Orleans/Niagara BOCES Employees of the Year

Orleans/Niagara BOCES District Superintendent Dr. Clark Godshall paid some surprise visits to several employees before school started this year. He wanted to let them know that their peers had named them as employees of the year and congratulate them personally. Staff members wrote submissions for their peers in the categories of administrator, clerical, maintenance, staff specialist, substitute, teacher aide and teacher of who they think do an outstanding job during the past school year and deserve the recognition.

The Administrator of the Year was Dr. Sushma Sztorc, the Principal of the Niagara Academy. She has been with BOCES for twenty-one years and says her favorite part of her job is that it is not a job. “I got here together with everyone at the Niagara Academy. Recognition hits home with my responsibility towards the teachers, staff and students I work with every day.”

In the Clerical category Nicole Bensley has worked in the Labor Relations Department handling personnel and certification for 14 years. “I like helping people inside and outside of our organization. I enjoy assisting people with personnel and certification matters. I think it is very nice that BOCES recognizes individuals for their role in supporting the BOCES mission. Everyone plays a part.”

In the Maintenance category Danny Flatt has been with the organization for 11 and half years. “What I like most about my job is the great relationship I have with my co-workers and staff. They are fantastic. When I found out I was named the Employee of the Year, I was both stunned and excited. It makes me proud to be part of the BOCES family.”

Staff Specialist Diane Vigrass has been with BOCES for five years. “I love the relationship that my work allows me to develop in our districts. These relationships lead to collaborative strategic planning for school improvement which is one of my favorite parts of my work. I feel very privileged to work in an organization that pays close attention to the significant work of its employees and students.”

Fred Fierch is a former employee from Orleans/Niagara BOCES and when he retired he thought he would substitute occasionally. “This year I subbed over 70 days in the Diesel, Welding, Building Trades and Security programs at our career and technical education centers. I really like the support that you get here from administration, clerical and teachers.” When he was told that he was the Substitute of the Year he says, “I thought it was April Fool’s Day. I was just volunteering; I didn’t expect anything like this. I am very appreciative that they thought enough of me to nominate me.”

Robin Moll has worked at BOCES for seven years and is the teacher aide in the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning Program. “I love working with all the students and teachers at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center. The teacher Mr. Destino is great and the kids are wonderful. They mean a lot to me. I actually feel sad when school is not in session because I miss everyone.”

Special education teacher Colleen Schwartz was named the Teacher of the Year completing her 32nd year at BOCES and her last as she looks forward to retiring next year. “I enjoy coming to work every day because each of the students are unique and offer a new experience daily. My favorite part of the job is working as a team. There is a lot of synergy with working with caring and dedicated people. We make it a priority to get each other’s input, to use each person’s perspective to find the best solutions for our students. I have learned so much from the people I have worked with, but most of all from the students themselves. They contribute much to our world. I feel honored and blessed to be named Employee of the Year!”

Roy Hart Learning Center Starts Website

Teacher Anne Leubner has started a website for the Roy Hart Learning Center. If you are interested in checking it out the address is: http://royhartlearningcenter.weebly.com

Pictured: Anne Leubner with students Irving Burkhardt, Sean Fingers and Noah Langworthy.
Ohio Tech Teacher Shares Skills with Auto Body Students

It is not uncommon for colleges to visit the Orleans/Niagara BOCES’ campuses to talk to the students about what opportunities they can present to them after they graduate. What is unusual is a college teacher bringing equipment and a chance to learn some techniques. Tom Banks, from the Ohio Technical College, recently visited Tom Struebing’s Auto Body program at the Orleans Career and Technical Education center. At the college he teaches custom paint and graphics and was glad to share with the students his experience and some tricks of the trade.

He told the students that you don’t have to be an artist to be a good airbrush artist and that the potential for making money is unlimited. “I can go to a fair, a sports game and make thousands of dollars for painting t-shirts, helmets, pretty much anything.” Teacher Mr. Struebing confirmed this by saying he would make extra money airbrushing the helmets for softball teams.

Mr. Banks then set up metal canvases for each of the students and showed them different techniques and asked them to try their hand at it as well. He started with the basic airbrush designs and moved on to more complicated methods. “The student got a lot of out this experience,” says Mr. Struebing. “It gives them great exposure to what they can do with the skills that they learn in class and what avenues they can take after graduation.”

