Orleans/Niagara BOCES Names Its Employees of the Year

Orleans/Niagara BOCES kicked off their new school year with announcing their employees of the year. District Superintendent Dr. Clark Godshall announced the winners at opening day ceremonies. The winners were nominated by their peers in the categories of: administrator, clerical, maintenance, staff specialist, substitute, teacher aide and teacher for doing an outstanding job the previous school year.

Dr. Michael Weyrauch
The Administrator of the Year was Dr. Michael Weyrauch, the Principal at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center. He has been with BOCES for four and a half years and says his favorite part of his job is the staff and students that he gets to work with on a daily basis. “I felt very honored that in this organization, which has a large number of outstanding staff who give it their all each and every day, that I was chosen. It is an outstanding feeling.”

Shirley Campbell
In the Clerical category, Shirley Campbell, who works for the Special Education Department and has been with BOCES for 14 years. “My favorite part of my job is working with the secretaries in all the districts. They are a wonderful group of women. I was very shocked that I won. It was a wonderful surprise.”

Tom Wright
In the Maintenance category, Tom Wright, who has worked in the Print Shop for seven years. “The best part of working at BOCES is the people of course! All my coworkers and administrators are great to work with. I was very surprised and excited that I was named an employee of the year.”

Leon Szczerbinski
Staff Specialist Leon Szczerbinski has been with BOCES’ Safety Risk Department for eight years. “I work in a very solid unit that provides a valuable and necessary service for our component districts. I am impressed by the quality of service the Safety Risk unit has been able to provide and I am encouraged daily to see the end result; a safer place to learn and work. I have also met so many wonderful people at BOCES and in all the districts wherever I am assigned. I am grateful for their cooperation, assistance and the opportunity to know and interact with them. Being named an employee of the year is an awesome tribute! I am humbled and grateful by this honor and recognition, but I am certain that my inspiration and dedication was and is instilled from my parents, family and my BOCES family of whom I work and interact with daily.”

Theresa Clause
Special Education teacher Theresa Clause was named the Teacher of the Year. She has worked at BOCES for 20 years. “My favorite part of my job is the paperwork. Just kidding! Of course it’s the kids! My personal experiences are the greatest contributing factors to me becoming a teacher. These experiences shaped my views and continue to influence my teaching style. I love the fact that I can give back. I have a learning disability (dyslexia) and I have been on the other side of the classroom. I understand the daily struggles our kids have to overcome just to be on an even playing field with peers and hope I can be a positive role model for them. I want to challenge them to dream bigger and imagine themselves in a different set of circumstances. I want to make them aware of the opportunities they may be oblivious to because they do not know they exist outside of school or the life they know. I strive to meet students where they are, and not dwell on where they should be. I truly believe that you can accomplish anything you put your mind to. When I was in school I always wanted to be a teacher and with hard work and family support I made it happen. I was so surprised and humbled by this award.”

Rene Becht
Rene Becht has worked at BOCES for 22 years and is the teacher aide in the Welding Program. “I started working in the day care as a Toddler Room teacher and after 10 years, I started working with the high school vocational students where I have been an aide since 2008. My favorite part of my job is working with the students, helping them realize their potential. I have enjoyed the positive relationships I’ve built with many of them and the daily interactions in and out of school. The staff at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center are all great and I would not be able to do my job without them. It was a great honor to be recognized. I especially want to thank Dr. Elaine Black-Richards for all her advice over the years and always being there for me.”

Robin Quinones
Robin Quinones is an independent hair stylist at the Blue Door Salon, NYS Certified Instructor for Career and Technical Education and a Career Coach for Beauty Industry Professionals. She has substituted at BOCES since 2006. "It’s incredibly gratifying helping students prepare for future careers and continued education. I am honored to be chosen as Orleans/Niagara BOCES’ Substitute of the Year. It truly validates my efforts that I brought into the career and technical ed classrooms.”
ESL Class Becomes Pathway to Citizenship for Lyndonville Man

Orleans/Niagara BOCES ESL (English as a Second Language) teachers, Shelly and Jeff Smith, recently saw one of their students achieve a dream. Their student, Jesus Garcia, became an American citizen.

Jesus was from Xoaxia, Mexico and came to the United States when he was 15 years old with his parents. He worked with them picking apples for a local farmer. He wanted to attend school, but his parents would not allow it. At the age of 25 he found his way to the Yates Baptist Church in Lyndonville, where he resides, and started attending ESL classes there.

