

Special
Education
Foundation



2023 Annual Report



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Dear Friends,

The 2023 fiscal year for the Special Education Foundation was an extraordinary year of firsts in our mission to assist students with disabilities in St. Louis County in partnership with the Special School District.

Among the **highlights was that SEF positively impacted 6,000 students who receive special education services in St. Louis County** through our various programs, which you'll read about in this report.

Among the highlights this year were our grants to teachers and schools, which made an enormous impact by supporting activities such as bringing the arts to classrooms, student field days, and school celebrations, helping to develop social skills and learning for students.

All of this would not have been possible without the generosity from individuals, businesses, and foundations in the St. Louis region. The **20th Annual Dan McLaughlin Charity Golf Tournament and Auction raised a record \$412,000**, helping SEF achieve a remarkable fundraising year in FY 2023. In addition, **unrestricted donations to support our mission more than doubled during the past twelve months.**

The past year's success allows us to look forward to new opportunities to help students in the year ahead. Among these new initiatives are the **Autism Independence Project** to address the social challenges faced by students with autism, and **The Mobility Project** to help promote and improve the independence and ability to interact with their environment and peers for students with physical disabilities.

We would also be remiss not to thank the Board of Directors of SEF for their leadership and commitment to our mission and our amazing staff that shares that passion for helping students.

Finally, we are grateful to our partners at the Special School District of St. Louis County for their unwavering dedication to helping students aged 3 to 21.

Thank you for your support of the kids and for allowing us to help them in so many ways.



Mike Corry

Chair, Board of Directors



Tim Eby

Executive Director



Who We Are

Established in 1984 as the first public school foundation in the state of Missouri, the Special Education Foundation (SEF) provides support and assistance in ways not supported by tax dollars to students who receive services from the Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD).

Who We Serve

The Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD) is the largest specialized education provider in the state, and equips and empowers students of all learning abilities to excel to their greatest potential. SSD provides special education services to children and youth with disabilities, ages 3 to 21. Placements range from SSD teachers providing special education services in the student's home school and district (partner district) to students attending an SSD special education school or private separate agency.

Today, SSD serves almost 22,000 students with disabilities in SSD schools and 22 district classrooms, over 1,400 students in career and technical education, more than 900 students who attend private/parochial schools, and over 100 adult students working towards their practical nurse licensure.

Your Impact *in 2023*

6,000

students helped in 2023

\$71,891

funded 71 students receiving assistance with hearing aids, molds, repairs, and Adaptive and Assistive Equipment

\$65,000

funding 92 teachers' Classroom Innovation projects to enhance student learning and success

\$11,255

supporting 7 SSD Principals' school projects, including the Juvenile Detention Center and Bridges Program

\$26,368

funding to help send 30 Kids-to-Camp

\$17,491

raised to support student and family Critical Needs

Programs & Highlights

Adaptive & Assistive Equipment: Filling gaps in perception, communication, and vision

Adaptive equipment and assistive technology, funded by SEF through the Tilles Foundation grant, enhance the participation and engagement of students with disabilities, up to age 21, in the Special School District. SEF focuses on providing augmentative devices, adaptive equipment, hearing aids, eyeglasses, and related technologies to individuals facing financial challenges. This effort aims to foster independence and improve the quality of life, aligning with SEF's commitment to positively impact education and well-being.



Meet Vivianna

Vivianna received a Mini iPad after completing her public school education. Her parents signed her up to participate in a program offered by the St. Louis University Speech and Pathology Department to assist individuals using communication devices. While she knows how to use the device, she needs encouragement to use it to communicate. Her parents are working on helping her see it as more than a tool used for school work and as a benefit to communicating with others. When Vivianna first received the iPad, her dad took her grocery shopping and while on the juice aisle, used her device to say she wanted cranberry

More than 71 students received hearing aids in 2023 through SEF's Gift of Sound program and 20 students received adaptive or assistive equipment, the tools the students need in or beyond the classroom to enhance their learning and gain independence.





Arts in the Classroom: Bringing theater and music enriching experiences into the school environment

Theater and music programs can have a significant impact on students with disabilities, which results in heightened self-esteem, enhanced social interaction, improved language skills, and a deeper appreciation of the arts. It is not uncommon for students to discover hidden talents and skills through their participation in experiences that include theater, music, and artistic expression.

SEF believes in the invaluable role that fine arts play in the education of students with disabilities. We are dedicated to bringing artistic opportunities to the students' environments, fostering their growth and development through plays and musical troupes.

