

BARBER

JULY 2024

# SPIRIT

## Project SEARCH<sup>®</sup> Graduation



Barber National Institute

*Making dreams come true.*



# PRESIDENT'S Message

Dear Friends,

We just love summer at Barber National Institute!

The warm weather gives additional opportunity for exploring Pennsylvania's scenic beauty, recreational treasures and cultural experiences. Our children and adults are busy attending camps, sporting events and even preparing for Barber Beast on the Bay!

Summer especially reminds us of the passing of time as children and adults graduate. In this issue, we highlight Project SEARCH®, a one-year school-to-work transition program designed for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are either in their last year of high school or are recent graduates.

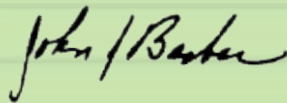
We share the story of Alexis Plyler, a 2021 Project SEARCH® graduate, working in the childcare setting as a classroom aide.

Summer reminds Kevin Prindle of meeting his beloved wife Patty and getting caught in the summer rain during one of their long walks. He shares his heartfelt songs written just for Patty.

Jacob and Tonie Booher fell in love in late summer after they met on Facebook commenting on a Beast on the Bay obstacle. Now married, the couple will participate in Beast on the Bay in September.

There's no doubt about it, summer is a fantastic time of year. I hope that this summer brings you many opportunities to reconnect with family and friends and time for renewal. On behalf of those children, adults and families we are privileged to serve, thank you for your friendship and support that is truly making dreams come true.

Sincerely,



John J. Barber  
President & Chief Executive Officer



*Jacob and Tonie Booher pose for a photo after the 2023 Barber Beast on the Bay. The two married after meeting through the Barber Beast on the Bay. Read their full story on page 14.*



*Alexis Plyler, 2021 Project SEARCH® graduate works as a childcare aid at Saint Vincent Childcare Center in Erie.*



*Project Search graduate Kaylee Schultz pictured with her AHN Saint Vincent mentor Jennifer on graduation day 2024.*

## Our Mission Statement

We are “making dreams come true.” We provide children and adults with autism, intellectual disabilities and behavioral health challenges and their families the education, support and resources needed to be self-reliant, independent, and valued members of their community. In addition, we provide the professionals who serve them with world-class education and training.

**ON THE COVER: 2024 Project SEARCH® Graduating Students**  
— SEE ARTICLE ON PAGE 10 —





Elizabeth Lee Black School teacher Joy Maisner hugs Lincoln Elliott. Lincoln nominated Joy for the Golden Apple Award.

## ELIZABETH LEE BLACK SCHOOL TEACHER JOY MAISNER RECEIVES GOLDEN APPLE AWARD

For 38 years, Joy Maisner has been teaching and inspiring young people at Barber National Institute's Elizabeth Lee Black School. Her decision to work with children with special needs came in the mid-1980s.

"I met a little guy at Erie Infants Home, now Erie Homes for Children and Adults. I was doing my internship there, and he was so different," said Joy. "I fell in love with him, and I just knew in my heart I was ready for that, and I came here. It's just a very happy place to be and when you see the growth from these kids, it just melts your heart," said Joy.



It's a hat-trick for the Elizabeth Lee Black School. Three of our teachers have been honored as Golden Apple Award recipients. Pictured left to right- Julie Moore, Brent Manti, Joy Maisner



Watch  
Joy's heartfelt  
interview!

## COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF WARREN'S ANNUAL GIVE DAY SUPPORTS BARBER NATIONAL INSTITUTE

It was a record-breaking year for the Community Foundation of Warren County's annual give day on Wednesday, May 15. Over 100 nonprofits received an impressive \$936,952 including Barber National Institute's Bollinger Campus. It was the first time that donors spanned all 50 states! Our thanks to over 50 donors who donated \$6,934 to expand art and technology activities.

A Warren County Day Of Giving  
**WARRENgives**





# PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Secretary  
Valerie  
Arkoosh

VISITS

**D**epartment of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh visited Barber National Institute on May 30, to talk with self-advocates, parents, and direct support professionals about the need for historic investments in Governor Josh Shapiro's 2024-25 proposed budget, which would increase the number of Pennsylvanians who can access intellectual disabilities & autism (ID/A) services, and support the professionals who care for Pennsylvanians with ID/A. The proposal has received bipartisan support, and Secretary Arkoosh was joined by Senator Dan Laughlin (R), and Representatives Jacob Banta (R), Patrick Harkins (D), and Robert Merski (D).

"Achieving an everyday life with dignity is a goal for so many of our neighbors, friends, and loved ones in ID/A communities, but when they must wait for services, we are falling short in helping them meet this goal. Every Pennsylvanian with intellectual disabilities and autism should receive the supports they need when they need them," said Secretary Arkoosh. "Under Governor Shapiro's budget proposal, Pennsylvania will affirm this by working to eliminate the waiting list for services, investing in the value and importance of ID/A service providers and direct support professionals, and, most importantly, demonstrating our commitment to Everyday Lives for all Pennsylvanians."

Governor Shapiro's proposed budget would invest \$483 million in federal and state funding to provide more resources for home and community-based service providers so they could increase the average starting wage from approximately \$15/hour to \$17/hour; this increase for more competitive rates would both attract and retain the qualified staff who provide these essential services. Governor Shapiro announced late last year that DHS would re-examine rates earlier than required to better support ID/A service providers and the direct

support professionals who dedicate their careers to helping Pennsylvanians with ID/A. In addition, service providers also will receive a one-time supplemental payment later this spring to assist with workforce recruitment and retention.

