



# KEEPING IN TOUCH

## Allies Earns Approval to Deliver Short and Long-Term Supported Employment Services in Two States

Allies is pleased to announce that the agency has earned approval to deliver short and long-term Supported Employment Services in two states – New Jersey and Delaware.

Luke J. Washack, Sr. Director of Vocational Services, remarked, “Expanding our vocational rehabilitation services across two states is a very special milestone for Allies. By extending our reach, we will be able to improve and enrich the lives of more individuals with special needs and help them reach their employment goals. I’m extremely proud of our various departments for collaborating and working hard to make this achievement possible.”

Supported employment refers to service provisions wherein people with disabilities, including intellectual and developmental disabilities, mental health, and traumatic brain injury, among others, are assisted with obtaining and maintaining employment. These services may vary depending on the unique needs of each individual.

The State of New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (NJDVRS) has approved the agency to provide Pre-placement, Time-Limited Job Coaching, and

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*Allies’ Supported Employment Services give individuals with special needs, like Dan Nilson and Kurt Rosengarth, a pathway to obtaining meaningful employment and the skills and support to succeed in the workplace. Keep up the great work Dan and Kurt!*

# MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Dear Allies Family,

I hope that our winter edition of *Keeping in Touch* finds you well and your holiday season was filled with joy.

Here at Allies the holidays were filled with celebration and immense appreciation for all of our supporters who donated to our annual “Share the Joy” campaign. The campaign provided over 600 gifts that allowed every resident to experience the joy of finding a personalized gift under their holiday tree.

Allies also celebrated our exceptional Community Support Staff during “National Direct Support Professional Recognition Week” by recognizing “stars” from each of our program areas. We were pleased to name one of these bright stars, Mattie Byrd, as our 2022 New Jersey Association of Community Providers “Hero of the Year” for providing the highest quality of supports and service to our residents in Ocean County. Allies is so fortunate to have so many dedicated support staff throughout the state, who like Mattie, work to ensure the individuals we are honored to serve live their best life.

As we moved into this new year, we were very excited to announce that our agency earned approval to deliver short and long-term Supported Employment Services in eight counties in New Jersey, as well as New Castle County in Delaware. We hope you’ll enjoy reading more about this achievement, and how these services impact the lives of those we serve, in our cover story.

Inside this issue, you’ll also meet our new Clinical Director of Children’s Services, Kristen Kierney, hear how our Project Grow program brought joy to our local communities, learn about the launch of our new “Community Engagement & Enrichment Fund,” receive news from our affiliates, and more.

Thank you for continuing to support the work that we do, and for cheering on the accomplishments of those we serve as well as our staff. We look forward to a bright year ahead and wish you the same.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike', written in a cursive style.

Michael D. Haggerty  
President and CEO  
Allies, Inc.

Supported Employment Services in New Jersey in Burlington, Cape May, Cumberland, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Salem and Somerset Counties. In addition, Delaware’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DEDVRS) and the Delaware Division of Developmental Disabilities Services has granted Allies the opportunity to provide Supported Employment services in New Castle County, Delaware.

Luke shared what each of these services provide to individuals served by Allies. “Pre-placement may be used as a diagnostic service that leads to job match placement. During Pre-placement, a comprehensive vocational assessment is conducted to determine a career pathway for an individual. An individual’s interests, skills, abilities and experience are explored to help identify careers that could be a suitable fit. Once this is established, a career selection is made and a comprehensive plan of action is created to support the individual in obtaining the position. The plan may include resume development, completing applications, interview preparation, and other traditional job seeking activities.”

Once an individual secures a job, they receive Supported Employment (SE) Services or Time-Limited Job Coaching (TLJC). Luke said, “They are two very similar services, but with one major difference. The individual receiving Supported Employment is projected to require supports for an extended period of time, possibly for the life of the job.”

While receiving SE Services or TLJC, a job coach helps an individual learn his or her job duties, adjust to their new work environment, and become independent in their job. This coaching continues until job stabilization is reached. If the individual requires long-term

support, they participate in a Long-Term Follow-Along program or a similar funding arrangement such as provided for by the Division of Developmental Disabilities.

Luke said, “In addition to Pre-placement, SE Services and TLJC, Allies also offers Small Group Supported Employment and Transition Services in New Jersey and Delaware, as well as Pre-vocational Services featuring our Bake Studio Training Program in New Jersey, and in our Maintenance Crew Training Program. We look forward to helping many more people in the new year become proud members of the workforce.”

Michael Haggerty, President and CEO of Allies, remarked, “This is a very exciting time for Allies. The approval for us to provide vocational rehabilitation services in these two states gives us an even greater opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of people with special needs, and to provide a continuum of care throughout their lifespan.”

**For more information about our Pre-Placement, Individualized and Small Group Supported Employment, Time-Limited Job Coaching, and Transition Services, contact Luke J. Washack, Sr. Director of Vocational Services, at [lwashack@alliesnj.org](mailto:lwashack@alliesnj.org) or 609-218-0513.**

**For more information about the Bake Studio Training Program, please contact Joe Gleason, Director of Vocational Services, Northern Region, at [jgleason@alliesnj.org](mailto:jgleason@alliesnj.org) or 609-414-6664.**



## Allies Celebrates Direct Support Professional Recognition Week and Honors our 2022 DSP Stars

We are so proud of our Direct Support Professionals! Because of them, adults and children with disabilities can live and work more independently, remain active in their community, and reach their own goals and dreams.

In recognition of “Direct Support Professional Recognition Week,” Allies honored seven DSPs at a special luncheon at our administrative offices in September. The “DSP Stars” were selected by their Executive Directors for going above and beyond in carrying out Allies’ mission.

At the event, Executive Directors, Support Managers, and members of Allies’ leadership team shared thoughtful and inspiring remarks about each DSP and why they were nominated.

Michael Haggerty, President and CEO of Allies, addressed the nominees saying, “DSP Recognition Week gives us the opportunity to highlight the incredible work that our organization does. Our organization could not do it without you – our Community Support Staff. You are the backbone of Allies, and I am in awe of the work that you do and the many accolades that you have received from your colleagues and your leadership team.”

