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Celebrating a Lifetime of Larc Service

On January 15th, longtime Board Member Jim Madden was honored with the Camden County Martin Luther King, Jr. Freedom Medal for his unwavering volunteerism at The Larc Norcross School. For the past 45 years, Jim has selflessly dedicated himself to the school, tirelessly raising funds and championing the educational and therapeutic activities that enrich the lives of the children each and every day.

"With no thought of reward or recognition, Jim has quietly provided the children with care, comfort, and learning opportunities they could otherwise only dream of," said Board Chairperson Ed McDonnell. "Though most will never fully understand his impact, Jim Madden is their relentless hero."

McDonnell added, "An extraordinary champion for those with disabilities, Jim Madden truly embodies Martin Luther King's dream of creating a more just and loving community."

Jim joins Pepe Piperno as the second Board member to receive the Camden County Martin Luther King, Jr. Freedom Medal.



Camden County Commissioner Jonathan L. Young, Sr., Jim Madden, and Larc's Chairman of the Board, Ed McDonnell, celebrate Jim's lifetime achievements at The Larc Norcross School.



A Message from the Board

by Charles Higgins

A Word About Our Logo

In September, the Board unanimously voted to add the Norcross family name to that of Larc's, creating "The Larc Norcross School." While nothing else changes, the Board wanted to honor the decades of service and substantial support George Norcross and his family have provided to the Larc School over the decades.

I have been involved at The Larc Norcross School for a number of years. Initially, my wife and I were desperate to find a school for our daughter, Lauren. To be candid, there was nothing that we found that measured up that offered a program that she needed. Finding another parent in the same predicament, Ed McDonnell and I stumbled across a few families in the basement of a church with limited resources, staffing or curriculum. Our wives, Gail and Kathy, endorsed the idea and a seed was planted that we would build something almost from scratch. Over the years, there have been a countless number of individuals and organizations that have helped us greatly. We are forever grateful to them.

The Larc Norcross School has flourished through the years. Perhaps we are somewhat biased, but it is second to none. The staff is talented and committed beyond belief. Many obstacles have been overcome along the way. There are a boatload of people and things that I could share a thought or two with you, but I prefer to write about just one in this article.

I had the opportunity to visit several classrooms at the start of the new year and witness the technology that is being used with the majority of our students. I was introduced to one of our preschool teachers whose father has a background in technology, and he volunteered to make several communication aids for our kids. Mr. Barger crafted "key guards" to help students with hand function issues so they can more accurately select messages on their speech generating devices. He also created "eye gaze wands" which allow students to directly access vocabulary by looking at the desired words or images. These assistive technology tools empower our students with speech or language impairments to actively participate in communication.

The parents who have their special child attend Larc Norcross have plates that are more than full. In these times, families are challenged in many ways. The Larc Norcross program and its staff accomplish extraordinary things with their children. Larc is a "safe place" that is totally focused on helping some of our most "special kids" among five Southern New Jersey counties. If you ever have a moment, ask for a tour to see what happens on a daily basis. I believe that it will be a memorable visit. To maximize each student's potential is what they do in a loving way.

The Board of Directors at Larc Norcross sincerely thank you for all of your help through the years! ■



Racing Through Time on the Ben Franklin

On a crisp November 3rd, thousands of runners, walkers, volunteers, and spectators converged for the Larc Norcross annual Run the Bridge event. The race spanned the iconic Ben Franklin Bridge, connecting New Jersey and Pennsylvania, before weaving through Camden and along a new scenic waterfront course. The gorgeous weather, refreshing craft beer, and even a surprise appearance by Ben Franklin himself all contributed to the festive, sold-out atmosphere. As runners approached the famously challenging Bridge, Franklin's playful shout rang out, "Run faster! The redcoats are coming!" - eliciting amused chuckles from our runners. Registration for next year's event on November 2, 2025, is already "up and running," with hundreds of eager participants already signed up. ■



FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT: [RUNTHEBRIDGE.ORG](https://runthebridge.org)



THANK YOU!

A Sincere Thank You to the Sponsors of the "Cooper Norcross Run the Bridge"

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AmeriHealth Lets Larc's Imagination Shine

On September 24, 2024, Larc unveiled a vibrant, interactive mural titled "Let Your Imagination Shine" in the school library.

The project began two years ago when Larc was overjoyed to be selected as an AmeriHealth IMPACT partner. It soon became clear that the school library could benefit from AmeriHealth's support. AmeriHealth sprang into action, fundraising and collecting donations of books, sensory objects and stuffed book characters to liven up the space. The AmeriHealth team then spent a day cleaning, organizing, and decorating the library with the new items.

