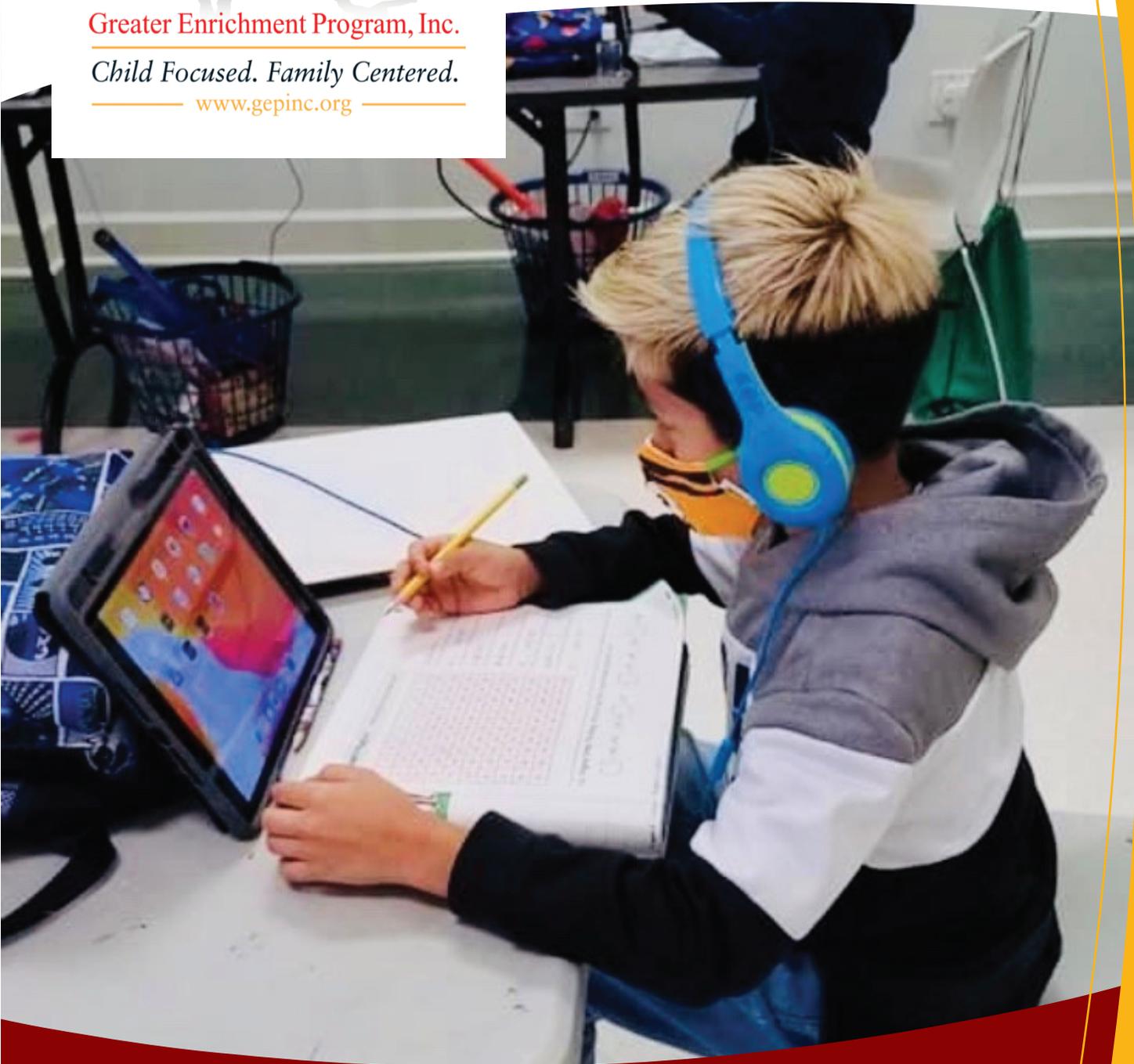




Greater Enrichment Program, Inc.

*Child Focused. Family Centered.*

[www.gepinc.org](http://www.gepinc.org)



# GREATER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

Pre-/Inter-COVID Newsletter

Summer 2020 - Winter 2021

## **PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST**

Founded in 1975, Greater Enrichment Program (GEP) is a licensed after-school program that operates at four sites in Charlotte. The organization is committed to providing a holistic program that serves both children and their families. Students are given academic, cultural and social instruction in a safe and loving environment. All services, including transportation, are of no cost to GEP participants. By providing support to the whole family, GEP helps children gain knowledge, confidence and character to achieve their personal best in school and in their community.

