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## **Talents Blossomed as Students Showcased Horticultural Skills** *Annual Summer Flower Show proved to be a success for Archway Programs*

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**ATCO, NEW JERSEY** (August 17, 2018) – Last week Archway School students held their Annual Extended School Year Summer Flower Show for an employee-wide event to showcase their skills and talents from the horticultural on-campus program. The event took place on Wednesday, August 8<sup>th</sup> and ran all day in the Career Center at Archway's Upper School. Kristine Henle-Blank, Horticulture Instructor, and participating Archway students transformed the space to mirror the theme which was inspired by their favorite exhibit at this year's Philadelphia Flower Show. As Archway employees arrived, they stepped into Archway's very own "Lantern Festival" complete with lights, Asian inspired music, handmade lanterns and of course several floral masterpieces, each made by various students who participate in the horticultural program.



*The Career Education Center was transformed into Archway's "Lantern Festival".*



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Horticulture Instructor, Kristine Henle-Blank helped students turn their visions into reality with the help of Music Therapist, Gabe Garcia who produced and played live music inspired by the Asian culture which drove the “Lantern Festival” theme. Archway students began planning for this event back in March when they attended the Philadelphia Flower Show to gain insight and inspiration. The Zen Garden exhibit is what ultimately fueled this year’s “Lantern Festival” theme.



*Some of the floral arrangements that talented Archway students designed and assembled.*

Each year the students choose a new theme for this event, which provides them with an opportunity to learn a new skill or about a new culture. After attending the Philadelphia Flower Show, students discussed what inspired them, what colors and concepts they liked as it relates to what they have learned in class, their favorite displays and why, what focal flowers were used, and why they were drawn to certain designs. Students researched color theory, the color wheel, principals of floral design including shape and design style. Based off of their favorite concepts, they came up with the Asian inspired “Lantern Festival” theme for this year’s annual flower show. Students worked collectively and decided on the various arrangements that were displayed at the event.

“This is always a fantastic opportunity for our students to experience the pressures and excitement of working an event. They showed real artistry, attention to detail and great commitment throughout the



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preparations – and I’m very proud of what they achieved. Events like the flower show help showcase the students’ talents and teach them other skills aside from just making flowers look nice. Students are also required to use math and science to build the living sculptures,” said Horticulture Instructor Kristine Henle-Blank. “This allows students to really express themselves, get creative and collaborate in small groups. There is a lot to be learned from one another and several components that go into executing the design.”



*One of the incredible floral arrangements showcased at the flower show.*

Each student plays a different yet important role in this process. For example, one student may have a vision of what they want to create and another may be more involved in the actual construction of the arrangement. Planning these types of events help students achieve a strong work ethic, how to respect others and work together in a team.

“It’s remarkable to see how several months of hard work pays off in just one beautiful day,” said Kristine Henle-Blank.

Archway School student, Antonio Rainey, who will begin his senior year this fall, described this year’s show, “It’s a lot of hard work and it’s really tiring, but the moment you’re there and you get to see people’s reactions...it’s amazing,” he said. Antonio and David Brion, who will begin his junior year this fall, are both in the advanced level class of the horticultural program. Antonio and David liked the idea of working with unusual flowers and together they created an incredible three dimensional arrangement. With Antonio’s



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creativity and David's mechanical skills they joined forces to create a distinctive masterpiece. To construct the arrangement, they wired palm sago flowers to create a double helix surrounding birds of paradise and equisetum.



*David and Antonio with the arrangement they constructed for the Archway Schools' annual flower show.*

The students created the arrangements in the on-campus flower shop, "From The Ground Up", one of the structured learning experiences offered through the Career Education Program at the Archway Schools. Students have the opportunity of participating in an innovative horticultural program and have access to the flower shop in addition to a green house. Horticultural Instructors and accomplished floral designers Kristine Henle-Blank and Hannah Gunson both run the program and are inspired by the students, what they accomplish and seeing first-hand how much the program contributes to their growth despite whatever challenges or disabilities they may have in life. "From the Ground Up" facilitates students' ages ten to twenty-one years old to incorporate classroom curriculum and Individualized Education Program goals. For some it's Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, social interaction, math, critical thinking, and/or science; it varies depending on each student's objectives and abilities. Students also learn team building skills, good work ethic, responsibility, customer service, inventory and other retail skills.



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*Gabe Garcia, Music Therapist (right), and Kristine Henle-Blank, Horticulture Instructor (left) at this year's event.*



*Archway School students with Kristine Henle-Blank, Horticulture Instructor and Wes Roach, Teacher.*



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The Archway Schools are located around a lake at Archway Programs' (nonprofit) headquarters in Atco, New Jersey. Since the early 1960s, the schools have been providing numerous educational programs and services, serving special needs children, teens and young adults, between the ages of three and twenty-one. The Archway Schools use a successful model unique to each program, providing a safe, structured and compassionate atmosphere as staff discovers and builds on each student's strength to overcome barriers, teaching coping and social skills. The Archway Schools offer a diversified approach to public school districts seeking out-of-district placement for students experiencing multiple, behavioral and autistic disabilities. This includes providing students with the skills needed to successfully transition from school to adult life.

Students at the Archway Schools participate in the Career Education Program which provides opportunities to learn in the classroom and on-the-job skills necessary to transition from school-to-work, with a number of vocational and career training experiences. This includes on-campus and off-campus job samplings, cooperative education, sheltered workshop phrases, classroom instruction and job placement. For students who cannot be placed into a vocational or trade school, it gives them an option, as the program also provides work-readiness skills, increased social and independent skills gained in a work environment. The Archway Schools serve students from preschool throughout twelfth grade (up to 21 years of age) with approximately 240 students currently enrolled.

**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 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](http://www.archwayprograms.org) for more information.*

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