2024-25 Issue 3

Eastern Suffolk BOCES

Spotlight



School Café Serves Up Learning

Student Internships Kick-start Careers

Practical Nursing Celebrates 60 Years!

Para leer esto en español, vaya a www.esboces.org/spotlight

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Congratulations!

Congratulations, Pete Lepore! Lepore is the principal of Islip Career Center and was selected as a 2024-2025 Administrator of the Year by the Council of Administrators and Supervisors. The Council recognizes public school administrators in Nassau and Suffolk counties, and is the largest such organization on Long Island. The awards ceremony was held in May at Mezza Luna in Hauppauge.



Council of Administrators and Supervisors
Supporting Educational Leadership

Students Take Home Prizes in Bus Safety Poster Contest

Three Eastern Suffolk BOCES students earned top honors in the New York Association for Pupil Transportation's (NYAPT) annual poster contest, themed "Safety First – Safety Always."

Eric, from Sayville Elementary School, won first place and a $100 prize; Nimrod, from Brookhaven Learning Center's Transition Services Program, secured second place with a $75 prize; and Christian, from Jefferson Middle School took third place, earning $50.



School Café Cooks Up Learning Experience







A special project at the new Masera Middle School is helping students develop valuable life and work skills. Bear Necessities Café, a simulated restaurant kitchen, provides a unique learning environment designed to teach students communication, teamwork, and daily living skills.

Created by teacher Daniel Atalla; speech therapist Erika Tracy; and paraeducator Stephanie Gedulig, the café helps students enhance their abilities in reading, math, and communication through tasks such as taking orders, operating the cash register, following recipes, and even making deliveries throughout the building. Every day the students build teamwork, problem-solve, and utilize customer service skills.

"Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and it's been great for morale throughout the building. Teachers and staff are thrilled to have an affordable option for breakfast, lunch, and snacks throughout the day," said Atalla. "More importantly, they appreciate interacting with the students and watching them grow in their roles and skills throughout the year."

The Bear Necessities Café menu includes egg sandwiches for breakfast, weekly lunch specials (such as BLTs or chicken salad sandwiches), and a drink menu featuring coffee, tea, and hot chocolate. The café also offers a "Ready to Go" menu with personal pizzas, chicken bowls, and waffles—all ready to be microwaved and enjoyed in the classroom.

"The name was chosen because it combines the school's mascot, the bear, with the idea of providing students opportunities to learn functional, hands-on pre-vocational skills," said Tracy. Inspired by "The Jungle Book," the name serves as a reminder that learning these "bare necessities" can help students thrive in both their education and future careers. Bear Necessities Café is more than just a classroom project—it's a step toward preparing students for their future.

Classroom Happenings

Track Time

Learning to record a multitrack audio session takes time and knowhow. In Mike Mazzaraco's Audio Production class, students are using software, a mixing console, other equipment to capture individual vocal and instrumental recordings. They then layer, or mix the audio, and adjust each element for a more enhanced and intricate finished product.





Crafting a Vinyl Display

Creative minds in action. Students in Cora Weule-Sparwasser's computer graphic art class at the Islip Career Center brought their talents to life, designing and installing a vinyl display at the Sayville Adult Education Center to commemorate the program's 60th anniversary.

Ode to Bob Ross

Art teacher Gina Cariello channeled famous American painter Bob Ross when she donned a wig and beard to teach her students at Bellport Academic Center how to paint like him. Cariello used plenty of quotes made famous by Ross on his iconic TV show and made sure everyone had a great time expressing their creativity.





Parade of Champions

A standing ovation, please, for the participants in our CTE and Special Career Education Programs who earned almost 50 medals after competing in the recent SkillsUSA Long Island regional challenge. Contestants faced off against peers in skills-based, industry-related challenges that were judged by experienced professionals. Next stop, the national conference in Atlanta.

Bringing ESBOCES Together

Brookhaven Learning Center hosted their peers from Westhampton Beach Learning Center in a friendly basketball game. The excitement was palpable throughout the gym as students and staff cheered on the players. A special halftime performance by the school cheerleaders elevated the spirit and energy to a whole new level.





Free Rabies Clinic

NINETY-SIX pets were vaccinated against rabies at the recent free rabies clinic hosted by Ward Tech's Animal Science Class and the Suffolk County Department of Health through the Brookhaven Animal Shelter. The clinic was held on campus and students put into action everything they learned throughout the year. Working alongside licensed professionals, they drew up vaccines, injected the animals, prepared and logged paperwork, completed rabies certificates, and informed the public of possible side effects. They did a great service to the pets and the community.

