

Let Every Voice Empower



A Message From The Principal: Dr. Balsamello

Happy New Year! January begins 2025 yet concludes our second marking period. This means we are already halfway done with the school year. Please enjoy this newsletter with updates on Hillcrest Academy South Campus (HAS) events, students, and staff.



January 2025 Monthly Report Enrollment Data

Enrollment-97 (1/31/25).

New Students-3

Disenrollments-2 (1-GED 2-Assault on student and staff).

Emergency Drill-1/14/25.

Fire Drill-2/5/25.

JANUARY

2025

	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	
		WINTER BREAK	WINTER BREAK	01 HAPPY NEW YEAR	02 SCHOOL REOPENS	03 SCHOOLSPIRIT- HASCOLORS	04	
05		06	07	08	09 YEARBOOK PICTURES	10 SCHOOLSPIRIT- TWIN DAY	11	
12		13 EARLY DISMISSAL- PD DAY	14	15	16	17 SCHOOLSPIRIT- MISMATCHED DAY	18	
19		20 DR MARTIN LUTHER KING JR DAY-NO SCHOOL	21 MR. CERRA BEGINS MUSIC CLASSES	22	23	24 SCHOOLSPIRIT- SUPERHERO DAY	25	
26		27	28	29	30	31 END OF 2ND MARKING PERIOD		

Student of the Month

January - Za' Miyah

Congratulations to Za' Miyah for being our overall Student of the Month! She has worked hard and been very dedicated in her classes to receive this honor. Keep up the excellent work!



Faculty "Getting to Know You"!

Ms Fern's Favorites:

Favorite movie: Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe

Favorite food: Italian and Cuban

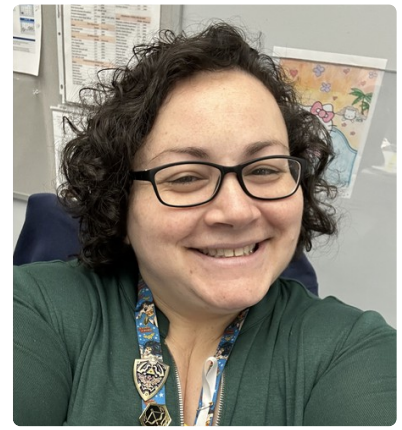
Favorite color: Purple

Favorite travel spot: anywhere tropical

Favorite shows: Impractical Jokers, Masked Singer, Big Bang Theory

Favorite superhero: Wonder Woman

Favorite video game: Legend of Zelda



"Let Your Voice Empower" Teacher Recognitions

January - Represent

This year's district wide theme of "Let Your Voice Empower", teachers are awarded pins in different areas of empowerment. The January theme was 'Represent'. As role models for our students, it is important to be an example of what empowerment looks like and how we can empower others to do the same.

The faculty/staff picked for this month's honor, are a great representation of what HAS is about. Congratulations!



Mr DiOrio



Mrs Demilio



Mrs Arora

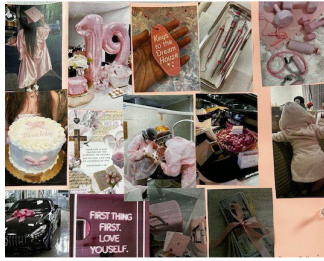
Teacher's Corner: English

Ms Vlastaras - English/Creative Writing

Upon returning from winter break, students in Ms. Vlastaras' classes worked on reflecting on the previous year, as well as goal setting for the new year. They created vision boards containing images representative of their short and long term goals, which are displayed in the hallway as reminders of what they are working towards. In Creative Writing, students are wrapping up their unit on Memoirs by looking back on their own life in order to choose and write about a defining moment that helped shape who they are today. In English, students are immersing themselves in

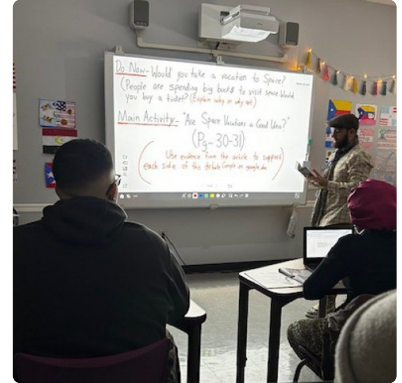


Shakespeare's Macbeth by participating in readers theater. As they delve into the text, students are analyzing key themes related to power, corruption, and the consequences of unchecked ambition.



Mr Shandroff - English

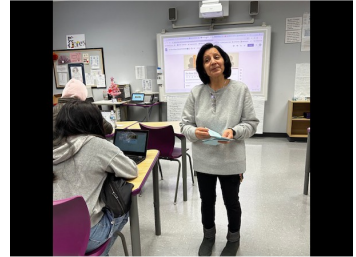
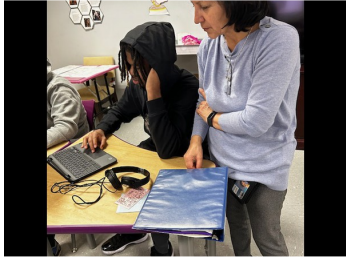
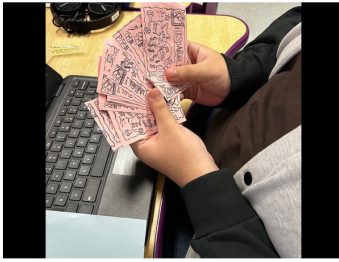
During the month of January in Mr. Shandroff's classroom, student's have worked on completing their personal narrative essays and also worked to enhance their diction by completing various vocabulary assignments. Students additionally worked on improving their reading comprehension skills and analyzing text by reading and writing in their Scholastic Magazines.



See you Next Year Mrs Flores!

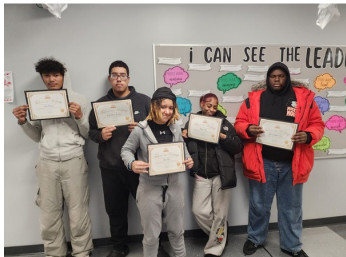
The end of this month marks the end of the second marking period as well as the end of our first semester in the 24-25 school year. With the end of the first semester comes the end of the Spanish course for this school year at HAS. Our Spanish teacher, Sra Flores, will now switch over to Hillcrest North where she will share her love of the Spanish culture for the second semester. Muchas gracias Sra Flores for your unrelenting energy, loving demeanor, and support through your teaching and guidance to all of us here at HAS!





Congratulations to the Fright Club Writers!

In October several students at HAS entered a creative writing contest sponsored by Young Writers titled "Fright Club" through Ms. Vlastaras's class. For this contest, students were asked to write a 100-word spooky story full of tension and suspense! The results are in and the short stories of eight students from HAS were selected! The short stories will be published in an upcoming anthology, *Fright Club - Whispered Nightmares*.



Diana A.
Night Shift
"You have arrived," said the voice.
"Isn't this supposed to be a haunted hospital?" said Ian.
"It's what the website said, don't get why it looks like it was just built".
Confused, and annoyed, I turned the car on. As we were about to leave, we heard a scream coming from the hospital. We looked at each other.
"What the hell?"
"Let's check it out!"
"Where's everybody?"
The smell was horrible. There was blood on the floor.
"Where is she?"
The scream again. The door slammed shut. We looked at each other in fear as the lights went out...

Isalah F.
Reflections of Fear
In a small, forgotten town, Sarah found an old mirror in the attic. At night, she glimpsed a shadowy figure behind her reflection, always just out of sight. Chalking it up to fatigue, she ignored it—until the figure began to mimic her movements, grinning wider each night. One evening, the mirror cracked, and a cold whisper echoed, "Let me in." Heart racing, Sarah turned to flee, but the glass rippled like water. With a final, piercing laugh, the figure reached through, dragging her into the dark. In the morning, only the mirror remained, reflecting a hollow smile.

Juan R.
Whispers
The whispers started at midnight. They came from the dark corners of my room. The shadows kept moving as if they were alive. I saw my reflection in the mirror. It was smiling even though I was not. Cold hands seemed to have touched my skin, but no one was there. I tried to scream, but not a soul heard. My reflection whispered, "We've been waiting for you." My heart sped up. I realized I wasn't alone in my own body. It wasn't going to let me go. The mirror shattered, and it clawed its way out.

Marvin L.P.
Vanish
The house stood on a forgotten road. Legend spoke of a woman who vanished inside, her laughter echoing through the halls. Curious, a group of friends decided to explore.
As they entered, the air grew thick. Flickering candles lit up the dust-coated furniture, and the sound of giggles surrounded them. They found a mirror reflecting not their faces, but a single pale figure with hollow eyes watching them.
Panic set in as they tried to escape, but the walls tilted and turned. One by one, their screams faded, absorbed by the house until there was only a whisper. "Welcome home."

Nevonne J.J.
I'm Home
"What do you want to eat?" a voice yelled from the kitchen
"That shouldn't be possible," I thought. "That voice..."
I looked at the top of the drawer, to confirm my suspicions.
"Lydia Singeman, 1999-2024" was engraved on the urn.
My attention snapped back to the door
There was a shadow underneath the door, and I could hear heavy breathing.
I only thought "Who the hell is that?" but immediately I heard the voice again
"Did you forget that I'm your wife, Lydia, silly? Now I'm hungry, open up, and let's eat."
"How did she know...is the doorknob moving? What...."

Nyasia D.
Based on a True Story
As I lay in bed, the remnants of that cursed movie lingered in my mind like a haunting specter. The moonlight cast eerie shadows, intensifying my unease. Desperate for solace, I reached for my phone - 3 am, the witching hour. A scratching sound disrupted the silence, but I dismissed it as wind. Suddenly, a paralyzing fear gripped me. My eyes refused to open, my voice trapped in my throat.
Through the haze of terror, a silhouette materialized at my window. A figure cloaked in darkness, eyes glinting with malevolence. The movie had escaped the screen; its horror now my reality.

Oliver R.

The Perfect Team

My mom said Readale is our home. This last time we are moving. It didn't take long to warm up this town. Plus it has one of the best high school basketball teams in the country. I'm lucky enough to be a part of the team, even if my coach is often yelling at the players. Practice started like normal till Coach gave us all words to recite, while standing in a circle. Balls started to dribble along the side of the court as we read along. The players giggled. Someone whispered in my ear, "can you be perfect?"

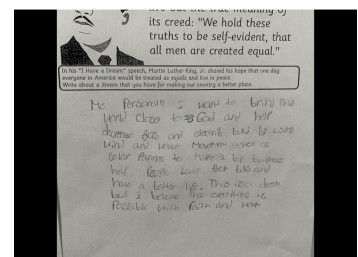
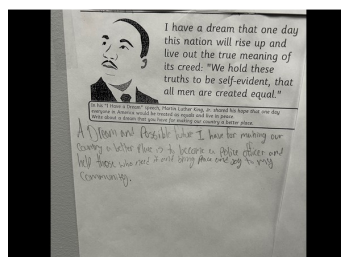
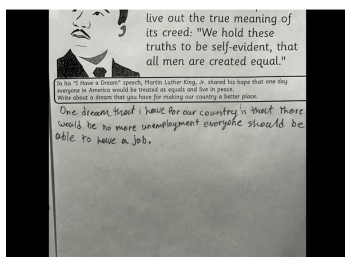
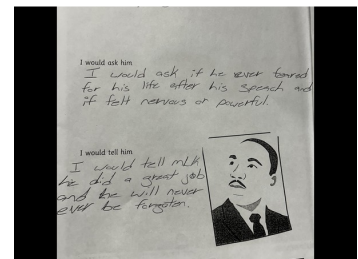
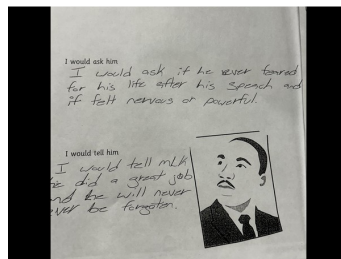
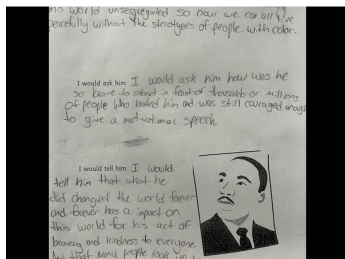
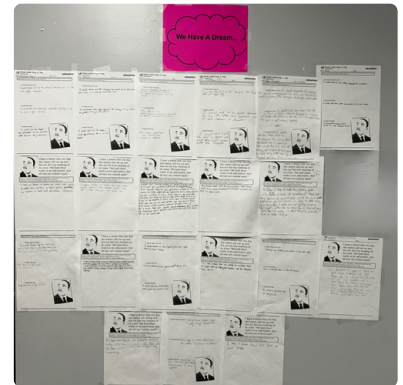
Zamayah C.

The Underground

Remy didn't have a chance to weave out of the way of that car. "She's losing a lot of blood. I don't think she will make it..." the medicals anxiously discussed. She made it to the hospital but passed out. It was early on a Wednesday morning when Remy finally woke up. The room was pitch dark and she felt stuck. She tried to move around, but she noticed she was in some sort of box. She tried knocking on it, calling "Hello, someone please let me out!" A few feet away, Remy's family was grieving at her funeral ceremony.

We Have A Dream

In honor of Dr Rev Martin Luther King Jr, Mrs Wrzesinski's history classes learned all about Dr King and the importance of his contribution and leadership during the Civil Rights Movement. One of the assignments that the students worked on for this lesson began with the question "What dream do you have to make the world a better place?" The second page focused on if the students were able to meet Dr King and wrote what they would thank him for, what they would ask him, and what they would tell him. This assignment really engaged the students to think about current events by learning from the past and how to make the future better for everyone instead of repeating the worst.



3D Printer Presentation

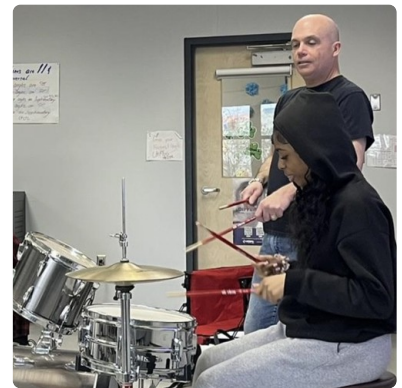
In Mrs Ferrari's Geometry classes, students learned about 3D printing. Mrs Ferrari's daughter, who is an engineering student at the University of Pittsburg, came in during her break to show how 3D

printing works. A big part of 3D printing is all about the design of the project, which uses geometry. Students learned how to design our school mascot, the phoenix, on the computer and were able to print it out a sample.



Welcome Back Mr Ceirra

Last year Mrs Ferrari and Mrs Flores wrote a grant to bring music to HAS. This grant was renewed for this year and we are so happy to have Mr Ceirra back again! Music and Math are strongly connected, so it only makes sense for Mr Ceirra to share his love of music during Mrs Ferrari's Math 2nd period class every Tuesday. Students appreciate and enjoy learning how to play instruments and relating it to mathematics. Learning music has been proven to improve math skills because it's about timing, beats per minute, and progressions.



January Spirit Days



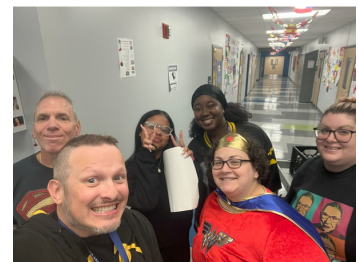
Twin Day

Students and staff were able to pick a partner or two to dress alike and be a "twin" or "triplet".



