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## SCARSDALE HOSTS 17<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL WISE CONFERENCE

WISE Services' 17th annual conference, "WISE Connections" was hosted by Scarsdale High School on March 28, 2008. Over 150 WISE students, mentors, and coordinators participated.

The highlight of the morning was a pair of keynote speeches by Andrew Ross Sorkin, Scarsdale, 1995, and Cheryl Furjanic, Croton-Harmon, 1994. Andrew's description of his internship at *The New York Times* can only be described as both inspiring and hilarious. Today Andrew, who set out to do the impossible – intern at the *Times* as a high school senior – is the Chief Mergers and Acquisitions Reporter and Assistant Editor of the Business and Finance Section at the paper and frequently appears as an analyst on television.

Cheryl Furjanic, an award-winning filmmaker currently teaching documentary video production at NYU, viewed her senior project as an opportunity to pursue her career interest in medicine. How she ended

up finding out film was her true passion made for a fascinating tale. She showed the audience the marvelous trailer from her latest feature length documentary "Sync or Swim," the story of the U.S. Women's Olympic Synchronized Swim Team.\*

Break-out sessions included a student workshop with an Alumni Panel of Jessica Edelman, '02, who now runs the Scarsdale Teen Center, Michael Resnick, '02, who teaches in Yonkers, and Ricardo Garcia, '97, who is

President of the Scarsdale Alumni Association and Executive Vice President of Latinos in Information Sciences and Technology Association (LISTA of NY); a Roundtable and an internet workshop.

It was a great conference and we look forward to getting together again this year!

\*For more information on "Sync or Swim" visit the film's website at <http://www.synchronmovie.com>



*Andrew Ross Sorkin, Linda Greene, Vic Leviatin, graduate panelists and Cheryl Furjanic enjoy a moment.*

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WISE Individualized Senior Experience, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

As I approach my 70th birthday and WISE celebrates its 35th year, I am overwhelmed by the joy that WISE has offered me since its founding at Woodlands in 1973. When I retired from teaching in 1991, I could imagine nothing that would be as fulfilling as my many years as a mentor and a coordinator of WISE. But, in 1993, WISE Services was born, and the joy continues! For the last 15 years, I've worked with other WISE retirees to spread WISE to new schools across the country and to expand our extended WISE family.

A school administrator recently commented that WISE might be the only non-mandated school program ever to have survived in any school for so many years. Good programs come and go, he said, but WISE has not only continued at Woodlands for 35 years, but has expanded to other schools for equally amazing periods of time (Scarsdale and Croton for the last 15 years, another 14 schools with programs that began over 10 years ago, and 20 additional schools with programs that began more than 5 years ago).

The glory of WISE (aside from its logic, elegance, and the need it fulfills for graduating high school seniors) is that it continues to evolve as each WISE school

shares experiences with the other schools. The WISE Individualized Senior Experience is, in fact, "individualized" -- not only for each student, but now for each WISE school, with modifications made by the school's task force of students, teachers, parents and community members. WISE at Tiospaye Topa on the Lakota Sioux Cheyenne River Reservation in South Dakota is different from WISE at Midwood in Brooklyn and both are different from WISE at Hollywood Hills in Florida, WISE at Hunter-Tannersville in New York and WISE at Connecticut's New Haven Academy.

My joy is evident from my calendar. Exciting WISE workshops have started for students and staff at Northern Burlington and Lindenwold high schools in New Jersey and at the Queens High School for Teaching. In early October, Linda Greene and I visited some of our Connecticut and Massachusetts schools as part of a trip to Boston to meet with WISE graduates who are starting a Boston-based WISE resource group. (That trip included a visit to the Kennedy Library -- see "Did You Know" on page 8 below.) Next week, Deborah Harris and I will travel to Charlotte, NC, where WISE Services will continue its 12-year tradition of presenting a WISE workshop at the Coalition of Essential Schools Fall Forum.

And everywhere we go, we meet WISE graduates from different WISE schools, with their journals in hand and their excitement about WISE undiminished. "What can we do?" "How can we help?" "WISE was the best thing that ever happened to me in school." Yes, indeed. Me, too!!



