

RA Incorporates Restorative Justice Into Schedule

This year, Resilience Academy students and staff dove into restorative justice with classroom sessions with help from a professional in the field. Restorative justice brings together individuals impacted by a conflict in order to understand the incident and identify ways to move forward and can become a transformative collective experience of healing through deepened connection and understanding.

Paula Rodriguez, Director of Restorative Programs at the Mediation Center of Dutchess County, has been working with students since mid-winter on Tuesdays. She was first introduced to students during an assembly in which she explained how restorative justice is not a replacement for therapy and is voluntary, adding that students must navigate the journey they will take, as they are the experts in their own lives.

"I only go as far as you're willing to go in your journey," she said, explaining that she helps students figure out the best solution and resources for them. "You're not just here to help a conflict, but you're actually building a community, building tools and skills that you can take outside in life."

When Principal Kiesha Tillman asked for examples of how restorative justice can be used in situations where no harm

occurs, Rodriguez recalled when it was used in one school on twin students who needed to be separated during the day.

"They've been together all day and they had to come up with a plan so that they could have space and time apart because they're like 'I'm with him all the time,'" Rodriguez recalled.

Another example centered around helping a group, "be creative so that they can actually have conversations with adults that are meaningful, not just conversations and curriculum that's forced upon them."

Circles where restorative justice is practiced can also be a helpful tool as Tillman noted that they do not always have to be used to address a conflict.

"It could be you're just having a conversation about academics ... maybe the circle is about a misunderstanding,"



Paula Rodriguez, Director of Restorative Programs at the Mediation Center of Dutchess County addresses Resilience students gathered in the Dutchess BOCES Conference Center.

Tillman said, explaining that Rodriguez will support sitting in circles.

During one of the sessions, Teacher Daniel Lynch showed his students a video of restorative justice being practiced and asked them to jot down three observations. One element Lynch highlighted was how the circles are a safe place to discuss matters. "Even without bullying, giving yourself out there to people can be intimidating," Lynch said. "What happens here, stays here."

Senior Alexandra Varble is part of Student Government, which initially proposed an idea to bring restorative justice to RA, and believes it can help students improve communications, build meaningful relationships and understand the gravity of what they do every day. She described it as a chance for students to resolve issues by delving into why they acted out originally.

"I understand its significance and I do think it could be beneficial for the school," Varble said. "Everyone is going through something ... it's something this school needs."



Paula Rodriguez, Director of Restorative Programs at the Mediation Center of Dutchess County.



Classroom discussion underway at Resilience Academy.

Board Honors Special Olympics Athletes, Coaches



Students received their certificates at the Board of Trustees meeting.

Students from Dutchess BOCES' Salt Point Center and Resilience Academy were honored by the Board of Trustees for their participation in the Special Olympics New York Regional Aquatics and Basketball Competition at April's regular meeting.

Tyrese Williams, Onassis Tavarez, Dominic Tavarez, Rama Haridevara and Jahkai Etienne, donning their Dutchess BOCES Bulldog jerseys, each received a certificate and medal celebrating their participation. Team coaches Erin Scott, Tracey Smith, Eric Hirsch, Maria Sita and Adam Repinz were also honored for going above and beyond in coaching these athletes.

"It's really important for us to provide opportunities for our students in every activity that we can help them participate in," District Superintendent Dr. Jodi DeLucia said of the Special Olympics. "It really gives us great joy when we can celebrate their successes."

Williams was overjoyed to be recognized for his efforts at the competition.

"I'm very happy," Williams said. "I loved to play in the Special Olympics."

Scott said it was great to see the kids recognized for their hard work and for their parents to have an opportunity to see their children shine.

"Special Olympics shows that it's ability over disability, and letting our students shine no matter what level they are competing at," Scott said. "Many times our parents hear what their child cannot do; being recognized shows that their child can."

Smith was proud to see her athletes be recognized by the board, especially since they gain so much from being involved in the Special Olympics.

"It was a fabulous moment for them to be seen as part of the BOCES community," Smith said. "I am happy our Board recognizes their commitment and continues to support the Special Olympics program ... Go Bulldogs!"

