

Grand Haven Meijer Funds Adaptive Equipment for Students

Members of a class at White Pines Intermediate School in Grand Haven, Mich. are familiar faces at their local Meijer.

The students shop at the store as part of a monthly community outing. These regular visits help them work on mobility, communication and functional skills by shopping for their favorite items. The students have Severe Multiple Impairments (SXI), which means they have significant learning needs, as well as physical, medical or sensory needs.

"This real-life, meaningful experience at Meijer only improves when students have access to their communication devices," said Jaime Oppenlander, a White Pines teacher. "Due to our students' significant needs, our students require hands-on learning, adaptive equipment, and opportunities to generalize their skills to real-life applications in the community."

Our store recently provided a \$4,100 donation to the class for accessories to improve their communication while they use their bikes and mobility aids.

Grand Haven Store Director Robin Owczarzak partnered with her regional leaders to get the funds for these students. With the donation, the teachers purchased communication trays and mounts for the students' bikes or chairs.

"The ability to communicate and share your wants or needs and converse with others is not one that they take for granted at White Pines," Robin said. "Through this new equipment, the students can talk to their peers, adult helpers, and just make comments. Jaime shared with me that one student was able to say the word 'cool' while riding their bike. It was a very precious moment."

The donation also meant a lot to Robin's team.

"Over the past year, we have been working on our journey of diversity and inclusion," Robin said. "We have really strived to accept others for who they are and make a difference in the community that we serve. My team, along with myself, are extremely proud to be a part of something that is so meaningful to these students and teachers."

White Pines Intermediate School believes an inclusive environment benefits everyone – the community and students with or without disabilities. Its program focuses on helping students build skills for their future, such as functional academics, literacy, communication, mobility, daily living skills, job skills and community involvement.

Jaime said the classroom staff takes pride in thinking of ways to help students learn new skills that are life-changing for themselves and their families. A primary focus is literacy, because students must be able to read and spell to have access to all forms of communication. When a student is non-verbal, the ability to communicate relies on access to a device. That's why donations toward communication trays and similar accessories that allow consistent communication throughout each day and within the community are so vital.

"Our students come from across Ottawa County to our unique Inclusion SXI program at White Pines Intermediate," Jaime said. "Our program is unique because it allows students with severe disabilities to have the opportunity to learn and go to school with their general education peers."

That commitment to growing their students' capabilities is evident in the two class mottos: "All Kids Can" and "Nothing is Impossible" – two phrases we're happy to stand behind.

Additional assets available online: [**Photos**](#) ⁽²⁾

<https://meijercommunity.com/Grand-Haven-Meijer-Funds-Adaptive-Equipment-for-Students>