CTE Support Staff Members Embody BOCES Mission

Support staff members may work behind the scenes at the Tech Center, but they are front and center when it comes to the hard work that goes into its many programs and the students enrolled in them.

Debbie Lividini, secretary to the school administrator; Carol Chiara, Career and Technical Education administrative assistant; and senior office assistants Dawn Michetti, Denise Bisaccia, Geraldine Gilmore, and Mary Ellen Cassidy are passionate about the work they do because they believe strongly in the programs. They also say they are eager to come to work every day because of the incredible spirit of collaboration they have at the Tech Center.

“I am just so proud to work here — it is clear what we do makes a difference,” said Debbie Lividini, who has worked for BOCES for 14 years. In addition to supporting CTE Director Cathy Balestrieri and the principals and teachers and supervising office staff, Lividini has taught adult literacy at Tech. “Our programs change people’s lives,” she said. The variety of programs, Lividini said, makes the Tech Center the right choice for so many students. “It is perfect for kids who either do or don’t want to go to college,” she said. “It is amazing how we have grown as an agency and the breadth of programs we now offer.”

Carol Chiara, who has worked at BOCES for 26 years, handles a variety of responsibilities including budgets for secondary and adult education programs as well as human resources and business office tasks. Her fellow support-staff members, she said, are crucial to the department running efficiently.

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“I can really rely on them,” she said. “They are amazing. They keep things running seamlessly.” But it is not just her fellow staff members that make Chiara look forward to coming to work. “I love the fact that our programs are so successful,” she said. “I have seen our students in professional medical settings or out in the trades in successful jobs, and they say thank you. Being here so long has enabled me to see that our support is indirectly helping students gain that success. It is a great feeling.”

Dawn Michetti, who supports CTE Principal Jim Bellucci and handles transportation concerns, said she particularly enjoys seeing the success of the culinary arts program. “The students are doing great in such a professional setting,” said Michetti, who helps organize the Educated Palate program on our Yorktown campus as well as Educated Palate North at Tilly Foster. Michetti said the collaborative attitude of the staff makes things run smoothly. “This is a team of great people who truly love what they do!”

Denise Bisaccia, who supports CTE Principal Steve Lowery and maintains the enrollment database, said that one of the best parts of her job is interacting with the students. “It is really rewarding watching them succeed,” she said.

Geraldine Gilmore, who works in Tech South and handles responsibilities related to programs in that building, agrees. She said she loves seeing how the students grow and become so confident with the new skills they have learned by the end of the year. “They learn things here that they would not get to learn elsewhere,” she said, “and they meet students they wouldn’t have met otherwise as well.” Gilmore’s responsibilities also include work on National Tech Honor Society, graduation, Skills USA and CTE awards ceremonies.

Staff members referenced the collaborative environment again and again. “Our staff members really complement each other,” said Mary Ellen Cassidy, who is responsible for attendance, report cards and progress reports in addition to helping organize the College and Career Fair and annual Information Event. “Everyone on staff works as part of a cohesive team.” Cassidy said that one of the reasons she thinks CTE students are so successful is that the programs encourage them to explore what is important to them. “Students can be themselves here,” she said.

CTE Director Cathy Balestrieri said that the support staff members passionately believe in and advocate for career and technical education. “In addition to their individual responsibilities, they work collaboratively to provide outstanding support and assistance to students, staff, parents, and all other stakeholders,” she said. “We are fortunate to have such a superstar team and truly value them for all that they do!”

Pride born of hard work, passion and dedication is evident in all staff members. Says Lividini, “I love to tell people where I work. We have a lot to be proud of.”

FILM STUDENTS AUDITION FOR PEERS INFLUENCE PEERS

Buck Heller, Frank Reale and Ian Elk from Peers Influence Peers Partnership came to CTE’s Digital Film, Video and Audio Production class recently in search of talent. Students auditioned for on-air talent spots for the partnership’s public-service commercials. Peers Influence Peers is a not-for-profit that works to help students create and produce public-service announcements in order to effect positive change. This year’s theme is developing empathy, understanding and kindness in teenagers.

Teachers Collaborate on Best Practices

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“This yearly event allows BOCES academic instructors to meet and share best practices and procedures,” said teacher Stephanie Buckhout. This year, the event was facilitated by CTE TAC (Career and Technical Education Technical Assistance Center).

“This event is great in that it allows us to discuss and remediate issues, share lesson plans and celebrate our successes,” said Buckhout.
Three Programs Awarded

The Computer Graphics, Urban Forestry and Arboriculture, and Medical Assistant programs at the Tech Center at Putnam | Northern Westchester BOCES have been recognized as top Career and Technical Education programs in the state by the National Research Center for Career and Technical Education at the Southern Regional Education Board (NRCCTE), along with the New York State Education Department (NYSED). Kudos to teachers Aaron Armisto (Computer Graphics), John Madden (Urban Forestry) and Maria Pontbriand (Medical Assistant) for providing outstanding educational opportunities for students.

CONSTRUCTION EXECUTIVE DELIVERS PROFESSIONAL ADVICE

“We can’t find enough young talent to fill all the jobs we have in the construction field,” Michael Hanrahan, director of employee development at Schimenti Construction, told students at the Tech Center recently. Whether a student is looking to go to college and become an engineer, architect, or construction superintendent or wants to go directly into a trade and become an electrician, carpenter, or HVAC worker, the jobs are plentiful as are the salaries that go along with them, according to Hanrahan.

