

# Tools of the Trade

FALL 2023

A Publication of the Southern Westchester BOCES Center for Career Services

## Center for Career Services Hosts Annual Conference



**100**

Speakers

**30**

Different Professions

**1,080**

Students from  
SWBOCES districts  
there to take it all in



The Center for Career Services hosted the in-person return of its Annual Career Conference - the first since 2019 - at its campus in Valhalla on Friday, Nov. 17. The half-day event brought in more than 100 speakers representing approximately 30 different professions and 1,080 freshmen and sophomores from Southern Westchester BOCES component district high schools.

Throughout the campus students were found intently listening to experts in their fields of interest. These speakers gave examples of their own personal experiences and then allowed students to ask questions.

The day was broken up into two 45-minute sessions, allowing students to select two different areas of interest to explore. Topics ranged from sports careers, veterinary medicine and engineering to education, automotive and computer science. Each session typically featured 2-3 professionals - though the number varied from one to seven - providing diverse experiences and contexts for each given career field.

Nearly every space on the Valhalla campus was utilized for presentations, from classrooms and conference rooms to automotive garages and studios. More than a dozen current and former SWBOCES faculty and staff presented. The wide majority of speakers, however, were working professionals who agreed to spend the morning imparting their knowledge and experiences to the young people who turned out.

In the Radio & TV session, presenters Logan Vigilio, freelancer, and News 12 studio director Samantha Damiani were joined by SWBOCES Public Relations Specialist and video producer Anthony DiNoto.

Mr. Viglio once sat in the very same seats as those at the conference. He spoke of how well the program prepared him for his career, and he gave advice to those looking to enter into the field.

"You have to find what you are good at and hone in. It's a very departmentalized industry and you have to follow your passion," Mr. Viglio said.

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## A Message from the Director



It's been quite some time since the Career Services campus was as busy with activity as it was with the in-person return of our annual Career Conference. The event was exciting not only for the breadth and scope of professions represented by more than 30 guest speakers. Nearly 1,100 students from high schools across our component district region attended. They had their pick of career fields to learn about. Every classroom, workshop and studio was occupied during the big event. We are so grateful to all who turned out, especially our presenters.

Another sign of fall here at our Valhalla campus was the return of our HOSA and SkillsUSA delegates from their respective conferences in Albany last month. They include two Statesmen Award winners — Adrian Vargas and Nathaniel Stone — who attended the SkillsUSA gathering. Meanwhile, Gabrielle Marcelin and Joanna Madrid, both from New Rochelle, received their HOSA New York Achievement Pins from our very own statewide President Brianna Osorio of White Plains. Congratulations!

It wouldn't be fall without turkey and pumpkin pie, and the aromas from our Culinary Arts kitchens are a particular delight this time of year. Chef John Damiani's students prepared 45 turkeys and baked 200 pies, all of which benefited families in need through Port Chester's Meals on Main Street.

Also in these pages, you'll see we opened our doors for our annual fall open house event, giving teachers and families the chance to connect around all that our programs entail for students. The Haunted Hallway was back for Halloween, and I have to say students and staff alike outdid themselves with frighteningly creative costumes. The TV/Video Production and Cosmetology classes also benefited from the insights of visiting guest speakers sharing their industry expertise.

Before we know it, the holidays will be upon us. Wishing everyone a restful break and looking forward to returning in 2024.

*Dahlia A. Jackson*

Director, Southern Westchester BOCES  
Center for Career Services

## In This Issue...



## ► Center for Career Services Hosts Annual Conference

### Students learn about potential career paths

CAREER PATHS, continued from page 1

Ms. Damiani added her personal experience to the conversation, stating "I love what I do. At 5 o'clock every day, that show is going live whether it's ready or not, and it's going to look either really good or really bad. So it takes time management, technical knowledge and professionalism to do my job effectively and on time"

In the Personal Services session, students were greeted by Laura Mirabel, who teaches Cosmetology at SWBOCES. Ms. Mirabel graduated from BOCES in 1975 and has been teaching for 18 years. She has a wealth of knowledge and was excited to share it with students. Her speech touched on the importance of being a good listener, having strong communication skills, creativity, and being persistent in pursuit of success.

