



# HILLCREST ACADEMY NORTH

*JANUARY 2024*

## Principal's Message



Dear Hillcrest Academy North Campus (HAN) Student and Families:

January has been a very productive month here at HAN. Students have been working diligently in the classes in finishing projects and assignments for marking period 2. HAN facilitated an "advocate meeting" during the middle of the month designed for advocates to meet with students to review grades, missing assignments, attendance, and overall attitude about school. These

meetings have proven to be productive as students are reminded of their progress, or lack of, toward the end of the marking period. It opens up an opportunity for staff to connect with students by demonstrating that we care about their well being both academically and social emotionally.

I wish everyone a very Happy New Year!

Sincerely,

Mr. Marquet  
Principal

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# Upcoming Dates

February 1st - Marking Period 3 Begins

February 9th - Professional Development Day - School Closed for Students

February 16th-19th - President's Weekend - School Closed

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## Staff Spotlight - Mrs. Flores

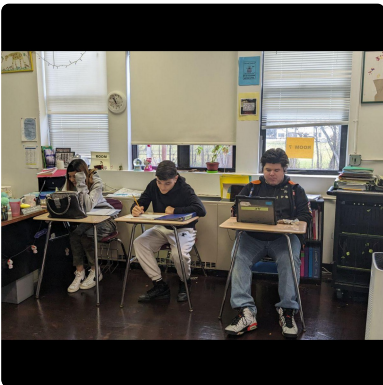


Mrs. Flores is the Spanish Teacher at Hillcrest Academy North and has been teaching here for two years. She has been with UCESC for over a decade. Mrs. Flores is adored by her students and her positive, upbeat energy is felt around the building. Mrs. Flores put together the Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration in October. Students in the Spanish classes created and led five different activities for students to participate in. Under Mrs. Flores' guidance, students created posters celebrating the different cultures of various Spanish speaking countries, and engaged the entire building in the Celebration. We will miss Mrs.

Flores while she spends the next year teaching Spanish at Hillcrest Academy South!

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## Classroom Spotlights



### Ms. Lederman, English Teacher

Ms. Lederman's English class finished up "author's purpose" by exploring why Machiavelli wrote *The Prince*. Then they started exploring "theme" by reading *Names/Nombres* by Julia Alvarez. For both the passage and the short story, students answered written questions and had discussions about the texts. Then they wrote a claim, evidence, analysis paragraph about each.

In Creative Writing the class has been writing short stories, scoring their classmates short stories with a rubric they created (based off of one Ms. Lederman created), and then revising those short stories to make them even better, making sure they include dialogue, imagery, and proper punctuation.

### Mr. Mojovich, Physical Education & Health Teacher

During the 2nd marking period, in Health Class, the topic of discussion was Sexual Health Education. There were so many topics being discussed that are very important for students to be aware about and know more about. Some of the topics discussed were the reproductive systems, the importance of knowing about and how to treat and prevent HIV/AIDS/STDs, and prenatal



development and care. Students would listen to me present my Google Slide presentation and it would be followed up with a 'questions for understanding' worksheet. All of the students were engaged and asked great questions about the topics that were discussed.

Along with talking about Sexual Health Education, I also assisted on administering an ELA portfolio essay. Students had to read an article named, "How the Web Affects Memory," where a Harvard Professor Daniel Wegner did several experiments testing out whether or not the internet has proven that we rely too much on it, instead of using our memory. Students had to complete a multiple choice assessment, along with a 5 paragraph essay, agreeing or disagreeing with Wegner's assessment. Students worked on completing the essay daily, as they were instructed to complete a paragraph daily. At the end of it all, they had to type up the essay and submit it to the Supervisor of Instruction for credit.



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## January at HAN



### SEL

Mr. Jones joining in on playing video games during lunch in Mr. Kaplan's class. Students enjoy taking a break and relaxing on the couches after completing their Claim, Evidence, Analysis assignments!



### Spirit Days

HAN had weekly Spirit Days throughout the month of January. Students have been working hard in their classes as the Marking Period comes to an end and the Friday Spirit Days were always looked forward to!



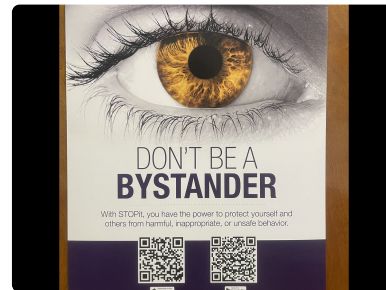
### Welcome Back Mrs. Picciano!

HAN is excited to welcome back the Art Teacher, Mrs. Picciano! Students are looking forward to working on their creative and artistic skills in Mrs. Picciano's classes!

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## STOPit Solutions

Students and staff were introduced to STOPit Solutions, a program that allows students and staff to report any concerns about unsafe, harmful, or inappropriate behavior to the HAN Safety Team. Students are encouraged to download the STOPit App onto their phones.



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## About HAN



Hillcrest Academy North assists students from the Elizabeth Public School District in reaching their full potential by providing an alternative to the traditional high school setting. We offer smaller class sizes with a rigorous and challenging high school curriculum that is aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards and prepares students for college and career. Our goal is to provide a safe, supportive, and empowering school

environment that fosters lifelong learning, mutual respect, creativity, and the joy of learning, with an effective, caring, innovative staff, in partnership with home and the community.

Mr. John Marquet, Principal

Mr. Thomas Van Cleef, Supervisor of Instruction

Location: [2630 Plainfield Ave, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076](https://www.google.com/maps/place/2630+Plainfield+Ave,+Scotch+Plains,+NJ+07076)

Phone Number: (908) 233-9366

Website: [https://ucesc.org/schools/hillcrest\\_academy\\_north](https://ucesc.org/schools/hillcrest_academy_north)

**Visit Us On Instagram**

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## Mission Statement

It is the mission of Hillcrest Academy North that all graduates have demonstrated the following attributes: Responsibility and accountability for themselves by routinely producing quality work through high academic standards now and in the future A sense of pride in who they are and what they can contribute as a

[ucesc.org](https://ucesc.org)



**John Marquet**

John is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





# JANUARY NEWSLETTER

## Principal's Message

Dear Westlake Community,

As we embark on a new year, our social emotional learning for the month of January, lets us celebrate the leadership, courage and everyday heroes within our school. Together, we encourage an environment where each student and staff member has the opportunity to exhibit leadership qualities and courage in their every day experiences. Let us all recognize the unsung heroes among us, whose actions inspire and elevate our school community. Our newsletter continues to showcase these heroes and the work they do everyday.



By embracing these principles, we shape a future where everyone can be a leader and find their inner hero within.

Best regards,  
Claudine



## Dates to Remember!



Parent/Teacher Conferences: January 29, 2024 - February 2, 2024

School Closed: President's Weekend: February 16, 2024 and February 19, 2024

March Madness (Westlake Basketball Game) - March 20, 2024

School Closed: Spring Break: March 9, 2024 - April 5, 2024



## Westlake December Spotlight!

### Student of the Month



C.A. was nominated for all of the times that she showed courage in the classroom.

### Principal's Award!



## *Principal's Award*



**We are so proud of R.G. for being a leader in the classroom!**

## Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month!