As Michael spoke, he also noted the qualities that each DSP in the room possesses: compassion, dedication, a positive attitude, and a deep commitment to providing high quality care and support. He said, “These qualities are what makes each of you, and your work, so exceptional. You are truly role models, not just to your colleagues, but to those you serve as well.”

The event concluded with a delicious luncheon and a celebratory cake and more heartfelt words from Michael. He said, “Thank you for the amazing work that you do, your positive attitude and perseverance despite challenges such as COVID, and for never losing sight of our organization’s mission and your personal mission to improve the lives of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We are so grateful to have all of you as a part of our Allies family.”



**We hope you enjoy reading about each of our exceptional stars!**

## Allies' 2022 DSP Stars

### **Bydria Branch** **34 Gosselin Group Home,** **Monmouth County**



Bydria is a dedicated Community Support Staff member who has been a part of the Allies family for almost six years. She's referred to as "Miss B." by those she serves, and they look forward to her

coming to work each day. Bydria excels in communicating and connecting with those in her care and encourages them to give it their all each day. In addition, she ensures the ladies she serves are always clean and looking and feeling their best. Bydria always goes the extra mile – picking up additional shifts, assisting with doctor appointments, and supporting managers with documentation. She does an extraordinary job in everything she does and her Monmouth County team members are very grateful to work with her.

### **Madeline Pichardo** **Junco Group Home, Hunterdon County**

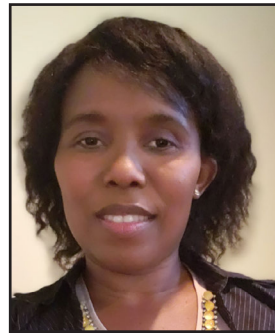


Madeline has been a part of the Allies family for three years. As a dedicated Community Support Staff member, she has worked in various residential programs at Allies, most recently transferring

to Hunterdon County. Madeline is known for being caring and patient. She makes developing a positive relationship with each individual she serves a high priority; and is respectful and embraces their individuality. Madeline enjoys celebrating the holidays and birthdays of those she cares for, as well as

taking them out for leisure activities. In her free time, she often visits individuals in the hospital or rehab to cheer them up. Guardians have praised her for her compassionate care, and enthusiastically invite her to special outings and at times their homes. Madeline's positive attitude, flexibility, and resiliency are also applauded by her managers and teammates. She has been recognized for her leadership skills and for setting an excellent example for her peers.

### **Magna Telusma** **Mechanic Street Group Home,** **Morris County**



Magna has been a part of the Allies family for over a decade. She goes above and beyond in her role as a Community Support Staff member, and is known for her hard work, charisma, and her dedication to

those she serves, as well as her team. Magna's love for the people she supports is evident in her patience and care, and the bright smile that she shares with them each day. Her managers and staff have recognized her for being a great leader, as well as her sense of humor, ability to tackle tasks and changes with ease, and her beautiful spirit. Parents and guardians also enjoy their interactions with Magna and deeply appreciate her positive attitude and the energy she brings to the home.



**Mattie Byrd**  
**Crane Group Home, Ocean County**



Mattie has been a part of the Allies family for eleven years as a dedicated Community Support Staff member. Mattie is deeply devoted to ensuring that individuals at the Crane Group Home enjoy a safe, clean, and comfortable

environment. She is highly attentive and caring and thrives on making sure that the needs of those she cares for are fulfilled each day. Mattie's excellent communication skills are an asset to the individuals she serves, as well as those she works with. She is highly respected by her colleagues and the home's residents. She has been praised for her hard work and going the extra mile in completing any task that needs to be done. Mattie's strong relationship with her teammates has also been applauded. She always takes the initiative to provide her colleagues with updates and information so that they can provide the best care possible. Every member of the Crane Group Home, individuals and staff alike, are grateful to have Mattie as part of their family.

**Mohamed Rafat Siddiqui**  
**24 Marlton Group Home, Salem County**

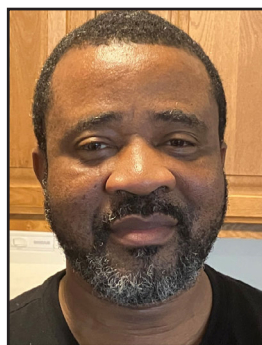


Mohamed has been a part of the Allies family for a little over three years as a Community Support Staff member. He is known for being hardworking and going above and beyond in the care that he provides to individuals. He is always

very optimistic, patient, reliable, and possesses the unique ability to work successfully with any individual assigned to him. His passion

for his work and sensitivity are evident in the way he prioritizes the safety, respect and care of those he serves. Mohamed also takes pride in ensuring that those he cares for are well-groomed and presentable; giving them haircuts and shaves regularly. He has also been recognized for being a team player and someone that staff can depend on to help provide support and assistance whenever it is needed.

**Olusegun Odediji**  
**Project Freedom West Windsor Group Home, Mercer County**



Olusegun has been a part of the Allies family for two years as a Community Support Staff member. In his short time with Allies, he's been recognized for the amazing support that he provides to those he serves. He works hard to

provide safety and comfort to everyone in his home. Olusegun cares deeply about those he cares for, taking time to understand their specific needs and wants. He keeps individuals actively engaged through conversations on various topics as well as activities. He is also a wonderful role model to individuals, encouraging them to take pride in themselves. His calm, patient and easy-going personality is appreciated by those he cares for, his coworkers, as well as family members. His sense of humor keeps a smile on everyone's face. Olusegun has received a great deal of compliments from family members, who look forward to speaking with him. He always shares thorough updates, and families know that he goes above and beyond in his duties to ensure their loved ones are well taken care of.

**Rahshan Williams**  
**186 Clubhouse Group Home,**  
**Burlington County**



Rahshan has been a part of the Allies family for eight months, lending his talent and skills at our Radnor and Donoma Medical Group Homes before coming to Clubhouse. As a Community Support Staff member, he takes a great

deal of pride in caring for others and putting a big smile on their faces each day. He places a high emphasis on connecting with those in the home and enjoys talking with them and bonding as they watch a movie together or listen to music. Those he cares for look forward to seeing him and spending time with him. Rahshan plays a huge part in helping those he serves manage their health, including taking people to their doctor appointments as needed.

