

EPEA News

Volume 5, Issue 3

June 2025



Sunshine &
SUMMERTIME



Greetings and Happy Last Week of School,

This address needs to begin with a heartfelt thank you. Garth Merlino, Lisa Reidy, and Deb Gampietro; our Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer are stepping down from their roles effective June 30. After 10 years of serving as officers they are opening the door to new leadership. Thank you, Garth, Lisa and Deb, for all your hard work during the past 10 years. You are leaving the Erie 1 Professional Education Association a better organization than when you found it and I will be eternally grateful for your partnership. Best wishes to all of you- enjoy some well-earned free time and we hope to see you at our meetings and activities.

Again, a thank you is in order, but to our incoming officers who have accepted the challenge as new leaders for the EPEA. Peter Bellanti, Melanie Kujawski and Jackie Conley will be taking their roles as VP, Treasurer, and Secretary effective July 1st; although, a lot of meetings and trainings have already been attended.

And a final thank you to those EPEA reps that are stepping down and those that are joining the board. I look forward to working with the new representatives and appreciate all the efforts of those that have served. Each voice is valuable in serving our vast population and we couldn't have done it without you!

On a different note, we will spend the summer working on a new evaluation system- for all educators within the EPEA. There is a committee of approximately 25 members that will meet throughout the summer. Our goal is to negotiate a plan that can be put into place for the 2025-26 school year.

Our summer will also be spent reviewing the contracts for the 19 component districts of Erie 1 BOCES as well as the contracts of Orleans Niagara BOCES and Erie 2 BOCES. Our contract expires on June 30, 2026, so we will begin negotiations hopefully in late November. You will be receiving surveys to complete and notices for "town hall" type meetings to attend as we work through the negotiations process.

Finally, I wish you the most pleasant summer- whether you travel, staycation, work summer school, or just hang out I hope it is perfect. We will see you in August and hope that you'll join us for the Labor Day Parade on Monday, September 1!

Yours in Solidarity,

Donna Walters
Erie 1 Professional Education Association President
Local 02055



Next EPEA General Membership Meeting

Wednesday, September 17, 2025

Location TBD

President:

[Donna Walters](#)

Vice President:

[Garth Merlino](#)

Secretary:

[Lisa Reidy](#)

Treasurer:

[Deb Gampietro](#)

EPEA Schedule 2025-2026

Monday 8/25/25	Mentor Intern Day
Tuesday 8/26/25	Opening Day
Monday 9/1/25	Labor Day Parade
Wednesday 9/17/25	General Membership Meeting
Wednesday 10/15/25	Board of Reps Meeting
Saturday 10/18/25	Making Strides Against Breast Cancer Walk
Saturday 10/25/25	Fall Into Reading- Frontier Teachers Assoc.
Wednesday 11/5/25	Board of Reps Meeting
Monday 11/10/25	Non and Newly Tenured Social
Wednesday 12/3/25	Board of Reps Meeting
Thursday 12/11/25	Holiday Party
Wednesday 1/21/26	Board of Reps Meeting & Training
Wednesday 2/25/26	Board of Reps Meeting
Friday 3/6/26	NYSUT Winter Leadership Conference
Wednesday 3/18/26	General Membership Meeting
Wednesday 4/22/26	Board of Reps Meeting
Wednesday 5/20/26	Board of Reps Meeting
Wednesday 6/17/26	Board of Reps Meeting/Dinner



**Please
Join US!**

LABOR DAY PARADE

**Monday,
September 1st,
Cazenovia Park**

Keep an eye out for
info on our
Facebook page



Follow on Facebook: [Erie 1 Professional Education Association](#)



Join us at: [Erie1Educators.org](#) for News and Resources

EPEA SOCIAL EVENTS



EPEA PICNIC
June 7, 2025

Wow, what a day we had at Como Park for the picnic this year!! Music, popcorn (thank you Donna!), and the food & desserts, holy cow!! Best of all was the company - laughter, stories and new trips folks planned to attend were just a few of the wonderful conversations we had!

