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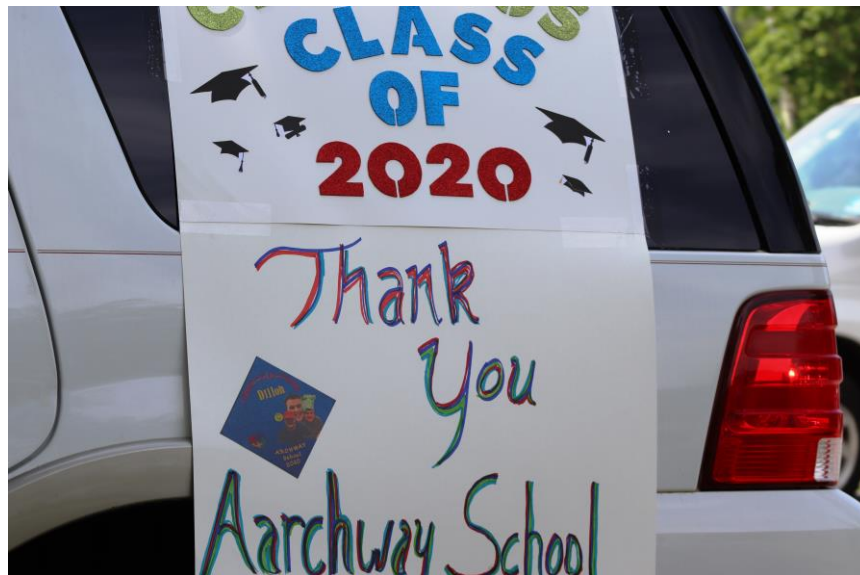
**The Archway Schools Revamp Graduation Amid Pandemic**

*School staff honors the Class of 2020 by holding drive through graduation ceremonies*

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**ATCO, NEW JERSEY** (June 11, 2020) – This year, staff from the Archway Schools have been doing everything they can to make the end of the school year special for graduates to celebrate the big milestone. Last week, the Archway Schools held drive-through graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2020 for both Upper and Lower School students on Archway's main campus in Atco, New Jersey. The Archway Lower School event was held on Wednesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup> and the Archway Upper School event was held on Friday, June 5<sup>th</sup>. Graduates and their families were loaded into family vehicles, many of which were decorated in school colors and had photos, posters and banners of the graduates taped to the outside. Horns were blaring, balloons were flying from the top of cars, teachers, school administrators and administrative staff lined the procession line and the 2020 graduates were dressed in caps and gowns.

The cars were decorated with balloons, posters, signs and much more as well as the front lawn of the schools where graduates were greeted with signs, teachers and administrators cheering them on. As the different grads and families arrived, they entered school grounds and parked outside forming a line from the school parking lots driving in front of the main entrance of the schools, and alongside the driveways that parallel the lake on Archway's Main Campus. Both principals welcomed families, introduced the Class of 2020 and called each graduating student one-by-one and their families drove through the long driveway.



*One of the decorated vehicles at the Lower School drive-through graduation ceremony honoring the Class of 2020.*



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At the start of the drive, students were greeted by their principals and teachers and were each given their diplomas, awards, a flash drive full of memories throughout the year, customized face masks, cards and gifts from their teachers. Each graduating student also received a family style meal and dessert donated by Archway Programs for families to enjoy since festivities this year are a little different due to COVID-19.