## WISE ALUMNI NEWS

**Lauren Grunstein**, Solomon Schechter HS, 2006, is a student at Boston University, where she is majoring in Public Relations. Lauren wrote, "For my project I interned at a Fashion and Beauty PR firm in Manhattan. It is because of WISE that I solidified my interest in Public Relations. At the time, I was a student who was eager to get out of the classroom and establish myself in the working world. Through my internship I learned the basics of public relations such as promotional strategies, the importance of maintaining relationships with the media and client value. My internship inspired me to follow my passion and gave me the foundation I needed to succeed." Last year, Lauren created a website called



*Lauren Grunstein*

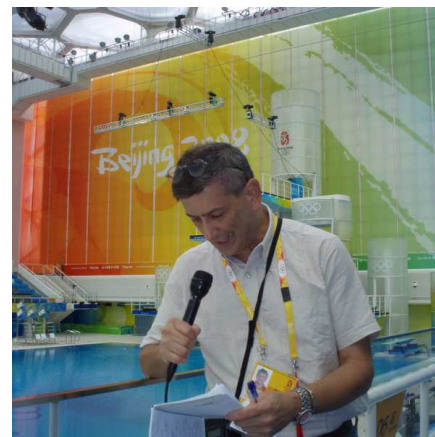
InternshipRatings.com, that allows students to rate their internship experiences in various industries across the United States. She writes, "I think that internshipratings.com can be a useful resource for many WISE students."



*Vinnie Bagwell at work*

**Vinnie Bagwell**, Woodlands HS, 1975, recently visited with the WISE Board and shared some of the memories she carries from her WISE experience, which involved research on Black English. She told us about her new work, a commissioned sculpture for Hofstra University entitled Frederick Douglass Circle. This magnificent outdoor sculpture cast in bronze commemorates one of the most prominent figures in African American and United States history, who was a steadfast believer in the equality of all people. Vinnie was commissioned to create this piece after her proposal won the national Person of Color Sculpture Competition in 2007, sponsored by Hofstra University. Regarding her work, Vinnie comments: "My pursuit of artistic excellence and creating art for public places is grounded in my desire to use sculpture as a visual language that is so compelling it has the power to reach out and strike the heart and enrich the lives of others."

**Bill Marcus**, Woodlands HS, 1977, writes, "My WISE project was an auto-biographical novel. Because I considered it to be an absolute failure, I've spent the last 31 years trying to find something relevant to say. My goal is to meet the standard of two women: Maya Angelou, who asked "Did you show up to make a difference?" and Sojourner Truth, who said "Dry your eyes and tell your story." Bill reports from Shanghai, China for American Public Media's Marketplace and Fox News Radio. He covered the Beijing Olympics for Fox and is a former lecturer in the Department of Foreign Language and Literature at Fudan University where he specialized in American Culture and Spoken English. Bill started his career as an anchor, editor, and Greenburgh Town Hall beat reporter for WFAS and The Greenburgh Inquirer.



*Bill Marcus at the Water Cube in Beijing*

## THE FIRST YEAR OF WISE AT SOMERS HIGH SCHOOL BY JOHN MURPHY

Last year I was appointed as the first Somers High School WISE Coordinator and had the pleasure of teaching the WISE English class. The first eighteen months of WISE at Somers were filled with so many wonderful projects, events, and presentations that brevity is difficult when explaining just how much fun we had while “learning the ropes.”

We followed the WISE format as closely as possible, reading the many materials brought to us by WISE Services staff and asking frequent questions to make sure we had it right. The Task Force met monthly, and each month, our vision grew increasingly clear. As the program has grown, it’s been great to meet so many community members who are willing to join the Task Force. This year, I plan to continue to reach out to people who can help on various committees. Parents, graduates, retirees, business owners, and politicians alike all seem eager to help.

Our inaugural year was also a success in large part because of our administration’s efforts—Principal Irene Perrella and Assistant Principal Brian Hunt both took active roles in the Task Force. Their hands-on support added to the legitimacy of WISE at Somers, and their logistical help made the year run quite smoothly.

