

Passion for Dance

At Spaulding, we believe every child deserves opportunities to discover their passions and shine beyond the classroom. This year, one of our students proudly completed her second season of dance classes, with the support of Spaulding staff who help make these meaningful community experiences possible.

Participating in dance has provided an opportunity to build confidence, develop new skills, and experience the joy of being part of a group activity. Over the past two years, she has grown tremendously in her independence, confidence, and self-expression. She is incredibly proud of the hard work and dedication that brought her to this special moment, and it was wonderful to see her celebrate this achievement alongside her family at her recital.

Experiences like these are an important part of helping our students thrive both on and off campus. We are honored to support opportunities that encourage personal growth, foster community connections, and create lasting memories. Congratulations on a wonderful recital!

Nicole Desharnais, MA
Board Liaison & Communications Specialist



Learning

Rock Garden

This month in the art room we have been working on painted rocks to add to our rock garden! Last year the students started a rock garden at the entrance of the art building and this year students will be creating new rocks to grow our garden!

Robyn Allen
Art & Music Teacher

Student Art



Let it Grow

Look closely if you drive up Shedd Road! You may see some of our students in the Spaulding Teaching Garden. The students have been busy planting over the past few weeks. So far, we have planted strawberries, beans, onions, peas, cucumbers, sweet potato, white potato, corn, summer squash, zucchini, tomatoes, eggplant, cabbage, brussels sprouts, broccoli, cauliflower, peppers, carrots, beets, lettuce, pumpkins, and asparagus. We also included a sensory garden where students are encouraged to touch and smell the plants.

The benefits of a school garden are far reaching when teaching children about nutrition. Our garden experience offers a hands-on connection to learning where food comes from. This may be the first experience a child has with food coming from its original source. We also know that the more exposure a child has to fruits and vegetables the more likely they are to consume them. For our population nutrition education starts from the ground up rather than a lecture! Lived experiences leave a lasting impact on the foods we choose to eat.

Stay tuned for updates from the garden over the summer!

Lesley Robie, RDN, CNSC
Registered Dietitian

Nutrition



Candyland Comes to Life

Students enjoyed an unforgettable evening at Spaulding Academy & Family Services' fourth annual Prom on June 5. This year's Candyland-themed celebration featured favorite pizzas, sweet treats, music from DJ Candy Cain, and even limousine rides, creating a magical experience for all.

Throughout the evening, students shared comments like, "This is the best night ever," "I LOVE THIS SONG," and "This is my time to shine." Their smiles and excitement made the night truly special.

Prom was made possible through the support of many staff members and departments. Special thanks go to Maintenance, Food Services, DJ Candy Cain, the beauty team, and staff for coordinating limo rides. A heartfelt thank you also goes to the Prom Committee, whose months of planning, decorating, and helping students select attire brought the event to life.

Now in its fourth year, Spaulding Prom continues to provide students with a memorable evening filled with fun, friendship, and opportunities to shine.

Nicole Desharnais, MA
Board Liaison & Communication Specialist



Happenings

Staying Cool as the Weather Heats Up



As temperatures rise, emotions can feel more intense as well. Heat, changes in routine, increased activity, and disrupted sleep can all contribute to stress, irritability, and emotional dysregulation in children and adolescents. Just as staying hydrated helps regulate the body, practicing coping skills can help regulate thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Encouraging your child to recognize early signs of stress and use healthy coping strategies can help them “cool down” before emotions escalate.

Deep Breathing

Deep breathing activates the body’s natural calming response. Encourage your child to inhale for four seconds, hold for four seconds, and exhale for four seconds. Regular practice makes this skill easier to use during stressful moments.

Mindful Grounding (5-4-3-2-1 Technique)

Grounding helps youth focus on the present moment. This technique can be helpful during moments of anxiety, anger, or overwhelm. Have your child identify:

- 5 things they can see • 2 things they can smell • 3 things they can hear
- 4 things they can feel • 1 thing they can taste

Take a Movement Break

Physical activity helps release stress and improve mood. A short walk, stretching, dancing, or spending time outdoors can help youth regulate emotions and refocus their energy.

