



Crossroads Monthly Report

April 2024

Message from the Administration

As the month of April comes to a close, we are excited to share with you the meaningful themes and activities that took place at Crossroads School. April brought with it a focus on the themes of Responsibility and Self Care, while also highlighting Autism Acceptance Month.

At Crossroads, responsibility is about recognizing the importance of our roles in creating a safe, respectful, and supportive environment for all. We encourage our students to show responsibility by treating others with kindness and empathy, and to contribute positively to our school community. Self-care is equally important, especially in today's world. It's essential for maintaining balance, well-being, and resilience. We encourage everyone to prioritize self-care practices that nurture mental, emotional, and physical health. Whether it's spending quality time together, engaging in hobbies, or simply taking a moment to breathe deeply, let's make self-care a priority for ourselves and our loved ones.

April is also Autism Acceptance Month, a time to deepen our understanding and embrace the diversity within our community. At Crossroads, we strive to create an inclusive environment where every individual feels valued, respected, and understood for who they are. Together, let's foster empathy, understanding, and acceptance. Our recent visit from the students at Mount Saint Mary's Academy was a wonderful opportunity for our students to connect with peers from another school in order to help broaden perspectives, promote empathy, and strengthen understanding and acceptance.



On April 24th Crossroads School celebrated Administrative Professionals Day. This was an opportunity for us to express our gratitude to our Secretary Christina, who works tirelessly behind the scenes to keep our school running smoothly. Her contributions are invaluable, and we are grateful for her hard work and dedication to the school.

As April comes to an end, let's carry forward the spirit of responsibility, self-care, and acceptance in all that we do.

Warm regards,

Matt, Danielle, and Stacey

Enrollment as of April 26, 2024

Actual: 55

Changes: Entered: 1 Exited:0

Referrals: 3

Intakes Scheduled: 2

Accepted: 1

Fire Drills: 4/9/24

Emergency Drills 4/9/24 (Offsite Evacuation)

Upcoming Dates

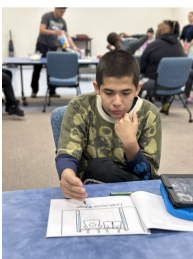
May 6, 2024 - Crossroads Teacher Appreciation Luncheon - 11:00-1:00

May 6 - May 10, 2024 - Teacher Appreciation Week/Nurses Week

May 7, 2024 - Parent Education and PTO Meeting - 1:00

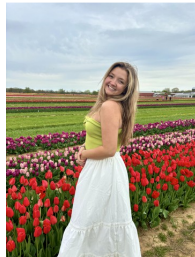
May 27, 2024 - School Closed - Memorial Day

Crossroads Staff and Student Spotlight



Student of the Month - Alex

220a is excited that Alex is student of the month! Alex has made a lot of progress this school year. In addition to his daily functional academics, Alex participates in community based instruction every week where he has been learning to shop in a variety of stores, complete a check out routine, increase his pedestrian safety skills, and work numerous jobs at the movie theater such as concessions and cashier. During Pre-Voc, Alex may have come to your office or classroom while working at the school store or taking orders for utensils or office supplies. As an 8th grader, Alex will be leaving Crossroads in June and transitioning to Westlake School in the fall. Though he will be missed, we are proud of all that he has accomplished and we are looking forward to visiting him during our trips to Westlake and seeing his growth continue through high school and beyond.



Staff Spotlight - Grace Ahern - Art Teacher

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

I started at the commission in November of 2023. It is crazy to think it has only been 6 months! I am currently doing my Alternate Route through the commission and am grateful for all the support and my amazing mentor, Ms. Allison!!

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

I went to the University of Tampa for my degree in Art Therapy. I lived in Florida for four years and it is safe to say I miss the weather, beaches, and palm trees!

3. What is your dream vacation?

My dream vacation would be traveling around the country in a van. I would take time to visit the National parks and just explore the country. I always thought that I would live the “van life” at some point, but have yet to figure out when it would fit into my life.

4. What is your favorite meal?

Sushi! I love all types of sushi! I feel like it is not something easily made at home so it's always a treat when I have it!

5. What is your greatest accomplishment?

During my undergrad, my artwork got hung up in the Tampa Museum of Art. The best part about it was working with one of my students to complete the project, so she got her work hung up too! It was a very cool experience to see my work in a museum, but it was even more amazing to see the look of accomplishment on the student's face.



Staff Spotlight - Gloria Guardado - Teacher's Assistant

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

I have been working at the commission since 1999!

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

I started working in Special Education because of my nephew. He has autism and I wanted to learn. He is now 31 and I stayed because I love it!

3. What is your dream vacation?

Anywhere with my daughters - they are my best friends.

4. What is your favorite meal?

Pizza! As long as there are no anchovies.

5. What is your greatest accomplishment?

Raising two strong - independent women. Also, I went back to college and will be graduating soon



Honors and Accolades

Crossroads was awarded a Garden Enhancement Grant by the Union County Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund.





A Service of the Union County Board of County Commissioners
2024 UNION COUNTY KIDS DIG IN!
School Garden Grant Program

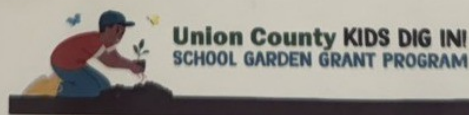
This is to certify that

Crossroads School
Township of Westfield

Has been awarded a Garden Enhancement Grant by the Union County
Open Space, Recreation and Historic Preservation Trust Fund



Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded
Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded, Chairwoman
Union County Board of County
Commissioners

Sergio Granados
Sergio Granados, Chairman
Open Space, Recreation, and
Historic Preservation Trust Fund

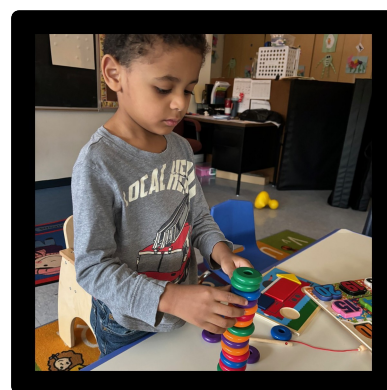


Classroom Spotlights

Ms. Peggy's Classroom

As spring blossoms around us, we're excited to share all the wonderful activities happening in room 102. We're buzzing with excitement as we delve into the wonders of spring.

This month, our little artists have been busy exploring different textures, colors, and shapes to create beautiful flower masterpieces. From finger painting to tissue paper collages, each child has had the opportunity to express their creativity in unique ways.

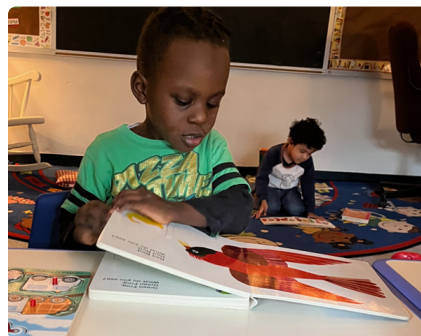


Through hands-on activities, our preschoolers have been able to engage their senses and discover the joy of nature. Sensory bins filled with scented playdough and tactile flower puzzles have provided endless opportunities for exploration and learning.

We have also embarked on a fascinating journey as our preschoolers learn about the lifecycle of butterflies through our caterpillar project. We have a cup of five baby caterpillars, and everyday we watch the caterpillars eat and grow. Soon, they will hang upside down and form chrysalides, and in

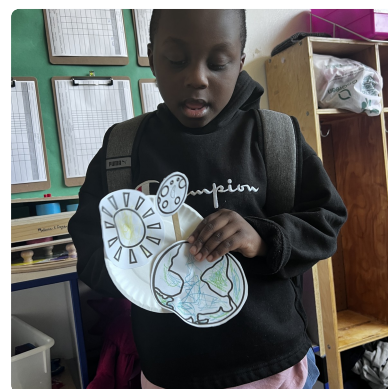
a few weeks beautiful butterflies will emerge! Our preschoolers are witnessing firsthand how caterpillars transform into beautiful butterflies.

As we approach the end of the school year, we're taking time to review and reinforce the readiness skills we have learned. From letter recognition and counting to fine motor development and daily living skills, we celebrate their individual achievements.

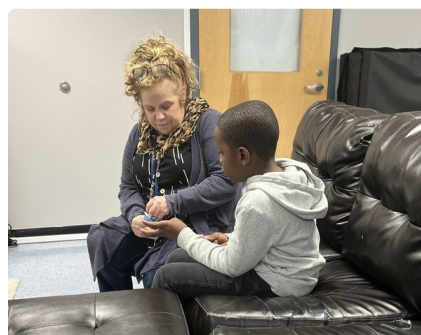


Ms. Hannah's Classroom

This April, Room 104 has been focusing on their independence. We've been practicing completing work by ourselves as well as playing with toys and bathrooming on our own. We work in the ADL room every week on our daily living skills too, like making the bed, setting the table, hanging up clothes etc. Right now, our boys are being encouraged to clearly state what they want and need. We practice this daily to help our students understand advocating for themselves.



On the April 8th, we enjoyed learning about the Solar Eclipse and had fun creating a craft to replicate it. We also celebrated our friends' birthdays and enjoyed the sun coming out with warm weather. Room 104 loves playing outside and seeing the flowers bloom again!



Therapy Spotlight - Occupational Therapists



April is National Occupational Therapy month. We decided to include some OT information in our newsletter article:

How Can an Occupational Therapist Help a Child?

Occupational Therapists are highly-trained healthcare professionals that evaluate and assist children that are having difficulty participating in meaningful activities or “occupations” that are needed to conduct their daily routines and live their life to the fullest.

For a child, this may include the development of life skills such as learning at school, playing, completing self-care tasks, relating to others, and fulfilling their role as a family member. In the schools, Occupational Therapists address the needs of students experiencing delays, disabilities, or health challenges through therapeutic intervention to promote skill advancement, the use of compensatory strategies, adaptations to the child’s educational environment, and/or modifying the curriculum or activity.

Occupational Therapists also collaborate with teachers, parents and others to identify and modify barriers that restrict a child’s success and model strategies for others to use that will extend the benefits of direct intervention.

Occupational Therapy Skill Areas:

Fine Motor: Holding crayons, pencils and other small objects, stringing beads, using clothing fasteners, manipulating toys

Eye-hand Coordination: Scissor use, puzzles, ball skills

Visual Motor: Printing, drawing, forming shapes, coloring

Visual Perceptual: Sorting, matching, figure ground, scanning, letter reversals

Self-Care: Dressing, feeding, using utensils, tying, bathing & shampooing, grooming

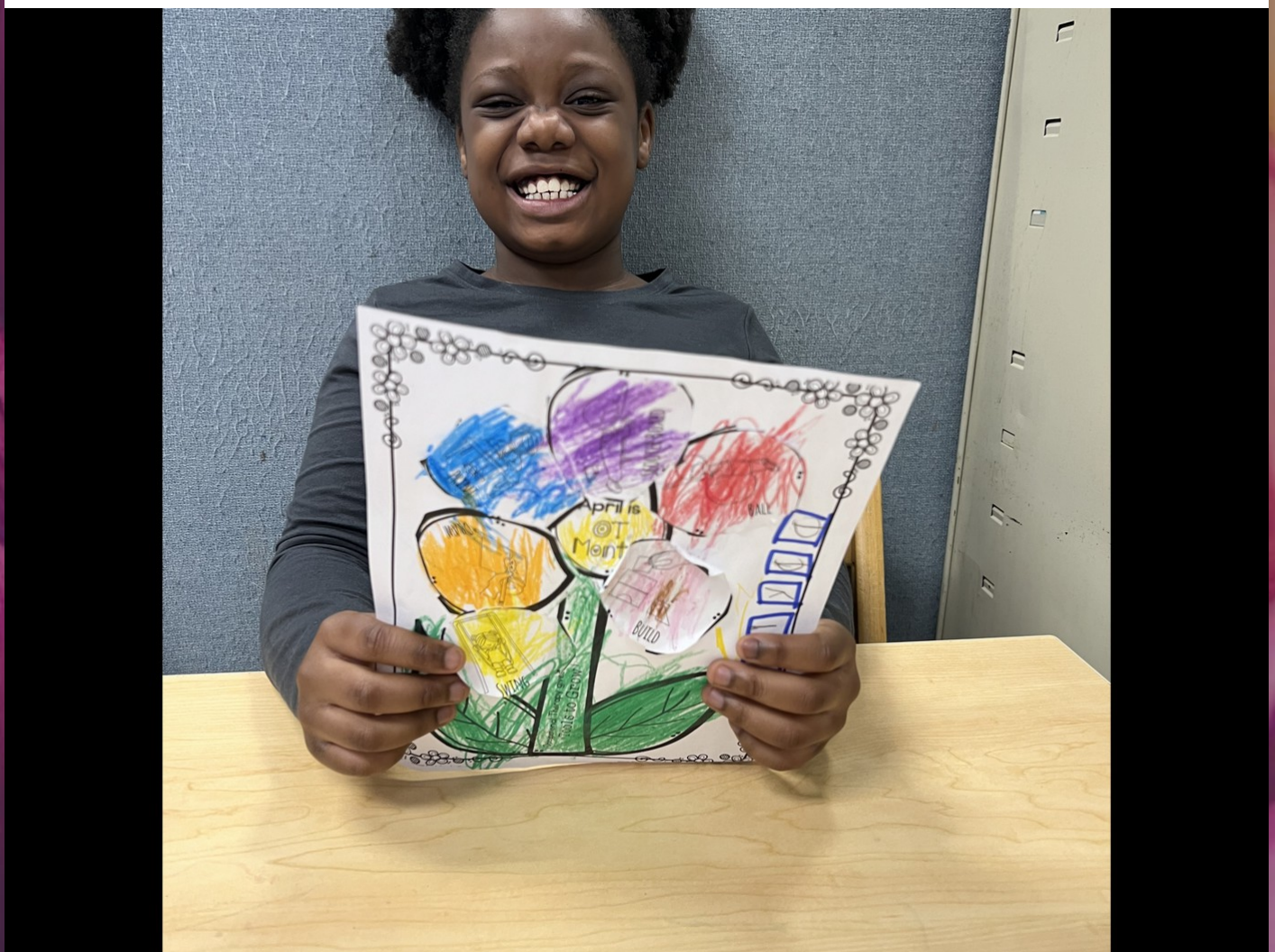
Sensory Processing: Delays in adaptive responses to sights, sounds, movement, taste, touch

