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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

Mayor Fulop Expands Recreation & Youth Development Programming for Children with Special Needs under New Director

Carlo’s Bakery Dessert Decorating Events This Thursday to Kickoff New and Improved Inclusive Experiences

JERSEY CITY – Mayor Steven M. Fulop joins the **Department of Recreation & Youth Development** to announce the *expansion of Jersey City’s special needs programming, enhancing inclusive recreational and educational experiences for children of all abilities citywide* with a brand new Special Needs Social Club and upcoming dessert decorating events with **Carlo’s Bakery** - all under new leadership with the hiring of the City’s first Special Needs Recreation Programming Specialist.

The additional adaptive and special needs programming will facilitate the development of recreation skills, socialization, independence, and overall quality of life.

“This December, we’re launching a new Special Needs Social Club to host events every Tuesday that offer socialization and organized activities for Jersey City’s children and young adults with special needs,” said **Mayor Fulop**. “Since expanding the Department of Recreation to include Youth Development, we have been successful in establishing new programs and enhancing existing recreation to be more inclusive of everyone’s abilities and interests, ultimately attracting more children to participate in skill-building experiences that help create a solid foundation for a prosperous future.”

On Thursday, Jersey City will host the first inclusive Holiday Dessert Decorating Class with special guest **Mauro Castano from Carlo’s Bake Shop** to celebrate the expansion. The dessert decorating classes for individuals with special needs will take place on **October 27 and November 4 from 4-6 p.m.** Please see the flyer attached.

The Fulop Administration’s ultimate goal is to provide all youth in Jersey City with the opportunity to play a team sport, participate in a social recreation program, and make physical gains in terms of coordination and endurance. Developmental skills such as the ability to wait, focus, follow



directions, and feel a sense of accomplishment are central to the skills and training in these special needs and adaptive programs.

To support the expansion of special needs recreation programming, Jersey City is proud to introduce Ryan Magee, the first special needs recreation programming specialist, who will coordinate and implement these expanded programs. He brings more than 10 years of experience in the field of special needs and recreational activities.

“The vision of these programs is that no matter who you are, you have a purpose in this life, no matter your disability, and have a right to participate in community activities. With ongoing support and encouragement, the department truly believes anyone can have fun,” added **Ryan Magee, Special Needs Recreation Programming Specialist.**

Current programming tailored to children and teens with special needs includes adaptive sports and social opportunities such as kickball, flag football, and bucket drumming. The department will now offer at least one self-contained special needs program for every season, while incorporating more events, trips, and family-themed programming.



Each Recreation and Youth Development program includes activities to improve participants’ mental and physical wellness. Positive reinforcement from trained staff help boost participants’ confidence as they reach new milestones during each session. All program participants will enjoy low-impact activities aimed at improving strength while reducing obesity and other health issues.

As a whole, the special needs programs seek to provide a source of positive youth development and recreational enjoyment within the community. Participants will use their skills to showcase their growth, creativity, and growing independence.

“We want to make sure all of our youth in Jersey City get to participate in enriching recreational and educational programs where they can simply be themselves while developing social skills, establishing meaningful friendships, and learning new abilities,” said **Lucinda McLaughlin, Director of the Department of Recreation and Youth Development.**

The Department of Recreation and Youth Development’s Special Needs Programs currently include Bucket Drumming every Wednesday from 6:15-7 p.m., Holiday Dessert Decorating Class on October 27 and November 5 from 4-6 p.m., and Friday Night Kickball 5-6:30 p.m. Upcoming programs include the Special Needs Social Club on Tuesdays 5:30-7 p.m. where individuals with disabilities can meet up and engage in activities that will provide a space of their own to socialize and hang out. For more information and to register, please visit jcrec.recdesk.com.

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