

### **Director's Note January 2025**

The school year is moving rapidly along, and it is amazing to see the relationships, the fun, and the growth happening in our classrooms. These are the most essential pieces of what we do, and also the most observable. But there are lots of things going on behind the scenes as well.

For the past year and a half, Jowonio administrators and Board members have been actively engaged in a Strategic Planning process. Through a grant from the Gifford Foundation, we hired Heidi Holtz (Stillwater Consulting) and Natalie Scavone (OMN Consults) to facilitate the process. With their facilitation, and extensive input from staff, families, and community supporters, we took a fearless look at where we have come from, where we are today, and what initiatives we want to prioritize over the next several years.

Through this process, we re-affirmed our commitment to our long-standing mission, to provide model inclusive programs for young children, where diversity is celebrated and all are free to learn and grow. We identified 5 strategic pathways as areas of focus. These are:

**Build Access to Inclusive Education** – feasible ways to expand hours/programs; supporting families with advocacy, and caring for our aging building

**Develop Thought Leadership** - Better define, research, and review effectiveness of our approaches; and expand training and outreach to advance inclusion and our approaches in other settings

**Increase Effective Communication** – Communication and marking of our approaches; Improved internal and family communication; and strengthened Board relations

**Improve Staff Experience** - Enhance compensation and benefits to attract and retain highly qualified staff; optimize staffing structure for improved efficiency and job satisfaction; foster a positive and cohesive culture; and develop leadership pipelines

**Improve Organizational Effectiveness** - Leverage technology and systems; standardize staff operations and expectations; and strengthen people and culture

These are lofty but attainable goals! We are excited about the new energy and possibilities the strategic planning process has created, and look forward to seeing all we will accomplish, and where it will take us. You are an important part of our success, and we truly welcome your questions, concerns, and input.

~Lori





### Summer Program Changes

In order to continuously provide an environment that is conducive to strong relationships and learning and to serve our entire school population, we need to change our program model for the summer of 2025. What you need to know: • The summer program runs from 7/7/25 until 8/15/25

ALL classrooms will operate for 2.5 hours a day (8:45-11:15 or 12:00-2:30)

A wraparound care program is a strong possibility. We are currently working out the details

• Please respond to a survey regarding your summer plans by...

### **Enrollment Policy Update**

Effective for the 2026-2027 School year, Jowonio's enrollment policy will change to be equitable and consistent.

What you need to know:

- Jowonio will limit enrollment to preschool aged children only (turning 3 or 4 years old by December 1st).
- Jowonio will no longer enroll children who turn 5 years old before December 1st.

\*This doesn't mean your child must attend kindergarten! There are many wonderful programs that may be a great stepping stone for your child. We're here to help you brainstorm!

Jowonio regularly revisits and updates policies in response to a wide array of stakeholders and concerns. For example, our summer program changes are in response to a nationwide educator shortage which has made it increasingly challenging to maintain our high quality Special Class Inclusive Setting (SCIS) classroom model during the summer months. The decision to switch to half days for summer was made in consultation with Jowonio's school board, some district CPSE staff and with NYS Department of Education. We understand this change is challenging for families and we assure you that we are working diligently to offer some type of wraparound care.

Historically we have had some families continue to enroll their kindergarten eligible kids at Jowonio. However, this option has never been available to kids who receive special education services as part of our SCIS program. UPK programming also cannot be extended to a child's kindergarten eligible year. Updating this policy creates an equitable enrollment policy allowing for equal access regardless of disability or program status. Additionally, Jowonio is a preschool program. Enrolling only preschool aged students supports our mission of providing a high quality preschool program to three and four year olds.

# Staff SPOTLIGHT



# Nora Rjafillah

Job Title: Floating Substitute

Jowonio employee since: November 2021

Classrooms (current): All!

**Original Hometown:** Morocco (born and raised there)

Languages I speak: Arabic, French and English

<u>Something that or someone who inspires me is...</u> my mum. She is my favorite person and my source of inspiration. We are best friends and I love how she thinks. She's calm, wise and so patient. As a big sister in her family, she took responsibilities way younger than most. She was a working mum but was present in our lives, mine and my brother, and was also taking care of my grandparents. I hope that me and my daughter will have that same connection together and get to enjoy each others company forever.

<u>My favorite hobbies include:</u> My favorite place to go is the beach and my favorite activity is watching the sunset. I'm just amazed how the sun eclipsed in the ocean and the waves settle down. It inspires me and make me teel that there is always another beginning, another day to do better just like the sun. It rises up and then goes down showing us that there is always to morrow to improve ourselves. always tomorrow to improve ourselves.

