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SCENE

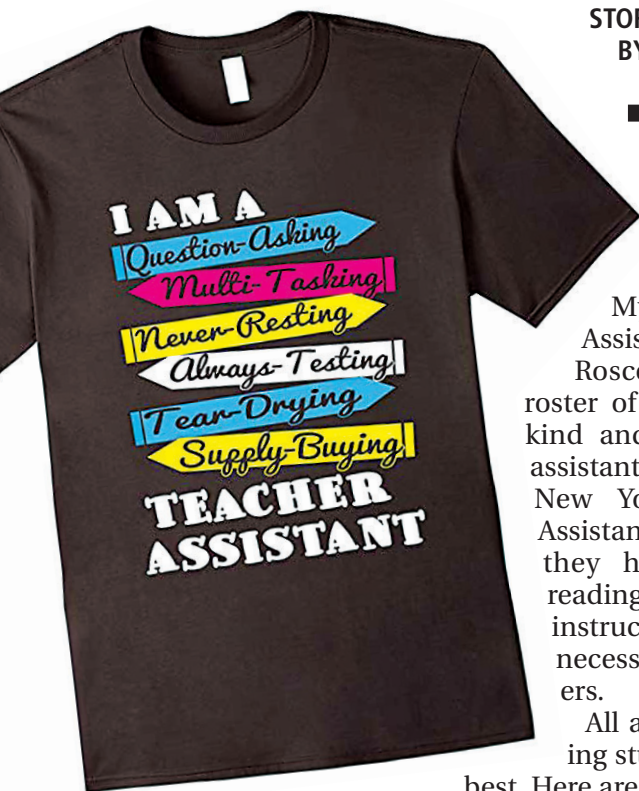
A look at
activities
in the
Roscoe
Central
School
District

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THE SULLIVAN COUNTY
DEMOCRAT
FEBRUARY 2022
CALLICOON, NY



'Why I love my job'

By four dedicated teacher assistants



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Teacher assistants find the profession exceptionally rewarding and worthwhile as they work one-on-one or in small groups to bring home the lessons they learn from their teachers.

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY KATHY DALEY

The profession is so popular it actually has its own sweatshirt emblazoned with the words: "I Love My Job: Teacher Assistant."

Roscoe benefits from a roster of smart, empathetic, kind and generous teacher assistants. All of them bear New York State Teacher Assistant licenses that show they have mastered the reading, writing, math and instructional support skills necessary to assist teachers.

All are engaged in helping students achieve their best. Here are their stories.

EMILY MINER

"I'm a Teacher Assistant for seventh and eighth grade students. This is my third year," said Emily Miner. "And I also teach my own class in seventh grade social studies."



Emily Miner assists seventh grade students who need support in English, math and/or science. 'My current students are math whizzes,' she said. 'I love watching them raise their hands, give appropriate answers and be really involved in their learning.'

In addition to her TA license, Miner holds a masters in elementary education from SUNY Potsdam.

Most of her time is dedicated to supporting seventh graders in ELA, math and science in the classroom and during study halls.

"In a day I might play an audio version of the book we are reading in ELA and ask questions as we listen. Or I help the students remember the steps to solve a mathematical inequality and make sure they

have the supplies needed to complete the problems."

Recently in ELA, they were working on different types of literary irony. (An example of irony is saying during a snowstorm, "what beautiful weather we're having.")

"The assignment was to read a paragraph and decide what type of irony it was and support that decision," said Miner. "I sat with my students and read the paragraph to them. We had a collaborative discussion about what the answer might be and why that answer made sense. Students then drafted their own response based on our conversation."

STACEY EVANS

A 1990 graduate of Roscoe Central School, Stacey Evans has worked as a teacher assistant for almost four years. She has a BS in accounting from Syracuse University.

Once her own children were no longer little, she began substitute teaching at Roscoe and Livingston Manor schools. "But I realized I wanted something that allowed me to have more interactions with children," she said.

As a TA, "I am shared between the third and fourth grade," she said. "I work with students in small reading groups. We work on phonics, increasing reading comprehension and fluency. I provide support in whole group instruction in ELA, math and science, circulating the room while the classroom teacher is teaching and I help students who may be struggling."

PLEASE SEE **MY JOB**, PAGE 5R

School Scene

A Look Inside the Roscoe Central School District

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MY JOB: Meet some of the teaching assistants at the Roscoe CSD



'The work we do is especially important because kids have missed a lot in the last year and a half (due to Covid),' said TA Stacey Evans. 'I love working and building relationships with students,' she said.

