



# *St. Michael's Association for Special Education 2nd Quarterly Newsletter*

## **A Letter from our Executive Director**

Happy New Year everyone!

2018 is here and we are excited to begin a brand new year at SMASE. The children and clients are ready for more fun and excitement.

December at SMASE was busy as it is a month of celebration and giving! The students made crafts and ornaments to decorate a Christmas tree in the cafeteria. The children worked very hard at making and wrapping gifts, the holiday centerpieces, and practicing their songs and singing.

We were thrilled to have a group of ladies from Granny.com donate winter scarves, hats and gloves. Southwest Indian Foundation also provided every student and client with a Christmas stocking filled with goodies. Some of our students that are sponsored by Children's Incorporated received some funds for shoes and blankets. Everyone was warm and cozy during the Holiday Season. Thank you so much to all contributors for that special experience!

Our students sang during our Christmas Program, which was a special time. We were impressed and excited with the children's wonderful singing. A warm thank you to all the staff for helping in the experience of giving this holiday season! It was such a special treat to have parents, relatives and siblings join us in our holiday program. Thank you for joining us and for all the food brought to share during the reception. We had a wonderful time, and we hope you did too! I would like to wish everyone a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

Best wishes,  
Michelle Spencer  
Executive Director

## **A Letter from our Education Director**

Greetings,

Our second semester is underway as of January 8, 2018. We had an amazing first semester! All three classrooms and DTA participated in a multitude of activities including Special Olympics, community outreach, including academic curriculum. Winter brought the holiday season, our students and clients had an amazing time singing and dancing at our holiday program. I would like to welcome two new students to our program as we also continue to seek new referrals to SMASE. Both students will be entering into the RISE classroom! With our best efforts, our Education Staff remain committed to carrying out each designated program for the students. We are looking forward to a great Spring semester.

With gratitude,  
James Conner  
Education Director

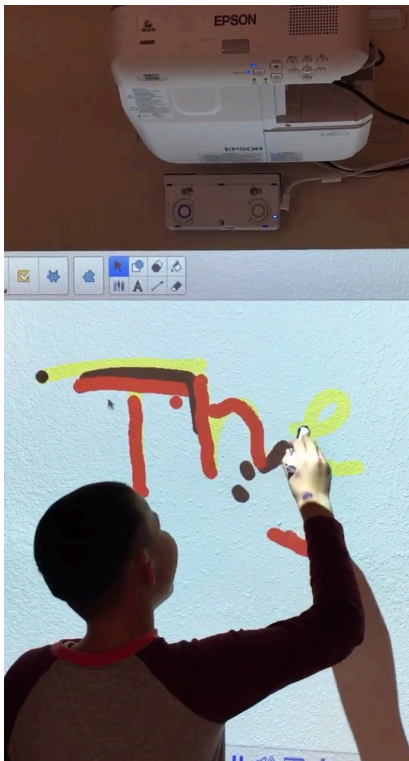
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## New Classroom Technology

In November, both RISE and Learning Support classrooms had new technology installed in their classrooms! SmartBoard Projectors are being integrated into both class's curriculum. These smart projectors work with the computer and act as a white board where digital information can be integrated into everyday instruction. From the photo below, students can draw and write as if it were a white board! Teachers can also display digital information and use the smart projectors to make the information interactive for students. This new technology has been useful in getting students motivated and active in the learning process.



## Adaptive Ski Trip to Telluride



On January 15, six clients and six chaperones made the four-hour drive to Telluride, CO. to participate in an adaptive ski program. During their three days in Telluride, the students and adult clients who went on this trip learned how to ski, sight see in the beautiful town of Telluride. They made new friends with the local 5th and 6th graders who helped out with the adaptive ski program.

During down time, clients and chaperones worked on life skills such as cooking, cleaning, laundry and social skills at the beautiful three-story mountain lodge. A local church group generously paid for this trip. Thanks to that church group, who treated the participants of this trip to a dinner out and allowed each person to choose two gifts of their own from a local souvenir store. At the conclusion of the second and last day of skiing, there was an awards ceremony where each client was given an award for their participation, including a hand written letter from the students who helped them learn to ski. It was an amazing trip!



