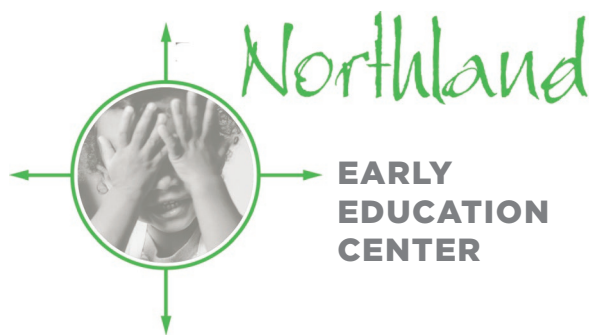


# LEADING

## THE WAY IN EARLY

# INTERVENTION & EDUCATION



# 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

8630 North Oak Trafficway | Kansas City, Missouri 64155  
816.420.9005 | [www.nееckids.org](http://www.nееckids.org)

# LEADING THE WAY IN **EARLY INTERVENTION** AND **EDUCATION**

**MISSION** Northland Early Education Center (NEEC) provides early education and therapy services for children who have special needs as well as early education for children who have typical needs, in a fully inclusive classroom environment in order for them to reach their full potential.

## HISTORY

NEEC was founded in 1981 by a group of concerned parents of children with physical and mental disabilities along with parents of children whose household incomes were low to moderate. These parents envisioned an early education center that would serve all children, regardless of their developmental level or socioeconomic status. The school began in a basement of a church north of Excelsior Springs, Missouri with a class of only six children. From then, the school continued to grow and as the need for fully-inclusive early education and therapeutic intervention for children with special needs continued to increase, it became evident that the school was in need of a larger building to ensure that services were available for all children with special needs residing in the Northland. In 1998, with funding from the Clay County Developmental Disabilities Resource Board, NEEC was able to move into a larger building in Kansas City, Missouri that was more spacious and inviting. The new facility provided, and continues to provide, an environment where children's classrooms are separated by age, not developmental level, allowing them to learn not only from their teachers but from one another as well. Since its inception NEEC has grown from a preschool serving six children to a nationally accredited early education center providing early education and therapy services for over 200 children annually.

## EARLY EDUCATION AND THERAPEUTIC INTERVENTION PROGRAM

NEEC provides early education and therapy services for children who have special needs and early education for children who have typical needs age's birth to five. NEEC also provides a before and after school/summer program for children ages 6 to 14 who have special needs. NEEC's eight early education classrooms are staffed by dedicated childcare professionals, including a lead teacher with a Bachelor's degree in special education, early childhood education or a related field. All lead teachers prepare weekly lesson plans that fully utilize and incorporate the principles of the Project Construct curriculum framework. In a Project Construct classroom, children build their own knowledge, at their own pace and development level, through play and interactions in a well-facilitated educational environment. As a result, children become critical thinkers and creative problem-solvers while developing a love of learning.

Children are screened upon entry into the program and continually assessed each day; milestones are recorded in each child's individual portfolio and discussed at bi-annual parent-teacher conferences. Success for a child, either with special needs or typical needs, in a NEEC classroom is demonstrated by the child's ability to think critically and creatively, problem solve, and cooperate with other children in a learning environment. At NEEC children attain these skills in a fully-inclusive classroom environment, meaning that children are separated by age, not developmental level.

In addition to high quality, fully-inclusive early education, NEEC offers therapy services for children with special needs who qualify. NEEC's therapy department consists of four therapists specializing in physical and occupational therapies, speech and language pathology and special instruction. The therapists work collaboratively in a teaming model to ensure the whole family's needs are being met. Primarily, the NEEC therapy program collaborates with Missouri's First Steps program to determine the appropriate level of therapeutic intervention for children from birth to age three. NEEC therapists also work with families and children through Medicaid, and private pay. Each child that receives therapy services through NEEC has some form of individualized goals and a plan on which the therapy services are based. Predominately this plan takes the form of either an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Program (IEP). An IFSP guides the therapy process for children (aged birth - three) with special needs based upon the family needs and goals. An IEP is for children three and older and consists of a written plan developed by a team to help an individual child with educational goals. All therapy service plans at NEEC include a statement of the child's present levels of educational and/or developmental performance, measurable annual goals, and outlines the specific services that will be offered to help the child meet these goals. Success for a child receiving therapy services through NEEC is as individualized as the child.

## BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL/ SUMMER PROGRAM

In order to fulfill a growing need recognized in our community, NEEC provides a before and after school program for children ages six to 14 with special needs. This program, which meets before and after public school and during the summer months, has its own teaching staff that incorporate each child's Individual Education Plan goals into the classroom's daily activities and lesson plans. Knowing that the fully-inclusive environment is the most appropriate for all children, this program is seeking to incorporate typically developing peer models. However, space for this program is limited and children with special needs still remain the number one priority for this continued learning program at NEEC.

## LICENSING AND ACCREDITATION

The Northland Early Education Center is proud to be accredited through both the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). Additionally, NEEC is a licensed private agency with the Missouri Department of Health and holds certification through the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. These accreditations, licensures and certifications ensure that NEEC's program standards are among the highest in the nation.

## SERVICE AREA

NEEC serves children age's birth to five who have special needs and typical needs, as well as children who have special needs ages 6 to 14 predominately in Clay and Platte counties, as well as surrounding counties in the Kansas City Metropolitan area.

# 2015 OUTCOMES MEASUREMENT

The families of NEEC have entrusted the development and education of their children with the staff and teachers at the school. In order to ensure that our program is continually improving, NEEC utilizes an Outcomes Measurement format for evaluating annual goals. The Outcomes Measurement serve as a motivating and tracking tool, allowing us to better qualify the impact that our programs have on the children and families we serve. The NEEC Board of Directors, administration, and staff believe that the well-organized, thoughtful, and honest program evaluation the Outcomes Measurement provides is imperative to furthering our mission to provide early education and therapy services for children who have special needs as well as early education for children who have typical needs, in a fully inclusive classroom environment in order for them to reach their full potential.

- NEEC provided a total of 6,653 units (1,663 hours) of physical and occupational therapy, speech and language pathology and special instruction
- 94% of children with special needs receiving services from NEEC made progress on at least 75% of their IFSP/IEP/classroom goals
- 8% of children who have special needs receiving in-home therapy services transitioned to the on-site early education program
- On average, 39% of children enrolled on-site at NEEC were children with special needs
- 64% of children receiving services from NEEC, both in-home and on-site, were children with special needs
- NEEC provided early education and/or therapy services for a total of 217 children in 2015
- 71% of staff had been employed at NEEC for at least one year



## 2016 ACTION PLAN

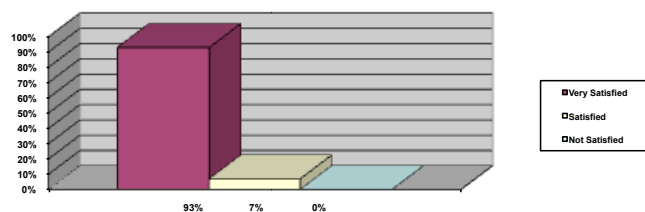
The long-term goal for NEEC is an on-site consistent enrollment of 50 percent children with special needs and 50 percent children who have typical needs. In 2016, NEEC's goal is to continue to work to ensure our on-site enrollment is consistently at least 43% children with special needs to 57 percent children who have typical needs. On average in 2015, 39% of the children served on-site had special needs.

In order to expand NEEC's 2015 goals, the NEEC Quality Improvement Committee has established the following action items:

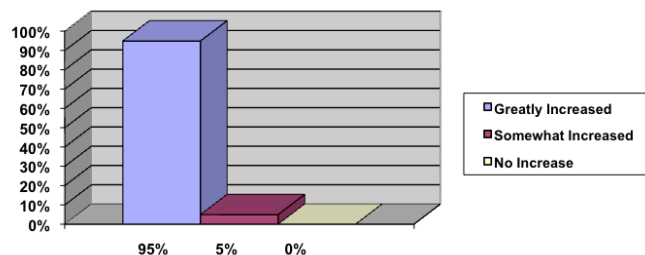
1. The Executive Director, Program Director and Development Director will increase community outreach and awareness through newsletters, presentations, social media outlets, strengthening relationships with area hospitals and advocacy groups, and through special events with the specific purpose of growing a constituency of community members.
2. The Program Director will ensure that several spots on-site are left available for children birth – two years of age with special needs requesting placement at NEEC.
3. The Executive Director and the Development Director will research additional funding opportunities for the scholarship program, making every effort to ensure that all children with special needs seeking placement at the school can find scholarship opportunities.
4. The Executive Director, Program Director, Development Director, and the Board of Directors will continue the action steps needed to potentially expand the program as outlined in the 2015-2017 Strategic Plan.