**J.D. is working hard at being a server in the cafe!**



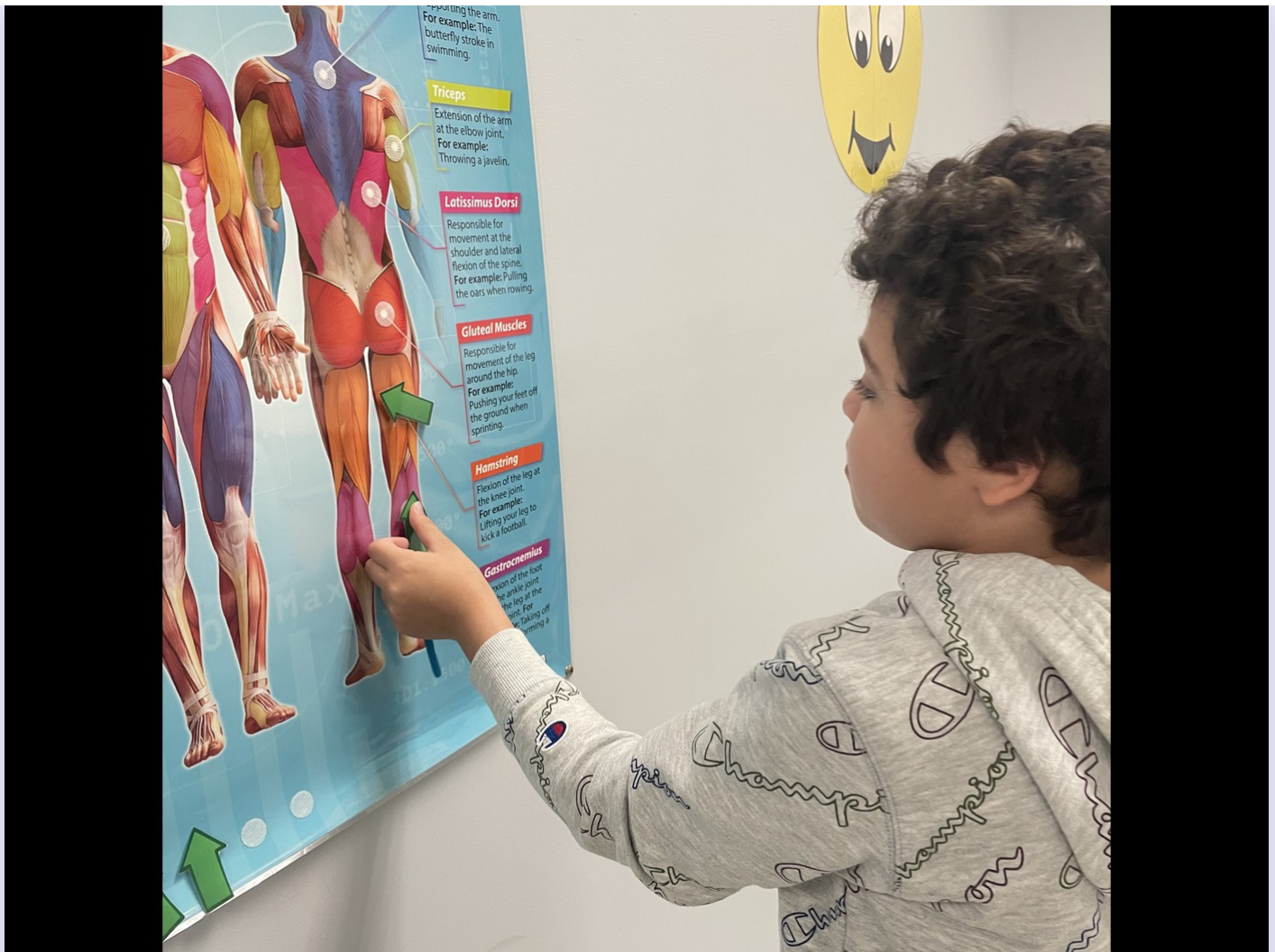


## Therapist Spotlight - Ms. Aliza

We are having a great time in physical therapy (PT) this month working on our movement, strength, balance/coordination and gross motor skills. In Westlake School PT services are provided both in individual and group sessions. During PT group we have a great time working together with our peers to move and strengthen. We also practice other skills in our groups such as; taking turns, waiting our turn, cheering on our peers and helping our friends. The new treadmills have been a great addition to our PT program this year!

Many of our students are using them to work on endurance and gait and enjoy charting their progress. Overall our students are having a great month in PT and are continuing to make steady progress towards their goals!







Demember Wrap Up!





The month of December is an exciting time at Westlake.  
We celebrate many different holidays with 12 theme  
days and activities!  
We ended the month with special visits and a  
sing-a-long!





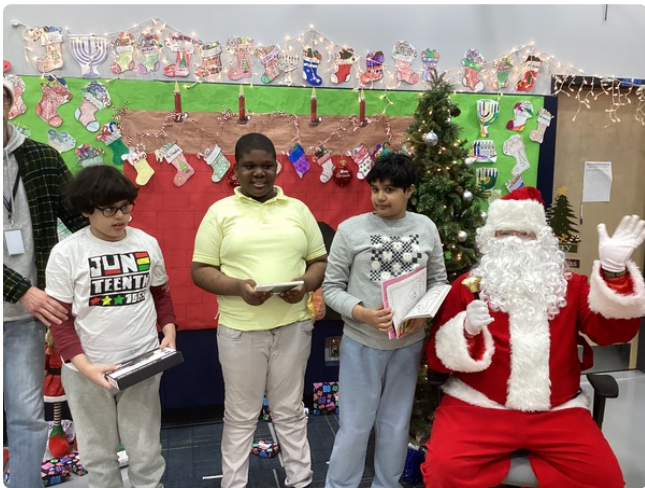


















# January - A time to show Leadership and Courage

Mr. Will Scott



Will Scott worked for the Union County Educational Services Commission for 20 years, he worked at both Lambert's Mill Academy and Westlake School. For the last 2 years, Will showed his courage everyday coming to work with a smile on his face, while battling brain cancer. He did not let his treatments stop him from working and joking with students. Will lost his battle with cancer on December 26, 2023. He will be missed!





I.S. shows courage everyday when he gets a shot from the nurse!



Classes focused on the monthly theme, courage and leadership, by learning about Martin Luther King Jr.. They listened to his "I have a dream" speech and complete differentiated activities.

In art, classes made a lion craft while discussing what it means to be courageous!



Thank You Provident Bank!

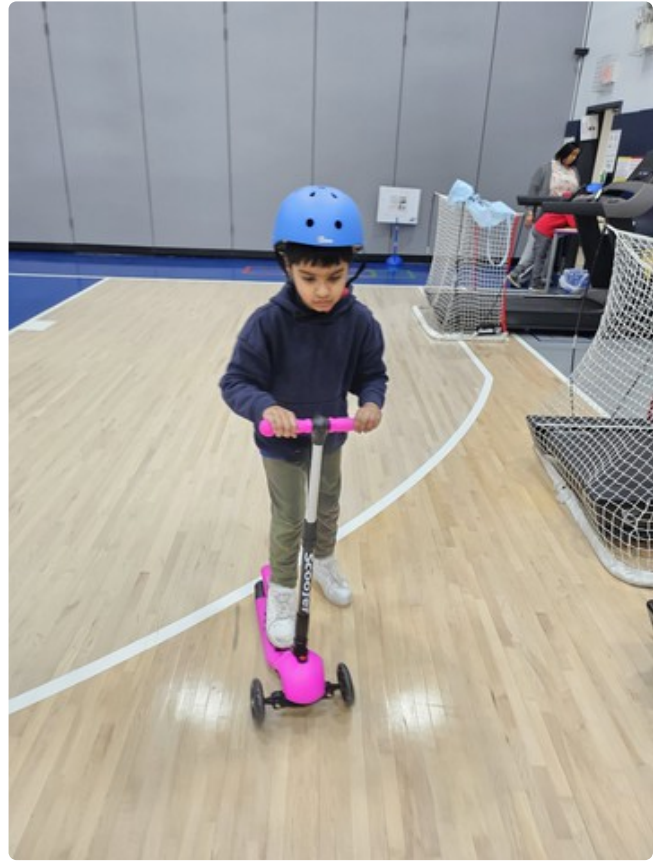




We are pleased and proud that Westlake School in Westfield, New Jersey, which is part of the Union County Educational Services Foundation, announced it has been awarded a Major Community Grant in the amount of \$10,000 from The Provident Bank Foundation. The Provident Bank Foundation Grant will support students and their developmental skills, while increasing opportunities for students with disabilities to be successful in sports, life skills and integration within their community. Students have already begun to enjoy and utilize the materials that include Scooters, Scooter Safety Equipment and Indoor Miniature Golf equipment that will allow us to differentiate instruction and provide an all inclusive learning environment, while above all having fun.