# SMASE's First Annual Earth Day 5K

We are proud to announce SMASE is hosting a 5K Run/Walk Event will be held on Earth Day April 22, 2018 starting at 8 am. Registration will occur at the Baseball field at St Michael's Catholic Church. Runners can sign up via Internet, by mail or in person for \$10 entry fee. Forms are available at SMASE or online via Facebook. We are accepting "Virtual Runners" so if you cannot attend the event you can still sign up as a runner and be a part of it from where you are. (Entry Fee the day of the race will be \$15)

The first 50 to sign up will receive an event T-Shirt even if they are "Virtual Runners".

The first 50 to cross the finish line will also receive a SMASE 5K Medal.

First place in Men and Women will receive an Olympian Wreath and \$50 in prize money.

You can also participate by being a Sponsor of the Event as a Business or Individual. For a \$50 donation, your business name will be on the back of the shirt. For a \$100 donation the name will be in BOLD. You can choose a person to honor and their name will go on the shirt.

All of the proceeds from the event will go into the



SMASE General Donation Fund. It can then be used to support our extracurricular activities such as Special Olympics. We are asking for support and prayers to make this event a success. We will then make this an annual fund raising project to support our SMASE clients.

## DigDeep Water Project Update

We are coming into the home stretch of our water project with DigDeep. All of the funds have been raised to complete the project, as has all the testing and planning stages of the project. Now is when all the magic takes place- very soon the actual water filters will be installed all over campus! As stated in previous reports on the project, beginning last spring, comprehensive testing took place on every building in use by DigDeep's staff.

The testing results found various contaminants and high levels of minerals. The engineering team from DigDeep determined several

sources of contamination including the off-campus water source and our campus' old plumbing. Using this testing, the engineers were able to identify the pipes on campus that will need replacement, what type of water filters are needed and where they are to be placed.

We are currently working with DigDeep's American Project Director Emma Robbins, a native of Tuba City, to finalize this plan. Emma exhausted every effort to find a local Navajo plumbing contractor with the experience and knowledge to complete this complex job. A contractor from Phoenix, Quail

Plumbing, will be completing the project.

Work will be scheduled over a two-month period. Additional filming of the final stage of the project will occur. Additional photo consents will be sent to parents and families ahead of this time. We are finally coming to end of this incredible effort to provide clean, safe water to our campus. It will benefit the children and adults of SMASE for years. Look for our final report in the next newsletter, when the project is completed.



## Welcome to the New DTA Annex Building

The Day Treatment for Adults (DTA) program is proud to announce the official opening of a secondary annex building. After months of preparation and building inspections, we are finally utilizing this new space. We are enthusiastic about the extra space available for new activities, more personalized care and attention that we can now provide to each consumer. We will begin the day as a full program in our DTA Main Building, then a group of consumers will walk to the DTA Annex Building for the day group and independent

activities. This annex building allows consumers to be surrounded by peers with similar levels of functionality, challenging them to grow and develop in community.

This secondary location promises many benefits for the SMASE DTA program. The annex building provides consumers the opportunity to improve independent-living skills, social skills, and problem-solving skills in a space free of interruption or distraction. We improve independent-living skills by creating practice environments for tasks such as making beds,

folding clothes, counting money, and more. Practicing daily-living tasks will foster skills within our consumers to live as independently as they can, the primary objective of our adult day-treatment program. Consumers can interact socially with peers during the cooperative and competitive games that they play, as every group activity provides

an opportunity to practice social skills. Lastly, the quiet space is more conducive to higher-level thinking and allows consumers to effectively practice problem-solving strategies.

We are grateful for the extra space and excited for the benefits it holds in store for the future of our program!



