

# Annual Report

2022 - 2023

Educate + Equip + Empower



**St. Lillian**  
ACADEMY

## OUR MISSION

To provide a measurably effective education for students who have communication and learning challenges.

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## OUR VISION

To ensure that our students maximize their futures and become productive, contributing members of our community.



St. Lillian Academy is more than a school. It is a community. A family. A place and people Charlotte loves and treasures. When she is dropped off at school each morning there is a sense of peace. She is safe, ecstatically happy, excitedly welcomed and surrounded by teachers, staff, and other students and parents who truly have her best interests at heart. Her teachers and staff go above board providing Charlotte with the absolute best of resources and the best of themselves.

— Donald and Theresa Hodges,  
Charlotte's Parents

## St. Lillian Academy: Where Students Learn, Grow and Thrive

Many schools talk about educating the whole child, but at St. Lillian Academy, we live it. Our unique, integrated approach to education ensures that all of our students have access to a transformative learning environment that begins the moment they step through our doors.

St. Lillian Academy was founded in 2011 through generous support from donors Gary and Martha Solomon, who were inspired by the work of Sister M. Lillian McCormack, the founder of St. Michael Special School in New Orleans. For over fourteen years, we have helped students learn and grow through our unique team approach that provides a holistic education for your child.

Our structured and well-planned curriculum, onsite, integrated developmental therapy services, and behavioral intervention and management create a safe, nurturing environment to help students grow to their fullest potential intellectually, emotionally, socially, and creatively so that they can pursue lives full of meaning and joy.

This past year, we had the opportunity to grow our St. Lillian family by combining with Greater Baton Rouge Hope Academy. Hope Academy shared our legacy of providing the highest quality educational environment to students with learning support needs and our vision for a future where unique learners have the resources and support they need to learn, grow and thrive.

This transition will allow us to expand our uniquely holistic model of providing education, therapeutic intervention and behavioral support in one place to even more students and help ignite and nurture the spark of creativity and love of learning in all our students.

At St. Lillian Academy, we believe every child can have success with the right resources and support. With your support, we can continue to lead the way in providing the exceptional education our children deserve for decades to come.

Sincerely,

*Veronica Crous*

Veronica Crow  
President, Board of Directors

*Elissa McKenzie*

Elissa McKenzie  
Head of School





# Leadership

## School Leadership

**Elissa Mckenzie**  
Head of School

**Kris Barios**  
Language Specialist

**Tiffany Williams**  
AP, Hope Campus

**Christine Whitlow**  
Principal

**Celeste Goodwin**  
School Counselor

**Cindy Richard**  
Elem Team Lead

**Claire Weaver**  
Behavior Specialist

**Sharon Moore**  
Director of SPED

**Alexis Brumfield**  
Foundations Team  
Lead

## Founders

**Sandy Colvin**

**Elissa McKenzie**

**Nicole Guest**

**Joy Pennington**

**Chanler Holden**

**Gary Solomon**

## Board of Directors

### Through July 2024

**Conway Solomon**  
CEO/Co-Founder  
*WRSTBND*

**Heather Folks-Givens**  
Human Resources Consultant  
*Guarantee Restoration  
Services Inc.*

**Joe O'Brien**  
LVP & Controller  
*Lamar Advertising Company*

**Thomas Krentel**  
Secretary/Treasurer  
*Krentel Management Services*

### Through July 2025

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Sr. Loan Officer  
*GMFS Mortgage*

