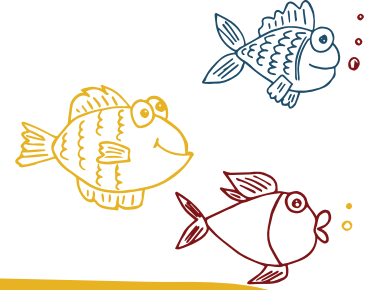




PREPARING STUDENTS FOR LIFE BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

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FOCUS ON PHOENIX



What's Inside



CLASS OF 2024!



SPOTLIGHT ON THE BOLGER FOUNDATION



HIGHLIGHTING OUR PARAPROFESSIONALS!



SPRING CONCERT: TPC PRESENTS "THE MAGIC OF DISNEY"

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As we approach the end of another school year, I am filled with immense pride and gratitude for the progress and achievements of our students and staff at The Phoenix Center. This year has been marked by significant milestones and heartwarming stories of growth and kindness.

Thanks to the generosity of The Bolger Foundation, we now have the funding to purchase a new school bus - enhancing our community-based instruction, supported employment and recreational programs. This bus is more than just transportation; it represents expanded opportunities for our students.

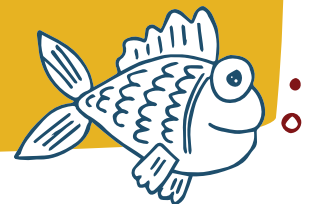
Our paraprofessionals, the backbone of our school, provide unwavering support and care for our students. Their dedication and passion are evident in every interaction, and we are incredibly fortunate to have such a talented and compassionate team. Please read what some of them have to say about TPC in this newsletter.

As we look forward, our goal remains clear: to provide a nurturing and supportive environment where every student thrives. We are inspired by the progress we see each day and the potential within each of our students.

Thank you to our entire Phoenix Center community for your steadfast commitment and dedication. Together, we are making a difference, one step at a time.

Until next time, take care, be well and stay connected. ♥

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

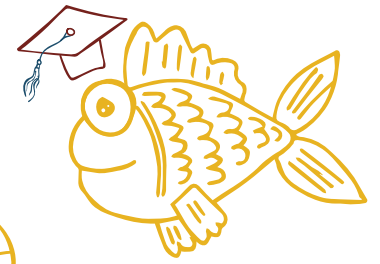


The mission of The Phoenix Center, working in partnership with families and community, is to develop the potential of each student with developmental disabilities and those on the autism spectrum ages five through 21 and to provide customized, unique, and individualized programs aligned with the New 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.

JUNE 2024 GRADUATION

We are pleased to announce one of our largest graduating classes in TPC history this year! Our graduates are:

Jihaad B.	Brandon S.	Ethan L.
Emerson C.	Dylan S.	Jett P.
Amanda D.	Nicholas T.	Graham S.
Ava F.	Angelo V.	Jhony V.
Enmanuel M.	Malary C.	Alexander V.
Christopher M.	Anthony D.	
Jonathan M.	Lauren D.	



New Ride in TOWN!



The Phoenix Center Thanks Bolger Foundation for New School Bus

The Phoenix Center is thrilled to announce a generous gift from The Bolger Foundation - a new school bus! This essential addition to our fleet will significantly enhance our ability to serve our students.

The Bolger Foundation, known for its commitment to supporting educational initiatives, has made a profound impact on our school community through this donation. The new bus will replace our 15-year-old, 16-person bus with a modern 24-person vehicle, accommodating more students, paraprofessionals, and related service providers. This upgrade ensures that our students have the necessary support and services during transportation and now rounds out our fleet of three 24-passenger buses.

Here is our interview with J.T. Bolger, President of The Bolger Foundation:

Tell us about your organization/foundation... What does it do/what is its mission?

The Bolger Foundation was founded by David F. Bolger in 1966 as a way to give back to the communities around him. Throughout his life he instilled giving back in each of his children. The mission of The Bolger Foundation is to inspire individuals and support charitable organizations, empowering them to better serve their community and the world.

What is your personal role and/or journey there?

