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### greenchimneys.org

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Farm Apprentice Julian spends a work session with staff member Danielle Zalewski tending to chickens and (below) assisting with repairs to the coop.

## Advanced Farm Experience: Cultivating Responsibility and Independence

**T**he nature-based approach at Green Chimneys, in its simplest form, is structured to enable students to interact with nature as they learn about and become responsible for plants and animals, while discovering new personal skills. This is a concept known as Green Care. The teamwork practiced in the barns, paddocks and gardens facilitates interactions with peers outside of a classroom or dorm, and students learn to apply the lessons of this setting to help them build the skills needed for everyday life.

The Farm Apprenticeship is a growing program that offers a more immersive experience to older students who have a special interest in management and leadership practices. Students can apply to apprentice under a farm caretaker to gain further experience as part of their individual therapeutic goals. The apprenticeship is an advanced application of Green Chimneys' popular Learn & Earn program, where students

attend weekly sessions with staff and interns, earning a stipend while assisting with care of the farm and gardens.

What sets the apprentice program apart is the high level of independence achieved by the students. Typically, applicants have already participated in other on- or off-campus jobs, and go through an interview process. Students selected for these limited spaces are those



"I've had a Learn & Earn job my entire time at Green Chimneys but I like this because there's a lot more responsibility involved. I'm part of bigger tasks like maintenance and building things. I'm trusted more, with activities like using tools, and I have to make sure I get here on time."

- Julian, High School Senior

## From Executive Director

Dr. Edward Placke



When I think about our students, I am inspired by their ability to live with their challenges – the challenges that they come to Green Chimneys with, and the challenges that emerge for all youth, as they move through adolescence and toward adulthood. Part of our focus as educators, clinicians, and service providers is to help our students move away from being defined by these challenges and start to identify their strengths, amplify them as a means to build confidence, and begin to seek the tools and support they need to become more self-sufficient.

Advocacy, particularly for oneself, is one of the most important values we can help to instill in the youth we serve. Our treatment team model brings together all facets of a student's daily life on campus, and their progress over time, to determine growth and development, as well as new needs to address. The students, themselves,

become an important part of this process. We see an increasing number of our students actively participating in their own treatment planning, expressing personal goals and their own perspective on how they are progressing in their program. It's a positive sign of their motivation to achieve the objectives of their individualized plan, and the ability to be forward-thinking about their future.

In this issue, you'll learn how some of our students are taking the initiative to make their voices heard, both on their own behalf and their peers. You'll also get a look at our upcoming events, including Birds of Prey Day. Each event is a wonderful opportunity to experience, and celebrate, Green Chimneys and its legacy of support for children, nature, and the human-animal bond.

We are proud to share these highlights and hope that they inspire you, as they do us, every day. Thank you for your support.

## Rescued...and Released

In a snowy afternoon in January, Green Chimneys Wildlife Caretaker Dave Spillo patiently awaited the Wildlife Center's newest arrival, a Bald eagle that had gotten its ankle caught in an illegal coyote trap. Despite losing a fair amount of blood, the bird managed to make its way into the yard of a good Samaritan, who contacted Dyckman's Wildlife Control. After successfully rescuing the eagle from the trap, the group brought the bird to Green Chimneys and it was taken to Brewster Veterinary Hospital the next day.

Dr. John Wilson carefully examined the bird and treated the injured ankle, determining that nothing was broken. The eagle mainly needed time to rest and regain its strength. After a week of recovery, the Bald eagle was ready for safe transfer to the flight cage, to stretch his wings and practice flying. Through February, the eagle displayed normal behavior and flight capability but Dave observed a bent rear talon. While it is not



impossible for a bird to return to the wild with a bad talon, it can certainly make it more difficult. Upon a second examination, Dr. Wilson considered potential nerve damage from the trap but advised that the talon could heal on its own with time.

In early March, the eagle was released in a large cow pasture on the Green Chimneys campus. Staff and students looked on as the bird left its carrier and cheered as it majestically soared across the field and high into the trees. Returning a bird to its natural habitat is always our goal, and important for our students to see, as well.

The concept that one can build skills and strength, and move on to an independent life, is a meaningful one to share.

