

A WORLD OF

Opportunities



A young boy with short dark hair is smiling at the camera. He is wearing a long-sleeved shirt with horizontal stripes in teal, dark blue, and yellow. He is sitting outdoors, with his hands resting on his knees. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green foliage and a wooden structure.

ANNUAL REPORT & WISH LIST

2020

Student photos featured in this report were beautifully captured and provided by René Victor Bidez.
770-461-4410 | www.bidezphoto.com

A WORLD OF

Opportunities

The Joseph Sams School is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the education and life skills development of children and young adults who are intellectually, physically, or developmentally challenged.

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“ I like to do art – Ms. Misty helps me
and makes me feel happy! -Reese

A WORLD OF

Opportunities

“When Samantha started at JSS at age 3, our family learned the only doors closed because of her disabilities were the ones we did not try to open.”

No matter what direction each student takes, The Joseph Sams School opens the door to a world of possibilities and opportunities as they follow their educational journeys. The parents and families of our students are welcomed into an environment that truly champions what is possible as their child grows and develops.

“JSS has made an impact on our family by allowing Dillon to begin to make advancements in his mobility. The M.O.V.E Program is exactly the type learning opportunity our family was seeking for his growth.”

“Early intervention created a routine, exposed him to other children, and greatly improved socialization outside our home.”

“JSS gives our student hope for a brighter tomorrow.”

“The Joseph Sams School has given our son opportunities that we thought would never be possible.”

“Eli now has the confidence to get off the sidelines and play and explore.”

“JSS has built a path for Alex to reach his full potential despite the prognosis given at birth. JSS has helped Alex find his voice, mobility, and communication.”

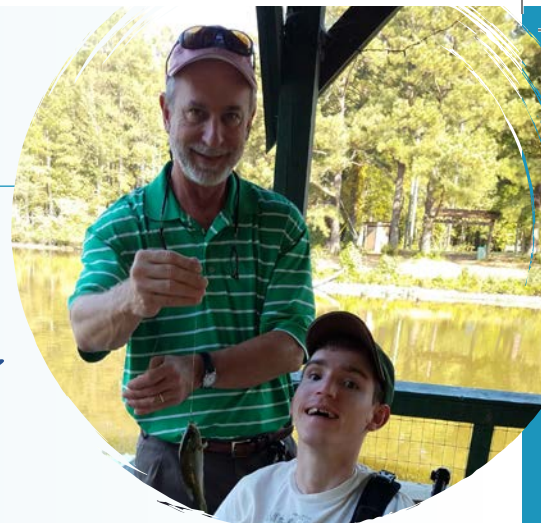
“Throughout the years of customized and consistent support offered by JSS, Haven has grown in her independence and confidence to communicate and engage with others.”

“We are grateful to have a school that can help with the little and big life skills, and cares for our kids.”

A young boy with Down syndrome is sitting on a wooden bench outdoors. He is wearing a blue t-shirt with yellow and white vertical stripes and the word "FEAR" in large, stylized letters. He is also wearing blue jeans with a tear on the knee and white sneakers. He is smiling and holding his right foot with his left hand. The background is a blurred green landscape with trees.

*“I love the
playground
– Santiago*

SEEING & SEIZING Opportunities



At my age, it is getting harder and harder to remember being a child. But one thing I can remember is the wonder of knowing that your whole life is in front of you and that anything is possible. Ask a child what they want to be when they grow up and there is no telling how many different answers you might get. A child sees nothing but a world of opportunities ahead.

The kids at The Joseph Sams School are no different despite the challenges and difficulties they face every day. Albert Einstein said that “in the middle of every difficulty lies opportunity.” I truly believe that is the reality at The Joseph Sams School. Our students and staff face many obstacles every day. The COVID pandemic has presented a new and, at times, overwhelming obstacle. But for every challenge, obstacle and difficulty our students and staff face, there are an unlimited number of opportunities. Opportunities to learn, grow, overcome, and excel. Opportunities to smile, laugh, and celebrate. Opportunities to serve, heal, share, and love. And opportunities to make a difference – in the lives of our kids and the world around us.

I am so thankful for our teachers, administrators, parents, volunteers, donors, board members, and other supporters in the community. It is your support and dedication, fueled by your love of our students, that allows them to see a world of opportunities every day at The Joseph Sams School. I see the same wonder that I remember as a child. I see it in their faces every morning in the carpool line. I see it in their smiles and laughter when I attend Donuts with Dads or other functions at the school. And I see it in their dedication, hard work, and sense of accomplishment at their Christmas and year-end performances.