"I want to instill a passion for the industry in the potential student, that being a cos-

metologist does not mean you will only be a stylist in a salon. There are so many career paths to fit an individual," Ms. Mirabel said.

The conference, which fulfills New York State Education Department career awareness requirements, educates students on opportunities available to them in the job market. Organizers were enthusiastic about its in-person return to campus. In 2020 the conference was canceled due to COVID. Presenters were pre-recorded in 2021, while the conference was offered remotely in 2022.

"It was exciting to see students and presenters from the various career pathways back on our campus," said Dahlia Jackson, Director of Career Services. "The conference provided students an opportunity to hear from professionals and gave them a chance to get a feel for the various careers available to them."



## TRACY REEVES JOINS SWBOCES AS THE NEW WORK-BASED LEARNING COORDINATOR

### New Coordinator brings real-world experience to the job

Tracy Reeves understands what it takes to be successful, not only in the classroom but in the workplace as well. She knows that real-world experiences are just as important as what is taught during a lecture and together make the perfect combination for success.

Ms. Reeves has a passion for connecting students with hands-on opportunities, making her new position as the Work-Based Learning Coordinator the perfect job for her. Once a student at Orange-Ulster BOCES, and then a Cosmetology instructor at Ulster BOCES, she joins Southern Westchester BOCES after 19 years in the cosmetology industry.

During her time in the Cosmetology program at OUBOCES, Ms. Reeves went from a student wanting to jump start her career to having a desire to pass her knowledge on to future students. In 2004, she completed the Cosmetology program and then went on to work in a salon, where she says the real learning began. Ms. Reeves says she was grateful for all she was taught in the

classroom but said she received hands-on training in the salon that was invaluable.

"I've always been a planner, and knew what I wanted to do. As a high school student, I knew I wanted to work for BOCES," said Ms. Reeves, reflecting on her career path. "After graduation I passed the New York State Board exams required to obtain my Cosmetology license. I then went on to obtain my Bachelors and became a Certified Cosmetology Teacher with a Work-Based Learning Teacher Certification extension."

In 2019 she was a substitute teacher for a year at Orange-Ulster BOCES until obtaining a cosmetology teaching position at Ulster BOCES. Ms. Reeves fell in love with the idea of helping students expand their learning outside of the classroom. Being the Work-Based Learning Coordinator allows her to connect students with businesses that are willing to help the future workforce.

"One of the things I like most about this position is, because of my work experiences,

I'm very comfortable talking to people. I enjoy the social aspect of the position," Ms. Reeves said ecstatically about her new role. "I enjoy that the students are going out there. I can see their excitement. It's great to interact with the students on a daily basis. We talk about the program and opportunities available to them. I let them know that I'm here to support them. It's a team effort."

Since beginning her new role at Southern Westchester BOCES in September, Ms. Reeves has already connected a dozen students with internships at local businesses. She has also secured guest speakers to come into the classrooms to speak to students about what it's like to work in their desired field. Ms. Reeves says future internship opportunities for various CTE programs are already in the works.





## Another set of babies for Animal Science



Scribbles, the resident rat in the Animal Science class at Southern Westchester BOCES' Career Services, welcomed a set of 14 babies, her second litter in just a few short months.

At the end of August, Scribbles and her sister Hershey each welcomed a litter. Scribbles birthed 17 babies, for a total of 31 this year, while her sister Hershey birthed 14. These baby rats, which live on average two years, will be cared for by students in the Animal Science program for the next two years.

Due to high enrollment in the Animal Science class, more rats were needed so each student would have one of their own. "Scribbles was such a good mother, I asked her to have another litter soon after she weaned her previous litter," said Michael D'Abruzzo, the Animal Science Teacher.