Strength: Manipulating resistive materials, moving against gravity, sustaining body positions

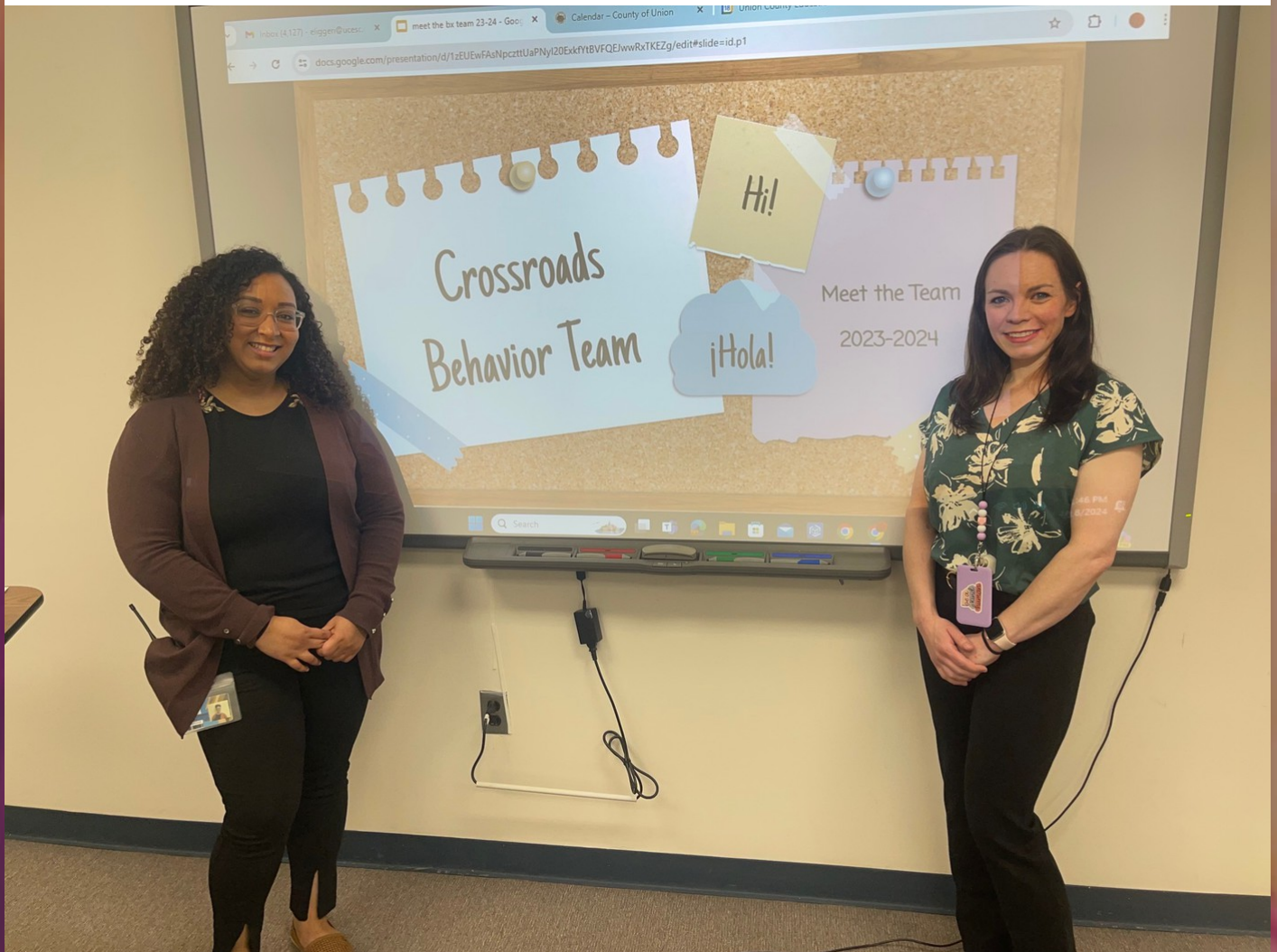
Social: Interacting with others, following routines, play skills

The Crossroads therapists started the celebration with some new gear, proudly displaying "OT Squad" t-shirts. OT month signs were hung up on the bulletin boards and doors throughout the school and the students completed an OT month color, cut and paste activity working on scissor skills, fine motor coordination, writing/pre-writing skills and bilateral hand skills. The project entitled: "Occupational Therapy gives me the Tools To Grow" encouraged the students to identify what they do in OT and color, cut and paste the coordinating petal on the flower. The students' flowers were displayed in the OT room and classrooms.

With the break in the weather, the therapy sessions are beginning to focus on sensory motor outdoor play. The students all love bubbles, sidewalk chalk, digging in the dirt and the new addition of 3 kick scooters.



Behavior Spotlight - Ms. Karly and Ms. Marianny - BCBA's



Celebrating Autism Acceptance Month in April

Hello everyone, we are Marianny Amezcua and Karly Barreto, the Crossroads Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs).

In April, we celebrated Autism Acceptance Month, a time to promote understanding, acceptance, and support for individuals on the autism spectrum. Throughout the month, our school community engaged in various activities and initiatives to raise awareness and foster acceptance. We also hosted informational sessions and workshops to educate families and staff about autism spectrum disorder (ASD). These sessions focused on promoting acceptance and providing strategies for supporting individuals with ASD in educational and social settings.

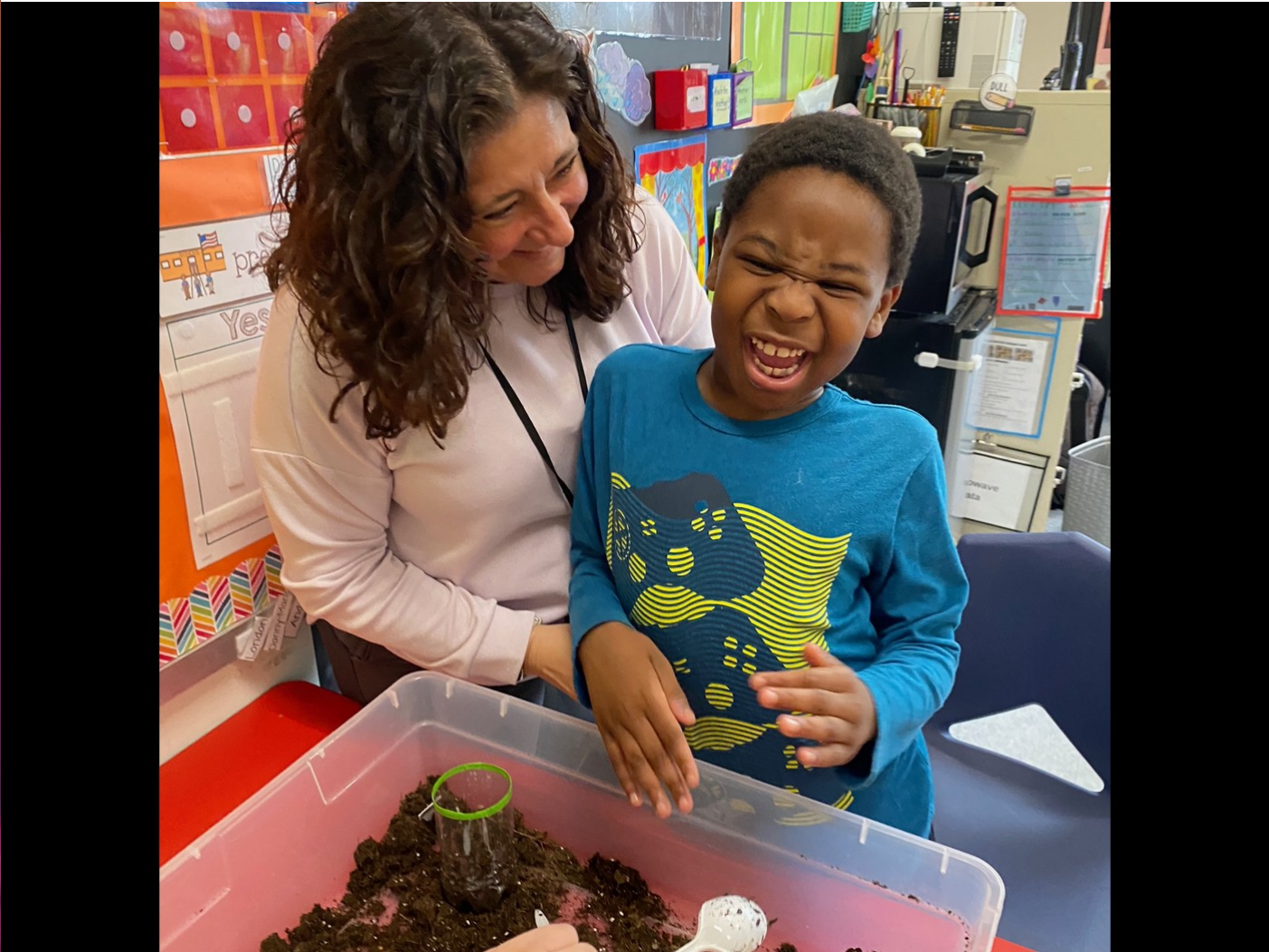
Fun Fact: There are about 3,000 BCBAs in the state of New Jersey and our school has 2 Full-time BCBAs, plus our administration team are BCBAs! That means we have 5 total BCBAs in one school, that's awesome! Our team also includes 5 full-time Registered Behavior Technicians (RBTs) who support the staff and students in the school setting.

As we wrap up Autism Acceptance Month, let us continue to embrace and celebrate the differences that make each of us unique. By promoting acceptance and understanding, we can create a more inclusive and supportive community for individuals with autism and their families.

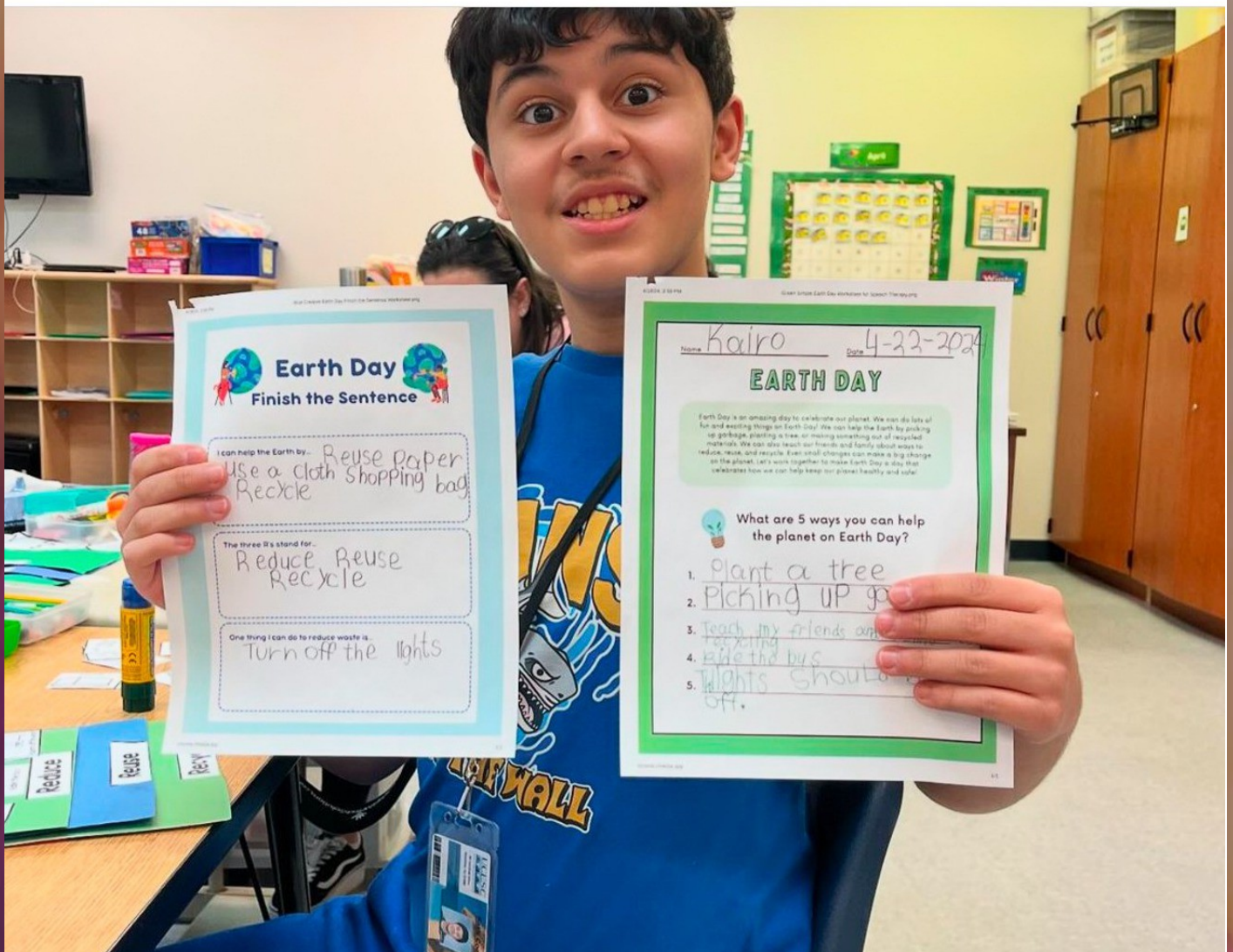


April at Crossroads









Special Visit from the students of Mount Saint Mary's Academy



Crossroads in the Community





Staff Corner

Celebrating Christina on Administrative Professionals Day!