Recently with his teachers and his family, wife Janna and his sons Liam and Jamie attending, he stood in front of the Honorable Judge Hugh B. Scott and was sworn in at a Naturalization Ceremony in Hamburg, New York. “We are so very proud of his accomplishments that he has made,” says Mrs. Smith. “It was amazing to observe.”

Literacy Zone’s Karen Cunningham Named Public Health Education Promoter of the Year

Karen Cunningham, a teacher at the Literacy Zone, has been chosen as one of the Public Health Education Promoter of the Year by the Niagara County Department of Health’s Environmental Health Division.

Mrs. Cunningham works at the Trott Access Center in Niagara Falls and regularly presents or provides speakers to her classroom so that they have a wealth of health and safety knowledge to create a safer and healthier environment for themselves and their families. Paul Dicky, Director of Environmental Health, says, “Environmental health hazards can prove to be deadly and Mrs. Cunningham provides the BOCES students with the education that they need to prevent serious health and safety problems from occurring in their lives.”

A literacy zone is a comprehensive network of community services and partnerships that is committed to helping clients create pathways out of poverty. They offer free adult literacy classes in adult education, job readiness training, high school equivalency diploma preparation, English as a Second Language and computer literacy.

Karen has been working at BOCES since 2006. “I like working here. The programs that the Literacy Zone offers are so important. The teachers here are very dedicated to helping their students achieve success. My job is to make sure my students are able to get a job and/or diploma and keep moving forward with their lives. We wear a lot of hats here, teacher, caseworker, life coach and counselor. It is very rewarding when a student comes back to visit and tell me that they have a job and are doing great thanks to what they learned here.”

She started her career as a GED teacher and says she loves the challenge of what she does now. “I like to work at different things and different problems every day. We teach career readiness twice a week for six weeks; how to write a resume and a cover letter, how to look for employment and soft skills as far as appropriate behavior in the workplace. We also offer a more intense class that is seven days a week from 9:00am to 4:00pm for one month. We go over interview questions with them and how to fill out an application, what kind of jobs would be a good fit for them, how to write a thank you letter and how to navigate a job fair.” She also brings in guest speakers twice a week. “We have experts come in from the Health Department and they talk about fire, smoking, bugs, germs and the hazards of lead paint. Richard Krywalski from Citizens Bank comes in and tells them about banking and how to repair a credit score. We also have the Army come in and talk to them about the benefits of joining the Armed Services. Niagara Falls Legal Aid gives talks about tenants’ and disability rights and Ben Glurich from the Cornell Cooperative Extension comes in to talk to them about nutrition. I like to give students as many resources as I can and if they have questions, I try to answer them or find someone for them that can.”

When asked how she felt about her honor she said, “I was shocked that I won. It’s a good thing and shows that I am giving my students resources to be successful in life and the workforce. My students are very serious people who want to do better and get a job. They know social services is not a lifestyle and something that is temporary until they meet their goals. I am very passionate about my students and ensuring their success. I would like people in the area to know that we are here for them and have many resources to help them.”

For information on the Trott Access Center you can call (716) 278-8599.

LPN Students Show Shoppers about the Dangers of Hypertension

Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) students from the Orleans/Niagara BOCES Adult Education Program recently spent a day at the Fashion Outlets of Niagara Falls, USA talking to shoppers and mall walkers about the dangers of hypertension (high blood pressure) and offered free blood pressure readings.

The class performed over 100 screenings and gave some valuable information to everyone who participated.

Adult Education Program Receives Yahoo Community Fund

The Orleans/Niagara BOCES’ Adult Education Program is one of the first recipients of the Yahoo Community Fund for Niagara County. The fund, administered by Empire State Development, considered proposals that advance one or more of the three core enablements: implement smart growth, foster a culture of entrepreneurship and prepare our workforce and/or support any of the region’s target industry sectors. Eight projects were awarded a total of $400,000 and Orleans/Niagara BOCES received $160,982 to open a Workforce Development Center in Niagara Falls to bring training opportunities to those attending the literacy and workforce training programs.

Joseph Steinmetz, Orleans/Niagara BOCES Director of Adult and Continuing Education, says that the grant will greatly benefit the residents of Niagara Falls. “The unemployment rate in Niagara Falls is 6.4% compared to the New York State average of 4.8%, graduation rates are low, on average 73%, and out of the 18,000 individuals in the state who receive SNAP (food stamps), over 70% of them reside in Niagara Falls. Our hope is by offering them a career path to high-paying and in demand careers such as health, automotive, electrical and advanced manufacturing we can help them to break out of that cycle of poverty and revitalize the area.”

