

Student wig work goes to worthy cause

Women's shelter benefits from their classwork

BY OLIVIA WINSLOW

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In a far corner of the barbering classroom Tuesday at Baldwin High School@Shubert — a nontraditional secondary school focusing on career and technical education — three students were clustered around two mannequin heads outfitted with human hair wigs.

One student, Amaya Garcia, 16, a junior, parted the brown hair into sections and, with a flat curling iron, transformed what had been limp locks into bouncy waves.

Beside her were Braydon Castro, 17, a senior, and Harold Aguirre Gomez, a 15-year-old sophomore, who both took turns working on another wig, this one with straight hair and a frizz quotient in need of being tamed with some oil sheen.

The students were getting real-world experience but also aiding two residents of Bethany

House, who will get the wigs at no charge. Students in the school's police science class helped the female residents prepare their resumes. And the school district will also provide blazers for the two women.

Bethany House is a Baldwin-based nonprofit that provides shelter, transitional housing and supportive emergency programs for homeless women, and women who are victims of domestic violence and their dependent children.

The idea to help came last year after discussions with seniors in the school's barbering class about ways they could "utilize their skills to do something kind for others," said Gabriella Franza, assistant director of instructional programs. It came to fruition this year, with students deciding to help domestic violence victims at Bethany House.

Anthony Mignella, assistant superintendent for instruction, said the students' project fit in with the school district's ethos.

"It was a matter of finding them a relevant . . . learning experience outside of the regular classroom as well as giving back," Mignella said. "But giving back in kindness, I would say, is



Amaya Garcia works on a wig Tuesday in the barbering classroom at Baldwin High School@Shubert.

one of our board of education priority goals."

Franza said the wigs were donated by Hair We Share, a Long Island-based company that provides custom, human hair wigs free of charge to cancer survivors and others.

Castro said while working on wigs was not something students typically do in class, "it's for a good cause." Garcia agreed, adding, "and people need it."

The students' teacher, Daniel Wallace, barber instructor for Nassau BOCES, said: "This is a

little out of our realm but we decided to take it on as a good deed." At a later date, the students will fit the wigs for their intended recipients.

The women who will be receiving the wigs did not want to be interviewed, Bethany House officials said. But those officials who were at the Shubert School Tuesday to see the students work on the wigs offered high praise.

"I think it's a wonderful opportunity for some of our ladies because they have come from domestic violence situations

and they're not really feeling too highly of themselves, and something like this gives them the opportunity to boost their self-esteem," said Penny Shea, residential director of Bethany House.

Dimaex Louis-Charles, assistant manager of Safe Ground for Families, a Bethany House transitional facility, agreed.

"There's a connection between how you feel mentally and how you're taking care of yourself physically . . . Self care is very important," she said. "At Bethany House we advocate that, we support that."

New York largely spared during Atlantic hurricane season

BY JOAN GRALLA

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Unlike in still-recovering Florida, this year's Atlantic hurricane season largely spared the New York area, barely qualifying as "average" despite predictions that there could have been more storms.

"If you look at the statistics, there is only about a 25% chance the Northeast is going to see a named storm in a year, so you guys were due for an off year," said Jeff Masters, a Yale Climate Connections meteorologist and co-founder of Weather Underground.

All storms that reached the New York metro area this season had weakened below tropi-

cal strength.

Only 14 Atlantic storms qualified for names — 14 to 21 were forecast — and eight turned into hurricanes. Six to 10 hurricanes were anticipated when the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration issued its first projections in May.

The results put the June 1-to-Nov. 30 Atlantic season firmly in the "average" category, according to NOAA.

Several aspects about the season ending Wednesday are highly unusual: the slow start in June and July, the August lull, and the three hurricanes that arose in November, which is usually much quieter when the La Nina weather pattern prevails, as it has for three consecu-

tive years. La Nina raises the coldest ocean layers to the surface off South America's west coast, altering the winds.

An abundance of Saharan dust, blown across the ocean, also helped quiet the season's first two months, meteorologists said.

"The warmth, dryness and strong winds associated with the Saharan Air Layer have been shown to suppress tropical cyclone formation and intensification," according to NOAA.

No storms arose in August, an oddity still being probed, according to Matthew Rosencrans, lead seasonal hurricane forecaster at NOAA's Climate Prediction Center.

NOAA, in a statement, said:

"This unique season was defined by a rare midseason pause in storms that scientists preliminarily believe was caused by increased wind shear and suppressed atmospheric moisture high over the Atlantic Ocean."

Wind shear — changes in direction and speed — if powerful enough can blast hurricanes apart. And the fuel for these storms is heat and water.

"And what caused the wind shear? That's where the modeling and attribution studies will come into play," Rosencrans said.

Another boon for the tristate area were the "steering currents," including the jet stream and the Bermuda high, which never aligned to push storms

this way, said David A. Robinson, distinguished professor at Rutgers University and New Jersey State Climatologist.

"These storms can't steer themselves, really," Robinson said. "They are at the mercy of the winds in the tropics."

Four hurricanes formed in September, historically the most common month for northeast U.S. landfalls, said Ryan Truchelut, chief meteorologist with private forecasters WeatherTiger LLC.

However, this September, "The Bermuda high was relatively weak and farther east than average, which led to Hurricanes Earl and Fiona turning north and out to sea well east of the continental U.S.," he said.