

Special  
Education  
Foundation



# 2022 Annual Report

2022



## Providing support and assistance to students with disabilities in St. Louis County

Established in 1984 as the first public school foundation in the state of Missouri, the Special Education Foundation (SEF) works directly with the Special School District (SSD) to enable success inside the classroom and beyond through vital school programs, grants and scholarships – with all money raised by SEF benefiting SSD students. SSD provides special education services to children and youth with disabilities, ages 3 to 21 in a variety of placements throughout St. Louis County. More than 24,000 students received services from SSD in 265 schools. 59% of the students receive free or reduced-price lunches.

Special Education Foundation  
11933 Westline Industrial Drive  
St. Louis, MO 63146 – 3203

(314) 394-7030  
[www.sef-stl.org](http://www.sef-stl.org)  
[info@sef-stl.org](mailto:info@sef-stl.org)

### Board of Directors

**Mike Corry**  
Chair

**Mike Lackey**  
Vice Chair

**Julia Burke, Ph.D.**  
Secretary

**Will Skowyra**  
Treasurer

**Debbie Bentele**  
President Emerita

**Gene McNary**  
President Emeritus

**Michael Barbercheck**  
**Richard Carver**  
**Jasmine Chen**  
**Linda Fahrenkrog**  
**Geoffrey Grammer**  
**Tracy Hayes**  
**Dana Huxley**  
**Carin Shulusky**  
**Todd Streff**

**Tim Eby**  
Executive Director

**Shannon Benedek**  
Program & Communications  
Manager

**Jill Salinas**  
Event Manager

**Dan McLaughlin**  
Development Advisor

**Elizabeth Keenan, Ph.D.**  
SSD Liaison



# 5,000

students helped in 2022

# 62 Grants

funding teacher projects to support student success

# 70 students

receiving assistance with hearing aids, molds, repairs and other adaptive and assistive equipment

# \$62,349

spent on adaptive equipment for students in need

# 2022 Highlights

## Kid-to-Camp

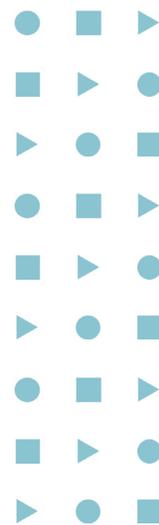
After the COVID summers of 2020 and 2021, the summer of 2022 brought more students heading back to camp, and SEF was there to help. We often hear about the positive impact of helping kids attend summer camp through SEF's Kids-to-Camp program.

Unfortunately, children with disabilities often cannot join their peers in a summer camp experience due to financial constraints or other hardships, with camp for students with disabilities often more costly than regular camp.

That's where SEF steps in to help young people and their families take advantage of these experiences that can be life-changing. The summer camp experience also provides parents and caregivers with peace of mind, knowing that their child is in a safe and healthy place, giving parents a chance to take a breather and reset for when their children return home.

The Talisman Summer Camp program in North Carolina noted four distinct benefits of summer camps for students with disabilities.

- Social skill building
- Active, healthy outdoor activities
- Increased confidence
- A break for both children and parents



**Nine-year-old Urijah had the time of his young life attending several camps in the summer of 2022.**

Urijah's godmother, Liz Fitzgerald, shared the joy and learning that Urijah experienced by attending three camps last summer with support from the Special Education Foundation.

According to Ms. Fitzgerald, the Lego/Robotic STEM camp at Maryville University was outstanding as Urijah used his creative "superpower" to create and build a wide range of Legos projects.

Urijah then attended basketball camp, allowing him to improve his hoops abilities while learning teamwork. And then, to round out the summer, he attended swim camp, where an individual swimming instructor with over 30 years of experience teaching special needs kids to swim helped Urijah make significant progress in his swimming skills.



**Libby, who attends school in the Kirkwood district, was one of our Kid-To-Camp participants in 2022.**

In the application for Libby, her teacher wrote that, "Participation in camp with peers would help support Libby's social and emotional growth. Libby has been separated from peers for too long during our COVID closure, and she's ready to participate in some summer fun."

Libby attended Camp Barnabas this summer and, according to her mother, had a fantastic experience. Her adventures included swimming, canoeing, paintball, mini golf, and numerous sports activities and crafts.

But, according to Libby's mom, "Her favorite part by far was the evening dance parties with friends! Spending extended time with peers with similar interests and abilities provides a level of comfort that can't be matched."

She adds that, "Not only does Libby learn from her friends at camp, but she also gets to be a leader and help others ... one of Libby's most endearing qualities!"



## Women Leaders Principal Grants

The Women Leaders raise money specifically to fund critical needs and special projects identified by the principals of the Special School District schools. The annual Special Education Foundation Women Leaders Fashion Show was held on Thursday, May 5, at Saks Fifth Avenue, with over 70 in attendance raising \$20,934. Five principals received \$1,000-\$1,500 each towards special projects, student celebrations and classroom upgrades.