In addition, he makes sure the gentlemen in his home have fresh shaves and haircuts so they look and feel their best. Rahshan has also been applauded by his managers, who say that he surpasses the expectations of his role daily and is a true asset to the team. He is always looking for new ways to support those he serves and reaches out to help others in need regularly.

**If our stars inspired you, consider learning more about the DSP role and how you can become one. Full-time DSPs currently receive a \$1,000 sign-on bonus! Visit: <https://alliesnj.org/direct-support-professionals/>.**



*Allies is a proud member of the National Alliance for Direct Support Professionals.*

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## **Mattie Byrd Named Allies' 2022 NJACP "Hero of the Year"**

Each year Allies selects one direct support professional who has demonstrated an extraordinary passion and commitment to serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. In September we were proud to name Mattie Byrd as our *2022 New Jersey Association of Community Providers "Hero of the Year."*

Mattie, who serves at Allies Crane Group Home in Ocean County, has been a dedicated Community Support Staff member at Allies for 11 years. Mattie is deeply devoted to ensuring that individuals at the Crane Group Home enjoy a safe, clean, and comfortable environment. She is highly attentive and caring and thrives on making sure that the needs of those she cares for are fulfilled each day. Her excellent communication skills are an asset to the individuals she serves, as well as those she works with.

Mattie is highly respected by her colleagues and the home's residents. She has been praised for her hard work and going the extra mile in completing any task that needs to be done. In addition, Mattie's strong relationship with her teammates has also been applauded. She always takes the initiative to provide her colleagues with updates and information so that they can provide the best care possible.

Mattie was honored at a luncheon on September 13th to celebrate DSPs during "Direct Support Professional Recognition Week." Michael Haggerty, President and CEO of Allies, presented Mattie with a special recognition plaque as well as a gift card.

During the event, Mattie's leadership team and colleagues shared glowing remarks about

Mattie's exceptional work and why she's such an asset to Allies and those she serves.

Andrea Conte, Executive Director, said "We are so proud to name Mattie as our 2022 NJACP "Hero of the Year." She is full of compassion, loves the individuals she cares for deeply, and they share the same love for her. She's also a team player that everyone can count on."

Anthony Visco, Support Manager at the Crane Group Home, remarked, "Mattie is the backbone of the Crane Group Home. She is the one that makes the ship go."

Christine Cocozzo, Vice President of Southern Residential Services, commented, "Mattie is the Mother Hen of the house. She's a motherly figure that brings comfort and positivity to the home every day, and she lifts people up on difficult days. We are so grateful to have her as a part of the Allies family."

Mattie was overwhelmed by the fanfare, but graciously accepted her award. She remarked, "It was so beautiful to be recognized for my work. It really meant a lot because it shows that

others notice the love and care that I provide to those I serve. But I don't do it for the praise. I do this work because I love to help others. I love educating them and connecting with them. My favorite part is seeing how the individuals I support evolve. It's a great feeling to know that because I believed in them, and gave them important skills and tools, that they were able to transform their lives and become more independent. I want them to live their best lives."

Congratulations Mattie! You are making a wonderful difference in the lives of those you serve and you're a shining example to everyone that you work with each day.



## Meet Our New Clinical Director of Children's Services – Kristen Kierney, MA, LPC, ACS

Allies is pleased to introduce our new Clinical Director of Children's Services - Kristen Kierney. Kristen is an Approved Clinical Supervisor and a Licensed Professional Counselor with over 16 years of counseling expertise. She also has extensive experience directing and managing residential programs throughout the state of New Jersey.

Kristen holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Criminal Justice from Caldwell University and a Masters in Counseling with a specialization in school counseling. Kristen said, "I find it extremely rewarding to work with children.

I enjoy watching them progress in their learning, build solid communication skills, and become more independent. Previously I oversaw 17 group homes with 125 clients. Being able to focus on two residential homes with five children in each home, and connect closely with families, is really a welcomed change."

In her new role, Kristen manages two of Allies' Out-of-Home (OOH) treatment programs to support families. These OOH programs in Northern New Jersey include an Intensive Residential Treatment Services (IRTS) Program and a Crisis Stabilization and Assessment



Program (CSAP). Both OOH programs provide short-term treatment for males and females between the age of 11-17 years old diagnosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), as well as a co-occurring mental health diagnosis or crisis. These critical programs provide customized treatment and education that encompass and empower families, while offering children a safe, nurturing, home-like environment.

Allies also offers two OOH IDD treatment programs in Southern New Jersey for youth aged 12-18. These homes are designed for youth who are deemed eligible for IDD services and are in need of behavioral and/or medical support that cannot be safely and consistently managed in their primary home environment or in a less intensive treatment setting.

Kristen oversees new admissions to IRTS and CSAP, along with discharges, medical and behavioral care, and the development of treatment plans for children. “I work hard to ensure that all staff in the homes can confidently implement each treatment plan, manage children’s behavior, and support their evolving needs,” said Kristen.

Another large part of her role is ensuring clear and consistent communication across the entire Allies team, medical providers, children’s family members and schools. “It’s very important to keep family members engaged with their child’s progress, we update medical professionals as needed, and try to involve the children’s schools as much as possible as well. We have a very integrated approach to care.”

Kristen excels at this integrated approach and enjoys connecting everyone together to aid in the progress of each child we serve. She also enjoys the variety that her role provides her and how each day is different. She said, “I never know what the day is going to bring. I always find that very interesting and it’s part of the appeal of this position. I never know what to expect, and I like that.”



*Kristen Kierney, MA, LPC, ACS,  
Allies’ new Clinical Director of  
Children’s Services.*

When asked what immediate goals Kristen has for the two programs, Kristen replied, “In addition to balancing the evaluation of children’s needs and developing protocols to run the programs effectively and efficiently, I’m working with staff to help kids become more independent. We encourage the kids to become actively involved in things like cooking or doing laundry in the home. This not only teaches them daily living skills that will help them be more independent as they get older, it also helps to increase their confidence in themselves.”

An additional goal for the programs is to work even more closely with Care Management Organizations to help support the efficiency of the discharge process. CMOs approve children’s treatment plans, monitor monthly “Strengths and Needs” assessments, and drive the discharge process. In some cases children are able to return home to their family, or they are moved to another long-term, out-of-home placement. Kristen shared, “Our programs are meant for children in crisis. Once children are stabilized, and they have received the treatment and tools they and their families need, we want to help them make a smooth transition on to the next step of their journey.”

