

The 28th Annual American Dreamer Achievement Awards

Southern Westchester BOCES
Center for Special Services



2020

Making Dreams Come True!



SOUTHERN
WESTCHESTER BOCES

About the Awards



Special thanks to the entire Southern Westchester BOCES community for taking the time to recognize individuals in our schools and communities who perform outstanding works of service for, and on behalf of, students who have special needs.

This awards luncheon was established in 1991 to recognize students, as well as those outside of Southern Westchester BOCES, who are partners in our mission to provide quality educational services.

The American Dreamer Award is an opportunity to honor and thank those who have elected to make a difference in the lives of others.

We are grateful for your service.



Achievement Awards Recipients

John “Pancho” Villa

New York Power Authority, White Plains

Nominated by St. Matthew’s Educational Building

John Villa, known as Pancho to his friends, plays an important role in the education of our students. St. Matthew’s Educational Building relies on businesses and agencies to sponsor student helpers from our programs. In these roles they learn valuable, on-the-job skills and the responsibilities of being sound citizens and employees. The New York Power Authority has been sponsoring our students for several years. Hector Garcia, one of our dedicated and skilled student helpers, values his job at the Power Authority immensely, and we know they appreciate him. Hector and the whole St. Matthew’s staff nominated Pancho for this award. “Pancho has worked for New York Power Authority for 20 years,” Hector says. “He is funny, intelligent and reliable. He taught me how to use some of the machines. At the end of work, Pancho offers me a healthy snack. Pancho is a great guy.” Thank you, Pancho, for helping our students.



Zahedul Haque, Daymon Shane and Katrina Raines

Staples, Elmsford

Nominated by teachers Doreen Sheldon
and Lisa Culler, Valhalla Center



Zahedul Haque

When we first inquired about our students participating in work-based learning at Staples in Elmsford, Sales Manager Daymon Shane's initial response was one of excitement. Daymon brought our request to his General Manager, Zahedul Haque, who shared his firsthand experience working with students and work-based learning. His exuberance was contagious.



Daymon Shane

When the students showed up for their first day at work, Katrina Raines, the Supervisor of the Copy and Print Center, was eager to support our staff and students in this endeavor. It takes a village for success, and our students are well on their way toward life-changing experiences.



Katrina Raines

It is our great pleasure to nominate Zahedul Haque, Daymon Shane and Katrina Raines for the American Dreamer Award.

Bristol Parmeshwari

Party City, White Plains

Nominated by teachers Doreen Sheldon and
Lisa Culler, Valhalla Center

When Bristol Parmeshwari, a supervisor at Party City in White Plains, was first approached about allowing our students the experience of working in the store, he was excited and welcomed the idea without hesitation. He has made our students' transition seamless, helping train our staff and the students in daily tasks and helping them become successful in the workplace. Bristol treats our students with respect and dignity. Our students have expressed how excited they are to go to work and how helpful and supportive Bristol and his staff have been throughout this experience. He has high expectations for them just as he does for his own staff. It is our honor and privilege to nominate Bristol Parmeshwari for the American Dreamer Award.



Mr. Lee Kaufman

White Plains Bake Shoppe, White Plains

Nominated by St. Matthew's Educational Building

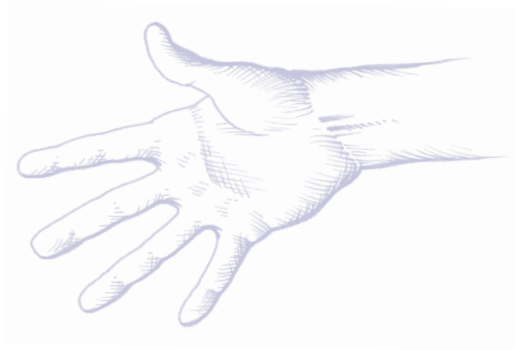
Lee Kaufman at the White Plains Bake Shoppe has taken on two student helpers from St. Matthew's Educational Building this year. We rely on businesses like this, as well as agencies, to sponsor



our students as they learn valuable, on-the-job skills and the responsibilities of being sound citizens and employees. Student helper Enzo Dent values his job at the Bake Shoppe immensely, and we know they appreciate him there too. That's why Enzo and the entire staff at the St. Matthew's Educational Building have nominated Mr. Kaufman for an American Dreamer Award.

"Mr. Lee gave us a new job site to work at," said Enzo, "He is a very nice man, and his staff is very nice too. I'm looking forward to working with Mr. Lee and his staff going forward."

Thank you Mr. Lee for helping our students.

