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### HIGH SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY 2023

Clark Public Schools

On Thursday, June 22nd, 2023, Arthur L Johnson High School held its sixty-seventh commencement ceremony. The event was attended by Board of Education President Steven Donkersloot, Vice President Thomas Lewis, Board of Education members, Clark Superintendent Edward Grande, Garwood Superintendent Christopher Kinney, family members, teachers, administrators, and other community members.

Assistant Principal Katrina Poskay served as master of ceremonies for the event. Senior Class President Julia Ranski led the Pledge of Allegiance and Marina Milara sang "The Star-Spangle Banner". The processional leaders included Julia Ranski and Victoria Szaro, Student Council President.

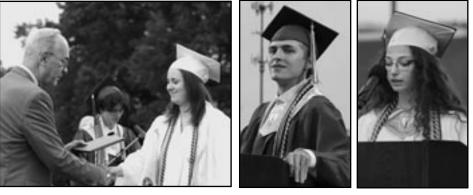
Salutatorian Samantha Domenick stated, "The people you spend your time with are important. While some friends come and go, others stay and so do the memories. Leaving high school I know the connections and relationships you develop make so much more of an impact than any grade or lab result."

Brian Morris then performed a flute solo to "Somewhere Only we Know."

Julia Ranski, Senior Class President reflected on her experience at ALJ and sharing her many memories, "Cherish the people and places you see because nothing will ever be the way it is again."

Board President Steven Donkersloot spoke about the bittersweet sentiment of the event. He encouraged graduates to think about the words of Martin Luther King "You don't have to see the whole staircase just the first step." He congratulated the students and thanked parents, guardians, teachers, administrators, and staff for the efforts in supporting these graduates.

Superintendent Grande shared the honors and accolades of the Class of 2023 mentioning that this class received over \$12 million in scholarships. He asked students to "be true to yourselves and your life dreams and make those dreams reality because you will be leaving here tonight with the foundation to do just that."





ALJ Select Choir under the direction of band director Erik Krebl, sang "Over the Rainbow/It's a Wonderful World."

Tara Oliveira, principal of ALJ, addressed the graduating class about the "power of moments. Moments have the power to shape us profoundly. They teach us about resilience, about adaptability, and about making connections. They remind us of the importance of being fully present and embracing the here and now and savoring each experience." 3 graduates, also joined Oliveira's speech. Nicole Lenkiewicz reflected on her time at ALJ and how friendships and memories will always remain alive. Vincent Goodman talked about his father encouraging him to get outside of his comfort zone. Matthew Froden then discussed the power of "weathering the storm" with his fellow graduates.

Students were awarded diplomas by Board of Education members. Names were announced by Victoria Szaro and Timothy Ford.

Valedictorian Brian Morris talked about the importance of taking advantage of opportunities. "Wherever you go, don't live a normal life. Live to be the very best person you can be and whatever any of us choose to do, I hope that none of us let any opportunities pass us by."

Ms. Poskay concluded the ceremony wishing the students "Blessing, peace, protection and happiness on all of the adventures that lie ahead of you. You will always be Crusaders and this will always be your home."



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### **GARDEN CLUB BUS VISITS NEW YORK CITY**

included the Cloisters, the Central Park Conservancy and the Met Museum. The club

The Garden Club of Westfield recently offers trips of horticultural interest, which are sponsored a bus trip to New York City, which open to the public. For more information, please contact Margaret Allen at gardenclubofwestfield@gmail.com.



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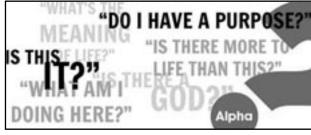
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#### Garwood Times • Page 4 • August 2023



(above) Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Scotch Plains to host a free spirituality seminar. Registration is required, please visit *ihmparish.net/alpha.* 





### **IS THERE MORE TO LIFE THAN THIS?**

A free spirituality seminar is being offered by Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Scotch Plains, NJ. Most meetings are on Zoom. In a world of isolation, anonymity, and keyboardwarriors, Alpha offers content and guidance for churches, ministries, and individuals to create a space for honest and open conversations about life's biggest questions. Everyone is welcome and no questions are off limits.