**Elizabeth  
Marcell-Williams**  
Founder and Senior Advisor  
*Center for Resilience, New  
Orleans*

**Jan Chiles**  
Persons with Disabilities  
Advocate

**Wanda G. Hargroder, Ph.D.**  
*Louisiana State University*

### Through July 2026

**Brandon K. Black**  
Partner  
*Jones Walker LLP*

**Catherine Saurage**  
Community Activist  
*Community Coffee*

**Gary N. Solomon, Sr.**  
*Crescent Bank*

**Jennifer Hogan, MD**  
*Ochsner Medical  
Complex - The Grove*

**Joe Wieser**  
President  
*Guaranty Income Life  
Insurance Co*

**John Moran**  
Vice-President  
Chief Executive Officer  
*Moran Construction  
Consultants LLC*

**Joseph Saffiotti**  
Architect, AIA | LEED AP | NCARB  
| PRINCIPAL  
*Coleman Partners Architects LLC*

**Nicholas Camel**  
VP Commercial Banking  
*Hancock Whitney*

**Veronica Crow**  
President  
*Environmental Consultant  
Ultra Consulting, LLC*



Izzy has gone to St. Lillian for 10 years. St. Lillian is her second family. It has always been a place where she has felt safe, where she is able to learn at her own pace, and be accepted. St. Lillian has given me and her dad a peace of mind we would not have sending her anywhere else. We are very grateful for all St. Lillian has done for her.

— Danielle and Blaise Faget, Izzy's Parents

# St. Lillian Academy Broadmoor Campus 2022-2023 Academic Year

63

Students  
Broadmoor  
Campus



6:1

Average  
Student-to-Faculty  
Ratio



Number of parishes  
represented by our  
student body



60% of lead teachers and direct student support staff members hold advanced degrees and/or specialized certifications or training at Broadmoor Campus.

30%

of students  
receive ABA  
therapy at  
school.

33%

of students  
receive speech  
therapy at  
school.

19%

of students  
receive  
occupational  
therapy at  
school.

16%

of students  
receive physical  
therapy at  
school.

Our Broadmoor Campus had a **97% student retention rate** and a **95% staff retention rate** this year. We added 8 new students and 3 new staff members to our community as well.

## Exceptional Students Thrive at St. Lillian

**When Chanler Holden was first searching for a school for her son, Wiley, St. Lillian didn't exist. In fact, Chanler couldn't find a school that offered the right mix of support services and education for him. So along with several other dedicated parents and future school leaders like Elissa McKenzie, she set out to start one.**



"We just kept talking with each other and saying, there's got to be something in Baton Rouge," she says. "Surely, there's a school in Baton Rouge for our kids. But there just wasn't. So we decided to start one, and St. Lillian Academy was born."

The effort took several long years and involved traveling across the country in search of other schools that could serve as models for the type of education parents and founders wanted to see at St. Lillian.

"Gary Solomon was always there to support us," says Chanler. "He was inspired by St. Michael Special School in New Orleans and wanted to see that kind of unique educational environment in Baton Rouge, one where all students could grow to their fullest potential."

In 2011 the school opened its doors. Wiley was among the very first students.

**"We started him in the first class, and I've been thankful for St. Lillian ever since," says Chanler.**

The integrated support services, combined with an emphasis on spiritual education and a family-like community, have been instrumental in Wiley's growth and development, she says.

"It turned our life around," Chanler says. "Being part of the St. Lillian community, that's when all of the gears started to move for Wiley, and each year has been smoother and smoother."

**"Wiley has grown immeasurably at St. Lillian. He wouldn't be where he is without the school," says Chanler. "It's the school we dreamed of for him all those years ago."**

Wiley, now 21 years old, is hoping to graduate in 2025. Like many twenty-somethings, he loves watching videos on YouTube. He also loves swimming and being in the water, whether it's at the pool, the beach or the lake. He enjoys spending time with his grandfather, who collects books to give to him, and going to the movies with his brother. He loves babies and lights up around them. He hopes to one day work as a caregiver, taking care of infants who bring him so much joy.

## Careful Planning Led to a Successful Combining of Schools

For students with unique education support needs, change can be especially challenging. But at St. Lillian, our goal is to ensure that every student feels safe, secure and supported each and every day.

That's why our decision to combine with Hope Academy in 2023 needed to be handled with careful, considered planning that would ensure that all students' needs at both schools continued to be met.

"The boards realized that we had two schools serving the same population of students with unique education support needs with very similar missions and approaches," says Veronica Crow, long-time parent and chair of the board.