Though AmeriHealth had already made a huge difference, they weren't finished. Larc had long wanted to add a mural but lacked the resources. AmeriHealth hired a local artist

to create an interactive masterpiece that engages students with vibrant color, imagery, and sound. A dedicated Larc parent volunteer, Leslie Klemm, also helped to bring the project to life.

Now, Larc students flock to the library to experience the inspiring mural, and visitors to the school eagerly tour the transformed space. This mural is more than just art - it's a beacon of creativity that unites and uplifts the entire community. Larc is deeply grateful to everyone who helped bring this vision to life. ■



Members of the AmeriHealth Executive Team, Larc staff, and the talented artists come together for a photo in front of the stunning new mural, celebrating collaboration and creativity.

Splash of Fun



PT Jackie and JB enjoying Larc's new SWIM program!

In July, The Larc Norcross School launched a new program: the SWIM (Students Water Instruction and Movement) Program. The goal of the SWIM Program is to provide instructional, recreational, and social activities that boost physical activity levels and develop self-confidence.

Aquatic therapy is a warm and wonderful option for kids with mobility issues. In the soothing water, they feel nearly weightless, which lets

them build strength in their muscles without stressing their joints - an impossible feat on dry land. This gentle physical activity also boosts heart health, relieves joint and muscle pain, and shields them from exercise-related injuries. Just as importantly, aquatic therapy provides profound mental and emotional benefits. Kids gain increased self-confidence, improved quality of life, better socialization skills, enhanced sensory integration, and a profound sense of independence when they're in the water.

So far, the Larc Norcross students and staff have embraced the new program, with the sight of the water



Thomas is all smiles, enjoying his turn in the pool!

alone sparking smiles and cheers. Through this year's successful Giving Tuesday campaign, the school hopes to expand the SWIM Program in the months ahead. ■

First All-Larc Employee Team Lends Its Legs



On November 3rd, four employees made history by forming the first Ainsley's Angels team for Larc.

Ainsley's Angels is an organization that pairs endurance runners with individuals who have disabilities, allowing them to participate in races. Volunteer runners push athlete-riders in specially adapted chairs, giving those with disabilities the opportunity to experience the thrill of running.

"The Bridge Run was designed to be inclusive, welcoming runners of all abilities. Seeing some of the Larc Norcross students and staff participating adds even more meaning and purpose to the event," said Dave Goldstein, South Jersey Ainsley's Angels Ambassador. "While raising funds for the school is the ultimate goal, witnessing the students having fun on the course is truly heartwarming, reminding the runners just who they

are supporting. I'd love to see more Larc student-staff teams joining future bridge runs - it creates such a special moment that we should build on."

The Founder of Ainsley's Angels, Major Kim "Rooster" Rossiter USMC (ret), added, "Imagine a day when our love for humanity outweighs our individual desires. An example of this vision, when we all come together for community over self, is so beautifully displayed at the annual Run the Bridge."

For information about becoming an Ainsley's Angel runner or rider, please contact Dave Goldstein at southjersey@ainsleysangels.org. ■



friends OF THE LARC NORCROSS SCHOOL

*Recognizing donations received from July 22, 20024 - January 14, 2025

Larc Norcross School acknowledges these gifts from our caring friends whose generosity makes it possible for us to provide the very best. We extend our deepest gratitude to every donor! There are many ways to support our mission, including planned giving and charitable donations through required distributions. Amounts donated may be excluded from taxable income. For more information about our donation opportunities, please contact Kim Cowperthwait at kcowperthwait@larc.school.org.

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The holiday season came alive at The Larc Norcross School once again. It began with a festive concert from our friends at Holiday Express. Then, the Camden County Corrections Officers organized a parade and breakfast for the Larc community. Before the holidays ended, the Pellegrino Auto Group treated our staff to a wonderful holiday luncheon and visited with each child.

The Larc Norcross School is grateful for the incredible generosity we received this year. Over \$5,000 was raised on Giving Tuesday to expand our SWIM (Students Water Instruction and Movement) program. This allows more of our students to experience the

joyful, therapeutic benefits of being in the water - splashing, playing, and socializing with their peers, teachers, and therapists.

"The SWIM program is so important to the kids we educate," said Principal Stacie Halscheid. "The water has a calming effect that lasts for hours. But beyond that, it gives our kids a wonderful sense of achievement and confidence in their abilities."

Thank you to our generous donors, and the DiLuigi Family for organizing a "wish list" drive which resulted in 70 items worth \$2,000 being donated to the School. ■

IN ADDITION TO THESE EFFORTS, INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS WERE PROVIDED BY:

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