We are very pleased to have Kristen as a new team member within the Allies Family, and look forward to watching how the IRTS and CSAP Programs evolve and grow to meet the needs of children and their families under her leadership.

**For more information about Allies' IRTS**

**and CSAP Program, please contact Kristen Kierney at [kkierney@alliesnj.org](mailto:kkierney@alliesnj.org), or 609-690-3300.**

**For information about Allies' OOH IDD Treatment Programs for Youth in Southern New Jersey, please contact Lorriana Dix at 609-649-8029, or [ldix@alliesnj.org](mailto:ldix@alliesnj.org).**

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## **Allies Congratulates Slavik Sergeenko on Earning an MBA in Accounting**

The Allies family would like to congratulate our agency's Controller, Slavik Sergeenko, MBA, CMA, on his recent achievement of earning an MBA in Accounting from La Salle University in Philadelphia. His degree was conferred on January 15th.

In recognition of Slavik's high academic achievements in the MBA program, during the induction ceremony he was invited to join the prestigious business honor society Beta Gamma Sigma. He was also accepted into the University's National Society of Leadership and Success Chapter.

Slavik has been a part of the Allies family for a little over a decade. In his role as Controller, Slavik leads the accounting and payroll department and oversees financial operations. He oversees all levels of accounting, including day-to-day, high-level, managerial accounting, and revenue generation. In addition, he leads the preparation of company budgets, forecasts, financial analysis, contingency planning and internal and external financial reporting. Slavik also collaborates with external auditors, such as independent CPA firms and state auditors, to ensure the company follows all reporting guidelines and procedures.

Michael Haggerty, President and CEO of Allies, remarked, "We applaud Slavik for taking the initiative to advance his education and knowledge in the field of accounting, and admire his determination and drive. We highly encourage our employees to take advantage



*The Allies family congratulates Slavik Sergeenko, Controller, on his recent achievement of earning an MBA in Accounting from La Salle University.*

of our Tuition Assistance Program to support their professional development and career goals."

Slavik shared, "I'd like to express my gratitude and appreciation to Allies' Leadership Team, our President and CEO Michael Haggerty, and our Chief Financial Officer, Rick Manall, who is my direct supervisor and mentor at Allies. I am truly grateful for all their support of my personal career goals, as well as for instituting the Tuition Assistance Program to help further employees' professional development."

**For more information about Allies' Tuition Assistance Program and other professional development programs, call Theresa Wilson-Fall, at 609-689-0136, extension 8918, or email her at [tfwilsonfall@alliesnj.org](mailto:tfwilsonfall@alliesnj.org).**

## Allies Workplace Anniversaries

**Allies is delighted to recognize the following team members who celebrated work anniversaries between July and December 2022.**

Each employee brings a unique set of skills, expertise, talent, and creativity that helps support our mission; and we deeply appreciate their dedication and commitment to excellence.

### Five Years of Service

Abdulai Kallon, LPN Support Manager  
Abigael Bocicaut, Community Support Staff  
Abu Bockarie, Community Support Staff  
Ashley Bussey, Day Program Manager  
Benson Abishai Orina, Community Support Staff  
Cosheonia Quoizel Bowens, Community Support Staff  
Daniel Johnathan Fortenberry, Assistant Support Manager  
David Freeman Nyandibo, Community Support Staff  
Dora Oye Bampo, LPN Assistant Support Manager  
Fred L. Lee, Community Support Staff  
Funmilola Oshinowo, Community Support Staff  
Jessica Estriplet, Community Support Staff  
Keitha C. Francis, Support Manager  
Keivonna Foster, Community Support Staff  
Martina Chukwu, LPN  
Mia L. May, Community Support Staff  
Miya Nicole Ross, Community Support Staff  
Mohamed Kona Massaquoi, Community Support Staff  
Olufunke Olusola Nubi, LPN  
Pauline Cenor, LPN  
Rajeeah Jones, Vocational Specialist  
Semidar Walton, Program Manager  
Sharon Craig, Community Support Staff  
Sia Helen Bockarie, LPN  
Stephen Vergara, Community Support Staff  
Traci Kristin Henderson, Revenue Billing Analyst  
Yasin Ismail, Community Integration Support Staff

### Ten Years of Service

Adejoke Lasisi, Community Support Staff  
Donna Warren, Support Manager  
Eric Patterson, Community Support Staff  
Ibrahim Sillah, Community Support Staff  
Richard M. Manall, Chief Financial Officer  
Tara McAdams, Health Info Management Coordinator  
Yeah Dahn, Community Support Staff

### Fifteen Years of Service

Adeniyi Oladapo, Community Support Staff  
Alvita Lockwood, Executive Director  
Chantal Clervil, Community Support Staff  
Cheryl Hyde, Program Manager  
Descartes Lyndi Piquant, LPN  
Judy Janoski, Community Support Staff  
Kernande Gai, Community Support Staff  
Lydia Kiruri, Community Support Staff  
Mark Metcalfe, Sr VP Of Fleet And Facilities  
Susan W. Maina, LPN Support Manager  
Tayana Ceus, Community Support Staff  
Wanda Hoggard, Community Support Staff

### Twenty Years of Service

George A. Thorpe, Community Support Staff  
Jason Jamaal Woolford, Community Support Staff

**Thank you for being a valued part of the Allies family, we look forward to working with you for many more years to come!**



## Allies Launches Community Engagement & Enrichment Fund

On Giving Tuesday 2022, Allies, Inc. announced the launch of an initiative that will help enrich the lives of people with disabilities while promoting their inclusion in the community – a “Community Engagement & Enrichment Fund (CEE Fund).”

This exciting initiative supports individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities in:

- Nurturing hobbies that keep their minds and bodies stimulated, hearts happy, and spirit elevated
- Pursuing new activities and experiences that they’ve always wanted to try
- Developing relationships with people who share similar interests
- Becoming active and engaged members of their community

The fund makes it possible for those Allies serves to participate in things that are meaningful to them such as: taking an art or dance class, attending a concert, visiting a museum or planetarium, going bowling, joining a gym, taking a fitness class, exploring a park or new city, going to a live sporting event to cheer their favorite team on, and more. We want to make opportunities for people to learn, grow, socialize, and connect with their community an on-going venture.