Ms. Mund's Class

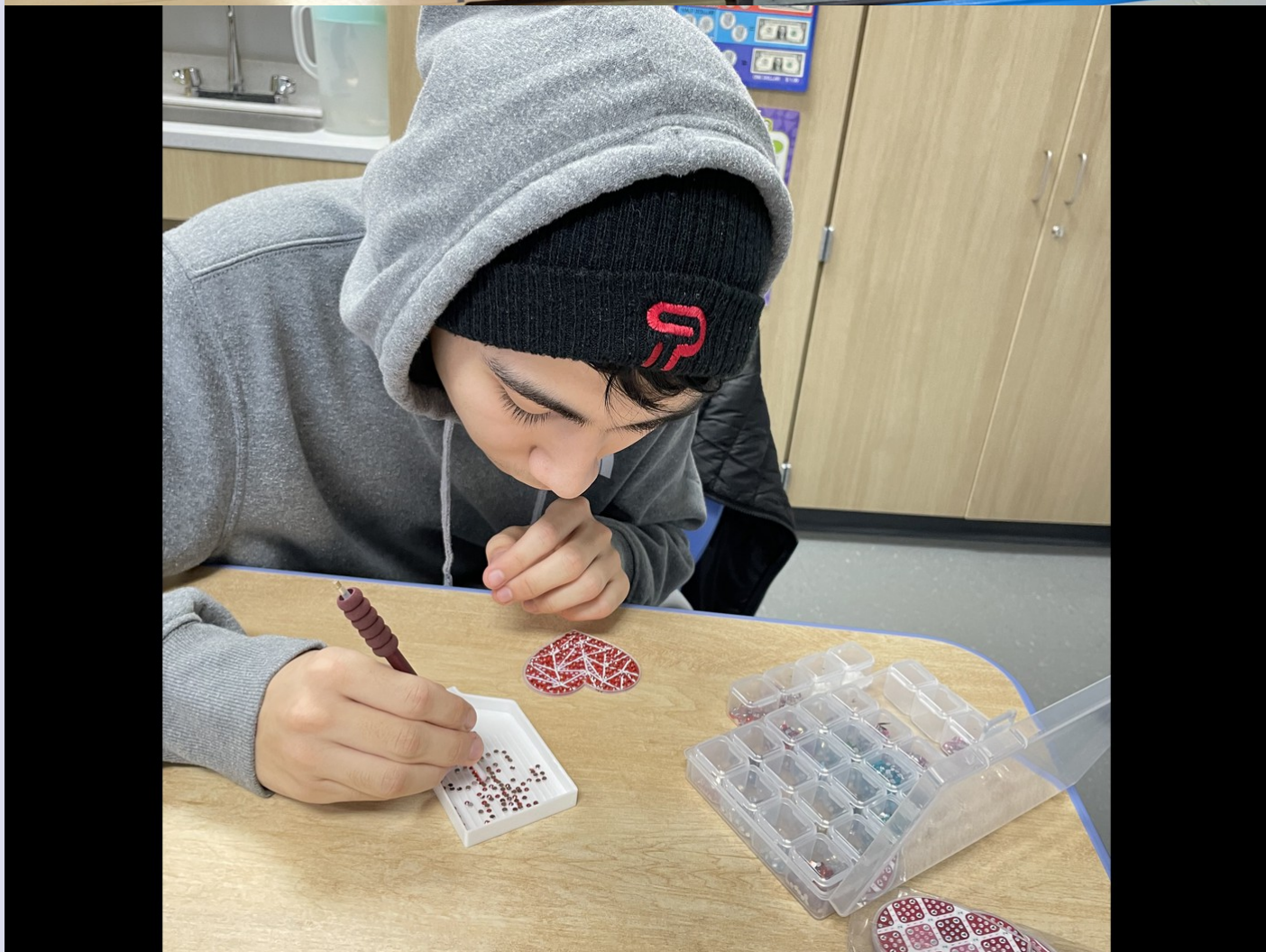


Mrs. Mund's class has been having an exciting and busy winter. The class has been hard at work reading about winter. We have read the books *A Cold Day* and *Snow Falls*. One of our students has been busy making diamond art hearts for Valentine's Day. The class took a community-based instruction trip to the bowling alley and had a blast knocking down the pins! They also enjoy visiting Cafe Sunshine weekly as a class. At the cafe, we can work on social skills while having amazing treats made by Westlake Students.











# WolfPack Press!



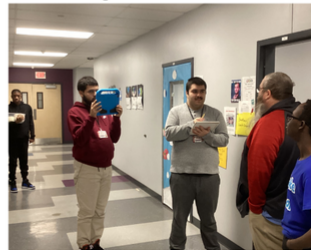
## WESTLAKE *NEWS*

Our students wanted to take a more active role in our newsletter. J.D. and E.K. worked together to interview Mr. Wasserman. E.K. taped and took pictures and J.D. typed up the article. We are very proud of their work and are excited to expand there roles.

### WHAT I DID ON VACATION

Mr. Wasserman went to Argentina, he flew on a plane, then he started sight seeing with his kids. He went to many places including going to historic places like the boat ride called El Tigre and learned the history of Argentina. Also he celebrated New Years Eve where they have fireworks.

The food that Mr. Wasserman ate in Argentina is steak and empanadas. He also spent time with his kids playing soccer and watching soccer games.



## Social Media!

**Follow us on Facebook!**

### Log into Facebook

Log into Facebook to start sharing and connecting with your friends, family, and people you know.

[facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/ucescwestlake/)

**Follow us on Instagram!**

<https://www.instagram.com/ucescwestlake/>

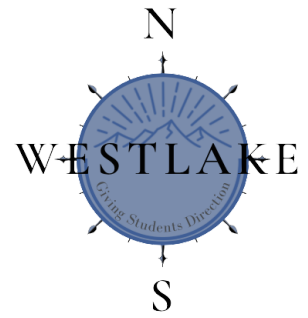
[instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com/ucescwestlake/)

## Contact Us!

**Website:** [www.ucesc.org/schools/westlake\\_school](http://www.ucesc.org/schools/westlake_school)

**Location:** [1571 Lamberts Mill Rd, Westfield, NJ, USA](#)

**Phone:** [908-232-4181](tel:908-232-4181)



**Robert Peneno**

Robert is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





# Crossroads Monthly Newsletter

January 2024



## Principal's Message

Dear Crossroads Family,

As we begin a new year together, I am filled with gratitude and excitement for the opportunities that lie ahead. January marks a time for reflection and growth, and this month, our focus is on the themes of leadership and acknowledging the unsung heroes within our school. Leadership is not solely defined by titles, but by actions that inspire and empower those around us.

This month, let's shine a spotlight on the individuals who work tirelessly behind the scenes, the unsung heroes whose dedication contributes significantly to the success of our school. From the custodial staff (Fernando and Mike) ensuring a clean and safe environment to the transportation team (Lorraine and Fran) providing support with unwavering commitment to our students, their efforts often go unnoticed. Let us take a moment to recognize and express our gratitude to these unsung heroes who embody the true spirit of leadership.

Wishing you all a January filled with moments of reflection, growth, and appreciation.

Warm regards,

Principal Matt

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## Upcoming Dates

**February 1, 2024** - Parent Education Meeting - 1:00PM

**February 2, 2024** - Wear Red for Heart Health

**February 9, 2024** - School Closed (Staff PD Day)

**February 14, 2024** - Valentines Day Dance/Ice Cream Social

**February 16, 2024** -School Closed (Presidents Day Weekend)

**February 19, 2024** -School Closed (Presidents Day Weekend)

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## Crossroads Staff and Student Spotlight



### Student of the Month - Adriel

Adriel Class is Crossroads School's student of the month. He has shown us such growth in the short amount of time he has been here. Adriel has adjusted to his classroom and schoolwide. He is already able to identify so many teachers and friends, as well the important spaces around the school (his classroom, bathroom, main office, kitchen, therapy rooms). Adriel is utilizing various modes of communication to share his wants and needs. He is also super musically inclined, and fills our classroom with songs and humming throughout the day. Miss. Gaby, Thomas, and Gloria are so proud of Adriel and cannot wait to watch him flourish the rest of the school year :)



### Certified Staff of the Month - Rich Horn - Physical Education

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

I started working at the commission in 2014 as the health and physical education teacher. During this time, I split my days between Crossroads and LMA. After 2 years, I moved out of state and then returned in 2018 and have been full time at Crossroads ever since.

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

Other than working out at the gym, I really like to landscape. It kinda helps me clear my head and I love to make things look nice. Something else many people might not know is that I was a scholar athlete in college and had a scholarship to play baseball at a school in Mississippi.



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

That's definitely a tough question and doesn't seem fair because there are so many amazing places to visit. I think Hawaii stands out on my bucket list of places to go. So many beautiful beaches, things to see and adventures to go on. I do have to say that so far, one of my favorite trips I have taken has been white water rafting through the Grand Canyon on the Colorado river with my dad. I was lucky enough to do it two times. We spent a week out on the river and got to sleep under the stars with nobody else within miles except the group you are with. Words or pictures can't do it justice. You have to see it in person to truly appreciate what is out there.

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

I would have to say pretty much anything Italian!!! I also love a good streak, baked potato and vegetable!!!

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

There are a few things that I could pick from but I would have to say graduating school with honors and becoming the teacher I am today!! There are a lot of people that helped and inspired me along the way and I appreciate them more than I can say.



## **Staff of the Month - Joe Fair - Safety and Security Monitor**

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

I have worked for the commission about 2 1/2 years. I previously worked in three other commission schools (Hillcrest South, Lamberts Mill, and Westlake) before coming to Crossroads.

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

I love to cook. It brings me joy to make food that everyone enjoys. I love to make lasagna, chicken alfredo, ribs, and chicken po boy sandwiches.

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

I would love to go to Tahiti. From what I've heard it is a beautiful place.

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

My favorite meal is a sirloin steak (cooked extremely well done), with roasted potatoes and grilled shrimp.

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

My greatest accomplishment is buying a house for my family and I.

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# Classroom Spotlights

## Ms. Anna's Class

It has been a busy New Year in Ms. Anna's classroom. We welcomed our new Teacher's Assistant Yassine, we are happy to have him! We also celebrated Lyla's 9th Birthday with cupcakes!

The students have been working on taking turns and working with one another in group activities. This month the students had fun making hot chocolate and smores. They loved it so much they ask to make hot chocolate all the time now. They followed directions and each step with a visual and verbal prompt. Now some of our students can make it independently and use the microwave. We also made snow by putting Ivory soap in the microwave and the students had a snowball fight outside.