**“It was clear that by pooling the resources and expertise of the schools, we could create even more opportunities for all of the students the schools serve.”**

The decision to combine the schools wasn't taken lightly. "Our Transition Task Force, our school leadership team, and our faculty and staff have worked tirelessly throughout last academic year and over the summer to ensure that the schools were ready to operate and serve our students at the highest level when our doors opened in August," says Veronica.

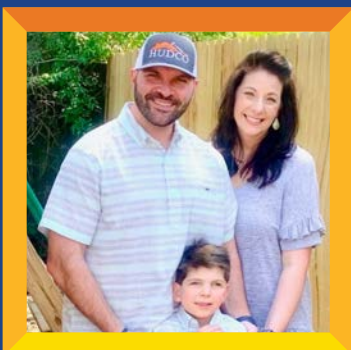
The result has been a smooth transition to a combined school operating on two campuses. "For students and parents, the process has largely been seamless," she says. "We have maintained all of our staff and faculty, with the exception of one teacher who retired. So from the students' perspective, they still have their support staff and teachers that they had before, and that's created a lot of continuity for them."

Remaining on both campuses this year has allowed the school to ease into the transition. "Our community has really embraced our new combined school," she says. "And they seem to be thriving."

Looking ahead, the school plans to relocate in the near future to a new school home, one that can accommodate the entire school population of 127 students. And one that has room for the school to provide even more educational and support programs and opportunities for its students.

"Our goal for the next phase is to grow our post-secondary education program to support our students in finding vocational opportunities that match their skills and interests," says Veronica.

**“With stronger resources and a larger community, we hope to become the hub for this type of exceptional education in Baton Rouge so that every student can grow into their full potential and lead lives of meaning and purpose.”**



**As parents, we have always said we will give Drew every opportunity to be the best version of him that he can be. We are so thankful that a resource like St. Lillian is here for families like ours. Having our son go to school and thrive is an answer to a prayer. Seeing his progress every day and the joy being part of the SLA community has brought him is a blessing we hope many future generations of families will experience like ours has.**

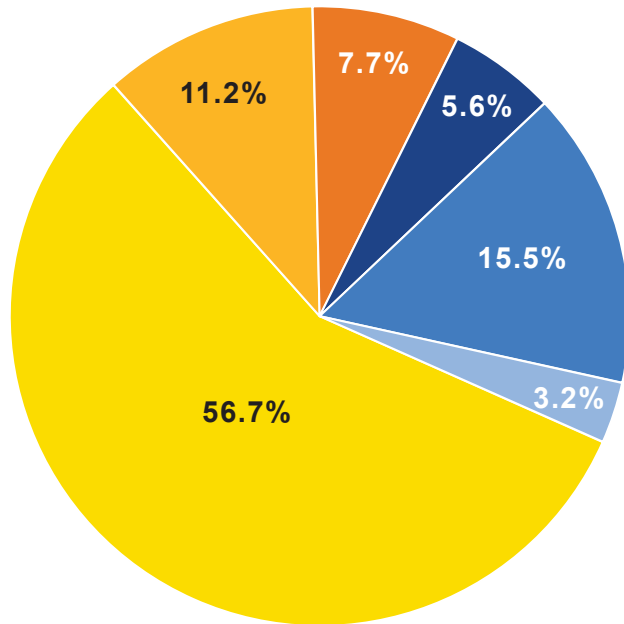
— Matt & Erika Moscona, Drew's Parents

# 2022-2023 Financial Overview

Your support helped St. Lillian Academy provide exceptional educational support and services to over 120 students last year. Below is a snapshot of the 2022-2023 fiscal year financials and what is needed to provide our students the quality education they deserve.

