



SUMMER 2022: SPENDING TIME TOGETHER

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR LIFE BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

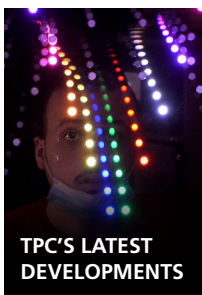
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FOCUS ON PHOENIX

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SUMMER 2022



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A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



I am happy to reconnect with you in our summer edition newsletter! We are calling this our *Spending Time Together* edition. As you will read, we have had the great pleasure of holding several in-person events during the last few months of the 2021–2022 school year.

Our first in-person fundraising event since 2019 was held on April 8th of this year. Casino Night 2022 was a great success!

In addition, you will read about our in-person graduation ceremony and our fun Family Bowling Night Out event, both held in June. Lastly, you will learn about our summer 2022 activities, as well as a snapshot of our donors and the accomplishments we have been able to achieve as a result of their generosity and partnerships.

Wishing you a happy and healthy summer! Until next time, take care, be well and stay connected.

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



The Phoenix Center is hiring!

TEACHERS & PARAPROFESSIONALS WANTED

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.



CASINO NIGHT AT A GLANCE

On Friday, April 8th, our Casino Night fundraiser was a great success! It was our first in-person fundraising event since 2019! Getting everyone together in support of a common goal was so gratifying and well-needed by all. We had 150+ in attendance, with over 20 contributing sponsors, 41 prizes, and 10 silent auction items that raised over \$90,000! Casino Night 2022 was one of the most successful events we have ever had! Thank you to all that contributed, attended and sponsored!

A special thank you to our Title Sponsor, DeMattheis Development and our long-time supporter and All-In Sponsor, Columbia Bank Foundation.

This success allows us to continue offering programs that are not covered by tuition dollars. The Leisure and Recreation program, which includes Yoga, Horseback Riding, Bowling and Flippin' Out Tumbling and Gymnastics, as well as technology upgrades throughout the school will benefit from this fundraiser. ■



“My wife and I were happy we attended The Phoenix Center Casino Night. It was a great opportunity to meet some new friends and have some fun all while supporting a great cause.”

—Dennis E. Gibney, Chief Financial Officer, Columbia Bank
TPC Board Member

“Last night's Casino Night Event was amazing. My family, friends and I had such a fun time at the event. It was great getting to see all the people coming together to raise money for The Phoenix Center. I look forward to attending more TPC events!”

—Kaitlyn DeMattheis, DeMattheis Development
TPC Sponsor

CASINO COMMITTEE

Ashley Agresti; Jonathan Andolino; Elizabeth Copti; Dr. Geraldine Gibbia, Ph.D., CCC-SLP; Jeffrey Hecker; Iryna Lomaga Carey, Esq.; Leon Morton; Julie Mower, M.A.Ed.; Natalie Neubauer, M.S., CCC-SLP; Kim Oakes, M.S., LDT-C; Kathryn Passarotti, M.A.; Mayra Pastore; Marc Restaino; Andrew Schuck, M.A.Ed.; Maria Sedlack; Carolyn Sharaway, M.A. CFRE; Kim Wynbeek, M.S., CCC-SLP

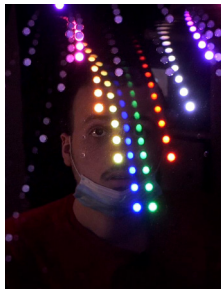
TPC'S LATEST DEVELOPMENTS...

TPC support from individual donors, Foundations and Corporations have made the following enhancements possible.



Our New Subscription to IXL

This online STEAM learning tool has been the perfect enhancement to our learning environment for the last few years. Thanks to a generous recent grant, we were able to increase our subscription for 100 students from one to three-years. This computer software gamifies learning in the areas of English and Language Arts (ELA), math, social studies, and science. Students find this experience motivating because they are rewarded for doing the exercises. Not only does it support all levels of learning, but its core curriculum structure meets the NJSL standards. Additionally, there are built-in diagnostic and data capture tools so teachers can track the progress and development of every participating student.



Enhancements to our Multi-Sensory Environment (MSE) Room

The Multisensory Environment (MSE) is a dedicated room that provides an immersive sensory experience using a combination of tools and equipment including vibro-acoustic seating, lights, music, fiber optics, light projectors and a large vertical tube that holds bubbles (aka, bubble tube). The purpose of the room is to provide students the space and opportunity to self-regulate so they can be more readily present in the classroom and able to learn. NJ.com recently published a feature on our special space you can see [here](#).

Students who participate in the MSE program demonstrate improved self-regulation and an increased ability to maintain a calm and alert state following this experience. Students develop the ability to tolerate, adapt and function more successfully in school, at home and in the community.

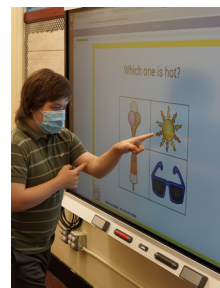
The MSE room has a direct academic impact on our students. A great example is Ernie, diagnosed as being on the autism spectrum, who is mostly non-verbal and learning to communicate using single words. The MSE room encourages him to use his own abilities to express needs and wants. In his recent session, Ernie was so excited to be in the "Bubble Room" that it motivated him to create simple sentences to say, "lights on; music on; open door", etc. The MSE motivates Ernie to create simple sentences where he wouldn't otherwise by laying the building blocks of learning and communication in a meaningful way.



Enhanced Horticulture Program

Some of our goals for the Horticulture program are for students to obtain a better understanding of basic botany, gardening as a hobby, growing an edible garden that they use to learn about eating, and preparing healthy foods.

