

INSIGHT

A MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

Showcase of the Magnet Schools' Skills and Talent!

There is no better testimony about the great things being accomplished at the Middlesex County Magnet Schools than was evident during the annual Tech Expo.

Tech Expo takes place every February to celebrate Career and Technical Education month, and it certainly was a celebration!

My first Tech Expo as superintendent was a showcase for the talent of our students on all five campuses and the excellence of their instructors.

The diversity of topics and the depth of knowledge of the presenters were stunning. In all, about 250 students participated and were judged by visiting academics and other experts, and members of the Magnet Schools administration.

There was the Ad Lunam team at Edison Academy that just days later were declared winners of NASA's APP Development Challenge and will be going to Johnson Space Center in Houston for a tour and discussions with scientists!

Other winning presentations included a team at Woodbridge Academy on the dangers and treatments of sepsis; and a wonderful collaboration between Edison Academy and East Brunswick Campus students on MC Green, the county robot that teaches children about ecology.

We were able to show off before some distinguished guests, including Middlesex County Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios and Commissioner Charles Kenny, and County Clerk Nancy Pinkin, as well as Magnet Schools Board of Education President Keith Jones II and Vice President Laura Czarneski.

As we enter the final quarter of our school year, it is clear we can continue to expect big things from our students as they strive to become **College Ready, Career Ready and Life Ready.**

Kind Regards,

Jorge E. Diaz

Superintendent of Schools



Board of Education

- Keith Jones II, *President*
- Laura Czarneski, *Vice President*
- Karen Eastman, *Member*
- Vittorio Tartara, *Member*
- Kyle Anderson, *Interim Executive County Superintendent of Schools*

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2023 TECH EXPO

Magnet School Students Display Their Knowledge and Talent in Annual Tech Expo!

About 250 Middlesex County Magnet Schools students on all five campuses competed in the annual Tech Expo in observance of Career and Technical Education Month in February.

The presentations ranged from the design of a moon rover for NASA to the layout and menu for a restaurant serving Latin cuisine.

Among guests attending were Middlesex County Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios and Commissioner Charles Kenny, Magnet Schools Board of Education President Keith Jones II and Vice President Laura Czarneski, and Magnet Schools Superintendent Jorge E. Diaz.

“The creativity and ingenuity of our students is inspiring,” Diaz said. “They embrace Tech Expo as a showcase for the talent that will bring them great success in the future. I salute the competitors and their teachers.”



2023 TECH EXPO

Judges included Greg Hancox of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees; Jon Miller and Glenn Best of New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities; Dr. Tom Leustak, dean of academic programs at the Rutgers University Schools of Environmental and Biological Sciences; Sandra Bottoni of the Middlesex County Office of Career Opportunity; Stephanie Staub of the New Jersey Council of Community Colleges; Middlesex County Clerk Nancy Pinkin; Christopher Reid of Solar Landscape; Joan Kartelias and Tina Brigino of the Middlesex County Human Resources Department; Linda Scherr, vice president for academic affairs of Middlesex College and Donna Howell, acting dean of business, STEM and health professions of Middlesex College.

The competition was supervised by Lee Neamand, Magnet Schools Director of Career and Technical Education, and Adam Recktenwald, Supervisor of Career and Technical Education.



2023 TECH EXPO

Many of the presentations featured collaborations among different career majors and even different campuses, as well as input from mentoring professionals and Magnet Schools alumni.

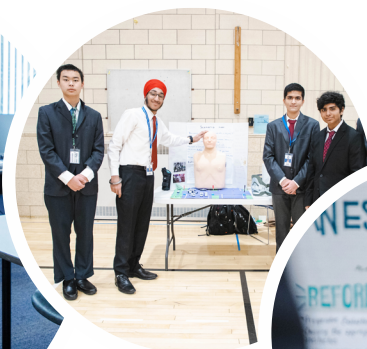
Use of artificial intelligence and 3D printers figured in several presentations.



At the Woodbridge Academy Magnet School, which specializes in bio-medical and health careers, first place went to the Mighty Chandrias, who presented about the dangers of sepsis. Second place went to the Cardiac Crew, on antihypertensives; and third were the Knockouts, on anesthesiologists.

At Edison Academy, where students major in engineering, there was a first-place tie between Ad Lunam, the lunar rover, and MC Green, a robot developed to teach about ecology, which was a collaboration with the Middlesex County Improvement Authority and pre-engineering students on the East Brunswick Campus.

