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URGENT NEED FOR ADVOCATES FOR YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE

Child Focus

The latest class of CASA volunteers were sworn in to advocate for youth in foster care on June 11, 2024.

Union County Superior Court Judge Rosalba Comas presided over the swearing-in of the newly trained volunteers, and each can now be assigned to work with children living in foster care through no fault of their own, advocating for their best interests and ensuring their needs are met while in the child welfare system.

The nonprofit organization Child Focus operates CASA of Passaic and Union Counties, and its goal is to provide a CASA volunteer for each of the more than 250 child-victims in Union County foster care. Currently, just 30 percent of these vulnerable infants, children, and teens have the continuity and support of a CASA volunteer serving as extra eyes and ears for judges hearing their cases. The need is critical for additional volunteers to step up and serve waiting children.

“We are proud to welcome this new group of volunteers to the CASA family,” said Erica Fischer-Kaslander, Executive Director of Child Focus. “These individuals have taken concrete action to make a difference in the lives of children who have experienced immense trauma, having been removed from home through no fault of their own, often due to abuse or neglect. We look forward to working with our new advocates as they serve these vulnerable youth and urge more community members to follow their example by volunteering to support children in need.”

Judge Comas expressed her gratitude for the CASA program and the volunteers’ commitment to the children they serve. “If I really want to know what’s happening with a child I listen to the CASA worker, because they are 100% in tune with everything that the child needs, and everything that’s happening in the child’s life,” she shared. “Their job is to look out for the kids, represent the children’s interest, and make sure that all of their needs are being addressed. It’s not just whether they need clothes or whether they need toys, it’s the bond. It’s what they need emotionally, it’s someone they can count on.”

Since caseworkers, attorneys, and foster homes are ever-changing, the CASA volunteer – or advocate – is a much-needed constant in a child’s life, committing to work with the child until they reach permanency in a stable home and the case closes. Children assigned a



(above) Latest class of CASA volunteers sworn in June 11, 2024. Courtesy photo

CASA volunteer are more likely to receive services, spend less time in the foster system, and experience significantly better outcomes than those without an advocate.

BECOMING A CASA - TRAINING SCHEDULED IN JULY

Becoming a CASA requires no special skills or background in child welfare. Child Focus provides thorough training on the ins and outs of advocating for abused and neglected children, and volunteers are fully supported by CASA program staff. Volunteers visit the children at least monthly and get to know the people in the child’s life, such as foster parents, biological parents, teachers, therapists, and attorneys in order to make unbiased recommendations to the family court judge that support the child’s best interests.

The first step to becoming an advocate is to attend an information session. Upcoming sessions will be held Monday, July 8 at 5:30 p.m. at the Elizabeth Public Library (Elmora Branch), 740 W Grand St, Elizabeth, NJ 07202; Thursday, July 11 at 5:30 p.m. at the Rahway Public Library, 2 City Hall Plaza in Rahway; Thursday July 25 at 5:30 p.m. at the Union County Colleen Fraser Building, 300 North Avenue E. in Westfield; or Monday July 1 at 10 a.m., Monday July 15 at 5:30 p.m., Wednesday July 24 at 12 p.m., and Wednesday July 31 at 5:30 p.m. at the Wayne Child Focus office, 415 Hamburg Turnpike, Suite D2. Register: casapassaicunion.org/info-session.

ABOUT CHILD FOCUS:

Child Focus prioritizes the needs and well-being of infants, children and teens impacted by, or at risk of, abuse or neglect by amplifying their voices and working toward lasting, permanent solutions that address their unique situations and provide support needed to thrive. This critical work is accomplished through three distinct but complementary programs: CASA of Passaic and Union Counties, NJ Safe Babies Court Team, and the Open Door Store. For more information about Child Focus, visit childfocusnj.org.

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MILITARY FAMILIES SACRIFICE TOO

Michael D Boll, NJVN President

For the last few years, the New Jersey Veterans Network (NJVN) has been helping veterans with resources and assistance with their mental health conditions. Over time we came to realize that the veteran's family was being affected by their struggles as well. Our team had to learn how to include their family members in our outreach efforts. We lose 22 veterans each day to suicide, and they leave behind grieving families. Recently, we decided to make sure all veteran family members can use the same resources that our team has available for veterans. Sometimes we forget about the sacrifices our veteran families have to make and this country should appreciate them for this.

