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## WISE 30-YEAR CELEBRATION— LINDA GREENE

On January 10, 2004, WISE Services sponsored a celebration of Westchester's pioneers in experiential learning programs for high school seniors from four high schools – Woodlands, Scarsdale, Croton-Harmon and New Rochelle. At a gala dinner at the Westchester Marriott, graduates, their parents, mentors, and local business sponsors, joined together in an anniversary celebration. Howard Rodstein, Head of the Scarsdale Alternative School, who helped found Senior Options at Scarsdale High School, Toni Abramson

Matthews, Andrew Courtney, Bruce Bozeman, and the Brown family – Phyllis, Bill, Steven, David, Richard, and Gary, all of whom have been instrumental in the success of WISE at Woodlands and of WISE Services, were honored.

Almost 300 people braved the cold to attend this event. They dined, listened to music performed by WISE graduates, viewed a new WISE video, heard former students describe the impact their projects have had, and celebrated the achievements of the honorees. Brinda Shah noted in the Woodlands

pursuing a WISE project in forensic science, pointed out, this event was an inspirational look into the opportunities that an individualized senior experience provides.

Ben Weintraub, a student at Scarsdale High School wrote in the *Maroon*, his school paper, that "WISE serves as both an opportunity for some students to get a head start in a possible career and as an opportunity for students to work in a field that interests them, but which they do not foresee themselves pursuing in the future. WISE and Senior Options are intended to allow students to embrace opportunities which a standard education would not allow. Senior Options emphasizes something that you may never do again, in any kind of education."

The 30 Years Celebration was a very special evening and one that will be remembered by those who attended for a very long time.



Welcoming guests at the WISE 30-Year Celebration are (l-r): Vic Leviatin, WISE Services President; Brinda Shah and Regina Bediako, Woodlands High School seniors; Emily Mark, Nyack High School senior; and Dr. Linda Greene, WISE Services Executive Director

student paper, *The Falcon*, that for WISE graduates, the night was a chance to renew friendships and to honor former Woodlands faculty members. For current WISE students, Brinda, who is

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



*These guidelines are used at Rondout Valley High School, whose task force is among the most dynamic in the country. We welcome suggestions from readers for creative engagement of task force members.*

The WISE Task Force provides a unique opportunity to bring together the various "stakeholders" of the WISE "family": community, staff, and students. The Task Force makes policy, creates positive publicity, and develops community resources. Here are some suggestions on how to "nourish and nurture" your Task Force for years to come.

1. **Recruit your personal and professional acquaintances from the community.** Friends who may one day want their children to participate in WISE are good choices. So are the professional and crafts people in your community with whom you have a relationship. Engage each person in a one-on-

one conversation for recruitment,

2. **Recruit a broad cross-section of the junior class who may be interested in WISE.** At the end of their junior year, interview every eleventh grader to determine their possible interest in WISE and invite these students and their parents to the last task force meeting in the spring. Recruit additional parents at a spring information meeting. Be sure to invite all parents!

3. **Recruit a broad cross-section of students.** As always, use one-on-one recruitment talks and utilize students to recruit fellow students.

4. **Recruit educators who are interested in Project-Based Learning.** Identify those who are supportive and encourage them to participate with the Task Force. Administrators and Guidance Counselors who serve on the task force giving practical suggestions for implementing changes are better "inside the tent" than "outside taking pot shots."

5. **Establish a meeting time that allows for active community involvement.** Even though the educators and students may be able to meet after school, it is often difficult for community members. Try to have meetings in the evening or schedule supper meetings.

6. **Have fun! Use "icebreakers" as a way to introduce participants at the first meeting.** Then use them judiciously as you "read" your members' moods.

7. **Have an Agenda printed for every meeting.** Focus the objectives of the meeting for a specific time period, certain tasks, and stay within those parameters. Subcommittees of the Task Force should be given important but manageable tasks (and not be overwhelmed with "take home" responsibilities).

8. **Inform community, staff, and students with great communication.**

Provide written notices of dates of meetings or meeting changes to all.

9. **Provide food and drink.** Divide the provision of food and drink among the various subcommittees of the task force on a monthly rotating basis.

10. **Emphasize the positive!** Constantly praise your Task Force and express gratitude for their efforts!

11. **Promote consensus by allowing all voices to be heard.** An "agreement to disagree" can be promoted by using the phrase: "Can you live with it?"