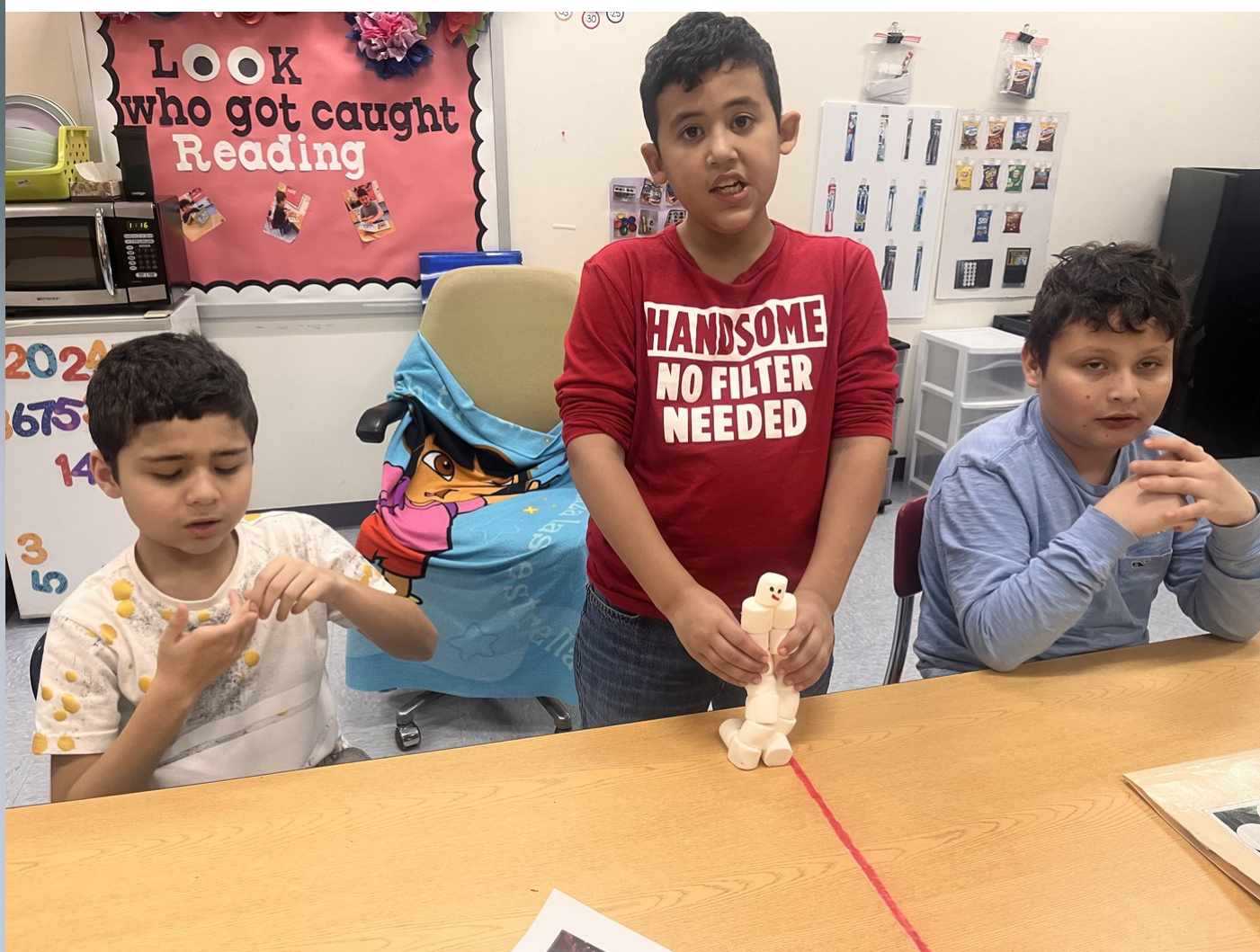


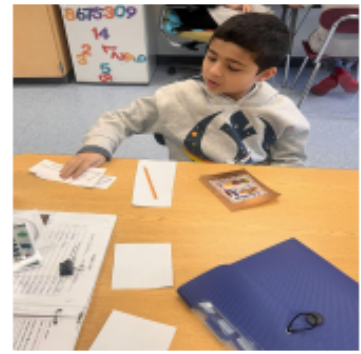
## Ms. Alexis's Classroom

Room 109 was very busy. All the students worked hard on their goals throughout the month. I have seen such growth in all of the students. They have each really developed a sense of belonging and have come together as a classroom family. This month we focused on STEM projects and worked on making a snowman out of marshmallows. They each tried to make the tallest marshmallow snowman. They loved building with marshmallows and toothpicks and trying to outdo their classmates.



This month the students also learned about what animals migrate in the winter and what animals will hibernate when it is cold outside. They also learned about what animals stay and adapt to the cold temperatures. The students also learned about Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. One of the students read a story to the class where they learned about how Martin Luther King Jr. fought for equal rights for all Americans.



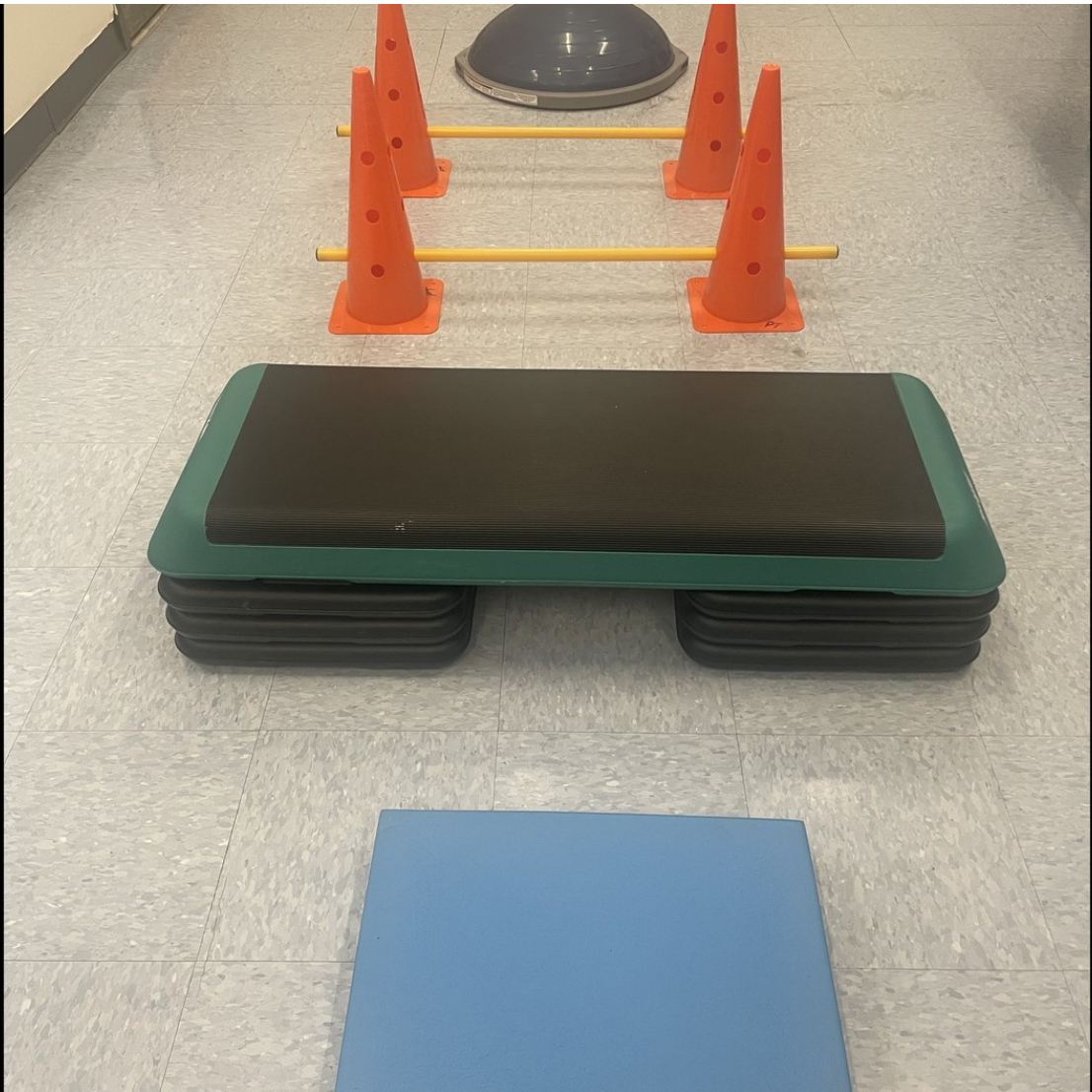


## ***Therapy Spotlight - Ms. Aliza - PT***

We are having a great time in physical therapy (PT) this month working on our movement, strength, balance/coordination and gross motor skills! The PT department was the recipient of a Union County Educational Services Foundation grant and we are so appreciative of all our new equipment! We received aerobic steps, hurdles, a new trampoline and balancing equipment including a BOSU ball and an Airex balance pad. These new items are used daily with our students. In PT we often make obstacle courses to work on many skills at once in a fun and engaging way. This new equipment is allowing us to get more creative with our activities. Overall our students are having a great month in PT and are continuing to make steady progress towards their PT goals!