Honoring the strength and freedom of wildlife is one of the themes of our famous Birds of Prey Day event. A highlight of the day is always the release of a rehabilitated bird with the help of a Green Chimneys student. Join us on Sunday, June 4th to be part of an educational and inspiring day! Details at [greenchimneys.org/preyday](http://greenchimneys.org/preyday)

# Outside of Four Walls

**G**reen Chimneys' Brewster and Clearpool campuses may be separated by 13 miles but one component that connects them is a thriving Outdoor Education program led by a truly dynamic educator. Michelle Vasiloff has a passion for the outdoors and this passion is infectious to those who participate in her program.

Michelle's classes are full of discovery as she pushes students to be outside all 12 months of the year. A typical day will find Michelle and her students out in the woods tracking animal prints, birding, or playing games while hiding among the leaves. These activities combine classroom-based skills with exploration and observation for hands-on, experiential lessons that go well beyond four walls.

When asked why she loves what she does, Michelle simply says, "I'd just rather be outside. In the moments when I can watch our students being kids, building forest shelters, or playing camouflage in ghillie suits (suits made to resemble foliage, snow or sand), I can see the genuine impact of the outdoors and it really puts a smile on my face."

On days when weather is harsh, Michelle doesn't skip a beat and students dive into classroom activities focused on national



Outdoor Educator Michelle leads a class on a birding hike to identify species native to our area.

parks or how America's indigenous people survived off the land. Nature-based education at Green Chimneys means incorporating all of our campus assets – from the farm & wildlife center at Brewster to the 350 acres of woodlands at Clearpool.

This programming enhances the school curriculum, especially at the Clearpool campus. "Michelle fully utilizes the forest setting, working alongside the

teachers to amplify what's being taught in the classroom," says Clearpool House Administrator Amanda Gassner. "For many of our students, this is their first experience with the outdoors and learning about nature using a hands-on approach. With engaging educators like Michelle, the possibilities are endless!"

# Keeping the Connection

**R**elationship development is an organic process and a finely tuned skill that is essential for success, but even more so, for happiness. Over the years, Community Based Services (CBS) staff have experienced just how impactful that can be for the youth we serve. It is one of the most celebrated office discussions when we receive a visit, phone call or message from a youth or family months – or years – after services have ended because they want to share their updates and accomplishments.

Gregory Anderson-Deas, formerly a resident at Green Chimneys School and then the Transitional Living Program (TLP), is a testament to the power of that connection. His last two years at Green Chimneys were both eventful and productive. Greg successfully navigated his way through the pandemic at the TLP by utilizing his supports and humor. In August 2020, Greg transitioned to Job Corps in Burlington, Vermont where he is currently building job skills and pursuing higher education. His annual phone calls to staff are always met with excitement, and support when needed. Greg knows that when he needs guidance or just some reassurance, he can call the CBS team.



Social services typically include after care comprised of periodic check-ins for up to six months after treatment but information and resources are often shared for up to 10 years. Facilitating an environment that empowers youth, teaches them to advocate for themselves, and helps them to develop autonomy leads to healthy, long-lasting and trusting connections and ultimately, a strong foundation for adulthood.

Learn more about Community-Based Services for positive youth development at [greenchimneys.org/CBS](http://greenchimneys.org/CBS)

## Advanced Farm Experience

*continued from cover*

who demonstrate skills in independent learning, have a strong work ethic, and are open to following guidance from staff. Apprentices are responsible for getting themselves to program on their own, managing their time, and developing and tracking goals.

There are currently six apprentices working hard across all areas of the farm. Apprenticeship offers them the opportunity to pursue individualized vocational goals in a welcoming and supportive environment that helps them to develop skills that will carry over into future jobs and endeavors. By working closely with the farm caretakers and staff, students also strengthen their communication and comfort in peer interactions. Each student brings their own unique skill set and ideas to the farm and garden, enriching their own experience and that of the farm staff. It's a particularly fulfilling opportunity for students who wish to explore a future in animal care and education, but the skills gained are applicable to any career interest or personal pursuit.



Apprentice Luke and staff member Danielle Zalewski administer deworming medication to goats.



This is my third year as an apprentice. When I first came to Green Chimneys, I was fascinated with the farm because I didn't know much about animals but I was quickly drawn in. I had a Learn & Earn but I wanted more

independence. The apprenticeship is much more serious; we do more medical care, which can be a lot to handle. I get work experience but it also makes me happy being surrounded by the animals."