Parent Resources

Stem Event with former Crossroads Speech Therapist Hope

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.

The JCC of Central NJ is committed to accessibility and inclusion.
To request accommodations, please contact Beth Mitchell
at 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



A Message from the Union County Board of County Commissioners

The Office for Persons with Disabilities
and Special Needs

Programs and Social Events for all ages

PROGRAMS

- Yoga
- Karate
- Cooking
- Ceramics
- Golf
- Spray Park

SOCIAL EVENTS

- Day Out with the Red Bulls
- Spring & Fall Fishing Derby
- Paint by the Pond
- Summer Festival
- Summer Camp
- Barn Dance
- Skating with Santa & more



For more information or to be placed on our mailing
list to receive brochures and program details:

call: (908) 527-4781

email: opdsn@ucnj.org

visit our website www.ucnj.org/opdsn

Or scan the QR Code!

Un Mensaje de la Junta de
Comisionados del Condado de Union

La Oficina para Personas con
Descapacidades y Necesidades Especiales

Programas y Eventos Sociales para todas las edades

PROGRAMAS

- Yoga
- Karate
- Cocina
- Ceramica
- Artes y Manualidades
- Golf
- Parque de Agua

EVENTOS SOCIALES

- Una Noche con los NJ Devils/
NY Red Bulls
- Ata tus patines
- Pesca en la Primavera y Otoño
- Pintando junto al Lago
- Carnaval de Verano
- Baile en el Granero
- Campamento de Verano



Para más información sobre estos programas, o para
ser incluido en nuestra lista de correo y recibir detalles,
llama o envíe un correo electrónico:

(908) 527-4781/ opdsn@ucnj.org
visite nuestra pagina web:
www.ucnj.org/opdsn
o escane el código!



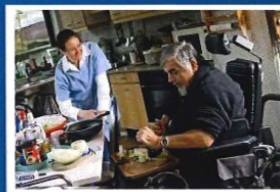
A Service of the Union County
Board of County Commissioners



UNION COUNTY
We're Connected to You!

LOOKING FOR ASSISTANCE? ARE YOU...

- A permanently physically disabled
resident of Union County aged 18 and
older?
- In paid employment, attending school, or
volunteering a minimum of 20 hours per
month?
- Capable of self-direction and able to
supervise a personal assistant?



**If so, you may be eligible for up to 40 hours a week
participating in the Personal Assistance Services
Program (PASP).**

For more information, please contact:

Diane Granada, PASP County Coordinator
908-527-4845 or diane.granada@ucnj.org
Union County Department of Human Services
Office for Persons with Disabilities & Special Needs

[Scan Here](#)



Scan the QR code to visit our website

*****For Medicaid eligible individuals, personal assistance services should be accessed
through their medical insurance first*****



A Service of the Union County
Board of County Commissioners



DDS
NJ DIVISION OF
DISABILITY SERVICES



UNION COUNTY
We're Connected to You!



www.ucnj.org



¿ESTÁS BUSCANDO AYUDA?

- ¿Eres un residente del Condado de Union con una discapacidad física permanente de 18 años o más?
- ¿Estás empleado, estás asistiendo a una escuela o participas como voluntario con un mínimo de 20 horas por mes?
- ¿Eres capaz de dirigir y supervisar a un asistente personal?



Si es así, usted puede ser elegible para participar hasta 40 horas a la semana en el Programa de Servicios de Asistencia Personal (PASP).

Para más información, por favor contactar a:

Diane Granada, PASP County Coordinator
908-527-4845 or diane.granada@ucnj.org
Union County Department of Human Services
Office for Persons with Disabilities & Special Needs

[Escanea aquí](#)



Escanea el código para visitar nuestra página web



Para las personas elegibles para Medicaid, los servicios de asistencia personal deben ser a través de su seguro médico



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Board of County Commissioners



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www.ucnj.org



About Us

Website: 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



CR Smore

CR is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



HILLCREST ACADEMY NORTH

APRIL 2024

Principal's Message



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

Hillcrest Academy North has been very busy during the month of April. We have had a productive launching of our Pathful Explore program which is designed to identify students skills, develop those skills, and align them to college and career. Teachers and students have been meeting for one hour a week to work in this software program which gives them the time to plan for their

future. There is certainly a "buzz" around the building about the program and how each student will benefit from it.

Also, we hosted Career Day 2024! Every school year HAN asks professionals from the community to join us for a day of "exploration" for our students as they learn about different professions from experienced professionals, are able to ask questions about the profession they are most interested in, and leave with a mindset that they must plan for their future while still in high school. It was a very fantastic and fun day at HAN.

Keep up the good work, HAN!

Sincerely,

Monthly Data

Total Enrolled - 86

Enrolled - 4

Disenrolled - 0

Fire Drill - April 9th

Off Site Evacuation Drill - April 9th

Upcoming Dates

May 3rd - School Wide Incentive Field Trip

May 7th-14th - State Testing for select students

May 17th - Field Trip for select Seniors

May 21st - Field Trip for select Seniors

May 24th - Science Field Trip for select students

May 27th - No School - Memorial Day

May 30th - Prom!

Prom Packets can be picked up in the Main Office

Staff Spotlight - Mrs. Picciano



classes.

Mrs. Picciano has been the Art Teacher at Hillcrest Academy North for over 15 years!. She is able to inspire her students through her passion for art and give the students a space for them to explore their creativity. Due to Mrs. Picciano's dedication to HAN, she along with several students created the award winning bulletin board for the UCESC contest! The halls of HAN are decorated with student art work that they create in Mrs. Picciano's

Main Office Spotlights

Mrs. Prieto, School Nurse



The health office has been busy this month performing annual health screenings and sending parent notifications if any screening is not within the normal limits. In addition to the screenings, the nurse created health records for 4 new students which includes obtaining immunization records and reviewing any medical issues. The nurse has coordinated a CPR training class for UCESC staff that will take place on April 30th. The nurse attended a UCESC nurse department meeting

Mrs. Goldenberg, Social Worker

April has been a productive and busy month in the Social Work office. Upon returning from Spring Break, the social work/guidance department took a group of 12 Seniors to UCNJ to visit the campus. Many students now plan to attend there next year, and will be attending a "New Student Orientation" on 5/21 where they will have the opportunity to register for classes for the Fall 2024 Semester. The social worker has worked with all other Seniors to help them take steps regarding their post graduate plans, including: assistance with college applications, career exploration, and completing financial aid. We also had our first NJ4S School-wide program over the course of three weeks, which was entitled "Relationship Losses". In this program, two professionals completed a presentation on ways we can effectively cope with relationship losses. They will be returning in June to complete a presentation on marijuana.

April 26, 2024 was our Annual Career Day, and professionals from various fields attended. Students had the opportunity to ask questions and learn not only about all of the different fields, but about how the individuals came to be in the field that they are in. Our students reported a positive experience – and we've already asked the professionals to return for 2025!

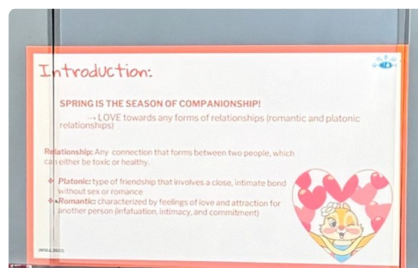


April at HAN



Yearbook Pictures

Students were excited to have their pictures taken for this year's Yearbook! Students posed for group Homeroom and Superlative pictures along



Relationship Loss Presentations

HAN students were visited by.... to present and discuss about relationship loss and how to handle it. Students participated in discussion



UCC Trip

Graduating seniors who were interested in Union County College went on a field trip to tour the campus and learn more about the programs of study offered there. Several

with individual Senior portraits. Due to HAN being awarded a UCESF Grant for Yearbook equipment this year, students were able to take a more hands on approach to creating this year's Yearbook and have high quality pictures!

about what red flags in relationships (both romantic and platonic) are and how to work through a heartbreak.

students are enrolled at UCC for the fall and will be going back to the campus to complete an orientation in May!

Career Day

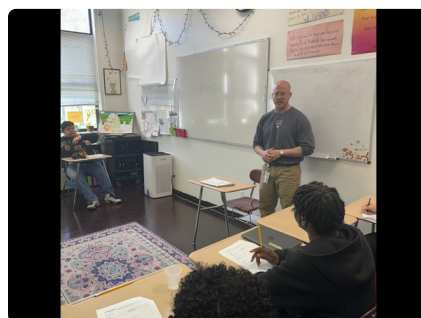
HAN held its Annual Career Day where professional members of the community gave presentations on their careers and how they reached their goals. Students were able to ask questions and engage in discussions with the professionals and wrote reflections about what career was the most interesting to them. Thank you to all of professionals who attended our Career Day!



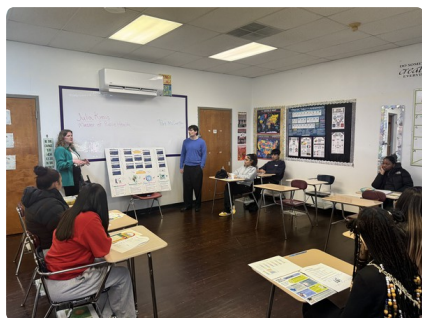
Amtrak Supervisor



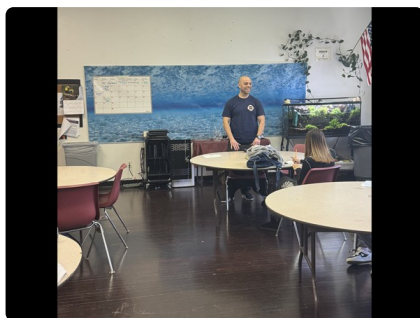
Small Business Owner



UCESC IT Department



Master of Public Health & Social Worker



EMT & Firefighter



Elizabeth Police Officers



Finance



**Student learning about
careers in Public Health
and Social Work**

Thank You!



April 24th was Administrative Professional's Day and HAN was able to celebrate Mrs. Di Carlo! Mrs. Di Carlo is the best of the best and ensures that HAN runs smoothly every day! Thank you for all that you do!

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 and parents/guardians are encouraged to download the STOPit App onto their phones.



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://ucesc.org/schools/hillcrest_academy_north)

Phone Number: (908) 233-9366

Website: https://ucesc.org/schools/hillcrest_academy_north

Visit Us On Instagram



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



John Marquet

John is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





Hillcrest Academy South Campus

April 2024 Monthly Report



Dr. Balsamello's Message

Hillcrest Academy South Campus (HAS) staff and students focused on the Social Emotional themes of Responsibility and Self-Care. HAS also promoted Autism Awareness and recognized Arab-American History Month. Students completed the third marking period then began the fourth and last marking period of the 2023-24 school year. We all hope you enjoy our newsletter!

April 2024 Enrollment Data

Enrollment: 92 (as of 4/29/24).

New Students: 5.

Disenrollments: 1 (Attendance).

Emergency Drill: Non-fire Evacuation on-site 4/9/24.

Fire Drill-4/16/24.

People Spotlights!

Student of the Month for March!

Congratulations to our Student of the Month for March, Alex! When asked about his work ethic, his teachers replied;

- Always ready to participate
- Very kind and very respectful
- Caring and helpful
- Always polite and conscientious



Staff Spotlight Ms Ramirez!

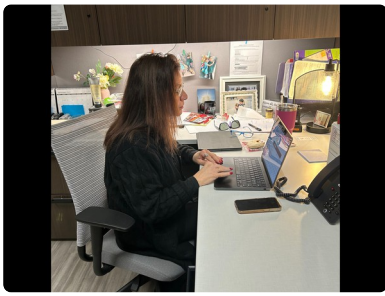
Ms Ramirez is in her 2nd year here at the Commission & HAS, but in general she has been in education for 24 years. Before becoming a SAC, Ms Ramirez was a Spanish teacher, and before that she worked in Addiction & Recovery. Aside from being a teacher, she was also a Latin Dance Instructor & served as a Latin Dance Club Advisor for many years; she loves to dance! Ms Ramirez comes from a big soccer family - her father in law played professionally, her husband played semi-pro, and together they ran their home town's recreational program, opened a club, and served on several boards. From this love of soccer, Ms Ramirez was also a soccer coach. When not working as a SAC, she enjoys spending time with her family; a big, crazy bunch, diverse in every kind of way. Ms Ramirez' family still lives close and sees each other often, which she sees as a true blessing. She love being outdoors and especially being able to see nature's beautiful scenery. Ms Ramirez once took a road trip through 3 national parks and can't wait to be able to do it again!



