

ANNUAL REPORT

Empowering people with disabilities in their pursuit
of employment, independence and life skills.

20 22



INROADS
TO
OPPORTUNITIES

Leadership Transition

The Board of Directors of Inroads to Opportunities is pleased to announce that Angela Calzone will succeed Michele Ford as President and Chief Executive Officer of Inroads to Opportunities upon Mrs. Ford's retirement on June 30th, 2023. Ms. Calzone has served as Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Inroads since January 2020. Ms. Calzone will become President and Chief Executive Officer effective July 1st, 2023.



L-R: Angela Calzone with Michele Ford at Railside Cafe.

According to Board Chair Jill Schafhauser, "Inroads has the pleasure of meeting Ms. Calzone over a decade ago when she, as a consultant and trainer, came to steward our first Strategic Plan. Over the years, she provided training for our leadership team and staff, worked with us through the launch of our transition from the Occupational Center of Union County to Inroads to Opportunities and supported us on subsequent Strategic Plans. Ms. Calzone also served briefly on our Board of Directors. We look forward to her continued commitment to our mission in support of individuals with a variety of disabilities."

Ms. Calzone, an award-winning business and talent management strategist, and as previously mentioned, most recently served as Vice President & Chief Operating Officer for Inroads to Opportunities. Prior to joining Inroads in January 2020, she served as Chief Operating Officer for The Webster Apartments in New York City. Earlier, Ms. Calzone spent ten years as a co-managing member of Change & Response Strategies LLC, a consortium of leadership, management, human resources, training and marketing strategists.

Ms. Calzone has held senior leadership roles at several top consulting and professional services firms across an array of verticals. Throughout her career, Ms. Calzone received numerous state-wide accolades in recognition of her exceptional leadership both as a serial entrepreneur and business professional. She was among the finalists of NJ's Leading Women Entrepreneurs and Business Owners by NJ Monthly Magazine, celebrated among the Best 50 Women in Business in New Jersey by NJBIZ and nominated for Garden State Woman of the Year.

Ms. Calzone holds a Master of Arts in Corporate and Organizational Communications from Fairleigh Dickinson University and a Bachelor of Arts in English and Business Administration from Upsala College.

Angela shared, "I am humbled to be passed the torch from Michele Ford and fully commit myself to leading this extraordinary agency into the the future."

Board of Directors 2022

Board Chair Jill Schafhauser
Board Vice Chair Janis E. Arrindell
Treasurer Ken Rowinsky
Assistant Treasurer Gerry Iacovano
Arnold Rintzler
Charles Walter
Jo Ann Kovalcik
Jack Kovalcik
Tara McDonald
TR Rathjen

Staff & Publication Contributors

Michele Ford
President & CEO
Angela Calzone
Vice President & COO
Amy Delman
Public Relations
Bryan Hansen
Marketing; Editor

THANK YOU JACK KOVALCIK FOR 44 YEARS OF SERVICE

On January 25th, 2023, Inroads to Opportunities Board Member Jack Kovalcik announced his retirement after 44 years of service. Jack held leadership roles as Board Treasurer, Board Secretary, Chairman of the Board. In addition, Jack became a member of various Board Committees, including the Finance Committee and the Executive Committee. In these positions, he became an invaluable counselor to the Board of Directors and Inroads management.

Jack has made a major impact during his tenure, helping to better the lives of individuals with disabilities. With over 4.5 decades of experience, we have major shoes to fill.

From all of us at Inroads to Opportunities, we want to send a heartfelt thank you to Jack Kovalcik for his commitment to our mission and his unwavering leadership.



Jack Kovalcik pictured left with Inroads to Opportunities Board Chairperson Jill Schafhauser

RAILSIDE CAFE MOVE TO INROADS CAMPUS

Since August 2015, Inroads to Opportunities has proudly owned and operated Railside Cafe in Fanwood, NJ. This business venture created a safe space for our various programs to work on pre-vocational skills and learn how to work in a restaurant.