Scott noted that the Special Olympics team continues to grow and will require new coaches to make it a success. Anyone interested in becoming a coach should reach out to Scott at erin.scott@dbcoces.org for more information.

Resilience Academy Students of the 4th Quarter



Congratulations to five of our Resilience Academy students who were recently named Students of the Quarter for their stellar efforts. Nia Allen was nominated because of her growth and amazing process just ahead of graduation while Jeniya'h Ayers shows great creativity and resilience in the arts with her Gelli Printing. Phylea Clark always tries her best, shows resilience and determination and showcases superior communication and writing skills. Micheal Ford is consistently a leader in work ethic and behavior and meaningfully contributes to classroom discussions. Alex Rine comes to class every day with a positive attitude, works hard and perseveres when an assignment is challenging. Good job everyone!

Outstanding CTI Students Inducted Into National Technical Honor Society

Twenty of Dutchess BOCES' first- and second-year students at the Career & Technical Institute (CTI) became members of the National Technical Honor Society (NTHS) during an April 30 induction ceremony held at the Conference Center.

In order to be considered, students completed an application with a writing prompt and provided community service hours and recommendation letters from instructors and job supervisors, all while maintaining an overall career technical education average of 93 or above.

This year's proceedings saw NTHS President Paolino Piazzi and Vice President Natalie Schultz present the inductees with certificates and purple and white cords, respectively, as a way to give them more responsibilities as student leaders. They also helped decorate the conference center and fold pamphlets ahead of the ceremony.

"I really wanted to boost the initiative the students were taking in their leadership roles," CTI School Counselor Deanna Pillius explained. "It was very student-centered in arranging everything ... they did great."

Piazz, an HVAC student, noted that being an NTHS member is a reflection of a student's commitment, consistency and the way they approach their work in the varied trades, adding that they represent leadership, responsibility, integrity, respect and a strong work ethic.

"You show up and put in the effort and hold yourself to a



Isabella Hughes receives her cord.

standard that not everyone is willing to do ... career and technical education plays a big role in developing those qualities," Piazz said. "In HVAC and other technical programs, you quickly learn that success doesn't come from getting it right the first time, it comes from understanding why something didn't work and how to fix it."

First-year Nursing Assistant student Isabella Caraballo, who embodies the mindset of a nurse by improving the lives of others with careful and heartfelt attention, said receiving the honor has motivated her to continue working hard.

"I felt really happy and grateful to be here," Caraballo said. "It's great to see all my hard work being appreciated in a ceremony."

Second-year Animal & Plant Science student Isabella Hughes, who makes her school

work meaningful and volunteers effortlessly for tasks, was initially not aware of NTHS, but once she learned about it, she considered it even more of a representation of who she is. She gave this advice to kids interested in pursuing this designation. "Stay dedicated even when things are hard," Hughes said. "Listen to the people around you because they have your best interest at heart."

The ceremony concluded with students reading the NTHS pledge and everyone partaking in a breakfast prepared by students in the Culinary Arts program.

Congratulations to this year's inductees!



Anything But Hair

First-year Cosmetology students created hairstyles without their tools or well ... hair, as part of the "Anything But Hair" mannequin challenge. CTI Teacher Wendy Wabshinak says it's a great way to use the mannequins students use in class once they no longer have hair left to practice on, and it lets them think outside the box when coming up with hair designs, making them more creative in class. Nice work to everyone who participated!



Earth Day

Resilience Academy students and staff spent last Thursday painting used CDs to give them a new purpose, making posters celebrating the earth and planting flowers, herbs and lettuce in the newly painted flower boxes using garden tools donated by Williams Lumber & Home Centers and built by students in the CTI's Construction Trades program. The Student Government procured the seeds and the PBIS Committee provided the flowers.

STUDENT OF DISTINCTION

Before Mari Ruiz Hernandez gave up the microphone at the Poughkeepsie City School District Board of Education meeting May 6, she used her platform to convey a message: "I want you to know that autism is not a disability," the Dutchess BOCES student from Poughkeepsie said, "It's a different ability."

Ruiz Hernandez, a student in BOCES' Providing an Education for Autistic and Communication Impaired Children Effectively (PEACCE) program hosted at Red Hook High School, was named BOCES' Student of Distinction for April and honored at the meeting.

