

For Immediate Release

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St. John of God Community Services
Archbishop Damiano School

**ST. JOHN OF GOD COMMUNITY SERVICES HOSTS RESOURCE
FAIR FOR FAMILIES OF TRANSITIONING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

(Westville, NJ) – For the parents or caregivers of a loved one with special needs, graduation can be a time of great joy but also great anxiety. It is during this time that many questions can arise regarding continued care for a loved one and what the future may hold. In an effort to help parents navigate through this process, St. John of God Community Services (SJOGCS) will host their second annual *Making the Transition Resource Fair* on **Saturday, November 3rd** from **11am to 2pm**.

This event is the first of its kind in the area, as it specifically focuses on the invaluable resources needed for families to successfully transition their loved ones from high school to the community/workforce. Representation will include those from support coordinating agencies, vocational rehabilitation and day programs, legal/guardianship services, financial planning services, state disability programs and vocational services.

According to Archbishop Damiano School (ADS) social worker, Alicia Gilbert, the need for this event was made apparent to the organization by the families of ADS, a grades K – 12 special needs school under SJOGCS's umbrella of disability services. This event is open to the entire special needs community, including educators and child study teams, as SJOGCS recognizes the need across all services and locations.

“A lot of parents begin to think about transition planning when their loved one is between the ages of 14 and 16, but then time passes quickly,” Gilbert said. “Transition is a process that takes time and consideration. It is when families think about the hopes and dreams for their child after they graduate, look into options in the community and develop a plan to meet those goals.”

Gilbert added that as a student nears 18 years old, families may want to consider pursuing guardianship or power of attorney. She recommends at this time to reapply for SSI/Medicaid, if the individual was not eligible previously due to household income, and to look into financial planning as well as what type of services in the community will best meet the student's needs after they graduate.

(MORE)

Making the Transition Resource Fair is just one in a number of initiatives created through ADS's newly formalized transition program. This program assists the families of students enrolled at ADS in planning for life after graduation.

"Transition is not only about finding the appropriate placement for students and adults with special needs, it is more about the quality of one's life," Brother Thomas Osorio, O.H, executive director of SJOGCS, said.

This event is free and open to all families in the community. The resource fair will be held in the ADS gymnasium on St. John of God Community Services' campus, located at 1145 Delsea Drive in Westville. For more information, please contact Shannon Reyes at (856) 848-4700, ext. 1231 or sreyes@sjogcs.org.

About St. John of God Community Services

St. John of God Community Services is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization with a mission to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities and to create a hospitable space where people may experience dignity and respect. Our New Jersey location provides multi-dimensional services to individuals and families throughout each stage of life. Our programs include a private K-12 special needs school (Archbishop Damiano School), early intervention, inclusive daycare and preschool (Here We Grow Learning Center), adult job training and day services, therapeutic recreation, religious education and clinic services. Building partnerships in support of each person's goals, St. John of God Community Services is dedicated to the individuals they serve and the community around them. For more information, please visit www.sjogcs.org.

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