



insight

Spring/Summer 2014

CLC PROGRAMS:

St. Joseph's School for the Blind
Early Intervention (EIP)
In-District Support Services
Adult Services (RAP)
Early Childhood Education

CONCORDIA LEARNING CENTER AT ST. JOSEPH'S SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND

A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends & Supporters,

As I prepare for my retirement as Executive Director of Concordia, I reflect on the dedication and generous support from all of you who have partnered in our mission. Please know that it is your support that has helped Concordia to proudly be an organization that provides high quality specialized programs for individuals with disabilities from birth through adulthood.

For more than 40 years, I have been blessed with a satisfying and gratifying career working in education and social services culminating in my years at Concordia. My decision to retire was not an easy one; however, I am confident David Feinhals will proactively and effectively lead Concordia into the future. His expertise, passion, and background will ensure his smooth transition as the new Executive Director. It is my hope that you will continue your generous support on behalf of the individuals we serve and assist David in his new position as he and the staff continue to provide excellent educational and therapeutic services to individuals with special needs.

I am grateful to the Board of Trustees, our founders, the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, the staff and you, the supporters, for the opportunity to have worked at Concordia Learning Center. My years at Concordia have been the most rewarding and fulfilling years of my career.

With Gratitude,

Judy Ortman

NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind is proud to announce that David Feinhals will join the organization on August 18, 2014 as its new Executive Director. David will succeed Executive Director Judy Ortman who will be retiring after 8 years of service. According to Board of Trustees Chairperson Maryann Kicenuik, "After a



thorough search, the Board of Trustees is confident David Feinhals exemplifies the qualifications, passion and expertise required to lead Concordia Learning Center into the future. His work in the field of vision aligns with our mission and he brings a deep sense of commitment to enhancing the lives of individuals with special needs."

A native of New Jersey, David earned a BA from Rutgers University and later pursued an MS in Special Education from Hunter College. It was early in his career, while educating children with autism, that he developed a strong interest in assistive technology. Over the years he broadened his focus on the use of technology for individuals with physical disabilities. Since 2001, he has worked with individuals of all ages who are blind or visually impaired in the areas of assistive technology, braille, optical aids and independent living skills. His career path led him to the NJ Foundation for the Blind, Denville, NJ where he has served as the Executive and Program Director since 2011.

As the Executive Director of Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind, David will oversee a mission which began in Jersey City more than a century ago. The organization has expanded over the years and today serves individuals from birth through adulthood with special needs. Programs include St. Joseph's School for the Blind, SJSB Early Intervention, In-District Support Services, Adult Services (RAP) and an Early Childhood Education Program.

"It is an absolute honor to have the opportunity to lead an organization with such a long, rich history of helping individuals who are blind and multiply disabled. Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind is a very special place because it combines a philosophy of serving with compassion, acceptance and respect with modern approaches to addressing the needs of the "whole person," enabling each individual to achieve their full potential. I look forward to raising awareness of this important mission and to meeting those who share our passion for supporting individuals who need and deserve our help," says Feinhals.

