

# MRESCUpdate

MIDDLESEX REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES COMMISSION

Cooperative, Cost Efficient, Quality Services

## NuView Academy's "Biggest Winner"

**N**uView Academy student Chris Charron, 16, has already learned some key steps necessary for accomplishing any goal.

"Getting support from others, remaining positive, and not giving up is what helped me," said Chris, referring to his weight loss achievement. In 18 months, Chris has managed to drop 326 pounds, going from 536 pounds, to his current weight of 210.

Chris has accomplished the weight loss goal despite working part time as a cashier at McDonalds, and without crash dieting.

He cites healthy food choices, working out regularly, and encouragement, particularly from Earl Wallace, a Princeton House Behavioral Health Manager, as the main factors for his success.

"We exercise all the time, and Mr. Wallace has been very encouraging," Chris said, adding that he now

(See **Winner** on page 6)



*Chris Charron and NuView Academy Principal Bill Walsh show the shirt Chris wore when he weighed 526 pounds, compared with the shirt that now accommodates his 210 pound body.*

## Productive Charter Schools/MRESC Seminar

**T**he first ever Charter Schools/MRESC Seminar proved to be a productive and effective investment of time for all participants, said Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission Superintendent Mr. Mark J. Finkelstein.

The seminar was co-sponsored by the MRESC and New Jersey Charter School "Executive of the Year 2014-2015," Mr. Dale Caldwell, Head of School/Chief Executive Officer of the Village Charter School in Trenton, and the MRESC Board President.

"Our services to Charter Schools have been increasing, so we wanted time to provide a thorough overview of our role, respond to any questions, and further strengthen our relationship," said Mr. Finkelstein.

Charter School administrators were clearly receptive to the opportunity, as representatives from Hudson, Mercer, Somerset and Middlesex counties braved the elements to attend the seminar, despite threats of torrential rain and a hurricane.

(See **Charter** on page 3)

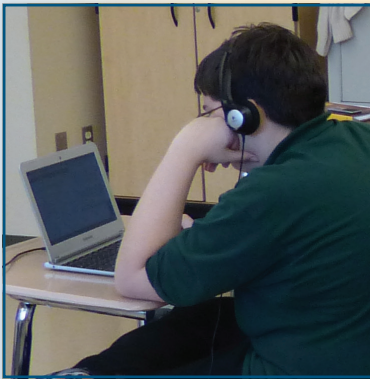


*MRESC Board President Dale Caldwell makes a point at the recent Charter Schools seminar.*

## MRESC Part Of Internet Consortium

Over 200 schools are receiving greater Internet capacity at less cost, saving New Jersey taxpayers approximately \$89 million, said Kevin Dellicker, Co-founder/Manager of Dellicker Strategies, on a recent edition of *Better Together*, the MRESC podcast highlighting the advantages of shared services.

The New Jersey Digital Readiness for Learning and Assessment Project (NJDLAP), a New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) initiative, is managed by the MRESC, Bergen County Technical Schools, and Dellicker Strategies, a Lehigh Valley, Pa., consulting firm specializing in broadband infrastructure.



*Schools receive more bandwidth*

NJDOE Assistant Commissioner Evo Popoff, who appeared on *Better Together* with Patrick M. Moran, MRESC School Business Administrator, and Mr. Dellicker said: "the state is committed to public, private and charter schools having enough high-speed bandwidth to support 21st century digital learning."

Mr. Dellicker said the savings were based on volume.

"When schools cooperatively purchase anything, including broadband capacity – they get more for less."

Mr. Moran said some districts that didn't sign up for the program still benefit due to their geographic location.

"We prefer districts being part of the initiative, but if more students are being served it's still a plus," he said. •

## Donation Used To Aid PRDS Family



*PRDS Teacher Brenda Berrios comforted PRDS Parent Ilma Portas, when she was told her family would receive \$6,000 to help recover from the misfortune of their apartment burning down.*

When Ashley Calderon, a PRDS student in Mrs. Brenda Berrios' class, arrived home at her Dunellen apartment after the second day of school in September, she was shocked to see the building that housed her apartment on fire.

Fortunately, Ashley had the presence of mind to call her mother, Ilma Portas, inform her of the situation, and assure her that she was safe, standing among the law enforcement officials on the scene. The family has been living in the attic of a friend since being abruptly displaced from their apartment.

Now, thanks in large part to the charitable efforts of Mr. William Zuppa's OneManOneBikeOneChild not for profit organization, the family will soon move into their own apartment.

Mr. Zuppa has been bike riding to raise funds annually for PRDS families ever since his nephew, Georgie Caunt, a former student there, passed away at the age of 14 in 1995. For this year's 20th Georgie Caunt Memorial Ride, Mr. Zuppa rode 165 miles in one day, raising \$6,000 in pledges.

