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# Mantra for new college VP: 'Helping people on their journeys'

SUNY Sullivan's new vice president Marc Singer (MS) was delighted to discuss his own journey and what he sees for the future at the college. Here is his discussion with Kathy Daley (KD) of the **Democrat**.

## KD: Why did you apply for the position with SUNY Sullivan?

MS: I wanted to work at a college that was focused on serving its community. I had come from working in a big city – San Francisco – and I wasn't convinced that what I was doing mattered there. There was so much noise crowding out our message that it didn't feel meaningful.

SUNY Sullivan is a mission-focused institution, and I wanted to work at a place where the mission mattered. I am a first-generation college student – my mother never graduated from high school. It took me 11 years to get my bachelor's degree because I took time off, worked, came back, on and on.

I know firsthand that for many people, higher education gives them a way to take charge of their destinies. I want to help people on their journeys.

My own experience is what has led me to focus more on adult and non-traditional learners in my previous work. People can learn at any age -- in fact, with the economy and the world changing so rapidly, we all need

to be lifelong learners.

## KD: What are the strengths of Sullivan County's college?

MS: SUNY Sullivan has unique programs, like the Catskill Hospitality Institute and the Green Building Technology program with its emphasis on sustainability. It has people who work here because they care about the mission of serving this county and region. It has a great athletics program, which gives some of our students an opportunity to come here and explore what it is like to live in a place like this. The little organic farm on campus is also neat.

Community colleges save students money – they provide access to opportunity for those who might not have it otherwise. They help retrain displaced workers. They help with the transition process to life in the U.S. for immigrants. At SUNY Sullivan, we provide course work to help people earn their GED. We offer courses in the prisons. We offer flexibility and affordability. We even offer child care.

## KD: Where are you living now?

MS: As of last month, I am living in Hortonville. I moved here from the Princeton, N.J. area. My wife and I love it so far. I had never lived here but my grandfather was an auto mechanic in Monticello for many years, and both my mom and my dad



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SUNY Sullivan's new college VP, Marc Singer, served as the dean of undergraduate studies at Golden Gate University in San Francisco and as vice provost for Thomas Edison State University in New Jersey. He taught history and humanities for 12 years. His grandfather was an auto mechanic in Monticello and his parents worked summers in Sullivan County's resort hotels.

worked in the old resort hotels for several summers. I was born and raised in New York City, so I had always known about Sullivan County.

## KD: What are you working on now?

MS: There is a lot to do at the

college: curriculum, which courses and degree programs we offer, workforce development, the library, the dorms, athletics, student services, online learning.

I have expertise in working with adult learners, and also with Open Educational Resources and Competency-Based Education, which works well with workforce development and industry partnerships. And I have focused on online and distance learning because it offers flexibility to students. Before the pandemic, most students said they actually preferred a hybrid approach – some in person, some remote learning. We need to use the tools that online learning has provided to meet students where they are.

In the past, you were a performer! Tell us about that.

Yes, I ran a performance space in Brooklyn for a while, and I was a dancer and choreographer. That might be why I originally went into education: I liked the idea of communicating and exchanging ideas, building community, and of course there's an audience. That experience taught me to think about how you are communicating – communication can't just travel in one direction.

You have to meet people where they are. I think the best education, and performance, is where you guide people to where they need to be, rather than just handing down your wisdom.

## School Scene

*"A look inside SUNY Sullivan"*

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# Food, fun and an occasional miracle at college's own food bank

BY KATHY DALEY

It's a funny thing. The Food Pantry never runs out of the shopping bags that students and others need in order to fill hungry stomachs both here and at home.

They chuckled about it not long ago – the college staff who help out and the volunteers such as Rev. Jean-Pierre Seguin. He was the first one to note that the grocery bags always seem to be in attendance.

Rev. Seguin is an Episcopal priest and along with colleague Rev. Diana Southwick Scheide is fully dedicated to the cozy room that carries everything from cans of soup and chili, to cookies and Corn Flakes, to freezer-held chicken, salmon, pork sausage and, in the fridge, eggs and other good things.

On the shelves, too, are important non-tasty items like laundry detergent, diapers and personal products. There's even a number of new looking jackets on hangars.

"This is a space where everyone feels welcome," said Seguin. "It's a team effort."

Seguin and Scheide, both of the Delaware Catskill Episcopal Ministry of Callicoon, Fallsburg, Monticello and Port Jervis, found

funds from the Episcopal Diocese of New York Campus Ministry to help SUNY Sullivan create the pantry.

The issue of hunger on campus arose several years ago when staff at the college's Learning Center for student academic support realized that students were hungry for food as well as for writing or math help. The staff kept a closet stacked with goodies to keep the students going.

"Many students who live in Sullivan County and commute to the SUNY campus are especially in need – some are from large families with hungry kids," said the college's Kathryn Scullion, an instructional assistant.

