Children’s Cabinet gets Challenge grant

Rhinebeck Bank announced a $30,000 Challenge Grant to help provide interim financing for the Poughkeepsie Children’s Cabinet, co-chaired by Poughkeepsie City School District Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser and City of Poughkeepsie Mayor Rob Rolison. The Cabinet is a coordinating body that brings together decision makers, leaders and community representatives to improve the lives of children, young people and families in the City of Poughkeepsie. Rhinebeck Bank President CEO Michael Quinn proposed the idea, which the bank’s board of directors approved unanimously. It is being made in memory of Thomas Wade, a former bank director who died Nov. 4, 2020, at 83. Wade, a Hyde Park resident, had a long and distinguished career in education and community service.

Poughkeepsie Children’s Cabinet is seeking $60,000 to fund Cabinet staff and community engagement programming for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year. Recently, the Cabinet shared a “Year in Review report” highlighting its work to date, including facilitating partnerships to create WiFi hotspots to help students access the internet and preparing to implement an individualized student support system pilot at Poughkeepsie Middle School.

Every dollar donated to the campaign from now until Feb. 1 will be matched by Rhinebeck Bank up to the $30,000 maximum. Contributions can be made to the “City of Poughkeepsie Children’s Cabinet Technical Assistance Fund” at the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley.

“We are not surprised by Rhinebeck Bank’s generosity,” said Mayor Rolison. “Under Michael Quinn’s leadership, the bank has taken a keen interest in helping the City of Poughkeepsie and the school district make progress, and we believe the work of the Children’s Cabinet is greatly aiding those efforts.”

Dr. Rosser said, “This grant will help maintain momentum of the Children’s Cabinet as we continue to make progress with transforming the Poughkeepsie City School District. The aligned efforts of the Children’s Cabinet and PCSD provides greater opportunity for transformation efforts to have tremendous collective impact on children and families throughout the City of Poughkeepsie.”

The Poughkeepsie Children’s Cabinet is being aided in its work by an expert team from Harvard University. For more about the Cabinet, visit www.pkchildrenscabinet.com “Rhinebeck Bank believes in the City of Poughkeepsie and the Poughkeepsie City School District. The Poughkeepsie Children’s Cabinet is an innovative experiment in community engagement and seeks to help children and families from cradle to career;” Quinn said.

PHS hosts Student Success Celebration

Hundreds of Poughkeepsie High School students were recognized just before Winter Break for their academic achievements, persistence and perseverance. Principal Kelleyann Royce-Giron and staff put together a virtual Student Success Celebration to recognize the 396 students who made one of the three honor roll tiers, those students who had perfect attendance and those students selected by their teachers for awards for Excellence, Perseverance and Most Improved. In all, nearly 500 students were applauded.

Throughout the 72 minutes, teachers, administrators and guests read aloud the names of the students being recognized. During the special awards, there were often specific comments made about the students’ work and efforts. In the live chat window, students cheered for each other.

“This is the beginning of a new marking period, when we celebrate you. You, the students. The amazing young people who get us out of bed every single day to come in to work – virtually or otherwise – to give you what you need,” Royce-Giron said to kick off the event. She encouraged students to keep pushing and striving for more, regardless of what they achieved.
“You push your success in life through character and working hard,” she said. We applaud all of the students being recognized and look forward, with Ms. Royce, to seeing that number double next marking period. To access the recorded event click here.

ELC principal teaches at symposium

PCSD’s Early Learning Center jumped into the spotlight in December as part of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development’s December symposium on, “Student Success in the Early Grades.” ELC Principal Colleen Hardiman and colleague Jethro Jones were chosen to present on one of several topics for the day-long event, teaching on, “How Virtual Learning, Play and Creativity Can Exist During COVID-19.”

At ELC, building relationships and educating the whole child are a priority, so students aren’t just in virtual meetings all day – they’re playing, being creative and connecting with each other, Hardiman wrote in her description of the session. “By focusing on building relationships, teachers at Early Learning Center at Smith School have unleashed their own and their students’ creativity in ways that are just amazing,” she said.

“I’m extremely impressed and proud of the way the educators at the ELC have responded to the move to remote learning. They have collaborated and worked tirelessly to develop ways to build relationships and community in their classes, while also teaching through creativity, hands-on, and play all via the computer.”

Hardiman estimates about 30 people attended her session live. The session is available on-demand through Feb. 7. ASCD has 113,573 members from more than 129 countries and has 64 affiliate organizations, according to its website.

“Play allows [students] to have ownership of their actions instead of being directed by adults,” Brittany Butler, an educator from Teaneck, NJ, wrote in the session chat.

Kathy Johnson from Columbus, MS, wrote, “It connects students. It helps engage them.”

Hardiman said it was rewarding to share the work going on at ELC with others. “It was wonderful to have an opportunity to share their impressive work and creative ideas with colleagues across the country.” Hardiman said that as a school leader, she participates in a weekly Transformative Mastermind session with Jones, who is the founder of Transformative Leadership Summit, host of Transformative Principal and author of “School X: How Principals can design a transformative school experience for students, teachers, parents - and themselves!” When she saw the symposium was seeking presenters she put together a proposal with Jones and they were asked to teach.

District launches alumni outreach effort

If you’re a graduate of Poughkeepsie City School District from any year or know of one, we’d like to stay in touch with you. The district is in the process of compiling a list of graduates via the PCSD Alumni Registration Form to keep everyone informed of the latest news and, hopefully, re-establish relationships. “We’re on the cusp of so much happening here with the capital improvement project and the goals Dr. Rosser and the board have set, we wanted to make sure alumni was connected,” Director of Special Projects Kristina Giangreco said.

The goal is to have 500 people complete registration by the end of the school year and we are nearly halfway there, with 237 surveys filled out, she said.

Separate from the survey, we’ve also established the Poughkeepsie City School District Alumni Group on Facebook.

There are plans to create an alumni section on the website and Facebook to highlight accomplishments of graduates and to start an Alumni Speaker Series as part of the college and career planning process, Giangreco said.

A summer event is also being considered for PCSD to celebrate our alumni Pioneers. More to come....