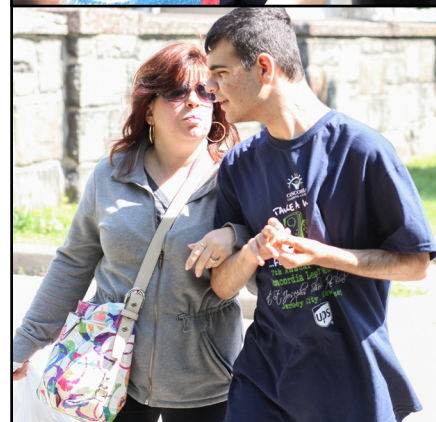
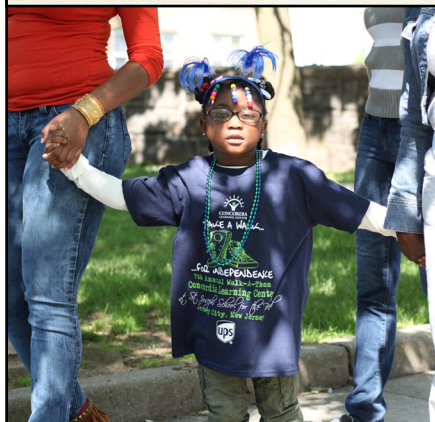
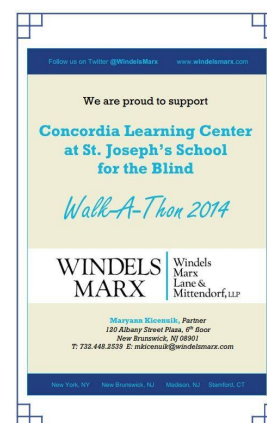
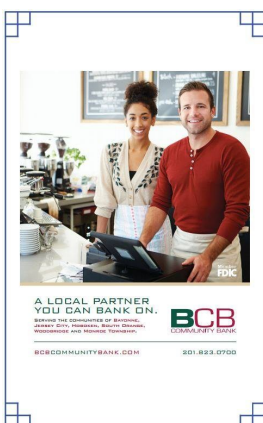
WALK-A-THON 2014

Students, faculty, families and friends joined together on Friday, May 30, 2014 for Concordia's 7th Annual Walk-A-Thon. This year's theme, **"Walking for Independence"** is symbolic of each student's strength and determination; representing all that they are, and all that they hope to be.

The successful event was held at Pershing Field Park and sponsored by a host of generous supporters. Gold Star Independence Sponsor, UPS North Atlantic District in cooperation with the UPS Foundation is a dedicated partner in our mission. As this year's highest level sponsor, they have led the way for our students' future success.

This year Concordia was proud to walk alongside Bronze Star Independence Sponsors, Windels Marx on behalf of Partner Maryann Kicenuik and BCB Community Bank. GMPC Printing, XCEL Federal Credit Union, Hudson City Savings Bank and Lions Clubs from across the region also helped support the event.

The day started on a high note with the Jersey City Middle School #7 band leading the way. More than 30 student band members provided an upbeat series of popular tunes for the walkers to enjoy. Shoo Shoo T. Clown was also on hand to cheer the walkers. The professional clown donated his time to bring smiles to the children and brighten their day. This year, more than 200 people participated in the event including 30 students from the Wayne High School Leos organization.



FIFTH ANNUAL "DARE TO DREAM" CONFERENCE



More than 175 special education students from Hudson County school districts and neighboring districts in Passaic and Bergen County attended the 2014 "Dare to Dream" Conference hosted by Concordia for the fifth consecutive year. The annual leadership conference focuses on student self-advocacy and transition from school to post-secondary opportunities.

A special thank you to students from Kearny High School for their thoughtful and generous gifts to Concordia for hosting the conference again this year.

"COSMIC MOVES" WITH NIMBUS DANCE WORKS

The students of St. Joseph's School for the Blind had the opportunity to experience the art of dance through a unique program designed specifically for their needs. Under the direction of Jersey City's, Nimbus Dance Works, students learned, through body placement, poses and touch, the sequence of movements in professional dance.

Nimbus teaching artists Myssi Robinson & Daniel Mont-Eton based the interactive program on the exploration of shapes, space, time and energy and drew on the methodology of Nimbus founder and Artistic Director Samuel Pott.

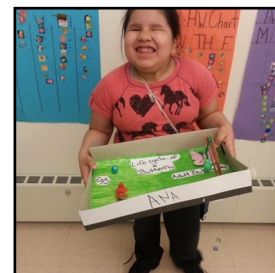
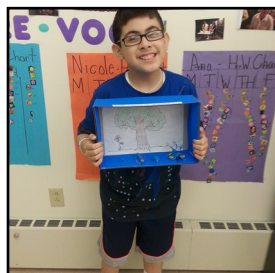
According to St. Joseph's School for the Blind Principal Joseph Schwartz, "The program Nimbus instructors created provided our students the opportunity to connect with dance through movement and taught them how to use movement as a means of expression. Nimbus instructors took the time to work with our teachers and specialists and made special accommodations in the program for students with multiple disabilities. Many students experienced increased movement and learned the relationship of space, time, and energy."

