

Elizabeth's Early Learning Center

Discover, Learn & Shine Newsletter — Fall 2024

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

HONORING THE MEMORY OF FRITZ “FRITZ FROG” VORDERMARK

Fritz Vordermark began his early childhood education journey at EELC in August 2019 when he enrolled in the Hummingbirds infant classroom. As he grew and developed over the years, Fritz transitioned to the Rainbow, Yellow House, and Maple Tree classrooms. While attending EELC in the Maple Tree classroom, Fritz was diagnosed with an ultra-rare, non-inherited genetic mutation that caused complex epilepsy. After his courageous two year battle, Fritz peacefully passed away in his home with his loving family on August 13, 2024.



*Fritz Vordermark
“Fritz Frog”*

During his time at EELC, Fritz touched the lives of many staff members and classmates. Staff quickly noticed Fritz’s love for music. He was frequently seen entertaining his class with his infamous dance moves and sharing his musical talents by playing instruments with classmates. He was such a joy to have at EELC and his bright, joyous spirit will live on here forever.

Following his passing, Fritz's parents asked that anyone who felt compelled to make a donation in Fritz's memory make it towards a special fund at EELC in Fritz’s memory. As a result, an outpouring of donations of over \$50,000 flooded in over a few weeks. Thank you to everyone who so generously gave to the EELC Fritz Frog Fund.

All donations will help develop a special music room at EELC that will be dedicated in memory of our Fritz Frog. All donations will also help support a music program that will take place weekly in the new Fritz Frog Music Room. The donations will help keep Fritz’s memory living on by providing an opportunity for many children in our community to benefit from the wonderful music program at EELC. We are humbled and honored to establish the Fritz Frog Music Room in Fritz’s memory.



*Happy
Thanksgiving!*

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WELCOMING EELC'S NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Holland Coleman recently celebrated her ten year anniversary with EELC. In August 2014, she was hired as an Assistant Teacher in one of the two-year-old classrooms. Shortly after she was hired, she was promoted to a Lead Teacher, where she was entrusted with teaching and caring for 16 two-year-olds alongside her co-teachers. She spent eight wonderful years gaining experience and knowledge in the Early Childhood Education field, and grew in ways that prepared her for her next promotion to Supervisor. As a Supervisor, Holland learned how to build a team and grow that team for the common cause of working towards fulfilling the mission of Elizabeth's Early Learning Center.



Two short years after becoming a Supervisor, Holland was promoted to Assistant Director, where she fulfilled her duties as the Site Director at EELC's second location on Humankind's campus. In the midst of COVID, our Humankind location served as a crucial component in being able to carry out our mission to our current families as well as reach more families in the community. As the Assistant Director, Holland continued to increase her knowledge and experience while also learning new leadership skills, which eventually led her to be selected as EELC's new Executive Director.

Holland brings a tremendous amount of knowledge in operations, leadership, culture, requirements of early childhood development, and experience to the Executive Director position. She credits Jane Gerdy, EELC's former Executive Director and current Education Coordinator, for her success. Jane has been an excellent coach and mentor to Holland throughout the last decade.

Holland graduated from Old Dominion University in 2011 with her B.S. in Elementary Education. When asked how she feels about her new role, her response was, "I am beyond honored to serve this school and our EELC families. I believe in the mission set forth by Elizabeth Forsyth 27 years ago and it is a dream to be able to carry out her vision on a daily basis. I look forward to building relationships with each and every person that crosses my path throughout this journey."



—

JOIN THE EELC SUNSHINE CLUB



All you need to do to join the EELC Sunshine Club is sign up to be an automatic EELC monthly donor!

Sunshine Club members are dedicated to making quality early childhood development more affordable for our community.

Your automatic monthly gift will support EELC's Scholarship Fund, which creates opportunities for all local children to benefit from age-appropriate instruction in a warm, safe, caring environment full of sunshine!

Sunshine Club members will receive special recognition in our newsletters and special events. Any monthly amount is appreciated and makes an impact.

Visit our newly redesigned website at www.eelc.org to join the Sunshine Club today!