MisMatched Day

Pajama pants, button down shirts, skirts, sweaters... all on one person at once?! Yep, mismatched day brought everything from two different socks to a whole wardrobe being worn.



Superhero Day

DC, Marvel, or personal, all heroes were welcomed to this spirit day!

Students Outside of School

Point, Click, Art!

Ian is a videographer/photographer and a part of the HAS audio/visual club. As part of his portfolio, he has recorded music videos for different artists and even does advertisements for businesses, brands, dealerships, etc. Two years ago, Ian began his love of videos and photos by learning how to edit them. From there he decided to start his videography and photography business. When asked how this activity makes him feel, he says "It makes me feel like I have the freedom to just do anything. I can express myself by the way I direct my music videos and photograph different people and brands."



About Us

Hillcrest Academy South Campus 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)

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Crossroads Monthly Report

January 2025

Message from the Administration

Dear Crossroads Community,

Happy New Year! We hope everyone had a wonderful and restful winter break. As we step into 2025, we are excited for all the opportunities this new year will bring for our students, staff, and school community.

Our monthly themes for January—**Leadership and Courage**—align perfectly with our school-wide mission of building independence and confidence in our students. We are also taking time this month to recognize the **unsung heroes** within our school community—the individuals who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that our students feel supported, safe, and valued. Whether it's our dedicated classroom staff, therapy team, behavioral team, or custodial staff, we appreciate every member of our Crossroads family who makes a difference each day. Their efforts truly embody our yearly theme: "**Let Every Voice Empower.**"

January has been a busy and exciting month! We had our second trip to LifeTown, where students had the opportunity to practice and generalize their life skills in this new environment. These trips are invaluable, allowing students to navigate real-world experiences with guidance and support. Seeing their confidence grow in each visit is incredibly rewarding! Lifetown's indoor community and playground have been a huge hit! With the winter weather in full swing, these spaces have provided a wonderful way for students to stay engaged, active, and social while continuing to build important skills in a fun and interactive setting.

This month, we also took time to honor the life and legacy of **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.** His message of inclusion, courage, and leadership continues to inspire us, reminding us of the

importance of using our voices to create positive change in the world. At Crossroads, we strive to instill these values in our students every day, helping them recognize the power of their own voices.

As we continue through the winter months, we look forward to more exciting learning experiences and opportunities for growth. Thank you for your continued support in making Crossroads a place where every student is empowered to thrive!

Warm regards,

Matt, Danielle, and Stacey

General Information

Enrollment as of January 31, 2025

Actual: 56

Changes: Entered: 3 Exited:1

Referrals:11

Intakes Scheduled: 3

Accepted: 3

Fire Drills: 1/28/25

Emergency Drills: 1/14/25 (Shelter in Place)

Upcoming Dates

February 3, 2025 - School Picture Day

February 12, 2025 - PTO/Parent Education Support Meeting

February 17, 2025 - School Closed for President's Day

Crossroads Staff and Student Spotlight



Student of the Month - Alaiyaa

Alaiyaa might as well be Miss Independent! She has blossomed into such an incredible young girl over her last two years with me.

Alaiyaa is always willing to try something new, and continues to love doing math and creating artwork. She has such a free spirit, and her happiest moments are when she's spinning and listening to

music. She is making so many strides by independently going to therapies and walking in and out of the building during arrival/dismissal. Alaiyaa has become a mini Miss Gaby, and has taken over several classroom jobs like organizing classwork, doing laundry, and feeding our classroom fish "Guy". Her intuition is her greatest asset, and she is super aware of her friends emotions and when someone needs help. We are forever proud of our girl, and Room 105 would not be the same without her.



Staff Spotlight - Dina Brigandi - Occupational Therapist

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

This is my 14th school year as an Occupational Therapist here at Crossroads School. I truly love what I do!

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

I think everyone here would not be surprised if I said I love hedgehogs, but I think they would be surprised to know that I had an actual hedgehog as a pet. His name was Bernie.

3. What is your dream vacation?

My dream vacation would be a family vacation with my parents and siblings, spouses and all the grandkids! Somewhere warm and tropical in a home not a hotel.

4. What is your favorite meal?

My favorite meal, hmmm. I really like food, so this question is hard to answer. At a restaurant it would definitely be a good steak with salad, vegetables and potatoes. At home it is definitely my chicken with kale and sundried tomatoes sauteed with garlic and olive oil over orzo pasta (with lots of shaved parmesan cheese).

5. What is your greatest accomplishment?

My children are my greatest accomplishment! I have 3 children and I have tried to raise them to be good humans! Being their mom is everything to me!



Staff Spotlight - Fabiola Quintero - Teacher Assistant

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

I have been working at Crossroads as a teacher assistant for a year and three months.

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

Something that would surprise people to know about me is that while I lived in Colombia I owned a restaurant and an ice cream factory. My family also owned a supermarket and many other businesses.

3. What is your dream vacation?

My dream vacation is to return to Madrid, Spain and visit my daughter who resides there.

4. What is your favorite meal?

My favorite food is anything with pasta, with an arugula salad.

5. What is your greatest accomplishment?

My biggest accomplishment so far has been being able to buy a home and a farm in Colombia for myself and my family. In addition, another accomplishment is overcoming ovarian cancer as I have been in remission for 2 years.

Classroom Spotlights



Ms. Gaby's Classroom

January was such an incredible month for our students. We got to talk about what we all did during winter break. Using symbols, we discussed “playing outside in the cold” and “what we need to wear when it is cold outside”. We kept it moving in our alphabet centers and got to make ladybugs for “L”, and mailboxes for “M”, and nests for “N”. Creating different works of art is such a fan favorite in our classroom, and helps our students connect with our lessons on a much deeper level. We got to enjoy our field trip at “Lifetown” with some of our other friends at Crossroads. We got to experience what it is like to use real money at a bank, and utilizing that for items and activities we individually wanted to engage in. Nothing

is better than eating pizza and playing with classmates instead of staying in school! Gloria and Raheem made cookies and had students cut out different shapes. Trying new food can be a tricky experience in 105, but all of our students have been brave and made sure to try something new like apples, sugar cookies, and string cheese! We also would like to formally introduce our new fish, Guy! We are super excited to see what 2025 brings us!





Ms. Alison's Classroom

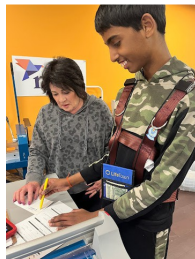
Happy New Year!!!

220B is thrilled to share the exciting ways we've been kicking off the new year in our classroom! January was filled with celebrations, adventure, and lots of learning!

This month we celebrated the birthdays of two students, Dilan and Abhinav, and one of our staff members, Claudette. We also went on 6 trips and had 5 CBI trips. At the Cranford Movie Theater, students got to do different jobs such as cashier or ticket collector, then enjoyed a movie after. At Westlake School, we saw some familiar staff and old peers. At Clark Commons, we practiced community safety and enjoyed a snack at Panera. At ShopRite and Costco, students purchased items for the school. Our 6th trip was a special one to LifeTown! 220B had a blast in the simulated town, it was the perfect combo of learning and fun!

On top of trips, 220B has been busy running the school store with 220A, and doing pre-vocational tasks, such as taking/fulfilling school supplies orders within the school.

In academics this month we had group lessons on New Years, MLK Jr., leadership, and snowflakes. Our group lessons include adaptive stories, crafts, cooking, and STEM activities. Some highlights from lessons this month include our class New Years resolution banner, MLK Jr. craft, leadership cake where each ingredient symbolized traits of a "good leader", and measuring/making snowflakes. We're looking forward to all that we have planned for February as we approach Black History month, Valentine's Day, another student's birthday, and the 100th day of school!



Specials Spotlight - Mr. Rich - GYM



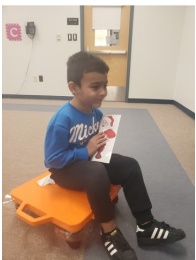
It's hard to believe it's almost February already. Over the past month, students have continued working efficiently on their health and physical education activities. They are continuing to make progress from week to week socially, emotionally and physically. Stressing things such as structure, routine and reviewing classroom expectations have remained a constant which has made things much more efficient for everyone. Even our brand new friends who have recently started are adjusting well.

Students have been practicing a multitude of skills and have participated in various activities during class, such as: walking, running, stretching, balancing, relay races on foot and scooters, obstacle courses, agility courses, letter, number, picture and color matching activities. As we continue to move forward, we will build off the above mentioned activities and slowly add new and more challenging ones that match student ability levels.

In health class, students have continued to work in group settings as well as individually and practiced following directions and turn taking while playing various games as well as answering questions on flash cards and a touch screen monitor that include topics such as community helpers and safety signs.

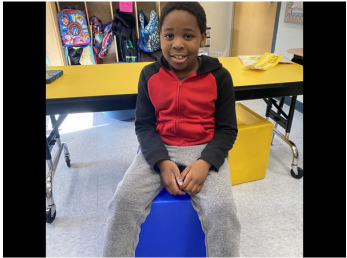
Fitness groups/individual sessions are continuing to go well and are giving students a chance to participate in some things that they might not necessarily get to in a typical physical education setting. Students have been engaged and are enjoying the extra time in the gym. They have also had the chance to be more independent and are practicing making choices on what activities they

participate in. This has helped to keep them on task and take more of an interest in the activities they do.

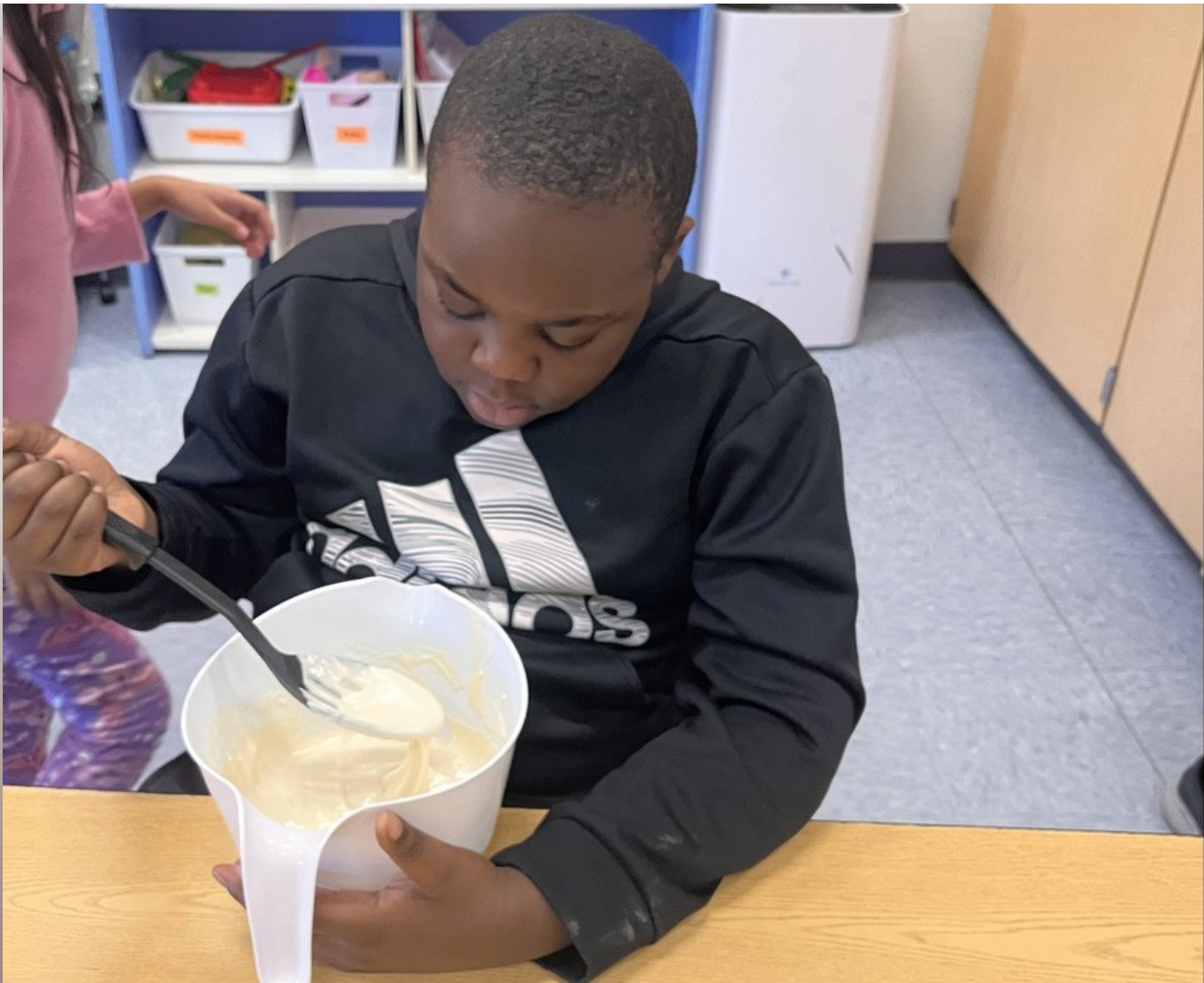


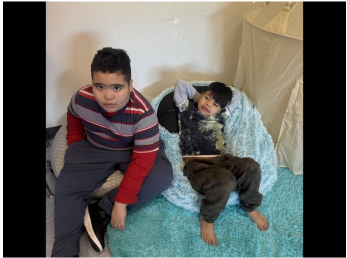
January at Crossroads

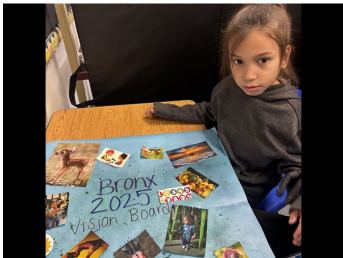


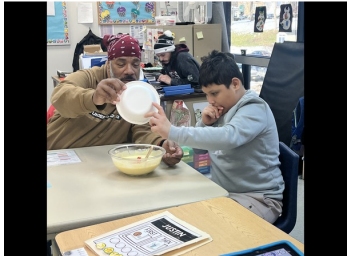
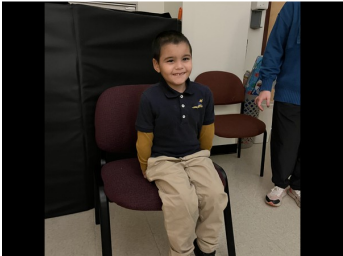