This unique program was made possible through a Local Arts Program grant funded in part by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/ Department of State, a Partner Agency of the National Endowment for the Arts and administered by the Hudson Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs/Tourism Development, Thomas A. DeGise County Executive and the Board of Chosen Freeholders.



CLASS 3 "BUTTERFLY LIFE CYCLE" PROJECT

Class 3 explored the intricate process of a butterfly's life cycle for their Spring class project. Based on classrooms lessons, each student created a dimensional piece of the four stages of butterfly metamorphosis—egg, larvae, pupa and adult. Each student completed a majority of their work at home and presented their final masterpiece to their teachers and peers. Exquisite work for such young minds!



STUDENT ORCHESTRA DAZZLES SJSB STUDENTS

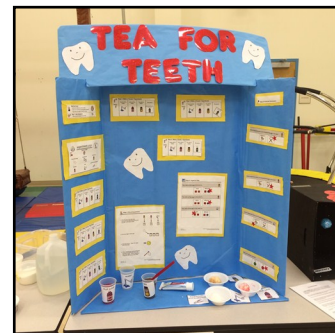
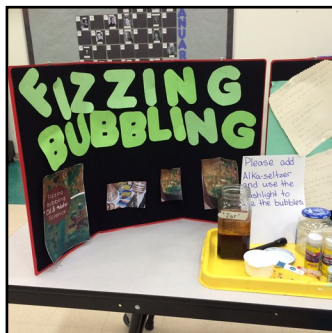
A 58 piece string orchestra from New Hope, Minnesota, the Robbinsdale Cooper Senior High School Orchestra, performed a melodic, symphonic concert for the students of Concordia Learning Center, the last stop on their week-long tour of our area. Their appearance at Concordia was coordinated by William La Rosa, Administrator of the County of Hudson Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs/Tourism Development.

The hour long concert included music from the popular musical Wicked and the movie, The Hobbit which brought cheers from the audience! To better involve many of the school's students who are blind/visually impaired, band members shared the name and sounds of each stringed instrument throughout the concert, and at the close, presented the instruments to the students so they could feel each shape. Robbinsdale Orchestra students arrived in New Jersey and performed at both the Jersey Gardens Mall and Liberty Science Center.



STUDENT SCIENCE FAIR PROJECTS

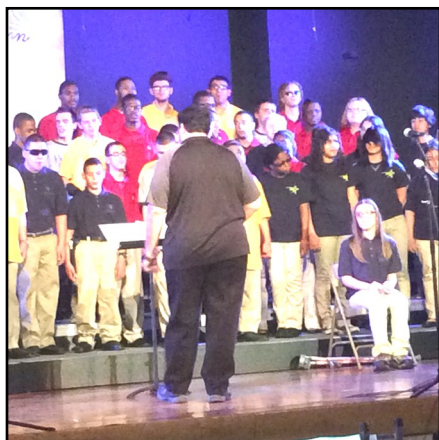
Our SJSB and Pre-K3 students worked together for this year's Science Fair event at Concordia. From topics such as, "Fizzing Bubbles" to "Gummy Bear Science", our students and staff provided a fun-filled afternoon of discovery for all ages.



SJSB STUDENTS PERFORM FLAWLESSLY AT MUSIC FESTIVAL

A beautiful and enriching event took place at the MUSIC IS OUR VISION - Eastern Schools for the Blind Music Festival in Philadelphia. Our senior choir traveled to Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to take part in the festival over the May 16th weekend. This festival takes places every two years and includes students from six different schools for the blind across the east coast. All students in attendance rehearse and collaborate together under world-renowned music instructors; and have the opportunity to share and interact with new and talented friends.

