

## RA Students Are "Brewing" Success With Coffee Cart

Students in Dutchess BOCES' Work-Based Learning Program have hit the ground running by organizing and maintaining a beverage cart that is filling the halls of the Resilience Academy (RA) with the aroma of fresh coffee and opportunity.

Staff can fill out Google Forms by 9 AM on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays with their coffee order, which is then delivered to them between 9:30 and 10 AM. The cost per cup is \$1.50, lower than Dunkin' Donuts or Starbucks, and the cart only takes cash with all funds cycling back into the program to support events and activities. The menu will be expanded in the future to include tea, hot chocolate and muffins.

Work-Based Learning Coordinator Kayla Kelly noted that this initiative, that began Feb. 9, is more than just staff getting a caffeine fix, it is a mobile classroom where students with disabilities develop essential skills needed for future independence and employment.

"I trained many employees while working as a Cafe Manager before coming to BOCES," Kelly said. "I am so excited to



Julian Page and Isaac Wilson making coffee.



Julian Page and Isaac Wilson deliver coffee to Teresa DeCesare.

bring that experience here and teach my students through our Coffee Cart Program."

Following a conversation Kelly had with Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services Denise Dzikowski and RA Teacher Krystine Nardozi, where Dzikowski explained how a coffee cart transformed the environment at her previous school, staff moved quickly to make this dream a reality.

"This is just the beginning," Dzikowski said during the Feb. 11 Board of Education meeting. "They're learning inventory, customer service ... It's great vocational work and it touches on those skills."

In December, Kelly was awarded a \$500 mini-grant from the Dutchess BOCES Education Foundation, allowing the program to purchase a commercial airport coffee brewer, thermal carafes and an electric coffee bean grinder.

June Markle, the foundation's President, said the coffee cart provides a great opportunity for RA students to get work experience that they may not be afforded otherwise.

"We were glad to fund a project that was giving them the opportunity to work and learn useful skills for potential work

afterwards and to provide a service in the building," Markle said.

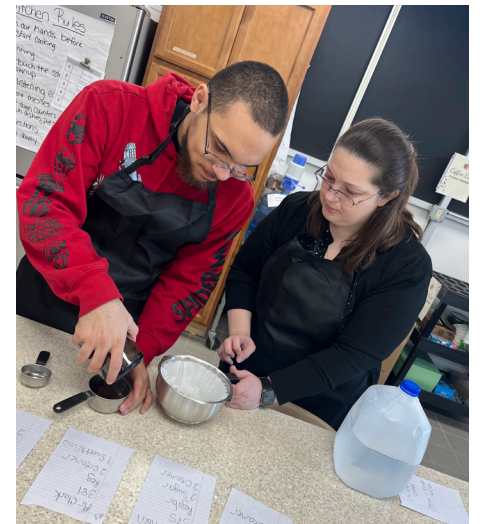
To ensure students get a well-rounded education, they rotate through roles as baristas, where they learn to follow recipes; cashiers, where they make change and manage transactions; and as customer service representatives, where they develop professional communication skills with staff. They also organize orders to ensure a timely delivery.

"This creates a tangible 'giving back' loop, allowing students to see the direct benefit of their hard work,"

Kelly explained. "The Resilience Academy serves as a 'low-pressure' training ground, where they can master their craft in a familiar environment before transitioning to external job sites."

Quadir Wheeler enjoys working the cart where he learned how to grind coffee beans and brew them into a smooth beverage. He finds staff are very appreciative of his and his fellow students' services.

"I love making coffee and being a barista," Wheeler said. "I like to help serve coffee, it's lots of fun."



Kayla Kelly helps Isaac Wilson make coffee.

# Board Honors SkillsUSA Competitors

Career & Technical Institute students who participated in the recent SkillsUSA Area IV Conference, whether they placed or not, were recognized for their efforts during the March Board of Education meeting. A big congrats to all 48 of our students who competed.

Seven students placed during the conference, held in Westchester Feb. 28. They are:

- Matthew McGivney, a second-year Automotive Technology student, won first place in Automotive Vehicle Maintenance – Basic.
- Laura Bancroft, a first-year Early Childhood Education student, notched second place in Extemporaneous Speaking.
- Thomas Senior, a second-year Automotive Technology student, placed third in Automotive Service Technology.
- Elizabeth Roberts, a first-year Culinary Arts student, placed third for Cake Decorating.
- First-year and second-year students Henry Cavanaugh, Samantha Douglass and Alex Renbeck won the Culinary Arts Quiz Bowl.

