

# History of

## Charles Brant Chesney Elementary School

Charles Brant Chesney Elementary School is located just blocks from the busy Pleasant Hill/Interstate-85 business district but is surrounded on three sides by the tree-studded neighborhoods it serves. Chesney Elementary opened in August of 2004 to relieve overcrowding at Berkeley Lake and B. B. Harris elementary schools. The building was constructed to house up to 770 students with 46 classrooms, 2 computer labs and a media center.

When it was decided that a new elementary school would be built in the Duluth Cluster a grassroots movement to name the school for Charles Brant Chesney began. Brant Chesney, a Gwinnett and Forsyth County fireman who was killed while fighting a fire on Lake Lanier, was dedicated to educating children and was responsible for teaching hundreds of Gwinnett students about fire safety. He was known throughout the state for his work as a fire safety educator. He was responsible for educating hundreds of students about fire safety and burn prevention in Gwinnett and Forsyth counties. In 1996, Mr. Chesney was named Gwinnett County's Instructor of the Year. On August 9, 2004, Charles Brant Chesney Elementary School opened its doors with pride, honoring a man who had played such an important role in education.

Mr. Chesney served as a career firefighter with the Gwinnett County Fire Department, where he assisted with the establishment of the Gwinnett County Trench

### FAST FACTS

**Address:** 3878 Old Norcross Road,  
Duluth, Georgia 30096

The following have been principals of Charles Brant Chesney Elementary School:

2004–2011	Carlotta Rozzi
2011–December 2013	Margaret Ackerman
January 2014–Present	Dr. Ricardo R. Quinn

**School Colors:** Purple and White

**School Mascot:** "Sparky" Dalmatian

Rescue Unit and the Swift Water Rescue Team. He also served as a volunteer firefighter for the Forsyth County Fire Department, where he established the first Rope Rescue Team and Swift Water Rescue Team. Mr. Chesney was among the first firefighters in Georgia to be actively involved in the "Fire Safety House" program, which was supported

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Gwinnett County Public Schools

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2004



by the Georgia Firefighters Burn Foundation. A statewide grant program was instituted to help fire departments throughout the state acquire their own fire safety houses. In honor of Mr. Chesney's work and dedication, the foundation named the initiative "The Brant Chesney Fire Safety Grant Program" in 1997.

Charles Brant Chesney passed away on December 27, 1996, while fighting a fire on Lake Lanier, just two days before his 37th birthday.

Chesney Elementary School opened under the direction of Principal Carlotta Rozzi with 692 students and 96 teachers and staff. Chesney's diverse student population originated from 47 countries and spoke 27 different languages. That diversity was reflected in the Chesney staff which had its origins on five continents and speaks 12 languages.

The Charter Chesney PTA was formed in the spring of 2004. During the school's first spring and fall registrations, parents assisted Chesney students in voting for the school mascot. Supporting a fire safety theme, students voted to have a Dalmatian serve as the Chesney mascot. After school opened in the fall of 2004, students suggested names for their mascot and selected Sparky as their pet's permanent name. A lifelike statue of Sparky greets visitors to Chesney as they enter the front lobby. Later in the fall (October 24, 2004) the school community officially dedicated its new school, inviting parents, students, community members, and firefighters.

During the first year, Chesney students worked with their art teacher and an artist in residence to create a unique sculptural representation entitled Once in a Bamboo Moon. This sculpture was dedicated to the school in a ceremony that took place in April of 2005. During the second school year, 5th grade students continued the tradition of presenting a gift to the school by planting a Kousa Dogwood tree dedicated to Charles Brant Chesney. Chesney students and staff worked hard to develop partnerships with local businesses and community groups, and participate in the annual Duluth Fall Festival, Barefoot in the Park Arts Festival and other community activities. The school is following the legacy of Charles Brant Chesney by becoming an integral part of the Duluth community and developing a culture of shared commitment to excellence.

In 2014, the school celebrated its 10th anniversary. Participants included MaryAnn Bank, the mother of Charles Brant Chesney, as well as School Board Member Louise Radloff, Duluth Mayor Nancy Harris, Gwinnett

County Fire Battalion Chief Rod Dawson, and former principals Carlotta Rozzi and Margaret Ackerman.

Chesney continues to take great pride in enhancing student achievement while promoting a positive school culture for its students, staff, and parents. That school culture is evident in the high attendance in school events and the school's work to provide technology to support learning. As more teachers integrate instructional technology into lessons, the school has implemented BYOD (Bring Your Own Device) which allows students to use their own devices to "power up" their learning and safely go beyond the boundaries of the school to increase learning opportunities. In addition, the school has been recognized by Gwinnett Clean & Beautiful for its environmental education efforts. Another key to the culture of Chesney Elementary is the school's focus on giving back. Each year, the school participates in Relay for Life and United Way. In addition, students and community volunteers built, painted, and decorated Buddy Benches, which promote an anti-bullying climate.

Good schools build better communities and good communities build better schools... this is certainly true at Chesney Elementary where students, staff, parents, and community members and organizations learn together and lead together! The school's theme for 2016-17, "T.E.A.M. Together Everyone Achieves More," is a testament to this school's commitment to the education of its students.