



Gary and Nancy Chartrand Donate \$200,000 for New Outdoor Fitness Center at Jacksonville's Special Education Morning Star School

Jacksonville, Fla. (July 20, 2020) – [Morning Star School](#), the only special education school in the [Diocese of St. Augustine](#) serving K-12 children with learning and intellectual differences, will soon break ground on a new fitness center thanks to a \$200,000 donation from the Gary and Nancy Chartrand Advised Fund.

“We are extremely grateful to the Chartrand family for helping us make this important addition to our campus,” said Morning Star School Director of Development Maria Johnson. “It has never been more important to teach our students how to stay fit and healthy in a fun outdoor atmosphere. It is an important part of a positive learning experience, especially in our current pandemic environment.

While all students at Morning Star School will use the outdoor fitness center, Johnson said it will be specifically designed for the older students – since the school already has a playground geared to the needs of the younger students. The project will include an open fitness field with artificial turf, exercise equipment including parallel bars, a square pull-up station and a ‘double turbo challenge’ area – along with the construction of a three-foot retaining wall at the rear of the property. It also provides a huge open field for all types of play.

“We feel strongly that the excellence that Morning Star School provides in the classroom should be available to students when they are outside as well,” commented Nancy Chartrand in regard to the gift made from the Gary and Nancy Chartrand Advised Fund at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida. “Having a state-of-the-art outdoor fitness area will not only meet the needs and unique abilities of these young people, but it will encourage healthy activities and habits that are so important in life.”

Johnson noted that the students at Morning Star School also assisted in fundraising for the outdoor fitness center – with junior- and high-school students participating in a fundraiser selling Spanky’s Gourmet Pickles to help raise funds for the project.

“This time of uncertainty we just faced with COVID-19 is a great example of why the fitness center area is of great importance,” said Morning Star School Physical Education Teacher ‘Coach’ Natalie Bryan. “Stress is inevitable and, as it varies for individuals old and young, the fitness center contributes to good health and helps to address stress, even now. Also, students who maintain their fitness and good health are more likely to become active healthy adults – improving student learning while reducing obesity and participation in high-risk behaviors, as well.”

Permitting is now under way for the project, with construction scheduled to begin later this year.

The school, which shifted to virtual learning only for all students in March, plans to open on Monday, August 10 for the 2020-21 school year offering a hybrid learning model of in-person and virtual education.

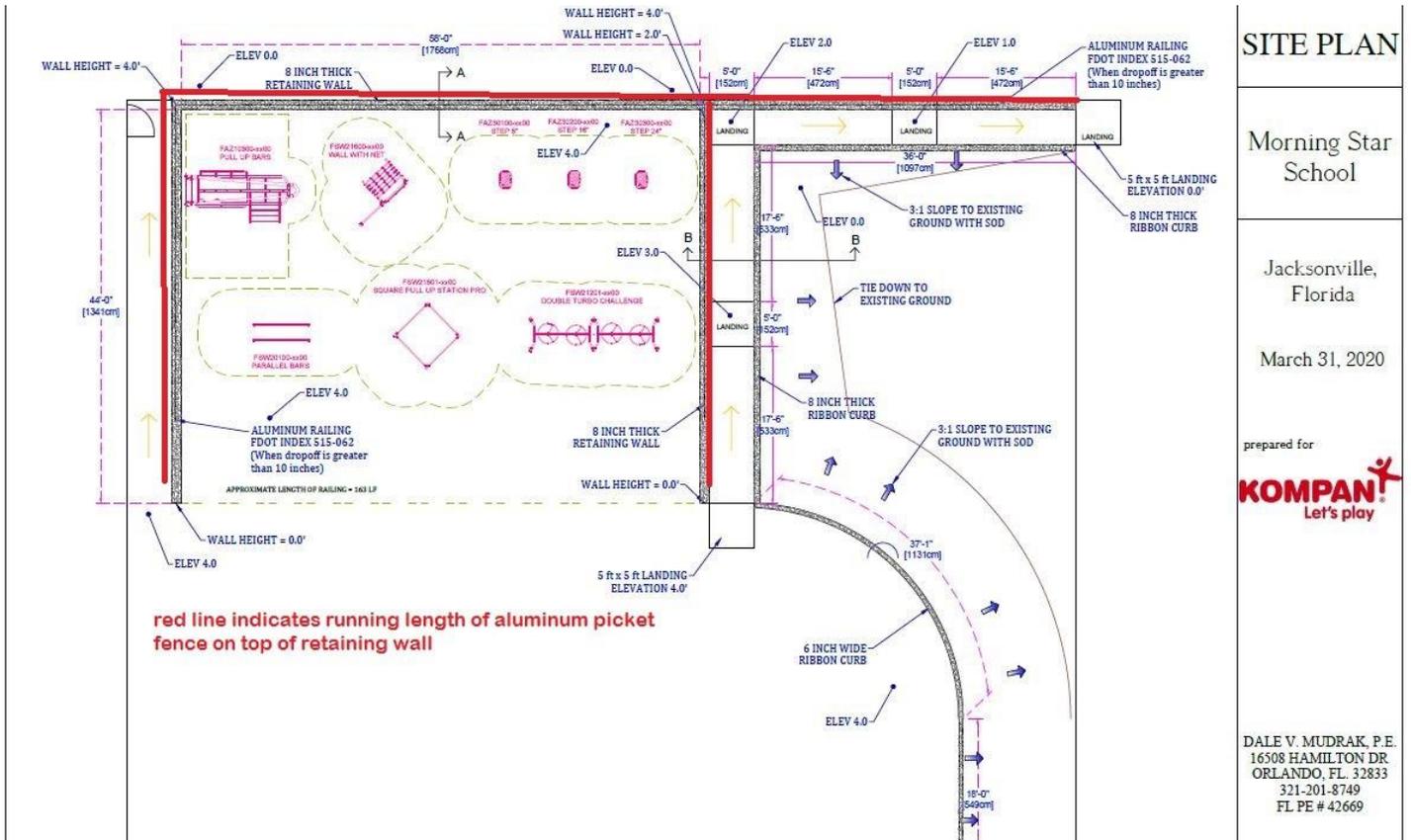
For more information about the outdoor fitness center and other needs at the school, contact Maria Johnson at 904.962.5080 , or email development@morningstar-jax.org.

About Morning Star School

[Morning Star School](#) in Jacksonville, Florida is a K-12 school serving children with learning and intellectual differences, including attention deficit disorder and autism spectrum disorders, intellectual and developmental challenges such as **SLD, ADD, ADHD, InD processing deficits and high functioning autism**. Fully accredited by the [Florida Catholic Conference](#), Morning Star School is the only special education school in the [Diocese of St. Augustine](#) and takes pride in its diverse students who are welcomed regardless of background or religious affiliation. Teachers and staff work with each individual student and partner with parents, therapists and medical providers to provide each child the opportunity

to reach their highest potential. Morning Star School is perpetually at capacity and is raising funds to expand the school and its services. For more information, visit www.morningstar-jax.org.

Media Contact: Ron Whittington, ron@whittingtonpr.com, 904.563.0402



SITE PLAN

Morning Star School

Jacksonville, Florida

March 31, 2020

prepared for
KOMPANI!
Let's play

DALE V. MUDRAK, P.E.
16508 HAMILTON DR
ORLANDO, FL 32833
321-201-8749
FL PE # 42669