



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Helping Graduates Through Hands-on Experiences

Senator Patty Ritchie

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Senator Ritchie's Weekly Column

It will not be long before thousands of high school students throughout our region put on their caps and gowns and walk across the stage to receive their diplomas. Every student will have his or her eyes on the future—but every student’s future will be different, and filled with new and exciting experiences.

While many students will pursue a college degree, there are others who will travel a different path and immediately enter the workforce, or continue training for a future career in a trade. To ensure every student has the chance to achieve his or her goals, we are fortunate to have several programs in our region that give students a chance to learn through hands-on experience. As state senator, one of my top priorities has always been supporting increased educational opportunities for students. That includes opportunities for them to learn through coursework at our local BOCES facilities.

Recently, I visited students at the Center for Instruction, Technology and Innovation (CiTi) BOCES in Mexico to see them in action. They are preparing for careers in manufacturing and engineering in our region. During my visit, I was shown their newest piece of technology—a CNC (Computer Numeric Control) machine that I was able to help the school purchase through a \$50,000 grant. The machine is for prototyping and full production for the cutting, carving, machining and milling of wood, plastics, aluminum and more.

They are not the only ones preparing for future careers through hands-on learning. In Jefferson County, one of the most popular and fastest growing programs at Jefferson-Lewis BOCES is the culinary arts program. I was fortunate enough to help the school modernize its kitchen through a \$50,000 state grant. Future chefs are now able to work with the very ranges, sinks, counters and refrigerator systems that restaurants use.

In addition, I wanted to make sure students know what job and career opportunities are out there. To help achieve that goal, I was able to secure \$10,000 for the “GPS for Success” program—which is overseen by Jefferson-Lewis BOCES—that puts students on paths to employment by connecting them with information on industries looking to hire.

Of course, in our region many will be looking to get involved in our state’s leading industry, agriculture. One of the ways our local students prepare for a future in farming is through the St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES Agricultural Studies Academy in

Canton. There, students learn all about agriculture, from running a farm or business to mechanics, natural resource management, general farm upkeep and more. Students are getting that hand-on experience with a new skid-steer and a tractor I was able to help the school purchase with \$100,000 in grants.

Also in St. Lawrence County, students at the St. Lawrence-Lewis BOCES campus in Fowler are gaining hands-on experience their future careers by using their new, high-speed graphics printer that allows for the production of commercial grade publications and movie type posters.

The printer was purchased with assistance from a \$6,500 grant I secured, which also allowed the center to buy additional equipment for the students to get even more career training. In working with the printer, students are learning the skills they need to obtain jobs with commercial graphics and printing companies by using computerized graphics.

This year and every year, I wish all of our students the very best in whatever their futures may hold. It is an honor to have been a small part of their education and I look forward to seeing them as they take that next step in their lives. Congratulations to all of our graduates!