What a lovely turnout and a very generous party as \$116.00 was taken in for the 50/50 & congratulations to Leeann Haj as our winner! The other portion of the 50/50 will go to our Breast Cancer Walk in October 2025. We also had a super wonderful basket turnout - 29 baskets & entrance fee brought in \$245.00. Therefore, our total going to the Walk for Breast Cancer is: \$303.00!!

A BIG thanks to the Elaine Rosina and the Social Committee for another great event!



**Save
The Date**



**Non and Newly Tenured
Membership Social
November 10th, 2025**



HOLIDAY PARTY!

**December 11th, 2025
5-8 pm at The Columns**



LET MEMBER BENEFITS HELP YOU PLAN FOR RETIREMENT

If you recently retired or plan to do so in the near future, it's important to prepare for the transition from in-service work to retirement.

Maintaining NYSUT membership in retirement is crucial, especially if you're currently participating in a NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed program(s) and would like to continue doing so. This can be accomplished in one of two ways:

- 1** Continue membership within your local if retiree membership is offered. Contact your local to find out if any retiree membership requirements are in place. You must comply with these requirements to continue your membership in NYSUT along with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and National Education Association (NEA).
- 2** Continue as an at-large member of NYSUT through the Retiree Council in your region. Contact your local to ensure you will be reported as retired to NYSUT. This will provide you with membership in the Retiree Council in your region along with NYSUT, AFT, and NEA. If you have questions about maintaining NYSUT membership or would like more information about NYSUT retiree programs, you will want to contact the NYSUT Retiree Services Consultant serving your region. You can find this information at nysut.cc/retireeconsultants.

More than a dozen of the endorsed programs offered by Member Benefits can be purchased through either payroll or pension deduction. These convenient payment methods offer reduced premiums or the elimination of service fees in many instances. An active NYSUT membership is required to participate in payroll or pension deduction. If you're currently participating in one (or more) of our endorsed programs, we encourage you to look into switching to pension deduction after you enter retirement.

Learn more about continuing Member Benefits-endorsed programs or the pension deduction process by scanning the QR code, visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org, or calling 800-626-8101.



We are proud to recognize the following outstanding students, each of whom has shown incredible hard work and commitment to their academic and professional goals.



CTE Scholarship Recipients:

Isabelle Canaple, a dedicated member of our New Visions Education Pathways Program, has consistently worked hard to excel in her studies. She will be attending Plattsburgh University to pursue a degree in Social Work.

Luke Gworek, a diligent student in our Welding Program, has overcome significant challenges throughout his life while maintaining an unwavering work ethic. He will be attending Pennsylvania College of Technology to study Aviation Maintenance.

EPEA Scholarship Recipients:

Francis Bellanti, whose tireless work ethic shines through in his academic pursuits, will be attending the University of Akron, Ohio, to study Civil Engineering, with a focus on researching sustainable building materials.

Liam Feeney, a committed and hardworking student, will be attending Boston University to study Mechanical Engineering while bringing his national championship rowing titles to their prestigious team, where he will continue to compete at an elite level.

LOOKING TO HELP OUT? JOIN COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Join our Community Outreach Committee! We are striving to support our community, but we need your help. You **DO NOT** have to be a union representative to be involved. This committee's goal is to support our BOCES community, the component district community and the greater community. By volunteering, engaging and helping our fellow educators and students we can make a lasting impact.

Join today by contacting Tina Wyant, Twyant@e1b.org
Community Outreach chair.