- [Click here](#) to view the Edison Academy Magnet School Tech Expo recap video.
- [Click here](#) to view the Woodbridge Academy Magnet School Tech Expo recap video.



2023 TECH EXPO

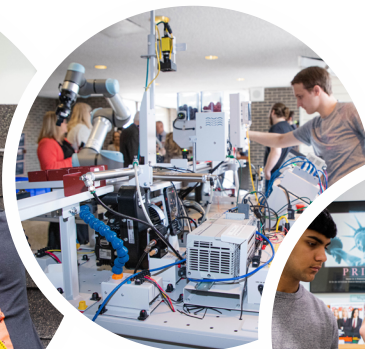
At Perth Amboy Magnet School, first place went to Electrical Technology with “We Will Shock You”; second was Culinary for “Latin Kitchen,” and third was Computer Systems Technology for “The Established.”



At Piscataway Magnet School, first place was awarded to Health Technology for “The Travelers”; second, Health Careers for “Better Health/Better You,” and third, Construction Trades/Carpentry for “The Green Energizers.”

At East Brunswick Magnet School, first went to Cosmetology and Graphic Design/Commercial Art and Illustration for “Team Magazine”; second, AgriScience for “Members of the Corn,” and third, Multimedia Art and Digital Design for “Vets and Pets.”

- [Click here](#) to view the East Brunswick Magnet School Tech Expo recap video.
- [Click here](#) to view the Perth Amboy Magnet School Tech Expo recap video.
- [Click here](#) to view the Piscataway Magnet School Tech Expo recap video.



NEW OPPORTUNITIES

High School Students Can Earn College Degree Under New Middlesex County Program

A program launched by Middlesex College and the Middlesex County Magnet Schools will enable students to obtain an associate degree while still in high school.

“It’s a great benefit to the students,” said Linda Scherr, Middlesex College Vice President for Academic Affairs. “They can graduate high school and be halfway to a bachelor’s degree.”

“This is a very innovative initiative that will greatly benefit our students,” said Jorge E. Diaz, Magnet Schools Superintendent. “It adds to our roster of articulation agreements that allow our students in all career majors to obtain college credits and employment credentials while still in high school.”

Mark McCormick, President of Middlesex College, said the program will save money and time for the students, and it offers another important feature: increased success.

“Our data show that students who take Dual Enrollment classes have a higher retention and success rate in college than students who do not,” he said.



Several students at the county’s Edison Academy Magnet School, which is on the Middlesex College Campus, are on track to earn their associate degree before they graduate in June, Scherr said.

The program – called the Dual Degree Pathway – is also available to students at the Woodbridge Academy Magnet School.

(continued on next page)

NEW OPPORTUNITIES



Students must complete at least 15 credits on the Middlesex College campus or virtually through the college, at the High School Scholars reduced tuition rate -- currently \$125 for any three- or four-credit course. Combined with AP credit and dual-enrollment courses taken at the Magnet Schools, they can reach the 60 credits necessary for an associate degree.

The special High School Scholars tuition rate applies to courses taken at Middlesex College by students currently enrolled in high school anytime and anywhere, including at their high school, at any of the college's locations, in Edison, New Brunswick, and Perth Amboy, and online. Middlesex College offers courses during the day, evening, and on Saturdays. College courses also may be taken over the summer.

Magnet Schools Assistant Superintendent Jeffrey Bicsko said the program was introduced to parents of prospective students at information sessions for the Edison Academy Magnet School – where students major in engineering – and for the Woodbridge Academy Magnet School – where the students major in health and biomedical sciences.

“Parents were very excited about this,” Scherr said.

“This is a new initiative for us, and we’re very excited about it,” Bicsko said. “It’s a cost benefit for the students.”