The money will be used to purchase equipment for a new Licensed Practical Nursing lab including a simulator as well as equipment for Electromechanical, Building Trades, Welding programs and four Smart Boards for the literacy classes. “It will benefit our students by providing them with state of the art teaching and lab facilities to enhance their learning and proficiency. We are looking forward to a new location and a lab that students will love to learn in. Our adult training programs will be equipped with the latest technology thanks to the Yahoo funds,” says Karen Kwidrans, Health Occupations Coordinator.

Niagara Falls. Our hope is by offering them a career path to high-paying and in demand careers such as health, automotive, electrical and advanced manufacturing we can help them to break out of that cycle of poverty and revitalize the area.”

The increase in occupational training programs will add to Orleans/Niagara BOCES’ established presence in Niagara Falls through their Literacy Zone sites which serves over 2,000 undereducated and under- or unemployed adults. The Literacy Zones not only provide educational services to clients but connects them to the many support services available in the city. Having workforce programs available will directly connect their disadvantaged populations to, not only literacy and other programs, but the high-need, technical training necessary for employment in our region,” says Mrs. Kwidrans.

Congratulations to Our New LPN Graduates!

We are so proud of our latest LPN graduating class! If you are interested in getting more information on our LPN program you can contact: Terry Josker at (716) 731-6800, ext: 4445.
Senator Ortt Delivers A Total of $45K To Orleans/Niagara BOCES

During a ceremonial check presentation today, Senator Rob Ortt (R,C,I – North Tonawanda) delivered a total of $80,000 in state funding to support educational programs, services and projects throughout Niagara, Orleans and Monroe counties.

The Orleans/Niagara Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) received $45,000 for its nationally-recognized adult health care programs offered at both its locations in Sanborn and Medina. The funding will go toward purchasing medical equipment and supplies, hospital beds, and computerized manikins used for scenario-based simulations. Adult/Continuing Education health care programs offered at O/N BOCES include Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN), Certified Nursing Assistant, Phlebotomy and Home Health Aide. With a high need for employees in the health care field, O/N BOCES is hoping the addition of new, state-of-the-art medical equipment will bolster the number of students in these programs.

The funding was secured by Senator Ortt in the 2016-17 State Budget in addition to state aid secured last year.

Auto Technology Students Find Stylish Way to Raise Breast Cancer Awareness

Students in John Jeckovich’s Auto Technology Program at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center are wearing their hearts on their sleeve, along with pink ribbons to show their support for National Breast Cancer Month.

For the month of October the students wore a blue Auto Technology t-shirt with a pink ribbon logo. “It is a horrible disease that affects many of us,” says teacher Mr. Jeckovich. “Many of us have people we care about who have had or are fighting this horrible disease. We thought it would be a nice gesture to wear our shirts to honor all of those who are afflicted and raise awareness around our center.”

Culinary Arts Students Help Salvation Army With Thanksgiving Meal

Robert Ihle’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 40 turkeys to the 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.”
Landscaping Program Cleans Up Around Career and Technical Education Center

Students in Tracey Dahlhaus’s VIP Landscaping, Grounds and Plant Production program have been hard at work cleaning up around the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center. The program which is designed to be an exploratory course for students with an overview of landscaping and plant production topics just started at both of the Orleans/Niagara BOCES’ Career and Technical Education Centers this year. Students in the class will be learning greenhouse and nursery plant production, small engine and equipment maintenance, landscape design, and construction and grounds maintenance.

Computer Technology Students Use Skills to Build Computer Lab

Computer Technology students at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center started off the year by building their own computer lab. Teacher Paul Herrmann, Jr., has the junior class dismantle the computers at the end of their first school year and when they return for the following school year they spend the first week rebuilding the computer lab.

“It is a great work based learning experience for them to be able to assemble the computer labs each year. They learn the computers inside and out,” says Mr. Herrmann.

The students learn Cisco IT essentials where they learn hardware and software along with web design, HTML and Java Script and simplistic game design. Mr. Herrmann says the students are also given a senior project of their own creation that counts for a big percentage of their grade.

“It allows them to explore whatever is of interest to them and share their findings. This is something that can add to their portfolio when they are applying for colleges or jobs.”