My initial role with The Bolger Foundation was that of a Trustee, serving alongside my brother and father. I eventually became Vice President and Treasurer during my tenure. I currently serve as the President/CEO of the Foundation, and have served on the Board for over 20 years.

How or why did you start supporting special needs education?

The Bolger Foundation has always had a special penchant for special needs organizations and youth. We have worked with many over the years. Two that come to mind are West Bergen Mental Healthcare and The Children's Therapy Center.

We have long standing ties with West Bergen Mental Healthcare in Ridgewood, working with WB on various building projects, acquisitions and support over the years. We also have worked with numerous other organizations like The Children's Therapy Center, helping them to realize their building dreams in Fair Lawn and their new campus in Oakland NJ, fondly named after our father/founder David F. Bolger. My father always enjoyed the smiles and the joy children had with even simple gifts. One of our favorite days was to visit The Children's Therapy Center for Ice Cream day!

What led you to becoming a donor to The Phoenix Center (TPC)?

Through our grant application process we discovered The Phoenix Center and their need for a new school bus. The Trustees and myself were moved by the story of TPC and the large effect the new bus would have on programming for the students.

Is there an accomplishment/project or initiative that you are enabling for The Phoenix Center with your contributions?

We feel we are enabling more students to take part in offsite activities, whether it is a trip to the Zoo or the pool or other educational programming. We recognize that these are not typical school trips, and the students need 1:1 care along with the support of other professionals. Our hope is this new 24-passenger bus opens up new possibilities for more students to enjoy activities they may not have been able to before.

Tell us one thing about yourself that not very many people know.

I am an avid scuba diver!



The impact to TPC

TPC uses its school buses for nearly 500 trips annually, providing students with invaluable experiences beyond the classroom. These trips include community-based instruction, where students practice essential life skills such as grocery shopping and dining, as well as recreational activities like yoga, gymnastics, bowling, and therapeutic horseback riding. Additionally, the bus facilitates supported employment, offering internships and part-time job opportunities that help students develop professional and soft skills.

Field trips to the Liberty Science Center, Turtle Back Zoo, and other educational destinations further enrich our students' learning experiences. The bus also supports visits to a local pool donated by The Fidilians Foundation, enhancing our physical fitness and recreation programs.

The Bolger Foundation's mission to support educational and community-based initiatives aligns perfectly with the goals of The Phoenix Center. Their dedication to improving the lives of individuals through philanthropic efforts will make a lasting difference in the lives of our students. We are deeply grateful for their support and commitment to our mission.



Pictured from left to right:
Michael Tozzoli, J.T. Bolger, John Bolger,
Kathryn Byrne, Kaylee Bolger

J.T. Bolger, President of The Bolger Foundation, said it best, "The Bolger Foundation was proud to support The Phoenix Center and their purchase of a new bus. The bus opens up possibilities for the students to get off campus and experience all the area has to offer and The Bolger Foundation saw this as an integral part of the educational needs for the students."

The Phoenix Center and its community extend heartfelt thanks to The Bolger Foundation for this transformative gift.

HIGHLIGHTING OUR PARAPROFESSIONALS

At The Phoenix Center, our paraprofessionals are a crucial part of our educational team - providing essential support and care for our students. Recently, we surveyed our paraprofessionals to learn more about their journeys, experiences and aspirations. Here are some of their insights:

TELL US ABOUT YOUR JOURNEY—HOW DID YOU COME TO WORK IN THE FIELD OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND/OR THE PHOENIX CENTER?

Yahayra P: "I worked in early intervention for over 16 years, and my friend Lauren told me about this opportunity. I've loved every moment since joining."

Angela A: "My cousin Kate was a student here. She inspired me to switch careers."

Jessica B: "I worked in a self-contained classroom. I had a friend who worked here and always loved how happy she was at work and decided to apply."

Jessica K: "I have been working with this population for over 10 years now! I began volunteering at a summer program for children and adults with special needs when I was 14, and every summer since I have been there! I currently work as a group leader at the program, and seeing all of my kids grow up and being a part of a place where they get to be uniquely themselves and have fun pushed me to become a part of something more. This inspired me to work at a school for this population, so I could be a part of one of the biggest support systems that students have, and allow more students the opportunity to learn and grow (and have fun!)."

