



FEBRUARY 2021: HINDSIGHT IS 2020

Preparing students for

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

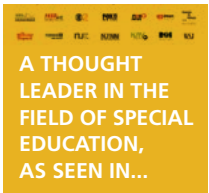
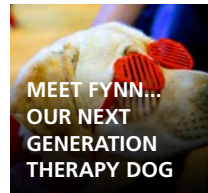
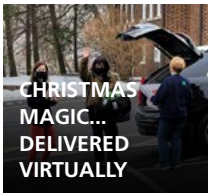
life beyond the classroom

FOCUS ON PHOENIX

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Virtual Gala Fundraiser



A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Happy 2021 to you all! We named this newsletter "Hindsight is 2020" in the hopes that we will use what we have learned from our experiences in the past year as we move forward. Due to the continuation of COVID-19 protocols, we have opted to make our 30th Anniversary Gala Fundraiser on Saturday, June 5th a virtual event, ensuring the health and safety of our friends, families, and supporters.

I am so very proud of The Phoenix Center's students, their families, and staff for coming together to make the learning experience so robust and engaging. We could not have done it without everyone's dedication, out-of-the-box thinking, and Herculean efforts.

Equally as important are the contributions of our donors and sponsor community. We truly appreciate the long term involvement of Modera Wealth, TradeWeb and UBS in our holiday cheer efforts, to our longest-standing supporter, the Columbia Bank Foundation, who is the title sponsor of our Gala event, and Thomas J. Kemly, CEO and President, as our honoree.

Together, we will weather the storm, rise and soar, like the ancient phoenix our name is taken from. I invite you to contribute in any way you can...a silent auction item, a sponsorship, or a gift and/or ad in honor of a loved one. Until next time, take care, be well and stay connected.

In 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'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY

Virtual Gala Fundraiser *Saturday, June 5, 2021*

*Honoring Thomas J. Kemly, President and
CEO and the Columbia Bank Foundation*



Due to health concerns, the continuation of COVID-19 restrictions—and our commitment to keeping our friends, family and supporters safe—we **have made the decision to make the Gala a virtual event**. We have an action-packed schedule planned that promises an evening of fun, silent auctions, prizes, and more. We will also be using a silent auction bidding software called **GiveSmart** this year and we will be able to open the bidding the week leading up to the event! **More information will follow regarding ticket pricing, journal ads and more...**

We are pleased to announce our Title Sponsor, Columbia Bank Foundation...thank you to Thomas Kemly and his amazing staff for their 20 years of support!

Knights of York have just signed on as one of our Leader sponsors, so a big thank you to Hani Copti and the Knights for their 18-year commitment to our events and programming as well.

We would like to also recognize our other committed sponsors: Railroad Construction Company and Edward Jones are Legacy Sponsors, the Knights of York and DeMeola, Zawacki and

Mingione are our Leader Sponsors, Delta Marcliff at Ambassador level and JB Autism Consulting is our Steward sponsor. Please join me in thanking these wonderful organizations for their ongoing support. Please let us know if there is a firm you know that may be interested in getting some visibility at our event.

This brings us to a very important note: **we very much need additional sponsors to help us underwrite the event, as well as goods and services for our prizes and auction items**. We call upon our sponsors, friends, families, vendors, local businesses, and volunteers to attend and contribute in any way that you can. We have sponsorship options at multiple donation levels, as well as personalized gifting opportunities. Because we had to cancel our Casino Night in May 2020 due to COVID-19, this Gala event is even more critical to our fundraising efforts.

We will also be offering an **event journal for advertising/messaging opportunities**. If you would like to know more, please contact our Development Officer, Carolyn Sharaway at CSaraway@thephoenixcenternj.org or 973.542.0743 ext 403.

Please stay tuned and support in any way you can! ■

“For 30 years, The Phoenix Center has supported the educational, behavioral and therapeutic needs of students with disabilities,” said Thomas J. Kemly, President of Columbia Bank and the Columbia Bank Foundation. “For 20 of those years, we have been fortunate enough to call The Phoenix Center our friends and our partners. Through grants of over \$300,000 and numerous volunteer days, we hope to continue our history of making a difference together.”





CHRISTMAS MAGIC... DELIVERED VIRTUALLY

On December 21, 2020, we kept the spirit of the holidays alive for our students and staff...Thanks to the invaluable and ongoing support of **Modera Wealth**, **TradeWeb** and **UBS**, our students' wish lists were fulfilled. TPC "elves" coordinated their efforts and organized a parent "curbside pick-up" of their children's personalized gifts. Additionally, students were invited to log into their Google Classrooms to see **Santa (Kevin Gaynor)** and **Mrs. Claus (Dr. Gibbia)** sing and share a holiday message virtually. Thanks to our very talented friends at **Holiday Express**, students and their families and staff were able to enjoy a virtual concert of holiday classics to top off the festivities! ■

MEET FYNN...OUR NEXT GENERATION THERAPY DOG

Part of our Occupational Therapy (OT) Program is the inclusion of our therapy dog, Fynn. Fynn's 'Mom' is Occupational Therapist Lauren Martini, and Fynn is a relative of our beloved therapy dog, Chaney! Fynn, now two years old, is the highlight of any Google classroom he visits. Always a crowd pleaser, he graciously performs tricks as the students call out to him, including riding a skateboard and balancing on a surfboard on top of a yoga ball, to name just a few! We are all looking forward to when he can be back at school, 'live and in person!' ■





#GIVINGTUESDAY WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!

The Phoenix Center raised nearly \$20,000 from our #GivingTuesday campaign on December 1, 2020.