This has been a very difficult year for all of us as the COVID pandemic has seriously disrupted our lives. I want to give a special thanks to our administration and staff for the incredible job they did preparing the school for the return of our students. I have seen a lot of “return to work” plans, and the plan Amy and her staff developed is second to none. As a parent and board member, I have been blown away by the staff’s hard work, dedication, creativity, “can do” attitude, and perseverance in the face of very difficult and complicated COVID related issues. We owe them all a tremendous debt of gratitude for giving our kids the best environment in which to learn and grow.

When I think about The Joseph Sams School and the world of opportunities it opens for our kids, I am reminded of a quote by the famous theologian Maltbie Davenport Babcock, who wrote the well-known hymn “This is My Father’s World.” He said this about opportunities:

Opportunities do not come with their values stamped upon them. Everyone must be challenged. A day dawns, quite like other days; in it a single hour comes, quite like other hours; but in that day and in that hour the chance of a lifetime faces us.

I am thankful that every day and every hour at The Joseph Sams School gives our kids a world of opportunities and the chance of a lifetime!

I hope you all have a joyous and blessed holiday season filled with love and thanksgiving.

Wayne Hillis | DECEMBER 2020

WITH Gratitude

Recognizing Allen Harp

Over the past 7 years, and under the solid leadership of our Chairman of the Board of Directors, The Joseph Sams School has thrived while developing a strong vision for our future. Allen Harp joined the Board of Directors in 2009 and served as Chairman of the Board from 2013 through October 2020. We are grateful for his 12 years of service, as well as his spirit of humanity and dedication to increase support and community awareness of The Joseph Sams School.

A true ambassador of the School, Allen's focus on improving the lives of our students and families has remained clear. During his tenure as Chairman, Allen absolutely accepted every challenge presented to him and did so with the same enthusiasm and compassion that has been the essence of The Joseph Sams School for 37 years. Committed and hardworking, Allen has tirelessly given his time, talent and resources to all JSS fundraising events, demonstrating his unwavering support as a host, donor or volunteer, and always sharing his approach to keeping it simple and reminding us all, 'it is about the kids'.

As Allen passes the baton of leadership, our hearts are grateful and the school is stronger. A famous activist once said,

"Wisdom is knowing what to do next; virtue is doing it." Allen has proven to be both wise and virtuous in his leadership of The Joseph Sams School. He recognized that the vitality and sustainability of the Board of Directors was crucial to the vitality and success of the School, and so he encouraged the engagement of new board members to diversify with novel ideas and perspectives - essential for JSS to endure.

Allen's vision to provide a state of the art facility that gives our teachers the tools to provide the best educational opportunities to our students was clear and we are closer to making it a reality. In casting a vision for the future, Allen was directly responsible for driving the board to develop plans to grow the school in a new building on an entirely new property. As a testament to that, we have purchased land, completed a new strategic plan and after a successful feasibility study to determine donor receptivity for a major campaign, the Board of Directors is in position to engage in pre-campaign work as soon as the pandemic subsides and the economy resurges.

The Joseph Sams School has been enriched by Allen's time, dedication and advocacy. He has made a difference in the lives of our students and families, not only through his resources and talents, but through his unselfish sharing of wisdom, character and compassion. We, as an organization, are both grateful and honored for all that Allen has contributed during his tenure as Chairman and board member. He has been a leader that not only has encouraged and supported us to be the very best that we can be, but challenged us to improve as we provide the world of opportunities our students deserve, and we are committed to continue building on this solid foundation he has led us to establish.



FACTS & FIGURES | *The* JOSEPH SAMS SCHOOL

Students by County

35%	Fayette	3%	Douglas
18%	Fulton	2%	Spalding
18%	Coweta	2%	Cobb
14%	Clayton	2%	Meriwether
6%	Henry		



Sources of Funding

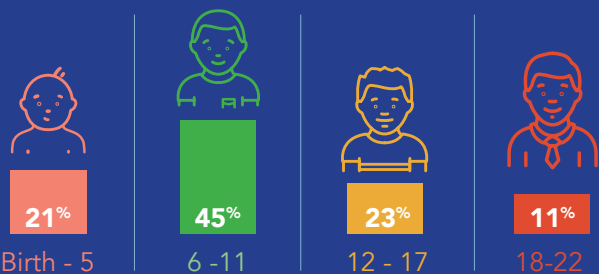
48%		Tuition/Fees
21%		Fundraising
19%		Community Support
8%		Interest/Dividend Earnings
4%		Grants/Foundation Support