## Critical Needs

SEF partnered with SSD on the Critical Needs Coat Drive raising more than \$6,000, to buy new coats, scarves, gloves, and hats for students this winter. The program also provided food baskets for students and their families winter break, spring break, and the beginning the summer vacation.

# Adaptive Equipment and Audiology

More than 50 students received hearing aids in 2022 through SEF's Gift of Sound program, with another 20 receiving adaptive or assistive equipment to help students communicate and gain independence. In addition, our new partnership with Mercy allows us to provide eyeglasses for vision needs.

Our Gift of Sound fundraiser in February and March 2022 raised more than \$20,000 to support our audiology program.

The Tilles Foundation provides major support for our Adaptive Equipment program.

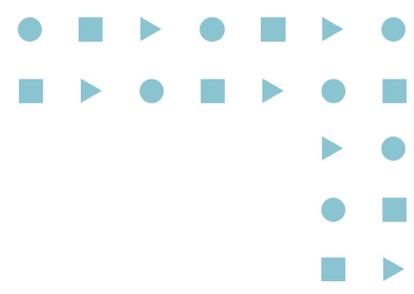




# Fred Saigh Leadership Academy

The 2021-22 Class of the Fred Saigh Leadership Academy was able to return to its schedule of on-site visits, including the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City, Boeing, and with County Executive Sam Page. The class also raised money in its fall car wash that they designated to give to three charities. The class held its graduation celebration in May 2022 attended by teachers, parents, and SSD administrators. At the event, Richie Tienter received the C.J. Aubuchon Award, an award chosen by the current leadership class for one who exemplifies kindness and inclusivity.

The Saigh Foundation provides support for the Fred Saigh Leadership Academy.



# Dana Brown Teacher Mini-Grants

Our Dana Brown Mini-Grant program supported more than 62 innovative projects from teachers in 2022. These ranged from providing sensory-friendly areas in schools, to cooking classes and coffee carts. Grants also provided graduation gowns for students and created a garden area for students to grow plants. The Mini-Grants also helped students put on theater performances and create gingerbread houses. SEF was able to award \$54,000 in funding for selected teachers' projects.

The Dana Brown Charitable Trust is a major funder of our Dana Brown Mini-Grant program.



# John Cary Scholarships

In 2022, SEF awarded five \$5,000 scholarships to college-bound students through the John Cary Scholarships.

## Lillian Blanton

We helped students like Lillian Blanton, who attends Valparaiso University and who became the leader of the ASL Club at Valpo in her first semester. She joined multiple student organizations including the competitive Robotics team and the Society for Physics students. Here's a selfie of Lilly in the Physics Student Lounge at Valpo, where she tells us she spends about 50% of her time.



## Takia McMorris

Takia McMorris graduated from Parkway Central and South Tech. In her scholarship application, she was described as someone with an insatiable appetite for learning and a consistent desire to go beyond the required to achieve a greater understanding of herself and her world. Takia is in the dual engineering program at UMSL and has adjusted nicely to campus life.

## Isabelle Lentz

Isabelle Lentz is a Valley Park High School graduate attending Missouri State in Springfield. She tells SEF that her favorite class has been Art 100, otherwise known as 2-D design. It is challenging, but she says is having so much fun creating art pieces. Isabelle said that her favorite place on campus is probably the swimming pool. She adds, "My suitemates and I go there to study and to exercise. It is a great way to unwind after a long day!"



## Lucy Davis

Lucy Davis also was a John Cary Scholarship recipient and has had a terrific start to her college career at Webster. She has taken violin lessons and summer music programs at Webster for many years, so it was a natural choice for her college years. She is majoring in Data Analytics and minoring in Japanese. Lucy hopes to spend a semester in Japan, as part of the Study Abroad program, later in her college career.



## Caroline Bellido

Caroline Bellido is a graduate of the Fred Saigh Leadership Academy class and is using her scholarship to attend the University of Oklahoma after graduating from Parkway West. She tells SEF that, "Being here at OU this semester has been going great! I'm working hard, getting good grades and making straight A's! The scholarship has helped me tremendously, and I appreciate that."

She shared a selfie walking to one of her classes with the Student Union behind her, which she says is where she likes to hang out before her classes.

Learn more about our programs  
on our website: [sef-stl.org](https://sef-stl.org)



# By the Numbers

## 2022 Program Expenditures

Dana Brown Teacher Mini-Grants \$54,000 – 62 grants

Fred Saigh Leadership Program \$25,000 – 18 students

Camperships \$14,135 – 12 campers

College Scholarships \$27,500 – 6 students

Assistance for hearing aids, molds and repairs \$15,708 – 50 students

Adaptive equipment \$62,349 – 20 students

Assistance to SSD schools \$5,625

Critical Needs \$11,100 – 289 students

## 2022 Revenue Sources

