

**BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

Application No. 19748

Date: May 16, 2018

TESTIMONY OF DAVID KIRBY, ACTON ACADEMY FOUNDATION

Good morning, Members of the Board.

My name is David Kirby. My wife, Nicole, and I are parents of a 4-year-old, Madeleine. We live at 2737 Devonshire Pl, NW, in Woodley Park. We're also the cofounders of a new school, Acton Academy of Washington, DC.

We are working to to open Acton Academy in one of the row houses on the campus of St. Paul's Parish, on K Street in Foggy Bottom.

This would be for a small, private school for up to 60 students. Acton would offer a Montessori pre-K and Kindergarten program for children ages 3 to 6, as well as an Acton Elementary program, for children ages 6 to 10. We plan to open in September.

Neighbor Outreach, ANC Unanimous Approval, Letters of Support

As you have seen in our pre-hearing statement, we have been working very, *very* hard over the last months to reach out to neighbors, share our plans with them, and get their feedback.

We personally knocked on doors of the houses nearby St. Paul's Parish to introduce ourselves. We hand delivered letters about Acton and our project. We toured the site with neighbors. Acton presented at the Foggy Bottom Association monthly meeting. We hosted two meetings for neighbors at the West End Library. We met with neighbors in their living rooms and in backyards.

We are extremely grateful for the warm reception that nearby neighbors have given us. Many neighbors who live directly adjacent to St. Paul's Parish attended the ANC 2A meeting to voice their support—at 9:30 on a Wednesday night, no less. The ANC voted unanimously to approve our Application.

After the ANC meeting, eleven neighbors submitted letters in support of Acton. This includes neighbors who live adjacent to the outdoor play area, families with small children, the Rector of St. Paul's, the President of the Foggy Bottom Association, and

residents who have lived in Foggy Bottom for decades. The number and variety of neighbors who wrote letters speaks to the depth of support of those who live nearby St. Paul's and who are most directly affected.

Preview of Remarks

I'd like to do two things in my brief remarks.

First, I wanted to give a brief background on Acton Academy and our mission, who we are, and why we believe it will make a valuable contribution to the community in Foggy Bottom.

Second, I wanted to describe the plans and walk through the two aspects of our Application for a Special Exception: first, the drop off and pick up plan; and then, our preliminary plan for our outdoor play area.

About Acton Academy

At Acton, we believe that children are far more powerful than we ever imagined.

What does that look like?

Acton is the host of an annual community event in Cleveland Park called the Acton Children's Business Fair of Washington, DC, where children ages 6 to 14 become entrepreneurs for a day.

Children make something with their own hands, sell to real customers, and decide themselves what to do with the profits. We provide outdoor tents and table. Imagine Dupont Market for children!

Young children baked and sold bread, sewed stuffed animals, and made custom paper airplanes. There was even a child who would fix your broken iPhone on the spot!

Just last Saturday, we hosted our third annual event, with over 120 young entrepreneurs and over 3,300 customers. *The Washington Post* profiled the event on the front page of the Sunday Metro section! I loved the headline: "At a D.C. business fair, kids test their entrepreneurial skills — and cash in." I included some photos and the Washington Post article in my testimony, for your reference.

The Acton Children's Business Fair is a one-day example, of what Acton Academy, the school, is all about.

First is belief in learning by doing. Second, is a respect for Montessori's idea of the freedom of independent learning. And third is a vision for what education is all about. It's not just about getting into college, or even starting a career. It's about discovering a calling.

Who am I? What am I passionate about? Where is there a problem in the world, that I can solve with my unique talents? Something that brings me great joy and may even change the world.

That's why my wife and I, and our community of families, are very excited to be opening the first Acton Academy in Washington, DC.

About David Kirby and Nicole Spencer

Briefly, I wanted to say a word about who we are, as cofounders of Acton. My wife and I are lifelong Washingtonians. I was born at Washington Hospital Center and my daughter was born at Washington Hospital Center. We live in Woodley Park. Our family lives around the city from Dupont to Georgetown to Capitol Hill.

