

From the District Superintendent

Dear Staff:

During the past month, I have had the opportunity to meet with many of you during the seven **Conversations with the District Superintendent** sessions that were held. Because this year's conversation is so important and many of you were not able to attend, my letter to you this month will highlight the messages shared.

What will 2012 bring? This year's conversation focused on the areas of leadership change, the new evaluation system for teachers, and the fiscal pressures facing schools and BOCES.

Leadership changes. The announcement of my retirement triggers a process at the New York State Education Department that analyzes whether this BOCES should stay as it is, merge with another, or create some other configuration of school districts. The analysis process, called the Supervisory District Survey, is in the process of being completed and we are awaiting a final decision. It is not until the Commissioner indicates that the OCM Supervisory District will stay as it is that the OCM BOCES Board of Education can initiate the search. We anticipate that we will be able to begin the search within the next month.

Evaluation system changes. The Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) process for teachers and principals is mandated by state law. A committee of teachers and administrators has been meeting since October to work on the development of a system that will meet the requirements. I am pleased to say that the committee is making significant process and hopes to have a draft APPR to share with the Board of Education in March. The process will be initiated in September 2012.

Fiscal Pressures. School districts are funded by a combination of property taxes and state aid. Both sources of revenue are being limited this year. Property taxes cannot be raised more than 2% because of new legislation that has been passed and at the same time, state aid to school districts has been limited. The fiscal pressures impact BOCES because our funding comes from school districts purchasing services. When districts have less money, they tend to purchase fewer services from BOCES.

Students in the Spotlight!



Nicole DeRusso (with Lori Pallone) is a 2011 OCM BOCES External Diploma Program (EDP) graduate from the Marathon School District. Just prior to finishing her required work for the program in September, she gave birth to her first son, Dominic. Nicole was so dedicated to completing the program that she only took one week off from her school work, then returned to complete all of her assignments. Her hard work and dedication certainly paid off for her.

Nicole's instructors refer to her as "a model EDP student, completing all of her assignments on time and making all of her weekly appointments."

While all of our programs have been impacted to some extent, programs such as Career and Technical Education and Alternative Education have been particularly hard hit by decreased requests. While we are in the process of developing the budgets for programs now, we are awaiting final requests from districts due in April to make decisions about programs and staffing.

As we learn more, we will share it with you. If you are interested in viewing the power point that I used during my conversations, please go to <http://www.ocmboces.org/tfiles/folder746/Conversations%20presentation%2Epdf>.

Jessica

Words of Wisdom



“ Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right. ”

- Oprah Winfrey

The OCM BOCES Employee Assistance Program staff would like to offer that in this time of making New Year's resolutions, if you need help keeping yours, call them at 315/471-1361



Artist Paints Picture of Determination for BOCES Students



Photos courtesy of Dick Blume/The Post Standard

On Monday, December 12, 2011, students in OCM BOCES alternative education programs at the Lee G. Peters Career Training Center in Liverpool learned a different kind of lesson at school. Throughout the day, classes were visited by Oswego artist, Dennis Pullen, who is paralyzed from the shoulders down but continues painting. The artist, who paints by holding a brush in his mouth, demonstrated the technique for the students and spoke to them about his passion. Students also had the chance to use Pullen's technique to do their own painting.

Pictured right: Career Academy student Jess Miner.



Bring on the Books!

OCM BOCES is once again participating in the United Way's Success By Six *Bring on the Books!* Book Drive

Through the drive, *new and gently used books* are distributed to child care centers, after school programs and other organizations in need of children's books. This initiative is an attempt to promote reading and literacy throughout Central New York.

Look for Success By Six collection boxes throughout the Henry Campus from February 11, 2012 to February 27, 2012.

Each year the drive is responsible for the donation of thousands of books to various locations in Onondaga County. Let's help the United Way continue their good work while supporting literacy for children.

For more information about the book drive at OCM BOCES, contact Linda Miller Shapess at Lshapess@ocmboces.org or 315/433-2671.



Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program Students Speak to Santa in Their Language



This past holiday season, as Jaimie Williams and Tracie Clark were working on holiday activities with their students, they quickly realized that several students were not familiar with Santa Claus, nor did they know about his “job” of delivering toys to children. The instructors discovered that the students had never had the opportunity to go to the mall and visit with Santa with the assistance of a sign language interpreter to make the experience meaningful for them.

In an effort to help the students learn about this piece of American culture and experience the tradition of Santa Claus, they spent time in class reading stories about Santa and writing letters to him. On Wednesday, December 21, 2011, six of Jaimie and Tracie’s kindergarten and first grade students, ages 5 and 6, had the opportunity to take a trip to Carousel Mall to visit with the figure about whom they had been learning.

The students were excited to meet the mall’s Santa and especially to speak to him in their own language!

McEvoy SkillsUSA Students Support Local Food Pantry with Food Drive



SkillsUSA students from the OCM BOCES McEvoy Educational Campus in Cortland recently held a food drive in support of their local food pantry and families in need throughout the community. The students encouraged their classmates, teachers and other school employees to bring in donations of canned fruits or vegetables and other non-perishable food items. The amount of donations received was tremendous and the offerings helped make the holiday season happier for many local families.



Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program Students Take Multi-Media Tour of the Human Body with Students from Around the Nation and World



On Friday, December 9, 2011, students from the OCM BOCES Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program at Solvay High School participated in an interactive videoconference call titled "InnerWorld Discovery." This program was a multimedia journey through the human body. With Dr. Silverstein as their guide, students participated in the session which allowed them to experience the wonder, intricacies and elegance of the human body's immune system.

OCM BOCES was one of seven schools to participate in the videoconference. Participation included students from Texas,

North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and even as far away as Croatia. One of the students is quoted as saying "It was interesting joining the conference and seeing kids from other schools, from different states and even different countries."

Chimers Entertain and Delight Students and Staff at Homer High School



On Thursday, December 22, 2011, senior Chimers musicians from the OCM BOCES McEvoy Educational campus, led by music teacher Molly Milner and supported by STAR teachers Brenda Comolli and Jamie Breneman, delighted adults and students during a lunchtime concert at Homer High School.

The group performed familiar holiday songs such as "Jingle Bells" and "Away in a Manger" and ended the mini-concert with the audience participating in "We Wish You a Merry Christmas."

The students did a wonderful job and many students and staff were in the auditorium during the lunch periods to enjoy the performances. One staff member even wrote a thank you e-mail after the event saying, "That was simply amazing! I enjoyed it so much! It was very moving and I loved it! Thank you so much for making my day!"

Flexible Spending Accounts

The 2011 Plan Year has ended!

A reminder that the 2011 Flexible Spending Account (FSA) plan year ended as of December 31, 2011.

Use it - Don't lose it!



Check your balance at the Benefit Resource, Inc. website at www.benefitresource.com.

According to IRS regulations,

you will forfeit any money left in your account at the end of the run-out period. All claims for unpaid monies must be postmarked to Benefit Resource, Inc. **by March 31, 2012** for expenditures from January 1, 2011 through December 31, 2011.

OCM BOCES Board Members

Ann Wright, *President*

Wayne Brownson, *Vice President*

Michael J. Brady

Catherine Cifaratta-Brayton

Roseann DuBrava

Mark W. Gilbert

Mary Ann Haley

Mike Murphy

Lisa O'Reilly

David Paczkowski

Joan Reeves