<u>A quote or motto I love:</u> « Il n'est jamais trop tard pour mieux faire » It's a French quote that means It's never too late to do better. There is always tomorrow, we can work and improve ourselves.

When I was a kid: I wanted to be a lawyer. Then I changed my mind and pursued my dad's career in Finance and Accounting. I had my Master degree in Morocco then came to the US in 2016. And now I'm working as a floating sub. This position gives me more flexibility and less stress. I have time to spend with my daughter and be with her whenever she needs me. And also I have the chance to go visit my parents and family over the summer and get to connect with my roots and origins in Morocco. My position allows me to interact with kids, play with them, be in their world, be creative and set my mind free. I'm so grateful to be part of Jowonio community. You all believed in me and I feeling so lucky to get to work with you every single day. Jowonio is the place to be. Thank you.

# **Family Events**

A tremendous THANK YOU to all of the staff and families who contributed so generously to our Thanksgiving and holiday toy drives! Every donation, small and large, helped us to provide items for 30 families in our Jowonio community.

For many years we have partnered with Nottingham High School's Key Club to pack baskets with Thanksgiving goodies. This year we had a huge group of students who energetically sorted and packed 30 baskets in under an hour. Thank you Nottingham!







Every year we are so fortunate to be part of the Tillie's Touch organization and Broadview Federal Credit Union toy drive programs. They assist us in gathering a huge amount of the requested toys for our families. We couldn't do this drive without them!

Our first Parent Networking and Resource Night was a huge success. Sky Armory hosted and catered a beautiful evening in November that brought together parents and caregivers of children at Jowonio with SCIS programming. We provided access to a great group of local services providers, including Golisano pediatrics, care coordination, estate planning, transition to school-aged special education, testing and evaluation, family and child therapy, and more.

Keep an eye out for flyers about our Transition from CPSE to CSE Workshop on February 5 th !





In recent month's Jowonio's Therapy team has developed our school's cohesive eating philosophy. We are happy to share it with you all here:

# **Eating Philosophy and Mission Statement**

At Jowonio School, we are committed to creating a nurturing and inclusive environment where every child can thrive. Our eating philosophy is rooted in neurodiverse affirming practices and ensuring that each child's unique needs and preferences are respected and celebrated. By following the child's lead, prioritizing their safety and wellbeing, and encouraging the exploration of food in all its diverse forms, we aim to foster a positive and enriching eating experience. At Jowonio:

We Acknowledge that

- every child and family has a unique relationship with food, influenced by their diverse cultural backgrounds
- eating challenges affect the whole family unit
- all parents and caregivers are doing their best and have the best intentions for their children
- eating may not be a pleasurable experience for everyone, but hope that mealtimes can become neutral or positive, nurturing social experiences

We Believe

- in a low pressure/no pressure environment when trying new foods
- there are no "good" or "bad" foods; instead, we focus on what each food does for the body
- food is part of our curriculum, we encourage activities and exposure regularly around new foods
- mealtimes are an opportunity to grow and foster social skills, we support and encourage interactions regularly
- the focus of eating therapy is improving the child's quality of life, not to meet cultural or developmental norms that may not be appropriate for that child

Our Staff

- seek to understand why a child is struggling with eating and explore the underlying factors
- build our practice and make decisions based on what is safe and comfortable for the child
- advocate for unrestricted access to a child's safe foods, believing that with exposure and practice, children may choose to incorporate new foods into their diet
- uphold a child's right to say "no" and eat foods in the order they choose
- incorporate play into the eating experience in order to help children explore new foods in a multisensory way
- provide positive experiences around food, even if that doesn't involve eating them
- know making a mess is part of learning to eat, and we encouraging learning to clean-up
- try to involve kids in all the steps of the meal process; planting, cooking, and preparing food
- purposely empower children to learn how to problem solve foods.





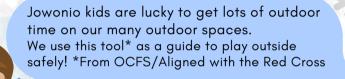
# IT'S HERE: WINTER WEATHER!

Check your Remind app! Any delay or closure for Jowonio will be sent out via the Remind app and posted on regional news station Closure Lists as "Jowonio" or "Jowonio School".

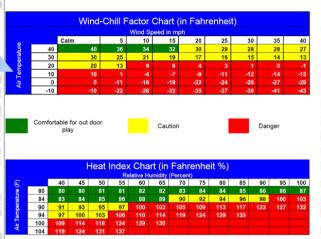
Important Bus Info! Buses cannot transport children into or through a closed school district even if Jowonio itself is open. For example: if your home school district is closed or delayed, bussing to Jowonio will be canceled or delayed accordingly. If Jowonio is open, parents and caregivers are welcome to transport the child to school themselves.

