



# THE NEXT RIGHT THING

**2023 ANNUAL REPORT & WISH LIST**





“As we toured the school, we knew this was the place for our daughter. It was truly a “place of hope”.

Amy and Shane Willbanks





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.

The Joseph Sams School opens up a world of possibilities for our students and their families as they embark upon their educational journey. It's the collaboration among parents, students, staff, and volunteers that make what we do at JSS extraordinary.



*PJ's experience at JSS has been a positive change for our family. He is finding his way!*

*Kiesha & Jerome Perrien*

## THE JOSEPH SAMS SCHOOL **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Travis Cliett  
Summer Costley  
Michael Harbin  
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Dr. Sally Goza  
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Mary Ann Crofton  
Mary Ann Mitcham  
Beth Wilker

# A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD PRESIDENT

## THE NEXT RIGHT THING

During our most recent Executive Committee Retreat, we invited Dr. Jim and Marie, and Ellen Nichol to remind us all of the beginning of The Joseph Sams School, essentially a refresher lesson of “the why.” I firmly believe it is important not to dwell in the past, but I also understand that to better know where you are going, you ought to know where you have been. Dr. Jim put a lot into perspective when he talked to us about doing “the next right thing.” This seems like a pretty good framework for understanding our purpose as a school and moving forward to impact as many lives as possible, while continuing to expand the levels of community support.

With 73 students enrolled for the 2023/24 school year, our current waiting list stands at 15 students, necessitated by both staffing and space requirements. The next right thing is to continue recruiting high quality and high-level staff while also determining the best option for solving the physical space needs to serve more students and help them excel.

As an executive committee, we are committed to helping write the next chapter by focusing on quality growth as a board with new board and executive committee members that can help maximize the growth potential of The Joseph Sams School with varying levels of expertise and influence. Our succession plan will include at least 4 new board members each year with expectations to roll up the sleeves and contribute to the various board committees, as well as being willing to serve as executive committee officers and officers elect to offer better continuity of leadership.

Not only do we have to focus on growth of the current school, but we are branching out finally with an Adult Day Program, something that has been in the discussion and planning stages for awhile but is finally ready to be realized. In growing the school and expanding our services to adults, the next right thing will be the implementation of a building program to house both programs, preferably on one campus and under one roof. As a board, we understand we can no longer simply talk about it; we have to take action in the coming months to meet the space needs required for the school and the Adult Day Program to flourish.

We continue to rely on the generous support of all of our current donors and friends of the school, but we know it is particularly important to the longevity of the school to grow the brand and expand the JSS name, allowing new donors to come alongside and help to further the mission of JSS. It may be hard to imagine, but there are people in Fayette County who have never heard of the school or our mission, much less all of the surrounding counties. For this reason, we are planning the next right thing, a more aggressive marketing venture to help make The Joseph Sams School more of a household name and to explain “The Why” by telling the story.

Before I took my family to The Grand Canyon several years ago several people told me that pictures do it no justice. Once there and absolutely awestruck by the magnitude and majesty of that natural wonder, I understood what everyone was talking about and felt emotionally overwhelmed. The same goes for visiting JSS on a school day; people can hear our stories about the school, the staff, the kids or even go to a fundraising event and hear personal testimonies from parents and grandparents of our students, but there is nothing quite like seeing it live and in person. I would encourage anyone who has not been, to stop by on a school day, and if you have been but know someone who has not, offer to go with them and consider it your next right thing in helping to share the JSS story.

*Joe Barbogk, P.D.*





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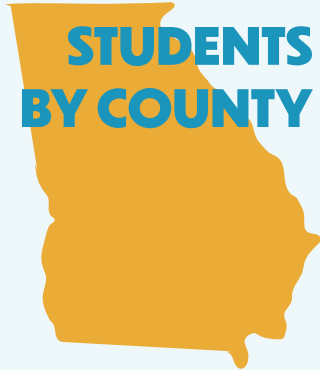
JSS plays a really big role in my child's life.  
He has learned many new skills and is improving every day.