Dawn King, Vice President of Integrated Health Services at Allies, remarked, “Having hobbies and pursuing personal interests are beneficial to improving one’s mental and physical health. Hobbies create a diversion from daily routines, which can lower stress, reduce blood pressure, and improve your mood and sleep. They can also decrease the likelihood of developing depression and anxiety by activating the brain and energizing the body. Hobbies are also a wonderful way

to foster social connections. We look forward to seeing what activities and hobbies those we serve choose to pursue this year and witnessing many positive benefits to their health.”

**To contribute to the CEE Fund, visit our website at [alliesnj.org](http://alliesnj.org) and click the blue button at the top of the page or the yellow Donate button at the bottom.**

You’ll have the option to give via PayPal, credit card or debit card. Please be sure to include the words “CEE Fund” in the Write a Note section before you finalize your donation.

**If you have a question, please email Nicole Zamerovsky, Director of Communications, at [nzamerovsky@alliesnj.org](mailto:nzamerovsky@alliesnj.org).**



## Allies' Horticulture Therapy Program Enjoys Another Season of Learning, Giving and Growing

Project Grow, Allies' horticulture therapy program, had another successful year filled with an abundance of learning, giving, and growing that touched individuals in the program as well as neighbors in our local communities.

As the leaves began to change color and the crisp air blew in, Project Grow participants and our horticultural therapists wrapped up the growing season by preparing the gardens for winter. They worked to clear the gardens of debris and add organic fertilizer and compost before putting the gardens to bed.

Project Grow's gardens are located throughout New Jersey at Mercer County Community College (MCCC) in West Windsor and Duke Farms Community Garden in Hillsborough. We also have accessible raised garden beds outside Allies Day Programs including Mercer Day Program in Hamilton, Flemington Day Program in Flemington, and Mt. Holly Day Program in Mt. Holly. These raised beds allow individuals of various abilities, including those using wheelchairs, to participate in the program and experience the joys of gardening. Zoom sessions expand the reach of the program even wider, allowing those who cannot physically visit the gardens to participate in the comfort of their own home.

In addition to providing therapy and education through horticulture, Project Grow aims to give back to local communities by donating their harvests to food banks during the year. Last year we donated 1,500 pounds of fresh produce to local food banks!

Once the gardens were ready for their wintertime nap, the group reflected on some

highlights of the year. MaryAnne McMillan, HTR, a registered horticultural therapist who has been with Allies for over 12 years, remarked, "We had another wonderful year in the gardens. In addition to tending to various flowers, vegetables and herbs, folks at Project Grow had a great time putting together a healthy recipe card collection. Participants received a lesson on the produce grown in the gardens and created cards capturing this information. The cards were then included with our donations to local food banks. They were a big hit."

Another fun project involved growing fragrant lemon balm and mint in the gardens. The group later used the fresh herbs to make delicious teas sweetened with a natural sweetener derived from the leaves of the Stevia plant. Between the recipe cards and the teas, MaryAnne joked that there may be a Project Grow cookbook on the way.

In December Project Grow teamed up with participants of Allies' Mercer and Flemington Day Programs to bring holiday spirit to their local communities. Using dried flowers and herbs from Project Grow's gardens they created beautiful potpourri sachets and Christmas cards. The lovely gifts were delivered to the Hamilton Continuing Care Center in Trenton, NJ and Hunterdon Care Center in Flemington.

MaryAnne shared, "Participants in our day programs were so excited to make these gifts. They really enjoy using herbs and flowers from the gardens to make presents for their families and staff; and were thrilled to make the potpourri sachets and cards for elderly community members. It adds to their enjoyment of the season, and they love to share and give back to others. They are very special people in my eyes."



To kick off 2023, Project Grow participants began sowing seeds to prepare for the spring and summer growing seasons. MaryAnne said, “Last year we started some crops including lettuce, spinach and arugula. This year we’re adding peas, garlic and milkweed, and we’re figuring out what others we want to try.”

She was also happy to report that the “Project Grow Assistant” initiative is still going strong. Each week a new “assistant” from the program is chosen to work beside our horticulturists. They pass out materials during horticultural therapy sessions, make sure that participants understand each lesson, and help people if they have questions. MaryAnne said, “We love that participants are still so eager to volunteer for that role. They truly get excited about it and are proud to receive their certificate once they complete their week. Our horticultural therapists really appreciate their help in the gardens and their enthusiasm as well.”

Project Grow would like to recognize its team of talented horticultural therapists for their valuable skills and their passion in sharing the healing power of plants with those we serve, our staff and the local community. MaryAnne said, “Horticulture therapy supports people on so many levels. Digging in the earth, working with plants, breathing in fresh air and enjoying the sunshine creates such a sense of well-being. It truly impacts ones physical and mental health and enhances social and vocational skills too. We’re grateful that we can share this with others, and for the support our program receives that keeps us going.”

We’d like to offer special thanks to Mercer County Community College and Duke Farms Community Garden for their continued support of Project Grow, and once again express sincere appreciation to Bristol Myers Squibb, Janssen and the National Garden

Bureau for their past grants that have made the program possible. We encourage anyone who would like to help sustain this program to reach out to Allies.

**For more information about Project Grow, or helping to sponsor the program, please email MaryAnne McMillan, HTR at [mmcmillan@alliesnj.org](mailto:mmcmillan@alliesnj.org).**



*Frances Pastore, Project Grow Assistant; Nick Stryker, Allies Horticultural Therapist; Alex Jaffe, Gardener for Project Grow and a student in Mercer County Community College’s DREAM Program; and Kasey Hamilton, Horticultural Therapist Intern.*

