

Let Every Voice Empower

# Newsletter 24-25

March



## *A Message From The Principal: Dr. Balsamello*

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March 2025 was filled with engaging events at Hillcrest Academy South Campus (HAS). We partnered with the Westlake School with Read Across America activities as well as visiting their Westlake Sunshine Cafe on Wednesdays and the Westlake Snack Shack every day during student lunches for special treats. Students interested in the UEFA championship playoffs were able to view select matches as an attendance incentive. We also had continued to hold our School Spirit theme days every Friday with a special day on a Monday for St. Patrick's Day. Please enjoy HAS's newsletter and feel free to contact us with any questions.

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# March Important Dates

 **March 2025**

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						Women's History Month begins 1
2	3	UEFA Champions League playoffs viewing incentive begins 4	Read Across America at Westlake 5	6	Bulletin Board Contest set up Spirit day - Wear denim for dementig 8	
9	1 pm dismissal for faculty/staff professional development 10	NJGPA testing 11	NJGPA testing Unsung Hero Gala at Kean University 12	13	Pi Day Spirit day - Wear "smart" clothes for Pi Day 14	15
16	St Patrick's Day Spirit day - wear green Annual Duck Hunt begins 17	18	19	First Day of Spring 20	Spirit day - Mismatched socks day 21	22
23	24	25	26	27	Women's History Month movie day Spirit day - School Attire 28	29
30	31					

## Student of the Month

### March - Beatriz

Congratulations to Beatriz 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"!

### Mr Van Cleef's Favorites:

Favorite movie: Anchorman

Favorite food: Empanadas

Favorite color: Red

Favorite book: Mr Popper's Penguins

Favorite travel spot: Hawaii



Favorite tv show: The Simpsons  
Favorite football team: The Jets



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## *"Let Your Voice Empower" Teacher Recognitions*

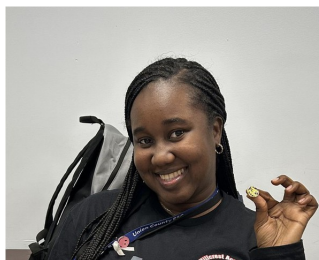
### **March - Respond**

This year's district wide theme of "Let Your Voice Empower" was incorporated by teachers being awarded pins in different areas of empowerment. The March theme was 'Respond'. 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 have responded to the call of what it means to be a member of the HAS family!



**Mr Van Cleef**



**Ms Pradel**



**Mr Geist**



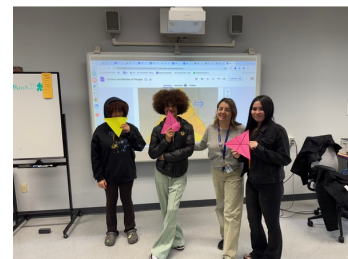
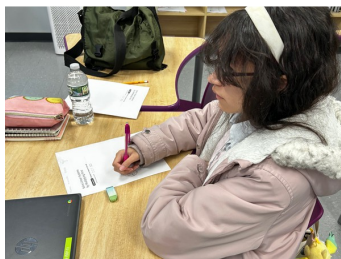
**Mrs Rubin**

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# Teacher's Corner: Math

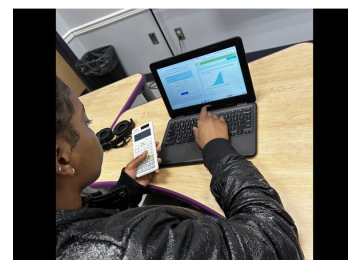
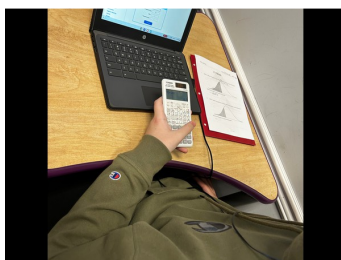
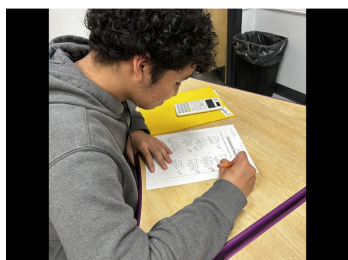
## Ms Ferrari - Algebra I/ Geometry

The Algebra I skills the students worked on this month included solving systems of equations using substitution, graphing, and elimination. They particularly enjoyed the lessons when they utilized Desmos to solve systems of equations and learned about the technology available to assist with doing Algebra classwork. Geometry students worked on the properties of triangles and used the concepts of similar triangles and the Pythagorean Theorem to solve the missing dimensions of triangles. They worked on Special Right Triangles and were introduced to the basics of Trigonometry. Lastly, the students constructed an equilateral triangle out of construction paper. They analyzed its many properties that include but are not limited to three lines of symmetry, perpendicular bisectors, altitudes, medians, and a centroid.



## Ms Fern - Algebra II/ Probability & Statistics

The Algebra II classes began the month of March with factoring trinomials. This led to factoring special polynomials like perfect square trinomials, difference of two squares, and sum/difference of two cubes. Students then transitioned to completing the square that was a method of factoring unfactorable trinomials before learning the shortcut of the quadratic formula. By the end of March Algebra II students were able to determine the discriminant and begin working on rational equations. Probability & Statistics began working on standard deviation concepts. They researched what standard deviation was and how to apply it to normal distribution, z-scores, and z-values under a bell curve.





# Unsung Hero of HAS

Google defines an Unsung Hero as "someone or something that provides a great benefit, has done very good work, has performed some heroic deed or function, etc., but has not received the credit or recognition they deserve." Nothing can be more true of our very own Martha! When this year's nominee was voted on for this prestigious award, it was a unanimous vote from administration, our guidance counselor, and the social worker. Martha has been at HAS for two years and has benefited tremendously from our small environment. Martha has blossomed into an inquisitive learner who can visualize a future in which she plays the starring role. Despite being an "introvert" she is instrumental in school spirit and in decorating the school halls and classrooms. All of her teachers consider her an asset to their positive classroom environment. During her time at HAS, she has dramatically improved her attendance and has excelled in all her academics. She is a role model and exemplifies the standard of Hillcrest Academy South student. Martha has the distinction of being on our Honor Roll every marking period. Martha's demur nature and smile brings joy to our school community. Her artistic aspirations range from architecture to the culinary arts. She will be successful in whatever path she chooses.



Welcome to the  
2025 Union County  
Unsung Heroes  
Awards Ceremony!

March 12, 2025  
Kean University



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# HAS Teacher of the Year!

## Congratulations Ms Fern!

Hillcrest Academy South's 2024-25 Teacher of the Year is none other than Wonder Woman herself, Mrs Fernandez-Siejack! Not only is she an enthusiastic participant of school spirit days, she also runs the HAS social media account, and prepares our fantastic newsletter every month. Most importantly, she is an incredible math teacher. Students continually engage in higher-level thinking activities while in Mrs Fern's classes, solving complex equations and providing evidence when explaining their thinking. For many of our students, this is the first time in their lives that they have had a math teacher that they feel like they can trust enough to ask for assistance. Mrs. Fern makes math accessible and achievement



possible for all of her students because she believes in all of her students. Congratulations Mrs. Fern!

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## ***HAS Staff of the Year!***

### **Congratulations Mrs D'Emilio!**

This year, all across the UCESC district, non-instructional staff were eligible to be voted for Staff of the Year. There is no surprise our first staff selection was Mrs D'Emilio. Aside from all of the work she puts in behind the scenes as the administrative assistant to the principal, Mrs D'Emilio goes above and beyond for the students and faculty. For our students, she is like a mother-figure and makes sure they are fed when they are hungry, feel safe when they are upset, are clothed if they need it, and stern when needed. When HAS received a new student, she always showed them around to their locker and classes and did her best to make sure they felt welcome. Our students love and respect her for all she does and are truly grateful. For our faculty, she is always available if they need assistance by making sure they have what they need in terms of supplies (pencils, pens, folders, etc) and is there for advice and a smile. Congratulations Mrs D'Emilio!



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## ***1571 Staff of the Year!***

Mr Whitehead has the amazing privilege of being voted as Staff of the Year for an entire building! The 1571 building houses three different schools that are Lamberts Mill Academy, the Westlake School, and of course HAS. Mr Whitehead oversees the maintenance for all three schools, goes above and beyond the regular duties of being a custodian, and has always been ready to answer the call if an emergency arises. From helping to hang posters and things for teachers, cleaning messes, and assisting with bus traffic. There is nothing that Mr Whitehead can't do. Thank you so much Mr Whitehead for all that you do here at 1571 and especially at HAS. Congratulations!



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## ***Welcome Mr Geist!***

Welcome to Mr Geist who is a leave replacement sub for Mrs Wrzesinski while she is on maternity leave. He will be covering her World History, US History 1, and 20th Century History classes. Some



fun facts to get to know Mr Geist:

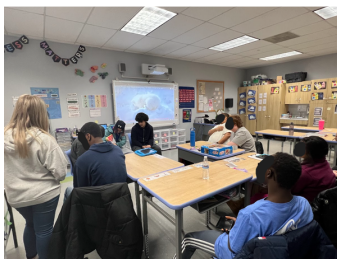
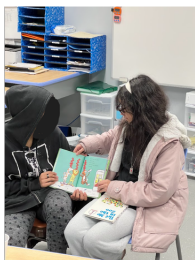
- 1) He grew up in Allentown Pennsylvania.
- 2) He is a graduate of Nyack College and the Alliance Theological Seminary.
- 3) He served in the pastorate in NYC from 1993-2000.
- 4) In July of 2012, had a 16 foot albino python on his property and two days later a 10 foot caramel python showed up on his property.
- 5) Has been a house painter for over 30 summers.



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## *Reading to Westlake for Read Across America*

Westlake and HAS collaborated to participate in Read Across America activities. HAS students came to Westlake and read books written by Dr Seuss. Books like "One Fish Two Fish Red Fish Blue Fish" and "Put Me In The Zoo" were enjoyed by both schools followed by a biographical presentation on Dr Seuss.



# Women's History Month

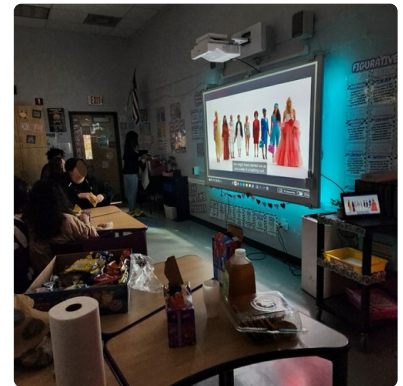
## Bulletin Board

Visual reminders are always good. That is why every month our bulletin board is always made up with such thought and encouragement. In honor of Women's History Month, the photos and quotes of many influential women can be seen on our bulletin board to encourage the young women here at HAS.



## Women's History Month Movie Day

Movies such as Selina, Wonder Woman, The 355, Wicked, Barbie, and Brave were shown as the Women's History Month movie incentive. These movies have strong women leads that expressed their rightful place in society while doing what was right for everyone. After the videos were shown, students then completed a self-reflection:



1. In what ways are the characteristics of the protagonist or antagonist like your own or those of someone you know?
2. Who was the protagonist? What conflict did they face and how did they approach it? What is your reaction to their experience and the decisions made along the way?
3. In films, the personal qualities that help the protagonist solve his or her problem are often a part of the lesson to be learned in the film. Based on the film that you watched, what is the lesson to be learned? What qualities did the protagonist possess that helped them overcome their conflict?
4. Which character did you admire, hate, love, and/or pity the most? What was it about that character that caused you to have that reaction?
5. What life lessons can be learned from the choices made by the characters in the film that you watched?
6. Culture plays a big part in everyone's life, sometimes in small ways that we might not realize until we stop and think about it. How did culture impact the characters, their relationships with one another, and their life in the movie you watched?

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## March Spirit Days



Denim for Dementia



Pi Day



Happy St Patrick's Day





**Crazy Sock Day**



**Crazy Hat Day**

## Bulletin Board Contest

On March 7th, in a galaxy not that far away, Ms Vlastaras along with Ms Fern and seven brave students, began an adventure to put the HAS name in the stars. They set out on a quest to design a bulletin board at the Central Office showcasing the HAS student body while celebrating "The UCESC Way." Armed with original artwork, photography, and student writings, HAS was able to show what "The UCESC Way" means to us.



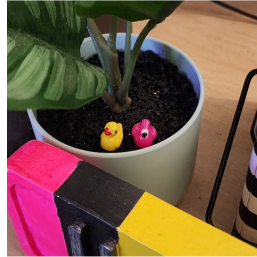
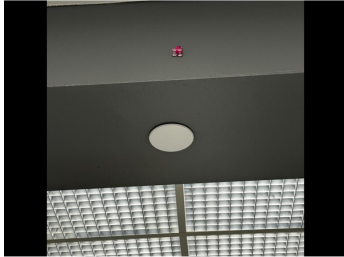
## Duck Season has Returned...

**and it has brought a friend?**

The annual Duck Hunt is finally upon us! But wait, its not just ducks but flamingoes as well. The ducks have brought their friends the flamingoes to help make the game more interesting. This



season, yellow ducks are worth one point, glitter ducks are worth three points, and the new comer flamingo are worth a whopping five points! There has been tough competition with students already having over 100 ducks found on the first day. Who will find the most and win the prize? Only time will tell since March 31st is the deadline. May the ducks be ever in your favor!



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## *Students Outside of School*

### **Let's Play Ball!**

When Eli was growing up, his whole family loved the game of baseball. They loved to watch and play it, so it was no surprise that at nine years old, Eli was motivated to begin playing. As shortstop, Eli has built up his baseball career and is currently his team's captain! It is his responsibility to lead by example and make sure everyone on his team gets along and does their best. Being the captain makes Eli feel great because he has worked so hard to participate in something that he loves.



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### **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](http://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](https://www.google.com/maps/place/1571+Lamberts+Mill+Road,+Westfield,+NJ,+USA/@40.6444444,-74.3888889,15z)



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

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# HAN Newsletter

## March 2025

March 2025

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Si usted desea leer "The Newsletter" en otra lengua que no sea inglés, hay un botón para traducir la página en la parte superior de la computadora (Translate). Le llevará a la siguiente página para que presione (Translated) y escoja la lengua en que usted desea leer.

## Principal's Message

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

This month has been filled with significant student activities and student engagement in classes. I am very proud of HAN students for being focused and resilient during the longest month in our school calendar. From State testing to content area projects and assessments, students have remained driven.

Our community service project of the month was students getting involved in "Reading Across America" at Crossroads School. HAN students enjoyed reading to Crossroads students and sharing cookies with them to celebrate their success. All HAN students who participated came back to the school with a sense of accomplishment and pride that I haven't seen before. We received wonderful feedback from Crossroads School about the work we did and how much it was appreciated.



We are also proud of the progress we have made in strengthening our community by conducting Restorative Circles. Students have had meaningful experiences within these circles that promote student voice and community building.

HAN continues to be a safe space for students where they can thrive academically and socially while individually soaring to new heights!

Keep it up, HAN!

