



The Phoenix Center, Inc.
16 Monsignor Owens Place
Nutley, NJ 07110
Phone: (973) 542-0743
Fax: (973) 542-0687
www.phoenixcenterinc.com

Inside this issue:

Student Spotlight	1
A letter from the Executive Director	2
Bergen Community College Visit	3
Bowling Team, Swimming, and Horseback Riding Programs	3
Fundraising / Development	4

All of our students have abilities and disabilities and we will focus on their abilities rather than their disabilities.

Focus on Phoenix

The Phoenix Center is a private nonprofit school committed to offering a well-integrated program focusing on the development and education of the whole child and his/her family. Our team approach provides diversified programming with the emphasis on student independence, social-emotional growth, career development and integrated employment opportunities. The Phoenix Center's primary goal is to assist students five to 21 years of age in developing skills which will maximize their adaptation to everyday life.

Volume 13, Issue 2

Winter / Spring 2010

Student Spotlight

The Phoenix Center is proud to introduce one of its shining stars, Marc P. In 2005, at the age of 6, Marc first came to The Phoenix Center.

When Marc first arrived, he was non-communicative and rarely socialized with his peers. He had difficulties both academically and behaviorally. Now, Marc is 11 years old and is reading and socializing with his classmates. He has made friends at The Phoenix Center and in the community.

Marc is especially successful in reading and math: two areas he really enjoys! He is on the reading program, *Reading Milestones*, and continues to make excellent improvement. He is also doing an superb job with *Touch Money*, a money skills math program, and is able to apply his money skills when participating in The Phoenix Center's Restaurant Program and on field trips into the community.

Marc has also become a technology whiz and his mother, Jude, attributes his success in this area to all the technology The Phoenix Center offers. Jude says, "The Phoenix Center has given him the opportunity to use technology such as the SMARTBoard. He loves using computers and he is good at it because of his exposure to computers at The Phoenix Center."

He also enjoys going on Community Based Instruction (CBI) trips. His most recent trip was to Brunswick Lanes, where Marc showed his excellent bowling skills. Bowling with his class allows him to show his peers something that he is really good at. It is a chance for him to impress his classmates with his great skills and also share bowling tips with others.

Jude, Marc's mother, credits the Community Based Instruction trips to Marc's success in the community. Jude says, "We used to not go out because Marc would have a difficult time in the community. However, once he started going on CBI, we were able to go out as a family again. We take Marc and our family out to dinner now, and by the end of the meal, Marc has become friends with our waiter or waitress. Marc also learned from his bowling trips not to run down the lanes. Now we go bowling every Saturday night, and he does a great job. He even has his own bowling ball."

Laura BouDaher, Marc's teacher, adds that she is very proud of Marc. "Marc is making excellent progress both academically and behaviorally. Through the help and support of his one-to-one aide and his parents, we have been able to move to the next step with Marc and challenge him more academically and behaviorally. Marc has created new friendships in the classroom and he continues to be social and work on his interactions with friends."

Marc's mother, Jude, notices his growth as well, saying, "Marc was a different child from when he started at The Phoenix Center. He had very little communication and difficult behaviors. Now he is socializing with people everywhere he goes. He also has more patience and will sit down to watch some television or a movie, which is something he would never do before. The Phoenix Center has given him so many opportunities. I owe his success 100% to The Phoenix Center."





**The Phoenix Center
Administrative Staff**

Geraldine Gibbia, Ph.D.
Executive Director

Douglas A. Berrian, Ed. D.
Director Personnel /
Staff Development

Julie Mower, M.A. Ed.
Principal

Audrey Poggioli, M.A. Ed.
Assistant Principal
Curriculum and Instruction

“Believe that
opportunity
is everywhere
and all
around you.”

**The Phoenix Center
Board of Directors**

**Rick Claydon
Rosemary LaGamma
Karen McNamara
Maria Sedlack
John Siracuse
George Spina
George Reinhardt
Karen Reinhardt**

A Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends, Families and Supporters,

It is already February, the second month of the second decade of the 21st century!! It feels like Y2K was only yesterday! As you can see from the contents of this newsletter, our educational and enrichment programs support our mission of educating the whole child and his/her family. This mission insures that The Phoenix Center continues to soar!