*We mourn the loss of Valerie Somersille, a founding member of WISE at Woodlands and a Board Member of WISE Services*

## GRADUATE VOICES - by Jen Scibelli

*Jen Scibelli, New Rochelle Class of 1994, has recently begun work as a chef at Blue Hill at Stone Barns. Blue Hill, which opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, 2004, is described by the New York Times as an "upmarket restaurant." Classes at Stone Barns will focus on ecology and farming for local schoolchildren as well as adults. Its goal is to show how locally grown food can strengthen communities and how small farms can be their foundation. Here is Jen's January 2004 reflection on her WISE experience:*



My WISE experience was one of the most important journeys I have undertaken thus far, both physically and mentally. I traveled to Deep Springs College in Nevada, and worked through the National Forest Service to help conduct high altitude studies of cows in the Sierra Mountains. Part of my job was to remain at the College and help with chores. The college is nestled into a small valley and is completely sustainable, a model for what I then went on to study in college (wildlife biology and conservation agriculture). Daily chores consisted of milking cows, feeding the calves, and cooking for the students (the student body consisted of 26 men). We were quite isolated, and being in such a beautiful area, all alone, taught me a lot about myself and the person I was becoming. Working with the animals in fields of green and gold, sleeping beneath the stars, walking in pastures barely touched by the hand of man helped to enhance me spiritually as well.

The second part of the job required taking a five-day trip into government protected land, very high up in the Sierras, where I learned how to read topographical maps, lay down transects for future research and of course, study the behavior of grazing cows that have very little contact with humans. The hiking was very difficult, the temperature at night (although it was May) dropped far below zero, and I even learned first hand what it is like to have altitude sickness. We washed in the rivers, slept and woke according to the time table of the sun. I will never forget how I felt when I made it to the top of the highest mountain in the Sierras. It took all day, we hiked up as a vantage point for where we could find water to drink, and it was physically one of the hardest things I have ever done. Once on top, I stood there with my hands outstretched, surveyed the land, and cried not from sadness, but because I was indeed, the happiest person alive.

This project greatly impacted my future choices in college, and in life. It was the most valuable thing I have ever done. At age 17, when most of us were floundering about what to study in college and why, I knew. I went to the University of Vermont (a choice made solely from my experiences during my WISE project) and was intrigued by animal behavior. I took classes that related directly to the research and study of wildlife and the outdoors, joined conservation groups, and found myself constantly reflecting on my WISE experience. After college, my love of cooking resurfaced, a love that was not known until I started cooking for Deep Springs college, apprenticing with the fabulous chef of the wilderness, Jack.

I am now a line cook in an upscale restaurant in Manhattan. I attribute my career to my early days in Nevada, and I am the only cook that is excited when filleting a fish, to study the anatomy. I intend to go to graduate school at some point, to continue my studies. I encourage students to really take the time to indulge in the WISE project, pick it carefully, and experience it with eyes wide open. I still find time to explore the beautiful outdoors in any capacity, and even make it a point to sleep outside at least twice a year, a reminder that although the skies in the Sierras shine brighter, we always see the same stars.



## Annual Conference Report

On March 26, 2004 WISE Services sponsored its 13<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference entitled "Enriching the Senior Year." This was an exciting conference for many reasons. For the first time, the annual conference took place outside the New York metropolitan area in Providence, Rhode Island. Our host, Textron Chamber Academy, is the first charter school to join the WISE family and as an inner-city charter school, it provided participants with a chance to learn about their program.

Two Textron Chamber graduates gave inspiring presentations to start and end the conference. Nacoula Burgos, Textron Chamber '03,

fly and achieved his dream to be an airplane pilot. Conference-goers were able to experience some of the thrill of Rynaldy's first flight at the controls in a video presentation and heard him say, "If all the schools in this country had this program our youth could find their dream."

An introductory workshop was provided for schools new to the program and two core workshops were given on "Survival Strategies for WISE Practitioners" and "Building WISE into the High School Curriculum and the Schedule." "Survival Strategies," led by Franny Hertz, Rondout Valley Co-Coordinator and Andrew Lutz, Retired Co-

Participants offered many comments at the conclusion of the conference. Among these were the following: "This was a good way to get together and discuss WISE with other coordinators." "It helped me put my program in the grand scheme of WISE." "I got a lot of ideas to take back with me." "With expert planning and maybe some luck, you dealt with issues that are currently most important to me – new ideas for incorporating WISE into the school, and solving mentoring problems." "I valued the students who spoke so passionately about what WISE has done for them." "I really learned a lot." "I learned that WISE is differ-



*Nacoula's classmates model the dresses she designed as her mother (right) looks on approvingly.*

described the sense of accomplishment she felt when she designed and produced from scratch six gorgeous dresses. The dresses were modeled by her friends, classmates and her mother, who told the audience that she had never been more proud of her daughter than she was when she completed her WISE project. What made the project all the more remarkable was that Nacoula did not know how to sew when she began her project!