## **OUR MISSION**

To serve the most disadvantaged families in the most economically deprived neighborhoods in Charlotte by providing an out-of-school time educational program that is fun and enjoyable for eligible (at-risk) school-age (preK - 5th grade) students and their parents in which, regardless of their background and abilities, they truly realize their potential for academic achievement, cultural/social enrichment, positive self-esteem and productive citizenship.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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## **GEP ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF**

**Bronica Glover**, Executive Director  
**Katy Vasquez**, Office Manager & Registrar

**Angie Benjock**, Financial Manager  
**Nicole Richardson**, Curriculum Coordinator

## **COMMUNITY PARTNERS**

**Arts Plus**  
**Atrium Health Foundation**  
**Carolina Girls Rock**  
**Charity League Charlotte**  
**Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools**  
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**Children's Theater of Charlotte**  
**Clayworks**  
**Davis Tennis Foundation**  
**Daymaker**  
**Executive Women International**

**First Tee Greater Charlotte**  
**Foundry Commercial**  
**Freedom Communities**  
**Gethsemane A.M.E. Zion Church**  
**Girl Scouts Hornets' Nest Council**  
**Griffin Brothers**  
**Mecklenburg County Boy Scouts**  
**Movement School**  
**Myers Park Mustang Community Association**  
**N.C. A&T Queen City Alumni Chapter**

**Palisades Episcopal School**  
**Providence Day School Lacrosse Team**  
**Selwyn Avenue Presbyterian Church**  
**Southminster**  
**St. John's Episcopal Church**  
**Steele Creek A.M.E. Zion Church**  
**United States Tennis Association**  
**Warehouse 242**  
**Westside Education Think Tank**

## OUR REACH

According to the Afterschool Alliance, one in five kids across America is alone and unsupervised from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. These are the hours when many parents are still at work and juvenile crime and victimization peak. For nearly 46 years, GEP has provided afterschool enrichment to at-risk, inner-city communities in Charlotte. Children who live and attend schools in these areas reap a variety of productive, engaging educational and social programs and services that normally are not available to them. Prior to COVID, GEP served more than **400 students daily** at four sites - Ashley Park Academy, Hidden Valley Elementary, Merry Oaks International Academy and Movement Charter School. Approximately **86%** of these students come from homes that are classified as **Extremely Low Income (ELI)** and nearly half speak English as their second language.

## Academic Enrichment

GEP uses the “Learning is Fun” curriculum, which addresses individual needs and learning styles. The curriculum includes a self-guided reading program that focuses on both comprehension and fluency, and the GEP curriculum coordinator has designed fun, teacher-directed activities that address N.C. Common Core Standards in these areas. The lessons are engaging, fun and integrate character education and science, technology, engineering, art and math (STEAM).

### 2019-2020 Academic & Survey Highlights

- ▶ 87% average daily attendance September 2019 - March 13, 2020 (closed due to COVID)
- ▶ 62% of GEP Movement students were on the honor roll in second quarter
- ▶ 30% of GEP Hidden Valley students were on the honor roll in second quarter
- ▶ GEP Movement exceeded enrollment with 105 students and maintained a wait list
- ▶ End-of-the-year parent surveys indicated that:
  - 95% of GEP parents ranked the program as excellent or good
  - Cost and fun learning activities were the top factors in selecting GEP as their afterschool provider
- ▶ End-of-the-year teacher survey indicated that 100% of teachers felt that having GEP at their schools was beneficial to students, families, and school staff and administration
- ▶ End-of-the-year student survey showed:
  - 60% of students said their GEP teacher was the best part of afterschool
  - 80% of students said they liked or loved the GEP activities
  - 63% of students said that GEP helped them learn to read better
- ▶ 100% of GEP community partners surveyed rated their experience with GEP as excellent

### GEP Virtual Literacy Camp Highlights - Summer 2020

- ▶ 80% average daily attendance during the six week summer camp
- ▶ 35 tablets were distributed to eligible GEP students with Internet access
- ▶ 12 students exceeded the Summer Sizzler Reading Challenge goal by reading more than 500 minutes during the six weeks
- ▶ Participating students read for a total of 16,139 minutes during the Summer Sizzler Reading Challenge

## GEP Remote Learning Centers

GEP staff has been committed to ensuring students succeed during the pandemic. To meet this challenge, GEP has partnered with Galilee Ministries “Learning Vine,” Selwyn Avenue Presbyterian Church and Niner University to offer all-day remote learning centers (RLCs) for children. The centers are open Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Students attend the centers at no cost and receive transportation, three meals, consistent Internet and in-person learning support each day. GEP classroom associates provide academic support and ensure students understand, complete and upload/submit daily assignments.