*School staff lined the driveway and congratulated students at the drive-through graduation ceremonies. Pictured (left-to-right) is Amanda McEaney, Teacher and Dottie Musick, Paraprofessional of the Archway Upper School.*



*Archway Lower School graduate, Marc Malinak, during the Archway Lower School drive-through ceremony.*



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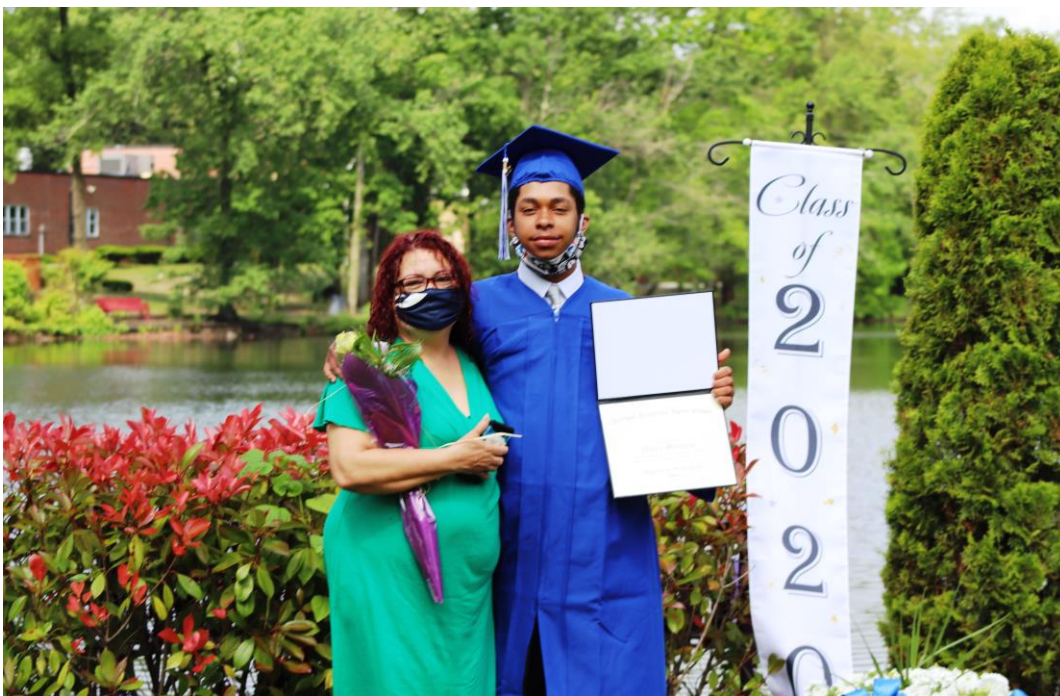
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After families made their first stop, they continued to drive past the entrance of the schools. Live music was playing and staff lined both sides of the driveway holding signs, ringing cow bells, throwing confetti and cheering for the graduates for reaching such a big milestone. By the end of the drive, the graduates were invited to step out of the car with their families to get their pictures taken at an outside picturesque photo booth.



*Archway Lower School graduate Emma Padilla poses with her family at the photo booth.*



*Archway Upper School graduate Malex Mendoza poses with his mother at the photo booth.*



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School staff also had yard signs made to honor the Class of 2020, which were displayed at both events last week and given out to each of the families to take home and proudly display at their homes.



*Archway Lower School graduate, Armando Feliciano, poses with his Class of 2020 yard sign before the drive-through graduation ceremony began.*

After the drive-through graduation ceremonies, many families drove to a billboard a few miles from the main campus that Archway Programs had produced in honor of the Class of 2020. The first names of the students are all listed on the billboard for everyone to see. This is another way Archway Programs is recognizing its graduates this year amidst the pandemic.



*The billboard is located on the White Horse Pike in Berlin, right across from Lucien's Manor.*



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“We are doing everything we can to highlight this year’s graduating class and how much they have contributed to the community and that we recognize and celebrate them,” said Susan Lafferty, Executive Director of Archway’s Education Department. “These students have worked so hard this year and they have missed out on so much with the shut down and we want to make them feel as good as possible about their graduation. Archway’s Class of 2020 is exceptional – we are looking forward to seeing everyone in the upcoming school year at our annual events. Our graduates will be missed dearly and we are all incredibly proud of them,” said Lafferty.



