LearningSpring is a place for children on the autism spectrum to learn, to grow and to belong.
OUR MISSION

The LearningSpring School for children on the autism spectrum in grades K-8 is committed to advance the social, developmental and academic growth of its students through pioneering educational and therapeutic strategies in order to prepare each child to participate in the wider community.

OUR VISION

LEARNINGSPRING challenges its students with an academic curriculum consistent with New York State Common Core Standards.

LEARNINGSPRING engages its students with an innovative social skills curriculum based on current research and best practices.

LEARNINGSPRING recognizes and nurtures each student’s unique gifts and talents.

LEARNINGSPRING is a place where students learn in small cooperative groups facilitated by highly qualified and motivated teachers and therapists.

LEARNINGSPRING uses a multi-disciplinary approach to address the particular social, organizational, emotional, sensory, motor, pragmatic language and academic needs and goals of each individual.

LEARNINGSPRING will continue to collaborate with research institutions to develop optimal programs and share this information.

LEARNINGSPRING builds a working partnership with families as an integral part of the school program.

LEARNINGSPRING offers a supportive and eco-friendly environment that helps students grow into inquisitive and socially engaged individuals.
With pride we present our 2016-2017 LearningSpring School Annual Report, detailing some of the poignant moments and milestones for both our students and our school community.

We are very happy to report that we raised $306,530 in our Annual Fund, which exceeded our goal. For the ninth year in a row we achieved 100% participation from our Board and our parent body, But we are not done. We stand committed to continuing this trend. As parents and trustees, we must hold ourselves accountable to raising the revenue we need to make up the difference between state funding and the real cost of educating our students.

It is only through the generosity of the people listed in this report that the cornerstones of our school remain steadfast: a successful dual academic and social skills curriculum; enriching after-school programs; hardworking and dedicated faculty and staff; a growing alumni association; and a strong program of parent education and support. Our values remain strong as well and are present in all that we do for our students and for each other.
In addition, your generosity has made available to our students a range of experiences that have introduced them to new worlds and new people. Our students have been able to forge friendships with students from mainstream public schools in the neighborhood; to experience theater, ballet and world-class art and engage with professional artists and musicians; to visit a local firehouse; to order and enjoy a meal in a restaurant; and to learn the skills that will enable them to live up to their fullest potential.

And so we ask you to give as generously as possible to support our school. And we ask that you get involved and take a role in our fundraising activities; an active and engaged school community is vital to our future success.

We are enormously thankful for all the ways our parents, trustees and friends help LSS; and we are grateful for the hard work and dedication of our faculty and staff, whose warm and inspirational relationships with our students will always lie at the heart of our success. But our successes are not just ours to celebrate. They are yours as well.

Thank you for your dedication to and belief in our school and our students.

Margaret Poggi
Head of School

James Snyder
President, Board of Trustees

Andrea Esteruelas
Mark Gonsalves
Co-Chairs, Parent Association
LEARNINGSPRING SCHOOL VALUES

Creativity and Innovation

At LearningSpring we believe that for every unique student there is an equally unique approach. Each day is a new opportunity for creativity and innovation.
To support and encourage our students to move throughout the day, our OT/PT department introduced the idea of “Activity Bursts” for the students, which incorporates movement activities into classroom lessons rather than stopping lessons to take a break to get up and move. Not surprisingly, our staff loved the concept and incorporated “Activity Bursts” into their work day!

Students at Learning Spring are becoming “cultural connoisseurs.” Over the school year each of our classes enjoyed trips to the theater, museums, concerts, and the ballet. Through our growing arts partnerships with both cultural institutions and professional artists, our students not only learned about various forms of art and the “creative process,” they also learned how to express themselves through their own artwork and through collaborative projects.

Our Life Skills Program is an innovative approach to teaching and developing everyday independence through hands-on learning based on three components: repetition, motivation, and expectation. The goal of the Life Skills Program is to promote successful independence in the classroom, at home and in the community. Over the course of this past school year, our Sequoia students explored valuable life skills, including food management, organizational strategies and money management, using tools such as the classroom snack station and trips to neighborhood stores.
Positive and Nurturing Environment
LearningSpring is welcoming and inviting. We value people who love their jobs and who are committed to building a positive and nurturing environment for our students. We are passionate about what we do and are dedicated to the growth and education of every student.
LSS believes that an important part of nurturing is supporting others, and so at the beginning of the holiday season, we took the opportunity to educate our students about supporting others. For the second year, our students collaborated with NY Common Pantry on a Thanksgiving Food Drive. Each LSS family was asked to donate one or more dry or canned items ranging from rice to stuffing mix to canned beans. The Food Drive was a great success – our whole LearningSpring community contributed over 100 pounds of food to NY Common Pantry, which helped provide Thanksgiving meals to 2,300 low-income families in our area.

