I had the great privilege of sharing some remarks with graduates from various programs during our completion and recognition ceremonies this month. As I stopped to think about our achievements this year in preparing those remarks, I couldn’t help but say ‘Wow!’ I’m always amazed by all that our students, staff and programs accomplish each year, but to see all of those accomplishments put together into a newsletter like this makes me incredibly proud. From our first Manufacturing Technology graduates to our largest National Technical Honor Society induction class to our national SkillsUSA competitors, the breadth of our students’ talent, skills and knowledge is so vast and quite impressive.

I think you will feel the same as you look through this issue of The Banner. After all, these are your students and our students. Our collaborative work over the past year has provided them with unique opportunities to find their passions and the support and guidance to achieve their goals. These collaborations are just one of the things that makes our region so successful and allows us to progressively and proactively prepare our students for their next steps. I look forward to continuing this work with you in the fall, and I hope to see many of you over the summer through our varied student programs, professional development workshops and planning sessions. Until then, enjoy the summer!

MOBOCES hosted its first Drone Camp this spring, providing students from the region with an opportunity for hands-on exploration of drone technology.

The one-day camp allowed students to manually fly drones through an obstacle course, program drones to fly across the room, test out a flight simulation software, and learn about drone-related trends, research and careers. They even had a low-tech session – trying to fly cardboard gliders and hand copters – to explore the basics concepts of aerodynamics and flight.

Maria Smith, director of the Mid-State Teacher Center at MOBOCES, said one of the camp’s goals is to inspire students to study science, technology, engineering, the arts, and math, or STEAM.

“Drones are interesting to kids, and if they want to know more about them, they will have to learn more about various STEAM topics,” she said. “Drones are an engagement strategy for kids to learn and think more deeply about STEAM subjects.”

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Celebrating Our Successes

By Jacklin G. Starks, District Superintendent

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MOBOCES inducted a record 112 high school seniors into its chapter of the National Technical Honor Society this year. The inductees were from 17 Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and nine area high schools. They represent the top 10% of the CTE senior class and are part of an elite group of NTHS members statewide.

NTHS is an honor society recognizing excellence in career and technical education. To join the honor society, students must be nominated by their teachers, carry a minimum 3.0 grade point average, demonstrate excellence in their CTE program and participate in extracurricular activities at BOCES and/or their home school. NTHS membership is a distinction achieved by only 3-4% of CTE students nationwide.

This year’s chapter co-advisers are Katie Ragozzino and Stephennie Vasquez, the Equine and Animal Science teaching assistant and teacher, respectively. They led the ceremony, with support from New Visions Professions teacher Joanne Saya. CTE teachers presented students from their programs with their honor cords and certificates.

Eight students helped lead the ceremony - Kassidy Allen, Camryn Sullivan and Ashlee Gilbert of Camden; Joanna Musacchio of Canastota; Gabriel Camp of Morrisville-Eaton; Garrett Craft of Rome; Alana Murphy and Katelyn Lanz of VVS. Kendall Dust, of VVS, led students, staff and families in the Pledge of Allegiance at the start of the ceremony.

Students, BOE Member Earn SBI Awards

Three MOBOCES students and a longtime board member were recognized at this year’s Oneida-Madison-Herkimer School Boards Institute’s Student Recognition and Distinguished Service Awards Ceremony.

VVS junior Darin Champney is a student in the CTE Auto Collision Repair program. He was nominated by MOBOCES teaching assistant Holly Sroka for his positive attitude, strong work ethic, determination, drive, support of his classmates, and commitment to his studies and the auto repair field.

Oneida junior Emily Dickan is a student in the CTE Early Childhood Education program. She was nominated by MOBOCES teacher Leigh Anne Staudt for her helpful demeanor, positive communication skills, determination in the classroom, work ethic and commitment to the early childhood field.

Rome junior Mariah Saxe is a student in the Alternative Education High School. She was nominated by English teacher Anne Husak for her personal growth, leadership in school, support of her classmates, positive outlook and commitment to her academics.

Dr. John J. Costello Sr., a 31-year MOBOCES board member from Oneida, received one of this year’s Distinguished Service Awards. In addition to his MOBOCES service, he spent 30 years on the Oneida school board and continues to work with the BOCES Consortium of Continuing Education’s Policy Board as well as service agencies in and around Oneida.

Scholarships Awarded To Future Teachers

The Andrew D. Rossetti Scholarship Fund Committee awarded $2,500 scholarships to high school seniors from Camden and Canastota who plan to pursue careers in teaching.