In February, our minds recall our First President, George Washington, and our Sixteenth President, Abraham Lincoln, the love all of us share on Valentine's Day, and the great African Americans who have made a difference in our country. The American Heart Association reminds us that February is Healthy Hearts Month, and the American Cancer Society focuses us on Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

I would like to reflect on the presidents, love, and Breast Cancer Awareness Month and provide our readers with some insight on how The Phoenix Center's staff and its programs reach out beyond the walls of our school.

All of our **presidents** valued **education**. President Abraham Lincoln said:

“Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.”

The Phoenix Center believes in sharing its excellent educational and therapeutic programs with young scholars in the fields of general education, special education, speech, physical and occupational therapies, and psychology. We are a training/internship site for undergraduates and graduate students from **Seton Hall University, Montclair State University, William Paterson University, St. Elizabeth's College, Dominican College, and Caldwell College**. These affiliations allow The Phoenix Center to give back to its community constituents. We believe that by providing these opportunities, we are aligned with President Obama's guiding principle of *providing a high-quality education for all which is critical to America's economic future*.

On **love**, Helen Keller once said *“The best and most beautiful things in this world cannot be seen or even heard, but must be felt with the heart.”* As you know, last month, Haiti was devastated by an earthquake. The Phoenix Center has several staff members whose families live in Haiti. As a community, we felt their hurt and extended our love to them by initiating **HHH-Help Haiti Here**. Staff members have contributed and we have held Pancake Breakfasts and other fund raising events. To date, we have raised \$2000. This money will be shared with members of our staff whose loved ones have been affected by the Haitian earthquake.

On **Wednesday, February 10th**, we celebrated our **100th day of School** for the 2009-2010 School year. All students and staff were asked to bring in 100 pennies which were given to the **American Cancer Society** in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Jennifer Bell, our Language Arts teacher also known as *Starfish* (Chairperson of the Fishing Crew) introduced the idea believing it would make *someone's day and allow us to be present to those suffering from breast cancer (two of the FISH! Philosophy principles.)*

The Phoenix Center believes it has been given much and must in turn be socially conscious and give back to its community. Many of the student and family programs described in this newsletter would not have been possible if it were not for the generosity of YOU, our supporters. It is because of the richness of our program that we can be a training site. Our staff makes it a caring community filled with love.

Thank you for supporting us and our mission. Be well, healthy, and remember to smile. As Winnie the Pooh says *SMILES are catching!*

Gratefully,
Dr. Geri Gibbia



Bergen Community College Visit

On November 20, 2009, seven Phoenix Center students attended a resume writing class at the Mosaic Center located at Bergen Community College at the Meadowlands. The students, who have various disabilities, were given an opportunity like never before - to attend a college class and learn from a college professor. The students followed the lesson with enthusiasm and curiosity and were able to participate in the class with little help from support staff. After learning about the components of a resume, students applied the newly learned knowledge to create their own resumes.

The course lasted one hour and was followed by a meeting with an admission counselor. During the meeting, students were given the opportunity to ask about the demands of the Mosaic Center's program and how to apply to it. They were very enthusiastic about the meeting and the opportunity to ask questions about the program.

This is just one of the many ways The Phoenix Center approaches vocational education. The Phoenix Center incorporates job skills into many core subjects including Language Arts, Social Studies, and Math to help students become more independent after they graduate. Additionally, many students hold jobs in the community and are supported by The Phoenix Center's employment specialists to help them be successful on their job site. However, this opportunity provided a new experience for the students since it was more hands-on and in a college setting. One student described the experience as "the best day of my life because I got to go to college."

The Mosaic Job Center is a newly developed program jumpstarted by the Henry H. Kessler Foundation. The Mosaic Center's mission statement is "Through a centralized public-private partnership of service providers and employers, we serve as a single point of contact to match the needs of employers with the best qualified job candidates and assist job candidates with disabilities to fulfill their employment goals."



Students displaying their certificates after participating in the class:
Michael V., Allan R., and Steven C.

Bowling, Swimming, and Horseback Riding Programs

Part of The Phoenix Center's mission is to educate, empower, and enhance the independence of its students and graduates. To do this, we use a variety of different resources in and out of the classroom. Three programs The Phoenix Center offers outside of the classroom include Swimming, Bowling, and Therapeutic Horseback Riding. These three programs have fostered independence and socialization among our students and other members of the community and are funded by the generous corporations, foundations, and gifts from individuals.