In the event of a 2-hour delay, there will be no school for the Bunny or Kangaroo classrooms.

In the event of a two hour delay on a Wednesday, the school will be open for children from 10:30-12:30, but no bussing will be provided.



### **Child Care Weather Watch**



### Myth: Can You Catch a Cold From the Cold? by Nurse Jamie

Many people believe that cold weather directly causes colds, but this isn't entirely accurate. The common cold is caused by viruses, not by cold temperatures themselves. However, cold weather can contribute to conditions that make us more susceptible to catching a cold.

When the weather turns colder, people tend to spend more time indoors in close proximity to others. This increases the chances of being exposed to cold-causing viruses, such as rhinoviruses, which spread easily through droplets from coughing, sneezing, or touching contaminated surfaces.

Additionally, cold, dry air can dry out the mucous membranes in the nose and throat, making it easier for viruses to enter the body. Moreover, the immune system may not function as efficiently in colder temperatures, which could also make you more vulnerable.

While staying indoors during colder months may seem cozy, it's important to remember the benefits of fresh air. Ventilating your home by opening windows, even for short periods, helps reduce the concentration of airborne viruses and improves overall air quality. Fresh air also promotes better circulation and can support a healthy immune system, reducing the likelihood of getting sick.

To minimize the risk of catching a cold in cold weather, it's important to practice good hygiene, such as washing hands regularly, avoiding close contact with sick individuals, and dressing warmly to protect your body from the elements.

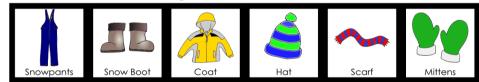
# Speaking of outdoor play...





Helping a dozen or more preschoolers into their snow clothes is no easy feat! Jowonio teachers work hard to support kids develop self help skills and independence for this task along with many others. Classrooms will often read books like, "Froggy Get's Dressed" or "The Jacket I Wear in the Snow", and engage in various activities to learn about getting oneself dressed and ready to play. Sometimes visuals, like the one below, can be a helpful tool that promotes independence and provides instructions for kids. Families may want to try something similar. Reach out to your child's classroom if you need help!

### Getting Dressed for Outside











If all else fails, bring the snow in! Waterfall kids loved playing with watercolor droppers and snow in the classroom on a recent cold day!



# Field Trips Extend Learning!

As part of our general education curriculum, Jowonio kids have been learning about communities and community helpers. Several classrooms were able to see their learning in real life! Field trips extend learning outside Jowonio's 4 walls. Ocean Room kids had an amazing experience at Milton Cat, using tools and checking out big trucks.



Butterfly kids visited the DeWitt Fire station and also checked out a huge working garbage truck.



Sunflower kids visited the Minoa Fire Department thanks to a parent who arranged it!



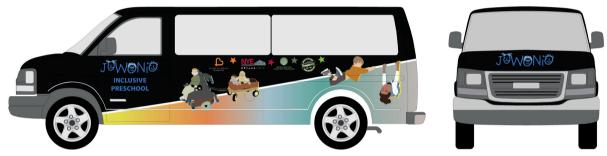


# JOWONIO BOARD CORNER -CELEBRATING PROGRESS & COMMUNITY

### Exciting Updates from the Board

As 2024 comes to a close, we're thrilled to share the fantastic strides Jowonio has made in the past few months:

- Financial Wins Thanks to the generosity of our community and donors, we've secured funding for two new vans to provide safe Field Trips & Family Support services for our students! A big thank you to the Jim and Juli Boeheim Foundation, NYE Automotive Group, the Shirley M. Aubrey Fund at Central New York Community Foundation, the Patrick Clement Fund, Rita Rogers, Image Press, and other contributors for making this possible.
- Strategic Vision in Action The board has officially approved the Jowonio 2025-2028 Strategic Pathways Plan, ensuring we continue to grow and serve our students with excellence.
- **Mark Your Calendars!** Our annual Celebrate Jowonio Silent Auction & Raffle Fundraiser is set for April 25, 2025! Stay tuned for more details—we can't wait to celebrate with you.





