

# The Work Readiness Academy

November 2023 Monthly Report

## Director's Message



Dear WRA Families,

I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday whether you stayed local here in New Jersey or braved the roads to travel and be with family and friends out of state. This month we have been spending a good amount of time discussing gratitude with our students and the many things we are thankful for in our lives including our families, our friends, our health, and of course, video games :)

During this time of year Rachel and I are reminded of how grateful we are for the dedicated group of adults who makeup our WRA staff. Each and every person on our team is here for the right reasons. We care about supporting your children, bringing out their very best qualities, and helping them to recognize their strengths as we prepare them for a life of independence and fulfillment. Thank you, WRA Team!

It's hard to believe we are just three weeks away from our Winter break. We know many families will be celebrating a variety of holidays this month. Enjoy - and please don't hesitate to contact us if you or your child would like to share some of your family's holiday traditions with our community.

Please enjoy the rest of this month's newsletter.

Sincerely,

**Josh Bornstein**

**Director at the UCESC Work Readiness Academy**

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## Upcoming Dates

**December 22** - WRA Student Holiday Celebration & 1pm Dismissal

**December 25-31** - Winter Recess (WRA Closed)

**January 1** - New Year's Day (WRA Closed)

**January 2** - WRA Re-opens



## Student Absences, Late Arrivals & Early Dismissals

As a reminder, in the event that your child will be absent, arriving late, or picked up early, please call our main number at (908) 633-2704 and speak with our secretary Maureen Wakeman. If it is before 8am, please leave a message. You can also email Maureen at [mwakeman@ucesc.org](mailto:mwakeman@ucesc.org)

## November Spotlights



### Student of the Month

Congratulations to **Kevin Villacis**, our student of the month at the Work Readiness Academy. Kevin is a hard working, polite, and kind student. Not only does he participate in his Work Based Learning while at the WRA, but he is also working at a paid part-time job in the kitchen at the Hilton hotel on weekends.

Kevin is always willing to help out his fellow students, and does so with patience, humility and good humor. Way to go, Kevin. Well deserved!



### Meet the Staff

**Tracie Wiebush, WRA Teaching Assistant!**

**How many years have you worked at UCESC & in what roles?**

This is my (gulp) 19th year at the Commission. I was a paraprofessional at Crossroads School for the first 14 years and then joined the



### Community Partner Spotlight

Established in 1983, **Legacy Salon** is a full-service hair salon based in downtown Cranford, New Jersey. For the past two years, Lauren Curley & her team at Legacy have partnered with the Work Readiness Academy to serve as a Work-Based Learning site for our students. Interns get to learn many tasks associated with a salon assistant position including product stocking, general sweeping & cleaning, folding towels, washing coloring bowls, and assisting clients. Legacy is a Paul



Work Readiness Academy in 2015.

**Why do you love your job?**

I love my job because I have amazing coworkers and the students are wonderful; they learn from me and I learn from them!

**What do you like to do in your free time?**

I love to read, cuddle with my dog and spend time with my family at the beach.

**People may be surprised to know that...**

I have two tattoos; one commemorating my church; and the other honoring my nephew.

Mitchell focus salon with a commitment to only using products that are animal cruelty-free and good for the planet. They even have vegan hair products and color! Legacy us also a certified Green Circle Salon, recycling everything from hair to foils to old product packaging.

We thank Legacy Salon for hosting our students!

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## *Supervisor's Corner*



The students at Work Readiness Academy have been hard at work exploring a variety of new topics this month! Our employability skills focus of the month are teamwork and productivity. Students have had the opportunity to explore both skills while in the classroom and have been making great progress demonstrating their understanding while at their Work Based Learning internships throughout the week. To gain a deeper understanding of the importance and value of teamwork, students were challenged to create tall towers, using only marshmallows and toothpicks. They worked together, problem solved and had a blast! As the holiday approached, students participated in a variety of lessons to discover the meaning of gratitude. During a whole group

community lesson, students shared who and what they are grateful for, and how they can express their appreciation each and everyday. In addition, students helped in the planning, preparation and cooking for our Thanksgiving feast. Having the chance to generalize their skills in a natural environment supports our students in making real life connections to the concepts and topics being covered. We are so proud of all of their hard work this month and look forward to watching them continue to grow!

# WORK READINESS ACADEMY FRIENDSGIVING MENU



Pilgrim Chicken Cutlets  
Macaroni and Cheese  
Mashed Potatoes  
Stuffing  
Corn Bread/Rolls  
Student Empanadas  
Sweet Potato Casserole  
Corn Pudding  
Various Desserts











## What's Happening at Project SEARCH?

During the month of November the Project SEARCH students learned about filtering their thoughts in a lesson called “Think it or Say it.” They also continued their learning about problem solving by examining real life problems and talking about their impacts in a lesson on matching problems to reaction sizes.