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

Sincerely,

John Marquet  
Principal

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## Upcoming Dates

April - 7th - Last Day of Marking Period 3

April 8th - First Day of Marking Period 4

April 18th - April 27th School Closed - District Recess

April 28th - School Reopens

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## Monthly Awards



Principal Awards for February

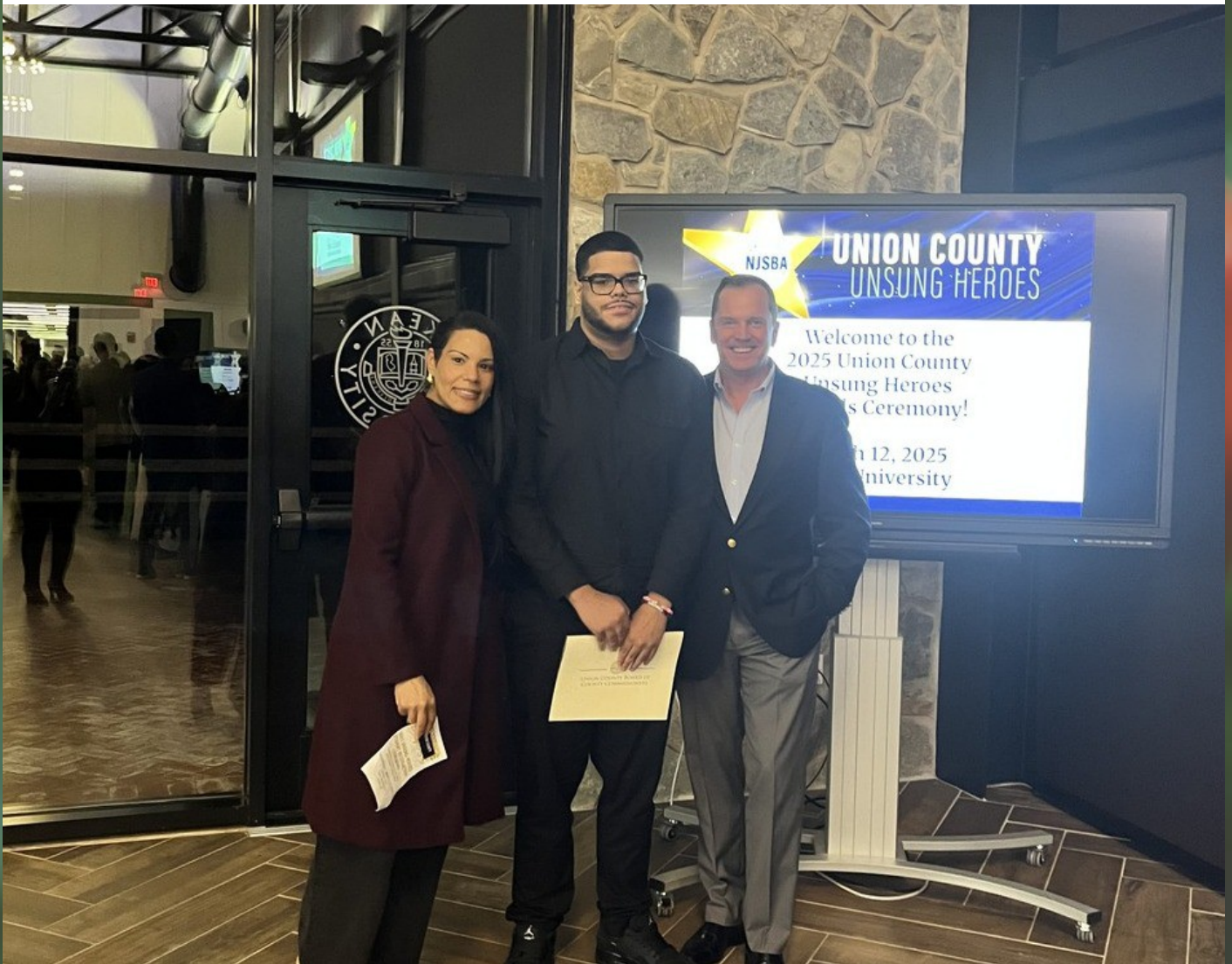


Perfect Attendance Awards for February

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# Unsung Hero

Anthony Leon



## Words spoken about Anthony during the Union County Unsung Hero Award's Ceremony, March 12th

When arriving for their interviews at Hillcrest Academy North, students are told that this second chance IS their greatest opportunity; a chance to start over, a chance to shine, and an opportunity to overcome whatever adversity was facing them in the past. Each year, we as a staff are so impressed with the students for overcoming challenges and building positive futures for themselves. While there are many candidates to choose from, there is one, Anthony Leon, who stands out this school year.

"I know how it feels to be hated on, so there is no hate in me." This is what Anthony started with when I first met him in my office before the school year started.. Anthony further explained that he has faced both medical and social challenges. From a very young age, Anthony had to move from state to state because of his parents' work. He struggled to learn English and form relationships with his classmates because of multiple moves. He began to be untrustworthy with his peers and allowed himself to miss school and become credit deficient. Anthony will call it "being at the bottom of the barrel." But he never allowed any of it to stop him from persevering. His attitude and experience has allowed him to become who he is today, which is a kind, trusting, motivated honor student whose biggest attribute is simply being a gentleman.



Anthony is a positive influence to anyone that he crosses paths with. At Hillcrest Academy North, he is a leader among his peers, he is a role model that is seen as an exemplary student, and he is certainly someone who you would want your son and daughter to be friends with.

Anthony aspires to be an economics teacher, and if possible, get into politics to help cause positive change in the world. Although it will sadden me when he leaves Hillcrest Academy North in three months, it makes me so happy to know such a fine gentleman will be out in the world making such a positive impact with those he may encounter.

### **How did the unsung hero event go?**

Each of the Unsung Heroes stories were compelling and inspiring. The story that touched me the most was one of a student athlete known as EJ. His story was all about perseverance; after sustaining a career threatening injury and suffering the enormous challenge of being homeless, EJ didn't make any excuses for himself. EJ still went to school, still went to physical therapy, and he didn't tell a single soul. EJ's story touched my heart but changed my brain; after the event I decided to change from that day forward and not let excuses hold me from achieving more.

To sum up my experience at the Unsung Heroes event, I enjoyed conversing with my peers and the other Heroes of my region, and I'm grateful for the opportunity I was granted to be a part of a school that recognizes me and that also gave me the chance to make my mother proud.

- Anthony

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## **HAN at Crossroads**

HAN students went to Crossroads on Friday, March 7th for "Read Across America Week". Our students had a blast reading cookie themed books and then gave cookies to the students as a treat!

### **Read Across America Week**

Crossroads was a great experience. They were very welcoming and gave us a talk on how they work and a little about their students. They have a good system and schedule for the kids. I found the staff to be very patient, and they have great spirits which potentially can make the kids have better spirits. We broke up into groups of two and went around the school to read to the kids. We read books for the children. The staff let us read and also got students to engage more into the books we were reading. The books were about cookies for their spirit week, and we also gave them Oreo Cookies after, which I'm pretty sure they loved.

-Azzarah



## My Visit to Crossroads

My experience visiting Crossroads was better than I anticipated. I went with my Forensics teacher Ms. Silva, also one of whom made the trip possible. I'm grateful for the opportunity that Ms. Silva reached out for us to have. Crossroads showed me that I might have a future in teaching, if not in Crossroads. The ambiance and environment felt welcoming and it helped me ease into the assignment we were given. I found the atmosphere and the staff were a very big factor in us as students to feel comfortable, and also because of the Crossroads' students. I personally believe that if a newcomer could feel comfortable in an environment like this, the students must learn even better. What I enjoyed the most about spending time in a place like this is that the feedback doesn't have to be the usual feedback I'm used to. We read stories to the class and gave the children cookies after. They enjoyed us reading to them and that was enough feedback. After that I realized that teaching might be in the books for me.

- Alexandra







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## Restorative Circles

### In Kaplan's Class

I facilitated a restorative circle with my class where we explored the concept of "what makes you, you" and delved into the idea of the universe of obligation—how we define our responsibilities and connections to others. This concept is key to understanding the reasons behind our unit topic (the Holocaust) and how something like that occurred and still can.

The session was incredibly meaningful, as every student engaged wholeheartedly in the discussion, sharing their thoughts and listening to others with respect and openness. It was rewarding to witness the sense of community grow stronger, as students reflected on their individuality and the ways they relate to the world around them. The active participation and positive energy was truly great to see.

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## In the Classroom

### Spanish Class



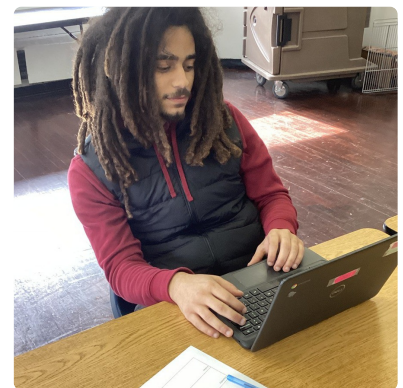
The students are finishing the unit “*La Escuela y las Tradiciones*” in Spanish class. Students distinguish the similarities and differences between the patterns of celebrations in the school, family traditions of the target culture related to activities, school, family, and celebrations of the local culture in different Spanish countries. This unit fits precisely in the social studies component of high school standards, where students are exposed to different experiences, school and family traditions, foods and lifestyles of other people around the world with “*Las Tradiciones Alrededor del*

*Mundo Hispano*”. Students are able to demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between practices of the culture studied. For instance, students have multiple opportunities to compare and contrast “El Poder de la mujer Latina”, which is one of the traditions in South America and around the world, dating back since the rule of the Aztec Empire and “Afrolatinas”.

Students discussed the impact of women in society since we are in “Women’s History Month” and learned about it since it addresses multiculturalism, helping students develop a sense of diversity and respect for other cultures. Then, as an assessment students analysed, wrote and illustrated their own version of the “El Poder de la Mujer Latina”. In addition, students worked in different projects in which they had to create a well-organized research about “*La Mujer Afro Latina*” in the school/ home in order to describe their favorite Afro-Latina in Spanish. Students were able to engage in conversations, express feelings and emotions, and exchange opinions and compare and contrast different school and family traditions from the Spanish-speaking countries and the United States.

## Media Literacy Class

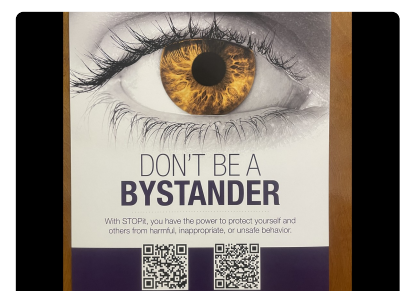
In Media Literacy class, the students explored the website [www.JournalisminAction.org](http://www.JournalisminAction.org). This is a website by PBS NewsHour Classroom that helps students explore the ways journalists have covered major news stories throughout history. Students selected one topic to focus on from a list of twelve events/themes including "The American Revolution and Early Republic", "Exploitation: Labor and Immigration", "Watergate", and "Gender Equality". Students were able to view primary sources and use interactive features to help them explore how investigative journalism works to prepare them to do their own investigative journalism.



## 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.





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# About HAN



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

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

Mr. John Marquet, Principal

Mr. Thomas Van Cleef, Supervisor of Instruction

Location: [2630 Plainfield Ave, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076](#)

Phone Number: (908) 233-9366

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

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## Mission Statement

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

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



**John Marquet**

John is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters





# Work Readiness Academy

March 2025 Newsletter



Dear WRA Families & Supporters,

Spring is here, and it's the perfect time for a fresh new perspective about our goals, mindsets, and dreams for the future! The world around us is awakening and preparing for new growth, just as we are continuing to open our minds to new ideas, concepts, and skills that will prepare us for a new season of excitement and wonder!

*"When you're in a growth mindset, what that means is that you choose to see struggle and challenge as an opportunity for growth and for learning and development." - Chris Bertram*

Here at the Work Readiness Academy we utilize "teachable moments" to demonstrate and highlight not only how to overcome adversity, but also to remind ourselves that although our journey may be ongoing, it is important to take the time to look back and see how far we have come, how hard we have worked, and the undeniable growth we have achieved! Just as spring flowers grow to face the sun, we here at The Work Readiness Academy have continued to work on staying positive and are always searching for opportunities to grow our confidence, self-advocacy skills, and communication abilities. We continue to find ways to use our voices to share our visions, thoughts, ideas, and opinions for how we plan to impact the world and become active participants and contributing members of our local and school communities. We continue to look forward to sunny skies and warmer days as we head into the spring season!

## Save the Date!

Our End of Year ceremonies are confirmed and will take place on the following days:

**Work Readiness Academy** - Wednesday, June 18th at 6pm (at Holy Spirit Church Cafegymatorium)

- ALL students will be recognized and honored
- Graduating students will receive a special recognition

**Project SEARCH** - Monday, June 16th at 3pm (at Overlook Medical Center's Bouras Auditorium)

Congratulations to **Alejandro Colon** for being named one of Union County's 2025 Unsung Heroes by the Union County School Boards Association. More details and pictures are featured further down in this month's newsletter.

In keeping with our new tradition, we invited **David Alzate** - another one of our exiting students - to join us for a picture this month. David is looking forward to pursuing paid employment in retail or electronics once he leaves our program at the end of June.

Please enjoy the rest of this month's newsletter and as always, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at [jbornstein@ucesc.org](mailto:jbornstein@ucesc.org) or [rlicher@ucesc.org](mailto:rlicher@ucesc.org) if you have any questions or want to discuss your child's program. We can also be reached at (908) 633-2704.

**Josh Bornstein, Director**  
**Rachel Richer, Supervisor of Instruction**  
**UCESC Work Readiness Academy**

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## Always Growing Our Student Voices at UCESC!







## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

**April 5, 2025** - Autism Acceptance Celebration and Resource Fair  
(Flyer below)

**April 18, 2025 - April 25, 2025** - Spring Recess

**May 30, 2025** - WRA's Got Talent Show

**June 16, 2025** - Project SEARCH Graduation Ceremony at 3:00pm

**June 18, 2025** - WRA Graduation Ceremony at 6:00pm





## Attendance Reporting

In the event that your child will be absent, arriving late, or picked up early, **please send us an email at [AttendanceWRA@ucesc.org](mailto:AttendanceWRA@ucesc.org).**

You may also call our main number at (908) 633-2704. If it is

before 8am, please leave a message.

# March Student of the Month

## Nick Barrett

**Nick** has exemplified our ideals of growth mindset and open mindedness this month at The Work Readiness Academy! **Nick** works incredibly hard to be a supportive and encouraging friend as well as a dedicated and enthusiastic intern! His ability to listen to and apply feedback in all facets of our program as well as his warm smile and joyful personality all contributed to him being selected as our student of the month! We are all so very proud of you **Nick**! Keep up the good work!







## March Classroom Spotlight



### Sharlene's McQuade's Class...

During the month of March, the students in my class have been focusing on updating their resumes to reflect their new internships, researching entry level jobs, learning time management skills, and celebrating Women's History Month by creating Google Slides about how women have made impactful contributions to the business world. In financial literacy, we are developing an understanding of how to use credit cards, debit cards, and mobile wallets, and recognizing safety precautions to

take when using each form of payment.

Our students have also been hard at work in their fitness classes! They have been participating in cardio drumming - a low impact workout used to help increase cardiovascular endurance and coordination. Students use drum sticks and a stability ball to drum to the beat of a song while completing different exercises. They definitely rocked it!

Additionally, the students in my homeroom are excited to have partnered with three local businesses in downtown Cranford (Vinny's Pizza and Pasta, Cake Artist Cafe, and Mr. J's Deli), to resell their school-based product..."Furlicious Dog Treats". They have also been selling our treat to the staff and families of UCESC. Our students have learned how to develop a product, name their business, create a slogan, market, advertise, and write a business plan! Additionally, our students worked as a team to test recipes and bake our dog treats in The Work Readiness Academy kitchen. I am very proud of all that my class has accomplished this month!

**Sharlene McQuade**

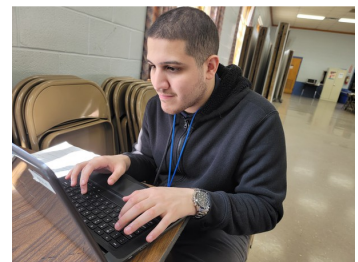
**Work Readiness Academy Teacher & WBL Supervising Teacher**



How Long Will It Take You? Activity

Task	Time you think it takes to complete the task	Time it actually takes to complete the task
Clap 100 times		
Line up in alphabetical order (The whole class)		
Walk to microwave in the cafeteria		
Walk to the gym area and jump 10 times		

Time Management Activity



Working on our resumes!



Cardio Drumming





**Furlicious Treats** Launches In the Community at Cake Artist Cafe in Downtown Cranford!

.....





Vinny's Pizza and Pasta, Downtown Cranford





Mr. J's Deli, Downtown Cranford

## WRA Staff Spotlight



### **Amanda Rosen, Speech-Language Specialist**

**Current position at UCESC?** I am a Speech-Language Specialist. I currently work at WRA, Crossroads, Westlake and LMA!

### **How long have you worked at UCESC?**

April will be my one year anniversary at UCESC.

### **What do you love most about your job?**

One of my favorite things is helping students develop communication skills they need for real world success. Whether that's advocating for themselves, navigating workplace interactions, or interviewing. I also love establishing strong relationships with all of my students and helping them gain confidence, independence and watching them succeed!