Earlier this year, Governor Shapiro directed DHS to immediately release additional program capacity to counties, which will allow an additional 1,650 Pennsylvanians to receive services this year. The 2024-25 proposed budget seeks to build on this by investing \$78 million in federal and state funds to serve an additional 1,500 Pennsylvanians in the next fiscal year.

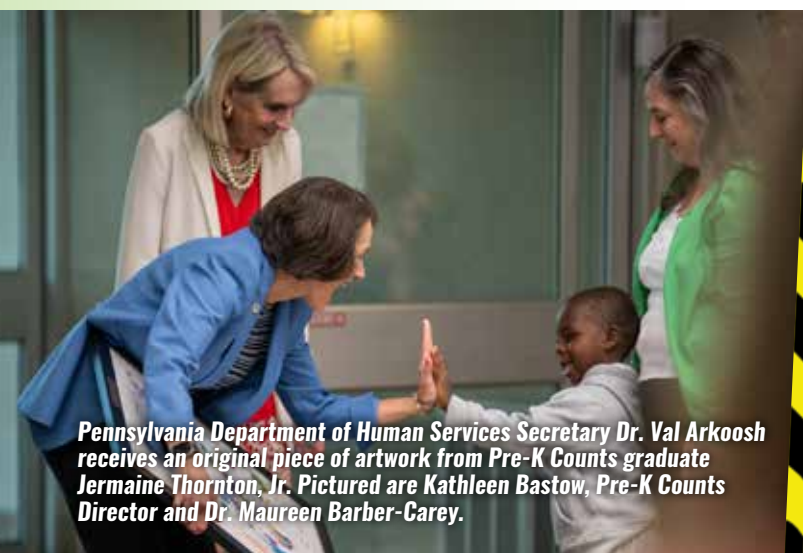
If passed, Governor Shapiro's budget would increase the number of Pennsylvanians with ID/A who are able to receive home and community-based services, kicking off a multi-year growth strategy to make Pennsylvania a national leader and end its adult emergency waiting list. To support this growth, the budget would increase rates for providers, which will support higher wages for the direct support professionals who care for Pennsylvanians with ID/A.

"Governor Josh Shapiro's proposed budget demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity, improved outcomes, and a sustainable ID/A system by increasing funding and resources for individuals with intellectual disabilities and the direct support professionals who care for them," said Barber National Institute Senior Vice President Robert Barber. "There are over 4,500 individuals on the adult emergency waiting list across the Commonwealth in need of services. Governor Shapiro's budget proposal is crucial to organizations like Barber National Institute in serving the most vulnerable individuals in Pennsylvania at the highest possible level today and into the future. What we need now is the General Assembly to pass the Governor's ID/A budget as proposed."





**Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh** was joined by elected officials and Barber National Institute direct support professionals, families and leadership in advocating for historic investments in Governor Josh Shapiro's 2024-2025 budget.



**Pennsylvania Department of Human Services Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh** receives an original piece of artwork from Pre-K Counts graduate **Jermaine Thornton, Jr.** Pictured are **Kathleen Bastow**, Pre-K Counts Director and **Dr. Maureen Barber-Carey**.



**DSH Secretary Dr. Val Arkoosh** visited Barber National Institute on May 30. Pictured with the Secretary are Barber National Institute Senior Vice Presidents **Robert** (left) and **Patrick** (right) Barber.



## POOL PROGRESS

Work is well underway on Barber National Institute's \$3M pool and natatorium renovation. The locker rooms have been demolished and are being rebuilt. This work includes new showers, stalls, sinks, toilets and flooring. Completion of the locker rooms is expected in July.

Other completed work includes replacement of the pool's two boilers, filtration and pool equipment room.

The pool deck and top portion of the pool wall have been demoed and removed. Next up is the pouring of the pool deck, construction of the new family restrooms and installation of the new gutter filtration systems.

The final leg of the project is the complicated replacement of the hydraulic lines for the moveable pool floor. Anticipated completion is this fall.



# TEACHING ARTIST ALEX ANTHES HELPED ARTISTS EXPAND HORIZONS



Teaching artist Alex Anthes leads a printmaking activity at one of Erie's adult day programs.

Creating beautiful works of art is not something new to participants in the Erie Community Participation Supports (CPS) Program. For years, artists in the program have created stunning pieces that have been enjoyed by many.

While these participants had been creating some magnificent art, there were still plenty of techniques they had not yet tried. Enter resident artist Alex Anthes.

Anthes is a collage artist, printer, illustrator and designer, and completed a multi-week artist-in-residence beginning in the winter of 2024. Under her supervision, artists in the CPS Program experimented with various processes to create abstract and colorful works.

The journey began with the basic concepts of relief printing. Anthes worked with artists to apply ink by hand to a variety of found objects – from glass bowls to plates, bottles and more – before transferring these unique textures onto handkerchiefs. The handkerchiefs were then sewn together to create the collaborative piece titled “Banner.”

