

Arc of Somerset County celebrates volunteerism at gala

The Arc of Somerset County 4:06 p.m. EST November 23, 2014



(Photo: Photo courtesy Lauren Zeigler)

BEDMINSTER (/search/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 preschool 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 volunteer work with the 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."



From left: Raymond Roach of Grainger, Nicole Zukowski of L'Oreal, Lauren Panarella of The Arc of Somerset County, Susan Ur of L'Oreal, Jill Darby of L'Oreal, Grayson Slater of L'Oreal and Chris Drudy of L'Oreal. (Photo: Photo courtesy Lauren Zeigler)

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