Orleans/Niagara BOCES Announces Its Employees of the Year

The school year at Orleans/Niagara BOCES started on a great note with the announcement of its 2016-2017 Employees of the Year. District Superintendent, Dr. Clark Godshall, played a movie at opening day where he surprised the winning employees in each category: administration, clerical, continuing education, custodian/maintenance, staff specialist, substitute, teacher and teacher aide to tell them that they had been chosen by their peers for the honor and awarded them a plaque.

The Administrator of the Year was Ann Logel, the Coordinator at the North Tonawanda Learning Center. Ms. Logel started at Orleans/Niagara BOCES in 1996 as a Cosmetology teacher and has been a special education administrator since 2004. “My favorite part of my job is watching staff work with students every day. I am very thankful I have a professional staff to work with and good relationships with our districts and parents. It makes for a great working environment.”

The Clerical Person of the Year was Janet Fitch, who has been at BOCES for 35 years. She has worked at many different special education sites during her years at BOCES. “I was at Project SASH for 25 years at Niagara East, Good Shepard, Meadow Elementary in North Tonawanda and the North Tonawanda Learning Center. Currently work at the Newfane Learning Center.” She says her favorite part of the job is seeing the kids every day and the variety of jobs that she does. “I’ve worked with amazing people throughout the years. Special education has a caring and compassionate staff. I also enjoy the interaction with the other BOCES offices and the school districts. It is definitely an honor to receive this award and I’d like to thank those who nominated me. My sincere gratitude to all my coworkers, both past and present, for all that they have done and continue to do every day.”

Stephanie Bevacqua has been named the Continuing Education Employee of the Year. She has been a teacher since 2009. “My favorite part of my job is getting former high school dropouts to recommit to their education. It’s extremely rewarding to help a student transition from the label “dropout” to the label “graduate.” My students often tell me that no one has ever believed in them before, no one “cared”. Now that they know I care, they are inspired to move forward, be it onto college, or a training program or even a promotion at their jobs.” She says she was shocked when she was named an employee of the year. “Continuing education has never had an employee of the year before, so I was astonished when Dr. Godshall approached me over the summer to give me the award. I am truly humbled by this honor, but I have to stress that I am simply part of a great team. We all work hard to give second chances to students.”

Colleen Bronschidle was recognized as the Custodian/Maintenance Person of the Year. She has been working with BOCES for eight years. She started running the kitchen at the Niagara Academy for five years, worked as a teacher aide for two and a half years and also worked as a night cleaner for two hours every day. She eventually switched to a full time cleaner. She says the part she likes best about her job is the people at the Niagara Academy. “They have become like family and I enjoy every part of my day at work. I would not want to be working anywhere else. I have done my best as much as I could, and I will try and learn as much as I can at the job. I am always at work and very rarely miss a day. I have overcome any challenges the job has offered me and succeed at the best of my abilities.” She says the award has been a great honor to her. “I have worked long and hard at this establishment and I appreciate being noticed and liked by my coworkers. I am blessed to have been able to show my abilities and work ethics. My parents did not believe in slackers, you have to work for what you want.”

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**Computer Technology Program Starts from Scratch in Computer Lab**

Students in Paul Herrmann’s class at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center spent their second week in class building their own computers. “We build brand-new computer kits every single year. This year it’s a new AMD processor with EVGA power supply SSD drive and an ASUS motherboard,” says Mr. Herrmann. He compares the day they build the computers to Christmas morning. “Everyone loves it. They like being part of it. They all get a chance to do the hands-on work and become very acclimated to what is a computer, how do you put it together, how does it become part of our computer lab. They are very proud of the work they do and it gives them a sense of ownership.”

Many of the students expressed how much they enjoy being part of the Computer Technology program. Alexandra Oleksy, a senior from Royalton Hartland, says she loves the program. “Honestly, the people here are great, the class is great. It is a nice escape from school. I hope to use what I learn here and continue on in college. I would like to get a job to help put me through school more than they used to, dressing properly for the workplace, using proper language, etc. Another part of the job that I really enjoy is watching the students grow and continue on in college.”

Ed Wallace’s Diesel Technology class recently welcomed two guest speakers from Anderson Equipment Company to the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center.

Jerry Skiff (Director of Service) and Larry Beach (WNY General Manager of Product Support) gave a presentation to the students in the senior and junior classes about their company. Anderson is a distributor of earth moving and mobile equipment for the construction, mining, road building and specialty material handling industries. They sell, rent and service equipment and have been in business since 1935. They have 18 full service locations across Pennsylvania, New York, West Virginia, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont.

The speakers talked about the kind of work the company does, the cost of repairs they provide and the owners’ commitment to keeping a safe and clean work environment and their loyalty to their staff. Mr. Wallace said his students were shocked at the variety of repair work. “Many of them were very surprised to see the different kinds of machinery and the cost associated with repairs. They were almost overwhelmed with the amount of technician training and the million dollars in investment in their facilities. I think hearing that a hydraulic shear repair is $15,000 or a complete wheel loader rebuild is $500,000 made them realize how much this equipment costs to own or repair.”