Abigail Walker, of Camden, plans to study Early Childhood Education at SUNY Oswego. She is the daughter of Chad and Jennifer Walker of Camden.

Kacey Cashel, of Canastota, plans to study Adolescent Math Education at Keuka or LeMoyne. She is the daughter of Catherine Cashel of Canastota.

The Rossetti Scholarships were created in 1988 to honor Andrew D. Rossetti, an Oneida resident and District Superintendent of the Madison-Oneida BOCES from 1973 to 1984. Rossetti, also a former Vernon-Verona-Sherrill superintendent, had a lifelong passion for teaching.
Two Qualify For SkillsUSA Nationals

Two CTE students from MOBOCES won their contests at the New York State SkillsUSA Championships on April 25, qualifying for spots at the national competition in June, to be held this year in Kentucky.

- Katelyn Lanz, Vernon-Verona-Sherrill, Electrical/HVAC - 1st Place in Prepared Speech
- Devan Pelky, Morrisville-Eaton, Outdoor Power Equipment - 1st Place in Motorcycle Service Technology

In addition, two MOBOCES students also earned medal at the state meet.

- Dominic Stith, Hamilton, Outdoor Power Equipment - 1st Place in Small Engine Service
- Cole Szewczyk, Morrisville-Eaton, Outdoor Power Equipment - 2nd Place in Power Equipment Technology

Although Dominic finished first in his category, Small Engine Service does not have a national-level contest. SkillsUSA is an education-industry partnership that engages students in technical skills competitions and fosters leadership development. More than 60 different contests challenge students to put their career-focused skills training into practice.

MOBOCES students began their journey in February, competing at the regional meet at Morrisville State College against more than 900 students from technical high schools and other BOCES. Twenty-one MOBOCES qualified at regionals to compete at the state level.

Rotary Honors CTE Seniors

The Rotary Club of Oneida honored 19 graduating seniors from the Oneida and Stockbridge Valley school districts for the success in CTE. Instructors selected students based on program accomplishments, attendance and academic success. This year’s honorees represented six CTE programs - Allied Health Partnership, Carpentry, Cosmetology, Early Childhood Education, Engineering and Graphic Design.

Engineering Student Secures SU Internship

Engineering student Jamie Jones, an Oneida junior, has been accepted into the Engineering and Computer Science Research Internship this summer at Syracuse University. It is the first time a MOBOCES student will be attending this prestigious, highly competitive program.

Through the internship, Jamie will work with SU students and faculty to develop data on a biomedical engineering project related to chemical compounds in the brain. This research could help in the development of brain therapeutics for treating Alzheimer’s and other diseases.

Jamie plans to study biomedical engineering in college and is excited about the opportunity to gain real-world, hands-on experience in her future field.

AHP Student Earns National NTHS Award

Allied Health Partnership student McKenzie Leahey, a Canastota senior, has been recognized by the National Technical Honor Society with the highly selective national Jon H. Poteat Scholarship. The $1,000 award recognizes excellence and promise in CTE.

McKenzie is one of only 225 award winners nationwide and the second MOBOCES student to earn this honor. She plans to attend Nazareth College to study biomedical sciences.
373 Complete CTE Programs

Career and Technical Education leaders presented completion certificates to 373 seniors who completed 20 one-year and two-year programs at MOBOCES. The group included the first-ever graduating class from Manufacturing Technology, which began in 2017-18 with a group of juniors.

During the three evening ceremonies, a student delivered an address to their classmates. This year’s student speakers were: Devyn Marshall, New Visions Professions, Morrisville-Eaton; Beth Bunce, Health Related Careers, Camden; Makenzie Capron, Cosmetology, Camden; and Katelyn Lanz, Electrical/HVAC, VVS.

In addition, a student was selected each evening to lead the Pledge of Allegiance: Damaris Moriarty, Culinary Arts, Rome; Tyler Waldron, Manufacturing Technology, Rome; and Devan Pelky, Outdoor Power Equipment, Morrisville-Eaton.

50 CTE Seniors Receive Awards

MOBOCES leaders and community partners honored more than 50 CTE students with awards, scholarships and commendations at this year’s Senior Awards Ceremony.

This year’s award winners represented eight high schools and 15 CTE programs. Those numbers include 13 students who received Industry Awards of Excellence, special awards presented by local business and industry partners in recognition of students’ success and future potential in the career field.