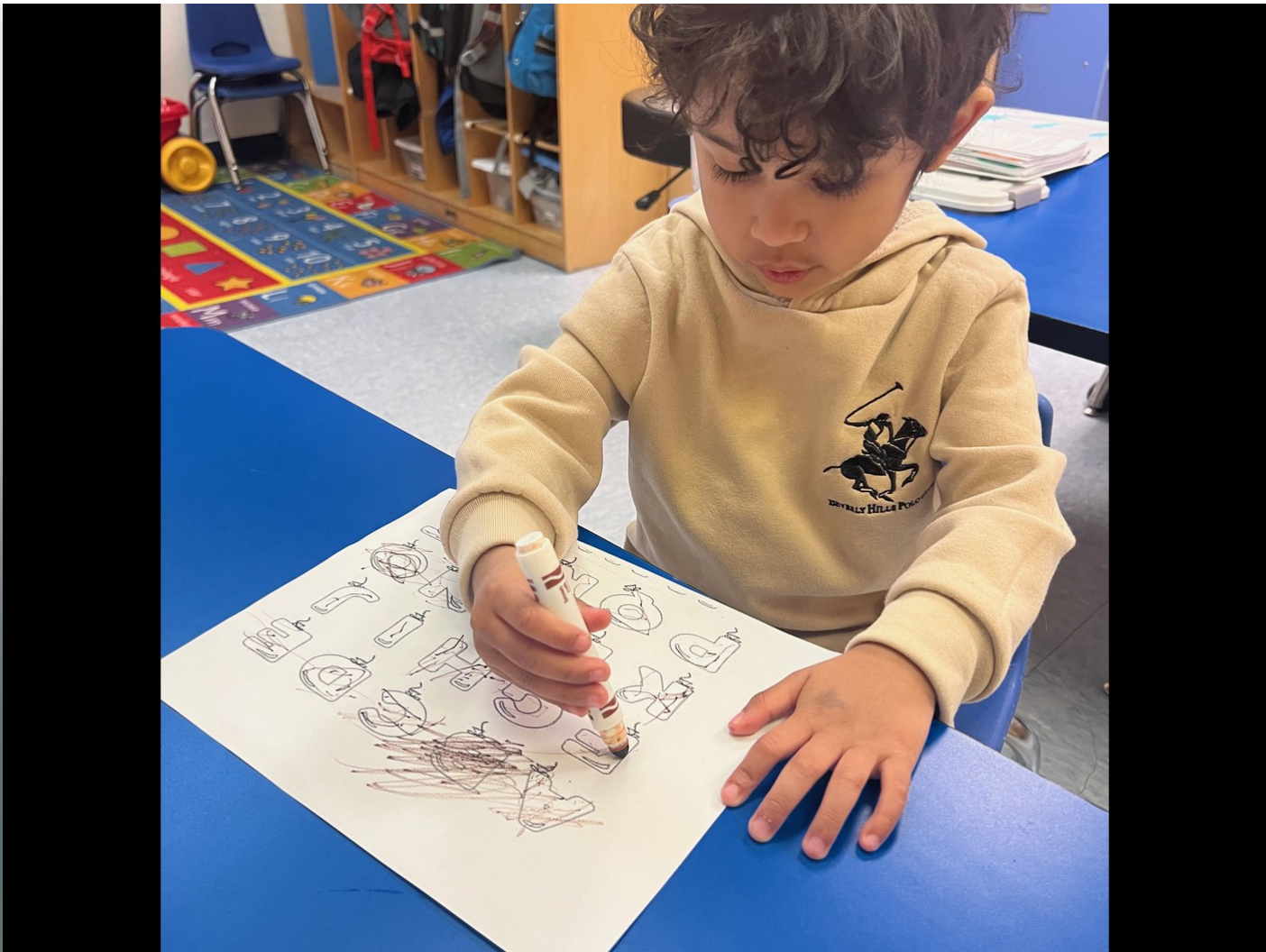






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## *January at Crossroads*















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## ***Crossroads in the Community***











# Crossroads Unsung Heroes

Thank you to Fernando, Mike, and the entire custodial team!







Thank you Lorraine, Fran, and the rest of the transportation department.



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## ***Additional Information Needed***

As we continue with our Strategic Planning we are asking for help from our parents and districts to provide some additional information to help with our planning. If you can click on the link below and complete the google form it would be greatly appreciated.

<https://forms.gle/wTMEuiUJshjetPt69>

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## ***Parent Resources***



# 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.

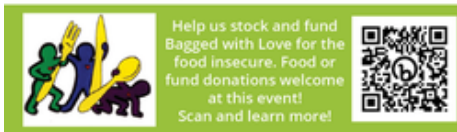
Raising a child with special needs is challenging and requires a unique approach. Join Lisa Afflitto, LCSW, for a monthly support group where caregivers can learn strategies to support their own mental wellness, share their experiences and meet/connect with other caregivers. This monthly group is free.

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.



## 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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# Work Readiness Academy

January 2024 Newsletter

## Message from the Director



Dear WRA Community,

I hope the first few weeks of 2024 have treated you all well! I am proud of the collective efforts by our students to continue to work hard to develop critical skills for employment - both in the classroom and at their Work-Based Learning experiences. We are looking forward to our WBL rotations which tentatively begin the week of February 20th (we are closed on the 19th). January also saw the WRA survive its first snowfall of the season! The winter

weather brings additional safety considerations as it relates to traveling to and from our internship sites...and the commute for our Project SEARCH students who use NJ Transit or Access Link. I want to thank our students and staff for their flexibility on those days, and to Rachel, Sharlene, Jodi & Jourdan for quickly identifying engaging and meaningful alternative programming when needed.

I am also very excited to share that the Work Readiness Academy (and Project SEARCH) have been named a sub-recipient of a \$2.75 million grant that Atlantic Health System (the parent company for Overlook Medical Center) has received from the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) as part of the department's Nursing Expansion Grant Program. **The WRA will receive a total of \$256,000 over four years to help expand our Work-Based Learning of young adults with disabilities at Overlook Medical Center & the Overlook satellite campus in Union, New Jersey.** Students from the WRA will be piloting internship experiences at the Overlook-Union campus beginning in late February.

The grant will also fund the establishment of Atlantic Health System's Pathway to Ensuring Access and Clinical Excellence in Nursing (AHS PEACE), an innovative, new program designed to expand and diversify the pipeline of nursing professionals, practicing at the top of their licensure, to fill positions that are in high demand. AHS PEACE will institute professional pathways for Registered Nurses (RNs) in acute care and critical care specialties, as well as development of clinical pathways for nursing assistants, and other entry-level clinical positions that only require a high-school diploma (i.e patient transporters, patient care representatives, radiology technicians, etc).

Included among the candidates for these positions will be candidates from historically marginalized and underrepresented populations. We are thrilled to be a part of this initiative!

Please enjoy the rest of this month's newsletter!

Sincerely,

**Josh Bornstein, Director**

**UCESC Work Readiness Academy**



### Dates to Remember

**February 9, 2024** - WRA Closed for Staff Professional Development

**February 16 & February 19, 2024** - WRA Closed for President's Day Weekend

**Week of February 20, 2024** - New WBL Internship Rotations Begin



### How to Contact Us!

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)**

## January Spotlights



We are please to recognize **Joe Agar** as our **Student of the Month for January 2024!** Staff nominated Joe because he has demonstrated incredible growth, initiative, confidence and perserverance. Joe is



Meet **Nicole Dellavecchia**, Teaching Assistant (Part-Time)

**How long have you worked for UCESC?**

I have worked at the WRA for almost 4 months!



**Strength N Fitness Club (SNFC)** of Cranford has been a long-time partner of the Work



committed to achieving his goals, including finding a new part time job. He has also shown leadership in his role in the Can-Do Food Services Program and has successfully completed his first college class last semester and is enrolled in more classes this Winter. Finally, Joe has shown great improvements in his attendance.

Way to go, Joe!

**What do you love best about your job?**

I love the people! I couldn't have asked for a more supportive group of co-workers and the students are such a joy to be around! It's what makes the WRA such a special place.

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

My free time is mostly spent with family or cheering on my daughters at their various activities. When we have downtime we like to cook/bake together. I have fond memories of helping my father in the kitchen growing up, so I'm hoping to create that for my girls as well.

**What is something that people would be surprised to know about you?**

My first language was not English! I spoke only Portuguese until I started school.

program's inception, SNFC has graciously provided the WRA with a discounted monthly rate that allows us to bring a small group of the students to the gym every Friday.

SNFC is a community fitness club that provides a comfortable, relaxed atmosphere, surrounded with the most technologically advanced weightlifting and cardio equipment from Star Trac, Cybex, and LifeFitness. This family owned and operated fitness club includes a full service gym, sports conditioning, personal training, batting cages, youth camps, soccer, baseball & softball lessons!