Mr. Wallace says he is very grateful for the time that Mr. Skiff and Mr. Beach spent with his students. “Speakers like this are absolutely a necessity because they help build a bridge between education and industry employment. These gentlemen talked about potential careers, but more importantly got the students thinking about their own educational path. Having business representatives come in and talk to students is both meaningful and essential to our students’ educational development.”

**Employees of the Year Continued from page 1**

I would like to thank everyone at the BOCES and Niagara Academy sites for giving me the chance.”

Staff Specialist of the Year is Dave Perry, a Computer Specialist in the Technology Department. He has been at BOCES for 16 years. “My favorite part of the job is my interaction in the classroom with staff and students and being able to travel to all the different sites to help resolve issues.” He says he really likes the people in his department and thinks they work well together as a team. “Receiving this is a real honor because you are nominated by your peers, and that someone took the time to write a letter on my behalf means a lot to me.”

Substitute of the Year is Frank Riffrogia. He is a retired Blind and Partially Sighted teacher at BOCES and says he loves still being part of the organization. “I am very honored. Working at BOCES was some of the best years of my life.”

Teacher of the Year was Eric Farrell. Mr. Farrell teaches Welding at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center. He has been at BOCES for 14 years. “I was very fortunate to start this job when I was 22 years old. I feel so very lucky that they took a chance on me as such a young guy. My favorite part of the job is when you see success. Not all of our successes come in the career area we teach, some of those successes can be as simple as getting a student to come to school more than they used to, dressing properly for the workplace, using proper language, etc. Another part of the job that I really enjoy is watching the students grow over the two years that we have them. Some of the students come into the welding shop knowing little information and actually end up very successful in this career path later in life.” He says he is very honored to be named the Teacher of the Year. “I realize that this award is something that has to go to one individual, but I really feel as though this is something we earned as a building. I would not be the teacher I am today without the amazing teachers and staff that I work next to daily.”

Sharon Librera was named the Teacher Aide of the Year. Sharon works at Orleans Learning Center that houses special education classes. She has worked for BOCES since 2004. “My favorite part of this job is being with the kids! They can be tough at times, but hilarious other times. I really care about them. I was very shocked, happy and grateful for winning this award.”
Adult Literacy Program Offers Second Chance to Many

Adult Literacy teacher Stephanie Bevacqua says her door is always open to her students at the 60th Street School’s Continuing Education Center in Niagara Falls. Mrs. Bevacqua teaches Adult Basic Education (ABE)/High School Equivalency (HSE) for Orleans/Niagara BOCES. She says that thanks to the great partnership BOCES and the Niagara Falls School District have, she can help students who are ready to transition out of high school to stay in school and prepare them for the TASC (Test Assessing Secondary Completion) exam. That exam has replaced the GED in New York State to become the primary pathway to a high school equivalency diploma.

Students take the TABE (Test for Adult Basic Education) to determine the adult learner’s skill levels and aptitudes in reading, math and English. “We do this as an introduction to get into the program,” explains Mrs. Bevacqua. “All of my students are at different levels and I try to incorporate everyone, so they can do stuff at their own level. I am here to encourage them. I tell them I will be your mom, I will support you and I will even share my lunch with you. I am an open book and they can talk to me about anything. I try to get here before class if any of them just need to talk to someone about what is going on in their lives. I want them to be a better student and a better person. I tell them this is their path now and I will help them take it.”

Mrs. Bevacqua was recently named the Continuing Education Employee of the Year at Orleans/Niagara BOCES. Adult Literacy Coordinator, Susan Diemert says, “Stephanie is an incredible teacher. She engages the youth in her program. You have to be a certain type of teacher to work with this population. She can relate to them and is just wonderful with those students.”

Some students stay in her program for years and some of them just need a little push or testing strategies and they are gone.

Career and Tech Ed Students Participate in WNY Career Days

Recently seniors in many of the classes at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center spent a day at the Western New Career Days. The event was held at the Operating Engineers Union Hall in Lakeview, New York.

The students did many hands-on activities like bricklaying, concrete pouring and welding. “The students also had a chance to talk to representatives from prospective employment opportunities and future colleges,” says Diesel Tech teacher Wes Blidy. “They had a great time and also had a chance to drive bulldozers, backhoes, excavators, skid steers, and operate a man lift and a crane. It was very rewarding for our students to see that there are many job opportunities in the construction industry.”

Diezel Tech Program students: Austin Ash (North Tonawanda), Louis Chiavetta (Starpoint), Ross Eracitano (Niagara Wheatfield), Cooper Fournier (Wilson), Cheyanna Gentry (Niagara Wheatfield), Wyatt Janese (Niagara Wheatfield), Zach Litwinski (Niagara Wheatfield), Mike Martin (Wilson), Sean O’Brien (Starpoint), Makayla Rubin (Niagara Falls), Todd St. Onge (Starpoint), Robert Wilcox (Wilson) and Vinny Wisniewski (Starpoint).
Conservation Students Help Collect Data for Database

Students in Paul Dewey's Conservation program recently conducted water quality tests at Wilson Tuscaraora State Park as part of Green Rivers and Conservation Programs.

The Niagara Career and Technical Education Center students collected data on multiple water quality parameters. The data collected is used in a national water quality database. Niagara County Soil and Water District specialist Scott Collins worked with the students. He is a graduate from the Conservation Program.

