

HERKIMER BOCES 2021 ANNUAL MEETING REPORT

“Partnership through a pandemic”

Herkimer County Public Health Department wins Community Partnership Award



Pictured here, Herkimer BOCES District Superintendent Sandra Sherwood presents the Herkimer BOCES 2021 Community Partnership Award to Herkimer County Public Health Director Christina Cain and the Public Health team. Read more about this partnership, BOCES programs, the BOCES budget and more inside.

“Christina Cain is a highly successful local leader that has gained the respect and admiration from a multitude of stakeholders and residents within Herkimer County. She has consistently demonstrated qualities of self-initiative, dependability and professionalism. We are extremely grateful for her leadership and guidance during these challenging times.”

-Mount Markham Superintendent Joseph D’Apice

“Christina has always been just a phone call away to do her best to guide, answer or support us. Being in education or the health field at this moment in our history has certainly been challenging. However, we are all doing our best, and Christina and her staff have shown tremendous patience and courage as they lead us all through these trying times. Thank you for the support, encouragement and help whenever I needed it.”

-Central Valley Superintendent Jeremy Rich

“Ever since last March, you and your team have stood shoulder-to-shoulder with BOCES and all the schools in our region to mitigate the effects and spread of COVID-19. I appreciate all the phone conversations around protocols and that you reach out to all the schools whenever you are needed – nights, weekends, holidays – when the community needs you, you are there.”

-Herkimer BOCES District Superintendent Sandra Sherwood, in a letter to Christina Cain

“The positive spirit that Christina and her team have demonstrated on a daily basis is made more impressive due to the challenges and overwhelmed feeling that the pandemic has created. The Herkimer County Public Health Department has maintained not just their professionalism, poise and composure, but they find a way to bring a positive energy to our conversations.”

-Richfield Springs Superintendent Thomas Piatti

“Regardless of the chaos, stress and amount of work piling up on their office, Christina always answers the phone or text message from me with guidance, a friendly voice and even a laugh or two! I know our district would not be as successful or as sane navigating these uncharted waters without the partnership with Christina and her team.”

-Frankfort-Schuyler Superintendent Joseph Palmer

Herkimer BOCES Annual Meeting - April 1, 2021

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Administrative and capital budget primers

Administrative Budget Primer

BOCES operates with the collective support of its component school districts; the districts must pay an administrative assessment to cover the administrative portion of the total costs of operating BOCES.

A district's responsibility or level of ownership of the administrative budget is determined by its student population. The number used is resident weighted average daily attendance [RWADA].

Each district's proportion of the total RWADA for all districts is the district's portion of the administrative budget responsibility.

The BOCES Administrative Budget is submitted to each component Board of Education for annual approval in April.

If approved by the Boards of Education, the administrative budget is reviewed by the State Education Department for its compliance with law and regulation.

Upon approval, the administrative budget is static. This means that, unlike program budgets maintained by BOCES, the administrative budget does not fluctuate because of district requests.

The categories that make up the administrative budget are prescribed by law and, therefore, are consistent BOCES-to-BOCES throughout New York state.

Capital Budget Primer

An estimate of the rentals, capital expenditures and debt service of the BOCES is presented along with the BOCES administrative budget.

State legislation, which gave component boards the right to vote on the administrative budget in 1994, purposely exempted the capital budget from a vote.

Were the capital budget fixed, BOCES would be unable to respond to mid-year district requests requiring additional classroom rentals, such as special education classes.

Agenda for the Annual Meeting

The 2021 Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego BOCES Annual Meeting will take place virtually starting at 6 p.m. on Thursday, April 1.

I. Welcome

II. Call to Order

- ▶ Pledge of Allegiance
- ▶ Approval of 2020 Minutes
Thomas Shypski,
President,
Herkimer BOCES Board

III. 2021 Community Partnership Award – Christina Cain and Herkimer County Public Health Department

IV. Rising to the Challenge Presentation

- ▶ Sandra R. Sherwood,
District Superintendent

V. Introduction of BOCES Board Candidates

- ▶ Respective component superintendents
- ▶ BOCES board candidates will address the audience

V. Adjournment

- ▶ Thomas Shypski

Minutes from the 2020 Annual Meeting

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the 2020 Annual Meeting was held in a virtual setting.

Herkimer BOCES Board of Education President Thomas Shypski served as the chairperson of the meeting in place of board member Linda Tharp, who wasn't in attendance.

Shypski called the meeting to order at 6 p.m. and requested everyone rise to recite the "Pledge of Allegiance." The 2019 Annual Meeting minutes were reviewed.

Board member James "Bob" Schmid moved and board member Michael Clements seconded a motion to approve the 2019 Annual Meeting minutes. All members present voted in favor.

Shypski noted the 2020 nominations for the BOCES Board of Education. Four candidates were nominated for four BOCES Board of Education seats, which were for three-year terms: July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2023. The candidates seeking a board position were introduced: James "Bob" Schmid – Dolgeville CSD; Ronald Loiacono – Mount Markham CSD; Deborah Kessler – Poland CSD, and Linda Tharp – Owen D. Young CSD.

District Superintendent Sandra Sherwood presented the 2020-2021 administrative budget overview.

Clements posed a question regarding the BOCES budget vote and board member election that was scheduled for April 15. Sherwood explained that the BOCES vote is not a public election so it does not fall under the executive order that moves all public elections to after June 1. She further noted that the BOCES vote is a vote of the boards of education and these entities continue to conduct business.

In response to Shypski's inquiry, Sherwood informed attendees that per an executive order, there was leeway about how board meetings are conducted and the date of which the BOCES budget vote and board member election can be held. The executive order allows you to vote, even if you are only participating by phone, which is usually prohibited.

With no further business, board Vice President Daniel Voce moved and board member Jane North seconded a motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:16 p.m. All members present voted in favor.