Alpha is a place to connect with other people who are open to exploring life, faith, and meaning. Alpha fosters honest, open, and judgment-free conversations for anyone to explore the Christian faith. Each session includes a time to connect with others, watch a short video on an element of the Christian faith, and then a chance for each person to share thoughts and questions with the group.

"I was invited to participate in the Alpha pilot. From the initial meeting, I knew this was something that I wanted to be a part of," explains Nancy Schreck. "After completing the pilot, I joined the Alpha team to help plan for the future of Alpha at IHM. It's a wonderful opportunity for people at any level of faith to meet new people and explore new ideas."

### **ALJ MUSIC PROGRAM RECEIVES ACCOLADES**

**Clark Public Schools** 

The Arthur L. Johnson High School music program, under the direction of ALJ Teacher Erik Krebl and Kumpf Teacher Andrew Calo, has received numerous recognitions recently. The ALJ Jazz Band attended Overbrook's Yearly Jazz festival where the ensemble received an Outstanding Band award and ALJ student Brian Morris won best soloist of the entire night, beating out 14 other schools and he received a scholarship. The group's Rhythm Section won



(above) ALJ takes home Top Soloist award and Best Rhythm section at Manchester's Jazz Festival. Senior Brian Morris receiving the soloist award for the tune "Hey Sammy!" and our Rhythm Section being represented by Senior classmen alike have all built up to sweeping soloist awards at every single competition ALJ participated in this season, and they hope to get more next year.

Sessions are free to attend and are scheduled on Monday nights at 7:30 p.m. The first meeting will be live and in-person on Monday, September 18, 2023, beginning at 7 p.m. in the Nazareth Center of Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) Church: 1571 S. Martine Ave. Scotch Plains. Good food and conversation will be offered to all in attendance. Most meetings after that will be hosted on Zoom. Links and directions will be provided to those who register. Participation is capped at 30 people.

"When I offered tech support for the pilot program at IHM, I had no idea what I was in for. I'm not very religious, but Alpha was an unexpected surprise!" offers Gabe Lamberty. "The program is interesting and entertaining. And it's nice to meet new folks from the community. Overall an unforgettable experience."

"I'm looking forward to the Alpha experience," says Lou Zappo. "It sounds like a lot of fun, and who knows, I might learn something about myself."

Registration is required, please visit ihmparish.net/alpha or call 908-889-2100. If you have questions about Alpha, please email office@ihmparish.net.

best rhythm at Manchester High School during the Tournament Indoor Association Jazz Competition, beating 7 other schools, along with Brian Morris once again winning best soloist of the night. The Jazz Band has also just placed 3rd in their Region Championships getting their highest score to date.

The ALJ Indoor Percussion won 1st place at the Tournament Indoor Association Competition at Brick Township High School as well as at Haddon Heights High School. They also successfully hosted a Tournament Indoor Association Competition at ALJ welcoming 10 other schools' music programs to compete. Most recently, at an April 30th event, Indoor Percussion and Color Guard placed first to be named Region Champions.



(above) The group's Rhythm Section won best rhythm at Manchester High School during the Emma Czeh. The hard work of upper and lower Tournament Indoor Association Jazz Competition, beating 7 other schools. The Jazz Band has also just placed 3rd in their Region Championships getting their highest score to date.

Photos by Clark Public Schools



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### **COMMUNITY GARDEN** INSTALLED **AT ALJ HIGH SCHOOL**

**Clark Public Schools** 

Arthur L. Johnson High School recently created a community garden with help from the Union County Dig In Grant. The project helped with the installment of two garden beds, soil, and various vegetable plants. All produce will be maintained by ALJ students, and then donated to the Osceola Church Food Bank, located in Clark.

Follow ALJ High School on Facebook





## **KEY CLUB SCHOLARSHIPS**

Submitted by Susan M. Dougherty

ALJ High School where the Clark Kiwanis Club's Key Club Students are given service certificates recognizing their volunteer service for the year. The Kiwanis Club of Clark, that started the tradition of honoring students this way back in the 1990s, gives out scholarships that night to Key Club members from the senior class. This year, five students were awarded scholarships and one other student was recognized for her willing spirit to help others.

