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## ALJ HIGH SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY 2024

### Clark Public Schools

Arthur L Johnson High School held its sixty-eighth commencement ceremony on June 19th, 2024. The event was attended by Clark Board of Education President Steven Donkersloot, Clark Board of Education Vice President Thomas Lewis, Clark Board of Education members, Clark Mayor Sal Bonaccorso, Clark Superintendent Edward Grande, Garwood Board of Education President April Farrell, Garwood Superintendent Christopher Kinney, family members, teachers, administrators, and other community members.

Christopher Di Nucci, Interim, introduced those in the processional. Assistant Principal Katrina Poskay served as master of ceremonies for the event. Senior Class President Zoey Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance and Marianna Milara sang "The Star-Spangle Banner". The processional leaders included Zoey Brown and Shannon Lancellotti, Student Council President.

Salutatorian Taylor Normann addressed the class stating, "When you leave here today and move on to go to either college, trade school, job, military or wherever your path may lead, I want you to remember to embrace the change. Confront the fear. And don't forget where you came from." She continued, "Do what makes you scared. Don't let anxiety and fear be the thing that stops you. Let it be what drives you to keep pushing forward."

Marianna Milara and ALJ Alumni Judah Gray performed a duet of the song "Unwritten" by Natasha Bedingfield.

Zoey Brown, Senior Class President reflected on her experience at ALJ stating, "If each of our lives is a book, then each of our books is a different volume to the series we call ALJ. The final pages may be written here tonight as peers add their final words and memory of switching their tassel from right to left." She continued, "Some of us may be introducing the new book in our series at the college of our dreams in the next two months, some going into the trade they are fascinated and driven by, and others may not be sure where their pages take them next, and that is okay."

Clark Board of Education President Steven Donkersloot stated, "As you embark on what comes next, remember the lessons learned during your years spent in school and with the community and carry those lessons with you moving forward in life. Continue to work hard, dream big, be kind, and make a difference." He congratulated the students and thanked parents, guardians, teachers, administrators, and staff for the efforts in supporting these graduates.

Superintendent Edward Grande shared the honors, accolades, and pursuits of the Class of 2024 mentioning that this class received over \$14.5 million in scholarships. He asked students to "Live with intensity and focus. Take calculated risks. Challenge both yourselves and others but make sure that the needed supports for success are in place. Love with all that you have. Be patient for you never know what others are coping with. Be the one in the room whom the others can count on to speak the truth



Photo by Clark Public Schools

about them when they are no longer there."

Tara Oliveira, principal of ALJ, addressed the graduating class about likening your life to a book. She stated, "Undoubtedly, you have learned a lot over the course of your four years. Think back to your first day of freshman year at ALJ. I'm sure you were nervous yet excited about the unknown. Remember the friendships that you forged in the classrooms, on the playing fields, the late nights you spent studying or laughing. These are the moments that have shaped you. That have defined the Arthur L. Johnson chapters of your life."

Students were awarded diplomas by Board of Education members. Names were announced by students Abigail Henkel and Shannon Lancellotti.

Valedictorian Grace Wright talked about following your passion and getting out of your comfort zone. She asked the class to consider, "What are you passionate about? What do you think about for hours on end that you just can't seem to shake? What do you need and crave to make yourself feel whole? What ignites a fire so big and bright inside you that it's too painful to keep it in?" She gave examples from her graduating class of different "sparks" of passion. She concluded with a message to "Carry yourself with kindness."

Ms. Poskay concluded the ceremony wishing the students "Blessings, 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. Make us proud."

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## 23RD ANNUAL DRIVE FOR AUTISM GOLF EVENT

Drive for Autism Foundation

The Drive for Autism Foundation is pleased to announce that its annual golf event, Drive for Autism XXIII will be held at Royce Brook Golf Club in Hillsborough, NJ on Monday September 16, 2024.