SUNSHINE CELEBRATIONS

Kyle Hooper - baby boy

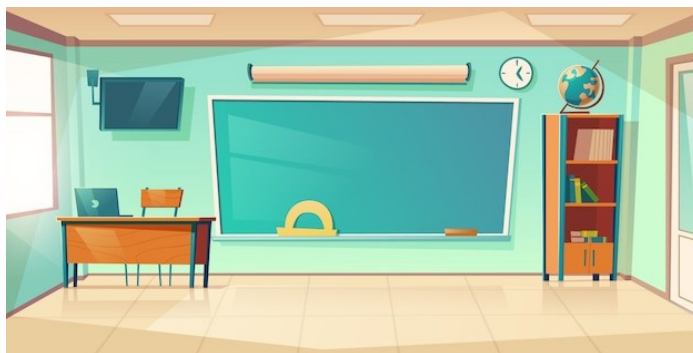
Ashley Simmons - baby boy

Stephanie Ciesiulka - baby girl



CLASSROOM CORNER

~~~~~  
Celebrating great things  
happening in our classrooms



This June, Maryvale Academy hosted our second annual talent show. We were so excited to share our talents with friends, staff, and families. Our talent show is a student run production. Students from our Regents and Life Skills programs worked together to make this an incredible show! Our students ran the concessions, created art work for the display, worked back-stage, designed the poster and programs, greeted audience members, participated in the set up and clean up crew, and of course - performed their various talents! It truly was a collaborative effort! We hope the families enjoyed the show and we are already looking forward to next year's show.



# ART SHOWCASE

On Wednesday, June 11, 2025 Erie 1 BOCES hosted a district-wide Arts Showcase. Students had to submit applications to perform or have their artwork on display; 100 pieces of artwork and numerous musical and performance arts were selected from across the component districts. A reception with refreshments was provided following the E1B Educational Foundation Board Meeting, and several young artists received additional accolades for their talents.

Two 6th grade students in Ellen Foegen's class at Northtowns Academy submitted applications for their artwork to be included in this juried show, and both were selected. Ariel Baughman's tempera painting inspired by Keith Haring, and Maximus Chapin's watercolor painting were both featured in this show.

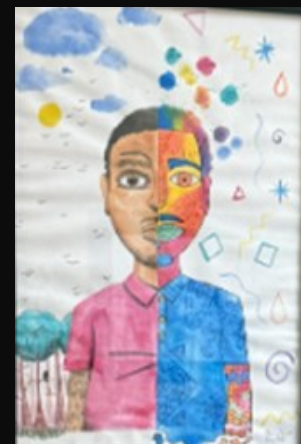
Tom Rojek from Maryvale academy also had two students recognized for their amazing talents; Maddie Pfentner and Deven Blanding.



Ariel Baughman



Maximus Chapin



Deven Blanding

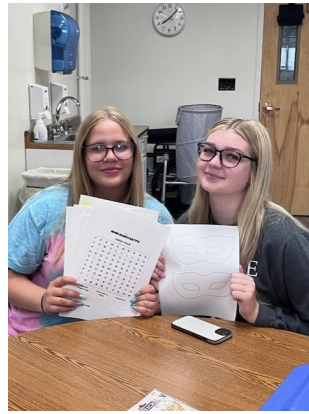


Maddie Pfentner

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY PARTY



What a Wonderful Cultural Diversity End of Year Party. Food, Lessons, Crafts, Games and Dancing. A huge Success. A fun way to share our heritage with our class family at Ken Ton.



## DEMYSTIFYING LONG-TERM SUSPENSION

**Long-term suspension often comes with a lot of stereotypes about our students. Some may hold a bit of truth, but more often than not, they're far from accurate.**

This year, I've seen students come and go—but more importantly, I've seen many grow. I've watched them form friendships with people they may never have spoken to before. I've seen one student earn a Science award from their home school while here with us. I've watched others shift their mindset about special education, learning to love and appreciate every child in both our K–5 and High School programs.

They've looked out for each other. They've protected one another. They've become part of our Winchester Academy family.

So, when you think of students in long-term suspension, remember—they're still just kids. Kids who made a mistake. And yes, some may make the same or even new mistakes. But many have learned, grown, and changed for the better. And I truly believe that every teacher and paraprofessional in our program has played a vital role in helping them learn those lessons and become better people because of their time here.

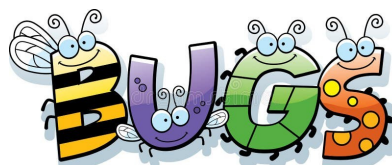
Submitted by Leeann Haj

# BUGS, BUGS, BUGS



Kammy Ciesielski's K-2 Special Needs class spent the month of May learning about insects! The students worked so hard. We read a lot of insect books from the Scholastic Science Vocabulary Series. These elementary students learned where insects live and that they have 3 body parts - head, thorax and abdomen. We also learned that some insects have wings, and all insects have 6 legs. The students continued their research to learn about different life cycles. We watched how a caterpillar turns into a chrysalis and changes into a butterfly. We also were able to watch how a ladybug changes from a larva to pupa, and then to an adult ladybug! These students were amazed to see the butterflies fly away and the ladybugs walk through the grass. The students worked hard all month making a lap book about what they have learned and a bug box to keep their homemade insects (made out of different materials). We also used one bug to "pollinate" the flowers during a science experiment.