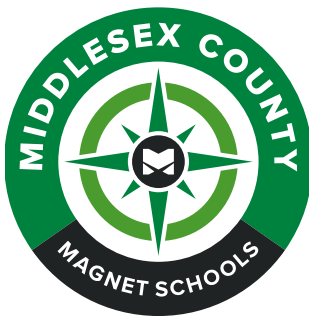
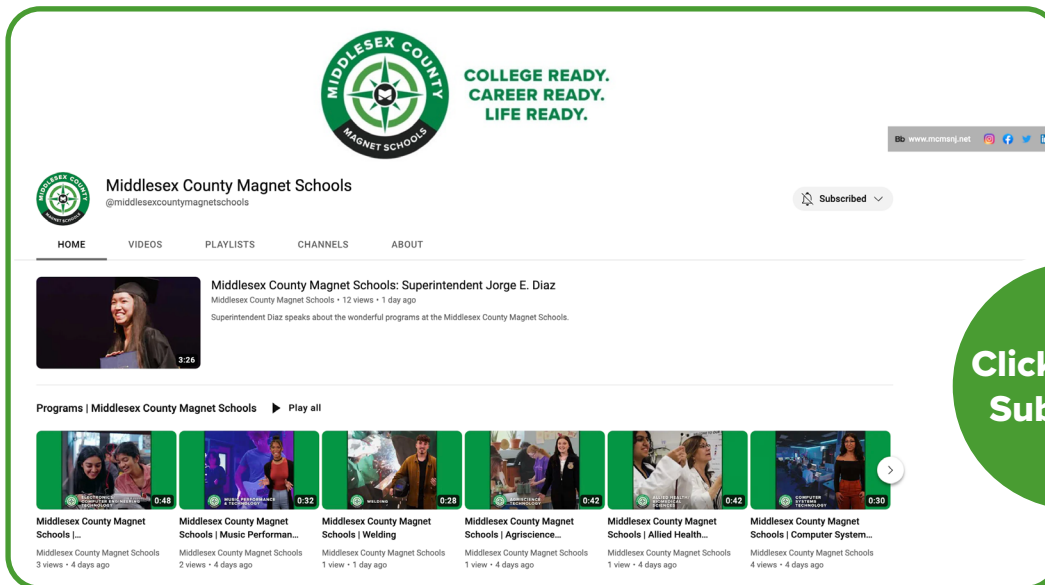
The program will reduce the tuition students will have to pay for their four-year bachelor’s degree at all state colleges, including Rutgers and NJIT, which draw many Magnet School students, and a number of private colleges in New Jersey.

[Read the full article here](#)

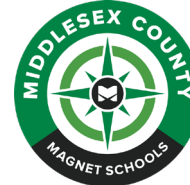


VISUAL IDENTITY

Check out our newly launched [YouTube channel](#) to view all of the Program Spotlight Video Ads created, as well as the Superintendent's message about our schools!



**COLLEGE READY.
CAREER READY.
LIFE READY.**



**ADULT
EDUCATION**

NEWS RECOGNITION

Featured Articles About Us:

- [TapInto East Brunswick](#)

Magnet High School Students Can Earn College Degree Under New Middlesex County Program

- [Career Tech NJ](#)

CTE Success Story: Christian Rios Finds His Way Back to Middlesex County Magnet School as a Culinary Instructor

- [TapInto Woodbridge / Carteret](#)

Carteret Gets Its First Indian-American Council President

- [Patch.com](#)

Magnet School Students Can Earn Degree at Edison's Middlesex College

- [SSP Architects](#)

Interest in Music Performance and Technology Major Boosted by Middlesex Magnet School's Recording Studio



Photo courtesy of Middlesex College



Photo courtesy of Borough of Carteret



SPOTLIGHT VIDEOS

Twelve students from 12 different career majors representing all five campuses were recently filmed to highlight the various programs that we offer at all five schools. These videos were filmed to bring awareness to our many different programs in the perspective of our students.



[Check out our new YouTube channel and view the full playlist here.](#)

Thank you to the following program students that were featured in the second round of videos:

East Brunswick Magnet School

- Ariana Morales, *Baking*
- Mathieu DeOleo, *Dance*
- Thomas Kipila, *Pre-Engineering and Manufacturing Technology*

Piscataway Magnet School

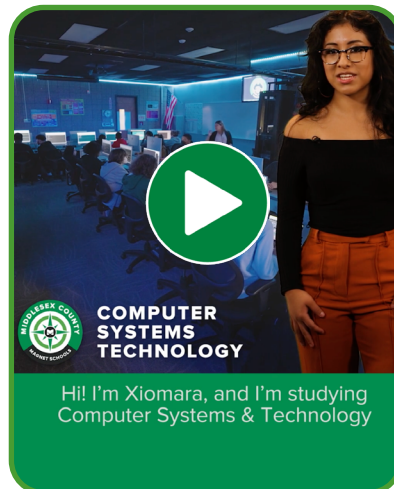
- Fernando Xelhuatlani, *Automotive Collision Repair and Technology*
- Xiomara Baca Samaniego, *Computer Science Technology*

Perth Amboy Magnet School

- Leah Gonzalez, *Graphic Design: Commerical Art & Illustration*
- Noah Espinosa, *Carpentry/Building Trades*



SPOTLIGHT VIDEOS



CELEBRATING SENIOR NIGHTS!