The Drive for Autism Golf Outing, which has been held since 2002 has raised and distributed over \$855,000 to local school programs. Previous beneficiaries of grants were Morris Union Jointure Commission (New Providence, NJ), Salt Brook School (New Providence, NJ), AW Roberts School (New Providence, NJ), Union County Educational Services Foundation/Crossroads School (Westfield, NJ), Educational Partnership for Instructing Children (Paramus, NJ), Young Life (greater Summit area), Eden II/Genesis Programs (Staten Island, NY), Spectrum360 - formally The Children's Institute (Verona, NJ), and Seton Foundation/Mother Francheska Elementary School (Staten Island, NY).

Grant recipients use money to fund Health and Fitness Programs, Social Skills Programs, educational curriculum and teacher training, a van for community trips and transportation to job training centers, laptop computers, computer touch screens, iPads, video projectors and educational toys and games

The golf event is the main fundraising function for the foundation. Single golfers and foursomes

are welcome as well as, product donations and corporate sponsorships. To register online please go to: [birdease.com/DriveforAutismXXIII](http://birdease.com/DriveforAutismXXIII)

**ABOUT DRIVE FOR AUTISM FOUNDATION:**

Based in New Providence, New Jersey, The Drive for Autism Foundation (EIN#20-1760417), is a 501(3)(c) tax exempt public charity that was created in the Spring of 2002 for the sole purpose of raising and distributing funds for educational facilities specializing in students with autism.

**DRIVE FOR AUTISM GOLF OUTING 2024**

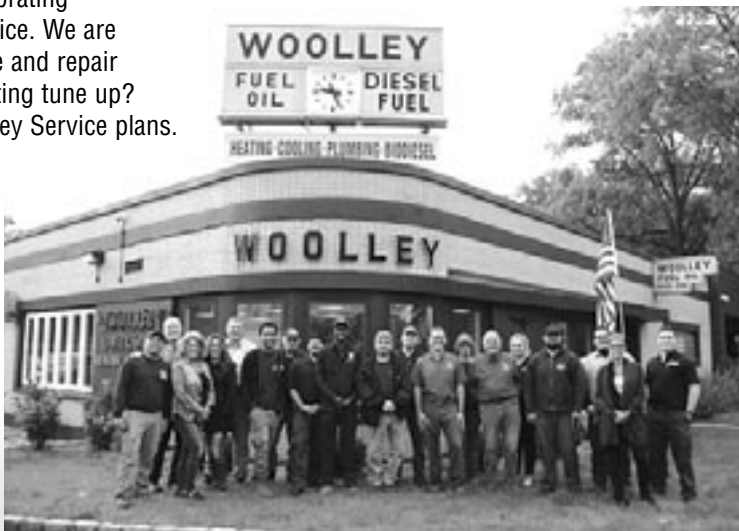
The Drive for Autism XXIII is scheduled for Monday Sept 16, 2024, at Royce Brook Golf Club in Hillsborough, NJ. The event consists of a morning round of golf followed by a barbeque. Special events include golf contests, raffles and a silent auction of sports memorabilia, game tickets and golf trips.

To register or for additional information please visit [birdease.com/DriveForAutismXXIII](http://birdease.com/DriveForAutismXXIII), call 908-451-8033 or email [driveforautism@comcast.net](mailto:driveforautism@comcast.net).