Areas of Spending

72%	Personnel
15%	Operational
7%	Fundraising
6%	Program



Student Ages

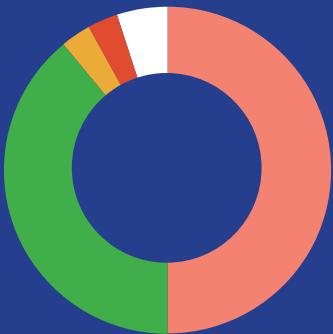


Program Enrollment by Number

Preschool	8	
Primary	13	
Elementary	15	
Upper School	21	
Collaborative - Autism	6	

Student Ethnicity

50%	Caucasian
39%	African American
5%	Hispanic
3%	Bi-racial
3%	Asian



Student Diagnoses

Autism Spectrum Disorder	47%
Other Chromosome/Genetic Disorder	16%
Cerebral Palsy	13%
Down syndrome	13%
Developmental Delays	8%
Medically Fragile	3%



PROGRAM *Highlight*

Since the inception of JSS in 1984, the goal has been to provide the best possible education to our students. To quote a JSS parent, “JSS changed our lives—not just my daughter, but our whole family. It is amazing to see an entire school embrace your child and love them unconditionally.”

These times have proven both challenging and inspiring for The Joseph Sams School, and while this school year looks unlike any other in our past, we are encouraged every day by the amazing spirit of our students, families, staff and community. The pandemic may have put the world on pause and required several modifications to what we consider normal, but be assured it did not stop our staff and students – JSS has remained strong and committed.

The hard-work and efforts the teaching staff continues to put forth to ensure a safe learning environment while maintaining high expectations is awe inspiring. Our staff truly understand the unique and often complex needs of our students, and have continued to focus on program and curriculum expansion and enhancement.

More than ever, it is critical to make sure the JSS frontline heroes have the right tools and support to continue to provide quality programs and therapies. Over the past year, we have enhanced our school-wide curriculum, Unique Learning System (ULS), by adding a new component, Positivity: Empowering Self-regulation. Offering proactive strategies for behavior management and empowering students to self-monitor and regulate their behaviors. In addition, a Physical Therapist (PT) Consultant has joined our staff, thus, allowing us to offer the Ready Body Learning Minds Program and adaptive physical education to our students. We are proud to share these program enhancements, as they continue to ensure we are providing the right educational environment and opportunities for students.

At JSS, we recognize that the journey is different for every student and family. However, one factor remains the same for all, and that is to provide a nurturing learning environment that champions what is possible for every student to grow and develop their full potential. Now, in our 37th year of operation, we remain most grateful for the courageous group of founding parents and their vision for their preschool-aged sons, which led to “The Early Years”; what we now call The Joseph Sams School.

“*School makes me happy!*
- Parker



STUDENT *Spotlight*

Daniel Thompson

On June 19, 2014 we held 22 month old Qiumeng for the first time in Beijing, China. That was the day he became our son. We named him Daniel Charles Qiumeng Thompson. We knew Daniel had special needs. We knew he was a treasure from the Lord. And that is all we knew. When people asked if we were ready, the answer was “no.” Not that we didn’t have a medical plan, but no one can honestly say they’re ready to parent. We weren’t ready, but we were resolved. We resolved to embrace the future as an adventure believing that endurance develops through faith, determination, and consistency over time. We floundered through his first year home, but at the same time getting to be his parents was a dream realized (Daniel is our second of now four children). Wading through malnourishment, the process of attachment, surgeries, and hours of therapy almost daily during his first year home developed our “advocacy-muscle” and ability to somewhat communicate the loss and physical suffering he had endured.

We experienced the grief and glory of seeing almost all of his “firsts” over the next twelve months. By Daniel’s third birthday, he shined. He was our smiley, healthy little boy...at home. For a season, we celebrated the fact that we got to be his safe haven with little regard for the many challenges he would face down the road. Then with Daniel happy and healthy, we sought further evaluations to determine a “road map” for raising him. Daniel’s most prominent disorder severely affected his receptive and expressive language as well as his ability to self regulate. Daniel was capable of so much, yet he seemed lost within himself. Though we celebrated all of his breakthroughs, there remained what felt like a wall between Daniel and the rest of us because we lacked the means to communicate with one another.



