



# JAGUAR NATION

DECEMBER 2022 • VOLUME 12, No. 3

SOMERSET COUNTY VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL

## SCVTHS PEER MENTOR GROUP HELPS STUDENTS WITH TRANSITION TO HIGH SCHOOL

### PRINCIPAL'S CORNER

Dear Jaguar Nation,

As we close out the First Marking Period, prepare for Thanksgiving and reflect on our first few months of school, we have many things to be proud of and thankful for. Students participated in community service projects and fundraisers, benefitting important causes and the less fortunate. New clubs, most initiated by students, are approved monthly and reflect the increased diversity of our campus. Our Theater Arts Department presented their Mainstage Production titled "The World Goes 'Round" last month. As we conclude Fall sports and prepare for Winter activities, optimism remains at the forefront of our vision.

Grades became available in Genesis starting on November 23rd. I wish all students academic success. If tutoring is needed, our Guidance Counselors are ready to assist.

If traveling during the holiday season, monitor your symptoms prior to returning to school. Please call the Health Office with any questions.

Enjoy your family during the Holidays!

Sincerely,  
Hector Montes



(standing l-r): SCVTHS Peer Mentor Advisors Supervisor of Career and Technical Education Rob Carrig, Science Instructor Shannon Melick, Supervisor of Alternative Education Chris Lemongelli, Administrative Assistant Rachel Glerum; (Seated back row, l-r): SCVTHS Peer Mentees Chloe Upton of Watchung, Valeria Reinoso of Hillsborough, SCVTHS Peer Mentor Kye Taran of Bedminster, Peer Mentees Joseph Spagnolo of Branchburg; (Seated front row, l-r): Pari Malla of Branchburg, Syna Singa of Hillsborough, and SCVTHS Peer Mentor Julia Beatty of Manville

With the school year in full swing, the Peer Mentor Program at Somerset County Vocational & Technical High School has hit the ground running with a new group of student mentors and mentees. The purpose of the SCVTHS Peer Mentor Program is to provide support for 9th graders in their transition to high school. Peer Mentors are junior and senior students who have shown an interest in and a capacity for helping others.

Some of the topics covered in the Peer Mentor modules include goal setting, self-esteem, and decision-making. This year SCVTHS has 24 peer mentors and 10 groups of mentees. "So far this year, the students have held 2 successful modules, with the peer mentors fostering a positive and fun environment for the freshmen to engage in activities and meet peers in different shops," explained SCVTHS Peer Mentor Advisor and Science Instructor Shannon Melick. Melick went on to add, "The Peer Mentors have gone above and beyond by implementing the modules, engaging students, and establishing peer relationships outside of the mentor program."

The Program began in 2021 as a collaborative effort between SCVTHS administrators Rob Carrig and Chris Lemongelli. Carrig, previously an advisor for the Peer Mentor group at Hillsborough High School decided to replicate it at SCVTHS because he knew how "the Program worked wonders by easing students' transition from middle school to high school."

Carrig added, "Many students who attend SCVTHS are not only making the transition into high school but are also partially or completely leaving a peer group that they have had established for years. I felt as though introducing our incoming freshmen to upperclassmen would help them feel at home quicker, leading to more academic success."

"Moving forward, I would love to see the mentors get even more involved in the school community by organizing and assisting with events as well as participating in leadership training," explained Carrig. "As the Program continues to grow I hope we can introduce more modules specifically linked to social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies."\*

For more information on this story contact James Strickhart at [jstrickhart@scvts.net](mailto:jstrickhart@scvts.net).





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## SCVTHS CULINARY ARTS STUDENTS HOLD FOURTH ANNUAL AMUSE-BOUCHE CONTEST

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On November 15th, students in the Culinary Arts Program at Somerset County Vocational & Technical High School (SCVTHS) held their Fourth Annual Amuse-Bouche Contest. Amuse-bouche is a French term for “mouth amuser” and traditionally features single-bite appetizers.

For the contest, the Culinary Arts students were divided into their cohorts and worked in small teams to compete against each other. The students then used their creativity and culinary skills to create amazing amuse-bouche dishes.

This year, in addition to SCVTHS School Counselor Susan Kiser and Supervisor of Academics Randee Holz, who served as judges, the contest featured SCVTHS alumna Becca Coviello, a guest judge in 2017. Coviello, a Culinary Institute of America graduate and the current Cake Decorator and Production Lead Chef for 90 Acres at Natirar Park, returned to visit the Program and assist with judging the competition. The judging panel was used to determine a winner from each group of second, third, and fourth-year students, as well as an overall winner of the contest.

At the end of the competition, second-year Culinary Arts students Jonathan Romero Cruz of Raritan and Alyssa Robinson of Somerset were named the overall winners of the contest. Jonathan and Alyssa’s winning Amuse-Bouche dish featured a shrimp tostada. Toni Romani of Neshanic Station and Charlie Shiloff of Somerville were named the fourth-year winners; Ava Bottone and Nick Meyers of Hillsborough were the third-year winners; and the team of Mackenzie Monto of Manville and Jackie Hernandez of Hillsborough were named winners from the second-year Culinary Arts students group.

Culinary Arts Instructor Keith Johnson stated, “Our Fourth Annual Amuse-Bouche Cook-Off was a great success. I am very proud of all the participants and looking forward to next year’s competition.” Culinary Arts Instructor Mark Mastrobattista added, “It was great to see the creativity and camaraderie that came through on all levels!”\*



SCVTHS second-year Culinary Arts students  
Jonathan Romero Cruz of Raritan and Alyssa Robinson of Somerset



All-Rounder Shrimp Tostada, the SCVTHS Fourth Annual  
Amuse-Bouche Contest's winning dish

For more information on this story, contact James Strickhart  
at [jstrickhart@scvts.net](mailto:jstrickhart@scvts.net).

## ALESSANDRA AZCONA



Alessandra Azcona

## STUDENT OF THE MONTH

Alessandra Azcona, a junior in the Graphic Communications Program, has been selected as Somerset County Vocational & Technical High School’s (SCVTHS) Student of the Month for November 2022. Alessandra is the daughter of Juan and Mary Ann Azcona of Manville.

SCVTHS Social Studies Instructor Dr. Tokarsky-Unda nominated Alessandra for the Student of the Month award stating, “Alessandra is attentive, likes to participate in class discussions, makes connections between events of the past and her family’s life, and works hard on class projects.”

SCVTHS Graphic Communications Instructor Jaclene Santone added, “I’ve had the pleasure of being Alessandra’s teacher for the past two years. Alessandra is a self-starter, creative, respectful, and takes the initiative to help her classmates.”\*