Just in time for Thanksgiving, the students read an article called *The Science of Gratitude* and found that being grateful can promote good health and well being. We enjoyed celebrating the upcoming holiday with a delicious feast. We want to thank Overlook Hospital’s Food and Nutrition Department for offering to provide the students with a lesson on Healthy Eating. The students are excited for the smoothie samples they will be able to taste.

- Jourdan Spencer, Project SEARCH Instructor







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## Application Now Available!

The online application for the **Project SEARCH at Overlook Medical Center Class of 2025** is now available and can be accessed by clicking the link below:

<https://forms.gle/JJmq3rnpPeV1zXA97>

Interested students and their families must first attend one of our upcoming virtual information sessions:

### Upcoming Dates:

Tuesday, December 12th at 7pm

Tuesday, January 16th at 7pm

Tuesday, February 13th at 7pm

Tuesday, March 12th at 7pm

Tuesday, April 16th at 7pm

Please email Josh Bornstein at [jbornstein@ucesc.org](mailto:jbornstein@ucesc.org) with your preferred date and we will send you the Google Meet link for the requested session.





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## *Director's Award for the Month of November*

Congratulations to **Layla Jackson** - the winner of this month's Director's Award!

Layla demonstrates genuine care and concern for her peers at the WRA. She is always attuned to how others are feeling and advocates for peers who she feels may be upset or need support.

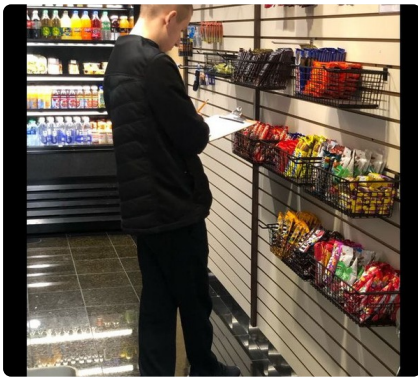


The Director's Award is given out each month to a student who exemplifies kindness and compassion - two important values at the WRA.

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## *Snapshots from November Work-Based Learning*





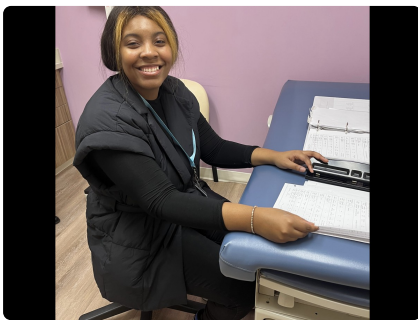
**Paul at the Hilton Hotel**



**Bre at Children's Specialized Hospital**



**Kevin at the Hilton Hotel**



**Layla at Summit Health Pediatrics**



**Nick at Walgreens**



**Nick at Summit Health - Mail Room Operations**



**Jamari at Overlook Engineering**



**Cole at Overlook Surgical Services**



**Wadney at Overlook Radiology**





**Steven at Overlook  
Oncology**



**Jon at Overlook Food  
Services**



**Louis at Overlook Panera  
Bread**



**Thomas at Overlook  
Materials Management**



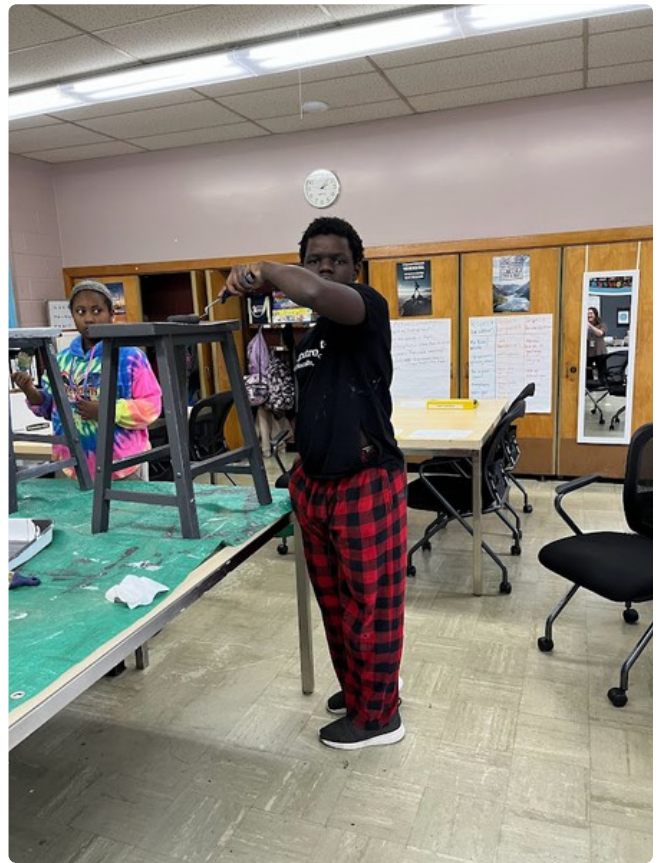
**Jazmin at Overlook Gift  
Shop**

## *Elective Class - Up Close!*

WRA Teacher Jodi Klimko has been offering a new elective class on Friday afternoons...Intro to Furniture Restoration. Students in this elective are learning how to strip & sand used furniture pieces...and then bringing them back to life with a fresh coat (or two) of paint. The group plans to re-sell the newly improved furniture as a program fundraiser.