We found in The Joseph Sams School the opportunity for Daniel to receive the tools for language and life skills he needed to thrive in the world and help us to draw closer to each other as a family. JSS provided Daniel with intensive instruction in these areas from fall of 2018 through last spring. What irony that I don’t have the language to explain what was gained and how his growth impacted us! We have to settle with just saying “Thank you” knowing that’s not enough. Daniel was given the gift of language! And not just Daniel, but we as a family were given the best methods of communicating with him. How do you measure the value of that!? JSS didn’t just embrace Daniel as a student (which would have been enough). The instruction Nathan and I received was of equal value. Furthermore, in addition to a comprehensive Individualized Education Plan, JSS was a place where Daniel was loved and belonged.

Today Daniel is still our treasure; he still has special needs; and we are still building endurance. Our time with JSS opened doors, however, for communicating and completing daily tasks which empower us to move forward in this adventure. Daniel knows that the world can in fact be scary, that the future can be unpredictable, that life will be challenging, but he is not helpless or alone. He has a family, a community, and now (because of JSS) a VOICE. Those truths mixed with his God-given abilities will unfold into a bright future, one opportunity after another! And he himself will get to tell the world his story.

-Katherine & Nathan Thompson

Peter Cook

Every parent remembers that moment when they first learn they are going to be a mom or dad, anticipating an amazing journey to care and love for another human being and give that child every opportunity possible. Whether a typical child or one with special needs, we all want the best life has to offer for our child and for he or she to be happy. That is what we have always hoped for our son Peter.

Our fourth and youngest child Peter was born with Trisomy 21, or Down Syndrome, almost sixteen years ago. We had an ultrasound and amniocentesis prior to his birth and so we were aware of his diagnosis before he was born. That said, nothing can prepare you for the many unknowns that come with a diagnosis like that. Not long after Peter was born, the neonatologist sat down with my husband and me. He said "I have good news, and I have bad news." I remember sitting terrified, not knowing what was before us. He said, "The good news is Peter will eventually do everything that his siblings can do. " What is the bad news? "He will never be as tall as you and your husband." It might take longer, sometimes months, sometimes years, but our tough Peter will get there given the opportunity.

When Peter was almost three years old and getting ready to finish with the Babies Can't Wait program, we received a phone call from the director at The Joseph Sams School. They wanted to meet our son and tell us about the school. We came by and immediately loved it and could tell it was someplace very special. Shortly after, Peter started preschool three mornings a week. He would go to school in his pajamas and carry his very own backpack that was as large as he was. Not only was he learning letters and academics, but also daily skills like undressing and dressing himself, grooming, and feeding skills. His speech improved because problems were identified and worked on. He made friends and learned social skills like taking turns and standing in line. We were thrilled. We also became friends with the other parents in Peter's class, providing much needed support.

A few years later we began to wonder what the public school system would be like. Peter had three older siblings in the system and we wondered if it would be a good fit for him. We had several discussions with the JSS administration and his teachers and decided to give it a try. The first year or two went well. Peter was soon diagnosed with a Sensory Processing Disorder and had dropped even further behind in his speech. The school he was attending was no longer the best fit for Peter and after looking at our options, Peter returned to JSS as an elementary student.

This transition was such a blessing for Peter! Our son was learning and working hard. Peter was transitioning better and the school was teaching him to make good choices. Peter was eating in the cafeteria with his friends. He participated in music and art class. He went on field trips and out on community based instruction. He was happy and thriving! But the big success was that Peter was learning to communicate using words and sign language to express his emotions and desires, therefore cutting down on many of the behavior issues that came with his inability to communicate.

Over the last three years unexpected medical challenges have occurred in Peter's life. He had three separate surgeries to rebuild both hips and then learned to walk again. The teachers and staff have been so flexible with his many absences, provided materials for home study, and even visited him at home! We have also found resources through talking to staff and parents at the school that have aided in Peter's recovery.

Our son is now in the Upper School at JSS and continues to grow. His days may not be perfect, but the goal is to be happy and successful. His teachers have found what motivates Peter and are able to help him meet his goals. He is now learning job skills in the community and it has opened a whole new world for him. If we are having an issue at home, whether behavioral, with speech or communication, or with daily skills, his teachers are willing and able to help with it. The staff partners with us to help him reach his potential. The focus at the school is not on Peter's handicaps, but what he can and has yet to do. It is just like the doctor long ago told us. It has been a difficult but joyous journey so far, and we watch daily as Peter learns to overcome obstacles and work hard to be successful.