-Shawn Maxson, Clerk of the Board

A letter to our component school board members and superintendents

April 2021

Dear component board members and superintendents,

Let me start by saying thank you to all our component boards and superintendents for the ingenuity, hard work, and continuing focus on how to meet student, family and staff needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. In some ways, it is hard to believe that we have been dealing with this pandemic for a full year, but at other times, it feels like we have been dealing with it for many years. I am confident that we all look forward to some relief and a return to a less restrictive environment in the next school year.

The pandemic has overshadowed the regional concerns around enrollment declines, and while the response could have been hunkering down to see what happens next, our region did the opposite. You will see in this Annual Meeting Report as well as in the presentations at the Annual Meeting that the approach this year is a celebration of the work we have done regionally over the past year.

Since the meeting will be predominantly virtual, we are not asking one of our component districts to host... we look forward to 2022 when Owen D. Young will be able to serve as the host because they will have been "on hold" since the spring of 2020. Because we are not having a district host, we have been collecting student artwork from all 10 school districts as well as from within the BOCES programs. The art will be presented via a video that will play for 10 minutes before the meeting on April 1 and then again at the end of the meeting. This need to change our procedures is allowing us to celebrate the artwork of so many students from around our region – and because it will be livestreamed, the students and their families will be able to see their work on the internet!

Along these same lines, our "student focus" in this year's Annual Meeting Report is actually a focus on how our students have found ways to support our community and other programs during the pandemic.

These efforts started in the spring of 2020, when our VP-TECH Advanced Manufacturing machines were programmed to create face shields for healthcare workers. VP-TECH students have since made face shields for BOCES adult nursing students, and Advanced Manufacturing students created mock-up oxygen concentrators for the Health Science Careers virtual laboratory. VP-TECH students also collected personal care items for families who were struggling due to job loss or other economic stressors. In the winter, the Pathways Student Council held a drive for "goodies" for local healthcare workers. Pathways students built a wooden crate to serve as a basket for some of the goodies. These stories are all featured in this report on pages 8-9.

We thought more regionally in choosing our Community Partnership Award recipient and all agreed that the Herkimer County Public Health Department under the guidance of Director Christina Cain were the deserving partners this year. Public Health has partnered with the schools from early March 2020 through the present. They have made themselves available for phone calls and virtual meetings as needed to resolve student, family and staff concerns and issues. Public Health has worked closely with the BOCES Safety Services led by Adam Hutchinson, as they worked with all the schools to develop protocols and procedures and then to revise them as new guidance came out from the CDC or the New York State Department of Health.

I look forward to our continued support for all the schools and children in the region. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me or any of the BOCES board members with your ideas and suggestions... it is so true that together we are so much stronger than any one of us on our own.

Sincerely,

Tom Shypski
President
Herkimer BOCES
Board of Education



2021-22 Proposed Budget Summaries

Summary of Proposed Administrative Budget

Personal Services*	\$509,073
Fringe Benefits**	\$288,306
Equipment	\$0
Supplies and Materials	\$36,050
Revenue Note Interest Expense	\$18,000
Total Contract Expense	\$328,904
Retirement Benefits	\$2,079,000
Net Transfers (other than capital)	\$32,393
Total Administrative Budget	\$3,291,726

*Salaries of central administrative and supervisory personnel.

**Benefits of central administrative and supervisory personnel.

Summary of Tentative Capital Budget

Rental of Facilities	\$213,000
Transfer to Capital Project Funds	\$1,132,000
Total Capital Budget	\$1,345,000

Summary of Tentative Program Budget

Career and Technical Education	\$4,837,027
Instruction of Students with Disabilities	\$8,690,476
Itinerant Services	\$4,246,997
General Instruction	\$3,110,453
Instructional Support	\$2,181,213
Total Program Budget	\$23,066,166

Compensation of District Superintendent of Schools

State Salary	\$43,499
BOCES Salary	\$127,614
Annualized Benefits	\$25,921
Total Compensation	\$197,034

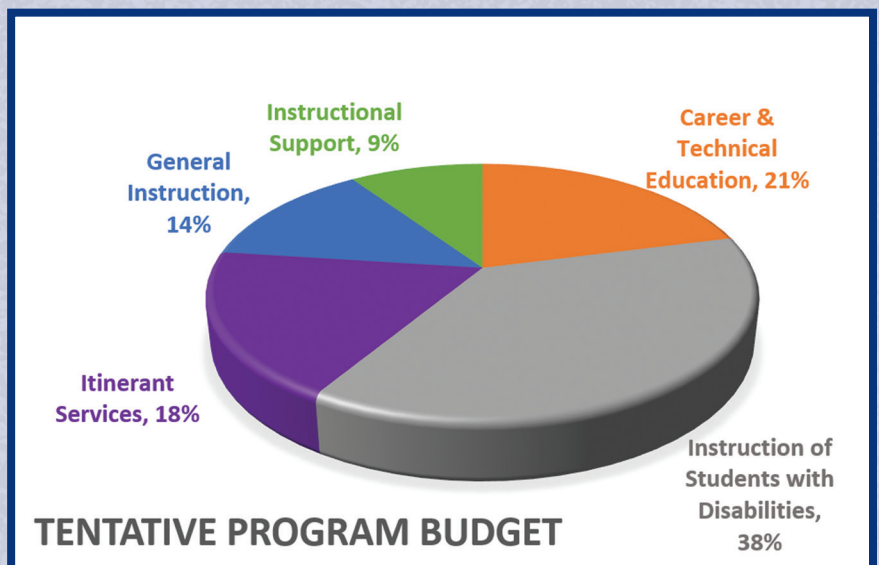
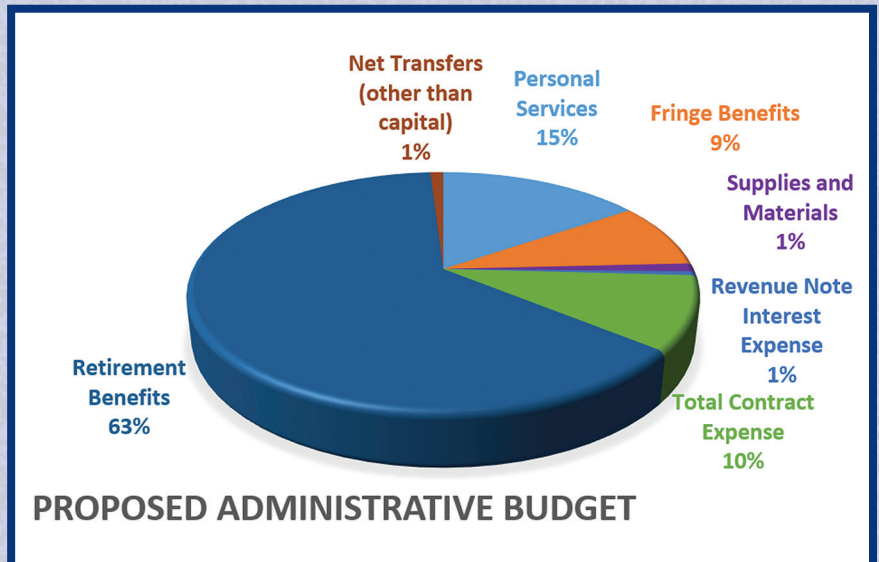
Voting Information

