



# GOOD NEWS FROM GOOD NEIGHBORS

*SEPTEMBER 2019*

SML Good Neighbors is widely recognized as an extraordinary program serving hundreds of children each year in our community with educational support, performing arts, environmental awareness, social and character development.... experiences most would not have an opportunity to witness.

What many people don't know is, it is a program born from the passion of one extraordinary and dedicated individual, Russell Baskett.

Earlier this year, Baskett announced to the Board of SML GN, his intention to step down from his position as Executive Director, as he and his wife, Sarah, prepare to move to Northern Va.



"It's time for me to step aside," Baskett said simply, adding modestly, "It is a good thing to have new leadership, fresh ideas and exciting visions for the future."

After months of strategic planning sessions, the Board unanimously agreed to appoint Lisa Lietz, former Program Director, as the new Executive Director, as of October 1st 2019.

"It wasn't a discussion about how Lisa would 'fill my shoes'" Baskett clarified. "It was about giving her the leadership support to fill her own shoes."

"Lisa is a skilled, competent leader," Baskett added. "We have worked together six years as a team, aiding the evolution of the programs through many changes and complexities. We have like minds, the same driving vision and mission, belief in the same culture we want the children to experience."

It was in 2006 when Baskett first shared his vision for summer programming with a small group of like-minded individuals. What followed was a summer feeding program in 2007, and the following year, two four-week day camp programs for 1<sup>st</sup> - 4<sup>th</sup> graders, primarily those who were economically disadvantaged. Since those early beginnings, the outreach of Good Neighbors has grown substantially.

Much of the recent growth has been fueled under Lietz' leadership. As Program Director, she helped screen/select/train the summer interns working one-on-one with the children and functioned as site director during the camps. As the liaison with the schools, Lietz helped expand from a handful of schools serving 65 students, to over 300 students this past year from all 12 Franklin County summer schools and six in Bedford. She also was pivotal in developing programs for 5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> graders, a new year-round middle school academy for 7<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> graders, and student enrichment in the arts after-school programs throughout the school year.

"I continue to hear stories about the impact of Good Neighbors on families, along with statistics confirming our programs' significance in students' reading levels," Lietz noted. Feedback from the interns also provides inspiration. "I didn't know how much love these children need us to give them," wrote one college intern working last summer. With these validations Lietz shared enthusiastically, "The opportunity to serve Good Neighbors in any capacity is a privilege."

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Lietz appointment marks the beginning of a new season, a new chapter for Good Neighbors and the Basketts. Admitting his uncertainty regarding his own new chapter, Baskett nonetheless shares his excitement about what's to come next.

"I've been an educator most of my adult life," he explained, having taught high school students in the 60's, and later, nursing, medical and engineering, undergraduate and graduate students. Baskett describes being a teacher as an "inner fuel that has kept the flame burning over the past 13 years as we gave birth to, and nurtured this most remarkable program."

"This is the beginning of a new season and although I don't know what this will look like, I know it will be rich. I know that, in some capacity, I will be a teacher."

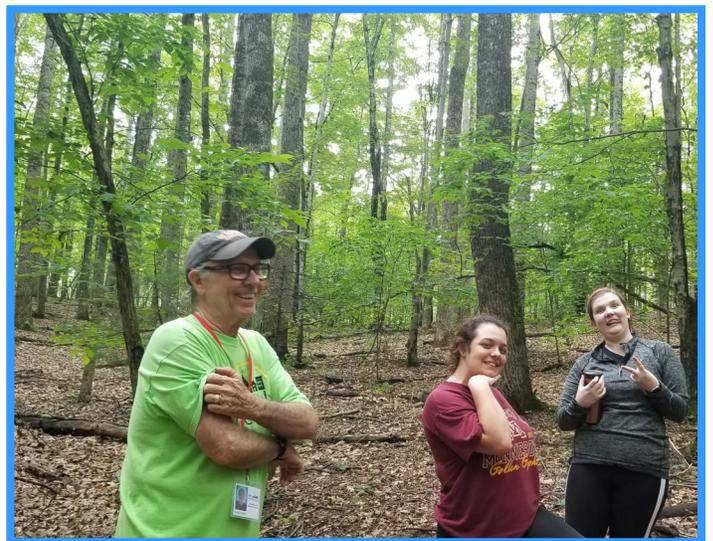
"Russ is the soul of this organization," noted Board Chairman Diane Burakow . "I've been so honored to work with him."