**- Luke, High School Senior**

## A Special Volunteer Bond

**G**reen Chimneys is fortunate to have the commitment of numerous volunteers who give their time, and heart, to help meet the diverse needs of a campus serving children and animals. Longtime volunteer Al Marmor is one of these special individuals, generously giving his time since 1988. Working primarily at the Farm & Wildlife Center, Al has served as carpenter, horticulturist, snow remover and painter, tending to tasks large and small in every season, and in all kinds of weather.

Although his work contribution is evidence of his commitment to the Green Chimneys mission, it is Al's huge heart and sense of humor that have endeared him to generations of students and staff. He is a kind presence, always ready to

joke, and just loves to be part of the Green Chimneys community.

Al recently began partnering with farm maintenance staff member James Langworthy and in the time they have been working together, a special bond has formed. James, a young man in his 20s and Al, at 93 years old, have developed a beautiful intergenerational relationship that is beneficial to both and makes their time together more special and productive.

James calls Al his 'granduncle' and sees Al as a role model, mentor and friend. "Al reminds me of my own grandfather," says James. "The four hours we spend together each week is the highlight of my work week." Just by chatting and sharing stories as they work, the two have connected in ways we have not seen before with our volunteers and staff. James enjoys hearing Al's stories and experiences, and respects Al's suggestions for the projects they work on, learning more every day. In turn, Al



loves to share his wisdom, humor and life experiences. "My time with James makes me feel young!" Al says with a grin.

We are grateful for our team of volunteers, who spend time taking care of our hundreds of animals, tending to our farm and gardens, and tutoring and mentoring our students. Learn more about opportunities to get involved at [greenchimneys.org/volunteer](https://www.greenchimneys.org/volunteer)

# Fostering Leadership in Youth

**S**elf-advocacy is a person's ability to communicate and assert their needs. People who self-advocate are more likely to experience success at school, at work, and throughout their lives. This skill takes on more importance for students with social-emotional challenges, who often lack understanding of their own needs, struggle to communicate effectively, and may rely more heavily on adults to communicate on their behalf. As these students transition from high school to higher education, or to the world of work, the impetus for securing necessary accommodations and services falls away from the adults and directly to them.

"When we take care of everything for our youth, including removing obstacles in the way, we also take away their opportunity to learn how to do things for themselves," says Kristin Licardi, Green Chimneys Associate Executive Director, Behavioral Health Services. "Without the necessary skills to advocate for themselves, these youth are left even more vulnerable."

And this is why Green Chimneys student Alex is determined to be a voice in residential care for youth. Alex knows firsthand the variety of challenges that exist for youth who need mental health services or have been in residential treatment. When the opportunity arose to join a forum to share their experience and talk about how the needs of youth are not always served, Alex was ready to sign up.

This past August, the New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH) hosted the "Youth Advisory Board Experience,"

a two-day training event for youth ages 12-20 who have been recipients of mental health services. At first, 14-year-old Alex viewed it as an opportunity to get a break from their schedule and meet kids outside of Green Chimneys; but what they gained from participating in a confidential setting, where candor and openness was encouraged, was truly empowering.

"I was surprised how many people were there; it was only 20-30 kids and 4 adults," Alex recalls. "There were NO parents so whatever you said was confidential and only heard by the people in the room. The environment was very open for conversation and sharing," they explain.

Over the course of two days, the youth worked in groups to delve into issues with services they received – from crisis hotlines to mental health support in school to hospital stays. Staff-guided

training activities focused on where to direct concerns and ways to present them effectively; the groups then presented their concerns to state-level representatives.

"The opportunity to be taken seriously was validating," says Alex. "It also meant a lot to talk to people who were in a position to bring feedback to the attention of the right people, the ones responsible for the programs and services we discussed."

In December, Alex was invited to participate in the next level of this advocacy project, which is specific to youth with experience in residential treatment programs. "Learning to think 'What can I do about this? Who can I talk to who can do something?' and having resources so that I can use my voice, can make things better for so many kids." We are proud to know strong students like Alex who are trying to make a difference!

