

# Tools of the Trade

SPRING 2023

A Publication of the Southern Westchester BOCES Center for Career Services

## Advocacy Day 2023



Each year, Southern Westchester BOCES students serve as ambassadors for our programs. Joined by educators and administrators, they take part in

Advocacy Day, meeting with New York State legislators and sharing their stories of success. The goal is to ensure that our state representatives have the opportunity to understand the depth, breadth and scope of services provided by Southern Westchester BOCES, learning firsthand from our students why these programs are so valuable and worthy of their support. This year, for the first time since the pandemic, that effort will take place in person.

We've captured the stories of some of our exemplary students and share them here.

### Opportunities in CTE

As more and more people recognize the value and diversity of Career and Technical Education programs, Southern Westchester BOCES students continue to exemplify all the ways that students can achieve and excel as they prepare for the world of work.

Ariel Novominski and John Cross are excellent examples. Ariel is an Edgemont High School senior who is studying Engineering at SWBOCES. John is learning the ins and outs of TV/Video Production in our state-of-the-art studio. Both arrived on the Career Services campus in Valhalla looking to set themselves apart academically and professionally.

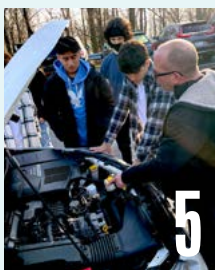
For her part, Ariel chose SWBOCES in favor of an extra Advanced Placement elective, a decision some of her friends questioned. She admits she saw their point but ultimately decided there was no reason to limit herself or miss the chance to explore a career path before graduation.

"Many of my friends dismissed it because they felt that they could take an extra AP class here or there and that that could further their education," she said, "but now I realize that I can do both."

John chose SWBOCES because he wanted to get something extra out of his high school experience. He's looking to go straight to work after graduation and decided the CTE program would give him the best shot.

ADVOCACY DAY, continues on page 2

### In This Issue...



### A Message from the Director



This time of year, everyone seems to be in a groove. The holidays are a distant memory, and summer is still a ways off. Spring has sprung, but there's work to be done and our students and faculty are completely focused.

Once again our delegates to the New York HOSA Spring Leadership Conference in Syracuse made us proud. The EMS program brought home several honors, and our own Brianna Osorio was elected president for the 2023-24 school year. Congratulations!

Also making us proud were our CTE student advocates who joined administrators in Albany for the annual BOCES Advocacy Day, making the case for state legislators for the value and impact of our programs. Judging by the reactions from some of the highest ranking elected officials in New York State, they were as impressed as we were!

Earlier in the winter, our local newspaper reported on the growing recognition of the value of Career and Technical Education, looking to our students and campus as primary examples to make that case. We were delighted to see two of our EMS students featured on Page One.

Our faculty deserve tremendous praise for guiding our students. Here you'll read about a graduate who returned to lead the very program he completed 20 years ago and a new addition to our team who stepped in mid-year to fill a key classroom role.

There's a hybrid vehicle on campus — a gift from the New York Power Authority — that has been a boon to the Automotive Technology program and which will soon be wrapped in vinyl courtesy of Commercial Art and Collision Technology. Speaking of Commercial Art, our students' creations have been on exhibit across Westchester.

Here's to a happy and productive start to spring and the final stretch of the school year!

*Dahlia A. Jackson*

Director, Southern Westchester BOCES Center for Career Services

# Advocacy Day: Exemplary Students tell their BOCES Story

## ADVOCACY DAY, continued from page 1

"BOCES has prepared me substantially to go toward that goal," he said.

"BOCES gives you a realistic take on whatever industry that you're interested in," he added. "It definitely gives you a very in-depth look at whatever you think it is."

Ariel agrees. She considered medicine, business and engineering before arriving at SWBOCES, and her studies here have helped her narrow down her choices.

"BOCES allows you to experience all of these things while you're still in high school. There's no reason why you have to spend four years in college studying something that may not turn out to be your passion," she said. "It gives you a step up into the workforce and into seeing whether your goal really is your goal."

### Special Services students benefit from CTE programs too

For Samantha Perkaj, Southern Westchester BOCES' Special Services programs at Irvington High School allowed her to focus on school. Samantha arrived there from Yonkers, "and when I met the people here it just clicked and I've been here ever since."