Guidance Spotlights

Mrs Gilchrist - Social Worker

Broadly speaking, as the Hillcrest Academy South School Social Worker, Ms Gilchrist aims to assist students in their day to day academic life. Students have total access to the Social Work office and are able to avail themselves of both counseling and resource finding services. This approach encompasses the "whole student" to ensure that they are physically, emotionally and

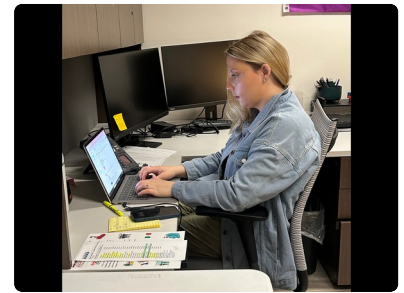


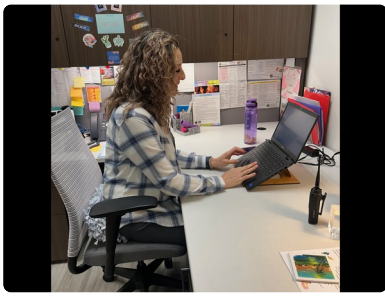
mentally present in the classroom. The main objective is to promote equality and justice. The general idea is to provide a safe learning environment so that all students are academically successful and socially adjusted.



Ms Schulhafer - Guidance Councilor

This month, the school counselor organized a trip to UCC where potential seniors could tour the campus and learn the benefits of attending a community college. As the school year is coming rapidly to an end, the guidance counselor has been meeting with all of the seniors to ensure they are on track to graduate and have post-secondary plans in place. Ms. Schulhafer enjoys meeting with all of the students to help create post-secondary plans to help get the students excited for what the future holds! Ms. Schulhafer continues to plan for the students to take the NJSLA and the SAT this spring.

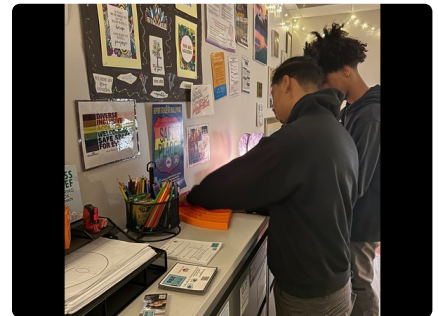




Mrs Ramirez - Student Assistance Coordinator (SAC)

Being fairly new to the UCESC, Ms Ramirez is working on providing a comprehensive student assistance program that includes prevention, intervention, support and instructional services for students. As a Student Assistance Counselor (SAC), the goal is to offer assistance to students troubled by familial, emotional, social, legal, physical, or substance abuse problems.

Ms Ramirez aims to serve as a structured, organized liaison among the school, parents, and outside agencies. The role of the SAC is to provide a strength-based approach in working with the youth she serves in her efforts to promote a healthy, safe, & drug-free life-style. Ms Ramirez does her best to utilize the existing resources within the school to address school based concerns as well as link students and their families with community resources to provide for needs requiring specialized services.



Arab-American Heritage Month

Arab American Heritage Month aims to honor the rich heritage, history, and hopes of the more than 3.5 million Arab Americans across our country. It began as a 2017 initiative that only involved a few states and cities, but recognition has been steadily spreading since then. In April 2021, President Biden became the first U.S. president to issue a proclamation acknowledging Arab American Heritage Month. HAS recognized Arab American Heritage Month in a hallway display that included notable individuals with roots in one of the 22 countries located in the Middle East and North Africa that are united by their primary language, Arabic, as well as by their shared history and culture.

April is Arab - American Heritage Month



3rd Marking Period Honor Roll Trip

Congratulations to all those students who made honor roll for the 3rd marking period! As a reward for all of their efforts and hard work, these students were treated to a trip to the movies. They were able to purchase snacks and treats, sit with their friends, and enjoy a relaxing day out! The movie for this trip is Godzilla x Kong: The New Empire which was chapparoned by Dr Balsamello and Ms Gilchrist.



Arbor Day



What is Arbor Day and why is it celebrated? In 1872, a man by the name of J. Sterling Morton proposed that a special day be set aside for the planting of trees. Trees are a necessity in multiple ways and they were being cut down and not being replaced. The first time this holiday was observed more than one million trees were planted in Nebraska. Now it is currently celebrated all over the world. As part of this celebration, Mrs. Arora took her science classes outside to plant a few trees on our school campus. While they planted trees, students learned how trees work, why it is important to plant them, and how different creatures, like earth worms, contribute to the function and flourishing of trees.



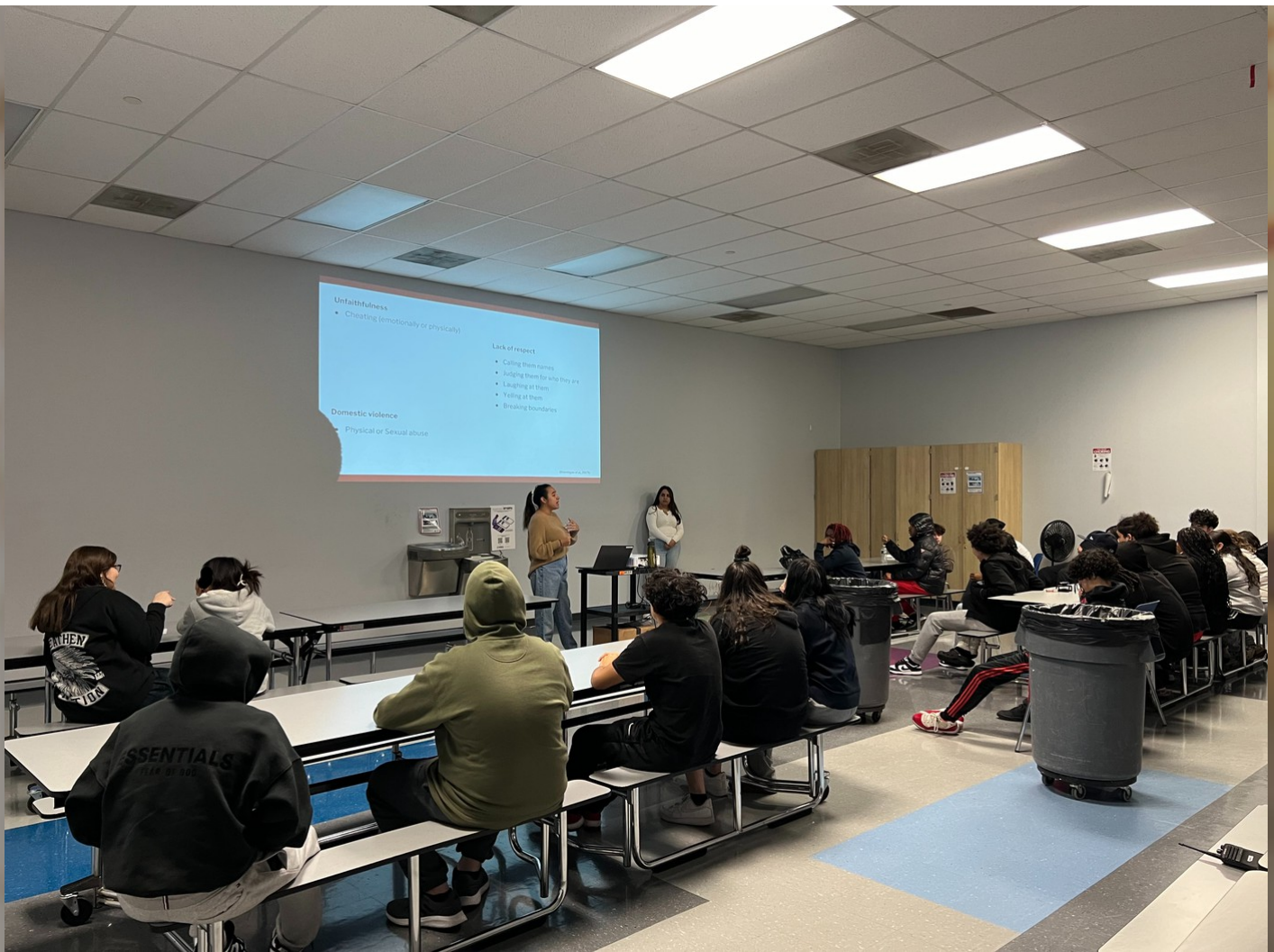
Union County College Trip

Guidance Councilor, Mrs Schulhafer, organized a trip to UCC where interested seniors could tour the campus and learn the benefits of attending a community college. UCC has campuses in Cranford, Scotch Plains, Plainfield, and even Elizabeth which will make commuting easy for these prospective students. College is an important right of passage for teens/young adults as it helps open doors into jobs and future endeavors. It shows that a person is committed to studying, personal growth, and ready to work toward a specialized area of knowledge. At UCC, students have the opportunity to either earn a degree, get a certification, or prep for a new job skill.



Healthy Relationships Assembly

Relationships at any age can be difficult, and that's if the relationship is a healthy one. What makes a relationship healthy? What makes a relationship toxic? What if the relationship ends? Does friendship count as a relationship? These are things that high school students may not fully understand because this is all new to them. This can also be a very devastating time for them if the relationships end. Mrs Ramirez, UCESC's Student Assistance Coordinator, organized the Healthy Relationships Assembly for students. During this assembly, presenters spoke with students about what the difference is between a healthy relationship and an unhealthy relationship. Both romantic and friendships were included in this presentation as well as the tools needed to handle "break ups" for both.



Happy Administrative Professional's Day

Here at HAS, we are so grateful for our Administrative Professional, Mrs D'Emilio! According to Google, the definition of an Administrative Professional are those who "provide essential office duties such as writing business correspondence, scheduling appointments, managing projects, maintaining paper and electronic files, and delivering customer service". Here at HAS, Ms D'Emilio is so much more than that! The students love her and look up to her for all the kind things she does for them. The staff appreciates all the work she does behind the scenes to keep our school running. Thank you Mrs D'Emilio for all you do for us here at HAS!



Our Students In and Out of School

You play ball like a girl!

For the past 2 years, Charline has been an outside linebacker for a women's flag football. It started when her s/o had a passion for football and when they started dating, Charline developed an interest. She began to watch and she came across videos of those with backstories and why they began to do what they do. Ray Lewis being one of her biggest inspirations, he is one of the best linebackers. He takes out his anger on the field and his story behind it was to get stronger. It almost seemed like a coincidence that Charline was assigned the number 52 on her jersey because Ray Lewis is also known for the number 52 and his deck of cards. His example gave Charline a reason to keep going because of the parallels to her life; to never back down from any man, defend her mother from any harm, and always stand her ground. Playing flag football makes her feel strong, confident and empowered. Charline puts all of her hard work and dedication into this sport. When she begins to lose motivation, she will put on her uniform, get out onto the field, and then the game starts. She remembers to continue to strive for the better version of her. To be an example for other women who don't have the confidence to step foot on the field because they were told not to just because



they are women. Violence won't be the answer, its about being the bigger person reaching for the stars and staying consistent. "If this is what I want, I have to go for it!"

About Us

Hillcrest Academy South is an alternative high school for students from the Elizabeth Public School District. Students are referred to HAS by their Elizabeth Academy guidance counselor and administration for an interview at HAS. We provide a small educational learning setting with opportunities to make up courses through our Credit Retrieval Program in a caring environment in order to meet Elizabeth's graduation requirements.

Website: www.ucesc.org

Instagram: [ucesc_has](https://www.instagram.com/ucesc_has)

Facebook: [Hillcrest Academy South](https://www.facebook.com/HillcrestAcademySouth)

Location: [1571 Lamberts Mill Road, Westfield, NJ, USA-Door 3B](#)

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

[Visit us on Instagram](#)



HAS Smore

HAS is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



**APRIL
2024
MONTHLY
REPORT**



LAMBERTS MILL ACADEMY

"Before the reward, there must be labor. You plant before you harvest. You sow in tears before you reap joy." – Ralph Ransom

Supervisor's Message

Good Morning,

I hope this newsletter finds you well! The month of April has been quite interesting, as we started the month with a well-deserved Spring Break for students and staff at LMA. Allowing LMA school community members the opportunity to 'reset' and prepare for the final marking period has been evident throughout this month. Students resumed their engagement in academic classes, and continue to work on therapeutic treatment goals in both individual and group therapy sessions.

The month of April was filled with different LMA initiatives, learning experiences around arts and nature, along with recognition of Autism Awareness on a national level. I'm proud to see the students at LMA so vested in the growing LMA school community! We will start administering the NJSLA state testing the first week of May, and complete makeups throughout the month of May. As we wind down the school year entering the 4th marking period it's becoming more and more clear we are seeing how the different



programs put in place in September are truly coming to fruition now for students and staff at LMA. I am thankful for the parent/guardian feedback from our NJ SCI survey results. The data you provided will help us target our areas for growth so that we can truly improve school climate, and build on our successes at LMA. The school climate is truly the foundation of LMA.

Please spend some time reviewing our monthly newsletter, and see all the events and activities completed at the Mill, along with different upcoming community events and support systems.