LSS faculty and staff don't just work together, they have fun together and show their appreciation for each other, and so this past year the Staff Appreciation Committee created the “Cart that Cares.” Several times throughout the school year, the gaily decorated “Cart that Cares,” replete with breakfast foods, afternoon pick-me-ups, or holiday themed treats, winds its way around the school and surprises and delights one and all!

LSS Parents also show their appreciation and thanks for the hard work and dedication of the faculty and staff with a festive Staff Appreciation Breakfast at the end of each school year. This year’s Hawaiian-themed Staff Appreciation Breakfast included a photographer who supplied costume props for group pictures of the faculty and staff, a full breakfast buffet and goody bags for everyone!

“Starting a new position in a new system is always a challenge, but thanks to such supportive staff, it has been easy to get guidance around anything new.”

Liz Blanchard, Clinical Director
Collaboration

LearningSpring School values working together – with each other, with each student, with each family and with the community. We value collaboration and integration in every area of our school.
Our Integrated Peer Group program, in which we partner with Friends Seminary, P.S. 40, and SALK Middle School for weekly social groups, offers our students opportunities to learn and practice socially appropriate behaviors in various contexts and settings. During the social groups our students engage in various social and relationship-building activities with their typically developing peers at our partner schools, while helping their students develop an understanding and greater sensitivity for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders.

After coming home from the first Integrated Program session, an LSS student told her mother, “I have a cool new trick. I am not going to do whis- pers and talk to myself anymore. I have new friends like Dana from PS 40. She helped me with my homework. I’m going to talk to them and I’m going to have friends.”

Our Big/Little Buddies partnership, in which each student from our 4th grade class has a little buddy in the Kindergarten class, provides our students with opportunities for mentorship, role modeling, perspective taking, and, of course, fun! The Big/Little Buddies planned creative activities for both classes to do together, including building an obstacle course in the gym and a field trip to Dunkin’ Donuts (always a favorite with our students).

Our Oak class visited the neighborhood Fire Department and was treated to some exciting hands-on experiences, while two of our younger classes visited our local Police precinct. These field trips increase LSS’ sense of place in the community and provide our students with fun, first-hand learning opportunities.
Fun
LearningSpring believes in having FUN! We encourage each other to find and celebrate a good sense of humor.
Each October LSS holds an annual Halloween Parade and classroom parties. Our students put a lot of thought and work into creative costumes. In the morning our students “trick or treat” throughout the school and in the afternoon parents, grandparents, staff and friends gather in the gym for the “frightful” parade of students modeling their costumes, which is always accompanied by plenty of cheering and laughter. Following the parade, parents join their children in the classrooms for a celebration.

Hands down, the most exciting day of the school year is our Field Day, during which our students experience a day of social engagement and fun in the neighborhood park and throughout the school. Each class, wearing their team tee-shirts, starts the day with a parade and class song. Throughout the day, classes participate in relay races, obstacle courses, water balloon fights, and face painting. Goldman Sachs generously underwrites Field Day while their employees (many of whom ask to return each year) volunteer for the day.

Our Redwood students had a great time participating in “The Amazing Race,” which was created by our speech and language department. In “The Amazing Race” the students worked in small groups of three using Google maps to research places in the Gramercy neighborhood they wanted to explore and learn more about. Each group, armed with three clues, set out on a scavenger hunt to find the place chosen by another group. These adventures took the students to places as varied as the top-rated Maialino restaurant in the Gramercy Park Hotel to the store Bath and Body Works!
GRANTS

This list includes all program grants awarded to LearningSpring School from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017. We thank all of our longtime supporters and welcome our new foundations and corporations. Your gifts are deeply appreciated.

Goldman Sachs & Co.
The Hyde and Watson Foundation
The Morris and Alma Schapiro Fund
Adolph and Ruth Schnurmacher Foundation, Inc.

ANNUAL FUND GIFTS

The following list acknowledges with sincere gratitude the LSS parents, families, friends, foundations and corporations that contributed to the LearningSpring Annual Fund from July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017.

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*Board Member (as of July 1, 2016)
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LearningSpring School is a New York State approved non-public school that receives funding by way of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE). The funding does not cover the entire cost of LSS' academic and social skills programs; therefore, a financial gap must be made up through the generous contributions of our supporters through several fundraising campaigns.