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



I enjoy spending time with my son, husband, and our French bulldog. Recently, I started to play pickleball and I am a big fan of Rumble boxing classes. I'm also a huge fan of true crime documentaries! And when it comes to unwinding, retail therapy is my favorite activity!

**What is one thing that would surprise people about you?**

I have a twin sister with whom I share an incredibly close bond. She also has twin children, and I consider them like my own. We share a truly special and unique relationship.



## Work-Based Learning Snapshots



*Charlie at Bovella's Cafe in Mountainside*





***Alejandro** at Classic Cafe in Summit Medical, Berkeley Heights*





***Matt** at ShopRite in Clark*





*Ben A. at Kean Athletics in Union*



*David at Best Buy in Union Plaza*





*Kevin at the Can Do Food Cart at Overlook Medical Center-Union Campus*

## Project SEARCH Update

This month the Project SEARCH interns became the first cohort to become certified in CPR-Heartsaver! The training was made possible thanks to support from the AHS PEACE Grant team and the education staff at Atlantic Mobile Health. The students will also be utilizing a new modified CPR and AED Basic Skills Game to reinforce the content learned at the training. The game was provided to the program as part of funding from the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.



**Overlook  
Medical Center**  
ATLANTIC HEALTH SYSTEM

The Project SEARCH Program at Overlook Medical Center is now in its 9th year. The one-year immersive program provides intensive, hands-on training for students ages 18-21 with disabilities who are motivated to work and eventually seek paid employment in the community.

For more information about Project SEARCH, or to access the application for the Class of 2026, please visit our **newly update website at:**



## Women's History Month



### Celebrating Women's History Month: Honoring Trailblazers, Changemakers, and the Future of Equality

Women's History Month is a celebration of women's contributions to history, culture and society and has been observed annually in the month of March in the United States since 1987. We reflect on the often-overlooked contributions of women to U.S. history. From [Abigail Adams](#) to [Susan B. Anthony](#), [Sojourner Truth](#) to [Rosa Parks](#), the [timeline of women's history milestones](#) stretches back to the founding of the United States.

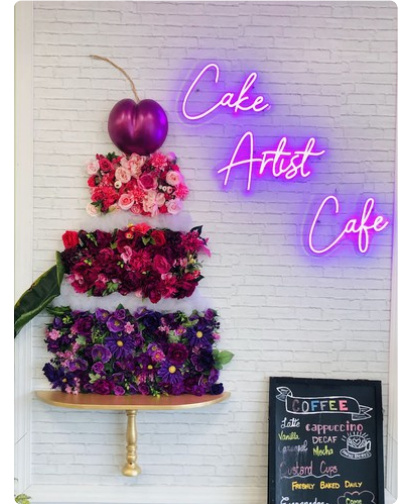


# Work-Based Learning Community Business Partner Spotlight

## Cake Artist Cafe

This month we're pleased to spotlight the **Cake Artist Cafe**, located at 8 Eastman Street in Downtown Cranford! Liga and Rui DeJesus have been operating their business since 2011. They have been fantastic mentors to our students over the past several years, including helping to teach entry-level bakery decorating skills.

When asked what they enjoy most about this partnership, they said, "Just getting the pleasure of being able to help!" A little-known fact is that both Liga and Rui speak four different languages; English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Afrikaans.



For custom cakes for every occasion, check out the Cake Artist Cafe. You can visit them at:

<https://www.cakeartistcafe.com/>





## Cooking/Baking Elective



### Savor the Flavor in the Cooking/Baking Club

The “Shake and Bake Cooking Crew” is learning how to make quick, easy meals and/or desserts that can be made at home. The students focus on how to read directions, preheat an oven, bake or make a meal or dessert, and how to use a microwave. “The Crew” is having fun while learning how to be more independent and safe in the kitchen.





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## Union County Unsung Hero Award 2025

Each year In collaboration with the **New Jersey School Boards Association**, the **Union County School Boards Association** recognizes an **Unsung Hero** from each of Union County's high school programs. Nominees are those who have made outstanding contributions to their schools and communities but are often overlooked by other traditional student recognition programs. They may have overcome difficult academic or personal challenges including a disability, modeled good citizenship, or demonstrated spirit of quiet strength that has inspired others.



This year, the Work Readiness Academy nominated and honored **Alejandro Colon** at a ceremony held on March 12th at Kean University's Liberty Hall Academic Center.





**Alejandro** with parents (Maria and Hector Colon), Union County Commissioners Kimberly Palmieri-Mouded and Lourdes Leon, and WRA Director Josh Bornstein

.....



**Alejandro** and his classroom teacher, Jodi Klimko



## Look Who Was Spotted in the Community!

Former Project SEARCH interns **Steven, Louis & John** (all current employees at Overlook Medical Center) were caught having lunch in the cafeteria at the hospital. Keep up the good work, gentlemen!





## Picture of the Month

Congratulations to long-time **WRA Bus Driver, Rosario Malave** on her retirement. We will miss you, but wish you the best as you move to Florida!

*Buena suerte y mis mejores deseos!*







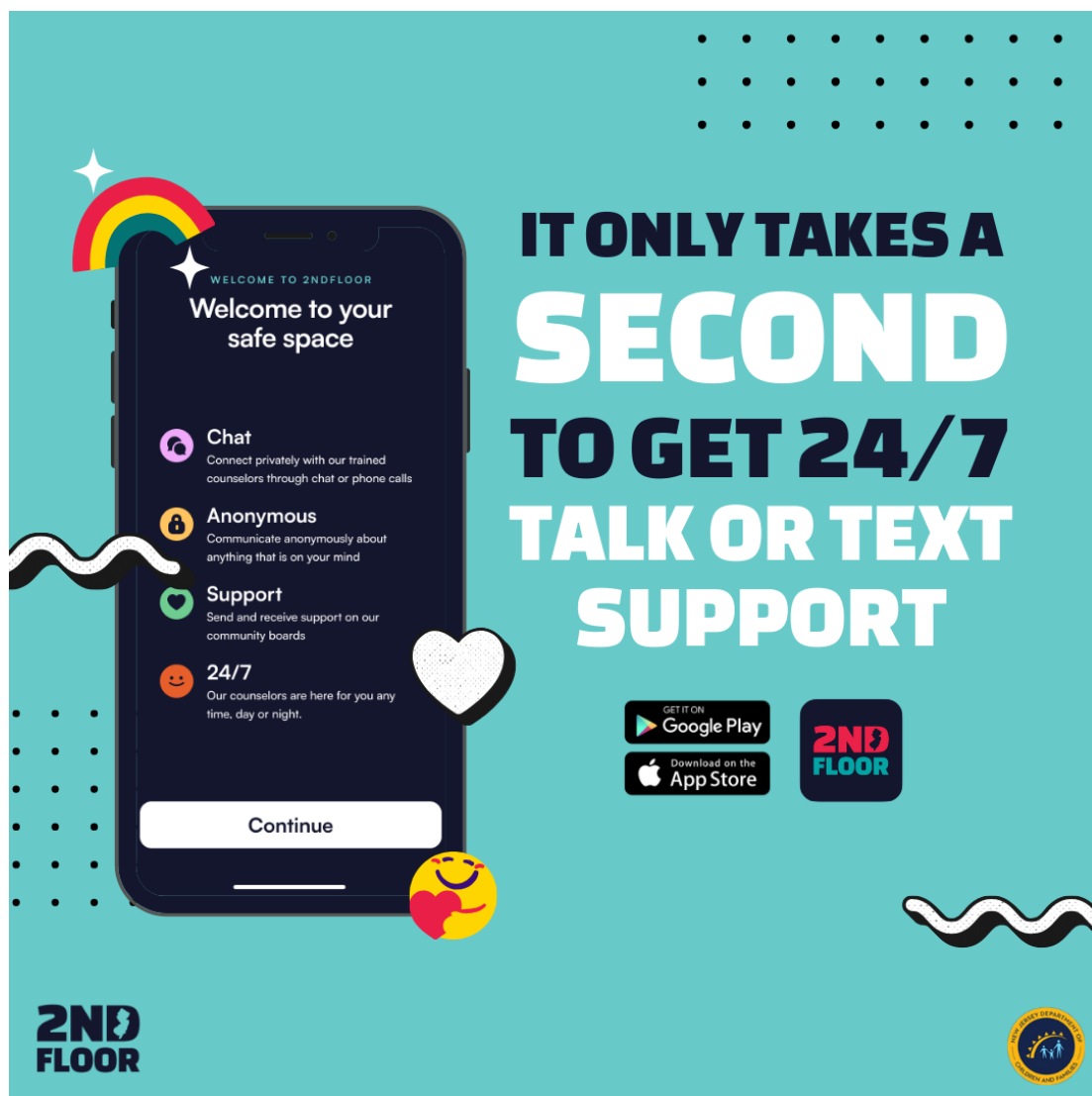
Community Resources/Events





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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](https://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 (DVRS)

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

Check out our DVRS Go Bag: [bit.ly/DVRSgobag](http://bit.ly/DVRSgobag)

### "Employment First" State

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

## EXAMPLES OF SERVICES

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

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

### • **Job Development**

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

### • **Job Sampling**

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

### • **Job Coaching**

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

### • **Long-Term Follow Along**

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

### • **Trial Work Experience**

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

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

## REQUIREMENTS OF COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT

### Wages

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

### Benefits

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

### Scheduling

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

### Integration

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

### Advancement

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

## NJ WORKABILITY

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

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

April 2022



### Supported Employment Fact Sheet Final.pdf

Click the link to download the attachment

Download

641.9 KB

## Guardianship Resources

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



### Updated Guardianship Fact Sheet (3).pdf

Download

107.0 KB



## 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](mailto:rreicher@ucesc.org)

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

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

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

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



**Click Here to Follow the  
WRA on Instagram!**



**WRA Smore**

WRA is using S'more to create beautiful newsletters





# Lamberts Mill Academy



March Newsletter 2025

*"The best luck of all is the luck you make for yourself."*

Douglas MacArthur

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## Administrators' Message

### March 2025

Good Morning,

We hope this Newsletter finds you well as we conclude March, and have started Spring with enjoyable outdoor weather! As we move into the final three months of the 2024-2025 academic year, I am filled with immense pride and excitement for the accomplishments we've shared this month, and the opportunities that lie ahead at The Mill.



Some of the proud accomplishments that have taken place at LMA this month include, all 11th grade students successfully completed the New Jersey Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA) for ELA and Mathematics. We are proud of the time you spent completing the assessment. Our school community shone brightly at the recent Union County Teens Arts Festival! Not only representing LMA, but the UCESC district is a huge accomplishment for the LMA community. A huge round of applause to our talented students and the dedicated staff who

supported them. Your creativity and passion were on full display, showcasing the incredible artistic talent within our school in multiple disciplines! Lastly students and staff all worked hard to get our school recycling program off the ground with a structured system in place.

A huge thank you to all parents/guardians, students and staff who completed the NJ SCI survey this month. Your feedback will be utilized as we continue to refine, and look for ways to improve the overall LMA school climate at LMA.

With the arrival of warmer weather, we are eager to embrace the outdoors and provide our students with more opportunities for enriching experiences beyond the classroom. We are currently planning a variety of outdoor activities and spring celebrations to make these final months memorable and engaging. Stay tuned for details!

As we enter this final stretch, let's continue to support one another, celebrate our successes, and work together to ensure a strong finish to the school year. I am confident that the next three months will be filled with growth, achievement, and joy.

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to the LMA school community. If there are any questions or concerns, please reach out!

Reed & John

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## Upcoming Events

### April 2025 Important Dates

April 18 - April 25 - Spring Recess (No School)

April 29 - Start of NJSLA (7th, 8th, 9th & 11th grade)



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## Staff Spotlight

### Mr. Soto - RBT

Mr. Soto is an endearing member of our Lamberts Mill Community. He joined us in 2023 as a teacher assistant and then continued to grow and educate himself, mentoring the importance of education to our students, to become a Registered Behavioral Therapist. The students gravitate to him daily as they develop their skills to socially and behaviorally interact within the community. Mr. Soto comes to us with a diverse amount of skills based on his life's journey. He is a musician with



his principal instrument being the drums, even though he also plays the guitar. He is a huge Mets fan, Go Juan Soto! Additionally he is a BMW enthusiast. Mr. Soto uses his communication skills uniquely as he is a prior car salesman. Lastly, he is the proud father of an 8 month year old daughter.

Student voice- "Mr. Soto is so much fun, as even when I am in a bad mood he will bring you to a ten in happiness"- SA



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## LMA Student of the Month - March 2025

### Getting to know Alex C.

*LMA is proud to present Alex as our March Student of the Month! Alex has demonstrated significant change in the right direction and more motivation towards his goals here at LMA. Alex has shown great interest in developing a welcoming personality with staff and peers. He has used his art skills to create amazing portraits of LMA personnel! In his free time Alex enjoys riding his bike and participating at a local church. Alex is currently looking to form part of a tennis team.*



Alex C is 15 years old and is currently in the 10th grade. He is our first student showcase this month. We took some time to get to know Alex a little better. LMA is very proud of Alex as he continues to strive towards success and has earned all of his points in a week. Read below to get to know a little more about Alex:

- What's your favorite subject?

"I love music. I like US History and Biology."

- What are things that you enjoy?

"Playing tennis and video games, like Minecraft and EU4. I like collecting things like records and neckties."

- What's your favorite food?

"Italian cuisine"

- How have you been earning all of your points consistently for weeks?

"I behaved. I paid attention in class. I'm managing my impulses. I was friendly to peers. I did my assignments, especially on time and I worked hard to get where I am now."

- What are your goals and what keeps you motivated?

"Rewards keep me motivated, such as going to the school store. My goal is to go back to district. Staff have also been supportive and given me interesting, but appropriate assignments, as well as fun"

- When you feel frustrated or upset, how have you handled it?

"I've called for a time out and speak to clinicians. I've also been patient and kept my calm."

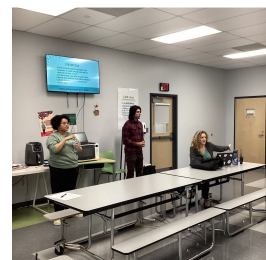
- What advice would you give to a student that's having a tough time?

"If you're frustrated, just breathe. If you're having a bad day, there will be better days. If the sun is not shining, it will shine another day."

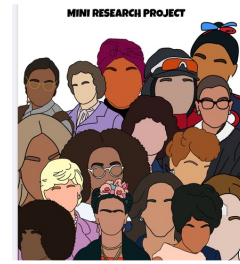
- Fun fact: I like 80's and 90's music.

## March at The Mill

As we March on towards knowledge and success at Lamberts Mill Academy we have had a busy Month. The theme for the month was Women in History and Empowerment with various activities to recognize these focuses organically within our therapy groups and academic courses. Student voice was expressed through the Arts by submitting works and attending the Annual Union County Teen Arts Festival. Through our math exploration students learned about Pi and with hands-on learning they made pizzas and baked pies for all to enjoy. We had a school wide assembly on March 25th discussing marijuana use, addiction and coping skills from NJ4s. On Wednesday March 26th, we had an Army Recruiter speak to us about their experience in the military and a possible option for our post graduates. Therapy groups explored the process of becoming stronger and more confident as a focus on the school wide month's theme of empowerment. This allows School spirit was embraced this month with students and staff wearing their sports gear. Go Lions!





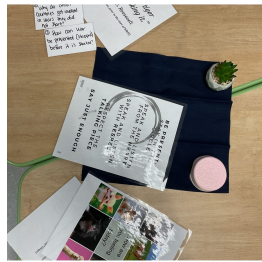


## Classroom Spotlights



### Ms. Schneider's Music Class

This March, music students focused on women in music. During class various woman musicians were played during the SEL music appreciation, and class discussions were had. All students then found a woman musician they thought to be influential to research, listen to their songs, and share with their peers.



### Mrs. Miller initiates Cirlces in the Social Studies Room

LMA students worked on a collaborative Women's History Month Project in Social Studies and English Language Arts. In Social Studies, students researched an influential woman and created a Google Slides presentation about them. Students researched background information, interesting facts, and the positive impact the woman had on society in Social Studies. Students used the information to then write an essay in English class.

