



FALL 2021: A RAINBOW OF POSSIBILITIES!

Preparing students for

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

life beyond the classroom

FOCUS ON PHOENIX

WHAT'S INSIDE

OUR GALA RECAP

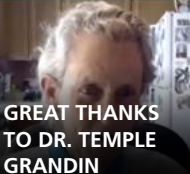


RECIPE FOR A SUCCESSFUL VIRTUAL GALA

THANK YOU TO OUR GALA PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO COLUMBIA BANK FOUNDATION



GREAT THANKS TO DR. TEMPLE GRANDIN



THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



THANK YOU LEN WYNBEEK



2021 GRADUATION



WE'RE BACK!



SPOTLIGHT ON OUR ALUMNI: ADOLFO, STEVEN & CHARLIE



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

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



I am so proud of our students, parents and staff for working through the challenges of the past year and a half. Together, we are rounding the corner and are making our way back to the normalcy of a full and regular in-person school day. Rest assured, we continue to be in close communications with our local health department and are following the guidance provided by the NJDOE, NJDOH, CDC and Governor Murphy. Despite the ups and downs of COVID restrictions and the impact they had on our events and programs, we have a lot to be grateful for, plenty to celebrate and so much to look forward to.

This year holds much potential and hope—of ongoing health, strength and prosperity for our learning community. It is because of that mantra that our chosen theme for the 2021-2022 school year is a **rainbow of possibilities**. Everyone's rainbow may look a little different, but a rainbow all the same. 🌈

As Executive Director, my **rainbow of possibilities** for this school year includes good health, students filling our hallways, getting our students back into the community and in-person family events. As true as *"there's no place like home,"* was for Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz, it is similarly true for The Phoenix Center, who has been called a *"home away from home"* for so many. Our rainbow represents the strength needed to face adversity and challenges, while dreaming and planning for a future together.

This issue covers our 2021 graduation, updates from some of our alumni, and a recap of our 30th Anniversary Virtual Gala celebration. Also included is our thanks to our Gala committee, our sponsors, and one of our unsung heroes, Len Wynbeek, along with a sneak-peek at our full in-person ESY program!

I am excited to see the rainbow of possibilities this school year will bring. I invite you to create your own rainbow. 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.



2021 GRADUATION

We were so happy to be able to get together again and hold an in-person, socially distanced graduation ceremony for the TPC Class of 2021. Despite the many challenges our students and their families weathered in the last year, Bill NJ S3434 provided a *rainbow of possibilities* by offering an additional year of school for this graduating class. With that said, 14 of our 25 2021 grads will be joining TPC for an additional year of learning! We wish all of our graduates luck and success! ■



WE'RE BACK!

During TPC's summer program in July, called Extended School Year (ESY), the large majority of our students returned to full time in-person learning. They enjoyed a summer filled with Olympic-themed activities in the classrooms and therapy treatment areas, leading up to a schoolwide Field Day event! It was so good to be back together again. You can still "see" the smiles on our students and staff members' faces—even behind the masks! ■

SPOTLIGHT ON OUR ALUMNI: ADOLFO, STEVEN & CHARLIE

We are so happy and proud to report on the growth and success of our alumni, Adolfo, Steven and Charlie, the self-proclaimed 'Mt. Rushmore of The Phoenix Center'.

These three remarkable young men—who all started attending TPC back in 1994—were featured in a conversation with Lauren Protomastro, Transition Coordinator, Amy Maciag, Related Services Supervisor and Nancy McDonald, Unit Supervisor during our Gala event.

We learned that Adolfo has been performing as an actor at *Stage Quest* since 2010 and recently appeared in a production entitled "Frost Nixon". Charlie is currently a paraprofessional at TPC, has completed his associate degree at Bergen Community College with a major in Liberal Arts History and began taking courses at Ramapo College in pursuit of his bachelor's degree. Steven is currently attending Passaic County Community College, focusing on Humanities. We're so proud of all of our alumni and each of their great accomplishments! ■



OUR
GALA
RECAP

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*

**Columbia
Bank** *Foundation*

RECIPE *for a Successful Virtual Gala*

70 minutes of fun!