#### Friends of Jowonio Board of Directors

Mike Rey, President Jason Benedict Jim D'Aloisio Nicole Schuster Kevin Tampone Craig Holava, Facilities Director Jen Petrie, Assistant Director Lori Saile, Director

### **Contact the Board**

board.member@jowonio.org To reach Mike Rey: board.president@jowonio.org

A huge thank you to our board members, staff, families, and community partners for your ongoing support. We're looking forward to a bright 2025! With gratitude, The Jowonio Board of Directors

### Interested in joining the Board?

Send an email to let us know!

# Join us in building a brighter future

Monthly or annual donations provide a sustainable way to support our mission and grow the educational experience.

Donations can be made in various ways:

- Online: Visit our website at <u>www.jowonio.org</u> and click on the "Culture of Giving" page to make a secure online contribution or set up automatic donations.
- Check: please make checks payable to "Jowonio School" and mail them to, or drop them off at, 3049 East Genesee Street, Syracuse, New York 13224

**Employer Matching Programs:** Many employers offer matching gift programs to support employees' philanthropic efforts. Matching donations double the impact of your contribution. To participate:

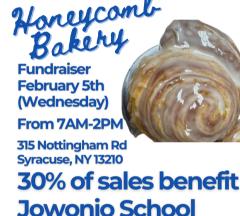
• Contact HR: Reach out to your Human Resources department about your company's matching gift program and fill out the necessary forms.

United Way Way Of Central New York



**Birthday Fundraisers:** families and students have created beautiful birthday traditions where friends and family are asked to provide donations to Jowonio School in honor of a birthday. For every donation made in honor of your birthday or your child's birthday, we send a thank you note to those who donate, designed with love.







### TO PARENTS & FRIENDS

Thank you for donating to Jowonio's Annual Appeal. The Appeal funds operating expenses and raises for our staff every year.

We are grateful to Eastwood Rotary Club for awarding \$3,500 for crucial laptop upgrades for staff; the **Rotary Club of Syracuse** for awarding \$2,240 towards a new automated external defibrillator (AED) to keep our kids and staff safe; to **the Song & Dance** for holding a \$1,872 benefit for Jowonio!

Jowonio is thankful for parents and friends who hold fundraisers, and for all the families who joined us as volunteers for the Westcott Street Cultural Festival and Plowshares Crafts Festival in the fall.

Join us for Jowonio's signature annual fundraiser, Celebrate Jowonio— April 25th 6-9PM, a night of delicious food, live music, friendship, and an exciting Silent Auction and raffle!

**You can make a difference!** Sponsorships and raffle items are vital to the success of this event and directly support Jowonio's mission. Consider contributing today and help us make this year's celebration unforgettable!

Contact Hanah at 315-445-4010 x203 or growejowonio.org

## SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE



### SUPPORT JOWONIO SCHOOL'S INCLUSIVE EDUCATION MISSION AT OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER



6PM-9PM 325 Waring Road, Syracuse

Dear friend of Jowonio,

Join us for Celebrate Jowonio, our annual fundraiser. Funds raised support Jowonio's inclusive classrooms and therapy programs, vital to local children and families.

### Become a 2025 sponsor!

There are multiple tiers of sponsorship levels with the highest being the **Presenting Sponsor**. Presenting sponsorship demonstrates your business's leadership and commitment to creating a more inclusive community, while giving your brand prominent visibility at Celebrate Jowonio. This premier partnership highlights your role as a champion of special education and an essential supporter of the 156 children and families we serve.

> Fill out the sponsorship form and return to: Jowonio School, 3049 East Genesee Street Syracuse, NY 13224 or by email: kristen.antonacci@jowonio.org Email program ads and logos by 4/15. Questions? Call 315-445-4010 x203

I/We will sponsor CELEBRATE JOWONIO 2025 at the following level:

### Presenting Sponsor: \$5,000

1 Table (8 tickets) with individual gifts at Celebrate Jowonio and foursome at 2025 Jowonio Open Golf Tournament. Program Cover Ad. Name & Logo on Event Invitation, Signage & Social Media. Shout out at event. 25 Tickets donated to teachers.

### Friend Sponsor: \$3,000

1 Table (8 tickets) at Celebrate Jowonio and foursome at 2025 Jowonio Open Golf Tournament. Two Full Page Program Ads. Shout out at event. Name & Logo on Event Signage & Social Media. 20 Tickets donated to teachers.

### \_Sweet Spot Sponsor: \$2,000

1 Table (8 tickets) at Celebrate Jowonio. Two Full Page Program Ads. Name & Logo on Event Signage & Social Media. **NEW this year**- naming on "Sweet Spot" dessert lounge. Shout out at event. 10 Tickets donated to teachers.