World History students have started to work on Community Building Circles in class. Students are able to build upon the skills they have gained while doing Circles in WIN class. Students are able to use their voice to express their opinions on various historical



### Updates from Ms. Matusz in Science

We have initiated a recycling program at LMA. Students will be involved in collecting plastic bottles and aluminum cans in an effort to have our school become more environmentally focused. We will be discussing how to turn our previous garden into a sitting area/outdoor classroom. When the weather finally gets better, we are going to plant flowers and hang bird feeders in this area.

All Science classes are researching various women in the science field and will complete a project on the scientist of their choice. Earth Science class will soon be exploring the changing landscape of the Earth and plate tectonics. Environmental Science class will be exploring world population, environmental

topics and issues. It has been a growing experience for students to express themselves and trust in the process of Circles. Circles has allowed students to create conversations and connections in a trusted environment and they are excited to continue Circles throughout the year.

*Student voice* - "In my opinion, we are being respectful, the questions are fantastic, and the group overall is getting to know each other better. I think we need more Circles in all classes." - I.W. (9th Grade)

impact, consumption and our impact on the environment. Biology is finishing up studying the human body systems and will move on to the study of genetics. We will be doing a lab to discover genotype and phenotype.

Marine Biology students are studying the life and organisms in the open ocean and human impact.

Chemistry will be delving into chemical reactions after we complete hybrid orbitals.

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## LMA Recycling Initiative

*At Lamberts Mill Academy, students and staff have begun an inaugural recycling initiative. This initiative is yet another example of a student led experience that provides evidence that this year is different; our school has launched an innovative recycling initiative led by the dedicated students, staff and custodial department. With a mission to foster environmental responsibility, we have collectively transformed our daily routines into impactful actions.*

*The initiative kicked off during a school community meeting where LMA students, LMA Principal, Reed Leibfried, Supervisor of Instruction, Mr. John Lopreiato, and LMA Science Teacher, Ms.*

*Dawn Matusz, shared our vision for the program. Mr. Leibfried introduced the initiative as he passionately spoke about the importance of recycling in combating climate change and reducing waste. He emphasized that every student and staff member plays a crucial role in this effort. Blue, color coded recycling cans were strategically placed in classrooms and throughout the school campus.*

*To ensure everyone understood the initiative, Ms. Matusz and student council members, presented to all LMA students during Science classes. The enthusiasm was contagious, and soon, the school community is rallying around the cause.*

*Each and every Friday, the administrative team shared the progress that Ms. Matusz and students compiled through tracking the data of the plastic and aluminum that is being recycled. We will*





*continue to share success stories of how much waste has been diverted from landfills, showing the tangible impact of the initiative for the rest of the academic school year.*

*One of LMA's future goals is to organize a friendly competition among classes to see who could recycle the most. This goal is an effort to foster camaraderie and a collective sense of purpose amongst the LMA student community.*

*Mr. Leibfried is confident that this LMA initiative will continue to gain momentum, with the hopes of LMA becoming a model for sustainable priorities. Students are being taught that recycling is not just a chore but an essential part of life, instilling values of responsibility and teamwork.*

*By the end of this school year, our students will know that their hard work has made a lasting impact—not just on the school, but on the hearts and minds of every student and staff member.*

*the LMA recycling initiative is more than just a program; it will become a movement that echoes throughout the school community, reminding everyone that together, we can make a difference for our planet, one recycled item at a time.*

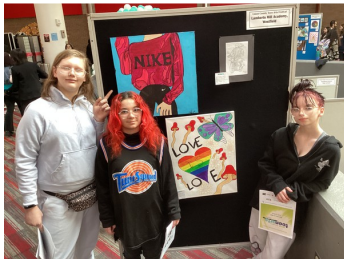


# UNION COUNTY teenarts

Lamberts Mill Academy students participated in the 2025 Union County Teen Arts Festival. Students from all over Union County gather at the annual festival to showcase their creative work, receive professional critiques from artists and authors alike as well as attend a plethora of hands-on workshops. We had Artwork displayed by our students in the main atrium as you entered the event. Students also read aloud their creative writing texts to their county wide peers and were given constructive critiques by published authors.

## Student Voice!

"We get to express ourselves with likeminded people." J.M.





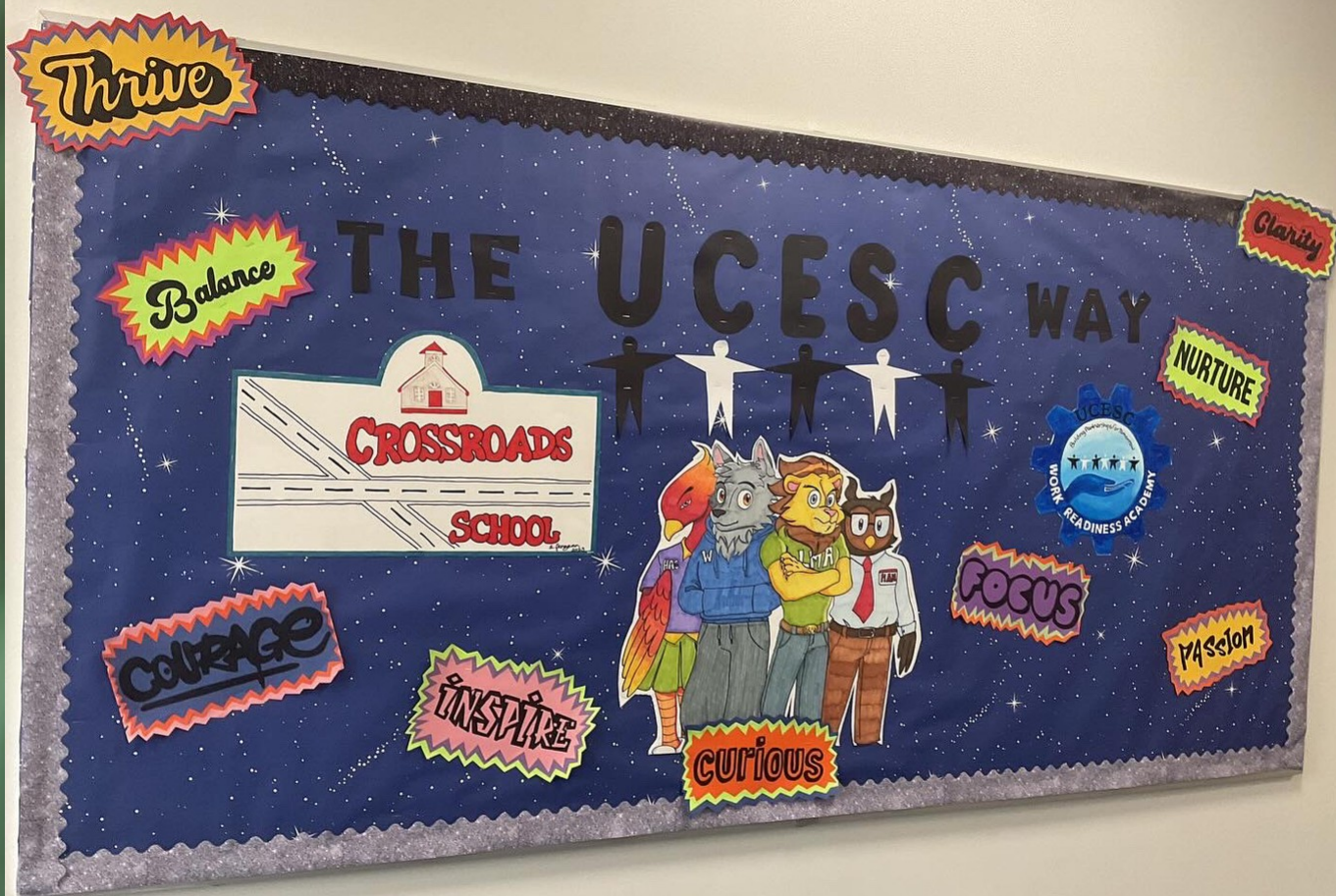


## UCESC Annual Bulletin Board Contest

Students, led by Mrs. Stenger competed in the annual UCESC Bulletin Board contest. The theme this year was "The UCESC Way." Students created posters depicting mascots for Lamberts Mill Academy (lion), Hillcrest Academy North (owl), Westlake School (wolf), and Hillcrest Academy South (phoenix) and the logos for Crossroads School and Work Readiness Academy. Students also chose and decorated words to represent what it means to be a part of UCESC. The senior class traveled to the Commission Offices to put all of the elements together and created a wonderful representation of UCESC.

*Student Voice* - "I liked going over to the Commission Offices for the contest because they have a nice space. I like our bulletin board a lot because I like the logo in the middle with the mascots. It shows how we work together as different schools." - B.B. (12th Grade)





## Clinical Corner

Empowerment is the process of becoming stronger and more confident. This allows Here are 5 approaches you might find useful:

1. Affirmations - Start your day by repeating positive affirmations, such as: "I am capable" and "I believe in myself."
2. Surround yourself with positivity - Positive, supportive people can help you believe in yourself and help you see your potential.
3. Be kind to yourself - Practice self-compassion. Replace negative thoughts with more encouraging ones.
4. Celebrate your achievements - Start with small, achievable goals. Accomplishing these helps build confidence over time.
5. Step outside of your comfort zone - Try doing things that challenge you. The more you face fear and discomfort, the easier it becomes to handle them.

## Group Therapy

Group therapy continues to run smoothly and successfully as students demonstrate group cohesiveness with their peers and are eager to attend. Most groups are student led where they feel comfortable to use their voice and share opinions with their peers, supporting the theme of



Empowerment for the month of March. Therapeutic activities included self advocacy/communication skills, processing women's history month, women empowerment, and women that inspire us. Students also discussed boundary setting to empower each other in assertive communication and developing healthy relationships. Within the group dynamic students continue to learn from others while working toward increasing self esteem and confidence.



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## Students Outside of the Classroom / Alumni

### New Point lends a hand to the community

Mr. Bell's New Point Specialty class has begun volunteering at the food bank at Elizabeth's Jewish Family Service. The students sort and fill bags of canned and dry goods that are then distributed to families. The volunteer director says the students have been excellent workers, and are filled with energy and enthusiasm. The work will soon include helping with their vegetable garden whose products are then shared with the clients too.



# Upcoming Community Events

The Union County Board of County Commissioners  
& The Department of Human Services invite you to our annual

- LIVE DJ ▪ CRAFTS
- TOUCH-A-TRUCK
- GIVEAWAYS & MORE

Superhero theme  
Wear your costumes!

Brought to you by the Union  
County Office for Persons with  
Disabilities & Special Needs

**2025**  
**AUTISM**  
**ACCEPTANCE**  
CELEBRATION AND RESOURCE FAIR

**SATURDAY, APRIL 5TH ▪ 10AM TO 12PM**  
TURF FIELD AT WARINANCO PARK, ROSELLE  
RAINDATE: APRIL 12TH ▪ SAME TIME & LOCATION

**FREE EVENT**  
Scan QR code to register or visit [ucnj.org/opdsn-reg](https://ucnj.org/opdsn-reg)

ELIZABETH PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
Every child, achieving excellence

PREVENTION  
LINKS  
Early, Evidence-Based, Effective

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**UNION COUNTY**  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



<https://ucnj.org/press-releases/public-info/2025/03/18/a-day-of-inclusion-and-celebration-union-countys-autism-acceptance-event-returns-april-5/>





NAMI Basics is a 6-session education program for parents, caregivers and other family who provide care for youth (ages 22 and younger) who are experiencing mental health symptoms. This program is free to participants. The course is taught by a trained team with lived experience raising a child with a mental health condition. They know what you're going through because they've been there too.

**NAMI NJ and NAMI Camden invite you to join a virtual six-week NAMI BASICS Class**

**Date:** Mondays, April 7 to May 12, 2025

**Time:** 6:30 pm to 9 pm

**Via Zoom, Limited Space Available**

**Attendance is FREE, and Registration is required**

### NAMI BASICS COVERS

- The impact mental health conditions can have on your entire family;
- Introduction to mental health diagnoses including: ADHD, OCD, Anxiety, Depressive Disorders, Bipolar Disorder, Schizophrenia and more;
- Different types of mental health care professionals, available treatment options and therapies;
- An overview of the public mental health care, school and juvenile justice systems and Resources to help you navigate these systems;
- How to advocate for your child's rights at school and in health care settings; • How to prepare for and respond to crisis situations (self-harm, suicide attempts, etc.);
- The importance of taking care of yourself;
- And Much, much more!



**To Register**

**CLICK HERE**

**Or Scan Me**



### PARTICIPANT PERSPECTIVES

"This is such a great step by step program that walks parents every step of the way. It is as if you are holding their hand through it all."

"The course is inclusive of almost all aspects of family and child resources. I could have spent a lifetime getting all this information on my own. I feel supported, strong and ready to go forward."

By participating in NAMI Basics: you'll realize that you are not alone. You'll find support and shared understanding—compassion, reinforcement and empathy from people who truly get your situation. And don't forget: Your experiences may also help others in the course. Together, you will all learn that recovery is a journey, and there is hope



**NAMI New Jersey**



**NAMI Camden County**

<https://files.constantcontact.com/9325d276001/0072ef3a-5708-4689-9835-0c120f9c63e7.pdf>

# WESTFIELD CELEBRATES MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



**SUNDAY, APRIL 28**

## **WALK FOR CAKE** **10:30-12:00**

Compassion  
Acceptance  
Kindness and  
Empathy

Mindowaskin Park  
Interior Park Road  
Rain location:  
Westfield Town Hall, Community Room  
Entrance on East Broad Street

## **Mental Health Fair** **11:00-2:00**

Provider Resources  
Child-Friendly Activities  
Presentations  
Interactive Sessions

Bauer Family Branch YMCA  
422 East Broad Street

Sponsored by Westfield Mental Health Council  
[westfieldnj.gov/mentalhealth](https://www.westfieldnj.gov/mentalhealth)

<https://www.westfieldnj.gov/432/Mental-Health-Upcoming-Events>

## **Community Resources**



<https://naminj.org/>





<https://988lifeline.org/>



<https://nj4s.nj.gov/s/>

# School in the Community

1. Union County Teen Arts Festival
  2. NJ4S Assemblies at 1571
  3. Monthly Community Meetings celebrating student awards.
  4. WBLE at Walgreens (Clark), Hilton (Springfield) and Chili's (Clark)
  5. Field Trip to ShopRite of Clark
  6. LMA Recycling Initiative with Westfield Conservation Center
- 

## About Us

### Contact Information:

*Phone:* (908)-233-7581

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

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

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

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



**LMA Smore**

LMA is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters







# WESTLAKE MARCH NEWSLETTER

## Message from the Administrators

### "EMPOWER YOUR VOICE"

March began with Westlake honoring Women in History. We highlighted the many achievements and contributions of women throughout history who have made a difference in various fields. For example, students learned about **Amelia Earhart**, a pioneering aviator who was the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. Her courage and determination continue to inspire people around the world. They also learned about **Rosa Parks**, an American activist in the civil rights movement who played a pivotal role in the Montgomery bus boycott. Her bravery in refusing to give up her seat on a bus sparked a movement that helped to end segregation.



At Westlake, we selected a young woman, **Ashanti** as our "Unsung Hero." She was given an award at the Union County Unsung Hero Presentation at Kean University in March. Ashanti was selected based on her ability to learn how to empower herself by working independently and have a sense of ownership over her own learning. We believe that her skills learned are crucial for success in school and beyond and that her **VOICE** will be heard and continue to **EMPOWER** her.

Picture Day was a great success! Students looked beautiful and handsome, smiling and happy to have their photographs taken. Parents should be receiving an email from Positive Image



Photography shortly to select pictures for purchasing! A Big thank you to Mrs. Mund and Ms. Foendoe for finding our photographer and setting up picture day!

Every voice is heard and empowered at Westlake! Through our recognition program of selecting students and staff for the month, we take a tally vote from peer nominations to come up with a collective winner. This month's student of the month for March is Mohammad and the Principal's award went to Azan. Our staff of the month went to Megan Curran. Congratulations to all!

All the best!

Claudine T. and Bobby P.