In the final presentation, Rynaldy Rosario, Textron Chamber '03, described how he had learned to

Coordinator and WISE Services staffer, focused on building and maintaining a strong Task Force and supporting mentors. Real-life scenarios gave participants an opportunity to develop problem-solving strategies. The Curriculum Workshop, led by Linda Greene and Mary Mastro of WISE Services, and Howard Sheldon, Principal of Nathan Hale Ray High School, presented an array of curricular models for integrating WISE into the High School program. ( See article on page 5)

ent in every single school."

Traveling to Rhode Island for our annual conference presented us with the opportunity to provide an overview of WISE to Rhode Island schools. We hope this will lead to an expansion of our program in New England. This conference also presented us with a chance to get to know some of the participants of the program at Textron Chamber and for our staff and visiting schools to see a wonderful WISE program in operation. We thank Textron Chamber for its hospitality.

## Building WISE into the High School Curriculum and Schedule

What is the best way to integrate the WISE Program into the High School Curriculum? What models are in existence now that provide ways for WISE students to develop the skills necessary to maximize their WISE experience? What are some ways schools build WISE into the schedule? If we could design the ideal High School program, how would WISE be scheduled? These were some of the questions posed at a workshop held during our Annual Conference in Providence on the topic of Building WISE into the High School Curriculum and Schedule.

A central tenet of WISE philosophy is that each high school's WISE Task Force designs the program for its school. With over 60 high schools currently implementing the WISE program, it is not surprising that there are many models. At the workshop we heard about Cypress Bay's WISE class, which includes lessons devoted to preparing for WISE during the fall semester Social Studies class, and on-line communication and assignments during the Spring semester while students are completing their projects. The website offers sections for "Course Outline," "Assignments,"

"Documents," "Gradebook," "Newsletter," and "Contact Us." This virtual classroom can be found at [www.cypressbayhighschool.com](http://www.cypressbayhighschool.com). Select "WISE" and then "Virtual Classroom."

Another Florida school, Hollywood Hills has a WISE English and Social Studies class during the first semester along with a WISE preparation course called WISE internship. During this course they work on research skills, journaling, interviewing, resume writing and presentation skills. Students start their projects in February. Rondout Valley student coordinators described their program in which students return to "in-school days" during the second semester for journal workshop, presentation preparation, and problem-solving sessions. This model is also used at Woodlands High School and many other WISE schools. Some schools have in-school days every week. Others bring back students as needed.

Nyack High School offers WISE English and WISE Social Studies during the second semester of senior year. Students may take both courses, just one, or do a WISE project without taking the courses. Most students opt for the two-course

and mini-presentations with feedback from the students and teachers. They begin their projects in March and have the two last two periods of the day free to work on WISE with in-school days every Thursday throughout the semester.

The Textron-Chamber Charter School allocates a full year to WISE. Students engage in research, writing, and oral presentation preparation during the first part of the year, and then do their projects from March to May. Newton South in Newton, Massachusetts offers WISE in both the Fall and Spring semesters. Students utilize a 55 or 90-minute block each week for their projects. Most intriguing to the group, is a program offered at Nathan Hale Ray High School in Moodus, Connecticut. The school's Principal, Howard Sheldon described a four-year seminar program. Students are given skill-building, career skills, technology skills, and life skills in Academic Seminar and Portfolio classes. During the first quarter of senior year all students take College Prep and use this time for college selection, applications, and scholarship forms. Then students who choose WISE embark on projects for the following three quarters with four 86-minute blocks a month allocated for off-site project participation.

In their fantasy schedules, many participants wished more time was available for WISE. How to expand WISE into the first semester and perhaps into the high school years leading up to the WISE experience are intriguing considerations for each WISE Task Force. We look forward to more discussion on this theme in these pages and in our interactions with WISE participants across the country.