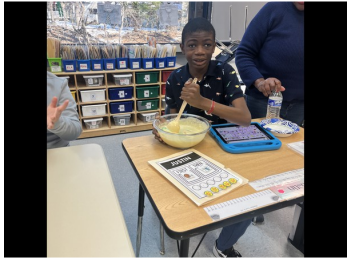
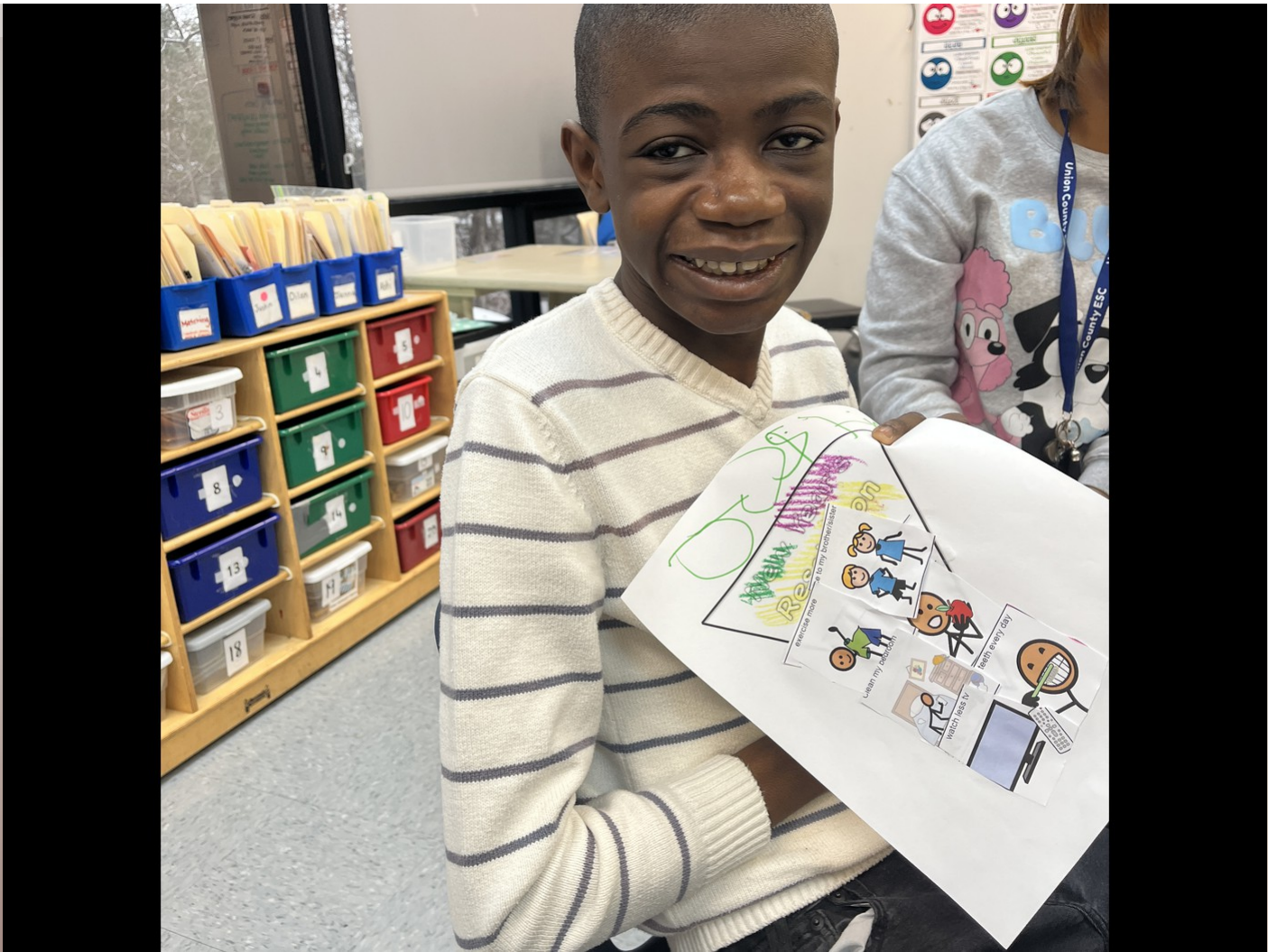














Crossroads in the Community











Parent Resources

Tips and Tricks for home from the Crossroads Behavior Team- January

"Say What to Do, Not What Not to Do"

One of the simplest and most effective ways to encourage positive behavior at home is by **using positive language** to tell your child what TO do, instead of what NOT to do. This strategy helps children understand expectations clearly and reduces frustration.

Why It Works:

When we tell a child what *not* to do—"Don't run!" or "Stop yelling!"—they might not know what the correct behavior looks like. Instead, giving clear, positive instructions helps guide them toward success.

How to Use Positive Language:

1. State the Expected Behavior Clearly

1. Instead of: *"Don't run!"*
2. Say: *"Walk, please!"*

2. Turn "Stop" Statements into Actionable Ones

1. Instead of: *"Stop yelling!"*
2. Say: *"Use a quiet voice."*

3. Encourage Instead of Criticizing

1. Instead of: *"You never clean up your toys!"*
2. Say: *"Let's put the toys in the bin so we can keep the room clean!"*

Pro Tips for Success:

Be Specific – Tell your child exactly what you expect. Instead of "Be good," try "Keep your hands to yourself and use kind words."

Use a Friendly Tone – Children respond better when they don't feel like they're in trouble.

Praise Positive Behavior – When they follow your instructions, celebrate it! "Great job using your walking feet inside!"

Why This Small Shift Makes a Big Difference

Using positive language helps children feel successful, reduces power struggles, and makes daily routines smoother. Try this at home and see how small wording changes lead to big behavior improvements!

Reminders (Cold Weather)

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

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

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

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Hillcrest North January 2025 MR

January 2025

Principal's Message



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

January has been cold, and we appreciate the efforts students have made to brave the weather to make it to school. Our walls are decorated with art projects from Mrs. Picciano's classes. They are also decorated with the latest SEL project with Mrs. Goldenberg. Students made "Snow Globe Goals" where they had to come up with personal and academic goals for the year. They also

had to think about a place they want to travel to and their word for the year. Our students got really into this project.

February is the beginning of a new marking period and semester. It also begins the start of the second half of the school year. We will also be going to Jersey Lanes on February 7th to go bowling. Permission slips will be handed out soon. Please return them signed by a parent/guardian as soon as possible.

HAN continues to be a safe space for students.

Keep it up, HAN!

Please feel free to contact our main office with any questions.

Sincerely,

John Marquet
Principal

Monthly Data

Enrolled - 84

Accepted - 5

Disenrolled - 0

Fire Drill - January 29th

Lockdown Drill - January 14th

Upcoming Dates

February 3rd - Third Marking Period begins

February 7th - Bowling Field Trip (Jersey Lanes)

February 17th - Presidents' Day - No School

Monthly Awards



December's Principal Awards



Perfect Attendance Awards for December

Teacher Spotlight

Nataly Kelly - From Former Student to Teacher: A day in the life of a former student.

Every job has its perks; this one especially! During my time in high school, Hillcrest Academy North was always a place I could call home. Today, it still is. Working at HAN has been such an eye-opening experience as I never thought I would be working to become an educator, nor work at my old school. Although it was challenging, awkward and a bit uncomfortable at first, the staff, including former teachers, welcomed me with open arms just like they had done once before.



As a student, you never realize how much a school does and cares for their students. Now that the shoe is on the other foot, I can confidently say the team at HAN has truly always worked for their student's education, needs, and comfortability. Being able to form relationships and connect with students at North has been one of the most rewarding parts of the job. During my time at Hillcrest, I always looked at my teachers as an outlet for my stress and issues, especially Mrs. Goldenberg. I am now in a position where I can be that outlet for students and advocate for them as well.

Making sure students know they matter and are cared for is one of the most important things to me as they might not get that support elsewhere. Hillcrest Academy North profusely continues to provide that support, and I am glad that I can be a part of such a wonderful team.

Student Voice and Empowerment

Jahmir Baker is in his second year at HAN. Last year he had a spotty attendance and wasn't really into school. After starting off this school year the same, Jahmir decided to make a change. He began to regularly come to school, put effort into all his classes, and helped out around the school. All of these changes were apparent to everyone at school, but especially to the staff. Jahmir was our "Student of the Month" for December.

"In my time and experience of coming to Hillcrest, I honestly believed that the school was bad because I was on the outside looking in. As I continue to attend the school, I can see that this school can help you grow to be a better person. The school itself helps you to grow a better relationship with your peers," Jahmir.

"I always used to think school was pointless and how I would never need a diploma to represent myself. I would always skip school and purposely not go to make up excuses to hide from my problems. I was on my last strike and at the worst point in my life. Any other kid at my age would've given up and called it quits, but it wasn't until this one day when I had a talk with Mr. Marquet and he set me straight. The next day I woke up and decided to make a change for myself because I acknowledged the path I was heading wasn't leading me anywhere. I had 2 decisions, stay stuck at this bottomless pit or try to climb out of it. Once I made that change of taking it step



by step, climbing out my point of view in school changed drastically. I was always quiet and because of that, it blocked me from asking for help, trying to even learn, or pay attention. I always assumed I was never going to pass just because of me being quiet, I was in a really dark place, and didn't know who to go to or what to do. I was absolutely clueless!. But this is where everything changed.

"I started waking up early, going to my bus stop on time, and when I would get to class, I always tried to do my work before class ended. Even though I didn't have any friends to ask for help, I accepted the challenge I was going to face everyday - going to school regardless of how I would feel. I started working out and started to be more outgoing. Then I made my first friend and got my first 2 compliments on my physique. That was when this beautiful spark in me was created and from there I gained the confidence to be able to depend on myself throughout all the problems that were happening in my life.

"Now I come to school everyday with perfect attendance and I never miss a day! I finish all my work for each and every one of my classes the day that it is due. But mostly, I am not quiet anymore! I now can proudly talk out loud without having any hesitation and I'm always the first to participate when it comes to talking, reading, asking a question, literally anything. I am now a changed man, pursuing whatever obstacle I have to face because thanks to my mindset, I am capable of accomplishing the success I desire." - Justin Montoya

In the Classroom



Tom Van Cleef, Supervisor of Curriculum

During the month of January, students at HAN continued adding to their Student Success Plans, which is an ongoing initiative to help us learn more about our students and have our students learn more about themselves. This month, students specifically addressed the "How I'm Feeling" section, where students reflected on questions like "what should you look for when I'm not feeling my best". This type of communication, rooted in student self-reflection, truly ensures that our students are in a better position

to succeed in our schools. Staff are empowered with knowledge to help best serve students because our student's voices are being heard.

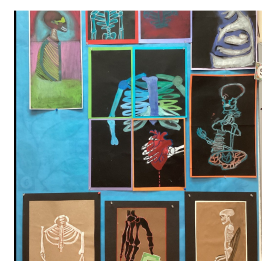
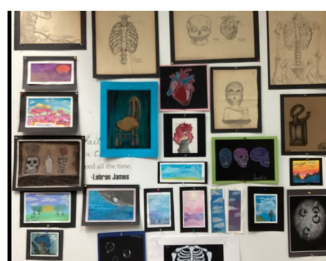
Victor Solano, Intern/TA

During this month of January I got to work in my field which is something I truly enjoyed. From working one on one with students and helping them navigate their emotions and thoughts, to working with groups or covering a class, I enjoy working with these students. Last week I went on

a professional development course which I enjoyed and I believe that some techniques I can use in this school. I look forward to continue being of service to these students.

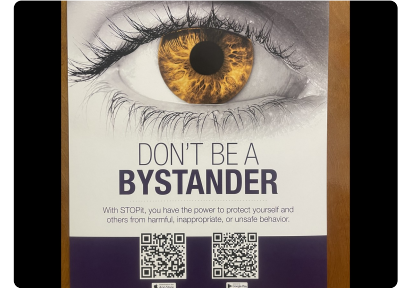


Around the School



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](#)

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



John Marquet

John is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters

Work Readiness Academy

January 2025 Monthly Report

Message from the Administration



Dear WRA Families & Supporters,

As we close out the month of January, we want to take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude for your continued support and dedication to our program. We look forward to all the wonderful experiences the new year will bring.

We also want to thank those families and community agencies who attended our **Adult Services Provider Fair** earlier this month. By all accounts, the event was a success as measured by the informal feedback we received. We're glad many of our families were able to speak with agencies about the services they provide

and collect additional resources. Nonetheless, we will be sending out a short survey soon to get your feedback. This will help us to plan an even better experience next year.

The new year also means **new Work-Based Learning experiences!** Students at the WRA will be "rotating" into at least one new WBL experience beginning the 2nd week in February. Information about the new internships and dress requirements were sent home with your child earlier this week, along with forms that need to be signed and returned to us at your earliest convenience. Students in the Project SEARCH program started their 2nd internship rotations the 2nd week in January. See more below in our Project SEARCH update.

January at the Work Readiness Academy has been filled with a fresh new perspective as we continue to support our students in discovering their individual potential, strive to accomplish their goals, and find joy in the process of learning. As we begin this new year together, we are looking forward to progress, perseverance, and endless possibilities! Throughout daily lessons, activities, internships, and a variety of outings, our students continue to explore and discover the world around them. **They have worked hard to find their inner courage and bravery in order to self-advocate, lead, and inspire!** As we step into the new year at WRA, the power of courage will continue to shape our journey. Brené Brown reminds us, *"Courage starts with showing up and*

letting ourselves be seen." Whether it's students starting a new internship experience, families encouraging their children's independence, or educators inspiring learners in the classroom, each act of showing up makes a difference, and fosters a true sense of self-discovery and growth.

We were extremely pleased to have **Penelope** join us for this month's welcome message photo. Penelope will be exiting our program in June and will receive her diploma from Cranford High School. We are excited to be working with Penelope and her family on a plan for her transition. Each month from now until June, we will be showcasing one of our students who is scheduled to leave the Work Readiness Academy at the end of the school year.

Josh Bornstein, Director

Rachel Richer, Supervisor of Instruction

UCESC Work Readiness Academy



Each week, our students are empowered and encouraged to express their opinions, feedback and ideas by participating in our student "voice" board.

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January Data

Enrollment as of January 30, 2025

Actual: 26
Changes: Entered: 0 Exited: 0
Referrals: 3 (SY 2024-25)
Intakes Scheduled: 3
Accepted: N/A



1/17/25 - Shelter in Place

1/31/25 - Fire Drill



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

February 13, 2025 - WRA Class Trip to Linden Lanes

February 14, 2025 - Valentine's Day Mocktail Party at WRA

February 17, 2025 - School Closed - President's Day



New Attendance Reporting Email!

In the event that your child will be absent, arriving late, or picked up early, **please send us an email at AttendanceWRA@ucesc.org**. You may also call our main number at (908) 633-2704. If it is

before 8am, please leave a message.

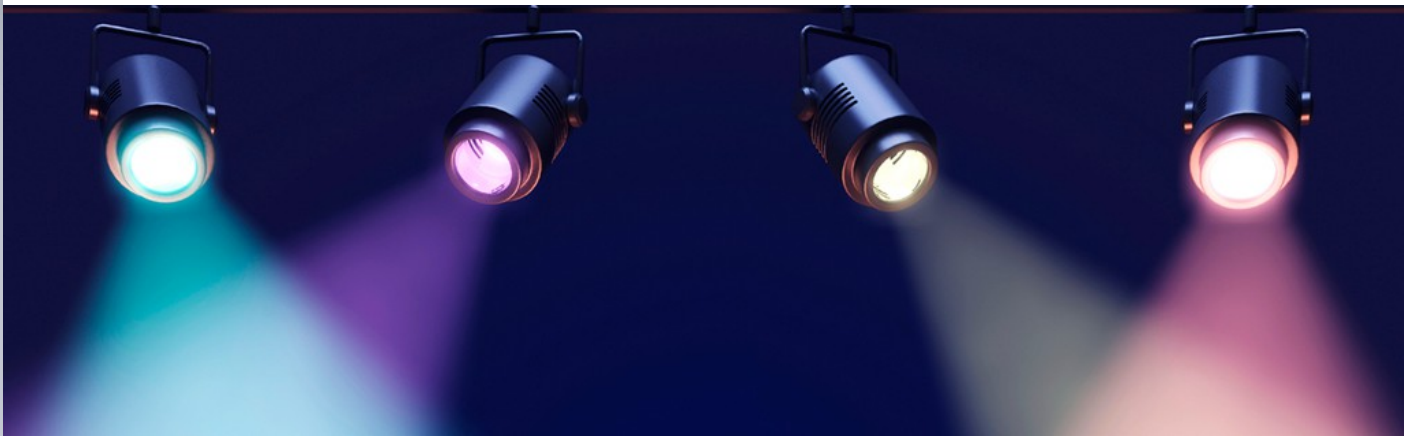


January Student of the Month

Ben F.

