

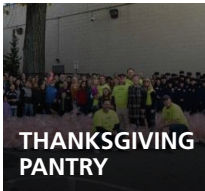


*Preparing students for*

*life beyond the classroom*

# FOCUS ON PHOENIX

## WHAT'S INSIDE



## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



I hope this finds you and your families well. We have been blessed these last few months with the generous support and donations of people like you and the organizations we are featuring here today: **PSEG Foundation, Holiday Express, The Mariner Foundation, UBS, Holy Family Parish, Tradeweb, Modera Wealth Management LLC of Westwood, The Shannon Rose Restaurant—among others.**

Our students have enjoyed special holiday events and activities, some that have inspired them to focus on the needs of others and the ways in which we can offer aid.

This past quarter was a record-breaker in terms of our press coverage. Our good work has been featured on Channel 12 News, FIOS TV, NJBiz.com, NJ BIZ, NJ Kids Special Needs, The Montclair Dispatch, and Coffee with Marci for our work in the community, as well as right here at the school.

And finally, regarding our fiscal health, we have currently raised 88% of our \$48,000 Annual Fund goal. Please help us bridge the gap with your own gift so that we may continue to provide the most loving, safe and educational environment possible for all of our students, while continuing to offer ongoing resources to them and support to their families.

We are grateful for the continued financial assistance and support we receive from our friends, parents and alumni families. If you have already made your gift, thank you. If you have not yet done so, you can donate at [thephoenixcenternj.org](http://thephoenixcenternj.org).

Enjoy the rest of your winter. Until next time, stay safe, be well and stay connected.

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.*

# THE PHOENIX CENTER *at a glance*

We wanted to share with you a graphical “snapshot” of The Phoenix Center and all the great programs and initiatives we support each and every day. These are possible—in great part—because of contributions from people like you. Take a look:

Founded in

1991

 16 students

 12 staff

Today in

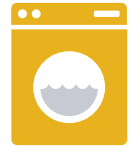
2018

 145 students

 200 staff

## Transition Services

- 30 local job sites
- 6 transition programs
- Community-Based Instruction



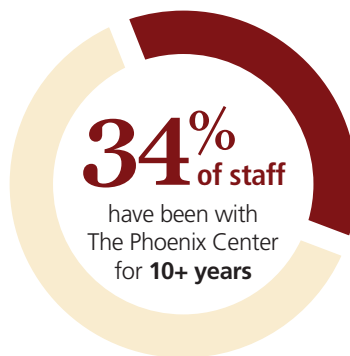
16  
classrooms



divided into four units based on age, classification, and level of functioning

6 special area subject classes

Students from 60+ districts in 8 counties



5

related service offerings



10

treatment rooms

## 4 Principles of the FISH! Philosophy

- 1 choose your attitude
- 2 be present
- 3 make someone's day
- 4 play

Supported Employment

44%

of students ages 16–21 hold paid or unpaid positions in the community

17     extracurricular activities



## COFFEE WITH MARCI

Julie Mower, Executive Director of The Phoenix Center, sat down with Marci Hopkins to talk about the mission of the school and how to “make it” through the holiday season without stressing out. Our blog on this topic: *5 Tips to Alleviating Stress for Students and Their Families* can be found on our website. ■

# PSEG FOUNDATION HELPS US ADD ANOTHER ROBOT!

Earlier this school year, The Phoenix Center submitted a grant to add another robot to our family and our grant was approved by the PSEG Foundation!

On January 8th, the PSEG Foundation came to visit and awarded a \$13,656 grant, allowing us to expand our Robot Human Interaction (RHI) program with the purchase of an additional NAO Robot. The autonomous, programmable humanoid robot is just 23 inches tall and weighs 9.5 pounds. It is equipped with two HD cameras, four microphones, a sonar rangefinder, two infrared emitters and receivers, an inertial board, nine tactile sensors and eight pressure sensors. More than the sum of its parts, the NAO robot acts as a mediator to encourage students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to explore their interactions with other people in a way that is non-threatening.

Maria Spina, Program Officer and Marlene Perfeito from PSEG Foundation, Scott Kennedy from The Montclair Dispatch and Emily Girsch from FIOS TV were on hand to interact with NAO. Our student, Billy, has developed a software program for the robot to do a "Simon Says" interactive learning module for another classroom. When asked why he likes to work with the younger students, his response was, "because I like to be a good friend." Billy's mom, Jen, was able to contribute great insights as well.

The PSEG Foundation's generosity allowed The Phoenix Center to purchase its first NAO in 2016. We are so thankful to add another NAO Robot to our growing family.

Great news travels fast—in addition to the FIOS news piece, News Channel 12 also featured our Robot Human Interactive program! ■



## SAVE THE DATE FOR CASINO NIGHT!

**Mark your calendars for April 27th at 7 p.m. for The Phoenix Center's 9th Casino Night Fundraiser to be held here at the school.**

**Please register and consider buying a sponsorship.**

If you haven't attended before, it is a festive evening of gambling, passed hors d'oeuvres, drinks, dessert and great prizes! This event helps us fund our key annual initiatives and provides our sponsors and partners with the visibility and community goodwill they have earned. We anticipate more than 200 attendees and a dozen or so sponsors. Sponsorships are available, and your participation would make an enormous difference in our ability to sustain our high quality of education for so many students. For sponsorship opportunities or ticket information, please contact Carolyn Sharaway at [csharaway@thephoenixcenternj.org](mailto:csharaway@thephoenixcenternj.org). ■



# HOLIDAY EXPRESS COMES BACK TO VISIT!

Holiday Express has been coming to us since 2014, and their return visit in December 2017 was one of our best days of the year! Through Holiday Express' giving partners program, the Mariner Foundation donated \$4000 to the school.