## Navajo Culture Flourishes

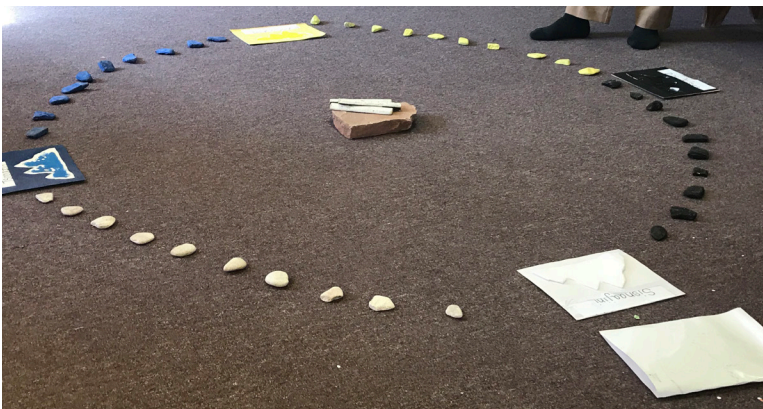
For over 20 years, SMASE has been working with the Department of Diné Education to implement an adaptive Diné Language and Cultures program to our students.

Currently, two of our paraeducators, Jovita Curtis and Juanita Cook teach this program. The curriculum consists of adaptive books and

hands on activities to ensure that our students learn about Navajo customs, culture and tradition way of life. Themes are often decided based on the season. During these winter months, we have been partaking in both the Shoe game and the Stick game.

A favorite among our students

is the Stick game. Not only is this game a way to pass time, but it is also a way to pass down knowledge of the four sacred mountains. We practice pronunciation with our verbal students and sign language with our non-verbal students as we play.



## GROUP HOME CONSTRUCTION UPDATE: COMPLETION



Happy New Year, and welcome to 2018. We are at the end of January, “Yasniltées.” The Navajo name for the month of January means “melting or cooking the snow.” The names of the months were determined by the New Moon and months were named according to the cosmology of the universe and all forms of life on earth.

Since the October newsletter, we’ve witnessed the progression of group homes, Ayoo anii nishni, Bitsiidi Hoghan, and Diné Bi’ Hoghan. On January 25, 2018, the homes were completed. We still have work to do in the next few weeks.

Planning commences for the blessing of the homes in the Diné traditional Blessing Way. Blessing of the hoghan is performed to enhance joy, love, good health, and protection from Mother Earth, Father Sky, bounded by the four Sacred Mountains. It will help and remind those who enter that the home is blessed and is recognized by our Great Creator and Holy Beings.

The Residential department will be working diligently with Department of Economic Security/Division of Developmental Disabilities to certify the new homes so they may house 9 members who will move from other homes.

We are looking forward to working with DigDeep again to install water filtration for all the group homes. Once all the homes have point access water filtration systems, we will no longer need to purchase bottled water. We are continuously thankful for the positive and wonderful things we’ve been blessed with in this year. We extend thanks and appreciation to the individuals that made it all possible.

## Physical Education Activities in the Solar Building

Over in the Solar building, students participate in Physical Education. Once a week, we venture over to the cafeteria to engage in exercise. We start each class by doing basic stretching to help get us loose. Then students pick out of a bucket the games they want to play. These games include relay races, bean bag toss, and parachute. Physical education is extremely important for our student population. It allows them time to increase their gross-motor skills, improves self-esteem, social skills, encourage an active lifestyle, and maintains motivation in various areas of life.

In addition, it provides an opportunity to build collaborative and social skills, while teaching our students how to focus on specific goals and overcome obstacles. Students also participate in a wide variety of enrichment activities that include cooking and grocery shopping, Navajo Culture, and Service Learning in the local community that require the gross-motor and social skills that we practice during Physical Education.

## New Wheels: Transports New Vehicles



The SMASE Transportation department received two 2018 International school buses and two 2017 Chevy Collins buses on June 1st, 2017. These buses are also gasoline powered making it more efficient and practical. The buses are used daily for the Sanders, Ganado and Local runs. We are extremely fortunate, happy and appreciative for the Navajo Nation supplemental grant, the SMASE staff and other people jointly involved for the new buses.