Each year the PRDS OneManOneBikeOneChild Committee votes to determine which of several PRDS families nominated should be awarded the funds.

"For the first time, the committee was unanimous in its selection," said longtime committee member Debbie Bussiere.

Upon receiving the check from Mr. Zuppa, Mrs. Portas said she considered Mr. Zuppa "one of my family members now." •

## Many NJ School Buses Bought Through MRESC's Co-op



It was no surprise when a large number of transportation vendors attended a recent school bus bid opening facilitated by School Business Administrator Patrick M. Moran (far right). A large percentage of New Jersey school bus sales are coordinated through MRESC's Co-op Pricing System because of the 950 member organization's ability to secure reduced rates. The MRESC Coordinated Transportation Services manages the safe and efficient transportation of 14,000 students statewide. •



## Communication Workshop For ALC Parents

**P**arent/child communication dynamics are often difficult under the best of circumstances.

For parents of children with special needs, effective communication can be particularly challenging.

To support parents with communication strategies, the Academy Learning Center recently held a workshop "Communication Supports: How Can I Improve Communication Skills?" facilitated by Speech and Language Pathologist Tina Giovannucci.

Since parents of special needs students generally have little if any special education training, Mrs. Giovannucci effectively demystified some common terminologies. For example, Augmentative Alternative Communication (ACC), was clearly defined as any form of communication with the exception of oral speech.

"Facial expressions, body language, gestures, even texting are examples of ACC," she said.

Mrs. Giovannucci stressed the importance of correctly interpreting verbal and non verbal cues as well, an important factor when communicating with anyone, including people with special needs.

Instead of parents becoming frustrated trying to understand what their child wants when going out to eat, it is important to realize that sometimes a non verbal gesture like pointing is all



*ALC Speech and Language Pathologist Tina Giovannucci facilitating a parent workshop on communication.*

that's necessary, Mrs. Giovannucci said.

"Some restaurants, like Friendly's, make communication much easier because of their use of pictures on the menu," she added.

Mrs. Giovannucci said iPads are an extremely useful communication support. With so many people owning iPads, those with special needs don't have to feel self conscious walking around with one, she added.

Regardless of the communication support, Mrs. Giovannucci said: "Always make your child feel good about making an effort to communicate." •

### Charter (Cont'd from page 1)

The program featured remarks from New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Assistant Commissioner/Chief Innovation Officer Evo Popoff, and Dr Laura Morana, the NJDOE's Interim Executive County Superintendent for Middlesex and Mercer counties, in addition to comments from Mr. Caldwell and Mr. Finkelstein.

Although state law grants Charter Schools some flexibility in meeting general education, special education, and business service regulations, they still must comply with all federal and state mandates, said Mr. Finkelstein.

"With nearly 40 years experience, we are a resource that can help Charter Schools further strengthen their educational efforts, save taxpayer dollars, and remain in compliance of state and federal laws," he said.

Overviews of specific services were presented by:

- Mr. Gary Molenaar – MRESC Assistant Superintendent for Learning/Educational Services
- Mrs. Nancy Armbruster – MRESC Director of Nonpublic Schools
- Mrs. Iris Perlstein – Princeton House Behavioral Health's Director of Clinical Programming
- Mr. Patrick Moran – MRESC Business Administrator and Board Secretary

Mr. Moran's comments included information about the cost savings to schools who join MRESC's free, 950 member Co-op Pricing System.



*Dr Laura Morana, the NJDOE's Interim Executive County Superintendent for Middlesex and Mercer counties, NJDOE Assistant Commissioner/Chief Innovation Officer Evo Popoff, and Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein were among the speakers at the first Charter Schools/MRESC Seminar.*

"We are the largest Co-op Pricing System in New Jersey, so our collective buying power helps members realize significant savings on everything from office furniture, custodial supplies, security equipment and computers, to reduced interest rates when leasing buses, snow blowers, and playground equipment," said Mr. Moran.

A podcast of the seminar can be downloaded at: <http://www.teachertube.com/audio/mresc-charter-school-presentation-978>. •

## Update On NuView Academy Annex

**N**uView Academy Annex (NAA) Principal Chastity Rivera recently made presentations at an MRESC Board of Directors meeting, and at a meeting of the Middlesex County Special Education administrators.

The NAA, which opened for the 2015-2016 school year, "is already having a positive impact on student achievement," Mrs. Rivera said.

"The combination of onsite, daily access to clinical support from Princeton House therapists, case managers and counselors, combined with the Hybrid Learning curriculum, which includes a Google Chromebook for each student during the school day, is

working well for students," she said.