One thing our team decided to do was to have Gold Star families meet disabled veterans at our events, so they can work together and form a bond. This effort was extremely affective and immediately brought joy to both the Gold Star families and to the disabled veterans. By adding veteran family members to the team, it allows us to work together on our peer support and recreational therapy programs. We are honored to have veteran family members to work alongside us and know they are just as committed with helping our veterans live a better way of life.

If you need assistance, or would like to join the team as a volunteer, please send us your name, email, and phone number to NJVN1775@gmail.com.

ABOUT NEW JERSEY VETERANS NETWORK

We are a group of veterans and volunteers dedicated to helping our veterans and their families live better lives. Our mission is to identify veterans and connect them with resources and programs designed to meet their unique set of needs. Help us save Vets! We are always looking for volunteers, with various skills, to join the team. If you are a veteran or family member that is in need of assistance; or are interested in volunteering, would like us to speak at your event, or contribute to our mission, call 973-332-1556 or email NJVN1775@gmail.com. To learn more visit njvn.org.



(above) Michael D Boll, NJVN President, with Dina and Tom Duffy who lost their son Tom Duffy, a Marine Corporal and Afghanistan War veteran. Courtesy photo

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SCOUTS HIKE THE GETTYSBURG BATTLEFIELD

Submitted by Dan Bernier

Boy Scout Troop 23 experienced an inspiring 4-day trip to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania over the Memorial Day Weekend. Ten Scouts and 7 adult leaders hiked the Gettysburg Heritage Trail, qualifying for a trail patch and medal. The Scouts not only learned about the famous Civil War battle that occurred there in 1863, but also about its effect on the Union and Confederate armies, the course of the war, and the town of Gettysburg itself.

After viewing an informative film in the Gettysburg Visitor Center and viewing the incredible Cyclorama painting of the battle,

Troop 23 hiked around the battlefield, visiting many monuments and learning about crucial actions during the 3-day battle. They also got to speak with Civil War reenactors and experience the light and sound show at the Gettysburg Heritage Center. Most inspiring was a walk through the Soldiers' National Cemetery, where President Abraham Lincoln delivered his historic Gettysburg Address.

Thanks to fundraising and donations, the scouts and leaders were able to eat in local restaurants to allow more time at the historic sites. And the long ride home was made more enjoyable with a stop at the gigantic Cabelas

store in Hamburg, Pennsylvania, where the Scouts saw exhibits of wildlife and used the indoor shooting arcade.

Boy Scout Troop 23, sponsored by St. Genevieve's Church of Elizabeth, welcomes any boys who are at least 11 years old or graduated from the fifth grade to join them on upcoming camping trips and hikes, a week-long summer camp in July, and the Jersey 360 Jamboree at the Sussex Fairgrounds in October.

Contact Scoutmaster Dan Bernier at 908-451-1948 or webfoottroop@gmail.com for more details.



(above) During their visit to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, Boy Scouts of Troop 23 met Civil War reenactors at the Gettysburg Heritage



(above) Boy Scout Troop 23 visited the Soldiers' National Cemetery, where President Lincoln delivered his famous Gettysburg Address, during a 4-day trip on Memorial Day weekend.

Courtesy photos



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ELIZABETH ARTS COUNCIL PRESENTS COOL ART

The Elizabeth Arts Council (EAC) annual exhibit COOL ART continues through July at the Elizabeth Public Library, 11 South Broad Street, third floor exhibit area.

COOL ART is a mixed media show featuring the work of EAC members Ray Horner, Derek J. Dent, Marjorie Picard, Daphnie Manzione, Joanne Leone, Lydia Watson, Shez, Jonathan C. Ross and Paula Borenstein.

The EAC is also proud to announce that the organization is celebrating its 25th year and its ongoing support and promotion of the arts in and around the city of Elizabeth.

For further information about the EAC and COOL ART, please call 908-289-3584.