Baskett has offered to serve and be supportive to the program that has been dear to him in any way he can.

"I have only one concern as I leave the community, " he said. "Like all non-profits, sustaining income is always a challenge." He encouraged those reading this to pledge their financial support for the long-term health of Good Neighbors.

"The children we serve need these programs," Baskett emphasized. "We contribute to their success by supporting their educational development."

(Article written by Lynda Imirie)





Developing good neighbors skills and values in children through programs that nourish, educate and support them while providing life-changing experiences for college students through leadership development internships.

*Sowing seeds of success in children since 2007*

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### **There is a Season... Reflections from Russ Baskett**

There are truly no words that can capture my deepest feelings about SML Good Neighbors. But, I'll try anyway. My friends and colleagues are quick to say that I'm rarely at a loss for words.

Recently I came across this statement I wrote for one of our newsletters: *Since the Spring of 2006, a small group of dedicated, passionate, visionary, persistent people with a heart for children has been leading the Smith Mountain Lake community in a mission to help our most vulnerable children. We may not change the world, but we help point the way for our Good Neighbors kids. This statement was preceded by a quote from Margaret Mead: Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, concerned citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.* Taken together, these statements come close to describing the inner fuel that has kept the flame burning that sustained me over the past 13 years as we gave birth to, and nurtured, this most remarkable program.

I've been an educator most of my adult life. I taught students in life sciences and environmental studies beginning with high school students in 1962. Later, my students were undergraduate and graduate students, nursing and medical students, and even engineering students; I served as Director of Instruction at a community college and as an Associate Dean at a medical school. Through all of these varied experiences, I learned that my calling was to be a teacher. I love to talk about teaching and to share that passion with colleagues and young people thinking about their career paths. I can think of nothing better than being a teacher. I believe these life experiences as an educator prepared me to be part of the birthing of SML Good Neighbors and part of the leadership that has nurtured the organization into a program that is serving 400 children with educational support and enrichment programs plus social and character development. It is truly a remarkable story and has been a Capstone Experience for me as an educator and advocate for the Common Good.

Just as there was a season for me to be part of SML Good Neighbors, it is now time for me to step aside and for Good Neighbors to have a new Executive Director. It is a good thing to have new leadership, fresh ideas and exciting visions for the future. Lisa Lietz and I have worked closely together as a team for six years. We share a common vision for SML Good Neighbors. She is a perfect fit. I am excited about the future of SML Good Neighbors.

Sarah and I will be moving to Herndon, Virginia to live closer to our daughter. This is the beginning of a new season, a new chapter. Although I don't know what this will look like, I know it will be rich. I know that, in some capacity, I will be a teacher. As Quakers say, "Way Opens."

I will continue to be close to SML Good Neighbors and serve in anyway I can to be supportive. This program will be dear to me the rest of my life. Even though I won't be physically present to participate, I will be a follower and financial supporter. I have absolutely no worries about the programs and health of the organization. I have only one concern as I leave the community. That concern is the continuing financial support of SMLGN. Like all nonprofits, sustaining income is always a challenge. So, I challenge everyone reading this to join me in pledging financial support every year. I make that pledge. Become a member of the GRAND CLUB by pledging at least a \$1,000 per year. And, become part of the LEGACY SOCIETY by including SML Good Neighbors in your estate planning. I'm doing that also. Building a significant endowment is key to the long-term health of Good Neighbors. The children we serve need these programs. Our communities need for these children to be successful. We contribute to their success by supporting their educational development.

It's been a great ride - I will miss my friends and colleagues, our interns and our Good Neighbors kids. "Thanks for the Memories", I've been blessed beyond words.