"Covid made it worse," she said. "Many families had no income at all."

Scullion is one of a number of college personnel who help out at the pantry, which is also open to staff and faculty who might be experiencing food or financial insecurity. The food bank is available Wednesdays and Thursdays from noon to 3 p.m. and at other times by appointment.

Another key person is Debra Waller-Frederick, Associate Dean



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The college food pantry is open to students, staff and faculty who are in need. For more details about donating, email [foodpantry@sunysullivan.edu](mailto:foodpantry@sunysullivan.edu).



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Above Left: Rev. Jean-Pierre Seguin volunteers at the food bank. 'Working here is a highlight of my week,' said the vicar, who serves in the local Delaware Catskill Episcopal Ministry. The Episcopal Diocese of New York helped fund the pantry.

Above Right: Instructional assistant Kathryn Scullion volunteers at the food pantry. Before long, she said, fresh vegetables will be available from the college's Community Garden and from Hope Farm, which is run by New Hope Community on the college campus.

of Student Engagement. Recently she happily let everyone know that the food pantry had been approved for membership in the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley, the local branch of the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York.

"We will be able to purchase non-perishables, fresh and frozen foods," said Waller-Frederick. "Benefits include wonderful things like discounted prices for food, bi-monthly food deliveries to the Racino (in Monticello) and access to a fresh food at a first come, first serve warehouse in Cornwall."

The food bank focuses on partnering with farmers, manufacturers, retailers and wholesalers for donations, she said.

Amen to that.



# When nursing homes, fire and ambulance corps call for help

BY KATHY DALEY

Among the critically important jobs in Sullivan County are emergency medical technicians – the women and men who provide vital care and attention at the scene of an emergency.

“There is a desperate need for EMT training here,” said Dr. Jennifer Wrage at SUNY Sullivan.

Dean of Student Success and Workforce Development, Wrage’s job is to create and offer training for students as well as to help fill the need for specific jobs in our area.

Two EMT courses, therefore, are now attracting students to the college: an EMT Refresher class from Feb. 22 through May 23 for already certified technicians, and Introduction to Emergency Medical Technician Basics from March 1 through May 23. The college is partnering with Mobilemedic, a paid ambulance service in Hurleyville.

During the summer, a second EMT course will take place starting

in June, as well as a course specifically asked for by fire departments training for certified first responders.

“Like many other employers now, ambulance corps and fire departments do not have enough employees to fill the need,” said Wrage.

Hopefully, the classes will stimulate more people to serve in these important positions.

The other job much in demand throughout the U.S. is that of the certified nursing aide (CNA). The need for CNAs is growing faster than for workers in nearly every other job. In response, a SUNY Sullivan eight-week course for students who want to work as CNAs will run from April 25 through June 17.

For six weeks, CNA students in their classroom/lab will learn about human anatomy and physiology, along with basic patient care principles. Then they will complete their

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SUNY Sullivan EMT Instructor Susanne Legris works with students in an EMT Basics Course at the college. A refresher course for working EMTs is taught by Dave Weinstein, a retired police officer, volunteer firefighter and EMT.



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# Hurleyville applauds new Montessori school in its midst

BY KATHY DALEY

Main Street in Hurleyville is now home to an array of junior high students – seventh, eighth and ninth graders – who will in time become the students of the Collaborative College High School.

The first-ever joint project by a SUNY college and a Montessori school has the community buzzing in delight.

“We get a lot of kids coming in every day to buy lunch, snacks and drinks,” said Samantha Pisaniello, who works at the Hurleyville General Store. “We deliver food to the school if need be. It's brought a lot of life to the town.”

General Store owner Denise Lombardi echoed those sentiments: “Their enthusiasm is infectious. The students gather in here to discuss projects they are working on. They've brought great positive energy with them.”

The Montessori Homestead School was founded in 1978 by Peter and Marsha Comstock on the family's 125-year-old home and property in Glen Spey. In September, the school opened its doors for older students at the Hurleyville campus.

The senior high program – tenth through 12th graders – will launch in the coming fall.

Meanwhile, SUNY Sullivan has taught teachers at the Collaborative College High School (CCHS) and credentialed them to teach college-level courses in English Composition and Spanish I to the ninth graders. Termed dual enrollment, the partnerships between high schools and the college go on in every school district in Sullivan County, noted college president Jay Quaintance.

“In our year-by-year expansion into high school,” added CCHS Principal Jack Comstock, “our first tenth grade students will have an exciting array of courses planned at both the Hurleyville CCHS campus and the SUNY Sullivan cam-



KATHY DALEY / DEMOCRAT

Opened this past fall is the Collaborative College High School in Hurleyville, a joint project between SUNY Sullivan and the Homestead School in Glen Spey. With the college's emphasis on lab science, nursing, media arts, theater and more, high school students will gain credits toward their diploma and also as credits for college.

pus.”

