



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.

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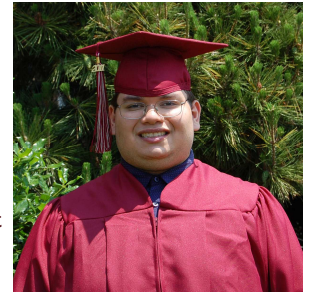
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Student Spotlight

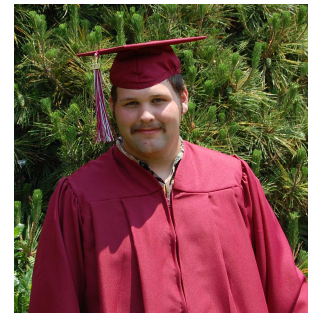
The Phoenix Center is saying good bye to two of its shining stars: Gustavo V. and Michael V. Both students graduated and are moving on to bigger and better things thanks to all they have learned at The Phoenix Center.

Gustavo came to the Phoenix Center nine years ago. At the time, he was very insecure and withdrawn. His mother, Ms. Lasso, says "Gustavo would not want to leave the house. He was very into himself. He was also not learning at his previous school because of his behaviors." His first teacher at The Center, Robert Engelbrecht added "Gustavo would never go to The Center's dances or participate in any extracurricular activities. He would stay home on days we had field trips or fun activities."



Gustavo V.

Now Gustavo is much different. He was involved in many extracurricular activities including Drama Club, Basketball, and Senior Chorus, and he never missed a fun trip or school dance. He also has a job at Staples in Clifton, where he interacts with and assists customers. "Today, Gustavo is not scared. He is outspoken if anything," says his mother. "To see him participate in Drama Club and Basketball is amazing," says Robert Engelbrecht. He adds, "His involvement shows the growth and potential that I knew he had."



Michael V.

Michael came to The Phoenix Center six years ago after he moved to New Jersey from Florida. At the time, Michael had a hard time dealing with consequences and would get annoyed with people easily. However he has improved immensely during the time he has been here. He joined the Drama Club, the Basketball team, and began working at the Montclair Public Library. He was able to obtain a second job at the Staples store closer to his home. "Michael has become quite a young man. I believe that the academics and the Drama Club played a significant role in who Michael has become" says his Uncle, James Schwartz. Michael's first teacher, Kelly Horst adds, "Mike has come very far in his time at The Phoenix Center. He was always very outgoing and willing to try his newest accent out. Over the years, his understanding as well as his personality has grown. His writing and acting abilities have matured, and he has learned what it means to be a good friend and employee. I am proud of the young man he has grown into."

Both young men have become amazing actors, with starring roles in this year's Drama Club production of "Peter Pan." They take their roles very seriously and have learned how to be good actors. Additionally, as they have matured, they have learned the importance of responsibility and balancing work and academics, as well as extracurricular activities. Ciara Dagostino, a teacher at The Phoenix Center, has had the privilege to teach these two young men for their last several years. "I have watched Michael and Gustavo grow into mature young men who are both very considerate and supportive of each other, and their friends. It has been a pleasure to work with them."

After graduation, Gustavo and Michael will continue to work at the jobs they obtained while at The Phoenix Center: Michael at the Montclair Public Library and Staples, and Gustavo at Staples. Both young men are great friends and plan on keeping in touch and maybe even exploring acting possibilities at local theater companies.

The Phoenix Center wishes them the Best of Luck in all they are do. They are rising stars that will continue to shine in all of their future endeavors.

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All of our students have abilities and disabilities and we will discover and focus on their abilities NOT their disabilities.



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By choosing to
think and believe
the best about
people, you are
able to bring out
the best in them.

- Bob Moawad

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A Letter from the Executive Director

Greetings Friends, Families and Loyal Supporters,

On May 6th, The Phoenix Center celebrated its 20th Anniversary with 375 supporters at a spectacular Gala at The Newark Club. The event raised more than \$100,000 for The Center's programs.

Over the years, The Phoenix Center has developed the reputation of being a happy, effective, positive, caring, loving and life-giving community. We offer a well-integrated educational and therapeutic program. We create highly specialized programs for students whose needs may not be met in other private school settings. WE BELIEVE THAT ALL OF OUR STUDENTS HAVE GIFTS AND ABILITIES AND WE DISCOVER AND FOCUS ON THEIR GIFTS.

Some highlights of our current program include our *Consumer Family Life Program* and our *Restaurant Program* which teach our students functional life skills such as cooking, bed-making, and doing laundry. As a result of these programs, several of our students are employed or volunteer in area restaurants and hotel chains. Our *Supported Employment Program* has eight job coaches who work with all of our students age 14 and older. Within the last two years, our employment sites in the community have increased from 9 to 30. These programs give our students the opportunity to be included in the real world—to learn to become as independent as possible...to feel successful...to get a paycheck---WHAT A GREAT FEELING!!!