Alex Bonilla, a first-year student of the program, is one of three students who will

be receiving a rat from the most recent litter. Alex chose the program because of his love for animals and was excited to take care of them. Having a rat of his own was an added bonus.

"I was there when the babies first came out, it was an interesting experience," Mr. Bonilla said excitedly about the birth of the rats. "I wasn't expecting to have a rat of my own. The best part was holding them."

Tom, the "stud" or father of Scribbles' babies, was carefully chosen because of his good temperament and ease of training. He was also picked because of the high probability that he would produce babies that will vary in color and pattern. This not only gave the students a lesson in DNA, but will help them distinguish the rats from one another.

"He chose the male that has the most colors and rats that would survive the longest. A true DNA lesson of who is the strongest," Alex said.



ANIMAL SCIENCE



## First-year Students Practice Working with Clients

COSMETOLOGY

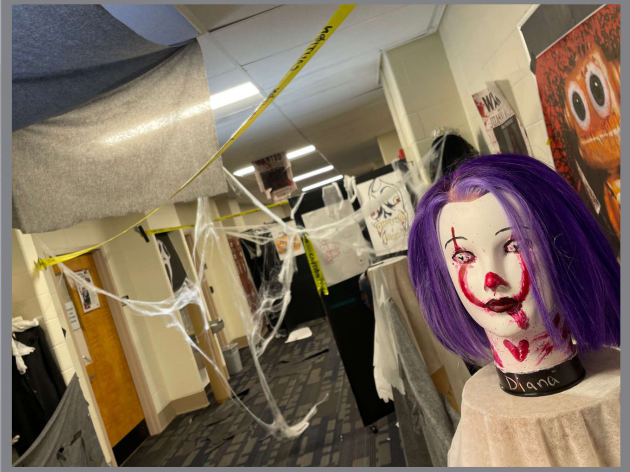
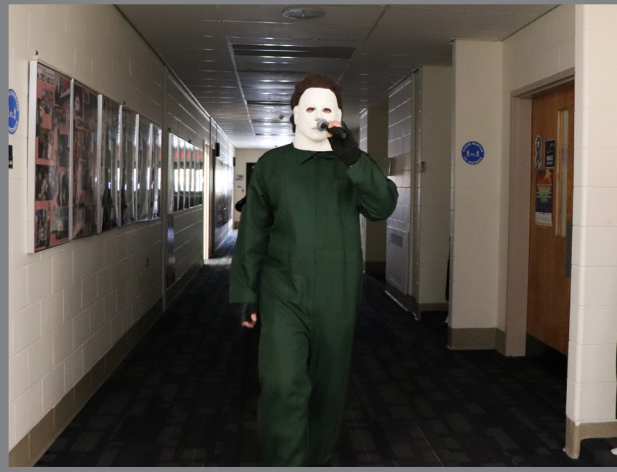


Students in Cosmetology 1 at the Careers Services campus in Valhalla are learning how to properly assess their clients' needs under the supervision of their teachers Yolanda Lopez, Vanessa Newby, and assistant Tes Giorgio. These first-year students are taught to conduct a proper scalp analysis, in order to determine what products to use and how to achieve the desired look.

After assessing their clients' needs, the Cosmetology students properly shampoo and condition their clients' hair then test out a variety of blow drying techniques to achieve their final results. These skills lay the foundation for their future studies in the cosmetology program and ensure that their clients receive the best results.







## HAUNTED HALLWAY MAKES ITS HALLOWEEN RETURN TO THE CTE CAMPUS

The Haunted Hallway made its Halloween return to the Career and Technical Education campus this year. Teachers and students alike went all out with spooky decorations and costumes that ranged from frightfully creepy - Mr. Harty as Friday the 13th's Jason - to downright fun Mr. Powers as Captain America and students in Harry Potter garb, angelic attire and more. Members of The Addams Family were spotted all over campus! Here's hoping everyone had a Happy Halloween!