This year, SEF funded the St. Louis Rep's Imaginary Theatre presentation of *James and the Giant Peach* and the Metro Theatre Company's presentation of *Maddie's Fridge* to Ackerman School.

SEF is partnering with the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Metro Theater Company, The Black Rep, and other organizations to bring more performances and programs into the SSD schools in the year ahead.



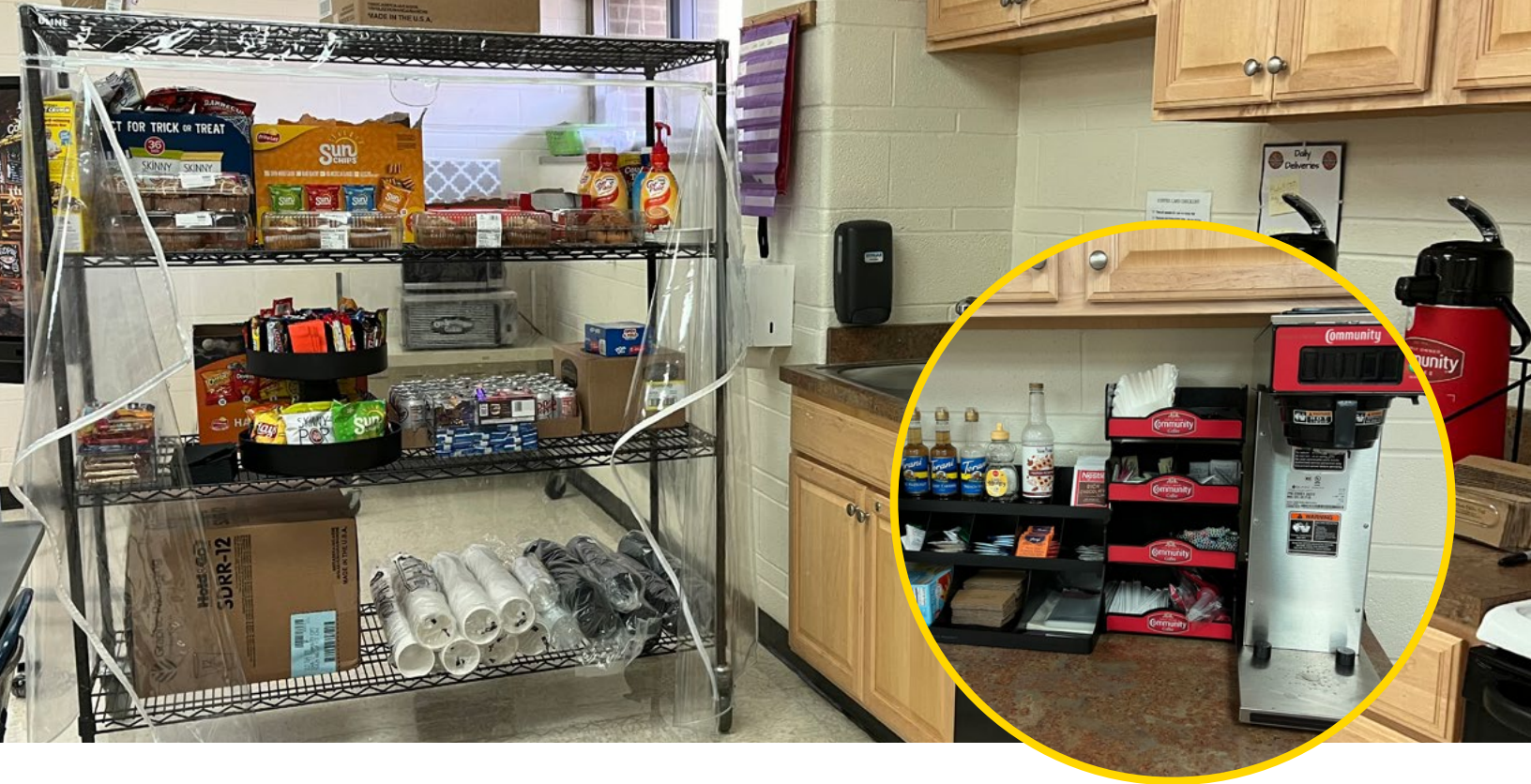
Critical Needs: Providing everyday essentials for students in need

Students with disabilities can face financial or physical challenges that interrupt their learning or prevent them from actively participating in the learning process.