Increasingly, families, like us, want to stay in this great city to raise their children.

Yet families in Foggy Bottom and nearby neighborhoods struggle to find educational options. Many pre-K programs at public schools are over capacity. There are long waitlists and eye-popping prices at private school options.

Even though this will be a very small school, up to 60 students, we hope Acton will make a valuable contribution to the neighborhood at St. Paul's by adding much-needed capacity.

Drop off and Pick up

Next, I wanted to briefly look at the plans in our special exception application. First for drop off and pick up then, the outdoor area.

As you'll see in the record, we worked with DDOT on our drop off and pick up plan. I've included the diagram in an attachment to my testimony.

Acton would stage drop off and pick up using St. Paul's Parish parking lot on Snows Court. The parking lot has 24 parking spaces that are mostly empty Monday through Friday.

Acton offers parents flexible drop off and pick up times. Drop off is between 8:00 and 8:45am and pick up anytime between 3:00 and 6:00pm. This would effectively stagger traffic, resulting in minimal queuing.

DDOT proposes a morning vehicle cap of 24 cars, after which we'd implement Traffic Demand Management procedures. Based on the number of families we anticipate walking or taking public transportation, this is fine with us.

Outdoor Play Area

One of the benefits of St. Paul's Parish campus is they have an outdoor green grass area that Acton can use for outdoor play. Particularly for Montessori-aged children, from 3-6 years old, this is a really lovely part of campus.

We presented a draft plan for our outdoor area at the ANC meeting. I also included the plans in the attachment to my testimony.

There are six houses adjacent to the outdoor space. Three are renters. One is the home of Father Wall, the Rector of St. Paul's. We've received invaluable feedback from the neighbors who live in these row houses. And in the record, we have letters of support from the owners who live adjacent to the outdoor play area.

Consistent with Montessori pedagogy, we plan to use natural materials for outdoor play, such as a flower garden, an outdoor gathering area with tables and benches, and an outdoor area for unstructured play. We do not plan to have large playground structures or new lighting.

And, of course, the final selection of fencing materials would go through Historic Review Board, as part of the permit process for the fence.

Conclusion

In conclusion, thank you in advance for your consideration.

Again, we are extremely grateful for the warm reception nearby neighbors have given us. And, we're excited to bring Acton Academy and a much-needed educational option to the Foggy Bottom community.

I'm happy to answer any questions you may have. We also have a representative of St. Paul's Parish with us, who can answer questions as well.

Acton Academy



WASHINGTON, D.C.