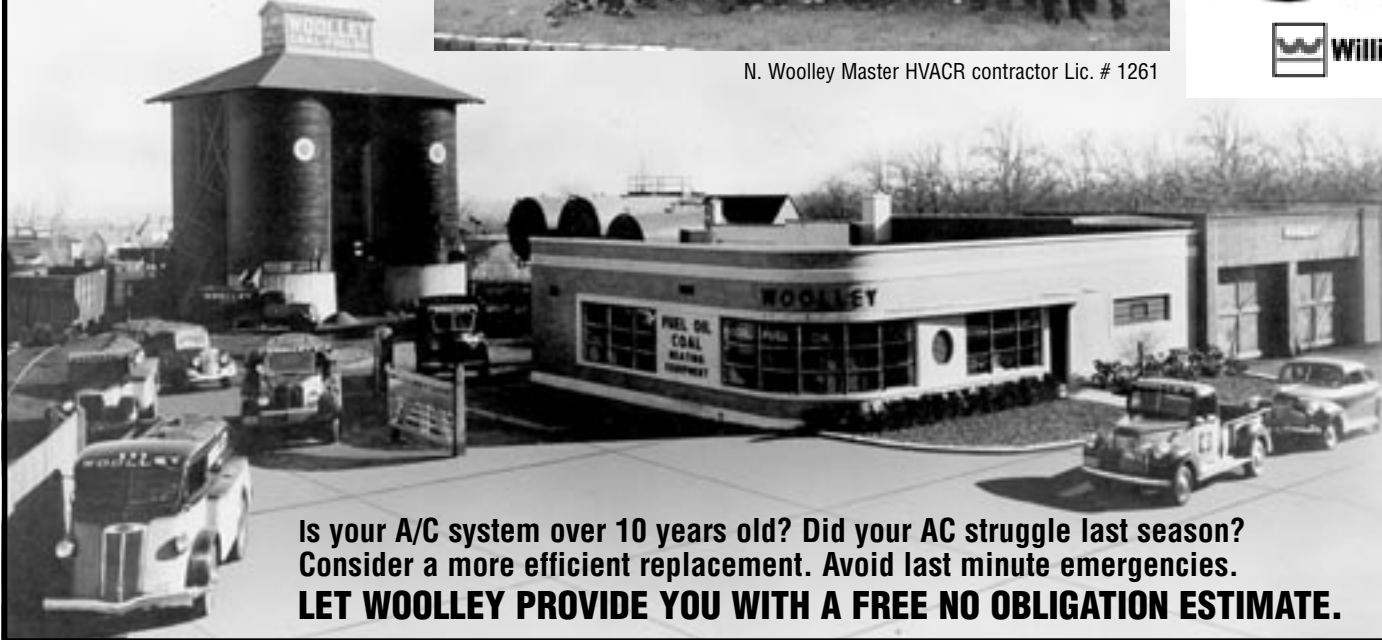


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Wednesday and Thursday 10 am to 8 pm,  
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Summer Reading Club Closing party  
August 6 @ 2 pm

The Scream Truck will be back for our closing party. Prizes and certificates will be awarded. Registration required. Limit 40. Must have logged in minutes to attend.

Financial Planning Strategies  
August 13 at 7 pm

Gail L. Abrams, Esq. will address many aspects of financial planning including: preparing for potential changes to the 2025 Sunset Provision of the Tax Act; exploring strategies to help seniors lower taxes on social security and interest income on investment accounts. She will examine ways to protect investments in volatile market; and presents retirement strategies that could lower the impact of inflation and market risk on current retirement savings. Registration required.

BOOK CLUB

August 19 @ 1 pm

Join us for a lively discussion of this month's book, "The #1 Ladies Detective Agency", by Alexander McCall Smith. No registration necessary.

Aging Services Kiosk (ASK)

August 28 from 10 am to Noon

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Lincoln School

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**ALUMNI**  
Spotlight

Lincoln School, Class of 2014  
Union Catholic High School, Class of 2018  
Montclair State University  
Double Major: History & The Classics  
Quadruple Minor: Ancient Greek  
Language, Mythology, Ancient  
Mediterranean Civilization  
and Archaeology

At Union Catholic HS Carrie was a National Honor Society recipient, founder of the American Sign Language Club and goalie on the Varsity Lacrosse Team. While at Montclair State University she made Dean's List every semester, played on the Women's Ice Hockey Team and graduated Magnum Cum Laude. During her last year in college, while studying abroad in Ireland, she had the honor of working with an archeology team on castles. Thinking back to her years Lincoln School Carrie said everyone felt like family to her and it was hard to leave them and move on to high school. Carrie loved coming back to Lincoln School as a student teacher! Again, leaving wasn't easy but she's thankful for the opportunity she had getting to see Lincoln School from the perspective of the loving staff. Garwood and Lincoln School will always have special place in her heart.