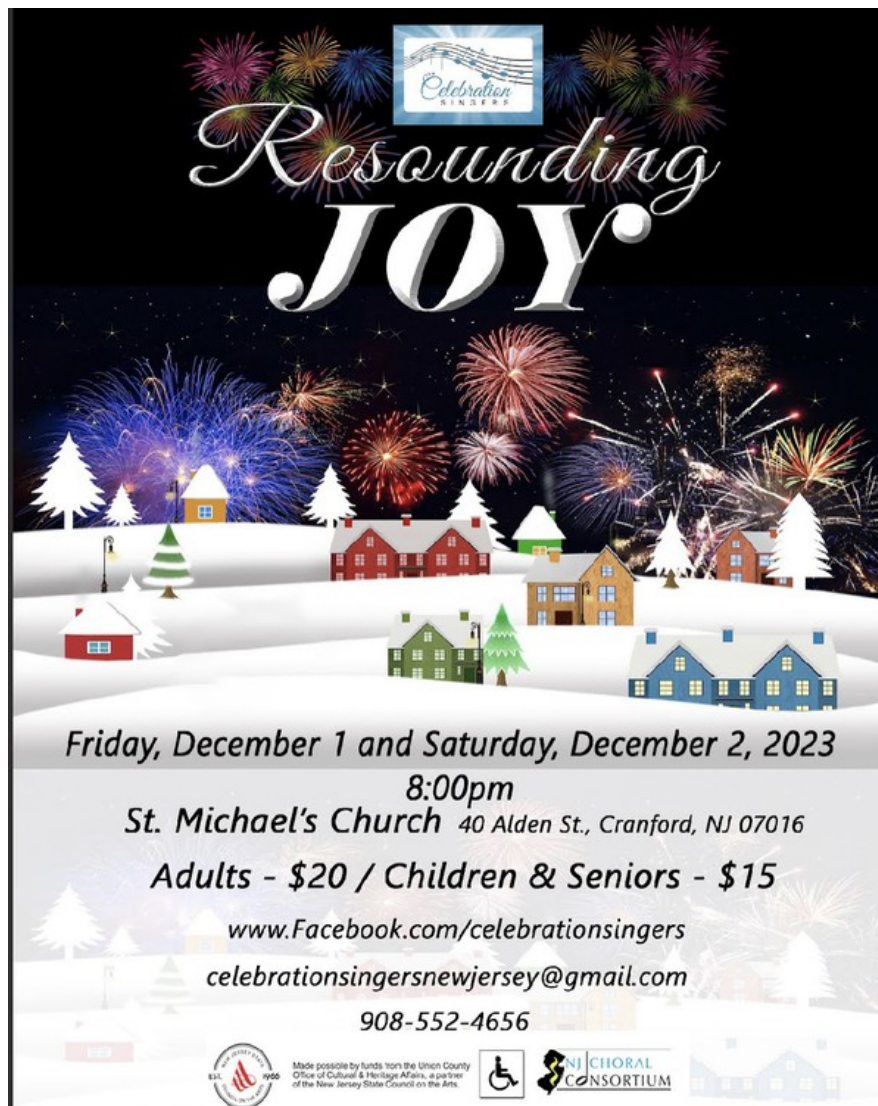
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## *WRA Spotted in the Community*

WRA student **Alejandro Colon** will be joining the Celebration Singers at their concert on Saturday night, December 2, 2023 at St. Michael's Church in Cranford! Details are below.







## *Picture of the Month*

Charlie looking proud after building his first bike at Hilltop Bicycle in Cranford, New Jersey!



### About the Work Readiness Academy

The Work Readiness Academy serves students ages 18-21 with disabilities and provides a comprehensive employment training experience that incorporates both classroom-based instruction and community-based work-learning experiences. While in the training classroom, students work cooperatively with similar aged peers to learn critical skills related to employment and socialization. Students also work on career exploration and planning, including the development of a person-centered, post-secondary vision and plan with clear goals and action steps. Program staff remain on-site during the internships to provide and fade support and assistance as needed. Students also participate in field trips focused on career discovery, independent living skills, recreation and independent travel training.