“Spaces in each grade are steadily filling up and Homestead is actively hiring instructors as the program grows,” said Comstock, who is the son of the Homestead School founders.

Meanwhile, students at CCHS are working on a master plan for their campus and were recently awarded a grant from the Catskill Edible Garden Project.

“Students are also in the process of taking their fall study of local food-shed issues into the next phase of development,” said Comstock. “Through meetings with local farmers and organizations focused on access to local food and food security, students will work to address the needs through design considerations of the school's agricultural space and through the development of service programs.”

## CALL: There when we need them

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 75

clinical work at the Roscoe Rehabilitation and Nursing Center before taking a certification exam.

Wrage loves her work helping people get the skills they need to excel in the workplace and aiding businesses or nonprofits in finding good staff.

“The whole healthcare system is in need for nurses and LPNs,” she said. “They lost people during the pandemic from burnout. Then there are the demands on healthcare and an aging population.”

Wrage relishes assisting students, pointing them towards meeting their goals and finding different initiatives to help. She, herself, has much on her plate each day. “I'm a good multi-tasker,” she says with a grin.



KATHY DALEY | DEMOCRAT

Dr. Jennifer Wrage, Dean of Student Success and Workforce Development at SUNY Sullivan, holds a Ph.D. in educational policy and leadership from the University at Albany. A year ago, she was hired by the local college to focus on student success and to help train workers in our area.



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# Esports on campus and a place for gamers to compete

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY KATHY DALEY

This sport doesn't need a training facility or even a polished gym. SUNY Sullivan simply recommissioned an unused classroom and added gear for gaming. And ta-da! An esports arena arises.

Short for "electronic sports," esports are a form of competition using video games.

"SUNY colleges were some of the first colleges to recognize the potential of esports," notes Emily Oeser, SUNY Sullivan's esports coordinator.

Last September, the local college congratulated student James Tegan, winner of the college's first-ever winner in a student athlete esports competition. Tegan defeated a player from Montgomery County (Pa.)

Community College in the game called Hearthstone based on the Warcraft fantasy universe.

At the Loch Sheldrake college, Oeser is clearly at the helm: "I coach students in the respective video game they compete in, set up practice schedules for teams, coordinate scrimmages between colleges, maintain equipment upkeep and handle any rescheduling."

"Esports is a competitive sport, and just like any competitive sport, you can become a professional player," explained Oeser, who also plays the violin. "Students can get scouted and sign with professional esports teams by being in collegiate esports."

Oeser graduated from SUNY Canton near Lake Ontario, a college coming up on its sixth year of esports competition.

"A vast majority of students," she reflected, "have grown up playing video games, and esports gives them a place to socialize, make friends, and express and show off their skills and talent."

"Esports is that niche spot for students who feel like they don't belong on traditional sports teams, haven't found any clubs on campus that resonate with them, and finally have a dedicated sport to cater to students who love playing video games."

Most esports athletes at SUNY Sullivan are students on campus, she said, although some are online learners. Esports audience members don't have to be stu-

SUNY Sullivan Esports Coordinator Emily Oeser organizes the team and prepares students for competition. A 2021 graduate of SUNY Canton, she also plays the violin.



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**Thank you, Maura Caycho!**



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In a recent match in the SUNY Sullivan esports arena, liberal arts major Andy Zheng plays Super Smash Brothers Ultimate in a National Junior College Athletic Association Esports match against a player from Carl Albert State College in Oklahoma.

students to watch matches but rather on any of their electronic devices.

The local college belongs to the National Junior College Athletic Association Esports (NJCAAE), founded in 2019. SUNY Sullivan is one of 50 participating SUNY Campuses that offer esports.

On the State University of New York website, SUNY Sullivan stu-

dent Abigail Jacobson hailed esports: "When I arrived at SUNY Sullivan for orientation, I came across the esports table and joined right then and there. From then on, it's been amazing. Watching our teams compete, cheering them on, and just being able to play video games with my new friends is an unforgettable experience."

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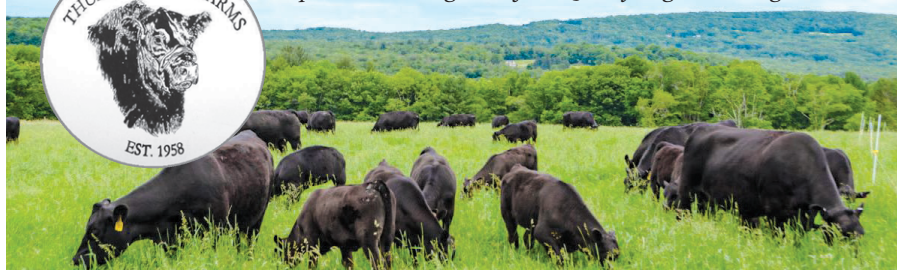


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