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CLASS OF 2014

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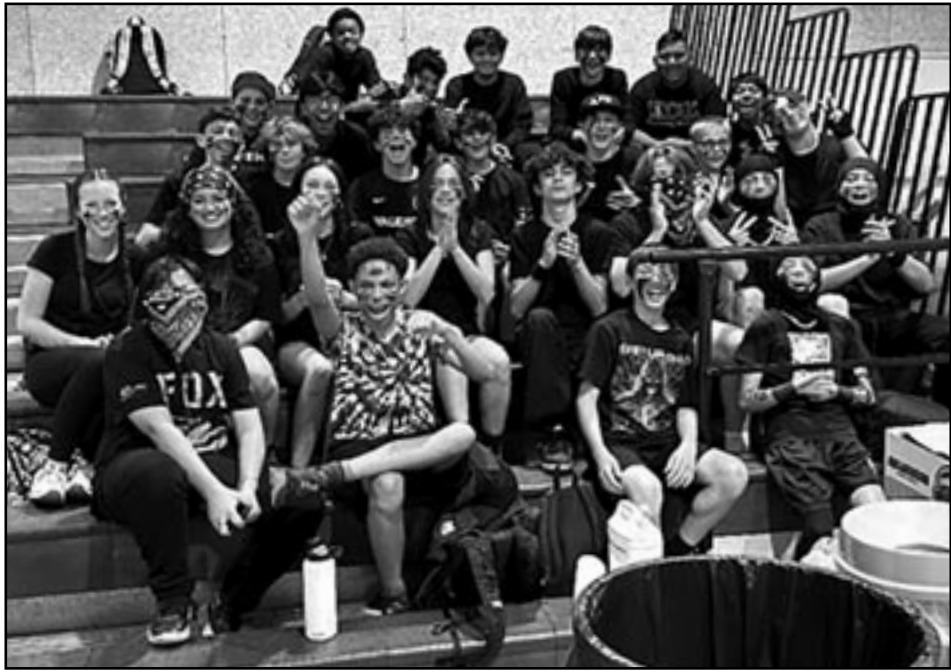
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# SPORTING THE MUSTANG PRIDE



### Garwood Public Schools

All students in grades five, six, seven, and eight were invited to participate in the annual Student Council fundraiser Battle of the Colors held in the spring. Nearly 100 students in middle school participated in this competition. Each grade level was identified by a color they selected to represent their team. Students battled across grade levels in volleyball and kickball as well as academic challenges like saying the alphabet backwards the fastest and reciting the presidents in order. This year students in grade 8 took the top prize while fifth graders earned the sportsmanship award. The event is sponsored by the Student Council and coordinated by Mrs. Benc. Both Mr. Burke and Mrs. Bree—assisted by Mrs. Peniche, Ms. Woodruff, and Mrs. DelConte—helped run the events or photograph the excitement.

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# LOCAL STUDENT TEACHERS NAMED TOP IN STATE

## Kean University

Three new teachers who recently graduated from Kean University were recognized as among the top student teachers in the state this year.

They were among 16 new teachers who received the highest commendation, Awarded with Distinction, from the New Jersey Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NJACTE) and the state Department of Education (DOE) as clinical interns, or student teachers. In all, 63 new teachers who recently graduated from 22 New Jersey colleges were recognized as Distinguished Clinical Interns at a festive ceremony held recently at Kean University.

“I know the importance of what takes place in classrooms every day, and I am so proud of each of you,” Kean President Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D., told the group. “You are stepping into your role at a time when teachers are needed more than ever. I have no doubt you will have a profound impact.”