Jasper Adams Named Automotive Service Excellence Instructor of the Year

Niagara Career and Technical Education Center’s Automotive Technology teacher Jasper Adams has been named as part of the ASE’s (Automotive Service Excellence) inaugural class of Instructors of the Year. Mr. Adams has been teaching at Orleans/Niagara BOCES for 22 years, and was honored with nine other recipients at the ASE Industry Education Alliance Instructor Training Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana.

“The ASE Industry Education Alliance is proud to recognize the best of the best in career and technical education,” said Trish Serratore, president of the National Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF) and Automotive Youth Educational Systems (AYES). “These outstanding instructors represent the dedication, commitment and experience our industry needs to train the automotive professionals of tomorrow.”

To achieve the recognition, instructors must be ASE-certified Master technicians currently employed at a NATEF accredited program, have five years of teaching experience and have placed students in work-based learning assignments, such as AYES or another defined internship model. Other conditions of qualification include an advisory committee member affiliated with at least one ASE industry training event in the prior year.

Tim Zike, ASE President and CEO says, “The success of our industry will be determined by the future group of leaders just now beginning their careers at CTE programs across the nation. We created this honor to recognize the important role that teachers play in shaping tomorrow’s automotive service leaders.” “We are very proud of Jasper,” says Niagara Career and Technical Education Center Principal Anedda Trautman. “It is nice to see such an excellent teacher be recognized on a national level.”

Auto Body Class Gives Hand to the Medina Band

The Auto Body students in Tom Struebing’s program at the Orleans Career and Tech Ed Center have a project to keep them busy for the next couple of weeks. They will be painting a school bus for the Medina High School Marching Band to use for their equipment. The school approached the class to see if they could prep, prime and paint the bus. “We are more than glad to do this,” said Mr. Struebing. “Sherwin Williams gave us a good price on the white paint which will keep the price down for the district and the students will feel a sense of pride when they see it on the road. It is a good opportunity for them to use the techniques they have learned in class and they get to work as a teamwork and time management skills to complete this.”
Orleans Career and Tech Ed Centers

Students Attend Construction Days

Students in Matt Anastasi's Building Trades program and Bill Leggett's Electricity/Electronics program recently spent a day at the Western New York Construction Days. The event is hosted by the Buffalo Building and Construction Trades Council and its union affiliates. “It is a great experience for our students,” says Mr. Anastasi. “It is a perfect opportunity for them to talk to union representatives in the various trades and get a look at the apprenticeship programs they offer.”

Although many of the students get hands-on experience in class, there is a wide variety of booths set up by the unions that allow the students to do everything from drive a small Bobcat Bulldozer, try their hand at welding or repel down scaffold. “There is a greater need than ever for workers in these fields,” says Mr. Leggett. “There are a lot of baby boomers retiring and the unions are looking for qualified workers to take their place. It gives our students a chance to make connections for possible careers when they graduate. They all received hard hats and safety glasses for attending which was great.” Each of the teachers said their students had a great time and helped to reinforce to many that they have chosen the best career path for themselves.

Security and Law Enforcement

Students Learn Defense Tactics

Students in John Marotta's Security and Law Enforcement program have been learning various defense moves over the last several weeks. Retired Western New York police officer Joe Follendorf, who is an internationally recognized defensive tactics and firearms instructor, has been coming to the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center to show students how to protect themselves from being overtaken by a criminal and how to get the upper hand in a physical confrontation. “We are very fortunate to have Mr. Follendorf to come in and work with the class,” says Mr. Marotta. “He has a very distinguished career as an Assistant SWAT Team Commander, Firearms Training Officer, Physical Force Instructor and adjunct academy instructor.”

Mr. Marotta says he has been teaching his students how important it is to know how to stand and get leverage when a suspect attacks them. “I was a police officer for many years and I tell them that a criminal wants to take you down on the ground, so they can grab your gun and kill you. You have to know how to center your weight and anticipate how they are going to come after you. It could make the difference of life or death.”