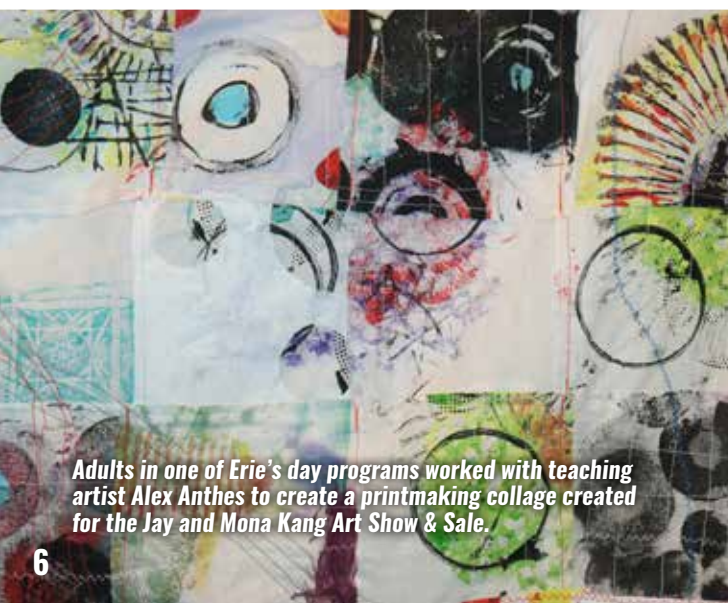
Once the foundation of printmaking was laid, Anthes helped artists expand their horizons. Fruits and vegetables were used in relief prints enriched with a silkscreen monotype technique.

“Participants embarked on direct painting and drawing onto screens using water-soluble markers and crayons, infusing their relief prints with fresh dimensions,” she wrote. “With each pass of the squeegee, the material traversed through the screen, transferring onto the surface below, further enriching the visual narrative.”

After weeks of working with prints and other materials, Anthes tasked the artists with cutting and repurposing old pieces to make something new. Through the art of collage, old works were given new life and new meaning.

“At its core, the participants’ journey centered on the process, where each mark made was a step towards self-discovery and creative growth,” Anthes wrote.

Anthes’s residency concluded with different works, including “Banner,” featured in the 2024 Jay & Mona Kang Art Show & Sale in April. The artist-in-residence was funded by Erie Arts & Culture and the Dr. Gertrude A. Barber Foundation.



Adults in one of Erie's day programs worked with teaching artist Alex Anthes to create a printmaking collage created for the Jay and Mona Kang Art Show & Sale.

# ARTISTS INSPIRED BY “TOTAL ECLIPSE OF THE ART” THEME

Celestial event draws visitors from near and far



Drs. Jay and Mona Kang, and their son Jared, are joined by Patrick Barber, Robert Barber and Dr. Maureen Barber-Carey in receiving an original piece of art created by an adult in Barber National Institute's day program.

There's no doubt about it – the 2024 total solar eclipse was a shared moment that joined us in a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Erie, PA was a destination for watch parties and themed events including Barber National Institute's Jay & Mona Kang Art Show & Sale: Total Eclipse of the Art.

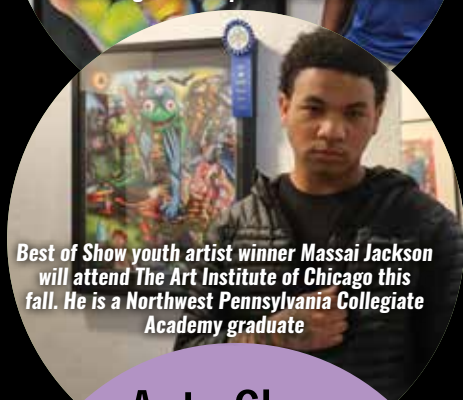
The public exhibit welcomed guests from as far as California, Washington, Iowa and Colorado to purchase themed art and commemorate their eclipse excursion.

Art show judges Ann O'Dell, executive director of Erie Arts and Culture, Rich Holmgren, artist and

retired vice president of creative services at Erie Insurance, and Marquis Wallace, artist and owner of Anansi Collaborations said in a written judge's statement, *"The art exhibited presented us contrast in subject, technique, medium, size, color, 2D, 3D, execution, and most importantly, creativity. As judges, we wanted to support the theme as best we could in our selection of awards for all the exhibition's various contrasts."*



Best of Show artist Caesar Westbrook created "The Merge" from a photo of his own hand.



Best of Show youth artist winner Massai Jackson will attend The Art Institute of Chicago this fall. He is a Northwest Pennsylvania Collegiate Academy graduate

## Art Show FUN FACTS

Artists: 159 adult,  
147 youth  
Entries: 235 adult, 175 youth  
States represented: 4  
Visitor from farthest away: 7  
different countries viewed the  
online art show and 13 states  
represented as visitors

### BEST OF SHOW- ADULT ARTIST

- Caesar Westbrook, "The Merge" - Erie, PA

### HONORABLE MENTION – ADULT ARTIST

- JoAnn Peters, "Stitchers Happy Garden" - Harborcreek, PA
- Daniel Bainbridge, "Antler Porkpod Basket" - Erie, PA
- Minnie Lawrie, "The Egg-Clipse" - Erie, PA

### PHOTOGRAPHY- ADULT ARTIST

- Frederick Fiedler, "Into the Night" - Fairview, PA

### PEOPLE'S CHOICE – ADULT ARTIST

- Olga Kurbanova, "Glorious Sunset" - Erie, PA
- Brett Biebel, "All That's to Come" - Erie, PA

### BEST OF SHOW- YOUTH ARTIST

- Massai Jackson, "A Community of Choice" - Erie, PA

### HONORABLE MENTION – YOUTH ARTIST

- Payton Hancock, "Imaginative Portrait" - Erie, PA
- Sofiya Popikov, "A Moment Together" - Erie, PA
- Red Adams, "Toxic Waste" - Erie, PA

### PHOTOGRAPHY- YOUTH ARTIST

- Sophie Becker, "Pebble Pond" - Erie, PA

### PEOPLE'S CHOICE- YOUTH ARTIST

- Tristan Hodinko, "Sunset on the Bay" - Erie, PA





Barber Behavioral Health Blended Case Manager Robin Fox leads a puzzle activity during Sib Sessions and Time for Me.