### \_Front Row Sponsor: \$1,500

1 Table (8 tickets) **NEW this year**- front row seats for the live music of **the Allen Fellows Project**! Full Page Program Ad. Name & Logo on Event Signage & Stage Banner, Social Media. Shout out at event. 10 Tickets donated to teachers.

### \_Classroom Sponsor: \$1,000

In support of our 11 classrooms. Reserved Table for 10 classroom parents to attend Celebrate Jowonio. Full Page Program Ad. Logo on Welcome Poster & Social Media.

I/We are **unable to sponsor** CELEBRATE JOWONIO 2025, but would like to support Jowonio with the purchase of a Program Ad or Sponsor a Family:

\_\_\_\_Full Page Program Ad: \$500, 5" x 7" size

\_\_\_\_Half Page Program Ad: \$250, 4" x 5" size

\_\_\_\_Dedication Program Ad: \$50, 2" x 3" size

\_\_\_\_\_Sponsor a Jowonio Family to attend event: \$100

	Full Page Ad
Business Name:	
Contact Name:	
Email:	
Phone: ()	
Address:	
City/State/Zip:	
Sponsor Level:	
Enclosed is a check made payable to Jowonio Schoo	
or Charge this credit card: VISA/Mastercard/AMEX	
Card #	
EXP: Security Code: Name on card:	

Mail to: Jowonio School, 3049 East Genesee Street, Syracuse, NY 13224 or by email: kristen.antonacci@jowonio.org

	Celebrate JOWONIO
•>	
S	UPPORT JOWONIO SCHOOL'S INCLUSIVE EDUCATION MISSION AT OUR ANNUAL FUNDRAISER GREAT FOOD AND LIVE MUSIC
	SILENT AUCTION & RAFFLE
•>	
	APRIL 25, 2025
	6PM-9PM 325 WARING ROAD, SYRACUSE
	Phone ()
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I/We will donate	the following item(s) for the Celebrate Jowonio Silent Auction/Raffle by 4/1/25
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### IN MEMORY OF



#### Dr. Jerome Renee Wilett

Dr. Jerome Rene Wilett, 89, passed away peacefully on October 21, 2024, in Gainesville, FL. He is survived by his daughter, Nicole Wilett, granddaughters Tessa and Eliza, and is preceded in death by his beloved son, Marc Wilett. A tireless advocate for the rights of people with disabilities and their families, he supported Syracuse's Jowonio School and the Cerebral Palsy Center among other causes. Donations in his memory can be made to the Marc-Wilett-Zan Currin Fund for students with physical needs at Jowonio School.



Eleanor Louise Warren, age 15, passed away peacefully on December 5, 2024, after a life filled with love, laughter, and resilience. Diagnosed with Pitt-Hopkins Syndrome, she cherished her time at Syracuse's inclusive schools, including Jowonio, where she thrived with the support of caring teachers and therapists. Eleanor's sunny disposition and sass brought joy to all who knew her, and she adored Bollywood dance numbers, snuggling with her pets, and sharing laughs with her sister, Linnea. Donations can be made to Jowonio School's unrestricted fund, in memory of Eleanor and in honor of her beloved adaptive ballet teacher and occupational therapist, Lisa Neville.



### Albert F. Antonini

Albert F. Antonini passed away peacefully on January 1, 2025, at Francis House, surrounded by his loving family. A champion for children, Albert and Susan donated the Albert F. & Susan Antonini Sensory Room and Antonini Spinner to Jowonio School, enriching the learning environment and providing joy for our students. The Albert F. & Susan Antonini Fund for adaptive equipment continues to support the innovative access to education for all students that makes Jowonio exceptional. Mr. Antonini's legacy of generosity and dedication to community lives on through the countless lives he touched.

	) 315-445-4010 x 203	\$
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- (a) grow@jowonio.org
- www.jowonio.org
- 3049 E. Genesee Street Syracuse, NY 13224

### **Dedicated Funds**

ALBERT F. & SUSAN ANTONINI FUND HEROS FUND BECCA'S DRAGONFLY FUND MARC WILETT-ZAN CURRIN FUND

### **Scholarship Funds**

BROOKS FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP ELLEN BARNES SCHOLARSHIP FUND JEANINE M. STABLES FUND MICHELE TORRISI SCHOLARSHIP FUND

### Jowonio School Agency Fund

Our Agency Fund is designed to sustain Jowonio for the next 55 years. The fund is housed at Central New York Community Foundation.

Donations can be made payable to: CNY Community Foundation c/o Jowonio School Agency Fund 431 East Fayette Street, Suite 100 Syracuse, NY 13202