STAFF SPOTLIGHT CELEBRATING 20 YEARS WITH RAVEN PAYNE

August 30th, 2024, at EELC was officially named, "Raven's Day!" Raven Payne started her journey working with young children as an assistant teacher for a wonderful program called Even Start. Through Even Start, young mothers completed a GED program while their children were able to attend school at Hutcherson Elementary.

Sadly, the program was discontinued and Raven lost her job. Although that door closed, a new one opened when she joined the EELC family. When she was hired, Raven was under the guidance of Executive Director, Sandra McConnell. Raven quickly fell in love with the idea of Elizabeth Forsyth's vision for EELC and how we, as a staff, can truly make a difference in young children's lives. Raven says it has been her life's work to protect, care for and teach young children. She has worked with infants, preschoolers, and toddlers (Green House, Yellow House, and Rainbow Room). She was hired at EELC as a part time Assistant Teacher and grew into a Lead Teacher position and now a Supervisor role.



We are so grateful for the many years of service that Raven has given to Elizabeth's Early Learning Center. Her reliability, dedication, and loving spirit are unmatched. "It is with great pleasure that I have celebrated my 20th anniversary here at EELC. I was just a baby when I started at EELC and look at me now. I would like to thank my directors, board members, office staff, parents, and co-teachers for all of the sweet cards, gifts and well wishes on my anniversary this year. I sincerely appreciate you all so very much. I have met so many amazing people over the years, and it has been a blessing and an honor to work with young children and the wonderful families of Elizabeth's Early Learning Center."

EELC STAFF VOLUNTEER AT THE VIRGINIA 10 MILER



On September 28th thousands of people filled the streets of Lynchburg for the 50th Anniversary of the VA 10 Miler. Some participated and others enthusiastically cheered on the participants. Seven EELC staff members partnered with neighboring Miriam's House to volunteer for the event. Staff enjoyed seeing past and present EELC families participating in the race and were overjoyed to cheer them on to the finish. Congratulations to all runners and walkers on such a huge accomplishment. Your EELC team is proud of you!

IT'S TIME TO GROW!

MUSTACHES FOR KIDS LYNCHBURG

Throughout the month of November, 19 of our EELC dads will be “Growers” for Mustaches for Kids (M4K)! M4K Lynchburg is a volunteer-run organization that raises funds to improve the quality of life for local children. Parents, donors, and friends can donate to support any of EELC’s 19 “Grower” dads and help them achieve their fundraising goals. As a result, M4K will make a generous donation to the Elizabeth’s Early Learning Center’s Scholarship Fund!



Visit www.m4klynchburg.org to make a donation in support of one of our EELC Growers!

Did you know that 50% of the students at EELC receive some form of financial assistance through our scholarship fund? Thank you to our Grower Dads, listed below, and M4K Lynchburg for helping us continue our mission of providing an excellent early childhood education that is inclusive to all children in our community.

Pink: Nathan France
Purple: Tyson Dummeldinger
Bluebirds: Matthew Brady & Thomas Lawton
Betts Station: Kyle Tennant
Town Hall: Chris Burriss
Yellow House: Tyler France, August Hardy
Blue House: Stuart Tinsley
Cardinals: Purav Patel
Hummingbirds: Josh Johnson
Woodpeckers: Cody Cotter & Zach Phillips
Sunshine: Brandon Conner
Rainbow: Shane Phillips & Shane Timberlake
Rainforest: Vito Carcioppolo
Red Barn: Pete Hamilton & Tim Spooner



MUSTACHES 4 KIDS FUN!



THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

APRIL 2024 — OCTOBER 2024

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Alex & Jessica Newmark
Ed Polloway
George Ramsey, Jr.

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Patty & Ken West

In Honor

Elizabeth Johnston in
honor of Mac Addair
Elizabeth Johnston in
memory of The Honorable
Richard Miller

In Memory

Elizabeth Johnston in
memory of Kent Manley
Jackson

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SPREAD THE WARMTH

Elizabeth's Early Learning Center is a drop off point for Spread the Warmth Coat Drive this year! In 2023, Foster Fuels accepted 5,573 donated coats. As part of the #FosterGives campaign, the coats and monetary donations were delivered to local schools and ministries to help provide warmth to those who need it. How can you get involved?