Ben has been selected as our January student of the month for his positive attitude, determination, perseverance, and flexibility! **Ben** gives one hundred percent effort to all tasks and across all settings. When met with challenges **Ben** asks for help and works incredibly hard to learn new

A young man with dark hair, wearing a purple hoodie and a blue lanyard, stands in front of a whiteboard covered in handwritten notes and drawings. He is holding a large white sign that reads "STUDENT OF THE MONTH". The word "STUDENT" is in green capital letters, and "OF THE MONTH" is in colorful, pixelated capital letters. The background includes phrases like "Charming", "you are UNIQUE", "you are beautiful", and "IMPORTANT".



Student Run Enterprise Launches Soul Energy Vegan Snack Mix

My students have turned their creativity and teamwork into a thriving business with the launch of ***Soul Energy Vegan Snack Mix***. The project began with brainstorming ideas, researching business plans, and choosing a product to sell. After some consideration, the students decided on a healthy, plant-based snack mix.



The process involved students and staff taste-testing and voting on various homemade granola recipes and snack mix ingredients. The final result? A delicious, energizing blend that is both healthy and vegan-friendly.

Currently, ***Soul Energy Vegan Snack Mix*** is available for purchase at two local businesses: The Morning Roast in Cranford and Soul Bowls in Scotch Plains. Each week, students work to make granola, measure ingredients, weigh the mix, and label the bags.

They are also ready to fulfill orders for families and staff at WRA and Cardinal Drive.

Interested in trying the mix? Simply visit one of our participating businesses, click the link, or scan the QR code for more details on how to order. Enjoy and stay energized.

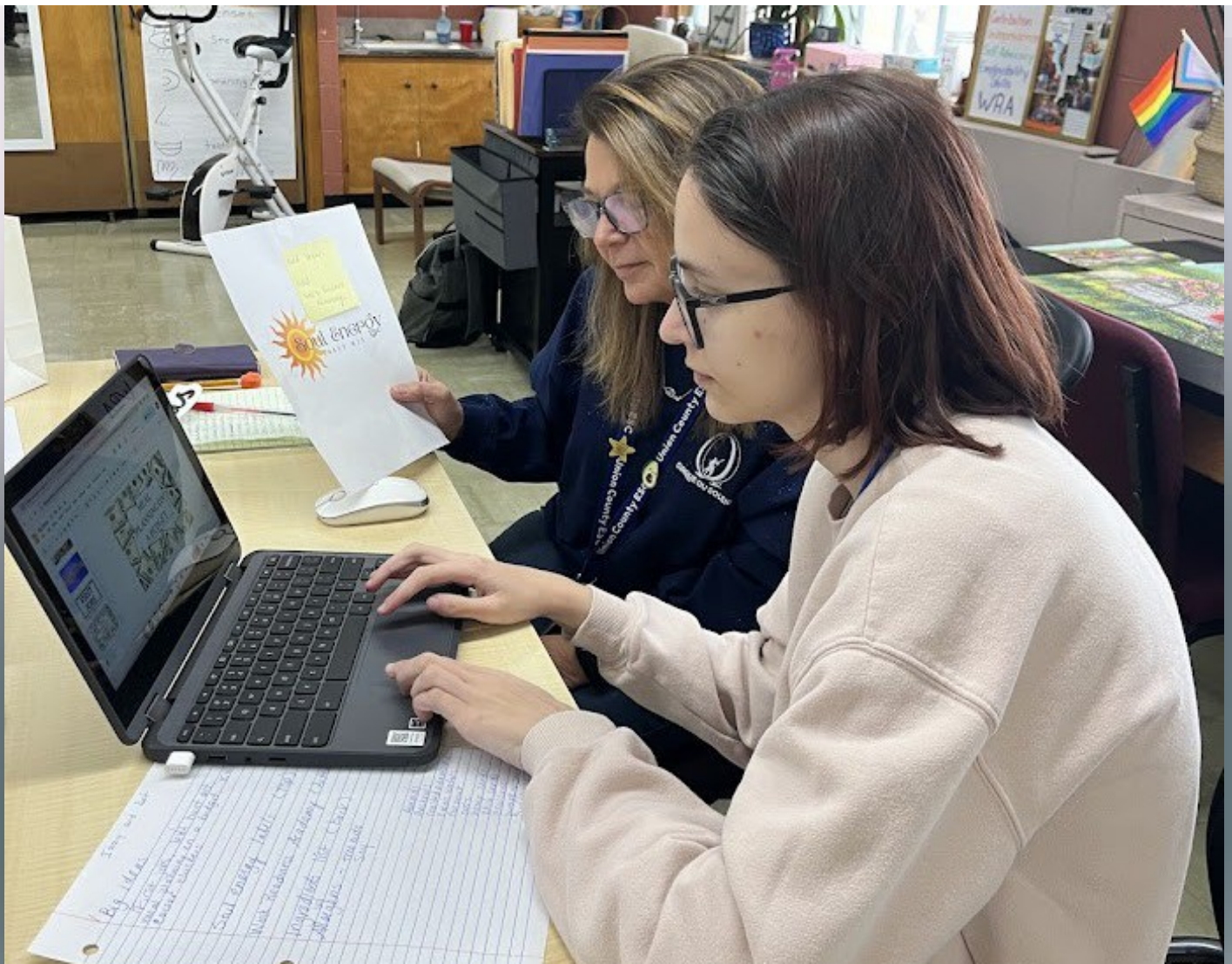
Jodi Klimko

Classroom Instructor/SLE Coordinator



To Order Soul Energy Vegan Snack Mix

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Deb and Izzy creating and editing the logo

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Larissa, Penelope and Alejandro working together to create our delicious, vegan snack mix

.....



Nicky purchasing the individual snack mix ingredients

.....



The snack mix is filled and ready for labeling!

.....



*Our team and our partners at **Soul Bowls!***

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*Our team and our other partner, **The Morning Roast!***

Behind the Success...A Look at Our Exceptional Staff



Staff Member of the Month

Sarah Cooke, RBT, Teaching Assistant, Bus Driver/Aide

How long have you worked at UCESC?

This is my 13th year!

What do you love most about your job?

I am truly passionate about supporting all young adult interns along their journey to future employment. There is nothing more fulfilling than watching our interns successfully apply the skills they develop and learn through our dedication.

What do you like to do in your free time?

Spending time with my family and 2 "hotdogs" Abby & Moose. I also love to draw, paint, design (anything), plant, garden, be in nature, hang at the firepit on a cool night, go out on a boat and fish in

the ocean. But, my absolute favorite thing to do is watch the beautiful sunrises and sunsets on LBI!

What is one thing that would surprise people about you?

I enjoy driving an ATV and often go "ATV-ing" in the woods behind our property. I also operate our ATV with a snowplow during a winter storm....which is pretty fun!



Work-Based Learning Snapshots



Erin at Overlook-Union Rehabilitation Department



***Anthony** at Hilton Hotel Housekeeping*



Steven at Walgreens in Cranford



Alfi at Best Buy in Union



Hernan at Mr. J's in Cranford



Kiya at Children's Specialized Hospital in Mountainside

Project SEARCH



The Project SEARCH Program at Overlook Medical Center is now in its 9th year.

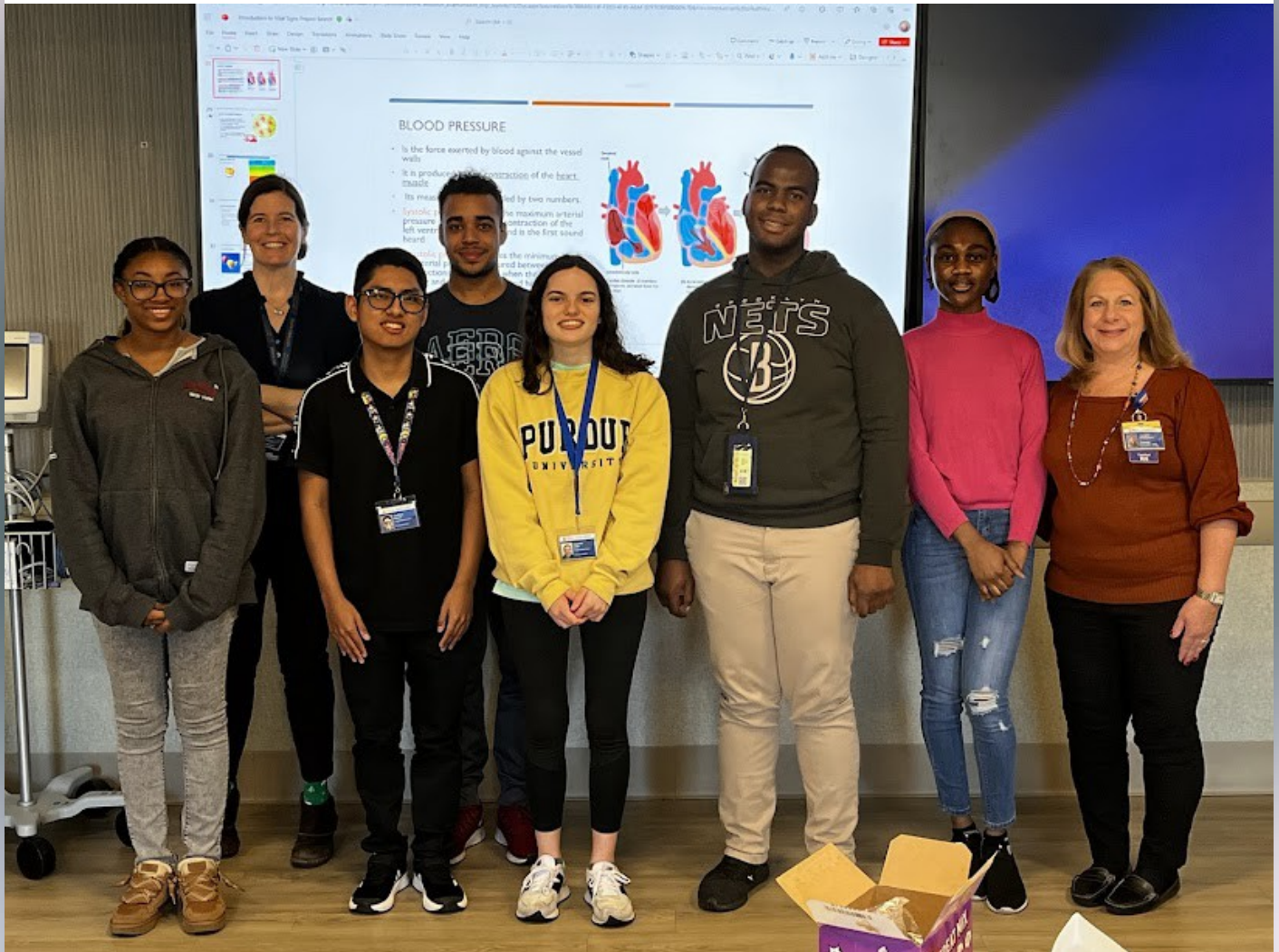
Applications for the Class of 2026 (cohort begins in the Fall of 2025) are now open. Applications for the Project SEARCH program are accepted on a rolling basis between November 1st and May 1st.

We are offering virtual information sessions and tours for prospective students, families, or referring school district staff. Please email us at projectsearch@ucesc.org to schedule. For more information about Project SEARCH, or to access the application for the Class of 2026, please visit:

<https://www.ucesc.org/schools/the-work-readiness-academy/project-search>

Meanwhile, please enjoy some highlights from the month of January at Project SEARCH including images of:

- The interns participating in our first ever modified Patient Care Technician Skills Training workshop! The students learned how to take vitals including temperature, blood pressure, and pulse-ox (level of oxygen in the bloodstream).
- The interns started their 2nd internship rotations. The new experiences will run for approximately 10-12 weeks with students attending 3.5 hours per day.
- The interns enjoying their first visit to the Overlook outdoor Walking Path and Summit Park Line.





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Exploring the World of Art...



You Gotta Have Art!

This year, the WRA introduced a new elective...Art Appreciation! Our students spend their Friday afternoons in the "art studio" creating beautiful work in Nature Sketching, Abstract Art, and Abstract Expressionism. The young artists have studied the works of Piet Mondrian and Jackson Pollock and used their talents to create beautiful pieces of art to decorate our school hallways. The "splash" painting lesson was hands down the most enjoyable

class for the students.