Kritant Adhikari is pictured with his bug box. Nathan Collins is pictured with the pollinators experiment. Katherine Htoo is pictured with the Bugville. Both Nathan and Kritant are looking at the ladybugs in the hut.



Jennifer Kelley shares that conservation students managed husbandry for a small population of a New York native species the hornworms. To learn about the metamorphosis cycle, students provide nutrients and monitor temperature and humidity throughout the hornworms' life and make observations about their physical appearance to anticipate when they will pupate.

While the worms pupate, students learn about the important role of pollinators in our ecosystem and when these hornworms emerge as a sphynx moth how they will join the ecosystem to pollinate flowers.



## HEALTH CAREERS FIELD TRIP

Jonnie O'Connor's juniors and seniors were guests on all day Health Careers field trip. The 23 students from Ken Ton's Certified Nursing Assistant Program were given a tour of both Buffalo Surgical Center and Excelsior Orthopaedics. They had several hands-on activities such as Physical Therapy, Surgical Prep, and How Xray Works. Many of our students were casted— what a lasting impression!



Staff visited to talk about their careers and opportunities for professional and entry level careers at Excelsior and were highly impressed with our students. "The students were incredibly engaged, asked thoughtful questions, and showed a genuine interest in learning more about the healthcare field. It was a great opportunity to share the work we do here at Excelsior/BSC and hopefully inspire the next generation of healthcare professionals."



## SCHOLARSHIP WINNER



Senior Culinary Arts student Dravan Rivera (Hamburg) was the recipient of the Jeremiah Whitmer Memorial Scholarship presented by Doug and Kari Anderson.

## GENEROUS DONATION



Senior Baking & Pastry and Culinary Arts students from the Potter Career & Technical Center donated \$500 to Hospice Buffalo.



Julie Jergens shared that Brian Willison from Great Lakes Dental Technologies spent 6 days over the 24-25 school year teaching and demonstrating many different types of orthodontic appliances.

Senior Dental lab Tech students learned to make Rapid Palatal Expanders, Custom Mouthguards and Invisalign appliances.

Junior Dental lab tech students learned wire bending skills and fabricated Hawley retainer appliances.



# SAVING WILDLIFE BY HELPING PEOPLE

Hannah Wiegand's Zoo, Wildlife, and Conservation Careers class learned about the importance of community in wildlife conservation from National Geographic Explorer and Primatologist Dr. Rebecca Smith. She's working to save capuchin monkeys and their disappearing Atlantic Forest ecosystem in Paraguay. One of the communities she works closely with is the Mberu Pirapo'i indigenous school in the San Rafael region. A quote from their website states, "The rural and indigenous communities around San Rafael have historically been neglected. We recognise that neither successful learning nor enthusiasm for conservation are possible if basic needs aren't met. Therefore, we regularly organise and engage in fundraisers for the communities."