At Irvington, she has felt like she could go to school and only worry about school without outside concerns interfering. "It felt like a very safe environment here for me," she said. In fact, she met her best friend on her first day there, and the two remain close.

She also takes Career and Technical Education classes for a portion of the day at the Career Services campus in Valhalla. She looks forward to studying abroad and one day becoming an ultrasound technician.

Samantha feels strongly that BOCES programs are deserving of support because they make a difference for kids.

"They provide kids like me who went through some traumatic experiences a safe place where they can grow and flourish, and gives them so many opportunities to do things they want to do for the future and for the rest of their lives," she said.

Andrew Murphy, who also takes Career Tech classes in Valhalla, is eager to put the construction trade skills he is learning to use after high school. He appreciates the job and career planning assistance he gets here. He has attended classes at the Irvington High School location for four years.

"If you really want to do something then this is a really good place," Andrew said. "They're forming you. They're kind of sculpting you."

Jordan Baldwin has come to Irvington High School from Mount Vernon since elementary school.

The classes are good, and the teachers are really nice, he said. He feels like he's being prepared well for the future, which could include a career in the trades or even architecture.

"I believe they have a good way of helping people get a better future with the programs they provide," Jordan said.

David Nunez of Yonkers has come here since graduating from middle school and said it has been a great place to find your purpose.

"If you're dreaming about something you want to do in the future and you really put your heart into it, it's eventually going to come true," said David.

For him that dream starts with construction and plumbing right now, but he wants to study computer science, sound production and computer engineering. He credits BOCES for the progress he has made in high school.

"I've felt very happy for the past four years that I've been in high school," he said. "Never once did I just want to leave, because I felt like I belonged."

Andrew Stein started coming to Irvington High School this school year and is excited about how well he is doing. He believes SWBOCES has helped him to focus on his goals and think about his future.

"I'd like to make a difference, and one of the ways I feel I can make a difference is by going into law," Andrew said. "I have an ambition to help people in any way that I can. I think that going into politics could help."

"I've only been here a short time," he added, "but BOCES has helped me a lot."

Learn more about our student advocates at [swboces.org/advocacy\\_day\\_2023](https://swboces.org/advocacy_day_2023)



## Reporters tour campus, interview students about the value of CTE

*SWBOCES students featured on front page of lohud's look at Career Tech programs*



We were proud to see our students interviewed by journalists from The Journal News /lohud.com. CTE has truly evolved over the years, and we are pleased to see the word getting out about the fantastic opportunities available to our students.





## SWBOCES CTE Students Shine at SkillsUSA Regionals



Students from a range of Career Services programs excelled at the SkillsUSA Regional competition in February at Orange-Ulster BOCES.

SkillsUSA is a partnership of students, teachers and industry working together to ensure America has a skilled workforce. The organization provides educational programs, events and competitions that support career and technical education programs like those offered at Southern Westchester BOCES Careers Campus in Valhalla.

"Our students continue to excel and make us proud when matched up against their peers from across the region and statewide,"

Teacher and SkillsUSA Advisor Ray Sulla said. "They demonstrate that they are able to perform in a real-world setting and learn that they can hold their own in their chosen field of study. That's a valuable lesson."

Director of Career Services Dahlia Jackson congratulated all of the students who participated. Their performance is indicative of the caliber of the entire student body on the Valhalla campus, she said, and it reflects the high quality instruction and relevant coursework teachers provide.

The New York State SkillsUSA Leadership and Skills Championships will take place April 26-28 in Syracuse. Congratulations to all the competitors.

The winners were:

**Ariel Novominski**  
1st Place, Related Technical Math

**Samantha Perkaj**  
1st Place, Job interview

**Chayce Hewitt**  
2nd Place, Advertising & Design

**Shantel Ximines**  
3rd place, Cosmetology

**Alejandro Valdovinos**  
3rd Place, Extemporaneous Speaking

**Alexis Madrigal**  
3rd Place, Job Skill Demo

## CTE SUCCESS | Alumni Spotlight

### FORMER CTE STUDENT ACCEPTED INTO THE INTERNATIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHERS GUILD



Thanks to the skills, mentorship, and direction he received as a student in the TV/Video Production program at Southern Westchester BOCES, Jake Romer's dream of becoming a behind-the-camera creator has come true. The New Rochelle native has recently been accepted into the Local 600 International Cinematographers Guild.