## 2015 FAMILY SATISFACTION SURVEY

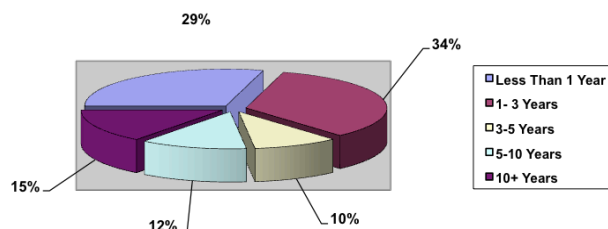
Are you satisfied with the services provided for your child by NEEC?



How would you rate your child's improvements since he/she began attending NEEC?



## 2015 STAFF RETENTION





# THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSION

Northland Early Education Center (NEEC) understands the importance of inclusion. NEEC provides pre-school, early education and early intervention for children age birth to 5 years in a fully inclusive classroom environment where all children are able to reach their full potential. At NEEC, “fully inclusive” means that all children, regardless of their physical or cognitive level are able to safely access and engage in learning opportunities together in chronologically age based classrooms.

Inclusion in an early childhood setting gives all children, regardless of gender, race, developmental level or socio-economic status the ability to safely access and engage in educational opportunities together in a classroom setting. This gives the children the opportunity to learn together, but at their own level and pace. Children with developmental delays learn from their teachers as well as through watching and interacting with their peers. Also, children who are typically developing are learning cooperation, acceptance and tolerance of children who are different from themselves.

Teachers in a fully inclusive classroom setting must be trained to modify the curriculum and the classroom so that their expectations apply to each child. The teachers must embrace the diversity in the classroom and follow the child's lead to match individual learning styles. All children have strengths and in the appropriate environment, with trained and educated teachers, their strengths can be nurtured and developed.

The inclusive atmosphere provides a safe explorative environment where everyone feels welcome and all children are working together through activities and learning centers that are modified to meet every child's individual need. Through ‘hands-on, minds-on’ experiences, students attain deep understandings in core content areas, while also learning to work collaboratively with adults and peers in order to be lifelong problem solvers. The social interaction, the student-centered skills and the responsibility the children are gaining within a fully inclusive classroom environment allow all children the opportunity to reach their full potential.

Walking down the hall of NEEC, on any given day and looking into any classroom, a person will see children of all developmental levels playing together and encouraging each other to learn. The relationships the children build with one another are without prejudice, transcending physical or cognitive ability, and instead are based on friendship and compassion. That is the true meaning of inclusion and what every child deserves.



# CURRENT STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

# EMMA



In May of 2012, I was diagnosed with papillary thyroid cancer. In July of 2012, I had a complete thyroidectomy. I spent the majority of that month in the hospital due to complications with my calcium levels and kidney failure. I was released from the hospital on August 3 and found out I was pregnant on August 10. I thought that I couldn't have children; my doctor had even told me that I couldn't have children. To learn I was pregnant, I was so excited, but very scared! My unborn baby had gone through all of those health scares with me and I didn't even know. I knew that if she made it, she would be a true fighter.

On April 2, 2013, I became a first time mom at the age of 37; Emma was born by scheduled C-section. Lying on that operating table I heard the doctor say that my baby had a cleft pallet. I had no idea

what that even meant. Due to her cleft pallet, Emma was not able to suck so she had to use a special bottle. When she would spit up, often times it would come out of her nose. As the months went by and Emma started eating baby food it was common for her to sneeze and have baby food, carrots or chunks of macaroni fly out of her nose. It didn't bother her one bit! Sometimes it was frustrating trying to explain to family and friends that she didn't always have a runny nose. The roof of her mouth was completely open, so saliva would go into her nasal cavities and out her nose. In fact, pretty much anything that went in her mouth would come out of her nose.

As her first birthday approached I was again very excited and scared. Excited for my baby girls first birthday but scared because I knew repair surgery was just around the corner. On April 25 of 2014, three weeks after Emma's first birthday I handed my baby girl off to the surgeon. That was the longest four hours of my life! When I was finally able to see Emma, her face was swollen beyond recognition. My heart hurt for her pain. I couldn't help but be a little excited though, as this was going to mark a new beginning for her.

The doctors had shared that Emma's speech would be delayed. I started reading to Emma when she was only a few months old hoping that it would help her later. As time went by, I started getting very worried; my baby wasn't saying anything! She would make the MA sound; she said MA for everything. She would pull me to the kitchen and attempt to climb in her high chair when she was hungry. She would bring me her cup when she was thirsty. But she wouldn't say anything but MA MA and it didn't mean Mommy. It was just the only sound she could make. She could understand me and follow direction but all she would say was MA. It was like that for months!