The ZWCC class had the opportunity to participate in a Zoom seminar with Dr. Smith and organized a winter clothing drive to send winter clothing to Paraguay. The lesson for the students was simple - in order to help wildlife, we need to help people first! If these kids are cold or hungry they are not in the right mindset to learn or care about the environment. This was a personal connection for me as well because the students receiving the clothing donations are the same students that I spent time with last summer while studying with Dr. Smith in Paraguay. With the support of Erie 1 BOCES, we sent two boxes of clothes that my students collected all the way to Paraguay in time to keep the kids warm this winter! (Our summer is their winter!) This was a new endeavor for the ZWCC program and I'm so excited to be forging global conservation connections with my students.

# EPEA MINI GRANT PUBLISHING PROJECT

## Mini Grant Project Brings Learning to Life; Dawn Bartlett, Life Skills Teacher, and Tom Rojek, Art Teacher at Maryvale Academy

Thanks to a mini grant, students recently took part in a fun project that combined art, science, and ELA. They created sculptures based on science topics, then wrote stories and descriptions inspired by their artwork.

The final result was a beautiful book filled with student writing and photos of their sculptures. This project helped students learn in a creative way and showed how art, writing, and science can work together. We're so proud of their hard work and imagination! Here is a sample below. When the books are printed by the Print Shop there will be a copy for our students, the Teacher Center Lending Library, and Mrs. Donald Ogilvie, in recognition of Erie 1 BOCES former superintendent.



## 🎓 Edge Academy Graduation 🎓 Celebrating the Class of 2025!

We are thrilled to announce that Edge Academy's Graduation Ceremony will take place on Wednesday, June 26th at 2:00 PM, as we proudly celebrate the incredible achievements of the Class of 2025.

This year's graduates have not only shown resilience and growth, but also brought a new level of creativity and personality to the celebration—especially through our amazing cap decorating tradition. From bold statements to touching tributes, the caps this year truly reflected the spirit, humor, and individuality of our students.

We can't wait to honor their journey and send them off in true Edge fashion.



# CALSPAN STUDENTS ARE ROCKING IT!

Rhys Sugg and Patrick Ballard interning on-site at Artpark, helping build the amphitheater video package for this season's summer concert series.



Rhys Sugg and Declan Goldhawk aced their Adobe CC Photoshop Certification exam and have received their Professional Certifications!



Owen Shotwell and Dominic Bucknowski working on the set of "Live From Black Rock," miking up the talent for the next episode.



For all your  
newsletter  
submissions.

Enclosed in this newsletter is information for Erie 1 Professional Education Association members pertaining to union related news and events. If you have a story idea or suggestion, please e-mail it to Brenna Towle at [btowle@e1b.org](mailto:btowle@e1b.org).

Calspan hosted a student showcase on Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup> at HiFi Hits on Main Street in Williamsville. The groups included both current students and alumni of the Video Production & Recording Arts and Virtual Production & Design programs. Students produced and promoted the event that was open to the public. The crowd was very energetic and responsive to the mostly original music written by the groups. The groups that performed that night were Blissen and Prairie Pavement. The musicians are from Lancaster and Kenmore East. More showcases like these will be happening again in the fall, winter, and spring with dates to be determined over the summer.

## CALSPAN STUDENTS ARE ROCKING IT!



Enjoy your summer break!



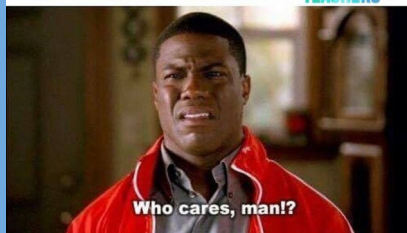
Teachers explaining to non-teachers why they deserve a break every summer.

**BORED TEACHERS**



My friend: "Wait...what day is it?"  
Me:

**BORED TEACHERS**



**\*TEACHERS IN THE SUMMER\***

When you're enjoying your summer break:

vs.

And then you realize it's already August:

**BORED TEACHERS**