Student Cole Wilcox says he loves this class and it is a top priority for his education. “I would rather be here than any other class I have.” Classmate Josh Barnett echoes this thought. “It’s a lot of fun and I know this is what I want to do with my life. I think if I didn’t have this class, I wouldn’t even want to come to school.”
Trick or Treat!

The Early Childhood Education students and their students from the preschool celebrated Halloween by trick or treating at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center. The students and their teacher, Chris Burdick, planned a fun day of visiting the various offices and classrooms around the center to get treats and then playing games.

Everyone loved seeing the cool and creepy outfits of the little ones as they made their way around the school.

Students in Ed Wallace’s Heavy Equipment/Diesel Technology Program at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center recently had two guest speakers show up in class. T/Sergeant Steven Flower and Trooper Matt Luft were invited in by Mr. Wallace to talk to the students about CDL license classes, DOT regulations and what they look for when they perform a commercial vehicle safety inspection.

The two NYS Troopers went over license classes needed for each vehicle due to weight, dimension and type of material being transported. They addressed what they look for when inspecting a commercial vehicle and showed the students the list they use to make sure the drivers are in compliance. They also discussed the rules of the road which are: no alcohol or drugs, wearing seatbelts, no use of cellular phones or texting while driving and obeying regular traffic laws. They talked about how to drive defensively and safely. With a PowerPoint they went over a checklist of what drivers and technicians are responsible to inspect before a vehicle leaves or returns for any trip.

Patrick Lang and Randy Librock from Relco Systems generously volunteered their time and brought out a tractor trailer so that the students could watch the troopers perform an inspection. The class asked questions as the troopers went through the inspection process.

Mr. Wallace said he thought the guests were very helpful to the students. “I feel it’s very important for the students to understand commercial vehicle safety regulations. Drivers and technicians play a huge role in commercial vehicle safety. I am very appreciative of everyone sharing their time and expertise with the students.”
Orleans/Niagara BOCES Inducts 58 into National Technical Honor Society

Congratulations to 58 students from the Orleans and Niagara Career and Technical Education Centers who were recently inducted into the National Technical Honor Society. The students were honored at the Orleans/Niagara BOCES technical education centers in front of their teachers, families and district representatives for maintaining a 89.5 average in their career and technical education programs and a 84.5 average at their high schools.

This year's inductees are:

**Orleans Career and Technical Education Center:**

Stephen Zayac (Albion/Diesel Technology), Baily Michel (Barker/Culinary Arts), Noah Rocklein (Barker/Welding), Sarah Kurbs (Lockport/Cosmetology), Fessor Thomas (Lockport/Electricity), Ryan Townsend (Lockport/Cosmetology), Paul Grabowski (Medina/Diesel Technology), Brandon Luthart (Medina/Electricity), Jonathan Costanzo (Newfane/Security and Law Enforcement), Cassidy Geise (Newfane/Cosmetology), Teri-Ann Graham (Newfane/Cosmetology), Anthony Harris, Jr. (Newfane/Building Trades), Jacob Kelkenberg (Newfane/Computer Technology), Scott Zeitz (Newfane/Building Trades), Andrew McKee (Orleans County Christian School/Computer Technology), Rielly Albee (Roy-Hart/Early Childhood Ed), Tanner Bulmer (Roy-Hart/Electricity), Jessica Kassmann (Roy-Hart/Allied Health), Matthew Maines (Roy-Hart/Auto Tech), Timothy Maines (Roy-Hart/Welding), Timothy Moriarity (Roy-Hart/Electricity), Cheyenne Pegelow (Roy-Hart/Early Childhood Ed), Tanner Rees (Roy-Hart/Graphic Communications), Alexis Rinker (Roy-Hart/Allied Health), Brendan Schyve (Roy-Hart/Electricity), Jacob Stern (Roy-Hart/Allied Health), Rajillya Storms (Roy-Hart/Security and Law Enforcement) and Jarrett Thompson (Roy-Hart/Auto Tech).