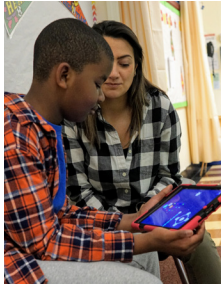
Through experiential teaching, students follow the process of a "farm-to-table" gardening concept. By offering a "multi-sensory approach to learning," horticulture is explored as both a science and an art. The horticulture program provides edible and sensory gardens that teach students about composting, planning, planting, and caring for an edible garden. This most recent grant will allow for two hydroponic towers that enable the growth of green, leafy vegetables indoors and year-round. These vegetables are used in our farm-to-table efforts when preparing recipes. In addition, it will fund the purchase and installation of a drip irrigation system for our raised garden beds that ensure that all plants are watered during weekends and during school breaks.



Three New SMARTboards

This equipment was purchased for our classrooms, Speech therapy and Supported Employment Program. This tech update also brings an updated technological capability and engagement component to these programs. These new SMARTboards operate on a vertical plane, which is beneficial from a therapeutic and instructional perspective, and extends the learning from individual to group sessions. Benefits to the Supported Employment program include students having pre-exposure to new job responsibilities. This new tech addition allows students to

participate in “drag and drop activities” and help teach job skills modeled after positions our students held during the pandemic when they couldn’t be there in person. This gives students exposure to new roles or jobs they haven’t experienced before and may want to pursue in the future.



Deliver a 1:1 Technology Ratio for Students & Staff

We now have Chromebooks and iPads for every student and staff member—depending on the needs and preferences of the students—that bridges the digital divide. These ongoing upgrades enable us to not only remain current, but help us pivot to remote learning in real-time when necessary. Some of our students are so excited to learn with their new devices that they want to take them home and continue to interact after school hours!



Recreational Community-Based Instruction (CBI) Program

One of our newest recreational CBI programs is yoga—and we’re so excited to share that this awesome new program made the news! *NBC New York* (did a feature on our amazing kids! Huge thanks to *Good Vibes Yoga & Kombucha Bar* in Nutley, and of course, an extra special thanks to PT Lisa Duffus for running this program so wonderfully and to Kimie Mittman, our dynamic instructor at *Good Vibes Yoga*!

Our teachers have noticed that after their students do yoga, they are calmer and more focused in class. Just like most yoga classes, students go through breathing exercises and poses to increase strength and flexibility. At the end, they do the relaxation practice of Shavasana. Learn more about how the students are responding to the yoga program by [watching the video here](#). ■

GRADUATION RECAP

On June 10th, we were pleased and proud to be graduating 16 students from TPC! As a result of the State of New Jersey’s Bill S.3434, students with special needs were able to receive an additional year of state-funded education from 2021–2023, so this year’s graduating class consisted of a combination of ‘21 and ‘22 year graduates. Dr. Gibbia, Co-Founder & Executive Director Emeritus was on hand to provide our graduates with words of encouragement and wisdom. Our Board President, Jim Russomano, presented diplomas to the graduates. Another highlight of this graduation ceremony was given by our student dance troupe, run by Jena H! This was the first onstage performance since 2019. ■

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES:

Bryan B., Eric B., Makylar B., Nicholas C., Louis J., Cristian K., Eliyahu K., Agni M., Jonathan N., Tiffany O., Giorgia P., Brian S., Tyree S., Dakota T., Joshua T, Kaleb T.





SUMMER 2022

For the first time since 2019, we are able to bring our students for a trip to the pool! Thanks to our ongoing supporters, Fidelity of America, for generously allowing us to use their outdoor pool facility in North Haledon. Our students enjoyed Friday morning swim sessions during our summer program—definitely a favorite! ■

The Phoenix Center at a Glance... LOOK AT OUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS!



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR
LIFE BEYOND THE
CLASSROOM
est. 1991

**MORE than 30 YEARS
OF IMPACT**

Accredited by
NCASES and
Middle States
Association

FOUNDED IN 1991 With

16 students

12 staff

Today We're

120+ students

180+ staff (full- and part-time)

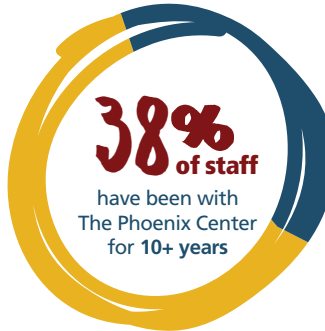


Students from **58+** districts in
8+ counties

5 related
service
offerings



11 treatment
rooms



15 clubs and
activities

1:1 student tech
ratio

15
classrooms

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

PREPARATION FOR LIFE

- Community-Based Instruction
- Job coaching services
- Adult service registration & placement
- Post-secondary support



FAMILY SERVICES



- Parent educational workshops
- Weekend and evening activities
- Support groups



4 PRINCIPLES OF the FISH! PHILOSOPHY

- 1 Choose your attitude
- 2 Be present
- 3 Make someone's day
- 4 Play

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FAMILY BOWLING NIGHT OUT

For the first time since 2019, TPC held its annual Family Bowling Night Out on June 17th. This event was attended by 26 students and their families (equaling 97 bowlers), plus 20 staff members, and was held at Bowlero in Belleville, NJ. Our students and their families enjoyed a night of bowling, pizza and socializing with each other. What an amazing way to spend a Friday night! ■

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!



PREPARING STUDENTS FOR
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SAVE THE DATE

CASINO NIGHT 2023
Friday, April 28, 2023
Mark you calendars!



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