To our dedicated supporters:

I have found that being an advocate for Good Neighbors comes effortlessly since my introduction to the organization in 2013. It is a natural instinct to support the work that has benefited well over a thousand students in our community the last 12 years. I have heard countless stories about the impact Good Neighbors has had on families, not to mention pages upon pages of data validating our programs' significance. Therefore, I truly feel that the opportunity to serve Good Neighbors in any capacity is a privilege.

Over the last 6 years, I have spent over 300 hours with Russ Baskett at he and Sarah's dining room table, their back porch and meeting spaces throughout their home; planning, visioning and working on Good Neighbors endeavors. In between our discussions we also shared about our lives and our stories. Russ has been a steady and resilient presence for Good Neighbors since before the organization even had a name. Our programs would not be what they are today, if it had not been for his leadership and dedication. His physical presence will be missed but we will all be keeping in close contact and cheering him and Sarah on in their new adventures.

I will continue to strive to be the best proponent I can be for Good Neighbors as we implement our planned transition. I am grateful for all of the support that I have received from Russ, our board of directors, staff and volunteers. I am honored to serve alongside these dedicated individuals as executive director.

In love and service,

Lisa Lietz

## Cornerstone Society Annual Reception

We are looking forward to greeting and thanking our Cornerstone Society members this November at our 2nd Annual Cornerstone Society Reception. Our youth mentor scholarship award winners will be recognized and speakers for the event include a Good Neighbors parent, 2019 teaching staff intern, former camper / academy scholar, and best selling novelist and philanthropist, David Baldacci. We will also be providing information on the Children's Legacy Society at the event. Cornerstone Society members, please be on the look out for your invitation this October.

### What is the Cornerstone Society & the Children's Legacy Society?

The Cornerstone Society of SML Good Neighbors recognizes individuals, families, organizations, foundations, churches and others that have contributed at least \$1,000 to the Annual Fund of SML Good Neighbors since the founding of the organization in 2007. Donors giving at least \$10,000 are further recognized based on the total cumulative amount contributed. Donors pledging to give \$1,000 or more each year to the annual fund are members of the GRAND CLUB of the Cornerstone Society.

The Children's Legacy Society recognizes donors making financial contributions to SML Good Neighbors that will provide continuous support for the children served by SML Good Neighbors well beyond our lifetimes. These are Legacy gifts. These gifts are invested and become part of the SML Good Neighbors Endowment Fund. The endowment fund yields approximately a 5.0% return annually. A gift of \$20,000 will, therefore, provide \$1,000 per year indefinitely. Donors providing Major gifts or Planned gifts to the endowment fund are recognized in one of five categories: Diamond Donor, Platinum Donor, Gold Donor, Silver Donor, or Bronze Donor.

To learn more about our annual and planned giving programs, visit [www.smlgoodneighbors.org](http://www.smlgoodneighbors.org).

# Bingo Bonanza!

SML Good Neighbors' semi-annual Bingo Bonanza fundraiser was September 13th at Resurrection Catholic Church. The event featured 15 bingo games (six cards per game) with all cash prizes. There were additional raffle prizes, forty door prizes and a 50/50 game at the end that patrons could purchase for an additional \$10. We are very pleased to announce that the event sold out and raised over \$6,000; helping to fund our Student Enrichment in the Arts program. Our 50/50 game winner took home over \$600. Tim Ernandes from WSLK, as always, did a great job calling the games and the Resurrection Youth Group was gracious in continuing their volunteerism; serving cookies and checking winners. This community event is always a blast! Thank you to all who supported this event and helped to make it a success!



# Smith Mountain Lake Charity Home Tour

SML Good Neighbors is elated to host the Kellstrom home this fall on the Smith Mountain Lake Charity Home Tour. The Charity Home Tour has raised almost five million dollars for local charities over the past 28 years. The event will take place over Columbus Day weekend, October 11—13, 2019. To purchase tickets, please visit [www.smlcharityhometour.com](http://www.smlcharityhometour.com).