Emma began attending Northland Early Education Center (NEEC) in November of 2014. Over the next several months Emma learned so much. With her teachers and her speech therapist's help, Emma began to speak more and more. It seemed like each day there was a new sound or a new word. As Emma's second birthday approached I again was excited and scared. Excited for my baby girl to turn two but nervous about how she would handle transitioning from the one year old room to the two year old room. To my surprise Emma transitioned great! She has met new friends and with that she is learning new words, wanting to talk more like them.

When she transitioned, she still couldn't say two syllable words and would shorten them all to one syllable. Ms. Jodi was Jo and Ms. Tina was Tee. She has come so far since then. I could count the number of words she could say back then. Now, she is unstoppable. She will attempt to repeat anything. Even words I would prefer her not say. While she still has some work to do I am so grateful for where she is. Without NEEC, I don't think that Emma would be who she is today. She is an amazing little girl, who has a whole lot to say and I am thankful for all of the teachers and staff who have made that possible for her. I have grown to trust and love the staff and teachers at NEEC. They have become a huge part of our family and we love them.



Sincerely,  
Christy Gunsaulis



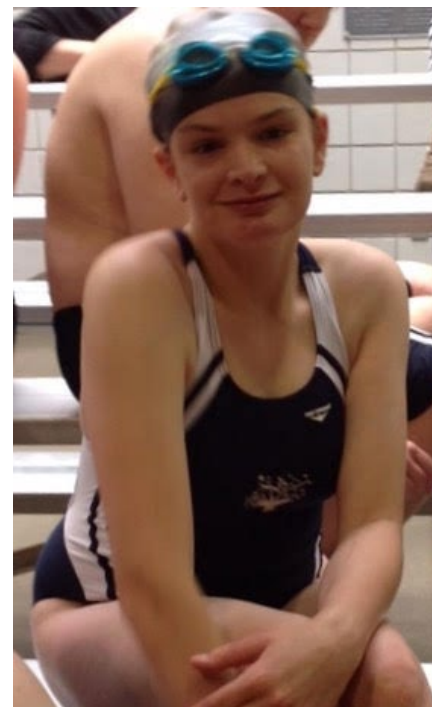
# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

# TY

Ty came to our family in 1996 as a six month old foster child. Ty entered the foster care system after she had been diagnosed with failure to thrive and was ordered to be removed from her home by a wonderful pediatrician at Children's Mercy Hospital, who saved her life. The first night that Ty was with us was incredibly frightening. She weighed nine pounds, functioned like a newborn, and her lungs made a wheezing noise, which grew worse as the evening wore on. We survived that first night and Ty soon began gaining weight and strength, but her brain development suffered because of her first six months. Ty's brother Danny, who was born nine months after Ty came to live with us, was also placed in our home as a foster child. (We eventually adopted both.) So our family went from two parents and our four year old only child, Louie, to having three kids, including two infants, in one year. That year was crazy and hectic, but seeing Ty begin to thrive and develop was incredibly cool.

Ty attended the Children's Place in Brookside for a year, and made progress in her development with lots of therapies and a very caring staff. After we moved to the northland, Ty attended the preschool at Pleasant Valley for part of the day, and attended NEEC (then The Lighthouse) for the remainder of her day. Ty was always fascinated with babies and with children who had special needs greater than her own, and she loved attending NEEC. Ty would brag about when she could "help" with a child in a wheelchair or who had a feeding tube at school. We saw early on that she was a natural caregiver. As she grew up, she was always offering to help our neighbors with their babies, and the neighbors would report that Ty was wonderful with them.

Ty was in special education, and had many behavioral issues in school, particularly in middle school. She spent most of her first year in middle school suspended, to the point where the school district sent a tutor to our home to work with Ty. Ty worked well with her tutor, who was a teacher at Golden Oaks alternative school, and eventually Ty began attending that school. While Ty continued to have behavioral problems at Golden Oaks, the staff there was trained to deal with these issues, and they were incredibly patient with her. She was rarely suspended at Golden Oaks, and was able to make friends with some of the other "rough around the edges" students like her. Ty completed her senior year there, and then attended an additional year, last year. At the end of last year we decided that she had had enough high school, and this is her first school year out of school.