Also within the last two years, we have sponsored *Leisure, Recreation, and Transition Fairs* with more than 35 vendors coming to our gymnasium to expose our parents and the community to the services available to our students now and in adulthood. We have expanded our *Parent Education and Support Programs* by offering monthly workshops with outside specialists and Phoenix Center staff members and by holding *Family Night Out* events at which parents can just go out and have dinner as our staff provides respite or benefit from the support of other parents in a group facilitated by one of our mental health professionals. Siblings, sometimes the forgotten children in families with children with special needs, also participate in sibling support groups. It is wonderful to see siblings exchanging phone numbers and e-mails. Another major focus has been on our *students' health and fitness*. In addition to their regular physical education classes, we have developed partnerships with *VOLT Fitness* in Glen Rock and *Flippin' Out Gymnastics* in Nutley to provide our students with community-based state of the art exercise experiences to increase their physical activity. We also collaborate in research and provide internship experiences for undergraduate and graduate students from *Seton Hall University, William Paterson College, East Stroudsburg University, The College of St. Elizabeth's, Montclair State University, and Touro College*. The program we are most proud of is our *Inclusion Program*. This year, three of our students were included in their local public schools for core content curriculum areas. In September, two of these students will be attending their local high schools full time!

As the Phoenix Center begins its third decade, our vision is to continue to improve our performance and live out our mission. This month, members of our Board of Directors, staff and community members participated in a two-day strategic planning retreat which will set the Center's course for the next three years. Some of our goals for the future include becoming a Nationally Accredited Educational Institution through the NCASES accrediting process; generating and participating in evidence-based research projects so that we can share our expertise and dynamism with the community; expanding our multidisciplinary assessment and intervention team to meet the complex needs of our students; and, starting an Alumni Association so that our families know that we are always here for them.

I close with a quotation from Helen Keller: *the best and most beautiful things in this world cannot be seen or even heard, but must be felt with the heart*. We are who we have become because of all of you—our families, child study teams, loyal supporters and new friends. Thank you for sharing your hearts with us. You have made a tremendous difference in the lives of our students and all of us in The Phoenix Center Family.

Make it a happy and safe summer!

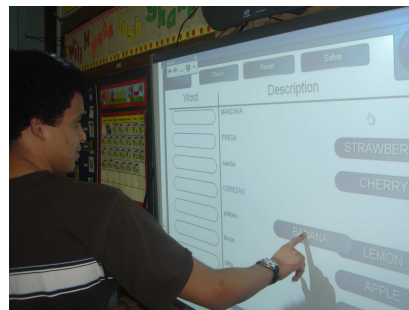
Gratefully,
Dr. Geri Gibbia



Technology Programs

The Phoenix Center is going hi-tech with the use of SMART Boards, iPod Touches and iPads. The Phoenix Center has been using SMART Boards (interactive white boards) in the classrooms for a number of years. We are now integrating the use of iPod Touches and iPads. These two latest technology gadgets have been the “in-item” for the tech-savvy, and they are now revolutionizing classrooms at The Phoenix Center. The two Apple devices are being used by Speech Language Specialists and Teachers to give students a voice and also to help them apply information they are learning in the classroom.

Phoenix Center student Nicky is one of the students at The Center who has been utilizing an iTouch to communicate. His iTouch comes with applications (‘apps’) designed to help him speak through touching icons that give voice to such basic functions as asking for a glass of water or even just saying ‘hello.’ “Nicky is bright and because he can read he was the perfect candidate for the iPod Touch. By using this new technology, he no longer feels isolated and has a more secure feeling of belonging in the world,” says Christine Saladino, a Speech Language Specialist at The Center.



Allan R. completing a SMART Board activity.



Nicky using the iTouch to communicate with his teacher.

Many students at The Phoenix Center use high-tech voice output devices to help them communicate, but they can cost up to \$16,000, says the Center’s Co-Founder and Executive Director, Dr. Geraldine Gibbia. “We still use these devices but because of the expense they can be cost prohibitive for The Phoenix Center, sending public school districts, and families.”

A new application, Proloquo2Go from AssistiveWare works with the newest generation iPhones, iPod Touches and iPads. The difference this device has made in Nicky’s life has been tremendous. He, like other students at The Center, now uses the application to participate in individual and group lessons as well as at home with his family and friends.

And what a difference it has made. Not only does using an iPod help our students feel more like other kids with its picture-taking and music playing abilities, it works wonders in helping them to ‘speak’ and keep in touch with family and friends. “Our entire team has seen an incredible benefit to using the iPod Touch with our students.” says Christine Saladino.