ACTON ACADEMY | BZA Hearing Slides

May 16, 2018

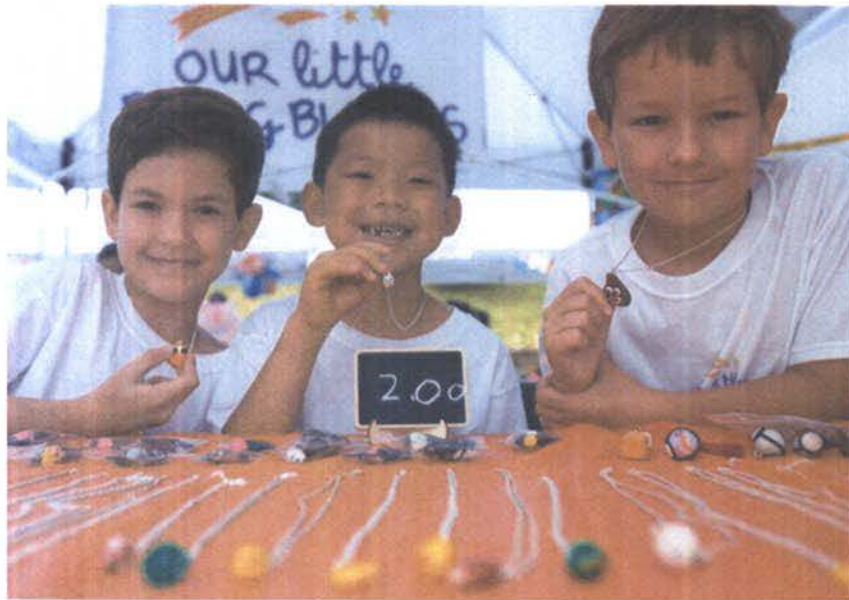
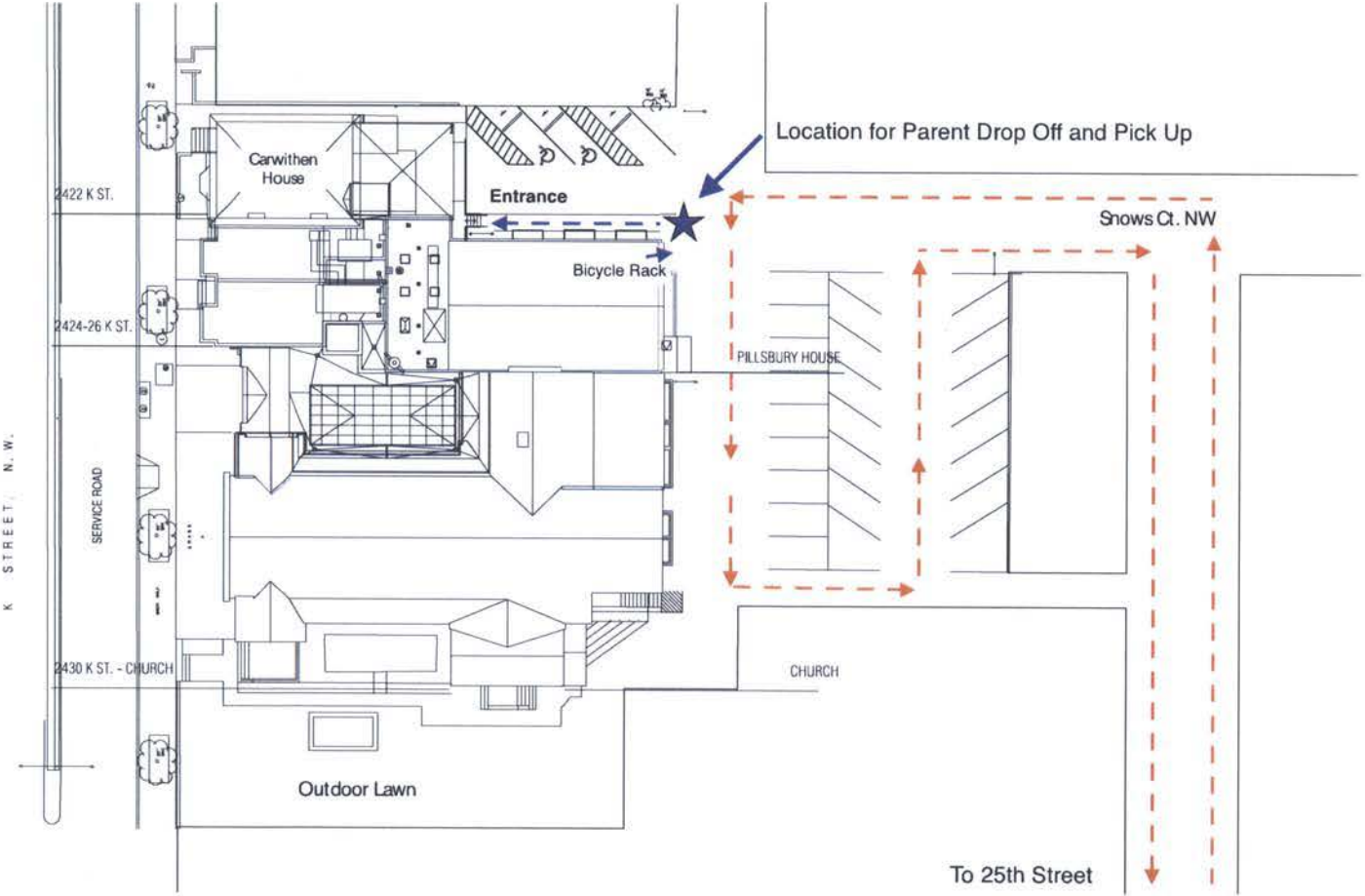


