

SUPERINTENDENT'S BRIEF

Together, We are the Champions for Children in Poughkeepsie City School District

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Seniors honored at BOCES breakfast



Kayla Hawkins and Amira Ibrahim (center) hold their certificates for a photo with family, Poughkeepsie City School District Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Instruction Dr. Charles Gallo, PHS Principal Phee Simpson and Board of Education member Felicia Watson.

Two Poughkeepsie High School seniors were celebrated, along with students from 12 other Dutchess County school districts at Dutchess BOCES' annual Distinguished Graduate Recognition Breakfast at the Culinary Institute of America (CIA) on May 17.

Amira Ibrahim's academic focus on math and science has helped her earn a full-ride to Yale where she will study neuroscience. On top of her academic achievement, Ibrahim was a member of the Ethics Bowl, Pioneer Post, National Honor Society and the girls varsity basketball team.

The senior had this simple piece of advice for her younger classmates.

"Know and remember why you are here and what you are aiming for," Ibrahim said.

Kayla Hawkins was diagnosed with a chronic autoimmune illness in junior year,

but pushed through and kept a full class schedule, plus she participated in the Gender Student Alliance, Debate Club, Pioneer Post, National Honor Society and the music revue. There's no stopping her now as she plans to major in psychology at Vassar College.

For younger students, Hawkins recommends prioritizing themselves.

"You don't need to worry about other people's opinions," she said. "Be sure to put your best intentions forward."

Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education Dr. Charles Gallo left this parting message for the two seniors.

"We encourage you girls to keep the fire burning because right now you are on fire," Gallo said. "We are so proud of our students."

The event was enhanced with a presentation of the American flag from Poughkeepsie High School's Air Force JROTC.

"Delish" Assistant Food Editor Francesca Zani, a 2018 CIA graduate, was keynote speaker. Her career includes stints as lead stylist for the Jernard Wells cookbook "Southern Inspired" and as a food and lifestyle television producer for shows featuring Patti LaBelle and Marcus Samuelsson. After graduating, Zani found herself sending out cold emails to food stylists asking for work, as she had nothing lined up post-CIA. Six months later, a call came her way to work at PowerHouse Productions. She noted that even if students do not have a perfect job right out of college, persistence will pay off.

"These things take time and timing is critical," Zani said. "If you keep pushing in the direction you want to go, you will achieve your goal."



Poughkeepsie High School's Air Force JROTC color guard presents the colors at the Dutchess BOCES Distinguished Graduate Recognition Breakfast.



Zani encouraged students to challenge themselves and be ambitious, but take a step back if they get overwhelmed. She also highlighted the importance of being passionate and staying grounded. "There is a place and time to shine, but that goes for everyone around you," Zani said. "Be a supportive colleague and friend."



Job fair offers opportunities

Poughkeepsie High School welcomed over 40 businesses and organizations to talk with students about their work options during the first annual PHS Career Fair on May 18.

PHS College Readiness & Workforce Education Counselor Kelly Semexant's vision for the fair was to have employers like the City of Poughkeepsie Fire Department and Central Hudson offering long-term careers, while others like Anderson Center for Autism offering entry-level positions for students who need summer or part-time employment while attending college locally.

"This is definitely worth having them face to face," Semexant said. "I'm hoping to build upon it and learn for next year."

Prior to the fair, Semexant sent students a list of questions they should ask potential employers, as well as career fair etiquette and tips. She was impressed to see some seniors walking away with up to seven job applications.

"I have people reminding them 'Take your hoods off, take your ear pods out,'" Semexant said of the students. "Most of them are prepared." If Semexant could offer only one piece of advice to students, it would be to keep their options open and



Clockwise from top: Sophomore Axel Recinos tries on the heavy duty firefighting uniform with a little help from City of Poughkeepsie Firefighter Scott Freeman; seniors Jason Johnson and Kerice Salmon pose with a bag from Hudson Valley Credit Union where Johnson will have a summer internship; representatives from the Fresh Air Fund talk with PHS students about opportunities.

explore what the fair had to offer.

"Your life is a buffet," Semexant said. "You pick and choose what you want to do."

Senior Jason Johnson is looking to pursue a career in real estate property management and during the fair signed up for an internship with Hudson Valley Credit Union this summer, which will help toward his goal.

"I feel like that's helping me a little bit," Johnson said. "Most of these jobs around here have helped me with my communication and my time management."

Johnson is thankful to Semexant for helping him and his fellow students be career ready.

"Without her, we probably wouldn't have the job fairs and college fairs," Johnson said of Semexant.

Senior Kerice Salmon agrees with Johnson and credits Semexant with helping her create a solid resume ready to hand to employers. She was most interested in applying for bank teller positions, which she believes will help towards her goal of working in marketing.

"She helps with that stuff," Salmon said of the counselor. "She's had us gain more knowledge."

Sister 2 Sister makes impact with older adults

Members of Sister 2 Sister, an extracurricular student club at Poughkeepsie Middle School, spent an afternoon with residents of the [Vassar-Warner Home](#), Dutchess County's only nonprofit senior living residence recently. The group played games, presented inspirational poetry and assisted some staff with light duties.

While students had fun on the trip it was also a learning experience. Simone Stewart, PMS social worker and PMS Sister 2 Sister adviser, said that through giving back to the community, they learned about new

career opportunities, acquired employment skills and the experience can be used as they apply for scholarships and college.

It also strengthens character, teaches humility and helps students move beyond their comfort zone.

"The girls truly enjoyed the experience and said they would like to visit Vassar-Warner House again before the end of the school year."



Sister 2 Sister members join residents of the Vassar-Warner home for a word game during their visit.

Please read our other newsletters, available now:

- [CI Weekly May 19, 2023](#) Features articles about how technology can help English Language Learners and reading/teaching nonfiction.
- [Mental Health May 2023](#) - May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Find tips on improving mental health, facts about mental health and more.
- [Puentes May 2023](#) - a Spanish language newsletter dedicated to City and District news.

Upcoming events

**Poughkeepsie City School District's
3rd Annual Family Festival**

**Community
Schools
Unity Day!**

Saturday, May 20, 2023
12:00pm - 3:00pm

Poughkeepsie High School Track & Field 70 Forbus Street Poughkeepsie, NY 12603

Enjoy engaging with our **community partners, free food, games, live performances, a DJ, and more!**

All attendees can enter into a **raffle** for gift baskets, including **children's bikes, gift cards, and other goodies!**

First come, first served
We encourage you to **bring your own water!**

Saturday, May 20

- Saturday Morning Lights, 9 a.m.-12 noon, Poughkeepsie Middle School, 55 College Ave.
- Community Schools Unity Day, 12 noon-3 p.m., Poughkeepsie High School Track & Field, 70 Forbus St.

Tuesday, May 23-25

- New York State 8th grade science testing.

Thursday, May 25

- Art Show, 4 p.m. Poughkeepsie High School, 70 Forbus St.
- PK Strings (Stringendo), 4:30 p.m., Skinner Hall, Vassar College, 100 Raymond Ave.

Friday, May 26

- Half-day for students

Monday, May 29

- Memorial Day, Schools and Central Office closed

Thursday, June 1

- Athletic Banquet, 5-8 p.m., Poughkeepsie High gym, 70 Forbus St.