



THE NICHOLAS CENTER RENAMES *Essential Food Pantry Program*

Submitted by Lee Anne Vetrone

THE NICHOLAS CENTER (TNC) announced the renaming of its essential food pantry program.

Formerly known as Port Provides and TNC Provides, the initiative will now be called The Nicholas Center Provides. This new name reflects the program's broader mission and commitment to serve families within the communities served by The Nicholas Center: Nassau County and Westchester.

The Nicholas Center has always been a lifeline for many. The new name encapsulates its commitment to not only providing necessary items but also fostering a supportive and inclusive community. "This is a major step forward for our organization and for the families we serve," said Nicole Ferrara, executive director and co-founder at The Nicholas Center. "The demand for our services has grown, and with this change, we are able to reach more people in need. The new name represents our dedication to building a stronger, more connected community where everyone has access to the resources they need."

The program's operations are a direct training experience driven by the autistic young adults served by TNC. Participants are fully engaged in the supply chain by shopping for goods, expertly packaging and preparing items, and personally delivering essential supplies to partners. This action-oriented participation provides invaluable vocational training and significant opportunities for deep community engagement, a vital solution against the 85-percent unemployment rate facing the autistic community.

We are proud to serve numerous partner pantries and organizations in our communities, including the Community Action Council, Good Samaritan House St. Mary's Parish, Littig House Community Center,

Lutheran Church of our Savior, Our Lady of Fatima Outreach, Sid Jacobson JCC Nikki Schwartz Memorial Food Pantry, and St. Peter's of Alcantara Parish Outreach in Long Island; and Hillside Food Outreach and Interfaith Emergency Food Pantry / Pleasantville Food Pantry in Westchester.

TNC also launched a strategic alliance with Taste NY, the "official Eat-Local, Drink-Local not-for-profit program of New York State." This partnership immediately expands the market reach for TNC's hand-crafted artisanal products and spotlights the vocational skills of the autistic young adults TNC serves.

Artisanal products from the TNC Chocolate Lab and TNC Candle Lab are now featured in three key retail locations — Long Island, Capital Region, and Hudson Valley — and soon to be online at Shop Taste!

Lee Anne Vetrone, director of development for TNC, highlighted the program's strategic value. "This unique partnership expands our reach and spotlights the work of autistic individuals at TNC. Each item produced with love and inclusion at TNC Chocolate and Candle Labs offers the opportunity for vocational training and work experience for more than 30 participants each week."

"Partnering with Taste NY is more than just a retail opportunity. It's a validation of the incredible talent and hard work of the autistic young adults we serve," said Stella L. Spanakos, co-founder and PR Specialist, The Nicholas Center. "To see our products alongside New York's finest local goods confirms that our model of inclusion creates economic value. This exposure will help us continue our mission to revolutionize the pathway to independence."

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