Contact Mrs. Rivera at [crivera@mresc.k12.nj.us](mailto:crivera@mresc.k12.nj.us) or 732-777-9848 Ext. 6100, for more information. •



*NuView Academy Annex Principal Chastity Rivera at recent Board meeting.*



*Mrs. Iris Perlstein, Princeton House Behavioral Health's Director of Clinical Programming, visited NuView Academy to discuss the onsite clinical support services her organization provides both NuView Academy, and the recently opened Nuview Academy Annex.*

### Welcome Aboard



*Board President Dale Caldwell (R) welcomed new members (L-R) Dr. Scott Taylor (Highland Park), Dr. Johanna Ruberto, (South Plainfield), Dr. David Roman (Perth Amboy) and Dr. Frank Alfano (South Amboy).*

### State Board President Visits MRESC



*New Jersey State Board of Education President Mark W. Biedron, (L), following a recent visit to MRESC with Administrative Secretaries Linda Anderson, Nancy Tavormina and Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein.*

## BBLC's Computer Coding Effort Draws Attention



**B**BLC's Kate Johnson and Tonya Shearin's techniques for introducing special education students to computer coding created some social media buzz after it was reported in the *Home News Tribune*, and posted to *myCentralJersey.com*. Within 48 hours, the story had been posted to Facebook over 200 times, retweeted 40 times, and shared 24 times on LinkedIn.

The story, appearing under the headline "MRESC school to teach students with autism how to code," was also the focus of a presentation to the MRESC Board of Directors.

*Bee-Bot robots, part of a presentation on teaching students computer coding, were distributed to Board members by BBLC's Tonya Shearin.*



## Performing Arts Program At PRDS

**M**usic, like other performing arts, are now much more accessible to special needs students, as advances in computer software enable them to play instruments ranging from piano guitar, drums, and most other instruments. One need look no further than the PRDS Visual and Performing Arts Program to witness examples of student success.

Led by Music Teacher Eric Marozine, the school's iPad Band, provides an opportunity for students to use iPads to play various songs. Members of the iPad Band participate in weekly practices, and play at special events.

"Playing in the iPad Band gives students a great sense of achievement, helps develop their teamwork skills, and is a lifelong way to reduce stress," he said.

With music of course, comes dance. Led by Adaptive Physical Education Teacher Angela Pento, participants in the APE Dance Class get exercise, and build their confidence and social skills, all while meeting several National Association For Sport and Physical Education standards.

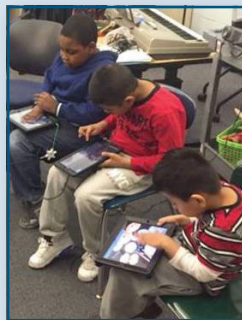
"Dance is also a great way for students to strengthen their ability to interpret visual, verbal and physical cues," said Ms. Pento.

Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein said: "It is most gratifying to us as educators, when teachers integrate advances in technology to not only help students learn, but also improve their quality of life."

The PRDS Visual and Performing Arts Program was the focus of presentations by Mr. Marozine and Ms. Pento at recent meetings of the MRESC Board of Directors, and the Middlesex County Special Education Administrators. •



*Music Teacher Eric Marozine leading an iPad Band practice.*



*PRDS students using iPads to play music.*



*Adaptive Physical Education Teacher Angela Pento explains the PRDS Visual and Performing Arts Program at a Middlesex County Special Education Administrators meeting.*

### MCA Picnic



*MCA students Yanee Stafford and Syed Ahmed demonstrate their impressive hula hoop skills at the recent school picnic.*

### Inventive Student At MCA



*As part of a class exercise, MCA's Jerson Acuna-Tejeda describes his invention which is designed to cure cancer.*

### New Staff Orientation



*MRESC Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein addressed approximately 60 new staff members at an orientation program coordinated by Director of Human Resources Lorraine R. Small.*

## Strong Turnout For Dyslexia Awareness Workshop

The MRESC Media Center was filled to capacity by parents and educators for a free Dyslexia Awareness Workshop.

Coordinated by Supervisor Fredrika Glantz-Schwerin, the event was held in October to coincide with National Dyslexia Awareness Month.

The workshop, called, Dyslexia: Making It Personal, was an "interactive simulation" designed to help participants experience the challenges and frustrations faced by people with this language-based learning difference.

The workshop was facilitated by a representative from Learning Ally, a national nonprofit organization



*Many parents and educators attended a free Dyslexia Awareness Workshop facilitated by Mark Brugger of Learning Ally, a national nonprofit organization that helps students and families manage reading difficulties.*

with "a defined approach to reading, learning and success for students and families managing dyslexia and other reading difficulties." •

### Winner (Cont'd from page 1)

experiences greater enjoyment playing sports, particularly baseball, not to mention a better social life.