Monthly Data

- 1. Enrollment - 48
- 2. Acceptances - 2
- 3. New Students - 3
- 4. Intakes - 3
- 5. Referrals - 4
- 6. Disenrollments - 2
- 7. Fire Drill - 4/16 9:15am
- 8. Other Drill (specify type) - 4/9 (EM Drill: Evacuation Non Fire Off Site) Call on County Radio

Upcoming LMA Events

May 2024 Important Dates

- May 13 - LMA Field Trip - Mane Stream
- May 17 - Union County Teen Arts Festival
- May 21 - Union County Outstanding Scholar Breakfast
- May 27 - School Closed - Memorial Day



Upcoming Community Events



TOWNSHIP OF SCOTCH PLAINS

In Partnership with FSP Rotary, Lifestyle Studio, and Resolve
Community Counseling

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WALK

**SATURDAY, MAY 4, 2024 AT 10AM
ALAN AUGUSTINE VILLAGE GREEN**

Scotch Plains Mental Health Awareness Walk

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/scotch-plains-mental-health-awareness-walk-tickets-865855766907?aff=ebdsoporgprofile>



FORGIVE

The Power of Forgiveness




Mayor Adrian O. Mapp
Councilwoman Terri Briggs-Jones
and the City of Plainfield


**May 16, 2024, 6:30 pm Door opens
Plainfield Performing Arts Center**


A Women's Mental Health Event: The Power of Forgiveness.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-womens-mental-health-event-the-power-of-forgiveness-tickets-880943033327?aff=ebdssbcategorybrowse>



Sponsored by the
Middlesex County
4-H Teen Ambassadors







**TEEN
MENTAL
HEALTH
FAIR**

Tuesday, May 21st
7:00-8:30 PM
Middlesex County 4-H Center
645 Cranbury Road
East Brunswick, NJ 08816


Open to all youth in
grades 6 and up

**REGISTER
NOW!**

<https://tinyurl.com/mc4hmentalhealth>
Questions: Contact 732-398-5261 or
lbovitz@njaes.rutgers.edu

- Tips for overcoming your mental health obstacles
- Learn from teens and adults on a variety of topics
- Talk to experts on mental health topics
- Chat & chill with other teens
- Stress Management tips and tricks
- Refreshments provided



Topics and activity stations include:

- Animal Therapy
- Art Therapy
- Journaling
- Calm Down Jars Craft
- Positivity Corner
- Dealing with Social Media
- Bullying and Abuse
- Depression
- Positive Body Image
- and more ...

Invitation To 4-H Teen Mental Health Fair

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSesKntiz4qMvUa_2t_TmzRijRF9UI7LPmihst85G2jww1Saw/viewform

LMA Student of the Month - April 2024

Evette L-C

LMA is proud to announce our April Student of the Month, Evette! Evette joined the LMA school community this past September. She has worked on hard on her academics, and her therapeutic goals while consistently attending LMA. A vote from all LMA staff revealed Evette to have a majority of the votes for student of the month, and it shows with all the progress and growth she has made while attending LMA. She has been taken on leadership roles, while improving her interpersonal skills at LMA. We are happy to name Evette as the LMA student of the month for April and look forward to seeing her continued growth at LMA!



LMA Staff Spotlight

Mrs. Reardon - LMA School Secretary

Getting to know Mrs. Reardon

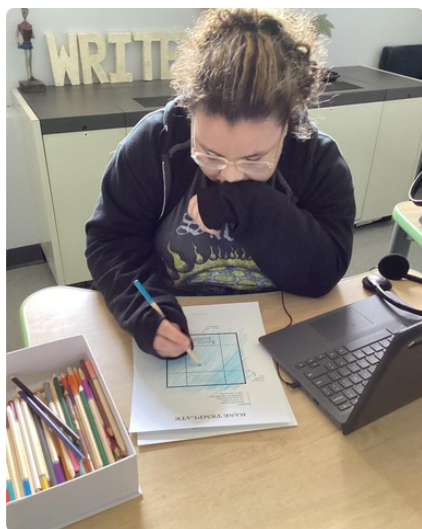
1. Loves to travel new places.
2. Enjoys gardening
3. Long-time New York Knicks fan.
4. Has worked with the Commission since 2010.

Enjoys all things food, watching cooking shows, finding new recipes, trying new restaurants and always willing to try something new and unusual.

LMA is proud and honored to have Mrs. Reardon as our Administrative Professional, ensuring the day to day operations are being completed with pride!

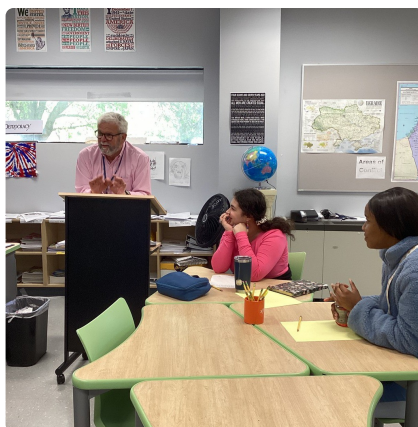


Classroom Spotlights



Mrs. Van Clief's Math classes learn about real world math!

Students worked on a dream car and or House project. Many students exchanged their ideas and presented their information to the classroom. They needed to look at information related to math



Updates from Mr. Bell's Social Studies classes

Students have followed our path of history into a number of themes. US II students have learned about WWII - the reasons for it happening, the key players, the US involvement, and the impact it had on our country and the world. US History I students learned about the closing



Mr. Acosta's Post Graduate Progress

Our post-grad students, Blake and Gabe, got to meet a chef from the Chili's corporation based in Dallas, Texas. He was so kind and welcoming and truly made them feel like part of the team. Additionally, we recently made cake pops with some help from the seniors. The cake pops were delicious and we plan on making them

such as miles per gallon, down payments and monthly expenses. Students also have been working on area, perimeter, and volume and how this relates to home repairs. They learned how to calculate the room size for the amount of paint, carpet, and tiles.

changes that did and did not happen in the country including the Great Migration and Jim Crow laws. World History students have looked at the history of laws and the models used from ancient Greece and Rome.

Those students who will be eligible to vote in our next elections participated in a seminar to review the history of voting, the importance of participation, and the actual forms necessary to become a registered voter.

again in the near future. Prior to the year ending, our post-grad students will be making sure their resumes are up to date to reflect all the new experiences from throughout the year!

Clinical Corner

Self care entails strategies that assist in improving your mental and physical health such as reducing stress and anxiety, lowering your risk of illness, and increasing your energy levels. Written below are 5 tips on practicing self care:

1. Getting enough sleep - Maintain a schedule, reduce caffeine intake, and limit screen time
2. Get regular exercise - 30 minutes of exercise can improve your mood and health. Try taking walks, running, playing sports, or swimming.
3. Practice healthy hygiene - Remember to always take care of yourself, such as taking showers, brushing your teeth, and cleaning your living space
4. Spending quality time with loved ones - Surround yourself with positive influences such as family members and friends
5. Practicing Coping Skills - Self soothe with some of your most calming activities



Learning Experiences at The Mill

RWJ/Trinitas Clinicians visit LMA students on social media and cyberbullying

On April 18th LMA welcomed guest speakers Nicole Macaluso and Nikki Milch from Trinitas Regional Medical Center Child and Adolescent Outpatient Unit. They provided an engaging presentation on Cyberbullying, Social Media safety and consent, and healthy relationships where the students had the opportunity to ask questions and participate in interactive discussion.

Here is what our LMA students had to say about the presentation:



I did like the presentation, it was very informative and interesting! I liked learning about the laws about sending appropriate vs inappropriate information. I found it very interesting that the age of consent in New Jersey is 16."

I loved it! It was good to hear about others who share the same perspective as me. The most interesting thing was learning about the age of consent

I found it very interesting that a lot of people go through cyberbullying. It helped me feel not alone and feel seen. The presentation made me realize I was not alone which made me feel

LMA Participates in Arbor Day

3 LMA students accompanied Ms. Matusz to participate in the Union County annual Arbor Day Tree Planting program on April 10. They were shown how to plant a tree at Oak Ridge Park and received 2 Eastern Redbud trees to take back to LMA to plant. The students did great and it was a wonderful learning experience for all! A huge thank you to James Pellettiere, clerk of the Union County Board of Freeholders.



LMA Monthly SEL Theme: Self Care/Responsibility & Autism Acceptance

During the month of April the SEL theme is self care/responsibility, and Autism Acceptance month. Throughout our daily groups students discussed various ways they engage in self care, and the importance of doing so. Students participated in mindfulness activities, yoga for teens and discussed healthy sleep hygiene schedules. A large portion of the month highlighted Autism Acceptance, and on April 19th students and staff wore red and/or gold to support Autism Acceptance month. Red is used in the community as it isn't a "sad" or "gendered" color like blue, and is a bright color that can be seen. Gold is used because "au" is the symbol for gold on the periodic table and "au" are the first two letters in autism. Lastly we had a speaker from Trinitas Regional Medical Center that discussed the topic of cyberbullying and social media safety.



LMA Students Outside the Classroom

Ben Embarks on his Eagle Scout Project

Ben is currently ranked as a Life Scout in Boy Scout Troop 114 in West Milford. He was recently granted approval to start his Eagle Scout Project, which is part of earning the highest rank in Boy Scouts. This project entails building brand new overhangs for cabins at the new Weiss Center in Ringwood. He will raise seven hundred dollars in funds for materials to help with the project. Once all materials are secured, he will start construction. He will be leading, managing and organizing a group of about eleven volunteers, including both scouts and adults. Ben is using his strong problem solving skills by reading blueprints, learning carpentry skills, and scheduling his volunteers in shifts to complete the project based on the timeline he was given. We are so proud of this milestone at LMA and can't wait to see how it turns out! Let's go, Ben!



Community Resources

988

SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE

If you or someone you know
needs support now,
CALL OR TEXT: 988
CHAT: 988lifeline.org

Talk with us.



nami

National Alliance on Mental Illness

<https://988lifeline.org/>

<https://www.nami.org/>

N e w  *J e r s e y*

MentalHealthCares

New Jersey's Behavioral Health and Referral Service

NJ Mental Health Cares

If you're concerned about your mental health or the mental health of someone you love, **NJ Mental Health Cares** can help. The **free helpline** offers telephone counseling, emotional support, information and assistance.

866-202-HELP (4357)
7 days per week, 8am - 8pm



<https://www.njmentalhealthcares.org/>

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

About Us

Contact Information:

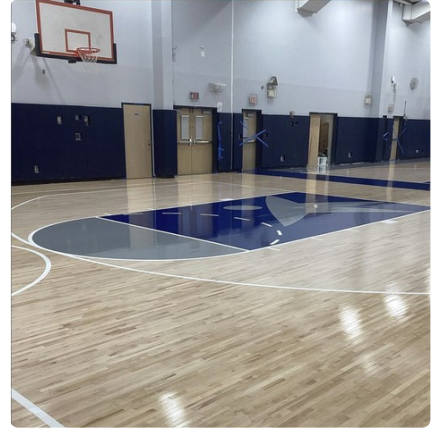
Phone: (908)-233-7581

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

Website: https://ucesc.org/schools/lamberts_mill_academy

Instagram: 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



MONTHLY REPORT

April

Supervisor's Message



What's in a Name?

As many of you are well aware that Autism Awareness month has been the recognized month to celebrate individuals with Autism and the Autistic community. However, a recent movement throughout special education, community leaders and the

Westlake School community is embracing the concept change and mindset from Autism "AWARENESS" to Autism "ACCEPTANCE".

The distinction between autism acceptance and autism awareness is significant in understanding how society perceives and supports individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Autism awareness focuses on educating the public on signs and symptoms of autism, while autism acceptance breaks down barriers and negative stigma by advocating for inclusive environments where individuals with ASD feel valued, respected, and included. It emphasizes creating communities where everyone belongs and has the opportunity to thrive and feel comfortable and be proud of who they are. Acceptance acknowledges the importance of listening to and respecting the perspectives of autistic individuals themselves and recognizes that they themselves are the experts on their own experiences and preferences and advocates for their voices to be heard, respected and valued.

Recently, this month President Biden hammered this idea home when he spoke about the name/concept change from “awareness” to “acceptance” , “I call upon all Americans to learn more about autism to improve early diagnosis, to learn more about the experiences of autistic people from autistic people, and to build more welcoming and inclusive communities to support people with autism.”

While autism awareness is an important first step in increasing understanding and educating the masses, autism acceptance takes that understanding to the next level by promoting respect, inclusion, empowerment and advocacy of individuals with autism.

We at Westlake applaud those who have embraced this shift and will continue to educate, advance and advocate for our students, their families and a society that accommodates and includes individuals with autism in all aspects of life.

Till next time my friends, be good to yourself and each other :)
Mr. P

Westlake Information!

- Current Enrollment: 57
- Referrals: 7
- Emergency Management Drill Evacuation (off site): April 9
- Fire Drill: April 16
- Acceptances: 4

Autism Acceptance!

Here's why autism acceptance is often considered more meaningful than mere awareness:

- **Embracing Neurodiversity:** Autism acceptance goes beyond awareness by embracing the concept of neurodiversity. It recognizes that autism is a natural variation of the human experience and values the unique strengths and abilities of individuals with ASD. Instead of focusing solely on deficits or challenges, autism acceptance promotes respect, inclusion, and celebration of neurodiversity.
- **Promoting Inclusion and Belonging:** Awareness campaigns often focus on educating the public about the signs and symptoms of autism, which is important for increasing understanding and reducing stigma. However, **Respecting Autistic Perspectives: Autism** It in discussions about autism-related policies, programs, and services.