**Youth Advisory Board Experience**  
Apply Today!

**YLAN**  
Young Leaders and Advocates Network  
In partnership with NYS Office of Mental Health

**How do I join?**

- Be a young person 12-20
- Interested in lending your voice
- Have personal lived experience with mental health services
- Have ideas to share about challenges and barriers

**About the YAB Experience**  
Two days in person in Albany, NY

## Hit the Green for a Great Cause

**The Samuel B. Ross, Jr. Green Chimneys Golf Classic**  
Monday, August 7, 2023 • Sunningdale Country Club • Scarsdale, NY  
Tickets and sponsorships are available; visit [greenchimneys.org/golf](https://greenchimneys.org/golf)



# Student Stars

Students of all ages showcased hidden – and not so hidden – talents at the annual Student Talent Show. Organized by our team of recreation experts and art therapists, the show featured an impressive range of skills from musical, vocal and dance performances to live-action drawing, magic shows, card tricks and even skateboarding.

Fellow students, family members, and staff applauded, cheered and high-fived every performer that graced the stage, reinforcing the support and acceptance of the Green Chimneys community that allows students to discover their strengths, build confidence, and celebrate their accomplishments. Congratulations to all!



Some unexpected partners recently joined the wildlife team for animal-assisted education and activities, providing opportunities for students to learn new lessons and experience diverse species.

## Welcome to the Fold!



Found as a “porcupette” separated from its family, this rescued porcupine received medical treatment and care from a local rehabber. Once old enough to be on its own, it was clear that it was too friendly to survive in the wild and was brought to Green Chimneys. Students and staff love to watch him enjoy his favorite foods and lounge on the high platform in his enclosure. Visit our porcupine FAQ at [greenchimneys.org/seven-questions](https://greenchimneys.org/seven-questions)



This female opossum was rescued with her brother by a local biker who was able to fit the pair in his pocket! Under the care of a rehabber from such a young age, the opossums never developed strong instincts for the wild and are safer in a wildlife center. Opossums are often misunderstood because they look a bit spooky but they provide an important community service with their steady diet of ticks, helping to keep the population down.

Similar to the birds at our Wildlife Center, the porcupine and opossum will not be named so that we continue to honor their place in nature, even though they will not return to the wild.



## Make Way for Cats!

Students and staff across our campuses have adored the canine companions of our campus dog program for years. Now here comes Siggie, the first feline member of this important support team. Siggie is a 6-year-old Himalayan belonging to social worker Leslie Oberhofer. Keeping cozy in Leslie's office, Siggie is a calm and attentive presence for students in individual and group sessions, and is always welcoming to visitors who stop by for a quick pet. While a cat may seem an unusual animal for a busy school environment, Siggie is very human-centric and enjoys the interaction. And he's become so popular that students can use their ROCK Bucks behavior rewards to buy a "Session With Siggie" and indulge in a private cat-sultation.



# Resident Voices Making Change

In a residential setting, providing the means for youth to express their needs, solve problems, and help shape their community is an important part of maintaining a socially and emotionally supportive environment. Resident Councils are recognized for the important contributions that members make when given the opportunity to speak for themselves. They provide a forum for residents to voice concerns directly to staff; identify problems and solutions from residents' perspective; and open up discussion on topics of interest to the residential community.

Green Chimneys' Residential Life Council has become an effective mechanism for representing the needs and interests of the dorm community. It consists of 9 residents who meet monthly to share concerns or make suggestions for the residential program and campus; plan activities and special events; and even provide input during the staff hiring process.

The Council has three main committees: Hospitality, Special Events & Activities, and Grievance. Members are able to choose which committee they want to bring their



special talents to, so they can truly speak to the issues they care about most.

Hospitality members are responsible for welcoming new residents and staff, and helping them to become familiar with campus, services and residential routines. Members of Special Events & Activities collaborate with staff advisors and the Recreation department to plan on- and off-campus activities, arrange holiday/cultural celebrations, and various themed events, such as the SnowBall, a dance for students of all ages and the group's most successful event to date.

Grievance members take their job very seriously, reviewing issues raised by residents or staff, and sharing with staff advisors who then pass matters to the appropriate department. The group also reviews policies and procedures periodically to keep residents informed of updates.

Resident Council is one of the ways Green Chimneys students are encouraged to make good choices, express themselves, and ultimately, advocate for their needs. Our students are building their confidence and building a community that they all want to live in.

## Counting Down to Birds of Prey Day

Mark your calendar for Sunday, June 4!