## Read Across America



Read Across America was celebrated during the week of March 3rd – March 7th. This nationwide event encourages us to read, listen and celebrate the joy of books. Students from Hillcrest Academy South and Lambert's Mill Academy visited many classes to have their students read to Westlake Students. The Westlake Administrators read to students as well and it was a joy to engage in learning activities with the students.

# Westlake Information

## Dates to Remember!

March 30th - Westlake Parent Organization (WPO) Bowling Event at Linden Lanes (It's not too late to sign up)

April is Autism Awareness Month

April 2nd - Yoga with Ms. Shannon

April 7th - State Assessment Testing to begin

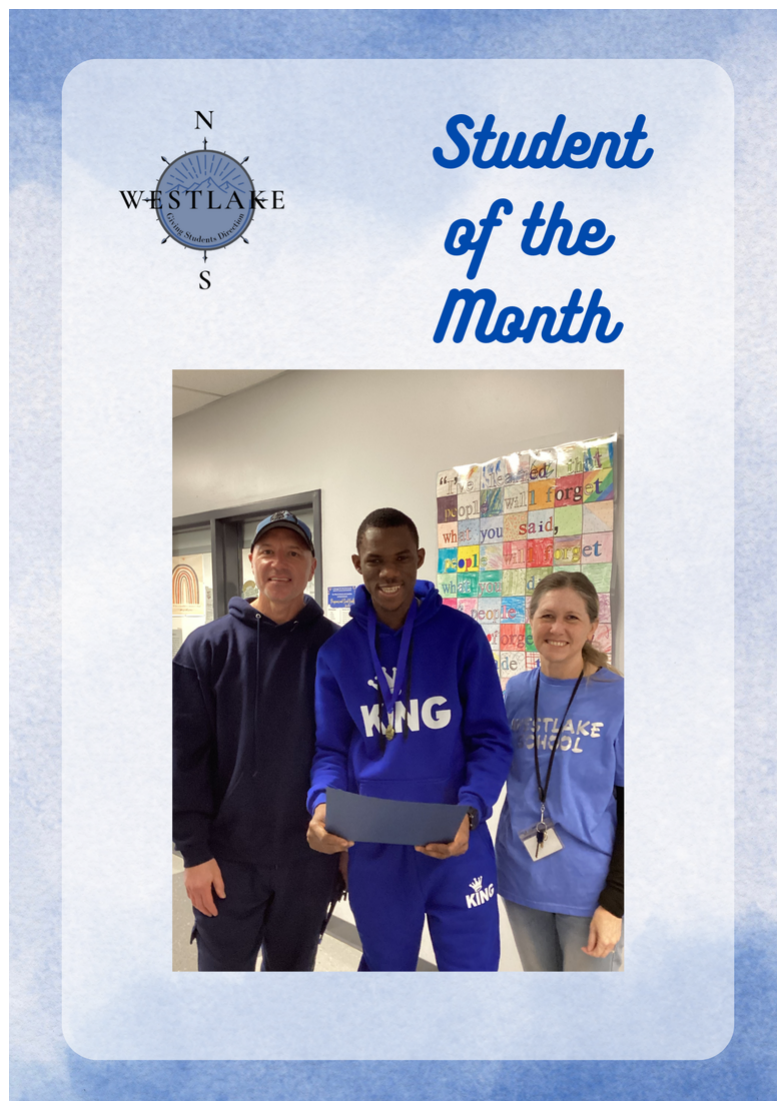
April 11th - School Spirit Day - Wear your Westlake shirt, flowers, bunnies or chicks

April 18th - April 25th - School Closed for Spring Break



## March Spotlight!

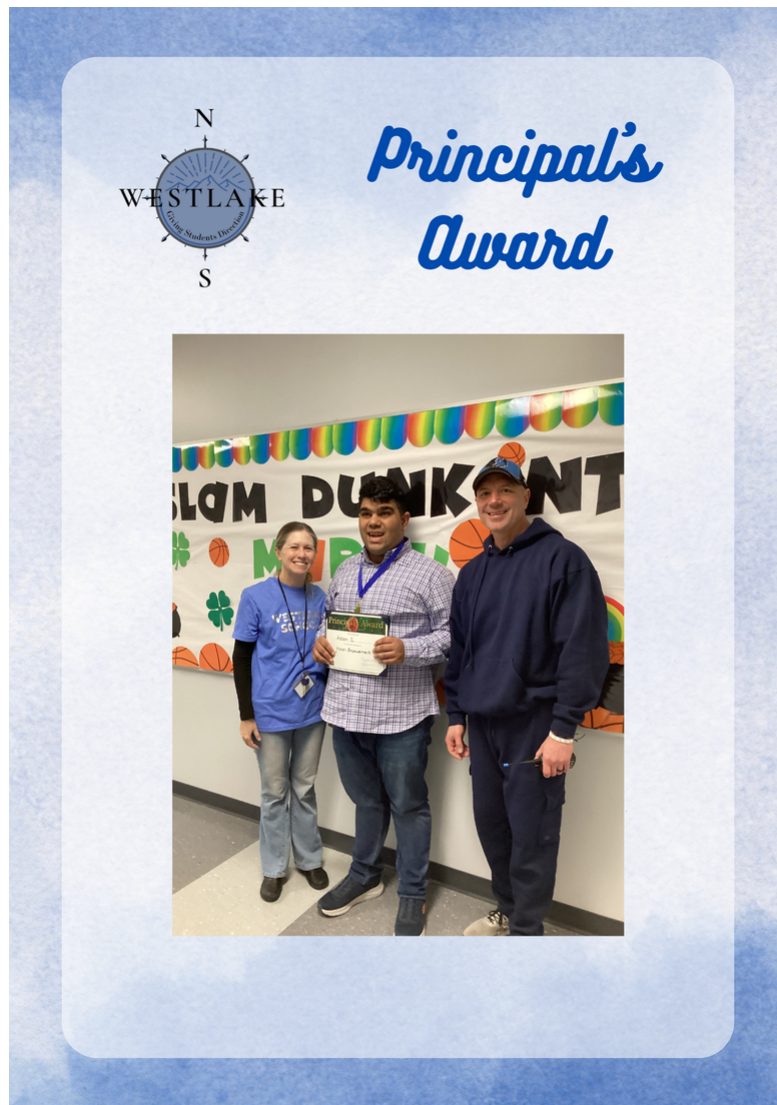
### Student of the Month!





M.K. is our Student of the Month, he always has a bright smile and is ready to help a friend. M.K. is always busy at Westlake, he works at the Sunshine Cafe and Work Based Learning sites. His positive attitude and work ethic make M.K. a great role model for our younger students.

## Principal's Award Winner!



A.C. is the Principal Award Winner, he is a hard worker. A.C. can be seen walking around Westlake taking pizza orders every Wednesday!

## Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month!

# SUNSHINE CAFE EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH



S.W. is the Sunshine Cafe Employee of the Month for March! He is a great worker who always shows up to work with a smile on his face. He loves to learn new skills and is always looking to try new jobs around the cafe!



## The Sunshine Cafe!





The Sunshine Cafe has a new special for March in honor of St. Patrick's Day! It is a St. Patty's Day Cookie and a Sparkling Kiwi Refresher!



**World Down Syndrome Day!**



On March 21st, Westlake celebrated World Down Syndrome Day! We wore crazy socks to symbolize the karyotype of Down syndrome chromosomes that look like mismatched socks!

Thank You to, G.R. and family, who donated bracelets for all students and staff to wear!



## Westlake's Unsung Hero!





The concept of an unsung hero highlights the importance of recognizing and appreciating the efforts of those who work diligently and selflessly behind the scenes, making a positive impact on the world without seeking the spotlight. This year, Ashanti was awarded the Unsung Hero award at the Union County Unsung Hero awards ceremony held at Kean University.

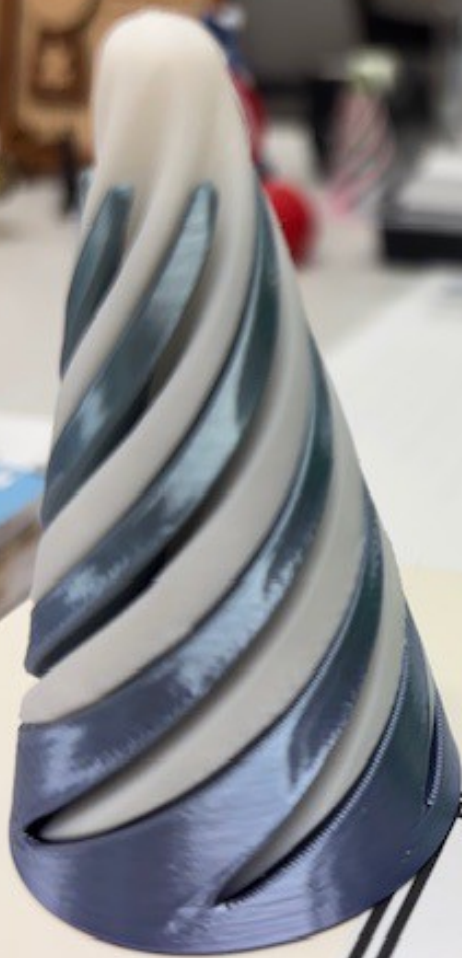
Ashanti's work at the Sunshine Cafe as a server and barista and work based learning at Lidio's Cafe where she performs various duties, including serving customers, cashiering, cleaning, and restocking, makes her an outstanding and independent worker. Her willingness to learn and embrace new challenges has enabled her to excel and achieve success. Ashanti's caring nature and consistently offers to help students and staff. She quietly makes the world a better place through her actions and character. Congratulations Ashanti for being selected as Westlake's' Unsung Hero!

## **Sensory Fidget Donation!**



Teacher Assistant, Barbara Gregory received an outside donation of fidget toys from a young 13 year old boy who made the fidget toys using a 3D printer and wanted them to go to students who would greatly benefit and be more focused using them. She presented them to Mrs. Sara Rocha, our Occupational Therapist for the therapy department and presented them to two students at this time.





To the Staff



To the Staff at Westlake School,

I am happy to donate these fidget toys that I have made, in order to support the incredible students at your school. I hope they provide comfort, focus, and fun to each student. They bring me calm when I feel anxious and I use them every day at school.

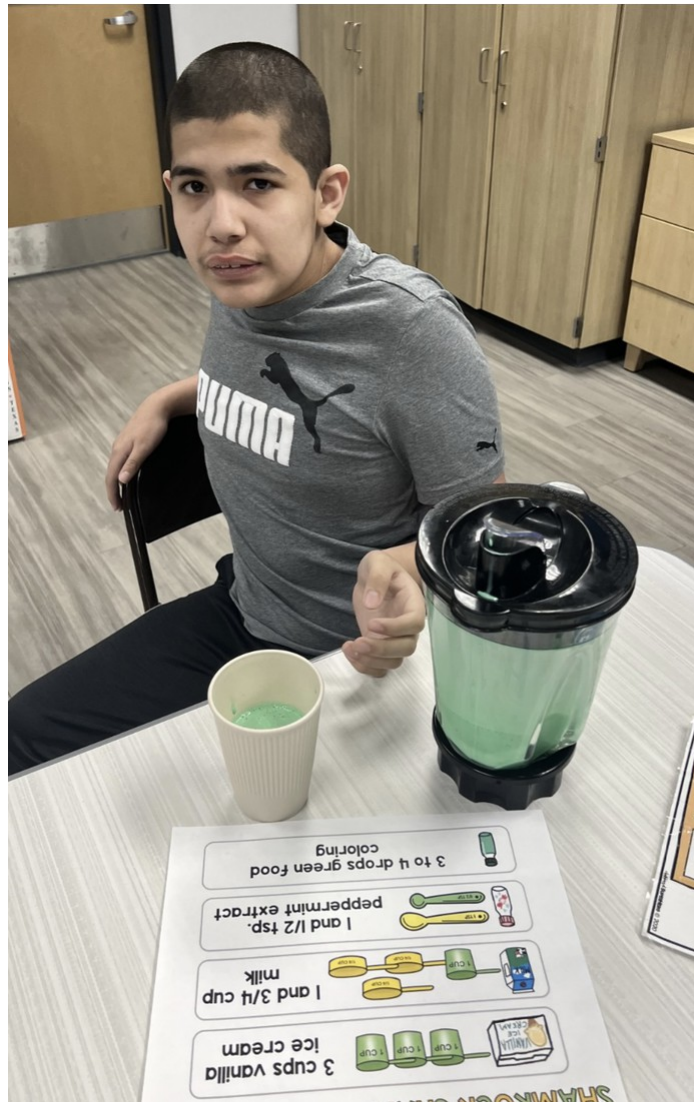
Wishing you and your students all the best!  
From,



Art



# Westlake OT Department



## Empowering Students, One Skill at a Time

Welcome to the March OT newsletter! We are excited to share what we've been up to in the OT department this month :)

School based OT is all about supporting our students to participate fully in their educational environment, addressing their fine motor/gross motor skills, sensory processing, self-regulation, and activity of daily living skills. Ultimately, we aim to promote academic success and well-being.

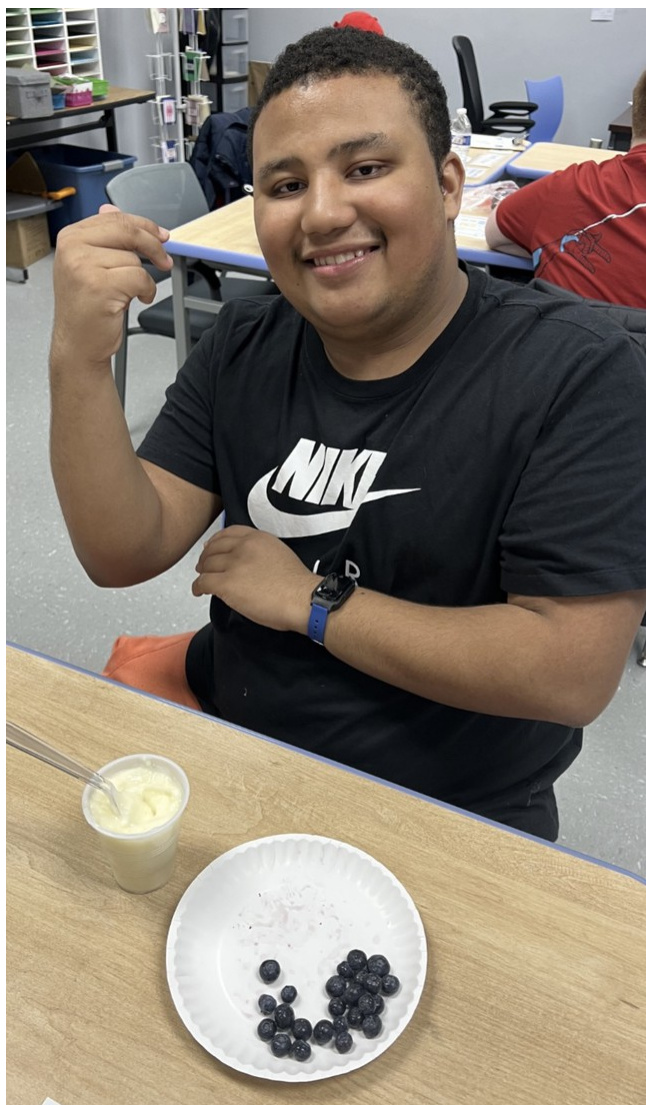
At Westlake, some ways we promote independence include practicing everyday life skills known as ADLs (activities of daily living). This month the students practiced following visual and written recipes to make macaroni and cheese, instant pudding topped with mixed berries, and in honor of St. Patrick's Day - Shamrock Shakes! See below for the fun they had making these recipes. In the apartment, students have also been practicing other household skills such as loading the dishwasher, making the bed, sweeping the floor, folding laundry, and more.

Some ways we are promoting fine motor, handwriting, and visual perceptual skills are through making fun crafts and themed activities. For example, this month the students participated in a St. Patrick's Day scavenger hunt which allowed them to exercise their visual perceptual, organizational and spatial skills while also having fun.



Overall, the students are working hard towards achieving their OT goals!

Warm regards,  
The OT Department









Community Based Instruction!





Every Wednesday, our classes take turns going to Garwood Lanes for an afternoon of bowling. Students work on socialization skills, taking turns, and gross motor skills while having fun with staff!

Look at all the proud faces and happy smiles!







.....