Basketball Season Concluded with Senior Nights, Celebrating Our Upcoming Graduating Class



East Brunswick Magnet School Tigers

Boys Basketball

- Juel Holmes-Smith, Justin Noon,
Scott Pede

Girls Basketball / Cheer

- Amiah Rivera, Angelina Almeida,
Ashley Tlatenchi, Camilia Garcia,
Hailey Simon, Isabella Marquez,
Kamilah Smith.

Perth Amboy Magnet School Patriots

Boys Basketball

- Angel Cordero Ramos

Girls Basketball

- Amanda Batista, Jalena Santiago,
Jennifer Gomez

Piscataway Magnet School Raiders

Boys Basketball

- Davin Rodriguez, Isaiah Shepherd, Shaan
Swam, Stanley Velasco, Ja'Kiir Waites,
Steven Arias-Rodriguez, Bryan Canavan

Girls Basketball

- Bayane Chahine

Woodbridge Academy Magnet School Hornets

Girls Basketball

- Annie Lei, Disha Garg, Emily Kamor,
Jasmine Wilk, Nithya Suresh,
Vidisha Maharana



NATIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELING WEEK

Middlesex County Magnet Schools
Board of Education Embraces the Goal of
High-Quality Education for All New Jersey
Public School Students.



National School Counseling Week 2023, “School Counselors: Helping Students Dream Big,” celebrated Feb. 6-10, 2023, focuses public attention on the unique contribution of school counselors within U.S. school systems.

National School Counseling Week, sponsored by ASCA, highlights school counselors’ tremendous impact in helping students achieve school success and plan for a career. National School Counseling Week is always celebrated the first full week in February.

Thank you to all of the School Counseling team across the district, we appreciate all that you do for our staff and students. Featured are just a few photos of those who make up the amazing team.



STUDENT AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Out of over 150 submissions from New Jersey, four of East Brunswick Magnet School's student short films had the honor of being official selections at the sixth Ramapo College High School Film Fest. Screening, awards, and reception took place on January 28 at Ramapo College. Forty-two films of every type and genre from dozens of high schools all across New Jersey were screened. "A Case if You" by Gabriel Werts (senior), "Isla Nena" by Maya Zeidman (senior), "Candy Heart" by Jordlyn DeLeon (senior), and "Film Ketchup" by Britney Harrington (senior) were official selections. Gabriel Werts received the Best Film of Festival award and Maya Zeidman received the award for Best Documentary.



All award recipients received a student "Oscar" trophy, as well as category-specific prizes from over \$5,000 in donated equipment and software from the following film sponsors: Rokinson, Tilta, WriterDuet, Maxon, Crumplepop, K-Tek, and Zacuto.

[Click here](#) for more information on the program.

On February 15, the Lady Patriots made history by clinching the **Gold Division Championship**. The Lady Patriots outscored Timothy Christian by a score of 49-43. It was an exciting game led by Senior Jalena Santiago, Senior Amanda Batista, and Junior Arlette Batista.



The **Piscataway Magnet School Debate Team** defeated South Plainfield under the direction of their advisor, Dr. Patterson. Congratulations to the entire team's efforts. The debate was followed by a luncheon prepared by our Culinary students under the direction of Chef Mastrella.



STUDENT AWARDS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The Woodbridge Academy Magnet School

Ethics Debate Team competed in the **National High School Ethics Bowl Regional Competition** on February 11.

Isai Balamurugan, Fernanda Herrada, Shivani Jaishankar, Michael Annunziata, and Shreya Dutt won the regional competition by unanimous decision in every round.



The Edison Academy Magnet School Ad Lunam Team has won the **NASA App Development Challenge** and will be traveling to the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas over spring break. They will be touring the NASA facilities and presenting their project to NASA leadership.

The team consists of Sushant Chadha, Yuvraj Lakhotia, Benjamin Louie, and Akshada Guruvayur, as well as mentors Aarav Agarwal, Samuel Lihn, and their advisor Mrs. Gomes.