The Elizabeth Arts Council
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Saturday: 9:30 a.m. - 4:45 p.m. • Sunday: Closed. The library will be closed on July 4

Zumba Gold

Monday, July 1, 8, 15, & 22 and
Thursday, July 11, 18, & 25 at 9 am
Add fitness into your day through dance with us! Call 908-353-4820 to reserve your spot, however, walk-ins are welcome!

Mahjong

Monday, July 1, 8, 15, 22, & 29
from 1 pm - 4 pm
Everyone who loves Mahjong is welcome to come & play at the library. Bring friends or come alone & find new partners. We'll provide the space for open play. A minimum of 4 players are required to play the game.

Junior Chess Club - (Ages: 7-12)

Monday, July 1, 8, 15, 22, & 29 at 4 pm
Don't miss out on our Chess Club for Kids! It's happening every Monday at 4 pm, and we welcome all kids, including beginners. Join us and let's play some chess!

Lil' Bookworms

Wednesday, July 3 at 5 pm
Kids will share their love of reading, learn to talk about the books they're reading, and be motivated to read. Ages: 5-8

Toddlers World

Friday, July 5 & 19 at 11 am
An hour of fun songs to sing, music, and playtime.

Adult Chess Club

Friday, July 5, 12, 19, & 26 at 12:30 pm
Join the Adult Chess Club every Friday at 12:30pm! Regardless of your skill level! Beginners are welcome to participate. We hope to see you there!

Crochet with Sol

Monday, July 8 & 15 and
Tuesday, July 9 & 16
Learn the tips and tricks with Ms. Sol! She will teach you everything you need to know to get started, from fundamental stitches to understanding gauge.

Read to a Dog

Tuesday, July 9 & 23 at 11 am
Creature Comfort will be coming to the Elizabeth Public Library to allow children to read to a dog! Space is limited. Registration is required. Please visit our online calendar to register.

Bridge for Beginners

Thursday, July 11 at 1 pm
All skill levels are welcome to join the library for Bridge - a challenging trick-taking card game played with a standard 52-card deck by four players in two partnerships sitting opposite each other around a table. Stop by with your own deck of cards!

I Scream for Ice Cream

Thursday, July 11 at 2 pm
To celebrate National Ice Cream Month, learn how to make ice cream at Elmora!

Registration is required! *Space is limited

Storytime at Green Acres Park

Saturday, July 13 at 11 am
Located on 169 Bellevue St, Elizabeth, NJ
Join Ms. Martha for storytime and craft, and so much fun at the park! No registration required

Stitch & Chat

Tuesday, July 16 at 10 am
and Wednesday, July 31 at 5 pm
Come to Elmora to mend your clothing. Bring the article you need help with and assistance will be provided.

ESL Classes for Kids

Wednesday, July 17 at 5 pm
Join us every third Wednesday of each month, to learn English as a Second Language with fun interactive activities. For ages 5-12

Adult Scrabble

Thursday, July 18 at 2:30 pm
Word lovers! Exercise your B-R-A-I-N (7 points) by playing Scrabble with other like-minded adults.

Friendship Bracelet

Saturday, July 20 at 2 pm
In Honor of International Friendship Day, make a friendship bracelet at Elmora for your BFF!

Adult Spanish Book Club

Thursday, July 25 at 2 pm
Come and join Martha as she hosts a monthly book discussion for Spanish-speaking adults!

Drawing for Kids

Thursday, July 25 at 3 pm
Come and join us for a delightful storytime where you will get to learn how to draw various animals!

Bubbles aRe Us

Saturday, July 27 at 1 pm
Located on 640 3rd Avenue, Elizabeth, NJ
Join Ms. Martha for songs, stories, and crafts with LOADS of fun! This storytime will feature stories in English and Spanish for the whole family. FREE PIZZA!!!

Show & Tell

Saturday, July 27 at 3 pm
Elmora Branch Library is hosting a Show & Tell event for kids to showcase their cool toys and other items!

Cod Fish Craft

Tuesday, July 30 at 2 pm
Come hang out with Ms. Martha and get crafty on Tuesday as we make a super cool cod fish craft together!