Members of all component boards of education will vote on the 2021-2022 Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego BOCES administrative budget on Wednesday, April 21.

Voting will take place in each district. After board members cast individual votes, each school board will file a single majority vote.

Component boards will also vote on three BOCES Board of Education seats, which are all for three-year terms.

The following districts have open seats: Frankfort-Schuyler, Little Falls and Richfield Springs.



A look at component school enrollments for the last 8 years

Central Valley:

- ▶ 2013-14: 2,238
- ▶ 2014-15: 2,224
- ▶ 2015-16: 2,229
- ▶ 2016-17: 2,216
- ▶ 2017-18: 2,191
- ▶ 2018-19: 2,121
- ▶ 2019-20: 2,114
- ▶ 2020-21: 2,130

Dolgeville:

- ▶ 2013-14: 924
- ▶ 2014-15: 877
- ▶ 2015-16: 893
- ▶ 2016-17: 851
- ▶ 2017-18: 874
- ▶ 2018-19: 804
- ▶ 2019-20: 815
- ▶ 2020-21: 798

Frankfort-Schuyler:

- ▶ 2013-14: 1,027
- ▶ 2014-15: 987
- ▶ 2015-16: 955
- ▶ 2016-17: 942
- ▶ 2017-18: 949
- ▶ 2018-19: 927
- ▶ 2019-20: 942
- ▶ 2020-21: 883

Herkimer:

- ▶ 2013-14: 1,155
- ▶ 2014-15: 1,132
- ▶ 2015-16: 1,141
- ▶ 2016-17: 1,101
- ▶ 2017-18: 1,052
- ▶ 2018-19: 1,066
- ▶ 2019-20: 1,044
- ▶ 2020-21: 1,008

Little Falls:

- ▶ 2013-14: 1,110
- ▶ 2014-15: 1,085
- ▶ 2015-16: 1,075
- ▶ 2016-17: 1,104
- ▶ 2017-18: 1,112
- ▶ 2018-19: 1,096
- ▶ 2019-20: 1,076
- ▶ 2020-21: 1,065

Mount Markham:

- ▶ 2013-14: 1,080
- ▶ 2014-15: 1,060
- ▶ 2015-16: 1,055
- ▶ 2016-17: 1,049
- ▶ 2017-18: 1,038
- ▶ 2018-19: 1,058
- ▶ 2019-20: 1,044
- ▶ 2020-21: 987

Owen D. Young:

- ▶ 2013-14: 193
- ▶ 2014-15: 201
- ▶ 2015-16: 191
- ▶ 2016-17: 191
- ▶ 2017-18: 193
- ▶ 2018-19: 194
- ▶ 2019-20: 184
- ▶ 2020-21: 173

Poland:

- ▶ 2013-14: 583
- ▶ 2014-15: 585
- ▶ 2015-16: 549
- ▶ 2016-17: 572
- ▶ 2017-18: 551
- ▶ 2018-19: 551
- ▶ 2019-20: 536
- ▶ 2020-21: 517

Richfield Springs:

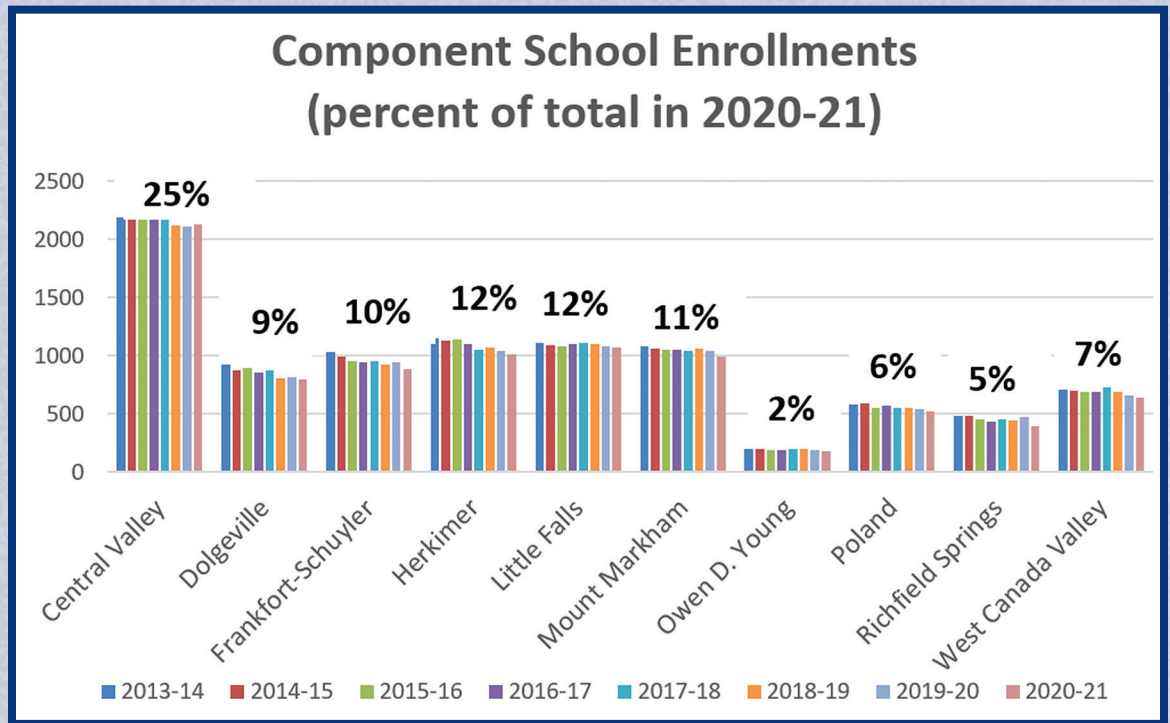
- ▶ 2013-14: 477
- ▶ 2014-15: 478
- ▶ 2015-16: 448
- ▶ 2016-17: 431
- ▶ 2017-18: 449
- ▶ 2018-19: 441
- ▶ 2019-20: 467
- ▶ 2020-21: 390

West Canada Valley:

- ▶ 2013-14: 710
- ▶ 2014-15: 700
- ▶ 2015-16: 683
- ▶ 2016-17: 689
- ▶ 2017-18: 727
- ▶ 2018-19: 686
- ▶ 2019-20: 660
- ▶ 2020-21: 634

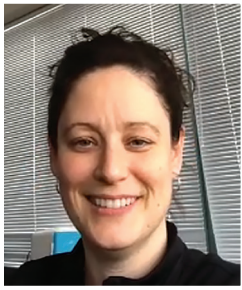
Total:

- ▶ 2013-14: 9,497
- ▶ 2014-15: 9,329
- ▶ 2015-16: 9,219
- ▶ 2016-17: 9,146
- ▶ 2017-18: 9,136
- ▶ 2018-19: 8,944
- ▶ 2019-20: 8,882
- ▶ 2020-21: 8,585



Culinary Hospitality students have been delivering lunches to classrooms this school year.

Partnership through a pandemic *Herkimer County Public Health wins Community Partnership Award*



Herkimer County Public Health Department Director Christina Cain is pictured here and in the photo below (third row, middle) participating in a virtual Herkimer BOCES region superintendents' cabinet meeting.

The importance of this partnership made itself clear starting with the first meeting about COVID-19 on March 13, 2020.

On that date, Herkimer County Public Health Department officials met with superintendents in the Herkimer-Fulton-Hamilton-Otsego BOCES region. Public

Health Director Christina Cain entered the COVID-19 discussions then, and throughout the year since, well aware that school officials were facing concerns such as maintaining safety, allowing staff to continue working and keeping students on track academically.

With both Public Health and school officials facing heavy responsibilities, the meetings were approached with mutual respect and a desire to stay on the same page regionally, Cain said.

"I think that's really what shines through because things aren't so scary when you know you're going into something with partners who are willing to stand strong with you," Cain said.

The cooperation the Herkimer County Public Health Department has had with Herkimer BOCES District Superintendent Sandra Sherwood, Herkimer BOCES Safety Services Coordinator Adam Hutchinson and superintendents in the Herkimer BOCES region throughout the COVID-19 pandemic is why the department was selected as the recipient of the Herkimer BOCES 2021 Community Partnership Award.

Cain said receiving the award at a time like this makes it extra meaningful.

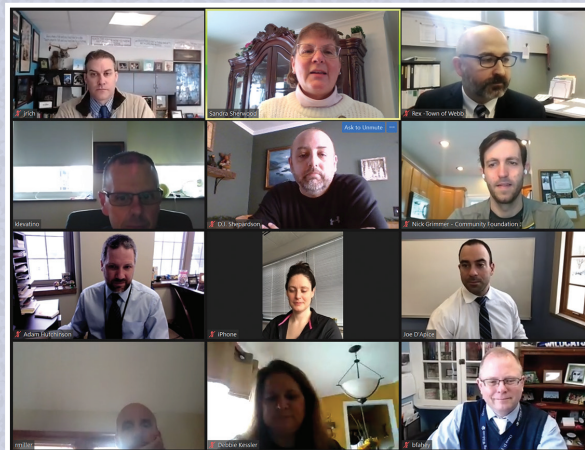
"I think that especially given the seriousness and the heavy weight that everybody's been living under for the past year, any kind of happy news is wonderful," she said. "And then on top of that, anytime people are really stressed or frustrated or scared, the negative emotions tend to be the ones we hear a lot more, so

being recognized for maybe doing a good job is always a good thing, but it definitely is even more impactful right now."

'That connection'

For the March 13, 2020, in-person meeting, Cain was on maternity leave but on the phone with then-Acting Public Health Director Diane Ward, as a decision was made to initially close schools through spring break. Meetings since then have been held virtually with BOCES officials and superintendents from the BOCES region and Town of Webb Union Free School District.

That first meeting generated familiarity and trust that everyone could speak openly and honestly in the months to come.



"It was always really seamless," Hutchinson said. "And they've always been really open to - the overall goal is having the best educational experience for kids that we can while keeping them and the community safe."