*The Archway Schools’ leadership team is pictured above in front of the billboard honoring this year’s graduates: John Petsch, Principal of the Archway School at Coopers Poynt, Mark Letiziano, Principal of the Archway Upper School, Michael Graff, Principal of the Archway Lower School and Susan Lafferty, Executive Director of Archway’s Education Department.*

A total of eighteen students graduated this year from the Archway Schools. The graduating Class of 2020 includes the following:

Damir Bingham (*Upper School*)  
 Valentina Dilks (*Lower School*)  
 Armando Feliciano (*Lower School*)  
 Andrew Gagliardi (*Lower School*)  
 Christopher Larmond (*Lower School*)  
 Marc Malinak (*Lower School*)  
 Theodore McCrone (*Upper School*)  
 Nathan McGonagle (*Lower School*)  
 Malex Mendoza (*Upper School*)

Gavin Over (*Upper School*)  
 Emma Padilla (*Lower School*)  
 Deanna Padilla (*Upper School*)  
 Anthony Pirenoglu (*Upper School*)  
 Dillon Sexton (*Lower School*)  
 Elizabeth Shields (*Lower School*)  
 Ryan Taylor (*Lower School*)  
 Adrian Usilton (*Upper School*)  
 Samuel Viola (*Lower School*)



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The Archway Schools' strives to prepare each student for the next stage in life upon graduation, providing students with the right tools to be as independent as possible, which includes making the right life choices and being contributing members of the community. This varies for each student which is why the Education Department at Archway has a high attention to detail and focuses on each individualized supports, working with families to address Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals.

Ellen Giovetsis, a parent of one of Archway's Lower School graduates, said her daughter excelled during her years at Archway. "When my daughter started off at Archway, she wasn't able to communicate with others. She went from not speaking at all, to being able to communicate verbally and through facial expressions and body language. She has also made new friends, and is more confident in herself and her ability to take on challenges that come her way. This would not have been possible without the staff at the Archway Schools. The impact that Archway has made in my daughter's life is immeasurable. I am forever grateful to Archway school staff for showing my daughter an incredible level of compassion, patience and guidance throughout the years," said Giovetsis.



*Archway Lower School graduate, Valentina Dilks with her mother, Ellen Giovetsis, and her younger brother.*

The Archway Schools are New Jersey Department of Education Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities (APSSD), serving special needs students' ages three to twenty-one years old, located in South Jersey in Atco (Lower School), Evesham (Upper School), and Camden (Cooper's Poynt). Using a successful model unique to each school, children are provided with a safe, structured and compassionate atmosphere as Archway staff discovers and builds on each child's strengths and helps the kids overcome barriers by teaching coping and social skills. This includes providing students with the skills needed to successfully transition from school to adult life. Students learn skills that will gain them "real world" employment through Archway's Career Education Program, which enables them to overcome their challenges and learn in the classroom and on-



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the-job, skills necessary to transition from school-to-work and offers a number of vocational and career training opportunities to its students in both the Upper and Lower Schools. Students are given the opportunity to gain this experience by participating in on-campus, off-campus job samplings, cooperative education, sheltered workshops, classroom instruction and job placement. It also gives students who cannot be placed into a vocational/trade school an option, providing work-readiness skills, increased social and independent skills gained in a work environment.

**For more information on Archway Programs, visit [www.archwayprograms.org](http://www.archwayprograms.org).**

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***About Archway Programs***

*Since 1965, Archway Programs has been meeting the individualized needs of thousands of families throughout the state of New Jersey. Archway Programs is a diverse, non-profit, human services organization which includes approved private schools for students with disabilities in addition to several model programs providing unmatched services. Built on a solid foundation of core values, providing safety, possessing compassion and promoting individuality, Archway Programs strives to improve the life of every individual served. Our goal is to ensure that each individual's needs are met and customized services are provided and partnered with passionate, committed and talented professionals in a safe environment. Over 450 individuals are currently employed by Archway Programs and this dedicated and talented staff provides services to over 1,800 children and adults requiring individualized care. Please visit [www.archwayprograms.org](http://www.archwayprograms.org) for more information.*



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