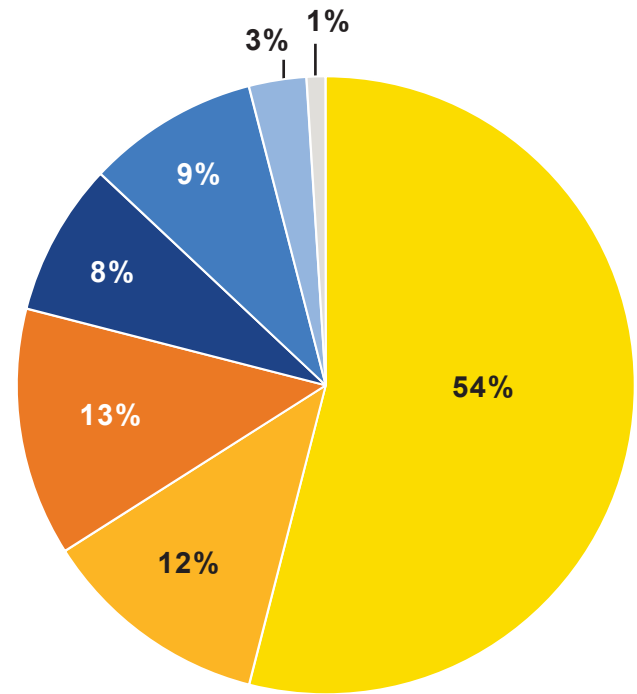
## ANNUAL EXPENSES

### WHERE YOUR DONATION GOES



- Teaching Staff
- Specialists Staff
- Administrative Staff
- Operation
- Facilities
- Curriculum, Classroom Supplies and Staff Development

### SLA FUNDING SOURCES



- Tuition & Fees
- 2022-2023 SLA Fund (impact)
- Grants
- 2023 Cheers
- Scholarship Program Revenue
- 3rd Party Events
- Scholarships (Donations)



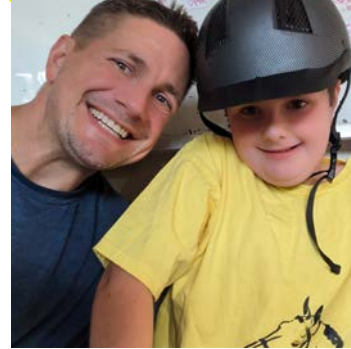
St. Lillian Academy is far more than just a school to us. It is gratitude for the people who work hard every day to educate our granddaughter Mollea by seeing her abilities and not her limitations. It is peace of mind knowing that she is being loved and cared for in an environment that provides both her educational and therapeutic needs in an approach that speaks to both in the most positive ways. And it is hope for a very bright future for Mollea, confident that with the foundation built by St. Lillian, she will reach her full potential to live her very best life.

— Jeff & Christina Hood, Mollea's Grandparents



## St. Lillian's Inclusive Community Meets Students Where They Are

Charlotte Bencaz's son Asher began school while they were living in the Orlando Metro area. Despite the fact that Orlando is one of the largest metro areas in the country, they struggled to find a school that would meet the unique needs of her son, who is autistic and nonverbal.



"We toured 20 to 25 schools in the Orlando metro area within a 60-mile radius and didn't find anything like St. Lillian, with its model of a highly personalized education environment blended with support and therapy services in the classroom," she says.

**"We felt so blessed when we moved to Baton Rouge and discovered St. Lillian."**

Asher, a gentle soul who finds so much joy in simple things, loves the water so much that last winter, when it turned too cold to swim in the family pool, he took six baths a day just so he could play in the water.

His teacher, Ms. Melissa, has been a godsend, says Charlotte. "I hear horror stories all the time about what parents have to fight for to advocate for their children, how they have to shout at the top of their lungs just to get the services and support and accommodations they need. But our experiences with teachers like Ms. Melissa at St. Lillian have been so different from that."

Whether it's supporting Asher through trial-and-error medication changes, giving him coping tools to manage frustration, or helping him with toilet training, St. Lillian has been there every step of the way, she says, creating an environment set up for his success.

Charlotte says that work has paid off in big ways and small ways for Asher and his family. Recently, as he began his 5th year at the school, she watched her son calmly walk out of the building to carpool all by himself. For parents of children without education support needs, that might seem like any other day. But for Charlotte, who has watched her son struggle with elopement for years, it represents St. Lillian's dedication to meeting students where they are—and providing the support and nurturing care they need to get where they need to go.

