

SPOTLIGHT ON THE WOMEN’S CLUB
Monroe Township High School (MTHS) Transitioning Adult Program
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“None of us suddenly becomes something overnight.
The preparations have been in the making for a lifetime.” Gail Godwin

Today a child is born in Monroe Township, with unforeseeable cognitive challenges. Throughout their young life, various programs will provide support that will teach that child academic, social and coping skills. Our Stonebridge Women’s Club has active, enthusiastic volunteers who participate in the Monroe Township High School’s Falcon T.A.P. – Transitioning Adult Program. This remarkable initiative services the Monroe Township and Jamesburg high school graduates who are 18-21 years of age with intellectual developmental challenges. The premise of the program is to help them progress to successful functioning in adult life.

In the 2012-2013 school year, District Transition Coordinator Erica Friedman reached out to then Senior Center Director Bonnie Leibowitz to incorporate a few high-functioning graduates into work readiness tasks there. The students would prepare gift bags for events, stuff envelopes or bag items for the food pantry. Years later, when the District hired a full-time teacher, their activities included more social interaction and the Women’s Club got involved, playing table games which supported communication and collaboration. Current Senior Center Director Karen Theer would provide program ideas and materials for one of the twice monthly sessions. The Central Jersey Sentinel even wrote an article about it in May of 2018.

Now the TAP sessions occur monthly and have moved to more targeted job readiness and life skills. While socializing with these dedicated Women’s Club volunteers, with their help, these delightful students have progressed to more authentic work-based and life learning through prospective work interviews, wrapping gifts, bagging groceries, folding clothes, sorting mail and catalogs, identifying specifics on grocery product labels and studying store circulars for select food items. These volunteers fall directly into this quote by Frederick W. Faber, “There are souls in this world which have the gift of finding joy everywhere and of leaving it behind them when they go.” According to their teacher, Jonathan Grasso, the students repeatedly question when the next challenging session is and tremendously await its arrival. The Women’s Club volunteers know they are making a difference in these wonderful students’ tomorrows, and on the flip side, these charismatic students have carved a niche in each of their hearts.

In addition to the Senior Center, the students participate in work experiences at many job sites around central New Jersey. For example, they look for expired products at a local store, shelve products at another, wrap utensils at a restaurant, wipe down arcade games, and run a coffee concession at their high school.

With this Transitioning Adult Program, the Women’s Club showcases its devotion to helping that newborn achieve his/her personal best.