Niagara Career and Tech Ed Center Raises Funds for Niagara Hospice

Thanks to the cooking skills of Bob Ihle's Culinary Arts students at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center, Niagara Hospice will be receiving a generous donation. The students prepared a pasta dinner which they sold at the school's open house. The 384 dinners were sold out and a portion of the proceeds will be going to Niagara Hospice, a charity that was chosen by the class. “That open house was one of the busiest we have ever had,” says Mr. Ihle. “The students in my class and SkillsUSA did an outstanding job and we were so pleased at the turnout. Altogether we raised about $2,300, which will be used for supplies for the students and to benefit Niagara Hospice.”
Welding Students’ Bench Pays Tribute To Lewiston Historical Association Curator

Dorothy Cunningham was the curator of the Historical Association of Lewiston (HAL) for over 20 years. She was very dedicated and respected and the current curator Pam Hauth and other members of the board wanted to do something special to honor her memory. Niagara Career and Technical Education Center Welding teacher Steve Frey is on the board and he told them about a bench that his students have been working on. “Sometimes to break up the monotony of bigger projects, they practice on smaller pieces. It gives them a chance to use their creative talents and create a work of art.” The board thought the bench would be a great addition to their garden and a wonderful tribute to Dorothy, who served from 1981 to 2002. The welding students put the finishing touches on the project and a plaque was attached with Dorothy’s name. On a beautiful October day Dorothy’s family gathered, along with the HAL board members at its unveiling. “It was a very emotional moment,” says Mr. Frey. “She meant so much to all of us and I think for my students it meant something to them to be able to contribute to this memorial.”

Culinary Arts Student Explores Johnson and Wales Over the Summer

Kashiya Hogue considers herself very lucky that she knows what she wants to do when she graduates. She has known since she was a small child. “I have always known that I want to be chef,” she says. “I remember when I was little making cupcakes and selling them to my family.”

The Niagara Falls senior, who attends the Niagara Academy, says when she first met teacher Bob Ihle it was in the Orleans/Niagara BOCES Career Exploration Program. “I just loved it and thought he was great. He always had time for everyone in the class if they had a question or needed help. I knew once I was a junior I was going to sign up for his Culinary Arts program.”

It was at the end of her junior year she started thinking about college and was leaning towards Johnson and Wales University in Charlotte, North Carolina, a world renowned culinary school. “I saw that they offered a summer weekend immersion program and I jumped at it. It was a fantastic experience and I was impressed how they treated us.” For a small tuition a limo was sent to pick her up from the airport and she was whisked away to the campus to one of the dorms along with many other students from all over the United States. “The dorms were amazing and so was the campus. The labs we participated in were incredible and I met some very cool people. We got to see a lot of the area and it really solidified that this is where I want to be once I graduate.”

For Kashiya the Culinary Arts Program at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center has helped her shoot for the stars. “I am so grateful to Mr. Ihle and this program. It has really honed my skills and I have been able to take something I am good at and become better. I love that I can spend half of my day doing something hands-on that is going to help me with my ambitions. And that I get to study with a teacher who is a trained professional and obviously loves what he does has really helped me to develop into the chef that I want to be.”
Lewiston Police Officer And K-9 Partner Share Experience With Security Class

Officer Scott Stafford and his partner K9 Taser of the Lewiston Police Department recently paid a visit to Amber Chunco's Security and Law Enforcement class at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center. Office Stafford did a question and answer session with the Orleans/ Niagara BOCES students and then brought them outside where he ran through obedience drills with Taser. "Officer Stafford was very passionate about his job," says Ms. Chunco. "My students learned a lot from him. I am very grateful that he and Taser came in to expose them to this law enforcement career."

(LtoR): Back Row: Travis Mis (Lewiston Porter), Jayson Parker (Niagara Falls), Michael Ferry (North Tonawanda), Ronald Stanton (North Tonawanda), Rachel Anderson (North Tonawanda), Richard Williams (Niagara Falls), David Neff (Lewiston Porter), Brian Leising (Niagara Wheatfield). Front Row: Amber Chunco (Teacher), Ashely Edwards (Niagara Falls), Qamara DuBois (Niagara Falls), Officer Scott Stafford (Lewiston K9 Officer), Kaylynn Buck (Niagara Falls), Angela Micale (Niagara Wheatfield), Kaylee O'Donnell (North Tonawanda), Erin Schmidt (North Tonawanda) and Julian LaBarber (Lewiston Porter).

Precision Machine Technology Program Has The Right Stuff According to NASA

The Precision Machine Technology Program at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center had some special visitors from NASA recently. Mr. Rakonczay’s class has partnered with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in their innovative HUNCH (High school students United with NASA to Create Hardware) for the past couple of years. Nancy Hall, a research scientist/aerospace engineer at the Glenn Research Center, Stacy Hale, Project Manager from Johnson Space Center and James Wagner, who works at Glenn Research Center and acts as a mentor for the HUNCH program visited the class and talked to students about NASA and how they could help with using their skills to further the space program.