Kiwanis Club's president of the adult club Bruce Jones was on hand on May 22nd to distribute the scholarships. Teen member Tina Herron was recognized with a special \$250 award for her loyalty to the high school club. Mr. Jones presented the Jenni's Toys Scholarship in the amount of \$750 to this year's recipient Tori Szaro. Jenni's Toys is a 501 (c)3

nonprofit that this year adopted more than 80 It's a yearly tradition: Super Stars Night at families and 120 foster kids to shower them with presents.

Two Silver Service Awards of \$300 each were given to Grace Warnick and Alycia Arboleda. A Gold Service Award of \$750 was presented to Maria Mormile. Finally, the highest award of \$1,000, the Kiwanis Memorial Scholarship was given to Nicole Lenkiewicz.

The ALJ Key Club adviser, Meghan Bradley, presented gold-colored stoles to seniors who have completed the required number of service hours for all four years of their time at the school. The stoles will be worn over graduation gowns signifying to the parents, friends, and community members their dedication to their community through volunteerism.

For more information about the adult club, the Clark Kiwanis Club, or the sponsored youth programs, contact crusadersue@hotmail.com.



Gold Stoles at ALJ Graduation (above) Graduating Key Club members at Arthur L. Johnson High School in Clark will once again wear golden colored stoles that were presented to them at the annual Super Stars Night in May. Adviser of the high school club Meghan Bradley distributed the stoles and reminded the seniors to wear their stoles proudly at graduation to signify their outstanding volunteerism with the Key Club, an international organization that is sponsored by the local group, the Kiwanis Club of Clark.

Courtesy photo

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### MOBILE MEALS RECEIVES DONATION

Sheet Metal Workers' Union No. 22 recently presented Mobile Meals of Westfield a \$1,000 ShopRite gift card donation. Representing the union was Business Representative, Financial Secretary/Treasurer Jason Rooney. Accepting the donation was Mobile Meals Operations Manager Josephine Walsh.

Mobile Meals of Westfield is a non-profit organization which provides nutritious and affordable hot meals for those unable to provide meals for themselves. The organization serves the communities of Clark, Cranford, Fanwood, Garwood, Mountainside, Scotch Plains and Westfield. For more information about the organization, visit mobilemealsofwestfield.org or call 908-233-6146.

Sheet Metal Workers' Union No. 22 serves Union, Morris, Somerset and Sussex Counties. The union members support veterans, the homeless and non-profit organizations as part of their community assistance programs. In addition, new union members, as part of their apprenticeship, provide 20 hours of community service annually over a five-year period for a total of 100 hours. For more information on the union, visit SMWIALU22.ORG.



(above) Union representative Jason Rooney and Mobile Meals Operations Manager Josephine Walsh. Courtesy photo



### SHINING STARS TO MAKE HISTORIC DEBUT AT PAPER MILL PLAYHOUSE

#### Shining Stars Network

After making their successful Broadway debut recently at the Gershwin Theatre, Shining Stars Network, a regional theater group for young adults with disabilities and their typical peers, will be performing a groundbreaking show at the Paper Mill Playhouse, Millburn, NJ on August 5, 2023. The esteemed group will perform a selection of songs and dance from Broadway, movies and more! Shining Stars Network will be the first group of performers with special needs to be featured on the main stage in Paper Mill Playhouse history. The Tony award-winning Paper Mill Playhouse has been offering a theater experience since the late 1700's and is excited to bring this unprecedented performance to their stage as part of their Theatre for Everyone program.

"We are beyond thrilled to partner with the iconic Paper Mill Playhouse to bring this show to life," noted Shining Stars Network co-founder & CEO Mike Curci. "Our cast is so excited and we can't wait for our stars to shine at such an amazing venue and to work with the talented Paper Mill team."