The life as a parent of a child with a disability can be very complex. When families have additional children, without disabilities, it can be even more so. Parents struggle to find the equitable balance of dividing their attention to all their children.

“Children with disabilities might need more direct supervision, special protocols and routines. This can create feelings of jealousy in the other children. Children also are very aware of differences and are sometimes worrisome about how their friends will perceive their sibling with a disability,” said Barber National Institute Time for Me and Sib Session facilitator Shawn Miller, Ed. D.

“Time for Me allows parents some respite and time to spend with their child without disabilities to help strengthen their relationships and discuss topics relevant to their successful growth,” said Miller. “Or it further allows parents just some time to focus on their own personal goals and rest and rejuvenate to better manage their own personal growth.”

“Sib Sessions is very similar in its goal to allow parents time to spend with their child with disabilities in a smaller ratio, while their sibling is socializing with other

## Time for Me & Sib Session Programs Promote Self-Care for Parents, Siblings

students who may have similar experiences with having a sibling with a disability,” continues Miller.

Growing up, Miller heard about Dr. Gertrude Barber and the amazing things she did to better the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. “While never getting to meet Dr. Barber in person, I have had a great mentor in Dr. Maureen Barber-Carey. I taught under Dr. Barber-Carey’s direction for nearly 10 years and learned so much from her. I wouldn’t be the educator and advocate I am today without the guidance and inspiration from the Barber family. If I can be half the educator and advocate that these amazing mentors are, I feel that I can be a great resource for the community of Erie.”

*Time for Me is held the first Saturday of the month from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. and Sib Sessions is held the third Saturday of the month from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. at Barber National Institute’s Main Campus.*

“We encourage all families to stay in vigilant contact with their individual caseworkers and know available services. Partnering with other Barber National Institute services, such as Agency with Choice, parents can seek community and additional respite support for more individualized programming. It really comes down to supporting individuals and their families in all aspects of their development in the community. I’m just glad Barber National Institute has these programs and continues to strive to be at the forefront of providing services for the Erie community and beyond,” said Miller.



Shillelagh Person of the Year Bill Power, joined by his family. L-R Front Row: Rev. James Power, Bill Power, Carolyn Pace Power, Nancy Pace, Maureen Pathan, Richard Power. Back Row: Caroline Power Vervoort, Tommy Vervoort

## Shillelagh Golf Tournament a Success

196 golfers turned out for the annual Shillelagh Golf Tournament at Whispering Woods Golf Course raising money to support Barber National Institute’s important programs and services. Bill Power was honored as the 2024 Person of the Year.





*Kevin Prindle met the love of his life at Barber National Institute's Girard campus. He holds a photo album of their wedding day.*

# YOU'RE MY EVERYTHING

**K**evin Prindle met Patty (Patricia) Crawford in 1982 at Barber National Institute's Girard campus. They became fast friends.

One day, as Kevin recalls in 1983, Patty wanted to become boyfriend and girlfriend. "Patty asked one of the staff if it would be okay to ask me to 'go with her'. The staff told Patty to ask me, and I said, yes, I'll go with you!"

Throughout the years that followed, Kevin and Patty's friendship deepened. Kevin recalls walks, getting caught in the rain, taking cover under the porch, and holding hands.

In 2006, Patty's medical condition advanced and she was unable to continue participating at Barber National Institute. She moved to Pleasant Ridge Manor in Fairview, PA.

Kevin, smitten by Patty, rode his bicycle daily to Pleasant Ridge and visited her. They listened to music, held hands on walks, sat by the pond and enjoyed, what Kevin remembers as "the simple things in life". After watching their favorite soap opera General Hospital, Kevin would get back on his bicycle and head home.

Surrounded by family and close friends, Kevin and Patty were married in the Pleasant Ridge Manor gazebo on May 26, 2018 – just two days before Patty's birthday.

"I never wrote songs for any other girlfriend, until Patty came along," said Kevin. "At our wedding, I sang Patty a song I wrote called You're My Everything." He sings a few verses, "You're my life, you're my world, you're my everything. You mean so much to me, you're my

everything. For you and me, will never be apart. You will always have a place in my heart. You know I love you, I do."

Kevin flips through his wedding album and remembers Patty's staff taking her to Walmart to select his wedding ring which he still wears today.

With fresh tears, Kevin smiles and says, "Patty was the love of my life. She was a very special woman. She meant the world to me."

Before Patty's passing on January 13, 2024, Kevin wrote Patty another love song called You're the Joy and the Tears that I Cry. He sings, "You're the joy and the tears that I cry. You're the stars in the sky. You're the sun that shines so bright. You will be mine until the end of time. I love you and you love me, oh, honey, can't you see. You will be mine, together forever, until the end of time."

Kevin held Patty's hand when she passed away as he had done on those fond walks.