Kylaih Gaston



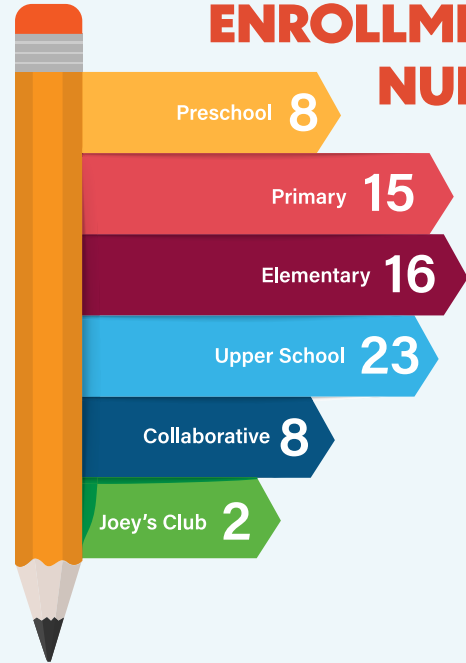
# FACTS & FIGURES

## STUDENTS BY COUNTY



Fayette	36%
Coweta	21%
Clayton	18%
Fulton	14%
Henry	7%
Douglas	1%
Meriwether	1%
Spalding	1%
Troup	1%

## ENROLLMENT BY NUMBERS



## SOURCES OF FUNDING



Tuition/Fees	45%
Fundraising	37%
Community Support	7%
Interest/Dividend Earnings	6%
Grants/Foundation Support	5%

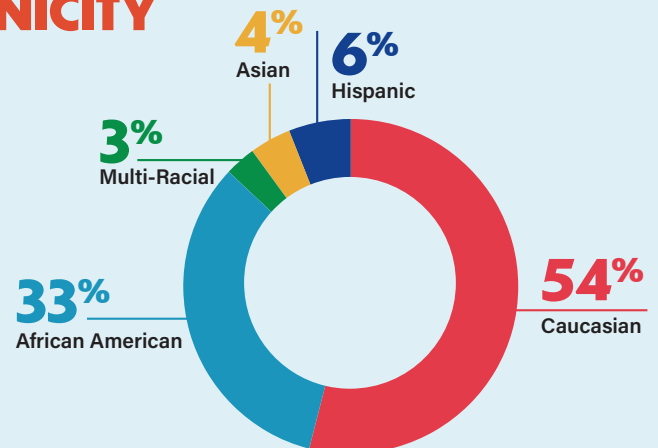
## AREAS OF SPENDING

Program Services	78%
Management & General	13%
Fundraising	9%

## AGE

	Birth - 5	25%
	6 - 11	40%
	12 - 17	28%
	18 - 22	7%

## ETHNICITY



## DIAGNOSES

Autism Spectrum Disorder	56%
Down syndrome	11%
Developmental Delays	10%
Other Chromosome/Genetic Disorder	16%
Cerebral Palsy	7%



# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT



## INTRAMURALS

We are thrilled to introduce a new extracurricular activity to our students this year - Intramurals! This program aims to promote the overall well-being of our students by encouraging social, physical, emotional, and cognitive growth. Our goal is to create an experience that fosters social interaction, promotes positive values such as fair play, and encourages habits that can be applied to various aspects of daily life, all while having fun! We are excited to witness the growth and progress of our students through this exciting new opportunity.



## SENSORY ROOM

Our school is proud to announce the creation of a new sensory room, which was made possible thanks to the support of the Becky Mowell Arnall Memorial Endowment. The sensory room is tailored to meet the individualized needs of each student, providing a calming, stimulating environment that enhances the support of our classrooms and programs. The room is equipped with calming lights, soothing sounds, tactile surfaces, and sensory tools and equipment, creating a truly multi-sensory experience. These resources are essential in helping our students navigate their school and community settings, providing a supportive environment that allows them to thrive and succeed. This addition is a testament to the school's ongoing commitment to doing "the next right thing."





## JSS VOLUNTEERS

There are many ways to volunteer at JSS. Volunteers can read a book to a class, assist with class activities, serve as a lunch buddy, help teachers prepare materials, and much more. A majority of our volunteers at JSS are former students. Volunteering provides an opportunity for these young adults to continue to be active in their community. This sense of giving back can be incredibly fulfilling and can positively impact their self-worth. It reinforces the powerful message that everyone, regardless of their abilities, has a valuable role to play in their community.