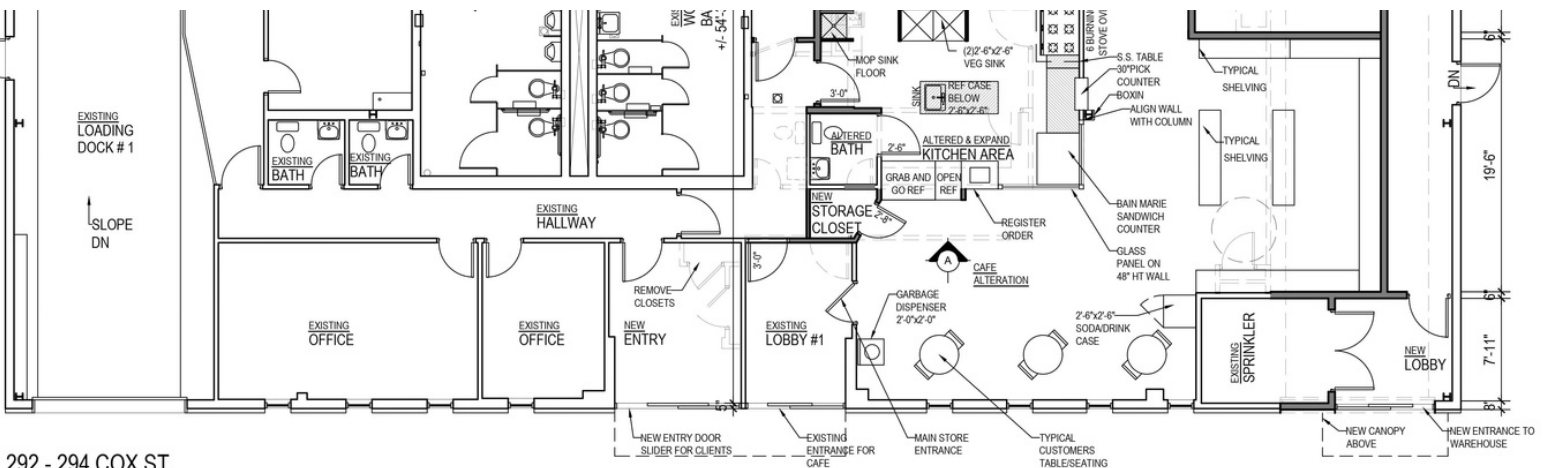
Later this year, Railside Cafe will be moving to its new home in Roselle, NJ at our Inroads Campus on Cox Street.

Planning is underway to re-imagine our market central training area into an in-house restaurant. Inroads offers a variety of employment readiness certificate programs including, ServSafe Food Handler and Janitorial Skills Training.

We look forward to having Railside Cafe on our campus, which will benefit not only our programs but the greater community of Roselle.



TransitionPlus and Dayhab engage in weekly peer shadowing and try various cleaning tasks at the restaurant, then enjoyed a wonderful lunch at the cafe.





Michele Ford, President & CEO of Inroads to Opportunities honored with the NJBIZ's 2022 ICON Award.

L-R: Sara Avanzi, Business Development Specialist, Gene Jannotti, CEO of Greater Westfield Chamber of Commerce, Michele Ford, President/CEO with husband James Ford, Lynn Boyko Director of Talent Acquisition & Development, Letty Esquivel Potash, Director of Mental Health, Angela Calzone, Vice President/COO.

NJBIZ's ICON Awards are given to New Jersey leaders over the age of 60, who have made major contributions to their designated field as well as their significant impact on the state's larger business community.

According to Ford, "I hope this award is another way to bring true recognition to the important work being done in the rehabilitation field to provide New Jersey employers with a diverse, qualified and enthusiastic work force. I am extremely honored and accept this award in recognition of Inroads to Opportunities and the amazing team I work with every day to prepare individuals with disabilities for independence and employment." With over 35 years of experience, Ford has made a tremendous impact on the lives of employees and participants in the Inroads to Opportunities program. Demonstrating selflessness and compassion, Ford has dedicated her life to supporting individuals with disabilities.

Within the last year, Ford has been recognized by The Union County Board of Commissioners with the Shero Award as well as receiving the 'Inventive Leader in Adult Services, Courage and Compassion Award' presented by the NJ Association of Mental Health & Addiction Agencies (NJAMHAA).



Inroads recognized as finalist for 2022 NJBIZ Business of the Year

Celebrating Inroads as a finalist for 2022 NJBIZ Business of the Year in the category of Non-Profit Organizations with under 100 employees.



L-R: Harry Jones IV, Director of Employment Services, Ken Rowinsky, Treasurer-Board of Directors, Cyndy Walsh Rintzler, Director of Vocational Advocacy, Janis Arrindell, Vice President-Board of Directors, Letty Esquivel Potash, Director of Mental Health, Michele Ford, President/CEO, Sara Avanzi, Business Development Specialist, Daniel Bagnato, Director of Vocational Services.