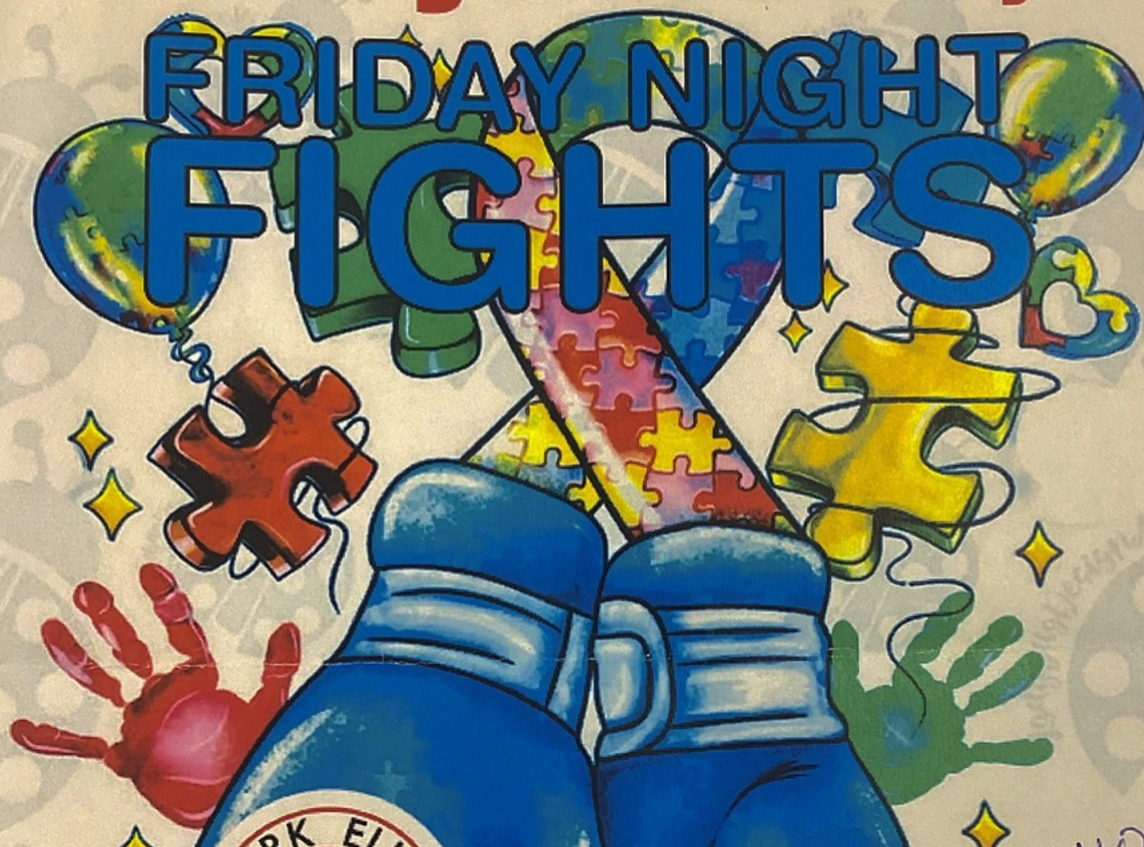
- **Empowering Autistic Advocacy:** Awareness campaigns often portray autism as a problem to be solved or a tragedy to be overcome, which can perpetuate negative stereotypes and attitudes towards autism. In contrast, autism acceptance empowers autistic individuals to advocate for their rights, needs, and preferences. It encourages them to challenge stereotypes, demand equality, and participate in decision-making processes that affect their lives.
- **Fostering Positive Change:** While awareness campaigns have helped raise visibility and understanding of autism, they may not always lead to meaningful change in attitudes, policies, or practices. Autism acceptance, on the other hand, aims to drive systemic change by challenging ableism, promoting accessibility, and advocating for policies and practices that support the full inclusion and participation of autistic individuals in society.

In summary, while autism awareness is an important first step in increasing understanding and reducing stigma, autism acceptance takes that understanding to the next level by promoting respect, inclusion, and empowerment of autistic individuals. It recognizes their inherent value and contributions to society and advocates for a world where everyone, regardless of neurotype, is accepted, valued, and celebrated.



Thank You Park Elite Boxing Academy!

PARK ELITE boxing academy



On April 19th, Park Elite Boxing Academy hosted a fundraiser to raise money for Autism Awareness. The event was run by A.G.'s (Westlake student) father, he generously donated \$1,000 to Westlake School. The staff and students are very thankful for this generous donation!



Westlake March Spotlight!

Student of the Month!



Student of the Month



T.R. has shown her responsibility this month by mastering the coffee machine and passing her barista test!

Principal Award Winner!



Principal's Award



J.A. has let this positive attitude shine over the past month!

Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month!

SUNSHINE CAFE EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



We would like to Congratulate Robbie on being selected for the employee of the month. He has mastered the coffee, hot chocolate, and tea station in the cafe. His ability to maintain a clean and safe environment is appreciated!



Sunshine Cafe!



Alumni Visit!

The Sunshine Cafe had a special group of customers on April 12th! Some of our alumni, their parents, and Mrs. Palmer enjoyed an exclusive Friday seating. Mrs. Palmer even brought a friend ! The Sunshine Cafe workers were able to serve their friends and catch up with them. The alumni updated us on their life after Westlake! We are so proud of them and happy to see them!

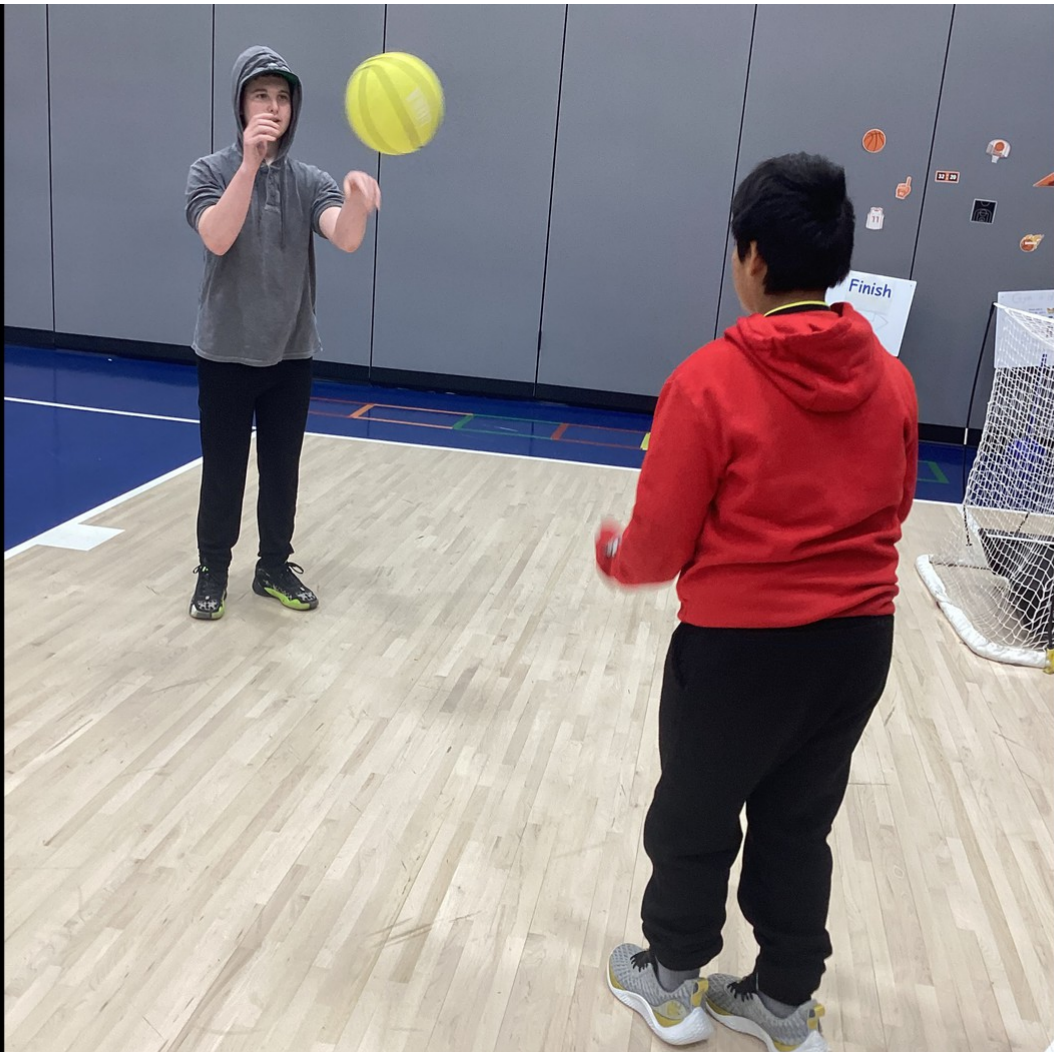








This month Westlake BCBA's partnered with Lamberts Mill Academy to start a pilot for a mentorship program between the two schools. A student from Lamberts Mill Academy was matched with one of the middle school students at Westlake to create this pilot program. The students have met weekly the past two weeks to get to know each other through facilitated games and leisure activities under the supervision of the BCBA at Westlake and Social Worker at Lamberts Mill Academy. This is an opportunity for the students at Lamberts Mill Academy to build leadership and interpersonal skills while creating higher level social models and opportunities for our students at Westlake. The two students began the first week by playing an icebreaker Uno game with questions incorporated into each of the cards in order for the students to learn more about one another. Last week, the students, who share a love of sports, played a basketball game. It was apparent from the way that they were cheering one another on throughout their game that they already have enjoyed their time together and have begun to form a strong bond. Westlake looks forward to continuing this partnership with Lamberts Mill Academy and expanding this mentorship program to include more Westlake students and Lamberts Mill Academy student mentors.



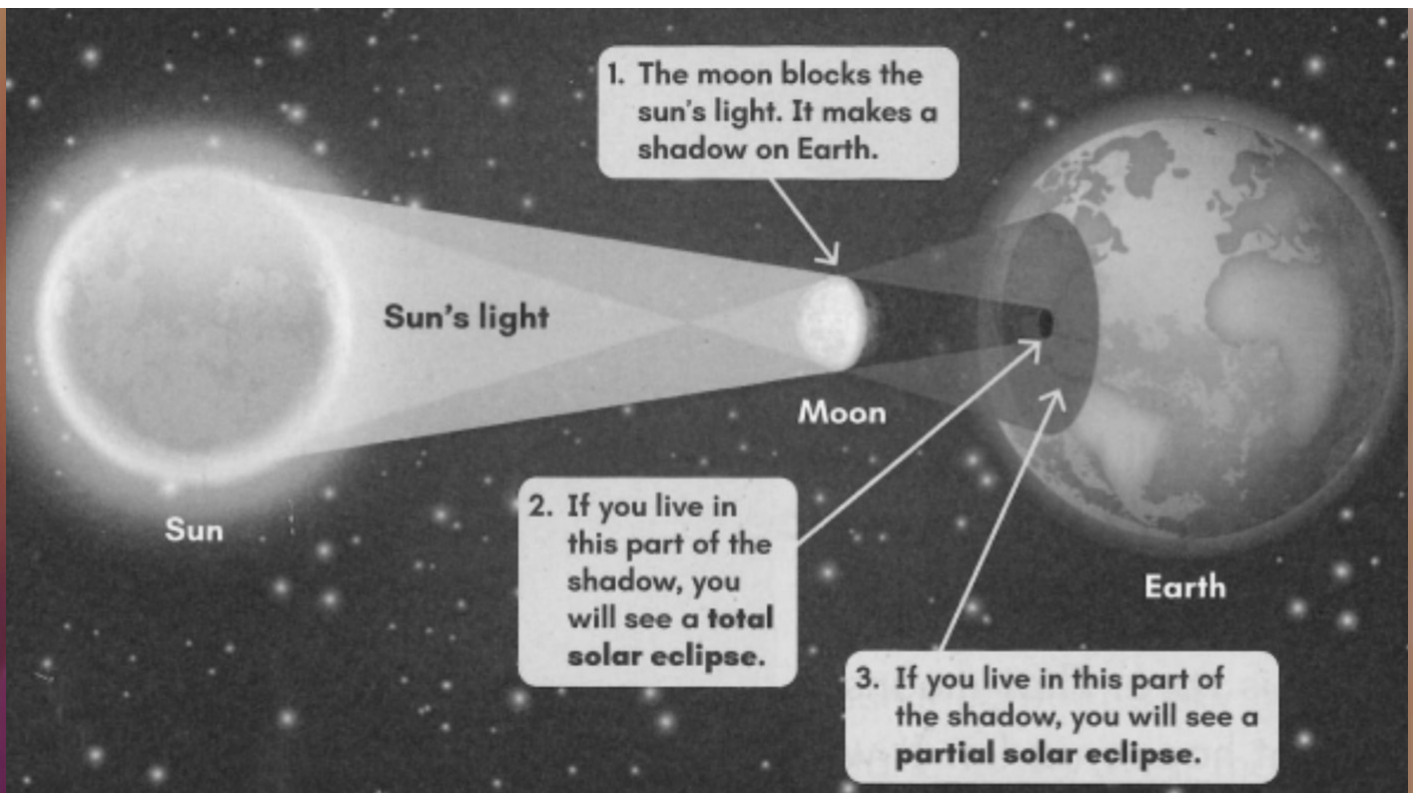
Ms. Pajewski's Class!

Everyone enjoyed a restful break and came back ready to work!

We started our month off with an Earthquake and an Eclipse!

Some students said they felt the earthquake, others did not. The main event for this month was the Eclipse. Together we explored how an eclipse happens, and learned how to protect our eyes! The next eclipse in our area will be in the year 2044. We also calculated how old the students will be when the next total eclipse occurs. Everyone will be between 31 to 34 years old during the next eclipse. WOW!!