Acceptance into the prestigious organization is a huge accomplishment for Jake and a testament to the power of SWBOCES Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

"Being accepted into the Local 600 International Cinematographers Guild is a dream come true," said Mr. Romer. "It brings validity to all the hours I spent at BOCES studying the equipment and learning all the technical aspects of TV production. I'm excited for the opportunities that being a member of the guild will bring and I look forward to expanding my network of industry professionals."

At SWBOCES, Jake acquired concrete skills that he uses daily in his work, from basics like coiling cables and exporting media to preparing cameras for filming. The technical skills and experience he gained set him apart from other candidates

and landed him high-level freelance gigs as a camera loader on major network TV shows such as "Law and Order: Organized Crime" and "Power."

As a camera loader, Jake is responsible for loading and unloading cameras, organizing equipment, and making sure that everything runs smoothly on set. It's a challenging and demanding job, but one that Jake is well-prepared for due to his experience in the TV/Production program.

"Our program provides a robust education and work-based learning experiences necessary for students to succeed in the entertainment industry," said SWBOCES TV/Video Production teacher Michael May. "With our focus on real-world projects using industry-standard equipment, students are well-prepared for the demands of the industry and can hit the ground running upon graduation."

Mr. May said that in addition to learning technical skills and hands on training in areas such as camera operation and video editing, students are taught important professional soft skills required in any work environment like time management, communication

and collaboration.

For Jake, the TV/Production program at SWBOCES was the starting point for a successful career in the entertainment industry. It provided him with the technical skills, hands-on experience, and industry connections that he needed to succeed. And as a former student, Jake is a shining example of what can be achieved through CTE programs.

"I wouldn't be where I am today as a member of the International Cinematographers Guild without the skills and experience I gained at BOCES. It gave me a solid foundation in the industry and prepared me for the demands of working on set. I'm grateful for the opportunities that the program provided me and would recommend it to anyone interested in pursuing a career in TV/Production."

Mr. Romer said he is already receiving calls from fellow union members for future jobs.

"Being accepted into the Local 600 International Cinematographers Guild is a dream come true." — Jake Romer, Former TV/Production Student at SWBOCES



# FACULTY SPOTLIGHT

JON ARRAS, ARCHITECTURE & INTERIOR DESIGN

## NEW ADDITION TO CTE FACULTY HITS HIS STRIDE



Technical expertise, hands-on experience translate well to the classroom

Jonathan Arras is a new face on the Careers Center campus in Valhalla, a mid-year addition to the CTE faculty teaching Architecture and Interior Design.

Halloween of all days marked the start of a new chapter in the career of the longtime technical designer, who stepped in after his predecessor left to take a new position. Mr. Arras's educational background, his prior career and even his experiences as a parent are combining to help him chart a new course in Career and Technical Education.

His classroom is filled with supplies, for which he is determining the best uses. The furniture is arranged how he found it but probably not how he'll arrange it when this school year winds down. His lesson planning is constantly evolving as he discovers better and better ways to support and guide his students.

"Getting the kids to see what I want them to see and learning to speak simplistically enough for them to get it is what I struggled with," he said. "My daughter's a junior, and I've got a bunch of juniors here. It's interesting seeing it from the other side."

Mr. Arras worked in a scene shop for a decade until the pandemic. It was then that he began to turn to teaching what he knew to the next generation. His background in CAD — computer-assisted drawing — fit well with what this position required.

A scene shop builds theatrical or television scenery, he said, from a luxury shoe display for an international company to museum exhibits. His shop built studio sets for 10 Olympics. He worked on the NBC Nightly News set and Chinese TV studio sets.

Mr. Arras holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Technical Theater from Penn State and a Master of Fine Arts degree in Technical Direction from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. A father of two girls, the younger of whom is 9, he is originally from Pennsylvania, as is his wife.

He worked his way up in the field, eventually getting into technical design, which relates well to what he now teaches. The work was rewarding, but the deadlines were demanding and the hours long.