Casino Night Returns

After a 3 year hiatus due to the pandemic, Inroads hosted it's Annual Casino Night Fundraiser and Awards Presentation Ceremony on Friday, October 7th, 2022 at Elks Lodge in Union, NJ, to celebrate National Disabilities Employment Month.

Guests competed in a variety of casino games like Craps, Roulette, Blackjack and Three Card Poker to win play chips, which would be cashed in for raffle tickets towards our 40 basket tricky tray. The event was a huge success! This special night was filled with pride, recognition and awards to those who have made a difference in the lives of people with disabilities. Many local political leaders were present and spoke to the attendees and award winners.

Thanks to the generosity of our guests and sponsors, we raised \$24,000 for our vocational programs and mental health services.

Here are the sponsors and family groups who help us make a difference:

King Sponsorships:

- Wells Fargo Advisors Peter Horowitz
- Chiesa Shahinian & Giantomasi PC
- Total Green
- Mr. Julio Russ

Queen Sponsorships:

- Jill Schafhauser
- Joy Leaf
- Javerbaum Wurgaft Hicks Kahn
- Wilkstrom & Sinins P.C.
- Willis Towers Watson

Jack Sponsorship:

- Bank of America
- Providence Bank
- Tara McDonald
- Stickel Packaging
- VMG Group Roofing

Wild Card Sponsorship:

- Dr. & Mrs. Walter Kraft
- Paymedia
- Hoag Contracting
- Thomas DiGiorgio Architecture
- Give Back Foundation

Inroads honored the following individuals who truly go above and beyond to make an impact at Inroads to Opportunities and its participants.

Pictured above left to right, Gene Jannotti, President/CEO, Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce, who received the Champion of Change Award; Donald M. Payne, Jr., U.S. Congressman, NJ District 10 and Paul Aronsohn, NJ State Ombudsman, who both received the Making Inroads Award.

Additional award recipients included Jackie Park-Albaum, Groundwork Elizabeth, who received the Community Partnership Award; Julie Holland, Columbia Bank Foundation who also received the Community Partnership Award; Nancy Furnari who received the Unsung Hero Award; and Lynn Boyko who received the Staff Lifetime Achievement Award.

Inroads to Opportunities President & CEO Michele Ford presents Lifetime Achievement Award to Lynn Boyko, Director of Talent Acquisition & Development



Lynn Boyko has been an essential part of the Inroads team for over 25 years; she began her employment at Inroads as a Job Coach. Lynn quickly demonstrated her interest, dedication and passion for the individuals served at Inroads and she was promoted to the Employment Services Supervisor in 2001.

During Lynn's time managing Employment Services our Employment Team created many opportunities for participants in the community. She was instrumental in creating a partnership with Shoprite/Wakefern that resulted in our first community enclave.

Lynn also worked with the VP of Services to broaden those we can serve in employment by applying and being approved as one of the first SSA ticket to work providers in New Jersey. Lynn is someone with many hidden talents, which she gladly shares, and uses at Inroads. Lynn was our resident Art instructor for a period as she has a fine arts degree. Lynn is also someone who loves technology and "a good deal" so she has assumed the duties of staff shopper, making sure all departments have what they need at the best prices.

In 2013, Lynn was promoted to Director of Talent Acquisition and Corporate Secretary. Lynn is someone who has been the right hand to the CEO since 2013.



Inroads Participant Tommy F. with Lynn Boyko at Holiday Express 2019

Lynn thoroughly enjoys and challenges the participants and staff to be their best and is always willing to lend a hand where ever and whenever needed. Events are another hobby of Lynn's; she is instrumental in the planning and execution of our annual fundraiser and participant picnics and other events.

Overall, Lynn has been an essential employee of the Inroads Team and I as the CEO could not have kept the Inroads shipping moving in the right direction these last 10 years without her guidance and support. A Lifetime of Achievement and many thanks from myself and the Board of Directors for all you do!