FAMILY FUN DAY DRAWS RECORD ATTENDANCE

Community Access Unlimited

The 26th Annual Ira Geller Family Fun Day, hosted by Community Access Unlimited (CAU), drew an enthusiastic crowd of over 800 supporters, members, and staff to Warinanco Park on Saturday, May 18th.

The event delivered a day filled with joy and community spirit, with an aim of supporting CAU's essential services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) and at-risk youth. Activities offered enjoyment for all ages and all abilities; the park was made more accessible with a path for those using wheelchairs, and a new sensory station engaged attendees to stimulate and regulate their senses.

Mayor of Elizabeth, J. Christian Bollwage joined the celebration, lauding CAU Executive Director Bernadette Griswold for her dedicated

leadership.

"Community Access helps direct services and housing opportunities to those who may have been on the margins—and because of all of you, you make this a reality," Bollwage said.

Participants enjoyed a variety of activities, including over a dozen games, two bouncy slides, a free photo booth, and lively music from CAU's resident DJ. The atmosphere was alive with families and friends reveling in the day's festivities, all while supporting a meaningful cause and commemorating CAU's 45th year of service to the community.

Tonya Hopson of Hillside, a CAU member since 1987, shared her personal journey and the profound impact CAU has had on her life.

As a teenager, Hopson aged out of the foster care system and found a lifeline in CAU, which provided housing and essential services. As an



(above, l-r) CAU members, Tonya Hopson, Dianna Simms, and John Drescher attended CAU's Ira Geller Family Fun Day.

Courtesy photo

adult with a disability, employment support from CAU assisted her in securing a job at a Target where she has thrived for over 20 years. Reflecting on her experience, she said, "CAU has benefited me in growing better and growing up, and I have a place to live." On having a job coach, she added, "They come and see how I'm

doing, and if I need anything they're there to help me."

This year's Family Fun Day not only celebrated the memory of Ira Geller, a former CAU member and advocate, but also highlighted the significant contributions of CAU in improving the lives of over 3,000 individuals and families across New Jersey. Through housing, education, support services, employment, support coordination, and the Day Program, CAU continues to make a tangible difference in the community.

For more information on CAU and its programs, or to make a donation, please visit caunj.org.

ABOUT COMMUNITY ACCESS UNLIMITED

Community Access Unlimited (CAU), celebrating 45 years in 2024, supports people with disabilities in achieving full lives in the community. CAU provides support and gives voice to adults and youth who traditionally have little support and no voice in society. CAU helps people with housing, life skills, employment, money management, socialization and civic activities. CAU also supports opportunities for advocacy through training in assertiveness, decision-making and civil rights. CAU currently serves more than 3,000 individuals and families and is continually expanding its services to broaden the scope of its support.

For more information about CAU and its services, contact us by phone at 908.354.3040, online at caunj.org or by mail at 80 West Grand Street, Elizabeth, NJ 07202.

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SALEM ROADHOUSE CAFÉ ANNOUNCES MARK ADAMY BAND

The Salem Roadhouse Café presents the Mark Adamy Band, Saturday, July 13th, 2024. The doors open at 7:30 p.m., the show starts at 8 p.m. Admission is \$20 and includes show, snacks, non-alcoholic beverages, and dessert. The venue is located in Bailey Hall, below Townley Presbyterian Church, 829 Salem Rd, Union, NJ. The Roadhouse operates as a non-profit that raises funds for several carefully chosen local charities.

Mark Adamy is a multitalented keyboardist and vocalist who works with artists around the globe as a live performer and recording artist. This includes his own band: The Mark Adamy Band, which is a group of accomplished musicians that has thrilled listeners with its original stylings fusing pop, rock, jazz, R&B, world, and spiritual music.