**Work Based Learning!**





**Our Work Based Learning Students work at the Cranford Movie Theater every Monday! They work as a cashier at the ticket booth and snack counter, as well as taking tickets. They get to help their favorite customer, Westlake students and staff!**







.....

## Mr. K's Class!



March gave us a lot to learn about and celebrate! We kicked off the month by celebrating Read Across America Week and Dr. Seuss' birthday. We learned about who Dr. Seuss was and the many books he wrote. We also read some of our favorite Dr. Seuss books! We learned about and celebrated St. Patrick's Day as well! We talked about what it means to be lucky and discussed what it means for something to be real (rainbows) or not real (leprechauns). We also talked about the 4 seasons, how seasons change, and celebrated the 1st day of Spring. We learned about lion vs. lamb weather and talked about how March is (supposed to!) come in like a lion and out like a lamb. March is also Women's History Month, so throughout the month we learned about several different incredible and important women in history. We learned about Helen Keller and talked



about our 5 senses. We talked about how life would be different if we could not see or hear, and discussed how she persevered and overcame challenges presented by her disability to be successful. Our SEL theme for March is Empowerment and we talked about how we can find our power in difficult times and situations through advocating for ourselves and asking for help when we need it, just like Helen Keller did.



## Ms. Grace's Art Class!



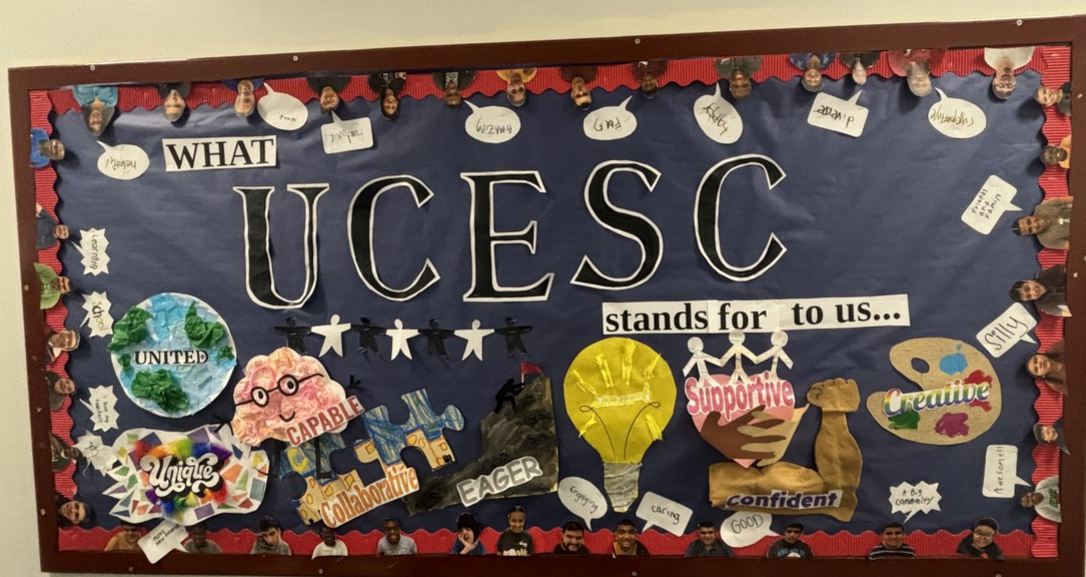
Spring has sprung in the Art Room!! Finally, we can put away the winter crafts and begin to focus on the warmer weather. In the past few weeks, we have touched upon St. Patrick's Day, Ramadan, Women's History Month, and the first day of spring! The students have continued to dominate these theme-based crafts while focusing on their fine motor skills.

This month, we also participated in the annual UCESC Bulletin Board decorating contest. A few students were picked to represent Westlake and take the trip over to the UCESC main offices to decorate our board. This year's prompt was to portray the UCESC way by expressing students' voices and fostering a sense of community. I took a survey of words that the students would use



to describe our school and then worked with some of the classes to make crafts that portrayed their answers!! Stay tuned for the results to see where we placed in the competition!!









# WolfPack Press



## Ramadan at Westlake

"My name is Mohammed. I celebrate Ramadan. There are many different things I like to do during Ramadan. I like to pray and feast. I enjoy my fast everyday. I also like to play soccer and read during this time. Ramadan makes me feel happy." - M.K

### What is your favorite Ramadan tradition?

**Mohammed:** Playing music and dancing at home.

**Mr. Sam:** Spending a lot of time at the mosque, eating rice with chicken and vegetables, drinking a lot of water, and eating dates.

**Ms. Sagal:** Making dinner with her kids, decorating the house, and going to the mosque.

**Ms. Sakeenah:** Fasting and praying, and her family coming together at night.

**Mr. Rich:** Celebrating Eid with his family.



## Sunshine Club!



Our amazing Sunshine Club, set up a March Madness Lunch in honor of the NCAA tournament.  
Thank you to the Sunshine Club who coordinated all the food, set up, and break down!





Parent Resource!



and Special Needs

# Programs and Social Events for all ages

## PROGRAMS

- Yoga
- Karate
- Zumba
- Ceramics
- Golf
- Spray Park & more

## SOCIAL EVENTS

- 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](mailto:opdsn@ucnj.org)

visit our website [www.ucnj.org/opdsn](http://www.ucnj.org/opdsn)

Or scan the QR Code!



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE



Bwo pou moun ki gen ankap ak bezwen  
espesyal

# Pwogram ak Evènman Sosyal pou tout laj

## PWOGRAM YO

- Yoga
- Karate
- Seramik
- Dans Zumba
- Gòlf
- Espre Pak ak plis ankò

## EVÈNMAN SOSYAL

- Konpetisyon Lapèch
- Penti bò Lak la
- Festival ete
- Kan ete
- Dans Granj
- Patinaj ak Santa akplis ankò



Pou plis enfòmasyon oswa pou yo mete sou lis adrès nou an  
pou resevwa bwochi ak detay pwogram yo:

Rele: (908) 527-4781

Imel: [opdsn@ucnj.org](mailto:opdsn@ucnj.org)

vizite sit entènèt nou an: [www.ucnj.org/opdsn](http://www.ucnj.org/opdsn)

Oswa eskane kòd QR la!



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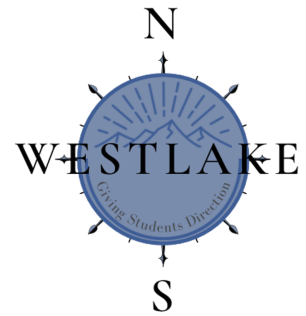


# Contact Us!

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

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

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



## INSTAGRAM!

Visit us!



**Robert Peneno**

Robert is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters



# Crossroads Monthly Newsletter

March 2025

## Message from the Administration

Dear Crossroads Community,

As we step into spring, I want to thank all the families who participated in the NJSCI survey. This year, we received a record number of responses! Your feedback helps us shape our program to better meet the needs of our students and families. Your voices are essential in making sure our school remains a place where all students are supported and valued.



March was a busy month at Crossroads, filled with activities that highlighted our yearly theme, Let Every Voice Empower. We focused on giving students opportunities to express themselves, learn in hands-on ways, and engage with our community. We kicked off the month with Read Across America Week, celebrating literacy and self-expression. Guest readers included the librarian from the Westfield Library, students from Hillcrest North, and many family members and friends. Even Petunia the Possum puppet joined in! As part of our celebration, students engaged with *Strega Nona* by eating pasta from the never-ending pasta pot, making macaroni jewelry, and playing in the pasta pool. These activities brought the story to life and gave students a fun way to engage with literature.

Another highlight was our annual Pinewood Derby. Students decorated their cars and raced them down the track, cheering on their friends and enjoying some friendly competition. This event encouraged creativity, decision-making, and perseverance—important aspects of empowerment. March also brought St. Patrick's Day celebrations. Students and staff dressed in green, and classrooms participated in themed activities, including making leprechaun masks, creating



rainbows, and using Lucky Charms for graphing exercises. These activities gave students a chance to practice skills while having fun.

As we move into April, we have a lot to look forward to! Be on the lookout for our Autism Acceptance Month activities as we continue to celebrate and support our students. We will also have our Spring Break, a well-deserved opportunity for rest and recharge. And, of course, we might just have a special visit from the a certain bunny for a spring egg hunt! Thank you for being a part of the Crossroads community. Your support and involvement make a difference every day.

Warm Regards,

Matt, Danielle, and Stacey

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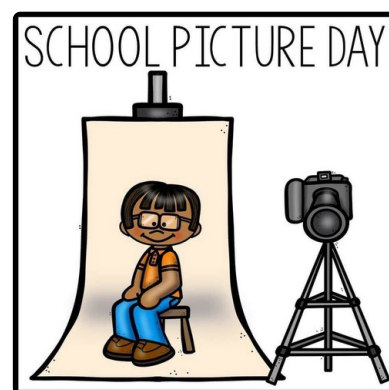
## Picture Makeup Sessions

Unfortunately Reflections Studio will not be able to return to Crossroads this year for a makeup day. If your child was absent for picture day, you can register for a makeup session and go to the studio in Scotch Plains.

The address is 1812 Front St, Scotch Plains, NJ 07076

Please use the link below to sign up for an appointment.

<https://www.reflectionsstudio.com/products/school-make-up-signup>



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## Upcoming Dates

**April 1, 2025** - Wear BLUE to school to celebrate World Autism Day!

**April 2, 2025** - Neurodiversity Tuesday - Wear Rainbow or Tie-dyed clothing

**April 3, 2025** - What's your passion Thursday - Wear something you are passionate about.

**April 4, 2025** - Sensory Friendly Friday - Dress in you comfy clothes or PJ's

**April 16, 2025** - PTO/Parent Education Support Meeting (12:30)

**April 17, 2025** - Spring Egg Hunt

**April 18, 2025 - April 27, 2025** - School Closed (Spring Recess)

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## Honors and Accolades



Congratulations to Ms. Dina Brigandi, Occupational Therapist, for being named Crossroads Teacher of the Year





Congratulations to Mr. Spencer Powers, Registered Behavior Technician, being named as Crossroad School's Support Staff of the Year!

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## Crossroads Staff and Student Spotlight



### Student of the Month - Bronx

Say hello to the student spotlight of the month Bronx! This is Bronx's first year here at Crossroads, and he has been a wonderful addition to the family. We have all welcomed him with open arms. He is well loved around the school with many friends and classmates saying hello to him in the hallways. He has an infectious laugh, and smile. He constantly finds himself playing with sand, dancing around with ribbon, and trying new snacks. You can find him active on the playground running around, or getting his movement on in the classroom. This month we went to Lifestown! Here you can find Bronx exploring every corner of the play area by bouncing on the trampoline, diving into the foam pit, or climbing to the top of the tube maze. Bronx is a fearless student and we cannot wait to see Bronx continue to grow as an individual.



## **Staff Spotlight - Daria Glynos - Classroom Teacher**

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

I have been working with the commission for almost a year now.

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

I am an artistic person who does not show it a lot, but I enjoy drawing as a means to relax.

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

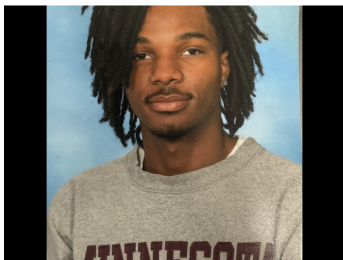
My dream vacation would be a trip through Europe, including Iceland, Ireland, Scotland.

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

My favorite meal would be my grandmother's lasagna or my mom's pastichio, which is a Greek version of lasagna.

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

My greatest accomplishment is having my son Paxton. He is the light of my life.



## **Staff Spotlight - Addis Belcher - Teacher Assistant**

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

I have been working at Crossroads for about four months.

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

I make amateur mini comics. I like to draw superheroes .

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

I would like to visit Tokyo. My dream is to go thrifting through Japan. I love their clothes and would love to have authentic Japanese sushi.

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

My favorite food is jerk steak and mashed potatoes.

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

My greatest accomplishment is enrolling in college and pursuing my degree in Graphic Design.

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# **Classroom Spotlights**

**Ms. Anna's Classroom**





Spring is in the air! This month room 108 celebrated many things. Some of these things were Read Across America Week, St. Patrick's Day, and the First day of Spring. During Read Across America Week, we welcomed special visitors to our school—my daughters joined the classrooms and read to our students. They had a lot of fun. Students also enjoyed going upstairs for the Strega Nona activities, making pasta bracelets, and going into the sensory "pasta" pool!

For St. Patrick's the class made clovers by ripping green paper and gluing them on a shamrock. We also shared green spaghetti from Ms. Jenn's class for our sensory group. In addition, we read interactive books about St. Patrick's day and discussed the things we see in Spring. Students identified pictures to words.

We also had our last trip to Lifetown for the year. Ava and Sidney enjoyed getting manicures, Iker loved making t-shirts, Josh liked to walk around and play in the ball pit and Devin enjoyed ice cream and popcorn! We are looking forward to what's to come the rest of the school year.





## **Ms. Alexis's Classroom**

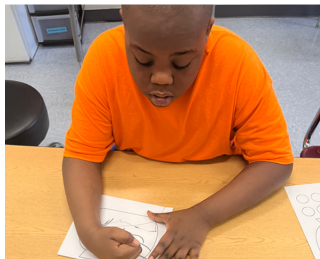
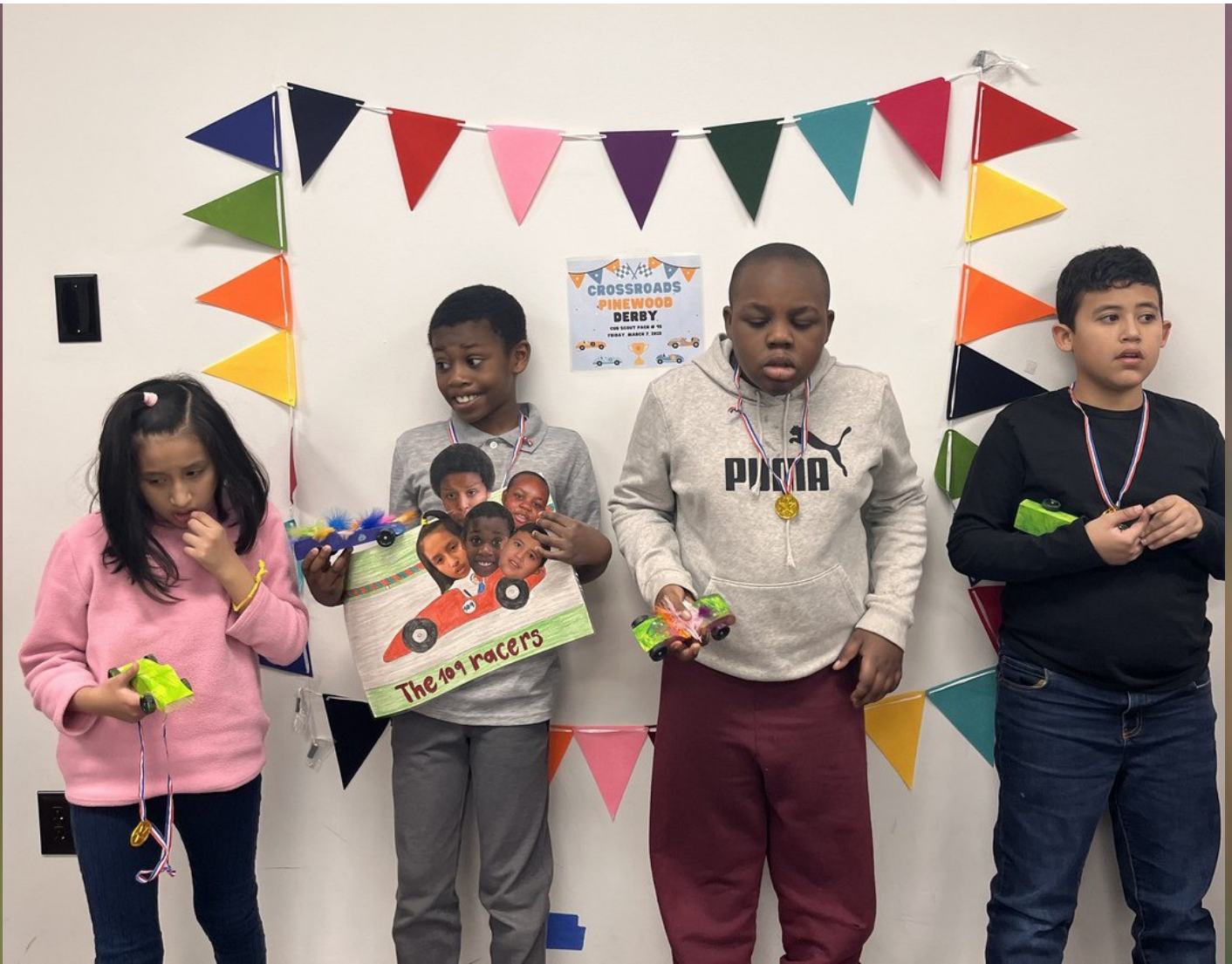
Room 109 had a very exciting month. We started our month off with Read Across America. The kids enjoyed listening to a variety of books read by different guest readers. Everyone enjoyed listening to the books and interacting with the different props that were brought in.