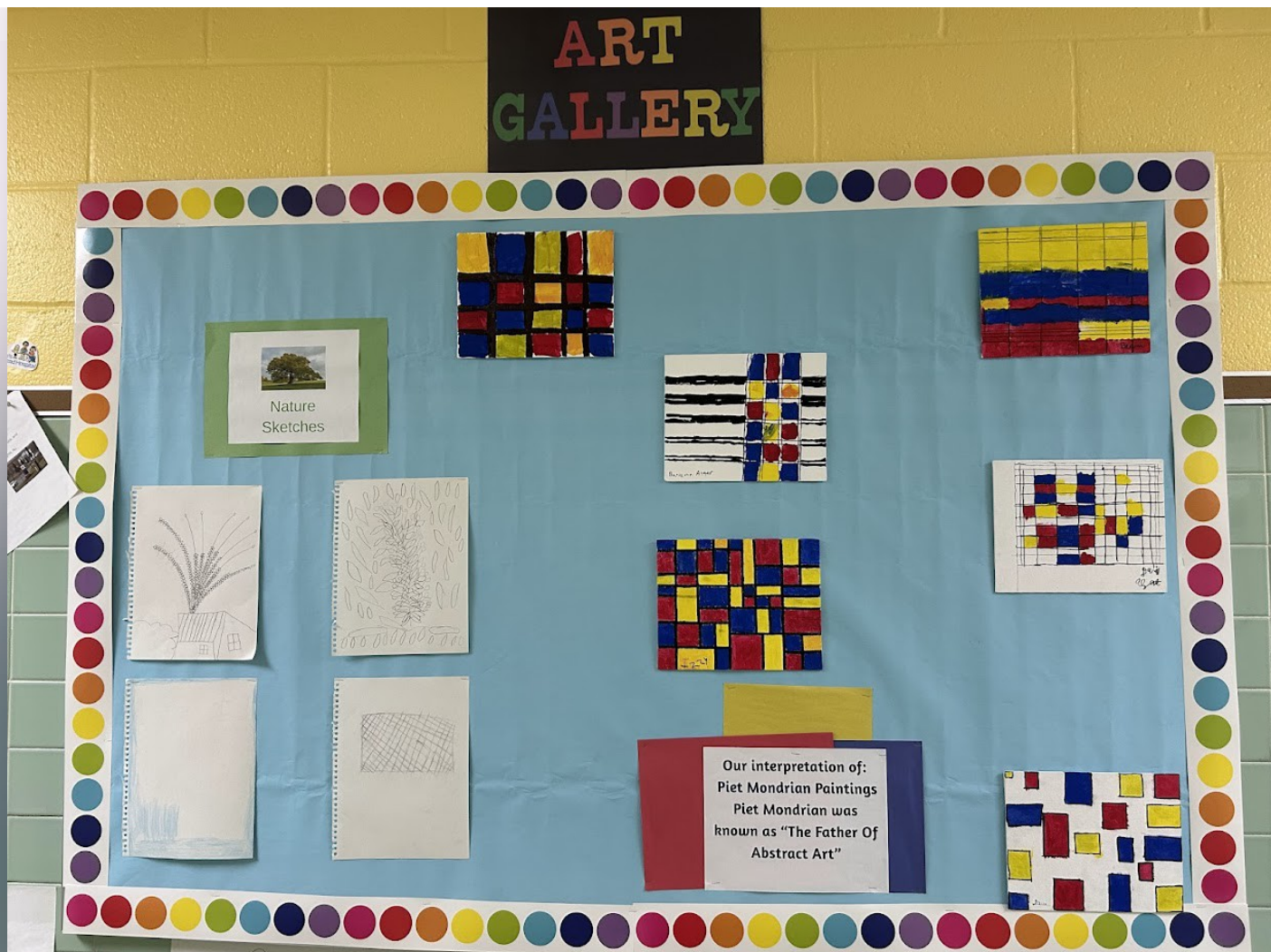
JACKSON POLLOCK



ABSTRACT EXPRESSIONISM



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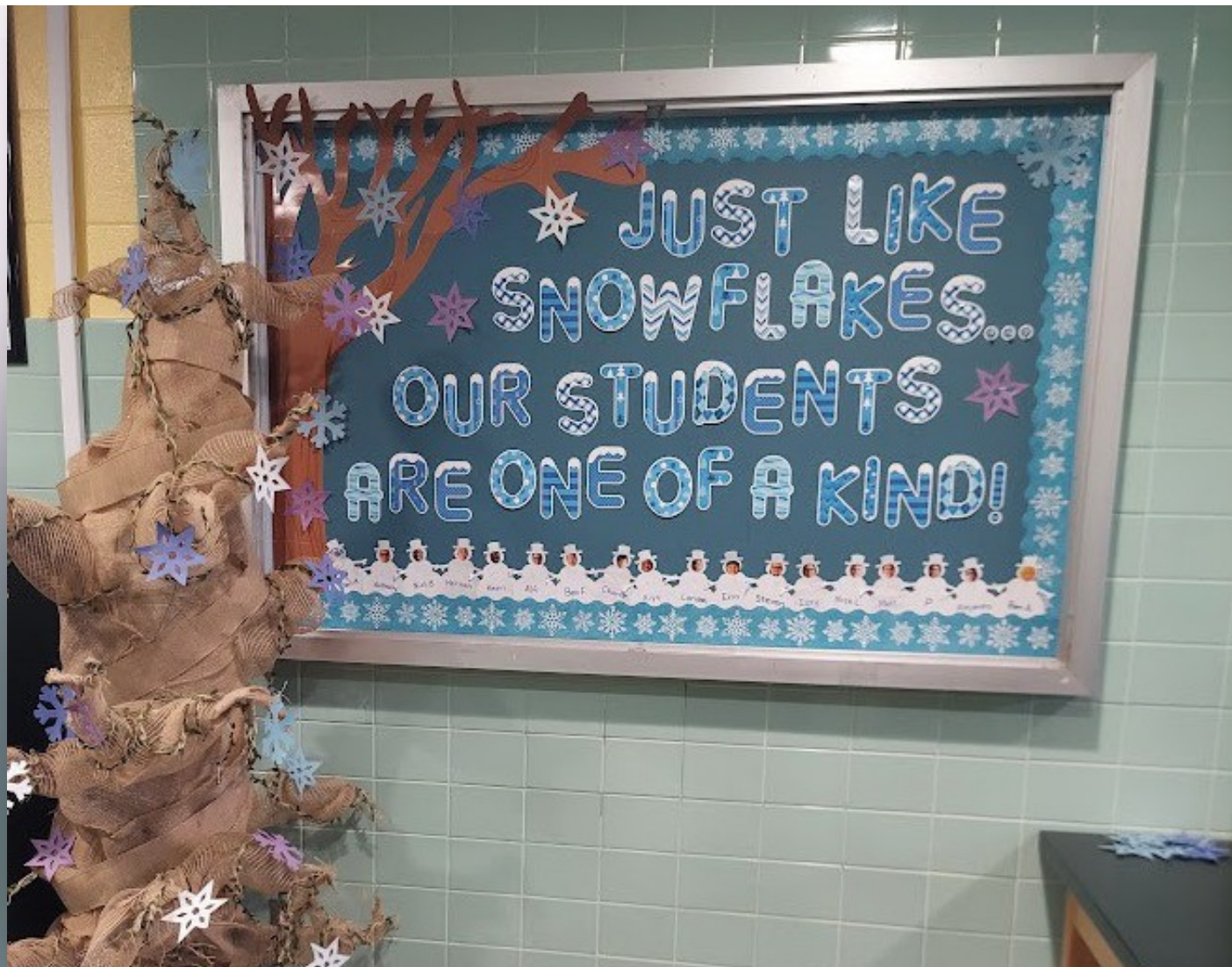


WRA Bulletin Board Showcase!

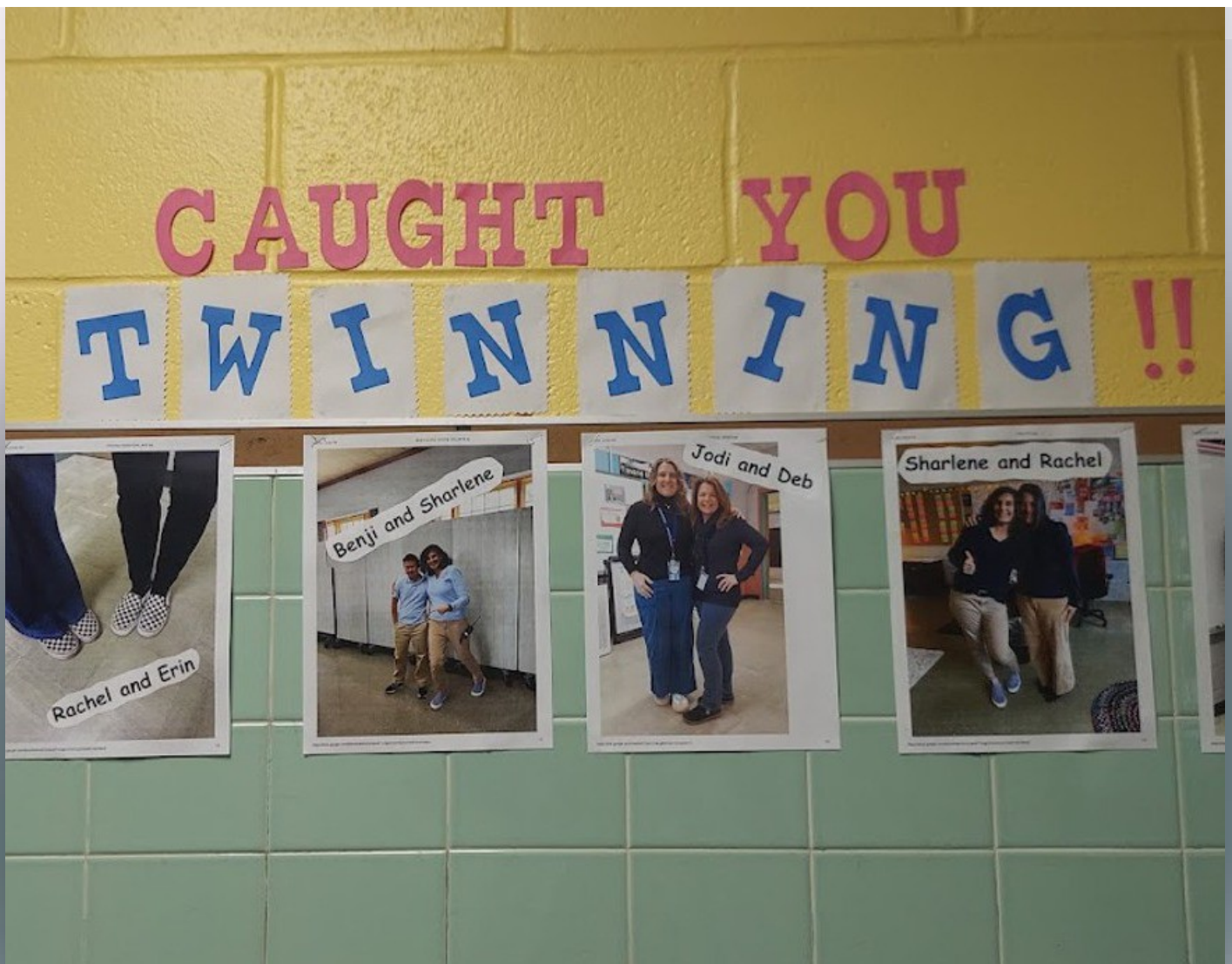
CHILLING IN THE USA!



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A Glimpse into WRA Holiday Cheer!



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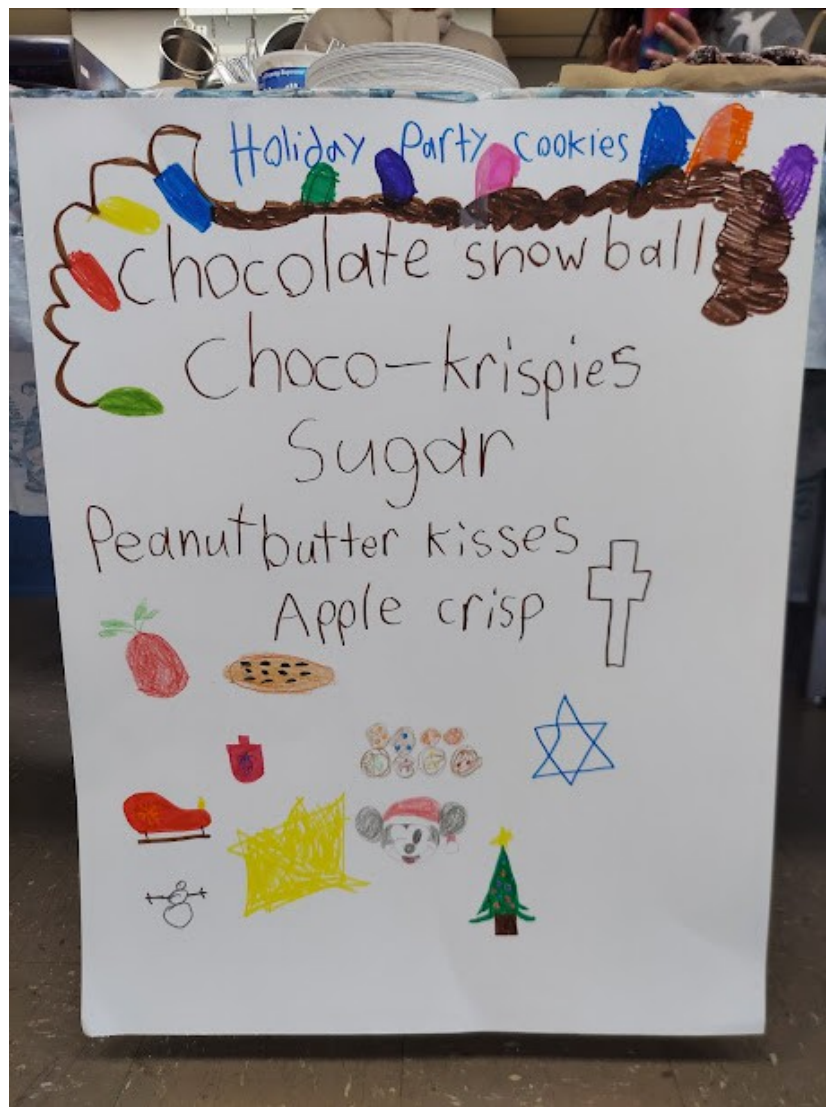
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Look Who Was Spotted in the Community!

It was great to run into former WRA student **Jack** who is now in his 2nd year working in the Dietary Services department at Overlook Medical Center!



Picture of the Month

Charlie doing his best "Kevin from *Home Alone*" impression!



Community Resources/Events

CRANFORD ELKS SPECIAL NEEDS COMMITTEE PRESENTS:

VALENTINE'S DAY PARTY

PHOTOBOOTH

\$10
PER PERSON

DJ TEDDY

WEDNESDAY
February 19th
7:00PM - 9:30PM

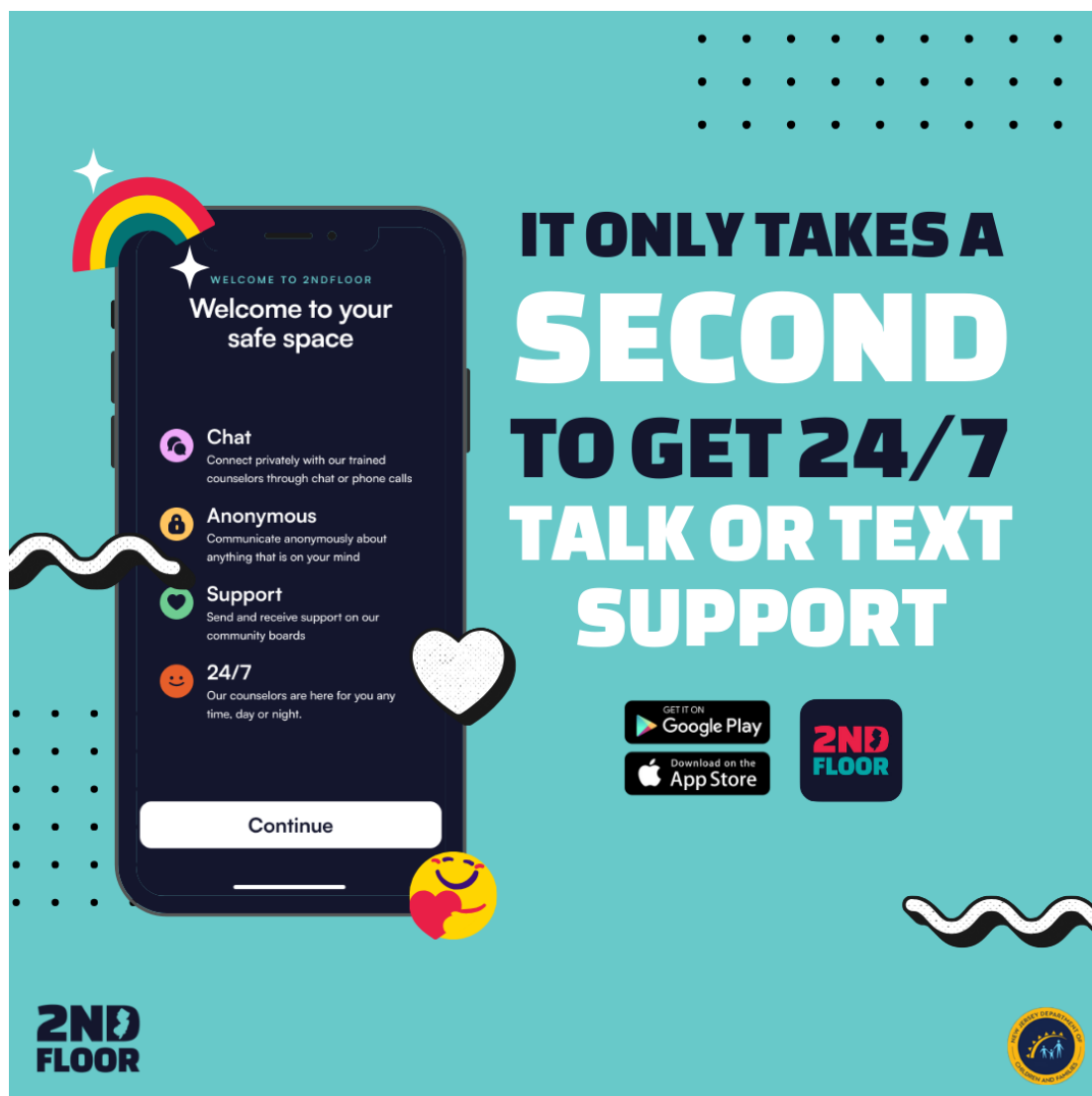
CRANFORD ELKS LODGE
951 LINCOLN AVE E CRANFORD, NJ

menu

Chicken
Fingers
Fries
Pizza

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The new **#2NDFLOOR app** for NJ youth is here! It only takes a second to get free 24/7 mental health support with one-on-one chat, helpline, community conversations, and more. Get started at 2NDFLOOR.org/download #mentalhealth #support.