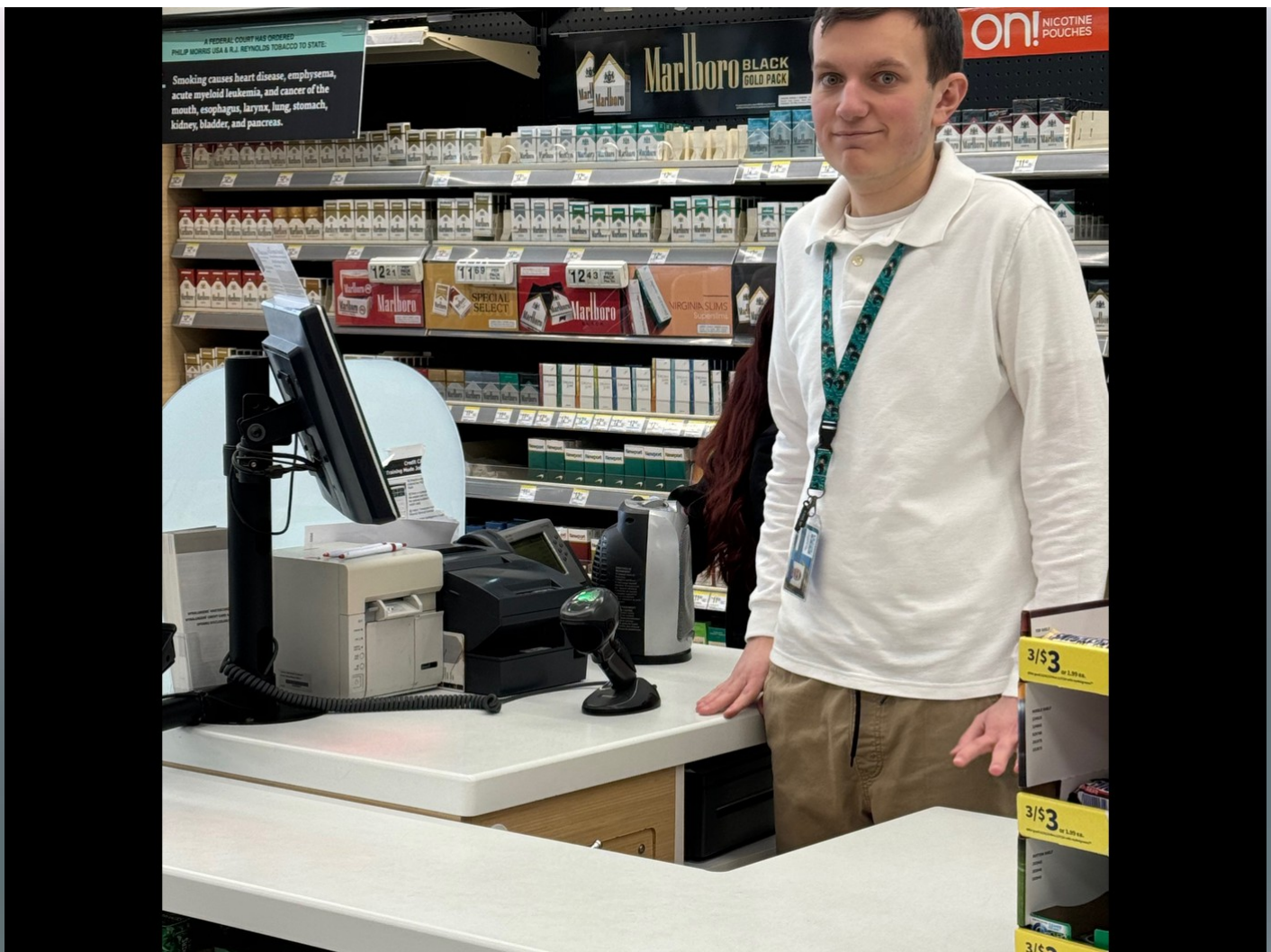
We are grateful to Hege, the Petschow Family & the entire staff at SNFC for making our students and staff feel welcome each week!

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## Director's Award



I am pleased to recognize **Nick Giamella** with the **Director's Award** for the month of January 2024! Nick has shown tremendous maturity and growth during what will be his final year at the Work Readiness Academy (and in school!). Nick is polite, respectful, and can frequently be spotted offering to assist a peer or even the custodian if something has spilled. Nick is also modeling independence at our program as he now attends his Work-Based Learning Experiences on his own without staff support four days per week. Congratulations, Nick!



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## Supervisor's Spotlight on the Classroom



As we welcome in the new year at the Work Readiness Academy our students have been hard at work exploring new topics, concepts and ideas, as well as practicing the new skills they are learning as they continue to work towards achieving goals set for 2024!

This month we have taken a closer look at both leadership and courage. Lessons have been filled with real-life examples and how we can demonstrate bravery and confidence across a variety of settings. While taking a look inward, our students have been asked to self-reflect and connect on how it feels to have courage and what the result of a courageous action looks like. How to Dance

in Ohio was a great example of how to demonstrate both courage and leadership, and has become the inspiration for our first ever student lead governing body! Classes will be electing a representative to relay important information, plan events and present ideas/suggestions to administration monthly. In addition, students have been investigating effective meal planning and preparation and how to apply those skills to our knowledge about nutrition and healthy living.

As we begin to prepare for a new work based learning experience next month, students have been creating updated resumes that exemplify the new skills they have attained and the professional

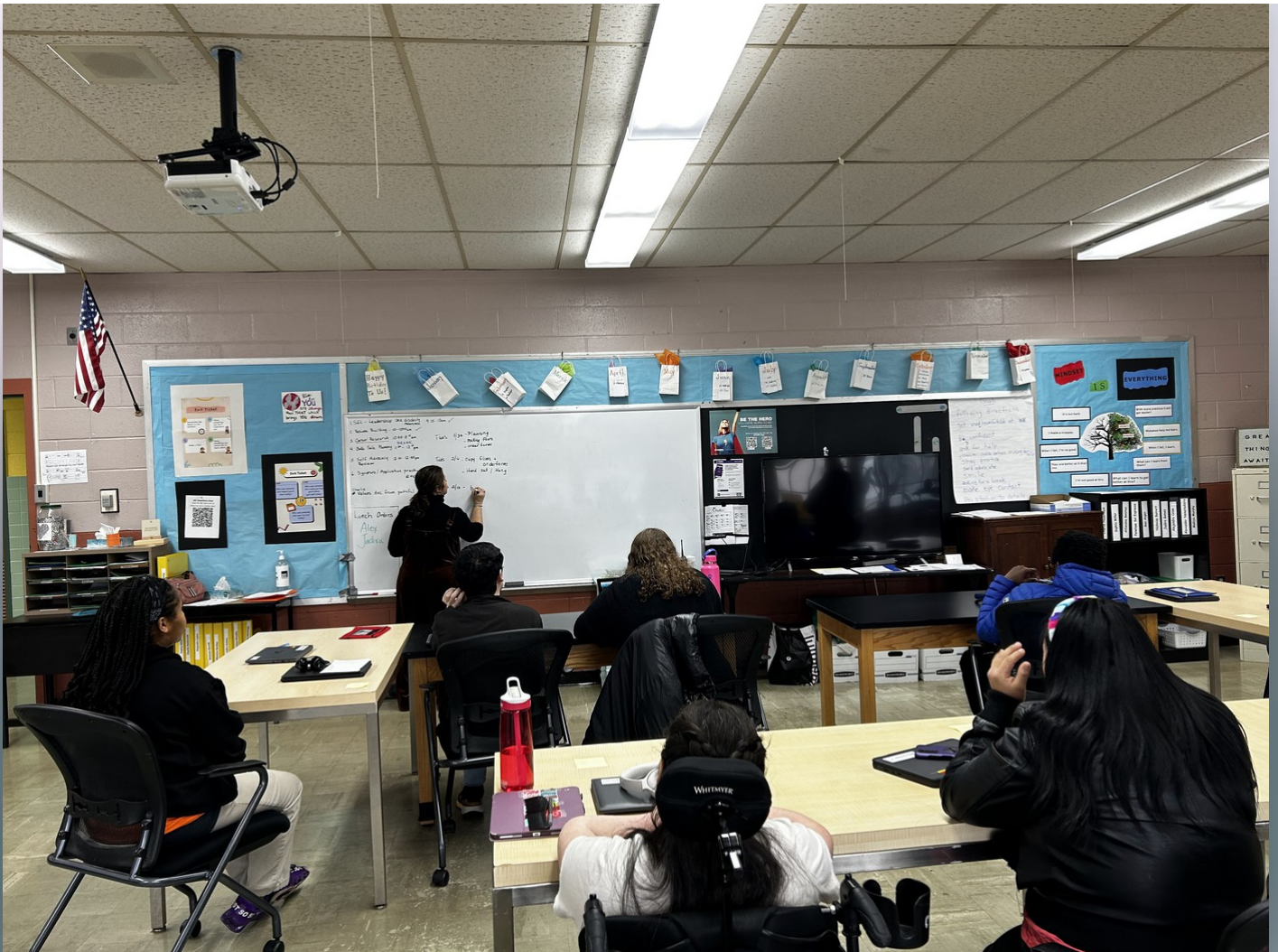


relationships they have formed this school year. The new year is off to an amazing start!

