



Spotlight

Fashion Learns to Upcycle

Culinary Covers it All
Alumni Updates

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Classroom Happenings

Running the Gauntlet

Every Job Standards Test at law enforcement agencies includes an obstacle course. Law enforcement students ran such a course in class to learn about potential job expectations. Winners had to make it through each challenge and be the first to correctly handcuff a dummy.



Upcycling T-shirts

Fashion Merchandising and Design students in Amelia Berry's class at Bixhorn Tech gave old clothing new life by creating their own "Upcycled T-Shirts." Upcycling means transforming worn or unused items into something stylish and fresh, rather than throwing them away.

Gaining Independence

New this year: Masera Middle School launched a prevocational course of study that focuses on life skills and independence, which benefits students outside school. Classes rotate through a series of stations that include café (cooking, measuring, sequencing), travel (packing and preparing for a vacation), and office supply (identifying and fulfilling materials for orders in the building), as well as gardening, recycling, and technology.



No Wheat, No Meat, No Problem Culinary Students Train to Accommodate All

For students who'd like to study the culinary arts, but believe they need to put that path behind them due to food allergies, dietary restrictions or lifestyle choices, think again. Culinary Arts students in ESBOCES programs learn the importance of adaptability from day one.

As soon as students enter the kitchen, they understand that the prevalence of food allergies, changes in eating habits, and a diverse society that observes religious and cultural dietary guidelines will impact their careers.

"The world is a much smaller place these days," explained Culinary Arts Teacher Chef Eric Rickmers. "Tree nuts, gluten, meat, dairy, shellfish, these are just some of the everyday items that regularly appear on the no-fly lists of restaurant goers everywhere." These diners look to experienced culinary pros to meet their very specific needs, without sacrificing flavor or an enjoyable dining experience.

Preparing students this early in their careers for the modern restaurant landscape provides them with an incredible advantage when they enter the workforce, culinary college, or both. They'll already understand present-day dining trends and the importance of adapting traditional recipes with alternate ingredients. This problem solving and creativity further enhances their employability.

To showcase the progressiveness of the culinary program, Rickmers reworked five popular dishes for students to prepare that appeal to changing consumer preferences. They consisted of entrees, side dishes, and a dessert. All are featured on the following pages.

Said Rickmers, "Dining trends come and go – remember the Atkins Diet? But some other evolutions are here to stay, such as vegetarianism and veganism, as well as health restrictions. My students will leave this program prepared to meet every consumer's individual needs."



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Tofu Sloppy Joe

To create a chewy texture similar to ground beef, Rickmers had his students freeze and thaw the tofu before squeezing out the excess liquid. They then shredded the tofu, seasoned it heavily, and seared it in a pan before serving it on a bun.



Quinoa Salad

Rickmers likes quinoa because it's a supergrain, a complete protein, and a versatile canvas. To work with the tiny quinoa grains, students added brunoised fennel and peppers (an ultra-fine and precise 3 mm cut). They incorporated rehydrated and chopped dried cherries, toasted and chopped pistachios, and a homemade redwine vinaigrette. The entire salad was elegantly presented in a large radicchio leaf.



Vegan and Gluten-Free Caesar Salad with Tempeh Croutons

Blanched tofu was pureed in a blender to create the creamy consistency for this iconic salad dressing. Toasted and crumbled nori (dried seaweed) took the place of the anchovies and was blended into the dressing to provide that taste of the sea. Cubed tempeh (fermented Indonesian soybeans) were cooked with juiced apples, soy sauce, garlic and ginger, and then lightly fried before topping the salad or a bun.

Culinary Students Train to Accommodate All



Vegan Butternut Squash and Apple Risotto

Traditionally, risotto is finished with butter and parmesan cheese. Here, students used the cream that rises to the top of canned coconut milk to keep it vegan. Toasted pepitas (hulled pumpkin seeds) were sautéed in a pan with garlic, olive oil, cubed butternut squash and apple, and added to the risotto. The crunchy seeds contrast with the creaminess of the rice.



Gluten-Free Chocolate Mousse Cake

This decadent dessert was made without flour and separately whipping egg yolks with sugar, whipping egg whites with sugar, and folding them both into melted chocolate to incorporate air and add volume to the cake. Slices of cake shared the plate with crème anglaise (a light vanilla custard sauce to set off the rich chocolate) and a strawberry sauce.



Alumni Gallery



Chukwuma Egbuziorm
LPN Program 2003
Vice President, Quality Management, St. Charles Hospital, Port Jefferson

Merging training from unrelated backgrounds into a successful career takes insight and hard work. Chukwuma Egbuziorm customized his career path by uniting qualifications in technology and nursing.

Egbuziorm came to the U.S. as an engineer from Nigeria and worked in the tech sector. After his employer relocated out of state, he took his career in a new direction by enrolling in the ESBOCES LPN Program.

“I was surprised that I loved it so much,” he said. “Men are not nurses in Africa. I wasn’t sure how I would fit in.” Egbuziorm embraced all the person-to-person interactions that went into helping patients heal. “That is what sold me,” he said.

After graduating valedictorian, he worked full-time at Good Samaritan Hospital and part-time at a nursing home, while earning a second bachelor’s degree to become an RN. Next, he earned a master’s degree in nursing informatics, a specialization that combines nursing with information and computer sciences to improve patient care.