## ATLAS ALUMNI

Our ATLAS (Adult Transitional Living and Support) program serves our students who are approximately 18-22 years old and preparing for what is next after they graduate from JSS. The relationship doesn't end after graduation! Young adults who have graduated from our ATLAS program are invited to meet up for social events throughout the year with the current ATLAS class. Once a month, the ATLAS students send a letter to our Alumni informing them of current events in school, wishing "Happy Birthday" for each month, and inviting them to the next event. These ATLAS Alumni events can include going out to lunch, going bowling, seeing a movie, and more! Continuing to foster relationships is important even after students graduate from JSS. The students love to hear what their friends are doing at their jobs, what trips they've taken, or how their families are doing. They truly care about each other!

“

*JSS has positively impacted my son and family by offering many opportunities to learn life skills. With JSS staff members' assistance, I feel more confident in Eden's abilities to interact within the community independently.*

*Regina Peterson and Neal Ghant*





## DIGITAL DATA TRACKING

Tracking data is an important part of every day at JSS. It allows us to monitor progress, adjust instruction, and ensure each student is moving forward towards their goals. This year, JSS has begun using a digital data tracking system, AbleSpace. Staff are able to access and take data on all of their students' goals from their tablets with a simple click. Whether collected by a speech-language pathologist, teacher, or paraprofessional, all the data is compiled in one place for every student. AbleSpace provides a graph, statistics, as well as an average for each goal that is customizable by the instructor and range of dates. This feature allows our staff members to maximize their time with the ease of analyzing the data. Staff are able to share with our families during meetings in a way that is concise and comprehensive, as AbleSpace allows for pictures of work samples to be included, as well as notes.



## JOEY'S CLUB

Joey's Club is a program that welcomes the siblings of our students and staff's children in our preschool and pre-k classrooms. The purpose is to create a reverse inclusion opportunity that allows children of all abilities to learn and grow together in a supportive environment. Joey's Club students serve as peer models, fostering friendships and meaningful connections that enrich the lives of everyone involved, creating a sense of community. Our priority is always the well-being of our students, families, and staff, cultivating a compassionate and supportive environment.



# STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

## THOMAS & HARPER HARP



The Joseph Sams School has been a part of our family for three years. We first heard about JSS from our Pediatrician. The boys were 6 years old when I first reached out to the school. They provided me with information and positive feedback that helped guide us to the next right thing. At that time, we felt JSS was not right, so after the 2019-2020 school year, the boys started at the Marcus Institute. After six months, Harper was ready to leave and begin his journey at JSS. Thomas would stay at Marcus for another year before making his transition to JSS.



The relationships formed with staff at JSS over the years have made a profound impact on our family. Harper and Thomas made instant friends and connections. It didn't take them long to adjust to their new school. We could see an immediate improvement in behaviors. Tantrums were less aggressive and less frequent. Both starting to wait for longer periods of time and were even able to leave stem toy in the car at drop off. For me there was an instant connection the first day I met the staff. I knew I wanted Harper and Thomas to go here. As a parent it's so important to trust the people taking care of your children. When we drop them off, we do not worry about them because we know they are in great hands.

A major concern for our family and most families is the cost of tuition. The question comes up can we afford this? When this was discussed all of my fears and doubts about not being able to afford the school was removed. I was told I would be responsible for a portion of tuition but that there was resources and scholarship funding available for families with financial hardships. It was such a relief to know money would not deny Harper and Thomas from the next right thing.



“

It was such a relief to know money would not deny Harper and Thomas from the next right thing.

Ashleigh Harp





# FOUNDATION SUPPORT

## GENERAL OPERATING

Coweta-Fayette EMC

**\$50,000**

Cisco Foundation Matching  
Gift Program

**\$24,000**

Clothes Less Traveled

**\$6,000**

The Ekkebus Family  
Foundation

**\$5,000**

## TECHNOLOGY & EQUIPMENT FOR THE CLASSROOMS

Heidelberg Materials

**\$12,500**

The John and Mary  
Franklin Foundation

**\$4,500**

Speedway Children's  
Charities

**\$7,500**

## LIFE SKILLS PROGRAM

Fair Family Fund

**\$2,000**

Fayette Civitan Club

**\$6,000**

## SCHOLARSHIP

William and Sara Babb Smith  
Foundation

Henry County students

**\$20,000**

Pennies From Heaven

**\$20,000**

Ida Alice Ryan Charitable Trust

**\$15,000**

The John and Polly  
Sparks Foundation

**\$10,000**

## FUTURE CAPITAL AND PROGRAM NEEDS

Cathy Foundation

**\$100,000**

“

The Joseph Sams School has made a positive impact on my daughter and our family by providing her with the right care from trusted people. We attempted typical daycare, but it was not sufficient. I found that my child would not participate as other children did; most days, I found that she would cover her ears and ball up in a corner or nap with the other children. Most days, she would come home dehydrated as she was not drinking enough liquids, as these were thickened due to her dysplasia. I went to work very nervous that she would aspirate every day. Today, I know that I can reach out to teachers, staff or even walk into JSS and know how my child is doing at any time. I am very thankful that we have found our JSS family.