**"The really exceptional thing about St. Lillian is how inclusive the environment is. No matter what, Asher is included. Asher is treated with dignity and respect. Asher is valued as a member of the community," she says. "It means so much to us that he doesn't get left behind simply because he doesn't speak."**

"They treat him as the whole person he is," she says.

# THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT

## Founders' Circle (\$10,000+)

The Huey & Angelina Wilson Foundation	Bill Bauder & Kelly Bauder
Fore!Kids Foundation	John Miremont and Kristina Miremont
Sigma Nu Fraternity	Core Occupational Medicine
Moran Construction Consultants, LLC	Ruth's Chris Steak House
The William Edwin Montan Charitable Trust	The Wallace Landry Family Foundation
225 Gives	School for a New Millennium
Group Contractors	Asphalt Products Unlimited

## Honor's Circle (\$5000-\$9,999)

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Touchstone ABA
The Lozick Family Foundation

## Friend's Circle (\$2,500-\$4,999)

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## Blue Ribbon Circle (\$500-\$1,000)

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Joanna Spears	Krista Valluzzo	Tech-Test Inc. of Louisiana	Kevin Tarleton & Nicole Tarleton
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## Pelican Circle (\$1-\$500)

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Janelle Caire	Mr. Charles Giardina	Richard Mueller & Stephenie Mueller	St. Gabriel Catholic Church	Ruby Peak	Jenni Peters	David Parker
Susan Eaton	Larry Harlan	Destin Pizer	Trae & Robin Weaver	Stewart Guerin & Yuko Kimura	William Coffey & Cookie Coffey	Dot Baudry
Martha Mittendorf	Leonard Carmouche	Chase Rainey & Sarah Rainey	Anne Duke	Andi Perkins	J. Eric Lockridge	Athena Jackson
Mary Rome	Chris Schneider	Tommy Parsons	Mrs. Amy Fuselier & Mr. Michael Fuselier	Katherine deKay	Margo Weisgerber	Victoria Theriot
Ben & Steph Roth	Julia Bourque & Charles Bourque	Kate Whitehead	Ryan Dixon	Pro Legal Copies	Judy Moore Vendetto & J.R. Vendetto	Jenny Peytavin
Art Barrios & Kris Barrios	Dr. Arthur Tribou	Jeanne Henderson	Bob & Rubye Evans	Jewell & Jewell Attorney-At-Law	Amanda Graves & Sarah Graves	Julia Summers
Gerard Tarleton	Christine Whitlow	Jan Chiles	Leigh Devillier & Thomas Devillier	Loveverde Construction Co., Inc.	Delta Delta Delta - Delta Omega	Molly Shepherd
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Nancy Watkins & Joel Watkins	Quang Nguyen	Denise Slaughter	Dawn Beale	James Leemann & Deborah Leemann	Sharon Jones	Robert Huey
Melinda Bachand & Michael Bachand	Sandy Lynch	Dewey Coulon	Mary Boudreaux	Cassie Gailmor	Suellen Wohnig	Dorothy Ewen
Joye Johnson	Rudy Gomez	Gregory Price	Carrie Wadlington	Jason Bargas	Shelly Bordelon & Scott Bordelon	Alice Summers
Danielle Satawa	Bridger Eglin & Merrill Faye Eglin	Mark Hermann	Steve and Pat Waters	Teri Morse	Melinda Clements	Caelon Tanner
Julie Vanderbrook & Richard Vanderbrook	Dee/Renee Morris	Anthony Simon	Belinda DuBois	Cheryl McGinnis	Keith & Laura Summers	Misty Lyngaas
Adam Brice & Nicole Brice	Regina Landry	Dean Beeson	Kristina Posey & Earl Posey	Karl Thomas	Lana & Clifton Baker	Wynne Hamiter
Chanler Mittendorf & Major Mittendorf	Dawn Vick	John Roussel	Brad Smith & Heidi Smith	Dale Catalinotto	Bo Boehringer	Gretchen Varnell
Joseph Greco	Marci Blaize & Charles Blaize	Eric Thomas	Charlanne Cress	Dwight Landry & Alice Landry	Mary Miller	Therese Juneau
Susan Hayden	William Musser	Karen Holden & Derrick Holden	Beverly Rotolo	Ralph Beadle	William Benedetto & Carroll Benedetto	AI & Susan Higgins
Scott Deumite	Jack Holden & Patrick Holden	Randal & Barbara Roth	Jean Gill	Veronica Crow & Casey Crow	Judy P. Calhoun	Chris Spencer & Karen Spencer
People First Consulting	Jeff Williams & Heather Williams	Mark & Margaret Walton	Sarah Ferstel	Candace Gary	Joann Rome	Randy Pierce
Clark Integrated Medical Clinics	Danielle Faget & Blaise Faget	Shawn Nolan & Heidi Nolan	John Baker	Thomas Miremont	Donna Broussard	Steve Broyles & Claire Broyles
Melchiodo Marks King	Donna King	Pam Wall	Sandy Colvin	Christine McKegney	William Corbett	Richard Brackin & Renee Renegar
Theresa Hodges & Donald Hodges	Michael McDuff & Ann McDuff	Cherise Knapp & John Knapp	Tonya Keller & Barry Keller	Kim Jones	Richard Curry	Lydia Powell
Judy Myles	Julia Buckner & Michael Buckner	Claire White	Conway Solomon	Alison Gardner	Kelly Henderson	Melissa Cole
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Mr. White Graves	Cat Kimball	Christopher &	James Nipper	Chris Breaux	Cindy Seymour	Carly Vicknair
			Barbara Hornstein	Michele Patrick	Shannon Cummings	John Byars & Kathy Byars
				Suzanne Sexton		