Students from BOCES’ Engineering, Architecture, HVAC, Electricity, Carpentry and Urban Forestry programs listened as Hanrahan — whose company has offices in New York, Connecticut, and California — spoke of the importance of preparing for careers in the business.

“When it is time for you to go on an interview for a job or an internship, it is really important that you are on time, dressed appropriately, and come knowing something about the company,” Hanrahan said. “These are the things that will set you apart from other candidates.”
Culinary Arts students delivered an authentic Asian feast at a luncheon at Educated Palate North restaurant at Tilly Foster Educational Institute recently. They have been serving professional luncheons to sold-out crowds twice a month at the state-of-the-art facility in Brewster.

Customers were treated to appetizers, soup, salad, entrées and an exotic dessert, all with a creative Asian twist.

Maeve Babnik, from Carmel High School, said, “I enjoy learning how to cook all different types of cuisine.”

“I really love the fact that we learn how to prepare food as well as serve and learn all other aspects of running a restaurant,” said Brooke Robbins from Mahopac High School.

“We have such a professional environment here,” said Katherine Diosdado, from Mahopac. “We are learning so much, and I enjoy every minute of it.”

Students work in the kitchen, preparing the meal.

STUDENTS SHARE PASSION FOR FINE FOOD AT VALENTINE’S LUNCHEON

Hospitality students at the Tech Center shared their passion for fine cuisine when they prepared and served a luncheon on Valentine’s Day at the Educated Palate restaurant on the Yorktown campus.

Patrons feasted on Caesar salad with garlic croutons and Parmesan crisps; sliced roast beef tenderloin with demi-glace; Duchess potatoes; and roasted asparagus with caramelized onions. And since no Valentine’s luncheon would be complete without some chocolate, dessert consisted of homemade chocolate mousse cake with raspberry buttercream and sorbet. A festive pink-hued mocktail completed the celebration.

Hospitality students do everything from planning the menu to cooking, baking and serving at the Educated Palate.

Students enjoy getting real-world culinary experience while still in high school. Said Karli Ramundo, from Hendrick Hudson High School, “I really enjoy making food and meeting new people!”

NEW RECRUITMENT APP CREATED BY STUDENTS

CTE students at PNW BOCES have developed an app to help promote the wonderful programs at the Tech Center. To download the app, go to https://mad-store.mad-learn.com/Home/DownloadMADstore, click on the Tech Center, and click Search. Then click View Now.
Summer Camps at Tech Center Make Learning Fun

Are you looking for a fun and compelling summer experience for your child that helps them explore interests they are passionate about? Then PNW BOCES Summer Camp at the Tech Center is the right place for you.

Students ages 12 to 15 can learn about 3D printing, architecture, animation, hairstyling, fashion design, film and sound, law enforcement, health careers, culinary arts, computer repair, sports medicine, metal working and more.

All programs run from 9 am to 1 pm and cost $235 per week, with the exception of session one, which begins on July 1 and costs $185. Session two runs from July 8 – 12; session three runs from July 15 – 19; session four, from July 22 – 26; and session five, from July 29 – August 2.

To register, go to www.pnwboces.org/tech and click on Summer Camp in the left-hand column. There is a discount of $10 per camp for payments received by May 4, 2019.

Mahopac Students See Programs in Action During Tech Center Tour

More than 100 students from Mahopac High School toured CTE programs — from New Visions Health, Veterinary Science and Sports Medicine to Carpentry, Cosmetology and Barbering — during a tour of the Tech Center recently.

Among the other programs offered are Architecture, Microcomputer Technology, Child Development and Education, New Visions Engineering, Intro to Physical Therapy Aide, Auto Body, and many more.

Students at the Tech Center get a head start on college and career readiness while still in high school. They can also earn college credits in many of the programs.

New Visions Health Students Learn Emergency Protocol

As part of their first-aid studies, New Visions Health students toured an ambulance and earned certificates for participating in a Stop the Bleed program led by EMT and Certified First Responder teacher Bob Cuomo.

“Mr. Cuomo gave a tour of the Empress ambulance, and the students learned how to use special tourniquets to help a trauma patient with life-threatening bleeding,” said New Visions Health teacher Veronica Farlow.
URBAN FORESTRY STUDENTS RISE TO OCCASION OF STORM CLEAN UP

Whether it was climbing trees to prune storm-damaged branches or operating heavy machinery to rid the campus of the last of the snow, Urban Forestry/Arboriculture students at the Tech Center were busy at work this winter, caring for the campus after the storms.

“They basically are doing anything that needs to be done,” said Urban Forestry teacher John Madden. “The snow and ice storms have been hard on the trees on campus.”

Student Ivan Oliveira, from John Jay High School, was high up in a tree, trimming away damaged branches. “He is really amazing at this,” said Madden.

The Yorktown campus provides the ideal outdoor classroom for students to learn and perfect their skills in climbing and pruning trees; operating backhoes and other heavy machinery; and learning about soil, plants, and landscape design. Students also learn how to start and manage a business.