Velea Montenegro





# FUNDRAISING AT JSS



Every donation you make to The Joseph Sams School makes an impact on students and their families. Like most nonprofit organizations, we rely heavily on the generous philanthropic support of corporations, foundations, and community gifts from both businesses and individuals, as well as fundraising through events. All these areas have been challenged by recent economic pressures and the recovery post-pandemic but thanks to the school's judicious use of its financial resources, we remain healthy. To grow our reach and capabilities in the future, and therefore help more, we must grow our share in all these potential areas so that we may look forward with hopeful optimism.

Our annual event plan appeals to a broad range of audiences and participants to raise money and awareness for The Joseph Sams School. Our events include a 5K race, a Sporting Clay Tournament, a new casual event we held in 2023 for the first time called Tailgates & Tunes and our largest and longest-running event the invitation-only, Dinner Dance and Auction. Other ancillary events throughout the years are hosted by community members, businesses, civic groups, organizations, and individuals that also raise funds for The Joseph Sams School.



## SAVE THE DATES

**RACE FOR A REASON**

April 20, 2024

**DINNER DANCE**

May 18, 2024

**CLAYS FOR A CAUSE**

October 2024

**TAILGATES & TUNES**

October 2024



# WISH LIST

**\$2,500,000**

COST PER YEAR TO OPERATE THE SCHOOL

**2.8**

STUDENT-TO-STAFF RATIO



## THE AVERAGE DAY AT THE JOSEPH SAM'S SCHOOL INVOLVES

- ✓ **18** Pieces of standing & walking equipment
- ✓ **30** Group therapy sessions
- ✓ **92** Speech devices for facilitating verbal and non-verbal communication.
- ✓ **11** Outside Visiting Therapists



**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:**

- ✓ Building/Facility enhancements
- ✓ Playground resurfacing
- ✓ Playground enhancements
- ✓ Consultative behavioral support services for classrooms

## **\$15,000**

### **Could purchase:**

- ✓ Technology enhancements
- ✓ Touchscreen classroom computers
- ✓ Unique Learning System Curriculum

## **\$10,000**

### **Could purchase:**

- ✓ Adaptive playground equipment
- ✓ iPads for classrooms

## **\$5,000**

### **Could purchase:**

- ✓ Gasoline for a year for the JSS bus
- ✓ Commercial ice maker
- ✓ Mobility equipment parts and accessories

## **\$2,500**

### **Could purchase:**

- ✓ Augmentative and alternative speech devices
- ✓ AbleSpace: IEP goal-tracking app
- ✓ Professional development for staff

## **\$1,000**

### **Could purchase:**

- ✓ Therapeutic Art supplies
- ✓ Music therapy supplies
- ✓ Switch-activated devices and toys

## **\$500**

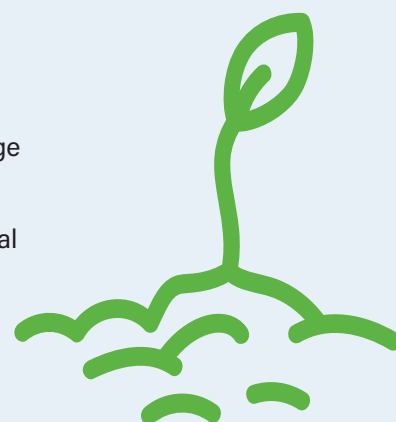
### **Could purchase:**

- ✓ Adaptive living supplies
- ✓ Supplies for the sensory lending library

## **\$100**

### **Could purchase:**

- ✓ PECS supplies (Picture Exchange Communication System)
- ✓ Communication and instructional apps for iPad



*Being a part of our family and celebrating Leo's wins with us.*

*Alma Castaneda and Jairo Zapata*



# GEORGIA TAX CREDIT SCHOLARSHIP

## DID YOU KNOW YOU CAN CHOOSE WHERE YOUR TAX DOLLARS GO?

It is your choice. You can send your money to the State at the tax deadline, or you can move your money into this scholarship fund to help The Joseph Sams School children reach their fullest potential. It is just that simple...