March also brought us some fun and interactive activities for St. Patrick's Day. The students made sugar cookies that they decorated with icing and green sprinkles. The students also went on a scavenger hunt to find the hidden treasures in the school. Finally, they all made Leprechaun dough out of cornstarch and hair conditioner. While making the play dough the students were encouraged to use their language, science and math skills.

The students have been doing a wonderful job on their academic programs along with their self care and play skills. The students enjoy interacting with each other and working on their play skills together.

The students also had a blast at the Pinewood Derby. The Pinewood Derby helps each student learn about creativity, craftsmanship, teamwork and friendly competition.





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**Ms. Lynn - School Nurse**



# Survive Spring Allergies

Spring is a wonderful time of year, with flowers blooming, pleasant weather, and unfortunately, those dreaded seasonal allergies. Seasonal allergies can be frustrating for all ages, especially young children, who can only let us know through frequent rubbing of their nose, sniffing or wrinkling their nose, pulling on their ears, and clearing their throat. They may also develop sleep issues, mouth breathing due to nasal congestion, and dark circles under the eyes

If you have a child with allergies, here's what you need to know and how to help them find relief.

- **Stay Indoors During Peak Pollen Times:** Check pollen forecasts and limit outdoor activities, especially in the mornings when pollen levels are highest. Sign up for pollen count allergy alerts at [Pollen.com](https://www.pollen.com).
- **Keep Windows Closed:** Close windows in your home and car to prevent pollen from entering.
- **Use Air Conditioning:** Run air conditioning instead of opening windows. Consider using HEPA air purifiers to reduce allergens.
- **Wash After Outdoor Play:** Have your child wash their hands and face right after coming indoors to remove pollen and even change their clothes.
- **Shower Before Bed:** Make sure your child showers and washes their hair before bed to get rid of lingering allergens.
- **Start Medications Early and Stay Consistent:** Over the counter medications like antihistamines, saline sprays or eye drops can substantially help to relieve allergy symptoms. Starting early can prevent symptoms from worsening and getting ahead of symptoms, instead of reacting to them, can calm the immune system and provide greater relief. Always, talk to your child's pediatrician before starting any new treatments.

## **Allergies or Illness? Here's How to Tell the Difference**



# Colds vs. Allergies

The symptoms of the common cold and allergies are very similar, which can make it difficult to tell the difference between the two.

## Cold symptoms

Sneezing

Runny nose

Thick, dark mucus

Sore throat

Body aches

Symptoms take about three days to appear and usually last for about a week.

## Allergy symptoms

Sneezing

Runny nose

Thin, clear mucus

Wheezing

Red, watery eyes

Symptoms can last for days or months after contact with allergens.

One of the most common questions during allergy season is, 'How can you tell if it's allergies or an illness?' While both can cause similar symptoms, there are key differences. Allergies often come with itchy, watery eyes, sneezing and a runny nose without fever. Symptoms tend to last as long as you're exposed to allergens, such as pollen or dust. On the other hand, illness symptoms, like a cold or flu, usually include a fever, body aches and fatigue and often come on suddenly. If your child has persistent symptoms without fever or if they're triggered by certain environmental factors, it's likely allergies. However, if symptoms worsen or include fever, it could be an illness. Always consult with a healthcare provider to get the most accurate diagnosis. It's also important to know that allergies are NOT contagious and that symptoms can vary in intensity throughout the day, often improving when indoors or after showering.

## Health Office Newsletter

# UNSTUCK



## Your Family's Guide to Childhood Constipation

We hope you had the chance to read our CONSTIPATION newsletter that was sent home last week in your child's backpack, and found it useful.

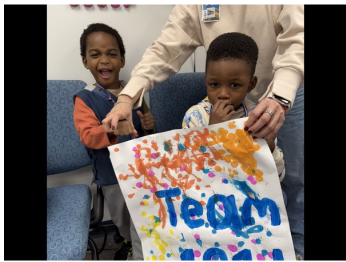
To further support that information, here's a fantastic resource to complement it.

<https://www.childrensmercy.org/departments-and-clinics/gastroenterology/constipation-and-encopresis/family-guide-to-childhood-constipation/>

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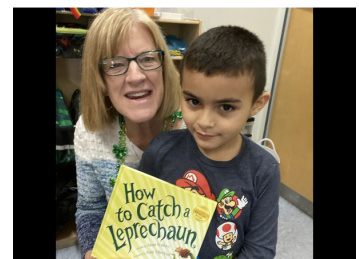
## March at Crossroads

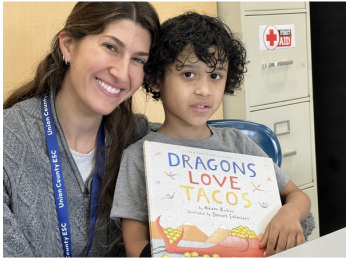










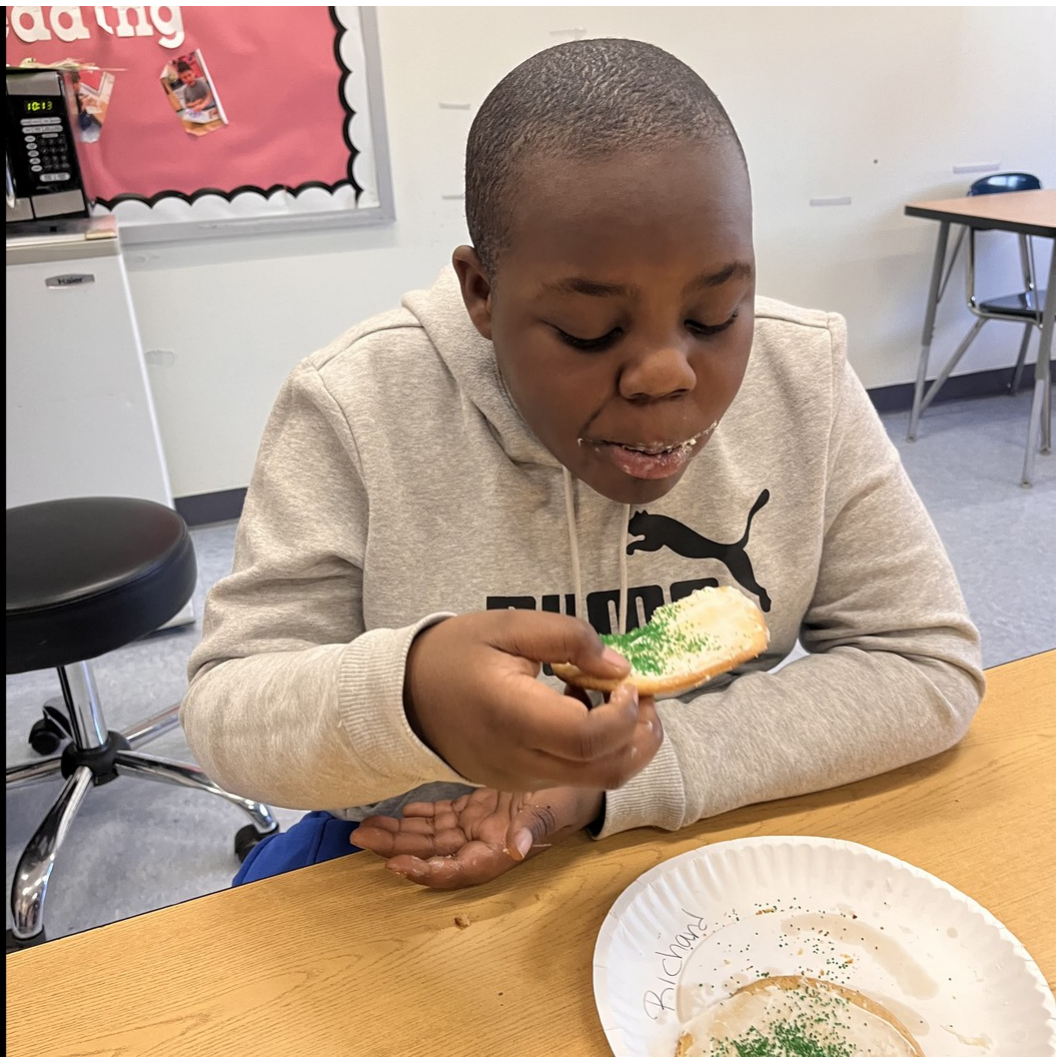


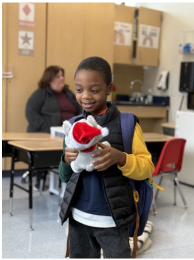




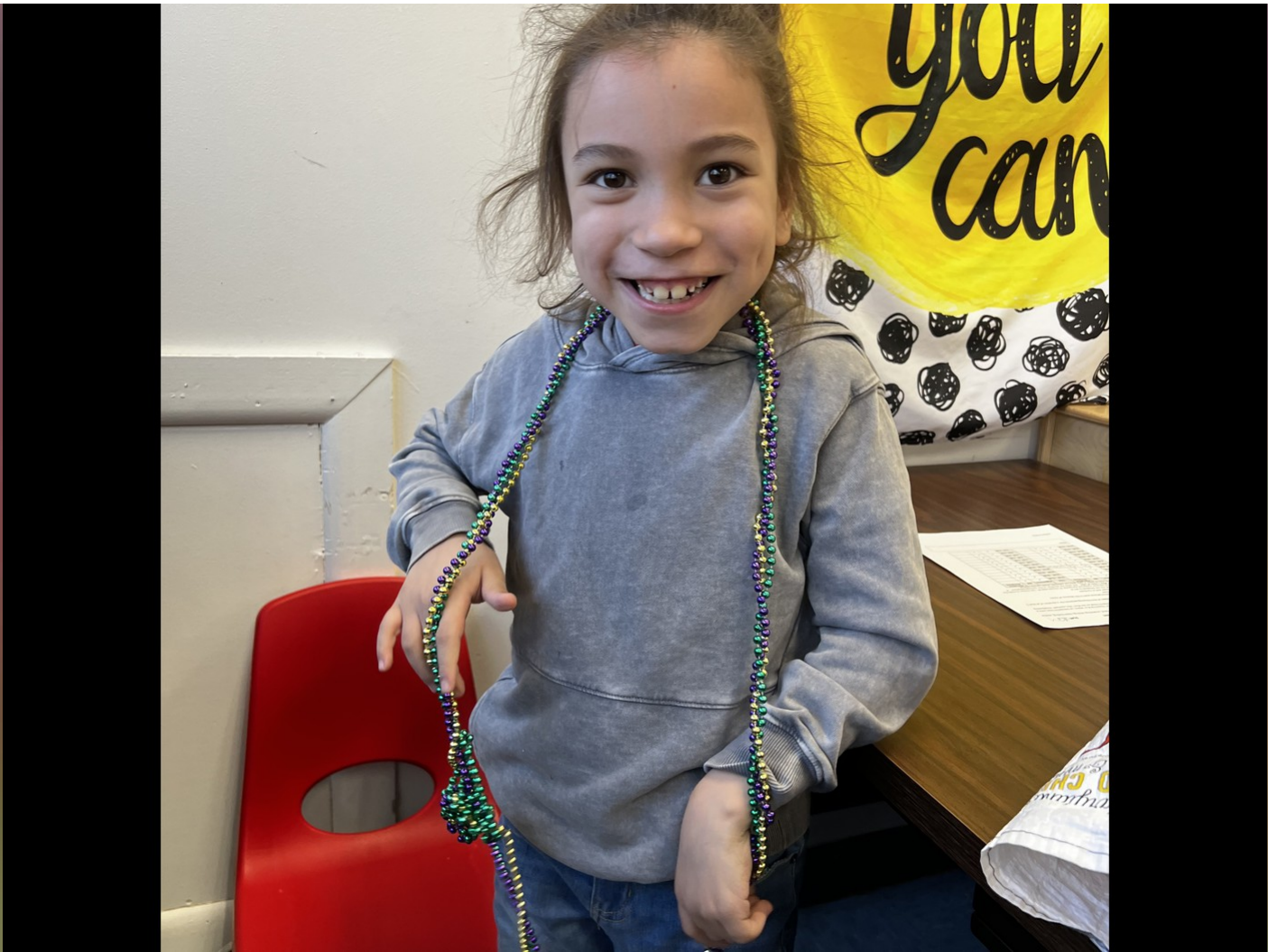






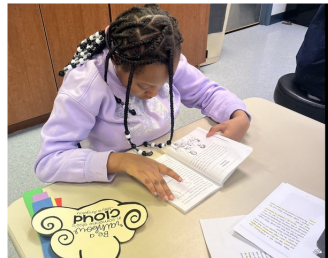
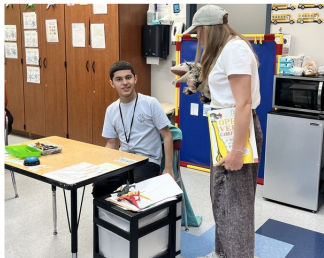
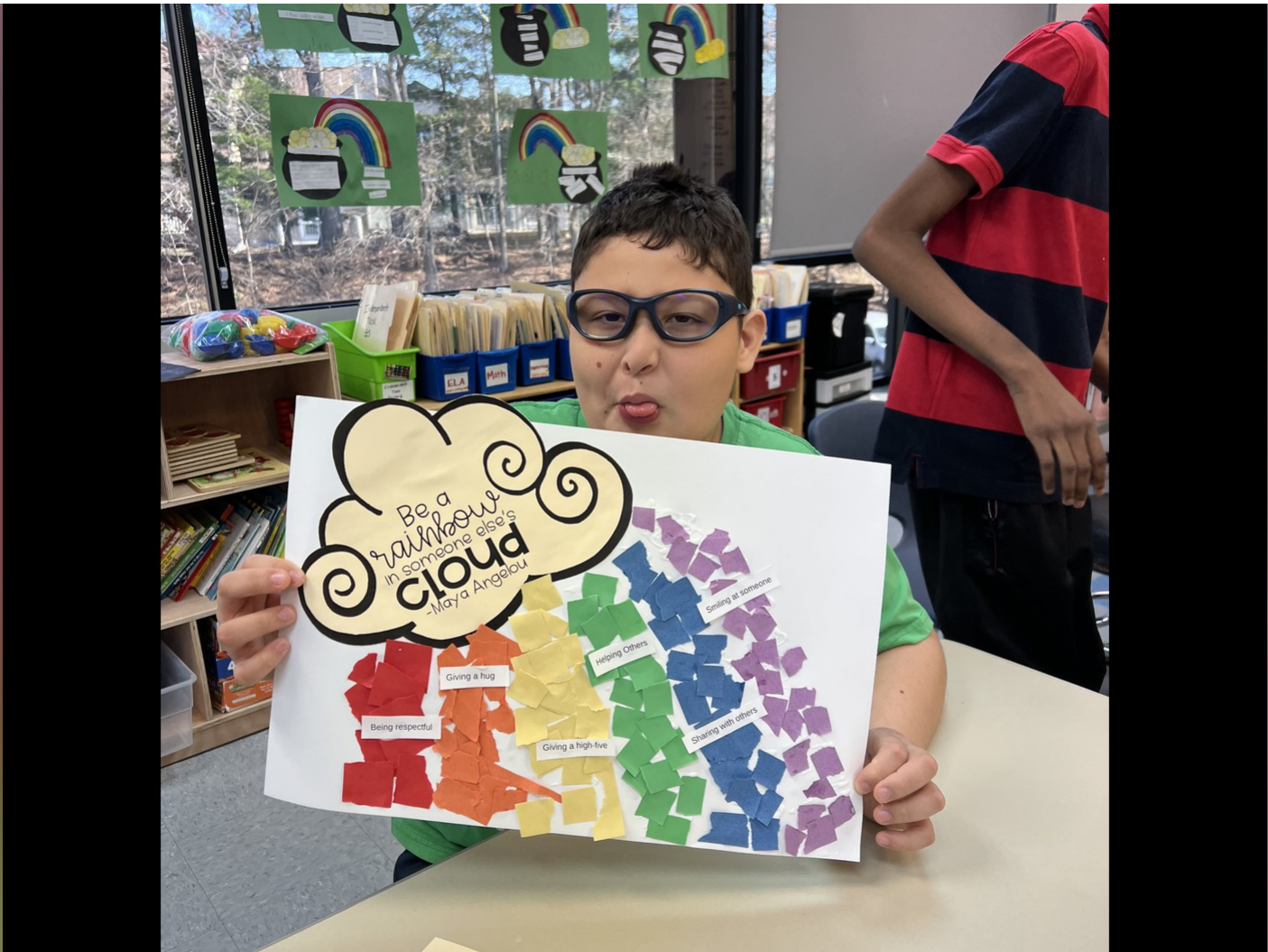


