

Learning by Doing

The overall goal of the vocational classroom is to build as much independence as possible for when a student transitions from Spaulding Academy & Family Services.

In the classroom, we focus on the functional academics outlined in each student's current IEP. Over time, we work on responding to various scenarios, composing emails, and practicing different budgeting situations. We also focus on vocational, employment, social, and life skills.

Within the vocational and volunteer components of the class, students work at a variety of jobs both on and off campus. They also have the opportunity to make purchases at a local store using school money. The goal of this part of the program is to identify students' interests or hobbies and then match them with an on or off-campus opportunity. This foundation will ideally lead to employment later in their lives.

Real learning doesn't happen solely in a classroom; it happens out in the world, where experience brings understanding to life. You can read endlessly about the power of the ocean, but it's not until you stand at the shoreline, feeling the tide pull at your feet, that its force becomes real.

Some of the vocational and volunteer opportunities include:

On Campus: Working with various departments - making deliveries with Food Services, light housekeeping, cooking, dishwashing, learning facility with Maintenance, shredding, data entry, creating greeting cards, daycare.

Off Campus: food pantry, animal shelter, Salvation Army, Veterans Home, police station, daycare.

Chris Cantwell
Special Education Teacher

Learning



Middle East

This month in the art room we have started our art history unit. We have been learning about the Middle East. We looked at maps, artwork, and listened to music from the Middle East. We created artwork inspired by what we learned about. This lion is a paper mosaic. Each student was given a square and asked to color it. It was almost impossible to tell which part of the lion they were coloring. Once I put all their squares together it created this beautiful lion inspired by a mosaic made in Iraq in 604 BC.

Robyn Allen
Art & Music Teacher

Student Art



School-wide project: all our artists participated in creating this piece.

Healthy Holiday Eating Tips

Nutrition

Parties, family gatherings and tasty holiday treats make it hard to stick to a balanced diet. The tips below can help you enjoy the season without sacrificing your health goals.

TIP #1: Pot luck—Make a holiday themed fruit or vegetable platter. Include a variety of fruits or vegetables.

TIP #2: Visiting family—offer to cook a nutritious meal while visiting. Try a new recipe using local ingredients. This can start a new family tradition.

TIP #3: Hosting guests—Eating breakfast can give you and your guests energy for the day. Avoid skipping meals so you are not over hungry when parties roll around.

TIP #4: Survey your options—walk around the food table and identify the healthier options. Build your plate with the healthier choices. Moderation is the key. Enjoy a small portion of the less healthy foods.

TIP #5: Slow down—Take your time during meals. Chew slowly and pause between bites. This gives your body time to tell when you have had enough. It takes your brain about 20 minutes from the time you begin eating to tell your brain that you are full.

TIP #6: Don't forget about your portions—Holidays can be a time when we unintentionally overindulge. Focus on your vegetables and protein. Use a smaller plate whenever available to help avoid overeating.

TIP #7: Avoid grazing—Snacking throughout the evening will often lead to excess calories and regain of weight you have worked to lose. If going to a buffet, set limits for yourself.

TIP #8: Pay attention to your beverages choices—Beverages can quickly add extra calories. Choose calorie-free beverages or consume higher calorie beverages in moderation.

Happy Holidays!

Lesley Robie, RDN, CNSC
Registered Dietitian



Thanksgiving Luncheon

Happenings

This year's Annual Thanksgiving Luncheon was nothing short of extraordinary! In addition to a wonderful meal, the luncheon welcomed students past and present, staff across all departments, members of the police and fire departments, quilters guild, Board, and family members, donors, and community partners. With more than 250 guests served, the day was filled with warm conversations, shared memories, and a delicious feast made possible by tremendous teamwork and the generous donation of Paul & Joyce Bouchard. Behind the scenes, our dedicated Dining Team, worked tirelessly to bring this beloved tradition to life. Their effort, coordination, and creativity made the meal both seamless and spectacular. Laughter filled the room, stories were shared from table to table, and the spirit of Thanksgiving was felt throughout the entire campus. The day was a true reflection of who we are: a community that shows up for one another, celebrates together, and gives thanks for the people who make Spaulding such a special place.

