Orleans Learning Center Performs “A Christmas Carol”

Students at the Orleans Learning Center pulled out all the stops in their rendition of the Charles Dickens’ holiday story, “A Christmas Carol”. Teachers and staff designed the sets and helped the students with their scripts and songs for the play.

Every year the students perform a holiday classic much to the delight of their families, classmates, staff and invited guests. This year no one walked away feeling like Scrooge!

Congratulations Dr. Rossi

Congratulations go to our very own Dr. Rachel Rossi! Dr. Rossi teaches at our Adult Education program and was recently recognized by Leadership Niagara as being one of the up-and-coming leaders in the Niagara County community in their third annual 12 Under 40 Awards.

The winners are all under the age of 40 and are nominated by community members for displaying leadership qualities in their daily lives. The event is meant to embolden young leaders in the county to build up the community and help new leaders in the county to build up the community and help new leaders emerge.

Great Job!

Our occupational therapists (OT) are some of our hardest working and dedicated employees.

Here is OT Michele Jackson working with her boss, Ron Barstys (Director of Special Programs), on a schedule.

Thanks for all you do!
Conservation Students Learn How to Make a Fire

Juniors in Paul Dewey’s Conservation program at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center recently spent a day in the woods behind center. Mr. Dewey along with his teacher aide, Jay Kaplewicz, taught the students how to make a fire as part of a survival training. Students used dryer lint and branches after going over safety and etiquette in making a fire in the woods. Mr. Dewey and Mr. Kaplewicz evaluated their fire making skills and then rewarded them by letting them make s’mores.

ESL Class Helps Out Local Food Pantry

The Orleans/Niagara BOCES ESL (English as a Second Language) Program in North Tonawanda reached out to others in the community for the holidays. The class decided to have a food and clothing drive for the North Tonawanda Food Pantry. The Pantry has been helpful to many of the students and they thought the holidays would be a good time to give back. A special thanks goes out to Ms. Dianne and her mom for delivering the donations!

Cosmetology Students Help Santa Spruce Up for the Holidays

Santa Claus recently stopped into the Cosmetology clinic at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center to spruce up before for the holidays. Teacher Anne Carnahan and her merry elves - the Cosmetology students- had a great time giving Santa a makeover.

CTE Students Talk BOCES Programs with North Tonawanda Middle School

Some of the students at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center spent a morning at the North Tonawanda Middle School talking about their programs with students for the school's annual career fair.

(Above) Teacher Anne Carnahan with Santa and students: Ashley Banks, Haley Black, Kalia Cruz, Carter Fritton, Madison Hazard, Deseree Holland, Trinity Jenkins, Samantha Lawson, Britney Morales, Candice Neff, Karlie Orsak, Sierra Ribbeck, Brianna Sawyer, Elaina Smith, Angela Wachob, Heather Wood.

(LtoR) Tanner McGrew and Joshua Wittcop (Both from Newfane).

Ashley Rogers (Health Occupations Technician), Sam Taylor (Conservation), Jake Perkins, Alyssa Kissel, Natalie Prims and Olivia Waterson (Security and Law Enforcement), Kaitlynn Miller and Tiffany Cracknell (Cosmetology), Michael Bogdan and Lexi Brosius (Culinary), Jason Bronschidle and Logan Carozzolo (Certified Personal Trainer), Peter Marchenko (Auto Mechanics), Robert Meyer (Welding), Mike Finn (Building Trades), Kayleigh Knetlinger and Laure Kyle (Early Childhood Education), Christian Riley (EMS) and Jared Martin (Cyber Security) volunteered with teachers Amber Croff (Security and Law Enforcement), Pauline Carney (Cosmetology), Lisa Cook (Culinary) and John Jeckovitch (Auto Mechanics).
HVAC Students Score Cool Trip to Key Bank Arena

The HVAC (Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning) students at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center spent some time at the Key Bank Arena in downtown Buffalo. As many people are aware this is where the Sabres play and many concerts are held.

