

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Students with Special Needs Graduate with Life and Work Skills

Young men and women become Archway's youngest alumni

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ATCO, NEW JERSEY (June 20, 2018) – Ten special needs students from The Archway Schools celebrated their graduation during two ceremonies held earlier this month. The Upper School graduation ceremony took place on Friday, June 1st, 2018 in the Upper School Gymnasium located in Evesham, New Jersey and the Lower School graduation ceremony took place on Tuesday, June 5th, 2018 in the Lower School Gymnasium located in Atco, New Jersey. Young men and women are now Archway's youngest alumni – the Class of 2018. The rooms were filled with pride, many proud tears of joy and laughter as staff and students reminisced their favorite memories throughout the years and the many accomplishments as parents, staff members, family and friends gathered to celebrate the Archway graduates. Each student was called to the stage for the walk of triumph, as they received their diplomas.

“I know I speak for all of the staff members at the schools when I say it has been a true joy watching each and every single one of these students grow into the remarkable young men and women that stand before us today. Sure they have had their ups and downs over the years, however it's evident that they have each worked hard to grow individually and we could not be more proud,” said Susan Lafferty, Executive Director of Education at Archway Programs.

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

The graduating Class of 2018 who received awards includes the following:

- Victoria Anderson, Upper School, Wenonah
 - Student of the Month 2018 (Classroom Award)
 - Greft Trefz Award for the 2017-18 School Year (Career Education Program)
 - September's Employee of the Month (Career Education Program)
- Kaitlyn Ambrusko, Upper School, Cinnaminson
 - April's Student of the Month 2018 (Classroom Award)
- NyQuay Ashley, Lower School, Camden
 - Music Therapy Award (Classroom Award)
 - Art Program Award (Classroom Award)
 - Gym & Swim Program Award (Classroom Award)



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- On-Campus Career Award (Career Education Program)
- Lower School's Most Improved Award for the 2017-18 School Year (Career Education Program)
- Kevin Erdman, Lower School, Franklinville
 - Music Therapy Award (Classroom Award)
 - Art Program Award (Classroom Award)
 - Gym & Swim Program Award (Classroom Award)
 - On-Campus Career Award (Career Education Program)
- Jacqueline Heintz, Lower School, Folsom
 - Music Therapy Award (Classroom Award)
 - Art Program Award (Classroom Award)
 - Gym & Swim Program Award (Classroom Award)
 - On-Campus Career Award (Career Education Program)
- Kevin Jennings, Lower School, Atlantic City
 - Music Therapy Award (Classroom Award)
 - Art Program Award (Classroom Award)
 - Gym & Swim Program Award (Classroom Award)
 - On-Campus Career Award (Career Education Program)
- Michael Manderson, Upper School, Atco
 - Student of the Month 2018 (Classroom Award)
 - Student of the Year Award for the 2017-18 School Year (Career Education Program)
 - November's Off-Campus Award (Career Education Program)
- Josh Parke, Upper School, Atco
 - May's Off-Campus Award (Career Education Program)
- Nicholas White, Upper School, Glendora
 - Student of the Month 2018 (Classroom Award)
 - Upper School's Most Improved Award for the 2017-18 School Year (Career Education Program)
 - April's Off-Campus Career Award (Career Education Program)

The graduates are listed below in alphabetical order including the school each student attended as well as their hometowns:

- **NyQuay Ashley, Lower School, Camden** – Plans to use his job experience gained at Archway and look for a maintenance position in his local community. During his time at Archway, he enjoyed participating in the Career Education Program, learning valuable life skills and held successful maintenance positions. He also enjoyed the Lower School's activities and holiday events.
- **Kaitlyn Ambrusko, Upper School, Cinnaminson** – Plans to attend Rowan College at Burlington County in the fall. She is interested in law and helping children. Kaitlyn attended Archway's Upper School from September 2016 through June 2018.
- **Victoria Anderson, Upper School, Wenonah** – Plans to attend Gloucester County College to study Education. Victoria attended Archway's Upper School from September 2015 through June 2018. During her time at Archway, she played basketball, was the lead anchor of Archway's Channel 4 News, and was a member of the SADD Club.