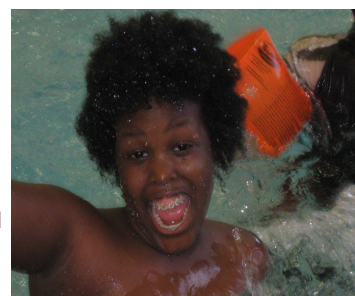
Bowling is a program geared to promote socialization among peers at The Phoenix Center and it also provides our students the opportunity to socialize with students from two different schools. In addition to weekly bowling trips, The Phoenix Center, along with the New Beginnings School in Fairfield, NJ, and Banyan School, also in Fairfield NJ, each send a team of 12 students to Brunswick Lanes four times a year. During these trips, the students are put into teams of four and are encouraged to socialize and become a team. They make up their own name and work on cooperation in a team environment.



Philip H. bowling at Brunswick Lanes.

Joe Poggioli, The Phoenix Center's Community Based Instructor, says "You see a lot of high-fives and laughing among the students. It has had a very positive effect because they are encouraging each other to do better and at the same time, forming new relationships."

The Swimming Program is held at the Pediatric Rehab of North Jersey in Wayne. The goal of the program is to provide the students with the opportunity to swim in a safe and accommodating environment. It also helps them become more comfortable with water. The students socialize with their peers and also learn safety rules around a pool. The pool is 100% chlorine and salt free and is a heated therapeutic pool.



Robert N. enjoying swimming with his class.

Therapeutic Horseback Riding takes place at Rocking Horse Rehabilitation in West Orange, NJ. At the site, the students are exposed to certified Hippotherapy and music therapy. The benefits of Hippotherapy include: improved balance and equilibrium, coordination, posture and self esteem. From a sensory standpoint, the program improves the students' motor planning and spatial awareness. The coordinator for this program, Marc Restaino, says "I have noticed a positive effect on our students involved in the program. They look forward to it and you can see an improvement in their behavior, especially on days they go horseback



Anthony H. enjoying horseback riding.



Fundraising / Development

Annual Giving Campaign: It is still not too late to make a donation to The Phoenix Center's Annual Giving Campaign. Annual appeal requests went out in the mail in December and again in early February. So if you have not yet made your gift, we would greatly appreciate your support. You can also log on to www.phoenixcenterinc.com and follow the Donate buttons to make your gift directly on our website.



Casino Night Fundraiser: Save the Date for an exciting fundraising event. On Friday evening, May 14th 2010, The Phoenix Center will hold a fundraising Casino Night. For ticket information or to sponsor a gaming table, contact nrahaim@phoenixcenterinc.com. Event Co-Chairs are Indira Khaku and Kerry Vara-Landolfi.



The Phoenix Center, Inc.
16 Monsignor Owens Place
Nutley, NJ 07110

THE PHOENIX CENTER CURRENTLY SERVES STUDENTS FROM EIGHT COUNTIES IN THE FOLLOWING NEW JERSEY SCHOOL DISTRICTS: Belleville, Bergenfield, Bloomfield, Boonton, Butler, Carlstadt/East Rutherford, Clifton, Cranford, Cresskill, Dover, East Orange, Elmwood Park, Fair Lawn, Glen Ridge, Hanover Park, Harrison, Hasbrouck Heights, Hawthorne, High Point Regional, Hoboken, Irvington, Jersey City, Kearny, Kinnelon, Lakeland Regional, Leonia, Lindon, Livingston, Lodi, Manchester Regional, Middlesex, Millburn, Montclair, Montville, Morris Hills Regional, Morris School District, Mt. Olive, Newark, New Providence, North Arlington, North Bergen, Nutley, Park Ridge, Pascack Valley Regional, Parsippany, Passaic, Passaic Valley Regional, Patterson, Perth Amboy, Pequannock Township, Pompton Lakes, Ramapo/Indian Hills, Ramsey, Ridgefield, Ridgefield Park, Ringwood, Rochelle Park, Rockaway, Roselle, Roxbury, Secaucus, Tenafly, Union City, Vernon, Verona, Wayne, West Essex Regional District, Westfield, West Milford, West Morris Regional, West New York, West Orange, Westwood Regional.