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BOCES

# SCHOOL

A Special Supplement to the Sullivan County Democrat





Stasey Gray, Aaron Ward and Carla Picciano lead Sullivan BOCES' CATS program, merging education with life skills for student's success.

# Empowering life skills

STORY AND PHOTO BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

In a move to bridge the gap between education and real-life application, Sullivan BOCES has introduced the Career, Academic, and Transition Skills (CATS) program, a component of the Career Academic Program (CAP), which began in September 2023 at Sullivan BOCES.

Targeted at Life Skills Students, the program serves as a beacon of hope, designed to prepare them for the complexities of adulthood through a blend of academic learning and practical experiences.

The CATS program stands out for its comprehensive approach to education, emphasizing the importance of equipping students with real-world skills alongside traditional academic knowledge. This initiative caters specifically to students facing unique learning challenges, offering them a tailored educational journey that acknowledges their diverse needs.

"The goal is to enable them to be gainfully employed in the communities," said Aaron Ward, CATS Program Coordinator. "This will make them successful as they branch out into the real world. It starts at the lowest grades and gradually builds from there. The aim is to support them and the people in the community. The businesses have been wonderful in partnering with us to offer these experiences, which have been

highly effective."

The program's collaboration with community businesses such as NAPA, Agway, Peck's in Jeffersonville and Livingston Manor, Krissy's Hair in Livingston Manor, along with Catskill Animal Rescue (CARE), provides invaluable resources and exposure to a range of career pathways, further enriching the students' educational journey.

"The businesses and the community members are incredibly supportive... even in businesses where customers are present, the customers are so supportive of our students being there," said Ward.

Understanding that each student possesses distinct strengths and challenges, CATS emphasizes individualized learning and support. This personalized approach ensures that every student finds their path to success, bolstered by encouragement and the right set of resources to navigate their educational and personal growth.

"I have one student who was really quiet when he first came to me. Now that he's out there, he has definitely become more vocal, more comfortable with himself,

and able to voice his concerns when he needs to," said Carla Picciano, a teacher's assistant.

Beyond vocational and academic skills, the CATS program profoundly impacts students' social and emotional growth. Participating in diverse activities, students develop crucial communication skills, teamwork, and self-esteem, preparing them not just for the workforce but for more integrated societal participation.

"You see a lot of growth in their efficiency and ability to complete tasks, and then how that equates to their confidence as well," said Ward.

The journey from adolescence to adulthood is fraught with challenges, especially for Life Skills Students. CATS is designed to ease this transition, equipping students with the necessary tools for independent living, further education, or entering the workforce. The program's goal is clear: to empower students to navigate the future with confidence and competence.

"The progress they've made, and the skills that they've worked on and retained and mastered, is

amazing," said Stasey Gray, a teacher's assistant.

The success of the CATS program is a testament to the Sullivan County community's commitment to inclusivity and support for all students. By opening doors to real-world experiences and fostering a nurturing educational environment, Sullivan BOCES is setting a new standard for specialized education programs.

"At the beginning, they were shy and unsure of themselves. Now we have them walking into NAPA, or Peck's, and not even having to ask what they need to do; they automatically know where to go. They're confident enough in their abilities now that they can just do it, and then their efficiency is becoming much better. You see the growth across the board, not only in efficiency but also in confidence in their ability to retain information, and also have success," said Ward.

As the program continues to evolve, its impact on students' lives is undeniable. With each passing day, Life Skills Students in the CATS program are stepping closer to a future where they can not only survive but thrive.

Through education, support, and community partnership, the CATS program is indeed transforming lives, one student at a time.

*Students in the CATS program are stepping closer to a future where they can not only survive but thrive.*



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Right: Students learn to fix things instead of throwing them away in the Electrical Trades program.

Far right: Gunther Jensen, a retired electrician with 32 years of experience, teaches students how to repair an old electrical fan.



# Sullivan BOCES lights up futures

STORY AND PHOTOS  
BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

The Sullivan BOCES Electrical Trades program is paving the way for the future of the electrical trade. Spearheaded by Gunther Jensen, a retired electrician with 32 years of experience, including significant projects such as

the Resorts World Catskills Casino and Monticello High School, the program aims to equip students with the necessary skills to thrive in the electrical field.

This program provides a practical, hands-on approach to learning. It teaches the fundamentals of electrical work, from residen-

tial and commercial wiring to repairing everyday items like curling irons and air fryers. This program not only focuses on technical skills but also emphasizes the importance of sustainability and the need to shift from a disposable culture to one that values repair and maintenance.

Jensen, with his vast experience, including specialized work in hospitals and an endearing personal story of repairing the maternity ward where his son was born, brings a wealth of knowledge and a passion for the trade to his students. His approach is deeply rooted in safety, practical knowledge, and the real-world application of skills. By incorporating lessons on basic algebra, physics, and job estimation, Jensen ensures his students are well-rounded and prepared for the complexities of the field.

“Get your good work ethics down, remember the basics, the employability skills. You have to be willing to learn, be open if somebody critiques you a little bit, take the criticism and move on with it,” said Jensen.

The program also serves as a vital link between the community and the industry. Through collaborations with local businesses and potential internships, students have the opportunity to apply their learning in real-world settings, enhancing their skills and employ-

ability. These partnerships are crucial in fostering a new generation of electricians who can contribute to the local economy and beyond.

The success of this initiative is evident in the enthusiasm and aspirations of the students. Student Lauren Stoutenburg, inspired by his brother's career as a lineman, sees the program as a stepping stone to a lucrative and fulfilling career. Students Haiden Sanders, and Roberto Menor Reyes praise the program's hands-on approach and the practical skills they've acquired, which they see as invaluable in a society increasingly reliant on skilled tradespeople.