Bravo Lynn!
Written by President and CEO Michele Ford

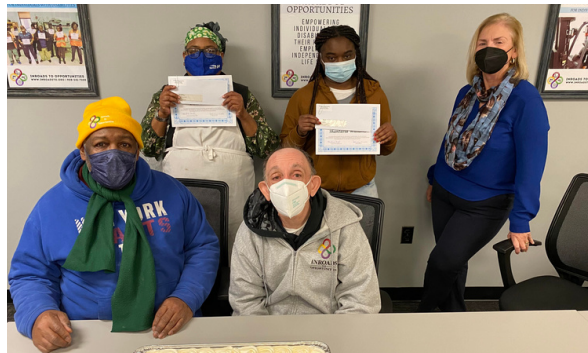
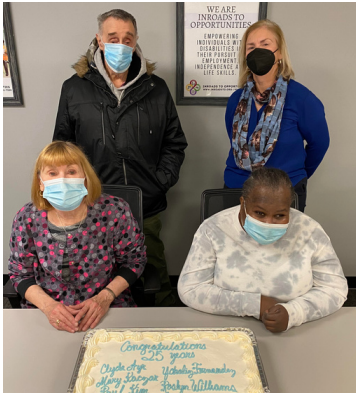
LONGEVITY AWARDS 2022



We are grateful to have a staff that continually goes the extra mile to help create opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Please help us congratulate these incredible staff members for their years of service.

- 5 Years: Lisa Jamison | Stephanie Nowrocki
- 10 years: Dan Bagnato
- 15 years: Gayl Schaad | Augusta Vega (*Not Pictured*)
- 25 years: Lynn Boyko | Cyndy Walsh Rintzler
- 30 years: Isabel Piexoto
- 35 years: Eileen Biletto

The following images are the Program Participants who have called Inroads to Opportunities home. We applaud them for their years of service as they continue to work on vocational, wellness and personal goals.



20 years:
 Cassandra C. | Jeffrey E. | Priscilla H. | Sonji P.

30 years:
 Lorenzo R. | Ritchie S.

40 years:
 John G. | Joe V.

25 years:
 Clyde A. | Mary K. | Paul K. | Yohaliz F. | Rosalyn W.

35 years:
 Jeff C. | Eileen M. | William M. | John S. | Eugene W. | Debbie Z.

2022-23 Corporate Sponsors

The success of Inroads relies heavily on support of community leaders with a heart. This year's sponsors are helping us in a variety of ways, including the investment of assistive technology for Inroads participants who seek to improve their communication and confidence skills through the use of technology, construction of food service vocational training facility on the Inroads campus allowing more participants to train in food service professions and achieve ServSafe Food Handlers Certifications, and community-based outings & field trips for Inroads Participants: Volunteering, Mall Outings, Movies, Pumpkin Picking, Baseball Games & More.

Thank you to the following corporations and family members who help us make a difference!

BANK OF AMERICA 

WillisTowersWatson 

Mr. Julio Russ



Q Vandenburg & Sons

Louis J. & Fannie Roncoli Foundation, Inc.



Ronell Managed Services



Cynthia and Anthony Prochilo



Support in Motion

Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors and grantors, we are proud to announce the unveiling of our first-ever LULA (Limited Use Limited Access) Elevator!

The Ribbon Cutting and Maiden Ride occurred on February 7th, 2023 on our campus in Roselle, NJ.

Omar Bison in wheelchair, Inroads President/CEO Michele Ford is in the yellow blazer next to Hon. Donald Shaw, Mayor, Roselle, NJ; Julie Holland (Columbia Bank Foundation) and Denise Wilkerson, Roselle, NJ, Councilwoman.



Among the many participants were Inroads to Opportunities leadership such as Michele Ford, Inroads President/CEO, Angela Calzone, Inroads VP/COO, Leticia Esquivel-Potash, Inroads Director of Mental Health, Cyndy Walsh Rintzler, Inroads Director of Vocational Advocacy, Rich Sherman, Inroads CFO. In addition, other participants were Hon. Donald Shaw, Mayor of Roselle; Denise Wilkerson, Councilwoman – Roselle; Julie Holland, Executive Director – Columbia Bank Foundation; Gene Jannotti, President, Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Jim Mooney, Board President, Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce and Inroads Program Participant, Omar Bisono.

In addition to its plethora of services and support for adults with disabilities, Inroads to Opportunities is enthusiastic about expanding its day programming, both in size and scope to include more social skills development, group activities and special events utilizing its newly renovated second-floor, multipurpose space that can accommodate larger groups of individuals with appropriate social distancing.

