Summit helps students grow, forge ties

Poughkeepsie City School District middle and high school students took advantage of a free leadership program this weekend to learn skills that will help them in life - regardless of what they choose to do after high school. The district’s first Youth Leadership Summit, featured two PHS alum and current district employees as keynote speakers along with eight workshops by five community partners:

- **Introduction to Non-Violent Communication** provided a strategy and tools for students to communicate effectively and empathetically. Ella Xiao, Exploring College program at Vassar College taught this session.
- **Professional Boundaries and Advocating for Yourself** focused on skills including setting professional boundaries and limits, asking for extensions, clarification, email etiquette and more. Iris Thao xaochay, Exploring College program at Vassar College led this session.
- **Financial Empowerment** covered opening and using checking and savings accounts, credit, budgeting basics and more. Demaj Ffriend a PHS graduate who works for Rhinebeck Bank and Brandi Rider, assistant vice president - community lender, at the bank, taught it.
- **Understanding and Creating Political Cartoons** gave students the chance to analyze and discuss the elements and purpose of political cartoons and then create one of their own. Michael Zwelling of the National Parks Service led this workshop.
- **The Importance of Academics and Career Planning** helped teach students how to stay focused on ELA, math and science classes as they plan their career choices. Dutchess BOCES staff taught it.
- **How to Choose a Career** provided middle and high school students with insight on how to use their time in school to understand the career process and what they can do while still in school to start their career path. Dutchess BOCES staff led this workshop.
- **Goal Setting with IBM**, taught by Chief Ndiaye, IBM Z firmware development manager, showed students the difference between a goal and a dream and the process to turn a dream into a goal.
- **Leadership with IBM** explained leadership and its importance to students and taught them how to develop the skills. Ndiaye also taught this workshop.

“The keynote speakers, Christina Peterson and Talent Davis were outstanding. They spoke about the “7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens” and how it affected their lives and how they’ve grown since being students in Poughkeepsie,” Director of Special Projects Kristina Giangreco said. Peterson and Davis both work in PCSD’s Community Schools department.

Students chose three workshops to join. “We wanted to engage students in conversations around leadership, college and careers. We wanted them to have the experience of going to a conference, interacting with professionals and expose them to the resources we have here,” Giangreco said. Junior Sami Kahn said it was time well spent.

“I thought it was a good way to get some experience in - they talked about finances and banking, so it was helpful,” he said, adding that he learned how credit and debit cards differ along with how to save money. Kahn also attended the goals workshop.

Seventh grader Makayla Anzovino wanted to try something new. “In non-violent communication, I learned about feelings and ever since then I feel a lot better and feel like I communicate better,” she said. Anzovino wants to be a UFC fighter, having watched the sport with her father since she was a baby.
During the career session, the presenter talked about following a path to your achievement and learning what you need to do before you can achieve your goal. “She told me that if I wanted to be a UFC fighter I would have to do judo classes and then if I want to do it fully then go to work on (learning other skills),” Anzovino said.

In addition to the workshops and presentations, Giangreco devised a trivia contest to keep students engaged. Leading up to the 10 a.m. start and during transitions, they were emailed trivia questions about the presenters and other topics, earning points which accumulated. The winner received a PCSD swag bag. There was also a raffle for gift cards. The winners of the trivia contest and gift cards were: Oheneba Osei-Gyimah, $100 gift card; Amir Shell, $50 gift card; Amira Ibrahim, $25 gift card; Sherome Hanson, $25 gift card; Makayla Anzovino, PCSD bag.

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Community Schools Natasha Cherry, Executive Director of Students with Exceptionalities Dr. Iris Goliger, Director of Special Projects Kristina Giangreco and Executive Director of School Engagement, Da’Ron Wilson.

“We wanted to make sure we are all commonly working together,” Giangreco said.

During the first meeting, Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser presented an overview of district goals and showed the progress the district has made toward them. Data about graduation rates was shared at the first meeting, broken down by overall graduation rate, socio-economic status, race, gender, English Language Learner, special education students and housing status.

“With each event we will share data because it will help drive many efforts,” Giangreco said.

Partners engaged in a virtual activity, placing virtual sticky notes on the district goals it could help with. “This will help us align our goals with each partner so that we as a district can ensure they are included,” Giangreco said.

There was also a presentation on the My Brother’s Keeper initiative and Community Schools. Giangreco said the next meeting is in June and asked any interested organization or business to contact her at kgiangreco@poughkeepsieschools.org.

As part of the 2021-2022 New York State Aid Projections, the Poughkeepsie City School District is slated to receive 2.1 million in Universal Pre-Kindergarten funding, which represents a significant increase from previous years. As a result, district administration is exploring multiple avenues to expand upon the current PreK program that it offers City of Poughkeepsie families. One such avenue is expanding the district’s program from a half-day program to a full-day program with a bilingual option. The district is also exploring the possibilities of identifying eligible high-quality early childhood providers who are seeking to collaborate with PCSD to implement the Pre-Kindergarten Program within the community Pre-Kindergarten aged students. These community programs may provide a half and/or full day program. As district administration works through these details, we will
provide more information to our community. The goal is to provide an expanded PreK program starting in fall 2021.