Head Engineer, Bruce Johnson, invited the classes of Vinnie Piaskowski and Nick DiFelice to the arena for a mechanical systems tour. The students were shown the heating and cooling systems for the building and also the ice rink making system. “The classes really enjoyed the trip,” says Mr. Piaskowski. “Bruce was very helpful about showing the large systems that control the building and ice along with the computer system that runs it all. We are looking forward to making this an annual trip for the HVAC students and Bruce was gracious enough to invite us.”

(No Particular Order) Mr. DiFelice Class: Ryan Tall (Niagara Falls), Logan Blazejewski (Niagara Wheatfield), Mr. DiFelice, Luke Seller (Royalton Hartland), Erick Slager (Niagara Wheatfield), Trevor Sarraton (Wilson) and Dakota DePadre (Niagara Wheatfield). Mr. Piaskowski Class: Robert Harris (Niagara Falls), Austin Hallman (Newfane), Andrew Ferris (Niagara Falls), Chris Pisarski (Barker), Cameron Wallace (Lockport), Mr. Piaskowski, Jared Fisher (Wilson), Taylor Carmer (Lewiston-Porter), Brett Teubner (Lewiston-Porter), Johnpaul Eckert (Lewiston-Porter), Grant Zimmerman (Starpoint), Jacob Phelps (Lewiston-Porter), Mason Miller (Niagara Wheatfield) and Stephan Walek (Starpoint).

Construction Industry Education Foundation In Talks with Orleans/Niagara BOCES

The Construction Industry Education Foundation is a charitable organization whose mission is to promote awareness of opportunities available in the construction industry and help provide educational opportunities and scholarships.

They recently met with the Building Trades teachers at the Orleans and Niagara Career and Technical Education Centers, Matt Anastasi, Anthony Molinaro and Nick DiFelice, to see what they could do to assist their students. “Currently they work with McKinley High School and provide them with all the materials to build a 1,300 square foot modular home,” says Mr. Anastasi. “The home, once completed, is sold to Habitat for Humanity and placed on a lot in Buffalo.”

This program provides students in the carpentry, electrical, plumbing and sheet metal classes with valuable hands-on experience. “We are in preliminary talks for both our centers to start a similar program,” says Mr. Anastasi. The Foundation awards scholarships to students pursuing a construction related post-secondary degree and tools to those entering directly into a trade. “That is a huge benefit is that it would make our students eligible for a scholarship each month and put them in contention to be the student of the year which is a $10,000 scholarship!”

NCTEC SkillsUSA Makes Holidays Bright for Many

The SkillsUSA students at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center were busy helping spread holiday cheer to many in the community.

As part of their community service the students had a “Giving Tree” toy drive for children in Niagara County who are in foster care for the holidays. The students were very generous with their gift giving and felt great making Christmas special for others.
Career and Technical Education Center Students Learn About Military and First Responder Careers

Security and Law Enforcement teacher Steve Browning said he found it very concerning that some of his students didn’t seem to have a game plan for after high school. After talking to colleagues at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center, he discovered that several of their students were facing the same problem. “I wanted to come up with something that would expose the students to opportunities as either a first responder or enlisting in the military and get them thinking about that possibility before graduation.”

Mr. Browning invited recruiters from several branches of the military and officers from the New York State Troopers, Medina Police Department and Medina Fire Department to set up in the commons area of the school. Students in all the career and technical education classes were given a sheet with questions and were directed to talk to at least three representatives. Although it was not mandatory, almost every class took advantage of the opportunity to explore careers with the representatives. “For some of the students this exposure might inspire them to pursue careers in the military, law enforcement or being a firefighter or EMS,” says Mr. Browning. “Or they might decide that none of these are viable options for them, but get them thinking what might be a good fit for them. Overall, I am very pleased how well it went and I would like to extend my thanks to all the representatives who spent the day here and interacted with our students.”

NT Learning Center Students Charm with Holiday Concert

The students at the North Tonawanda Learning Center recently put on a fun holiday concert for their loved ones and staff.

The concert was conducted by Ruthie Gifford and students performed “Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer”, “Jingle Bells”, “The Twelve Days of Christmas”, “Up On A Housetop”, “Deck the Halls” and “Feliz Navidad”.

