arbor School, she was the first student to have a Sweet Sixteen birthday party. Ms. Lee, her teacher, was so sweet and asked if it was alright with me if she brought "a few decorations." Well, let's just say it was more than a few! She went all out to make sure Lily had a special day and felt well celebrated. And while Lily may have enjoyed all the attention, her dad and I fell in love with The Arbor all over again, watching her teachers love her like we do.

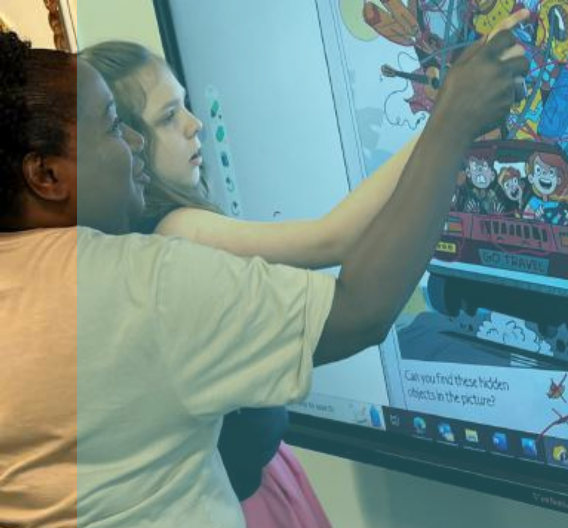
Finally, Lily has really enjoyed her art class at The Arbor and has created some beautiful pieces that we've not only hung in our home, but also shared as gifts with family. Both her big sisters have Lily Rush Originals proudly displayed in their homes. We can't wait for this year's upcoming art show!



GROWING WHAT MATTERS MOST

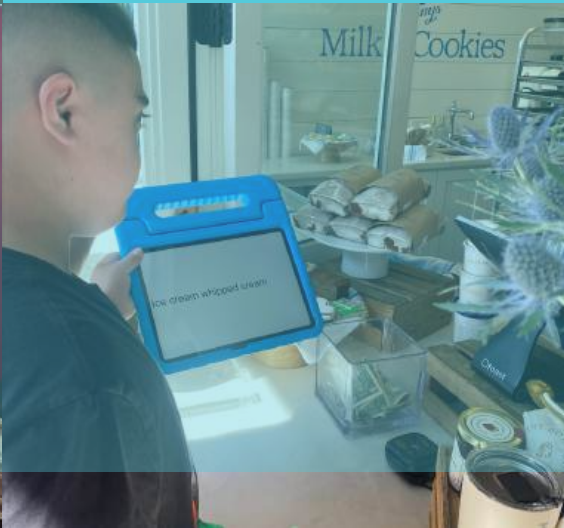


We have taken great joy in growing our Secondary Program this past year! With three full classrooms, the Secondary Team implemented a new schedule of rotations focused on three primary components comprised of life skills, vocational skills, and anchored by their academic homeroom. This rotation schedule mimics a more traditional middle and high school setting with additional exposure to staff and moving from room to room. And our students have been taking great joy in the increased responsibility and independence!



Our students have also had a significant increase in time spent in the community and applying the skills acquired in the classroom. In fact, this last school year, the Secondary Program spent a collective

1,716 HOURS IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING!



COMMUNITY-BASED TRAINING THIS YEAR

- Students worked on behalf of Kingsland Baptist Church on the creation of general welcome kits and 21 Days of Christmas gift boxes where the students helped build and filled up each box. Arbor students completed over 800 boxes.
- In celebration of Earth Day, students visited the local library and park for a lesson on cleaning up our environment. This was coupled with a visit later in the month to reinforce the idea of recycling, where students delivered recycling collected from the school to a local recycling center.
- Students work throughout the year in partnership with CW Plastics by applying bar code stickers to their saucers, and a group of our Arbor students were invited to visit the CW Plastics warehouse to witness firsthand how the items they work with are created.
- Arbor Students also work with a local MOD Pizza on the assembly of their pizza boxes and have visited multiple times through the last year to deliver the boxes and work on additional tasks at the restaurant. Everyone celebrates afterward with a free pizza meal!



CELEBRATING WHAT MATTERS MOST

This last year marked a major milestone for The Arbor!

35 YEARS!

To celebrate such a milestone year, we Cued the Confetti, and threw a party to remember. With a goal to raise dollars to endow our scholarship fund and enable us to expand our services to families who cannot consider The Arbor due to financial burdens and demands, we were beyond grateful to have raised over \$662,000! What a gift and legacy! We often state that disabilities don't discriminate, and neither do we when we speak about the variety of students we serve, but there are many who seek our program but can never consider it for lack of resources. Cue the Confetti has changed that and made the magic of The Arbor available to every family, regardless of their income.





CULTIVATING WHAT MATTERS MOST

We can't talk about what matters most without making a BIG mention of our community and the underpinning of support we're provided by our families (both past and present), our Board of Trustees, and our donors. The Arbor is so very often on the receiving side of generosity and compassion, and it fuels our mission to do more and do it well. Our greatness measured off the charts this last year – and it was all because of you!



3RD ANNUAL CORNHOLE TOURNAMENT

Arbor Family, Jimmy and Leslie Siegel, in collaboration with their team at Northwestern Mutual, hosted the 3rd Annual Cornhole Tournament in October 2023. With both new and old friends, this event was great fun! In total, the Tournament raised a net of over \$80,000 to support scholarships through the year!

13TH ANNUAL ARBOR FUN WALK

The Arbor Fun Walk shows the heart of our community unlike any other event. We LOVE this event as friends and families all rally together to support our Arbor Awesome students. This year, the Fun Walk had a peppermint twist and was sprinkled with snow flurries! We had Santa, snowball fights, hot chocolate and more as we rang in the holidays with this extra special Fun Walk! We are so thankful for our friends who helped us raise over \$179,000 by way of the Fun Walk last year!



