

Baer School's Partnership Board

*William S. Baer School
Baltimore, Maryland*

The William S. Baer School serves students with disabilities from ages three to 21, and students without disabilities from age three to five. Therapists have been working for years with Baer students on self-help and toileting skills. However, the handicapped toilets and sinks were fashioned for adults with disabilities, and had not been renovated since the early 1980's. Children were unable to use the facilities independently. Baer School's Partnership Board set out to renovate the facilities so that all students could reach the school goal of preparing for independent living.

Approximately twenty members compose the Partnership Board, including educators, businessmen, teachers, politicians, and parents. The board was founded to provide funds and materials to assist staff members in improving the quality of life for their students. The Partnership Board took on the responsibility to fundraise and plan for the bathroom renovations. Board members met with parents, teachers, and students to explain the project and ask for suggestions. After taking suggestions from therapists, teachers, and parents, the Board designed the fundraising plan.

It cost \$175,000 to renovate the four corner bathrooms. The Board followed the suggestion of one of the parents to sponsor a 5K race to raise funds. Board members recruited sponsors, ordered T-shirts, and secured donations of bottled water. The students participated as cheerleaders at the finish line. With money from the race and other sources secured, construction on the bathrooms began.

The renovation of the four bathrooms has been evaluated on several levels: it was ac-

cessible; met the needs of students, teachers, and therapists; and allowed students to practice their self-help skills. Through practice, students are now able to take care of their personal needs independently. Parents, staff, and students are delighted with the gain in independence. As Baer School's principal described, "I truly believe this project has increased the quality of life for these students."

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