

Class of 1989

Erin Pelnik Gall - Principal Court Attorney, Oneida County Court

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A graduate of New York Mills Jr.-Sr. High School and passionate about the sciences, Erin Pelnik Gall interned with Head Chemist Rusty Moore at Homogenous Metals, Clayville, NY. While in this internship, Gall realized that although she would not pursue a career as a chemist, the experience encouraged her to continue the study of science in college. In reference to her internship at Homogenous metals, Gall comments, "Rusty's support and mentorship enhanced my skill development and ability to think analytically. I have always considered him a wonderful resource and his enthusiasm and dedication to the Program instilled in me the desire to mentor others." Gall earned her B.A. in English and Theology from Boston College and her Law Degree from the University of Buffalo. Gall is Principal Court Attorney to the Honorable Barry M. Donalty, Acting Supreme Court Justice, Oneida County Court, Utica, NY, and in her role as law clerk, has mentored many RPE law interns. Gall states that as a career woman, wife and mother, life in the Mohawk Valley offers her that perfect balance - having a satisfying career close to home so that she can fulfill her role as mother, see her children thrive in a safe environment while receiving an excellent education.

Class of 1994

Amanda Haefele Leskovar - Manager, Immunoassy Technologies Lab, ICON Development Solutions

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Amanda Haefele Leskovar had a tremendous Regional Program internship experience with Cheryl Mattern, MD, an internship she completed while attending Gregory B. Jarvis High School, Mohawk, NY. Leskovar returned many summers to work with and learn from Dr. Mattern, Family Practitioner, while attending Lehigh University, Bethlehem, PA. With her B.S. in Molecular Biology, Leskovar is Manager, Immunoassay Technologies Lab, ICON Development Solutions, Whitesboro, NY, and is now mentoring RPE students who are interested in pursuing medical research. Married to a Herkimer native, she states that they both are thrilled to be close to family and friends.

Class of 1997

Brianne Puleo - Director of Community Relations, Sitrin Health Care Center and Adjunct Instructor, Utica College

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Brianne Puleo credits the Regional Program for providing a professional and educational experience that prepared her for college. Puleo performed her RPE internship at General Herkimer School before graduating from the Utica City School District in 1997. Puleo received her B.A. from Utica College and M.A. at the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University and now is the Director of Community Relations, Sitrin Health Care Center, Utica, NY. Puleo calls the Mohawk Valley home because, "My family is very important to me, and I love it here!"

Class of 1998

David Delecese – Assistant News Director, WKTU Newschannel 2

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As a senior at Notre Dame High School, David Dellecese participated in the Regional Program for Excellence by completing his internship at WKTU Newschannel 2, Utica, NY, with mentors, Joleen Ferris, reporter and Earl Davis, photojournalist. Dellecese received his B.A. in Broadcasting from SUNY Oswego and chose to return to work with Ferris and Davis at WKTU News Channel 2 where he is now Assistant News Director. Dellecese believes he has come full circle and is thankful to have the opportunity to work daily with his former mentors. He calls the Mohawk Valley home because. "I grew up here. My family is here. My wife is from here. Working here allows me to stay close to my roots while trying to do good for the people of my community."

Jonathan F. Henderson, MD – Utica Pediatrics

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As a Whitesboro senior, Dr. Jonathan Henderson interned with Family Practitioner Samuel Gooldy, MD, Optometrist Michael Waterman, OD, and Ophthalmologist Alan H. Harris, MD. Those enlightening RPE experiences coupled with his childhood memories of his own pediatricians, Robert D. Brennan, MD, Daniel L. Zeidner, MD, and C.P. Rao, MD, provided the realization of his love of working with children. While a Utica College sophomore studying biology and chemistry, J. Henderson applied and was accepted to the Upstate Medical University Early Assurance Program, where he graduated in 2007. He remained there for his residency in Pediatrics until completion in 2010. When asked to share his advice with students considering a career as a MD, J. Henderson offered these thoughtful words, "Work as hard as you can, even in high school. Having high grades are important, but being well rounded is just as important. I participated in Admissions at Upstate where I interviewed perspective students my third and fourth years of medical school. Every applicant who applies is at the top of his or her high school and college class. Being in chorus, playing an instrument, playing sports, maintaining a job, shadowing physicians, volunteering....all of these are very important and help separate you from other applicants. Every experience I've had has helped shape my career.....playing baseball at Whitesboro and learning to be a team player, interacting with customers when I worked at Arthur Treacher's Fish and Chips, bringing books to sick patients as a volunteer at St. Luke's, shadowing physicians. All of it has been very important, not only to separate myself from other perspective medical school applicants, but also in how I practice today." Dr. Henderson practices pediatric medicine at Utica Pediatrics. A believer in strong family ties, Dr. Henderson has chosen to raise his own family in this area.