Exhibit D: Student Drop Off and Pick up Plan



Scale: 1/32" = 1'-0"

2498 K St NW
Washington, District of Columbia

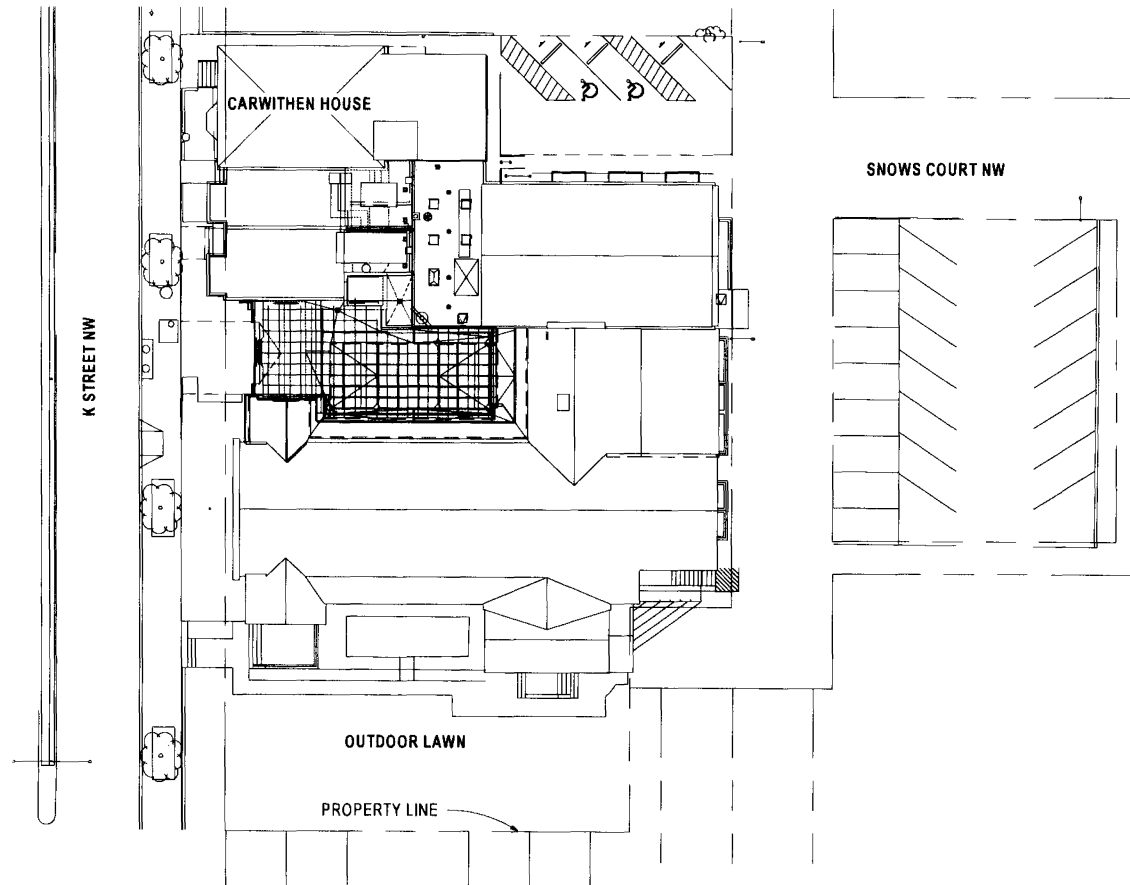
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Street View - Jun 2017