He recalled getting a call from an installer while with his child on a playground. One Friday afternoon at lunch, he got an urgent materials request for delivery to Washington, D.C. NBC had landed a major interview with then-President Obama and needed a set and backdrop. He had to find the materials, get them delivered to the shop and have the finished set in place by Monday morning.

Experiences like that offer a valuable lesson for students about the world of work. Many of them will require additional instruction beyond the foundational program, but the skills they learn at SWBOCES will remain applicable.

"I want to prepare them for, and get them into, a decent college," Mr. Arras said.

His predecessor focused more on Interior Design, while his CAD background leans more toward the architectural side. CAD is a tool that a lot of industries use — architecture, scene design. Even the classroom furniture likely began as CAD drawings, he said. He wants students to have a basic understanding of the tool. That said, he studied lighting, costume and scene design, which he draws upon in the classroom now.

"We were fortunate to have found someone with the varied technical skill set that Mr. Arras brings to the role, particularly with the school year already under way," said Principal Evangelo Michas. "He has settled in quickly and embraced the challenge. His students have really taken to him, and he offers them an excellent example

of real-world experience in the field they are pursuing."

Mr. Arras has found his colleagues and administrators to be very supportive. Someone is always checking in to see if he needs anything. At the same time, the degree of autonomy inherent in teaching has been a switch from the constant collaboration among colleagues of his prior career. There's a level of trust implicit in that autonomy that he appreciates, he said.

For now he's taking down copious notes and reminders with an eye toward the future. There have been plenty of victories so far, too, including students who apply themselves and improve their performance. Then there are students who push him so they can learn more.

"I had a kid the other day say to me, why didn't you tell me that from the beginning?" he said of a recent lesson.

Lessons are cumulative, though, and what's learned in the end has to be taught in the right sequence in order to be understood. It's kind of a parallel for his own progression as a new teacher.

"I am learning as much from them as they are from me," he said.



## ARCHITECTURE & INTERIOR DESIGN





## FOR AUTO TECH STUDENTS, HYBRID CAR IS A STEP FORWARD IN TRAINING FOR AN ALL-ELECTRIC INDUSTRY

**NEW YORK POWER AUTHORITY DONATION ARRIVES OVER HOLIDAY BREAK**



The Automotive Technology program at Southern Westchester BOCES' Career Services campus recently received a donation of a 2016 Subaru Crosstrek hybrid vehicle that students will use as a learning tool in their classes.

The New York Power Authority donated the car as part of its Fleet Donation Program, a statewide investment in the training of future technicians to repair and maintain the growing number of hybrid and electric vehicles on the roads. In the fall, NYPA announced the donation of 13 vehicles in an initiative to enable young people in underserved communities to explore careers associated with the increasing electrification of vehicles in New York State.

Principal Evangelo Michas accepted the generous donation, which was delivered over the Christmas break

"We have heard directly from our industry partners that there is a growing need for skilled technicians with training in hybrid and electric vehicle technology," Mr. Michas said. "Car makers are producing more of these vehicles than ever, and we are committed to providing our students with the skills required to excel and advance in this evolving field. This donation by NYPA helps greatly in that regard."

Plans are underway for a collaboration with SWBOCES' Commercial Art and Collision Technology programs to design and apply a vehicle wrap that reflects the car's NYPA origins.

Students in instructor Peter Schwartzott's class had a chance to kick the tires, so to speak, and look under the hood. They were impressed with its condition and eager to learn to keep it in top running condition. The white hatchback has fewer than 100,000 miles

"These cars are going to be the future," said student Luis Diaz from New Rochelle. "This way we get more knowledge about hybrids and eventually electric vehicles as well."

Classmate Said Mayorga from Rye Neck agreed. "I think it's really valuable because the next step in automotive is electric vehicles," he said. "States like California have passed bans on internal combustion engines. This is definitely a valuable learning experience."

New York adopted legislation in September advancing the transition to electric vehicles with the goal for all new passenger cars and trucks sold in the state to be zero-emissions by 2035.

Mr. Schwartzott said that even though hybrids are not new, they are a stepping stone in the shift toward fully electric vehicles replacing gas-fueled ones.