Hutchinson said the partnership continued on a regular basis with Public Health assisting with interpreting guidelines to allow graduations and ceremonies to occur as familiarly as possible, sharing and analyzing state or federal announcements and guidance, reviewing reopening plan templates that Herkimer BOCES Safety Services prepared for school districts, helping respond to positive cases of COVID-19 in school, prioritizing schools in the contact tracing process to minimize impact, explaining specifics of quarantine requirements, adjusting screening questions to make them a little bit less restrictive, setting up COVID-19 testing capabilities at Herkimer BOCES, developing a science-based way that could allow high risk winter

sports and other sports seasons to take place, helping school staff find access to vaccinations and more.

"We would have obstacles and we would have to try to figure out how to deal with them, but because we had that connection at the health department, it was never just like we were trying to throw things at the wall and see what would stick," he said.

'The trust and the respect'

Cain said a lack of clarification from the state and federal levels sometimes made it challenging to be as helpful to schools as she wanted to be, but she focused on being clear about where things stood even if she didn't have the answer yet.

"I think that the best thing that I have tried to do is always be extremely transparent and extremely upfront and extremely honest," she said.

Hutchinson said those conversations were very helpful especially in situations when trying to figure out something such as how to space out desks by 6 feet.

"They were really good to talk to about specific questions," he said. "Once you start tipping over dominoes, the guidelines become a bit of a labyrinth."

Public Health reviewing the reopening plan templates that Safety Services developed for districts was another especially helpful collaboration, he said.

"It gave everybody a nice starting place that was already approved by our local department of health," he said.

Additionally, after BOCES and schools had their first COVID-19 cases in school, Public Health helped make things calm, organized and focused on what information was needed, Hutchinson said.

"When it happens that first time, everybody starts scrambling," he said.

Cain said she intentionally kept the focus on information such as which students and staff would need to be contacted. She helped make sure school officials planned ahead, knew what information they would need and felt more prepared and better equipped to respond to positive cases.

"You couldn't have asked for a more efficient, more organized and quicker response to something," Cain said, of how

schools handled COVID-19 cases. “And that not only reflects well on the school, but it reflects well on the population being willing to share that information with the school, to give them as quick a heads up as possible. It speaks to the trust and the respect that the school population also has with the actual school district.”

‘The dedication’

Public Health’s response to COVID-19 and partnership with schools has been a team effort, Cain said.

“We are what I like to say: small and mighty,” she said. “We are not a large department at all.”

Hutchinson said it was remarkable to see Public Health keep things running through so many challenges.

“They’re comparatively such a small department staffing wise that they’re really punching above their weight with this,” Hutchinson said. “They’ve been able to do testing, do contact tracing and quarantine orders and now doing vaccination clinics, and they’ve just been able to roll with it. I’m sure it’s been stressful and a lot of work on their end, but they just keep taking what’s coming and making it work, which is really impressive for that department.”

Public Health staff have voluntarily taken actions such as working extra hours and fielding phone calls on days off, Cain said.

“My staff, I could never say enough about them to capture the dedication,” she said. “And that goes for my clinical staff and my non-clinical staff. It’s just absolutely amazing. The amount of loyalty to their profession and the amount of loyalty to their community that they have demonstrated not just on a day but consistently over the past year, I mean, that’s a marathon. That’s a long, long time. They’ve lost out on times with their families, they’re up at 11 o’clock at night returning phone calls or sending emails or checking in on people because they’re worried. If there was one thing that I wish people knew, it is how lucky they are to have such dedicated staff.”

The department’s administrative team includes Cain, Director of Health Services Diane Ward, Supervising Community Health Nurse Sarah Foster and Office Manager Kim Schrader. The nursing staff includes senior community health nurses Lonna Hart and Amanda Jones and part-time nurses Mary

Ellen Clark, Jill Barra and Karen Noble. The clerical staff includes Mary Lou Lally, Monica Boyer, Melissa Twitchell, Sharon Manion, Joann Carbone, Deb Falk and Mary Palmeri. Volunteer staff from other county departments includes Kim Barnes, Joann LaDue, Kim Fleming and Martha Calliger. Cain also said the Herkimer County Office for the Aging has been tremendously helpful with seniors, and Hutchinson said Joseph Angerosa, a state Department of Health employee assigned to Herkimer County as a school resource specialist has been great to work with as well.

Through frustrations with federal or state regulations rapidly changing and times of being overwhelmed due simply to a lack of hours in the day, department staff put forth the maximum effort, Cain said.

“I could not have asked for more from the staff,” she said. “I haven’t even had to ask. That’s, I think, the most amazing part is they’ve done it willingly. They’ve seen what needs to be done and jumped in. Herkimer County is very lucky to have the Public Health staff that they do.”

‘Good partners’

Cain said the partnership with schools has been very helpful for Public Health as well, and any praise for the department is directly reflective of schools and their staff.

“You can’t be a good partner unless you have good partners,” she said. “You can’t be everywhere at once, so having those people as part of your team, you could never do this alone. We couldn’t do it without them.”

Hutchinson said the partnership meant Public Health could feel confident that schools knew how to respond to COVID-19.

“Because we had that constant dialogue, everybody realized we were all working in everybody’s best interest,” Hutchinson said. “It was really about keeping the kids and their safety and their educational experience in mind.”

Cain applauded school officials for their willingness to shift on a dime and their patience and understanding when information from higher levels of government would keep changing. Their educational expertise and questions meant Cain and her department didn’t have to cover all the angles alone.

“Even though this was a public health issue, the schools were very, very strong

supports to me as well in that regard – making sure that I didn’t misstep and that I didn’t overlook anything,” Cain said. “They challenged me and the information I was giving them, which allowed me to develop it more and understand it more myself and look at it from those different perspectives.”

