



Preparing students for

life beyond the classroom

FOCUS ON PHOENIX

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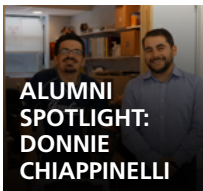
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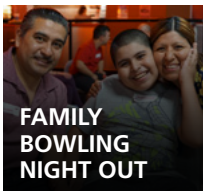
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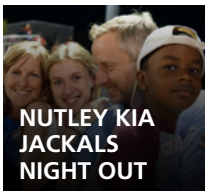
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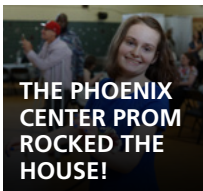
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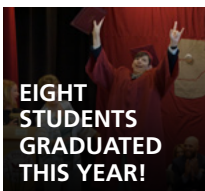
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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Welcome to another school year! I wanted to share with you our theme for 2018–2019: SMILE—See Miracles In Life Every day. This theme exemplifies who we are as a community and how we practice the FISH philosophy's four principles: play, make their day, be present, and choose your attitude. It's about making a personal connection with our students and their families every day.

Now, miracles do not happen overnight. They are the result of the hard work, dedication, and tenacity of a highly-skilled staff, along with the partnership of our families and their sending districts. All of these things are what come together to make miracles happen, and this is the magic The Phoenix Center makes every day! SMILE reminds us that life's little moments should be recognized and appreciated. Think of your own little moments and miracles and see if they don't bring a smile to your face.

Once again, I thank you all for your support, generosity, time, and energy. Remember to smile, because without you, this magic could not happen. 😊

With gratitude,
Julie Mower, M.A.Ed.
Executive Director

The mission of The Phoenix Center, working in partnership with families and community, is to develop the potential of each student with developmental disabilities and those on the autism spectrum ages five through 21 and to provide customized, unique, and individualized programs aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Promoting the development of the whole student, we care for, educate, and empower our students and graduates so that they will develop life-centered skills which will prepare them for life beyond the classroom.

THE PHOENIX CENTER FORMAL ROCKED THE HOUSE!

On June 8th, many of our “senior” students were invited to participate in a formal event with a DJ and a photo booth, well-equipped with props (all provided by Shughes Entertainment). Cindy Vero, on-air radio personality for 95.5 PLJ and 94.7 NASH FM emceed this annual event. Our students and staff were all dressed up and ready to “paint the town” (or gym, in our case)! This event was also covered in the Montclair Dispatch, a local news and events publication.

Cindy has been part of The Phoenix Center Formal for many years, ever since her friend Ashley Agresti asked if she would be kind enough to lead the event. Cindy told The Montclair Dispatch that, “My husband and I are friends with Ashley and her husband, and when she asked me to emcee it was a no-brainer. I love doing it, and I keep coming back year after year. [Ashley] never has to ask me again. I know that when June rolls around, it’s time for prom!”

We are happy to accept donations of formal clothing—dresses, gowns and men’s suits—for our students who may not have access to this kind of attire on their own. If you are interested in donating, please contact Ashley directly at aagresti@thephoenixcenternj.org. ■



EIGHT STUDENTS GRADUATED THIS YEAR!

We were proud to graduate eight students this year! Congratulations to David, Tony, Trisha, Charlotte, Danny, Charlie, Ayrton, and Valerie!

Our graduates were employed at a variety of different worksites, visited day programs, and held in-house positions here at The Phoenix Center, where they prepared mailings, stocked vending machines, and practiced their purchasing skills. They have worked at employment sites like Anthony’s Coal Fired Pizza, TJ Maxx, Tempo Music, Options, Walgreens, Goodwill Industries, William Paterson University, and Vreeland Associates.

A very noteworthy addition this year is that we launched a Graduate Support Services Program for our graduates and their families. Once a month, our Transition Coordinator, Lauren Protomastro will contact our graduates and their families to check-in and see how things are going since graduating from The Phoenix Center. It is our hope that this service will help ensure that our graduates are maximizing the post-21 services available to them. This program is another example of the love and respect we have for our students and their families. Through this new initiative, we are able to stay in touch and help when needed. ■



RECOGNIZING OUR ARTIST!

Amir, a 13-year old 7th grader from Room 201 won 3rd place in his category in a statewide art contest! Amir and his family were invited to attend a Special Education Day celebration on Monday, May 21st by ASAH (the association for schools in special education) at the Marriott Hotel in Princeton. The theme of the art contest was "working together to build a special future for all." Amir was presented with a framed certificate, and a monetary prize. Congratulations Amir! ■

PLAYING IN THE DIRT!