Says Phoenix’s Executive Director Dr. Gibbia, “With this new technology our special needs students can now be empowered to meet their unique communication challenges and become part of our ‘speaking’ society.”

The Phoenix Center is also piloting a new program using four iPads. These iPads will be used by the Speech and Language and Curriculum Departments and the classroom teachers. The iPads will be used to help develop communication as well as engage our students in new interactive lessons. “Integrating technology along with modifications and accommodations is a fundamental way of presenting content to our students” says Isabel Cosme, a Curriculum Specialist at The Center. “The use of iPads as an instructional tool will allow us to advance teaching and learning through the use of technology.” The iPad can also be used to help students communicate to peers, family, and teachers.

Teachers and Curriculum Specialists have been exploring the possibilities of using iPads in the classroom this past school year. They have used ‘apps’ for interactive reading, spelling, and math to help engage students and teach them new information. “One program we use with a student is interactive reading. The ‘app’ reads a book from Dr. Seuss, and then the student reviews sight words as well as comprehension questions pertaining to the reading” says Isabel Cosme. Additionally, students can learn about different emotions through the ‘apps’ available. “We have an ‘app’ that shows a video clip of a child acting out an emotion. It shows the entire emotion played out. It is in context and realistic,” says Cosme.

The integration of technology plays an important role in The Phoenix Center’s curriculum and services. It is a wonderful tool for all students and staff to use and we look forward to developing this program in the 2011-12 school year.



Stefon C. participating in an interactive lesson on the Apple iPad.



Fundraising / Development

The Friends of the Phoenix Center Foundation successfully completed another stellar fundraising year which directly helped our students. Because our students learn differently, they benefit from therapies and programs that are not covered by tuition contracts with the sending school districts. These cutting-edge therapies and programs are made possible because of the monies raised through the Annual Fund, Foundation & Corporate Grants and special events. This year, our special event was our 20th Anniversary Gala held at the Newark Club on May 6, 2011. All totaled our Annual Fund, Foundation & Corporate Grants and our Anniversary Gala raised over \$275,000 for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2011. With these funds, we supported leisure recreation and community activities, circuit training, swimming, bowling, therapeutic horseback riding, horticultural therapy, and family education and support. We were also able to purchase and install a new basketball system, *Peaceful Playground*, climbing rockwall, 10 computers, 6 SMART Boards, 4 Document Cameras, and multiple ITouches and IPads all for student use. And lastly, we were able to air-condition our gymnasium making it available for use throughout the school year.

We sincerely thank all the individuals, parents and organizations who provided support to our fundraising campaigns. We would also like to thank the following organizations for providing major support and grants during this time:

Catholic Human Services Foundation ♦ Copper Beech Foundation ♦ Robert & Joan Dircks Foundation ♦ First Hand Foundation ♦ Daniel Galorenzo Foundation ♦ Dorothy B. Hersh Foundation ♦ Hyde & Watson Foundation ♦ Inserra ShopRite Supermarkets ♦ Knights of Columbus Holy Family Council #14712 ♦ Knights of Columbus Lafayette Council #514 ♦ Knights of Columbus St. Mary's Council #2346 ♦ Knights of York ♦ John Victor Machuga Foundation ♦ Nicholas Martini Foundation ♦ Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation ♦ Lilian Pitkin Schenck Fund ♦ Seton Hall University ♦ William E. Simon Foundation.

**This does not include gifts to special events*



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THE PHOENIX CENTER CURRENTLY SERVES STUDENTS FROM EIGHT COUNTIES IN THE FOLLOWING NEW JERSEY SCHOOL DISTRICTS: Belleville, Bloomfield, Bloomingdale, Butler, Carlstadt/East Rutherford, Cedar Grove, Clifton, Cresskill, East Orange, Elmwood Park, Fair Lawn, Glen Ridge, Hanover Park, Harrison, Hasbrouck Heights, Hawthorne, Hoboken, Irvington, Jersey City, Kearny, Kinnelon, Lakeland Regional, Leonia, Lodi, Manchester Regional, Maywood, Middletown, Millburn, Montclair, Morris Hills Regional, Morris School District, Newark, New Providence, North Arlington, North Bergen, Nutley, Park Ridge, Passaic, Passaic Valley Regional, Paterson, Pequannock Township, Perth Amboy, Pompton Lakes, Prospect Park, Ramapo/Indian Hills, Ramsey, Ridgefield, Ridgefield Park, Rochelle Park, Rockaway, Roselle, Roxbury, Secaucus, Tenafly, Union City, Verona, Wayne, Westfield, West Orange, Westwood Regional, Woodcliff Lake