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## A Message from the Board

*(continued from page 1)*

As I reflected on the day and my role as a board member, it became clear to me that Larc School is not just a place of learning; it is a community that fosters connections. The shared experiences, the shared emotions, and the shared celebrations brought together families, educators, and supporters in a profound way. Witnessing the unity and support within the Larc School community reaffirmed my belief in the importance of the work we do and the positive impact it has on the lives of these extraordinary children.



The graduation ceremony at Larc School was an inspiring event that showcased the strength, resilience, and unwavering spirit of the students, their families, and the dedicated staff. It exemplified the core values of inclusivity, respect, and celebration of every milestone, no matter how small. This memorable day served as a powerful reminder of the transformative power of education and the profound impact it has on the lives of individuals with special needs. Larc School continues to be a shining example of the possibilities that can be achieved when a community comes together with compassion, dedication, and a shared vision of empowering every child to reach their full potential. ■



## A Message from the Board

by Pepe Piperno

“

The graduation ceremony was a testament to the dedication and perseverance of the students, their families, and the exceptional staff at Larc School. ”

I recently had the privilege of attending the graduation ceremony of nine preschoolers at Larc School. As a board member for over 25 years, I have witnessed countless extraordinary moments, but this particular event left a mark on my heart. Larc School, as a special needs institution, brings together a diverse group of families, educators, and supporters to honor the achievements of these incredible children. The overflowing room, the cheers of encouragement, and the unwavering commitment to inclusivity and respect made it abundantly clear why Larc School is a beacon of hope and inspiration for so many.

The graduation ceremony was a testament to the dedication and perseverance of the students, their families, and the exceptional staff at Larc School. Each child, whether navigating the aisle in a wheelchair or with the aid of a walker, was accompanied by one or two staff members who provided invaluable support. The sight of these children proudly making their way forward was a powerful symbol of their strength and determination.

There was an excitement in the room as friends and family members filled every available space, eager to witness this special occasion. The diverse crowd showcased the inclusive nature of Larc School, with people from various backgrounds and cultures coming together to support these young graduates. The school's commitment to inclusivity was exemplified when the accomplishments of one family were conveyed in their native language, ensuring that every family felt understood and appreciated. This simple act of respect and dignity epitomized the spirit of Larc School and its unwavering dedication to honoring the uniqueness of each child.

During the ceremony, each child was individually introduced, and their remarkable accomplishments were celebrated. The educators and staff members took the time to recognize even the smallest achievements – be it a smile, a look, or a sound made by the child. These moments of recognition reminded us all that success comes in various forms and that every step forward, no matter how small, is a cause for celebration. The cheers and applause from the audience echoed the pride and joy felt by everyone present!

(continued on page 8)

# MEET JIMMY

## - THE LARC FAMILY DOG



On April 14th, Jimmy, a two-year-old Golden Retriever, was “hired” by Larc School. Jimmy has been in training his whole life and was very excited to become an integral part of our school community. After a year-long

application process Jimmy came to Larc through a partnership with the Guide Dog Foundation and is a facility dog for the Larc School educational and Adult Programs.

**Birthday:** March 11, 2021

**Mom:** Annette (Golden Retriever)

**Dad:** Chappy (Golden Retriever)

**Siblings:** Nine brothers and sisters (5 boys and 4 girls)

**Family Life:** When he is not working, Jimmy takes turns staying at the homes of two staff members, Stacie and Stefanie.

**It Runs in the Blood:** One of Jimmy's brother's is also a facility dog and works in a pediatric oncology unit in Texas.

**Fun Fact:** Jimmy's lovies include a Lamb Chop doll and a blue crocodile.

Jimmy can perform interactive greetings like waving hello, setting the tone for the day as students arrive. He can also do a behavior called “rest” where he can put his head into a student's lap to provide a calming and grounding effect. Sometimes Jimmy can even hold fun and encouraging signs with his mouth, such as a “Welcome Back!” sign after Spring Break. And, of course, Jimmy can do service dog tasks, such as pushing accessible buttons, which can be used as motivation during physical, speech, or occupational therapy. He can be a teacher, a model, a cheerleader, a helper, and, above all, a friend for our students.

Larc has quickly learned that love is a wet nose and a wagging tail. ■

## SHAKE, RATTLE, AND STROLL OR ROLL DOWN LARC'S NEW SENSORY WALK

Thanks to a grant from the Camden Home Foundation, one of Larc School's hallways has been transformed into an indoor “Sensory Walk”. This Sensory Walk creates a pathway that is specifically designed to provide a multi-sensory experience for students in our educational program. Multiple sensory toys and specialized sensory supports are incorporated to stimulate and motivate students in all areas. This includes tactile, auditory, and visual stimulation, vestibular and proprioceptive input, and movement.

