



Elizabeth’s Early Learning Center

Discover, Learn & Shine Newsletter — Fall 2016

*A nurturing community
where every child can discover, learn, and shine.*

MEET KENNEDY

Kennedy Osmulski started the new school year at Elizabeth’s Early Learning Center on August 15th. She arrived at Betts Station with her new unicorn backpack and a huge smile on her face. We are so happy that Kennedy has joined our EELC family!

Kennedy was diagnosed with Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA) at six-months-old. SMA is a rare genetic disorder in which the muscles are missing the key genetic protein to keep them alive. Kennedy is the only child with a diagnosis of SMA living within a two-hour radius of Lynchburg. Her parents were told that her life expectancy would be two to three years, but at 2 ½, she is doing better than ever. There is no cure for SMA but a new drug has been presented to the FDA for approval, so there is hope.

SMA does not affect Kennedy’s brain, its development, or her ability to learn and succeed academically. It also does not affect her ability to build relationships with others. Kennedy’s parents, Tarrah and Patrick, want Kennedy to have a preschool experience because, “It is important for her to have social time and she is extremely smart. We don’t know how long she is going to be here so we want her to experience everything appropriate for her age. We want her to learn from other kids and teach other kids.” From her very first day at EELC, Kennedy has communicated with others through sign language and is teaching her friends and teachers to sign with her.

Through our partnership with Lynchburg City Schools, Kennedy is able to receive special education services at EELC while in a classroom with typically developing peers. Her special education teacher is at EELC every morning and her speech therapist visits twice a week. With the support of her classroom teachers and special education teachers, Kennedy is able to participate in all activities, including art, music, story time, and outdoor play. She loves coming to school.

Thanks to those who contribute to the EELC scholarship fund every year, Kennedy has been offered a full scholarship. For a family experiencing huge medical expenses, this opportunity would not be possible without the loyal support of our donors. The support from our community is truly making a difference in the life of a very special child.



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SUMMER FUN AT EELC!



RIBBON CUTTING FOR THE NEW MARIE HARRIS OUTDOOR CLASS- ROOM AT EELC!

Elizabeth's Early Learning Center hosted a Ribbon Cutting Ceremony in June for the new Marie Harris Outdoor Classroom.

The Marie Harris Outdoor Classroom encourages students and teachers to learn outdoors, and encompasses many elements to encourage learning, including fruit bushes and trees, vegetable and herb gardens, flower gardens, climbing plants, a butterfly garden, bird feeders, an art area, outdoor musical instruments, water areas, sand area, climbing equipment, a trike path, a construction area, weather instruments, a dramatic play area, and a covered amphitheater.

The Marie Harris Outdoor Classroom brings our students into a new world where they will learn about art, science, math, music, and much more by interacting with nature.

Thank you again to The Easley Foundation for its \$25,000 gift towards the Marie Harris Outdoor Classroom, and to the many other supporters that helped make the Marie Harris Outdoor Classroom possible. Thank you!



MS. ANGELA TAKES THE GOLD!

On August 27, 2016 at Link-horne Middle School, the Kennedy Mile Race was held in honor of EELC student Kennedy Osmulski to increase awareness of Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). All proceeds from the race benefitted Kennedy's family as they continue to seek out the best possible medical care for her. Kennedy's classroom teacher, Holland Coleman, and her Special Education teacher, Angela LaFon, participated in the race. Although Angela has not run on a track team since she was 13-years-old, she won the first place medal for her age group!!! She credits her success to the top-notch coaching provided by Holland on the day of the race.



Kennedy at EELC



Ms. Angela Wins the Kennedy Mile Race!

Angela is an employee of Lynchburg City Schools and is at EELC every morning as part of EELC's inclusion program. She collaborates with Holland and other EELC teachers (on and off the track) to provide the very best specialized care and education for our students. Congratulations, Ms. Angela and Coach Holland!

EELC WINS MATCHING GRANT!

Thank you to Don Giles of Campbell Insurance for nominating EELC to participate in a matching grant program between Campbell Insurance and Selective Insurance Group.

Their generous donation will be used to provide scholarships to children at EELC.

Thank you!!!



FALL FUN AT EELC!

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MUD DAY

On June 29th the children and teachers at EELC celebrated National Mud Day.

We went swimming in pools filled with mud, went digging in the dirt, painted with mud, and made mud pies.

We all know that children who don't spend time outside run the risk of serious health issues such as obesity and vitamin D deficiency. But did you know that playing in the dirt helps children build stronger immune systems?

Dr. Mary Ruebush, immunologist and author of *Why Dirt is Good: 5 Ways to Make Germs Your Friends*, counts letting kids play in the dirt as immune-system-building step number one. "Let your child be a child," she says. "Dirt is good. If your child isn't coming in dirty every day, they're not doing their job. They're not building their immunological army. So it's terribly important." Some studies have also shown that playing in dirt benefits mental health and can improve cardiovascular health.

So, remember to get outside and get dirty.



GRIME IS GOOD!



JUNE 29



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY JULIE!

Elizabeth's Early Learning Center's mission is to provide all children with affectionate and personalized care in a nurturing, safe, and thriving environment. We are only able to be successful in that endeavor because of the teachers that provide that very care - teachers like Julie Matthews, who celebrated her 15th anniversary with EELC in August.

Julie grew up in Indiana and later attended Missouri Baptist Bible College. She met her husband, Troy, in college and soon after marrying they moved to Lynchburg so he could attend Liberty University. Very active in their church and faith, Julie and her husband's ministry have taken them from Lynchburg to Sydney, Australia, to California, and then back to Lynchburg. While in California, Julie was the Children's Ministry Director at their church. She has also taught kindergarten and first grade. Her husband is currently a professor at Liberty University, and together, they have two adult children, Kellie and Kevin.

During her time at EELC, Julie has taught in the infant and toddler rooms. In infant care settings, it is the quality of relationships that determines the quality of care. Julie has a natural talent for developing personal relationships with each of the children in her care. She loves being able to foster the emotional growth of the very young, making sure that their needs are met and they feel loved and cared for. She loves watching them grow from babies into preschoolers, and gains satisfaction from knowing that she has been a part of their security and development.

In 2001, Julie joined the EELC family, and since then, has seen the Center go through many changes. She has sustained leadership changes, helped obtain NAEYC accreditation, and weathered the construction of expansion. She feels that things are greatest now because of the teachers that surround her. "EELC has really, really good, caring teachers that support the mission."



*Happy 15th Anniversary
Teacher Julie Matthews!*



**Hooray for
Mud Day!**

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OUR MISSION

Elizabeth's Early Learning Center provides every child with affectionate and personalized care in a safe environment. We focus on providing for the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive developmental needs of children in an age-appropriate manner.

SPECIAL THANK YOU!

Thank you to Gerdy Construction Co. for donating log benches and tables for the Marie Harris Outdoor Classroom and to Bert Dodson of Dodson Pest Control for providing heavy equipment to transport and place the logs on the playground! Thank you!



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