Foster Fuels is asking the community to donate any new or gently used coats for the Spread the Warmth coat drive. All you have to do is drop coats off at any of local drop-off locations.

Spread the Warmth collects children's coats for distribution to area elementary schools and to give to children in need. Adult sizes are also accepted and will be donated to area high schools and other charities. When you are cleaning out your closets, please think about donating any new or gently used coats. Let's help keep our community warm. Nobody should be cold this season.

SPREAD *the* WARMTH
NOW ACCEPTING DONATIONS

gently-used coats
Gather any gently-used coats. We accept kids and adult sized coats.

drop-off coat locations
Visit our website for a list of drop-off sites throughout the community.

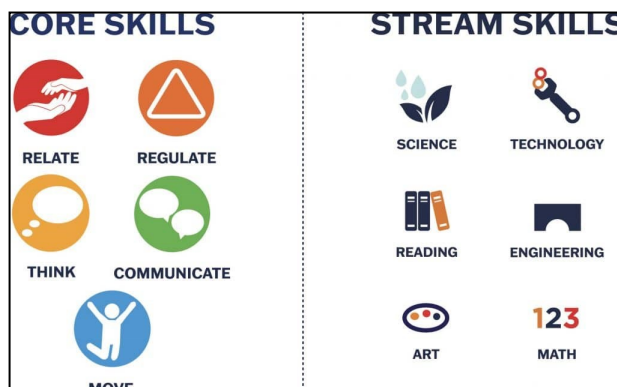
we distribute
Foster Fuels will distribute these coats to local schools & non-profits.

#FOSTERGIVES COAT DRIVE EVENT
For additional info about Spread the Warmth, visit our website.
FOSTER-FOUNDATION.ORG

FOSTER FUELS
SINCE 1921

EELC IMPLEMENTS NEW CURRICULUM

EELC is now using the STREAMin3 Curriculum, an innovative curriculum model developed by researchers at the University of Virginia. In the STREAMin3 Curriculum, children think big, solve problems, and explore their world. This sets them up for success in kindergarten and beyond. The STREAM skills are taught through hands-on experiences in Learning Centers in the classroom and outdoors through interactions that are intentional and integrated throughout the day, across all ages and skills.



STREAM represents:

Science – Children use their senses to explore and understand the world. The Science Center includes plants and animals, sensory materials, magnets, and collections of nature items. Our outdoor classroom includes a large variety of trees, including an apple and fig tree, blackberry bushes, a pollinator garden, a sandbox and water tables.

Technology – Children use tools to create, explore, and innovate. Technology materials include magnifying glasses, droppers, tweezers, tools, and simple machines.

Reading – Children learn letters, sounds, rhymes, print, and early writing. The Reading Center includes books, writing materials, puppets, and flannel board stories.



Engineering – Children discover how and why things work. The Engineering Center includes blocks of varying size, shape and material, simple machines, vehicles, Legos, Magna-Tiles, play people and animals.

Art – Children create, express, and imagine. Centers include paint, markers, crayons, scissors, glue, play-dough, costumes and props, and musical instruments.

Math – Children explore numbers, shapes, spatial sense, patterns and measurement. The Math Center includes manipulatives to count, sort and compare, puzzles, balance scales, 2D and 3D shapes, and math games.

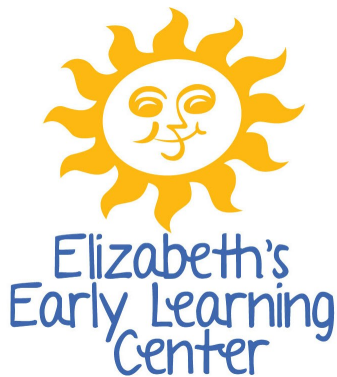
All activities are designed to help children relate to their friends and teachers, regulate their emotions, attention and behavior, think about and make sense of the world around them, use language to communicate needs and share their ideas, and move their bodies to achieve their goals and care for themselves.

In the first five years of life, the human brain grows more than at any other point in life. The STREAMin3 Curriculum is designed to capitalize on this. Based on the latest research, it taps into how children learn best. Every moment of every day is a learning experience for the children at EELC!

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.

EELC VOTED ONE OF BEST PRESCHOOLS



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