"Everything is going that way," he said. "It's going to happen, so you need to embrace it and prepare yourself."

That said, he added, a car is a car, and many of the components and systems — drivetrains, suspensions, steering — are the same, regardless of the type of engine. That creates plenty of learning opportunities.

"What's most important for us is to have our students understand the safety requirements when it comes to these cars because electric vehicle manufacturing is very different," he said.

Those differences require dealership service centers to have certified specialists for each make and model, Mr. Schwartzott said. That specialization, in turn, bodes well for those technicians whose skills will be ever more valuable in the job market.

"On behalf of Southern Westchester BOCES and our Center for Career Services, I would like to express my appreciation to the New York Power Authority for this generous donation," District Superintendent Dr. Harold A. Coles said. "This vehicle will further enhance and improve our already leading edge automotive curriculum, which allows us to provide students with the training and skills that are in demand by employers today and into the future."

"New York State is moving to cleaner transportation, and that transition brings with it new clean energy job opportunities," said NYPA Acting President and CEO Justin E. Driscoll. "The New York Power Authority is pleased to be able to support Southern Westchester BOCES' maintenance and repair programs. We are glad to play a role in ensuring that energy-related workforce programs are current and relevant, and students have the tools they need to develop the skills that will be required in a future powered by zero-emissions vehicles."

*"New York State is moving to cleaner transportation, and that transition brings with it new clean energy job opportunities."*

*— NYPA Acting President and CEO Justin E. Driscoll*

# COMMERCIAL ART STUDENTS FEATURED AT PRESTIGIOUS KATONAH YOUNG ARTIST EXHIBIT



Several students in the Commercial Art program of Southern Westchester BOCES' Center for Career Services had their work on display in the Katonah Museum of Art's annual Young Artists exhibit. This prestigious event showcases the talent of young artists from across the region and provides a platform for them to display their work to a wider audience.

This year's event was particularly special as the museum is celebrating its 40th anniversary of the Young Artists show. In addition to displaying the work of high school seniors, Young Artists 2023 gives students the opportunity to participate behind-the-scenes in many aspects of mounting a museum exhibition.

Under the guidance of teacher Damian Powers, 10 students displayed their exceptional talent in various mediums and participated in all aspects of the exhibit, from designing promotional material to curating and installing all the work in the gallery.

"My teacher from my home school saw my piece at the museum and she told me how impressed she was with the work," senior Ife Akinbola said of his artwork. "It made me feel good to know that my artwork is on display for the public to see."



Ife said his piece, titled Mom, was inspired by his mother, of whom he is very proud. He presented the artwork to her as a birthday gift.

"Mr. Powers always encourages us to take chances with our artwork and show it to as many people as possible. I was really glad he encouraged me to show my work at the museum," said senior Arianna Hoover-Illuesma.

Arianna created an acrylic piece specifically for the show and titled it "Carasa Para Nada" or Face for Nothing.

More than 40 districts from Dutchess, Fairfield, Putnam, Rockland, and Westchester counties participated in the Young Artists Show, which ended its run in late February.

"I am incredibly proud of our students and the work they have produced," said Mr. Powers. "The exhibition provides a unique opportunity for these young artists to showcase their talent and gain recognition for their hard work and dedication to their craft."

## EMERGENCY Medical Services

### EMS PROGRAM DOMINATES STATEWIDE SKILLS COMPETITIONS

*SWBOCES Career Tech students excel at health occupations leadership conference*



Students in the Emergency Medical Services program returned from the prestigious New York HOSA Spring Leadership Conference in Syracuse with an impressive haul of awards in the statewide skills competitions.

HOSA Future Health Professionals, formerly Health Occupations Students of America, is an international career and technical student organization. The March 21-23 conference was in person for the first time since 2019. Students from multiple SWBOCES medical field-related programs typically attend and compete. This year it was the EMS program's year to clean up.

SWBOCES students swept the CPR First Aid Category. Laurel Lowenthal and Brianna Osorio took first place; Emily Ferraro and Kieran Mullin came in second; and Kaliyani Hartung and Connor Kwan finished third.

In the Emergency Medical Technician competition, Emily Ferraro and Lisanne Rattery won first place while Alyssa Carrasquillo and Amara Osei came in second.