Mr. Hale came up with the idea of the HUNCH program which is a school-innovative program that promotes student interest in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. “While students are building hardware, softgoods, prototypes or experiments for NASA, they are also building their interest as researchers and scientists. It is a very cost-effective way for us to get new hardware and helping to develop the talents in these students.”

“We are very impressed with the students and equipment in Mr. Rakonczay’s class. We have really realized what a great resource classes like this are,” says Ms. Hall. “The students are very talented and hard working and it is helping us build up our program. I think it is very exciting for students to know they have helped to contribute to something that helps us explore space. We are inviting everyone to come to the Glenn Research Center in Cleveland, Ohio at the end of the school year so that we can thank them personally for everything they have contributed.”

“It is a phenomenal experience for my students,” says teacher Bill Rakonczay. “NASA provides training, materials, equipment and mentoring so my class can get real-world hands-on experience creating hardware for them. This has been a great partnership and we are looking forward to working with them throughout this school year.”
Kenworth Lends Truck to Diesel Mechanics Program

Students in Westin Blidy’s Heavy Equipment/Diesel Mechanics program at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center are the beneficiaries of Kenworth Truck Company of Buffalo. Kenworth is allowing the class to have access to a heavy duty T680 truck for a week at the Orleans/Niagara BOCES site.

“We are very appreciative of Kenworth’s generosity in donating this vehicle for my students to improve on their education,” says Mr. Blidy. “We will use it for engine troubleshooting and studying exhaust emissions. It is a great opportunity for my classes to get a better understanding of the latest technology that is used by the trucking industry because that is what they will be working on in the future.”

Precision Machine Tech Program Gets Boost with New State of the Art Machine

The Precision Machine Technology students received a nice surprise when they returned to class this fall; a brand-new Haas CNC mill machine. Teacher Bill Rakonczay says the $36,000 machine, which was funded from a grant, is the most popular in the United States and many colleges such as ECC and Monroe Community College and area companies are using this technology. “The companies are very excited that our students will be trained on this machine. They are already telling me they are looking to hire at least three students after they graduate in June. And if the students go on to college they will already be familiar with how to use this putting them ahead of their classmates.”

Mr. Rakonczay said he is very thankful to NYMAT Machine Tool who helped the school to order the machine. “They were great to work with and they had it built in California and then shipped it here. We are very excited to have it here and it is going to be a great tool to educate our students. There are a lot of jobs out there for graduates that pay very well and this will give them another set of skills to get those jobs.”

Principal Michael Weyrauch Recognized by Superintendents

Dr. Clark Godshall and Michael Weyrauch

Dr. Clark Godshall, District Superintendent of the Orleans/Niagara BOCES, selected Mr. Weyrauch because of these attributes and that he is in the process of completing his doctorate in education at the University of Rochester.

“Being recognized by your boss as someone they feel is worthy of nomination for this prestigious scholarship is a great feeling and an accomplishment in itself” says Mr. Weyrauch. “I want to thank the Council for selecting me as this year’s recipient. My family and I are honored and grateful for this scholarship and the recognition that has come with it. I am also thankful to Dr. Godshall for nominating me for this scholarship and his continued support and guidance”.

Orleans Career and Technical Education Center
Principal Michael Weyrauch was awarded the 2014 Raymond R. Delaney Memorial Scholarship at the New York Council of School Superintendents (NYCOSS) in Saratoga Springs at their annual conference. The Council asks superintendents to nominate someone from their district that shows outstanding commitment to education and leadership abilities. Dr. Clark Godshall, District Superintendent of the Orleans/Niagara BOCES, selected Mr. Weyrauch because of these attributes and that he is in the process of completing his doctorate in education at the University of Rochester.

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Building Trades Program Assists Lockport High School with Project

Recently, Mr. Anthony Molinaro’s and Gary Benker’s Building Trades Program at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center (NCTEC) undertook a podium project for the Lockport High School. His class helped to create a series of six podiums for the school. “These podiums will be used throughout the building’s classrooms for various student/teacher collaborations and presentations,” says Mr. Molinaro. “The doublewide podium will be used more specifically for special presentation and awards ceremonies”.

Mr. Molinaro says his students learned a lot about finished carpentry from start to finish and the elements involved in making this a community service-based project. He wants to extend a special thank you to Mr. Scott Brauer’s Project Based Engineering Program at the NCTEC who helped to design and engrave the Lockport logo.

