



## ESC NJ Welcomes Future Foundations Academy

**F**uture Foundations Academy (FFA) opened its doors on April 29, serving students in an environmentally-friendly, 55,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art facility on our Piscataway campus.

"The staff was well prepared and excited, which made this move effortless," said Schools Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein. "Each student was guided into the new building and acclimated to the school setting. By dismissal time on the very first day, it was heartwarming to see so many smiles on the faces of teachers, support staff and – most importantly – our students."

Prior to the move, the staff received instruction on the SMART Learning Suite, a "cloud-based workspace" featured in all classrooms. This learning software tool aides in lesson delivery, assessment and student collaboration.

Along with the latest technology, the academy features 12 classrooms, dedicated space for horticultural, culinary, community-based instruction and family living programs. There is also an innovative "Makerspace" for collaborative projects, a learning kitchen known as "Lucy's Café," and a fitness center, with a gymnasium and exercise equipment geared for students with special needs.

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Ribbon Cutting Ceremony**

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# Meena Pasupathy Appointed as Supervisor of Collaborative Educational Services and Administration



Meena Pasupathy is the very first Supervisor of Collaborative Educational Services and Administration at ESCNJ, a newly-created position.

With a doctoral degree in economics, Pasupathy began her career as a professor. After her daughter was born, she sought a career change, transitioning into special education.

"My daughter was a major influence in my life. Having a child with a disability you see the world in a very different way," she said.

In 2001, Pasupathy's daughter was enrolled as a student at the Academy Learning Center. Pasupathy saw the tremendous work being done at the ESCNJ and knew she wanted to play a substantial role in its service and growth.

In 2005, she began as a substitute aide while studying for her graduate degree in special education from The College of New Jersey. Pasupathy then became a teacher and, with continuous education, earned her

supervisor's certification and became the supervisor of ESCNJ's Center for Lifelong Learning.

In her new position, she will be working to expand collaborative services with school districts throughout New Jersey. "The main objective of my job is to provide support services for districts and help serve the needs of their students," Pasupathy said. "Services can include instructional, support, therapeutic support, as well as evaluating a student to see if he or she can remain in the district, with peers."

Her first task is to work with Allison Sanchez to develop and implement the new "Adult Community Services" program scheduled to open this fall.

"My goal is to expand the program to ensure a high-quality education for every student whether he or she remains in-district or attends one of our superb schools," Pasupathy said. "As a parent of a child with a disability and with my 12 years working for the commission, I know first-hand that every student deserves the best education possible."

# Allison Sanchez Named Executive Director of the Adult Community Services Program

For her entire life, Allison Sanchez has had a genuine passion in helping others.

It is one of the many reasons she is the ideal fit as the new Executive Director of ESCNJ's "Adult Community Services."

"I thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to make a difference in other people's lives," Sanchez said. "I look forward to taking my passion to the next step."

This fall, Ms. Sanchez will work with students who have completed their specialized school programs. She is developing a life-skills learning program that prepares graduates for independence and meaningful jobs, a long-time objective of the ESCNJ.

"I want to enable individuals to further explore their interests and be given opportunities to increase their skills in a true job setting," Sanchez said.

She is eagerly looking forward to the program's grand opening in September when participants will be mentored in developing vital life skills, such as how to dress for an interview, do laundry and handle money.

Sanchez is ideal for her new role at ESCNJ.

From 2005 to 2019, she worked at JESPY House. One of her many accomplishments included building relationships with local employers and then matching

them with individuals with disabilities eager to work. Now, at ESCNJ, she is excited with the opportunity to build a more extensive program from the ground up.

Sanchez said she is a firm believer in the open-door policy, and welcomes the many questions from the parents and other loved ones of program participants.

"When I speak to parents, they are so excited because they love ESCNJ and they like the substantial progress that they see in their children," Sanchez said. "I want parents to know that they are heard and will continue to be heard. Their input is so important to me."

Sanchez has no doubts that the list of interested families will continue to grow, as the program develops new, exciting opportunities for its participants.

"In all my years of service, nothing has given me greater pleasure than doing something for the benefit of others," Sanchez said. "I am just so thrilled. The program is going to be a success...it's going to be phenomenal!"



# Pathway to Adult Living Celebrates its First Graduation

There were plenty of smiles and photos, and some tears, as Pathway to Adult Living (PAL) marked its very first graduation with a student-prepared luncheon.