The NASA App Development Challenge (ADC) is a coding challenge in which NASA presents technical problems to middle and high school students seeking student contributions to deep space exploration missions. By responding to the ADC, students take part directly in the Artemis Generation endeavors to land American astronauts, including the first woman and first person of color on the moon.

[Click here to view the finalists announcement video.](#)

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

The Teen Mental Health Epidemic: Depression Effective School Solutions (ESS)

We are in the midst of a youth mental health crisis that can also be characterized as an epidemic. Growing numbers of children are experiencing anxiety and depression, and increased stressors can exacerbate these symptoms. [Read this article](#) to learn more about depression and what schools can do to help.

For the last two years, the Middlesex County Magnet Schools have partnered with ESS to deliver district-wide staff and parent Mental Health workshops as well as school-based clinical services to students (and families) identified as needing Tier II interventions at our Piscataway Campus.

Members of the crisis team concluded “Intervention,” the second of a three-part training module for the evidence-based Lifelines Suicide Prevention and Crisis Management program. “Intervention” ignited discussions among crisis team members and administrators on new ways to identify and respond to students who may be at suicide risk.

The training module included:

- **Practical tools** for talking about suicide in a developmentally appropriate and conversational manner designed to decrease stigma
- **Videos** that demonstrated techniques for engaging students and parents in the intervention and referral process
- **Detailed information** about potentially higher-risk students, including those who are subjects of bullying, who identify as LGBTQ+, who are gifted, or who are returning to school after suicide-related or other traumatic event absences.



The last module of the three-part training series is “Prevention.” By next year, Lifelines will be fully implemented districtwide. Middlesex County Magnet Schools will continue to pursue and utilize evidence-based programs and resources like Lifelines and [HELPme](#), to support the mental health needs of our school community.



ADULT EDUCATION

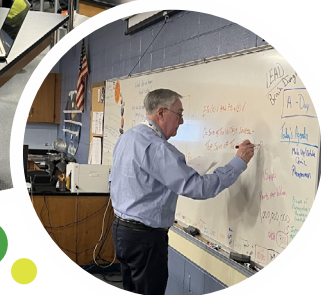
The Practical Nursing Graduation was held on February 16 at Piscataway Magnet School.

Congratulations to the graduates for completing their 15-month Practical Nursing Program!

A special thank-you to the dedicated and caring instructors whose expectations are high and want all of their students to be successful in the Practical Nursing Program – Jennifer Kean, program coordinator, Teresa DaSilva, Dr. Mavis Ermakov, Gina King and clinical instructors Jill Greve-Falcone and Mary Claire Hartigan. Also in attendance was Board of Education Vice President Laura Czarneski and Assistant Superintendent Jeffrey Bicsko.

Instructor Jennifer Kean's Senior practical nursing students listened to heart sounds on "Susie", a computerized, programmable manikin. Susie can simulate almost any function such as heart, lung and bowel sounds, pupil reaction, blood pressure, etc.. Instructor Jennifer Kean programmed a different heart rate for every student, who had to correctly listen to and count the apical (right over the heart) heart rate. The practical nursing students were so excited when they got it right! And, a lot of them did.

Mr. Shine's first-year IBEW apprenticeship class in East Brunswick spent time learning about Ohm's Law, which is a formula calculating the relationship between voltage, current and resistance. They also learned about Kirchhoff's Law, which states a current flowing in must be equal to the current that flows out.



ATHLETICS NEWS

The Perth Amboy Magnet Schools “Lady Patriots” are the Middlesex County Gold Division Champions!

The team, led by Head Coach Nancy Barajas and Assistant Coach Jordan Manley, has achieved an outstanding 19-3 record.



Mr. Modzelewski, Woodbridge Academy Physical Education teacher, is integrating technology into his lessons to help improve student learning. The students created video recordings of their peers performing a learned skill and then review the recording for self and peer assessment. This feedback is very helpful for students to improve their skills for the future and also provides important assessment data for Mr. Modzelewski.



Edison Academy Magnet School's 2022 Varsity Eagles Soccer team have received United Soccer Coaches Team Ethics and Sportsmanship Gold Level honors for the Fall season, having received just one yellow card caution for the season.



[Click here to view Athletic Schedules](#)

Student athletes have been recognized by the Greater Middlesex Conference (GMC) as All-Division players for the 2022-2023 basketball season.