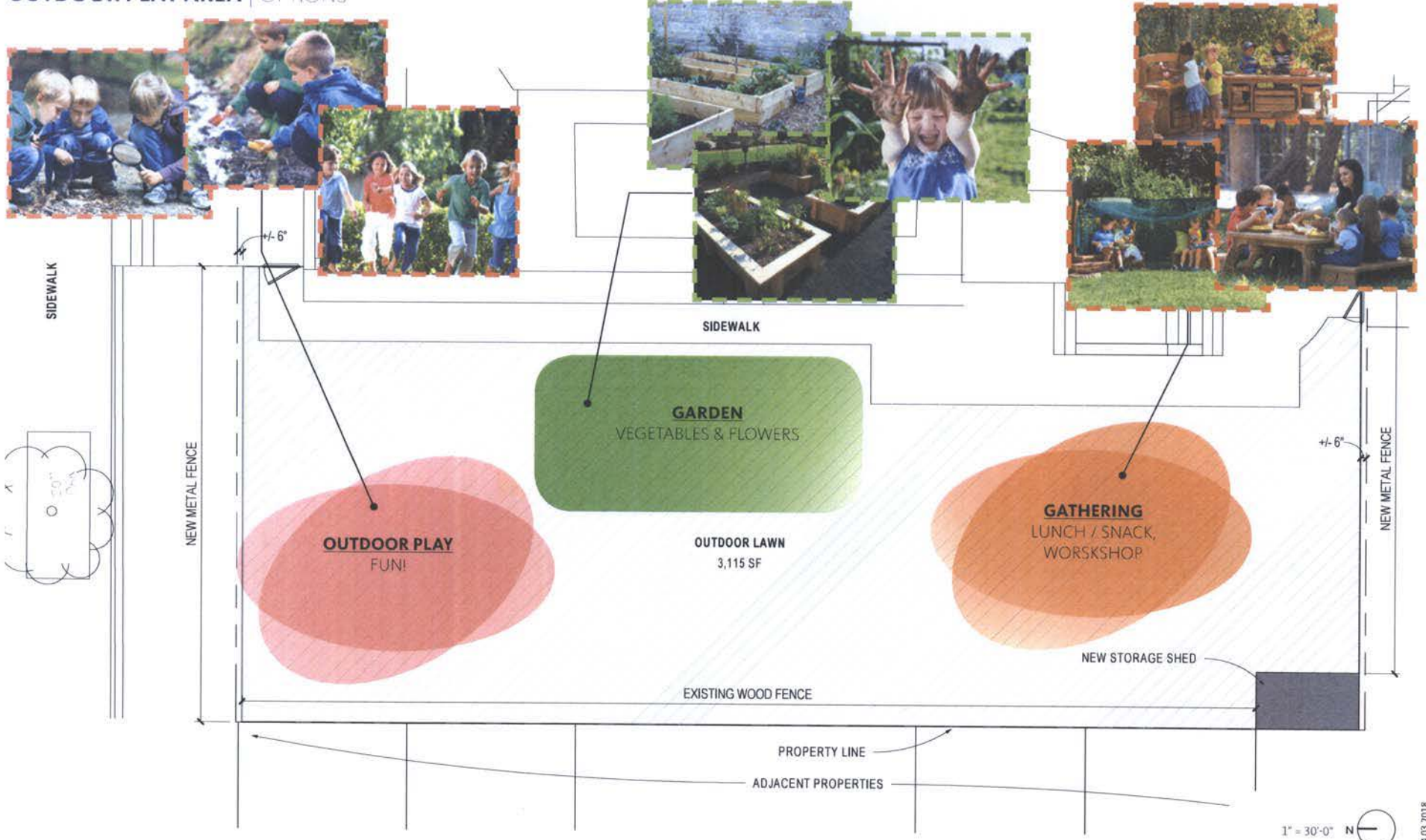


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SITE PLAN



OUTDOOR PLAY AREA | OPTIONS



The Washington Post

At a D.C. business fair, kids test their entrepreneurial skills — and cash in

Children ages 6 to 14 perfected their sales pitches on Connecticut Avenue.