Unaddressed essential needs can have a detrimental impact on students in the classroom or the community.

SEF is committed to offering financial support to address these critical needs. In partnership with SSD, we have raised \$6,000 towards the Coat Drive, which provides new coats and other accessories for students served by SSD to be well-equipped for the winter season. The program also helped fund food baskets for students and their families during winter, spring, and at the beginning of summer vacation.





Classroom Innovation Grants: Support for Creativity to enhance student learning

In efforts to enhance education for students with disabilities, teachers consistently look for creative methods. Often, these dedicated teachers find themselves reaching into their own pockets to enrich their students' learning experiences.

Since 2002, SEF has been committed to fostering educational excellence through its Classroom Innovation Grants program. Designed specifically to empower teachers and enhance the educational journeys of students with disabilities, this program provides the essential funding needed to bring creative classroom projects to life.

SEF awarded \$65,000 in grants, funding 92 teachers' innovative projects.

One grant was used to create a school Café. The teacher helps the students organize inventory, sort, and count money and materials so that the cafe mirrors an

actual work environment that students may encounter after graduation. This project helps to develop the students' independence, social, and functional skills. They learn best practices for engaging with others and serving items in the café. This grant project will not only benefit students during this school year but in many years to come.

Two other teachers were able to implement their Student Lounge project. The purpose of the Student Lounge is to provide a dedicated space for students to work or to spend time in a calm environment, outside of their regular classroom. The intention for the space is to be both functional and comfortable. It is designed to be utilized in a variety of ways such as student meetings, alternative workspace, and relaxing outside of the classroom. The items requested helped to develop the space with a variety of sensory items for a wide range of students to access.



Fred Saigh Leadership Academy: Creating leadership opportunities for students

In 2004, SEF launched the Fred Saigh Leadership Academy, generously supported by a grant from the Fred Saigh Foundation. This annual Academy cultivates leadership skills among students with disabilities.

The program's curriculum is developed to involve the students in the real-world challenges and opportunities that shape our community. Through a blend of experiential learning, mentorship, and skill development, the Fred Saigh Leadership Academy empowers the students to learn effective skills to campaign for school offices, manage school projects, and assume leadership positions.

The class raises money to donate to three chosen

charities annually with their Car Wash in September. Throughout the nine-month program, they visit and explore key sites/locations and meet leaders throughout the metropolitan area. Locations include the St. Louis County Executive, the George Westfall Criminal Justice Center, the Missouri State Capitol, and the Holocaust Museum.

The class graduation ceremony is held in May to celebrate the completion of the program. They also choose one student to receive the C.J Aubuchon Award, an award for one who exemplifies kindness and inclusivity. **Vivian Lang** of Affton High School was honored with the award this year.

John Cary Scholarships: Propelling students to future success

The Special Education Foundation introduced the John Cary Scholarship in 2016, in honor of the late Superintendent of the Special School District of St. Louis County (SSD). John Cary is known for his unwavering dedication to excellence and advocacy for students with disabilities.

This program provides college scholarships each year to carefully chosen students who are embarking on their post-secondary education journeys. The recipients of these scholarships exemplify the very qualities

that John Cary admired most—resilience, courage, and unwavering determination. Candidates for the scholarship are evaluated by taking into consideration their academic success, leadership capabilities, community involvement, achievements in athletics or the arts, and their potential for future success.

Each year, SEF awards five \$5,000 scholarships to selected, college-bound students.

Constance Anthony, a graduate of North Technical High School, is described as a person who is resilient and challenges herself to exceed her own expectations, overcoming any obstacle placed before her. She is attending Lindenwood University to major in Psychology and minor in Writing, allowing her to accomplish her dreams and reach her goals.



Sara Brooks, a Bayless High School graduate, is a devout student who gives 100% to every task given to an exemplary student. The Bayless Board of Education has also recognized her for her efforts in participating in the Young Scientist Program. She is attending the University of Missouri-St. Louis to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Biotechnology.

Cara Rhodes, a graduate of Eureka High School, is vibrant, full of life, and has just the right amount of grit. She has a rare ability to use her own experience to bring comfort to others. She attends Lindenwood University and is studying Criminology and Medicine. She loves to help others and her studies will help prepare her for her dream of being a Pediatric Surgeon.



John Cary Scholarships: Propelling students to future success

Aaron Sims, a graduate of Parkway West High School, is hard-working, self-motivated, and an active member of his church community. He attends Brigham Young University-Idaho to further his education in the healthcare field reciprocating the help he has received from others and serving his future communities.