**Niagara Career and Technical Education Center:**

Bradley Poeller (CAWNY/Health Occupations Technician), Trevor Richardson (CAWNY/Web Development & Game Programming), Vanessa Horton (Lew-Port/Early Childhood Ed), Vincent Presutti (Lew-Port/Building Trades), Cody Swart (Lew-Port/Web Development & Game Design), Caitlyn Mericle (Lockport/Early Childhood Ed), Eric Siemucha (Lockport/HVAC), Robert Hetherington (Newfane/HVAC), Amanda Brown (Niagara Falls/Building Trades), Sarah Schucker (Niagara Falls/Culinary Arts), Ryan Fatouros (Niagara Wheatfield/HVAC), Hope Flanders (Niagara Wheatfield/Animation & Video Production), Branden Pangrazio (Niagara Wheatfield/Security & Law Enforcement), Charlene Phillips (Niagara Wheatfield/Cosmetology), Antonio Zito (Niagara Wheatfield/HVAC), Hayleann Haudricourt (North Tonawanda/Early Childhood Ed), Kaila Veach (North Tonawanda/EMS), Elliot Spitzer (Roy-Hart/Animation & Video Production), John Tyler (Roy-Hart/HVAC), Vincent Monaco (Starpoint/Animation & Video Production), Stacy O’Malley (Starpoint/Early Childhood Ed), Kaitlyn Pasnik (Starpoint/Early Childhood Ed), Emma Seely (Starpoint/Cosmetology), Michael Todaro (Starpoint/Electricity), David Cloy (Wilson/HVAC), Georgia Gray (Wilson/Early Childhood Ed), Dylan Guy (Wilson/Computer Technology), Nicole Leder (Wilson/Early Childhood Ed), Joshua LiPuma (Wilson/HVAC) and Kayla Neumann (Wilson/Cosmetology).
Building Trades and Electricity Students Learn There About Wind Energy

Students in the Electricity/Electronics program and the Building Trades program recently had some interesting guests at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center. Representatives from APEX Clean Energy came into the building and spent time with students in Bill Leggett’s and Matt Anastasi’s classes talking about clean energy and giving a demonstration on how wind generation and local projects could provide power for thousands of homes.

APEX Public Affairs Associate, Cat Strumlauf, says that there are three proposals on the table in the area: Heritage Wind in Barre and Lighthouse Wind in Somerset and Yates. “Heritage Wind would generate 200 megawatts of clean energy which is enough to power around 53,000 New York homes. The project will bring in millions of dollars in revenue for the county over 30 years and will mean a steady source of income for landowners who have signed onto the project.”

APEX brought in technicians to host a wind blade workshop and demonstrated what wind power could do. “The students had a great time learning about the wind generation business and how they might become a repair technician or installer,” says Electricity/Electronics teacher Bill Leggett. “The creation of the wind foils to get the best efficiency competition was well received by all. Using what they learned in the presentation along with the scientific model to create, test and modify their blades is a good use of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math) based learning that we all use at the Tech Center.”

Building Trades teacher Matt Anastasi says the demonstration was excellent. “The students were actively engaged the entire time. It really tied together a lot of what we do here. My students are usually hands-on learners and the students were involved in a friendly competition designing, building and modifying wind foils with some basic office supplies. The students learned a tremendous amount of scientific principles that we use in Building Trades. One in particular is using Bernoulli’s Principle which is beneficial in our roofing lab, which is the main principle in wind turbines. Now the students will have a better understanding, and maybe become more interested in wind turbines, considering the building/designing careers that are becoming more in demand now.”

“It was really interesting to see and apply physics principles to a real-world problem, such as wind turbines,” said Elijah Sones, who takes the Building Trades program. Electricity/Electronics students, Joe Brown, Ethan Knott and Cameron McGhee designed a sail in a blade shape with the right curvature to allow it to accelerate at a faster rate. “It was great to tie all of the concepts in our classes together and have a friendly competition among the students,” said Mr. Anastasi.

NCTEC SkillsUSA Students Attend Leadership Training in D.C.

Niagara Career and Technical Education Center students Dylan Guy and Rachel Gifford attended the SkillsUSA National Leadership Institute in Washington, D.C. recently.

Guy, a student from Wilson is the New York State SkillsUSA Parliamentarian. He is taking the Computer Technology Program at the Orleans/Niagara BOCES Center. Rachael Gifford, attends the Christian Academy and takes the Culinary Arts program at the site. She received a SkillsUSA Area One scholarship of a $1000 to attend the SkillsUSA National Leadership Institute.

SkillsUSA is a United States career and technical student organization which serves more than 320,000 high school, college students and professional members enrolled in training programs in technical, skilled, and service occupations, including health occupations. The Leadership Institute allowed both students to train with other SkillsUSA students from all over the country. “I loved working with other students from all over the nation and look forward to training other students at SkillsUSA Fall Leadership in Albany this November,” said Dylan.