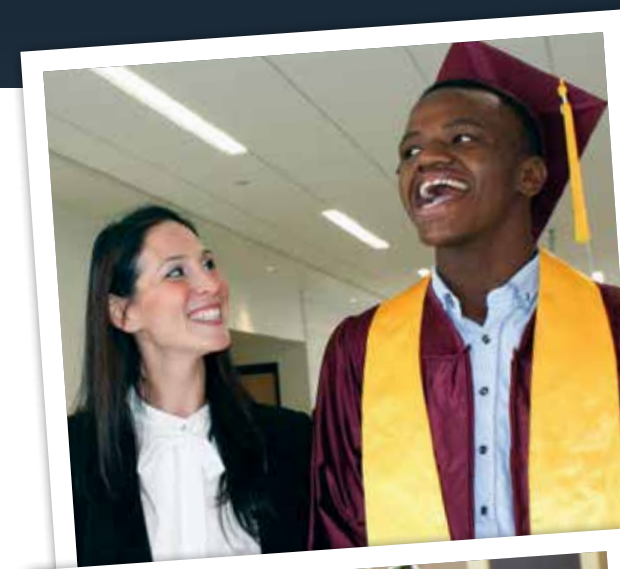
PAL Supervisor Raissa Prus, along with Marci Rubin, offered heartfelt speeches praising the students on everything they have accomplished in such a short period of time.

Sayreville Mayor Kennedy O'Brien, a strong, vocal advocate of the program, was in attendance to congratulate the three graduates, and shared some words of encouragement and perspective.

Best wishes to Donovan Moore, Caterina Perez and Vincent Pistilli on their completion of the program.



# Congratulations to Our 2018-2019 Graduates



## ACADEMY LEARNING CENTER

Braxton Alston	Vishnu Kowdlay
Nicole Cano	Timothy Quismundo
Robert Cipoletti	Ariel Roa
Jason Cullen	Bajram Sela
Jake Eisen	Michael Siryj
Amanda Fabian	Ghanan Umakanthan
Paul Gincel	

## BRIGHT BEGINNINGS LEARNING CENTER

Briana Adame	Dajuan Nixon
Aditya Badam	Natalie Pastuna
Joselyn Calderon	Adrian Perez
Steven Javier	Roshni Ramesh
Tyler Johnson	John Paul Lara Rojas
Valerie Martinez	Christopher Sumner
Ricardo Miranda	Juan Torres-Soto
Alim Nikovic	

## CENTER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

Brandon Brzezniak	Casimo Medoro
Jeremiah Rosier Clark	Anthony Vargas
Faith Gamrat	

## FUTURE FOUNDATIONS ACADEMY

Jonathan Friedman	David Ovuike
Abdul Little	Daniel Taylor

## NUVIEW ACADEMY

Curtis Charles-Ceus	Angel Torres
Autumn Mignella Colalillo	Elijah Vickers
Raymond Franchino	Edwin Adongo
Yeivi Andino Melgar	Daniel Rosales

## PISCATAWAY REGIONAL DAY SCHOOL

Alexa Cada	Luz Pérez
Kristina Dawson-Dixon	Juan Carlos Rodriguez
Serge Gilbert	Michelle Rosa
Briana Johnson	David Santiago
Berline Joseph	Elijah Santiago
Nathaneal O'Sullivan	Benjamin Santibanez
Luke Pecora	Roger Vasquez
Ashley Pérez	Sara Wright

## 2019 Vendor Expo Connects Vendors and Buyers



The 2019 ESCNJ Vendor Expo, featuring dozens of co-op vendors and potential buyers, was once again held at Raritan Center in Edison. The May 15th event was well-attended, as always, creating a platform of networking that ultimately saves taxpayers millions of dollars a year.

## ESCNJ Board President Enshrined on the "Wall of Fame"



Long-time ESCNJ Board President Dr. Dale Caldwell, who also serves as vice president of the New Brunswick Board of Education, now has his photo on the "Wall of Fame" at the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) in Trenton.

Dr. Caldwell has served on the New Brunswick Board of Education for nearly 21 years. He served as president from 2006-08 and was re-elected to the top post in May 2017 for a district enrolling more than 10,200 students from preschool through grade 12.

## ESCNJ Salutes its "Governor Educator of the Year" Winners

ESCNJ is thrilled to have so many "Governor Educator of the Year" winners. Congratulations to our terrific, hardworking and talented teachers!



## ESCNJ Board Tours FFA

The ESCNJ Board took a special guided tour of the new Future Foundations Academy (FFA) at the final board meeting of the school year in June. All agreed the building was impressive and saluted the ESCNJ team for making it all happen for the students.

Pictured above: (L-R) Board President Dr. Dale Caldwell, Vice President Bill Petscavage, Dr. Susan Genco and Dr. Scott Taylor.