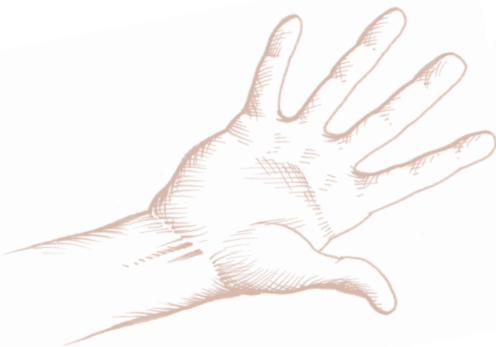


Ms. Michele Dunne

Irvington High School

Nominated by Irvington MS/HS staff

Irvington High School Mainstream Physics Teacher Michelle Dunne is a very helpful, caring and patient member of the Irvington High School/Southern Westchester BOCES community. Ms. Dunne makes sure to give extra support to students whenever it is needed, but she also gives students the space and autonomy they need when appropriate. The students in the Therapeutic Support program have always had positive and enriching experiences in her classroom. The culture she fosters there is one that puts collaboration and inclusivity first. The TSP team always feels confident that her students will experience success and growth in her classes. We continue to appreciate having her work with our students. Thank you for all that you do for SWBOCES students!



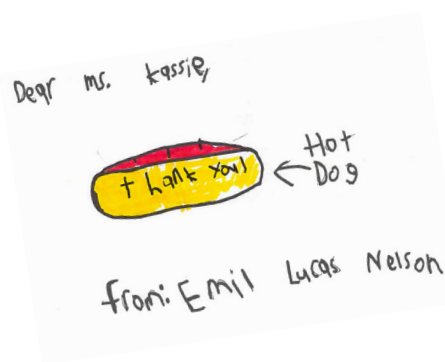
Katherine “Kassie” Keehn

Chef, Pocantico Hills School

Nominated by Pocantico Hills staff

Katherine “Kassie” Keehn is the chef and overseer of all cafeteria activities at Pocantico Hills. Kassie is an incredibly creative cook who constantly looks to expand the culinary choices she provides for students and staff in the Pocantico community. Kassie always makes our SWBOCES community feel welcome and included. Whenever we get a new student, Kassie makes sure they are connected in the system and that she is aware of any medical or financial needs that may be present. When students come in to get breakfast and lunch, Kassie greets each student by name and takes the time to know and remember their likes and dislikes. She has gone above and beyond many times in making sure that students have a meal they like and will eat, and that is certainly not an easy task given the variety of specific dietary needs and

preferences. Kassie created a salad program this year that was a huge and healthy hit with our staff. When asking who we should honor this year from a host of wonderful candidates, Kassie was the resounding answer. She is one of the incredible people that make our experience at Pocantico Hills truly special, and we are very grateful to her.



Regina Mignogna

Tarrytown Sleepy Hollow Basics

Nominated by Tappan Hill Staff

Regina Mignogna has been on the frontlines of the movement to reduce the achievement gap for 40 years. For 25 years, she was a reading specialist in White Plains Schools, working with at-risk teens. She is the founding president of the Foundation for the Public Schools of the Tarrytowns, now in its 26th year. Through her efforts, millions of dollars have been raised to support students there. She helped bring in the Parent Child Home Program, supporting parents of young children. The Tarrytown Sleepy Hollow Basics campaign is her newest endeavor. Its mission is to ensure all children enter kindergarten ready to learn. She is grateful for the partnership with Tappan Hill School for the help in preparing materials for the Basics.



Regina has contacted us for a variety of tasks for the program. Tasks such as folding papers, placing them in brochures, placing stickers on materials and filling Ziploc baggies with blocks can be cumbersome. For our students, though, these jobs provide the opportunity to develop pre-vocational skills and eventually job skills. Students learn to follow routines to complete jobs. They also learn the value of teamwork when completing multi-step tasks as well as pride in a job well done. They learn their skills will be valued in the workforce, because Regina believes in them and goes out of her way to provide these opportunities for them.

Samantha Makris, Meg Lewis, and Gabby Cohen

Volunteer New York! RISE group from

Arc Westchester Choices Program

Nominated by the Tappan Hill Faculty and Staff

The RISE: Readiness thru Integrated Service Engagement program, of Volunteer New York! engages young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities, supporting their transition into the adult world and engaging them in volunteer opportunities where they can build skills. We value our partnership with the Tappan Hill School. RISE volunteers have the opportunity there to mentor students who will be transitioning out of school themselves. This project allows students to make social connections with older peers who have already transitioned into the adult world. This RISE group was selected from The Arc Westchester's Choices program, an educational, community-based day program for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. This assignment gives them an opportunity to develop leadership skills through volunteerism. It's a win-win for all involved, says Patti Colombo, manager of the RISE Program.

Samantha Makris has been a part of Choices Program at the ARC Westchester for 12 years. She loves volunteering as a peer mentor.



She is proud to be a project leader for all of their community service projects. She loves giving back to her community. Her other volunteer roles include being a lunch assistant at The Grace Soup Kitchen in White Plains and performing clerical tasks at the Boys & Girls Club of Northern Westchester. She helps out at the Ronald McDonald House in Valhalla, where she was selected

as the Arc Pull Tab Ambassador for their Tab Recycling Collection Program. Samantha introduced the program at Tappan Hill, and students participated in a fundraising project for Valentine's Day, helping her raise money to underwrite the cost of a night's stay for families in need.