Orleans Career and Tech Ed Center Annual Holiday Craft Show is Huge Success

The Orleans Career and Technical Education Center held its annual SkillsUSA Craft Show on Saturday, November 18th.

There were over 50 vendors at the Center. There was a $2 donation at the door to help SkillsUSA students fund their activities and competitions throughout the year.

Many of the classes made items to sell or helped out with offering their services to help the event run smoothly.

Newfane Learning Center Celebrates Thanksgiving

The students and staff at the Orleans/Niagara BOCES’ Newfane Learning Center celebrated the Thanksgiving holiday together. Staff members volunteered to make the turkeys and serve at the buffet line. Each class made a dish to share.
Niagara Career and Tech Ed Center Introduces New Building Maintenance and Management Program

It is not unusual for students to have a hard time picking a career and technical education class when they come to the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center. Recently a new program has started that incorporates heating, cooling, electrical, masonry and building trades. It is called Building Maintenance and Management and is taught by Building Trades teacher, Anthony Molinaro and HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) teacher Nick DiFelice.

“We are piloting the program through the ECC (Erie Community College) program Building Management and Maintenance,” explains Mr. Molinaro. “We have formed a partnership with Erie Community College because of their relationship with NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research) which offers curriculum and certification in more than 70 craft areas.”

The NCCER program has standardized construction and maintenance curriculum and assessments with portable credentials that will allow organizations and companies to track the qualifications of their craft professionals and/or check the qualifications of possible new hires. “We will teach the program and send the grades and NCCER will do the paperwork and send our students cards that they can use anywhere in the United States,” says Mr. DiFelice.

As far as the actual program itself, Mr. Molinaro and Mr. DiFelice say it grew out of the desire for the students to be a jack or jill of all trades. “We feel with a more complete knowledge on how a structure is designed the students can handle much more of the job,” says Mr. DiFelice. “If you send out a tech to a home and they have to move a thermostat they usually have to get another contractor involved say to patch the drywall. Instead of that, they can do it themselves because they understand what is in that wall as far as structure and electrical.” Mr. Molinaro adds, “On the construction side, you have a builder who knows how to build a room, but we want them to understand the mechanics of what needs to be in that room as far as electric and HVAC. It all comes together to make a system work. I am still teaching building trades, but they will get more bang for their buck. Why would you not want to understand how it all works and be able to do some, if not all of it yourself? It will make our students more marketable and they will be able to ask for more money since they are not bringing in outside help.”

Mr. Molinaro and Mr. DiFelice say they are getting a lot of great feedback. “Business owners are saying that this is what they need. Parents love the idea of their children being exposed to all aspects of construction,” says Mr. DiFelice. “The students I teach at our Continuing Ed program say they wish they had access to something like this when they were in high school.” “Bottom line is that we want our students to be well-rounded and succeed whether they use this as a career or helping to maintain their own home,” says Mr. Molinaro. “I would say if a student doesn’t know what field they want to go into they don’t have to pick one, they can choose this and learn how to do it all.”

For more information on the Building Maintenance and Management program go to the Orleans/Niagara BOCES website at www.onboces.org.
SkillsUSA Officers from the Niagara and Orleans Career and Technical Education Centers recently attended a Fall Leadership Conference in Albany. The students were trained in leadership, community service and team building activities.

The students enjoyed working with other students from across the state and learning new skills to share with other SkillsUSA members at their schools.

Dessert Café chef Autumn Kuhn recently stopped into James Atzrott’s Culinary Arts class at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center to talk sweets and careers with his students.

She stressed to the class how important it is in this field to have a good work ethic and then showed off some amazing desserts that she makes at the restaurant.

It was a yummy and informative lesson for the students!
Fashion Design/Interior Decorating Students Inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright

Fashion Design/Interior Decorating teacher Debra Wilczak is fortunate enough to have a historical landmark practically in the backyard of the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center.

Recently, she took her students to the famed Darwin D. Martin House in downtown Buffalo to study organic design and architecture. “It was a great opportunity for my students,” she said. “This is one of Frank Lloyd Wright’s Prairie houses.”

The Darwin D. Martin House is a prime example of the Prairie House ideal, with strong lines and planes, deeply overhanging eaves, a central hearth, prominent foundation and a sheltering, cantilevered roof. Mrs. Wilczak says her students were particularly impressed with the 394 examples of art glass windows, which include the famed “Tree of Life” window.

BOCES Holds Youth Career, College and Occupational Trades Fair

Erie 1 BOCES, Orleans/Niagara BOCES, ACCES-VR, WNY Employment Consortium and Parent Network of WNY banded together to sponsor the annual Youth Career, College and Occupational Trades Fair.

Over 100 special education junior and senior high school students from Niagara and Orleans Counties attended the event. Over 20 employers and training programs were present and spoke to students about the requirements of their respective fields, the diversity of careers within each business and discussed any potential future jobs for which they may be hiring.

Students had an opportunity to meet with potential local employers and listen to presentations about self-awareness and employer expectations. In addition, ACCES-VR counselors reviewed resumes and gave resume tips to students.

Culinary Arts Students Provide Refreshments for Niagara Hospice’s Day of Remembrance

The Culinary Arts students at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center recently lent a helping hand to Niagara Hospice. Teacher Bob Ihle and his students made and donated cookies to the Hospice House in Lockport for their Day of Remembrance Celebration.