Today, Kevin visits the Girard campus and Pleasant Ridge Manor weekly where he feels closest to Patty.

Kevin is 63 years old and received the ARC Alliance Award for rising above his challenges and having not only advocated for himself but strived to support and help others in his community. Kevin was presented this award by founder Dr. Gertrude Barber. He participated in adult services for 34 years.



Kevin sits on a bench outside of Barber National Institutes Girard campus holding a bear given to him by his wife Patty. The two met at the adult day program.





# Project

# SEARCH®

# Graduate Spills

# Kindness into

# Childcare

# Classroom

*Project Search® graduate Alexis Plyler reads to a young student in her classroom at Saint Vincent Childcare Center in Erie.*

**A**lexis Plyler says one of the lessons she learned through Project SEARCH® was kindness. A 2021 graduate of Erie High School and Project SEARCH®, Alexis is now a childcare classroom aid at Saint Vincent Childcare Center in Erie, PA.

Findings from the National Snapshot of Adults with Intellectual Disabilities in the Labor Force reveal that fewer than one out of every two working age adults with an intellectual disability (ID) is in the labor force, and only 44 percent of adults with an ID aged 21 – 64 are in the labor force.

One of Barber National Institute's main vocational services for workforce training and development, Project SEARCH®, is an international program designed to help individuals with ID access competitive integrated employment opportunities. Barber National Institute works with five partners to operate its Project SEARCH® services, including Allegheny Health Network's Saint Vincent Hospital,

Erie School District, Department of Labor & Industry's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, and Erie County Department of Human Services.

After going through the interview process with Project SEARCH®'s partner organizations, students begin their internships at Allegheny Health Network's Saint Vincent Hospital. They will first learn soft skills and practice working and interacting with others. After these initial activities, they move to hard skills, or the physical work of the internship. Once the full 10-week period is up, they either get hired at their initial internship site or move to their next internship at the host organization.

"Project SEARCH® taught me to be on time, be nice to my co-workers and to be kind," said Alexis. "When the kids get frustrated at daycare, I show them kindness. My co-workers are my friends and being here makes me feel happy. I am proud."



2021 Project SEARCH® graduate Alexis Plyler speaks at the program's graduation ceremony.



Alexis helps in the classroom as children move between learning stations and assists with keeping the classroom clean and organized. Her supervisor Jalitza Velez, Saint Vincent Childcare Center lead teacher supervisor, says that Project SEARCH® is an important program to help adults with ID try different jobs and build their skills and confidence. She encourages businesses to give adults with ID a chance. "She's a really good worker and helpful in a variety of situations."

To learn more about Project SEARCH®, visit [projectsearch.us](https://projectsearch.us).



2023

## Community Report



Project SEARCH® was featured in the 2023 Highmark Bright Blue Futures Community Report. Highmark Bright Blue Futures is Highmark's charitable giving and community involvement program. Highmark AHN is the parent company of Saint Vincent Health Center.



Scan the QR to read the full report



2024 Project SEARCH® graduates stand for a class photo with program instructors and mentors.

Seven students graduated from 2024 Project SEARCH® internships on May 16. The graduation ceremony was held at AHN Saint Vincent's McGarvey Learning Center. The students honored their internship mentors and were joined by Project SEARCH® partners and their family and friends. One graduate has already been offered a job upon high school graduation at AHN Saint Vincent. Congratulations!





# RAPID RESPONSE TEAM PREVENTS DISRUPTIONS

## Reducing Suspensions and Expulsions in Childcare Classrooms

**R**esearch tells us high-quality, supportive early childhood programs have a positive effect on the lives of infants, young children, and families. Early childhood programs help support young children's readiness for school and lifelong success. Unfortunately, recent data shows a troubling number of children are expelled or kicked out of early childhood settings. When this happens, children do not receive the benefits that early childhood programs provide.

Childcare center expulsion rates are 13 times more than K-12 rates according to a 2020 National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) study. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the fragility of the early learning system and the weakness of policies and resources to support both children and educators in the classroom.

Early childhood programs provide a variety of reasons for expelling a child. Typically, a child is removed from a program because of challenging behavior. Teachers and other staff may feel concerned about the safety of the child and other children in the program.

Early childhood programs are being encouraged to implement policies to reduce and eliminate preschool expulsion. The Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning has awarded the Northwest Institute of Research, PA Region 1 Early Learning Resource Center and Barber Behavioral Health a \$200,000 implementation grant to begin a unique partnership – a Rapid Response Team- aimed

at reducing suspensions and expulsions of children ages birth to five from Erie County licensed childcare centers.

The new Rapid Response Team brings together a cross-sector of early childhood development and behavior experts to work alongside early childhood education programs when an early care and education program is struggling with the challenging behavior of a child or classroom and is at immediate risk of suspension or expulsion.

In support of Erie County's early childhood workforce, the Rapid Response Team is committed to:

- Responding to early childhood education programs within 48 hours.
- Short-term support of the program's staff, child and child's family.
- Utilizing community and regional partnerships to provide "warm handoffs" to additional community services.

The Rapid Response Team will include early intervention, behavior and mental health specialists from Barber Behavioral Health.

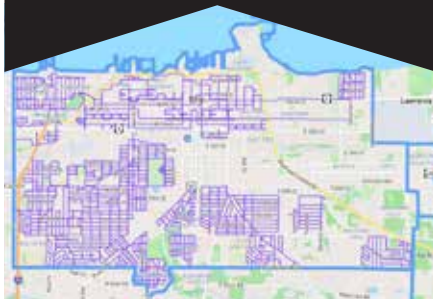
The program is provided free to Erie County licensed childcare centers.