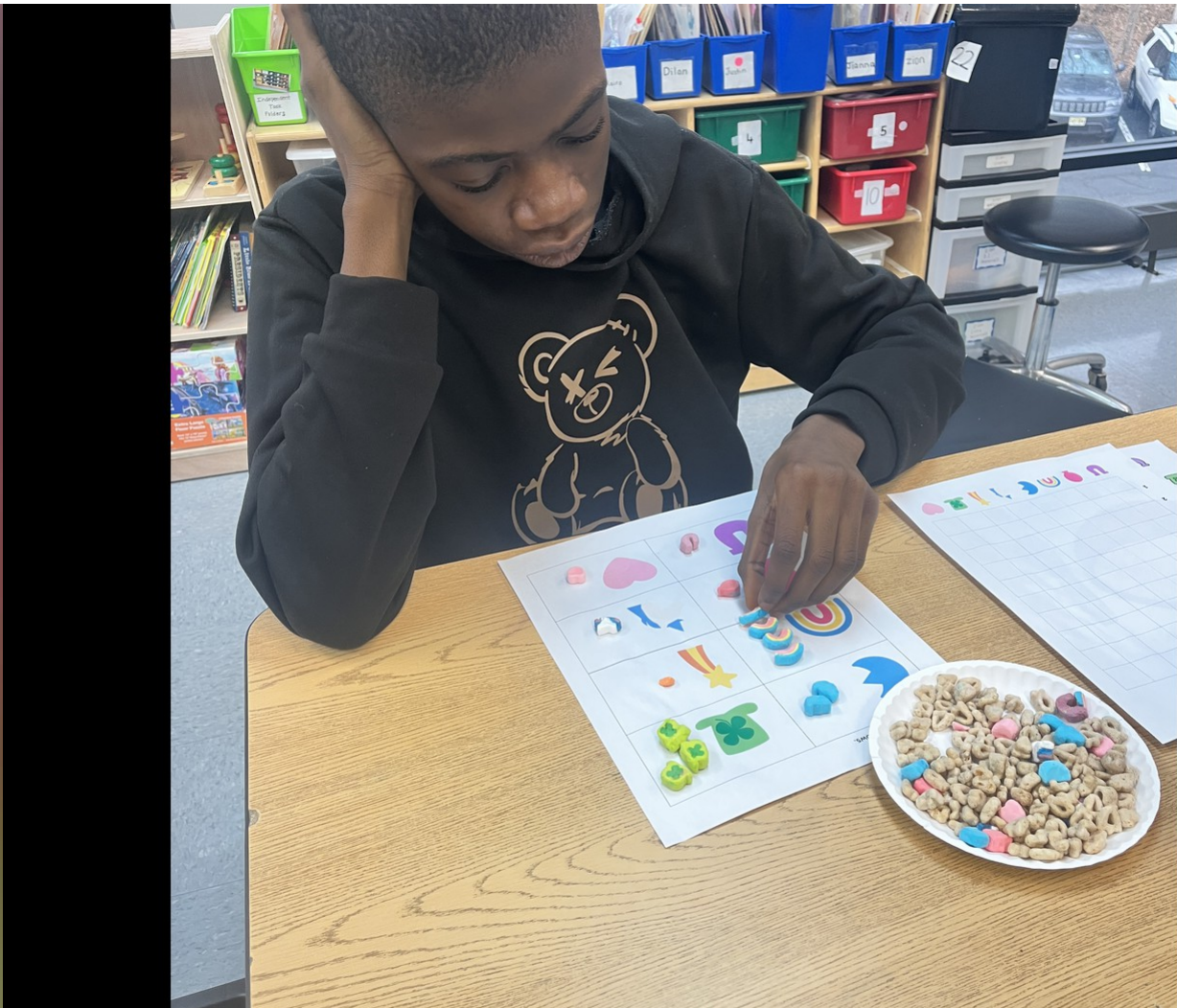












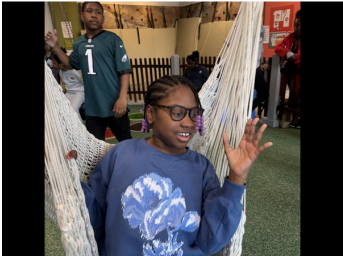
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## Crossroads in the Community

Crossroads students enjoying this month's trip to Lifestown. Our Middle School also had the opportunity to take their monthly trip to Westlake School where students participated in a gym class with our gym teacher Rich.

















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## Events and Activies

### Read Across America Week

Crossroads Celebrated this week by inviting guest readers into the school. We had family, friends, students from Hillcrest North, and a visit from the Westfield Library. We also read the book *Strega Nona* and students had the opportunity to eat pasta, make macaroni bracelets, and swim in the "pasta pool"

















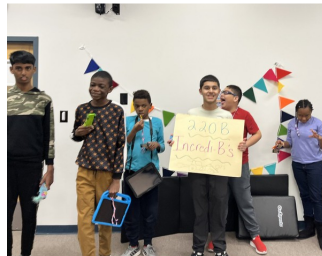
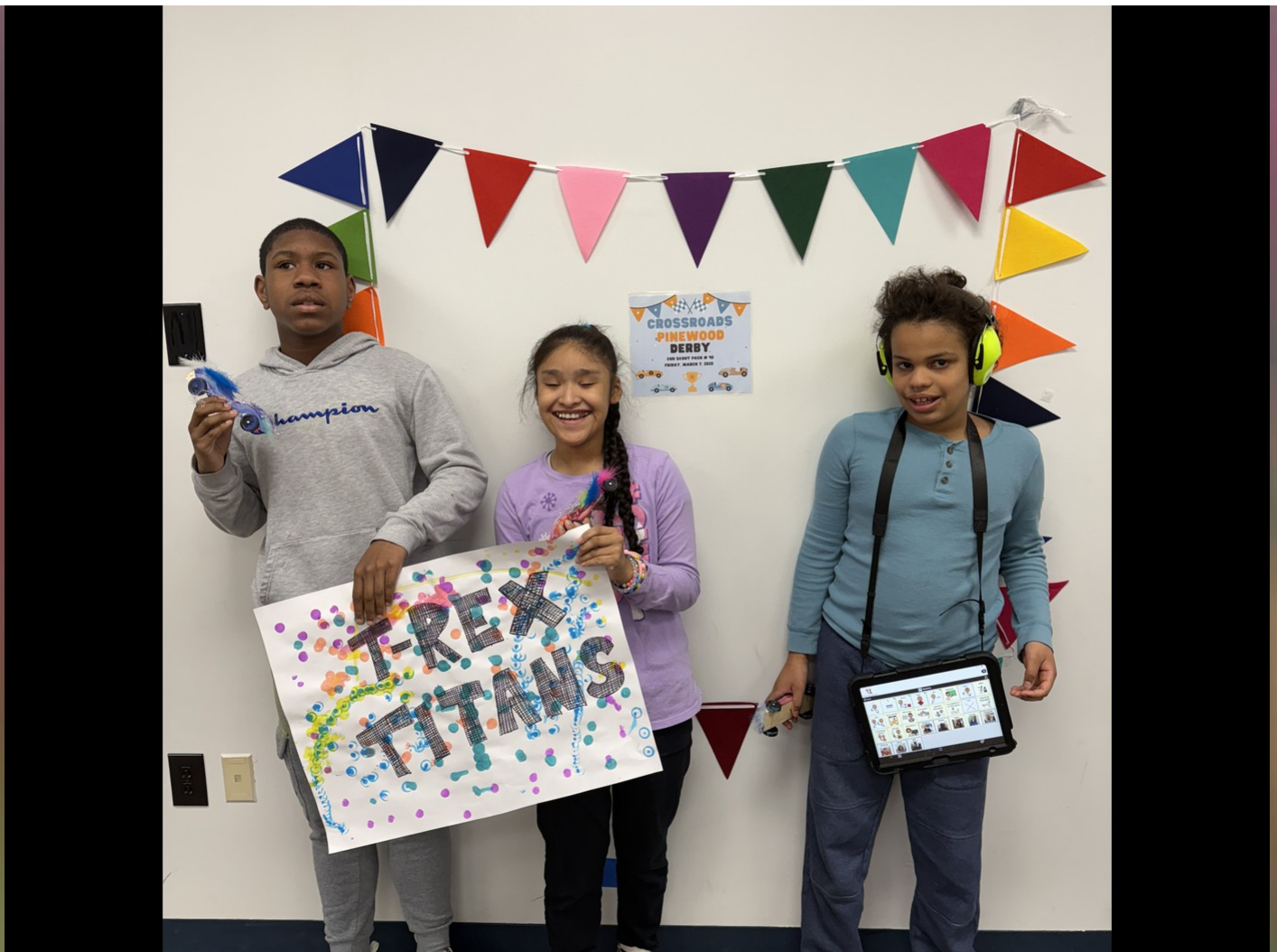
## Pinewood Derby

Crossroads Pack 45 hosted our annual Pinewood Derby









## Parent Resources

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

Practical Supports for Home: Navigating Spring Changes- Tips and Tricks from CR Behavior Team

March brings longer days, changing schedules, and often, travel plans for spring break. While these seasonal changes can be exciting, they can also bring challenges for children with autism. Disruptions to routine, sensory overload, and unfamiliar environments may lead to stress and anxiety. Here are some practical strategies to help make transitions smoother and build independence in the community.

### **Spring Break Travel Tips**

Travel can be an overwhelming experience for individuals with autism due to new environments, changes in routine, and sensory overload. Whether your family is going on a road trip, visiting relatives, or flying for the first time, preparation is key to a successful experience.

#### **Try these strategies to set your child up for success:**

**Prepare with Social Stories** – Read or create a social story about what to expect when traveling, including what they will see, hear, and do. Reviewing pictures or videos of airports, hotels, and other new environments can also help.

**Pack a Favorites Sensory Kit** – Bring familiar comfort items such as noise-canceling headphones, fidget toys, weighted blankets, sunglasses, or preferred snacks to help manage sensory sensitivities.

**Call Ahead for Accommodations** – Many places offer sensory-friendly services, such as priority boarding on airplanes, quiet rooms in amusement parks, or reduced stimulation times at attractions. Contact locations in advance to plan accordingly.

**Practice the Routine** – If possible, take a mini "travel day" by visiting a nearby hotel, airport, or train station to help your child become familiar with the setting. Watching videos or role-playing different travel situations can also ease anxiety. Youtube offers a variety of video models of different settings.

**Use a Visual Schedule** – Create a step-by-step guide showing what will happen during the trip. Include pictures or icons to help your child understand transitions.

#### **Social Story: "Going on a Trip"**

*"Soon, we are going on a trip! We might take a car, a bus, a train, or an airplane to get there. I might see new places and meet new people. Sometimes, trips can be exciting, but they can also feel different from home. That's okay! I can bring my favorite things, like my headphones and toys, to help me feel calm. My family will tell me what happens next. If I feel worried, I can take deep breaths or ask for a break. This trip can be fun, and I will try my best!"*

#### **Adjusting to Daylight Saving Time**

Daylight Saving Time (DST) means changing the clocks forward by one hour, which can disrupt sleep schedules and daily routines. This shift can also be difficult for children with autism, who often thrive on consistency.

#### **Ways to ease the transition:**



**Shift the Schedule Gradually** – Start adjusting bedtime and wake-up times by 10–15 minutes earlier each night for a few days before the time change. This gradual shift can help prevent sudden sleep disruptions.

**Use Natural Light & Movement** – Exposure to sunlight in the morning and engaging in physical activity (such as stretching, walking, or deep pressure activities) can help regulate the body's internal clock.

**Maintain Predictability** – Keep mealtimes, school routines, and bedtime rituals consistent to minimize disruptions. Using visual schedules, timers, or countdown charts can help reinforce the change.

**Create a Relaxing Bedtime Routine** – Use dim lighting, calming music, and predictable bedtime activities to help ease the transition into sleep.

**Social Story: "The Clocks are Changing"**

*"One day, the clocks will change. This means the time on the clock will be different, even though my day will feel the same. It might be lighter outside when I wake up or darker when I go to bed. My body might feel a little different, but that's okay! I can follow my schedule and do my bedtime routine to help me feel calm. After a few days, I will get used to the new time. My family will help me, and everything will be okay!"*

By preparing for seasonal transitions and encouraging real-world learning opportunities, families can help their children navigate changes with more confidence, comfort, and success.  
Happy Spring From the Crossroads Behavior Team

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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
- Zumba
- Ceramics
- Golf
- Spray Park & more

### SOCIAL EVENTS

- 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](mailto:opdsn@ucnj.org)

visit our website [www.ucnj.org/opdsn](http://www.ucnj.org/opdsn)

Or scan the QR Code!



BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE

**UNION COUNTY**  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Department of Human Services



Yon mesaj ki soti nan  
Konsèy Komisyone Konte Union

Biwo pou moun ki gen andikap ak bezwen  
espesyal

*Pwogram ak Evènman Sosyal  
pou tout laj*

<p><b>PWOGRAM YO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yoga</li> <li>• Karate</li> <li>• Seramik</li> <li>• Dans Zumba</li> <li>• Gòlf</li> <li>• Espre Pak ak plis ankò</li> </ul>	<p><b>EVÈNMAN SOSYAL</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Konpetisyon Lapèch</li> <li>• Penti bò Lak la</li> <li>• Festival ete</li> <li>• Kan ete</li> <li>• Dans Granj</li> <li>• Patinaj ak Santa akplis ankò</li> </ul>
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Pou plis enfòmasyon oswa pou yo mete sou lis adrès nou an  
pou resevwa bwochi ak detay pwogram yo:

Rele: (908) 527-4781  
Imel: [opdsn@ucnj.org](mailto:opdsn@ucnj.org)  
vizite sit entènèt nou an: [www.ucnj.org/opdsn](http://www.ucnj.org/opdsn)  
Oswa eskane kòd QR la!



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**UNION COUNTY**  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
Department of Human Services



## Crossroads Fundraiser

**CROSSROADS SCHOOL**

# JOIN OUR FUNDRAISING EVENT

We invite you to Stage House Tavern Rt. 22, Mountainside on April 2nd, 2025. For the entire day, 10% of every food purchase will go towards Crossroads School. Please make sure to show this flyer, paper/digital. Your presence will help us make a significant impact.

## World Autism Month

April 2nd is designated as World Autism Awareness Day by the United Nations, aiming to raise awareness and promote acceptance of people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The day encourages understanding and acceptance of the diverse experiences and perspectives of autistic individuals.



Come out to the Stage House Tavern in Mountainside on April 2, 2025. Bring or show this flyer and 10% of the proceeds will go to Crossroads School

## Reminders (Cold Weather)

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



### About Us

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

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

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



[Visit us on Instagram](#)



**CR Smore**

CR is using Smore to create beautiful newsletters