

BOCES BITS

November 2008 Vol. 4 Issue 9

Jessica F. Cohen, District Superintendent • Laurie Cook, Editor

From the District Superintendent

Dear Staff,

I have been reading the headlines recently and wondering what this next year will bring. The recent announcement by Commissioner Mills of his retirement is significant for educators in New York State. Commissioner Mills has been in his position for the past fourteen years and has had an extremely positive impact on our educational system. He has been a strong supporter of programs provided by BOCES and has helped us to grow over the past years. The next few months will be very interesting as the Board of Regents select a new Commissioner.

The Governor recently announced that the state faces a record \$47 billion budget deficit over the next four years, with an expected \$1.5 billion deficit this year and \$12.5 billion next year. The next few months will require us to react to the impact of the state's fiscal pressures.

Since state aid to schools is a significant part of the New York State budget, it is safe to say that the next few years will provide many challenges for school districts and for BOCES.

BOCES was designed to provide school districts with cost effective options to collaborate on services. OCM BOCES does this in many ways for students, schools, and communities. Our challenge this year will be to create additional ways to develop and enhance programs to assist our districts to help students be successful. We will be working on how to make sure that we are cost effective and that our services help our districts to become even more cost effective. We'll be talking about this a lot in the next few months.

Jessica

Crayon Box Nursery School Opens for Preschoolers



Above: Katelyn Cook (left) from Liverpool High School and Kierston Llera-LeVe (right) from West Genesee High School work on creating name tags for the preschool children who will be attending OCM BOCES Early Childhood Education Program. Katelyn's mother was formerly a student of the same program with OCM BOCES and now works at Chestnut Hill Middle School.

On November 4th, 2008, the Crayon Box Nursery School opened their doors to its first group of preschool children at the Irvin E. Henry campus. The 2008-09 school year is the first one during which the Early Childhood Education (ECE) program has been housed at the Henry campus. Prior to this school year, the program was located at the Career Training Center in Liverpool and was called the Charlie Brown nursery school.

OCM BOCES ECE program juniors and seniors spent the first part of this school year readying for the preschoolers' start by preparing instructional lessons, creating classroom materials and developing teaching tools. Program Instructor, Nancy Slominski, has been teaching in the BOCES ECE program, the only "lab learning" early childhood education classroom in the Syracuse area, for over 30 years.

The Early Childhood Education Program is still accepting preschoolers for the 2008-09 school year for both morning and afternoon sessions. For more information, or to schedule a visit, call Nancy Slominski at 433-2635.

Cortland Alternative Junior High Students Perform Community Service

On October 1, students and staff from the Cortland Alternative Junior High School visited the 1890 House in Cortland to do some community service. The students worked on the landscaping, cooked, dusted, and decorated for Halloween. Recently, the 1890 House had to terminate all of the paid employees due to a lack of funding.



Park Hill School Students Visited by Special Readers



On October 15th and 16th, 2008 preschool students at Park Hill School and OCM BOCES Children's Village program at Park Hill, were visited by many special readers. Teachers brought their classes through the school to various stations where special guests read different stories to the children. In all, there were approximately 30 guest readers including superintendents, parents and Onondaga's Deputy County Executive, Edward Kochian. Pictured left with the students from Kim Isbell's Friendship Room, are OCM BOCES District Superintendent, Jessica Cohen and Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, Colleen Viggiano. At this station the students heard the story, "The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything" by Linda Williams.

Spotlight on Good News - Kasson Road School

As educators, we often talk about utilizing a strengths based approach and finding hidden talents to build self esteem in children. This past summer, Kasson Road School staff member, John Scharmach put those words into actions. John lent his musical talents on the guitar to teach interested students the joy of making music!

The children displayed their newly acquired talents in a mini summer concert for school staff and the other students during one of our lunch periods.

These Kasson Road students have dedicated themselves to practice, teamwork, and sacrifice thereby earning their way into our Special Activity Wednesdays this summer. Their hard work showed as they played wonderfully. Congratulations on a wonderful job!



Flexible Spending Account (FSA) Year-End Reminder



Your current Plan Year is ending soon!

As a participant in your employer's Flexible Spending Account (FSA) Plan, you know the value of paying for out-of-pocket medical and/or daycare expenses "tax-free". By electing an FSA, you saved money by not paying FICA, federal and state income tax on your election amount.

Use it – Don't lose it

Check your balance at the Benefit Resource, Inc. (BRI) website: www.BenefitResource.com. According to IRS regulations, you will forfeit any money left in your account at the end of the run-out period. Please check your Plan Highlights for information concerning claim submission details.