*WISE in the Curriculum Conference workshop in progress.*

combination. In the course, which is co-taught by an English teacher and a Social Studies teacher during the month of February, students are guided through project formulation, journal workshop, research sessions,

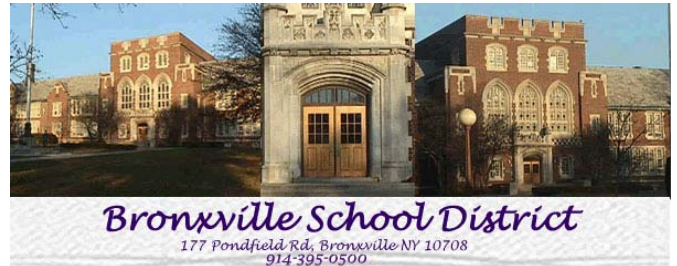
## WISE SCHOOLS - PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS AS OF MAY 2004

Abraham Lincoln High School (CO)  
 Bellefonte Area High. School (PA)  
 Berkeley High School (CA)  
 Bronxville High School (NY)  
 Canton High School (CT)  
 Carmel High School (NY)  
 Christopher Columbus High School (NY)  
 Coginchaug High School (CT)  
 Concord-Carlisle High School (MA)  
 Copiague High School (NY)



Croton-Harmon High School (NY)  
 Cypress Bay High School (FL)  
 DeWitt Clinton High School (NYC)  
 East High School, Denver (CO)  
 East Lyme High School (CT)  
 Eastchester High School (NY)  
 Evanston Township High School (IL)  
 Hendrick Hudson High School (NY)  
 Highland Park High School (NJ)  
 Hollywood Hills High School (FL)  
 Hunter-Tannersville High School (NY)  
 Huntington High School (NY)  
 Ithaca High School (NY)  
 J.P. Taravella High School (FL)  
 Locust Valley High School (NY)  
 Lyme/Old Lyme High School (CT)  
 Mahopac High School (NY)  
 Mamaroneck High School (NY)  
 Marjory Stoneman Douglas HS (FL)  
 Milken Community High School (CA)

Miramonte High School (CA)  
 Monument Mountain Regional HS (MA)



Nathan Hale-Ray High School (CT)  
 New Canaan High School (CT)  
 New Rochelle High School (NY)  
 New York School for the Deaf (NY)  
 Newton South High School (MA)  
 North Branford High School (CT)  
 Nyack High School (NY)  
 Old Saybrook High School (CT)  
 Ossining High School (NY)  
 Park City High School (UT)  
 Peekskill High School (NY)  
 Putnam Valley High School (NY)  
 RHAM High School (CT).  
 Rondout Valley High School (NY)  
 Saugerties High School (NY)  
 Scarsdale High School (NY)  
 Staples High School (CT)  
 Stevens High School (SD)  
 Stonington High School (CT)  
 Summit High School (NJ)  
 Textron/Chamber Academy (RI)  
 Tiospaye Topa School (SD)  
 Tuckahoe High School (NY)  
 University Heights (NY)  
 Village School (NY)  
 Walter Panas High School (NY)  
 Westlake High School (NY)  
 Wheeler High School (CT)  
 Woodlands High School (NY)



## A WISE FAMILY - BY MICHAEL MARK



*The Mark family - left to right: Michael, Emily, Noah, and Mary*

I was ahead of my children in participation in the WISE program by one year. Jimmy Gilroy, a Nyack High School senior and a motivated musician, asked me to participate as one of several supervisors on his project, which dealt with the world of music from both performance and business aspects.

Jim and I met for a couple of intense and detailed sessions to discuss the music business. I was able to provide him with reading materials, sources for researching contracts, publishing and copyrighting along with some personal anecdotal information. It was gratifying to be a part of Jim's music-driven world, to enjoy the performance video he put together for his presentation. Even more gratifying was, a couple of years later, receiving a copy of his band's first CD, SAMSON, from Jimmy's parents.

In the following year, 1999, our son Noah was a senior at Nyack High School. Noah's dedication to sports was surpassed only by his passion for movie and television production. He had done a film production course at SUNY Purchase in the summer of '98, and was headed for the School of Communication at Boston University. So it was no surprise when he chose to explore television production for his WISE project.

With persistence and some family help, Noah got himself an internship on the television program *INSIDE EDITION* with Deborah Norville. An in-

tern at Noah's level is on the set to observe and be a gofer. Yet, in a couple of weeks, Noah was logging footage, assisting on shoots, and editing bumpers. In essence he had gone to work. He was commuting to New York City two or three times a week, not only learning but participating in the business.