Benjamin Perry, a Ladue Horton Watkins High School graduate, demonstrates a love of learning and the commitment needed to succeed in college and beyond. He is attending Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia to major in Engineering as he has always been a hands-on learner with the desire to figure out how things work.

SEF also recognizes a recipient of the **Christopher Davis Scholarship**, a \$2,500 SEF scholarship awarded each year in honor of Ronald and Marsha Davis' son, Christopher, who was tragically killed in a car accident in 1993.

As an alumnus and Hall of Fame member of Ritenour High School, Davis provides this opportunity through SEF's scholarship program to a selected student from Ritenour.

Toshiko Graham, a Ritenour High School graduate, is passionate about what she wants to accomplish, is responsible, and hard-working. She attends the University of Missouri-St. Louis majoring in Biology to pursue her childhood dream of becoming a Veterinarian.





Kid-to-Camp: Support to keep students learning and engaged during academic breaks

Camp programs play a crucial role in sustaining the educational progress of students with disabilities during extended breaks throughout the year. They offer students a valuable opportunity to engage with their peers, forge friendships, and cultivate relationships that can boost their self-assurance and independence.

The Special Education Foundation's Kid-to-Camp program supports families with students who have disabilities. Camperships, provided through the Kid-to-Camp program, are allocated based on a careful assessment of financial need and the benefits that students stand to gain from this enriching experience.

SEF funded \$26,368 for 30 students to attend camp during academic breaks over the winter break, spring break, and summer months.

Meet William

William, a third grader, who we helped attend Camp ALEC. Hosted by Indian Trails Camp in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Camp ALEC is designed so that children, aged 8-21, who never thought they could go to a typical camp independently, can go. Indian Trails provides highly skilled and compassionate counselors who attend to all of the children's needs.

According to William's mother, the camp was incredibly beneficial because they brought in two doctors to train therapists and teachers who then worked with William. The family received five pages of suggestions on how best to grow his literacy which will help him with his Individualized Education Plan (IEP). They also got very lucky that his SSD speech-language pathologist was able to attend the camp training! She is now well-versed and an integral part of his team.



Women Leaders

The Special Education Foundation's Women Leaders is a dynamic women's group deeply dedicated to helping children with disabilities, particularly by financing unique projects that benefit students served by the Special School District. This empowering group formed in 2009, was inspired by the heartfelt interests of a friend-raiser event looking for ways to make a positive impact.

Throughout its existence, the Women Leaders have orchestrated various events which included fashion shows, for the sole purpose of generating funds to support the Principals at the five SSD schools, including the Juvenile Detention Center and Bridges program. These events serve as a testament to their unwavering commitment to making a difference.

Principals Grants: Enhanced support for school and student projects

Each September, the Women Leaders and SEF staff meet with the principals to share insights into their schools' populations and present their proposed special projects.

The Women Leaders raised \$11,255 during the Give STL Day campaign in May. Their funding provided up to \$2,000 in assistance to each of the principals to bring these projects to life.

20th Annual Dan McLaughlin Golf Tournament

For decades, the Special Education Foundation has helped thousands of children with physical and mental disabilities and their families. The annual Dan McLaughlin Golf Tournament and Charity Auction just completed its 20th year. Thanks to the unwavering generosity and support it has received over the years, the tournament has successfully raised over \$5 million, 100% of which is dedicated to those who need it most.

Each and every contribution made has a profound impact on the students served by the Special School District of St. Louis County, providing not only crucial financial assistance but also empowering them with the tools necessary to thrive in their educational journey and to prepare for life beyond the classroom. The programs and services offered by SEF have been instrumental in transforming the lives of these students and their families and have helped hundreds of teachers and SSD staff.

As the demand for assistance for students with disabilities, their families, and teachers continues to rise, this tournament is a fun way to give back to the SSD community.

In addition to the golf tournament, SEF plans to add additional special events to raise more awareness about the Special Education Foundation's programs and services and to extend help to even more individuals in need, making a lasting difference in their lives.



20th Annual Dan McLaughlin Golf Tournament

This year's tournament raised \$412,000 through sponsorships, golfing, happy hour, and by silent and live auctions.

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Your contribution has the power to make a profound impact on the lives of individuals with disabilities.

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You can also donate through our website: sef-stl.org or via PayPal and Venmo.



