

Community Transition Activities Helping AHS Students Prepare for Future

Students in Oriskany's Alternative High School (AHS) program are looking beyond the walls of their classroom and preparing for the future with some help from local community leaders and organizations.

Transitioning out of the AHS and into the community includes more than just addressing the academic or educational needs of a student; it also applies to the training, vocational skill development and independent living skills required for a person to be an independent, contributing member of society.

Over the past two years, a growing number of community transition activities have been added to the AHS curriculum to help teach students strategies and techniques to prepare them for success in whichever education, career and life paths they choose.

During the weekly activities coordinated by AHS teacher Ms. Mazza, presenters from a variety of community organizations visit the AHS classroom to speak with students about how they can begin to prepare for their futures and resources available to them. While some presentations focus on practical skills like the college application process and financial aid, others emphasize lifelong endeavors like cultivating a positive mindset and making good choices. Common themes throughout all of the presentations have been professionalism, opportunity, community and most importantly, hope.

"These presentations are giving students hope for their future," said Ms. Mazza. "While they're in a difficult situation right now, each presentation provides them with an additional resource for their toolbox."

This year's speakers have included MVCC Associate Dean of Social Sciences and Public Services Dr. Mark Montgomery, Captain Michael Harrington of the Salvation Army, Patrick Johnson from MVCC's New Directions program, and representatives from the Neighborhood Center, the Rome Rescue Mission and Human Technologies Corp.

"We're hoping to teach the students that people, places and things have a ripple effect on our lives," said Dr. Montgomery. "That no matter the path they are on, positive social and behavioral change is within their grasp, and educational and vocational endeavors can yield positive life changing experiences and lifestyles."

Mr. Johnson echoed these sentiments during his presentation, reminding the AHS students to stay focused on what's ahead of them rather than looking back to their past actions and behaviors. "Students in this program need to know that it's not the end of the road. They can still do wonderful things and be successful."

And the students themselves are already recognizing the value of the skills, insights and information they're gaining from each presentation as they begin to set attainable goals for their own futures.

"These presentations are going to make me keep pushing toward a positive outcome. They give me hope and a reason to become a better person."

Looking forward into the next chapter of life for the AHS students, the expectation is that the knowledge and self-confidence they have gained will help guide them in a positive direction.

"Everyone needs help and guidance in life. You can't do it all on your own and there's always help around."