The guests were then invited for a story hour, cookie decorating and ornament making. It was a festive time for all.

“The Lion King” Makeup Artist Talks To Cosmetology Students About Careers and Techniques

The Cosmetology students at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center recently attended a performance of Disney’s “The Lion King” at Shea’s Performing Art Center. They also got a chance to meet with one of the show’s makeup artists who taught them some techniques on achieving the show’s looks and gave them advice on breaking into the business.

Ashley Hughes told the students in Ms. Lindke’s and Mrs. Carnahan’s classes that she got her start washing makeup brushes in an opera house in Nashville. As she worked her way up and gained more skills, she landed the job with Disney, which she says she loves. She encouraged the students to explore careers with them. “Disney offers internships for cosmetology professionals where you can play characters in the park’s spas or in their fashion boutiques and you can live in dorms in Florida,” she told them. “I would also look into joining a local union so you can work for shows and keep up with your education. Definitely make as many connections as you can, that is very important in this business. With connections and your skills, you can go anywhere.”

She told the students to keep their portfolios updated. “It is very important to show a prospective employer their work. You are very lucky to be living in this area,” she told the class. “There is a lot of film work in Buffalo, it’s a great time to break into the field.”
Computer Technology Program Sets Students on Career Path

Students in Mark Leffler’s Computer Technology class have been working on some interesting projects at the Niagara Career and Technology.

Not only are the students learning about cyber security and hardware and software, they are getting real world experience in class that is preparing them for life after high school. Patrick Johnson, a junior from Wilson, has been working on two different computers. “I am making it so these computers share a computing process together. This will increase the running speed. It’s been a lot of fun.” Asked what he will do with the skills he is building after high school he said, “I am going to Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and taking the ROTC program. My goal is to go into the Navy and hopefully work with computers.”

Classmate, Christopher Wilson, has been working on a team of three taking apart an old computer. “We have taken everything out of it and now we are putting it back together to see how everything will work together. I really feel this class really matches up with my interests better than any class I have taken. It really helps me to understand a lot of the questions that I have had.” Christopher is also planning on attending RIT after graduation and hopes to get a job doing computer security at a corporation.

Mr. Leffler says it is really gratifying to see his lessons inspiring his students and get them thinking about their futures. “It’s great to see the growth in this class. These students thought of these projects on their own and executed them at a level that exceeded my expectations. They developed problem solving skills they did not know they had. This will serve them well in further education and also later in their careers.”

NCTEC SkillsUSA Students Participate in World’s Largest Christmas Card for Veterans

The SkillsUSA students at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center (NCTEC) participated in the World’s Largest Christmas Cards for Veterans Project. It was run by the Salvation Army of Lockport and all the cards went to Veterans Hospital.

Along with SkillsUSA advisors, Amber Croff and Donna Quinn, the students came together and collected 15 cards which the students throughout the school decorated with paper ornaments which they hung off poster boards.

Security and Law Enforcement students, Alyssa Kissel and Natalie Prims, both from North Tonawanda, headed the project. “The whole event turned out to be a great success,” says Mrs. Croff. “It brought the students together for a common cause which was to help people. This is by far the meaning of the holidays. I was very happy that Alyssa and Natalie stepped up and took the initiative with this project.”

Newfane Learning Center Students Shoot from the Heart

Newfane Learning Center staff members, Kyle Hinchcliffe and Megan Rankie, recently coordinated a Hoops for Heart event on December 8th.

The program is through the American Heart Association and teaches students the importance of developing heart healthy habits. They focused on fun physical activities while raising funds to support research and education. Together the students and staff raised $1,384.54 to help save lives across the country and their community.

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Life Skills
Students Help Out Salvation Army

Students from the Orleans Learning Center spent a December morning ringing the bell for the Salvation Army.

The students volunteered at the Wright’s Corners Tops Supermarket. Not only did it help a worthy charity, it helped the students with their social skills and doing some community service work.