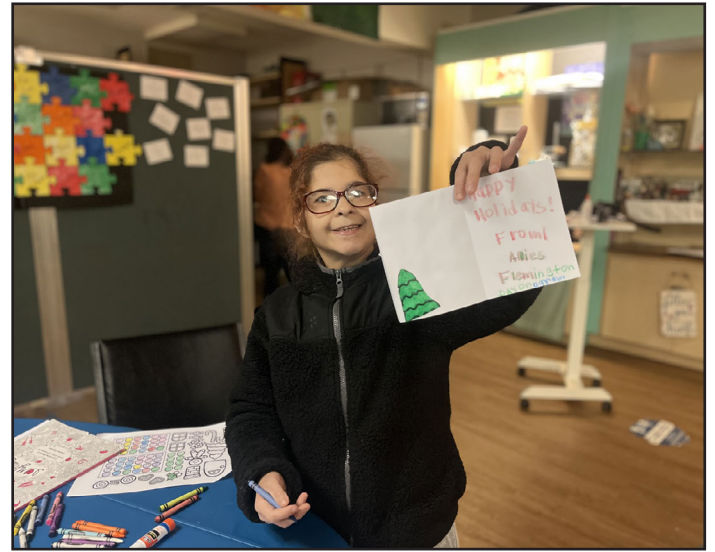


*MaryAnne McMillan, HTR, a registered horticultural therapist with Allies (far right), leads Mercer Day Program participants in a lesson about dried herbs and flowers.*





*Nathalie, Ashok and Daniel use dried flowers from the gardens to create potpourri gifts.*



*Denise shares a Christmas card she created.*



*Nicole and Joy are delighted to work on their potpourri project.*



*Staff at Project Grow delivered handmade Christmas cards and potpourri sachets to the Hamilton Continuing Care Center in Trenton, NJ and Hunterdon Care Center in Flemington for the holidays.*

## **Mercer Day Participant, Matt Suznovich, Selected As A 2022 Miracle League National All-Star Weekend Representative**

The folks at Allies' Mercer Day Program were filled with excitement in September as they welcomed their friend Matt Suznovich back from a trip of a lifetime. Matt, who is a participant at Mercer Day, was selected to be a 2022 Miracle League National All-Star Weekend Representative. Matt is a baseball aficionado who is very active in the Miracle League of Mercer County.

The Miracle League of Mercer County (MLMC) is a non-profit organization that provides children with special needs an opportunity to play baseball as a team member in an organized league at a specially designed adaptive field. The "Miracle League Field" is the first ADA accessible ball field of its kind in New Jersey. It features a flat synthetic turf to ensure children's safety, and the bases are painted on the turf to provide a barrier-free surface for those with disabilities.

In addition to enjoying the sport of baseball, Miracle League athletes like Matt get to experience all of the benefits of being part of a team, including supporting teammates and developing positive and encouraging relationships. Their success on the baseball field translates into improved self-esteem and confidence while developing their physical and social skills.

Matt has been a part of this special league for 15 happy years. His mother Diane remarked, "Baseball is Matt's favorite sport. He's a big Phillies fan. He really likes being part of a team and batting. He gets excited when he knows there's a game."

Last year was an exceptional one for Matt, who is also known by his friends at the league

as "Matt the Bat" and most recently "The Tennessee Kid." Matt was selected to attend the Miracle League's National All-Star weekend event in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Only 125 athletes are chosen each year to attend this exciting event, with athletes participating from Miracle Leagues in 20 different states. Diane and her husband Steven were extremely excited to travel to the event with their son.

Diane said, "The weekend kicked off with an Opening Ceremony and dinner outdoors. Athletes received an All-Star T-shirt, hat, and cookies with the Miracle League logo on them. On Friday Matt participated in the "Home Run Derby" assisted by his Dad; and on Saturday he played in an All-Star Game with his buddy Matt from Murfreesboro, TN. The games allowed players of all abilities to participate, and players were supported with wheelchairs or walkers if needed. At the end everyone received an All-Star medal."

Over the weekend there were also other fun activities planned, including an accessible zip line that Matt really enjoyed riding on. "It was a fantastic experience that was made extra special by rockstar treatment from MLMC President & Executive Director Dan Sczweck, as well as all of the coaches and volunteers," said Diane.

When Matt arrived back at the Mercer Day Program his friends and staff were thrilled to see him and look at the photos and videos from his trip. Geri Lordi, Director of Vocational Services, Central New Jersey Region, said, "We were all so happy to see Matt again. We put a video from his trip up on the screen and watched it together. We always support each other's accomplishments and we were so proud of him."



Whether he's playing baseball in New Jersey or Tennessee, we're sure that Matt the Bat will always be an "All-Star" in the eyes of his family and friends. He's an inspiration to athletes of all abilities.

**To learn more about the Miracle League of Mercer County visit [miracleleaguemercer.org](http://miracleleaguemercer.org).**

**For info about Mercer Day Program, contact Geri Lordi, Director of Vocational Services, Central NJ Region, at [glordi@alliesnj.org](mailto:glordi@alliesnj.org).**



*Matt Suznovich, 2022 Miracle League National All-Star Weekend Representative.*



*Matt enjoyed playing in the All-Star game with his buddy Matt from Murfreesboro, Tennessee.*



*Matt with his proud parents Diane and Steven Suznovich.*



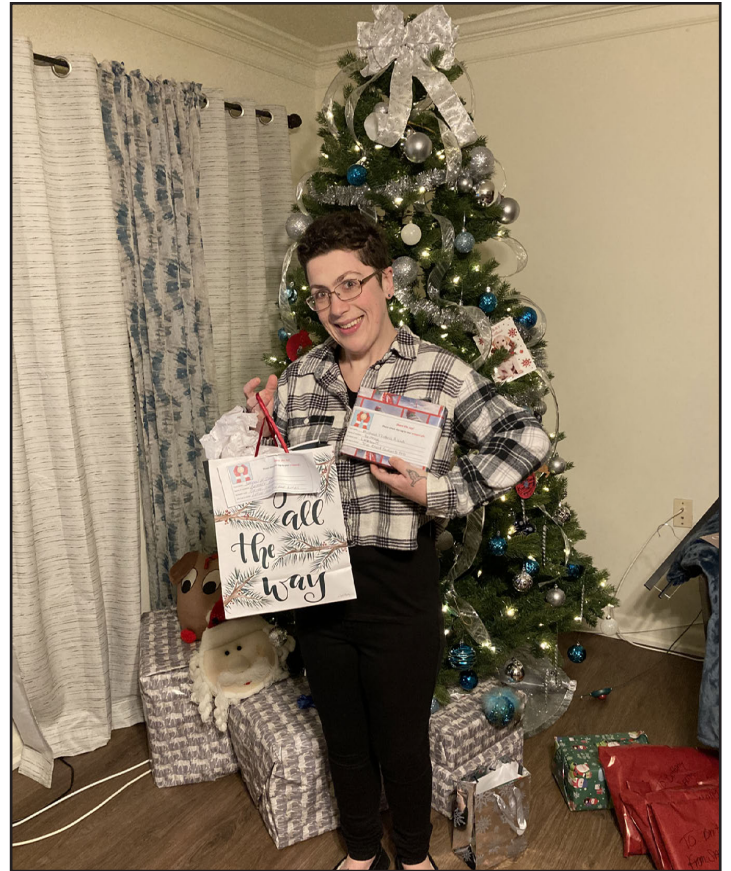
## Share the Joy Campaign Brings Christmas Cheer to Individuals with Special Need