“Both students did a great job representing themselves in working with others and leading the way up on Capitol Hill,” says SkillsUSA advisor Robert Ihle. “While in D.C., we were able to attend workshops that taught skills in leadership, communication, getting the job done, and some ideas in how to make a difference with our government officials. Both students also went up to Capitol Hill and met with representatives from Congressman Brian Higgins’ office where they lobbied for the Carl D. Perkins Act and for the SkillsUSA organization and students.”

Some other highlights of the students’ trip included the opportunity to tour the Capitol Building, see the Pentagon Memorial, the laying of the wreath and changing of the guard at Arlington Cemetery and some of the Smithsonian Buildings.
Security and Law Enforcement Class Addresses Opioid Epidemic with Narcan Training

Opioid overdoses are a growing nationwide concern with prescription drug and heroin abuse increasing across all demographic groups. For the Security and Law Enforcement students at the Orleans Career and Technical Education Center, in their chosen career they will no doubt be encountering someone suffering from an opioid overdose. “This is a growing epidemic in our country,” says Security and Law Enforcement teacher Steve Browning. “We felt it was very important to bring in an expert to talk about it and who can show the students the proper way to administer Narcan, which blocks the opioid overdose effects. Law enforcement agencies are using this more and more.”

Andrew Steel, EMT-P/NRP with Lake Plains Community Care Network, spent some time with Mr. Browning’s and Mr. Gene Newman’s classes. He educated them on opioid overdoses and showed them how to administer Narcan, also known as naloxone, nasal spray. “Unfortunately there are a growing number of people who are experimenting with drugs and are drug dependent. Opioid overdoses are occurring in urban, rural and suburban areas on a daily basis. It is hard for these people to get help because there is a two year waiting list to get into rehab centers. We are trying to push out Narcan to the communities because it is turning into a pandemic. I also want to make the students aware that it is not only people who are using these drugs recreationally who can have an overdose. Sometimes elderly people, who are taking prescribed opioids, will forget that they already took their dose and take more causing them to overdose. I spend a lot of time talking to first responders on how to identify if someone is overdosing and what to do.”

Mr. Steel went over the signs and symptoms of an overdose with the students. “Usually in an overdose you have a small window to respond and there is no time to waste. You have four to six minutes until they die if they are not treated with Narcan.” He assured the students they don’t need to fear helping someone who is overdosing thanks to the 911 Good Samaritan Law. The law protects the non-medical person from liability who administers naloxone. With a prescription people are allowed to carry ten syringes. “This device will equip community members, families, friends and caregivers with a tool they can use without medical training to save a life,” says Mr. Steel.
NCTEC Garden

For Science teacher Dan LaBernardo it all started a few years ago when his aide, Karen Boyd, brought in some cherry tomato seeds for his homeroom students. “She thought that it would give the kids something to do when they were caught up with their schoolwork. We put them on the back counter and the kids were just drawn in by the whole process,” says Mr. LaBernardo. “They cared about them, they nurtured them and got excited when they started growing.”

The reaction he saw among his homeroom class got his wheels spinning on how to tap into their excitement and turn it into a learning experience. “I teach environmental science and it had a unit on agriculture. I thought let's make this part of the curriculum and see how the students respond to it. They really enjoyed it and every year it seemed I spent more and more time adding to the unit, eventually converting our classroom into a true growing laboratory. I added shelves, fluorescent lights, thermometers, and timers in the classroom and finally thought; I might need to get some help with this.”

He said many people in the community stepped up to help him out with the project by donating seeds and soil. A company as far away as Indiana donates up to 50lbs of seed every year. Zehr’s in Burt, NY gave them a huge gift of acting as mentor and even donating some greenhouse space to start the seedlings. “When I told the owner I was looking for assistance he told me, “You don’t need to make another call, you hit the jackpot!” He allowed our students to tour the greenhouse and let us pick his brain. It was great.” Mr LaBernardo says that almost every single farmer he has reached out to has been very open with him about their craft. “They are excited about passing on their culture to a new generation. The end result is the students walk out of here with a skill and pride in what they have created.”