The Holiday Express organization's mission is to deliver music, food, gifts, financial support and friendship to those with the greatest need for the gift of human kindness during the holiday season and throughout the year. They visit adults and children in need, including the mentally and physically disabled, the isolated, individuals in addiction and recovery programs, the poor and the homeless, and children with serious illnesses. The organization includes 150 professional singers and musicians who volunteer their time, as well as more than 1,600 other adult volunteers who work tirelessly year-round to prepare and perform the private charity programs at specialized schools, psychiatric facilities, homeless shelters, and soup kitchens.



We were visited by Rudolph, Santa and many other characters. Everyone—from the kids to the teachers and administrators—left with ear-to-ear smiles. Thank you, Tim McLoone, for founding this unique and special organization and sharing your work with us. We really appreciated the holiday cheer their team provided. Michele Macchia says, "Our visit to The Phoenix Center is incredible every year! The students are wonderful and the staff is amazing. Everyone has a 'Rocking Good Time!'" ■

## SANTA AND HOLIDAY GIFT DRIVE

This year again, we had the good fortune to be sponsored and supported by the generosity of the following people, companies and organizations such as Holy Family Parish, UBS, Tradeweb and Modera Wealth Management LLC of Westwood, NJ. Modera Wealth Management LLC was a first time donor and outdid themselves by hosting an event where clients and friends joined staff in decorating gift bags, making handwritten cards and preparing gifts for delivery to the school. It was a festive event. Special thanks to members of our Board of Directors and staff who also contributed to this worthwhile event! ■





## HOLIDAY CONCERT FRIDAY, DECEMBER 15TH

Our Annual Holiday Concert was another huge success. Attended by over 150 friends and families, the students performed and sang various multicultural holiday songs. Each of our students performed on stage and many students participated in additional acts such as the Comedy Club and Dance Troupe. Several highlights to the morning concert included solos performed by our students, Rosie (vocal), Rowland (piano), Eric (piano), Ryan (vocal), Zion (vocal) and Ismael (violin). Our Holiday Concert has turned into a steadfast tradition for so many of our friends and family! ■

## FOCUS ON “THE SHANNON ROSE” RESTAURANT

98 Kingsland Avenue, Clifton, NJ



One of our local eating establishments has been a tremendous supporter of our school for many years. For those of you who have ever been to our Casino Night or other after-school events, you would have had the opportunity to taste Shannon Rose’s delicious food. Dimitri Meleounis, General Manager, explains how he got to know us, “The team at The Shannon Rose has worked closely with The Phoenix Center for over six years. In that time, we have supported the school with food donations for their annual Casino Night fundraiser. However, the most fulfilling aspect of our partnership is when we host Restaurant Night twice a year for the students and their families. Our staff loves the opportunity to help the families of The Phoenix Center experience a night out from time to time.” Please visit The Shannon Rose and tell them we said thank you! ■



## THANKSGIVING PANTRY

We're so very proud of our very own Rachel (from Room 112!) and her family at Guzzo + Guzzo Architects for being a part of the "Basket Brigade" organized each year by the Meadowlands Regional Chamber of Commerce! Rachel's dad, Anthony Guzzo, started this effort after Hurricane Sandy. Over 300 baskets of Thanksgiving foods were distributed this year (with several Phoenix families benefiting) by this amazing program! We're so lucky to have such incredibly caring staff members like Rachel! ■

**A “Notable Note!”:** The Phoenix Center’s Giving Tuesday Fundraiser yielded \$7,740 in donations plus \$25 matched by The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The Foundation hit their limit within the first hour of the day! We had 51 people donate on a day that Facebook didn’t take any fees and has now announced it will not charge fees on donations given through the platform going forward! ■



## STUDENTS RUN A BAKED GOODS FUNDRAISER

This school year, one of our units (consisting of four classrooms) led by Stephanie Bloomer of Room 209 and supported by Marc Restaino, Thomas Reynolds, Kelly Horst, and Greg Reisman, focused on exposing our students to the needs of others and the ways in which we can offer aid. "We felt the holiday season would be a great time for our students to really get hands-on experience with doing something selfless." The students were involved in the prep-work, advertising, baking, set-up, and implementation of the fundraiser. They also counted the money they raised, and wrapped all of the presents purchased with the funds.

Providing our students opportunities to consider the experiences and hardships of others is important, and this activity really allowed them to do so. It was also wonderful to watch students of different ages, and from different classrooms, work together and accomplish a common goal. They were all extremely proud of themselves, and of how much money they were able to raise for the children of Boston Children's Hospital through their hard work. After the fundraiser was done, they even began requesting other activities and organizations they could help next time! ■



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**SAVE THE DATE**  
CASINO NIGHT FUNRAISER Friday, April 27, 2018