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AUTISM EVENT PROMOTING ACCEPTANCE AND INCLUSION



Archway Programs hosted its 9th Annual Hands Around the Lake event on Wednesday, which promotes autism awareness. This is a community-wide event where individuals served, staff members and families all attended to show their support. The goal of the event is to educate others about autism, so that as a community, we can not only be more aware, but accept and include all of those affected by autism and other disabilities. Those who attended the event lined up around Archway Programs' main campus lake and held hands while Executive Director of Education, Susan Lafferty, welcomed everyone and students from both of the Archway schools read facts about autism before the walk began.

Music teachers from both schools and students performed live music, which featured a drum circle. Activities included climbing into a sensory-friendly firetruck, thanks to the Evesham Township Fire Department, and a petting zoo, thanks to Amy Derman Miduski, Pony Tyme

owner, for making this extra special for those we serve. Students also made Light It Up Blue candles which were for sale at the event, a beautiful floral arrangement which was raffled off and baked goods organized by both Archway schools. Money raised directly supports those with autism at Archway throughout its numerous programs. Many individuals served at Archway Programs are on the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), so this is something that hits close to home for many of our families.

"We're quite proud of our students and their community spirit in wanting to participate in activities that support a cause such as autism," Susan Lafferty, Executive Director of Education explained. "Through efforts such as this they will grow and learn and continue to see they can make valuable contributions to their communities in many ways."

Kids and adults throughout our programs were thrilled to get a chance to meet real-life every day super heroes - policemen and firefighters from the Waterford Township Police Department, the Evesham Township Police Department and the Evesham Township Fire Department.

Archway staff was proud to welcome back school alumni to the event as well. "I love coming back to this event to show my support, talk to my old teachers and visit my Archway family," stated John King, former Archway School student who graduated in 2015.

"Every year for the past nine years Archway has taken the opportunity to gather as a community in order to raise awareness of autism, as well as to promote acceptance and inclusion for all special needs people. Thank you to everyone for joining us on this beautiful day and participating in the fun activities, food and fellowship," said Michael Graff, Lower School Principal at Archway Programs.