April is responsibility & learning to care for ourselves. Our class has been working closely with Ms. Jenn & Ms. Sara, our occupational therapists to practice some daily living skills. They have been practicing in the Westlake Apartment. There students have the opportunity to use real life appliances and furniture that they would use in their own homes. They enjoy cooking on a stove then cleaning up using the dishwasher, making the bed, and doing the laundry.





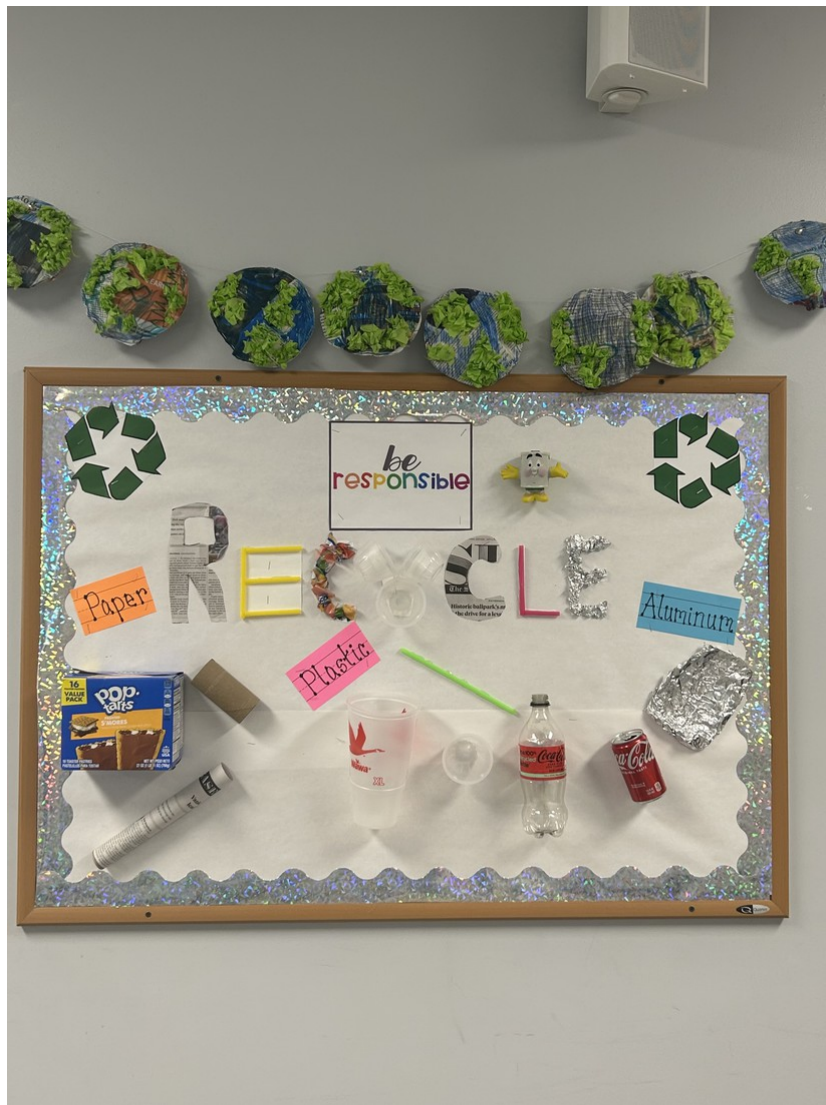




Earth day is a celebration of the Earth. So many fascinating things are on our planet. We should protect it. So we explored ways to help our planet. We learned that we can repurpose items. Reposursing items helps the Earth by reducing trash. Recycle, reuse and reduce!



Earth Day!



Earth Day is an annual event on April 22 to highlight protecting our environment. The official theme for 2024 is "Planet vs. Plastics. Classes learned about recycling. Westlakes's Ms. Frizzle(Ms. Ivonne) planted flowers with our students.





WolfPack Press!

WolfPack Press

Welcome back to the second Spring Edition of the Wolf pack press. Reporting for you today we have Venus, Ashanti, and Tiffany and we went out to ask the question: What did you do during your spring break? To our surprise many people took this time to relax or do some home improvement projects around the house. Many people did some activities like visit a zoo, watch a baseball game, and enjoyed some lunch with friends. The most interesting story was the teacher who took a road trip from California to San Diego, she not only enjoyed the views but had great weather and good food while she was there. There were some other interesting vacation locations like Cape May NJ, Miami Florida, and Myrtle Beach South Carolina. Staff and students also visited other

countries like Milan, Italy and Cairo, Egypt. Overall everyone seemed to enjoy their week off of school!

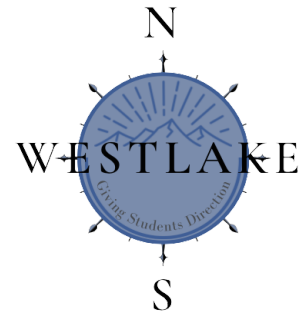


Contact Us!

Website: www.ucesc.org/schools/westlake_school

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

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



Instagram

Visit us!



Robert Peneno

Robert is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters

Work Readiness Academy

April 2024 Monthly Report

Message from the Director



Dear WRA Community,

April was a busy and productive month at the Work Readiness Academy. With less than 40 days left in the school year, it's time to start planning for some of our special end of year events and celebrations!

We are looking forward to our 2nd Annual **Work Readiness Academy's Got Talent** variety show. This year's show will take place on **Friday, May 24th from 10:30am-12:30pm** on the WRA stage in our cafegymnasium. We are inviting all students from both the WRA and Project SEARCH programs to showcase a talent, skill, or hobby. Students can perform individually or as group. Some of our staff will also be participating. Please know that our staff will also be assisting your children to brainstorm ideas for possible acts. We welcome your support and collaboration as well. If you have an idea, please discuss it with your child or reach out to your child's teacher and share your idea with us (Sharlene McQuade at smcquade@ucesc.org, Jodi Klimko at jklimko@ucesc.org, or Jourdan Spencer at jspencer@ucesc.org).

The **Project SEARCH** program will hold its **Graduation Ceremony on Monday, June 17th at 10am in the Bouras Auditorium at Overlook Medical Center**. Please save the date and be on the lookout for an invitation coming home in the next couple of weeks!

The **Work Readiness Academy** will hold its **End of Year Recognition Ceremony on Tuesday, June 18th at 10:30am** in the gymnasium at 970 Suburban Road in Union, New Jersey. All WRA students will be honored for their achievements at this event. We will also be offering special recognition for those students who will be graduating our program (or leaving for Project SEARCH next year). Parents and guardians of ALL students are encouraged to join us for this event. Please save the date and be on the lookout for an invitation coming home in the next couple of weeks!

Please enjoy this month's newsletter including more detailed updates about our instructional program from Ms Richer and the latest from our Project SEARCH program!

Sincerely,

Josh Bornstein, Director

UCESC Work Readiness Academy

April 2024 Data

Enrollment as of April 26, 2024

Actual: 30

Changes: Entered: 0 Exited: 0

Referrals: 4

Intakes Scheduled: 4

Accepted: 4



4/12 - Emergency Drill (Shelter in Place)

4/25 - Evacuation Drill (Fire)

Dates to Remember

Month of April - Autism Awareness Month

Friday, May 24, 2024 - WRA's Got Talent (SEARCH students included)

Friday, May 31, 2024 - Trip to Kean University using NJ Transit (WRA only)

Monday, June 17, 2024 - Project SEARCH Class of 2024 Graduation Ceremony (10am)

Tuesday, June 18, 2024 - WRA Graduation & Recognition Ceremony (10:30am)



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**

April Spotlights



Congratulations to **Makiya Murphy**, our Student of the Month for April!

Makiya was nominated for demonstrating improved focus, attention to detail, and independence at her Work-Based Learning experience in the housekeeping department at the Hilton Hotel at Newark Airport. Makiya has also been excelling in communicating effectively with the Hilton room attendant staff. Not to mention, we love her positive attitude, smile & willingness to take risks, even when she may not be comfortable. Way to go, Makiya!



Meet **Sharlene McQuade**, WRA Speciale Education & PE/Health Teacher

How long have you worked for UCESC?

I have worked for the Commission for 10 years.

What do you love best about your job?

I really love our students and how we are able to see them grow throughout the year. I also enjoy working with our incredible staff. They are the most dedicated and caring group of people who will do anything to help our students succeed!

What do you like to do in your free time?

I like to spend time with my family and I also like to go for hikes with my family and our dog.

What it something that people would be suprised to know about you?

I was inducted into my High School's Hall of Fame, twice! The first time as an individual (because of all my individual athletic achievements) and the second time as a team member (my whole team was inducted because of our achievements).

Director's Award



I am pleased to recognize **Alfonsina Benitez** with the **Director's Award** for the month of April! Alfie is kind to everyone in our community and sensitive to the feelings of others. She has demonstrated tremendous growth this year as she has become more confident finding her own voice which has enabled her to

more easily express her own wants and needs. Congratulations, Alfi!



Supervisor's Corner



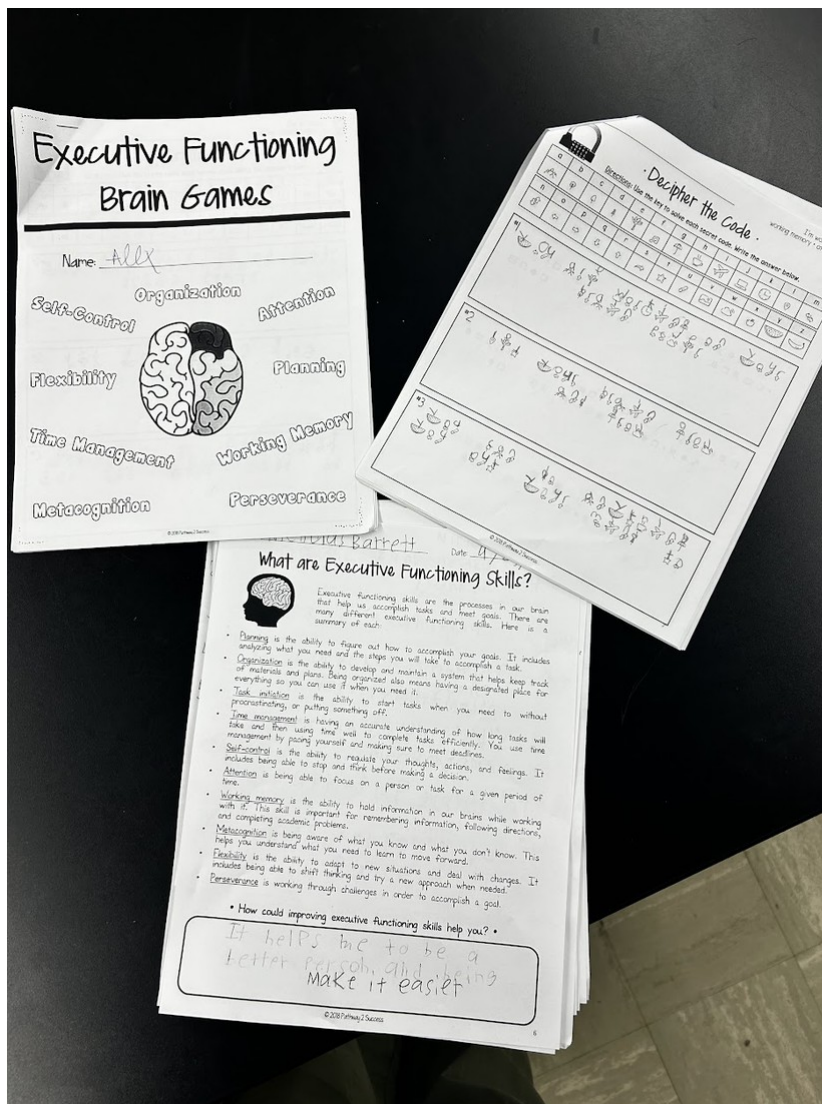
Spring has sprung and so has a new month of learning! Our students at The Work Readiness Academy have been hard at work both in class and out in the community! We have been identifying and exploring executive function skills with the use of brain games and hands-on activities during our classroom instructional periods. Students are learning that executive functioning skills are the important processes in our brains that help us finish tasks and meet our goals. They have been working on relating these concepts to both their internships and everyday life skills.

Students are continuing to work on creating their own personal resumes by adding their internship experiences, as well as compiling references that include their mentors from current work based learning sites. They have all worked hard on developing these professional relationships and are now able to see how they can benefit them in future employment searches! To celebrate our wonderful planet and continue to promote environmental awareness for the world around them, students worked collaboratively to create a representation of the planet using recycled materials displayed for the school to see! Taking our Financial literacy skills out into the world, students participated in a field trip experience where they traveled to Ikea. They navigated the store in small groups and worked together to furnish a home while staying within the budget they were given, and of course had a chance to grab some of those delicious Swedish meatballs on the way out! As we

head into the final stretch of the school year I am thrilled to see all of the progress our students are making, and look forward to all of the exciting events we have coming up!

Rachel Richer
Supervisor of Instruction





What are Executive Functioning Skills?