- East Brunswick Magnet School - E. Atanacio, Boys Basketball, C. Garcia, Girls Basketball, S. Pede, Boys Basketball
- Perth Amboy Magnet School - A. Batista, Girls Basketball, J. Santiago, Girls Basketball
- Piscataway Magnet School - M. Miller, Girls Basketball, I. Shepard, Boys Basketball
- Woodbridge Magnet School - V. Maharana, Girls Basketball
- Sportsmanship - Boys Basketball, Perth Amboy Magnet School



CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION

On January 20th, Music Technology students from our East Brunswick Magnet School welcomed professional studio musicians to record in their state-of-the-art studio.

Students were tasked with setting up this multiple room recording session, including the main studio space and the vocal isolation booth, and use the mixing board to control all the takes of the actual recording process.

The month of February was Career and Technical Education Month. We recognize how career and technical education offers students the opportunity to gain the academic, technical and employability skills necessary for true career readiness. Students in career and technical education programs participate in authentic, meaningful experiences that improve the quality of their education and increase their engagement and achievement. Each of the campuses prepared to celebrate CTE month by participating in Tech Expo in late February.

On February 15, the Career and Technical Education office staff were guests at Chef Mastrella's Valentine's Day Luncheon at the Piscataway Magnet School. Culinary students served a delicious three-course menu alongside mocktails with impeccable service. Thank you to the Culinary students who served this incredible meal, Chef Mastrella for organizing, and to the Piscataway Magnet School students and staff who showed off their musical talents while the staff were served.



STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Edison Academy Magnet School Sophomore E. Poon has been working on a personal service project under the guidance of our Interact Club. He led four individual bake sales to fundraise for [Elijah's Promise Community Kitchen in New Brunswick](#). He raised around \$200 and bought healthy snacks in bulk (requested by the organization) to package for the community kitchen. Special thanks to our Interact Council, P. Kulkarni, J. Mudhar, S. Gupta, B. Pandey and A. Arora for all the support they have provided on this project, as well as the volunteers and advisor Ms. Simmons, who helped make this fundraiser possible.

On February 24, by invitation from Superintendent Diaz, [Piscataway Magnet School Welding, Architecture Technology and Building Technology students visited the Carteret Arts District](#) for further exploration of the proposed sites of the obelisk that was designed by Architecture Technology program and will be manufactured by Welding and Building technology. During the visit the students were given a tour of the Carteret Performing Arts Center by Mayor Daniel J. Reiman and his staff. Students were amazed to see the great design and construction applications used throughout the Performing Arts Center.

Mrs. Sobolewski's Junior Graphic Design class at East Brunswick Magnet School [created portraits of Nigerian children for the charitable organization Memory Project](#). Memory Project sends us photos of children from around the world who have faced substantial challenges, such as neglect, loss of parents, violence, war, natural disasters, and extreme poverty. The class uses these photos as inspiration to create both traditional and digital portraits which are sent back to each child. Mrs. Sobolewski's Junior classes have been creating art for this charity for the past 7 years.



STUDENT ACTIVITIES

Chef Moir's Culinary class and Mr. Luginsland's Chemistry class held a joint lesson about the maillard reaction. This built a bridge between the two classes while simultaneously providing an introduction to one of the many key topics that students will be able to take with them either through their post-high school culinary work, academic food science/culinary programs and/or establishing a fundamental understanding of where arts and science work in tandem.



On February 4, 50 students from Woodbridge Academy Magnet School, along with State President Ahdaf Zaman, State Historian Deepa Subramanya, and chaperones Dr. Wiemer and Ms. Hoffman attended the New Jersey HOSA Southern Regional Conference at the Cumberland County Technical Education Center. These students came home with 29 collective medals for placing in the Top 8 places for their respective healthcare competitions! Twenty-four of these highly-achieving competitors will be advancing to the State Leadership Conference at the Burlington County Institute of Technology next month.



A special guest speaker visited East Brunswick Magnet School on February 13 to speak to our school community about their experiences related to the Holocaust. This speaker is a second-generation survivor. She presented the stories of her parents, both Holocaust survivors, to a large group of East Brunswick Magnet School students in person and via livestream. The retelling of her family's experience both during and after the Holocaust impacted students and staff greatly, and gave insight as to how we can be the change and to continue to share these experiences to our future generations.