Class of 1999

Alissa Passalacqua - First Grade Teacher, Hart's Hill Elementary School, Whitesboro CSD

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Interning with first grade teacher, Elaine Herman at H.R Jones Elementary School, Utica, was such a powerful experience that it determined Alissa Passalacqua's future. Passalacqua reports, "I always knew I wanted to teach a primary grade, K-2. After interning with Mrs. Herman, I fell in love with the curriculum of first grade, specifically teaching reading. Kindergarten was too young for me and by second grade most students have a foundation when it comes to reading skills. First grade is really when you help the students learn to read and become beginner writers. Also, first grade is a year where you can see amazing growth with your students in a short period of time." A graduate of T. R. Proctor,

Passalacqua chose Syracuse University for her post-secondary studies and holds dual degrees in Inclusive Elementary/Special Education, NYS teaching certifications in both N-6 Elementary Education and K-12 Special Education and her MA in Elementary Inclusion from Utica College. She is pleased that she can pursue her career locally as her family and friends are near. For this she feels quite fortunate.

Class of 2001

Matthew Powers – Instructor of English, Herkimer County Community College, Herkimer, NY
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“I return to the area to teach, to show students the value of the Mohawk Valley, to be closer to my family, and to give back to the community that helped shape who I am today. Since returning I have had the unique opportunity to discover the Mohawk Valley and myself. I have reconnected with my roots in many ways, reconsidered the initial headstrong judgments of my youth, and have found a deep appreciation and love for this area that I thought was lost. For that, I am grateful.” M. Powers, 2/16/11

Matthew Powers graduated from Herkimer High School in 2001. While a senior there, Powers interned at The Theatre at Mohawk Valley Community College with mentors, John Krause and Catherine Daley. Powers received his A.A. at HCCC, B.A. at SUNY Geneseo and M.A. in English from The University of Rochester.

Class of 2002

Geoffrey Henderson - Pharmacist

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A Whitesboro graduate, Geoffrey Henderson, completed his RPE internship with the Dental Clinic of Faxton St. Lukes Healthcare, Orthodontist Eric P. Shoenlein, DDS, and Pediatric Dentist Norman J. Cognito, DDS. Henderson explains how his Regional Program experiences factored into his change in career focus--- “One of the main factors actually came from my internship at St. Luke's Dental Clinic. Everyone there was extremely welcoming and let me jump right into the day to day operations. I spent a number of hours shadowing every move of the dentists and assisting where permitted. It was a great opportunity, friendly environment, and a great way to really see what goes on. Everyone answered any and all questions that I had. After coming out of this portion of my time with RPE, I questioned if I could really see myself remain focused on dentistry for the rest of my life. This question seemed to come up more and more as I started my career as a Biology major in Utica College and SUNY Buffalo 3-4 Pre-Dental Program and while continuing to shadow other dentists in the area. I stayed at UC for two years and then transferred to Albany College of Pharmacy.” Henderson graduated in 2010 with his Doctor of Pharmacy degree and is currently studying for the three part NYS Pharmacy Boards: NAPLEX- North American Pharmacy Licensure Examination, which tests knowledge of drugs and disease, the MPJE- Multistate Pharmacy Jurisprudence Examination to test a student’s knowledge of pharmacy law and Wet Lab-NYS Compounding and Calculations Examination. Henderson remains in the Mohawk Valley because it keeps him close to friends and family. He stays committed to his community as a coach and board member of the Mohawk Valley Youth Hockey Little Pioneers.