According to Michele Ford, Inroads to Opportunities' President & CEO, "We are honored to be able to make this great space accessible to individuals with mobility issues; we have embarked on a costly but much needed LULA (Limited Use Limited Access) elevator installation to make sure everyone can take advantage of all Inroads to Opportunities has to offer. Safety is our number one priority and the LULA Lift and new fire-rated steps to the second floor are essential to ensure facilities are accessible, inclusive and safe."

The LULA lift, fire-rated steps and overall renovations were funded in part by the generosity of the Columbia Bank Foundation and other corporate sponsors.

2022 Grants



Inroads was the recipient of a \$10,000 grant in 2021 from Columbia Bank Foundation towards the installation of a Lula Elevator and new staircases in our wellness building. We thank them for their support of our mission.

George W. Bauer Family Foundation

The Bauer Foundation gifted Inroads a \$15,000 grant in 2022. We are grateful for the generosity of the Bauer Foundation and for their annual support.



United Way of Greater Union County

Our friends at United Way of Greater Union County gifted Inroads with a grant for \$4,949 to help us pay the salary of a rehabilitation counselor. Inroads is grateful for the annual support of United Way.



2022 HEART (History, Education, Arts Reaching Thousands) Grant from the Union County Board of Chosen Freeholders gifted Inroads with \$2,500 to help us pay for an art teacher in our wellness program.



City of Linden
NEW JERSEY

Community. Diversity. Progress.

The City of Linden granted Inroads \$7,000 in support of our mission. We are fortunate for their annual support and belief in our efforts in Union County.

Cyndy Walsh Rintzler Appointed by Governor Murphy to Serve on Advisory Council

Pictured L-R Assistant ED Arc of Camden, Joann Rusik; Inroads Director of Vocational Services, Daniel Bagnato; Director of Advocacy and Quality Assurance Cyndy Walsh Rintzler, Vice President of Government Affairs ACCSES NJ, Matthew Putts; Board Member Occupational Training Center Burlington, NJ, Franklin Gomez on July 20th, 2022 for ACCSES NJ Day on the Hill.

February 7th, 2023, Director of Advocacy and Quality Assurance, Cyndy Walsh Rintzler, LPC, has been appointed by Governor Phil Murphy to serve as a member of the New Jersey Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services Rehabilitation Advisory Council. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) appoints leadership and necessary resources to assist state and additional agencies in the provision of vocational rehabilitation and other services to individuals with disabilities. It maximizes their employment, independence as individuals, and the integration into the community and labor market.

According to Michele Ford, President & CEO, "We are delighted that Cyndy was selected to serve on this Council. She is a strong advocate for vocational choice for individuals with disabilities."

The Union County Development Workforce Board is comprised of local partnerships of private and public sector participants that provide coordinated planning, policy guidance and oversight for all workforce readiness programs in the community. Cyndy will be a voice for Union County citizens with disabilities as the UCWD Board works toward a more inclusive community.

Director of Vocational Services Daniel Bagnato hosts Demystifying DVR Webinar

October 12th, 2022 Inroads hosted its first webinar on the subject of DVRS assessments and evaluations, which provided valuable insights to support coordinators. Director of Vocational Services, Daniel Bagnato presented on the importance of assessments, possible Assessment outcomes, who benefits and how to provide the right information (Disability Documentation, ISPs, Psych Evaluation).

"As we move ahead as an agency, it is important for us to continue to provide educational tools and resources to New Jersey's diverse group of support coordinators. In the end, everyone benefits by providing better services to our most vulnerable population," stated Dan Bagnato.

Bagnato oversees the work of Inroads counselors and more than 200 students and trainees annually in Inroads Transition and Extended Employment programs. We look forward to providing additional webinars and information sessions later this year.



With over 20 years of experience in the field of Vocational Rehabilitation, Cyndy continues to lead our advocacy movement. Inroads is a proud member of A-Team New Jersey, a state chapter of the national advocacy movement to unite individuals with disabilities and their families in their choice of employment options and services. In 2019, Cyndy helped organize attendance at a rally at the State Capitol, which helped to successfully increase the pay for Direct Service Providers. For these efforts, Cyndy received the ACCESSNJ 2019 Star Award and is currently a nominee for appointment to the State Rehabilitation Commission.



Cyndy Walsh Rintzler pictured with Daniel Bagnato outside of Congressman Donald Payne Jr.'s office in Washington D.C. advocating for employment options and services for our community.