**Rachel Richer**  
**Supervisor of Instruction**













## WRA's Newest Elective: Anime Club!



We're excited to be offering a brand new elective class this cycle - Anime Club! The brainchild of WRA student David Alzate, students in this elective meet up on Friday afternoons to view selected clips from their favorite Anime shows and discuss themes, characters, and more! High-five to Rose Makris (veteran WRA TA)

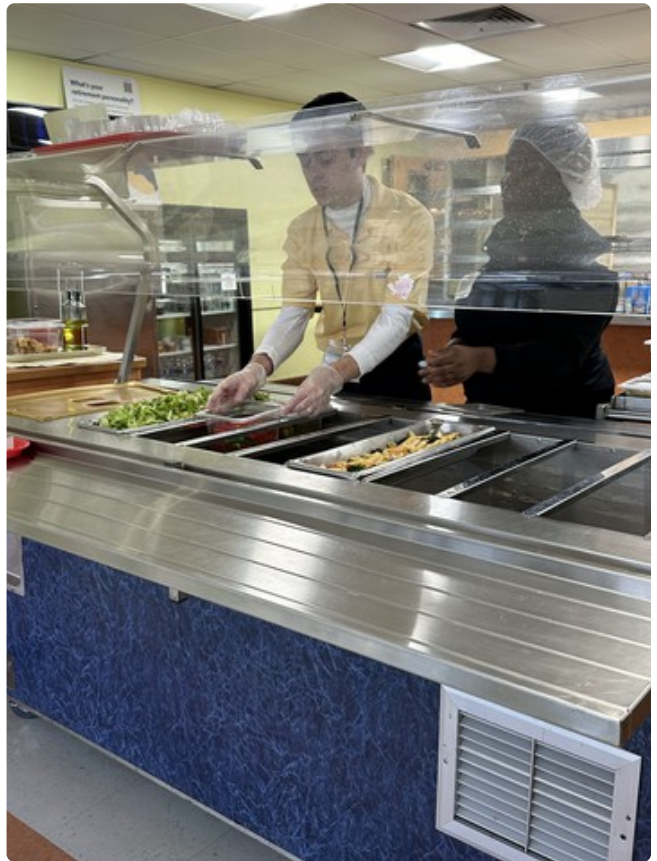
for agreeing to facilitate this elective & learn more about this niche interest area!



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## Snapshots from January Work-Based Learning















# What's Happening at Project SEARCH?

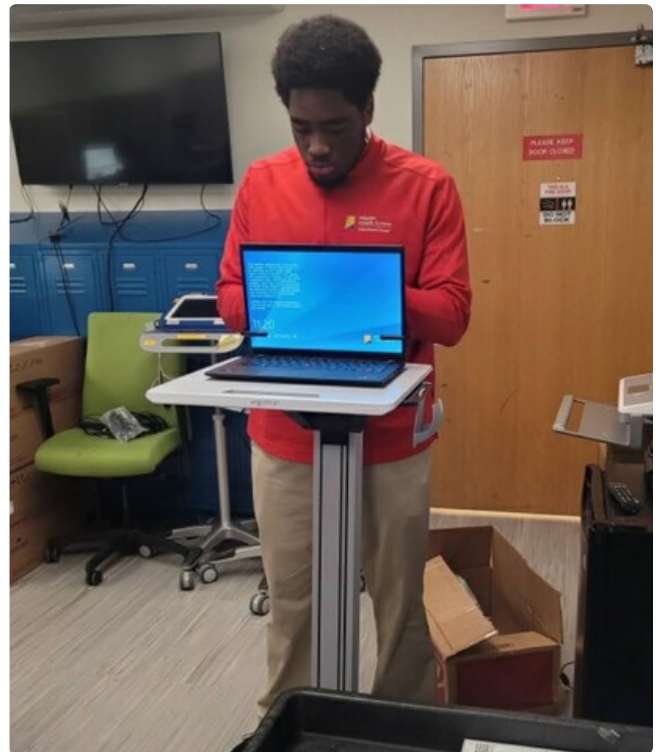
Happy New Year! The interns have transitioned into their second internship rotations at Overlook Medical Center. They are working on various employability skills, such as communication, teamwork and problem-solving. In the classroom, the lessons have focused on topics that have helped the students to grow personally and professionally. Some of these have included setting goals, establishing healthy habits, writing professional emails and perspective taking. Guest speakers included staff from the Respiratory Therapy Department who taught the students about the dangers of smoking, as well as employees from Patient Admissions who explained the importance of HIPPA and keeping patient information confidential. We are looking forward to working with Project Hire's new job developer, Abiola Daniels. Abi will be meeting with each of the students to learn more about their individual strengths, preferences, interests and learning needs. This important information will help her to plan for employment.



- Jourdan Spencer, Project SEARCH Instructor for UCESC











## Project SEARCH 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** attend one of our upcoming virtual information sessions:

### Upcoming Dates:

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.



WRA TA Tracie Wiebush delivered another fantastic bulletin board idea - our Pet-Palooza! Who knew so many of our students and staff had cute, furry friends?



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## Emergency Bus Evacuation Drills

The Work Readiness Academy participates in state-mandated Emergency Bus Evacuation Drills two times per year. During these drills, students and staff practice identifying and using alternate exit options. A heartfelt thank you to our bus drivers, bus aides, and transportation department for all they do to keep our students safe on the roads!



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## Community Resources/Events

Special Needs Resource Fair

Sunday, February 25, 2024 • 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**FREE and open to the community!**

In honor of Jewish Disabilities Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month (JDAIM) in February, the JCC of Central NJ is hosting a Special Needs Resource Fair and publishing its 4th annual Special Needs Resource Directory.

**Wide variety of specialties:** ABA services • Adaptive programs (karate, aquatics, arts, etc.) •

Dentists and orthodontists • Recreational programming • Residential services • Sensory supportive interior design • Special needs attorneys • Special needs products • Summer camp programs • Supported employment • Synagogues • Therapy services • Travel training

Click the link below to register.





## JCC of Central New Jersey | JCC of Central New Jersey

Sunday, February 25, 2024 \* 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. FREE and open to the community! In honor of Jewish Disabilities Awareness, Acceptance and Inclusion Month (JDAIM) in February, the JCC of Central NJ is hosting a Special Needs Resource Fair and publishing its 4th annual Special Needs Resource Directory.

🌐 [jccnj.org](http://jccnj.org)

# 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!  
Scan and learn more!



1391 Martine Avenue, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076  
908-889-8800 • [www.jccnj.org](http://www.jccnj.org)



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## Understanding Supported Employment Options Available AFTER Graduation

# SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT IN NEW JERSEY

Supported Employment helps individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) secure and maintain **competitive employment**, or work in a setting to prepare for competitive employment. An individual's interests, likes, and dislikes are important factors when considering a job or career path.



## KEY TERMS

### Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Federal legislation signed in 2014 to help individuals access education, training, and support services to succeed in the workplace.

### **Competitive Employment**

Work performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting that is compensated at or above minimum wage.

### Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVR)

The state agency which provides vocational services for individuals with IDD or other barriers to employment.

Check out our DVR Go Bag: [bit.ly/DVRGobag](http://bit.ly/DVRGobag)

### "Employment First" State

An initiative that outlines that competitive employment is the preferred post-education activity. It presumes that all individuals, including people with IDD, are capable of integrated employment.

## EXAMPLES OF SERVICES

### • **Pre-Employment Transition Services**

- Offered to high school students to plan and prepare for entering the workforce.

### • **Job Development**

- Assists individuals with a job search, interview skills, and resume development.

### • **Job Sampling**

- Gives the individual the opportunity to explore different types of employment and identify areas of interest and ability.

### • **Job Coaching**

- Provides assistance with learning essential job tasks, transportation training, social skills, and can act as a liaison between the employer and employee.

### • **Long-Term Follow Along**

- Ongoing support through worksite visits designed to help individuals maintain skills built during job coaching.

### • **Trial Work Experience**

- A workplace readiness assessment administered by a Supported Employment provider agency, such as [Project HIRE](#).

\*This is not a fully inclusive list. Services may vary between agencies, school districts, and funding sources.

## REQUIREMENTS OF COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT

### Wages

Individuals are compensated at or above minimum wage, and at a comparable rate to coworkers without IDD performing similar duties with similar experience and education.

### Benefits

Individuals receive the same benefits as other employees in a similar position with a similar level of service.

### Scheduling

The schedule is determined by the needs of the employer, not the availability of the individual.

### Integration

Employment takes place in a setting where individuals with and without disabilities have the opportunity to interact and work alongside each other.

### Advancement

The same opportunities for promotion and advancement are available for employees with and without disabilities in similar positions with similar experience.

## NJ WORKABILITY

NJ WorkAbility offers people with disabilities who are working, and whose income would otherwise make them ineligible for Medicaid, the opportunity to receive full Medicaid coverage.

Through NJ WorkAbility, individuals can earn up to \$65,196 of gross annual income and maintain less than \$20,000 in assets without threatening their Medicaid status. A couple cannot exceed \$87,900 in gross income and \$30,000 in assets. Learn more about NJ WorkAbility and eligibility requirements at: [bit.ly/njworkability](http://bit.ly/njworkability)

April 2022

## Supported Employment Fact Sheet Final.pdf

Click the link to download the attachment

[Download](#)

641.9 KB

## Guardianship Resources

At 18 years old all individuals, including those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, reach the legal age of majority. This means that parents can no longer make decisions legally on behalf of their children. See the attached fact sheet from the Arc of New Jersey for more information about Guardianship and various alternative options.

## Updated Guardianship Fact Sheet (3).pdf

[Download](#)

107.0 KB



## WRA Spotted in the Community!

Former Work Readiness Academy & Project SEARCH Student Ryan Fay (now working in the bakery department at the Shoprite of Clark). Ryan is the Cupcake King!