At the conference, Teacher Amanda Scoca was recognized as one of the "Advisors of the Year" and our industry partner, DS Home Services, earned a "Business Partner of the Year" award.

District Superintendent Dr. Jodi DeLucia noted that the board forwent its usual staff recognition to give the students and their advisers praise for their efforts because of the large number of students who participated and won, adding that SkillsUSA is more than just a competition.

"It provides students with the opportunity to demonstrate the high level technical skills they're developing while also building central competencies such as leadership, teamwork,

communication and problem solving," DeLucia said. "We're always incredibly proud of the students who participate in our SkillsUSA team and represent Dutchess BOCES so well."

Roberts was surprised to hear she had won third place in cake decorating due to the competition she had, but was excited nonetheless. She credits BOCES teachers for helping her get this far and is planning to participate in the statewide SkillsUSA competition.

"I definitely couldn't have decorated a cake before and I've learned a lot about community service and just helping out," Roberts said. "It just seemed fun to try a new experience."

Even though construction student Matthew Recks did not place in the competition, he still felt honored to be recognized by the board. He credits SkillsUSA for helping him become more comfortable with public speaking.

"If I didn't come to BOCES, I don't think I would have ever been able to do something like this," Recks said.

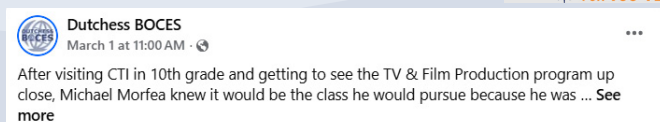
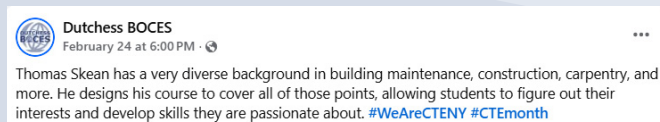


Top: Students shake hands with District Superintendent Dr. Jodi DeLucia. 2nd: Students gather around to hear Work-Based Learning Coordinator Sharon Myers speak.

# Career and Technical Education Celebrated

In honor of CTE Month, Dutchess BOCES highlighted students and teachers in Career and Technical Institute (CTI) programs during the month of February. All 18 programs offered at CTI were showcased in 36 posts shared across three Dutchess BOCES' social media channels.

Students shared why they chose their program and what they are learning in the classroom, while teachers shared their background and the experience they bring, as well as their learning goals for students in their programs.



# Dutchess BOCES Bulldogs Bring Home Medals and Smiles

The Dutchess BOCES Bulldogs brought grit, determination and - most importantly - smiles to the Special Olympics New York Regional Aquatics and Basketball Competition at Marist University Sunday, March 8.

After a warm-up of sinking 3s and high fives, the Bulldogs shouted out the Special Olympics Athlete Oath alongside all the other athletes: "Let me win! If I cannot win, let me be brave in the attempt!"

Then, the real excitement began!

Showing off their basketball skills, the Bulldogs were cheered on as they completed passing, dribbling and shooting drills. Students earned points for speed, accuracy and technique.

"My brother is really strong," said Odell Tavarez who was cheering on his twin brother, Dominic. "I'm cheering so loud and clapping!"



*Reagan Albach showed off her basketball skills during the Special Olympics NY Regional Aquatics and Basketball Competition.*



*Odell Tavarez (left) cheered on his brothers Dominic (center) and Onassis (right) at the Special Olympics NY Regional Aquatics and Basketball Competition at Marist.*

Dominic and Onassis Tavarez were strong competitors, both placing within their heat.

"The dribbling is my favorite," said Onassis. "I'm really good. It's very fun."

Students proudly held their medals up for their parents; coaches Tracey Smith, Eric Hirsch, Maria Sita, Erin Scott and Adam Repinz, and other supporters to see. Smith thanked everyone who came out to support the Bulldogs!

"It was truly an honor to be at Marist and witness our students competing alongside the incredible staff who supported them. Our athletes demonstrated remarkable heart, perseverance, and teamwork throughout the day," said Salt Point Center Principal Melissa Murphy. "Watching them cheer for one another and celebrate each accomplishment was a powerful reminder of the strength, pride, and community that make Dutchess BOCES so special."

## SPC Students Take On Olympic Activities



*SPC students enjoyed "bobsledding" during PBIS.*

Students at Salt Point Center joined in the fun of the Winter Olympics by participating in special activities themed around the games during the weekly Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Fridays initiative in the school's gym.