TransitionPLUS

Filling the gap in services for young adults with disabilities ages 21-25+



Thanks to our friends at Fiserv for giving us a tour of their Berkeley Heights, NJ facility. Our school to work transition students learned about the various financial services Fiserv provides around the world. Lisa Jamison, Transition counselor pictured center with students.

While a percentage of School-to-Work Transition students ages 16-21 graduate and advance to employment opportunities, many benefit from additional employment readiness training. So, in 2022, Inroads launched TransitionPLUS, which serves individuals with disabilities ages 21-25+ that are interested in continuing pre-vocational training after high school graduation. TransitionPLUS provides consistent and structured professional support to help participants navigate the challenges that often arise due to their disabilities.

TransitionPLUS gives young adults a place to access assessments, career and independent living skills, self-advocacy training, job coaching, volunteer experience and case management, while building friendships and networking with peers.

In 2022, Inroads TransitionPLUS launched with 5 students and is expected to double in size by the end of 2023.

We are always searching for business owners who would be open and willing to allow our students to learn and grow. If you would like to help us by providing a tour or job shadowing opportunity, please connect with us!





Meet Inroads Newest Talent



April Bonitz

Receptionist/Office Assistant



Cory Brown

Facilities Maintenance Specialist



Emani Brooks

Assistant Workshop Supervisor



Justin Whitehurst

Workshop Material Handler



Kenneth Leeder

Employment Specialist



Kenneth Williams

Assistant Shipping Manager



Linda Galarreta

Transition Counselor



Max Basile

Mental Health Counselor



Kia Williams

Assistant Cafeteria Manager



Shanoya Luckett

Assistant Workshop Supervisor



Talia Eason

Assistant Director of Mental Health, Clinical Services



ANNUAL REPORT 2022

The financial information included in this presentation is preliminary and subject to revision upon completion of the organization's closing and audit process.

Operating Revenue

Service Income	\$4,729,638.00
Rehabilitation Training Fees	\$1,087,410.00
Total Operating Revenue	\$5,817,048.00



Vocational Rehabilitation Services 2022

Number of Evaluations in 2022:	18
Clients Receiving Mental Health Services:	61
Clients Returning to E.E. Services:	184
Number of Students in Transition:	15

Expenditures

Direct Services to Individuals with Disabilities:	\$3,063,795.00
Overhead and General Expenses:	\$1,921,668.00
Administration	\$1,126,530.00

Total Operating Expenditures \$ 6,111,993.00

Net Operating Loss: (\$ 294,945.00)

Community Supports & Fundraising Revenue

Grants/ Contributions:	\$72,912.00
Fundraising:	\$59,688.00
Total:	\$132,600.00
Total Loss 2022:	(\$162,345.00)



INROADS TO EMPLOYMENT

Clients Receiving Employment Services:	70
Number of New Placements:	20
Average Hourly Wage:	\$16.63
Ticket To Work Ticket Holders:	64

We get by with a little help from our friends

Throughout the year, Inroads receives support through smaller fundraisers and donations from community leaders.

Fundraising Totals by Campaign 2022:

- Casino Night Fundraiser:** \$24,000.00
- Family & Friends Annual Drive:** \$10,750.00
- Double Good Popcorn Fundraiser:** \$1,496.00
- Memorial Donations:** \$2,584.00
in remembrance of Mrs. Milo & Matthew Magglio
- Inroads Apparel Fundraiser:** \$3,220.00
- Hot Rods & Harley's:** \$502.00



In 2022, The State of New Jersey provided additional funding through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, allowing us to purchase a Chrysler Voyager LX 2022 6 passenger Mini Van with a wheelchair ramp. This vehicle has been vital in helping our participants with transportation across each of our programs and services.



May 14th, 2022, Inroads attended the 20th annual, Hot Rods and Harleys in Rahway, New Jersey. With the help of a 50/50 raffle, our dedicated staff members sold tickets in the summer sun and raised \$502. Thanks to our friends at Garden State Gear Shifters and our dedicated staff members who volunteered their time. L-R: Gayl Schaad, Inroads Nurse; Maria Melito, DJ Q104.3; Leticia Potash, Inroads Director of Mental Health selling 50/50 raffle tickets.

STAFF PROMOTIONS



Harry Jones | Director of Employment Services

A strong advocate for employment choice for individuals with disabilities, Harry has been working in the field for over a decade. In addition to managing Employment Services for Inroads where Harry and his team provide support in the areas of job search, career planning, job coaching and long term on the job supports, Harry mentors at-risk youth ages 5 – 18.