Although the WISE initiation process helps the program come to life, *people remain the most important ingredient of a great year of WISE*. My co-coordinator Ann Ferraro did a tremendous job, and I’m happy that she’ll join me again this year. We were blessed to have four Student Senior Coordinators and two Junior Coordinators, all of whom played major roles in developing the program’s important components while fine-tuning the nuances. The Task Force and members of

WISE Services played integral roles as well. I’d also like to express my thanks to the Guidance Department for their excellent ongoing support. Encouraging participation, scheduling students, and participating in Task Force all helped the program grow and prosper.

Our database of businesses and organizations has been growing; it’s surprising how many people have already requested that we send another student to them in 2009. Just last week, a student and her mom showed up at the high school with questions about a placement. The girl hopes to research genetic counseling and secure an internship in the



*Journal Workshop with Mr. Murphy*

field. Although our database is rather small, compared to most veteran WISE schools’ databases, I quickly pulled up a contact from the computer, and the student will reach out to a doctor who sponsored a student last year. I could not have imagined how easy this would be, and I can only guess that this list of contacts will grow exponentially over the years. Much of the credit for our placements rests with the Resources sub-committee of our Task Force, which has been active from the beginning.

The people who most impressed me during our first year were the 31 students who fulfilled their WISE

requirements and delivered outstanding presentations. To watch our students confidently and passionately talk about their accomplishments gave me and the other Task Force members a considerable amount of joy. When I first heard that audience members often cry during WISE presentations, I didn’t believe it. Wow, was I wrong! The poignancy and humanity of these projects far exceeded the already-strong emotional power of traditional high school life. These students were almost finished with their four years of high school, and these presentations truly shone as capstone achievements as these young men and women closed a monumental stage of their lives.

It’s difficult to select just a few highlights, but my favorites include a dancer who taught dance to students with disabilities; an artist who arranged to have his art exhibited at a local library; and a student who interned with a minor-league baseball team (and has segued her WISE project into a job with a minor-league team in North Carolina). My own mentee worked on creative writing and publishing her work. The returns on her efforts did not come until the summer, when she e-mailed me to let me know that two of her poems were accepted for publication. The rewards do not stop.

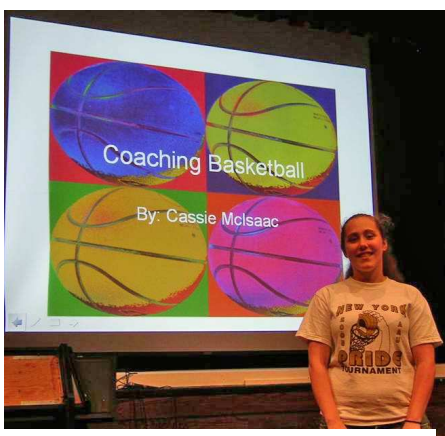
In many ways, WISE is about community building. The fourth letter of the WISE acronym is *Experience*. Meeting so many people in different fields has been a remarkably rewarding experience - our collective experience at Somers has been memorable. We’re looking forward to another great year this year as our numbers have almost doubled. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at [wise@somers.k12.ny.us](mailto:wise@somers.k12.ny.us).

## THE FIRST YEAR OF WISE AT SOMERS HIGH SCHOOL (CONTINUED)

### Reflections of a New WISE Principal By Irene Perrella

Today we completed our last WISE presentation. I loved what the student said as she began- W (Why) I (Isn't) S (Studying) E (Enough?). She went on to do a stellar presentation about breaking rules and finding her musical voice and finally composing a piano piece with full orchestra parts that was performed at our band concert. Her journal was wonderful. Although she is also our valedictorian, I heard for the first time her growth towards becoming her own person and not just an exceptionally good student with a fantastic memory. She really made some significant strides in her maturity and in what she learned about herself. Her mentor was so moved when she presented him with her journal that he could not find words.

I cannot tell you how proud I am that Somers has adopted this program. Every meeting was worth it. John Murphy and Ann Ferraro were the perfect people for this endeavor. I would like to thank the WISE Services staff so much for all their help. This is important work and I'm thankful for people like you who are willing to take it on.