FROM PAGE 2R

gling. I also work one-on-one with students.

"I have moments every day that makes me think 'I love this.' It happens when a student finally understands a concept that I've been helping them learn – when they trust you enough to talk to you, when they make you laugh or they say they love you."

SHARON RUTLEDGE
 "My day usually starts out in the Distance Learning room," said Teacher Assistant Sharon Rutledge. "I work as the facilitator, operating the equipment for college courses/languages the students take online."
 "This is a great opportunity for our small school – students as seniors or juniors are earning college credits while still in high school," she explained, noting that students have been able to learn the



TA Sharon Rutledge assists students having difficulties by reteaching, supporting and helping them complete assignments and projects.

Italian language through distance learning.

"This is probably one of my favorite parts of the day," said Rutledge. "I am able to hear the professor's lecture (on the screen) along with the students. I am always reminded of parts of psychology or sociology that I may have forgotten."

Rutledge graduated from SUNY Delhi with a degree in veterinary science technology. She has worked in Roscoe as a teacher assistant for 15 years.

"This year I'm attending tenth grade classes that include Global History, Geometry, Earth Science, English, and Health. I help students having difficulties by reteaching, supporting and helping them complete assignments and projects. I also help the students prepare for the Regents in June."

MARY DNISTRIAN

"My career in teaching has lasted for 29 years," said TA Mary Dnistrian.

Born and raised in Sullivan County, Dnistrian lived in Callicoon and graduated from Delaware Valley Central School. She then earned her B.S. in elementary education and a masters in reading from SUNY Oneonta.

"My career started at Roscoe," she said. "Then I used my reading degree at another public school in Sullivan County and then at the Center for Discovery. I returned to RCS after 17 years."

Dnistrian works in both first and



Longtime teacher Mary Dnistrian began at Roscoe, and now has seen her return as a TA. 'I love my students,' she said. 'Seeing them make gains and accomplishments is very rewarding.'

second grades along with the teachers, helping students in reading and math, either in the whole group of students, or in small groups, or one on one.

"I love working at RCS," she said. "And working as a teacher assistant gives me more time to work with the students, getting to know their different personalities and having the opportunity to enjoy them as individuals."

Best Wishes to the Roscoe School Staff & Students.

Especially, Pamela Carpenter,

Robert & Emma Buck and Tyler Carpenter

Nancy Buck Sullivan County Treasurer

The magic of fourth grade: Imagination and love of learning

STORY AND PHOTO
BY KATHY DALEY

For Wendy Schwalb, a focus of energy is preparing her fourth grade students for the real world.

"I often discuss with them that their job right now is to be a student, and although we will be more relaxed at times, this is still serious work," she said.

"For me, teaching is a way to show young students the world that's out there waiting for them," said Schwalb. "I can convey it through the literature I teach, through science and social studies. I convey the real uses for math in daily life."

Math, science and the real world were all part of the Jeffersonville Animal Hospital, operated for 26 years by Schwalb's husband Richard. Wendy handled book-keeping and other duties. Last April, Dr. Schwalb handed over the reins to Dr. Moria Norris.



By that time, Wendy Schwalb had earned a master's degree in childhood education and served as a substitute teacher at Sullivan West, Liberty, Livingston Manor and Roscoe schools. Her first full-time teaching job took place in Liberty

where from 2013 to 2018, she taught third grade.

Roscoe hired her as its fourth grade teacher this past September.

"For my personality and teaching style and interests, third and fourth graders are the best!" said Schwalb. "Fourth graders are very independent but also very interested in learning and enjoying school in all ways. They enjoy learning without inhibitions created by the peer pressure that's found in the upper grades to disguise those interests. They have very creative ideas and use their imaginations to solve problems."

Because students work at different paces, Schwalb forms a good deal of her lessons around their budding desires for independence. "I create ways for them to work self-paced once I teach the material. We have many 'check-ins' during a lesson too. That allows for the stronger students to practice independently and provides opportunities for me to work with the developing students."

In English Language Arts, students learn how to write multi-paragraph essays about non-fiction articles and fiction stories, with proof from the text. They work in reading groups on how to retell stories, analyze character traits and feelings and how they affect the story; and all genres of literature.

"In science, we study the animal and plant kingdoms, states of matter and forms of energy," she said.