Allies' "Share the Joy" gift-giving campaign was a huge success in December thanks to the generosity of our employees, families, friends, and community partners. Our mission was to ensure that every resident received a gift to open on Christmas day, and we delivered over 680 gifts to the children and adults that we serve throughout New Jersey!

"This was our second year implementing the campaign through a website that allowed gift-givers to scroll through a list of our residents' names and see the gifts that they specifically requested," said Nicole Zamerovskiy, Director of Communications at Allies. "With a simple click, people could sign up to purchase a gift and then drop it off at our office. By the middle of December our administrative office looked like Santa's workshop – filled with beautifully wrapped presents. It made everyone smile when they walked into the office each day."

Michael Haggerty, President and CEO of Allies, remarked, "It was wonderful to see how employees, families, and members of the community came together to make Christmas special for those we serve. Whether they shopped for a gift for someone on our list, helped to wrap and tag the presents, or assisted in delivering them, we hope they know how much all of their efforts were appreciated. We know it's a very busy time of year, and we thank everyone for keeping the Allies family in mind during the holiday."

We'd also like to thank our staff in the field and at our administrative office who worked hard to collect, organize, and deliver the gifts. Santa would be proud!





## **Thank You to the Rotary Club of Robbinsville-Hamilton for Taking Us Out to the Ballgame**

Allies, Inc. would like to thank the Rotary Club of Robbinsville-Hamilton for donating 48 tickets to a Trenton Thunders game so that the individuals we serve could enjoy a wonderful experience at the ballpark.

Our group had such a fantastic time at the game – donning ballcaps, socializing, cheering the Trenton Thunders on, and of course enjoying their favorite ballpark snacks. Many that attended said that it was the highlight of their summer.

We appreciate the Rotary’s generosity and congratulate them on their 30 years of dedicated service to their local communities. Thank you for standing beside us in our mission to enrich the lives of people with special needs.

**To learn more about the Rotary Club of Robbinsville-Hamilton, visit: [rhrotary.org](http://rhrotary.org).**



### Abilities of Northwest Jersey Inc. Announces New Three-Year CARF Accreditation

**Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc.** is proud to announce its recent three-year accreditation awarded by CARF International for its Community Employment Services, including Employment Supports and Job Development, Organizational Employment, Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation, Employee Development, and Transition Services with an Autism Spectrum Disorder – Adult designation for each.

The latest accreditation is the 14th consecutive accreditation that CARF International has awarded to Abilities. This accreditation is a major accomplishment for Abilities, continuing to conform to the CARF standards and receiving accreditation specifically for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) for the second consecutive survey.

While many strengths are highlighted in the survey, one that stood out was that the Abilities staff demonstrate a deep commitment to the well-being of the consumers and to the greater community through the provision of high-quality, person-centered services. A positive culture of hope, respect, and safety for the consumers is evident across the organization, which involved always approaching the consumers in a holistic manner, addressing their needs, and working diligently to remove barriers. The staff members embrace the organization's values in their day-to-day



operations with a true sense of teamwork, camaraderie, and integrity, qualities which helped them navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

For full survey reporting, visit: <http://abilities-nw.com/reports-resources.php>

#### **About Abilities of Northwest Jersey, Inc.**

*Abilities of Northwest Jersey inspires people with disabilities to achieve their life goals by providing individualized supports. Incorporated in 1974, Abilities works diligently to create an inclusive community where individuals with disabilities are given the opportunity to reach their fullest potential in life. Visit our website at <https://www.abilitiesnw.com/>, or follow us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/abilitiesnw/>.*



## Archway Programs' 12th Annual Cancer Walk Raises Funds for Virtua Cancer Program

For the past twelve years, every October **Archway Programs'** staff, students, family, and community members have gathered around the lake centered on our beautiful campus for the Annual Archway Cancer Walk. We come together to walk and show our support for loved ones, friends, and neighbors with cancer diagnoses. We walk in solidarity and pledge to do what we can to ease their burden and let them know we are here for them.

With our community's generosity and support, Archway Programs raised funds for the Virtua Cancer Program in Voorhees, NJ. In addition to the monetary donation, a group of Lower School students worked with staff to create comfort kits designed to offer patients a welcomed distraction and comfort during their treatments. The kits have lotion, adult coloring books, pencils, lip balm, and hard candies packed into canvas totes along with an encouraging, cheerful card. During the walk, Archway holds raffles and has tables set up for its annual bake sale. They offer cupcakes, bottled water, trail mix, and soft pretzels to the participants as they make their way around the lake.

On Wednesday, November 10, 2022, Susan Lafferty, Archway Executive Director of Education, and Lower School staff and students visited the Virtua Cancer Center in Voorhees. The Virtua staff, Deb Friedman, Director of Oncology Support Services; Ann Desjardins-



*Archway students and staff met with staff from the Virtua Cancer Program to donate comfort kits and funds raised during their 12th Annual Archway Cancer Walk.*

Feldman, Oncology Social Worker; and Natalie Conboy, Lead Clinical Social Worker Oncology, welcomed the Archway students and staff. Archway presented Virtua with a check for \$1,000.00. In addition to the monetary donation, the students presented the group with the twenty-six comfort kits they had created. Thank you to everyone who joined us for the 12th Annual Archway Cancer Walk. A special thank you goes out to our Waterford Township Police Department (NJ), Officers Lieutenant David D'Amico, Lieutenant Daniel Chiumento, Patrolman Matthew Jankowski, Patrolman Justin Barbuto, and Patrolman Darren Carrero. We appreciate them joining us during our walk and their continued support.