Take part in Green Chimneys' famous annual tradition dedicated to children, the environment and magnificent birds of prey.

- Over 100 raptors
- Free-flying demos
- Top wildlife experts
- Live animal presentations
- Family fun

Come for the owls, hawks, and eagles - stay to explore the Farm & Wildlife Center. Shop crafts by local artisans and enjoy tasty bites from popular food trucks. Tickets now on sale! Learn more at [greenchimneys.org/preyday](http://greenchimneys.org/preyday)





# Setting Up Students for Success

**S**tudents at Green Chimneys benefit from a fully integrated approach that incorporates academic, behavioral and emotional support to help each child achieve new skills and confidence. Part of this support focuses on building foundational skills that help youth develop the ability to make good choices; express themselves in effective ways; and navigate varied situations, such as a social setting or job site.

Green Chimneys partners with agencies like CoveCare Center and Job Corps to help provide education and guidance that all youth need to prepare for independence and a life beyond school. Starting this spring, all middle and high school students will participate in substance abuse education and prevention programming with CoveCare Center, a mental health provider serving the Hudson Valley region.

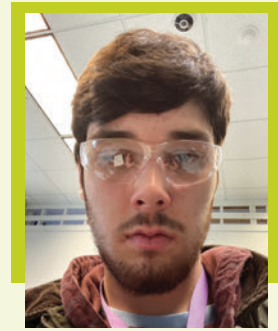
A curriculum focused on healthy decision-making incorporates psychoeducation to help students make positive choices around temptation, peer pressure, and risk-taking behaviors. Strategies for reducing stress and managing anger are core to activities designed to build interpersonal and self-management

skills, which are key to successful relationships and employment throughout life.

Green Chimneys School works closely with Jobs Corps to introduce students to a concentrated career training option, and assist with application. Work readiness education at Green Chimneys starts as early as middle school helping students to identify career interests; attain work-based learning experience; and develop key life and employment skills. Open to upper grade students, Job Corps is a program of the US Department of Labor that provides a residential college-style experience with workforce development and complete job training and certification in a wide range of fields, including technical services; trades; healthcare; hospitality; transportation; and finance.

As a structured and supportive program, Job Corps offers a solid next step for students who need time to build their independence and readiness for the workplace, higher education or other future pursuits.

# Alumni Update



Markus Goss graduated from Green Chimneys in June 2022 and arrived at Job Corps' Callicoon, NY campus that August. He was enthusiastic and energized from the outset, completing a Personal Career Development Plan and readily graduating the initial 60-day Career Preparation Period. "I knew right away that I wanted to do the Electrical Trade," says Markus. He also became active in campus life, taking on the role of Vice President of the Student Government Association and a stint as "Dorm Mayor," gaining leadership skills and the ability to advocate on behalf of students.

Job Corps also helped Markus continue to build some of the skills he developed at Green Chimneys. He notes increasing his self-awareness and composure in certain situations, and a resolve to press on, regardless of judgment and input from others.

Following the necessary electrical courses, Markus now has a resume that features the skills and certifications he has acquired and his future looks bright. He has also met all requirements to attend the STRAC Program at Exeter Job Corps Academy in Rhode Island, to learn to solder, repair and design hardware for circuit boards.

"I feel proud and comfortable in what I'm doing," says Markus. "Job Corps has taught me that we're learning something new every day and that a job takes dedication, determination, and the will to do what you do efficiently and effectively."

We look forward to Markus' continued success!



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for latest products and store hours

301 Doansburg Road • Brewster, NY

## Donor Corner: Celebrating Partners

**G**reen Chimneys is fortunate to have numerous individuals, companies and foundations providing our programs with financial and in-kind support, volunteer labor and assistance, and expertise, year after year. The Annual Gala is our opportunity to recognize such contributions, which have a very direct impact on the children and animals in our care. On May 18th, we will honor two notable partners: Jennifer Enger, DVM and AVANGRID in partnership with New York State Electric and Gas Company (NYSEG).



For 20 years, Dr. Jennifer Enger has provided veterinary care for our animals. Taking calls from concerned staff day and night, Dr. Enger's counsel has provided invaluable support for our farm and wildlife caretakers. She understands how we manage our farm within the context of our mission as therapists and educators, and encourages our interns, staff and students to be involved in the medical care of our animals during visits.