# OPEN HOUSE

## Parents Head Back to School for Fall Open House

Students and their families were greeted on Back to School Night by the Center for Career Services' faculty and staff on Oct. 12, 2023. From how the program works to possible careers, parents gained insight into how the Center for Career Services operates and what opportunities it provides.

At the event, guests were invited to indulge in a light Spanish-themed dinner and a variety of desserts. This delicious meal was created by Culinary Arts students, who "have been working hard for the past two weeks to prepare for this event," said Chef John Damiani, the Culinary Arts instructor.

Following that, families headed over to their students' respective classrooms to learn all about the wonderful programs. Many cosmetology students accompanied their parents and ecstatically showed off their mannequins, which happened to be styled using the latest techniques the students learned.

Throughout the campus, parents were found listening intently to instructors, who educated them about their students' chosen trade and how it will benefit them for years to come. Teachers spoke about their program, what is expected from students, and in some classrooms displayed projects their students were working on.

"I look forward to my students gaining a broader understanding and respect for the industry they are training to be part of in the future. That they will experience working firsthand in the field and not require supervision to perform a particular job duty successfully," said Michael May, TV/Video Production instructor. "I hope that my graduating students continue their learning and gain more experience in post-secondary education and ultimately entry-level positions in the industry."







# CULINARY ARTS STUDENTS PREPARE FOR THANKSGIVING FEASTS

Students cook meals and bake pies for a good cause



The Culinary Arts students at Southern Westchester BOCES lent a hand in preparing and cooking Thanksgiving Day meals to be distributed to those in need. They teamed up with Meals on Main Street in Port Chester, an organization that is working to change the mindset about food insecurity through education, training, and volunteer work.

Meals on Main Street receives donations from various farms and occasionally seeks the support of community partners in preparing meals for distribution. Since Thanksgiving meals require a lot of preparation, the organization enlisted the help of the SWBOCES Culinary Arts students.

The program received 45 donated turkeys and a lesson they will never forget. They learned how to butcher, prepare, and properly cook a turkey. They also learned how to make stock, gravy, and stuffing to go along with the main dish.

"This is our fifth year working together with Meals on Main Street," said Culinary Arts teacher John Damiani. "It helps the students understand giving back to the community."

Ashley Stricker, a Culinary Arts student at SWBOCES from Blind Brook school district, works in a country club as a line cook. She hopes to one day own a restaurant and says

she's taking the class, so she understands all the hats that need to be worn in a kitchen in order to be successful.

Ashley excitedly took on the task of preparing Thanksgiving meals. She said, "this was my first-time butchering turkeys. At first, I said I'm never doing this again, but the more I did it, the more I liked it."

Regan Suhay, a Culinary Arts student at SWBOCES from West Lake school district, agreed that there was definitely a learning curve but "after the first one we all got the hang of it. It became easier and I enjoyed it."

Amid all of the cooking, students were also baking in anticipation of the big feast. The students received a tall order of 200 pies, and each was tasked with making at least eight. Nia Hudgins, a second-year Culinary Arts student from New Rochelle school district, who was whisking up her ingredients, was happy to make something she knew everyone would enjoy. "The best part is I get to bring home a pie to my family. My family is excited about it, and they can't wait."

When asked about teaming up with Meals on Main Street, Nia said, "I feel really good about it in my heart. I feel like it's helping people who don't have support. If I could do this every year I would."







## YOUTUBER AND SWBOCES ALUMNUS PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO THE MEDIA INDUSTRY



The TV/Video Production class got a glimpse into the future when YouTube content creator Anthony Valbiro and Southern Westchester BOCES alumni Donell Clark stopped by for a Q&A session. This visit provided students the opportunity to have an open discussion and learn more about their chosen field.

"Having industry representatives come speak with students in the TV/Video Production program is incredibly beneficial to their ongoing professional and personal development," said Instructor Michael May.