Violeta L: "As an OTA student at that time, I needed to fulfill my fieldwork requirements and found TPC. I fell in love with the community and stayed."

Jessica S: "My oldest daughter is on the spectrum. We received so much help with her when she was younger. She is in middle school now and doing amazing! I believe in the services. I just wanted to help and give back to other families."

Isis G: "I've always worked with children. But working with students with special needs came as a surprise...a good surprise. I heard about The Phoenix Center from a coworker who recommended it, and I read about TPC and found out it is one of the best special needs schools in New Jersey - so I wanted to be a part of it. I have loved working here and enjoy doing it. It is very rewarding to me, to see the students learn and grow with a little help from me."

WHAT DO YOU THINK MAKES THE PHOENIX CENTER SPECIAL?

Jackie M: "I think TPC stands out from the rest because of our core values! When first applying I loved reading that "Each student is someone's son/daughter, brother, sister, niece, nephew, and as such, will be treated with respect and dignity!" And of course our principles of the FISH Philosophy! And, we have the best staff!"

Yahayra P: "I love it! All the staff help each other. I love this school."

"It is very rewarding to me, to see the students learn and grow with a little help from me."

ISIS G



Angela A: "The big hearts people have and seeing people going above and beyond daily. Knowing I am working with a team."

Lisa P: "All the kids, amazing staff and all the wonderful things that happen here."

Jessica B: "The sense of family."

Rosalie L: "I love the kids so much. They have been a blessing in my life!"

Sanadra O: "The amazing staff and all the wonderful activities we do with the kids make it a special place."

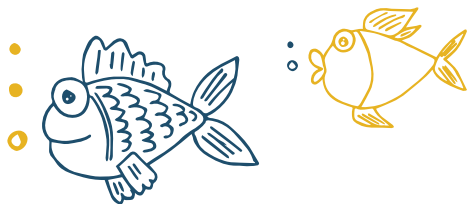
DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE SCHOOL TRADITION OR ACTIVITY?

Jessica S: "I love the prom that the school hosts for the older kids. I love seeing the kids dance and have the best time."

Rosalie L: "Art Class with Peggy is the BEST!"

Jessica K: "The holiday express and spirit week are always fun and engaging for everyone."





IS THERE AN ACCOMPLISHMENT YOU'RE PARTICULARLY PROUD OF DURING YOUR TIME AT THE PHOENIX CENTER?

Angela A: "I am proud of how much I have learned not only from the staff, but the students as well. I am proud to be a head paraprofessional for years."

Marie W: "Working with many students to help them achieve milestones no matter how small and teaching them to become as independent as possible as well as helping to reshape their behavior."

AFTER GRADUATING, WHAT DO YOU HOPE THE STUDENTS TAKE AWAY FROM THE PHOENIX CENTER?

Barbara R: "That TPC cares about each of them."

Angela A: "I hope they take away the kindness they have been shown. The lessons they have learned, the love that they were given, but most of all the independence we promoted. I hope they carry all that with them through the rest of their journey through life."

AFTER YOUR EXPERIENCE AS A PARAPROFESSOR AT TPC, DO YOU HAVE ASPIRATIONS TO CONTINUE IN THE FIELD OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN ANOTHER CAPACITY?

Jessica K: "I would like to become an OT!"

Sanadra O: "Yes, I love working in this field and I hope to grow more in the future."

Isis G: "I would love to continue working at The Phoenix Center as long as I can. I would like to work in the supported employment field."

The dedication and passion of our paraprofessionals are a big part of what makes The Phoenix Center a special place for our students. We are grateful for their continued commitment and the positive impact they have on our school community.

TPC PRESENTS "THE MAGIC OF DISNEY"

One of TPC's favorite events is our Spring Concert, where all of our students participate and showcase their talent and passion for the arts.

This year, our performances feature the magical music of Disney! Below are some highlights from the show.





PREPARING STUDENTS FOR
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IT'S NOT TOO LATE TO DONATE!

If you haven't done so already this school year, please consider making a donation.
Your support helps us continue to expand our dynamic programs and services. Thank you!