

Staying Active in School **RunningBrooke grants promote physical activity for kids.**

BY CAROLINE B. CURRAN

With Labor Day behind us, another summer comes to an end and another school year begins. Whether you're holding tight to that summer feeling or eager for the routine of school, one thing is for certain — we all want this to be our kids' best school year yet.

Here at RunningBrooke, our team is so excited to continue supporting our local teachers, administrators and parents in giving kids the best opportunities to thrive in school. We know that physical activity is essential for academic and social development. Over the last 10 years we've been working with local educators, community partners and neighborhood organizations to bring physical activity right where children spend most of their time — in school.

Through our 2019-2020 Move2Learn Partner Grants, RunningBrooke supports schools' efforts to implement movement in the classroom setting and beyond. This year, we awarded \$69,955 to 12 different pro-

grams across nine ACPS schools and the ACPS LINK club at Brent Place Apartments, and six community partners who work with ACPS students. We're excited to see the creative ways that teachers and administrators around Alexandria are sparking happier, healthier, learning-ready students.

Take the sensory hallways at John Adams Elementary School, for example. These hallways will cultivate kinesthetic learning for children of all ages — from displays featuring the alphabet and counting numbers to more complex topics like the compass rose and angles. Giving kids an opportunity for movement outside the traditional classroom, these hallways combine high-level thinking with fun age-appropriate fitness activities and emotional check-ins, so kids can refocus their brains at transition times, during lunch, or as a break from the classroom.

Brenda Tarquinio, the 5th grade teacher who submitted the grant, is excited that the hallway will "meet the needs of all of our learners to get them active and learning at the same time. It will benefit so many kids

for years to come. I personally thank you from the bottom of my heart!"

April Rodgers, a PE teacher at Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School and the 2019 ACPS Teacher of the Year, has partnered over the years with RunningBrooke to bring movement to her students through the Circus Club, Imagination Playground — life-sized building blocks that get students moving while learning — and the Of Pedals and Pages Cafe, a series of six stationary bikes that students can ride while they read and learn. Our 2019 grants will expand the Imagination Playground and establish the Trailblazers Before School Movement Program at Ferdinand T. Day Elementary School.

When asked about the impact of the grants on her students, Ms. Rodgers said, "It provides time in their academic day so that they can begin to internalize and advocate for themselves: 'Could I take a movement break? I'm just feeling sluggish...' or 'I notice that I feel better and more alert after we ride the bikes than I do when we first get here from Reading.' Though they

may just be seeds now, I truly believe that we are growing a generation of learners who understand the power of including movement into their days."

We know that physical activity primes kids to be more focused at school; we at RunningBrooke are so excited to support initiatives like these that engage kids in creative and active learning. RunningBrooke is proud to support game-changing programs that get kids active where it matters most and has the greatest impact.

In 2009, RunningBrooke was just an idea dreamed up while running. Now, we're a proud team committed to improving the lives of our area's children. In the past decade, RunningBrooke has raised over \$1.5 million to invest in our community and become a movement champion for our children throughout Alexandria. To celebrate these milestones, we're excited to host a community gathering that we're calling Mile Marker 10. Join Alexandria's movers and shakers on Oct. 19 for an unforgettable night under the stars. To get your tickets, visit runningbrooke.org.