The celebration is held twice a year and is a private ceremony for families whose family member passed away while in Niagara Hospice care. Tricia Degan, the Director of Marketing and Public Relations, says it is a special ceremony to celebrate the life of the families’ loved ones. “We have a beautiful pictorial slideshow and then they can visit with the staff and nurses who took care of them. We have a reception afterwards with coffee and cookies. Mr. Ihle and his students have always been very generous with providing refreshments for our events and have offered to help us out at our Light-a-Life ceremony on December 7th as well. We are always appreciative of their generosity.”
Kenworth Assists Diesel Technology Class in Making Big Impression

The Niagara Career and Technical Education Center had an eye catcher for their open house. Diesel Technology teacher, Wes Blydy, and his students were excited when Kenworth of Buffalo lent them a 2016 Kenworth W900 to put on display for their visitors. “My students and the community that came into the classroom were so impressed,” said Mr. Blydy. “The technology that is incorporated into these new big rigs is incredible. It even has a touch screen display for driver information.”

Orleans Learning Center Focuses on Peer Teaching

Students in Mrs. Kim Wiley’s and Mrs. Theresa Clause’s classes at the Orleans Learning Center have been having a classmate help them out with learning some new tech skills. Noel Mireles has been showing students how to use iPads, get on the internet and use Apps.

The teachers think it’s great that Noel has stepped up to do some peer teaching.

Locks of Love

Aiden Haley from Royalton Hartland recently donated 10 inches of his hair to Locks of Love.

What an awesome thing to do!

Juniors: Jared Barry (Wilson), Jarod Bryk (Lew-Port), Tony Conklin (Niagara Wheatfield), Devin Donner (Starpoint), Peter Fortino (Lew-Port), Chris Fey (Niagara Falls), Tobey Harvey (Starpoint), Steve Imerese (Lew-Port), Richard Jackman (Niagara Wheatfield), Greg Mayday (Niagara Wheatfield), Brett Mayer (North Tonawanda), Jacob Myers (North Tonawanda), Emma Nugent (Wilson), James Pula (Niagara Falls), Max Shocknesse (Lew-Port), Cameron Wollaber (Wilson) and Austin Zwelling (Niagara Wheatfield).

Roy Hart Learning Center Celebrates Halloween Week

Monsters, superheroes and wild animals walked the halls of the Roy Hart Learning Center for their Halloween Week.

The students had fun with ghoulish activities like mummy wrapping the teachers, having a scarecrow dress-up day that included teachers reading scary stories and the week ended with a costume parade.

A fun and spooky time was had by all!

Ms. Christa Schultz’s class has fun wrapping their teacher like a mummy. Ms. Schultz, Mrs. Sandra Falby (teacher aide), Tatyana Covington, Mikayla Sheppard, Patrick Hicks, Jacob Litchard and Melanie Towery.

Cosmetology student Kia’Zsa Huston (Lockport).

Noel Mireles shows Owen Weidenboerner how to use an iPad.
Customs and Border Protection Talk Careers with Students

Students in the Security and Law Enforcement and Certified Personal Trainer programs recently had guest speakers from Customs and Border Protection to talk about their careers and working with K9 Kay, who is a detector dog.

K9 Officer David Ambrosia and Officer Kenneth Allore, who are assigned to the Port of Buffalo, talked to the students at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center about Homeland Security and the fight against terrorism and human and drug trafficking. Officer Ambrosia told the students that he has been an officer for ten years and worked with Kay for four years. Canine officers agree to the additional responsibility of training and caring for their police K9s. Positions working with a K9 are highly coveted in law enforcement. “I worked very hard to get this cool job. I would advise you to learn about this job by interviewing people about it, working hard, and making yourself likeable.” Qualities of K9 officers are being approachable and friendly because they receive more attention from the public and have to interact with a wide variety of people.

Officer Ambrosia had to undergo additional and extensive training to prepare for working with a K9. He told the classes that his partner Kay cost $75,000. “She is a Dutch Shepherd from the Netherlands and even has her own passport. She lives and travels with me.” “She is six and a half years old and still has a lot of life in her. But when she is ready to retire, I get to keep her.”

Officer Allore talked about searching vehicles and thanks to Kay’s “stereo” nose they are able to find narcotics and humans rather easily. “She has an amazing ability to smell each component in any item. She helps us search vehicles, freight and people. You would be amazed at how clever people are trying to hide things when they go across the border, but nothing gets past her.”

The officers then went outside and demonstrated on a car and some boxes how Kay sniffs out drugs and human beings. The students were fascinated by how quickly she was able to find the hidden items, along with Officer Allore, who was hiding in the trunk, and how well trained she is. “As always, I am very grateful when law enforcement professionals are willing to give of their time to help our students learn about different careers,” says Steve Browning, Security and Law Enforcement teacher.

Culinary Arts Students Check Out Whole Foods and Becker Farms

Students from the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center’s Culinary Arts Program spent a day on a very educational fieldtrip.

The class started their day at the new Whole Foods Market in Amherst and saw firsthand how the supermarket business is changing. They learned about organic foods, watched a butcher cut meat and toured the kitchen at the facility. Store leader, Mark Wilkins, took the students throughout the store so that they could sample the various products it offers. “The Whole Foods team was great about giving the students an education on organic foods from all over the world,” says teacher Robert Ihle.