For more information or to make a student referral, please email Josh Bornstein at

[jbornstein@ucesc.org](mailto:jbornstein@ucesc.org)

**Email:** [jbornstein@ucesc.org](mailto:jbornstein@ucesc.org)

**Website:** [https://www.ucesc.org/schools/the\\_work\\_readiness\\_academy](https://www.ucesc.org/schools/the_work_readiness_academy)

**Location:** [970 Suburban Road, Union, NJ, USA](#)

**Phone:** [908-633-2704](tel:908-633-2704)



[Click here to visit the WRA on Instagram!](#)



**WRA Smore**

WRA is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters







# Crossroads Monthly Report

November 2023



## Principal's Message

I hope this message finds you well rested after the Thanksgiving break. As we return to school after the long weekend, it's a perfect time to reflect on the spirit of gratitude that permeates our school community. Here at Crossroads School, we certainly have a lot to be grateful for. This past month we were able to open our ADL room. This room will allow students to work on skills such as making the bed, folding laundry, setting and clearing the table, as well as participating in various leisure activities. This room would not have been possible without the generous donations of items

from staff, parents, and community members.

On a personal note, I am incredibly thankful for the outstanding dedication of our staff as well as for the support of our parents and families. Your commitment to fostering a positive and collaborative learning environment is truly remarkable, and it sets the tone for a successful educational environment. As we move into the month of December we look forward to celebrating all the different holidays that take place this time of year. I wish you all a fantastic month as we prepare for the holiday season.

Warm regards,

Principal Matt

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## General Information

Enrollment as of November 29, 2023

**Actual:** 52

**Changes:** Entered: 3 Exited:0

**Referrals:** 6

**Intakes Scheduled:** 1

**Accepted:** 1

**Fire Drills:** 11/15/23

**Emergency Drills:** 11/6/23 (Evacuation)

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## Upcoming Dates

**December 7, 2023** - Parent Education and PTO Meeting

**December 21, 2023** - Crossroads Holiday Activity (schedule will be sent out)

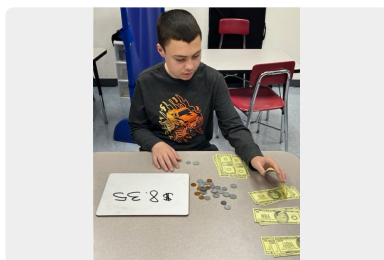
**December 22, 2023** -Early Dismissal (1:00PM) for Winter Recess

**December 23, 2023 - January 1, 2024** - School Closed for Winter Recess

**January 2, 2024** - School Reopens

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## *Crossroads Staff and Student Spotlight*



### Student of the Month - Manny

Manny in Mr. Steve's class is striving to improve his money skills. Manny often engages in worksheets, manipulatives, and other school activities that require him to demonstrate a variety of money amounts. More recently, Manny is beginning to generalize money concepts in different environments. One way Manny applies money in school is by operating the school store. Manny uses a menu along with a visual chart to help determine the cost of a customer's order. Manny counts and exchanges mixed coins and dollars with his clients. Manny is also learning to make purchases in the community during Middle School C.B.I trips. This month, Manny visited Panera Bread, successfully purchasing breakfast with his friends.





## **Certified Staff of the Month - Consuelo Alzate - Teacher**

### **1. How long have you been working at the commission?**

I have been working at the commission for almost 25 years!

### **2. What would we be surprised to find out about you?**

Most people don't know that I love scuba diving as much as skydiving.

### **3. What is your dream vacation?**

My dream vacation is to take a cruise around the world, stopping at every place of interest where I can learn about the culture and enjoy the cuisine.

### **4. What is your favorite meal?**

Food I see, food I eat!!! However, I have a soft spot for Portuguese food.

### **5. What is your greatest accomplishment?**

I would like to think that one of my greatest accomplishments has been my career. I came to this country as a single mother, with no family or friends. I went to college, graduated with dual Masters Degrees and have devoted my life to working with children for the last 25 years.



## **Teacher Assistant of the Month - Aaron Mantilla**

### **1. How long have you been working at the commission?**

For about 4 months. I started this previous summer.

### **2. What would we be surprised to find out about you?**

I coach volleyball at my hometown high school.

### **3. What is your dream vacation?**

My dream vacation would be to visit Lake Como in Italy where they filmed the Star Wars movie "Attack of the Clones"

### **4. What is your favorite meal?**

A Chipotle chicken bowl with a tortilla on the side and all the veggies!

### **5. What is your greatest accomplishment?**

Being a role model, whether that means being a coach, a player, a brother. This is my greatest accomplishment!