Culinary Arts Students Create Gingerbread Masterpiece

Culinary Arts students Reanna Hewitt and Tabitha Human, who are both from Niagara Wheatfield High School, took second place at the Niagara Falls Culinary Institute’s Gingerbread House Competition in the High School Division. Their Niagara Career and Technical Education Culinary Arts teacher, Bob Ihle, said, “They did a beautiful job recreating a gingerbread barn house with fondant figurines of farm animals and Santa.”

The gingerbread house was donated and raffled off to raise money for The United Way of Greater Niagara. The generous students took their $50 prize money and donated it to the United Way.

NCTEC Student Places at WNY Auto Collision Competition

Nick Mancari, a senior from Niagara Wheatfield, took third place overall at the second annual WNY Auto Collision Competition. The event was held at Auto Collision and Glass of WNY in Amherst and gave students from four local BOCES a chance to show off their skills and compete for prizes.

“I am very proud of him,” says his Niagara Career and Technical Education Center teacher Paul Magyar. “He had competed last year as well and this year he was our only senior to win. It was a pretty good competition. Several local collision shop owners run it to give the students a chance to show off their skills and they can get to see the young talent that is out there.”

“I felt very prepared for the competition,” says Nick. “Mr. Magyar has taught us a lot and he really worked with us to prepare us for this.” His competition consisted of refinishing a panel and blending for color match and doing a damage estimate. “I felt very good about how I did and I won $75 dollars and a duel action sander.”

Nick says after graduation he plans on attending NCCC and eventually transferring to a college in California.

Teacher Paul Magyar and Nick Mancari (Niagara Wheatfield).
Life Skills Students Get Work Experience Through Job Coaching Program

Students enrolled in our Life Skills program at the North Tonawanda High School, Niagara Wheatfield High School, and the Orleans Learning Center have the opportunity to gain valuable work experience while still in school. Local businesses provide this opportunity at no charge. This partnership benefits not only the employers, but the students as well by creating a transition step between school and work.

This is accomplished by working with a variety of area businesses. The current list of business partners includes the North Tonawanda Bus Garage and Ridge Road Express, Sportsplex, Fitness 19, Aramark (NT School Cafeteria Food Service), various departments and locations of Tops Markets, as well as DeGraff Memorial Hospital, Wheatfield Commons, Meals on Wheels, Subway, Wash ’N Wear Laundromat, Spoiled Rotten Pet Spa, Ace Hardware, Alternative Ground Caffe, and Absolut Care of Gasport. In each of these sites, students perform a variety of work related tasks with the support of a job coach. The job coaches’ role is to model appropriate work behavior, assist the student in learning the work tasks and oversee the quality of work being completed, providing feedback when needed. Students spend between one to six hours weekly completing tasks assigned by the employer. The ultimate goal is to increase the student’s employability skills.

Life Skills students are evaluated by the job coach on their soft skills such as following directions, working at an appropriate pace, using appropriate communication skills and problem solving skills, staying on task, dressing appropriately for the work place, etc. These valuable soft skills can be transferred to any work setting and contribute to success in the work place. Employers also have an opportunity to evaluate the quality of the student’s work as well. Our students gain self-confidence and a better understanding of their strengths. Success among our graduates has been noted as several students have found employment within their own community and are working independently!

Medina K9 Unit Visits with Security and Law Enforcement Classes

Medina Police Department Lieutenant Todd Draper and his K9 partner Kye, stopped in to the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center. The purpose of his visit was to spend time with the Security and Law Enforcement students in Steve Browning’s and Dudley Gilbert’s classes.

Lieutenant Draper talked to the students about what it is like to work with his K9 partner, who is a Belgian Malinois, and the bond he has with him. “I have had Kye since he was one year old when the police department brought him over from Holland. He is seven years old now and not only do we work together, we live together. “He told the classes that when he was offered his promotion to lieutenant he would not accept it if Kye was not part of the package. Luckily the Medina Police Department honored his request. “When he is ready to retire, I am hoping the department lets me purchase him. The usual deal is that for a dollar they will transfer ownership to me.”