The students then proceeded on to Becker Farms in Niagara County and learned about the production of growing apples and pumpkins and what products could be made from them. “We had a fantastic day,” says Mr. Ihle.

On the ladder Kevin Burns (Lewiston-Porter), Tyler Maggard (Lewiston-Porter) and Shiloh Scott (Niagara Wheatfield).

Royalton Hartland Learning Center Celebrates Thanksgiving

The students and staff at the Royalton Hartland Learning Center recently put on a feast for themselves and invited guests for the Thanksgiving holiday. The teachers prepared the turkeys and each class made a side to share.

It was a great way to start the holiday week and many thanks were given for all the people in their lives.

Teacher Aide Deb Sammarco, teacher Wende Nicosia, students Chloe Taughrin, Desiree, Alex Miskho and Alex Miller.
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand Introduces Legislation to Promote CTE Education

Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Senator Todd Young (R-IN) have made it their mission to help students get career and technical education skills. They introduced the “21st Century Strengthening On Programs that Cultivate Learning Approaches for Successful Students Act” and the bipartisan House version of the legislation was introduced by Representatives Tim Ryan (D-OH), Mark Takano (D-CA), and Susan Brooks (R-IN). The legislation would give federal funding for equipment to career and technical education programs and give teachers more training on how to use the equipment.

Statistics show that through 2025, an estimated two million manufacturing jobs could go unfilled because of a lack of skilled workers. In a statement, Senator Gillibrand said, “Technologies like 3D printers, laser cutters and computerized machine tools are transforming American manufacturing and increasing the need for specialized training for manufacturing jobs. To prepare our students with the skills needed for high-tech jobs, this legislation would amend the Perkins Career and Technical Education (CTE) Act to give greater priority to funding for maker education, makerspaces and training for teachers in the application of maker education.”

“Many businesses and manufacturers are struggling to find qualified employees,” she said while addressing staff, students and guests at Charles D’Amico High School in Albion recently. “This would give students the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to get good paying jobs in the high-tech manufacturing sector.” She continued, “These jobs are very important and we rely on them every day, whether it’s an engineering job, whether it’s to help to repair a hurricane or whether it’s a high-tech manufacturing job here in Western New York.”

David Heminway graduated from the Orleans/Niagara BOCES’ Machine Tool program in 1976 and was on hand for the press conference. He went to work for Kodak after graduation and then worked for the NY Canal Corporation for the past 23 years and is currently supervisor of the skilled trades for the canal. “I really hope this opens people’s eyes up about what career and technical education can do for students. Today’s workforce is very competitive and demanding and this will give students an advantage when they leave high school or go on to college.”

The career and technical education programs at the Orleans/Niagara BOCES have grown ten percent in the past five years with students graduating with a 98 percent rate says their Career and Technical Education Director, Joseph Steinmetz. “I am grateful to Senator Gillibrand for personally delivering this good news and I want to thank her for supporting career and technical education. I am very excited about the federal support for our programs, to expand CTE and to give us the opportunities to be competitive. For the jobs of the future we really need the support, because technology is always changing and technology is very expensive. If you look at students who are in the 5th and 6th grade, those jobs aren’t even invented yet. We have to make sure we have the technology to keep students up to date in the training and skills they need so they can get good paying jobs. The jobs of the future are going to be skilled trades.” He added that BOCES spends about $150,000 to $200,000 a year to provide students with the latest technology.

“Our students should be able to take many different paths in order to get a good job and earn a good salary,” says Senator Gillibrand. “This bill would help equip more students with the skills they need to get on a path toward good-paying high-tech jobs when they graduate high school.”

O/N BOCES Adult Literacy Program Graduates 42

Orleans/Niagara BOCES’ Adult Literacy Program celebrated 42 students at their fall graduation. The students, who are from Orleans and Niagara Counties, received their high school equivalency diploma.

The commencement ceremony was held at the Lockport Literacy Zone Welcome Center and the guest speaker was David Wohleben, 4th Ward Alderman, who spoke about the importance of lifelong learning. New York Senator, Robert Ort handed out Certificates of Achievement to the graduates as their families and loved ones cheered them on.

All of the graduates enrolled in the TASC preparation classes through Orleans/Niagara BOCES to prepare for the exam. Susan Diemert, Literacy Specialist, stated, “We are so proud of all of our graduates. We know how much hard work goes into the preparing for the exam and passing it. We hope having the diploma will open many doors for each graduate.”

Orleans/Niagara BOCES has classrooms throughout the two counties which specializes in adult education focusing on the High School Equivalency Preparation, Job Readiness Training, Career Preparation, basic skills remediation and English as a Second Language. The Niagara Falls and Lockport Literacy Zone Welcome Centers provide comprehensive and support team approach to help residents address their educational needs and provide pathways out of poverty. “We encourage anyone who needs a high school diploma to stop in to one of our centers and begin the process,” says Charles Diemert, Literacy Zone Coordinator. “Our classes are free and materials are provided,” he added. For more information, call (716) 731-6800, extension: 3003.
Security and Law Enforcement Students Spend Day at Lockport City Courts

The Security and Law Enforcement students from the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center spent some time at the Lockport City Courts with their teacher, Amber Croff.

