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## Phoenix Center reports optimism in employment market

These days most would say optimism in the employment market is hard to come by. But, not according to Kevin Gaynor, Job Developer for the Phoenix Center's Employment Program. "I see smiles, optimism, and positive attitudes every day," said Gaynor who places Phoenix Center students with autism and developmental disabilities in volunteer and paid jobs in the community.

And that optimism was certainly apparent at a recent luncheon at the Phoenix Center where student employees greeted and thanked employers like the Montclair Library, Nutley Library, St. Mary's Hospital in Passaic, Parisi's Fitness Centers in Midland Park and Wayne, the Courtyard Marriott in Lyndhurst, the Shannon Rose in Clifton, Staples in Clifton, JP Home Arama in Hawthorne, and the Sunset Pub and Grill in Lincoln Park.

"These organizations and the individuals that supervise our students are truly phenomenal," said Geraldine Gibbia, co-founder and executive director of the Phoenix Center. These organizations and individuals are creating quality jobs for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. It is a win-win for both the employee and employer. All of the Phoenix Center's students aged 14 through 21 participate in vari-



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE PHOENIX CENTER

Pictured are luncheon attendees from left to right: Dr. Geraldine Gibbia, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Phoenix Center; Mike Mazekiem, Librarian at the Nutley Library; Maria Labadia, Youth Services Supervisor at the Montclair Library; Lorraine Greaves, Manager of Volunteer Services at St. Mary's Hospital; Mark Cronin, Regional Manager, Parisi's Fitness Centers; Heidi Hayes, Front Office Manager at the Courtyard Marriott; Carolyn Blagojevic, General Manager, The Shannon Rose; Jeanine Seelman, Manager Midland Park, Parisi's Fitness Centers; Bob Egan, Owner, Sunset Pub & Grill; Sarah Guttman, Human Resource Manager, Courtyard Marriott; Frank Shrek, General Manager, Sunset Pub and Grill; Ed Burke, Manager, Staples; Jeff Psota, Owner, JP Home Arama; and Doug Berrian, Principal and Co-Founder, the Phoenix Center.

ous types of employment. Career exploration is the focus for students aged 14-16 while supported employment is the focus for students 16 and older.

The Phoenix Center is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit private school for students on the autism spec-

trum and those with other severe developmental disabilities. One hundred forty six students aged 5-21 attend the school located in Nutley. Students hail from 70 towns in New Jersey counties including Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Middlesex, Morris, Passaic, Sus-

sex, Union and Warren.

If you are interested in learning more about the Program or have an interest in employing a student, contact Gibbia at 973-542-0743 or [www.phoenixcenterinc.com](http://www.phoenixcenterinc.com).