The Shining Stars Network cast recently celebrated their ten-year anniversary of inclusive theater performances with the assistance of typical buddies. It all began in a local home with a karaoke machine and people with disabilities who just wanted to perform to the best of their abilities with joy and acceptance. Shining Stars Network has performed in front of large audiences at the Union County Performing Arts Center, the Paper Mill Cabaret, and most recently the Gershwin theater on Broadway in New York City. They provide a safe and enthusiastic learning experience, culminating with a professionally staged performance.

Tickets for the Paper Mill performance start at \$25 and can be purchased at:

my.papermill.org/shiningstars. More information about Shining Stars Network can be found at shiningstarsnetwork.org/.

Shining Stars Network offerings include their annual "Evening of Shining Stars" spring show, a two-week Summer Workshop for individuals 21 and over, Camp Shine for students under 21, and their annual "Christmas Spectacular" in December.

"We're all about inclusion and opportunity while building self-esteem and creating friendships," noted Shining Stars co-founder and Show Director Sally Curci. "There have been so many incredible performances over the years and we can't wait to see our stars shine on the Paper Mill stage."

"Each opportunity offers our special cast members a chance to create lifetime memories," added Mike Curci. "Our ensemble just made their Broadway debut at the "Arts for Autism" concert at the Gershwin Theatre, where they received a standing ovation, and now, the amazing opportunity to perform a full show on the legendary Paper Mill stage will be another dream come true."

SHINING STARS NETWORK is a non profit organization based in Cranford, N.J. founded by Sally and Mike Curci that shines the light on the special needs community by creating opportunities in the performing arts, with the goal of building self-confidence and self-esteem while enjoying the experience of performing on stage. Now entering its 6th year, Camp Shine (for ages 10-20 years) and The Shining Stars Summer Workshop (21 and over performers) are two-week intensive programs open to everyone, including those with developmental disabilities, and will take place Aug. 14-25. To register, or for for more information on Shining Stars Network or any of their programs, please visit ShiningStarsNetwork.org or send your email to ShiningStarsNetwork@gmail.com.



(above) Performers with Special Needs take the main stage on August 5th at the Paper Mill Playhouse. Tickets start at \$25 and can be purchased at: my.papermill.org/shiningstars.The Shining Stars Network has performed in front of large audiences, and most recently the Gershwin theater on Broadway in New York City.

### **GRANT WILL SUPPORT COMMUNICATION CENTER**

Submitted by Adele Lewis, EFG Vice-President

The Education Foundation of Garwood (EFG) is proud to announce a new grant has been awarded to the administrative staff for a communication center, which includes a news desk and associated technology for students to broadcast video and audio announcements. Superintendent Christopher Kinney noted this will enable students to gain confidence as they participate in producing and delivering daily announcements, from current events to school news.

This grant was made in large part thanks to a generous donation from the family of Mr. and Mrs. John E. Conlin. This grant donation was made in their parents' memory and will continue their family's commitment to education by directly supporting our Garwood teachers and students. The Mr. and Mrs. John E. Conlin Grant will create greater opportunities for Garwood's educators by allowing them to obtain funding for school projects that connect to their curriculums while enhancing the educational experience of their students and we are grateful for their generous donation.

Mr. John E. Conlin along with his wife Jean, who shared John's passion for education, were both proud lifelong residents of Garwood who raised their four sons here. Mr. Conlin began his career as an educator at the age of 25 subsequent to serving in the United States Navy during World War II. At the end of the war, Mr. Conlin joined the Clark School District as a science teacher where he served in many educational capacities. Mr. Conlin retired from the Clark District as the first principal of Frank K. Henley grammar school, too. Always wanting to do more, Mr. Conlin then served as Garwood's elected representative to the Union County Regional High School Board of Education for 38 years and over that time he served as Vice President of the Regional Board and served time on various committees. During his tenure on the Board, the Regional District expanded from one high school to four and upon his retirement Mr. Conlin had served the longest tenure on the Union County Regional Board.

In retirement, Mr. Conlin remained an active citizen in Garwood as he would often be found at borough meetings where he would always provide valuable input to the Garwood Board of Education and the Borough Council. In 2012, the Education Foundation of Garwood honored Mr. Conlin with the "Person Making a Difference" award for his decades of service to Garwood and his core belief that children are our future; his passion for education was truly inspiring. The EFG members are honored that his family chose the EFG to continue his legacy by offering this generous donation to our organization.

