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THE WISE PRESENTATION: MAGIC MOMENTS BY DEBORAH HARRIS

When WISE Services staff members introduce our program to students, they sometimes frown as we describe the culminating event of their project: the presentation. Sadly, public speaking is rarely taught in schools these days. As a result, students frown, not because they are against the concept, but because they haven't received the training that would make them comfortable and allow them to excel as speakers.

The realization that it is the passion for their project that they'll be able to communicate begins to make the prospect of presenting not only palatable, but also exciting. Once students are trained, and view a model, they're off and running. They become confident that they can do it, that they will excel, and that the sky is the limit for this culminating activity. As they dive into the preparation process, mentors take a lower profile, assisting

when necessary, but clearly, this is the student's time to shine.

Each year, the presentations seem to get more ambitious, and more elaborate, particularly from the "senior" schools. As the level of enthusiasm rises, so does the nature of the presentations. They take place in many and varied venues: classrooms, auditoriums, kitchens, and local businesses. Unusual locations have included a skating rink, a Russian church, and a "staged" crime scene at someone's home.

At Miramonte HS, the coordinators were enthusiastic about the quality of their presentations last year. They scheduled a model presentation during an evening to maximize community participation. One of their most exciting projects was that of a student who collaborated with physicians in the area of neuropsychology.

The coordinators at Cypress Bay HS design a "virtual scrapbook" of their



Danielle Alamon, Woodlands 2006 model presenter, informs a packed WISE room about nursing as evaluators (front row) listen and take notes

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I just came from a WISE presentation at New Rochelle High School. The topic was “Making a Skateboarding Film” and Dylan and Max were enthusiastic and articulate as they discussed their passion of skateboarding “as a way of life” (read subculture), referred to their research and glossary, and showed fine still photos and a work-in-progress film. They described techniques and lessons learned in video, skateboarding tricks, negotiations with adults, geography (scouting sites) and overcoming obstacles. They said they had not only learned a lot, but had matured tremendously. The appreciative audience of about 100 students, teachers and community members included the Superintendent of Schools. The assistant principal, a community member and two peers on the evaluation committee, having read Dylan’s and Max’s journals before the presentation, gave a detailed assessment of their experience.

Throughout the month of May, more than 80 New Rochelle seniors are scheduled for presentations on their projects, which include criminal justice, culinary arts, fashion marketing, elementary education, original music performance, art exhibits, children’s literature, the comparative study of religion, and internships in dentistry, medicine, nursing, business and law

In this issue, we celebrate the presenta-

tion as the culmination of the WISE project. Students distill a semester of experiential learning before family, friends and the public, often using their time as a bully pulpit or a reflective review of their journey.

When WISE Services staff give presentation workshops, we emphasize preparation to overcome nervousness, but we also elicit rationales for presenting. In every school, students overwhelmingly rank sharing experiences, informing and educating the audiences, reviewing and reflecting, and demonstrating competence and growth as far more important than learning presentation skills, receiving constructive criticism, linking academic and experiential accomplishments and validating their projects.

So the presentation is inherently understood by seniors as a gift -- a present to the school and community. It is especially gratifying for teachers to see the value their charges place on informing and educating.

When the WISE Services Journal was first published in 1998, our goal was to inform and educate students, teachers, parents and community in dedicated subsequent issues about how the key components of the WISE Program -- the project, the journal, the mentor, the presentation and the Task Force -- provide a bridge from high school to college and work. Each issue also celebrates individual project accomplishments, the WISE Board, sponsors, donors, program anniversaries. With this issue, we have now discussed all the “pillars of WISE” in our newsletters and we hope our readers are more knowledgeable about the program.

But May/June is the season to celebrate presentations. Students of all abilities stand and deliver, often surprising and delighting their parents, friends and evaluators with their insights and growth in a brief semester. One parent summed it up: “Watching my sons’ presentations assured me that they were ready to leave home and be adults.”

WISE Presentations



Jennifer Reyes, Woodlands '06, Swims the Hudson

Her parents thought she was joking when Jennifer Reyes first decided to swim across the Hudson River for her WISE project. After all, she had never been in a river before. Jennifer completed her WISE project by swimming roughly three miles in 70 minutes, raising \$4000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

On hand to cheer her on as she made her swim were her parents, her brother, and her grandfather, who flew to New York from Colombia for the occasion. Also there were her WISE Coordinator, Dr. Constantine Andreadis, who had suggested the project to Jennifer when she was considering possible options, and her mentor, Officer Zenon. They both knew about her passion for swimming and shared her disappointment when her school swim team was disbanded at the start of her senior year.

Jennifer's presentation preceded her swim which, in true "it takes a village fashion" included support from the Greenburgh police and Irvington police as well as the Make-A-Wish Foundation. As always with the WISE family, everyone chipped in. The presentation was conducted at the Make-A-Wish Foundation building in

Irvington, close by the river. (This was because Jennifer had to reschedule her swim due to weather issues). A staff member from Make-A-Wish participated in the presentation as an evaluator. The presentation included information on river history, tides, and the story of how Jennifer came to choose this project.

Jennifer's swim and presentation brought a wonderful project to an end. Jen made the most of her WISE experience, serving first as a junior Coordinator for the Woodlands WISE program and then serving as a senior Co-Coordinator. Officer Zenon (of the Greenburgh Police Department, who works at Woodlands High School) said that Jennifer was his first mentee and she "totally spoiled" him with her ambition, her ability to accomplish new highs, and the way she went "all out" on her project. You can read Jennifer's WISE Journal entries at: <http://jrwise.blogdrive.com/archive/cm-4-cy-2007-m-4-d-17-y-2007-o-40.html>.



Julian Robertshaw, Hunter Tannersville 2006, with his lamb

Julian Robertshaw's Sheep Husbandry Presentation *by Andy Lutz*

Last spring, I went to Hunter-Tannersville to see the sheep husbandry presentation. There are not enough positive adjectives to describe the presentation by Julian Robertshaw. He raised money to purchase four Katahdin sheep ewes and had them bred to a Katahdin ram in November (obviously he needed to start his project early!) The four ewes gave birth to three rams and two ewes. He built birthing pens, feeding troughs, and did all that was necessary to raise the sheep. As part of his research, he interviewed eight farmers (including one from England and two from New Zealand).

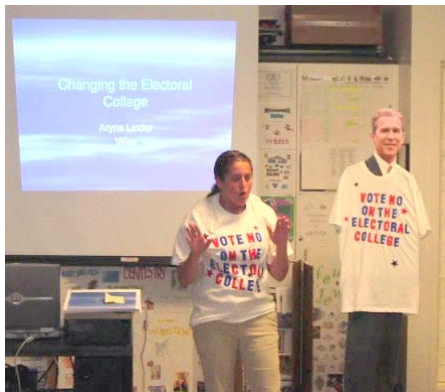
During the preliminary part of the presentation, we went to the sheep barn at the Bruderhof Community in Tannersville to tour the sheep pens and feeding troughs. Then we went inside the Bruderhof for the formal presentation. Refreshments were served and Julian had a display of all of his printed resources to be examined prior to his actual verbal presentation. Pictures and diagrams of the construction were included in Julian's journal. During the presentation he was focused, articulate and knowledgeable. He discussed niche marketing in New York City for mutton vs. large-sheep farming operations. He was grateful to the Hunter Tannersville WISE Task Force for the networking it had done in connecting him with local sheep herding farmers. It was a tour de force, easily one of the best presentations I have ever seen.

A WISE ARRAY OF PRESENTATIONS

Cypress Bay High School, Cypress Bay, Florida, Mark Love, WISE Coordinator

Michelle used the WISE Experience to continue her work on her fantasy novel. It was amazing the detail she has put into her “world of Kneomir” – seven lands, with unique governments and religious structures (Costume!)

Aryne was motivated by her American Government class to pursue changing the Electoral College System for her WISE project. She developed her own web page, an online poll, and even brought President George Bush to her presentation! (See photo!)



Christie’s WISE Experience was one of the most unique we’ve ever had – she investigated Homicide Detectives. Highlights of her experience included visiting and watching five autopsies and setting up her own crime scene at her home (with her “victims” very convincingly portrayed by her parents!)

Juliana completed her WISE studies on Flamenco Dancing, culminating with a live performance amidst the audience. Her infectious enthusiasm during the performance led to the Foreign Language department booking her presentation for their classes.

Alejandra decided to develop a new hobby for her WISE project – candle making; she took classes and learned the art of making candles. A unique part of her presentation was her story on how she dumped hot wax down the kitchen sink – which led to all kinds of plumbing problems.....(This was told with her mother in the audience, who did not know the story prior to hearing it at the presentation!)

Alicia worked in and researched the Movie/TV Industry for her WISE project....this included bit parts in a to-be-released major motion picture, and in “The O.C.” a FOX network hit. Her commitment to WISE was so serious that she dropped an AP Calculus class at CBHS and took it online to make room for WISE! Another highlight was the presentation of “Oscars” to her WISE Coordinators.

Sean’s passion for motorcycles went to a new level thanks to his WISE Experience. His presentation was in a motorcycle shop where he interned – learning the business side of the industry, and learning more about the mechanics of motorcycles, and how to repair them.

Saugerties High School, Saugerties, NY, Dawn Scannapicco, WISE Coordinator

One of our students wrote and directed her own play. She did an awesome job and the presentation was an incredible experience. The parents of the student who wrote the play were thrilled that she had the opportunity to show her work. They were impressed also that she now realizes the amount of hard work and planning necessary to make an event like this happen.

Milken High School Comments from Parents, Nancy Schneider WISE Coordinator



- A former parent who has stayed on the Task Force writes: "I enjoy seeing these kids/adults come alive during their presentation. They get so much out of the program and it takes so much effort on your behalf, I feel privileged to be able to support the program and the participants."
- "Frankly it is one of the more rewarding things I get to do" (serve as an evaluator)
- "This is one of Milken's 'gems' and I am thrilled my son had the opportunity to participate. He gained a great deal from the experience, he matured because of it, and we are very proud parents after his presentation."
- "She displayed a maturity that we had not seen before. The program is wonderful!"

A WISE ARRAY OF PRESENTATIONS (CONTINUED)

Peekskill High School, Peekskill, NY, Alison Risoli, WISE Coordinator

The presentations that stand out include one with a local pediatrician. Two students worked in his office. One did a Strep test on me and the other did a presentation on the heart.



She tested mine (and I'm glad to say it's fine). The boy wrote a rap song about Dr. Schaff, who has taken care of almost every kid in town.

Another presentation involved a girl at NYS Assemblywoman Sandi Galef's office. She was put in charge of contacting all the state Lieutenant Governors to find out about their voting systems. The information she gathered (which she didn't know at the time) is being used to help set up a national voting system. Sandi has proposed legislation in Albany regarding this issue. Melissa also got to speak to Bill Clinton on the phone when he called Sandi's office. That was her biggest thrill.

Rondout Valley HS, Fran Hertz, WISE Coordinator

Two students did projects on their experiences as teen parents. Both students kept up with their journals and managed to meet all the WISE requirements while raising newborns (without the help of the fathers).

One student did fashion design and photography and made a beautiful prom dress like none other.

A super shy student who lives way out in the country built a dark-room at her house and did a photo essay of her friend's single parent family. She "aced" her presentation, although she was truly terrified.

Another student did a project on her life in the foster care system and how it felt to be "different" as a child without a "real" family. In high school she was adopted after being in 20 foster homes. You can imagine the emotional power of this presentation!

Another student built a dune buggy from scrap parts and had people drive it at his presentation.

One of our model presenters created an established stage crew for all school performances and put on an incredible multi-media presentation for all seniors and juniors. The presentation included live performances, movies, and a power point. The entire school became instantly more technological!

The class clown for the class of 2005 got serious with WISE and re-wrote *Hamlet* for the screen. He cast the movie with teachers and students and shot all the scenes on location throughout the community. He had a final showing of the completed film on a Friday night and the auditorium of 300 was full. The actors came in on a red carpet (his little sister's "slip

and slide" game). The entire audience was amazed by what he had done and the casting was brilliant!



Ramapo High School, Spring Valley, NY, Arlene Leben, WISE Coordinator

One ESL student wanted an internship in nursing. During her presentation, she made a statement that really stands out in my mind. She stated that one day she was working with a nurse who was treating an elderly gentleman. This nurse was not particularly kind or friendly to someone who was scared and ill. The student stated, "I learned what kind of nurse I *don't* want to be." She also said at the end of her presentation, "I'm really proud of myself for doing this!"

Two students did a project on the production and promotion of a CD. What absolutely blew the audience away was the *sensitivity* (as well as the talent) of these students. The depth of the subject matter of the lyrics took everyone by surprise. Many of the staff who attended the presentation asked for an autographed copy of the CD so they could say, "I knew them when..." It was definitely the consensus of opinion that they would be famous one day.

PRESENTATION REFLECTIONS FROM GRADUATES

WISE Graduates Look Back at their Presentations

The final presentation for CHOOSE strengthened my educational growth. Although it was intimidating to research, and present an in-depth presentation in the presence of community members who were professionals in this field, it prepared me for college. It also forced me to be responsible, and develop self-confidence, and verbal skills.

Christine Faranda, Croton Harmon High School Graduate

The friends we made at Project Hope came to our WISE presentation. There was nothing better than standing on that stage, sharing our experiences and looking at the front row and seeing the new friends we made be so supportive. It was amazing!

Jennifer Marcus, New Rochelle High School Graduate

I was a 17-year-old student. I realized that the kids slouched down in their chairs who never spoke in class actually had something to say (and said it well) – when they had the



chance to pursue a passion and apply their unique talents.

Mary Ann Masarach, Woodlands High School Graduate

I tried to incorporate as many aspects of teaching into my presentation/project to give the overall experience that I gained. I looked at classroom management, curriculum development and day to day operations in and out of the classroom.

Mike Hanley, Nyack High School Graduate

The research, focus, and communication skills I developed that final year of high school were critical to my success in college and as a professional.

Kia Darling-Hammond, New Rochelle High School

The presentation was perhaps the most useful WISE element. In college I had to make several presentations, and my job now requires speaking and presentations. WISE provided the first opportunity I had to do a big presentation, with a time limit, graphics, and a thought-out beginning, middle, and conclusion.

Mark Spencer, Woodlands High School Graduate



I don't mind speaking in front of large groups of people, perhaps due in part to my WISE presentation.

Simon McCaffery, Nyack High School Graduate

(Continued from page 1) Presentations

presentations, and each year the projects get more (as their Coordinators boast) “fabulous!” Last year’s projects included Salsa Dancing, the History of Tattoos, and Veterinary Medicine.

Some of our newer schools are also using presentations as a very special occasion. Mount Vernon HS, hosted a kick-off evening of celebration, with members of the School Board, Administrators and other community V.I.P.s present. There was much fanfare, and the presenters knew that they were involved in a “magical evening.” They put their nerves aside and rose to the occasion, with Law Enforcement and Architecture among the topics.

At Nelson Mandela HS, a student who had done a law internship was not the only proud individual at that morning’s event. His sponsor, a partner in a local law firm, attended, and spoke very highly of his experience. The student and his family members beamed. One could feel the magic in the air!

WISE presentations create an understanding of just how special the WISE program is...one that can perform magic and transform students, mentors, the school, and the community! We’re all looking forward to the spring 2007 presentations.

WISE FAMILY—THE FRELOWS BY VIC LEVIATIN

Bob Frelow's son Fred graduated from Woodlands High School in 1972, having done a pilot senior project before WISE officially began at Woodlands in 1973. Thus, Fred pioneered WISE for Rena Frelow's daughter Ruth Hersh in 1978, for his own younger brother Michael in 1979, and for the thousands of Woodlands WISE graduates who followed. And then, years after his own pre-WISE project, Dr. Fred Frelow became Assistant Superintendent of Schools in Nyack, New York, when Nyack High School began its WISE program in 1995/96!

Like so many other WISE families, the Frelow Family has extended connections with WISE.

Bob Frelow retired as Superintendent of the Greenburgh Central 7 School District in 1990. As Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, he was a strong supporter of WISE at its inception. As Superintendent of Schools, his unwavering support continued. He "persuaded" the Board of Education to devote three two-hour sessions to becoming steeped in the WISE process, and he somehow found time to serve as both a mentor and a placement sponsor over the years.

When Rena Frelow retired from the Greenburgh schools in 1990, she was an elementary school principal and had "hosted" dozens of WISE students with projects in teaching. In recalling her own high school experience, she remembered senior drama as an unusual and joyous highlight, and she had the kind of intuitive and intellectual understanding of WISE that greatly enriched the WISE experience for student interns and participating teachers at her school. *

To this day, both Bob and Rena speak with great emotion about WISE. Bob credits glowing parent evaluations and the district's showcasing of seniors' projects for the longevity of WISE in Greenburgh: "It's part of the culture of the school and the community. Parents and staff expect seniors to do WISE and underclassmen look forward to it -- especially when they see presentations." About Michael's experience, he says: "As a father, I watched my son grow before my eyes. At his WISE presentation [marine photography], he was a mature, articulate man." Rena notes that elementary teachers "demand" WISE kids for their classes every year: "Many elementary teachers welcomed back kids they had taught, and helped their transition to the adult world and careers in teaching."



Top left (clockwise) Robert Frelow, Jr., Dr. Fred Frelow, Michael Frelow, Rena Frelow, Dr. Robert Frelow

Bob and Rena have been indefatigable staff volunteers in WISE. They drove 600 miles to help us start WISE in Denver, flew to San Francisco for B.E.S.T. at Berkeley High School and, most recently, have been meeting with other WISE staff members at 5:00 a.m. to participate in WISE workshops at Paul Robeson High School and Midwood High School in Brooklyn.

In this issue celebrating WISE presentations, what a present Bob and Rena continue to be!

** Many years earlier, Rena was also the magical kindergarten teacher of my son Daniel (WISE '82) and his future wife Connie (WISE '81). And, as we all happily discovered in 1998, at the 25th Reunion of WISE at Woodlands, the WISE internship of Rena's daughter Ruth (WISE '78) was at New York Hospital with music therapist Audrey Grossman (my future daughter-in-law Connie's mother). The WISE-family spirals continue.*

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DID YOU KNOW?

The Rondout Valley HS WISE program won an award last year. The award reads "Distinguished School Partner Award" presented to WISE Program, Rondout Valley Central School District for offering students exceptional career exploration opportunities. This was presented to the school at the Ulster County Chamber of Commerce Meeting in celebration of the Ulster County School-to-Work Partnership's 10 year anniversary. New York State Commissioner of Education Richard Mills was the guest speaker and our Student Co-coordinators (Troy Shaheen and Julia Doran) accepted the award on behalf of the school.

Participants recently enjoyed the WISE Services 16th Annual Conference at Solomon Schechter School in Hartsdale, NY. Almost 100 people spent the morning attending workshops and enjoying the interactive percussion activities of Leon Parker (Woodlands WISE '83).

During the 2007-08 school year, we will be working with Burlington HS (Burlington, NJ), Fairfax High School (Los Angeles, CA), Somers High School (Lincolndale, NY), and Wallkill Senior HS (Wallkill, NY).



Vic Leviatin congratulates Emilia Stern and mom Franny Hertz after Emilia's WISE presentation on relief work and photography at Biloxi, Mississippi. Franny, the WISE Coordinator at Rondout Valley (celebrating the 10th Anniversary of WISE), did her WISE project at Woodlands High School (1978)