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NYACK WISE 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

With the help and guidance of WISE Services, the first Nyack High School WISE presentations took place in May of 1996. Ten years later seemed an appropriate time to celebrate that achievement and the many projects that followed, and so, on May 20, 2006 Nyack WISE celebrated its anniversary with a brunch attended by graduates, parents, mentors, and community sponsors.

The theme of the day was "connections." Graduates reconnected and reminisced, community sponsors

and Task Force members explained their participation in the program, and parents glowed with pride as their children described their WISE projects and the paths they have followed since high school graduation. Former Superintendent Roberta Zampolin, who was a member of the original Task Force, and new Superintendent Valencía Douglas, who has championed the program, were both present to enjoy the festivities as were WISE Service staffers Bob and Rena Frelow and Vic Leviatin, who had helped launch the program.

The highlight of the event was the story told by graduates about their projects and their current lives. Anna Scretching, who gave the model presentation in 1998, and who appears in a WISE video describing her work in a third and fourth grade multiage class, is now a teacher in her own 4th grade classroom. Lisa Rochford and Mark Marino have also pursued careers in education, as have more than 40 other graduates.

Derrick Cooley, WISE 1996, told about his experiences at the Tolstoy Nursing Home under the guidance of original Task Force member Serge Jelenevsky. Today Derrick, who attended with Doug and Sue Plath, whose sons did WISE projects at Woodlands, is a Substance Abuse Social Worker in the Bronx. Fabienne Fromentin, who did a criminal law project and is now working in the legal field, chatted with Melanie Russell, who did her project at the Women's Shelter and is now a Social Worker. Both women worked at the Rockland Rape Crisis Center after leaving high school. A number of graduates who are still in school spoke of their plans and how their WISE internships started them on the path they pursue today.

Featured speaker, Richie Thomassen, told the audience how he had started out to do a music recording project, but found a mentor in the per-

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Genik Vasquez Sanchez and Mentor Anna Silverman

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Last spring, Nyack High School celebrated ten years of WISE at a wonderfully well-attended gathering of graduates, mentors, parents, sponsors, sites and school staff. Linda Greene did a great job organizing her home school fete and looks forward to helping other 10-year celebrants plan their anniversaries.

These events provide excellent opportunities to reinvigorate the program and build a permanent base of support among graduates, parents, staff and the community. They also inform local districts about the extended WISE family and offer great contacts for projects, collaboration and exchange.

As WISE Services celebrates its 15th year, we are justly proud of 35,000 WISE graduates and WISE programs in more than 80 high schools nationwide. Our staff is expanding, with more retired WISE practitioners joining us each year. We have held 15 Annual WISE Services Conferences, a dozen major workshops for the Coalition of Essential Schools, and WISE presentations for many national and state organization (the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Association

of Secondary School Principals, High Schools That Work, the Foundation for Excellent Schools, the New York State Guidance Counselors Association and the New York State Education Department.)

We have held 25-year and 30-year WISE anniversaries, with a total of over 400 attendees. We have organized project enrichment trips for WISE students to the Montefiore Medical Center, the Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, the Mailman School of Public Health at Columbia University, and the New York Times. We have reintroduced our Annual Coordinators' Exchange for WISE schools and partnered with ConnectEdu to offer a free college application program to WISE schools. We are also now working closely with the New York City Board of Education to expand the number of WISE schools in the five boroughs, the latest of which is Paul Robeson High School in Brooklyn.

But the most important celebrations of all occur every spring as thousands of WISE presentations vindicate our core belief that high school seniors of all ability levels have gifts and talents that WISE programs can tap.

Springville Griffith's Walter Branislavsky and his mentor, Phil Veratti, visited the David Smith sculpture exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum in NYC as a highlight of Walter's welding project. They were hosted by Vic Leviatin.

15th Annual WISE Conference

WISE Services was proud to sponsor its 15th annual conference, “Empowering Students,” hosted by the Nyack HS WISE program on March 17, 2006. Over 100 WISE students, mentors, coordinators, and community Task Force members participated.

Greetings from Nyack Assistant Superintendents Walter Woodhouse (whose son Jonathan participated in the program in 1996), and Winsome Gregory (whose son Dwaine participated in the Woodlands program in 2002) started the program. They were followed by new Nyack Superintendent, Valencia Douglas, who spoke of her enthusiasm for the program. Linda Greene, Executive Director, introduced three Nyack graduates who described their WISE experiences. Cory Hunt, '04 spoke about his project in the geosciences at Lamont Geological Observatory and his double-major at Binghamton in Computer Science and Anthropology. Abe Barth-Werb, also '04, described his passion for stage lighting and how he loved the WISE Program because he had the freedom to learn in the real world with the support of his mentor, Tom Burns. Genik Vasquez Sanchez, '01, recounted how she dropped out of school and then returned to complete her studies and do a WISE project in Art Therapy. She thanked her mentor, Anna Silverman. Tashania Leard welcomed the audience on behalf of this year's students and Vic Levatin, President of WISE Services,

greeted the attendees.

Participants attended sessions on Introduction to WISE, the Connect! Internet program, and a lively workshop session for Coordinators on “Working with Mentors” led by John McLain and Constantine Andreadis from Woodlands HS and Suzanne Schneider from Hendrick Hudson HS. The next set of workshops included a session for Counselors and Administrators on Guidance and the WISE Program and a workshop on expanding the Task Force to include more community participants. During both sessions students had an opportunity to speak with each other and to hear from Student Coordinators from Woodlands and Rondout Valley in separate students-only sessions built around the theme of

“Empowering Students.”

Participants enjoyed the conference, as indicated by these comments on the conference evaluation forms: “The conference was incredibly interesting and eye opening.” “I learned about different schools doing the WISE Program and how they implement the program.” “I valued the contact with experienced WISE teachers.” “Great workshop – learned a lot through sharing.” A student noted “I took a risk and learned something new. I learned about student empowerment and believing in yourself. I also learned to take advantage of the opportunities in front of me and to learn as much as possible.”



WISE Coordinators and Students at the Conference Wrap-Up

Graduate Voices



Elisa Brotherhood - Nyack HS, 2003 - Interior Design

If there was one thing that the WISE program gave to me after a senior year of life changes, that would be perspective. It helped me to explore my interests and abilities in a way I never imagined possible at such a young age. It allowed me to take control of my future, and helped me to make some of the very important and difficult decisions that I faced.

My internship was with Interior Designer Jennifer Eno. I helped her and her team as they designed the Children's Hospital at Columbia Presbyterian.

Currently, I am enrolled in the Interior Design Program at the Fashion Institute of Technology. As I get closer to my degree, I find myself referring back to my internship more and more. It allows me to put my classroom education and experience into perspective, and think of what really matters in the "real world."

Without WISE I may have never even tried Interior Design. It gave me a safety net of sorts to try something that interested me, but that I didn't know a lot about. It forced me to push myself creatively and academically, and gave me the inde-

pendence that many high school classrooms lack.

My WISE experience was definitely the most positive from all my years in school, and left me with some of my fondest memories.



James Stewart - Nyack HS, 2002 - Emergency Medicine

As I embarked on the final few months of my senior year at Nyack High School, I was privileged to participate in the WISE Program. I worked with the Nyack Community Ambulance Corps for my project, since I was then an active riding member. I was fortunate to have Mr. Don Hains as my mentor. He was a very influential role model to me throughout the program.

I am a current graduate of Quinnipiac University with a B.S. in Entrepreneurship & Small Business Management. Last year, I won the Quinnipiac University Business Plan Competition for my business idea, Homecare Dialysis Systems Inc, a company that will provide dialysis care for patients in End Stage Renal Disease within their home. Without my experience in the Emergency Medical Services and the WISE Program, I would not have been as passionate in my desire to form this medical company that will aid patients with this horrible disease. I hope to implement this plan and create a viable business in the near future.



Kyria Rousseau (sitting, second from right) — Nyack HS, 2004 Psychology

My mentor was Christina Alexopoulos, who helped me a great deal while I was at Nyack High School, and who still helps me. I was fortunate to find such a wonderful mentor.

For my WISE Project I wanted to have an experience in the area of psychology. I worked with Mrs. Holt in the BOCES program at St. Ann's School for disabled children. Since many of the students were severely autistic or had other behavioral disabilities, I was able to learn a great deal about behavioral abnormalities.

Right now I am a Psychology major with a concentration in Developmental Psychology so my WISE experience definitely inspired me! My WISE experience influenced my life in a lot of ways because I became more aware of the world that I am living in. I learned to be more patient and to appreciate everything that God has given me.

I definitely want to become a child psychologist to help kids like the ones I worked with who are in desperate need of help. WISE was a terrific experience and a wonderful way to end High School!

WISE JOURNALISTS VISIT THE NEW YORK TIMES



Allia Brenner, Bronxville HS, David Corcoran, Times Science Editor, Sarah Drumm and Alicia Staccio, Saugerties HS, Dan Weininger, Solomon Schechter High School, and Molly Levinson and Katie Willingham, Nyack HS in the Page 1 Room at The New York Times.

On May 23rd, 2006 a group of WISE Students representing Saugerties High School, Bronxville High School, Solomon Schechter School, and Nyack High School visited the headquarters of The New York Times in New York City. Hosted by David Corcoran, a Science Editor at the paper (and Nyack High School graduate), the students were able to visit the newsrooms, chat with writers and editors, observe how the photo editor assigns and selects photographs for the news articles, learn how the legal department works with the news department, and sit in on the noon Page 1 meeting. Comments from students indicated they found the day to be both fascinating and illuminating.

The single most interesting event of the day was the Page 1 meeting. Here, the top editors from the paper gathered around to discuss potential stories for the next day's first page (May 24, 2006). Editors "pitched" stories they and their writers judged to be important, questions and comments from the assembled journalists were fielded, and the students had a chance to learn how the first page is assembled. Several students indicated that they found the meeting "intriguing," and that they looked forward to viewing the first page the next day to see how closely it followed the "pitches" from the day before (as it turned out, it followed exactly!).

Visits to the sports department where students met Jay Schreiber, Day Sports Editor, the legal department, where George Freeman, a lawyer for the paper described some of the work he does, the photo department (where Meaghan Loomam, Assistant Photo Editor explained how the photographs that illustrate the many stories are ob-

tained and chosen), and the editorial offices yielded important information about, as one student put it, "the tone of the workplace that is the New York Times." From the slightly chaotic sports department, where desks were piled high with clippings, reference books, newspapers, and notebooks, to the legal offices filled with legal tomes and video clips destined for the website after vetting by the lawyers, and from the open cubicles of the newsroom to the austere and formal editorial floor (done in medieval style), it was clear that the atmosphere of The New York Times is complex.

We were fortunate to be able to converse with two science writers for the paper. Andy Revkin writes about environmental issues and was able to describe several trips to the far reaches of the world including the polar ice caps. Monthly visits to New Orleans have been mandatory for John Schwartz, who has been the Science staffer responsible for covering Katrina's aftermath and the state of the levees as preparation for the new hurricane season unfolds.

Several WISE students commented on how friendly and helpful the staff people were. Among other Times staffers we met, perhaps the most important conversation took place with Nancy Sharkey, Senior Editor in charge of new hires and recruitment. She described various college internship opportunities and the type of training that would be most useful for future journalists. Among her recommendations were computer training in flash animation and html since many new jobs in journalism are on the website, and language acquisition (particularly Chinese, Arabic, Spanish, and Farsi). Most important, is a liberal arts education that provides knowledge across many disciplines. As they go along, she told the aspiring journalists, they should get whatever work they can at local papers, develop a clip portfolio, and "move up the food chain" from smaller papers to larger ones.

As the WISE journalists left the paper, official New York Times reporters' notebooks tucked under their arms, they wondered if any of them would return some day to work there. Allia Benner, a senior at Bronxville High School said, "the trip to The New York Times redefined my aspirations for life in college and beyond. I had doubted whether or not I wanted a future in the journalism world, but spending a day relishing that lifestyle reminded me what I loved about it: its unpredictability, flexibility, and lack of boundaries." Sarah Drumm (who attended with her WISE colleague and photographer, Alisha Staccio, from Saugerties High School) voiced the

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(Continued from page 1) **Nyack 10th** son of Jacques Roc, who took Richie to Haiti to help with a documentary film. Five trips to Haiti later, Richie is now headed into a career in film and video. He showed us a work-in-progress: a video based on a popular Haitian song.

Task Force member Henry Kelston was at the brunch along with his two children. Son Jake did a project as a DJ and daughter Annie worked in the field of mid-wifery. Proud parent Jane Kelman and even prouder grandmother, Rennie Kelman, described how Erica Brand had struggled to complete her music and film performance project after contracting Lyme Disease. Other attendees include the Rev. Tom Danney, who worked with Urban Eisen-Miller on a church ministry project this year after previously sponsoring the anti-starvation project of Tori Waterbury, Class of 2003. Judge Victor Alfieri has provided internships for a number of WISE students over the past ten years in his role as Clarkstown Town Justice. New County Clerk David Carlucci offered future students a placement in his office and was glad to learn about the WISE program.

Carol Brotherhood, Task Force Community Coordinator, attended the brunch with her daughter, Elisa. Elisa described her project at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City with designer Jennifer Eno, summer placements at Jennifer's firm and her studies in interior design at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Abe Barth-Werb and Cory Hunt, classmates from 2003, described

projects in Stage Lighting and geosciences, respectively. Genik Vasquez Sanchez brought along her husband and new baby, Madison, who we expect to be in the Nyack WISE class of 2018! Looking for all the world like the proud grandmother, but actually Genik's WISE mentor, was Nyack teacher Anna Silverman.

Cole Dowie, who interned in the kitchen of the Hudson House Restaurant (where the event took place), described his culinary experiences there and at the Culinary Institute, where he is about to graduate with plans to pursue his culinary dreams. Widler Sanon had a chance to view a WISE video in which he appears, filmed by community member and WISE supporter, Mort Korn.

New Task Force Members Madalasa Mobili and Gini Stolldorf assisted with the brunch. Gini and John's son, Nate, gave thanks to his sponsor, Barbara Sandek of Theater Works, where Nate recently interned. Barbara was delighted to discover that a long-time friend, Stella Blasenheim, was also attending in her role as sponsor to several WISE students who have interned at the Elmwood Playhouse.

Graduates who were unable to attend the brunch were able to participate by sending in reflections on their

(Continued from page 5) **NY Times** hope that they can become part of the team." Said Dan Weininger of the Solomon Schechter School, "As someone who wants to pursue print journalism, and hopefully work at The New York Times one day, this trip was such a great experience. I was able to get a look into my dream, and to see how the Times works. I couldn't believe that I was actually there. It was unbelievable." We'll look forward to the credits and bylines for all the students in the future.

WISE experiences. Forty seven sent descriptions of their projects and their current lives. (Some of these are featured in our Graduate Voices section.)

So, whether it was old connections being renewed, or new ones just starting, we all felt a kinship and a pleasure in our joint celebration. After such a delightful afternoon, members of the Nyack Task Force look forward to another event in five years, when we'll have graduates and more wonderful stories to share.



Brunch Guests for Nyack's 10th Anniversary Celebration Listen to Graduates Speak of their WISE Experiences

SCARSDALE SENIOR OPTIONS (WISE) GOES TO NEW ORLEANS AND MISSISSIPPI



Scarsdale Students Pose with David Greene in Mississippi

By David Greene, Senior Options (WISE) Coordinator at Scarsdale High School

The first thing we saw when approaching New Orleans from the air is a still broken roadway over a bay. That was once Route 90, an entrance to Bay of St. Louis, our destination. One sees blue tarp covered roofs. Those are expected sights. What one doesn't expect to see is a once bustling, now empty airport terminal and three planes parked where dozens used to be.

Leaving the airport, our group of nine Scarsdale Senior Options students who had chosen to do their projects in New Orleans and Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, viewed various levels of destruction. A wide boulevard took us past streets of boarded and abandoned houses, signs on light poles for newly created "gutting companies," and rusted remains of cars. There were few people. The end of the boulevard brought us to a huge destroyed restaurant, park and marina, usually packed with people and cars. Empty. Silent. Across the street was an earthen levee. Behind it, protected by its wall and canal gates, stood what looked to be an untouched Scarsdale neighborhood, merely 200 yards from all that damage. Why?

Driving on, we approached the most devastated area in New Orleans, the lower Ninth Ward. Words cannot express the emptiness. Houses boarded. Cars strewn. Personal effects scattered. Sounds of silence everywhere. We wandered through the remnants of thousands of lives.

We arrived at our final destination, Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, where our home for three nights was Lagniappe Presbyterian Church, across the street from the Bay St. Louis Waveland Middle School. Our first assign-

ment was to work during the mornings with the kids in the Summer Program. Our student volunteers longed to get to what they thought was the most important work...gutting and helping to build houses. After they heard the Lagniappe coordinator of site volunteers speak of how they, the gutters and builders, longed for work with children I believe our students finally realized how important, if less glory filled, the work was with those kids.

Our first afternoon in Bay St. Louis, Angela Benvenuti, head of the summer program, drove us around what was once town. We saw several square miles of still devastated property including her home. Angela took us to what had been a vibrant and charming downtown. Here used to be a street filled with artisan shops and local restaurants that led to a waterfront with a beach, marina, and clubs. Now there was nothing but what looked like a war zone. Blown out remnants of buildings and asphalt were everywhere. Again, the biggest thing was the silence.

Finally, on the second afternoon there we went to work on 207 Broad Street. Our task was to gut the last room in the house and clean up the interior and make it ready for the next wave of volunteers. Finally, the kids had work they could sink their teeth into. They ripped out walls, swept debris, and finished the task four hours later. Smiles and tired bodies told us of the value that work had for them.

Our two days in Bay St. Louis were filled with incredible experiences with children, teachers, parents, neighbors, and other volunteers. All were so glad we were there. Four year olds clung to us like lifesavers; teachers and mothers relieved their pain by telling us everything they went through. Neighbors told us of troubles with their real enemies: political deals involving real estate and insurance companies trying to avoid payouts for the storm.

Only 30% of the people of Bay St. Louis are back. Those who are show remarkable resiliency and hope. They shared both their anger and humor with us. We have to share our gifts with them. This trip cannot be a one and only. Our nine WISE student volunteers resolved to "pay it forward." They want to recruit seniors over the next few years to do all or part of their Senior Options (WISE) projects there. So do I. That's what I promised Angela. Help me keep that promise. What if other WISE schools also adopted that community and students from WISE programs all over the country spent time working there as part of their projects next year and perhaps in future years? If you or your 2007 WISE students are interested, please let me know. It's a great experience for WISE students and a wonderful way to help people who really need our assistance.

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DID YOU KNOW?

WISE Services has undertaken a new initiative in collaboration with the New York City Department of Education. Jean Claude Brizard, Executive Director for Secondary Schools and staffer Cynthia Foulkes are now working with us to both identify schools ready to benefit from the WISE Program and to help initiate the program in these schools. Under this initiative, we have begun work with Paul Robeson High School in Brooklyn and are about to meet with several other school teams within the five boroughs.

The WISE Program and Milken High School in Los Angeles were featured in the May 15, 2006 *Time* magazine article regarding "senioritis." The work of Nancy Schneider, WISE Coordinator at Milken, continues to make headlines as she looks forward to working with Patty Heideman, formerly at Woodlands and now at Woodrow Wilson HS in East L.A. in the upcoming school year.

Springville Griffith's Walter Branislavsky and his mentor, Phil Veratti, visited the David Smith sculpture exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum in NYC as a highlight of Walter's welding project. They were hosted by Vic Leviatin.

New Schools for the 2006-07 school year include CIMS, Global Enterprise Academy (Bronx, NY), Paul Robeson High School (Brooklyn, NY), Sleepy Hollow High School (Tarrytown, NY), SAR High School, Riverdale, NY and Woodrow Wilson HS (Los Angeles, California). We will also work with two schools, Glen Cove HS (Glen Cove, NY) and Pelham Prep (Bronx, NY) on post-pilot WISE programs.



Springville Griffith Staffers Try out Long Bow Made by Student Nick Dillsworthas. Nick and Mentor Tim Baumgartner look on