Mark has enjoyed popularity as a sought-after talent for special events, productions, and performances. He has won honors including Entertainer of the Year and Boston Music award nominations. Sharing the stage with greats like Chaka Khan, James Brown, The Four Tops, John-Lee Hooker, Pieces of a Dream, Howard Hewitt, Phil Driscoll, Phil Keaggy, Roger Humphries, and many others, Mark has established himself as the consummate professional in the Metro NYC area. Mark has played in many Broadway productions as well as music directing off-Broadway productions in NYC. Mark's concert credentials are extensive with acts such as the Coasters, the Cadillacs, Ink Spots, Jive Five, Silhouettes, Marvlettes, the Charelles, and guitarist Billy Davis. He has jammed with jazz artists such as Warren Hill, Makoto Ozone, Darren Lyons Group, and Lee Robinson at venues ranging from New York's Russian Tea Room and Knitting Factory to Boston's Symphony Hall.

Local artist/photographer Robert Cleary will have his works on display at the Roadhouse Gallery of Fine Art for all to enjoy.

As always, the Salem Roadhouse Café is live, intimate, up front, and personal. All ages are welcome.

ABOUT SALEM ROADHOUSE CAFÉ

It's not "church music." It's music music. Folks who've come to the Salem Roadhouse Café know that it's a clean, safe place for people who enjoy listening to live music — in a world otherwise filled with clubs and bars. The Roadhouse has always offered its stage to local and independent mainstream musicians. Jazz, rock, folk, and other groups have performed. What's the common thread? They're all great musicians playing the kind of music people like to hear. There's no message, just music.

The Roadhouse started in 2008 by members of Townley Presbyterian Church with a grant from the Presbytery of Elizabeth. Hey — that's why we're located where we are, 829 Salem Rd, Union, NJ. The Roadhouse operates as a non-profit that raises funds for several carefully chosen local charities. That's its social mission.

But the many musicians who've played the

Salem Roadhouse Café see it as a solid performance venue. They love it because of its special intimacy and great audiences. They say people here "really listen." Ask any of the musicians you meet here — they love to play the Roadhouse, and they want to come back often.

The Salem Roadhouse Café has raised funds for many carefully chosen charities. They include: The Presbytery of Elizabeth E-port

Center, Center For Hope Hospice, Community Food Bank, Monarch Housing, Angel Paws Animal Rescue, National MS Society, Haiti Disaster Relief, Hurricane Sandy Disaster Relief, The Union County YWCA Domestic Violence Program, Making It Possible To End Homelessness, Camp Johnsonburg, The Music Institute, and others. Many thousands of dollars have been raised for these deserving charities.



SALEM ROADHOUSE CAFÉ

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SATURDAY, JULY 13, 8:00 PM

DOORS OPEN AT 7:30 PM

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Admission includes snacks, beverages, tea, coffee & desserts






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SOCIAL IMPACT FUND SUPPORTS SWIM PROGRAMS

The Phillips 66 Social Impact Fund, on behalf of the Phillips 66 Bayway Refinery, is providing a \$46,000 grant to The Gateway Family YMCA to offer swim safety programming through Summer and Fall Swimming Lessons to 209 low and moderate-income youth.

Melynda Disla, President/CEO of The Gateway Family YMCA, has expressed a pressing need for financial assistance. She states, "We can't provide additional swim lesson scholarships without the help of donors like Phillips 66. Low-moderate-income families can only afford these lessons with financial assistance despite how much they are needed."

Bayway Refinery Manager, Don Susanen, said, "We are proud to partner with The Gateway

Family YMCA. The programs offer more than swim lessons. It provides a safe and healthy outdoor activity for youth, preventing them from being stuck indoors all summer. And remember, every life saved from receiving swimming lessons makes the investment well worth it."

Our support of this program demonstrates how Phillips 66 continues to strive to be a trusted community partner. At Phillips 66, we understand that we share our communities and take responsibility for our neighbors' safety and well-being.

At Phillips 66, we believe actions speak louder than words. Together, we are #GivingGoodEnergy!



(above) A \$46,000 grant from Phillips 66 Bayway Refinery provides swim safety for local youth just in time for summer.

Courtesy photo

POOL SAFETY TIPS CAN HELP SAVE A LIFE

U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission

Drowning is the leading cause of unintentional death in children ages 1 through 4, and data released by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) shows that more than 375 children drown in pools and spas each year. Children younger than 5 years old account for 75 percent of these drownings, 56 percent of which are attributed to a gap in adult supervision. Most child drownings (71 percent) happen at home.