This educational endeavor not only addresses the current shortage of skilled workers in the electrical trade but also challenges the prevailing notion that a college degree is the only path to success. It highlights the opportunities available in the trades, offering a promising alternative for those inclined towards practical, hands-on work.

As the program continues to grow, it stands as a testament to the importance of vocational education and the value of skilled trades in our society. By equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to pursue careers in the electrical trade, Jensen and his team are lighting the way for a brighter future for both the students and the communities they will serve.

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# Sullivan's future paramedics

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

Sullivan BOCES is breaking new ground with its innovative Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) program, offering an unprecedented level of hands-on training and comprehensive medical education to the next generation of EMTs.

Under the guidance of Darryl Raynor, an EMS veteran with over 27 years in the field, the program redefines EMT education through a year-long module that encompasses 432 hours of intensive learning.

This ambitious program is designed to go beyond the basics, offering 216 hours of Health Science Core, 108 hours of clinical experience, and 108 hours of theory. It's an approach that not only deepens students' understanding of essential medical skills but also prepares them to handle real-life emergencies with confidence and expertise.

Eligibility for this groundbreaking program requires students to

be at least 17 years of age by June 30 of their senior year. Raynor envisions expanding this program to accommodate more students and potentially collaborate with the new Fire Science program the Career & Tech Center is hoping to launch in the fall of 2024, and

further enhancing the training experience with practical tools like an ambulance that was recently donated.

The curriculum covers a broad range of critical topics necessary for emergency medical care. Students learn everything from

Ramero and Erica Terpstra are among the enthusiastic students who have already experienced the program's unique benefits. They highlight the opportunity to learn about emergency medical care in a hands-on environment, appreciate the sense of community within the program, and recognize the value of being able to serve their families and communities.

"I want them to be comfortable no matter what situation arises. Your skills and knowledge will always kick in," Raynor emphasizes the program's goal to prepare students for any emergency.

This initiative arrives at a critical time as Sullivan County and surrounding areas face a significant shortage of volunteer EMTs and firefighters. The program aims to address this shortage by training students within the county, encouraging them to volunteer in their local communities. Several students are already making a difference by volunteering, gaining invaluable real-world experience.

By engaging with local EMS agencies, including Mobile Medic and various volunteer organizations, students complete the clinical hours required for certification and gain direct patient contact, honing their skills in real-life scenarios.

"Not only does this benefit the workforce, but it also gives volunteer agencies an opportunity to have students who are being trained within the county," Raynor points out the broader impact of the program.

As Sullivan BOCES' EMT program evolves, its aim is clear: to equip a new generation of EMTs with the knowledge, skills, and compassion needed to serve their communities effectively.

Through rigorous training, hands-on experience, and a commitment to community service, the program prepares students to face the challenges of emergency medical care with confidence and competence, marking a significant step forward in the field of emergency medical services education.



Darryl Raynor, an experienced EMS veteran, leads a class of future paramedics at Sullivan BOCES, sharing over 27 years of knowledge and expertise.



Together,  
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empowering  
a healthier  
generation at  
Sullivan  
BOCES!



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Student Georgia O'Brien demonstrates how to measure blood pressure on fellow student Erica Terpstra during a simulated emergency scenario.

taking vital signs and using diagnostic tools to managing cardiac arrests and assisting in childbirth. The training emphasizes both Basic Life Support (BLS) and the prerequisites for Advanced Life Support (ALS), providing a solid foundation for those aspiring to become paramedics.

Derek Moorner, Maytte Morales-

# Leading in animal science

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PATRICIO ROBAYO

Sullivan BOCES' Animal Science Program combines hands-on experience with academic study, offering a comprehensive approach to learning that prepares students for future careers.

At the heart of the program's philosophy is a learning model that immerses students in the care of a variety of animal species, from domestic pets like rabbits and guinea pigs to larger farm animals such as goats, sheep, horses, cows and more. This immersive approach aims not only to impart practical skills but also to foster an understanding of animal welfare and sustainable farming practices.

Another feature of the Sullivan County BOCES program is its commitment to collaboration with local farms, animal shelters, and conservation organizations.

Additionally, the program has established articulation agreements with Alfred State College, SUNY Cobleskill, SUNY Delhi, and SUNY Morrisville. These partnerships facilitate a smoother transition for students aspiring to further their education in animal science and related fields, offering them a significant advantage in their academic and career pursuits.

Students also have the opportunity to earn various certifications, enhancing their qualifications and expertise in the field. These certifica-



Canari Rogers cradles a guinea pig, a favorite among the students.

tions include Beef Quality Assurance Certification, Youth for Quality Care of Animals, Master of Beef Advocacy, Biosecurity for Youth Caring for Livestock, and the American Rabbit Breeder Association Rabbit Care Contract.

Through internships and volunteer work, students gain invaluable insights into the day-to-day operations of farms and animal care facilities, learning firsthand the challenges and rewards of working in the field of animal science. These experiences not only enhance their resumes but also imbue them with a sense of purpose and a commitment to making a positive impact on their community.

The influence of the program extends well beyond its immediate participants. Graduates emerge as informed advocates for animal welfare and sustainable agriculture, ready to apply their skills and knowledge in various professional contexts.

The program prepares students for a wide range of career opportunities in animal-related fields, such as Livestock Production Manager, Laboratory Technician, Animal Health Inspector, Animal Shelter Manager, Extension Educator, Feed Sales Manager, Stable Manager, Trainer, Veterinarian / Vet Technician, and Farm or Herd Manager.

These opportunities reflect the comprehensive nature of the program and its ability to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in various aspects of the animal science industry.



Liliana Millman conducts a health inspection on one of the goats, now residents and recipients of care at Sullivan BOCES in Liberty.

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