# Classroom Spotlights

## Ms. Consuelo's Classroom

Welcome to Miss Consuelo's preschool class. This year we have three excellent Teacher Assistants in Sandra, Joanne, and Mary Kay. The students have been working hard acquiring many new skills, as well as working on their prosocial behaviors. The students are preparing themselves for advancement to Kindergarten. Each day students are presented with activities with the goal of furthering their independence. Other skills addressed within the classroom are: self-care, listener responding, fine motor, visual perception, manding, motor imitation, independent and group playing, and pre-academic skills. It's a full day of school for these little explorers discovering all that comes their way.

Direct Instruction provides each student with the preschool curriculum and pre-academic skills they need to develop healthy life-long learning skills. They are learning concepts such as numbers, senses, letters, colors, shapes, days of week, months of the year, seasons, and weather. The students are engaged through hands-on educational manipulatives, songs, and toys. Recently the children had a blast celebrating Halloween. They enjoyed discovering, exploring, decorating pumpkins, and trick-or-treating. Some of our students had a great surprise when they had family members visit to help them along the way. Under the guidance and supervision of Ms. Consuelo, and her nearly 24 years experience, another great year is underway!







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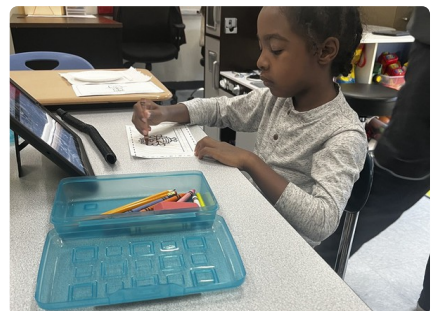
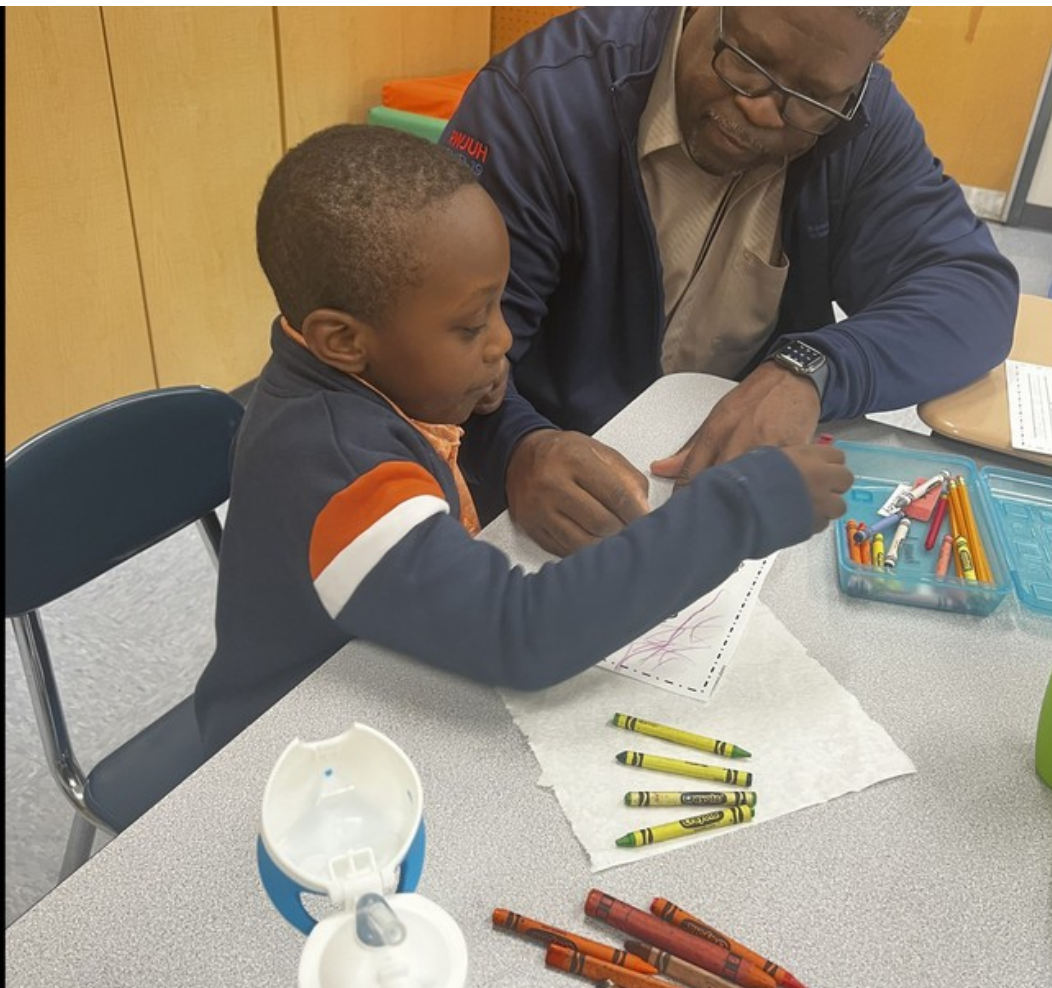
### Ms. Hannah's Classroom

We have had a lot to be thankful for in Room 104! In November, we have been able to enjoy new experiences with new and old friends. Our classroom has grown in size and skill. Earlier this month, we welcomed a new friend to our class and we are having a blast getting to know him. Room 104 has had a month of practicing our social skills like playing together and taking turns, greeting and helping others, and being independent. We also got to go on our 1st field trip of the year to the zoo. We had fun identifying the different animals and riding on the train. The kids were able to name the animals as well as each sound. We also used this trip as an opportunity to practice eating in a public space and work on our waiting skills.