It is exceedingly rare that you have the opportunity to give without having to donate any of your own money. 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 it has a significant impact on our students. It ensures that families can access therapies and services that they so desperately need. This program offers a unique opportunity for you or your company to redirect your tax dollars to provide tuition assistance to JSS students.

JSS partners with the Apogee Scholarship Fund, a Georgia registered SSO (Student Scholarship Organization) administering the tax credit program.

## 2023 APOGEE DONORS

Kenneth and Catherine Athaide  
Chris and Lori Barnett  
Gerald and Robin Barnett  
William and Mary Bennett  
Katrina Bradbury  
Brian and Michelle Bragassa  
Timothy and Rebecca Broadwell  
Shane and Krystyn Carr  
DK Engine Parts, LLC  
David and Paula Goodman  
Frank Huff  
Jessica Jarvholm  
Dustin Jordan

Ronnie Jordan  
Chad and Krista Massey  
Brock and Whitney Morman  
Matthew and Jennifer Morman  
Jon and Amy Murray  
Luke and Ellen Nichol  
Dallas and Ashley Olson  
Brandon and Kat Pendergraft  
Todd and Kellie Reed  
Jim and Marie Sams  
Fletcher and Dana Sams  
Dave and Anne Sapp  
Zane and Lori Scarborough

Carson Sears  
Ralph and Bonnie Small  
John and Lisa Sower  
SRC Ventures  
TBS Services, Inc.  
The Harbin Agency  
Gregory and Cindy Tibbetts  
Mary Ware  
John Jane Waters  
Brian and Whitney White  
Jon and Alison Williamson



Go to [www.apogee123.org](http://www.apogee123.org) and select the "go paperless" link.



*The quality of life provided through the education and nurturement our children have received from JSS is significantly improved. I can't say enough good things. My family is better, we've flourished and grown under JSS' guidance.*

Jason Tomson & Nicole DeOliveira



# CIRCLE OF HOPE

## SCHOLARSHIP GIVING SOCIETIES

Although scholarship donations are made at various times throughout the year, The Circle of Hope members continue to provide the bulk of our needs-based scholarship donations. The Circle of Hope is a Giving Society that the organization created in 2008 to help ensure funding was available to award scholarships to students whose families qualified for needs-based financial assistance with their annual tuition.

To qualify for The Circle of Hope, members give \$1000 or more in a cash donation during the year. Friends of the Circle of Hope are those who are donors who give less than \$1000 a year. These two giving societies combined have provided more than \$1.9 million in scholarship funding and more than four hundred seventy scholarships to JSS students and families since its inception. Our 2022-2023 Circle of Hope members have grown to an extraordinary group of benefactors and their contributions are met with the upmost appreciation and admiration.

## 2023 CIRCLE OF HOPE DONORS

Dr. and Mrs. David Arnall  
Mr. and Mrs. Burt Bailey  
Mr. and Mrs. Scott Beaumont  
Mr. and Mrs. Phil Binkow  
Ms. Angela Blank  
Brightmoor Hospice  
Mr. and Mrs. Skipper Burns  
Mr. and Mrs. Regis Carr  
Mr. and Mrs. Matt Clements  
Mr. and Mrs. Travis Cliett  
Mr. and Mrs. Jack Crofton  
Mr. and Mrs. Tom Crofton  
Mr. John Cunningham  
Mr. and Mrs. Rich Cutter  
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and Shelly Culp  
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SRC Ventures  
Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan Strack  
Mr. and Mrs. Joe Strack  
Mr. and Mrs. Lane Tibbetts  
Mr. and Mrs. Steve Tibbetts  
Mrs. Alice Todd  
Ms. Catrina Turner  
Mr. and Mrs. Mike Wehr



“

*The Joseph Sams School continues to be a valuable asset to our family. Each year, we face new challenges, and in partnering with JSS, we always feel equipped to meet those tough moments. The community effort is what makes JSS feel like home.*

*Troy and Carmen Neal*



# DONORS

THIS LIST IS ONLY REPRESENTATIVE OF OUR FISCAL YEAR AND IS ONLY REFLECTIVE OF CASH DONATIONS RECEIVED FROM JULY 1, 2022 TO JUNE 30, 2023.