Then in math, fourth graders become fluent in the multiplication facts "that form the fluency for all other math work going forward," she said.

To her delight, students often comment on how much fun they have in class. "Socially, my class appears to be more like siblings than classmates," said Schwalb, noting that most have been together since pre-K. "They're kind and thoughtful of each other and often rush to the aid of another if one of the group is sad or upset."

As for their teacher, she drives home to her husband – their kids Alex and Jessica are both in college – and is also greeted by Jack, an elderly Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, and Calvin, a two-year-old, 90-pound Great Pyrenees/German Shepherd mix from the Sullivan County SPCA. Two middle-aged long-haired cats, both also from the Sullivan County SPCA, are part of the clan.

"I'm not currently involved with stray animals like I once was (she served as president of the Sullivan County SPCA some years ago)," said Schwalb. "But I am an avid birder and make sure I visit every zoo or animal park wherever we go."



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Moving kids from users of technology to tech creators

STORY AND PHOTO
BY KATHY DALEY

“I guess you could say this is my first 'official certified' teaching job,” says Shannon Henke, who is Roscoe's new pre-k through 12th grade computer technology teacher. But she's no stranger to classrooms and education.

She spent over 10 years working as one of the office administration/business technology instructors at the Delaware Valley Job Corps in Callicoon. Then in the spring of 2017, she accepted a job as full-time substitute teacher at Monticello's middle school, teaching sixth and seventh grade computer technology classes.

She went on to accept a job at Sullivan West Elementary, working as a teacher aide and front desk clerk. At the same time, she earned a master's degree in educational technology from Adelphi University and a masters of secondary education degree with Grand Canyon University (on-line).

She holds a state certification in both Educational Technology Specialist (Pre-k-12) and Computer Technology Instructor (7-12).

“I hope to enable our students in becoming better digital citizens and helping them gain valuable digital literacy skills,” Henke said. “My focus is to move students from being consumers of digital technology to creators of digital technology, so I've been working to build up students' computational thinking and problem-solving skills by incorporating coding and programming skills into the technology curriculum.”

In the primary grades the focus is on learning basic computing skills like using the mouse properly, typing, the basics of how computers work, internet safety and how to navigate apps and websites. In upper elementary classes, kids are advancing the basic skills and learning about digital citizenship and internet safety.

“Students are working on slightly more advanced coding concepts



Born and raised in Sullivan County, Shannon Henke grew up in Kenoza Lake, went to grammar school in Jeffersonville and graduated from Sullivan West (Jeff campus). She is now Roscoe School's pre-k to 12 technology teacher.

like what events, algorithms, loops, and conditionals are. Students are also learning how to use Google applications to create reports, presentations, and so on.”

In middle school, students develop research skills, creating with Google apps, and learning more advanced coding concepts that allow them to create Scratch coding animation projects, and mobile apps. “We are also doing some green-screen video and photo editing projects,” she said.

In high school, she teaches a Video Game Design course where students are developing games with various coding languages including JavaScript: “We are using a game design engine to learn the skills for creating video games and animations. Students work in a 3D design environment to create game objects and scenes and then use code to animate the objects.”

There's fun and learning for teachers too.

“Each week I send out a Tech Tuesday newsletter that's a Google slide: I share technology tips, ideas for incorporating technology activities into lessons, digital templates and apps that I think are helpful or that the teachers might find useful. It could be as simple as providing some Google search tips. Or a power-point Jeopardy game template they can use for topic reviews, or a quick tutorial on how to use certain apps or features in apps.”

Finally, a Roscoe YouTube channel is showcasing the work Roscoe students are doing.

“We have had some great videos of student art shows, musical performances and more,” said Henke. “We have so many wonderful students and teachers working hard, and we want to make more of an effort to share our success with the community.”

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No 'fake' ingredients when it comes to keeping kids healthy



School chef Leo Palacio and wife Maria cook homemade soups and bake up the likes of chocolate chip muffins fresh from the oven to the delight of Roscoe students.

STORY AND PHOTO
BY KATHY DALEY

pandemic in September 2020.

"Institution cooking is different (from the restaurant trade) but bringing my experience to the table I wanted to try things a little differently, within the guidelines of the state, of course."

"I love to make homemade soups that are available daily. It's offered as another lunch option to the students as well as a lunch option for the staff."