Kean graduate Cristiana Rodrigues ’24, who completed her student teaching in a third grade classroom at Washington Elementary School in her hometown of Union, said it was “surreal” to receive the top honor. In the fall, she will be a full-time teacher at the school, which she also attended as a child.

“I get to go back and thank all the teachers who made me want to be a teacher,” said Rodrigues, who is also beginning studies at Kean this fall for a master’s degree in special education - learning and behavioral disabilities.

Each student teacher spent two semesters working alongside cooperating teachers as part of their training. Stationed in classrooms throughout the state and across grades, they taught classes, prepared lessons, conducted labs and served as role models to children.

The state education department and NJACTE also recognized the cooperating classroom teachers who worked with the student teachers. New Jersey Acting Education Commissioner Kevin Dehmer and Assistant Commissioner Jorden Schiff, Ed.D., both took part in the ceremony.

“This collaboration between cooperating teachers and clinical interns exemplifies how much we can accomplish for New Jersey’s students by working together,” Dehmer said. “These remarkable individuals stand at the intersection of learning and teaching, and their commitment serves as an inspiration to many.”

Monmouth Regional High School social studies teacher Joseph Nappi, the 2023-2024 State Teacher of the Year, also spoke at the ceremony. Nappi, who works closely with the Holocaust Resource Center at Kean and teaches an elective class on the Holocaust, genocide and humanity that gives his students Kean credit, congratulated both the new teachers and the cooperating teachers.

“This is an amazing profession,” Nappi said, “one that will impact, by the time you’re done, thousands of minds.”

The Kean students who received top honors – recent graduates Ryen Hagg ’23 ’24 M.A.,

Lillianna Ramos ’23 ’24 M.A., and Rodrigues ’24, all said they were honored to receive the awards. They also expressed thanks to their cooperating teachers.

Hagg, of Garwood, interned in a Scotch Plains-Fanwood High School chemistry classroom with teacher Swati Bulusu. A third-generation teacher – Hagg’s mother and grandfather, who both attended the ceremony, are educators – she will teach chemistry at Cranford High School in the fall.

“I was nervous, but it further confirmed this is what I am supposed to do,” she said. “My favorite moments were when I could explain things and saw my students experience that lightbulb moment.”

Ramos, of Colonia, interned with Rahway High School math teacher Toni Robertelli. She will begin a full-time job teaching algebra and geometry there this fall.

“I am super excited to continue my journey with an amazing group of math teachers I have gotten to know over the past year,” Ramos said. “I cannot wait to push myself to be better. I aim to be the best teacher I can be for my students.”


## ABOUT KEAN UNIVERSITY

Kean University, New Jersey’s urban research university, is a national institution of higher education recognized for its diversity, innovation and the social mobility of its graduates. Founded in 1855 as a teachers college, Kean has evolved into a thriving research university that supports students as they persist to graduation, give back to their communities and launch successful careers. Kean’s six colleges offer more than 50 undergraduate programs, six doctoral degree programs and more than 70 options leading to master’s degrees, professional diplomas or certifications, across a full range of academic subjects. With campuses in Union, Toms River and Manahawkin, New Jersey, and Wenzhou, China, as well as Kean Online, the University provides students of all backgrounds an affordable and accessible world-class education. Learn more at [kean.edu](http://kean.edu).



(above) Kean University graduates Ryen Hagg and Cristiana Rodrigues with Kean President Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D., and education officials. Kean graduate Lillianna Ramos, also awarded with distinction, is not pictured.

Photo by Kean University



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- Protect the masonry from the corrosive by products of combustion
- Provide a correctly sized flue for optimum efficiency of appliance




Easy & Effective Cleaning




Long Term Preservation


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**DANGER**  
CARBON  
MONOXIDE

Carbon Monoxide  
is invisible,  
odorless,  
and can kill you!

**\$600 OFF**  
NEW SIDING JOB

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