The class got to explore the courtroom and several of the students got a chance to sit in the jury box and the gallery, where the general public sits, to see the courtroom from that point of view. Once the students were seated in the proper area, the bailiff, Deputy John Embrosky, asked everyone to rise as Judge Katherine Alexander entered the court.

The students found it interesting to learn that Judge Alexander, who was filling in for Judge William Watson, is a newer judge and usually resides over the North Tonawanda court. “The students thought she did an extraordinary job at handling the various cases,” says Mrs. Croff.

The students witnessed several cases, from multiple traffic violations, trespassing and larceny, and were fascinated by the interaction between the judge, plaintiffs and defendants. Mrs. Croff said that the students enjoyed the experience and having the opportunity to see how a real courtroom runs.

Automated Manufacturing Students Sign Locker that Heads to Space

Students in Bill Rakonczay’s Automated Manufacturing and Engineering Program at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center, will have their signatures up in space at the International Space Station thanks to a partnership the program has with NASA called HUNCH (High School Students United with NASA to Create Hardware).

The program gives students the opportunity to make an impact on the lives of the astronauts while fabricating real-world products for NASA as they apply their science, technology, engineering and mathematics skills as well as learning to work in teams and think creatively.

Mr. Rakonczay’s class has been participating in the HUNCH Program for several years. Students make a knob and various other parts with NASA engineer, Amanda Phelps, that are used for stowage lockers. Recently Bill Gibbs, who represents NASA and was one of the first HUNCH teachers, stopped by the center with a locker that was created from some of their parts and had the students sign it. “The HUNCH program is a small step in your education, but a giant step in your future,” he told the students.

During the ceremony, special guests, Orleans County Legislator Lynne Johnson and Niagara County Legislator David Godfrey, extended their congratulations to students as they praised what they are achieving in class.

The program was also featured on WIVB’s Wake Up Program with reporter Angela Christoforos spending the morning with Mr. Rakonczay and students.
Congratulations to the 19 students from the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center and 22 students from the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center who were recently inducted into the National Technical Honor Society. Out of all the high school students in the United States, the National Technical Honor Society students who receive this honor comprise 1.6% of that population. That is the equivalent of the number of people who become professional athletes, according to one guest speaker Kevin MacDonald, who is the District Superintendent of Genesee Valley Educational Partnership and is the former Assistant Superintendent of Orleans/Niagara BOCES. “These students have been bestowed a tremendous honor. These young men and women are very special. They represent the four pillars of the National Technical Honor Society: Scholarship, Leadership, Service and Character.”

The students were honored at the Orleans/Niagara BOCES’ technical education centers in front of their teachers, families and school district representatives. The students had to maintain an 89.5 average in their career and technical education programs and an 84.5 average at their high schools, have superior attendance, exemplary behavior, be a member in good standing with SkillsUSA and have a recommendation from a faculty member.

Congratulations go to NCTEC students: Rebecca Albright (Royalton-Hartland/Animation and Video FX), Thomas Berner (Niagara Falls/Auto Body), Logan Blazewinski (Niagara Wheatfield/HVAC), Michael Buzzeo (Starpoint/Security and Law Enforcement), Jalisa Carson (Lockport/Emergency Medical Services), Spencer Champlin (Starpoint/Web Development and Game Programming), Morgan Class (Starpoint/Cosmetology), Matthew Daul (Wilson/Electricity/Electronics), Colt Dold (Starpoint/Project Based Engineering), Emily Emmons (Niagara Wheatfield/Cosmetology), Reanna Hewitt (Niagara Wheatfield/Culinary Arts), Brandon LaForme (Royalton-Hartland/Legal Studies), Marah Mills (Lewiston-Porter/Early Childhood Education), Chelsea Pagano (Starpoint/Security and Law Enforcement), Jarod Powers (North Tonawanda/Electricity/Electronics), Trevor Sarratori (Wilson/HVAC), Kyle Toth (North Tonawanda/Electricity/Electronics), Betty Lou Webb (Wilson/Health Occupations Technician) and Claudia Wrate (Starpoint/Security and Law Enforcement).

Forty-One Career and Tech Ed Students Inducted into the National Technical Honor Society

Congratulations go to OCTEC students: Malik Abdulghani (Lockport/Building Trades), Caleb Bellian (Medina/Welding), Deseree Brewer (Lockport/Security and Law Enforcement), Josephine Capen (Royalton Hartland/Allied Health), Skyler Christopher (Royalton Hartland/Early Childhood Ed), Carly Eldridge (Royalton Hartland/Allied Health), Catherine Fleischhut (Royalton Hartland/Early Childhood Ed), Heaven Flood (Lyndonville/Cosmetology), Jamasen Johnson (Royalton Hartland/Electricity & Electronics), Tristen Johnson (Newfane/Electricity & Electronics), Jordan Klosin (Barker/Building Trades), Madeline Kraus (Medina/Allied Health), Samantha Lawson (Barker/Cosmetology), Richard Miles (Royalton Hartland/Early Childhood Ed), John Reed (Lockport/Advanced Manufacturing & Engineering), Destiny Satkowski (Medina/Allied Health), Steven Schumacher (Royalton Hartland/Welding), Alisha Scroger (Medina/Culinary Arts), Kennedy Smelski (Lyndonville/Allied Health), Elijah Sones (Medina/Building Trades), Matthew Steves (Royalton Hartland/Building Trades) and Alexis Stratton (Barker/Cosmetology).