Fun Facts from this year's feast. This year's numbers tell quite the story of abundance and community spirit:

- 15 turkeys carved and served
- 3 gallons of gravy
- 96 lbs of mashed potatoes
- 72 lbs of butternut squash
- 36 lbs of cranberry sauce
- 300 cups of stuffing
- 300 dinner rolls
- 84 lbs of apple crisp
- 12 lbs of whipped topping
- 12 gallons of cider
- 10 gallons of fruit punch
- 5 gallons of coffee
- 160 bottled waters



These incredible quantities ensured that every plate was full – and some were even filled twice!

Nicole Desharnais, MA
Board Liaison & Communication Specialist



During the Holidays

Have you ever planned for the perfect holiday meal or family photo, only to find out that someone attending is severely allergic to the main course or your teen refuses to smile for the holiday card photo? Holiday disappointment is very real and can hit us at very inconvenient times. It is important during this season (and always) to offer yourself and your loved one's grace and compassion. While the holidays can be magical, they can also remind us of those no longer with us, gifts we can't afford or any way in which the holidays may be tough. With all the chaos and moving parts, it is important that caregivers take time out of their busy days to show themselves grace and compassion. A great way to make sure that the holidays remain enjoyable is to set reasonable expectations for yourself and the whole family. Flexibility is something that our staff and families thrive at! The clinical team here at Spaulding is also available to support setting realistic expectations for the holidays with your child, so that you can take one more to-do off your list this year!

Liz Lowrey, M.S. CMHC
Behavioral Health Clinician

Clinical

Things It Is Okay To Do During The Holidays



Create new traditions alone or with others



Want to have some time alone



Feel your feelings without judgment



Not be in a festive or jolly mood



Prefer a low key holiday season



Do what is best for you in the moment

MELAINIE_ROGERS_NUTRITION X @BALANCEDTX

Building Life Skills

At Spaulding, we're always looking for ways to help our students grow into their most independent, confident selves. One of the tools our behavior team is using to guide this work is the Dixon LIFE Assessment. This assessment helps us take a closer look at each student's daily living skills—things like communication, personal care, safety, social connections, and community participation. By identifying what each student already does well and where extra support might be needed, our behaviorists can design individualized programs that make learning meaningful and empowering. By using this tool, our team can better coordinate across residential, educational, and clinical settings — making sure everyone is working together toward the same goal: helping our students thrive in all areas of life.

Nicole Hilliker
Behavior Specialist



Behavioral

Holiday Stress

Holiday stress: a phrase we all know too well. While the holidays offer a chance for family to gather and celebrate, for many, it is also a time of financial and/or familial stress. With the holidays fast approaching, now is the best time to create a plan with your family on how to best support one another amongst the chaos. For some families, this may look like a shared family calendar that is posted in a common space in the home. For others, it looks like working with your child's permanency worker early in the month to sort out potential holiday plans. The important theme that runs through these ideas is the notion of communication. With hectic schedules, picking up overtime, holiday plays and parties, it can be easy to lose track of who is doing what and when. Here at Spaulding, creating schedules and predictability is a huge component of our children's treatment. For our families, we are a resource to be used to create a plan that works for the child and family and are always available to brainstorm if those plans need a readjustment.

Liz Lowrey, M.S. CMHC
Behavioral Health Clinician

Permanency



Solvere Visits Spaulding

We are pleased to announce another successful mobile dental clinic at Spaulding!

Spaulding Academy & Family Services is proud to partner with Solvere Health, a provider of onsite health solutions, and Northeast Delta Dental. The Solvere mobile medical unit is a fully equipped dental office providing comprehensive care. Oral health care services are performed by a dentist and dental hygienist team.

The van arrives on-campus twice yearly to provide care to our youth and community. Thank you to Solvere for providing diagnostic exams, x-rays, dental cleanings, oral health education and complimentary toothbrushes, toothpaste and prizes! In the words of Solvere, "a healthy smile impacts overall health!" Just look at those Spaulding smiles!

A special thank you as well to several Spaulding community members and services.

Thanks to Jen Benjamin, OT extraordinaire, who helped prepare and desensitize the youth with a social story, virtual reality video, and practice sitting in a dental chair prior to the visit date. Thanks to Daniel "Doc" Jenifer and Facilities for assistance with set up in the school parking lot. Thanks to Spaulding teachers for their flexibility with schedules, and thanks to the amazing support staff who accompanied the youth on the dental van. And lastly, thank you to Food Services for providing healthy snacks and lunch to the Solvere staff.

We very much look forward to the next visit in Spring 2026!

Katherine Rork, APRN
Wellness Educator and Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

Residential

