

The Learning Center of Beaufort County to open at multiple locations



A new partnership is forming in Beaufort County, and the unique collaboration has the potential to change the lives of many Lowcountry children. The Learning Center of Beaufort County will soon be opening its doors to students in need of tutoring services and specialized instruction thanks to the alliance between the Boys and Girls Club of the Lowcountry, Bridges Preparatory School, Penn Center, St. Peter's Catholic School and the Coastal Community Foundation.

The Learning Center of Beaufort will offer students the chance to fully engage in a meaningful learning process, effectively utilize their distinctive learning styles and productively pursue ongoing academic achievement. And most importantly, The Learning Center will be available to every child in Beaufort County.

All too often, children who possess an alternative to the verbal learning style get frustrated with mainstream teaching methods and abandon their will to learn. Students become apathetic; but it's not their fault. They just learn differently than most. The misunderstanding begins when many people can't figure out why an intelligent person can't read at their expected level. The mistreating begins when students are simply encouraged to 'try harder.'

Malcolm Goodridge, founder and benefactor of The Learning Center of Beaufort County, understands this frustration. He is dyslexic. And he says his dyslexia is his greatest asset.

Thinking Outside the Box

Written by Wendy Nilsen Pollitzer

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Goodridge remembers growing up and being called a "dummy" all the way through school. He took remedial reading classes to assist him, but they didn't help much. He fought hard through school to overcome his learning disability, eventually going on to a distinguished career as a senior executive with American Express. Now retired, he thanks his struggle with dyslexia for his continued ambition toward success.



"I think that if I had been a normal kid, I wouldn't have the drive for success that I have now. I was pushed down so far, I had to figure out a way to survive," says Goodridge.

Goodridge explains that children with dyslexia seek attention in the classroom in different ways. Some take the right path. Some take the wrong path. Many successful businessmen, athletes, politicians and celebrities are dyslexic. People with dyslexia are highly creative, out of the box thinkers, and use their brains differently, which explains the long list of people of note who have excelled.

In fact, Goodridge was by First Lady Nancy Reagan in 1988 as a successful businessman. He was in the company of Magic Johnson (sports), Governor Thomas Kean (politics) and Cher (entertainment), who also battled dyslexia.

Identifying the problem will usually steer the child in the right direction, and that's why it is critical for teachers and educators to understand different learning styles in order to offer alternative methods of teaching.

Malcolm Goodridge is passionate about The Learning Center of Beaufort County. He knows that these children are smart. They just learn differently than most, like he did. Goodridge was

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fortunate. He became successful with a prestigious business career and attributes his achievements to educators who recognized his learning challenges.

So, Goodridge has decided to give back to his adopted community of Beaufort by providing the same opportunity he had as a child... individual instruction to children in need.

The Learning Center of Beaufort County will be available at three locations: The Boys and Girls Club



of the Lowcountry at 1100 Boundary Street, also home to Bridges Preparatory School, which will open in August; St. Peter's Catholic School at 70 Lady's Island Drive on Lady's Island; and at Penn Center, located at 16 Dr. Martin Luther King Drive on St. Helena Island.

Kendall Erickson, Chairman of the Beaufort Board of the Boys and Girls Club of the Lowcountry, is thrilled about the brand new relationship.

"The Learning Center will be a place to get one-on-one instruction, which is what our students need. And it's open to everyone. You don't have to be a Boys and Girls Club member or be a student at Bridges," explains Erickson.

Chris Protz, Executive Director of the Boys and Girls Club of the Lowcountry agrees.

"We are very excited about the partnership. We want these kids to achieve academic success, graduate high school on time and be an integral part of society. It's a win-win for the kids, the parents, the school, the club and the community," says Protz.

Bridges Preparatory School's Chairman of the Board, Dr. Charlie Calvert, feels the same way.

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"This is a natural partnership. The Learning Center of Beaufort County provides consistency to the missions of Bridges Preparatory School and the Boys and Girls Club of the Lowcountry."

Bridges Preparatory School is a stem-infused charter school that will utilize the Paideia seminar-based instruction method.

"The Learning Center will be complementary to our teaching methods, giving our students supplemental instruction during school consistent with their learning styles ," explains Calvert.

Joe Benning, Principal at St. Peter's Catholic School agrees.



"By having The Learning Center on site, it will allow us to help students who are struggling at a much earlier age and give them the opportunity to be successful as they progress through our school. We are looking forward to being able to provide this service to our students," says Benning.

And there are many community leaders who support this initiative, including City of Beaufort's Mayor, Billy Keyserling, former Chairman of Beaufort County School District, Fred Washington and current BCSD Chairman, Bill Evans.

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Billy Keyserling, like Goodridge, also has dyslexia and is thankful for the new opportunity.

"Thanks to the Learning Center of Beaufort County and Malcolm Goodridge, a generous man who is also dyslexic, there are now opportunities in Beaufort that were not available when I was coming up. Fortunately, educators now know dyslexia and how to treat it," explains Keyserling.

Fred Washington, Jr. supports Keyserling's sentiments.

"The Learning Center will be a positive connection between the formal education system and community partnerships for enhanced learning. It is much needed in Beaufort County," he says.

Current Chairman Bill Evans explains further.

"Beaufort County School District looks forward to the opening of The Learning Center of Beaufort. Some of our students who don't qualify for special education will benefit from The Learning Center. We have an unfortunate state funding model, and sadly many students slip through the cracks. The Learning Center of Beaufort will be well-funded to give opportunity to an extended base of students," explains Evans.

An endowment for The Learning Center of Beaufort was established at the Coastal Community Foundation in March by its board of directors, Charles Kresch, past chairman of the Board of Education, Beaufort County, David House of Spring Island, member of the Board of Trustees of Beaufort Memorial Hospital, and Malcolm Goodridge, founding benefactor of the Learning Center of the Lowcountry. The donor-advised fund consists of a substantial amount. Grants will be made in partnership with the Foundation to expand The Learning Center concept to other educational institutions in Beaufort County, like St. Peter's Catholic School and Penn Center.

Walter Mack, Executive Director at Penn Center, understands the benefit that The Learning Center would bring to St. Helena Island.

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Mack states, "The partnership between The Learning Center of Beaufort and Penn Center, Inc. will provide one of the few afterschool centers in the county which will focus on and serve as an umbrella for children with a wide range of learning problems. We are pleased to be supported by a benefactor (Goodridge) who has first-hand experience that children like him with learning problems can succeed."

Mack continues, "St. Helena Island is a rural, underserved community with many needs, and the establishment of The Learning Center partnership with Penn will provide a valuable resource for parents and children with learning disorders who may or may not have been diagnosed."

The Coastal Community Foundation's ultimate goal is to improve the quality of life in Beaufort County by supporting the network of non-profits that serve our community.

Edna Crews, Regional Vice President of the Coastal Community Foundation, supports and encourages the collaboration of non-profits to seek grants.

"Our job is to facilitate relationships in order to evaluate and approve grants. This collaboration is a win-win. Additionally, we have an obligation to continue to provide this fund for The Learning Center of Beaufort in perpetuity. It will always be here," explains Crews.

And that is thanks to Malcolm Goodridge.

Crews continues, "When Malcolm first approached the Coastal Community Foundation, he wanted to find a way to provide services to all children, regardless of where they lived in Beaufort County. His desire was to see kids get the assistance they deserve in order to have a full life like his."

That's what sets Malcolm Goodridge apart from the rest. He suffered. He succeeded. Now, he wants others to get the same opportunity that was afforded to him.

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