In response to these numbers, CPSC's Pool Safely campaign is sharing simple water safety steps that families can take to prevent drownings, especially while many families are spending more time around backyard and portable pools this season.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission's Pool Safely campaign urges parents and caregivers to follow the Pool Safely simple safety steps to prevent more drownings:

- Never leave a child unattended in or near water, and always designate an adult Water Watcher. This person should not be reading, texting, using a smartphone or be otherwise distracted. In addition to pools and spas, this warning includes bathtubs, buckets, decorative ponds, and fountains.
- If you own a pool or spa, be sure to install layers of protection, including a four-sided fence with a self-closing, self-latching gate.
- Learn how to perform CPR on children and adults. Many communities offer online CPR training.
- Learn how to swim and teach your child how to swim.
- Keep children away from pool drains, pipes and other openings to avoid entrapments.
- Ensure any pool and spa you use has drain covers that comply with federal safety standards and if you do not know, ask your pool service provider about safer drain covers.

Families can visit poolsafely.gov for additional water safety tips to prepare for a summer that is safer and more fun.

FIND YOUR PASSION!

YMCA Annual Support Campaign

Your Support is Greatly Needed to Ensure YMCA Financial Assistance for:

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THE GATEWAY FAMILY YMCA tgfymca.org


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NEWSPAPER AD RATES

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4 Units	3.25" x 8" or 6.5" x 4"	\$180	\$450	\$700	\$900	\$1100	\$1300	\$1500	\$1700	\$1900
6 Units	6.5" x 6.25" or 10" x 4"	\$240	\$600	\$900	\$1200	\$1400	\$1600	\$1800	\$2000	\$2200
9 HALF PAGE	6.5" x 9" or 10" x 7"	\$320	\$800	\$1000	\$1300	\$1600	\$1900	\$2200	\$2400	\$2700
12 Units	10" x 8"	\$360	\$900	\$1200	\$1500	\$1800	\$2100	\$2400	\$2700	\$3000
18 FULL PAGE	10" x 14"	\$400	\$1000	\$1400	\$1800	\$2200	\$2500	\$2800	\$3000	\$3400
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YOUTH FACILITATORS SOUGHT – TRAINING IS IN AUGUST

Imagine, A Center for Coping with Loss

If you're a high school age youth interested in training to become a volunteer facilitator at Imagine the next training will take place over two days beginning on August 28th and concluding on August 29th and interested volunteers should plan to attend both days of the training. The training will be held from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. each

day. Please visit Imagine's website at imagineenj.org to learn more about volunteering with Imagine and to complete an interest form for our upcoming training. Questions about training to be an Imagine facilitator can be directed to Imagine's Clinical Program Supervisor, Abigail Preece, LPC at abigail@imagineenj.org.

Imagine's youth facilitators partner with our

adult volunteers as they facilitate Imagine's peer support groups for children. Youth facilitators are an integral part of Imagine's team as they create safe spaces where Imagine's young participants can share their stories or use play as an outlet for their feelings of grief.

One of Imagine's former youth facilitators said this about her experience as a volunteer:

"Being a part of imagine as a youth facilitator not only made my high school experience, it made me who I am today. I am so honored to be a part of a community that holds a space for so many families they can find nowhere else, as well as one that creates a space where us too as volunteers grow, and learn, and listen. At Imagine, I gained things that I don't think are accessible elsewhere, all while hopefully adding to someone else's life." The staff at Imagine are so grateful for the time that youth volunteers commit to their programs and for the unique perspective and empathy that they bring to their support groups.

Imagine is a 501c3 that offers grief and loss education and training to the community and free year-round grief support groups for children ages 3-18 and young adults 19-30 who are coping with a loss due to death. Concurrently, support groups are available for the parents and guardians of the children in the groups and offered in English and Spanish. For more information please contact Imagine at 908-264-3100 or info@imagineenj.org or visit our website at imagineenj.org.



(above, l-r) Participants in Imagine's recent youth facilitator training proudly displaying their certificates of completion: Tim Jiao, Addy Oni, Ava Handler, Amanda Linde and Lauren Glasofer

Courtesy photo

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