Cain praised Sherwood for her abilities as a leader, convener, facilitator, organizer and force of positivity. She credited Hutchinson as doing an amazing job, keeping a positive attitude and being a helpful collaborator.

She hopes the community appreciates the value of local districts committing to teamwork, consistency and communicating with families throughout the pandemic to reduce confusion. She said she learned from seeing BOCES region superintendents working together, challenging each other, keeping the same goal and valuing the strength of their team.

“I hope I had some growth too from being involved in that kind of dynamic,” she said. “We have great districts in our county, and I’m very proud to be associated with them.”

‘Very deep roots’

Hutchinson said he knew the schools and Public Health had been working closely together when a receptionist at Public Health started to recognize his voice.

Having such a strong partnership through dealing with COVID-19 was very valuable, Hutchinson said.

“It’s just really important,” he said. “They made this a lot smoother.”

Public Health previously had some degree of relationship with most local schools and knew the right people to contact, but the partnerships and communication are now at a different level, Cain said.

“I have grown to really respect and value the relationships that have developed through this,” Cain said, “and I feel like those partnerships have just grown some very deep roots now, which is a real silver lining to a challenging time.”

It’s easy to have good relationships when times are easy, but they mean more during a difficult period, Cain said. She expects the strengthened relationships to continue.

“It’s like an expansion of the team here,” Cain said. “We’re all kind of melding together at this point, and it is just stronger for all of us.”

VP-TECH students collect hygiene items to donate to local shelters

Herkimer BOCES VP-TECH Student Council members collected boxes of hygiene items this school year to donate to local shelters through the United Way.

“They wanted to bring people together,” VP-TECH school counselor Adam Bombard said. “They wanted to help people.”

Boxes were set up in offices and the VP-TECH classrooms. Students and staff donated items such as shampoo, diapers, toothpaste and deodorant.

This is the second school year that VP-TECH has had a student council. Council members were determined through an election process. Bombard and VP-TECH business teacher Andrew Carpenter-Brockway are the council advisors.

VP-TECH, which launched in September 2015, is made up of students in grades 9-12 from Herkimer BOCES component school districts. VP-TECH focuses on technology, project-based learning and

real-world work situations. Students can spend four to six years in the program to earn a Regents diploma, a free associate degree in quality assurance from Herkimer College, advanced manufacturing certification and local business connections.

VP-TECH Student Council advisors and members decided to do the hygiene drive – hanging posters, sending out messages to staff and talking to other students about making donations.

“We thought it was a good cause, and we also thought it was a good first organizing effort to kind of model to the council what they can do,” Carpenter-Brockway said. “I think they felt good about it.”

To help with their efforts, the council



VP-TECH Student Council members present donated items to Melinda Green for the United Way. From left, council members Nick Seifried, Jenna Lyman, Flare Livingston, Connor Dibble, Andrew Doolittle and Holly Allen with Green.

members created four committees this school year to focus on morale, fundraising, community service and communications.

“We want the students to connect with the community,” Bombard said. “We want them to understand they have the power to connect with the community – that they can do good; that they can help people.”

Healthcare programs receive assistance from other BOCES classes

Healthcare professionals have been giving Herkimer BOCES kudos for finding ways around COVID-19 to allow students studying in the healthcare field to still earn clinical and lab hours used for learning and certification.

Herkimer BOCES Adult Practical Nursing students have been earning clinical experience in a combination of the school’s virtual laboratories and off-site at the Foltsbrook Center for Nursing & Rehabilitation, urgent care facilities and various COVID-19 vaccination sites. As of early March, they were expecting to return to the Mohawk Valley Health System.

High-school Career and Technical Education students in the Health Science Careers program have been studying using a virtual laboratory for most of their 108 required hours, and as of early March, they were expecting to start off-site clinical experiences that month to complete their required 30 hours in a geriatric setting.

VP-TECH students have contributed to the healthcare programs: Seniors in a

government class helped put together 3D-printed face shields for adult nursing students to use in the virtual lab, and Advanced Manufacturing students built five mock-ups of oxygen concentrators for the Health Science Careers virtual lab.

Making masks

In spring 2020, VP-TECH became involved with creating face shields for the community, and sets were donated to Bassett Health Center in Herkimer and the Iliion Fire Department. Herkimer BOCES Special Education Coordinator Kelly Rowland and Mike Cimo, who was then the Advanced Manufacturing instructor, organized the effort.

In September 2020, the efforts resumed when VP-TECH created about 50 face



Health Science Careers senior Vianney Gamino, of Central Valley, uses a mock-up oxygen concentrator created by Advanced Manufacturing students.

shields – with about a dozen going to adult nursing students and the rest designated for other uses such as the Health Science Careers class. The visors for the face shields were 3D-printed in a VP-TECH classroom, and students helped adjust the prototype to print parts for four masks at a time instead of two.

VP-TECH teacher Nathan Purinton oversaw the 13-hour printing process per set of four visors with help from students.

Pathways Academy students donate baskets to healthcare workers

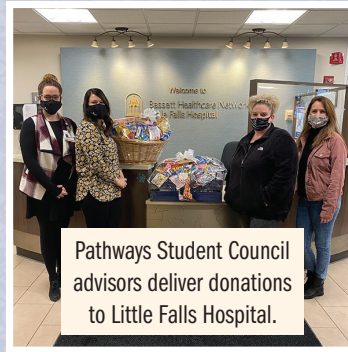
Herkimer BOCES Pathways Academy Student Council members recently found a way to show appreciation to local healthcare workers at two facilities by donating baskets of goodies to them.

The Pathways Student Council, now in its third year, regularly conducts projects to support the community, said the council co-advisors: teaching assistant Cheri Evangelista and art teacher Dina DeSarro.

