



Preparing students for

life beyond the classroom

FOCUS ON PHOENIX

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As we begin another school year, I thought it important to keep you abreast of all the great things we have been able to do since we last communicated. Our long-standing practice of the FiSH! Philosophy is alive and well and permeates all that we do for our students, their families and the community. Our staff—as well as our students—enjoyed wellness days, trips to the Jersey Shore, and summer afternoons of swimming! In this newsletter, we thank our long-time supporters and advocates, George and Mary Forshay and the Knights of York. To you all, welcome back and may we have another prosperous year together.

With gratitude,
Julie Mower, M.A.Ed.
Executive Director

*The mission of The Phoenix Center, working in partnership with families and community, is to develop the potential of each student with developmental disabilities and those on the autism spectrum ages five through 21 and to provide customized, unique and individualized programs aligned with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Promoting the development of the whole student, we care for, educate and empower our students and graduates so that they will develop life-centered skills which will **prepare them for life beyond the classroom.***



STUDENT WELLNESS DAY

In the spring, for the second year in a row, we had the privilege of hosting a wellness day for our students sponsored by pop.earth. Pop.earth is short for “population earth” and is a non-profit organization focused on providing holistic health treatments and options for those with special needs, including autism and other developmental disorders. Based in Long Island, New York, Founder and President Debbie Stone started this organization when her son Dylan was diagnosed with autism and began to explore a series of holistic treatments and therapies to help him.

Debbie Stone and pop.earth hosted yoga, cooking, and exercise (calisthenics) activities for our Student Wellness Day. All of our students participated in at least one activity throughout the day. Debbie explains, “working with a school like The Phoenix Center is so great because we are both committed to helping those affected by autism reach their fullest potential. This event enabled the students to explore different activities and interests for themselves.” ■

STAFF GET A WELLNESS DAY OF THEIR OWN!

Whether you read the paper, or medical journals, you are likely to find research studies on the importance of physical and social engagement as one of the most critical components of a healthy, productive and happy life. At The Phoenix Center, we are committed to ensuring the health and well-being of our staff. As their day-to-day lives are filled with challenges and the stresses (albeit rewarding) of giving 110% to our students, taking time to have a little fun is critical to keeping the four principles of the FISH! Philosophy—play, choose your attitude, make someone's day and be present—alive and well.

In the spring, we hosted a full day of wellness for all of our staff members. We started the day with a team-building exercise of a school-wide scavenger hunt. The rules of the game included having the staff take selfies of their group with the item or action they found. Some of the things they had to create for themselves included building a “human totem pole”, doing a reenactment of a Romeo and Juliet scene, finding a specific fish in the building and making fish faces. Zumba, yoga, massage therapy, scrapbooking and volleyball were some of the teambuilding activities we enjoyed throughout the day. A great time was had by all and everyone left tired, but smiling! Thank you to all of our dedicated, giving and passionate staff! We love you. ■



STAFF GO FOR A RUN!

The Nutley Chamber of Commerce was pleased to celebrate the 19th year of the Nutley 5K Race! The Phoenix Center and Nutley Special Young Adults each received a percentage of the proceeds of the race. We were grateful to receive \$1,250 from the 300+ runner event.

Barbara Chiarieri, Chamber office manager, said, “we were so thrilled to be able to make a donation to a very worthwhile local organization that too few people know about. They do amazing work with the special needs student population.” The race was attended by 15 staff members from The Phoenix Center and drew participants from NYC to South Jersey. Volunteers from Nutley High School also came to help execute the event, several of whom also helped with our Casino Night Fundraiser in April!

Mike Zippo, Chairperson and creator of the race, said, “I have been a lifelong runner and I believe it is important to teach our kids that it is really important to get up, out—and moving! I am thrilled to have partnered with the Nutley Chamber of Commerce. Over the years, we have been able to help so many organizations, from food banks to schools. This year, knowing we can in some way help a beautiful place like The Phoenix Center is very rewarding. It is amazing what they do for those kids.” ■



SPOTLIGHT ON GEORGE & MARY FORSHAY: LIFE IS A BEACH

George Forshay explains, "My wife Mary and I were with Dr. Gibbia and her husband Kevin on New Year's Day and said, 'we have this great beach house, you have this great school, what can we do together?' We started doing this in 2006, and that was the beginning of our 'Annual Beach Day Outing' for The Phoenix Center."