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



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 Rachel Richer at rreicher@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 Follow the
WRA on Instagram!**



WRA Smore

WRA is using S'more to create beautiful newsletters



Westlake January Newsletter

Message from the Administrators

Happy New Year to the entire Westlake families! We hope everyone had a restful and rejuvenating winter break. As we dive back into the school year, we are excited about the learning and growth that lies ahead for our students.

We started the year with Parent/Teacher Conferences during the week of January 6th - January 10th. Whether you were able to attend in person, virtually or by telephone, there was much progress communicated and things learned in order to enhance this year with specific student needs and support.



Our Westlake Parent Organization ran a movie before the holidays and they are looking to expand supporting the school with other activities. Please check your email for an upcoming WPO meeting invite and let us know if you are able to assist with next activity.

As you can see, our staff can be competitive when sports are involved. The Superbowl will take place on Sunday, February 9, 2025! **Eagles vs Chiefs!** May the best team win!!

Respectfully,
Claudine, Bobby and Stacey

Westlake Information

Dates to Remember!

- **Black History Month**
- **World Read Aloud Day:** Feb. 5th - to celebrate reading aloud
- **Yoga with Shannon** - February 5th @ 1:00 pm



- **School Spirit Day/National Wear Red Day:** February 7th - wear a red/pink shirt
- **Friendship School Dance/Valentine's Day:** February 14th
- **Presidents Day:** February 17th
- **Parent Virtual Workshop** - February 19th on Guardianship with Josh Bornstein
- **Creature Comforts Pet Therapy:** February 21st @ 1:00 pm

January Spotlight!

Student of the Month!



L.W. is doing amazing job everyday! He is not only our Student of the Month, he is also the Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month!

Principal's Award Winner!



Principal's Award



We are so proud of M.C.! He works hard everyday in the classroom!

Staff Member of the Month!



Staff Member of the Month



Mr. Valerie was voted Staff Member of the Month for her leadership/courage. She is supports her students and the other members of her team!

Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month!

SUNSHINE CAFE EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



We chose L.W. as our January Employee of the Month! L.W. was chosen because he is a hard worker and his skills have greatly improved. He is always polite, respectful, and helpful with our customers!



The Sunshine Cafe!



The Sunshine Cafe has a new special for January called the Berry New Year! It is a chocolate cake filled with mascarpone cream and 4 different berries!



Westlake OT Department



Happy New Year from the Occupational Therapy Department!

Welcome back to school and Happy New Year! January is a great time to set new goals and engage in activities that support your child's growth and independence. This month, we're focusing on fine motor skills, visual motor coordination, sensory exploration, and daily living skills.









Developing fine motor and visual motor skills is essential for tasks like writing, cutting, and drawing. Winter-themed activities such as coloring and cutting out shapes offer fun opportunities for children to enhance their coordination and precision while being creative.



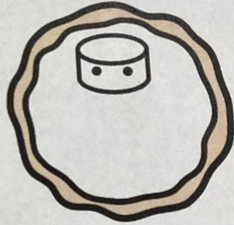



January is also a time for hands-on sensory play, like making snow! Following a visual recipe to create snow helps children practice sequencing, comprehension, and motor planning. Once the snow is ready, the tactile experience of molding and playing with it supports fine motor strength and sensory regulation.

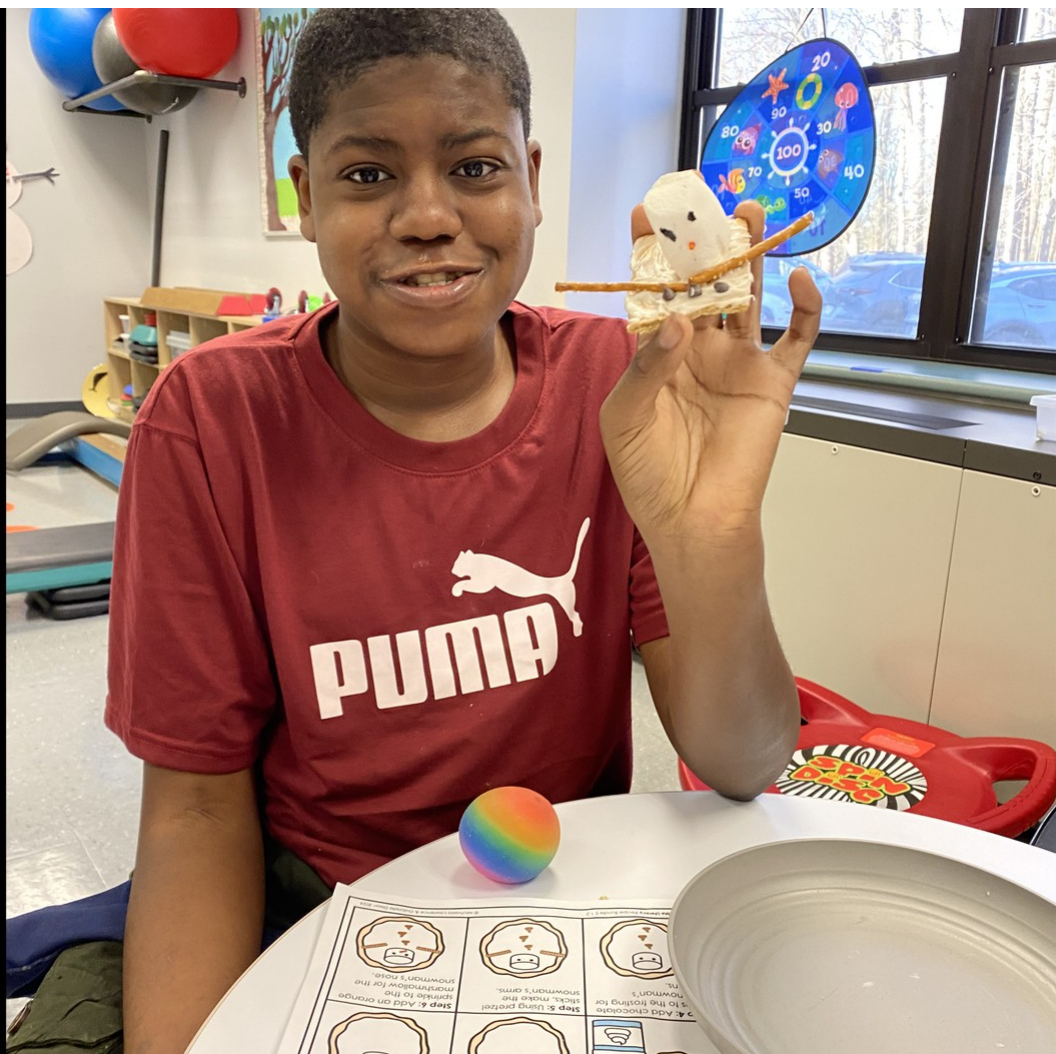
We are also encouraging the development of daily living skills to foster independence at home and school. Activities such as zipping coats, buttoning shirts, tying shoes, good hygiene, housekeeping tasks, and helping with meal preparation build coordination, problem-solving, and confidence. These skills are not only practical but also empower children to take on age-appropriate responsibilities.






Wishing you a happy and productive start to 2025!

Warm regards,






Ingredients & Supplies (serves 1)			
knife 	sugar cookie 	white frosting 	large marshmallow 
black icing 	chocolate chips 	pretzel sticks 	orange sprinkles 

Recipe		
Step 1: Spread frosting all over the cookie. 	Step 2: Place a marshmallow on top for the snowman's head. 	Step 3: Add two eyes using black frosting. 
Step 4: Add chocolate chips to the frosting for the snowman's buttons. 	Step 5: Using pretzel sticks, make the snowman's arms. 	Step 6: Add an orange sprinkle to the marshmallow for the snowman's nose. 



Mixing Bowl	Corn Starch	Shaving cream	Measuring spoon	Glitter
				

Recipe

1		Pour cornstarch into bowl
2		Mix in a tablespoon of glitter
3		Spray in shaving cream a little at a time and mix with your hands
4		Keep spraying shaving cream and mixing until it is a moldable consistency
5		ENJOY!!!!!!



.....

Work Based Learning!



This was an exciting week for D.V.O., he started a new job site at Overlook Hospital. He will be selling snacks with J.B. every Tuesday! He had an awesome first day!



D.V.O. and J.B. are working on customer service and math skills!

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Westlake Behavior Department!



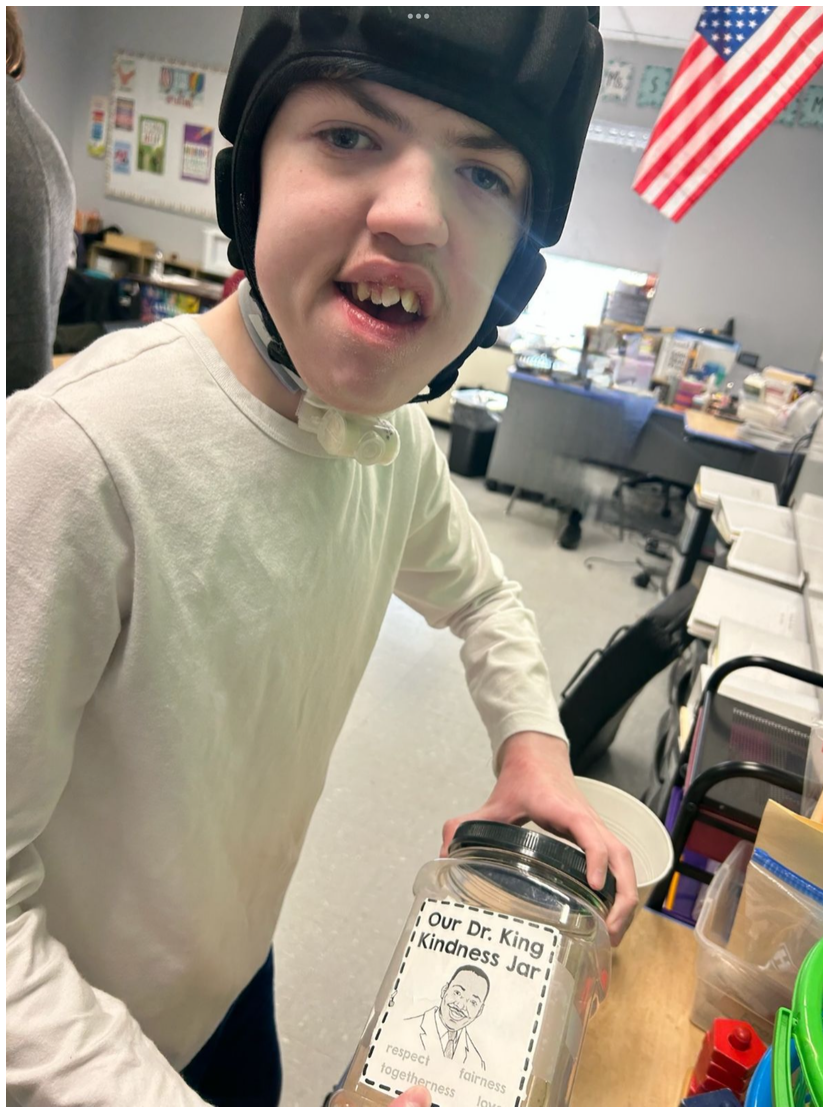
Westlake & Crossroads School Behavior Departments Unite!

The Westlake behavior team and the Crossroads behavior team recently convened to exchange valuable ideas and resources aimed at enhancing student progress and behavior management.

One idea exchanged was making picture activity schedules, which serve as visual aids to help students follow their daily routines more independently. These schedules use a combination of pictures and words to outline each activity, enabling students to understand the sequence of tasks. By following the schedules, students can clean up after each activity and transition smoothly to the next one without relying heavily on teacher assistance. This approach not only fosters autonomy but also encourages responsibility in managing their own learning activities. Overall, the collaboration between the two teams was productive and emphasized a shared commitment to improving educational outcomes for students through effective strategies.



Ms. Schiumo's Class!