STUDENT CLUBS AND EVENTS

The annual **East Brunswick Magnet School Dance Student Choreography show** was performed on February 3 at Middlesex College. The event and performance was a huge success.

On Saturday, February 4th, 2023 Ms. Rogers escorted our Piscataway Magnet School HOSA members and competed in four events.

They were victorious in every event they were entered in:

- **CPR/First Aid (5th place)**
 - Bayane Chahine (Senior) and Noel DiCanto (Sophomore)
- **Prepared Speaking (7th Place)**
 - Ishal Shahid (Sophomore)
- **Extemporaneous Writing (6th Place)**
 - Savannah Ryan (Freshman)
- **Dental Terminology (3rd Place)**
 - Salbia Zainab (Sophomore)

Salbia, Bayane and Noel will now move on to State Competition.

Woodbridge Academy Magnet School seniors and New Jersey State HOSA leaders Ahdaf Zaman (state president) and Deepa Subramanya (state historian) led the New Jersey HOSA Northern Regional Conference at Passaic County Technical Institute. **The state officers hosted competitions, workshops, and leadership sessions for over 800 students from the Northern Region of New Jersey.** They are now excited to move forward in hosting the Southern Regional Conference, which will be attended by approximately 50 Woodbridge Academy students for a chance to compete at the state level and potentially in the International Leadership Conference in Dallas, Texas.



STUDENT CLUBS AND EVENTS

Edison Academy Magnet School students recently competed in several national STEM competitions. Seven students qualified for the American Invitational Mathematics Examination (AIME) by virtue of their performance on the American Mathematics Competition (AMC). The students that were recognized are P. Sitaraman, A. Bhaskar, V. Badoni, S. Bagchi, N. Agrawal, F. Prince, and M. Zhang. Mrs. Gomes for oversaw and organized the event. The school also offered the United States American Biology Olympiad (USABO) test and the F=ma exam, a physics test. They were both organized by Dr. Colaizzi through the Science League.

Perth Amboy Magnet School Mural Ms. Dlugosz, Teacher of Art, and her students are currently taking on a creative diversity project together. Their mural is a student collaboration project to celebrate Hispanic and Latino heritage within the school. They designed and are painting the mural together.

Piscataway Magnet School's Safety Ambassadors were excited to present to Randolphville Elementary School's first graders. The students presented on the following topics: Safety in and around cars, falls prevention, wheeled sports safety and pedestrian safety. Students pictured are Isabella Mayorga, Angelina Hanna, Shayla Colon, Lauren Maria, Sahdia Ishaque, Portia McFadden-DiNicola, Bayane Chahine, Lyna Chahine, Sarah Vanderburg and Ruba Zafar.



ALUMNI NEWS

Welding Technology Program Alumni Continues His Dream Career Due to His Magnet School Experience



Welding is in Alex Day's DNA.

His grandfather, father, brother and uncle all were in the profession.

It definitely wasn't a surprise when last June he was the first student at the Middlesex County Magnet Schools Piscataway Campus to graduate with all three certifications necessary to become a professional welder.

He has now been accepted into Boilermakers Local 13 as an apprentice and is about to begin work at the Philadelphia Navy Yard.

"You couldn't ask for a better student," said Piscataway Magnet School Welding Technology teacher Glen Foli.

"He was focused and determined, and he came from a great background.

"I wish every student was like him."

Alex is also full of praise for his teacher.

"He's taught me everything that I know," he said.

"He's given me so many opportunities to explore and learn."

Alex says he finds welding "very relaxing."

"To me, welding feels like when you sit by a fire and are just fascinated by it."

Alex will be commuting to Philadelphia from his home in North Brunswick to excel in his welding career.



Photo courtesy of Navy Yard Philadelphia

ALUMNI NEWS

State DEP commissioner says Magnet School experience was pivotal

State Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn LaTourette says attending a Middlesex County Magnet School changed his life.

“I’m not sure I’d be here today without it,” he said. “It opened my eyes to all of the different possibilities. The whole experience just changed my life.”

“Middlesex County Magnet Schools, formerly known as Middlesex County Vocational and Technical Schools, have been providing exceptional, specialized education for over 100 years to Middlesex County students,” said Middlesex County Commissioner Director Ronald G. Rios.