And in the New York Achievement Awards,



the winners were students Laurel Lowenthal and Kieran Mullin and Teaching Assistant Anchelle Allen as advisor.

Meanwhile, Brianna Osorio of White Plains was elected president of New York HOSA for the 2023-2024 school year.

Participants agreed that what they've learned under the instruction of Teacher Robert Del Greco prepared them well for the competition. "I was confident," Lisanne said. "I feel like we've prepared so much (in class),

it's almost second nature."

Under the competition scenario, they were tasked with providing the emergency medical response to the victim of a two-story fall. The injuries they encountered included a broken leg, head trauma and a pelvic injury.

"After last year, I didn't want to stress," said Alyssa, who said she was a lot more nervous when her team finished second in CPR a year ago. "This time I got in there, and everything just flowed."

Amara admitted she felt some nerves, but said that having an experienced partner helped. "She was calm and collected," Amara said. "I think it was seeing how confident she was in what she was doing, and I was like, I got this."

Mr. Del Greco said he received very positive feedback about his students from the judges at the competition. He expressed confidence in them to repeat their showing at the international competition in Dallas in June. By that time, several will likely have earned certifications as EMTs and First Responders.

"It's like with a coach," he said. "I can't take the credit. I have to give it to the players."





## Work-Based Learning internships to get underway with community partners



The Work-Based Learning Department at the Southern Westchester BOCES Career Services campus in Valhalla sent several students off campus to gain real-world work experience, thanks to opportunities offered by community partners.

Beginning in mid-January, students traveled to their internships multiple days each week during their CTE class time.

Three students in instructor Ray Sulla's Security Law & Policing class went to Westchester Community College in Valhalla, where they worked with campus security personnel.

Two of Jason Poniatowski's Office Skills students were placed in customer service support roles with Premier Collection auto group in White Plains.

Automotive Technology Instructor Scott Nelson had four students interning at Premier Collection or Yonkers Honda.

Work-based learning is an authentic learning opportunity for students to explore their goals, interests, and abilities while applying what they learn in the CTE classroom in the real world. Instructional staff plan and supervise the internship experiences in collaboration with employers.

"Work-Based Learning is a core component of our instructional program," Principal Evangelo Michas said. "These internships offer students the chance to apply their in-class instruction in actual workplace settings, giving them experience they might not otherwise gain while still in high school. We are grateful to our community partners

for opening their doors to our students in this way."

Office Skills student Samantha Perkaj, a senior from Irvington, looked forward to returning to Premier Collection, where she helped stage an open house last school year. While this is a prestigious internship placement, that did not intimidate her.

"I don't think it'll be that different from what I'm used to because even though it is a little more prestigious, they are still people," Samantha said. "I'm just another person, and I'm here to help the best I can."

Classmate Jacqueline Alvarado of New Rochelle joined her on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Both brought prior work experience that they looked forward to expanding upon.

What appealed to Jacqueline was the chance to interact with the public.

"I'm a big people person," she said. "I like being around people, being on the phone, communicating and knowing that I can make a difference."

Mr. Poniatowski said it was exciting to have the program up and running and to see students gain real-world experience.

"We try to reproduce that here, and this is going to be that next step to try to transition them out there to get that experience," he said.

The feedback gained from interns and employers in turn helps shape programs and ensure they are meeting the needs of both students and the workforce they are preparing to join.

Mr. Sulla said that it's often helpful for students to share their workplace experiences in class. His students were eager to find out what they'd be tasked with doing and how their classroom instruction would apply.

"I'm interested in learning more real-world techniques, to apply what I've learned here in real life," said Tyler Cuevas, a senior at Woodlands High School in Greenburgh.

Classmate Kayleeane De La Rosa, also from Woodlands, admits that as a first-year CTE student this was a new experience but one she's excited for.

Isabel Martinez, a senior from Port Chester, said the goal is to increase their knowledge of the field from a different perspective. She felt well prepared by her classroom work and looked forward to applying what she's learned.

Automotive Technology students Juan Cartenas and Lucas Diaz, both from New Rochelle, were eager to learn from the professionals at Premier Collection and Yonkers Honda, respectively.