Belgian Malinois are used as a working dog whose tasks include detection of odors such as explosives, accelerants and narcotics, tracking humans and search and rescue mission. “This is the breed the Seals used when they went after Osama Bin Laden,” Lieutenant Draper told the students. He said Kye is trained for narcotics detection and he uses positive reinforcement to keep him on task. “He has a toy that smells like drugs, so in actuality he is looking for his toy when we are out searching. When he finds drugs I reward him for his work.” He told the students that you never cross train a police dog because when he finds something, you don’t know what he is detecting. He also said that they work with other states to get drugs for the K9 to smell and get accustomed to. “Drugs are made differently in each area, so it is helpful to expose the dogs to different narcotics.” He and Kye gave a demonstration on how he locates drugs and how he is used to takedown a suspect, with Mr. Browning volunteering in that role.

He says that Kye’s heightened abilities prove to be a great asset to law enforcement work. “He has a great sense of smell which is about 1000 times stronger than ours and great vision. He is also very athletic. He can jump over a six foot wall.” Lieutenant Draper says that Kye is also very social and a great draw to getting the community to interact with him. “Usually when I am walking through an event alone, I won’t get a lot of eye contact or people talking to me. When I have Kye with me everyone comes up to us and wants to pet him and interact with us. He is a great public relations tool,” he laughs. “I really could not ask for a better or more loyal partner.”

Wayne Mielcarek (North Tonawanda) working at Tops.

Lieutenant Draper and Kye with the Security and Law Enforcement students at the Orleans Career and Technical Ed Center.
OCTEC Donates to PB&J Drive

Students and staff at the Orleans Career and Technical Education really brought it for the 8th Annual Peanut Butter and Jelly Drive. The drive helps local food pantries fill their shelves with kid-friendly food like peanut butter, jelly and marshmallow fluff. It has become a tradition for the Orleans/Niagara BOCES center when math teacher Sarah Gebhard asked the students at the center if they would like to help out. Since then it has become a fall community project.

This year a friendly class competition ended up collecting 475 jars to donate to local pantries. A special shout out goes to Eric Farrell’s junior Welding class and Matt Anastasi’s senior Building Trades class who brought in the highest totals.

School counselor, Kara Kirk, says, “Every year I am amazed at the generosity of these teenagers here at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center. I am very proud of all of them.”

PB&J Drive volunteer Kenny Allore, Steven Pollock (Newfane), Kyson Bellan (Medina), Jose Galvan (Newfane), Malik Abdulghani (Lockport), Zachary Waters (Royalton-Hartland), Matt Steves (Royalton-Hartland), Gavyn Samanka (Royalton-Hartland) and Elijah Sones (Medina).

F- Bites Students Graduate At Niagara County Jail

BOCES Continuing Ed staff, representatives from F-Bites and Niagara County Jail were on hand to celebrate some inmates that participated in F-Bites program run by Chef Bobby Anderson.

The six week culinary program was started by Chef Anderson when he took fifth place in Gordon Ramsay’s “Hell’s Kitchen” in 2008. He took his prize money of $250,000 and started the organization as an afternoon program afterschool for students in Niagara and Erie Counties.

Two years ago he brought it to the Niagara County Jail. The goal is not only to teach the inmates cooking skills, but also soft skills that will hopefully translate to jobs when they are released. O/N BOCES Literacy Zone Coordinator, Chuck Diemert, says, “Using food to change lives is one of the mantras and it does. It is nice for the inmates to see Bobby. He is the whole package. He is from Niagara Falls and he came from nothing.”

For Chef Anderson his goal is to give them some life skills and employment skills to use to figure out what their next step will be. In the program, each student is assigned a role that rotates during each class. They make a whole meal including dessert. Chef Anderson showed them all the ingredients and how to prepare the dishes and how to plate them. “The food is just acting as a tool for them to learn how to stand next to each other and depend on one another.” After their hard work, the students get to enjoy the meal they prepared.