“During this pandemic, nurses, doctors and hospital staff have given us their all, tirelessly,” Evangelista said. “We wanted to show them how much we appreciate them.”

The Pathways Academy Student Council organized a donation effort across the school, and four large baskets were filled with goodies. Two baskets were donated to Little Falls Hospital, and two were given to Primary Urgent Care in Herkimer.

Pathways Academy focuses on students who have had a difficult time in a



Classes are project-driven and infuse career and technical education.

The classrooms of Heather Miller and Cathy Eysaman donated the most items for healthcare workers and won pizza parties put on by the co-advisors.

Teacher Adam Spatto’s Trade Industries II class at Pathways Academy built a wooden crate for one of the baskets donated to Little Falls Hospital.

“When asked if he could make something

traditional school structure or have to catch up on credits but have the ability to get a high school diploma.



something that was going to be put to good use,” Evangelista said.

Little Falls Hospital and Primary Urgent Care staff members were overjoyed about how many goodies they received, Evangelista said.

“What better way to say thank you than food?” she said. “Staff in the medical fields are working without breaks or lunches, and we wanted to give them something they can grab and eat on the go.”

for us to put the goodies in, he jumped at the chance to help out, and the students were proud to make

“It gives them the real-world piece that we are constantly searching for,” Purinton said. “Filling out a worksheet doesn’t compare to making something that’s actually going to be used. Giving them a project connected to a real need and making that part of school gives them a reason to come to school every day.”

The VP-TECH seniors in teacher Rachel Kent’s government class put the visors together with donated parts such as the shields, foam, clips and elastic to complete the face shields in a process similar to an assembly line.

Kent and her students worked on the face shields on Fridays, and it started some important discussions such as the purpose of doing community service.

“It generated a lot of conversations on how COVID has impacted our community,” Kent said. “This is citizenship, and part of your role of being a citizen is to give back and participate. It was that component of the class with real action.”

Herkimer BOCES Adult Practical Nursing Coordinator Sara Nicolette said the face shields were used in the virtual labs.

“We appreciated it,” Nicolette said.

Developing a virtual lab

Herkimer BOCES Advanced Manufacturing instructor Peter Stone and the juniors and seniors in his class created mock-ups of oxygen concentrators made out of sheet metal, cardboard and 3D-printed parts for Health Science Careers students. The simulated machines include mock-up buttons, switches and hoses, with painting done by students and laser cutting of letters done by 5 Axis Motorsports in Little Falls.

Stone said his students practiced the skills of measuring, designing, assembling, 3-D printing and cutting metal pieces through the project.

“I’ve got some really sharp kids,” he said. “I think they enjoyed the challenge of doing it.”

Health Science Careers instructor Christie Zambri said a virtual lab with mannequins was setup to provide clinical experience until students could return to off-site locations. She said the mock-up oxygen concentrators, used for treating

respiratory conditions that require oxygen administration, were helpful in the simulated environment of the virtual lab.

“We try to create real-life situations in there that they would come across at a clinical site,” she said.

The virtual lab is treated as a live hospital, and the mannequins are treated as real people, Zambri said. Through notes and signs, students are told how the patients’ conditions are changing based on their care, and this allows for the creation of experiences that students usually wouldn’t get at a clinical site without a real person’s condition worsening, she said.

Health Science Careers student Breanna Martinez, a senior of Central Valley, said using the mock-up machines to practice connecting the tubes to patients is part of a helpful virtual lab experience.

“I’ve been able to learn what the machine does for a patient,” Martinez said. “It gives us the opportunity to see different things we wouldn’t see in a clinical setting. It shows us things we would see in clinical plus even more. I think it builds our character and leadership skills even more.”

Program Highlights – updates about just some of the many great programs at Herkimer BOCES

Anti-racism project

Herkimer BOCES Special Programs students at Barringer Road Elementary School in Central Valley recently participated in an anti-racism project about how skin color is formed.

“It was an incredibly satisfying and fun experience,” Herkimer BOCES Supervisor of Special Education Patricia Wilson said. “The kids learned about how no one is actually white or black, or yellow or red – that we get our skin color in three ways: our ancestors, the sun and melanin in our skin. We learned that all people have melanin in their skin to protect us from the sun.”

The project took place in Kristina Staring and Abby Anglin’s third and fourth grade classes, Crystal Hilts’ second grade class and Gary Lesniak’s second and third grade classes. The activity incorporated science, English language arts and social-emotional learning. Students were read to, asked about details and mixed paint colors together to match their own skin colors.

“We had to mix a number of colors together, including black and white, for each of us to achieve our own unique color,” Wilson said. “Then the kids thought of creative names for their unique colors, like cinnamon, peaches and light paprika.”

Safety Services

Barring an emergency or crisis situation, Herkimer BOCES Safety Services normally operate on a predictable timetable such as fire inspections once per year, asbestos checks every six months and various drills throughout the year.

“When COVID hit, the Safety Service had to switch gears – and still do all that other stuff because none of those regulations got waived – and become an expert on COVID and the safety regulations around that,” Herkimer BOCES Safety Services Coordinator Adam Hutchinson said.

Hutchinson and Safety Services have worked closely with

component districts and the Herkimer County Public Health Department to address COVID-19 issues throughout the past year. (Read more on pages 6-7.)

Safety Services have successfully navigated the last year by finding ways to address safety issues that have arisen due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.



Working on an anti-racism project about how skin color is formed.

This work has included every aspect of operating in-person learning during the pandemic – such as developing reopening plan templates, conducting building walkthroughs prior to reopening and assisting with contact tracing.

Of note, the service was able to successfully apply for a “limited services laboratory” certification from the state for BOCES, its component districts and the Town of Webb Union Free School District in order to conduct COVID-19 tests. The service also developed a testing site protocol including consent forms, staffing recommendations and reporting requirements. Most recently, Safety Services developed a safety plan template for high-risk sports for Herkimer County districts. The plan includes guidelines for screening, personal protective equipment, transportation and other aspects of safely



Finding ways for 12:1:1 classes to gain career experience.

competing during the pandemic.