**To access the Rapid Response Team service, families or providers should call Barber Behavioral Health's Care Coordinator at (814) 823-5366 or email [rrt@nwirelrc.org](mailto:rrt@nwirelrc.org).**

## Why is expulsion a concern? Young children expelled from preschool are more likely to:

- Lose chances to learn, socialize with other children, and interact with positive adult role models.
- Miss opportunities to develop and practice the very skills they may most need, including social and emotional skills.
- Develop ongoing behavior problems leading to later school difficulty.
- Experience harmful effects on development, education, and health.
- View themselves negatively or as not capable of learning.
- Develop negative views about learning, school, teachers, and the world around them.





**Current Completion Map**  
As of 6/25/2024



**Megans Findings**



*Realtor Megan DeMarco finds her way through a swamp during Barber Beast on the Bay.*



## REALTOR MEGAN DEMARCO RUNS EVERY SINGLE STREET IN ERIE TO BENEFIT BARBER NATIONAL INSTITUTE

Inspired by an article relator Megan DeMarco read about ultra-runner Rickey Gates who ran every single street in San Francisco, she embarked on a self-prompted mission to run every street in the city of Erie, PA.

"As a runner, a realtor and a lover of a quirky athletic challenge, the concept of "every single street" really spoke to me. What a great way to familiarize myself with the city neighborhoods, improve my running abilities and do something that no other Erie-ite (I don't think?!) has done before," said DeMarco on her Instagram @MegKDeMarco.

DeMarco began hitting the streets in Sept. of 2023 and had completed about 40 city miles when she broke her fibula (leg) bone and displaced her ankle. Post-recovery, she has picked up where she left off, determined to complete this goal.

"I'm inviting everyone to follow along as I run the streets and document the hidden gems I find along the way. I'll be recapping some of the runs I've completed and the photos I've taken on my social media accounts soon. You can also follow me on Strava to see all my previous runs."

DeMarco is raising funds to support the mission of Barber National Institute. "As a former employee, I know firsthand the incredible services that Barber National Institute provides to individuals with intellectual disabilities. It was an easy decision to select Barber National Institute as this year's nonprofit."



To support Megan and Barber National Institute



*Realtors Stacy Santos (left) and Megan DeMarco (right) will donate \$100 of every home they sell in Erie to Barber National Institute in 2024.*


## Realtors Support Our Mission

Megan DeMarco and Stacy Santos are using their superpower of selling homes in Erie, PA to make dreams come true for Barber National Institute adults and children. The RE/MAX duo have supported Barber National Institute for years and now will donate \$100 for every home sold in 2024 to help support Barber National Institute's mission.





**Jacob and Tonie Booher pose for a photo following the 2023 Barber Beast on the Bay.**



# FROM BEAST TO Bride & Groom

If you've ever visited the Barber Beast on the Bay Facebook page, you might expect to find photos of the event, inspirational quotes, or memes. What you might not expect to find is the love of your life, unless you're Jacob and Tonie Booher.

In the age of dating apps, this couple can say they met commenting on a Facebook post. Neither could have imagined that this innocuous interaction would result in a wedding just a few short years later.

Their love story began in September of 2021, right after the 8th annual Barber Beast on the Bay. Tonie saw a post on Facebook that featured a participant climbing on top of the 40-ft Wall obstacle. Having completed the obstacle in a similar fashion, Tonie commented and joked with a friend, "Look that's how somebody else did it too!"

Two hours away in Bradenville, PA, Jacob saw Tonie's comment and chimed in saying he did the same thing on a different obstacle, the Tail of the Beast. He noted that there's nothing wrong with completing the obstacles by any means necessary.

The pair commented back and forth a few times before Jacob sent a direct message to continue the

conversation. There, Jacob and Tonie got to know a little bit about each other and discussed common interests. However, after a month, the conversation turned to silence as both parties became busier in the real world.

Fast forward to March 2022, when Jacob was in Phoenix, AZ to compete in another obstacle course race. He said there was something about that race that made him think of Tonie after all these months and he wanted to know how she was doing. So, he reached back out.

"That's where it all started," he said. "From that point forward, there weren't any breaks in our conversation."

After a few more weeks of talking, the two finally met in person, travelling back and forth to spend weekends together. Tonie and Jacob's relationship blossomed, and they officially became a couple on May 1, 2022. One year later, they got engaged on May 1, 2023, and were married just a few short months ago on April 27, 2024.

The couple agrees that they have the 40-ft Wall to thank for bringing them together.



"It definitely holds a special place in our heart," Tonie said. "We think about the race and the Wall, and how that started it all for us."



*The post that started it all* →

Since getting together, Tonie and Jacob have tackled the extreme obstacle course race as team for the last two years. Even though they enjoy every mile of the course, they can't help but get excited when approaching the obstacle that helped them find each other.

"As we get to [the 40-ft Wall] throughout the course, it's like 'Alright, here's the reason that we're together,'" Jacob said. "Before we met each other, it was just an obstacle in a race, and now it's something that sparked a conversation. It brought two lives together and now our lives continue together as one."

While taking on the obstacles and seeing the Beast himself is a lot of fun, it's not the only reason the couple keeps coming back. While it may have not been at the forefront of their minds when they first took on the Beast, the meaning behind the event and its charitable nature is a major factor behind their continued support.