By Katherine Shaver

Isabella Iordache arrived at Saturday's fair for budding kid entrepreneurs in Cleveland Park with a new game plan: capturing the boy market.

Her handmade headbands had been a hit with girls, she said, but apparently boys weren't so into hair fashion. So 8-year-old Isabella, a second-grader at Horace Mann Elementary School in D.C., recently expanded into key chains made from plastic Shrinky Dinks artwork.

"I thought about what boys might like," she said. "I know boys like key chains."

It was exactly the kind of lesson that organizers of the third annual D.C. Acton Children's Business Fair said they had hoped the 125 pint-sized peddlers would learn from starting their own businesses and testing their sales skills with more than 3,000 passersby on Connecticut Avenue NW.

"It's learning by doing," said David Kirby, who co-founded the fair with his wife, Nicole Spencer. The couple plans to open a private preschool and elementary school in the District focused on entrepreneurship.

"We challenge the children to be completely in charge of their own business and ask the parents to step back and allow their children's passion to do the work," Kirby said. "When you do that, it's astonishing what they can do."



Cousins Jaylen Manley, left, Josh Barrow-Adams and Elisha Adams show off some of their wares, including aroma-therapy bracelets.

The event started in Austin in 2007 as a way to promote entrepreneurship among children and has expanded to more than 100 cities worldwide. The kids, ages 6 to 14, develop a business strategy, market their products, hone their sales pitches and set their prices.

In addition to trying to make a profit, they competed for \$50 prizes for best business potential, best sales pitch and best original marketing.

Some had business cards and a website. A few had their own YouTube channels and Facebook pages. Products included handmade cake pops, organic dog biscuits, slime, jewelry, bath products and bookmarks.

Semaiah Luma, 10, sold something she said she'd never seen in a store: Colorful African outfits, complete with head wraps, for Barbie dolls.

"You usually just see pink clothes or plain casual clothes," said Semaiah, a fourth-grader from Baltimore. "You don't really see African clothes."

Rasa Thevenot, 11, said she got the idea for her “Fizzy Fun” line of homemade bath products after seeing bath bombs selling in stores for \$8 a pop. The colorful spheres fizz up in the tub.

“I went to Lush and saw all of these things, and I was thinking, ‘These are very expensive. I could make them at home for half the price,’ ” said Rasa, a fourth-grader at Haycock Elementary School in Falls Church, Va.

Three seventh-grade friends from Alice Deal Middle School in the District touted “Nook in a Book.” Gabby Bennett, 12, said they gathered old books from around their homes and reconfigured them inside to make secret compartments for jewelry, money, even a cellphone.

“And if you want to hide candy from a sibling, it’s a good place to put it,” said Juliet Franklin, 13.

Sales were going well, they said, but not as well as last year, when their booth was closer to the center of the fair.

“We’ve learned location matters,” Juliet said.

“But we did have a returning customer,” added Hadley Carr, 13.

“Which was nice,” Juliet added.