“State Environmental Protection Commissioner Shawn LaTourette is a testament to the exceptional education



provided by our county’s Magnet Schools, and inspires us to continue our mission of delivering high-quality education to all students”

Commissioner LaTourette, 42, attended middle school in Woodbridge and is a 1998 graduate of what was then Woodbridge Vo-Tech. It had been the girls’ vocational and technical school and still had a five-to-one ratio of girls to boys when he started.

The offerings on the campus, which now houses the Woodbridge Academy Magnet School, specializing in bio-medical and health careers, was still heavily geared toward what were considered careers for women, such as fashion design and cosmetology.

He chose automated office technology – an update of the old secretarial career major – and in his junior year was offered an internship with a small law firm in Perth Amboy.

(continued on next page)

ALUMNI NEWS

"I thought my best option was to get some skills and get a job after I graduated," he said.

"I tend to be sort of a very hands-on type of person. I learn by doing. Being at Vo-Tech, it spoke more to my learning style than a traditional high school would have. And because of that, a lot of doors opened that might not have otherwise.

"The real benefit was in the doing. If you come from a family like mine, the value and the dignity that that gives you where you're contributing and you're being productive, I was able to feel the benefits of that more directly at Vo-Tech.

"I was able to go into an office and demonstrate a skill and be rewarded for that skill.

The point is to have these multiple options that speak to the needs of different students. I'm not sure I'd be here right now today without it."



After the internship, he became a secretary's assistant, then a paralegal, then a business administrator of a small law firm.

"When I went to Vo-Tech it was not what it is now," he said. "It was the place you went when maybe college wasn't your next step. I grew up in a family where no one went to college.

"In my shop there were no men other than me," LaTourette said. "All of the girls jokingly called me Secretary Shawn, which I would answer to today. I was inducted into the New Jersey Equity Hall of Fame for being the only male in a female area of study.

"I did my undergraduate study at night while I worked full time, first at Middlesex County College, then Rutgers," he said. "It was exhausting."

(continued on next page)

ALUMNI NEWS

He “took a break” and went to law school full time at Rutgers in Camden, graduating second in his class. He then worked for large law firms in New York City and Newark. He became a community organizer, advocating for victims of environmental pollution, and did that for 10 years.

Although he wasn’t involved in state politics – even though he was a class officer in high school and at Rutgers – he was chosen for the role of chief counsel under Catherine McCabe, Governor Phil Murphy’s first commissioner of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), whose experience was in the federal government.



“She wanted a New Jersey environmental lawyer as chief counsel,” he said. “I moved up into another role and then another role. It turns out I love government – who knew?

“I have a deep love for the work that I’m doing here because of the way it can improve the lives of other people,” he said. “I imagine that my next step is to continue doing that work in some way.”

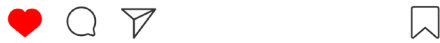
Commissioner LaTourette also is an advocate for gay rights and has been chairman of the LGBTQ Section of the New Jersey Bar Association.



All photos not credited are via Shawn LaTourette on Twitter.

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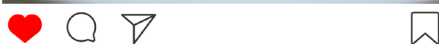
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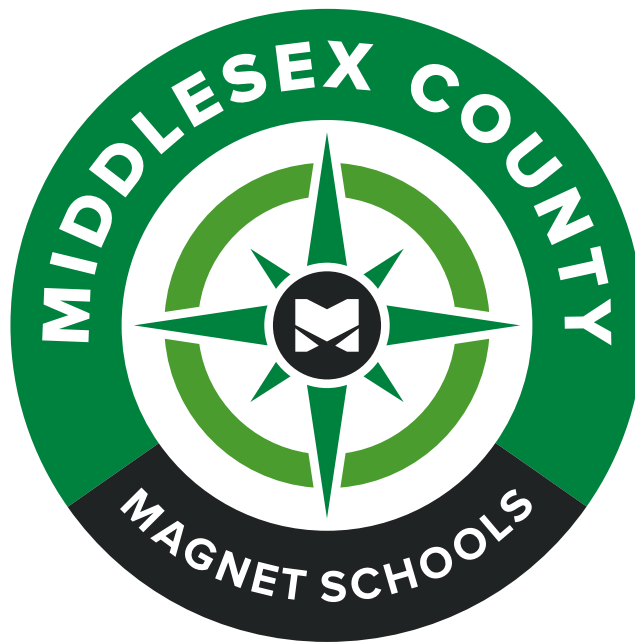
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