This school year, adjustments had to be made such as doing some school-opening trainings virtually and adapting fire and lockdown drills to COVID-19 regulations.

“Everything has a COVID tweak on it now,” Hutchinson said.

That also goes for Safety Services employees. School Safety Advisor Jim Garcia adjusted his work by using his law enforcement connections to help schools communicate with local law enforcement agencies to check in on students who weren’t participating in school virtually or responding to messages.

Safety Services also added a full-time Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

coordinator, Christy Harlander, who provides resources and technical assistance around the Dignity for All Students Act and social-emotional issues. Harlander’s role adjusted to COVID-19 by focusing more on social-emotional health, starting a wellness initiative at BOCES, providing resources to staff for students who might be in distress and providing training for staff self-care and resilience because it’s a stressful time for staff members as well, Hutchinson said.

“Teaching this year is not like teaching has ever been before,” he said.

Career Awareness, Preparation & Exploration

Herkimer Career Awareness, Career Preparation and Career Exploration programs have had to adapt to teaching employability skills within the classroom and building settings. Given COVID-19 restrictions, these students are not able to go into the community and work with our businesses as they have in the past, but that does not mean that they are not learning the characteristics and skills of employability. These 12:1:1 programs provide a career-based experience for students with disabilities. Students are given the opportunity to develop the

confidence and social skills necessary for success in community employment settings. In a COVID-19 environment, this presents some challenges; but our dedicated staff has met and exceeded those challenges.

Teachers are working collaboratively with their colleagues and administrators to identify authentic and purposeful employment opportunities where the students are located. Some of these experiences include: beautifying the trailhead at the Herkimer BOCES William E. Busacker Complex near the side parking lot by planting perennials and bulbs and pruning the trail entrance, painting the fire hydrants on campus, unpacking and labeling items for redistribution to other sites and putting together furniture.

The students also painted posts and created wreaths as craft projects for entrepreneurship ideas. They made cards for nursing home residents, sorted and mailed folders for teachers, made dog biscuits for the Humane Society, sewed masks and planted garlic in pots for next year's harvest. They had guest speakers that students interviewed about their jobs. They had guest chefs that showed them how to prepare food – all on Zoom.

Alana Connolly's class continued to have 4H meetings. Shannon Gayhart and her class wrote to the Mohawk Village Board to get permission to work in the Mohawk cemetery a couple of days per week. Jobs that the students completed include: cleaning headstones, raking, planting flowers and picking up debris and garbage.

"Our students are learning to be good employees and our teachers are being extremely creative and collaborative during a challenging time," Herkimer BOCES Director of Special Education & Alternative Education Roberta Matthews said.

Adult, Early Childhood & Outreach Education

Programs have found ways to do things differently this school

year, Adult, Early Childhood and Outreach Education Director Mary Kline said.

The Herkimer BOCES Adult Practical Nursing Program designed and had individual mannequins made, so they could practice various procedures. Virtual classes were used to keep classes in groups. Some clinical experiences were held at COVID-19 immunization clinics, and some second-year students were hired as immunizers.



Using mannequins in Adult Practical Nursing Program classrooms.

What is prekindergarten without toys, and centers and small group tables? Prekindergarten programs created small, 6-foot areas for each student. Centers became areas for each student. Centers became individualized play periods where students selected their toy for the day.

Adult literacy classes were changed into individualized sessions where small groups of students met and worked individually. It has provided more flexibility for the students and greater individualization. It seems to be working, Kline said. All students but one who have attempted the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC exam) have passed.

What would the Migrant Education program look like with staff confined to their homes, no school visits and no home-based instruction? It has become a virtual world. Staff are creating Google Classrooms



Spacing out desks in prekindergarten classrooms.

and are working with school districts to be included in their students' classes. Out-of-school youth have learned how to use various apps on their phones, and staff are delivering instruction.

"Where there is a will, there is a way," Kline said.

School to Careers

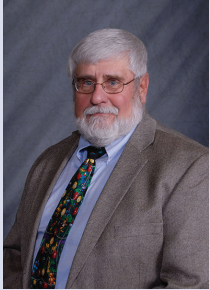
"Being successful in a virtual world" was the School to Careers tagline for the program's first time hosting a virtual career day. Similar to many other programs, School to Careers needed to transition from in-person district services to a fully remote world and did so successfully.

The Advanced Career Immersion Experience had a virtual internship campus this school year – providing mentoring internships for ACIE students interested in professions that restricted in-person placements and posting asynchronous workshops and Fearless Friday inspirational announcements. STC hosted numerous virtual career speakers for BOCES programs and component districts. The STC team facilitated a virtual career inspiration day, via livestream with Zoom links, which reached hundreds of students. The event featured career professionals who successfully transitioned to a virtual world.

To address the need for career exploration for middle school students, the STC team committed to creating a way to provide the Journey from 8 to Great virtually. Working in coordination with the Expertise Project and an intern from Herkimer High School, STC has been able to build an asynchronous experience that includes a tour of Herkimer BOCES, along with interviews of current and former students.

Additionally, STC will be hosting a seventh-grade skills trade day in May. This will be another virtual event that will highlight the skills needed and opportunities for the trades professions in the region. Through this format, STC will not only be able to present career awareness for middle school students from component districts, but will also give senior Career and Technical Education students the chance to practice 21st century work skills.

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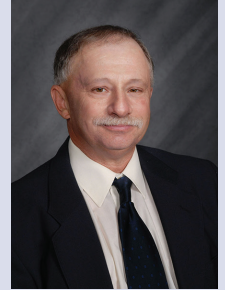
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