Said Egbuziorm, “Electronic medical records were on the rise.” This change made it possible for him to combine both of his degrees. He became the coordinator for quality control for three dialysis centers within Catholic Health System, managing all their data and metrics.

He eventually moved to St. Charles Hospital and received several promotions within Quality Management. Today, he is vice president of the department and will receive his doctoral degree in May 2026.

Despite Egbuziorm’s upward trajectory, he continues to maintain a part-time job working directly with people. “I still want contact with patients. I live the best of both worlds,” he said.

Shane Grill
Audio Production CTE Program, 2023
Freelance Merchandiser, Sound Mixing and Design Assistant

Shane Grill’s experience in the Academy’s Audio Production Program at Milliken Technical Center opened his eyes to a world of career possibilities. Growing up with a love for music and a passion for live entertainment, Grill jumped at the opportunity to enroll in the program when he first learned about it. “It was a turning point for me. Suddenly I wasn’t just a kid who loved music – I was learning how to make it a future,” he said.

Today, Grill is already building his résumé in the live entertainment industry. He works freelance at major Long Island venues, such as Jones Beach and The Paramount, where he assists with merchandising, live sound, and lighting. He also freelances as a session musician, playing drums for various artists, and shares his expertise as a part-time instructor of drums and audio at Guitar Center in Selden. At the same time, he is pursuing a degree in Business, Marketing, and Management at Suffolk County Community College.

Looking ahead, Grill has his sights set on working for a record label after graduation. “I want to apply the skills my teacher, Mr. Cooper, taught me and make a career for myself in the music industry,” he said.



Kaitlyn Ryan
Physical Therapy Aide CTE Program 2019
Physical Therapist

Kaitlyn Ryan stepped into the Career and Technical Education Physical Therapy Aide classroom and never looked back.

This Longwood CSD high school student developed an interest in physical therapy as a child, and the CTE Program was instrumental in shaping her career path.

“Jenn Capra was a fantastic teacher,” said Ryan. “She told me what colleges look for in applicants and what is valued in the field.” Ryan also received an internship through the program, which turned into a job.

She attended Arizona State University, where she studied neuroscience, received her master’s degree from Stony Brook University, and will complete her doctoral degree in health science in May 2026. “When I interviewed for my doctoral degree, the committee was amazed to learn about the CTE PT Aide Program. They’ve never heard of anything like it.”

After school, Ryan plans to focus on neurological physical therapy and may want to teach. “I stay in touch with Ms. Capra and am a guest speaker in her class. Her students take field trips to visit me at Stony Brook. I love working with students who are engaged,” she explained.

Kevin Venard
Bellport Academic Center 2017
Teacher of Special Education

Bellport Academic Center was a game-changer for Kevin Venard. The small class sizes and high staff-to-student ratio at the high school are a haven for students with personal struggles.

Venard faced much adversity as an adolescent. He attended two middle schools, three high schools and was homeschooled. “I felt like no one understood me. I never related to the other kids,” he said. The supportive staff at his new school provided a better environment and his ability to connect with others improved.

After high school, Venard attended the University of Maine where he double majored in philosophy and psychology, and spent a semester in Australia. “My teachers gave me the skills to make me think about what I wanted to do with my life.”

After college, Venard returned to school to earn a master’s degree in education from Wagner College, certified in Special Education 7-12 and English 7-12. “I feel I’ve come full circle,” he explained. “I can help people who went through what I did.”

In 2017, ESBOCES moved Bellport Academic Center to Holbrook and renamed it Sequoya High School.



Fallon Collotti
Project SEARCH, 2016
Unit Clerk, Medford Multicare Center

For Fallon Collotti, what began as a learning experience has grown into a rewarding career. When she joined the Project SEARCH program at ESBOCES, she was eager to gain hands-on experience and build the skills that would help her succeed after graduation.

Through the program’s partnership with Medford Multicare Center, Collotti trained as a Unit Clerk, learning to manage patient records, file doctor notes, and archive old charts. Over the years her role has expanded – she now reviews and prints documentation for patients attending outside appointments, a task requiring focus and attention to detail.

Today, Collotti thrives as a 21-hour employee at Medford Multicare, assisting with patient transport to off-site therapy sessions, delivering mail, and labeling patient room doors.

Project SEARCH, part of ESBOCES’ Special Career Education Program, helps students transition from school to meaningful employment through internships, classroom instruction, and job coaching. For Collotti and her family, Project SEARCH was a chance to discover her potential. “She’s grown so much from this experience,” her mother said.

ESBOCES Awarded Prestigious Grant

Eastern Suffolk BOCES has been awarded the New York State Learning Technology Grant, a competitive 3-year grant program that funds innovative approaches to technology-driven teaching and learning across the state.

As the lead agency for a consortium of eight districts, including Brentwood, Comsewogue, Little Flower, Patchogue-Medford, Riverhead, Sachem, South Country, and Victory Christian, ESBOCES will receive **\$200,000** each year through June 2027.

The grant will fund a professional development academy focused on strengthening project-based learning supported by artificial intelligence. The goal is to give teachers and school leaders practical tools to personalize learning, expand access to challenging coursework, and use technology to make instruction more impactful.

By working together, ESBOCES and its partner districts are taking an important step toward reimagining how students learn, and preparing educators to lead in a rapidly changing world.



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