Journaling or Creative Expression

Writing, drawing, coloring, or making music provides a healthy outlet for processing emotions and communicating feelings.

Positive Self-Talk

Help your child replace negative thoughts with encouraging statements such as, “I can handle this,” or “This feeling will pass.” Positive self-talk builds confidence and resilience over time.



Create a Personal “Cool Down” Plan

Work with your child to identify a few coping skills they find most helpful and keep the list somewhere accessible. Having a plan in place makes it easier to use healthy strategies when emotions run high.

Liz Lowrey, M.S. CMHC
Behavioral Health Clinician

Expanding Independence



Within the DIXON LIFE Assessment, the Liberating Domain focuses on higher-level life skills that support greater independence, self-advocacy, and participation within the community. These skills help students build confidence navigating real-world situations while developing increased responsibility and personal choice.

Areas within this domain may include managing personal information, community safety skills, money concepts, social problem-solving, leisure planning, self-advocacy, and completing more complex daily living tasks with increased independence. The Liberating Domain encourages students to apply learned skills across settings while building flexibility and confidence in unfamiliar situations.

As students grow within this area, they often begin showing increased independence, stronger decision-making skills, and greater participation in their home, school, and community environments. Our team supports this growth through individualized teaching, real-life practice opportunities, visual supports, and relationship-based strategies that help students continue building meaningful and functional independence.

Nicole Hilliker
Behavior Specialist



Change of Pace

Permanency

Summer often brings a change of pace for families. While your child is working hard on their treatment goals, it is important to remember that caregivers need support and restoration as well. As a case manager, I often encourage parents and caregivers to view self-care not as a luxury, but as an essential part of the caregiving journey. Many families experience a mix of emotions while their child is in residential treatment, including worry, guilt, hope, and exhaustion. Taking intentional breaks can help caregivers recharge, reduce stress, and maintain the emotional energy needed to support their child's progress.

- Reflect on your child's growth and your own strengths by keeping a gratitude or progress journal.
- Take a 10-minute walk outside each day.
- Schedule a weekly coffee or phone call with a supportive friend.
- Spend 15 minutes reading, gardening, crafting, or engaging in another enjoyable hobby.
- Practice mindfulness, deep breathing, or meditation.
- Create a "worry-free zone" where you intentionally set aside treatment-related concerns for a short period.
- Enjoy a family activity with siblings or loved ones that focuses on connection and fun.

A break does not have to mean a vacation or an entire day away. Small moments of self-care can have a meaningful impact. Summer can also be an opportunity to reconnect with other children in the home, strengthen relationships with your partner, or participate in activities that bring you joy. By prioritizing your own well-being, you are modeling healthy coping skills and building resilience for both yourself and your family. Remember: caring for yourself is not taking away from your child; it is helping you remain strong and present for their needs and successes.

Liz Lowrey, M.S. CMHC
Behavioral Health Clinician



Healing with Horses

Residential

At Spaulding Academy & Family Services, healing often happens in unexpected ways. Through the Healing with Horses program, students experience the unique bond between humans and horses while building confidence, developing new skills, and enjoying the therapeutic benefits of time spent with these gentle animals.

The program provides students with a calm and supportive environment where they participate in personalized riding lessons and learn about horse care and maintenance. Students work closely with instructors and horses, gaining hands-on experience that promotes responsibility, patience, and trust.

For many children, interacting with horses offers more than just a fun outing. Horses are highly responsive animals, helping students practice communication, emotional regulation, and self-awareness. The experience encourages mindfulness and provides opportunities to build self-confidence and healthy relationships in a setting outside of the traditional classroom or therapy office.

The program also supports Spaulding's commitment to providing meaningful experiences that help children learn, heal, and grow. Whether grooming a horse, mastering a new riding skill, or simply enjoying the peaceful atmosphere of the barn, students gain valuable lessons that extend far beyond the saddle.

Healing with Horses has become a favorite activity for many residential students. Through these experiences, Spaulding continues to create opportunities that foster resilience, independence, and joyful childhood memories for the children and youth it serves.

Nicole Desharnais, MA
Board Liaison & Communications Specialist

