

For Immediate Release

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Media Release

Students at Laing expand Go Baby Go project with community donations

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Charleston, SC – Since 2018, Laing Middle School has partnered with the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) through the [Go Baby Go Project](#). The program provides modified ride-on toy vehicles for young children with mobility disabilities so they can move around independently.

Dr. Mel Goodwin, the STEM coach at Laing, oversees the project at the school. Students assemble the toy vehicles to meet the needs of specific patients based on input from the Department of Rehabilitation Sciences and then donates them to the patients at MUSC to use while in the hospital and once at home once they have been discharged.

“Our STEM program enables our staff and students to see a situation that could be improved and help bridge the gap between current reality and future possibility,” said Principal Jay Whitehair.

“I learned about the project at a national conference and thought this would be a natural thing for Laing to participate,” said Goodwin. “Independent mobility is so important to the development of young children that we now regard it as a basic human right.”

The first recipient was born with no legs and just one arm. To use the ride on vehicle, he needed a joystick. The students designed a joystick to replace the standard foot pedal which worked perfectly for the young child.

Since then, more than 120 Laing students have participated in the project, completing several dozen cars.

“We want to extend our reach throughout South Carolina,” said Goodwin. “To do that we have to increase our budget and expand our operations.”

Two students set out on a lofty fundraising mission at the start of the school year. Megan Hall and Lia Lieberman, both residents of Hamlin Plantation, went door to door with their pitch about the project and have secured \$1,000.

"I think this is a great story of kids wanting to help others, and taking personal initiative to make it happen," said Goodwin.

"I am so proud that Megan and Lia have taken upon themselves to raise money," added Whitehair. "Most importantly, they are trying to bring a sense of happiness to kids that otherwise might not have that opportunity. Megan and Lia are prime examples of why so many of us have chosen a career in education. My hope is they will provide inspiration to everyone reading this article that we as a community can come together to support a common good."

Goodwin explained that \$5,000 will enable them to modify 24 cars in their effort to [end adaptive play barriers](#). He hopes that the annual spring fundraiser, financial resources from MUSC, and community donations will help the team reach that goal.

"The real payoff is when you get to see the children use the vehicles and their expressions," said Goodwin.

Hall, who is a seventh grader said she learned about the project after seeing an assembled car in the Fab Lab (STEM classroom) at school. She was intrigued and decided to join.

Hall and Lieberman spend their lunch period and recess in the lab with Goodwin modifying the cars as orders come in.

"My next door neighbor has special needs and I know how hard things can be for her and these kids, so I wanted to do something to give back," said Hall. "It is exciting to see how happy these children are to receive these cars."

Hall said it takes about a week to complete a car. Each child's mobility issue is different so the cars are custom modified to feature either a remote control, joy stick, push button or foot pedal.

Lieberman enjoys the engineering aspect of the STEM projects and was inspired by the idea of working on such a project and helping others.

"With STEM, the purpose is problem solving," said Lieberman. "This project helps solve problems in the real world. These toy cars can be life changing for a toddler. Participating in Go Baby Go is important to me because we're changing lives."

Goodwin agreed.

"Our students instantly get the point of the project," said Goodwin. "They think about another child not being able to get around and they understand the significant impact that has on their lives. The importance of the project is so obvious at that point."

"This is a humble little program that would not be possible without our fundraising efforts and donations," said Lieberman. "We felt so proud that we were able to raise some money thanks to the Hamlin community."

Goodwin described Go Baby Go as a learning opportunity that has a purpose.

"Certain activities might be considered tedious when it is just for school and the sake of a good grade," Goodwin explained. "When it is a chance to do something for someone else that is meaningful and has an impact on the lives of others, that's a game changer."

To donate visit the [GoFundme page](#). For more information on the Go Baby Go Project, email Melvin_goodwin.c@charleston.k12.sc.us.

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About the Charleston County School District

Charleston County School District (CCSD) is a nationally accredited school district committed to providing equitable and quality educational opportunities for all of its students. CCSD is the second-largest school system in South Carolina and represents a unique blend of urban, suburban, and rural schools spanning 1,300 square miles along the coast. CCSD serves approximately 49,000 students in 88 schools and specialized programs.

CCSD offers a diverse, expanding portfolio of options and specialized programs, delivered through neighborhood, magnet, IB (international baccalaureate), Montessori, and charter schools. Options include programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), music and other creative and performing arts, career and technical preparation programs, and military.