THE GREATNESS OF A COMMUNITY IS MOST ACCURATELY MEASURED BY THE COMPASSIONATE ACTIONS OF ITS MEMBERS. — CORETTA SCOTT KING



2024 COLLIERS GOLF CLASSIC

We are so grateful to have been the beneficiaries of the 2024 Colliers Golf Classic! Not only getting to meet new friends, but also enjoying a beautiful day on the golf course! A huge thank you to Colliers who raised a net of over \$53,000 on our behalf!

CHEVRON HOUSTON MARATHON

We had the most fun cheering on our 17 Arbor Awesome runners this year at the Chevron Houston Marathon! But we have to give an extra special shout out to Heidi Vogel, who has always held the spot as our #1 Run for a Reason fundraiser through the years, but also took home the #1 fundraiser in the ENTIRE 2024 Marathon. Heidi singlehandedly raised over \$38,000 for The Arbor this year alone! Thank you, Heidi!!





BUILDING WHAT MATTERS MOST

We are so grateful for a strong foundation with incredible leaders supporting our students and staff. We would love to introduce our Board of Directors for the 2024-2025 school year!

Jennifer Moore, Board Chair
Charly Weldon, Board Vice Chair
Leslee Murphy, Board Secretary
Jeannie Able
Justus Corley
Debra Martinez
Christina Morse

Patrick Murray
Neil Potter
Lis Purdy
Anna Scholtes
Nathan Stedham
Mark Temple

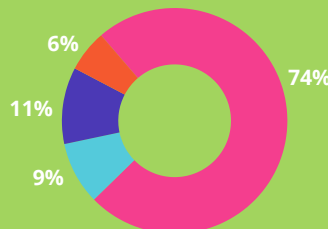
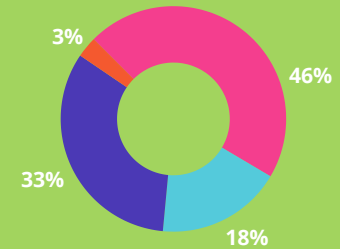
These people work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that The Arbor is running flawlessly, allowing our teachers and staff to dig in with families and see our students defy the odds!

But we couldn't do it without one very special person - you! Your support helps to make so much possible for our students and families! This year was by far our greatest financial story, and we thank you for helping to make it possible.

Below, we have broken down our income and expenses. The excess raised, with large thanks to Cue the Confetti, will be held for future scholarship support, helping families who need it most!

Income FYE 2024: \$3,744,503

■ Tuitions ■ Foundations/Corporations
■ Individual Giving ■ Other (In-Kind Gifts, etc.)



Expenses FYE 2024: \$3,108,649

■ Programmatic Operating Expenses
■ Fundraising ■ Administrative
■ Instructional Support & Therapy

THANK YOU

WE WOULD LIKE TO GIVE A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR MAJOR DONORS:

Abel Design Group
Jeannie and Trey Able
Agile Interiors
Iris Allen
David and Kristin Anderson
Judy Andrews
Paul E. Andrews, Jr. Foundation
Architectural Floors
Aspire Wealth Advisors
Masha Austin
Betty Babendure
Anthony and Gina Bahr
Baxter Trust
Emily and Stuart Bodden
Terry and Amanda Boffone
BP Corporation of North America
Brown & Brown
The Brown Foundation, Inc.
Stacie and Howard Chapman
Charity Guild of Catholic Women
Christian Brothers Automotive
Foundation
Colliers International
Crain Caton & James
CRC Group
Jerry C. Dearing Family Foundation
Tara Deneke
Executive IT Help, Inc.
Gary and Denice Foose
The Gallogly Family Foundation
Garrison Construction Group, LLC
The Gatewood Family Foundation
Frank and Rhonda Gracely
The Tony Gracely Family
Granite Properties
Jamie and Robert Harris
Albert and Ethel Herzstein
Charitable Foundation
Trent Hirsch
The Huffington Foundation
IAG Business Technology
JuliAnna and Ty Jelinek
The Johnson Family

Josh and Melissa Judd
Kingsland Baptist Church
The Leonard Family
Christina Leshner
Victor and Kelly Litwinenko
M-Rand Construction
The Malone Family
Marqet Group, LLC
Debra Martinez
MBLane & Associates, Inc.
Stephanie and Mike Miertschin
Joel and Jennifer Moore
The Moreno Foundation
Steve and Christina Morse
Patrick and PJ Murray
O'Donnell/Snider Construction
Scooter Owens
Latischa Petty
Adam and Katelin Pollock
Mary Pollock
Lis and Ryan Purdy
Mary Margaret and Justin Purdy
Marci Reistroffer
The Rigoni Family
Kristi and Paul B. Robishaw
Ben and Ashley Rodgers
Kimberly and Ryan Roth
Charlie San Muguel
Anna and Bret Scholtes
Jimmy and Leslie Siegel
Elliott and Denise Smith
R.E. Smith Foundation
R.E. "Bob" & Vivian Smith
Foundation
SouthTrust Bank
Mike and Mary Stedham
Nathan and Kristen Stedham
Strake Foundation
Kai Stratmann
Tip Strickland
Steve and Sandy Taylor
Texas Financial Group
The Thom Family

Title Houston Holdings
Rich and Tiffany Tyler
Jeff and Jenny Venghaus
Watson Family Foundation
Tom and Melinda Webb
Ashley and Lynn Webster
Wilson Cribbs + Goren
Woodforest Charitable Foundation
Kelli and Brian Wright





arbor
S C H O O L

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