As Thanksgiving approached, we remembered to be grateful for our friends, family, and teachers. We made sure to use our manners, by saying please and thank you using words, sign language, or an AAC device. We made sure to spread our spirit of gratitude in making our hand turkeys during OT group and having a movement and dance party. We also made sure to make a Thanksgiving placemat for all the food we got to enjoy. We are so grateful for the past and are excited for the rest of the year!





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## *Therapy Spotlight*

**Ms. Dina Brigandi, Ms. Jessica Trelles, and Ms. Sara Winter - OT Department**

November has been a fun month for the OT department as the SEL theme is Gratitude and Native American culture. The activities have been tailored to teach our students the meaning of Thanksgiving as well as holiday traditions and celebrating native





American heritage. The students have worked on fine motor and handwriting tasks by creating grateful trees and turkeys. Our pre-writers used crayons to trace and color turkey trails (mazes) while climbing in the foam pit. During the OT group sessions students worked on sensory, fine motor and visual motor skills by creating turkey crafts; while some of our older students practiced setting the table in preparation for the holiday meal in our brand new mock apartment/ADL room.



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*November at Crossroads*











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## *Crossroads in the Community*













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## Parent Resources

Free STEM Program with former Crossroads SLP Hope



# FREE STEM PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2023

SESSION 1: 11-11:30 AM (AGES 5-8)  
SESSION 2: 11:45 AM-12:15 PM (AGES 9-12)