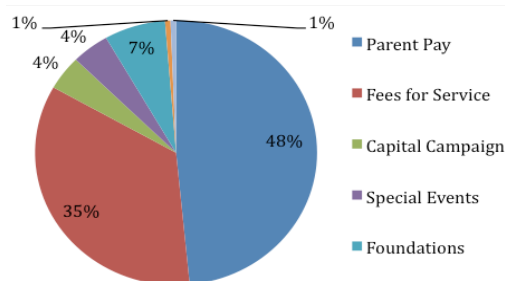
Ty keeps very busy with the Northstars Special Olympics program. Ty has participated in bowling, basketball, track, and softball, but has really excelled at swimming, which she began last year. I am a swimmer, and I tried very hard to turn my oldest son into one, but he was not a natural. I tried with Ty and Danny at Old Pike when they were little, but Ty was intimidated by the swim team atmosphere, and I had given up. So I was very surprised when, at 19, Ty started with the Special Olympics swim team, and she took off and displayed a beautiful stroke that I never knew she had. I finally have my swimmer! Participating in this program has given her a lot more confidence, and it has been wonderful seeing her excel.

Last spring Ty began volunteering at NEEC, and she loves it. She works three days a week in the Bumble Bee room, and comes home and tells me all about the great kids in that room. Between her sports and her work, Ty is very happy right now. I know that eventually we will need to push her toward adult independence, but for now, she is enjoying her life.

Having a child with special needs can cause disappointment for the things that they will never achieve, but the "normal kids" certainly can do the same. Ty has brought our household great chaos at times, but the joy that she brings far outweighs the bad. One day a friend of mine saw a mom with two special needs children at a Special Olympics event, and remarked that she felt very sorry for her. I know those kids, and they are two sweet, funny kids, and I had never thought to pity their mom. I guess you have to be a parent of a special needs child to truly understand the joy that they bring into your life, and the sense of pride that you feel for what they have been able to achieve with your guidance and love. Ty has been a gift to our family.

Maggie Moran

# 2015 SUPPORTERS



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NEEC Brown Room & Families  
NEEC Gold Room & Families  
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NEEC Orange Room & Families  
NEEC Pink Room & Families  
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Shoal Creek Dental Care  
Shoal Creek Golf Club  
Silver Dollar City  
Six Flags  
Skin Tech Day Spa  
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Sorella's Deli  
Southwest Airlines  
Sprouts Farmers Market  
Stacey Arp  
Steel Magnolias Salon  
Steve & Kim Thorne  
Stone Canyon Pizza  
Studio 29 Salon & Spa  
Swagat Fine Indian Cuisine  
Target  
Texas Roadhouse  
The Bell  
The BrickKicker Home  
The Cheesecake Factory  
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Weston Brewing Co.  
Whiteside Jewelry  
Wicklund CarStar  
William Jewell  
Wines by Jennifer  
Yard House  
Zoë's Kitchen  
Zona Rosa

As a 501(c)3 not for profit organization, NEEC must rely on the generosity of community members, foundations and corporations for nearly 20 percent of its annual budget. Forty percent of NEEC's operating income is derived from parent paid tuition and the other 40 percent comes from fees for services through contracts it has with the Missouri First Steps program, Clay County Developmental Disabilities Resource Board, Platte County Board of Services and other local and state governmental entities. Each year NEEC strives to diversify its funding pool and form relationships with new community members and donors. Our goal is not necessarily to receive funding from every new person we meet; we simply want to convey the message of how important quality, fully-inclusive early education and intervention services are for all young children.

The Board of Directors, children, families and staff of NEEC would like to thank the following corporations, foundations and individuals, as well as the businesses and individuals who provided items or services for, and attended our annual Pioneer Run and 14th annual Diamond K Ranch Party and Auction. We are grateful for their benevolent support in 2015. Thanks to the charitable spirit of our donors, NEEC is able to further our vision of shaping the future of children through quality early education and therapeutic intervention while teaching compassion for diversity.

# 2016 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 1	NEEC Closed - New Year's Day Observation
February 15	NEEC Closed - President's Day Observation (teacher in-service)
April 10-16	Week of the Young Child™
April 16	Free NEEC Community Carnival
May	Family/Teacher Conferences
May 30	NEEC Closed - Memorial Day Observation
June 11	Pioneer Run at English Landing Park
July 4	NEEC Closed - Independence Day Observation
July	Graduation
August	Enrollment
September	Community Helper's Month
September 5	NEEC Closed - Labor Day Observation
September 10	14th Annual Diamond K Ranch Party and Auction
October 10	NEEC Closed - Columbus Day Observation (teacher in-service)
November	Family/Teacher Conferences
November 24	NEEC Closed - Thanksgiving Day Observation
November 25	NEEC Closed - Day after Thanksgiving
December 26	NEEC Closed - Christmas Day Observation



# 2016 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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