At the end of their first planting, the students had hundreds of tomato plants that they sold at the school. It inspired Mr. LaBernardo to dream big. With the help of Paul Dewey’s and Anthony Molinaro's students at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center, we were able to set up our own vegetable garden right here at the Academy. Now I would really love to get a greenhouse. I have to do some research and see if I can get support for that. Between our regular students, the Career and Development and Occupational Studies (CDOS) students and our summer school students, we have many children that have benefitted from this part of my curriculum. The impact it has had on the kids has been amazing. As we all know, some of our students haven’t had a lot of nurturing in their lives and to see them take such delicate care and nurture these plants is truly a wonderful sight. When they see the plants produce fruits, vegetables, or flowers, it’s like they are proud parents. “On so many levels this has been good for them, the staff, and the culture here at the Academy. I really hope we can expand this.”

Niagara Academy Students Show Gratitude to Military

As part of a Business Class assignment at the Niagara Academy, students had to write a formal letter of gratitude to deployed military. As other students in the school heard about the assignment, they wanted to be part of it and asked what they could do.

Teacher Therese Floss sent a flyer around the school and called the mission Operation Gratitude. She asked anyone interested for donations of leftover Halloween candy and cards for our troops.

Staff and students brought in over 10 pounds of candy and students handmade 19 cards to send along with it. “I was very impressed with the students,” says Ms. Floss. “The thoughts they conveyed were very sincere, heartfelt and touching.”

Roy Hart Learning Center Show Their Gratitude

When people think of November, they usually think of things that they are grateful for. At the Orleans/ Niagara BOCES’ Royalton Hartland Learning Center, some of the people, the staff and students are grateful for are the bus drivers, maintenance staff, cafeteria staff and the local police that ensure the safety and wellbeing throughout the school day.

On November 9th, the center celebrated with an Appreciation Day and invited everyone in for breakfast and snacks. The annual tradition is something that everyone looks forward to every year.
Niagara Academy Students Prove to Be Rocket Scientists

The middle school students at the Niagara Academy have recently taken their learning to a higher level.

As part of their Technology class, with teacher John Vogt, the class built rockets powered by water and compressed air, capable of shooting 500 feet into the air. The students constructed the rockets out of pop bottles and foam board and applied what they learned about Newton’s Laws of Motion and principles of flight.

“The common reaction from the students was it was a blast!” says Mr. Vogt.

Newfane Learning Center Shows Support for Those Fighting Breast Cancer

As everyone knows, Breast Cancer Awareness Month is October and staff at the Orleans/Niagara BOCES’ Newfane Learning Center wore pink to show their support for those battling the disease.

Newfane School District held a Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk on October 15th. Kudos to our staff for making a difference!

OLC Goes All Out for Halloween

Students and staff got into the Halloween spirit and had a scarily good time!

Special Games Wrap Up

Students and staff had a great time at their annual Special Games at the Kenan Center. Students partook in various challenges and competitions for their skill level and enjoyed being together at the event.

Photo Caption: Faith St. Cyr has Director of Special Programs Ron Barstys all wrapped up as part of her competition.
Security and Law Enforcement Students Tour Niagara County Dispatch and Jail

Security and Law Enforcement teacher Amber Chunco, recently took her students from the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center on a field trip to the Niagara County Dispatch/Communications Center along with the Niagara County Jail.

At Dispatch students had a Q&A session with Captain Kasprzak. Many of the students asked insightful questions pertaining to the job and then were able to observe dispatchers taking calls. Michael Buzzeo, a student from Starpoint said, “I thought Dispatch was interesting because you get to see where the calls come in before they are sent out.”

Students continued on to the Niagara County Jail. Students were given a tour by Deputy Granto and Deputy Kingsbury. Students were walked through the entire facility, had a Q&A session with the deputies and were also able to have a Q&A session with an inmate. Leena Delucci, a student from Niagara Wheatfield, commented that although they were only in the facility for 2 hours it felt like it was a week due to how controlled the movement was inside. Classmate Annabella Murch said, “It was interesting to see what the life of an inmate was like. My favorite part of the field trip was being able to see all the contraband and how the contraband is brought into the facility.”

After the field trip multiple students approached the deputies and the instructors talking about how beneficial the field trip was. Ms. Chunco said, “This field trip opened up the students’ eyes to both the fields of corrections as well as dispatch.”

Newfane Learning Center Gives Thanks

Students and staff celebrated Thanksgiving together at the Orleans/Niagara BOCES Newfane Learning Center recently. Teachers and their classes prepared the turkey with all the fixings and shared in the holiday together. Students made adorable centerpieces and placemats and talked about what they were thankful for.

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