Looking forward we know we are in the perfect place to provide great opportunities of learning for Peter. He is happy, challenged, and is working hard to meet his goals. He has friends and is participating in activities that keep his life full. There is a big world outside of The Joseph Sams School and they are doing a great job preparing Peter for it. We do not know what the future holds, but we are so glad this is where God has put us right now.

- Joe & Virginia Cook



WITH Gratitude



After fourteen years of fundraising leadership, tireless work, and incredible results, Mrs. Ashley Sams has chosen to step down so she can devote her time more completely to the growing responsibilities of her family and raising two adolescent boys. She made her decision prior to COVID, and she remains committed to helping the school in these challenging times and beyond in a volunteer capacity.

Ashley began her formal career in fundraising at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta in 2003 and joined JSS in 2006. Through her boundless energy and creativity, driven by her love for the mission and students of JSS, she has graced us with her special brand of hospitality, sprinkled with a touch of magic. Among other accomplishments while with JSS, Ashley has taken the Annual Dinner, Dance & Auction from attendance of 250 to well over 500 guests. She worked with other community leaders to build and develop Clays for a Cause. She also added two other "signature" initiatives, Southern Flair and the Circle of Hope Scholarship. Each of these stands alone as vitally important support for our students.

Ashley has been a singularly devoted advocate for JSS. Our gratitude and love as an organization for her are beyond measure. She will be greatly missed in her role as the face of fundraising for JSS. We look forward to her bright smile and enthusiasm in the role of volunteer.

In appreciation for her service and dedication to The Joseph Sams School, honor Ashley by giving to the Circle of Hope Scholarship Fund.

FUNDRAISING

The Joseph Sams School relies heavily on the generous philanthropic support of foundations; community gifts, both business and individuals; fundraising participants; and volunteers, giving selflessly of their time, talents and treasures to provide a world of opportunities to our students. Each year we are blessed by their giving hearts, and the impact or their generosity is invaluable. All gifts, large and small, continue to be significant in both the School's financial sustainability and ability to successfully serve our growing community of children and young adults with special needs.

Our annual fundraising campaign features events that appeal to different audiences while raising funds and awareness for The Joseph Sams School. The School's annual events include a Sporting Clay Tournament; a 5K Race; and two private, invitation-only events (The Dinner, Dance & Auction and Southern Flair). In addition, to these annual events, community members, businesses, civic groups, organizations and individuals alike host events during the year in which funds raised are donated to The Joseph Sams School.

In these times of uncertainty, it is comforting to know that some things never waver. Among them are the loyalty of our faithful and loving community that continually provides a world of opportunities to our students and families. Thank you for your continued support of The Joseph Sams School.



SAVE THE DATE!

During this unprecedented time, we continue to adjust event details with the protection and health of our students, staff and community at the forefront, and will provide updates as they become available.

March 20, 2021

Race for a Reason

May 2021

Dinner, Dance & Auction

October 1, 2021

Clays for a Cause

October 2021

Southern Flair Field Party

FOUNDATION *Support*

Making Every Penny Count!

The Joseph Sams School once again extends a heartfelt appreciation to the foundations that so graciously supported the school throughout FY2020. Whether contributing to general operations, programs, scholarships, or capital needs, these funds constitute a vital revenue source that bolsters the school's funding needs.

Our loss of fundraising event revenues due to the pandemic coupled with the costs involved to safely reopen the school in August created an unprecedented need for funds to support daily operations. We are extremely appreciative of those foundation that have so willingly contributed to this critical area of need. **The John and Mary Franklin Foundation** granted \$10,000 and **The Ekkebus Charitable Fund** provided an additional \$5000, both supporting general operations and aiding JSS in its efforts to provide a safe and secure facility in which to house our unique programs and services.

JSS continues its long-term commitment of providing scholarship assistance to qualifying families making it possible for parents to access the quality programming their children so desperately need to advance in development. Many children simply would be unable to attend JSS without this assistance. We express our gratitude to **The Pennies From Heaven Foundation** for its \$20,000 gift to fund student scholarships and **The William R. and Sara Babb Smith Foundation** for once again providing \$20,000 to aid students from Henry County.



In order to provide the best possible education for our students, we are continuously seeking ways to enhance our programs and curriculum. **The Frances Wood Wilson Foundation's** gift of \$10,000 allowed JSS to provide a new component, Positivity, to our existing curriculum. Positivity is a researched-based curriculum that provides a proactive student-centered approach to self-regulation and social skills. Both proficiencies are vital for our students' success!