Physical Education Teacher Scott Calcagni is tasked with offering activities to students that get them moving and was invited

to a PBIS Committee meeting in January, where members discussed February's theme centered on living a healthy lifestyle. He thought it apropos to include the Olympics in his activities.

"Being this year was an Olympic year, we decided to incorporate a building-wide theme for students," Calcagni recalled.

Students tried their hand at curling, hockey and bobsledding, the latter of which taught them about the games and the meaning

of teamwork. It proved so popular that Calcagni offered the activity outside of PBIS Fridays.

SPC student Harley makes Olympic rings as part of a craft. "I then decided to carry bobsledding into my PE classes to further the excitement and correlate the happenings of the Olympics going on in the world into my classroom," Calcagni explained. "The students have been very

receptive and have taken it very well."

Noah DeSario enjoyed trying his hand at bobsledding, which proved to be labor intensive.

"I really liked when I could get pushed, but I didn't love being the one pushing," DeSario recalled. "I hope we can do it again soon."

In addition to the physical activities, students made their own paper torches and used the bottom of toilet paper rolls to replicate the famous Olympic rings symbol. Mikayla Smith made some flags celebrating the games in her classroom, which were displayed alongside other student made flags outside the SPC gym.

"The flag activity was fun because we got to make different things and it is fun to draw," Smith said. "I liked watching bobsledding and that they take turns trying to win gold, silver and bronze medals."

# Work-Based Learning Coach's Dedication Inspires Everyone

Like the Energizer Bunny, Dutchess BOCES Work-Based Learning Program Coach Phyllis Cort keeps going and going, even at the young age of 91. Her unwavering dedication to the job for nearly 30 years was recognized during the Board of Education's Feb. 11 meeting.

"Beginning her journey as the program's very first Youth Aide on April 1, 1998, Phyllis continues to be a vital coach and mentor for students with disabilities at various job sites," Work-Based Learning Coordinator Kayla Kelly wrote in her nomination. "Her dedication to going above and beyond continues to inspire us all."

Affectively known as "Miss Phyllis" by her students, Cort advocates for their professional futures by actively seeking out new job sites and connecting with community partners to share the program's impact with them. She spends two days a week at Vassar College with students and during her tenure has overseen essential tasks at the college's post office and dining facility, The Retreat.

"Throughout her career, Phyllis has supported students across 38 different job sites, maintaining an impeccable attendance record and a reputation for reliability," Kelly wrote. "She treats everyone with hallmark kindness, fairness, and dignity ... her students hold her in the highest regard."

Cort is legendary for her ability to help students overcome fear and trepidation by teaching them to replace self-doubt with the mantra: "I can, I will and I must" and fostering self-awareness and confidence through everything from personal presentation to posture; lessons that stick with them for life. She often checks in on former students who have found success, including one who overcame speech difficulties to become a Walmart greeter, a position they have held for 11 years.

"Phyllis takes immense pride in empowering her students to make sound decisions and achieve personal growth," Kelly wrote. "By focusing on each student's unique strengths, she ensures they develop the vocational skills necessary for independence."

Helping the community proved to be a family effort for Cort, as her late husband Rupert, worked alongside her as a substitute



Above L-R: Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services, Denise Dzikowski, Phyllis Cort, and District Superintendent Dr. Jodi DeLucia. At right: Phyllis Cort with Work-Based Learning Coordinator, Kayla Kelly.



and youth aide for several years before his death in 2021.

"Together, they built a family legacy of service that has touched countless lives in the community," Kelly wrote.

Words cannot describe Cort's appreciation for the board to take time out of their busy schedule to recognize her efforts. She said she has always been a Girl Scout, someone who smiles and sings under all difficulties, and does not wait to be asked to help someone, as everyone can use support. She encourages her students to try their best at everything they do.

"It's all about the power of now ... when you have work to do, do it with your will and your power," Cort said. "First you must climb the hill, standing at the foot and gazing at the sky, how can you get up if you do not try?"

## Resilience Academy Names Students of the Quarter



Amari Jones



Julian Pantojas

Congratulations are in order to two exceptional Resilience Academy students who were named Students of the Quarter at an assembly celebrating Third Quarter milestones. Julian Pantojas was nominated by Teacher Megan Flanagan for improving his communication by talking more with staff, with the help of a tablet.

Art Teacher Michael Hollick nominated Amari Jones because he is a very creative and driven 3D artist who is building a mountain and jungle landscape out of recycled materials, branches, foil and dried moss. Hollick praised Jones for being a leader in class, as he invites fellow students to help with his project when they need extra inspiration.