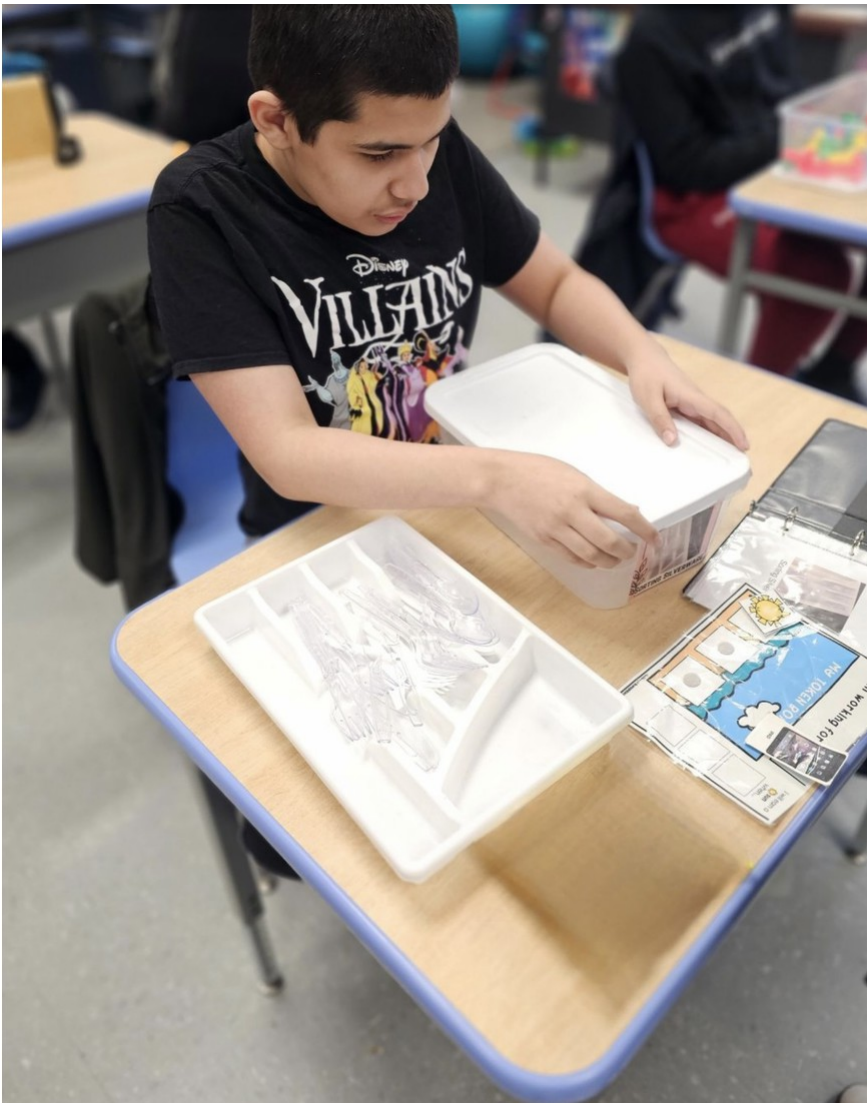


What better way to welcome 2025 than to celebrate our monthly topics of "Leadership and Courage"! Our class listened to the story of Sebastian's Roller Skates written by Joan De Deu Prats Pijoan. The primary theme is overcoming shyness in order to try new things. We spotlighted students and staff who found the courage to try new things. This included trying various activities, foods and situations just to name a few.

In addition we learned about the life and legacy of Dr Martin Luther King Jr. Students gave examples of ways they could emulate him in their own lives. We now have a Kindness Jar in his honor where students can earn rewards for demonstrating acts of kindness, leadership and courage.

In science we learned about states of matter and how they are related to various weather conditions. The students also participated in a hands-on experiment where they generated predictions and observations based on making their own ice pops. They also learned how the first ice pop was created by accident when a young man left a sweet drink outside in the cold.

All students are making huge strides with both their ADL and independent work schedules. An extra task was added this month and they rose to the challenge with ease. In vocational, students received a pay bonus for successful holiday jewelry sales. They were also given their first opportunity to spend or save their earnings. As a follow up, they utilized their calculators to update their pay records.





Ms. Kristen's Speech Group!

In the month of January, the speech department focused on various themes including leadership, courage, and goal-setting for the new year. A key theme this month was leadership and courage, inspired by the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. We explored what it means to be a leader, with a particular focus on the courage it takes to make a positive impact in the world. Through discussions and activities, students were encouraged to reflect on their own leadership qualities and how they could apply those in their daily lives. As part of the New Year's resolution activities, we prompted students to set personal goals and aspirations for the school year. These discussions not only encouraged self-reflection but also helped to foster a growth mindset in students as they prepared for the challenges ahead.

Throughout the month, we incorporated sensory activities into our therapy sessions to support students in engaging more fully with their learning. Sensory play allowed students to practice language skills such as describing and sequencing in a hands-on, interactive way. These activities also helped to calm and focus students, particularly those who benefit from sensory input during therapy.

We read a variety of books that focused on winter themes. These stories provided rich opportunities for targeting important speech and language skills, such as describing, sequencing, and answering questions.

We also attended parent conferences to discuss students' progress and areas for continued growth. These conferences were an opportunity to share specific goals and strategies that parents can use at home to support their child's speech and language development. By working together, we aim to provide consistent support across school and home environments, ensuring that each student has the best opportunity to succeed in meeting their goals.

Mr. Carten's Class!



The students in Mr. Carten's class have been working cooperatively in the areas of vocational tasks and food preparation. Students collaborated to bake a cake. They followed a recipe that provided directions in the form of pictures and words. Everyone was excited to taste the final product. In vocational, students worked as a team to fulfill a large order for more than 400 chocolate pops. This took a lot of teamwork to accomplish. Each complete Pop has many steps to complete. We worked together to melt the chocolate, pour the chocolates into the molds, put them in the bags, and tie them with ribbons. Because we worked so well as a team, we got the job done efficiently and in a timely manner. Along with vocational and food prep, the class continues to make progress on their academic goals!



WolfPack Press







Parent Resource!

PARENT WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

ALL WORKSHOPS BEGIN
AT 7PM!

Wed
Oct 16

DDD SERVICES: **ONLINE!**

What is DDD and How Do I Apply?

Thurs
Nov 14

SSI & MEDICAID: **ONLINE!**

The Key to Unlocking Adult Services

Wed
Jan 15

"LIFE AFTER 21" PROVIDER FAIR **IN PERSON!**

Representatives from 21+ Programs
will be in attendance

Wed
Feb 19

GUARDIANSHIP: **ONLINE!**

Is Guardianship right for my family?
What options are available?

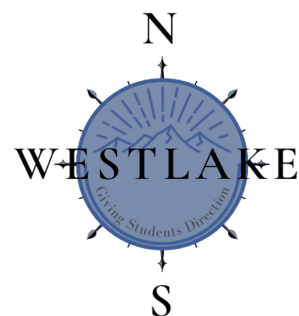
To register for any of the events above please email [Phyllis Sandrock](mailto:PhyllisSandrock@ucesc.org) at psandrock@ucesc.org

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)



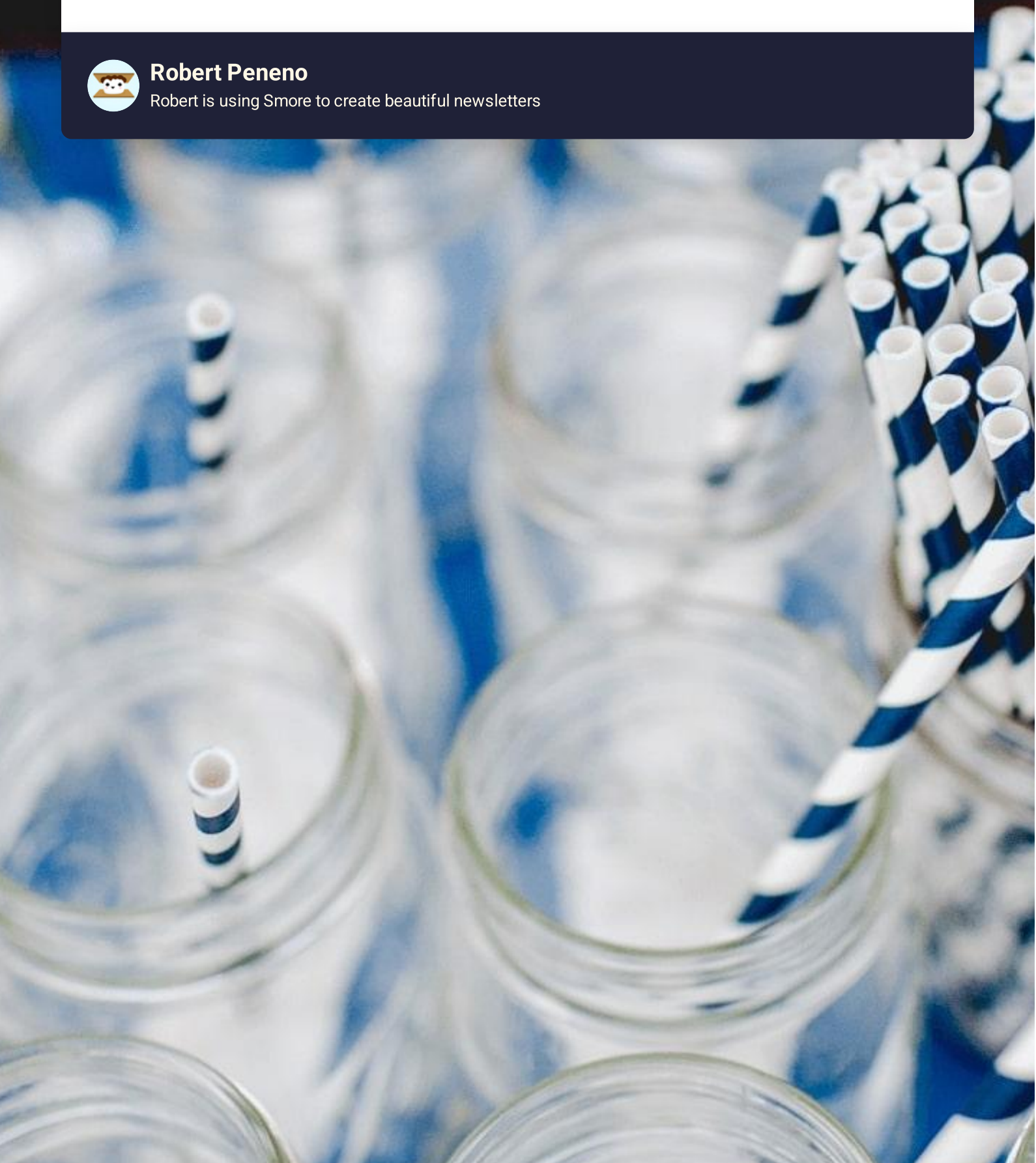
INSTAGRAM!

Visit us!



Robert Peneno

Robert is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





Lamberts Mill Academy

January Monthly Report 2025

- *"The new year stands before us, like a chapter in a book, waiting to be written."*

Administrators' Message

January 2025

Good Morning,

I hope this newsletter finds you well! As we finish the month of January, in the New Year, please allow us to showcase some of the different learning experiences, and events occurring at LMA. We are officially half way done with the 2024-2025 academic school year, and the next 5 months taking us from Winter to Spring, on the doorsteps of Summer will be busy! LMA will start to prepare students and staff for NJ DOE state testing for NJGPA and NJSLA in the near future. LMA is also excited to welcome a number of new staff members, all here to support academic learning and therapeutic growth!



As we enter the new year, and the second half of the school year, now is a great time to prioritize short and long term goals. Our students have already started this in their assigned therapeutic groups with the creation of Vision Boards. LMA as a school community continues to create positive experiences for students including Student Council, Community Building Circles,

Individualized Student Success Plans and identifying different layers of support we can provide LMA students for academics, therapeutic, and behavioral needs. All of these initiatives are in place to increase our Student Voice, and strengthen an already positive school community foundation.

The LMA Administrative team would like to give a very special recognition to the 1571 custodial department, especially Mr. Whitehead and Mr. Seale. Not only tending to the 1571 interior needs, but having their support in the parking lot at student arrival, and student dismissal to help maintain a safe environment for students, bus drivers, parents/guardians and staff on a daily basis, especially in these colder months!

Please take some time to review the Newsletter below. If you have any questions, or concerns, please reach out!

Reed & John

Monthly Data

Enrollment - 45

Acceptances - 2

New Students - 2

Intakes - 3

Referrals - 6

Disenrollment - 2

Fire Drill - 1/10/2025 1:30pm

Emergency Management (Shelter in Place) - 1/14/2025 10:40am

Upcoming Events

February 2025 Important Dates

February 4 - NJ4S Assembly - Marijuana Use, Addiction & Coping @ 1571

February 17 - Presidents' Day - NO SCHOOL



Staff Spotlight

LMA welcomes Ms. Morrisroe - LMA WBL Teacher

LMA is pleased to announce our new WBL teacher as Ms. Morrisroe. She joined the LMA team this January, and while getting to know the students and staff are a top priority; she has also been looking at expanding our Post Graduate program with LMA students integrating, and learning more day-to-day operations. We are excited to welcome Ms. Morrisroe to the LMA team, and for all the future initiatives she will bring to WBL at LMA.



Below are some fun facts about Ms. Morrisroe:

- Loves to listen to country music.*
- Has an identical sister who is also an educator.*
- Attended Kean University*
- Is a huge sports fan*
- Has a bulldog named Bailey.*

LMA Student of the Month - January 2025

Janelle

LMA staff came together to vote on the January Student of the Month. Janelle was the clear winner for number of votes by LMA staff. Numerous LMA staff have been reporting how well Janelle is doing in class at LMA. We are proud of her growth and progress at LMA; taking full advantage of academics and therapeutic supports on a consistent basis.



LMA Field Trip - Liberty Hall at Kean University

On Monday, 1/27/2025 LMA students participated in a field trip to Liberty Hall, part of Kean University. Students toured the first Governor of New Jersey's home and learned about the geography of Colonial America, how increased taxes lead to the American Revolutionary War, and different codes that spies used to pass messages during the war. Students ended the day by signing up as a Patriot, Loyalist, or Quaker, and playing Colonial games.





Student VOICE! - LY's Experience at Liberty Hall

What I learned on this trip is that there were slaves that slept in the house with their masters. I also learned there were no toilets forcing the people to go outside to use the bathroom. Another thing I learned was there wasn't heat so they had to use large and sometimes even small fires. Also there women whose husbands were fighting in the war and they helped as much as they could."

LMA - Westlake Mentorship Program

Introducing the Lamberts Mill Academy Mentorship Program at Westlake School

We are excited to launch a new mentorship program where students from Lamberts Mill Academy (LMA) will visit Westlake School once a week to mentor, and connect with our students. This program offers a unique opportunity for collaboration, growth, and the development of meaningful relationships between students from both schools.

As part of the program, LMA mentors will engage in activities such as practicing conversation skills, playing games, exploring shared interests, and working alongside their mentees on pre-vocational tasks. To prepare for this role, the LMA mentors participated in a specialized training led by Registered Behavior Technicians and the Supervisor of Behavioral Health Services. During the training, they learned about the diverse communication styles of Westlake students and developed key mentoring skills, including:

- Understanding and empathy
- Active listening
- Emotional self-regulation and reaction management
- Encouragement and positive reinforcement
- Adaptability and problem-solving
- Building trust and fostering confidence

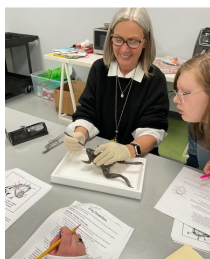
This mentorship program not only supports the social and emotional development of the Westlake students but also provides LMA mentors with valuable opportunities to build leadership skills and make a positive impact.

We are thrilled to see the relationships and growth that will come from this program and look forward to expanding it in the future to include more students and opportunities for collaboration!





Classroom Spotlights



Science classes get hands on

The Biology students dissected a perch and a frog. The class was able to view the internal organs of each species, label and describe the function of each. The Earth Science class is studying minerals and will be fabricating a "crystal" garden. Chemistry students will be creating molecule models for selected elements and participating in an "escape room" activity involving molecules. Marine Biology seniors are studying the oceans, bays, lagoons and inland waterways and the marine life in each and the



PE classes get warmed up with the LMA Badminton Tournament

January was a busy month for the students at LMA in Health and Physical Education. We started the new year off with the Fitness Unit by partaking in miscellaneous workouts such as stability ball training, step aerobics, and mindful meditation. The students are now 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



What's new in WIN

This month in "WIN" (What I Need), students learned how to identify disorganized behavior in others and analyze how these behaviors may impede that individual's success. We then upped the ante and analyzed our own disorganized behavior(s) and the natural consequence(s) that happen in our lives from these behaviors. Students self-reflect on their personal paradigms and created "glasses" that represented seeing the "positive" and "negative" paradigms in their lives. To expand on student voice in WIN, students were given an

preservation of all of Earth's waters. Biology class will soon be studying the life activities of animals and body systems.

currently in the middle of the annual LMA Badminton Tournament with the winners receiving prizes. During the tournament we have been covering the importance of good sportsmanship, teamwork, communication, and hard work. We are very proud of how our students have been performing during this unit.