"Rather than going to another obstacle course race that's for profit, this is something where our registration fees are going toward helping people with disabilities," Jacob said.

As a Qualified Intellectual Disability Professional for the Verland Foundation, individuals with autism and intellectual disabilities hold a special place in Tonie's heart.

"I take any chance that I can to help them out," she said. "I love that there's an Adapted Course too."

When asked what their goals are for the next Barber Beast on the Bay, the couple said they're going to fight the cramps and challenge themselves to run all the way up Heartbreak Hill. They also want to bring a bigger group to compete with and help get more Beast participants in their community.

Regardless of how this upcoming event turns out, it will be special, nonetheless. This will be the first time Jacob and Tonie Beat the Beast as husband and wife, and the 40-ft Wall will be waiting for them once again.



Jacob and Tonie Booher on their wedding day, April 27, 2024



# RENOVATED LIBRARY WELCOMES STUDENTS & TEACHERS



*Dr. Maureen Barber-Carey is joined by Northwest TriCounty IU5 Assistant Director, Kirk Shimshock at Elizabeth Lee Black School's library reopening.*

Elizabeth Lee Black School students and teachers celebrated the reopening of its library this spring; the library benefited from an emergency assistance to non-public schools grant. The library underwent renovations to include an accessible floor plan, new shelving units, seating, flooring, lighting, computers, viewing technology, and books!

"A crucial component to a library is literacy connection for our students. We wanted to create an environment that makes them want to open, touch, listen and read a book. Adding technology within the library program allows us to open the world of books to all students," said Cindy Priester, Barber National Institute Director of Children and Youth Programs. "Working with children who have multiple disabilities requires utilizing many different types of materials for student access. The library now has a leveled reading series of four basic sections of books, a textured and visually open area of books and English and Spanish translations."

The library's shelves are filled with over 625 hard cover picture and story books addressing cultural diversity, special needs, jobs and positivity. There is something for everyone at the new library!

Our thanks to the Northwest TriCounty IU5 for their funding support.



*The Elizabeth Lee Black School library renovation is completed with funding from the Northwest TriCounty IU5.*



## Prep Students Explore Careers

Cathedral Prep students worked alongside Elizabeth Lee Black School classroom teachers and staff to learn about careers working with persons with disabilities and connect with their peers.





# Presentations About Canonization Now Scheduling

**D**o you know of a group that would like to learn more about the amazing mission of Dr. Gertrude Barber and the process for her possible canonization?

Members of the Association for the Cause of Gertrude Barber are available to provide presentations to interested groups and organizations, including schools and civic and service groups.

Presentations can be customized for audience interests and age levels and can be arranged to take place in person or via on-line forums.

"Gertrude Barber's life story is truly a story for our times. Her dedication to persons with disabilities shows how one person's vision can bring about profound change in our society," said Monsignor Tom McSweeney, postulator for the Cause of Gertrude Barber. "She continues to be an inspirational role model, and the opening of a cause for her canonization enables more people to be inspired by her example."

**More information, INCLUDING AN ONLINE FORM TO REQUEST A SPEAKER, IS AVAILABLE AT THE CANONIZATION WEBSITE, [DRBARBER.ORG](http://DRBARBER.ORG)**

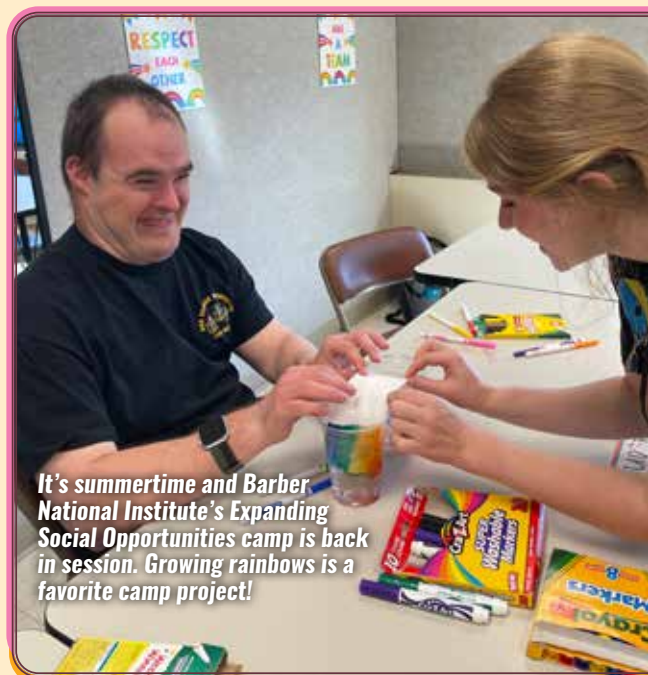
## Summer Camps Underway

Summer is synonymous with adventure, and what better way to embrace the season's spirit than with a journey into the world of summer camps. The allure of summer camps beckons with promises of new experiences, lasting friendships, and memories that linger long after the season fades. Thanks to the help of Barber National Institute donors, summer camps are off to a great start!

Barber National Institute offers four different summer camps for children and adults with autism and intellectual disabilities. Two Expanding Social Opportunities (ESO) camps, one for children and one for adults, are offered on the main campus. Camp Connections, held

at Mother Teresa Academy, is for children aged 5 to 14 with an autism diagnosis. At these three camps, individuals get the opportunity to foster friendships, attend field trips, and develop life skills. These summer camps are a superb opportunity for children and adults with autism or intellectual disabilities. A highlight for the campers is the talent show and getting to perform for family and friends.