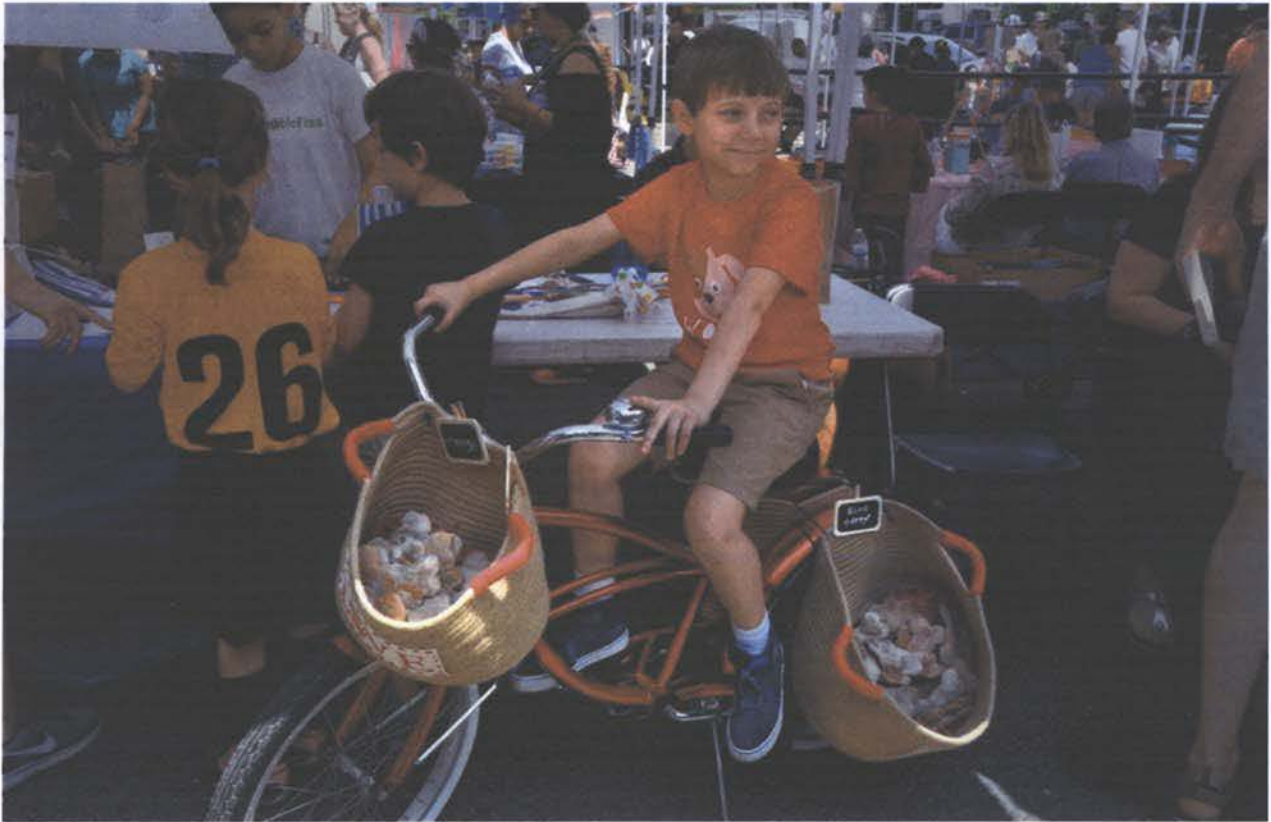
Because they’d had books and materials left over from last year, they said, the money they’d make would be pure profit — more than \$150.

Fletcher Shull, 9, came from Newport, R.I. to sell homemade blueberry, mango and sweet potato dog biscuits from a bright red bike. (Hence the name of his business: the Biscuit Bike.)

The bone-shaped biscuits had been a big hit with his four dogs, he said, and he thought people would go for the “organic” label.

“They’re made with 100 percent organic flour and baby food,” Fletcher said.

His father, Justin Shull, said he brought his three children to the fair because they liked selling lemonade in the neighborhood.



Fletcher shall delivers dog treats that he makes at his home in Newport, R.I. His business is called the Biscuit Bike.

He said he and his wife, Jennifer, wanted them to know what it was like to start a business, like the Kinderwagon stroller company they started when their children were younger.

“We thought it would be a great experience to talk to customers face to face, think about their products and think everything through,” Justin Shull said. “We wanted to teach them that it’s not easy to run a business.”

By the end of the three-hour fair, Isabella estimated her boy-targeting key chains had helped her bring in more than the \$200 she made at last year’s fair, though she hadn’t counted her profits yet.

She said she didn’t know whether she wanted to be an entrepreneur someday, but she knew she would donate some of the money she made to charities for diabetes and brain cancer.

“And I’m going to save some,” she said, “for college.”