Noah continued to win meaningful internships throughout his sojourn at Boston University - at KingWorld, Court TV, MTV and HBO. Upon graduating from BU, Noah landed a job on Sharon Osbourne's new talk show. His resume had been recognized by a woman who had hired him for an internship four years earlier, and she re-

membered his good work. Noah's early start, interning during WISE, gave him a substantial head start in the unbelievably competitive world of television.

This year, Emily Mark has returned us to the world of WISE, and once again, I am involved. Emily is an accomplished singer and performer, and she has chosen to look into the recording industry. Emily was all set with an internship at a Westchester recording studio but unfortunately, the studio had to close. So father and daughter are working together at my studio, producing a recording. Emily will be getting a crash course in composition, music theory, part writing and arranging, music copying, microphone and synthesizer technique and digital recording.

The WISE program asks students to find productive, meaningful uses for their time when they could easily be slowing into the wind-down of senior year. It's been a great program for our two children, with experiences that will serve them both well in the future.

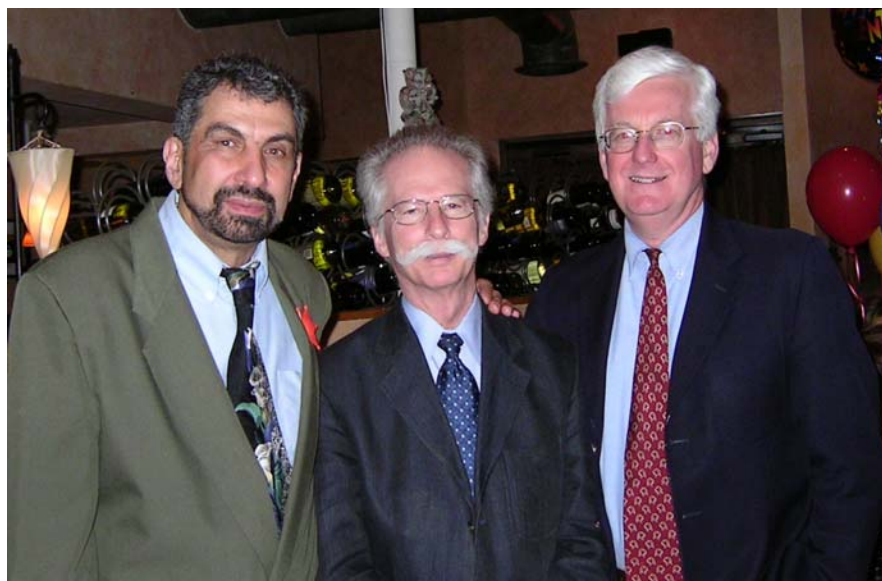
*Michael Mark, in addition to being father to Noah and Emily and Sponsor for Jimmy Gilroy, serves as a member of the WISE Services Board of Directors. He is also a member of the Nyack Board of Education.*

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WE'RE ON THE WEB  
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## DID YOU KNOW?

- Eight new schools will join the WISE Family for the 2004-2005 school year: Solomon Schechter High School in Hartsdale, John Jay High School in Katonah-Lewisboro, Harrison High School in Harrison, White Plains High School, White Plains, New York, the Westchester Magnet Academy at Manhattanville College in Purchase, New York, Midwood High School in Brooklyn, and two schools in Rockland County – Ramapo and Spring Valley High Schools in Spring Valley, New York.



*At Charles Deahl's retirement - left to right: Constantine Andreadis, Charles Deahl, and John MacLean. Charles has been the WISE coordinator at Woodlands since 1993.*

- WISE Services welcomes new staff members: Abby Hirsh, formerly Guidance Counselor at Port Washington and Somers High Schools, Christina Alexopoulos, who is retiring this June as a Language Teacher and mentor extraordinaire at Nyack High School, where she was instrumental in starting the WISE Program; James Lemyre, who is retiring from Rondout Valley High School, where he has been WISE Coordinator and English teacher; Gerald Garfin, who started WISE at Christopher Columbus High School in the Bronx, where he was Principal; and Howard Sheldon, newly retired Principal of Nathan Hale Ray High School in Moodus, Connecticut, who was formerly Principal of Wheeler High School. Both schools started WISE under his direction.