Account Information Available

- **www.BenefitResource.com, provides:**
 - Online Account Review: account balance and other detailed information about your FSAs.
 - Claim Forms: fill in online, print, sign and submit to BRI with supporting documentation.
 - Plan Highlights: provides information about the run-out period for claim submission after the end of your Plan Year.
 - SPD, Plan Document: provides additional detailed information about your Plan.
 - FAQ's: for the important information.
- **Participant IVR Account Review:** Available 24/7 at 1-800-473-9595. Press 4 for information regarding account balances, deposits and transactions, reimbursements.
- **Participant Service Call Center:** Representatives are available Monday through Friday from 8 am to 8 pm Eastern Time at 1-800-473-9595.
- **Participant Services Email:** participantservices@benefitresource.com

Re-enroll

In order to continue your tax savings, you will need to re-enroll in the Plan during your employer's open enrollment period. Use the BRI website to access Medical and Dependent Care worksheets to estimate your next Plan Year election(s). Don't forget to include over-the-counter items in your estimates.

Correction...

In the October, 2008 issue of *BOCES Bits*, the following photo was run with an incorrect caption. It is corrected below.



Above: Professor Sadao Shimizu observes Barbara Brigham's self contained K-1 classroom at Solvay Elementary School.

OCM BOCES Board Members

Michael J. Brady

Wayne Brownson, *Vice President*

Catherine Cifaratta-Brayton

Mark W. Gilbert

Mary Ann Haley

Mike Murphy

Lisa O'Reilly

David Paczkowski

Joan Reeves

Sandra Rausa

Ann Wright, *President*



Defensive Driving Course

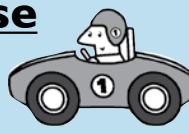
November 18 & 19, 2008

4:30pm to 7:30pm

Administration Building Conference Room

Minimum 20 people/Maximum 40

National Traffic Safety Institute's Traffic Survival Workshop - Saves you 10% on your auto insurance for three years. You must attend both sessions.

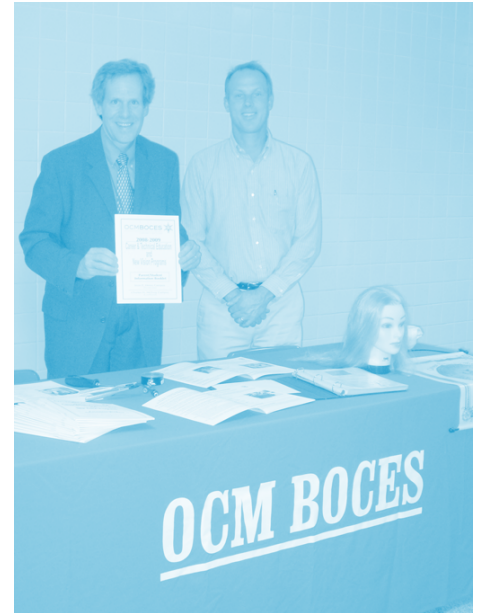


Cost is \$22 per person - Family Members Welcome!

Being there will enter you into a drawing for two \$25 gas cards! Bring in a copy of your current auto policy and get five extra tickets for the drawing.

Please respond to Cynthia Payne at 315-468-4000 EXT 54076 OR cynthia.payne@libertymutual.com

OCM BOCES Open House in Baldwinsville Draws Program Interest



Pictured above: Henry Campus Career & Technical Education assistant principal, Peter Hunn and Auto Collision teacher, Matt McGivney stand ready to meet parents attending the recent fall open house at Baldwinsville's C.W. Baker High School. During the event, Hunn and McGivney displayed student work, highlighted OCM BOCES' diverse CTE course offerings, distributed a steady stream of catalogs, and invited parents to encourage their students to visit a CTE program. Among the interested attendees were adults who had graduated from an OCM BOCES program and now look forward to seeing their children follow in their footsteps.

Teacher of the Year



Pictured left from left to right: WalMart Store Manager, Roger Orlandini, Lisa Jones and WalMart Personnel Staff person, Beverly Sherman.

Congratulations to Lisa Jones, OCM BOCES Special Education Teacher at the McEvoy Education campus. Lisa was named as WalMart's "2008 Teacher of the Year" on October 22, 2008. As part of WalMart's corporate giving program, and in recognition of Lisa's accomplishment, the McEvoy Center was given a \$1,000 school grant and Lisa a \$100 gift card to the store.

Three different students completed forms to nominate Lisa for the 2008 Teacher of the Year. Lisa has worked as a Special Education Teacher for OCM BOCES since 2005. Congratulations Lisa!