**SUNY fellowship program to expand at AHS**

By REBECCA WEBSTER

For SUNY student Andrianna Walraven, the last year of her graduate program has been unlike anything she could have imagined.

Walraven has spent the last ten years as a resident fellow at Amsterdam High School, as part of the Graduate Level Clinically Rich Teacher Preparation Pilot Program, a program aimed at effectively preparing teachers for high-needs schools and increasing the retention of the teachers in order to impact student achievement and growth.

When she graduates in August, she will graduate with her Master’s degree in Special Education, with certificates in teaching Students with Disabilities in grades 1 through 6, Students with Disabilities Adolescent General grades 7 through 12, Literacy grades 1 through 6, and Students with Disabilities Adolescent General grades 7 through 12, Literacy grades 1 through 6, and Students with Disabilities Adolescent General.

“You’re getting four certifications in two years? You never hear of that,” she said.

Walraven has spent the latter half of her 67-credit program at the high school working with a mentor teacher, her clinical supervisor, Lisa Grippo-Gardner, and the students.

“We are pretty much directly and indi-rectly accommodating students’ spe-cial needs while we’re in the class,” she explained. “It’s like we’re consulting.”

If a teacher provides notes, Walraven and the six other resident fellows provide ways to help maximize the learning poten-tial, by perhaps making the font larger, adding a picture, or adding lines to a page.

“We provide additional instruction,” she said. “We also teach our own class which is called a learning lab, which is just us whereas we take the concepts from the class and we re-teach it, view it, but we’ll do it in a way that’s direct where the students do need it.”

And at the end of the day, the fellows head to their SUNY classes, and take what they learn back to the following day to implement the strategies.

The partnership between Amsterdam High School and the SUNY Special Education program began a few years back when the two entities came together for some summer meetings to talk about possible collaborations moving forward.

“They thought we’d be a good choice,” said David Ziskin, principal of Amsterdam High School.

But it wasn’t until Race to the Top money became available that the collabora-tion fully took shape.

“The fact that we have happened to have that in the summer was very fortuitous for everyone and it’s worked out wonderfully for our students, but also for the kids here,” said Jane Domaracki, co-director of the program.

Grippo-Gardner said that they would have a full year to lay the foun-dation for the program, but a shift in the timeline caused the first set of resident fel-lows to jump right in that first year at the high school in January, sporting six-month fellowships.

But this year, she said, was a full year for the SUNY students.

The nearly $1.5 million grant was for three years. The students involved in the program take their first year at the college to do their course-work, do their elemen-tary instruction piece that following sum-mer, and then head to the high school for full-year fellowship experiences with mentor teachers. And the mentor teachers at AHS are provided professional develop-ment, along with a stipend.

“It’s a great partnership and experience. We provide our special education teachers, the mentor teachers who are hosting our resident fellow, the university conducts a monthly training with mentor teachers,” Grippo-Gardner said. “And then we as the university, we have a monthly seminar with the resident fellows, more of a culture and community feel.”

Top on this list, Grippo-Gardner, who actually has an office at the high school, is there to three to four days a week to be a resource to the mentor teachers, content teachers, who also aid in the program, and the students.

“Weekly I observe them, and then confer-ence with the resident fellow, provide feedback and support,” she said. “It’s a phenomenal program. That the fact that Dave has welcomed us into the school and the fact that I have a home-base where resi-dent fellows can come in, mentor teachers can come in and talk to me… it’s really a wonderful joint effort.”

Ziskin said through the program is a pilot, it’s one that validates the clinically-rich model.

“They are just embedded into the school in more of a practicum experience than a typical student teacher’s assignment where they may be there for 10 or 20 weeks. In this case, they make the full-year commit-ment,” he explained.

Rita Daly, a Special Education teacher at the high school, said this is her first year doing the program, but it has been a great experience.

“I think that the partnership is just a wonderful opportunity for our residents,” Daly said. “One of the things that we can provide, that we couldn’t before by just having ourselves, is having another per-son in the room who have different ways to approach the class.”

Daly said without them, the teachers have to do things differently.

“It really just expands what we can do with the kids.”

Next year, in the third and final year of the grant program, nearly 20 SUNY stu-dents will join the high school ranks for the fuller-year, that’s more than twice as many SUNY students as the high school had this year.

Domaracki said this is likely the difference between having notes, and from those already admitted to the program, but this was the year that they were able to recruit for the program. Some students, she added, even put off graduating a year to take part.

“A lot of good learning has happened for students in a variety of different ways and that’s really exciting to see,” she said.

Ziskin said he sees it as not only a good thing for the SUNY students, but an opportunity for the students in the Amsterdam district.

“Just having that type of critical mass of adults that will help kids learn is a great thing for our school and I take it as a big opportunity,” he said. “We’re willing to place that trust in us to take those 17 fel-lows.”

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Shovelen Internted with the Canajoharie Police Department, while Tyler and Wallace, who is also an Amsterdam Police explorer, interned with the Montgomery County Sheriff’s Office.

“It was real life experience,” said Tyler. “It’s a really liked it, and now I know I want to be a trooper or a deputy.”

“I’d like to go to the highest level I can,” said Shovelen. “When I get out of the mili-tary, I’d like to do whatever I can to get into a federal agency, like the FBI.”

When the program’s graduating seniors receive their diplomas in June, they’ll already have five certifications and some college credits to help them reach their goals.

Program Instructor John Pecora said after completing the two-year program, students are certified for fingerprint identification through the state Department of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), for baggage screening and X-ray machinery through Security Consultant International, as protection offi-cers through International FPI for Protection Officers, and for first aid and CPR.

The fifth will be completed this week to cer-tify them as security officers through DCJS.

Last late week, Pecora’s students were instructed by Bill Peeler, CEO and president of the federal agency, like the FBI.

The program has come a long way in the 10 years since it began, here,” said Pecora, former-ly the jail administrator at the Montgomery County Correction’s Office. “When I started, it didn’t have any of the articulations or agreements for college credits, and none of the certifica-tions that I have today.”

The goal of the program is to prepare stu-dents for entry into college programs, as well as career opportunities in law enforcement, security and corrections.

In addition to the certifications, class experi-ences have grown. Pecora said, including a mock trial and crime scene investigation exercises.

This year’s mock crime scene investigation was held May 9 under the direction of Amsterdam Police Officer Ariel Santiago. Students were given an imaginary scenario in which a deceased woman was found in suspi-cious vehicle on the BOCES campus.

Utilizing the skills they learned in class, stu-dents conducted a systematic search in which they found shotgun shells, footprints, a shell casing, and a handgun hidden in the grass. Students marked, photographed and cata-loged the evidence, and dusted the vehicle for fingerprints. They also made plaster casts of the footprints, and after collecting the evi-dence, students analyzed it in the classroom.

“The internship and the mock CSI were the most memorable things we’ve done,” said Tyler. “[Pecora] has helped us with our resumes and cover letters, and we’ve learned about Civil Service exams, because they’re probably something we’ll have to take to get the jobs we want.”

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**Jacob H. Bearden**

Army Pvt. Jacob H. Bearden has graduated from Basic Combat Training at Fort Leonard Wood, Waynesville, Mo.

During the nine weeks of training, the soldier received instruction in drill and ceremo-nial procedures, weapons and combat qualification, bayo-net combat, chemical warfare, field training and tactical exer-cises, marches, military cour-ses, military law, physical fitness, first aid, and Army history, traditions, and core values.

Bearden is the son of Donald Bearden of West Third Avenue, and Merri Metka of the South William Street, both of Johnstown.

He is a 2012 graduate of Johnstown High School.