**Senator Serino honors essential worker**

New York Sen. Sue Serino honored one of PCSD’s food service workers Monday with a special award. Each year, the New York State Legislative Women’s Caucus creates a Women’s History Month display in the Capitol’s Legislative Office Building to celebrate trailblazing New York women. This year, because the Capitol remains closed due to COVID-19, the caucus made the celebration virtual to honor “Essential Women” for their work during the pandemic.

Brenda McKinney, a PCSD food service worker for 23 years, “truly exemplifies what it means to be essential,” Serino said. “When our students’ lives were completely transformed due to the pandemic, Brenda stepped up to ensure that each student had a balanced meal every day, even during remote learning.”

McKinney, a lead in the department, is known for her kindness and compassion. “Brenda consistently puts the needs of the students and school community above her own, and has worked to build strong relationships with students, school officials and families,” Serino said.

Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser said the district was excited to learn of McKinney’s recognition. “As a long-standing champion for Poughkeepsie City School District students, Ms. McKinney continues to go above and beyond to ensure that PCSD students’ nutritional needs are met. I am honored to have Ms. McKinney as an essential member of the PCSD team, who are all steadfast in our commitment to strengthen the district’s impact on student success.”

**Joanne Bardin memories spark laughter, tears**

There were plenty of stories, laughter and tears shared at this morning’s celebration of life honoring Poughkeepsie High School nurse Joanne Bardin who died Jan. 16, 2021 after battling cancer. About 60 people, including Bardin’s family and the family of close friend Delores Wood, attended the service in PHS’ gymnasium.

Principal Kelleyann Royce-Giron put the program together to honor her friend and co-worker, starting with music by teachers Neal Grover, David Laffin and Joe North and the presentation of the colors by the Air Force JROTC.

Superintendent Dr. Eric Jay Rosser told the audience that Bardin, “has impacted all of our lives and thousands upon thousands upon thousands of children in Poughkeepsie City School District.” Bardin was a nurse in Poughkeepsie schools from 2002 until her death.
Royce-Giron said it would be hard to list all the things Bardin was involved in: Red Cross, the Backpack program, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts. “One thing she was very passionate about was our Teen Closet,” Royce-Giron said, introducing Shanna Andrawis and Demetra Kapogiannis who lead the effort to make sure teens have clothing and hygiene products. “Whatever we needed, she was a good source of information for the staff and she knew the kids in the community, we miss her,” Kapogiannis said.

Andrawis presented Bardin’s family with a t-shirt that had been set aside for Bardin.

JROTC Chief Mary Wagner told the crowd that Bardin was one of the first people she met in the district, as she had all sorts of physical health forms students needed to turn in. “Every time I would go into her office, she’d bring my stress level down,” Wagner said.

Former co-worker Lanaya Ballou read the Nightingale Tribute for deceased nurses, presenting the family with the traditional white rose, saying, “She worked hard to make much-needed changes on all our behalves. She gave her all to PCSD,” Ballou said.

Counselor Ann Marie Tucker, shared part of the story of how she told Bardin of openings in the district, but cautioned her not to take a job at Poughkeepsie Middle School where she worked given their history of fun together. “Of course, they assigned her to Poughkeepsie Middle School,” Tucker said. “I’ll never forget on our first day at the middle school together she said, ‘You got me a job at a place called PMS.’”

The crowd laughed. Tucker shared that as she dug through boxes of photos from different phases of her life, Bardin - who said she didn’t like to be in photos - was in many. The two met when Tucker was a teen in Girl Scouts. “She was a presence in my life. She wowed me.”

Ty Douglas, a fellow CSEA member, shared several stories, including one that illustrated how, “That woman can ride a motorcycle.” Douglas, Bardin and Kingsley Henry bonded through their work with CSEA and became close friends.

So close, that while she was in the hospital, Bardin asked one of the nurses there to call Douglas.

“I got a call from a nurse at the hospital she was in. The nurse said, ‘Joanne told me to call you and tell you she wants to get out of the hospital.’ Joanne was awesome!”

Royce-Giron said she wanted to get Bardin a cape, because of all her heroic efforts helping staff and students. But, she didn’t because she knew Bardin wouldn’t wear it. She never wanted to call attention to herself.

Bardin wanted to retire and ride her motorcycle along Route 66. So, as a fitting end to the service, the band played, “Route 66,” as Royce-Giron encouraged everyone to sing along using lyrics she provided and clap to the beat.

On behalf of the entire Poughkeepsie School District, rest in peace, Nurse Bardin.

PCSD celebrates our administrative professionals

PCSD faculty and staff from across the district are celebrating the administrative professionals that support the daily operations of the Poughkeepsie City School District.

“The daily responsibilities of PCSD administrative professional varies from office to office and in many cases from moment to moment. We appreciate all that they do to handle the unexpected and support PCSD in its role of educating children” Dr. Eric Jay Rosser, superintendent, shared.

Join us in celebrating the best administrative professionals in Dutchess County by sending them a thank you for their unwavering commitment in all that they do.