“These RLCs are essential during this unprecedented, challenging time,” said Bronica Glover, GEP executive director. “Many students are struggling to complete assignments and need the social interaction that school provides. Our centers give students some semblance of normalcy.”

When the online school day ends, RLC students transition to the “**GEP Experience.**” They engage in fun, hands-on character education programs and enrichment activities that focus on literacy and math. Students also participate in programs offered through GEP’s community partnerships with organizations including Discovery Place, Artsplus, Girls Scouts and Clayworks. Fun fitness programming also is provided to allow students to safely interact with their friends. All RLCs adhere to strict COVID prevention protocols including social distancing, hand washing and wearing of masks.

“The GEP remote learning center has truly been a help to my family,” said Stephanie Jackson, a GEP parent. “I am an essential worker and I can’t leave my kids at home. The program helps me by giving my kids a safe place to go and helps my kids by providing school and homework support.”



## Parent Advisory Boards Hold Blanket Drive for Homeless

The Parent Advisory Boards for GEP Movement and Hidden Valley took on a very big project this fall/winter during the pandemic. The parents came together to organize a blanket drive for the homeless population that occupies Charlotte’s tent city. The board of parents collected blankets from other GEP parents, friends and family. They safely delivered the blankets on a Sunday afternoon to those most in need. More than 50 blankets were collected and donated.

## “GEP TO GO” Virtual Program

Since the pandemic and school closures, GEP has continued to support students in the best ways possible. Using the Zoom application, GEP transitioned its program delivery, including academic support and learning resources, to a virtual platform. “GEP to Go” provides a vivid and highly interactive curriculum in a safe, contactless, virtual space. Students receive synchronous, hands-on learning in a live session each day. The virtual program also offers a space to prioritize relationship building and gives students opportunities to interact with peers. GEP teachers are able to conduct hands-on activities in a fun way, and through these activities, students continue to build foundational skills needed during the school day.

Enrolled **GEP to Go** students log on to a webinar platform and are greeted by their live GEP afterschool teachers. Students first engage in socialization activities to give them a break from structured remote learning during the school day and to allow for peer interaction. Facilitation of the virtual program is based on weekly themes using STEM and literacy learning modules in addition to project-based learning for upper primary grades. Students also receive homework support, additional support with literacy and learning goals (targeted skill practice) to help support academic growth.

**GEP to Go** students also participate in community partnerships and virtual field trips that offer enrichment connecting back to weekly themes, social-emotional learning and character education. To eliminate challenges and encourage full engagement, GEP delivers all needed materials to students in a monthly activity kit along with a month’s supply of healthy snacks. The program is offered Monday through Friday from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m.

## Gethsemane A.M.E. Zion Church Helps Prevent Hunger

GEP is extremely grateful to Gethsemane A.M.E. Zion Church, led by Rev. David A. Williams, for providing snacks to students who attend GEP remote learning centers. The school cafeteria provides breakfast and lunch to students daily. However, the church provided bags full of snacks and canned goods for students to take home during the winter break. GEP received nearly 200 bags to distribute to students. In addition to the snack bags, the church also invited GEP families to its drive-up food pantry and donated Food Lion gift cards to each GEP family.

“When students are not in school, we are very concerned that they don’t have food,” said GEP site director Tangella Stephens. “This kind of gesture means a lot during this challenging time.”

Steele Creek A.M.E. Zion and the North Carolina A&T Queen City Alumni Chapter also provided turkey dinners to GEP families during the Thanksgiving holiday.



## GEP Opens Doors to Niner University Elementary Students

In January 2021, GEP opened its doors to students at Niner University Elementary (NUE) at Amay James. The students currently are attending the new, full-day remote learning center Monday through Friday on the school's campus. They receive academic and emotional support needed to be successful students. NUE is an experimental school that is funded and operated by the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and the school's mission aligns with GEP's, to support students and families in underserved communities. GEP is excited about continuing the relationship with NUE and is looking forward to launching the GEP Niner afterschool program in fall 2021.

## Daymaker Holiday Surprises

Daymaker, an online giving platform that helps employees share resources with specific kids in need, has been supporting GEP students since 2017 through its Holiday Giving Program. The organization works with more than 40 companies in the U.S., enabling corporate employees to be consistent supporters of children served in several non-profits across the country. Through these partnerships, hundreds of GEP students receive holiday gift bundles and birthday gifts in addition to monthly discovery bundles that provide students with special activities in literacy, fitness and STEM.

Each gift bundle is specific to the student. GEP staff creates an online description about each child to allow donors to get to know students. During the holiday season, every GEP student received a large gift bundle with three to four items, including a book, educational game and craft.