The students were very excited to be handed their certificates of completion and appreciative of the round of applause acknowledging their hard work and dedication. Mr. Diemert says upon their release, all the students will get contact information and know that BOCES is always available to them for support, whether it’s to continue their education, find housing or just ask for advice or guidance.
North Tonawanda senior, Nina Marranca, recently spent some time at the Royalton-Hartland Learning Center with her Vision teacher Dawn Quinn. She also brought along a special friend, Viggo, who is her service/guide dog. Viggo, a yellow lab, has been trained from a puppy to lead blind or visually impaired people around obstacles.

Nina has been working with her vision teacher Dawn Quinn since she was in kindergarten. Ms. Quinn, who works at BOCES, asked her if she would like to talk to the young students about her life, how Viggo assists her in getting around and answer any questions the children had. Nina enthusiastic agreed and spent a morning at the school.

She told the classes she recently received Viggo. “I went to a school to get him in April. When I got there, he licked me all over and we started training together. A family raised and trained him for year and a half before that. They volunteered their time and they didn’t get any money to raise my puppy. They had to give him back to the school where they completed his initial training. I don’t know how the family did that because they got really attached. I still talk to them and I send them pictures of Viggo and keep them up to date.”

Some of the students asked Nina why she was blind. “When I was born, my eye didn’t grow enough in comparison to everything else. That’s why I can’t see. I have had a lot of surgeries throughout the years,” she told the students. She told the students she can’t use her eyes to read like they do or be able to see if it is okay to cross the street. When she was asked if she wished she wasn’t born blind, she said no which surprised many of the students. “My eyes don’t work the same way that yours do. But I like to read, write and sing and I am learning to play guitar from Ms. Quinn. So basically all the normal stuff that everyone else does. I just do things a little bit different.”

She has been with Ms. Quinn for 13 years and she was the one who taught her how to read braille. One of the students asked her how long it took her to learn braille and she compared it to them learning how to read. “I think it took me about a year. I think I learned it quicker because I like to read.” She also uses a BrailleNote device which is a bit like a computer. “I do a lot of my school work on it. I can play on it and write on it. It prints out so my teachers can see what I did on homework or tests.” The students got to examine up close when Nina passed it around.

Viggo helps her a lot and he keeps her safe by finding things that people don’t think about, like stairs or a curb on a street or a door. “When he wears his harness he knows that it is time to work. You should not pet a service dog when they are working because it distracts them. It could lead to me getting hurt or him getting hurt. Service dogs come in a lot of different shapes, sizes and breeds. They help people with disabilities. When I take off his harness we play together.”

At the end of her visit she took off his harness and let the students take turns petting him and giving him dog treats. Nina shared that she is very excited about her future. “I am an honors student. I want to go to college to be a writer. I have been accepted into Medaille College and Daemen College and I am waiting on decisions from Harvard and Yale.”

Royalton-Hartland Learning Center Coordinator, Paulette Hamilton-Koehler, says the students were fascinated with Nina and Viggo. “All of them sat completely still and listened to her which is really amazing. I think it helped with the students’ comfort levels with someone who has this disability and how to interact with them and their service dog. The staff and students were really impressed with her and I think it was a great message that she gave our students; how blindness is not a setback for her and how she faces challenges head-on.”

North Tonawanda Student Shares with BOCES Students Life As Being Visually Impaired

Life Skills Students Make Holiday Gifts

The Life Skills students in Mark Kurtz’s and Judy Wagner’s classes made a festive gift for their families for the holidays. The classes, which are located at North Tonawanda High School, made wreaths. Teacher aides, Sue Brauer and Liz Clapsadle, lent their artistic abilities to the students so they could complete their presents in time.

VIP Food Service Program Rolls Out Red, White and Blue Carpet for First Responders and Military

Students in Jessica Kroneberg’s VIP Food Service Program put their culinary talents to a great use by helping to prepare a thank you lunch for first responders and military personnel. The OCTEC students made some side salads and desserts for military and first responder representatives who participated in a First Responders/Military Career Day at the center. They showed off their artistic skills with a salad displayed like the American flag and red, white and blue fruit kabobs. The representatives were certainly appreciated the students’ hard work.