For Health we have just started to begin the Body Systems Unit with the students. Students have been learning about the importance of knowing all their systems such as the skeletal system, muscular system, digestive system, and so on. We will be covering every body system in its entirety and the importance of keeping said systems healthy.

avenue on how to recommend topics and poems/songs for our weekly restorative practice "circles" activity. January 23rd was "National Handwriting Day" and students attempted to write their names in script. On this day we also learned the importance of a signature as we enter adulthood.

January at The Mill



Clinical Corner

One of January's themes is Leadership. Being a leader is important because it enables you to make a positive impact on those around you. By embracing leadership, you have the opportunity to make a meaningful difference and help others thrive. Here are 5 tips to help you excel in becoming a good leader:

1. **Cultivate Self-Awareness:** Understand your own emotions, strengths, and weaknesses. Self-awareness is the foundation of emotional intelligence.
2. **Communicate Effectively:** Be clear, open, and respectful in your communications. Active listening is key.
3. **Manage Stress:** Stay calm and composed, even in challenging situations. Your emotional stability can influence the entire team.
4. **Lead by Example:** Model the behavior you want to see in your team. Your actions speak louder than words.

Encourage Collaboration: Foster an environment where everyone feels valued and heard. Encourage team members to share ideas and work together.

LMA 'The Mill' Merch

Show your LMA Pride!



If you would like to buy your own The Mill T-shirt for the upcoming Holiday season, you can order directly from the Custom Ink below.



Custom Ink Design 'Ima24'

View this Custom Ink design, make changes, share it with friends, or order for yourself.

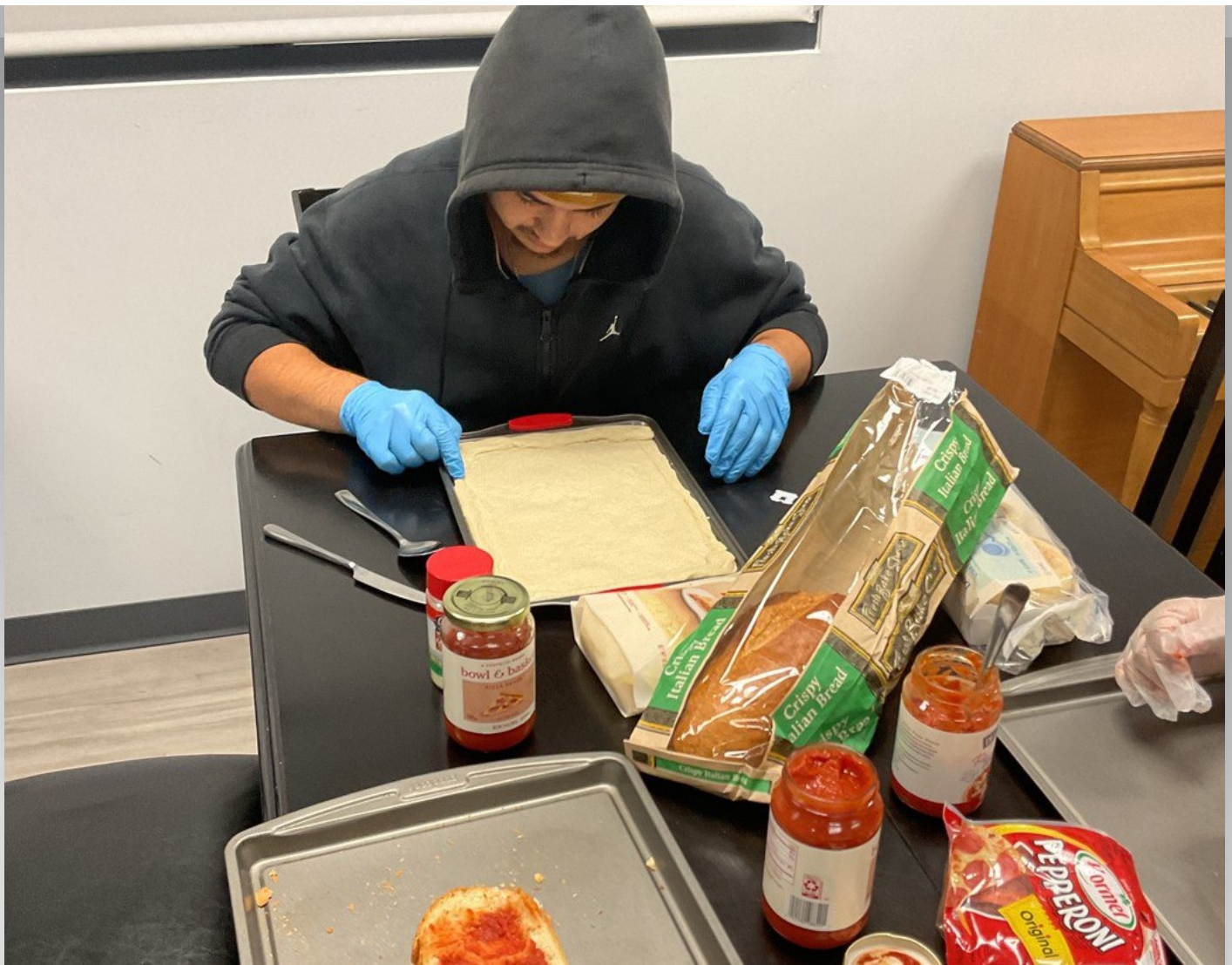
[customink.com](https://www.customink.com)

Group Therapy

Students continue to be fully engaged in their group therapy and look forward to participating in daily sessions. With this month's theme as leadership, courage, and unsung heroes the students have focused on understanding the characteristics that made prominent figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. so great! Not only does this enhance their self awareness but helps them further develop their leadership skills. Students worked on their vision boards, whether individually or in a group, to help visualize the goals they have set out for themselves for the upcoming year.



Students Outside of the Classroom / Alumni



Matthew L.

The LMA school community is proud to recognize Post Graduate student, Matthew L. for his work accomplishments. Coming to LMA last July, Matt has been working on transition and work readiness skills at LMA. Starting this school year he received WBL experiences at the Hilton, Walgreen's and Chili's for the first half of the school year. Matt will still remain an LMA student, but become a 'shared time' student, after he secured a position at JFK University Medical Center in Edison for his WBL needs. He will be rotating through various positions and departments at JFK, learning a number of new skills and job responsibilities. We are proud of his growth at LMA in WBL, and look forward to supporting him during this transition.

Upcoming Community Events



NAMI Middlesex County

in collaboration with

Intensive Family Support Services of Middlesex County (IFSS)

***Invites you to attend the Winter Speaker Series
Virtual Presentation via Zoom***

February 18, 2025 (5:30 pm – 7:00 pm)

Helping vs Enabling: Strategies to Improve Family Functioning

Speaker: Kenneth T. Kinter, MA, LPC, Assistant Professor, Rutgers School of Health Professions

This presentation was created with and for families with a loved one with severe and persistent mental illness and/or addictions. If you feel that: you are doing all the work, you and your family are stuck, you have the sinking feeling that all your efforts are not helping and may even be becoming unhelpful, or if you feel resentful about helping your loved one, you're in the right place. We'll share with other families and discuss what can be done differently to hopefully yield a different result.

Register in advance for the February 18th event at:

https://rutgers.zoom.us/meeting/register/T6um_UulRsu1dq-fVY4Dtq

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. Please do not hesitate to reach IFSS at 732-235-5000, or NAMI Middlesex at 732-745-0709, if you have questions or need additional assistance.

Please save the date of our Speaker Series Event on March 3rd.

https://rutgers.zoom.us/meeting/register/T6um_UulRsu1dq-fVY4Dtq#/registration

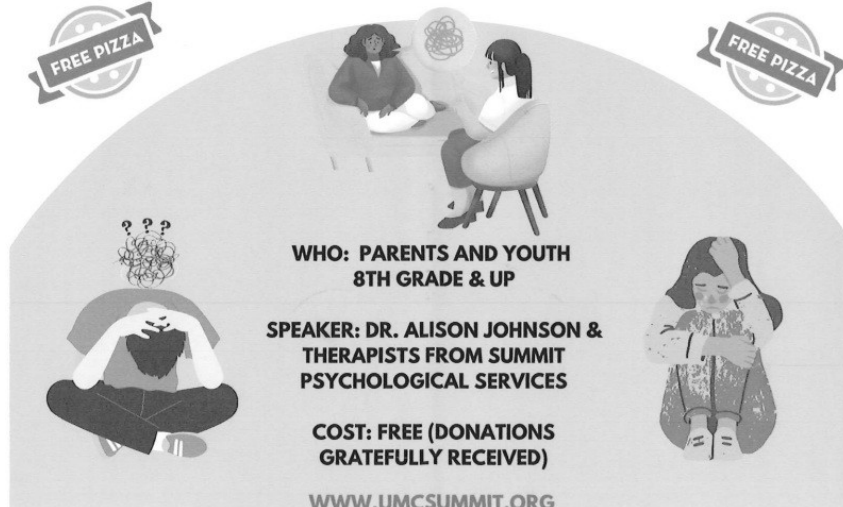


Lifeline Mental Health Seminar

**FROM FEAR TO FLOURISHING:
SUPPORTING ANXIOUS KIDS AND PARENTS**

FEBRUARY 23RD, 3PM-5PM

**THE UMC OF SUMMIT
17 KENT PLACE BLVD, SUMMIT, NJ**



**WHO: PARENTS AND YOUTH
8TH GRADE & UP**

**SPEAKER: DR. ALISON JOHNSON &
THERAPISTS FROM SUMMIT
PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES**

**COST: FREE (DONATIONS
GRATEFULLY RECEIVED)**

WWW.UMCSUMMIT.ORG

Ask the Expert with Joyce Benz, LCSW

February 25 @ 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm EST



February 25th, 2025 7:00PM- 9:00PM

Join NAMI Union to learn about mental health services available in Union County, featuring guest speaker, Joyce Benz, LCSW, of the Mental Health Association in NJ (MHANJ). This is a unique opportunity to get up to date information on established services and programs, to ask questions and share information with others looking to improve the quality of life for a loved one with a mental health diagnosis.

Joyce Benz, LSCW, is the Program Director of IFSS (Intensive Family Services) at MHANJ in Union County. By statute, an IFSS program runs in every county in New Jersey. IFSS is taxpayer-funded and therefore the services are free to its clients.

Joyce has helped many families navigate the mental health care system in her 40 year career. Her knowledge of the providers, their requirements and the nuances of our complicated mental health system are unparalleled. Join us to learn and ask questions in a relaxed setting about the services that are relevant to so many of us. No registration required and this program is free.

Location: RWJ Fitness and Wellness Center, 2120 Lamberts Mill Road, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

<https://naminj.org/event/nami-union-feb-2025-ask-the-expert/>

Community Resources

HOW 988 WORKS



988 Crisis Line

<https://988lifeline.org/>

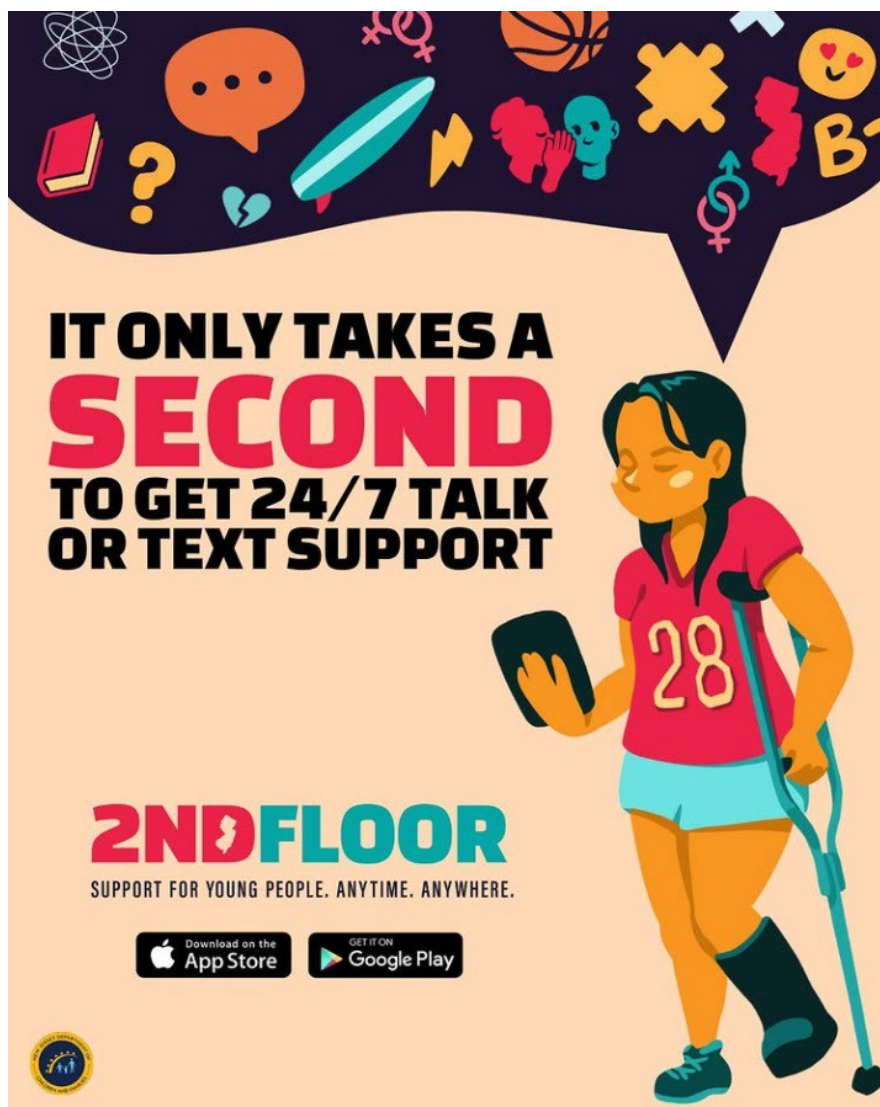


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www.performcarenj.org

877-652-7624

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



<https://www.2ndfloor.org/>
(888)-222-2228

School in the Community

1. Kean University Field Trip
2. NJ4S Assemblies at 1571
3. Monthly Community Meetings celebrating student awards.
4. WBLE at Clark Public Library, Hilton (Springfield) and Chili's in Clark.

About Us

Contact Information:

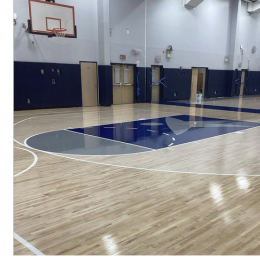
Phone: (908)-233-7581

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