**Support and Revenue**

- Tuition and Fees: $5,693,218
- Contributions and Grants*: $537,758
- IDEA Grant: $195,387
- Investments and Other Income: $485,266

**Expenses**

- Salaries and Benefits: $5,102,084
- Program: $288,488
- Administration: $224,029
- Facilities: $388,570
- Fundraising: $209,384

*In addition, LearningSpring School received $500,000 toward a $3.5 million multi-year pledge made in 2013.
TRIBUTE GIFTS

This list includes Annual Fund contributions made In honor of or In memory of.

In honor of Jeremy Amodeo
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In honor of children with ASD
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In honor of Harrison Ching’s birthday
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William and Bellanne Weitz
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Steven and Nicole Zizila

*Board Member (as of July 1, 2016)
On Tuesday, March 21, 2017, LSS held its annual LearningSpring Blooms Spring Benefit. Our theme this year was the importance of self-advocacy. Kerry Magro, Author and Autism Advocate, was honored with our Spectrum Award. Kerry, who is diagnosed on the autism spectrum, has dedicated his career to sharing his story and educating others about autism, overcoming obstacles and the importance of advocacy.

LSS parent Todd Drezner produced a moving video of our Student of the Month assembly, which demonstrated beautifully how proud our students are of their achievements. The speeches given by both Kerry and our Alumnus Speaker Kyle Lorenzana touched upon the important roles that self-advocacy and a supportive family play in a child’s life.

Thank you to our Benefit Co-Chairs, our Benefit and Auction Committees, and all the parents and staff who helped create a lovely evening of fun and friendship.

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Samuel Sarmiento and Karina Suarez
Jacob and Judith Saulig
Satya Scainetti
Alan Sclar*
Mardochee and Muriel Silin
Robin Stephenson*
Tom Sugiura and Emily Klein
Stephen and Eira Sukhra
Jan Svejnar
Michael and Kerri* Tricarico
Michael Weinberger and Cecily Chester
Patricia Weisenfeld
William and Bellanne Weitz
Lior and Jasmine Zangi
Steven and Nicole Zizila
Stuart* and Denise Zwerling

CORPORATIONS, FOUNDATIONS, ORGANIZATIONS
Austin & Co., Inc.
The Benevity Community Impact Fund
Coco Tea NY Inc.
First Republic Bank
JANCCS, Inc.
K & J Charitable Gift Fund
Kule-Korgood & Associates
Law Offices of Neal H. Rosenberg
Law Offices of Regina Skyer
Lemberg Foundation
Loeb & Troper LLP
Matthew 18:5 Foundation
Parish Property Management
Ramen Yebisu
Round Table Wealth Management
The Sherkow Center
Simons Foundation
Three-Ring Binder Events, LLC

*Board Member (as of July 1, 2016)
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CO-CHAIRS
Andrea Esteruelas
Mark Gonsalves

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Benjamin Davis (Magnolia)
Leslie Ann Carabalbo (Maple)
Andrea Esteruelas (Juniper)
Mark Gonsalves (Juniper)
Benjamin Metsch (Sassafras)
Luciana Nikpour (Poplar)
Courtney Lee-Mitchell (Spruce)
Carne Ross (Cypress)
Judith Saulig (Elm)
Margaret Bendlin (Willow)
Danielle Curi (Oak)
Miriam Mahler (Oak)
Kristina Bonhorst (Redwood)
Lisa Meyers (Sequoia)

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Co-Chair
Tracy Nixon
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Andrea Esteruelas
Ridge Huggett
Satya Scainetti
Joanna Scott
Misti Ushio*
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Misti Ushio*

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Susana Montes
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Greg Ng*
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Satya Scainetti
Sharon Sookdeo
Stacey Sookdeo
Bellanne Weitz
Nicole Zizila

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Benjamin Metsch
Co-Chair
Jennifer DeMatteis
Steven Grosso
Mary Howard
Christopher Huttleston
Dariosh Nikpour
Luciana Nikpour
Jesabelle Plagianakos
Jasmine Zangi

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Linda Ching
Chair
Angie Cuevas
Jennifer DeMatteis
Judy McGoldrick
Judith Saulig

STAFF APPRECIATION
COMMITTEE
Danielle Curi
Chair
Fanny Khowong
Miriam Mahler
Lisa Meyers

SOCIAL COMMITTEE
Luciana Nikpour

YEARBOOK
Kristina Bonhorst

FIELD DAY
Jeremy A. Katz

LIBRARY COMMITTEE
Stephen McGoldrick
SAVE THE DATES

Saturday, November 4, 2017
Raise Your Glass For LSS:
An Evening of Wine & Cheese & Jazz

Thursday, April 19, 2018
LearningSpring Blooms Spring Benefit
Honoring Robert Manfred
Commissioner, Major League Baseball