Michael McCrea | Director of Workshop Operations

Mike has been at Inroads for 7 years as Production Manager where he oversaw all aspects of production for Inroads Contract Packaging and Assembly Services. His dedication, experience and work ethic is applauded as he moves up to oversee the entire Contract Packaging and Assembly Services operation.



Diane Roberts | Manager, Ticket-to-Work Program and Benefits Counseling Services (Community Partner Work Incentives Counselor)

Diane has steadily grown the Social Security Administration Ticket-to-Work program at Inroads serving over 100 participants since its beginnings. Inroads experienced a record year in 2022 due to her hard work and focus while she was also studying and securing the designation required to provide benefits counseling to participants referred from DVRS. To date, Diane has already worked with 14 participants on benefits counseling. In her expanded role, among other things, she will be providing basic benefits counseling training to Inroads counselors as a means to better serve our participants.



Lisa Jamison | Transition Counselor

Lisa began her career at Inroads a little over five years ago as an Employment Specialist where she supported individuals with job search and placement, career planning and job coaching. Now as a Transition Counselor, Lisa is engaging our students both in the classroom and our community.



Denise Hall-Sparrock | Cafeteria Manager

Denise started at Inroads a little over two years ago as Assistant Cafeteria Manager and ServSafe Trainer. She is a competent trainer, manager and knows the food service business well. We look forward to Denise's leadership in the Inroads Cafeteria and the expansion of our Food Service Professional and ServSafe Certificate Training Program.

ON THE FRONT COVER

Top L-R:
Staff members Augusta Vega, Harry Jones, Georgette Castro and Diane Roberts served Thanksgiving lunch to our staff and participants.

Summer Transition students volunteered their time at Groundworks Elizabeth.

Inroads participant, Debby Z. performed an original song at Inroads Summer Picnic.

Frank B. with his sister Anne Barra at Inroads Annual Casino Night Fundraiser.

Bottom L-R:
Inroads Transition Program recognizes graduating students, Joseph and Khurram. Like all Inroads students, Joseph and Khurram have worked extremely hard to achieve their milestones. Helping to celebrate this spectacular event, we were joined by the families of both graduates as well as The Honorable Donald A. Shaw, Mayor of Roselle, Roselle Councilwoman Denise Wilkerson, President/CEO of the Greater Westfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Gene Jannotti, Farm & Garden Director of Groundworks Elizabeth, Jackie Park-Albaum, and Inroads Board Chairperson, Jill Schaffhauser.

Participants Maria F. and Scott M. represented Inroads at our table during Westfield, NJ Fall Street Fair.

The end of an era, Nancy Laporte, Director of Assembly Services retired after 40 years of service. [Read more on page 16.](#)





Message from Inroads President & CEO Michele Ford

After 43 years, I am officially retiring June 30th, 2022. My career has given me more than I could have ever dreamed. I consider myself very lucky to have discovered a passion for helping individuals who face unique challenges, due to a disabling condition, reach their individual goals. I have thoroughly enjoyed my journey from employment specialist, to counselor, to administrator, to CEO. For 40 years, I have been greeted by folks who are happy to be at Inroads, who give their all to grow and learn, and who always look forward to sharing a "hello", "you look nice" and "have a good day." I am overwhelmed by their genuine positivity, given the very difficult challenges many of them face. They manage some difficult cognitive, physical, behavioral and emotional conditions and are still excited to take on the everyday expectations of the workplace.

I have also had the privilege of working alongside some of the most talented counselors, trainers and administrators at Inroads and across the state; colleagues who day after day face the political, economic and bureaucratic difficulties that challenge the not-for-profit provider. Although the salaries are low and the continuation of funding for these programs is tenuous, the individuals who choose vocational rehabilitation as their career are smart, caring, dedicated, mission-driven, people who I could not be more proud to call colleagues and friends.

In my position as CEO, I have had the honor of working with a group of professionals from different fields who volunteer their time and expertise to serve on Inroads Board of Directors. They have been generous with their time, expertise and guidance. I am grateful to each of them. Along the way, I have met hundreds of families who dedicate their lives to their family members who have disabling conditions, learning how to best support them in adulthood. These parents, siblings, aunts and uncles are an inspiration, as they look for ways to create family structures that are supportive and meet everyone's needs and goals. Many of the family members also have given of themselves by volunteering at events to make Inroads programs and services better. Through the many fundraisers and social events we have developed a community of sharing and support. I am so thankful to have met and worked with so many over my tenure.