Revenues to support capital needs are always needed and welcomed! **Fayette Coweta EMC** generously gifted JSS \$50,000 for the purchase of a new school bus. The bus is used daily to transport students to local community venues and businesses as part of their Vocational and Community-based Instruction. As we continue our efforts to secure capital funds for the construction of a new facility, we were thrilled to receive gifts in the amount of \$20,000 from **The Pennies From Heaven Foundation** and \$10,000 from **The Hart Family Foundation** to further our capital campaign efforts!

The Oleta and Jimmy Collins Family Fund contributed \$29,000 to assist three of the above-mentioned areas of need: general operations; the future capital campaign; and scholarship endowment funds. We are grateful for the long-time support and generosity of the Collins family!

The Joseph Sams School strives for its students to become as independent and productive as possible aided by quality educational and therapeutic services. We salute all of these private and family foundations for their generous contributions which help to make this and so much more possible for our students as they grow, develop, acquire new skills, and seize life's opportunities to live a full and productive life!



2021 *Wish list*

Each year we watch and learn as the needs of our students and their families change. We continue to be challenged with successfully utilizing our resources as efficiently and wisely as possible. Many of you are already aware of the financial demands on our families; however, you might not be aware of the behind the scenes, operational needs.

\$2,200,000

cost per year to operate the school

2.46

student to staff ratio

The average day at The Joseph Sams School involves:

18

pieces of standing & walking equipment

37

group therapy sessions

121

speech devices for facilitating verbal and non-verbal communication



*I like to have races on
the playground - Alex*



Please consider providing a financial gift toward the purchase of these much needed materials or making a general donation to support the necessary operating costs of The Joseph Sams School.

\$25,000 Could Purchase

- + Interactive whiteboards for all classrooms
- + Playground surfacing

\$15,000 Could Purchase

- + Building/Facility and technology enhancements
- + Touchscreen classroom computers

\$10,000 Could Purchase

- + iPads for classrooms

\$5,000 Could Purchase

- + PPE and cleaning supplies
- + Staff development and conferences

\$2,500 Could Purchase

- + Augmentative speech devices
- + Art supplies
- + Laptop for teacher or therapist

\$1,000 Could Purchase

- + Music therapy supplies
- + Unique Learning System curriculum
- + Refrigerator for Living Lab

\$500 Could Purchase

- + Adaptive living supplies
- + Adaptive technology devices & components
- + Playground equipment

\$100 Could Purchase

- + PECS Supplies (Picture Exchange Communication System)

Apogee SCHOLARSHIP

Help your money work for kids!



Ensure our students achieve their hopes by choosing where your tax dollars go. It's your choice—send your money to the State or move it into a scholarship fund to help children reach their fullest potential.

The Georgia Educational Tax Credit makes this possible! Georgia's independent school tax credit scholarship program allows you to tell the state how you want a portion of your tax dollars spent. It costs you nothing but is a significant benefit to our students, as it ensures that families are able to access the therapies and services they so desperately need. This program offers a unique opportunity for you or your company to redirect your tax dollars to provide tuition assistance for Joseph Sams School students.

JSS partners with the Apogee Scholarship Fund, a Georgia registered SSO (Student Scholarship Organization) administering the tax credit program. Go to www.apogee123.org for more information.

Since 2011, we have received over \$450,000 in scholarship revenues from The Apogee School Choice Fund which has allowed JSS to award 190 scholarships.

2020 APOGEE SCHOLARSHIP DONORS

Burt and Kelli Bailey
Kevin Bell
Katrina Bradbury
Trey Bradbury
Brian and Michelle Bragassa
Jim and Heather Brantley
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Derek and Marcia Chapman
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David and Paula Goodman

Wayne and Kay Hillis
Albert and Asden Johnson
Charles and Krista Massey
Julie Matulia
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Matthew and Jennifer Morman
Jon and Amy Murray
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John and Lisa Sower
Jonathan and Erin Strack
Alfred and Carolyn Strack
Strack, Incorporated
TDK Components USA, Inc.
Gregory and Cindy Tibbetts
Jane Waters



“

*I like using my
iPad to learn.*

- Dexter

Donors

\$100-\$499

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The Active Network
Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Alford
Mr. Chester Allen
Mr. and Mrs. Eric Allgood
Mr. and Mrs. Steve Allgood
Amazon Smile Foundation
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Ms. Sue Arnall
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