*Cassie McIsaac's Presentation*

### Comments from Julie Gherardi, Assistant Superintendent, Somers Schools

How grateful we are to all who have made our first year with WISE such a successful one. As we prepare students to be 21st century citizens it is true that studying alone isn't enough. They need to cultivate the deeper understandings that come with active involvement in meaningful work. They also need to understand the importance of mentor relationships throughout their lives. Brava - and thanks to all!

### Comments from Somers WISE Students:

Emma Starkman, who changed internships mid-semester, wrote: "In the beginning, I took WISE to figure out what I wanted to do with life. Although I was unsuccessful at finding a direct goal, I instead have opened doors to a wider range of experiences."

Nina Harkavy, who interned with a genetic counselor, wrote, "Seeing people's reactions during a critical and often upsetting time; seeing their vulnerability; seeing people comfort one another: all this created what I hope is a permanent change in me. For the first time, I had compassion for absolute strangers."

"I learned patience, trust, and cooperation. This has been one of the best and most enriching experiences of my life," said Victoria Governali, who taught dance to special-needs children.

**Parent and Task Force Member Doreen Gadigian** writes, "As a parent of a senior involved in WISE, I am looking forward to seeing my child focus on an activity he is interested in and watching him grow socially and emotionally as he gets more involved. Students are encouraged to be independent with guidance from various adults, resembling a college atmosphere. I am glad to be a part of this experience."



*Dan Zlotnick and Samantha Dutan review Journals*



## WISE FAMILY—Three Generations of a WISE Family – The Hillmans, Avezzanos and Gorsteins

By Karen Hillman Avezzano,  
Woodlands WISE, 1978

WISE is a topic that I never get tired of talking about! I feel so good about the impact it has had on my life, the lives of my sisters, and many other people that I know. I am happy to relate my experience as a senior at Woodlands High School for anyone willing to listen. I worked at the NY School for the Deaf in Valhalla. I loved being in the classrooms, communicating in sign language, and learning about the culture of the deaf. I was exposed to professions such as Speech and Language Pathology and Audiology. My WISE project became a stepping-stone toward a career in Speech and Language Pathology and Education, so clearly my project had a huge influence on my life.

My two sisters, and many other extended family members were also WISE graduates. My sister Naomi (WISE, 1976) worked in the drama program with Tony Howarth. She and several other students formed a troupe that performed children's fairy tales and fables. They traveled to various

schools, community centers, and senior centers, where they found the senior citizens enjoyed their performances as much as the kids! They had an incredible time exploring ways to make the stories come to life. She has wonderful memories of learning to work as a team, brainstorming and building and accepting one another's ideas. Naomi continued her passion in college, where she studied theater and performed, directed and produced shows.

Naomi is married to David Gorstein (WISE 1975) who did a multivariate regression analysis of harness racing at Yonkers Raceway for his WISE project. His project was extremely successful (so much so that he jokes that his mentor retired to Miami at the end of the project!). Using the knowledge and experience gained from his WISE project, he decided to become a derivatives trader on Wall Street.

David's brother, Jonathan Gorstein (WISE, 1978) did a WISE Project in astrophysics. He had an opportunity to intern at the Hudson River Planetarium and work together with the team responsible for management of the projection apparatus and adjustment of the

independence and freedom to work at my own pace. In many respects, the freedom and flexibility provided by WISE dictated how I have ended up pursuing my undergraduate and post-graduate studies and continues to be a hallmark of my professional work as I run a small non-governmental agency supporting global health programs in developing countries."

My sister Bonnie (WISE, 1981) worked as an intern in a commercial Production Company in Manhattan. She loved commuting to NYC and learning about the advertising industry. When she completed her presentation, she felt disappointed that her WISE project was over.

My mother, Arlene, has been a Task Force member and presentation evaluator since my days at Woodlands and has always loved being involved in the program. She encouraged all three of her daughters to become involved with WISE because she thought it would be valuable to us.

Considering the impact WISE has had on our family it seemed natural to try to bring the program to my children's school. My son's school, Rockland Country Day School, has always encouraged independent projects, making WISE a perfect fit. RCDS welcomed the framework and structure that WISE Services offers and the staff and school community was so excited that they started the program a year early! WISE projects are now a requirement for seniors at my son's school. He and all his friends have been eagerly anticipating their WISE experience, discussing ideas and opportunities that they plan to turn into reality. We are looking forward to watching them plan and implement their projects and present their experiences next spring. It's possible that some day one of them will write an article about WISE and the profound effect it had on their family!



*Arlene Hillman and her three daughters, Karen, Naomi, and Bonnie*

"star balls" to create different images of the night sky. He writes: "While the content of the internship was extremely valuable, I believe that the most meaningful aspect of the experience was to be able to have some

## SAVE THE DATE



### CELEBRATING 35 YEARS OF WISE

Honoring  
**VIC LEVIATIN ON HIS 70<sup>th</sup> BIRTHDAY**  
**THE FAMILY OF WISE SCHOOLS**  
**THE GLICKENHAUS FOUNDATION**  
**UNIVERSAL WEATHER & AVIATION, RALPH VASAMI, PRESIDENT & CEO**

Thursday, January 29, 2009 7:00 pm

## A WISE CELEBRATION: Advertisement/Sponsorship Reservation Form

#### Sponsorship Packages

- ☐ **\$5,000 Leadership Table**
- Table of 10 for Dinner
  - Full Page Ad
  - Recognition in all printed materials
- ☐ **\$2,500 Benefactor Table**
- Table of 10 for Dinner
  - Half Page Ad
  - Recognition in all printed materials
- ☐ **\$1,500 Patron**
- Four tickets for Dinner
  - Recognition in all printed materials
- ☐ **\$1,000 Friend**
- Two Tickets for Dinner
  - Recognition in all printed materials

#### **\$250 Individual Ticket(s)**

Name/Title \_\_\_\_\_  
 Company/Organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_  
 Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Wise Individualized Senior Experience, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization. Your contribution is tax deductible less \$80 for the cost of the dinner for those attending.

#### Journal Ads

Full Page	\$ 1000
Half Page	500
Quarter Page	250
Eighth Page	125

**Deadline for Ad Copy:**  
**Friday December 12, 2008**

Sponsorship Package \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Ad Only \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Ticket(s) Only \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Payment Enclosed** \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I am unable to attend, but am pleased to enclose a check in the amount of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check payable to:  
**WISE SERVICES CELEBRATION**  
 Forward this form, camera-ready art-work and payment to: **Linda Greene**

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**Upper Nyack, N.Y. 10960**  
**Phone: 845 353-2854**  
**Fax: 845 353-2838**

**Email: wiselindag@optonline.net**

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## DID YOU KNOW?

Rondout Valley's WISE Program celebrated ten incredible years with a huge reunion in June, 2008. Over 200 people attended the gathering, held at the Eppworth Farm. Coordinators Fran Hertz and Mary Schreiber were thrilled with the turnout and it was a great day.

Vic Leviatin and Linda Greene recently traveled to Boston, Massachusetts. Stops at two Connecticut schools included East Lyme HS, where we visited with Patricia Newton, WISE Coordinator, and RHAM HS, where we met with WISE Coordinator, Anne Marie Hartigan. In Boston we had the pleasure of attending a Friends of WISE gathering at Concord-Carlisle HS, hosted by Coordinator Mark Angney. Attendees included parents, current students, Superintendent of Schools Diana Rigby, and Woodlands alumni Lisa Clauson, '86, Marion Milbauer, '82, Ahmed

Idris, '86, and Isabel Quinn Murphy, '77. Our final Boston stop was at Newton South HS, where we met educators and visited with Coordinators Marla Weiner and Tonya Londino and WISE graduate, Beke Olowe, Woodlands '91. One of the highlights of our trip was a stop at the John F. Kennedy Library, where Nina Tisch, Woodlands '77, a member of the Education Staff, organized a seminar and debate for 200 high school students.

This year the WISE Services staff will work with the Emerson Small Learning Community at The High School of Teaching and Liberal Arts & Sciences (Queens, NY),



Isabel Quinn Murphy, Woodlands 1977, Vic Leviatin, and Linda Greene at the Kennedy Library

The Brooklyn HS for Global Studies (Brooklyn, NY), Lindenwold HS (NJ), New Haven Academy (CT), Northern Burlington HS (NJ), and Rockland Country Day School (Congers, NY).