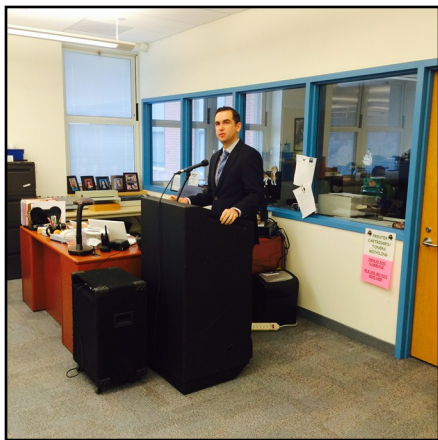
Congratulations to our senior choir and students (L-R below: Zena, Aaron, Zyshon, Asaya and Omar) who performed brilliantly and made Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind very proud!



DONOR APPRECIATION DAY 2014

In recognition of our donors' generous support, Concordia Learning Center held a Donor Appreciation Day brunch on Friday, April 30, 2014. Our students thanked donors and corporate sponsors, emphasizing the impact of their gifts for our programs.

Mayor Steven Fulop was a guest speaker along with Board of Trustees Vice Chairperson, Sharon Held, and Sister Margaret Byrne, CSJP. Mayor Fulop is joined by (left to right, top middle photo) Concordia's Board of Trustees Chairperson Maryann Kicenuik; Executive Director Judy Ortman; Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace Congregation Leader Margaret Byrne, CSJP, and Congregation Leadership Team Member Kristin Funari, CSJP. The event celebrated the support Concordia receives for its programs and services for individuals with special needs from government, corporate, foundation and individual donors.



DONOR CORNER FEATURING THE UPS FOUNDATION

The UPS Foundation and UPS North Atlantic District recently donated **\$25,000** to Concordia Learning Center at St. Joseph's School for the Blind for the purchase of a new passenger van.

The multi-purpose van will provide safe and efficient transportation for adults with special needs who participate in Concordia's Realizing Adult Potential (RAP) program. The self-directed day program serves adults, 21 years of age and older, with special needs. Under the direction of an experienced staff and housed on-campus in Concordia's residential facility, adults have the opportunity to engage in life skills training which includes personal and social skills, meal preparation, personal finances, job skills, personal fitness & health, consumer skills and community participation. In addition, the new multi-purpose van will assist the organization in a variety of functions in support of all of our programs that serve individuals who are blind, visually impaired and multiply disabled from birth through adulthood.

According to Judy Ortman, "We are extremely grateful to The UPS Foundation and members of UPS North Atlantic District for this generous donation of a new eight passenger van. Concordia is now better able to respond to the growing needs for specialized services for adults with disabilities in Hudson County and across the region. This van means more adults will be able to participate in our programs and be engaged in enriching and productive activities."

Established in 1951 and based in Atlanta, GA, The UPS Foundation identifies specific areas where its backing clearly impacts social issues. In support of this strategic approach, The UPS Foundation has identified the following focus areas for giving: volunteerism, diversity, community safety and environmental sustainability.

"The UPS Foundation is honored to support Concordia Learning Center's efforts to expand the RAP program and continue to provide specialized services to individuals with special needs," said Eduardo Martinez, President of The UPS Foundation. "Our goal is to fund powerful programs that make a lasting difference to the global community."



GARDENING FOR OUR CAUSE

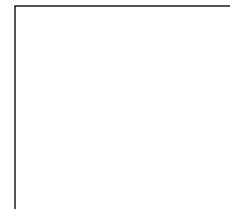
Goldman Sachs' global volunteer initiative, CTW, brought a talented group of associate volunteers to Concordia for a day-long project. The group worked outside clearing our sensory garden and planting a bounty of fresh vegetables and herbs for our students to harvest. The team also tackled indoor work in our gym and fundraising office.





**Concordia Learning Center at
St. Joseph's School for the Blind**

*A ministry of the Sisters of
St. Joseph of Peace*



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CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS:

EARLY INTERVENTION FUN DAY AUG. 6
SJSB LAST DAY OF EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR AUG. 12
STAFF ORIENTATION SEPT. 2
SJSB FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL SEPT. 3
PRE-K3 PARENT ORIENTATION 5 PM SEPT. 3
PRE-K3 FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL SEPT. 4

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