Our Phoenix Center students got a chance to learn about where their food comes from through a hands-on inclusion event with Nutley's Washington Elementary School. Through a peer leadership program, Washington School student ambassadors came to The Phoenix Center for horticulture training! Ashley Agresti, our horticulture instructor, set up a group station activity based on "farm to table" food sourcing. Students identified ingredients, tilled soil, crafted paper salads, and finally made their own. Yummy! ■



KRISPY KREME FUNDRAISER

Our 2nd annual donut fundraiser raised \$1,700. this past summer! Thank you all for supporting this tasty endeavor! ■

50/50 RAFFLE FUNDRAISER

Look for our upcoming 50/50 raffle fundraiser drawing this fall. Raffle tickets are \$50 for one or \$100 for three. Drawing takes place on November 13th at 11:15 a.m. You need not be present to win. All proceeds will go towards the purchase of a new vehicle for our Supported Employment program.

Check our website or contact
CSharaway@thephoenixcenternj.org for more info.



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: DONNIE CHIAPPINELLI, CLASS OF 2014

*From left to right:
Donnie C. and Jonathan Andolino,
Phoenix Center Job Developer*

In 2014, Donnie Chiappinelli graduated from The Phoenix Center, and he has been up to some great things ever since. Donnie has volunteered at The Phoenix Center each of the last three summers. At 22, Donnie lives in Belleville, New Jersey and shared some insights with us on school, life, and his future. Here are some excerpts from our interview with Donnie.

What have you been doing since you graduated?

I have been going to Bergen Community College. I will be getting my Associates degree in general studies—June 2019.

What's your favorite subject?

Science.

Why do you like it?

I love learning about organisms and what's around me; my favorite is astronomy because I like looking at the stars.

Do you have a favorite school activity?

I like art because it allows me to express my creativity. Probably sketching is my favorite, and I'll sketch anything!

What do you enjoy doing outside of school?

I enjoy creative writing—I write stories. I like to write about people who find themselves in unfortunate situations and how they get themselves out of it.

Do you have a role model?

I do...it's my older brother. He is 36, going on 37, because he conducts himself well and that's how I want to conduct myself.

What's your favorite holiday?

Christmas...because it allows you to give to others, also you receive some really cool presents.

What's your favorite food?

I like a lot of different foods, but one of my favorites is shrimp—shrimp cocktail.

Do you have a favorite TV show?

Gotham, on Fox network, it's about Batman, before there was a Batman. It's a little violent but the stories are great.

How long did you attend The Phoenix Center?

For 12 years, I graduated in 2014.

What do you like best about The Phoenix Center?

The staff here is really nice, they truly care about you and want to help you succeed.

Where do you see yourself in five years?

I like so many different things; I am not sure since I have so many interests.

What have you been working on at The Phoenix Center?

Data entry, form entry, fixing mistakes on computer forms, loading and unloading packages.

"The end of the school year is always a very busy and hectic time here and I really appreciate what Donnie does for me and the school while he is here. It's a real weight off my shoulders having him here," said Jonathan Andolino, Job Developer.

To which Donnie responded, "And I am more than happy to do it!" ■

MARY POPPINS AT OUR SPRING CONCERT!

Students Analy, from room 204 and Zion, from Room 209 gave a stellar performance as the lead actors in our production of Mary Poppins. What a great show! Special thanks to: Music Director: Linda Decker, Art Director: Matt Palmieri and Assistant Director: Lauren Martini. ■



FAMILY BOWLING NIGHT OUT

In early June, 91 guests (28 students and their families, along with 26 staff and administrators) attended our Family Bowling Night Out. Our event took place at Brunswick Zone in Belleville, NJ, where families were supported by our staff. Bowling with Pizza...now that's a lucky STRIKE bonus! ■



NUTLEY KIA JACKALS NIGHT OUT

Thank you to our Board Member, Jim Russomano, and his wife, Anne of Nutley Kia, for sponsoring some of our students and their families at a Jackals Baseball Game on June 8th. Attendance included 18 students and their families, totaling 59 guests and 24 staff members. Jim and Anne, thanks for hosting us for yet another year! ■



BELLEVILLE HIGH SCHOOL INCLUSION EVENT

Teachers Marc, Stephanie, Tom, Kelly, and Greg were instrumental in creating yet another fantastic inclusion event with Belleville High School. Students from Belleville High School, their teacher Ron Laxamana, and Phoenix Center students engaged in a collaborative and inclusive learning opportunity. They played basketball on our BankShot basketball court and participated in a hands-on learning project (led by teacher Ashley Agresti). Lastly, they indulged a pizza lunch and spent time socializing and getting to know one another. What a wonderful way to spend an afternoon together, building new friendships! ■



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