The EFG is a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization and was founded in 2004 to work with the Garwood School District "in pursuit of educational excellence." You can follow the foundation on Facebook at "Education Foundation of Garwood."

### Garwood Times • Page 9 • August 2023 POLICE WARN OF PROPERTY CRIME

The Garwood Police Department is warning residents about an increase in property related crime involving motor vehicles such as burglaries, catalytic converter thefts and stolen vehicles. The department encourages residents to call whenever they see something out of the ordinary. Things to lookout for include cars circling the block, driving without headlights on and parking in an unusual manner, especially parked and occupied. If it doesn't seem right, call.



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#### Whose Hands are Helping?

The week of August 1

Check out our white board as you walk in the Library for hints helpful in identifying the helping hands. Make a guess about whose hands are helping. Correct guesses will be entered in a random drawing for a prize. A winner will be drawn on Friday. The winner will be contacted on Monday.

#### Scavenger Hunts August 4

View a picture of the lost globe's location on the Library's Facebook and Instagram pages at 10 am on Friday. Find the lost globe somewhere in Garwood and take a picture. Leave the globe

in its' spot for others to find. Return to the Library, report the globe's location by 3:30 to

collect a prize from the prize box.

#### CHESS IN MILLBURN

- In-person and Online Chess Lessons
- Rated Chess Tournaments
- Search us on YouTube: Chess Party
- Summer Camp and Classes Registrations Open!
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#### Last Day to Log In

August 4 by 3 pm This is the last day to log in your Summer Reading minutes. Minutes must be reported by 3pm.

#### **Closing Party**

August 8 @ 2 pm

The Scream Truck will be back for our closing party. Prizes and certificates will be awarded. **Ask Kiosk** 

August 9 @ 10 am to Noon Aging Services Kiosk – Union County Division of Aging Staff will be on hand to assist seniors (age 60+) or their caregivers with information on services, such as meal delivery, respite care, adult day care and support services

for caregivers.

#### Fun with Phonemic Awareness August 10 at 7 pm

Join Genny Weinstein, Learning Disability Teacher, and Dyslexia Therapist, for a presentation on fostering phonemic awareness development at home. Learn her tips from years of learning and teaching.

#### **Book Discussion Group**

August 21 at 1:00 pm Join us in the library for a lively discussion of this month's book "The Mystery of Mrs. Christy" by Marie Benedict



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### SOFIA DIPROFIO GETS OUTSTANDING AWARD

#### **Clark Public Schools**

Sofia DiProfio, of Arthur L. Johnson High School in Clark, N.J., joined together with over 140 female student-athletes from New Jersey's high schools, colleges, and universities in celebration of the 37th Anniversary of National Girls and Women in Sports Day (NAGWS). NAGWS is one of the largest events in the state that recognizes women's athletics. Sofia was nominated by her coaches for her accomplishments as an outstanding high school female athlete in Volleyball, Basketball and Spring Track & Field.

#### Sofia's career has been full of many accolades:

- Heroes and Cool Kids, Grades 11, 12
- SMAC Club, Grades 09, 10, 11, 12
- Italian Club, Grades 09, 10, 11, 12
- Math Honors Society, Grade 11, 12
- Italian Honor Society, Grade 11, 12
- Volleyball Team MVP, Grades 11, 12
- Volleyball Team Captain, Grade 12
- Basketball, Grade 09, 10, 11, 12
- Track & Field, Grade 09, 10, 11, 12
- Four Year Varsity Gold Letter Winner-Basketball 2019-2023
- Third Team All-Group 1 Volleyball 2022
- Second Team All-Union County Volleyball 2022

Sofia is also heavily involved at ALJ with Heroes and Cool Kids, SMAC Club, Math Honors Society, Italian Honors society, and many other activities.

NAGWS is recognized in all 50 states to honor the success of female athletes and recognize the struggle for equality for women in sports. The Outstanding Athlete Awards were presented to one individual from each high school, junior college, and college throughout the country.



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