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Archway Programs Launches Its First Social Enterprise Business

A new retail flower shop will employ individuals with disabilities throughout South Jersey

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ATCO, NEW JERSEY (February 20, 2019) – Archway Programs is preparing to launch its first social enterprise, Blue Violet Flowers and Gifts, a retail flower shop located in Atco, New Jersey. The nonprofit is hosting a grand opening event next month to celebrate this new initiative and will be announcing more details soon. Blue Violet Flowers and Gifts will employ adults with disabilities throughout South Jersey, giving each individual an opportunity to work in an integrated setting to gain skills, readying them for future employment opportunities in the community and increasing their independence. Blue Violet Flowers and Gifts will create custom floral arrangements for all events and holidays, provide fresh flowers, as well as offer a variety of hand-crafted items and unique gifts from local South Jersey businesses.

This would not have been possible without the support of Woods Services, Archway Programs' parent affiliate. Archway Programs joined over thirty employees from their affiliates at Woods' 2nd annual Social Innovations Lab Pitch Event in September 2018. Among all of the Woods' affiliates and employees, a total of twelve projects were presented. This was a four-month long process in which participants collaborated on and developed business plans for ideas that will enhance services or develop new ones, improve upon policies or systems, and have a greater social impact, and/or enhance the employee experience. The Woods Services Foundation generously committed \$100,000 in startup costs to fund the best ideas. Archway Programs was selected as one of the top recipients and has received a grant of \$24,200 to develop its first social enterprise business, Blue Violet Flowers and Gifts.

“Archway Programs is grateful to the Woods Services Foundation for continuing this annual event. We are truly honored to be among so many talented individuals throughout the affiliate organizations. With the support of this grant, it will be possible for Archway to not only launch its first social enterprise, but also further our mission to make an impact in the lives of others in the community,” stated George Richards, Chief Executive Officer / Chief Financial Officer of Archway Programs.

Archway's team which consisted of Horticultural Instructor Kristine Henle-Blank, IT Director Karen Todd, and Accounting Manager Kim Zweier, presented their idea to launch Archway's first social enterprise, a retail flower shop to employ individuals with disabilities throughout southern New Jersey. Archway employees did an outstanding job presenting their idea and business plan, and were selected as one of the recipients to receive funding. Thanks to the grant from the Woods Foundation, Blue Violet Flowers and Gifts' vision has quickly turned into a reality.



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“This dream has unfolded so quickly and with so much support behind it. We are excited to provide quality products to South Jersey. We are also looking forward to showing people who come in that individuals with disabilities can do a whole lot more than you think they can,” said Kristine Henle-Blank, Horticultural Instructor of Archway’s Career Education Program.



Pictured above are Accounting Manager Kim Zweier, IT Director Karen Todd, Horticultural Instructor Kristine Henle-Blank and CEO/CFO George Richards standing in front of the storefront for Blue Violet Flowers and Gifts.

Since Woods announced the recipients in Mid-December 2018, Archway has been busy gearing up for the launch of Blue Violet Flowers and Gifts. They have selected a location and have been preparing for a community Grand Opening ceremony that will be held in Mid-March 2019. More details will be announced early next month prior to the celebration.



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Pictured above are all of the employees from Woods and employees from all of the affiliates who participated at the 2nd annual Social Innovations Lab Pitch Event in September 2018.

Horticultural instructor and accomplished floral designer Kristine Henle-Blank works alongside Archway students through the Career Education Program. For over ten years, students from the Archway Schools have used the on-campus greenhouse and flower workshop, which is offered to students enrolled in the Horticultural Class. This class gives students opportunities to participate in one of the many structured learning experiences. Blue Violet Flowers and Gifts will be Archway's first off-campus storefront, a social enterprise business that will provide many opportunities for adults throughout South Jersey with disabilities. Individuals will be hired based on their abilities and interests and do jobs in floral arrangement, inventory and customer service. This will also create a new opportunity for students at the Archway Schools to advance their careers through career training and viable employment.

For more information on Archway Programs, visit 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 440 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 for more information.



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