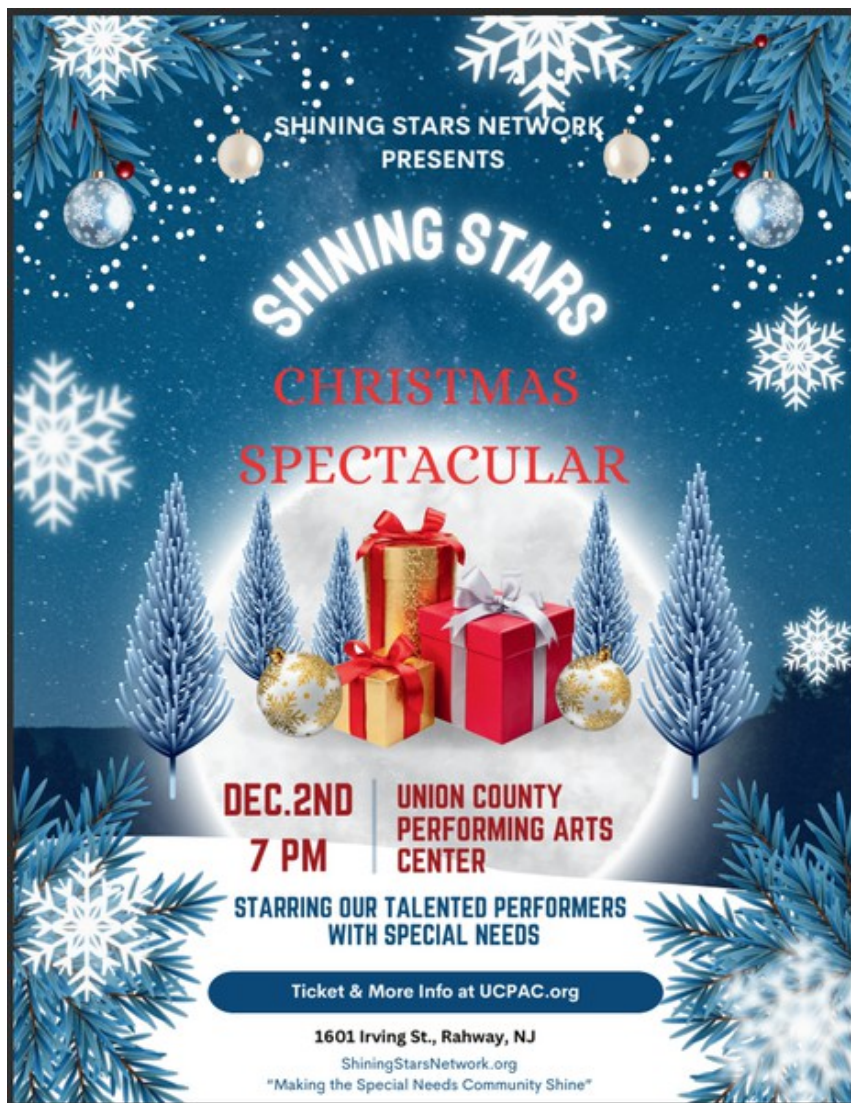
AT THE KENILWORTH PUBLIC LIBRARY  
548 BOULEVARD, KENILWORTH, NJ 07033

Registration is required-space is limited to 5 per group  
Register at [www.creationsofhope.net/events](http://www.creationsofhope.net/events)  
For questions email [info@creationsofhope.net](mailto:info@creationsofhope.net)

This event is not a library-sponsored program

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# Caregiver Support Group at the JCC



with Lisa Afflitto,  
Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW)

Wednesdays

October 18, November 15, December 20,  
January 17, February 21, March 20, April 17,  
May 15, June 19

7:30 - 8:45 p.m.

Raising a child with special needs is challenging and requires a unique approach. Join Lisa Afflitto, LCSW, for a monthly support group where caregivers can learn strategies to support their own mental wellness, share their experiences and meet/connect with other caregivers. This monthly group is free.

Lisa Afflitto is a seasoned Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW), a NJ certified Special Education teacher and the owner of Integrative Therapy Solutions, LLC. Her clinical focus is in supporting adults (18+) and families, who are navigating life either as an individual with a disability, or as a caregiver to a child or adult with a disability.

Lisa has a passion for facilitating support groups and bringing caregivers together to connect in a supportive space.

For questions and registration, contact Beth Mitchell, Director of Inclusion and Diversity, at [BMitchell@jccnj.org](mailto:BMitchell@jccnj.org).

The JCC of Central NJ is committed to accessibility and inclusion.  
To request accommodations, please contact Beth Mitchell  
at [bmitchell@jccnj.org](mailto:bmitchell@jccnj.org) at least two weeks prior to an event.



Help us stock and fund  
Bagged with Love for the  
food insecure. Food or  
fund donations welcome  
at this event!  
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## Reminders!

As we enter the winter months please be sure to pack warm weather clothing for your child. As long as it does not get too cold we will make every attempt to have the students enjoy recess outdoors. 🧒



## About Us

Website: [https://www.ucesc.org/schools/crossroads\\_school](https://www.ucesc.org/schools/crossroads_school)

Location: [45 Cardinal Drive, Westfield, NJ, USA](#)

Phone: [908-233-9317](tel:908-233-9317)

Visit us on Instagram





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# Westlake's

## November Monthly Report

### Principal's Message

#### Happy Thanksgiving to our Westlake District, Home and School Families!!!

This month, we are celebrating GRATITUDE and Hispanic Heritage Month. Students have displayed their gratitude in many ways, through their lessons, sharing with their friends, creating bulletin boards, kindness towards one another and speaking individually about things that they are grateful for. Students have expressed their gratitude for returning to our school building and being back home where they are thriving academically, socially and through the work that they are accomplishing!



This month, students are continuing to make products such as jewelry, chocolates and dog biscuits and fully running an in school Café, named the "Sunshine Café." They also express their gratitude for each other and for their families!

From everyone at Westlake school we would like to express our gratitude for sharing your children with us everyday and giving us the chance to learn and grow with them. We hope everyone has a wonderful and healthy Thanksgiving!

Sincerely,  
Claudine Tantillo and Robert Peneno



## Westlake Information!

Current Enrollment: 55

Referrals: 6

Acceptances: 1

Fire Drill - November 2, 2023

Non-Fire Drill: On Site Evacuation - November 6, 2023



## Westlake September Spotlight!

### Student of the Month!



B.W. is GRATEFUL for all her teachers and therapists!