Literacy Zone Partners With Digital Promise

The Literacy Program at Orleans/Niagara BOCES has been getting a lot of attention lately. Not only is it the largest provider of adult literacy in two counties in Western New York State, this year the National School Boards Association presented the program with its prestigious Magna Award for taking bold and innovative steps to advance public education. The honor caught the attention of the Digital Promise Foundation, an independent, bipartisan nonprofit, which was authorized by Congress in 2008 as the National Center for Research in Advanced Information and Digital Technologies.

Digital Promise wanted to know how Orleans/Niagara BOCES integrated technology into adult education programs like the Literacy Zone. Sue Diemert, a coordinator of the Literacy Zone, says, “We believe that adult education needs attention, investment and innovation and that technology has the potential to open doors for adult learners by expanding access to learning opportunities that help them acquire the skills necessary to succeed in a global and highly competitive 21st century workforce. We decided to enter into a partnership with Digital Promise to explore our adult education programs and how we incorporate many forms of technology into our classrooms.”

Digital Promise recently dispatched a media crew to BOCES to document the program. “The Literacy Zone concept includes adult basic education, high school equivalency, English as a Second Language (ESOL), computer literacy, job readiness skills, pre-collegiate preparation, career exploration and we incorporate technology into all the components,” says Chuck Diemert, also a coordinator of the Literacy Zone. “The film Digital Promise is putting together will highlight innovative adult education programs across the country and their use of technology to help students reach their goals in education. We are one of seven adult learning centers across the United States that will be featured.”

The segment on Orleans/Niagara BOCES will focus on the Literacy Zone concept, a welcome center in the most improvised two cities in the region and highlight the importance of a central location with many partnering agencies that can serve adults on many levels, including literacy, unemployment, underemployment, homelessness, and basically helping to break the barriers that prevent individuals and families from obtaining the tools needed to become self-sufficient with positive goals and outcomes. The crew visited the Welcome Center in Lockport, ESOL center in Waterport, where students are exposed to computer literacy in the migrant camps and Niagara County Jail, where the program focuses on using the internet in the classrooms for inmates to acquire computer literacy skills while having the ability to job search prior to release.
BOCES Classes Add to Lewiston Fire Department’s New Look

Recently the Lewiston Fire Company No. 1 completed a $1.8 million dollar renovation which included increasing the size of the fire station and remodeling the existing structure. Fire Company Director Barry Beebe felt it was time to also make lettering, address numbers and a company logo for the front of the station as well. “Last year while watching a bad Sabres game, I started sketching out what I thought the new logo should look like and since I have a background in design, I drew it out in CAD. We then started thinking about who we could get to make it a reality for us.”

He didn’t have to look too much further than his backyard. Lewiston resident Steve Frey is a Welding teacher at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center in Sanborn, whose students have been involved in a lot of projects in the community. “We had Klein Steel cut out all of the aluminum pieces and asked Steve if he would be willing to have his class work on it,” says Mr. Beebe. Mr. Frey said he and his class were more than happy to help out with the project. “It was a great learning experience for my students. It was a big project that required a lot of care because the aluminum could be easily scratched and dented. We were also fortunate that Scott Brauer’s Project Based Engineering class gave us a hand and Paul Magyar’s Auto Body students at the center helped us out with clear coating it to protect it. In between our regular class work, we put this together and we were very happy how all the projects turned out.”

Mr. Beebe said everyone at the department was thrilled how it looked. “We knew the Orleans/Niagara BOCES students had skills, but we were very impressed at how great it looked. We finally are in compliance with having our address numbers displayed, and have updated lettering on all of our buildings. And the logo is just amazing. We lit the logo from behind with LED lights and it is just incredible. We are very thankful to all the hard work that went into this.”

Fire Company President Les Myers personally invited the teachers and the students to the firehouse for the official unveiling and a pizza party as a thank you. “We are very grateful to the classes for helping us put the finishing touches on our fire hall addition and renovation. The finished products are just outstanding and have been very well received by the whole community.” Welding graduate Ryan Fritz felt a sense of pride looking at the front of the firehouse. “It was a fun project and it was tough, but seeing it up there is really awesome.”

Auto Body student Dallas Mors helped with sanding and painting the sign. “I felt very good about helping out with this.” Welding student Eric Facklan said he thought it was a great experience.

The Niagara Career and Technical Education Center Principal Anedda Trautman was on hand for the unveiling as well. “I wouldn’t have missed it. I know how hard the classes worked to get this exactly right for the fire department and it looks amazing. It is always nice when we can incorporate community service in what we are teaching our students and to know that they have made a mark on this community for many years to come is very exciting for all of us.”