The MOBOCES Education Foundation created a new Excellence in Employability scholarship this year to recognize students who demonstrated outstanding work ethic, job skills and potential to succeed in the workforce. Students from Morrisville-Eaton and Vernon-Verona-Sherrill each received $250 through that award.
Alternative Education Recognizes 19 Seniors

MOBOCES celebrated the successes of 19 seniors from the Alternative and Special Education division who will be graduating from high school this year. The students were seven school districts - Camden, Canastota, Oneida, Rome, Stockbridge Valley, East Syracuse-Minoa and Utica. Nakyiah Shaw, of Rome, led the Pledge of Allegiance.

District Superintendent Jackie Starks said she was impressed that every member of this year’s class has either college or employment plans.

“That’s quite an accomplishment,” she said.

In addition, teachers and administrators recognized a number of students in grades 9-12 for their outstanding achievements in academic subjects during the year and presented a number of special awards and scholarships.

Two new awards were presented this year:

The Max Schoeneck Memorial Award is named for an Alternative Education senior from Oneida who passed away unexpectedly in December. The award recognizes a student who overcame struggles in life to work toward graduation and had a strong belief in CTE, which helped Max find success in school. That award went to Devin Clemens of Canastota.

The Dream Big Award is for students who demonstrate leadership ability, excellent work ethic, enthusiasm for moving on to the next stage of life and have postsecondary plans for college, employment or trade school. Two students received these awards - Jordanne Charland from Camden and Tony Ruzzo from ESM.

CBOE Students Earn Diplomas

Ten students from the Community Based Occupational Education class donned their caps and gowns and received their diplomas at a formal commencement ceremony on June 20. The graduates were from Canastota, Morrisville-Eaton, Oneida, Rome and Vernon-Verona-Sherrill. Keagan Ammer, of VVS, gave the student address.

Program leaders also recognized six students - from Madison, Morrisville-Eaton, Oneida and Oriskany - who will be moving up from middle school to the High School Career Preparation Program.

In keeping with a long-standing CBOE tradition, the students closed out the ceremony with a dance party!

PreK Celebrates With Families

Pre-kindergarten students in Canastota, Morrisville-Eaton, Oneida and Stockbridge Valley celebrated their first year in school with end-of-year picnics. Students had lunch and treats with their parents, grandparents and siblings. Before the celebrations, students sang songs and demonstrated the skills they learned this year.
Dollar General Awards Grant

The Rome ACCESS Site got a big boost for its new Family Welcome Center thanks to a $10,000 donation from the Rome Dollar General.

Each year, the national Dollar General Literacy Foundation provides funding to its 10 top-performing stores in the country to award grants to local literacy education programs. The Rome store has been in the top 10 for the last three years and this year was the top-performing stores in the entire company, Store Manager Rick Goppert said.

That meant the store received four $10,000 grants to award within the Rome community, and Rome ACCESS Site was one of those recipients.

“A lot of people think we focus on children’s education but we are also about adult learning. I did some research and found the Rome ACCESS Site and liked the work they were doing,” Goppert said.

Across the country, Dollar General stories collect loose change and that is the money that supports these literacy grants, he said. All of the loose change collected at the end of the year is combined and divided among the top stores to award at the manager’s discretion.

“Most of the donations at each store come from the immediate area around the store, from people who live and work nearby, so this is our way to give back to that community and support their programs,” Goppert said.

He made a surprise visit to the center on West Dominick Street to deliver the money in person. While there, he met some of the center’s staff and students and toured the building.

BCCE Director Kathleen Rinaldo said one idea her team had is to use the money to enhance the Rome ACCESS Site’s culturally sensitive library, part of the center’s new Literacy Zone designation. That status allows the center to offer resources and coordinated services for community members, including the unemployed, veterans, individuals with disabilities, senior citizens, out-of-school youth, adults leaving incarceration and families living in poverty.

DS Announces Upcoming Retirement

Longtime District Superintendent Jackie Starks announced her retirement resignation this spring, effective December 1, 2019. Her announcement began the final chapter of a 40-year career in education, including 16 years at the helm of MOBOCES.

Starks joined the MOBOCES leadership team in 1992, having served as a Special Education Coordinator, Early Childhood Director, Special Programs Director and Assistant Superintendent for Instruction before assuming the District Superintendent role. Prior to that, she was an elementary school principal in Canastota, and she began her career as a speech/language pathologist. She is a 1974 graduate of Canastota High School, and she has remained actively involved in local, regional and statewide efforts to prepare the next generation of educators, align K-12 curriculum with higher education expectations and workforce needs, and move education forward for all learners.

“Serving as District Superintendent has been the most rewarding experience of my professional life. I have been blessed to know and work alongside so many passionate and talented educators, leaders and colleagues who truly care about children and education,” Starks said. “My career has taught me the true meaning of service leadership. It has been my great honor to serve the children, my regional community and statewide partners.