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- **Emanuel DeJesus, Upper School, Camden** – Looking into a technical school to start in September and is interested in Computer Programming. Emanuel attended Archway’s Upper School from September 2015 through June 2018. During his time at Archway, he enjoyed participating in the athletic department, played basketball, baseball, soccer, hockey each year. His favorite subjects include English Language Arts (ELA), science and history.
- **Kevin Erdman, Lower School, Franklinville** – Kevin is currently registered for the New Jersey Division of Developmental Disabilities and is working on registering with the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS). He successfully held maintenance positions in Archway’s Career Education Program. He loves animals and would like to eventually find a job working with them. During his time at Archway, he enjoyed participating in the Career Education Program and learning valuable life skills.
- **Jacqueline Heintz, Lower School, Folsom** – Plans to begin the Arc (Association for Retarded Citizens) Program in Gloucester County beginning this month. During her time at Archway, she enjoyed participating in the Career Education Program, learning valuable life skills, and enjoyed all of the activities and events offered at the Lower School.
- **Kevin Jennings, Lower School, Atlantic City** – During his time at Archway, Kevin enjoyed participating in the Career Education Program, learning valuable life skills, is passionate about music and enjoyed all of the activities and events offered at the Lower School.
- **Michael Manderson, Upper School, Atco** – Interested in attending a technical school and learning about auto mechanics with the hopes of working with Diesel Trucks in the future. Michael attended Archway’s Upper School from September 2013 through June 2018. During his time at Archway, he enjoyed participating in all of the different trips and activities which include Fun Day, Career Program Luncheons and the holiday functions. His favorite subject was social studies.
- **Joshua Parke, Upper School, Atco** – Plans to attend a technical school to further his education in broadcasting and ultimately become a Sports Analyst. He is also interested in auto body mechanics and is looking into attending a vocational school in the near future. Joshua attended Archway’s Upper School from April 2017 through June 2018. During his time at Archway, he enjoyed playing on both Varsity teams for soccer and basketball, being part of the music program, and co-anchor on Archway’s Channel 4 News. His favorite subject is math.
- **Nicholas White, Upper School, Glendora** – Plans to attend Gloucester County College and study Special Education to ultimately become a Special Ed. History Teacher. Nicholas attended Archway’s Upper School from July 2015 through June 2018. During his time at Archway, he enjoyed participating in the Career Education Program working at The Fountains at Cedar Parke, Marshalls, Keppels Carpet, Broadcasting for Archway’s Channel 4 News and participating in the athletics department as gym assistant.

“We anticipate the students who graduated will positively impact their communities with great enthusiasm, compassion, hard work and attitudes that are not only helpful, but provide an example to those around them on how life should be lived,” said Mark Letiziano, Upper School Principal at Archway Programs.



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Pam Clark, Upper School Secretary, congratulating the Archway graduates.



Mike Graff, Lower School Principal and one of the Lower School teachers handing out special awards to Archway graduate Kevin Jennings.



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Mike Graff, Lower School Principal and Lower School teachers handing out special awards to Archway graduate Jacqueline Heintz.

Lisa Heintz, a parent of a student in Archway’s Lower School, said her daughter grew and matured a lot during her years at Archway. “We will miss the staff at Archway the most – the one-on-one aides, teachers, therapists, everyone. Not only was it accommodating for my daughter but the school really cared about her as a person. Everyone in the school knew her well and staff communicated with me every step of the way. Before my daughter attended school at Archway, she really struggled making friends. At Archway, she learned how to form relationships and has made some great friendships with other students,” said Heintz.



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Upper School graduates move the tassel from the right side to the left side after receiving their diplomas.

Upon graduation, each student leaves the Career Education Program with a fully completed resume, cover letter template and mock interview experience to aid in obtaining a job after graduation. Brooke Chmura, Careers Structured Learning Experience (SLE) Coordinator, said she and other teachers “walk alongside students and help them learn how to do life,” including how to communicate well, safely travel around their communities, improve personal care and vocational skills, incorporate functional academics, and how to be responsible and active members of their communities. To further build skills, all students participate in multiple SLE and Community Based Instruction programs on and off-campus while in the Career Education Program. “I usually tell my students they should treat time at their on and off campus job sites as a job interview because it might end up with them in a paid position,” she said. “I have had that happen with a handful of my students, which is super exciting for everyone,” said Chmura.

Archway Programs has two schools serving special needs children, teens and young adults throughout New Jersey ages three through twenty-one years old. The Lower School has been in operation since the early 1960s and the Upper School was established in the early 1970s. Both schools are located in Waterford and Evesham Townships. Using a successful model unique to each school, children are provided with a safe, structured and compassionate atmosphere as Archway Programs’ 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-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 workshop phrases, 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.

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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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