"Learn to Ride" bike camp teaches children of varying abilities how to ride a bike. Learning how to ride a bike is more than transportation; it teaches balance, perseverance, and independence. Each camp is cherished by participants and staff.



**It's summertime and Barber National Institute's Expanding Social Opportunities camp is back in session. Growing rainbows is a favorite camp project!**







**Dr. Maureen Barber Carey congratulates graduate Niyelli Robison during a June ceremony.**



**Elizabeth Lee Black School held their graduation ceremony in June. Pictured left to right : Kristi Rathburn- Ft. LeBeauf Special Education Director, Dr. Maureen Barber-Carey, Haleigh Kafferlin- Graduate, Julie Moore- Teacher Room 107, Paul Kafferlin- Haleigh's Father**

## *Congratulations, Graduates!*

Barber National Institute Executive Vice President Dr. Maureen Barber-Carey was joined by Pre-K Counts Director Kathleen Bastow, M.Ed. and Happy Hearts Director Stephanie Robertson in celebrating the preschool graduation of over 30 children on June 3. Julie and Chris Moore performed their original song "Celebrate What's Different," Barber National Institute's theme song. The children performed the "Goodbye Song" which they learned during the school year as part of the Erie Playhouse's PlayTime program.

It was an emotional milestone for nine Elizabeth Lee Black School graduates and their families as they accepted their diplomas presented by Barber National Institute Executive Vice President Dr. Maureen Barber-Carey and Special Education Director Allison Reynolds, M.Ed. Several of the graduates have attended the Elizabeth Lee Black School since preschool. Faculty and staff shared tears and hugs as they wished the graduates well on their continued journey to reach their full potential. Congratulations graduates!



## Mini-Beast Builds Confidence

Elizabeth Lee Black School students take on adapted obstacles created by physical education teacher Brent Manti. Students amazed their teachers with their abilities



**The Barber Family receives the 2024 Louis J. Tullio Award. Pictured L-R — Dr. Maureen Barber-Carey, Patrick Barber, Robert Barber, Courtney Barber and John Barber**

## The Barber Family Receives Tullio Award from Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership

The Barber family received the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership's Louis J. Tullio Lifetime Achievement Award. The award is bestowed upon an individual or organization with a legacy of commitment to going above and beyond on behalf of the Erie community. It recognizes those who have a demonstrated legacy of outstanding service using their abilities, resources, and energies to sustain the Erie community's values, build on its needs and promote its defined goals and visions.





## Saint Luke School Students Visit

Middle school students from Erie Catholic's Saint Luke's School visited to learn about founder Dr. Gertrude Barber and service to adults and children.



## Coffee is Our Cup of Tea

Our adults in Corry stopped off at The Buzz of Union City Cafe for their favorite drinks - and of course a cute aesthetic photo op!



## Erie Ambassadors Visit Barber National Institute

The Erie Regional Chamber & Growth Partnership's Erie Ambassadors visited the main campus to learn more about our impact throughout Pennsylvania.



## Philadelphia Campus Welcomes Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities

Philadelphia Director of Regional Programs Daneen Engel, joined by Sr. Vice President Robert Barber, welcomed Amy Nieves, MHR, executive director of the Philadelphia Office for People with Disabilities/Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities.



## Week of the Young Child Celebrations

Pre-K Counts program celebrated Week of the Young Child! Our kiddos tried delicious dishes for Tasty Tuesday, played instruments for Waltzing Wednesday, and showed off their creative talents for Artsy Thursday. If only every week could be this fun!



## United Fund of Warren County Valued Partner of Bollinger Campus

While we make every effort to properly recognize our funding partners, the United Fund of Warren County was inadvertently left out of the 2022-2023 donor report. We are sorry for this omission. The United Fund of Warren has strongly supported the Bollinger campus, and funds received during the 2022-2023 fiscal year were used to beautify the campus after the construction project. Thank you so much for your continued support!



# BARBER SPIRIT

Barber Spirit is a quarterly publication for friends of the  
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*Have you ever dreamed of making someone else's dreams come true? Well, Erie Gives Day is your chance to be a philanthropist. Gifts made on this annual day of giving are matched by corporate donors which means your gift of \$25 or more has the power to fund a dream.*

*Our children, adults and families have interests and aspirations. Like you, they dream of first-time experiences and hobbies that bring them joy. Your gift can remove barriers and create opportunities. They can't do it without you!*

**ERIE GIVES DAY, TUESDAY, AUG. 13**

GIVE BY CHECK BEGINNING JULY 8 OR ONLINE AUG. 13

**ERIEGIVES.ORG**

## Calendar of Events

### Erie Gives

Aug. 13 at [ErieGives.org](http://ErieGives.org)

### Barber Beast on the Bay

Sept. 4 & 5 – Packet Pick Up, Barber  
National Institute north lobby

Sept. 7 – Obstacle Course Event, Presque  
Isle State Park & Waldameer Park

### Founders Day

Sept. 20, Barber National Institute

### Ladies Only Luncheon

Nov. 23, Kahkwa Club

### Barber Christmas Ball

Dec. 14, Bayfront Convention Center

### Adult Christmas Party

Dec. 15, Bayfront Convention Center



Barber National Institute