RAS Holds Open House

The Rome ACCESS Site held an open house on May 21 to help community members and potential students learn more about the programs and services available to adult learners. The event included building tours led by adult student ambassadors and an informational fair highlighting programs, resources, partner agencies, and guest speakers. Representatives from area businesses and agencies that employ and support RAS students and graduates were on hand, and both BCCE and Mohawk Valley Community College representatives spoke about continuing education opportunities.

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SLS Celebrates School Library Successes

The School Library System recognized excellent library programs and outstanding students, teachers, administrators and school librarians during this year’s Administrator Breakfast and Annual Meeting. This year’s honorees were:

- Rome Free Academy librarian Zack Snow received the School Librarian of the Year award.
- Morrisville-Eaton third grade teacher Stephanie Hughes received the Teacher of the Year award.
- Morrisville-Eaton Middle/High School principal Tracee Durkee received the Administrator of the Year award.

In addition, SLS recognized two retiring librarians from Oneida for their years of service - Linda Zuber and Zoe Hicks.

Fourteen K-8 students from the region were also recognized for the outstanding essays, poems and drawings they submitted for this year’s SLS Calendar Contest. This year’s theme was Everybody Belongs @ Your School Library. Winning students represented six districts: Camden, Canastota, Madison, Morrisville-Eaton, Rome and Vernon-Verona-Sherrill.

Louisiana school superintendent Warren Drake delivered this year’s keynote, joining the room virtually to help highlight SLS’s yearlong virtual communication initiative. He spoke on “An Evolving Vision for the 21st Century School Library.”

Camp Promotes Exploration of Drone, STEAM Technology

Student teams from two CTE programs at MOBOCES, Advanced Manufacturing and Conservation, participated in the event, as did a team from the Alternative Education High School. Oneida and Vernon-Verona-Sherrill also sent student teams to the camp.

Mid-State Teacher Center partnered with Project Fibonacci, where Smith also works, to offer the camp. Project Fibonacci, a Rome-based nonprofit that focuses on STEAM promotion and development, has sponsored more than 20 similar drone camps around the region over the past four years, Smith said.

She said the overall goal of the camps are to help schools to utilize curriculum involving unmanned aerial systems/vehicles (UAS/V) - or drone - technologies. The camps also teach participants about the national air space and FAA rules for both pilots and hobbyists using drones.

In addition to Project Fibonacci, NUAIR, ANDRO and CNY Drones also sent representatives to work with students at different activity stations.

Oneida students program drones to take off and fly across the room during the MOBOCES Drone Camp.
MOBOCES Educators Earn Accolades

Five MOBOCES staff members were recently honored with statewide and regional recognitions. Congratulations to: Literacy instructor Shawn Fuess, ESL and Hospitality instructor Mersiha Omeragic, and Dental Assistant instructor Kimberly Salatino from Adult and Continuing Education! They each received 2019 Teacher of the Year awards from the New York Association of Continuing/Community Education. They were among 10 adult education instructors across the state to receive the awards on April 30, and they were nominated by Director Kathleen Rinaldo and Senior Coordinator Brenda Wolak.

Ann Sylstra, Pre-K Assistant for Family Services in Early Childhood! She received a Friends of Children award from the Child Care Council of Cornell Cooperative Extension of Oneida County. The awards recognize service providers from Herkimer, Madison and Oneida counties who devote their time and talents to children, families and the early education field.

Lillie Savage, a case manager at the Utica ACCESS Site for Adult and Continuing Education! She was recognized by New York State Women, Inc., a professional association for women, for her service to education in the Mohawk Valley. She was one of seven area women to receive a Woman of the Year Award at the agency’s annual banquet on April 2. She was nominated by Lucretia Hunt, the TASC testing coordinator at the Utica ACCESS Site.

From left: Shawn Fuess, Mersiha Omeragic, Kimberly Salatino, Ann Sylstra, Lillie Savage

Student Video Receives Rural Schools Prize

The New York State Rural Schools Association has recognized a student video project with its Grand Prize Runner Up award in the RSA Student Video Contest. The contest recognizes videos on an important topic that have good scripting, production value and student participation. The statewide award includes a $750 prize.

Alternative Education High School students worked with a professional videographer from New York City last spring to create the video as their culminating project for the 2017-18 Regional Youth Leadership Summit. The video focuses on acceptance and school climate and features students and staff from the program. Judges in the contest specifically highlighted the visual storytelling method and the powerful message the video carries.