# LOOKING AHEAD

## School Leaders Work With Leading Education Experts to Shepherd St. Lillian into the Future

The past year has seen a lot of transition for the St. Lillian community. When the opportunity to combine with Hope Academy emerged at the beginning of 2023, school leaders from both schools saw the potential that it presented both communities, but they wanted to ensure a successful transition for all students, families and staff.

“It was very important for us that the process was as intentional and thoughtful as possible,” says Elissa McKenzie, head of school.

Guiding them through this transition has been Attuned Education Partners. Elissa and Christine Whitlow, St. Lillian’s principal, had already been participating in the Attuned Incubator, a program to support school founders looking to grow their impact.

But in the wake of the decision to combine, their work pivoted to supporting merger planning designed to help the unified organization develop a vision for the future and a pathway to integration.

“Elissa and Christine are so growth-oriented at heart,” says Jessica Long, deputy chief of adult learning at Attuned. “They really threw themselves into thinking about how they could expand the impact of St. Lillian’s model to serve more students and families who need that type of unique education support.”

The result has been a highly intentional, evidence-based and systematic approach to the process of combining the schools that has retained the strengths, attributes, and instructional excellence of both schools while envisioning a new, combined school identity that could offer increased skills, more student experiences, more extracurricular activities, and more opportunities for post-secondary transition planning, support and programming beyond graduation.

“We’ve been very intentional in thinking about how we can use our additional resources to expand what we can offer our students,” says Elissa. “We don’t want to lose what makes our school unique—our nurturing family-like community, our integration of support services, our instructional excellence.



**We want to provide an even richer, more robust learning and support environment for our students.”**

“As part of our process, we survey parents on how satisfied they are with the school, and St. Lillian received exceptionally high scores,” says Jessica. “It speaks to the exceptional culture and community of care the school has created. And that strong culture will continue to infuse everything St. Lillian does as they move into this exciting next phase.”



**St. Lillian Academy was and is the best decision we have ever made for William. He tells us all the time how much he loves his school. The teacher and staff go above and beyond to create a school for William to be himself and continuously grow. We have learned so much by being a part of this family and look forward to what is next!**

— Will & Marcia Lampton, William’s Parents



Thank you for being a member of the St. Lillian community and for your unwavering support and investment in our children's futures.

We are grateful for your generosity.

If you would like to do even more to help us provide an exceptional education to all our students, please contact Mimi Guercio, Director of Development, at [mimi@stlillian.org](mailto:mimi@stlillian.org).



**St. Lillian**  
ACADEMY

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