Margaret (Meg) Lewis joined the Choices Program at the ARC of Westchester in fall 2019. Meg is a graduate of Eastchester High School and also attended SWBOCES. She is a peer mentor through the RISE program at Tappan Hill School and aims to do her best as a project leader. Meg enjoys volunteering at all her sites in the Choices program. Her passion is collecting toys for disadvantaged children. She volunteers at The Grace Soup Kitchen in White Plains and helps with arts and crafts projects at the Boys & Girls Club of Northern Westchester. Meg also volunteers at the Ronald McDonald House twice a month, baking for the families who visit. Meg also enjoys making snuffle mats for the animals at the SPCA. She takes all her volunteer roles seriously, and everyone enjoys having her there to assist.



Gabriella (Gabby) Cohen is a part of the Choices Program at the Arc Westchester and a graduate of Eastchester High School. Gabby is proud to be a peer mentor through the RISE program at Tappan Hill School. She has strong social skills that make her a perfect mentor. Gabby is happy to help others in her community. She visits every site with a smile. She loves to make jewelry she donates to My Sisters Place in White Plains and donates snuffle mats she makes to dogs at the SPCA in Briarcliff. She takes pride in her volunteer work at The Grace Soup Kitchen in White Plains. Gabby also spends time helping her group bake cookies and treats at Ronald McDonald House.



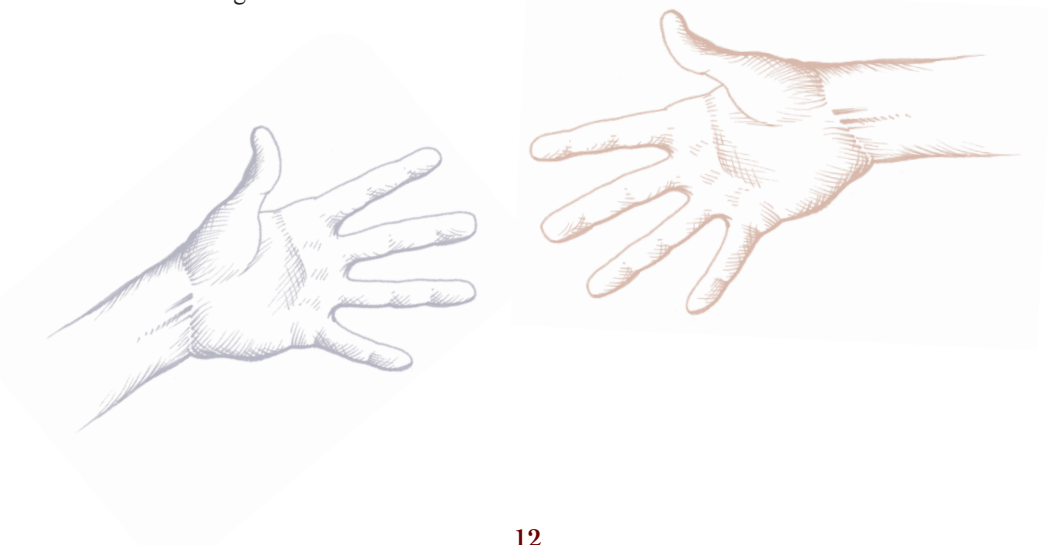
Kaitlin Brown

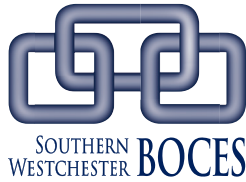
Rockland Psychiatric Center

Nominated by Principals Allison Emig and Scott Kaufman

For many years, Kaitlin has worked in the Intensive Day Treatment Program at the Rye Lake Campus. As a social worker, Kaitlin always has our students' best interests at heart, using her clinical lens and a loving and cooperative spirit. She forged positive and productive relationships with her students and families, building on respect for their individual needs. As a result, her students were successful and many were able to return to their home districts. Additionally, Kaitlin has professional relationships in our component districts and is highly respected for her work and devotion.

Kaitlin was recently promoted to a director position, removing her from her responsibilities in our program. This was exciting news for her, but we were concerned her students would no longer have access to Kaitlin's daily love and support. However, in her current role, we recognized quickly that Kaitlin's broader impact on the program and students would continue to touch our students' lives. Her desire for continuous improvement, accountability and use of current best practices has remained her priority. In turn, our shared students have continued to benefit from Kaitlin's expertise and leadership. We are thrilled to honor her for serving the students in our community so they can fulfill their own dreams in their bright futures.





Dr. Harold A. Coles
District Superintendent

Jacqueline O'Donnell
Chief Operating Officer/Deputy District Superintendent

James Gratto
Assistant Superintendent for Educational Services

Stephen J. Tibbetts
Assistant Superintendent for
Business & Administrative Services

Andrea Byrne
Director for Special Services

Board of Education
Catherine Draper, *President*
John V. Filiberti, *Vice President*
Sheryl Brady
John DeSantis
Lynn Frazer-McBride
Robert Johnson
Georgia Riedel

The mission of the Southern Westchester BOCES is to collaborate with school districts, agencies and communities to meet their educational challenges by providing regional leadership and quality, cost-effective services.