Board approves last day of school change

As a result of Governor Cuomo’s Executive Order that requires schools to stay open daily to provide remote instruction, meal distribution, and childcare to first responders and healthcare workers there has been a change to the original Poughkeepsie City School District Calendar for 2019-2020. The following dates reflect the changes approved by the Board of Education last night:

- Thursday, June 11, 2020 – Last day of remote learning for students and teachers
- Thursday, June 18, 2020 (AM) – Last day for teachers

We appreciate the efforts of all our teachers, administrators and staff who ensured that our children received the academic, social and emotional support throughout the entire school year. Our students must also be acknowledged for their dedication throughout this school year. Their growth provides a warmth to our hearts like no other.

Students’ works make festival

This weekend the community will be able to sit back, relax and watch a virtual exhibition of photographs and films created by teens locally and around the world.

The Reel Exposure 2020 International Teen Film and Photo Festival by The Art Effect is virtual this year beginning at 7 p.m. each night May 29-31. The awards presentation will take place after Sunday night’s screening and will include a live Q&A with the filmmakers and photographers.

Nine Poughkeepsie City School District students will have work featured, Sarah Timberlake Taylor, communications and marketing coordinator for The Art Effect, said. They are:

- PCSD graduates and current students Aleria Gonzalez, Leila Zachary, Ja’Dae Faircloth, Jordan Jones and Tariq Gordon worked on the spy film, “If you Choose to Accept It”
- PCSD students Liana Dockery, Angie Lockhart-Kelly and Tyrese Mclean have the film, “The Problems We Share,” about a boy who has to grow up faster than he should have to because of problems at home and later has a client with the same problem.

- Nestor Castellanos, a current Poughkeepsie High School student, has two photos in the show: “At the River’s Edge” and “Shattered World.”

Films and photos showcased in the festival were selected by two panels of judges composed of industry professionals and artists in the field of photography and filmmaking, Taylor said. More than 100 films and 300 photos were submitted, sought through using email campaigns, calls to local schools and organizations and through The Art Effect’s submission platform, Film Freeway. Only 15 short films and 50 photos made the final cut, she said. You can see a trailer here. For more than seven years, The Art Effect held the Reel Expressions International Film Festival and the Exposure Photography Competition. Taylor said the events merged this year to form the new event.
Viewers can vote for the Audience Choice Awards for Best Photo and Film. Attendance is free, though pre-registration is recommended, and there is a donation option available for attendees who wish to support youth arts programming. Visit thearteffect.org/reel-exposure to access the event, poll and awards presentation. The films and photos will be accessible after the live airing until June 1 when the Audience Choice award winners will be announced, Taylor said. Congratulations to all our students whose works are being showcased in the festival and to all the other youth whose projects were selected. Many thanks to The Art Effect for providing such an opportunity for youth locally and around the world.

**Church donates masks to PCSD**

Beulah Baptist Church Rev. Dr. Jesse Bottoms Jr. didn’t hesitate when someone from New York State asked if he could help get masks into the hands of people who needed them. “Our children need them. Because of the pandemic’s impact on minorities, we were especially concerned about making sure they get to those people who need them but couldn’t get them in the volume they needed,” said Rev. Bottoms, who is part of the Dutchess County African American Churches Association. As a result, 6,000 masks from the Department of Homeland Security arrived in Poughkeepsie for distribution and about 4,500 of them were earmarked for distribution by PCSD. “When I got them I contacted Mario Johnson and he made sure they got where they needed to go,” Bottoms said. Each package contains five reusable and washable masks, which can be hand or machine washed 15 times, said Mr. Johnson, PCSD project coordinator. District food services staff gave the masks out to children during meal distribution times. Thank you, Rev. Bottoms, for your help in protecting our children and families from this virus.

**Gallery owner creates, delivers art kits**

With art classrooms shuttered due to the pandemic, artist and Gallery 330 owner David Henningsen wanted to do something to keep students engaged with art. “I want to be a bridge between the arts and the community,” he said. When he started Gallery 330 on Main Street about four years ago, he noticed that there were some students who would pop in and share the artwork they were doing in their math and English notebooks. Henningsen told them to keep those books for their classwork and homework in those subjects and gave them sketch books to use. With the closure of schools, he realized that art supplies may be a lower priority for students and their families and he wanted to do something about it. He gathered some of his art colleagues together and started the Art Supplies for Kids GoFundMe page with a goal of raising about $2,000 to create art packs for children. He has raised about $1,767. “Right now I’m working with Catskill Art and Office Supplies which is giving me a wholesale price so I can stretch the money,” Henningsen said. He’s delivered about 65 packs, each valued at about $26, with drawing paper, oil pastels, watercolors, colored pencils, five sketching pencils of different weights, erasers and pencil sharpeners. Students who receive a pack are asked to send him photos of work they create using the supplies, so he can share it on the fundraising page. Anyone interested in a pack, can call Henningsen at 845-590-8922. Donations can be made at the GoFundMe page. Many thanks to Mr. Henningsen for keeping our students in mind and helping them stay creative during this time of isolation.