By The Numbers

FY 2023 Program Expenditures

Dana Brown Teacher Mini-Grants \$65,000 – 92 grants

Fred Saigh Leadership Program \$25,000 – 15 students

Kids-to-Camp \$26,368 – 30 campers

College Scholarships \$27,500 – 6 students

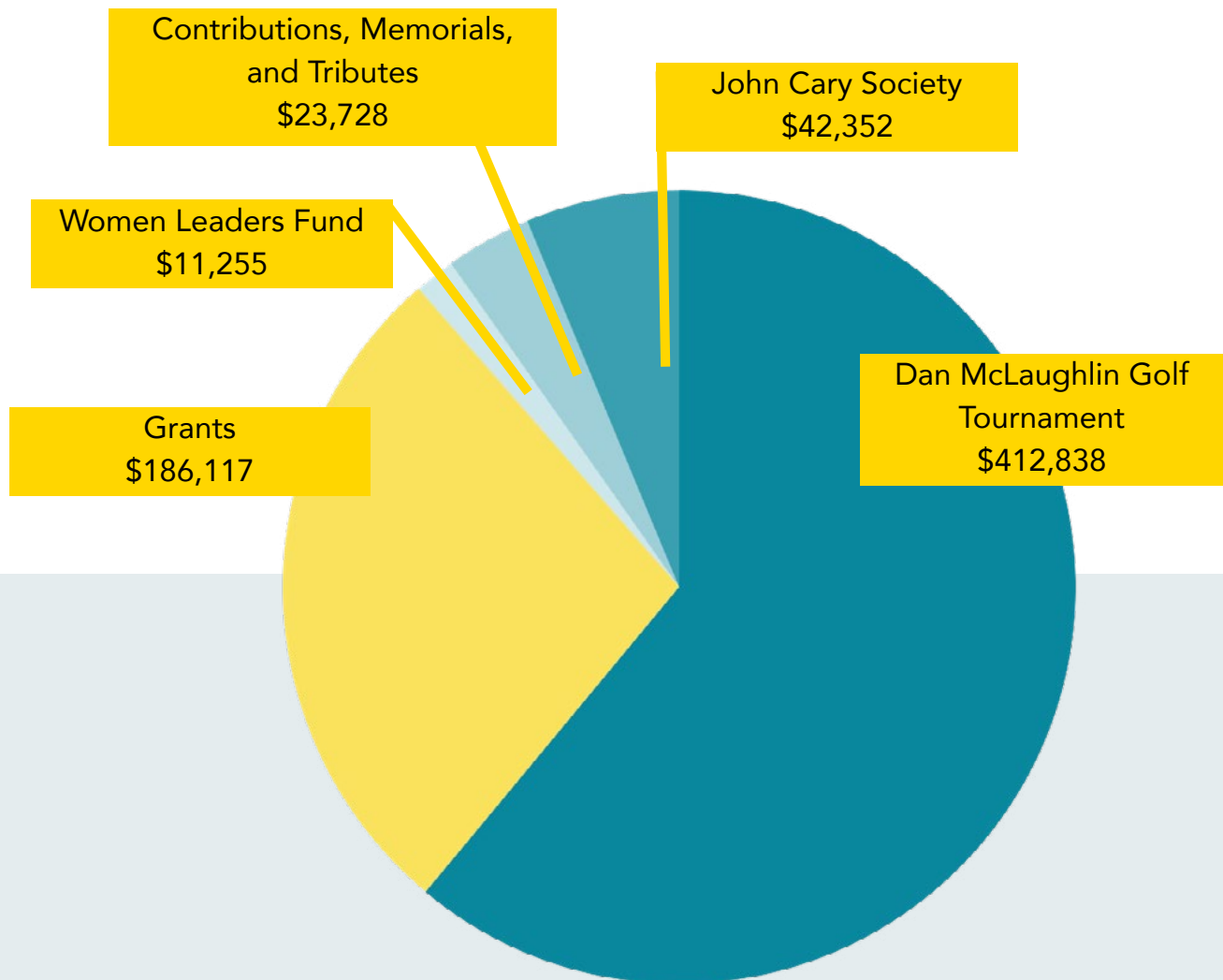
Assistance for hearing aids, molds, and repairs \$21,845 – 51 students

Adaptive equipment \$50,046 – 20 students

Principal Scholarships to SSD schools \$11,255

Critical Needs \$17,491

2023 Revenue Sources





Special
Education
Foundation 

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2023