Juan plans to become a mechanic, and wants to build his skills and experience in that field. Lucas's future plans lie in nursing, which he discerned after coming to SWBOCES.

The challenge of his internship was to find a way to excel while gaining hands-on experience.

"I'm very knowledgeable about auto mechanics, so I expect them to put me with sales or service management, something on the back end," he said. "It's a good opportunity."



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#### SWBOCES NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Southern Westchester Board of Cooperative Educational Services, its officers and employees, does not discriminate against any individuals, including but not limited to students, employees or applicants on the basis of race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, creed, sex, gender (including gender identity and gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, citizenship status, marital status, partner status, genetic information, predisposing genetic characteristics, weight, military status or service, political affiliation, or domestic violence victim status.

This policy of nondiscrimination includes access by students to educational programs; counseling services for students; course offerings and student activities; recruitment, appointment and promotion of employees; and employment pay and benefits. This policy also provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

Inquiries regarding this policy should be directed to the Compliance Officers at Southern Westchester BOCES, 17 Berkley Drive, Rye Brook, NY 10573. (914) 937-3820.

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"The job of BOCES is to support the work being done in schools by providing services and supports they are not able to provide for themselves."

## STUDENTS CRAFT BLANKETS FOR RONALD MCDONALD HOUSE FAMILIES

*Fashion Design and Merchandising students to deliver blankets personally to families*



A line of mannequins stood at the front of Carmen Galiano's classroom, draped in blue and pink fleece with decided animal shapes.

The set of cozy fleece blankets — wearable and animal-themed — were bound for Ronald McDonald House of the Greater Hudson Valley at Westchester Medical Center.

A dozen families staying there during their children's hospital stays received two blankets apiece as holiday gifts. Ms. Galiano's Fashion Design and Merchandising students delivered these classroom creations personally Dec. 19.

These hooded, costume-like blankets, designed like sharks, dolphins, cats and bears, were sure to make great holiday gifts. They've also made for a great lesson in design and fabrication.

Students worked attentively at sewing machines, putting the finishing touches on their blankets.

"I hope they enjoy them," said Crystal Mesajio of New Rochelle.

This was Mila Hossain's first time sewing. The White Plains student said she loves that her efforts were going to a good cause. "We're making animals so that it's more fun and cozy for them," she said. "Kids like dressing up so it makes sense as a costume."

The blankets are designed with hoods and pockets, and students can even step into and wear some of the designs.

The blankets are cozy and easy to care for. They're also brightly colored and elaborately designed, sewn in the forms of mermaid, shark, bear and cat shapes.

"I think these are fun because kids love pretend play," Ms. Galiano said. "It's multi-purpose, fun and functional at the same time."

It was also greatly appreciated.

"We are so thankful for the adorable

animal-themed fleece blankets that students at Southern Westchester BOCES handmade for our families," said Christina Riley, Executive Director, RMHGHV. "Our goal is to make families feel at home, even when they can't be and donations like this make that possible. A small token of compassion and care goes a long way when you are dealing with your child's medical crisis, especially during the holidays."

The students planned the combinations and closely followed Ms. Galiano's hand sketches. Some of the blankets were the work of a single student. Some were collaborative efforts, with individual students specializing in creating the same section for multiple blankets, like a factory assembly line.

The connection with Ronald McDonald House dates back several years. Most recently, Ms. Galiano's students designed and created dolls to donate. Last year, her students made stockings for students at a Bronx elementary school.

"I hope they're going to love it," said Maria Reda of Eastchester, sewing a length of pink fabric. "It's definitely a learning experience because it's my second

year here. I'm learning all these strategies and making sure everything is perfect. It makes me feel proud because I put my time and energy into it, and it came out looking great. I'm so happy."

*The Ronald McDonald House of the Greater Hudson Valley provides families with critically ill and traumatically injured children an atmosphere of comfort, hope and courage, keeping them close to the care and resources they need. The House has 12 bedrooms that are occupied almost every night. We also provide meals, laundry and respite services for our families during their stay. Located on the campus of the Westchester Medical Center in Valhalla, NY, the House is just steps away from the Maria Fareri Children's Hospital. Since it opened in 2011, more than 2,000 families have called our House their Home.*