The 21-year-old is also a part of BOCES' work-based learning program and attends several integrated classes at Red Hook.

"Mari is an exceptional, bright and determined student, who brings positivity and motivation to school every day. She arrives with enthusiasm and genuinely strives to meet expectations in social, emotional, academic and job-development skills," Meg Buckland, BOCES' director of alternative and special education, said at the meeting in a statement Board Member Fatima Carmen Martinez Santiago translated on the spot in order for Ruiz Hernandez's



Mari Ruiz Hernandez proudly displays her certificate, surrounded by her family, Poughkeepsie Superintendent Greg Mott, the board and Dutchess BOCES Director of Alternative and Special Education Meg Buckland.

parents and others to also enjoy. "She shows great respect for both her teachers and classmates, contributing to a positive learning environment."

Ruiz Hernandez has been attending the Red Hook-based classes since 2019. She enjoys learning about math, reading and history, and in her free time likes to write stories featuring characters she created – "Soleo and Friends."

"My experience at Red Hook High School learning in my PEACCE classroom, (learning subjects) such as food science, art, Spanish and gym, is amazing," she said.

Through the work study program, Ruiz Hernandez has worked at Hannaford and Williams Lumber in Rhinebeck, folding clothes, bagging groceries and stocking products on shelves. "I love working at Williams Lumber and Hannaford because it teaches me to be responsible and to work hard," she said.

Ruiz Hernandez was appreciative of the Student of Distinction honor. "I want to thank my teachers, my counselor, administrators, my mom, my stepdad and my job coach for always being there for me because they're the light of the world," she said.

Utility Bill Clinic Attendees Find Services Helpful

Hudson Valley residents visited Dutchess BOCES' main conference center for the Utility Bill Clinic in April to learn if they were eligible for various utility assistance options and other costs.

Sponsored by Assemblymember Didi Barrett and the Public Utility Law Project, a nonprofit advocating on behalf of low-income residential utility customers, attendees were provided with help filling out applications and connected with programs helping to reduce energy bills and other costs.

Barrett's office has worked with the Public Utility Law Project on prior initiatives and when she heard it had done a similar event in the Capital Region, her office worked with the organization's staff to hold the clinic at BOCES. "Certainly the issues that have been on most people's minds these days have to do with utility costs and energy prices," Barrett said. "PULP is an amazing resource."

Other organizations and businesses including Central Hudson, Dutchess Outreach, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Dutchess BOCES Adult Learning Institute and others were invited to join the clinic to help residents if they needed it. Barrett noted that if residents are struggling with utility bills they might be struggling with other matters, such as access to food.

"That to me is one of the most shocking things in this region when we're surrounded by farms to have so many people who are struggling with food access," Barrett said. "If people are struggling with some other issue you can take them over to one of the other tables and get answers right away."

The organization's Executive Director and Counsel Laurie Wheelock described the clinic as a great way for residents to get help in resolving concerns surrounding utility bills, housing and other related matters in one space.

"Utilities and housing go together like peanut butter and jelly," Wheelock said. "There were a lot of people coming in with

high bills, just wanting to understand why the usage is high and what they can do ... we walked them through, looked at their bills and directed them to resources."

Wheelock encourages people to follow the organization's website and to reach out with issues at info@utilityproject.com or call 877-669-2572. She appreciated the steady turnout of residents stopping by. "We're happy with one, but if you have 20, 30 people, it makes our whole day," Wheelock said.

Eunice Johnson went around to all the tables and appreciated the help Central Hudson and Cornell Cooperative Extension gave to determine the cause of why her energy bill was as high as her gas bill.

"They said it may be my furnace, it's coming on, but it's not actually putting out because I may have insulation problems and that makes a lot of sense," Johnson explained. "I really enjoyed talking to the people; they're very knowledgeable about what they're doing."

Cecilia Lopez appreciated the clinic where she learned that the Dutchess County Office for the Aging has a vehicle that could take her wheelchair-bound mother to a grocery store and other locations for \$1 a ride.

"That's a big help because I still work ... all of these agencies were very helpful and I got a few tips that I'm going to look into," Lopez said. "I'm very grateful."



Didi Barrett listens to a resident.