A popular breakfast addition is homemade chocolate chip muffins: "There's something calming about knowing that a muffin is made in-house, fresh in the morning with minimal ingredients, as opposed to a laundry list of ingredients that are often found in frozen muffins."

With the backing and support of Sullivan County school districts, Palacio and the food service director at Livingston Manor have worked with Cornell Cooperative Extension a Farm to School Initiative that focus on both helping local farms and bringing healthier foods to the schools.

"We purchase through the local Food Hub that supports local New York farms," said Palacio. "During the summer we procure, process and freeze seasonal fruits and vegetables that we are able to use throughout the school year."

Of course, kids will be kids and they don't hesitate to alert Palacio to something they don't favor.

"We welcome it – it's the only way to know what works and what doesn't. Sometimes it's very mixed: older kids loving some stuff that the younger kids do not, but that's expected and we always keep multiple options available."

His right-hand "sous" is assistant cook and cashier Colleen Bowers, and another friendly face on the serving line bears the name of Palacio too. That's wife Maria, who just started this school year and loves being a part feeding students with panache.

He's a professional chef who's worked in restaurants and then ran his own catering business. And as Roscoe Central School's food service director, Leonardo Palacio couldn't be happier.

"We love it when kids come back to the kitchen after they finish their meal to either ask for seconds or to let us know that the new menu item we added was delicious," said Palacio. "Some kids even come randomly and ask when we're making a certain item again."

"I imagine the kind of foods I want my own kids to eat when they start school," Palacio reflected. "I keep it healthy and interesting, trying to avoid as many frozen items as possible. We add new foods and try things out, but understandably kids are kids and our goal is always to keep them healthy and happy."

Palacio has worked at Roscoe Central School for two years, arriving right in the middle of the

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Coaches take to the classroom as teacher assistants

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY KATHY DALEY

Early on Nate Juron knew he wanted to be a teacher.

“I knew it in first grade, and it was official when I got to high school,” Juron said with a smile. “Teachers at Livingston Manor helped me. That’s what I wanted to do.”

A Manor native, Juron competed in cross country, basketball and baseball during his high school career and excelled in sports at his alma mater, Harwick College in Oneonta. He is now working on his masters degree in elementary education through the on-line Western Governor University, which is accredited by the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities.

As a teacher assistant at Roscoe, Juron works with a variety of grade

levels: sixth, seventh and eighth grade and then with students in their junior year in high school.

“I do reading groups with students -- we break up and read and discuss questions,” said Juron. “I also work with eleventh grade students in U.S. World History and English Language Arts, helping prepare them for the (New York State) Regents.”

In the meantime, he’s coaching Roscoe’s modified girls basketball team.

“I want to give back to others,” said Juron. “And working with students makes my day better.”

Colleague Evan Bowers is interested in becoming a teacher “but as of right now I like this position, teacher assistant.”

“I just love this job in general,” he said. “I enjoy getting to know the students, having conversations with them, knowing what



A competitive athlete locally in cross country, basketball and baseball, Nate Juron provides support in classrooms and study halls to students who need the extra academic boost. As a teacher assistant he works with Roscoe educators. He coaches modified girls basketball at Roscoe.



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For Evan Bowers, coaching kids and teaching them is his life. Bowers is a Teacher Assistant at Roscoe Central School along with coach for the Jayvee girls basketball team.

they like and dislike and being able to help them as much as I can.”

Bowers graduated from Livingston Manor Central School after attending Roscoe Central School from kindergarten to third grade and then moving on to Manor. He received an associate degree in sports management from SUNY Sullivan and went on to SUNY Cortland. His college degree was in kinesiology – the study of physical activity and how the body’s movement impacts health – with a concentration on coaching.

Bowers began working at the Center for Discovery, then for 11 years as coach at Liberty Central School District, coaching Jayvee boys soccer and boys and girls basketball and track.

Now, he’s coaching Jayvee girls

basketball at Roscoe. But mostly he works in the classrooms, assisting the teacher when fourth, fifth and sixth graders need support in ELA and math, social studies, science, art, computers, music and home and careers.

In general, Bowers helps students stay on task during note-taking, tests and group projects, and he helps them reread material they’re stuck on.

There are always happy moments, he said.

“The other day, I was working with a couple students in math and I could see another student waiting patiently for me on the side of the table. I heard him say to the teacher, ‘I want to show Mister Bowers how I did on this assignment.’”

It did Bowers’ heart good.

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