Global Perspective

Virtual trips allow you to easily visit multiple countries, which is exactly what co-teachers Samantha Picciotti and Allison Mahan do with their class at Sayville Elementary. These second- and third-graders recently "visited" El Salvador, where they learned about the country's official language, most popular sport, its geography, culture and more. The class even made pupusas, El Salvador's national dish, which are thick corn tortillas stuffed with delicious ingredients.



Career Game Changer

Don't underestimate the advantage internships provide to help forge a career path. They supply the real-world experience that employers everywhere look for in today's job market, and can make the difference between which entry-level candidate gets hired. Internships may indicate to employers which applicants are strongest, since they bridge that divide between the classroom and the workforce.

In fact, according to data published by LinkedIn in 2024, interns are 25 percent more likely than non-interns to start a full-time position within six months of graduation.

Internship opportunities are part of the hands-on career curriculum available in many Academy and ESBOCES Special Career Education programs, which provide workforce training to students with special needs. They help students decide if they want to continue down a chosen path.

To illustrate the benefits of internship opportunities, we've provided snapshots of the experiences and future plans of students from various programs who've found them indispensable.



Kiara Perez, 17, Bellport High School senior
Attends the Dental Chairside Assisting Program
Interns at Raio Dental, Medford

Kiara recently accepted a part-time position at Raio Dental where she currently interns. She will continue to work there on weekends while enrolled at SUNY Farmingdale as a dental hygiene student. Her goal is to work in a pediatric dental practice, and her internship provided the confirmation she needed to continue pursuing this career path.

Michael DiBartolomeo, 17, Longwood High School senior
Attends the Automotive Technology Program
Interns at Riverhead GMC, Riverhead



Michael currently works part time at Riverhead GMC, gaining hands-on experience from industry professionals. He started with basic tasks like oil changes and has steadily expanded his role. After graduation, Michael aims to transition into a full-time position, continuing his journey as an automotive professional with the goal of securing a town or state job in the future.



Shaleen Correa Castillo, 18, East Islip High School senior
Attends the Audio Production Program
Interns at Jones Beach State Park, Wantagh

Shaleen is gaining hands-on experience behind the scenes at concerts and live events. With a deep love for music and a sharp business mindset, she's set on turning her passion into a career. This fall, she will attend Adelphi University, where she plans to major in business and minor in music—laying the foundation to one day launch her own audio production company.

Isabella, 17, Sayville High School senior
Attends the Food Prep Program
Interns at Brownstones Coffee in Sayville, and in the kitchen at Sayville Middle School.



This fall Isabella will attend Suffolk County Community College to study culinary arts and plans to pursue a career in the culinary industry. Her multiple internship opportunities (she also interned at Buttermilk's Kitchen in Patchogue last year) make her confident that her career path is one in which she will excel.



Brandon Morales, 17, East Hampton High School senior
Attends the HVAC Program
Interns at Hamptons Quality Heating and Cooling, Montauk

Brandon is already learning from experienced professionals in his desired field. From inspecting and replacing air filters to assisting with installations and understanding the intricacies of refrigerant handling and energy efficiency, he is developing the skills that employers are seeking to keep businesses and homes running smoothly.

Max, 17, Sequoya High School senior (home district is Connetquot CSD)
Attends the Canine Careers Program
Interns at Atlantic Coast New York Veterinary Specialists, Bohemia



This opportunity solidified Max's passion for working with animals. Max always knew wanted a career in animal care, but his internship experience made it clear to him that emergency animal care is his calling. He will attend Suffolk County Community College in the fall where he will study to become a veterinary technician and then enter the field.

Nicholas, 19, Connetquot High School senior
Participates in the Project SEARCH Program at Medford Multicare Center



Project SEARCH is a one-year, full-time internship for young adults with disabilities who are transitioning from school to work. They attend during their last year of high school and receive long-term job coaching in a real-world environment.

Nicholas has interned in the Recreation and Central Supply Departments. In Central Supply, he inventories and replenishes supplies for the CNA closets. In Recreation, Nicholas delivers mail and packages to residents, assists in their daily activities, and helps transport them to and from their rooms.

Nicholas was recently hired by Medford Multicare in the Recreation Department. He will work there part time when he exits school in June.

Celebrating 60 Years of Excellence in Nursing Education

For six decades, the Eastern Suffolk School of Practical Nursing has been a cornerstone in the education of dedicated health care professionals. Over the years, the program's commitment to excellence has helped countless students launch rewarding careers in nursing. Many graduates have gone on to serve in hospitals, clinics, and health care facilities, bringing compassion, skill, and professionalism to the front lines of patient care.

As we recognize their 60th anniversary, we honor the legacy of the program's devoted faculty, staff, and alumni, whose contributions continue to elevate the standards of nursing education and patient care.



The esteemed faculty and staff of the Eastern Suffolk School of Practical Nursing, who have been an integral part of its 60-year legacy in health care education.

Eastern Suffolk BOCES

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