"Dr. Enger is one of the unsung heroes of our work," states Miyako Kinoshita, Farm Education and Program Manager. "She has laughed with us, cried with us, and worried with us while always keeping the focus on the health and well-being of the animals."

Through sponsorships, grants and volunteer service, AVANGRID, in partnership with NYSEG, has supported our work for more than a decade. This year, in addition to general operating support, the Avangrid Foundation provided Green Chimneys with a Wildlife Rehabilitation Grant to purchase materials and build an Emperor and Snow Goose



Shelter and a Songbird Rehabilitation Cage. This spring, volunteers from NYSEG then provided volunteer labor to build the goose shelter! "From funding to actually building the structure, we are so grateful to AVANGRID and NYSEG for their commitment to the welfare of our animals, and in turn, the children we serve," states Executive Director Edward Placke.

Join us for the celebration! To attend the Gala or provide sponsorship support please visit [greenchimneys.org/gala](https://greenchimneys.org/gala)



## Gathering Together

### Green Chimneys Gala

Thursday, May 18, 2023  
Tappan Hill Mansion - Tarrytown, NY

Each year this event raises critical funds for innovative education and animal-assisted therapy programs for children with special needs, as well as for the care of our animal partners.

Join the celebration as we recognize the accomplishments of our students animal partners, and all who are part of our success.

For event details and ticket purchase, visit [greenchimneys.org/gala](https://greenchimneys.org/gala)

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# Data-Driven: Measuring the Effects of Nature-Based Participation

**S**ince its inception in 2017, the partnership between Green Chimneys and University of Denver's Institute for Human-Animal Connection has produced a notable body of research aimed at understanding how Green Chimneys' nature-based programs affect student outcomes.

Studies to date have enabled the research team to better understand how students respond to the array of animal and gardening programs that are integrated into their education and therapeutic support, without disturbing the routine on the campus. Based on common themes identified in interviews with teachers, clinicians, farm staff, and the students themselves, these studies have revealed that these programs keep students engaged and help them self-regulate.

These common themes are being tested in two Green Chimneys School classrooms where video captures student behavior

and disposition both before and after attending programs outside of the classroom. The videos are translated into quantitative data that can be statistically analyzed to assess if students are more engaged and self-regulated after going to a farm program, compared to other types of programs or remaining in the classroom. Data has shown that many of the students are more regulated after attending a farm program, but that they also become more regulated even as they anticipate going to the farm.

How these near-term effects help drive longer-term developmental outcomes is being assessed through survey instruments that have been validated as measures of Positive Youth Development (PYD). The PYD model promotes the 5C's: Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring, which are key elements in the social-emotional development and individualized planning



for each and every student at Green Chimneys.

Overall, the research is showing that the farm programs contribute to Green Chimneys' success in supporting students' developmental goals. Latest findings will be shared at the Human-Animal Interaction Conference in April. To read studies published to date, go to [greenchimneys.org/recent-findings](https://www.greenchimneys.org/recent-findings)

## New School Leadership

In January, Green Chimneys welcomed new principal Paul Tobin to lead our school, overseeing both the Brewster and Clearpool campuses. Mr. Tobin's education career spans over 35 years in schools across the Hudson Valley region, with 25 years spent in leadership roles as assistant principal and principal of elementary through high school programs, both in traditional and special education settings. In addition to his educational acumen, Mr. Tobin draws upon his residential experience, understanding the synergy needed across programs to support our students who live on campus.

"I am excited to be at Green Chimneys, and part of a program that celebrates the human-animal bond," says Tobin. "I know from personal experience how animals can be so pivotal in the therapeutic process, and can help students be able to focus on their personal and academic goals."

Paul Tobin lives in Dutchess County along with his wife, Donna (a former teacher), his daughter Cami, their two dogs Brynna and Lola, and a horse named Chips.

"Paul brings a wealth of professional experience, as well as personal understanding of the natural bond between our students and animals,"

states Executive Director Ed Placke. "We are pleased to see his commitment to the success of our students, families and staff."



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# Keep In Touch.


As spring bursts into bloom across our campuses we are constantly reminded of the growth that happens for our students every day.

Thank you for supporting educational and therapeutic programs for our children, and the animals and gardens that help them.

Keep up with the latest Green Chimneys news and stories to inspire on all of our channels.

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 Green Chimneys News