21 sponsors

110 guests

3 alumni interviewed

3 families interviewed

1 keynote address: Dr. Temple Grandin

34 silent auction items

*Yields: Endless servings of fun and a full plate
of generosity and support for our programs.*



THANK YOU TO OUR GALA PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Phoenix Center is grateful to its Gala Planning Committee Members for their collaboration and work in making this event possible.

Ashley Agresti
Consumer, Family
and Life Skills Teacher

Jonathan Andolino
Job Developer/
Structured Learning
Experience Instructor

Dr. Jim Ball
Board Member

Liz Copti
Board Member

Jeff Hecker
Alumni Parent,
Board Member

Iryna Lomaga Carey
Board President

Julie Mower
Executive Director

Natalie Neubauer
Board Member

Katie Passarotti
Principal

Mayra Pastore
Alumni Parent,
Board Treasurer

Marc Restaino
Integrative Technology
Coordinator

Andrew Schuck
Assistant Principal

Nadine Schwartz
Alumni Parent

Maria Sedlack
Board Member

Carolyn Sharaway
Development Officer

Kim Wynbeek
Director of
Related Services



A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR TITLE SPONSOR COLUMBIA BANK FOUNDATION...

and a heartfelt thank you to our honoree, Thomas J. Kemly, and his amazing staff!

For over 20 years, Columbia Bank, the Columbia Bank Foundation and Thomas J. Kemly have partnered with The Phoenix Center to advance our mission of supporting the educational, behavioral and therapeutic needs of students with disabilities. Mr. Kemly was appointed President and CEO of Columbia Bank in 2012. Besides leading the bank on a steady growth trajectory, he has implemented programs to expand employment opportunities at Columbia Bank, created "Team Columbia," where employees volunteer to participate in community charitable endeavors, and expanded the Columbia Bank Foundation, now one of the largest private giving foundations in NJ.

The Columbia Bank Foundation has granted over \$300,000 to support various initiatives such as technology upgrades, school security enhancements, a new playground, enrichments to several Phoenix Center school programs as well as various sponsorships through the years. TPC was also the grateful beneficiary of Columbia's Charity Golf Outing on multiple occasions. In addition, Team Columbia volunteers visit TPC to paint and beautify the school every year. ■

GREAT THANKS TO DR. TEMPLE GRANDIN FOR BEING OUR GALA KEYNOTE SPEAKER!

The Phoenix Center was very honored to have Dr. Temple Grandin as the featured speaker at our event. Dr. Grandin spoke about early intervention, as well as finding and encouraging the student's gifts, not disabilities. We could not agree more! Thank you Dr. James Ball for making the connection and for including TPC in your timely co-authored article published in the Star Ledger with Dr. Grandin: nj.com/opinion/2021/04/temple-grandin-joe-ball-a-child-on-the-autism-spectrum-needs-early-intervention-opinion.html. ■



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THANK YOU TO LEN WYNBEEK

Our beautiful Gala invitations and Journal were both printed pro bono by *amplifi*, that specializes in strategic communications for non-profits, including fundraising strategy, personalization, data analysis, and stewardship.

A special thank you to Len Wynbeek Jr. (yes, our very own Kim Wynbeek's hubby!) VP, Business Development, at *amplifi* for your help and generosity. We appreciate you both! Len can be reached at: len@amplifinp.com, (973) 633-6500 x445, amplifinp.com ■



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



PLEASE HELP US SAVE TREES & TPC MONEY!

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



CELEBRATING
30 YEARS
OF EXCELLENCE

est. 1991

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SAVE THE DATES

TPC 50/50 DRAWING
Wednesday, November 10, 2021

#GIVINGTUESDAY
Tuesday, November 30, 2021



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