Beautiful Setting ♦ Beautiful Homes  
♦ Beautiful Cause ♦

“The Kellstrom home in Mountain View Shores is a Craftsman style house with



three bedrooms, three baths, two half baths and a large bonus room. There is a cottage atmosphere with soft grey walls, white trim and touches of aqua in most rooms. The kitchen contains a large sunroom with an antique sewing machine. The dining room has beadboard and a ship-lap wood ceiling. The homeowners have taken older furniture from their previous homes and painted the pieces various colors. There are some paintings from Norway and some by local artist Ruth Cole.”

If you are interested in volunteering your time to assist Good Neighbors on the Charity Home to Tour, please contact Judy Wolfe at [judybassdoc@aol.com](mailto:judybassdoc@aol.com).

# Barnes & Noble Book Fair

SAVE THE DATE: December 13th - 19th; Online and In-Store at the Tanglewood location. Watch your email and social media for more information to come!



# Summer Summary!



- Over 330 students spent 140 hours learning, playing and socializing this summer in a safe environment!
- Over 30 of those hours were spent on literacy
- 100% of students pre & post tested maintained or improved their reading levels this summer
- About 8,000 weekend meals provided
- Over 13,000 meals served at camp



## Student Enrichment in the Arts (S.E.A.)

We' kicked off our school-year S.E.A. sessions September 9th and, we are growing again! Thanks to partial funding from the Virginia Commission for the Arts, we are added our 6th school to the schedule. We have been partnering with the Roanoke Children's Theatre for the S.E.A. program since 2013. This program brings professional children's theater to the students in our community who otherwise would not have an opportunity to participate or be exposed to professional theater instruction. Participation in S.E.A. helps children to Develop imagination and critical thinking as well as refine cognitive and creative skills; enhance reading expression and comprehension; improve pronunciation, projection, and enunciation; be encouraged to read independently at home; build self-confidence; strengthen problem-solving and critical thinking skills; and develop team-building skills. To see the fall schedule, visit our website.



# Resilience & Relationships: An account of an academy scholar



In June 2016, Antonio was a rising 7<sup>th</sup> grader who thought he was helping his cousin get registered for summer camp with SML Good Neighbors at Moneta Elementary School. Our Middle School Academy teaching staff had other plans for him. It was the first week of the Academy Program's existence and our Academy teachers asked Antonio what his summer plans were. When they found out he didn't have any, they insisted he join the program. Over three years later, Antonio has been a consistent presence in the academy, often attending both Franklin County and Bedford County summer sessions. Now a sophomore in high school, he is a leader for many of the other Academy scholars.



When asked about what Good Neighbors has meant to him, Antonio shared the following with us. "Good Neighbors is a place where you can show what you are able to do and keep developing that. You can also develop more things that you didn't know you could do. It has helped me through a lot. It has helped me to keep going no matter what it is and no matter what would happen at the end; keep making progress and don't look for perfection right away." Antonio is a great example of resilience and grit, buzz words that we are hearing a lot in education recently. Many of the staff have enjoyed watching him grow and walk through difficult life situations with dignity and positivity.

Former site director, Chloe Johnson, along with teaching staff interns, have poured their hearts and souls into building and strengthening community within the academy and it shows. Antonio shared "I had the privilege of going to the Franklin camp (Academy) and got to meet a guy named Jeremiah. He's one of my best friends and our friendship means a lot to me because we get along so well. Same thing with the teachers from this recent year; I really appreciate them a lot. They have helped me through a lot of stuff and they were there whenever I needed someone." His teachers felt the same about him. Emily Gilfillan, who spent two years as an Academy teacher shared that, "He was the cool headed person in Bedford and showed amazing mediation/leadership skills."



In regards to whether or not Antonio would encourage other students to participate he said "I would definitely recommend it; it can help you develop a lot of skills and show you a different perspective. Also, it can improve your skills for the next school year." The Academy has been an accepting and welcoming space for many to learn and grow; both academically and emotionally. The main objective of the Academy is to help prepare middle school students for success in high school but I don't think we expected how much love, respect and inspiration would grow from the bonds built through the Academy program. And isn't that what life is about? It is those kind of relationships in all of our lives that often serve as the hand we need to keep trudging on through

the most difficult days and the hand to cheer us on with every success. Thank you, Antonio, for sharing your journey with us and allowing Good Neighbors to be a part of it.