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## Picture of the Month

Every Friday the Work Readiness Academy participates in Community-Based Instruction. One of our favorite trips so far was to Five Below where Makiya spotted these sunglasses that seem perfect for Valentine's Day!



## 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 S'more to create beautiful newsletters



# *Lamberts* **MILL** ACADEMY

*January 2024*  
*Newsletter*

"This is a new year. A new beginning. And things will change."

— Taylor Swift

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## *Principal's Message*

Lamberts Mill Academy Principal, Mr. Reed Leibfried, welcomes our students, staff, parents and community members to the 2024 school year! Each year, January allows us a fresh start and the overall LMA school community is ecstatic to ring the New Year in as positive a place possible!

On January 30th, 2024, the Union County Community College will be presenting at LMA to showcase exciting opportunities for our students. A special thank you to Mr. Acosta for organizing such a meaningful event for our senior students, as well as underclassmen. Mr. Leibfried and staff will be sponsoring a community based field trip to Costco in an effort to stock our school store. Our school store is utilized to promote positive behavior amongst our students through our point level sheet tracking system spearheaded by Mr. Lopreiato.

Mr. Leibfried selected five students to participate in the inaugural LMA "gym club," session. Research trends continue to show a direct correlation between physical exercise and mental/emotional health of our adolescents. Students from both our middle school and high school cohorts actively participated in the Friday morning gym session. The students successfully





participated in the designed workout and practiced collaboration, supporting their peers and teamwork. The next session of "gym club," will be next Friday and will expose five new students to the activity.

Student enrollment is continuing to increase and the positive school culture being promoted by LMA staff and students is beginning to pay dividends as school level philosophies are increasing the overall learning experience for our students in a positive manner. With NJDOE assessment on the horizon, it is clear that our students are up to the challenge. It continues to be an honor and privilege to serve the LMA school community as your Principal!

Sincerely,

Mr. Leibfried

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## *Upcoming Events*

### **February 2024 Important Dates**

February 7 - Field Trip (State Theatre)  
February 9 - NO SCHOOL - Staff Development Day  
February 12 - Field Trip (MPAC Show)  
February 16-19 - NO SCHOOL - President's Day  
February 26 - Field Trip (UCC Tour)  
February 28 - Field Trip (Union County Food Bank)



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## *LMA Student of the Month - January 2024*

### **Skye G.**

LMA is proud to announce our January 2024 Student of the Month, Skye G. Starting at LMA last spring they have been consistently earning points in class, and successfully utilizing the different supports within the LMA school community. Skye has achieved high academic honors for the first marking period at LMA, and is on track to secure their second honor roll achievement this marking period. We are proud of Skye and how they have been supportive to fellow peers in class, earning points in class and being a role model for younger peers at LMA.



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## *LMA Staff Spotlight*

## Meet Mrs. Rostami - Teacher's Assistant

### Getting to know Mrs. Rostami

- Born in Tehran, Iran
- Worked in Westfield School District for 6 years prior to joining LMA & UCESC.
- Enjoys listening to music and singing.
- Avid walker throughout the town.
- When not working with the LMA students, enjoys to read.



## Classroom Spotlights



### **Mr. Bell's class learning about voting.**

Mr. Bell's Social Studies classes recently spent a day focusing on free voting and the history of voting in the US. It was supported by a visit from a staff member from the Union County Board of Elections who brought a voting machine for the students to learn about and use in an election of their own. One of the many that are used in our county's many elections, it was a touch screen unit that is currently state of the art. The county owns nearly 1,000 units to meet the needs of the county's 21 towns. After the discussions, the students voted for their favorite superhero - with Ironman or Batman. The



### **Mr. Peter's PE classes refine their badminton skills**

For the month of January students have been working hard in the Badminton Unit. We have been covering all aspects of the game including serving, striking the birdie underhand/overhand, gameplay (singles and doubles), and game strategy. We are going to be starting our annual tournament soon with the winners receiving prizes. During the unit we have also been covering good sportsmanship, teamwork, communication, and hard work. We are very proud of how our students have been performing during this unit, and fortunate to have Mr. Leibfried and Mr. Lopreiato join in the competition.



### **Mrs. Finver's class learns about courage!**

Students have been working in the Narrative unit. We have been exploring various story elements and strategies on how to find these elements in a text. Students have begun creating their own narratives. We have integrated our month's theme of courage by using various courage quotes and how we interpret them through grand discussions. This was compiled by creating a courage banner in our school hallway.



ultimate result was quite close, but Ironman was the winner. It is hoped that when the students are of age they will feel more comfortable exercising their right to vote.

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## *Learning Experiences at The Mill*

### **Post Graduate Students continue Work Based Learning Experiences into 2024!**

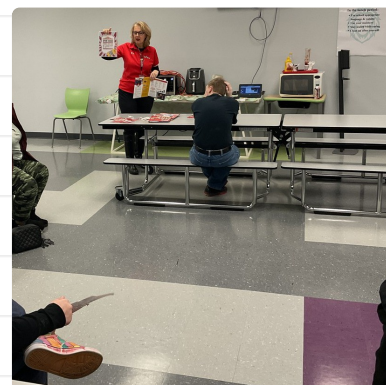
The post-grad students continue their outstanding work at their work-based learning experiences. Gabe continues to excel at checking for expired items at Walgreens. Additionally, Day and Blake are learning how to portion multiple different types of food at Chili's. The post-grad students will be participating in the first ever brownie bake off against the students in Mrs. Shaw's class (who is a teacher at Westlake) on March 5, 2024. Finally, we are looking to add two new work-based learning experiences so the students can try some new jobs. We are so incredibly proud of this group!!!



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### **UCC Visits LMA**

LMA Juniors, Seniors and Post-Graduate students had a unique opportunity to speak with a UCC representative who came to visit LMA directly. Students took part in an informational presentation regarding programming at UCC, different course programming, and how to formally apply to the college. Students also had the opportunity to ask different questions, and have an open discussion about the college. Overall, it was a wonderful experience allowing students the opportunity to learn about college, ask great questions about UCC and never have to leave the 1571 campus!



<https://www.ucc.edu/>

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### **LMA students continue to 'lend a hand' at the UC Food Bank**

LMA students Riley, John, Brynne and Daniel visited the Union County food bank on January 24, 2024. They moved items into storage, repacked canned and dry goods and even helped move very heavy frozen turkeys into the freezer! Every time our group visits the foodbank they are complimented for their willingness and energy. On our way back to school the group spoke of the

value of their work in helping families that have food sensitivities. It was a valuable morning as everyone felt good about helping others.

<https://thewestfieldnjfoodpantry.com/>



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## *LMA Monthly SEL Theme: Leadership, Courage and Unsung Heroes*

The themes for the month of January included Leadership, Courage, and Unsung Heroes. The groups worked on various activities and discussions on leadership skills and acts of kindness. Groups also watched a video on everyday people performing heroic acts to help others in need. We wrapped up the month with discussions on having the courage to set limits in relationships and the importance of saying “No” when one is feeling peer pressured and the need to feel accepted. .

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## *LMA Students Outside the Classroom*

### **LMA send off to Mary "Raven" Francis**

LMA would like to recognize Mary "Raven" Francis as her time at LMA comes to an end. It's a bittersweet moment for the LMA school community as her last day at LMA was the end of this month. She has been a student at LMA since July 2019, and has attended every ESY program since starting. She has always been a model student at LMA, possessing many leadership qualities. Often eager to greet new students and staff members, her overall positive attitude and willingness to assist will be greatly missed in the LMA hallways. Her work ethic, and eagerness to learn made her an ideal LMA student. We are proud of her progress at LMA, and wish her the best of the luck as she embarks the next chapter of her life!



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## *School in the Community*

1. Post-Graduate Program is fully engaged in WBL with students going to Walgreen's and Chili's on a consistent basis, while Mr. Acosta establishes new partnership with local organizations in the community for future WBL experiences.
2. Monthly Community Meetings to celebrate student progress and growth.
3. Students go out in the community to Bowlero for a field trip.



4. Students have been visiting and helping out at The Westfield Food Pantry with retired LMA Teacher, Mr. Convery.

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## About Us

### **Contact Information:**

*Phone:* (908)-233-7581

*Address:* 1571 Lamberts Mill Road, Westfield, NJ, 07090

*Website:* [https://ucesc.org/schools/lamberts\\_mill\\_academy](https://ucesc.org/schools/lamberts_mill_academy)

*Instagram:* [https://www.instagram.com/ucesc\\_lma/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_lma/?hl=en)

Lamberts Mill Academy is a school within the Union County Educational Services Commission. We are an out of district public school for students with psychiatric disabilities. We continue to partner with RWJ Trinitas Regional Medical Center to provide clinical services for our students. Our school community prides itself on our relationships with all stakeholders: students, staff, parents, families and community partnerships. Being a public school, we adhere to all NJDOE assessment and curriculum mandates. Our professional learning community strives to increase student achievement and improve classroom instruction to provide students with the most effective educational, social and emotional learning environment possible.



**LMA Smore**

LMA is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters