



Albany High School: multiple pathways to success

Five members of Albany High School's Class of 2019 took a moment recently to reflect on their time in high school and discuss their plans for the future. While their plans are as diverse as the school itself, the students each credit Albany High with helping them on their way.

"Everybody wants to see you succeed," says LyAsia Monroe, before going on to discuss how she fell in love with Virginia State University, where she will attend this fall.

Monroe visited the campus on a school tour of historically black colleges and universities, held in partnership with the Albany Black Child Development Institute.

"Throughout my career at Albany High, I have been a part of multiple extracurricular activities that have allowed for me to grow, prosper and

develop in a way I never knew I could before," said Naishaly Velez, who will head to the University at Albany to study theater.

"The overall aura that you get when you find your family at Albany High School ... is just overwhelming support," Velez added.

While Monroe and Velez will head off to school, senior Eric Rodriguez described a different pathway to success, one that helped lead him directly to the workforce.

Rodriguez took full advantage of the programs offered at Albany High's Abrookin Career and Technical Center and plans to join the local International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers as a union apprentice electrician.

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'Ready Room' signals a new approach to behavior management

The makeover of a space at Edmund J. O'Neal Middle School of Excellence is an example of the City School District of Albany's ongoing transformation in addressing students' social-emotional needs.

O'Neal's "Ready Room" is an inviting and tranquil place where students who struggle with their behavior can come to take a breath and reset themselves.

The space formerly known as room 219 was O'Neal's in-school suspension room. Now it's a haven for students who have experienced life trauma that affects their ability to succeed in school.

More than half of all U.S. children have experienced some kind of trauma, and 35 percent have experienced more than one type of traumatic event, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In the Ready Room, rather than punish students whose response to trauma is to act up, "trauma-informed" teachers, counselors and others are trained to recognize and respond to trauma-stressed students and guide them through challenging situations.

It's a new approach to managing student behaviors that is growing throughout the district.

"Trauma-informed care is a completely opposite approach to the use of traditional in-school suspension rooms," said Victoria Martell, a behavior specialist at O'Neal and the person who transformed the former detention room.

Trauma-informed care helps students learn the tools to cope with extreme situations. It also gives them a sense of their own safety.

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Student achievement



Schuyler's Jimmy Murphy: A young man on a mission

Most 10-year-olds haven't spent half their allowance over half their life supporting a charity. Then again, most 10-year olds aren't Jimmy Murphy.

A fifth-grader at Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy, Murphy has taken part since kindergarten in the school's annual "Pennies for Patients" fundraiser to benefit the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society Upstate New York/Vermont Chapter. He estimates he has raised about \$7,600 over that time.

That's a whole a lot of pennies.

When he first learned about leukemia and lymphoma – blood cancers that can be fatal – he went home and talked about it with his mother.

"I was like, 'Mom, I have to do something for these kids,'" Murphy recalled.

So for the past six years, Murphy has set aside half his pocket money (including his earnings from doing chores at home and the \$5 per game he receives retrieving foul balls for Albany Senators' games in Bleecker Stadium) and donated it to the Leukemia &

Lymphoma Society.

Murphy has been the top fundraiser at Schuyler, raising \$2,300 on his own this year. He hopes to keep up the momentum in middle school next year by starting a new Pennies for Patients drive.

His generosity is no surprise to Susan Paultre, who has had Murphy as a student the past two years.

"Jimmy is an amazing young man," Paultre said. "He is a leader with his choices in school and out. He is the type of person who would help you out in any situation that he could."

A huge hockey fan, both as a player and spectator, Murphy wants to have the opportunity to play the game and eventually go pro.

"That's my dream – to be a hockey player and still fund-raise for leukemia," he said. If that's not in the cards, maybe he'll be a cancer researcher.

Whatever he decides, it will involve continuing to help kids with leukemia.



Marching Falcons in France

The Albany Marching Falcons – the City School District of Albany marching band and color guard – relaxed June 6 on Omaha Beach in Normandy, France, after taking part in the official parade marking the 75th anniversary of the World War II D-Day invasion of Europe. In addition to D-Day performances, the Marching Falcons played several concerts on their week-long tour of Paris and Caen.

From the superintendent Looking back, looking ahead



The end of the school year is a natural time for those of us in education to reflect on what we have achieved, and on our goals for the future. I would like to share some highlights from 2018-19 in the City School District of Albany as we finish one year and prepare to start another.

After months of work, the district in January adopted its Equity in Education Policy, a blueprint of what the

district needs to do to remove barriers preventing students from reaching their potential. The policy will bring us closer to our mission to provide equitable opportunities for all students.

Also during 2018-19, we continued to refine our discipline practices and focus on closing gaps in academic achievement.

The State Education Department in January identified nine district schools in Good Standing based on overall academic progress – the most the district has had since 2010-11. Albany High School's graduation continued to rise steadily as well, increasing in 2018 for the fifth consecutive year.

Our hard work is paying off, which is gratifying.

I also am thankful to Albany voters. You overwhelmingly approved the district's 2019-20 budget and a facilities proposition that, among other things, allows North Albany Academy to expand into a new permanent middle school.

Thank you, neighbors. You truly are "all in for Albany."

Looking ahead to 2019-20, we will continue our work to provide equitable opportunities for all students. We also will advance two new initiatives: an attendance improvement program and a campaign to encourage students to tell an adult if they see another student hurting themselves or someone else.

Through the attendance initiative, we will ramp up our efforts to work with students and families to address barriers that prevent students from coming to school every day, on time. Regular attendance correlates directly with academic success, and our efforts will encompass learners from prekindergarten to grade 12.

In our ongoing efforts to improve safety, we also will roll out "If you see something, say something." In a variety of ways, this campaign will encourage students to report harmful or potentially harmful behavior to an adult.

Stay tuned for more information about these exciting projects, which our staff will fine-tune during July and August.

Have a safe and relaxing summer, and see you in September!



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Voices | Q:

As a graduating senior, how has Albany High School helped prepare you for your next steps in life?



Albany High School helped me with time management – balancing school and work and extracurricular activities like Music Production Club. High school has taught me that everyone works at their own pace and it's okay to go in different directions than others. High school has also taught me that once you set your goal, keep your eye on the prize and work hard so you can achieve it and be successful.

– **Alanna Carmello**, who will attend Schenectady County Community College.



Everyone's path for the future may look different, and that's okay! Some people will go to college or trade school, others will join the workforce right away, and some people – like myself – will do both! Albany High allowed me to explore my creative talents in the world of cosmetology and supported me through the college application process to become the educator I always wanted to be.

– **Xji-Anne Hudson**, who will enter the workforce in cosmetology at Heaven on Earth Salon in Albany, and also will attend Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts.



The Albany High School JROTC taught me many things that are going to help me be successful in my future. I joined JROTC to learn to manage my time and manage critical situations. JROTC also helped me to learn how to act in different situations, how to complete work on time and how to be punctual. It also helped me to select future goals and stay on track.

– **Inul Huda**, who will attend the University at Albany.



Albany High School has helped me prepare for my next step in life because it helped me realize my dream to be in the Marines! The programs and teachers here encouraged me to pursue new heights and to always challenge myself. Albany High was a stepping stone of experience and joy and knowledge that I will never forget. After I graduate I know I'm going to be great, thanks to everyone at Albany High.

– **Anthony Ignacio**, who has enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps.



Albany High prepared me for the next steps in my life by showing me that being responsible for my actions will set me up for the future. I also learned that I must set a goal ahead of time for everything I do. Setting this example provides a gateway for others to follow and learn.

– **Hai Blu Soe**, who will attend Hudson Valley Community College.



Albany High has prepared me for college in a variety of ways. The biggest way, I believe, was by offering such a wide array of AP classes I could take. One of them specifically inspired me and helped me chose my major, international relations. That class is AP Government and Politics. All of the opportunities it provided interested me even more. The AP classes in general prepared me for college-level classes by forcing me to study and do all of my work.

– **Felix Streznewski**, who will attend SUNY New Paltz.

Our guiding principles

In the fall of 2017, the City School District of Albany developed the following vision statement, mission statement and goals under the leadership of Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams. These values guide the district's work in all areas as we work together to raise achievement for each of our nearly 9,300 students.

Our vision

The City School District of Albany will be a district of excellence with caring relationships and engaging learning experiences that provide equitable opportunities for all students to reach their potential.

Our mission

The mission of the City School District of Albany is to work in partnership with our diverse community to engage every learner in a robust educational program designed to provide the knowledge and skills necessary for success.

Our goals

- Increase student achievement in early literacy, close the achievement gaps and increase graduation rate by focusing on the unique factors that impact student success
- Enhance the delivery of quality instruction by providing our teachers and staff with high-level, meaningful professional development



to promote student growth and proficiency

- Build our leadership capacity and increase accountability through ongoing professional growth opportunities designed to improve effective leadership in our organization
- Empower families to support the success of their children through relationships of mutual respect and clear and effective communication
- Partner with our diverse community, including local businesses and community leaders, to engage and empower stakeholders in the wrap-around services needed to support our students



Breaking ground at Albany High

Board of Education members, students, families and local officials joined Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams and Principal Jodi Commerford on June 1 to break ground on Phase 2 of the Rebuilding Albany High School project – a 39,000-square-foot building that will include art and music classrooms. The event also included tours of Phase 1 – a 120,000-square-foot classroom building scheduled to open in January. Learn more at albanschools.org.

‘This is a special place’

Who knew the tight-fisted Money Man was really born to be wild.

After managing all aspects of the City School District of Albany’s finances – and just about all other non-academic areas at one time or another during his 11-year tenure – Deputy Superintendent for Business and Finance Bill Hogan is retiring this summer.

Hogan will hang up his abacus and hop on a motorcycle for a cross-country ride, his bridge between a 31-year career in finance and operations and ... well ... whatever comes next.

No matter where the road leads, Albany will always feel like his professional home.

“This is a special place,” Hogan said. “You work with a lot of great people.”

“You can’t just retire and leave behind something that has been such a big part of your life. This experience really becomes a part of you.”

Kimberly Rohring will take over as the district’s new deputy superintendent for business and finance on July 1.

Since coming to Albany from the Berlin Central School District in 2008, Hogan has served as a chief advisor to five superintendents in one of the most comprehensive and complex school districts in New York.

He has developed annual budgets that balanced the needs of the district’s 9,300 students with the fiscal realities facing the city’s taxpayers.

The district’s average tax-levy increase



for the last six years is 0.86%, a testament to Hogan’s conservative long-range planning and the state’s strong commitment to public education.

Other career highlights include increases in the district’s bond ratings by both Standard and Poor’s and Moody’s Investor Services, refinancing the district’s bond portfolio to save more than \$9 million, more than \$75 million in facilities improvements that had no impact on taxes, restructuring food service operations to save \$750,000 annually and a leading role in managing two major construction projects totaling nearly \$400 million.

“I’ve always viewed my role here as adding value to the organization,” Hogan said.

“Where I can reduce costs or make things more efficient, it frees up resources for our highest priority – our students.”

To read more, and for a full list of all retiring district employees, please visit albanschools.org.



Welcome to Scooterville!

Every June, the Montessori Magnet School gym is transformed into an imaginary land called Scooterville! Students Lavinia Malone, Imeria Kissie and Janessa Trotter (*back to front in this photo*), travel through the “city” and are required to complete an obstacle course and exercise challenges. The young drivers also make pit stops at the hospital, police department, gas station, lemonade stand and pizza shop. The physical education unit ends with participants earning their Scooterville license from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Busing info for next school year

Applications are due Aug. 9 for school bus transportation in the City School District of Albany during the 2019-20 school year.

You need to submit an application only if:

- Your child is new to the school district;
- You have moved;
- Your child attends a private, parochial, non-public or charter school; or
- If your child is picked up or dropped off at child care or another location that is not home.

Applications are due by Friday, Aug. 9 in order to assure that your child will have transportation on the first day of school, which is Sept. 6 for all elementary students, students in grades 6 and 7 attending middle school for the first time and Albany High School freshmen.

The first day of classes for all other students will be Monday, Sept. 9.

Any transportation changes or new requests received after Aug. 9 will be effective Sept. 17.

You can download an application in the Transportation section at albanschools.org or pick up a copy at any school.

Applications also are available at the

district’s Central Registration Office or Transportation Department, both located at the Harriet Gibbons Student Services Center at 75 Watervliet Ave.

The district transports all eligible students – those who live 1.5 miles or more from their schools – either by yellow bus or Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA).

For more information, or if you have questions about whether or not you need to complete an application, please visit our Transportation section online or call the Transportation Department at (518) 475-6170.



Get the app!

In partnership with our school bus provider, First Student Inc., the City School District of Albany offers FirstView, a bus-tracking and transportation communications app for your smartphone or desktop.

FirstView lets you track the location and direction of your child’s bus, schedule for the current day, and times for school arrivals and departures. You’ll know when the bus gets to school in the morning and leaves in the afternoon.

For more information and to download the app, please go to firstviewapp.com. It’s a free download from the Apple Store or Google Play Store. Just search FirstView!

Summer school reminders

In July and August, the City School District of Albany offers summer school programs for students in elementary, middle and high school. The district also offers specialized programs for students with disabilities and English as a New Language students.

Many of these programs are designed to help students meet the state’s academic standards and graduation requirements. Breakfast and lunch are provided at every location.

Transportation will be provided for

programs serving students entering kindergarten-grade 8. Transportation also will be provided for high school students who live more than 1.5 miles away from William S. Hackett Middle School, which will host the 2019 high school summer program.

Please note that summer school may be held in a different location than your child’s regular school.

Learn more at albanschools.org/SummerSchool.



Class of 2019: College bound

The list of public and private colleges and universities that accepted Albany High School students is enormous (more than 200!) and impressive. Check out these institutions, and congratulations to all of this year's graduates!

Adelphi University • Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences • Allegheny College • American International College • American University • American University School of International Service • Anna Maria College • Auburn University • Babson College • Bard College • Benedict College • Bentley University • Boston College • Bowie State University • Brigham Young University • Brown University • Bryant University • Canisius College • Carnegie Mellon University • Cazenovia College • Champlain College • City College of New York CUNY • Clark Atlanta University • Clarkson University • Colby-Sawyer College • Colgate University • College of New Rochelle • College of Saint Elizabeth • College of the Holy Cross • Columbia University • Concordia College • Cornell University • Creighton University • Curry College • Dartmouth College • Dean College • Delaware State University • Drexel University • D'Youville College • Elmira College • Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University • Endicott College • Fashion Institute of Technology • Fordham University • Fort Valley State University • Franklin Pierce University • Georgia Institute of Technology • Gordon College • Green Mountain College • Hartwick College • Harvard College • High Point University • Hofstra University • Howard University • Illinois Institute of Technology • Iona College • Ithaca College • Johnson & Wales University (Charlotte) • Johnson & Wales University (Providence) • Keiser University • Keuka College • Lane College • Langston University • Le Moyne College • Lehigh University • Lincoln University • Long Island University, CW Post campus • Louisiana State University • Loyola University, Maryland • Maine College of Art • Manhattan College • Manhattanville College • Maria College • Marist College • Marymount Manhattan College • Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts • McGill University • McMaster University • Merrimack College • Middlebury College • Mildred Elley, Albany campus • Mississippi Valley State University • Missouri University of Science and Technology • Monroe College • Morehouse College • Morgan State University • Mount Saint Mary College • Nazareth College • New England College • New Jersey City University • New York University • Niagara University • Norfolk State University • North Carolina A&T State University • Northern Vermont University-Johnson • Northwestern University • Norwich University • Oberlin College of Arts and Sciences • Occidental College • Oklahoma City University • Pace University, New York City • Pennsylvania State University • Plymouth State University • Pomona College • Providence College • Queen's University • Quinnipiac University • Reed College • Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute • Roberts Wesleyan College • Rochester Institute of Technology • Roger Williams University • Rutgers University-New Brunswick • Saint Joseph's University • Saint Louis University • Saint Michael's College • Salve Regina University • Siena College • Simmons University • Southern Vermont College • Spelman College • Springfield College • St. Bonaventure University • St. John Fisher College • St. John's University • St. John's University, Staten Island • St. Lawrence University • St. Thomas University • Stonehill College • SUNY Adirondack • SUNY Albany • SUNY Alfred • SUNY Binghamton • SUNY Brockport • SUNY Buffalo • SUNY Buffalo State • SUNY Canton • SUNY Cobleskill • SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry • SUNY Cortland • SUNY Erie Community College • SUNY Fredonia • SUNY Fulton-Montgomery Community College • SUNY Geneseo • SUNY Hudson Valley Community College • SUNY Mohawk Valley Community College • SUNY Morrisville • SUNY New Paltz • SUNY Old Westbury • SUNY Oneonta • SUNY Onondaga Community College • SUNY Oswego • SUNY Plattsburgh • SUNY Polytechnic Institute • SUNY Potsdam • SUNY Purchase • SUNY Schenectady County Community College • SUNY Stony Brook • SUNY Ulster Community College • Susquehanna University • Syracuse University • Talladega College • The American Musical and Dramatic Academy • The College of Saint Rose • The Culinary Institute of America • The Sage Colleges • The University of Alabama in Huntsville • The University of Scranton • Tufts University • Tulane University • Union College (New York) • Université de Montreal • University of Bridgeport • University of California, Davis • University of Connecticut • University of Delaware • University of Denver • University of Hartford • University of Maine • University of Massachusetts, Boston • University of Nevada, Las Vegas • University of New Hampshire at Durham • University of North Texas • University of Pittsburgh • University of Portland • University of Redlands • University of Rhode Island • University of Rochester • University of San Francisco • University of Toronto • University of Vermont • Utica College • Virginia State University • Wells College • Wentworth Institute of Technology • Wesleyan University • Western New England University • Wichita State University • Williams College • Woodbury University • Worcester Polytechnic Institute



Save the date: Celebrate summer and safety July 20

Join the City School District of Albany and Mohawk Ambulance Service at Summer Celebration and Safety Day on Saturday, July 20 from 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

The free event will be held at the upper end of Lincoln Park, off Delaware and Morton avenues and near the former Sunshine School.

Stop by for food, live music by Legacy, family activities, raffles and community information tables.

The celebration isn't just about fun and games (although there will be plenty of both). We're promoting summer safety, as well.

Albany police will be on hand to print SAFE Child ID cards, and kids can tour the inside of a fire engine and ambulance and see a K-9 demonstration by members of the Albany County Sheriff's Office.

Mark your calendar and bring the whole family!

Career-bound seniors celebrate 'signing day'

Albany High School's Abrookin Career and Technical Education Center held a "signing day" on May 20 for seniors already committed to a trade after graduation.

Xji-Anne Hudson, Giavanna Mitchell and Dounaille Rene, cosmetology students, will begin work at Heaven on Earth Salon. Alhasa Alqahrman, an automotive student, intends to work at DePaula Chevrolet.

Eric Rodriguez and Jason St. Pierre, construction students, will enter Tri-City Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee electrical pre-apprenticeships.

The signing day event also recognized additional graduating career and technical education students as well as the community partners that are the crucial links between Abrookin's programming and the skilled trade jobs available in the region.

Through Abrookin, Albany High offers 10 career pathways in a variety of skilled trades, applied sciences and technology. The State Education Department endorses seven of those pathways, meaning graduates have earned the entry-level credentials needed for those fields.

Hall of Fame Class of 2019

The City School District of Albany Hall of Fame will add six new members at this fall's induction ceremony.

The Selection Committee chose the following candidates as members of the Class of 2019:

- Leslie Bogucki
- Teneka Frost
- Elizabeth Gaffuri Kearney
- Bill Ritchie

- Demond Shepard
- Sonja Michelle Smith-Summers

The annual induction dinner will be Oct. 4 at the Italian-American Community Center, 257 Washington Ave. Extension in Albany. The Class of 2019 also will be recognized during Albany High School's Homecoming activities Oct. 5.

To read more about this year's inductees and past classes, please visit our Hall of Fame section at albanyschools.org.

Albany High *(continued from page 1)*

"It's a great experience," said Rodriguez. "I'm only 18, and I'm going to be making more money than most of the adults I know, with a pension and 401k."

Jerome Robinson has enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps. He believes the diversity of Albany High has given him a competitive edge in life. He also credits Albany High's rigor with preparing him to serve in the military.

"Albany High gets you ready for the real world, and how diverse it's going to be," Robinson said. "Whether it's diversity of people, or diversity in opportunity."

While each of these seniors experienced Albany High in their own way, they all agree that its uniqueness, diversity and wealth of opportunities is what fosters success for students.

"People here have such a wide variety of interests," said Jason Eveleth, the valedictorian of the Class of 2019 who will attend Brown University in the Ivy League.

"And that breadth of experience – and the passion and the drive they have – is what makes this school what it is."

'Ready Room' *(continued from page 1)*

Students feel understood and supported, which leads to them feeling empowered and better able to regulate their bodies and emotions, Martell said.

O'Neal piloted the program for the last six weeks of school, serving 10 students. In September, the space will be open to all O'Neal students.

Being trauma-informed takes a shift in mindset, said Brianna Olsen, a trauma-

informed trainer in the district's Pupil Personnel Services Department.

"The shift from 'what is wrong with you' to 'what happened to you' is critical," Olsen said.

"Trainings help staff understand how trauma affects brain development and how students with trauma may present in their educational setting."



Cricket a 'hit' in district phys ed classes

When students new to America first enroll at Albany International Center, it's likely that everything from cafeteria food to lesson plans seems foreign to them.

This year, the City School District of Albany added the internationally popular sport of cricket to its physical education curriculum, providing something familiar for many students at AIC and throughout the district.

That was great news for AIC sixth-grader Shamsullah Zadrán.

"Reminds me of home a lot," said Zadrán, who was born in Afghanistan. "It's my favorite game."

Although it is not well-known in the United States, cricket is among the world's most popular sports.

With the significant growth of immigrant and refugee students the city has experienced in recent years, adding it to physical education classes is just one more way the district is emphasizing culturally relevant teaching and learning.

"It's so important to incorporate our students' backgrounds into all of our

curriculum, not just academics," said Director of Health, Physical Education and Athletics Kathy Ryan. "The kids are loving this in physical education and the teachers have enjoyed learning more about a sport that may be new to them, too."

Students at AIC, the district's optional program for immigrant and refugee students in grades 6-12, tend to be more familiar with cricket than their American peers. There still is a mix of cricket knowledge, but what one student lacks in experience, he or she makes up for in fun.

The physical education team appreciates being part of students' adjustment to life in the United States and creating a valuable connection, said phys ed teacher Tom Murley.

"I enjoy hearing about the students' prior cricket experience in the countries from which they immigrated," Murley said. "It's also a sport that students are able to master quickly so someone who has never played before can step right in and also enjoy participating."

To read more, visit albanyschools.org.



Corner Canvas Program

You don't have to head to a gallery, museum or even one of our schools to view our talented students' amazing art. It's now on display for everyone to see in two Albany neighborhoods. Murals by City School District of Albany middle and high school students, as part of the Corner Canvas Program, are transforming vacant properties in the South End and Arbor Hill into places for creative expression. This installation, a partnership with the Albany Center Gallery, can be found at the corner of Henry Johnson Boulevard and Clinton Avenue.

Check us out online!



At albanyschools.org, we have an Online News Center to provide you with as much news as possible about the great people and programs in the City School District of Albany. Stop by to read more about any of these stories and additional articles, including:

- Assembly speaker inspires student leaders
- Voters approve budget, facilities plan
- Scholar-athletes commit to college-level sports

- Language honor societies induct 27
- Board appoints new director of special education
- Clement nurtures whole child with community help

Also be sure to check us out on Facebook and Twitter by following [@albanyschools](https://www.facebook.com/albanyschools).

You can also sign up for email notifications and emergency text alerts through School News Notifier at albanyschools.org/SNN.

Awards & achievements

City bestows two Henry Johnson honors

Albany Board of Education member **Tabetha Wilson** (*below left*) received the Henry Johnson Award for Distinguished Community Service from Mayor Kathy Sheehan on June 5.

Albany High School senior **Irene Nelson** (*below right*) also received a scholarship from the Albany Housing Coalition for her essay on Henry Johnson.



Their recognition was a part of the third annual Henry Johnson Day celebration and the city's observation of the 101st anniversary of Henry Johnson's actions in combat during World War I, for which he earned a posthumous Purple Heart, Distinguished Service Cross and U.S. Congressional Medal of Honor.

State names two to prestigious fellowship program

An initiative started by former President Barack Obama continues to provide City School District of Albany students with the tools and skills they need for future academic and career success.

The New York State Education Department selected Albany High School's **Chandon Bouyea** and **Themba Pieterse** to participate in this year's prestigious My Brother's Keeper Fellowship program. The class of 67 fellows from across the state, all juniors, represents 22 school districts.

The state created the program in 2014 to expand opportunities and create pathways for success for young men of color through public-private partnerships. Throughout next school year, Bouyea and Pieterse will be connected to mentors who will help them engage in government, secondary education and business.

Unified basketball wins it all

In just the second year fielding a unified basketball team, Albany High School won the Section 2 championship with a 46-31 win over South Glens Falls on May 31 at Shenendehowa.



Unified athletics join students with and without intellectual disabilities. In this photo from the championship game, senior James Traynham celebrates with high-fives down the bench.

'Sweet Charity' orchestra recognized

The Albany High School Theatre Ensemble's March production of "Sweet Charity" earned an award for best student orchestra at the regional 2019 High School Musical Theatre Awards on May 11.

Albany High was one of 30 schools participating in the annual ceremony, a model of the Tony awards that's geared toward high school musical theater productions.

Senior trumpeter **Emma Russell** accepted the award on behalf of the "pit" orchestra, which was led by teacher **John Halvorsen**.

"Sweet Charity" also earned nominations for best actress (**Annabelle Duffy**), best supporting actress (**Sania Cooper**), best technical execution and best choreography execution.

District early childhood leader receives statewide honor

The New York Association for the Education of Young Children recognized City School District of Albany Early Childhood Department Director **Melissa Hasty** as its 2019 Early Childhood Leader this spring.

Hasty received the statewide recognition for her efforts in advocacy, research and mentorship on behalf of early childhood education.

As director of the Early Childhood Department, Hasty is responsible for overseeing teaching, learning, professional development and family engagement in prekindergarten classrooms in all 12 elementary schools and at 18 community agencies throughout Albany.

Under her leadership, the district's pre-K program has more than doubled in size and serves nearly 1,100 students ages 3 and 4.

Albany High students take second, third in essay contest

Two Albany High School students took second and third place in the 2019 Albany-Tula Alliance student essay contest.

Junior **Amelia Colafati**'s essay won the second-place award of \$500. Senior **Adam Aleksic**'s essay won the third-place award of \$250. Aleksic also earned third place in the essay contest in 2017 and first place in 2018.

The Albany-Tula Alliance promotes cultural exchange and business development between Albany and the city of Tula, Russia, 125 miles south of Moscow.

Student podcasts noted in NPR contest

Three of six podcasts that Albany International Center students compiled this spring earned honorable mentions in the first-ever National Public Radio Student Podcast Challenge.

The high school students narrating and sharing their stories in the podcasts all are in **Xrystya Szyjka**'s English as a New Language class. District technology coach **Jeremy Dudley** and high school English teacher **Brian Huskie** helped Szyjka and her students compile the podcasts.

NPR received almost 6,000 entries from all over the country. NPR journalists listened to all the podcasts and picked one winner from grades 5-8 and one winner from high school.

Albany High ensembles sparkle

Three Albany High School musical ensembles earned outstanding ratings – two golds and a silver – performing at the top level in this spring's New York State School Music Association's Major Ensemble Festival. The Wind Ensemble and Chamber Choir each captured a gold rating, and the Advanced Orchestra earned silver. Both performed at Level 6.

At major festivals, ensembles perform music at one of six levels of difficulty. Level 6 is the hardest. Performances are graded as bronze, silver and gold.

Trio earns Stock Market Challenge scholarship

Junior Achievement of Northeastern New York on June 12 presented three scholarship checks to the aspiring financiers from Albany High School who took third place in this spring's Junior Achievement Stock Market Challenge.



The team of senior **Mohammed Yehia**, senior **Nailia Pumbaya** and junior **Akili Bahati** (*pictured above L-R*) was one of 10 Albany High teams at the event, which drew more than 400 students from 19 area schools. Albany High had three teams in the top 10.

Teams competed in a race to accumulate the highest portfolio while learning the nuances of investing, trading and strategy; why companies issue stock; how actions in one part of the world impact the value of stock in another place; and why the stock market is an integral part of our free enterprise system. Their efforts earned the trio a \$500 scholarship.

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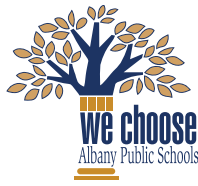
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Leading the way Meet Lee-Ann Mertzlufft Assistive technology specialist

As the assistive technology specialist in the City School District of Albany's Special Education Department, it is Lee-Ann Mertzlufft's job to link students who have language and physical limitations with technologies that can help.

Some of her students cannot speak. Others are blind or visually impaired. Still others have sensory or developmental challenges that make the physical act of writing impossible.

Enter the world of technology to fill in the gaps: gadgets like 24-inch machines with photos, iPads, technology that responds to its user's eye motions and Google Chromebooks with everyday technologies.

Mertzlufft works one-to-one with students and their teachers. Her job takes her to all district schools, and she also works with students who are homebound and at St. Margaret's Center, a facility that provides short- and long-term care to children with complex medical needs.



**Lee-Ann
Mertzlufft**

Q: What is assistive technology, and why might a student need it?

Assistive technology, or AT, matches a disability with current technology so the technology complements the disability.

The AT can be in the form of a magnifier for a visually impaired person, a screen reader for a child with a print disability such as limited vision, blindness or dyslexia. Speech-to-text technology or voice typing is helpful for a child who cannot write with pen and paper. Eye-gaze technology helps a child who has limited or no use of their limbs.

AT allows the person with the disability to function as if they didn't have a disability.

Q: Tell us about your typical day.

My day is never typical! I start at my office. After that, anything goes. I see students in different schools. I might meet with a team of teachers to discuss matching AT with a student's needs. I might work with a family to integrate home and school technologies. I usually end my day back in the office to write up who I saw and what I said.

Q: Tell us about your disability and how it influences your work with students and families.

I am an individual with dyslexia and dysgraphia. Simply put, dyslexia is a reading disability that affects how the brain processes letters, sounds and numbers. It has nothing to do with intellect. Dysgraphia affects writing and can include handwriting, spelling, sentence structure and/or grammar.

I understand how brains like mine work! I have analyzed my brain long enough that I can understand – as an educator – how someone arrived at that thought, and I usually know how to teach to it.

I also can relate to people with disabilities. I suffered the shame and fear that one has as an individual with a disability. Discrimination and prejudice are alive and breeding in this world. Therefore, I approach every child and parent with care and compassion.

Q: What do you like best about your job?

I do love my job! I love working with the incredible minds that are shaping our future. I respect and admire the students who allow me to see into their minds, the parents who do their best each and every day and trust me with their children, and the personnel in the district who do their jobs diligently and skillfully, so together we can make the once impossible, possible!

Alumni achievement



Tracie Killar '81

Since 2015, Tracie Killar has served 28,000 meals to Albany children.

But she doesn't work in the City School District of Albany's Food Service Department.

A 1981 Albany High School graduate, Killar is the founder and executive director of the South End Children's Café at 25 Warren St. She and her staff serve free healthy dinners every Monday through Friday night.

"The most important school supply is food," she said.

Killar grew up in the South End and attended elementary school at the former School 18, now Delaware Community School. She also is a 1986 graduate of The College of Saint Rose.

"I never knew college was an option for me until my guidance counselor (at Albany High School) helped me to find financial aid and scholarship opportunities," Killar said.

It's the positive experience Killar had in Albany's public schools that prompted her to open the café. Albany educators were responsible for her success as a young person, so as an adult she wanted to do what she could to support their work.

"I'm really proud to be able to partner with the district and the dedicated teachers and staff," Killar said. "Together I know we are enhancing children's education and wellness."

While Killar started the café as a way to address food insecurity, it has grown into so much more.

Students now receive wrap-around services like homework help and tutoring, and also are exposed to dance, sports, theater and music during the café's after-school programming.

Older students prepare for college and careers, thanks to the café's mentoring programs and field trips.

Killar also operates a day camp in the summer and is an invaluable community partner to nearby Giffen Memorial Elementary School, providing meals for the school's bimonthly academic enrichment program on Saturdays.

"Working with Albany's children and partnering with the City School District of Albany has been a wonderful experience and I am so happy and proud to be a part of the students' lives," Killar said.

Prior to opening the café, Killar worked in the non-profit sector for 35 years. She does not take a salary for her seven-days-a-week work at the café, and she insists that the growth and success of the children she serves is payment enough and her daily inspiration.