"The students are so happy and the parents are very grateful," said Glover. "Our students do not have access to the items that come in the gift bundles. The books are awesome, the educational toys are fun and the activities are engaging."

## Oh My! Bash - 2021 COVID Edition

Austin Helms, a GEP board member and chair of the GEP Young Affiliates, was unable to host his annual New Year's Eve fundraiser, **Oh My! Bash**, to benefit the program. Due to COVID restrictions, the in-person event was canceled. In lieu of the bash, Helms has pivoted the event to a new campaign that introduces local small businesses to GEP and its needs. The campaign asks small businesses to give at least a \$500 donation to help support GEP. Companies can also connect with GEP by virtually volunteering and providing other project support. Donations can be made by going to the GEP web site, [www.gepinc.org](http://www.gepinc.org), and clicking the donations tab.



## Boxes of Love

GEP would like to give a special thank you to Laurie Martin and Simplicity Organizers for organizing GEP's Boxes of Love project this past summer. The GEP staff packed and delivered more than 300 donated items to students. Each student received a box of love, including art supplies, academic games and books. The boxes were aimed at preventing summer learning loss, especially with school closures due to COVID.

## Math Pie Night a Hit for GEP Families

With family engagement being more important than ever as parents struggle to stay connected during the pandemic, GEP hosted a night of math fun and pie baking for its families. During the virtual Math Pie Night, students and their parents worked together to create an apple pie to showcase during a Zoom session. The fun workshop was led by GEP site directors. Students learned measuring and math concepts all while licking bowls and stirring up yummy goodness. GEP has continued to host virtual family engagement nights each month, including a Gingerbread House Engineers workshop this past December. The virtual events have been very successful with great participation from families. The staff also is planning to host family vision board and family fitness nights in the near future.



## National Lights On for Afterschool Poster Contest

On October 1, 2020, GEP celebrated the national Lights On for Afterschool Day by conducting a poster contest. Students were asked to illustrate through a poster why they love GEP. The staff awarded first prize to Ethan Acosta, a fourth grade student at GEP Movement, for his creative poster. His poster was displayed on a t-shirt and he received a gift card. All of the illustrations submitted were amazing and all of the students did a great job.

## GEP Selects 2020 Students of the Year

GEP would like to congratulate the following students for being selected as 2020 GEP Students of the Year.

### Ashley Park Academy

Chanel Crawford - 1st grade  
Dominique Davis - 5th grade

### Merry Oaks International Academy

Crystal Bernal Lopez - 2nd grade  
Brian James - 3rd grade

### Hidden Valley Elementary

Destiny Cook - 5th grade  
Kevin Blake - 2nd grade

### Montclair Elementary

Jaime Garcia - 1st grade  
Gyselle Baires - 4th grade

Hey Hey  
Look at me!  
I'm the  
**STUDENT**  
of the  
**YEAR**  
at  
**GEP!**

## GEP Scholar Attends Yale University

GEP is so proud of Gena Coque Alarcon and all of her academic achievements. Gina was the 2020 valedictorian at Rocky River High School and received a full scholarship to attend Yale University. She is currently majoring in political science at Yale. Gina attended GEP at Merry Oaks International Academy, where she was a super scholar and participated in the very first Miss GEP Pageant. She continues to volunteer with GEP and serves as a role model to GEP students. Congratulations, Gina!



## GREATER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM SITES

Ashley Park Academy

Hidden Valley Elementary

Merry Oaks International Academy

Montclair Elementary

Movement Charter School

Niner University Elementary at Amay James

## WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT! DONATE, VOLUNTEER, PARTNER

1. **Financially Contribute.** Make a general tax-deductible or in-kind contribution to Greater Enrichment Program.
2. **Volunteer your time!** Mentor a child in GEP's afterschool program. Sign up to be a homework or reading buddy.
3. **Host an event.** Invite us to a gathering. We can provide ideas and support, including guest speakers and informational materials about Greater Enrichment Program.
4. **Partner with us.** Through partnerships with other nonprofits and businesses, we are able to offer more meaningful, educational, cultural and social activities and programs for our students.

## ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

Executive Director  
Bronica Glover

Office Manager  
Katy Vasquez

Financial Manager  
Angie Benjock

Curriculum Coordinator  
Nicole Richardson

Link your Harris Teeter VIC Card to #7715 on the company website or in one of the stores to support GEP.

## GET CONNECTED:

Check us out on Facebook, Instagram & Twitter

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[www.instagram.com/greaterenrichment](http://www.instagram.com/greaterenrichment)



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