- Executive functioning skills are the processes in our brain that help us accomplish tasks and meet goals. There are many different executive functioning skills. Here is a summary of each:
- **Planning** is the ability to figure out how to accomplish your goals. It includes analyzing what you need and the steps you will take to accomplish a task.
 - **Organization** is the ability to develop and maintain a system that helps keep track of materials and plans. Being organized also means having a designated place for everything so you can use it when you need it.
 - **Task initiation** is the ability to start tasks when you need to without procrastinating or putting something off.
 - **Time management** is having an accurate understanding of how long tasks will take and then using time well to complete tasks efficiently. You use time management by planning yourself and making sure to meet deadlines.
 - **Self-regulation** is the ability to regulate your thoughts, actions, and feelings. It includes being able to stop and think before making a decision.
 - **Attention** is being able to focus on a person or task for a given period of time.
 - **Working memory** is the ability to hold information in our brains while working with it. This skill is important for remembering information, following directions, and completing academic problems.
 - **Metacognition** is being aware of what you know and what you don't know. This helps you understand what you need to learn to move forward.
 - **Flexibility** is the ability to adapt to new situations and deal with changes. It includes being able to shift thinking and try a new approach when needed.
 - **Perseverance** is working through challenges in order to accomplish a goal.

• How could improving executive functioning skills help you? •

It helps me to be a better person and being make it easier













Can Do Food Services Program

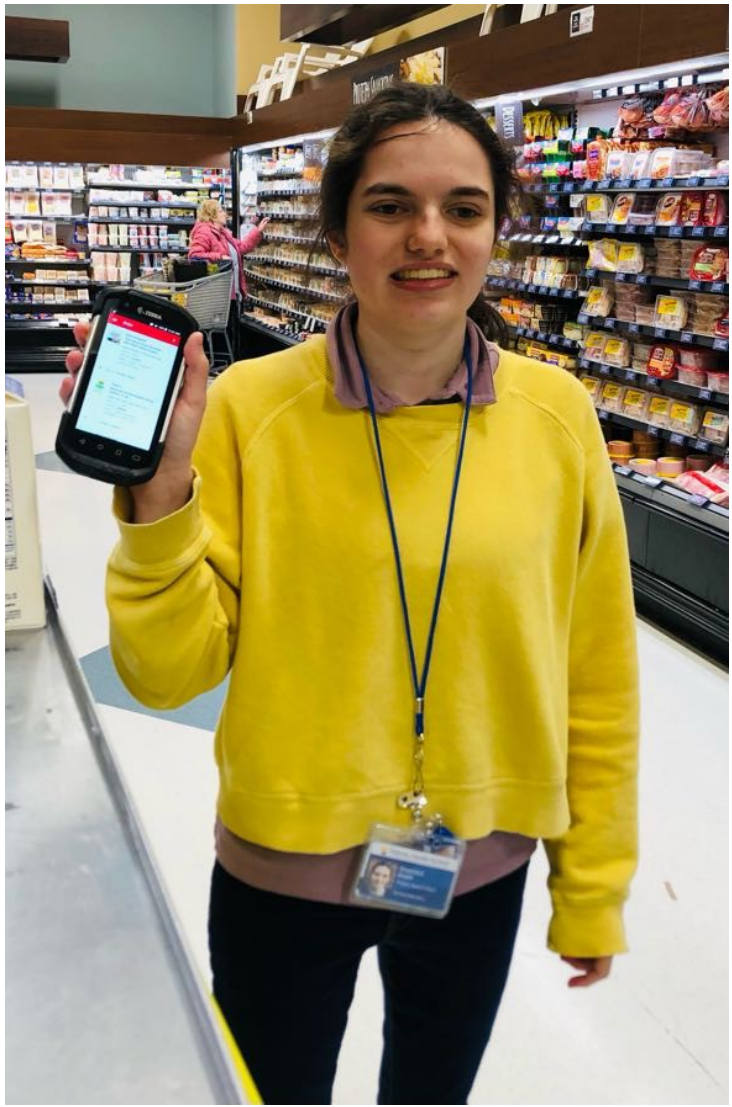
In recognition of Passover, the students in the Can Do Food Services Program learned how to make their own Matzah Ball Soup and homemade Matzah!





Snapshots from April Work-Based Learning



















What's Happening at Project SEARCH?

During the month of April the students started their third internship rotations at Overlook Medical Center. Students are interning in various departments throughout the hospital including Panera Bread, the Infusion Center, Wound Care, Materials Management, Food and Nutrition, Central Sterile, and Radiology. In the classroom, the students learned about autism awareness and acceptance, decision-making, executive functioning skills and professionalism. The students are looking forward to taking a trip to the Atlantic Health Systems Corporate offices in Morristown, NJ. They will have the opportunity to meet senior leaders and to learn about well-being and compliance. Students will also participate in a fun scavenger hunt with Project SEARCH students from the programs at Hackettstown and Newton Medical Center. The students will be participating in another round of Employment Planning Meetings where the team will discuss their progress and their goal of competitive employment.



- Jourdan Spencer, Project SEARCH Instructor for UCESC











Project | SEARCH



Overlook
Medical Center
ATLANTIC HEALTH SYSTEM

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, May 14th at 7pm

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

Welcome Madam President!

The students at Project SEARCH received a surprise visit this month from Overlook Medical Center President Stephanie Schwartz! Stephanie reached out to us requesting the opportunity to "embed" with some of our interns on a few select days this spring so that she could get a bird's eye view of our program and observe her team members in their roles as mentors.

Stephanie's first visit including spending time with SEARCH intern Steven Lopez in the Oncology Department. Steven recently learned how to take vitals and had the opportunity to test out his new skills on the OMC President!

Later on Stephanie stopped by the central kitchen and Food Services Department where she learned how to "Work the Line" with SEARCH intern Jonathan Wiener. This internship requires team members to be fast & precise. While Jon just started in this rotation a couple of weeks ago, he has been a quick learner and gave Stephanie some important pointers!





Furniture Restoration Elective

Students get the chance to participate in "choice" elective classes on Fridays. This cycle WRA Teacher Jodi Klimko is offering Furniture Restoration. The students are learning how to restore and paint used furniture and then resell it to support class fundraising efforts!







Community Resources/Events

THE SHINING STARS ARE COMING!



FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2024 - 7 PM

***Union County
Performing Arts
Center***

*1601 Irving Street,
Rahway, NJ 07065*



**Featuring Shining Stars performances of
The Beatles, Rolling Stones, Queen, Elton
John, Ed Sheeran, Spice Girls, Adele and
more!**

Get tickets at: ucpac.org/events



The Shining Stars Network, a special needs performing group based in Union County, NJ, will be performing their **British Invasion** show next month. Several former WRA and Project SEARCH students will be performing. You won't want to miss it. This a wonderful event for the entire family. Get your tickerts at the link above or use the QR code.



Registration is now open for the **Extra Special Prom Night**, set to take place on Thursday, May 30th, 2024, from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM at the Berkeley Heights YMCA. It promises to be an evening filled with elegance, fun, and unforgettable memories! Spaces are expected to fill up rapidly. To ensure your spot, we encourage you to secure your registration as soon as possible.

SAY Prom Flyer 2024.pdf

[Download](#)

19.6 MB

Union County Blue Envelope Program

In 2023, the Union County Board of County Commissioners announced the full rollout of the Blue Envelope Program. The Union County's Blue Envelope Program is geared towards fostering inclusivity and promoting safe interactions between law enforcement officers and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). It introduces a simple yet effective tool that contains essential information for drivers with Autism Spectrum Disorder. This includes a copy of their driver's license, vehicle registration, insurance details, and an emergency contact card. Additionally, the envelope provides clear instructions to drivers on how to navigate a traffic stop and interact with law enforcement officers in a manner that promotes clarity and safety.

The Blue Envelope Program is accessible to all Union County residents on the Autism Spectrum. Residents can obtain a Blue Envelope at their local police departments throughout the county. Similarly, the Union County Sheriff's Office is participating in Union County's Blue Envelope Program. Blue Envelopes are available in the Union County Administration Building, 10 Elizabethtown Plaza, located at the 1st floor Security Desk. If you have questions, please email Officer Victoria Smith at vsmith@ucnj.org or call her office at 908-527-4954.

The Union County Board of County Commissioners
in partnership with

are proud to announce the launch of:

THE BLUE ENVELOPE PROGRAM

More Info

The blue envelope brings together law enforcement and motorists with autism and other sensory disorders. It's a resealable and convenient place to keep all driver documents, and contains instruction for both the driver and the interacting officer in the event of a traffic stop.

The tool will help bridge gaps in communication and build empathy in our community.

GET YOURS NOW!

by visiting your local police station in any one of
Union County's 21 municipalities, Union County Sheriff's office,
Union County Police Department, or Union County Prosecutor's office

FOR THE POLICE OFFICER:

NAME _____

DRIVER IS ON THE AUTISM SPECTRUM

"BLUE ENVELOPE" - DRIVER INSTRUCTIONS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR OFFICER ON REVERSE

A SERVICE OF THE UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

A Message from the Union County
Board of County Commissioners

The Office for Persons with Disabilities
and Special Needs

Programs and Social Events for all ages

PROGRAMS

- Yoga
- Karate
- Cooking
- Ceramics
- Golf
- Spray Park

SOCIAL EVENTS

- Day Out with the Red Bulls
- Spring & Fall Fishing Derby
- Paint by the Pond
- Summer Festival
- Summer Camp
- Barn Dance
- Skating with Santa & more



For more information or to be placed on our mailing
list to receive brochures and program details:

call: (908) 527-4781

email: opdsn@ucnj.org

visit our website www.ucnj.org/opdsn

Or scan the QR Code!



A Service of the Union County
Board of County Commissioners



UNION COUNTY
We're Connected to You!

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.

The JCC of Central NJ is committed to accessibility and inclusion.
To request accommodations, please contact Beth Mitchell
at 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



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

"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

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

ABLE Accounts

ABLE Accounts provide eligible individuals with disabilities a better way to save money for today's needs or invest for tomorrow. ABLE accounts:

- Do not jeopardize eligibility for most benefit programs, such as Medicaid and SSI.
- Are tax-advantaged, so earnings grow tax free.
- Can accept contributions from anyone: the account owner, family and friends.
- Include online account management tools and a top-rated mobile app.

For more information, click the link below.



- NJ ABLE Frequently Asked Questions

New Jersey Division of Disability Services answers some of the most frequently asked questions about ABLE accounts.

[🔗 autismnj.org](https://autismnj.org)

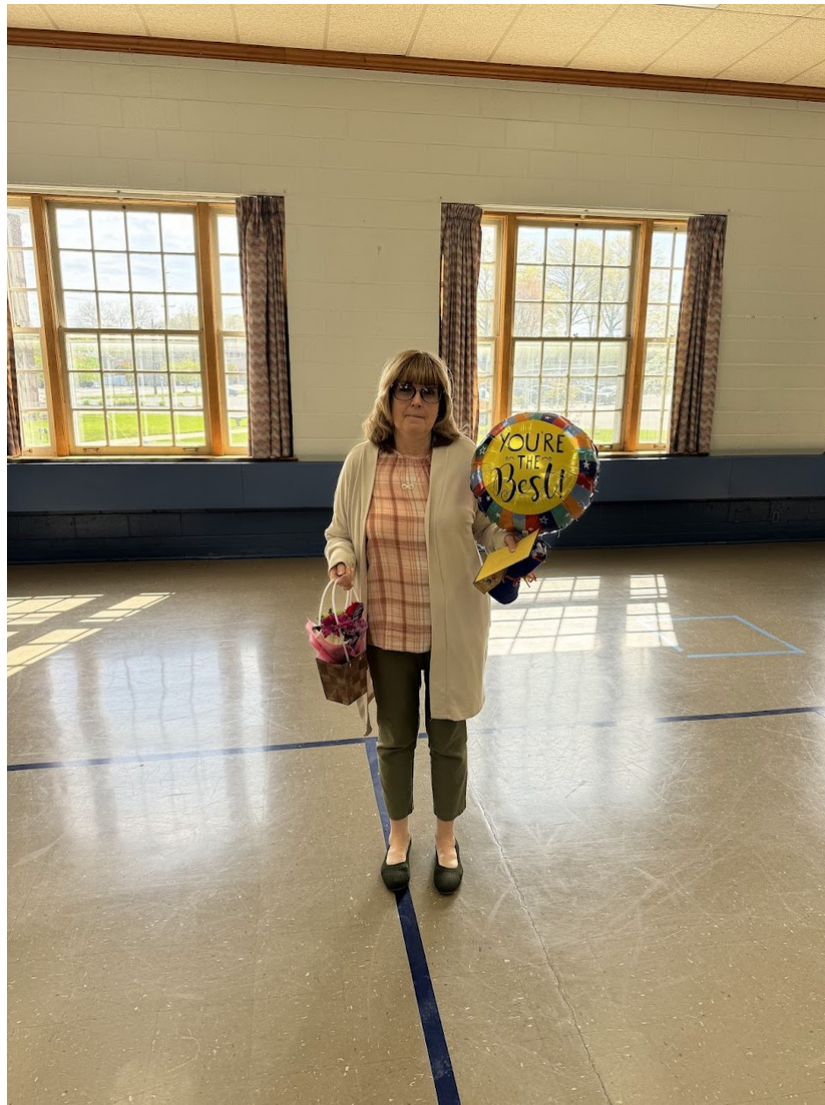
Spotted in the Community!

Former WRA and Project SEARCH Student **John Sheppard** enjoyed some birthday love from his colleagues at the Materials Management Department at Overlook!



Administrative Support Professionals Day

On Wednesday, April 24th the WRA recognized our school secretary Maureen Wakeman at our weekly community meeting! Thank you, Maureen for all that you do each day for our school!



Picture of the Month

WRA students Makiya & Charlie enjoyed some fun Easter-related silliness while participating in a Community-Based Instruction trip this month!



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

Email: jbornstein@ucesc.org

Website: 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