We owe this success to our friends, parents and staff who created campaigns on Facebook and invited their peers to participate as well. Facebook also matched a portion of the money raised!! These funds will support our non-tuition items, such as the purchase of student and teacher technology/devices as we continue to deliver a hybrid model of teaching and learning.

We are so grateful to our amazing community. Thank you! ■

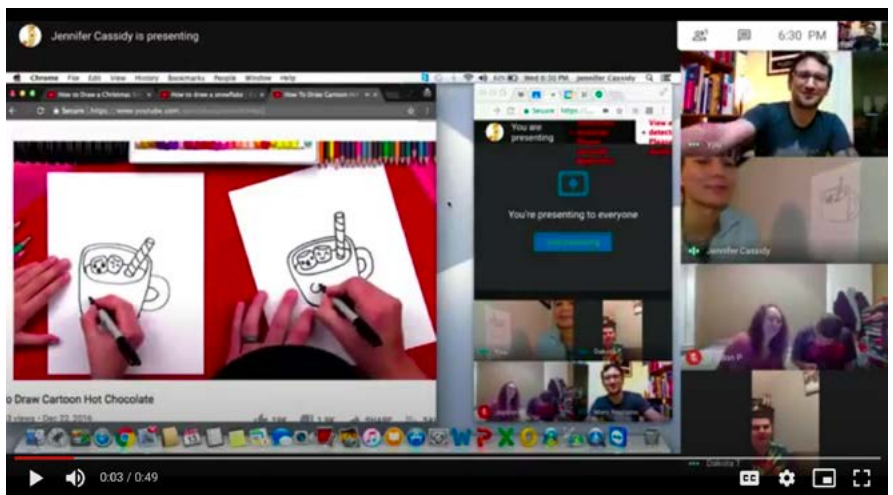
VIRTUAL FAMILY NIGHT IN

In this era of continued COVID restrictions and the colder weather bringing people indoors for longer periods of time, The Phoenix Center is still helping our students stay connected and sustaining a sense of school spirit and community.

On January 13th, The Phoenix Center hosted "Family Night In" via Google Classroom, that allowed our students, as well as their families (parents, caregivers, and siblings alike) to participate in a series of virtual activities ranging from BINGO games and drawing class, to pet therapy sessions with Fynn, and a virtual dance party!

Each activity had multiple time slots that were 15 minutes each. Participants chose any or all of the activities in any time slot.

The Phoenix Center has been hosting these virtual events since the early months of the pandemic thanks to the creative thinking and commitment of our teachers and staff. A special shout out to Ashley Agresti and her team (Melinda Sheehan, Michelle Benavides, Jennifer Cassidy, Lauren Martini and Fynn, Michelle Radosti, and TPC sibling, Eliska C.) for coordinating the event and activity stations! ■



THE GREAT KINDNESS CHALLENGE!

In the spirit of bringing more kindness into the world, the *Great Kindness Challenge* was a breath of fresh air for the TPC community. 28,000+ schools worldwide showcased various acts of kindness, culminating on the week of January 25th-29th. Some suggested examples were 'leave a nice note on your friend's desk', 'compliment five people today', 'tell a joke to someone' and so many others! We submitted our acts of kindness via photos and videos which can be seen in our social media and/or their organization's website at greatkindnesschallenge.org. Check out our video [here!](#) ■



STAFF FUNDRAISER

Each year, in memory of our student Ryan W., we've had toy drives in the name of *Do Happy* and the *Warter Strong Foundation*. This year that was logistically impossible, so we decided to have a staff fundraiser in memory of Ryan, with all funds going to gift cards for the clients at the incredible Toni's Kitchen in Montclair. Supervisors Amy B. and Nancy M., along with Executive Director Julie Mower, handed over almost \$1,400 worth of gift cards! #dohappy ■



A THOUGHT LEADER IN THE FIELD OF SPECIAL EDUCATION, AS SEEN IN...

As we reflect during this unusually difficult year, it seemed like the perfect time to stop, take a deep breath, and be grateful for the diverse media outlets we have had the privilege of being covered by. Our reputation as an innovative school, with thought leadership and subject matter expertise in the field of special education has never been more apparent. In the last several years, we have been featured in these news media, with our most recent article appearing in *Autism Parenting Magazine* entitled "How to Select a Private School for Your Child with Special Needs." ■



WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE



Amazon Smile

There are many different ways of supporting TPC. A basic and super easy way to contribute to TPC is to designate **The Phoenix Center, Inc** as your favorite charitable organization on Amazon Smile. This allows us to receive a small percentage of every purchase you make (0.5% of each eligible purchase). So, every time you shop at AmazonSmile, you're automatically giving TPC a gift, which makes us smile!

Matching Gifts

Another way to donate is to see if your employer will match your contributions, allowing your dollars to go that much

further. You can check to see if your employer matches donations by clicking on the [donate page](#) of our website.

Recurring Donations

Other ways to donate: a one-time donation, a recurring donation (monthly, quarterly or annually) or the opportunity to create a significant legacy by putting The Phoenix Center in your will and/or to follow a planned giving strategy. A planned gift is pledged now and gifted at a later date. There are a variety of ways to make a planned gift at no cost to you and some can give you income now while benefiting TPC today from your intentional philanthropy.

To consult with us about making a planned gift, setting up a trust, donating stock or another type of marketable securities, please contact Development Officer, Carolyn Sharaway, 973.542.0743 ext. 403 or CSharaway@thephoenixcenternj.org. ■

In an effort to save money, and some trees, The Phoenix Center is in the process of transitioning to an electronic newsletter. Please email CSharaway@thephoenixcenternj.org to be added to our list! Many thanks!



CELEBRATING
30 YEARS
OF EXCELLENCE

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SAVE THE DATE
TPC'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY
VIRTUAL GALA FUNDRAISER
Saturday, June 5, 2021



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