Check Out Donell Clark's reel:

<https://www.youtube.com/c/DonellClark>

Check Out Anthony Valbiro's music and art:

<https://tensecondsongs.com/>



## TWO STUDENTS EARN STATESMEN AWARDS AT SKILLSUSA FALL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

### Students tour capital and gain leadership skills



Students Adrian Vargas of new Rochelle and Nathaniel Stone of Ardsley, both Class of 2025, earned Statesmen Awards at the SkillsUSA Fall Leadership Conference in Albany early this November.

The New York Association of SkillsUSA is a Career Technical Student Organization that serves students in High School and College Post-Secondary programs. They are America's proud champions of skilled trades.

"We're a student-led partnership of education and industry that's building the future skilled workforce our nation depends on with graduates who are career ready, day one," said Midge McCloskey, NYS SkillsUSA Director.

In all, 450 students and advisors attended the conference, where local chapter leaders



were trained on the SkillsUSA Framework to help build a more comprehensive chapter. The three-day event was packed with activities, workshops, and team building.

"I'm always excited for the Fall Conference. Unlike the Spring Conference, where the focus is on competition, the Fall Conference is all about cooperation. We meet, set the

agenda for the upcoming year, welcome new chapters, and generally reconnect as a community," said Howard Hamilton, Skills Advisor at Southern Westchester BOCES.

Two students who showed interest in running for leadership positions as chapter or state officers were chosen to attend the conference, accompanied by advisors. Adrian, who is studying Automotive Technology and Automotive Trades & Maintenance, and Nathaniel, who is in the Security, Law, and Policing program, were taught leadership skills. They received lessons on how to run meetings, set agendas, and even had the opportunity to tour the capitol building.

"I definitely would say my favorite part of the conference was all of the group activities. I got to meet a lot of new people, and it was all very fun," said Nathaniel. "SkillsUSA is an amazing program and worth every bit of effort."





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SWBOCES IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

The job of BOCES is to support learning in schools and communities by providing services and supports they are not able to provide individually.



## Members Attend HOSA Fall Leadership Conference



In mid-November, nearly a dozen students and advisors participated in the HOSA Fall Leadership Conference in Albany.

The HOSA Fall Leadership Conference was from November 16 to 17. Attendees took part in several formal meetings and had an extended visit with workshops at the Albany College of Pharmacy to participate in leadership and team-building activities.

"It was a great place to meet new people. We got to meet a lot of people from other schools," said Mariana Mena, a junior from New Rochelle. "I feel like the tour was an expected but nice touch to it. You get to see what other places have to offer, outside the tri-state area."

The meetings were presided over by Southern Westchester BOCES' own Brianna Osorio, a senior from White Plains, who currently serves as the organization's State President for the 2023-24 school year. Members participated in activities such as a scavenger hunt, laser maze, a medical-themed game, and a spy game.

"My favorite part was just leading the activities and going to Albany College," said Brianna. "I not only got to lead, but I was also able to take part in the activities. It was really fun, especially the escape room."

Nine students and two advisors attended the conference, with two students and one advisor receiving a HOSA New York Achievement Pin. The Achievement Pin denotes outstanding knowledge of the organization, participation in all sessions of the conference, and the ability to recite the HOSA Creed from memory.

"This meant to me that I was special and smart enough to get this pin," said Gabrielle Marcellin, a Junior from New Rochelle, one of the recipients. "It felt great knowing that my hard work paid off."

While at the conference the members also participated in a fundraiser for Be The Match, an organization that connects patients with a matching donor for a life-saving blood stem cell transplant. Members brought in themed gift baskets that were raffled off. The fundraiser brought in approximately \$900 for the charity.



Animal Science



Architecture



Automotive Technology



CISCO



CISMA



Culinary Arts



Fashion Design & Merchandising



Security, Law & Policing



Sound Production



TV/Video Production

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