## Principal's Award!

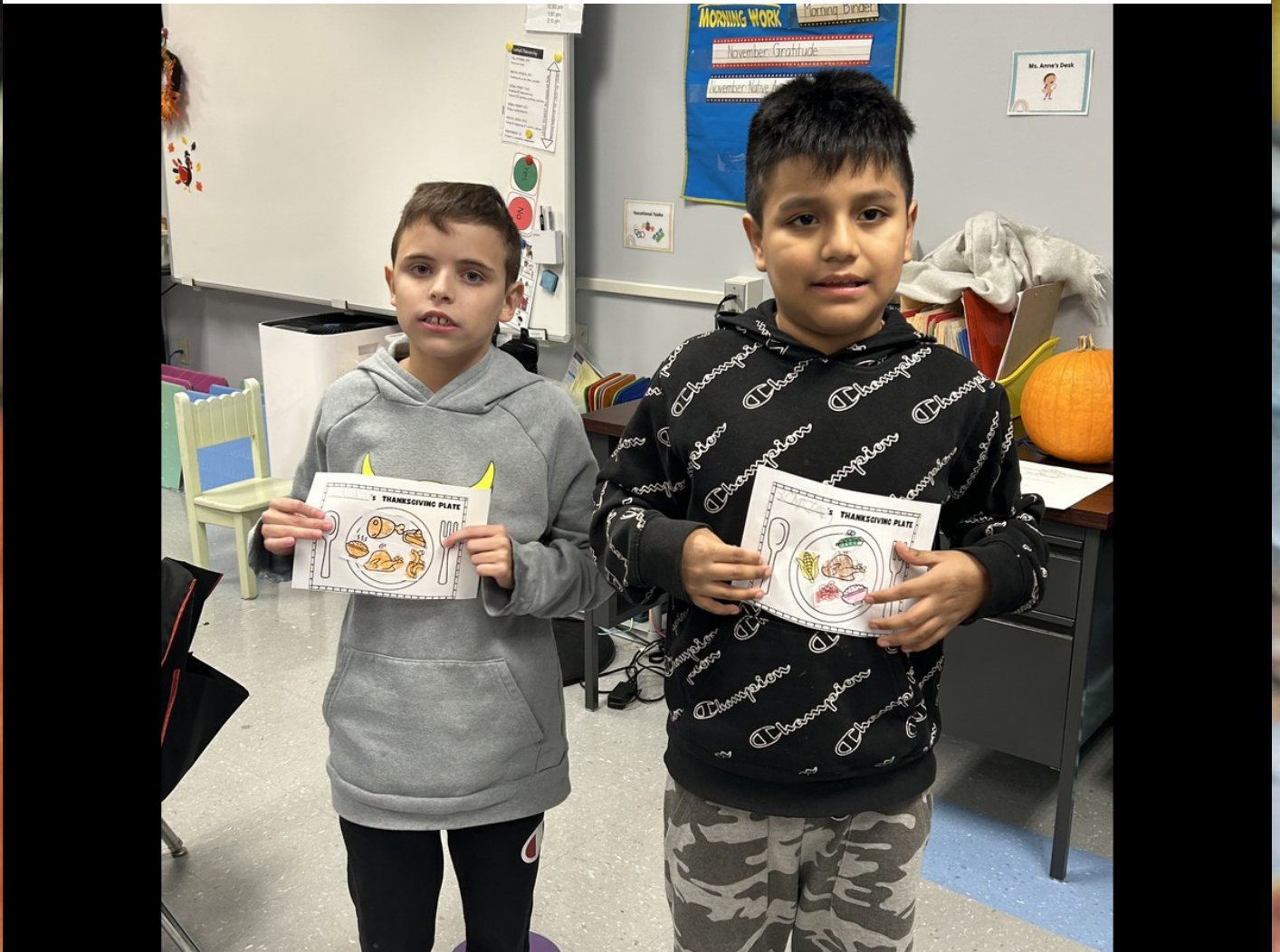
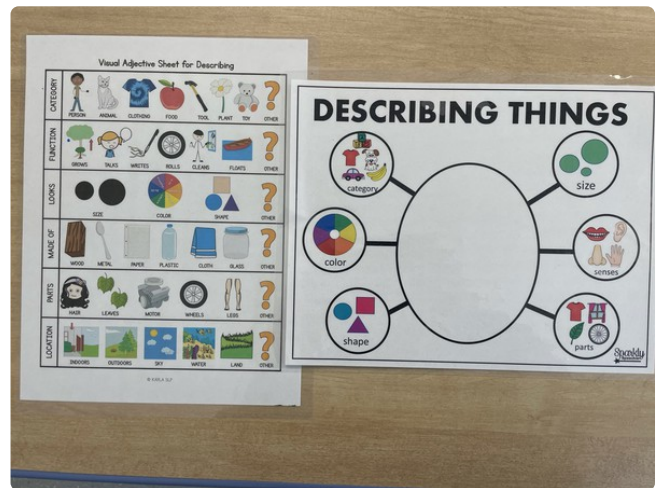


J.D. is GRATEFUL for all of the skills he is learning in the Sunshine Cafe!

## Therapist Spotlight - Mrs. Jess

We are preparing for the fall/winter holidays while working on our categorization and describing skills in speech therapy this month! The students worked in their individual and group speech therapy sessions to identify the holiday/holiday item and sort them into the correct category. Our students with describing goals used our describing visuals to talk about our holiday items in more detail! We had so much fun and can't wait to do the same for our Spring holidays in just a few months.





## October Wrap Up!

Westlake students enjoyed a Fall Dance on October 31st! Staff and students dressed up in costumes, danced to their favorite songs and watched fun fall theme movies!