I truly believe that everyone who can work should. It is something that gives us purpose, challenges us and allows us to contribute to our communities, our families and our own independence and growth. Utilizing real work, which is the foundation of Inroads, as a learning tool to help with skill building, concentration, and vocational exploration is still vital for some. It can become the successful gateway to a competitive job and successful career. I worry for the future of programs like Inroads but I know there are professionals at Inroads and across the nation who understand the vital role vocational training programs play in preparing and providing jobs for some adults with disabilities. I also know that I have done all I can to prepare the professionals to continue the legacy and the mission of the Occupational Center of Union County Inc. or as we are known now, Inroads to Opportunities. I will certainly miss everyone at Inroads and I look forward to hearing of the wonderful accomplishments of the individuals served, and the agency as a whole. I know you will all welcome and support our new CEO Angela Calzone and will assist her in continuing Inroads mission and excellence as a provider.

Michele Ford



— HAPPY — Retirement

August 2022 marked forty years of service for Nancy Laporte. Laporte was with the agency for four decades and retired from Inroads as their Director of Operations, Contract Packaging Services. Laporte is also a Star conference Lifetime achievement award winner.

Nancy dedicated the last 40 years of her working life to ensure that individuals with disabilities have a training facility that prepares them for the competitive assembly and packaging industry. She began her career at Inroads as the Coordinator of Operations, a position essential to keeping all the moving parts in assembly packaging in harmony. She has been responsible for overseeing the agency's time study process which ensured everyone is paid fairly using Department of Labor Wage and Hour regulations. Her dedication, genuine love for the field, and the people, made her the natural choice to step up into the Director position in 2017.

Directing a million-dollar assembly and packaging social enterprise that is involved in training some 400 individuals annually is no easy feat. The pandemic posed some very significant challenges for Inroads. Nancy immediately recognized that the agency must be able to meet their assembly and packaging commitments as well as balance participants schedules to work in person. Nancy and her team continued to work and put out product during the worst of COVID. This was accomplished without any trainees.

Her dedication and commitment were instrumental in Inroads retaining its assembly and packaging customers. Eventually the agency began seeing participants in person. Nancy has also been a strong safety and skill development advocate, pushing for upgrades to assist participants and the agency in moving forward.



Congratulations to Rita Christiansen on her recent retirement from serving as the Inroads Skills Training Coordinator where not only did she manage the Cafeteria at Inroads but also supervised the efforts of the certification skills training programs such as ServSafe Food Handling, OSHA Forklift Operating and Janitorial/Maintenance. Rita was an Inroads employee for over 18 years. We wish her the very best in her next chapter!



"Dolores is the most conscientious, helpful and caring staff member. She has a wonderful work ethic and also takes great pride in her job performance. Dolores' feedback and advice have helped the Operations Department resolve problems with greater ease. Dolores was always willing to help in a pinch with her excellent work skills. We wish her a very Happy Retirement!" Congratulations Dolores! ~ Nancy Laporte

Empowering people with disabilities in their pursuit of employment, independence and life skills.



INROADS
TO
OPPORTUNITIES

Like us!



LinkedIn

301 Cox Street Roselle, New Jersey
www.inroadsto.org | 908-241-7200

Saturday, April 29th

Inroads Fundraiser Outrun Your Fork
474 N Ave E, Westfield, NJ 07090
9:30AM to 1PM

Sign Up: www.inroadsto.org/fundraisers

May 1st-31st

Mental Health Awareness Month
Online Art Sale to Benefit Mental Health Programs at Inroads

Saturday, May 7th

Westfield Spring Fling Street Fair
Come visit Inroads at our table!

Saturday May 13th

Hot Rod's & Harleys
Downtown Rahway, NJ
11am-7pm

Come visit Inroads at our table!

Thursday, June 15th

Graduation Ceremony for School to Work Transition

Wednesday, June 28th

Participant Summer Picnic

Wednesday, August 9th

Annual Trip to the Somerset Patriots Game

Saturday, September 9th

Warinanco Park Union County Human Services Event
Come visit Inroads at our table!

October Date T.B.A.

Annual Casino Night Fundraiser & Awards Ceremony