## (\$100 TO \$499)

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Knights of Columbus Holy Trinity Council  
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Kroger  
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Diane Whitman  
Mr. Chris Wilbanks  
Mr. Jason Woods  
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Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Zitelli

## (\$500 TO \$999)

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Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Turner

Mr. and Mrs. Jordan Walker

Mr. and Mrs. Mark Wallace

“

*JSS has been  
the biggest  
blessing from the  
start. This school  
has met every  
expectation and  
more. As long as  
Keith is attending  
JSS, I know he's in  
great hands.*

*Michelle King*

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**(\$1,000 TO \$4,999)**

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Wright's Hydroseeding  
Yancey Bros. Co.





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*In the brief time that Eliana has been at JSS, she has been growing greatly in her development (she is talking more, some behaviors have changed in a positive way, and she is doing things with more confidence, like helping in the kitchen). We started to meet other families and the personnel who work and serve at JSS, and we already feel that we are part of a big, loving family. We are so grateful for this opportunity to be part of this wonderful school!*

*Mariana Hopkins*

**(\$5,000 TO \$9,999)**

B2 Contracting, Inc.  
Mr. and Mrs. Chris Barnett  
Mr. and Mrs. Gerald Barnett  
Mr. Richard Cassell  
Diversified Electronics  
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Mr. and Mrs. Brandon Harp  
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Strack, Inc.  
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Atlanta Speedway Children's Charities  
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Fayette County Civitan Club  
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Fayetteville Environmental Educational Center  
Fayetteville First Baptist Church  
Fayette FACTOR  
Fayetteville First United Methodist Church  
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## PROGRAM & OFFICE VOLUNTEERS

Morgan Blackmon  
Lana Carr  
Mary Ann Crofton  
Jazmine Flemming  
Aaron Johnson  
Stephanie Powell  
Marie Sams

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Georgia State University  
Grand Canyon University  
Mercer University – Department of Special Education  
University of Georgia – Department of Special Education (Griffin)  
University of Georgia – Department of Special Education (Athens)  
University of West Georgia



# STAFF & FACULTY

## ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

Amy Murray, Executive Director  
Danny McCranie, Development Director  
Danielle Clements, Principal  
Amber Phillips, Assistant Principal  
Lynda Price, Business Manager  
Faith Anderson, Administrative Assistant

## INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT TEAM

Vicki Allen, Preschool  
Lucy Barton, Primary  
Leah Bear, Upper Collaborative  
Joy Chapman, Primary  
Debbie Clark, Upper School  
Carly Gates, Elementary  
Allie Hunt, Pre-K  
Stacey Kinney, Upper School  
Heather Kontos, Physical Therapist Consultant  
Carol McLain, ATLAS  
Sylvia Strickland, Elementary

## FINE ARTS

Misty Lackey, Therapeutic Art Instructor  
Anna Claire Lett, Therapeutic Music Instructor

## FUNDRAISING CONSULTANT

Krista Massey

## SPEECH AND LANGUAGE TEAM

Brooke Barnes, Speech/Language Pathologist  
Payton Hoerner, Speech/Language Pathologist  
Ellen Jeffers, Speech/Language Pathologist  
Rhandi Finley, SLP Assistant  
Alison Schmidt, SLP Assistant

## PARAPROFESSIONALS

Rachel Carter  
Liz Chilvers  
Matthew Cote  
Cathy Crawford  
Briza Diaz  
Elizabeth Duncan  
Gina Giles  
Hannah Guess  
Jenna Hastings  
Tammy Hollis  
Nikki Lewis  
Kim McDonald  
Staci O'Neal  
Katherine Otwell  
Maggie Ragsdale  
M. Lorraine Reid  
Rashida Shamshad

## TEAM ASSISTANTS

Michael Crofton  
Alex Goodman



*Nicholas progresses each year at Joseph Sams School, and every year, he is reassessed to ensure that we are constantly doing "The Next Right Thing," empowering every step with care and understanding.*

*Lucretia Portwine*





**GIVE**  
TO JSS



The Joseph Sams School | 280 Brandywine Boulevard | Fayetteville, GA 30214  
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