Prior to purchasing and installing items for the Sensory Wall, Larc School professionals formed a multi-disciplinary committee. This committee determined which items would best meet the various needs of Larc School's population. Items were selected and purchased to provide optimal sensory integration experiences for Larc students.

The walls and floor of “The Walk” are decorated in an array of bright and bold colors. It is lined with sensory “toys” including a spinning “rain stick”



LJ really enjoys the new Sensory Walk, but his favorite is the interactive caterpillar!

butterfly and an interactive caterpillar with interlocking hardware. Larc's therapists and teachers incorporate these into their related services, lessons, and activities. The Sensory Walk experience gives students the opportunity to make “Sen-Sational” connections for processing and responding to sensory input through fun and play! ■



# A SPECIAL FRIEND VISITS LARC

In May, George Norcross, who is the chairman of Cooper University Healthcare, made a special visit to Larc School to hear more about our new programs and services.

Among the highlights of the visit were: learning more about Larc's expansion in arts and music programming; experiencing Larc's new Sensory Walk; and meeting Larc's new Facility Dog, Jimmy.

For many years Mr. Norcross has made it his mission to reach out to others, share with them the Larc Story, and ask them to help too. The Norcross Foundation and the Cooper Foundation are the naming sponsors of the Cooper Norcross Run the Bridge Event. With his leadership and support, the event has raised nearly \$5 million for the children of the Larc School.



## LARC'S ART SHOW GOES TO THE MOVIES

On Wednesday March 22nd and Thursday March 23rd Larc School welcomed Spring with our Annual Arts Festival. The theme of this year's Arts Festival was "Lights, Camera, Action". Upon entering, family members and special guests were greeted by a *Wizard of Oz* themed wall transformed by Larc's own art teacher, Kathy Vespe.

They followed the "Yellow Brick Road" into the auditorium, which was transformed into an art gallery. The student masterpieces on display were created by using a variety of materials and techniques. These included painting and print on canvas, paper crafts, and mixed-media art. Then it was "Larc, Camera,

Thanks for your support,  
Mr. Norcross.

Action" as the event continued with live and pre-recorded performances by Larc's exceptionally talented cast of students. In continuing with our theme, students performed montages of Rocky, Singing in the Rain, and many other favorites. These were Oscar-worthy performances! ■



Room 5 students performed "The Circle of Life" from Disney's *The Lion King*.







## 32nd Annual Help the Kids Golf Tournament - The Best Day “BY PAR”

On June 12th nearly 180 golfers took part in Larc School's annual “Help the Kids” Golf Tournament at Ramblewood Country Club. Although the date and venue changed, it was still the same amazing event many have come to enjoy for 32 years and counting! Golfers shared that the highlight of the day was definitely meeting Jimmy, the Larc Family Dog, and some Larc students. These students provided a glimpse into the abilities and potential that exist within us all.

Thank you to all our sponsors, donors and volunteers. Please know that as a result of your generosity, you have played a part in helping a child to learn, speak, walk, and so much more. ■



# thank you

6.12.23  
**help the kids**  
32ND ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT

## Larc School Sincerely Thanks the Sponsors of the 32nd Annual “Help the Kids” Golf Tournament

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# A MORNING TO APPRECIATE



In April Larc welcomed back a school tradition in holding its annual Appreciation Breakfast.

Larc School's Board of Directors presented David Owens, Director of the Camden County Department of Corrections, and his department with the "Paul Porado Humanitarian Award." The award is given in memory of Paul Porado, a cherished Board member who consistently championed the needs of individuals with disabilities. Director Owens and the Camden County Corrections officers of the Fraternal Order of Police received the award for ensuring that Larc is never forgotten over the holidays. For nearly 30 years, the group has put together a spectacular holiday celebration each year at Larc with motorcycles, police vehicles, fire trucks, K-9 dogs, and Santa himself.

The Board also honored the Pellegrino Family with the "Lauren Higgins Hope Award." The award was created in memory of a beloved former Larc School student, Lauren Beth Higgins, who passed away in 2006. Lauren gave all those she met hope that each and every day could be better than the one before it. Charles Higgins, Lauren's father and a Larc Board Member, presented the award to Mark Pellegrino for consistently demonstrating his commitment to Larc year after year through the "Help the Kids" golf tournament and numerous other charitable acts. ■