Visit the Archway Programs' website to view photos from the event: <https://archwayprograms.org/archway-programs-12th-annual-cancer-walk-raises-funds-for-virtua-cancer-program/>

### About Archway Programs

*Archway joins Allies, Legacy Treatment Services, Tabor Services and Woods Community at Brian's House as affiliates of Woods. Together, Woods and its five affiliates serve more than 22,000 people with developmental and behavioral challenges and employ approximately 6,000 dedicated people. To learn more about Archway's programs and events visit [www.ArchwayPrograms.org](http://www.ArchwayPrograms.org).*



*Patrolman Matthew Jankowski, Lieutenant David D'Amico, Susan Lafferty, Archway Executive Director of Education, Lieutenant Daniel Chiumento, and Patrolman Darren Carrero.*

## Inspiring Entrepreneurship with the Legacy Dreamers

**The Legacy Dreamers Entrepreneurial Program** gives at-risk youth who are residents of the agency's Adolescent Residential Services (ARS) program the opportunity to learn life skills which will lead to fulfilling professional careers. With teamwork, the Dreamers build patience, communication skills, and discipline to run successful business ventures throughout their time at the program.

Recently, the youth attended the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship's (NFTE) 2022 National Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge in New York. It was an inspiring trip for the young men, who left with a sense of hope for their own futures. Seeing the young entrepreneurs who participated in the challenge gave the Dreamers the confidence to advocate for their own skills. One young man even shared his goal of starting his own clothing line, Slime Ball clothing, within the next year, while another discovered his passion for art and creating. Many of the young men see themselves picking up a trade following their discharge and starting their own businesses. Conferences like NFTE's prove to be beneficial for these youth, exposing them to different perspectives and opportunities to make positive changes in their lives on their pathway to thriving.



*The Legacy Dreamers logo was created by youth who learned graphic design through the program.*

**For more information about The Legacy Dreamers Entrepreneurial Program, contact Marla Meyers, Foundation Executive Director, at 609-288-3070 or [mmeyers@legacytreatment.org](mailto:mmeyers@legacytreatment.org).**

### **About Legacy Treatment Services**

*Legacy Treatment Services is a vibrant, multi-state nonprofit human services agency dedicated to providing a comprehensive array of behavioral health, mental health, intellectual/developmental and addiction services to meet challenges for individuals of all ages. Legacy's mission: To change the behavioral health and social service outcomes for people of all ages, from surviving to thriving. Visit <https://www.legacytreatment.org/> to learn more.*

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## Woods Services Introduces its System of Care

As **Woods** transformed into a nonprofit in 1948, founder Mollie Woods Hare said, "The Woods Schools have always been pioneers. One of our earliest objectives has been constant pioneering research in the techniques of care and training of the exceptional child and the dissemination of that research to the medical profession and educators for the benefit of ALL exceptional children."

We are again in transformation yet our goal remains the same: pioneer new ways

of benefiting people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD), autism, co-occurring mental health, and other chronic conditions so that they can achieve their highest potential and independence.

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families face a broken system of inadequate and disjointed services. As a solution, Woods Services and its six affiliate organizations (Abilities of Northwest NJ, Allies, Inc., Archway Programs, Woods

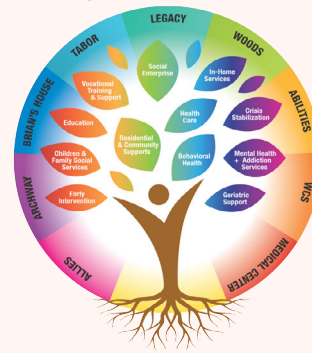
Community at Brian’s House, Legacy Treatment Services, and Tabor Services) have joined forces as the Woods System of Care. This system seamlessly provides people with the support that they need and deserve throughout their lifetime. We achieve this through innovative, integrated, and individualized approaches that promote learning and personal fulfillment by leveraging the expertise of each affiliate.

Together, we focus on serving the whole person – ensuring that they achieve and maintain social determinants of health. Our model is rooted in a population health management strategy, which includes integrating primary and specialty medical care with behavioral health. The Patient-Centered Integrated Care Model, through the Medical Center at Woods, has shown that providing integrated primary care and behavioral healthcare advances the quality of life and standard of care for individuals with disabilities.

We look forward to supporting our communities in the years to come and continuing to transform to meet the evolving needs of those we serve.

**For more information about the Woods System of Care, contact Cheryl Kaufmann, Senior V.P. of Communications and Development, at [ckauffman@woods.org](mailto:ckauffman@woods.org) or at 215-750-4255.**

Woods System of Care



## About Woods Services

*Woods System of Care/Woods Services is a nonprofit, life cycle care management and advocacy organization that, along with six affiliate organizations located in Pennsylvania and New Jersey – Abilities of Northwest Jersey; Allies, Inc.; Archway Programs; Legacy Treatment Services; Tabor Services; and Woods Community at Brian’s House - provides innovative, comprehensive, and integrated health, education, housing, workforce, behavioral health, and case management services to more than 22,000 children and adults in the intellectual and developmental disability, behavioral, child welfare, and brain trauma public health sectors who have complex medical and behavioral healthcare needs. Founded in 1913 by Philadelphia schoolteacher Mollie Woods with two simple goals – to advance quality of life and standard of care for individuals with disabilities – Woods Services continues its mission today by helping children and adults with disabilities and challenges to achieve their highest potential. Among the ways Woods does this is through its population health management strategy, which includes the integration of primary and specialty medical care with behavioral health. For more information, visit [woods.org](http://woods.org).*





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**FREE MATTER FOR  
THE BLIND OR  
HANDICAPPED**



*Participants at our Mercer Day Program worked together to create a vibrant piece of art that now graces the cover of Allies' new birthday cards. The cards are sent to each Allies employee on their birthday. To create the design, our artists took turns tracing their hands and arms on a piece of paper and then decorated each tracing with colors and patterns that are as unique as each of them are. In addition to brightening up the birthday of those who receive the card, it will remind them to always "reach for the stars," something that we encourage everyone in the Allies family to do each day.*