We are so proud of all of them and their achievement!
Building Trades and Electricity Students Undergo OSHA Training

Trainers from OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) paid a visit to the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center to talk to students in the Building Trades and Electricity/Electronics programs. OSHA works with the public to promote safe, healthy and secure workplaces and enhance workers’ voice on the job. Since 2003, the alliance has trained more than 8,000 students in the fundamentals of construction safety and health. Training covers the importance of workplace safety, recognition of the major hazards in construction work and building a safety culture within an organization. The instructional base of the safety and health training now includes building trades students and contractors.

Building Trades teacher, Matt Anastasi, took OSHA trainings with Tom Glomb, which allows him to train Orleans/Niagara BOCES employees and students. “He mentioned to me that he had formed an alliance with OSHA and his company, Lehigh Construction, and that they offered these trainings to many other BOCES programs. So I asked him to be a guest presenter because I knew he would offer a unique view of safety perspectives,” says Mr. Anastasi. “Gordon Delays has incredible knowledge and training as an OSHA inspector so he is able to give insights as to what a tremendous resource OSHA can be for the workforce, employers and owners in construction.”

Mr. Delay brought in many training pieces in fall protection since falls are the number one area of accidents and deaths on a worksite. Students had a chance to try on the protection harnesses. Mr. Glomb talked to the students about his company’s approach to safety and how successful it has been. He told them that they noticed more productivity and lower insurance premiums due to a safer workplace.

Mr. Anastasi and Electricity/Electronics teacher, Bill Leggett, were glad to be able to offer their students a ten hour OSHA Construction Industry training. This type of training is mandatory to work on any commercial or industrial worksite. “The card that I will issue will allow our students that ability upon graduation,” says Mr. Anastasi. Many employers are excited to see the students have already received this training as they know that they have made safety a priority.”

Roy Hart Learning Center Students Receive Gift of Reading

Roy Hart Learning Center students were gifted class sets of the book Wonder by R.J. Palacio. The books were donated by Pattie Murphy, a former colleague of teacher David Howe’s from Baltimore, MD. Ms. Murphy, a reading specialist, wanted to excite students to read novels that were current and applicable to life today. The students in Mr. Howe’s and Mrs. Walker’s classes will begin to read the novel in the coming weeks. The novel, which was recently made into a motion picture starring Julia Roberts and Jacob Tremblay, tells the story of an extraordinary 5th grader as he enters a new school. Students will learn about the true nature of empathy, compassion, acceptance, friendship, and—ultimately—kindness.

Sawyer Rotella, Ethan Kraft, Daniel Smith, David Tremblay, Matt Bracco, Makayla Tussing, Mackenzie Lugo, Cheyenne Ryder and Sam Tremblay.
Personal Trainer Students Put SLE Students Through Fitness Test

Certified Personal Trainer Joe Wilkie takes his students over to the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center frequently to help the Security and Law Enforcement students with their fitness. The students’ normal classroom is at Roy Hart High School. “It is very important for my students to work with other clientele other than themselves,” says Mr. Wilkie. “They are used to working with each other and they are all in good shape. And when they are in the real world that will not always be the case. The experience of working with the Security and Law Enforcement students helps them to modify routines depending on their clients’ fitness level.”

Security and Law Enforcement Class Gets CPR Certification

Forty Security and Law Enforcement students, from the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center, recently got certified for CPR (Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation) through the American Red Cross. Teachers Amber Croff and Jess Traver had both their senior classes receive the training for a full day on CPR, use of AED and the Heimlich maneuver. Health Occupations Technician teachers, Mrs. Dee Tomasello, Mrs. Jean Di Fonzo and Ms. Emily Hogle, volunteered to provide the training.

Mr. Traver says that he and Mrs. Croff feel that it is very important that their students be prepared for an emergency situation. “It will allow them to assist emergency personnel and be competitive in the job market after graduation or in college. We are very grateful to our Health Occupation Technician teachers who gave their time and expertise.”

The instructors explained the importance of knowing how to do CPR and the process of getting certified. They played training videos and then assessed the students on their technique using a mannequin and assisted them in the proper form. Once everyone completed the practical test, the instructors gave out a written test, which required an 85 to pass and everyone passing became certified.

“CPR is a very serious thing and everyone should know how to do it and get certified,” says student Samantha Kasper. “The certification is only good for two years, but people should keep getting certified in case they come into an emergency situation and they need to perform it. Early recognition and CPR are crucial for survival from cardiac arrest. By learning this, you’ll have the ability to help others and possibly save someone’s life.”
BOCES Student Shows Sympathy to K9

Tessa Breen is a student attending the BOCES’ Life Skills Program at North Tonawanda High School (NTHS). Her speech teacher, Lynne Hochmuth, says, “Tessa is a beautiful, kindhearted young lady. She was very taken with the story of the death of Officer Craig Lehner and what would happen to his K9 Shield. When talking with Mrs. Hochmuth about the passing of Officer Lehner, she was very concerned with K9 Shield’s feelings.”