Pendleton Lions Play Santa for Orleans/Niagara BOCES Students

The students at the Orleans/Niagara BOCES’ Royalton Hartland Learning Center could not contain their excitement when they had a special visitor before the holidays. Santa and his helpers from the Pendleton Lions Club stopped in to see all the students and give them a present.

Lions Club Member, Joe Biondo, says the visit makes the holidays more special for all their members. “We are here to have fun with the kids. We have money to buy them stuff and want to make sure they have a happy Christmas. A lot of times they don’t get out to see Santa Claus. It makes us feel great. It makes the year feel successful. It really is a great feeling.”

The Lions Club funds their generosity with two major fundraisers. “We do a directory to the community which we don’t ask for any money for it,” explains Mr. Biondo. “We have advertisers that buy space and that pays for the publication. When we hand deliver them, our residents will then turn around and donate to us. It’s very successful. This year for the first time, we ran a golf tournament, which was just as successful. It allows us to visit two different schools to do this.” The other beneficiary of the Lions’ holiday spirit is the Orleans/Niagara BOCES’ North Tonawanda Learning Center.

The Royalton Hartland Learning Center Coordinator, Paulette Hamilton-Koehler, says she and her staff are very grateful to the organization. “The students are just so excited to see Santa and their reactions are priceless. It puts all in the holiday spirit and makes some great memories for our students.”
Who’s Ready for Some Football?

The Newfane Learning Center students had a great time at their Super Bowl Party. The students and staff all wore their Buffalo Bills gear and celebrated the Bills’ playoff season by making crafts, playing games and enjoying snacks together. The students enjoyed the party and hanging out with their friends.

OCTEC SkillsUSA Students Celebrate the Holidays With Helping Veterans

Over 150 SkillsUSA students at the Orleans Career and Technical Education (CTE) Center partook in a community service activity for military personnel and their families. The students took some of the proceeds from their annual craft fair and chose to use the money towards two Red Cross sponsored activities, “Holidays for Heroes Comfort Kit Program” and “Activity Kits for Military Children”. Suggested items for the comfort kits were toothbrushes, shampoo, conditioner, deodorant, shaving cream, nail clippers, toothpaste, combs, razors and gum. For children’s kits they recommended coloring/activity books, crayons, colored pencils, washable markers, stickers, puzzles, books, craft kits, fruit chews, hand sanitizer and games.

SkillsUSA Advisor, Kara Kirk took the senior chapter officers shopping and says she was impressed with the students’ skills. “They spent a lot of time at the Dollar Tree looking at labels on the hygiene products and toys for the children and trying to figure out what was appropriate. They were also trying to get the most bang for their buck, so they would have more to give.”

After the SkillsUSA officers’ shopping excursion, all the SkillsUSA students spent a day making Christmas cards and packaging their purchases into kits at the Orleans CTE Center. SkillsUSA officer, Heaven Flood, says the event put everyone in the holiday spirit. “It made us all feel very happy to be helping our Armed Services and their families. You look around and everyone was smiling.” Elijah Sones says it put everyone in the holiday spirit. “It was a lot of fun and made us all feel good.” Malik Abdulghani says he hopes that when the kits are received they will know how much everyone appreciates what they do for our country. “We want them to know someone cares about them.”

Lisa Taibi, who is in charge of the Services to Armed Forces and International Services for the Red Cross, says she was impressed with the number of kits the students donated. “The comfort kits will be distributed to veterans and their families in VA hospitals, during various homeless stand downs, valor days and other military fairs and gatherings across Western and Central New York Region during the holiday season and throughout the year. The activity kits will be distributed to military children at Yellow Ribbon events, family days or anything military related. They are geared towards keeping children occupied while mom and dad attend trainings or informational meetings. We are so grateful to what the students here at BOCES have done for our veterans.”

Ms. Taibi was also presented with a $300 check from fundraisers held at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center and the Orleans Learning Center for Hurricane Relief.

Mr. Voss (teacher aide), Katrina Arnold (North Tonawanda), Spencer Notin (Royalton-Hartland), Clay Fischer (Lyndonville) and Sam Conrad (Niagara Wheatfield).

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