Like other NuView Academy students, Chris has benefitted from the combination of onsite, daily access to clinical support services from Princeton House therapists, and the school's engaging Hybrid Learning curriculum – which includes student's receiving a Google Chromebook to use the entire school day.

NuView Academy Principal Bill Walsh credits his supportive staff for helping Chris, but said Chris needed to maintain the resolve to follow through on his commitment to get in better shape.

"At some point Chris realized he wanted to improve his life, and determined there were things under his control that he could do to help himself," Mr. Walsh said.

Mr. Walsh said Chris was the inspiration behind NuView Academy's "Mission Possible" slogan, used

to celebrate the school's recent 15 year anniversary.

Chris said he now has the ability to make better food choices. For example, when he needs a snack, he will prepare a bowl of multigrain cereal with skim milk, instead of grabbing a bag chips and a bottle of soda.

"I have so much more energy now, and just feel better overall," he said.

The success of onsite clinical support services for students is what prompted the MRESC to open the NuView Academy Annex on its Piscataway Campus at 1690 Stelton Road, to start the 2015-2016 school year.

"Sending schools expressed interest in having more onsite clinical support to effectively meet students' behavioral and emotional needs, which in turn strengthens their academic performance," said Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein.

"Since we are typically at capacity at NuView Academy, our Board of Directors supported the idea of opening the NuView Academy Annex to benefit additional students," he said. •

## Broadway Visits NuView Academy

NuView Academy students enjoyed writing and singing with singer-songwriter Danny Tieger, who is currently in the traveling Broadway show Matilda. Mr. Tieger, who recently published his first book, *I am your Songwriting Journal*, visited NuView for a special workshop which focused on the creative process entailed in songwriting. The workshop included an opportunity for students to perform the songs they wrote.

Mr. Tieger has written, taught, performed and collaborated with the Story Pirates, NASA, The Jim Henson Company, Traveling Light Productions, and 5 Degrees West. •



*Touring Broadway performer Danny Tieger's songwriting workshop was well received by NuView Academy students.*

## Healthy Sales At PRDS Farmer's Market



*Part of the PRDS Community-Based Instruction program involves students helping customers make selections and collecting money for fresh produce purchases at the school's Farmer's Market.*



## Successful PTO Basket Auction at CLL

The Center for Lifelong Learning's 2015 Basket Auction, a major fundraiser managed by the school's dedicated PTO, generated approximately \$10,000 in revenue. There were items of interest for just about every one of the approximately 150 people who attended. The donated prizes included: an Eli Manning pre-autographed lithograph poster; a Gloria Vanderbilt wheeled duffle; a Dell Inspiron laptop; four tickets to a Somerset Patriots game; a Weber Grill; a free dental exam and cleaning from Dr. Mariana Blagoev, DDS.; a Hoover Wind Tunnel Vacuum, and a Martha Stewart Enameled Cast Iron 6 quart round Casserole, to name a few.

"We're grateful to so many people who donated their time and effort," said PTO Treasurer Mrs. Trisha Garlatti, a key Basket

Auction coordinator at CLL for several years.

PTO President Mrs. Corinna Mazza, added that "without the support of so many people and businesses, this event would not have been possible."

Principal Mary Beth Conley said the PTO's coordination efforts were extraordinary.

"It was amazing," said Mrs. Conley.

"So many people worked extremely hard to both raise money for students, and provide people with a fun night out," she added.

In addition to Mrs. Mazza, and Mrs. Garlatti, PTO Officers include Vice Presidents: Ms. Darlene Heins and Mrs. Marta Petrocelli, Secretary, Mrs. Maritza Mena and Fundraiser Mr. Hernan Castro. •

### *A Few PTO Basket Auction Moments*



## Student Support At BBLC Secondary

Occupational Therapist Dawn Welker providing some individualized instruction to a BBLC Secondary student. •



## Mobile Dome Theater At PRDS

The Mobile Dome Theater Planetarium touched down at the PRDS for two days recently, providing students an opportunity to learn about astronomy and space travel.

"It was a unique experience that our students truly enjoyed," said PRDS Principal Phyllis Delucia.

"Thanks to the generosity of Kramer Entertainment, we were able to keep their Dome Theater in our gymnasium for two days at a significantly reduced rate," she added. •



## BBLC Students Strive To Make Their Mark



Inspired by the Peter H. Reynolds' book *The Dot*, BBLC students created an art display that was featured in the Central Office Conference Room. Under the guidance of Art Teacher Audrey Roderman, students were urged to make their mark by unleashing their creativity. •



### Middlesex Regional Educational Services Commission

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