Knowing that many of Officer Lehner’s family, friends, and co-workers probably received sympathy cards, Tessa wanted to send K9 Shield a card to let him know he was thought of also. Taking it a step further, she invited the students in her classroom and the three other BOCES classrooms at North Tonawanda High School to write sympathy cards to Shield. With some help from Mrs. Hochmuth, Tessa created a PowerPoint that she presented to each class to make her pitch. It worked, because all of the kids in the programs at NTHS joined in making cards for Shield.

On November 18th, Tessa and her mom attended a meet and greet with K9 Shield. Tessa was able to hand deliver the cards to him and explained to the Buffalo Police officers that she was hoping they would read the enclosed cards to Shield and give him the mini milk bones attached.

“Tessa demonstrated some fantastic leadership skills and was able to engage her friends in an activity in which they showed empathy and kindness to a four-legged friend.”

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“This was a wonderful activity for Tessa and her peers,” says Mrs. Hochmuth. Tessa demonstrated some fantastic leadership skills and was able to engage her friends in an activity in which they showed empathy and kindness to a four-legged friend.”

Helping Out Hurricane Victims

The Orleans Learning Center and the Orleans Career and Technical Educational Center joined forces to raise money for victims of the hurricanes.

Kevin Burns (Lewiston-Porter) and Lillian Wakelam (Lockport).

Culinary Arts Students Help Salvation Army with Thanksgiving Meal

Robert Ihle’s and Caitlin Kucharski’s Culinary Arts students at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center have recently engaged in a holiday tradition that helps out the community.

The Lockport Salvation Army delivered 50 turkeys to the Orleans/Niagara BOCES center for the students to roast, carve and prepare for their Thanksgiving dinner as they have over the last several years.

“We really enjoy doing this for a number of reasons,” says Mr. Ihle. “Not only do the students get valuable skills on how to prepare the bird, they are giving back to the community and ensuring that those less fortunate are able to enjoy a traditional holiday meal. We are always glad to help out.”
Niagara County Probation Supervisor Talks to Security and Law Enforcement Students

Part of the curriculum of the Security and Law Enforcement (SLE) Program at the Orleans/Niagara BOCES is to learn about various careers in the field. Recently Orleans Career and Technical Education SLE teachers, Steve Browning and Dudley Gilbert, invited Niagara County Probation Supervisor Jeff Sheehan in to talk to their classes about the role of a probation officer and his own roundabout career path. Officer Sheehan said originally he wanted to be a teacher. “That was my goal, but I could not find a job in that field. I saw a job opening at an alcohol and drug treatment facility and I ended up working with people with addictions. It was very frustrating because you kept seeing the same people coming back after being rearrested. They would ask for help, but would not take it.”

After encountering probation and parole officers in his line of work he thought that it sounded interesting. He took the civil service exam for a TASC (Treatment Assessment Screening Center) Case Manager, which helps to make sure that clients have the tools and resources necessary to help them complete their treatment programs. They offer support and help to hold the individual accountable for their behavior. “Even though I enjoyed that job, I left because it was grant-based and I never knew if I was going to have a job year after year. That is when I thought about becoming a probation officer and in 2002 got hired by Niagara County for that position.”

He explained that probation officers supervise people who have been arrested for nonviolent crimes and try to assist them with their rehabilitation. “We wear several hats. We are still peace officers who wear uniforms and carry weapons. We act as social workers because we provide supervision and prepare detailed psychosocial evaluations on our clients about their background, family and their surroundings. How did they grow up? Where do they live now? Are there weapons, vicious dogs in the home? Are there mental health issues, physical disabilities? Are they unemployed?”

These reports are given to a judge along with the probation officer’s recommendation about if they should be given parole or be incarcerated. “I base that on if they have remorse or if they are at risk for being rearrested.” Officer Sheehan has 20 officers that work with him and they write between 12,000-13,000 reports a year. “We also do drug and alcohol testing and act as sort of a social worker with not only the offender, but their families. Some of the home visits can be very eye opening and help us make our determinations if they are a good candidate for probation.”

He showed the classes the various equipment they use to monitor the offenders and shared stories about situations he has been in with some his assignments. He told the students, “This is a great career if you are interested in law enforcement and social work. Even though this wasn’t my goal, I was able to take the work experience I had and turn it into something that has been interesting to me.” He told the students that the civil service exam is offered every four years. “We really appreciate Officer Sheehan taking the time out of his schedule to talk to our students,” said Mr. Browning.

BOCES Students Help out at Heart, Love and Soul Food Pantry

The Orleans/Niagara BOCES students at Niagara Wheatfield High School have been volunteering at the Heart, Love and Soul in Niagara Falls for three years. Teacher Kristine Miles and her students go to the soup kitchen once a month to lend a hand. “We have built a wonderful relationship with them and truly love going to help,” says Mrs. Miles. “This is my students’ favorite place to volunteer at.”

In November the class helped to prepare gift bags for local veterans for the Veterans Day celebration ceremony. The bags consisted of candy, snacks, water bottles and various toiletries. The students also included handwritten notes to say thanks for their service to the country. “We were very honored that Heart, Love and Soul gave us the opportunity to thank our local veterans this way,” says Mrs. Miles.

The Orleans/Niagara BOCES Bulletin

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