## Seventh-Annual Autism Swim and Play Made a Big Splash

The seventh-annual Autism Awareness Swim & Play on May 4 raised more than \$11,300 and had more than 200 participants. Participants raised money by swimming laps while others enjoyed playtime in the activity pool or through arts and crafts. All proceeds were donated to Autism New Jersey.



## Autism Awareness 5K Walkathon



The Center for Lifelong Learning held its Autism Awareness 5K Walkathon in May. The proceeds went to Autism New Jersey.

## Everyone was a Winner at the Annual Basket Raffle Dinner Dance



Bright Beginnings Learning Center and Future Foundations Academy held their annual Basket Raffle Dinner Dance. Everyone, including Cindy Borell and Sandy Giardino, had a great time.

# A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words During “Better Hearing and Speech Month”



May is Better Hearing and Speech Month. To celebrate, Terese Manalansan, a Speech-Language Specialist, along with her colleagues, held an event for students at the Center for Lifelong

Learning. It was a showcase of the school's impressive technology, including smart TVs, tablets and picture boards that provide a means of communication for students to communicate and participate in fun-filled learning.



## PAL Students Work the Day Away

The students at the Pathway to Adult Living (PAL) demonstrate their work skills at the Cheesequake rest area on the Garden State Parkway and Molly Pitcher rest stop on the New Jersey Turnpike. It is all part of a supervised paid work-study program exclusively for PAL students.

# PAL Students Help Recycle Sayreville

Residents are learning the ins and outs of recycling with help from Pathways to Adult Living (PAL).

“The key to recycling is education,” said Elyse Barone, the borough’s recycling and clean communities coordinator. “We all need to do a better job. We want to make this as easy as possible on residents and we want to help them recycle right.”

PAL, which works to ensure a transition to independent living for students ages 18-21 with disabilities, coordinates neighborhood walks in Sayreville. Program participants assess the items that residents leave in recycling containers, ensuring that recycling is being done correctly.

Eight students are paid \$9 an hour under the guidance of PAL’s state-certified supervisors. Participants wear yellow vests, indicating their participation in the program, which began in early June.

Residents who mistakenly attempt to recycle non-recyclable items might see a sticker on their recycling bins with a checked off item indicating what was wrong or receive a letter explaining what



can be recycled. PAL participants will return to the neighborhoods in a few months to see if recycling behavior has changed.

“The program is all about learning job skills, work skills, and behaviors that are required to succeed in a job,” said Raissa Prus, PAL supervisor. “The students are tremendously excited to do this work; it is a great self-confidence boost for these young individuals preparing for adult life.”

## The Force was with the Students at BBLC



Star Wars characters came out in full “Force” to support the Bright Beginnings Learning Center’s Mini-Olympics.

## Caterina Perez Eams the Rebecca S. McDonald Award



Caterina Perez, a Pathway to Adult Living (PAL) student, was delighted to receive the Rebecca S. McDonald award from the Transition Coordinators Network at Bell Works in Holmdel. Caterina was recognized for her “successful transition activities” in preparation for independent living. She was one of six students selected from across the state.

“We are truly proud of Caterina and congratulate her on receiving this prestigious award,” said Schools Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein. “Caterina is just one most example of the type of students we have, eager for opportunity and a chance to make a difference in wherever life takes them.”



**Piscataway Regional Day School Students Try Their Hands at Work**

The students from the Piscataway Regional Day School are out and about, testing different potential jobs at various locations throughout Middlesex County.



All of these new amenities compliments FFA's core curriculum of academic and community-based instruction. It is all part of facilitating life skills that includes robotics, computer coding, experiential culinary and horticultural courses.

"We are proud to offer our students the type of facility that is unparalleled within the specialized school community," said ESCNJ School Business Administrator Patrick M. Moran, who managed construction of the entire project. "This is the type of building that is designed to specifically encourage and enhance learning. Every single design aspect focuses on enhancing student performance and encouraging a

lifetime love of learning."

The new building also features the 8,000-square-foot Professional Development Academy (PDA). It is separate of FFA, with its own designated entrance, a 300-seat lecture space (which can be reconfigured for smaller meetings), contemporary lighting and sound systems and plasma screens for presentations.

The PDA will be available to host seminars for ESCNJ community partners, such as the Rutgers Graduate School of Education, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Colgate-Palmolive, Johnson & Johnson, and other corporations and organizations within greater Middlesex County.

**DARE to Be Great at NuView Academy**



NuView held a six-week D.A.R.E program with Detective Calvin Laughlin, in which he discussed the importance of a positive outlook and being kind to all people.

**A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words**



It has been an unbelievable year for the students at BBLC!



For the students at CLL they are gearing up for summer!



# The Educational Services Commission of New Jersey

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