This annual outing takes four groups of students, over the course of two weeks for a day at the Jersey Shore in mid-July at the gracious invitation of George and Mary Forshay. The students enjoy a day at the beach where they swim in the ocean, relax in the sand, and feast on an all American BBQ lunch of hamburgers, hot dogs, and more. This is followed by a ride in the Forshay's boat with Captain George and First Mate Mary and crabbing off their dock. George continues, "We love to do this, but it's the staff that deserve the credit. As challenging as it can be to get all of these students with a variety of disabilities from one activity to another in an unfamiliar environment, they do it—with love and a smile on their faces. It's extraordinary. What an amazing place with incredible people." ■





KNIGHTS OF YORK GOLF OUTING

On August 17, Dr. Gibbia, and her husband, Kevin and Kim Wynbeek and her husband, Len had the pleasure of attending the Knights of York Annual Golf Outing. The Knights have been long-time supporters and partners of The Phoenix Center for 15 years. The Knights are a non-profit organization made up of a “modern-day band of brothers” who have pursued one noble mission since 1996: to improve the lives of children in need. This annual fundraiser is a small example of the kinds of events held by the group. The event was attended by over 130 people and money was raised to help continue their philanthropic efforts.

We are pleased to acknowledge the tenure of President Andy Cioffi, who will be stepping down this fall, with Board member Fred Grapestein replacing him. Andy states, “I have enjoyed supporting The Phoenix Center for 15 years now. You see the difference that the school and the staff have on these kids. We know that all of our contributions go right to work—from buying technology for the classrooms to starting community employment opportunities for the older students—they need, and use, every penny.” We congratulate Andy on his Board retirement and thank him for all he has done for, and with, us! ■

CALLING ALL GIANTS AND RAIDERS FANS!

Make a difference in the lives of The Phoenix Center students while getting your football fix. Keep an eye out for the chance to participate in our annual raffle starting mid-October. You will have the chance to win an amazing trip to San Francisco to see the Giants vs. Oakland Raiders from Friday, December 1– Monday, December 4, 2017.

Hotel, airfare, ground transportation to and from airport, hotel and stadium, evening cocktail party and tailgate party included. Fully hosted by Big Blue Travel Services. Raffle tickets are \$100 for one or \$200 for three. Drawing takes place on Tuesday, November 14 at 11:15 a.m. Need not be present to win. Check our website in a few weeks for more info.

SAVE THE DATE
KNIGHTS FALL EVENT
Thursday, November 16,
Aleo Restaurant, NYC

This is the organization’s longest running fundraiser. Formerly called Cigar Night, this event features hand-rolled cigars, hors d’oeuvres, a buffet, wine tastings, raffle prizes, and a generous 50/50 drawing. The event kicks off the holiday season and the US Marine’s “Toys for Tots” program.



POOL TRIPS THANKS TO THE FIDELIANS OF AMERICA

We are excited to announce a partnership with the Fidelians Foundation, a non-profit organization based in North Haledon, NJ whose mission is to make a difference in the lives of individuals with special needs and critical illnesses. Born in 1939, the organization was started by a group of Italian-American businessmen. The word Fidelians was derived from the word "fidelity" which means "loyal to a cause." Their facilities include a swimming pool, picnic area and craft room, which we used on Fridays with our students during the month of July. Leonard Agrusti, President, states, "Providing The Phoenix Center with the use of our facilities is a great way for some of their students to participate and experience the joy of swimming in a pool on a hot summer day. There is something magical about the water which both kids and adults respond to. They all leave with smiles on their faces, which is our mission." ■



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SAVE THE DATE

CASINO NIGHT Friday, April 27, 2018