

# Arc of Somerset County celebrates volunteerism at gala

3 Somerset Co. high school students feted

THE ARC OF SOMERSET COUNTY

**BEDMINSTER** — The Arc of Somerset County celebrated its 42nd Arc Angel Gala "Celebrating Volunteerism" on Nov. 14 at Fiddler's Elbow Country Club.

Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli recognized three Somerset County high school students honored with the "The Angels Among Us" award, which celebrates the volunteer accomplishments of high school seniors who make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities.

The recipients included Leanna Caswell of Watchung Hills Regional High School, who was honored for her active role in the school's Peer Outreach elective course, where mainstream students work collectively with special needs peers on a daily basis.

Laura Clarke, also of Watchung Hills Regional High School, was awarded for her more than 250 volunteer hours at a pre-school and as a therapeutic equine instructor for special-needs students.

Laura Cavanaugh, of Immaculata High School, was honored for exceeding more than 1,000 hours of volunteer service

working with Higher Achievement Programs for Handicapped Adults (HAPHA) and many other smaller groups that serve the special needs community.

"It is such an honor to have these three high school students receive this recognition for their special needs community in our county," said Lauren Panarella, executive director of The Arc of Somerset County. "It is The Arc of Somerset County's hope that through public recognition of their efforts, these students will be further inspired to incorporate

the spirit of volunteerism into their evolving personal and professional lives."

The "Halo Award" for advocacy went to Evelyn Ramundo, an active member of The Arc of Somerset County community since 2003. Ramundo received the award for her role in the New Jersey Self Advocacy project, where she has held a leadership position for several years. She most recently led the Advocates for Change group that met with New Jersey State legislators on important disability issues, giving testimony during Assembly budget hearings

PHOTO COURTESY LAUREN ZEIGLER

From left: Assemblyman Jack Ciattarelli, Laura Clarke, Laura Cavanaugh, Leanna Caswell and Lauren Panarella of The Arc of Somerset County.

March 18 and March 20 for Disability Awareness Month.

"Evelyn has been an active voice for hundreds of individuals who are unable to advocate for them-

selves," Panarella said. "We are so very proud of her tenacity and ability to be such a great role model for the people we serve."

Three prominent corporate supporters of The Arc of Somerset County were honored for "The Arc Angel Award." L'Oreal, Henkel Corp. and Janssen Pharmaceuticals have played a vital role in the success of The Arc and, more importantly, have positively impacted the children, adolescents and adults who participate in various programs. All three companies have dedicated hundreds of hours over the past five years in efforts that have enhanced the mission of The Arc and have created lasting friendships within the organization.

"Volunteerism plays a vital role in the success of The Arc of Somerset County," Panarella said. "L'Oreal, Henkel and Janssen have leveraged their company's commitment to community ser-

vice, which has positively impacted the more than 1,000 individuals and families we serve."

The Arc of Somerset County provides quality services and advocacy to individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families to support development and achievement at every stage of life.

The Arc of Somerset County programs include the Jerry Davis Center for Children and Families, the Early Intervention Program, Camp Jotun, the PACT program (Parents And Children Together), four employment services programs and 27 residential programs throughout Somerset County.

For more information on how to support The Arc of Somerset County, or for volunteer opportunities, call the Development Department at 908-725-8544, ext. 610.

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