

# TechLife

Your Award Winning News Publication

CELEBRATING OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY



## Promoting Self-Empowerment And Social-Emotional Learning Through Affirmations

**PCTVS is extremely proud to announce the launch of a new Weekly Affirmation initiative! Designed to promote positivity and self-empowerment, the social and emotional learning (SEL) measure was introduced in February.**

An affirmation is a straight-forward, positive statement of emotional support or encouragement. Scientific studies have proven that these mantras can have profound effects on the conscious and unconscious mind, thereby supporting positive mental health and social-emotional learning.

Alternating between PCTI and DCL STEM Academy, student representatives have created brief videos each week delivering new affirmation statements. The videos are shared with the entire school community. Students are introduced to each affirmation through their homeroom classes. Follow-up activities throughout the week include quick discussions to help reinforce the concept and how it can be applied in students' daily lives. The supportive messages are shared on PCTVS social media platforms, as well, to encourage family discussions at home.

Cheyenne Williams, a student in PCTI's School of Performing Arts, successfully kicked off the first week of the program with her **'I AM CAPABLE'** affirmation. DCL STEM Academy Biomedical student Duaa Raza was up next with her **'I AM PRESENT'** message. Academy of Health Science senior Michael Saykali inspired with his **'I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE'** affirmation, while Victoria Mistretta, also from DCL STEM Biomedical, rounded out the month with **'I AM LOVABLE'**

Director of Pupil Personnel Services Nick Bucci is pleased with the response from the PCTVS community. "The students are doing an incredible job making the videos, and their encouraging messages are resonating with their peers. With so much uncertainty due to the pandemic, it is critical that we maintain a positive climate and help students develop tools to combat the negative effects of stress," he said.

Thank you to Mr. Bucci, Michelle Rizzo (Director of Special Education), the Committee for Student SEL, the contributing students, and the Communications Department for bringing this valuable initiative to our district!

### PCTVS AFFIRMATION!

**"I AM CAPABLE"**



### PCTVS AFFIRMATION!

**"I AM PRESENT"**

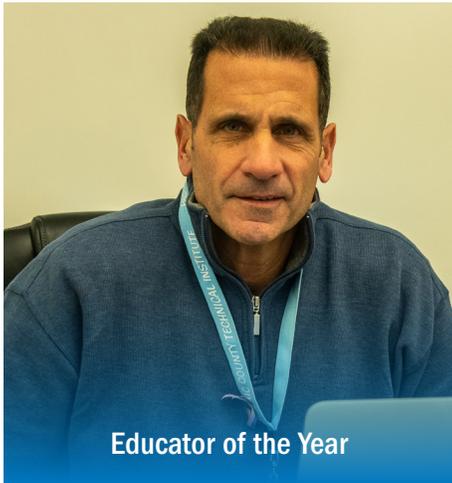


### PCTVS AFFIRMATION!

**"I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE"**



# Robert Nutile and Julissa Rodriguez Named EDUCATORS OF THE YEAR



Educator of the Year

The PCTVS community has proudly announced its Educators of the Year for 2020. The honor of Educator of the Year goes to Robert Nutile, while Julissa Rodriguez has been named Educational Specialist of the Year.

**Robert Nutile came to PCTI in 2007 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Police Administration and ten years of law enforcement experience.** As an educator in the Academy of Criminal Justice, Nutile consistently strives to apply his knowledge of child development to create a learning environment that nurtures the whole student. By fostering an atmosphere of inclusivity and mutual respect, Nutile is able to successfully support, guide, and encourage his students. “My overriding principle is to be available to my students and to structure my classroom and lessons to meet their needs,” he said.

Outside of the classroom, Nutile leads the school’s award-winning Mock Trial team. The extracurricular activity allows students to use critical thinking and presentation skills, while learning about the various roles within the criminal justice system. Additionally, Nutile coaches the baseball team, encouraging hard work, discipline, maturity, and teamwork. A testament to his leadership, his 2017 team was the recipient of Passaic County’s Pete Amoruso Memorial Award for excellent sportsmanship.

**For Julissa Rodriguez, pride in PCTVS runs deep, as she is a graduate of PCTI.** In her seventh year employed by the District, she currently serves as an Instructional Technology Coach. Prior to this position, she taught business courses in both the Academy of Finance and the School of Business, earning three consecutive W!SE Gold Star Teacher Awards. With a Master’s degree in Accounting and almost a decade of industry experience, Rodriguez made the transition to education through the alternate route program.

As an educator and coach, Rodriguez heralds the merits of lifelong learning – and she practices what she preaches. Not only has she completed the requirements for her Supervisor’s Certification, but she is also working towards completing a second advanced degree in Educational Technology. Additionally, Rodriguez earned the prestigious title of ISTE Certified Educator earlier this year. “The world is constantly changing and innovating, and it stops for no one. So keep learning and sharpening those skills, and success will follow,” she said.



Educational Specialist of the Year

## PCTVS Students Rock the Mock



Living up to its team motto, “Commitment to Excellence,” the PCTVS Mock Trial Team captured the Passaic County title for the fourth consecutive year. Sponsored by the New Jersey State Bar Foundation, the annual Mock Trial Competition seeks to bring the teaching of law to life for high school students across the state.

While this year’s event was unique, as it was held via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it did nothing to deter the team. After a week of competition, the Bulldogs were undefeated.

Mock Trial Coach and PCTVS Educator of the Year Robert Nutile praised the 25-member team on their hard work and dedication. “They were mentally tougher, smarter, and more disciplined than their competitors. The team received rave reviews from Superior Court Judge Justine Niccolai,” Nutile stated.

Representing PCTVS in the county trials were Kimberly Crespo and Lesly Montesino as Senior Attorneys; Diya Patel and Pamela Tolentino as Junior Attorneys; and Kevin Cazarez, Nathalie Coletti, Izabelle Grzybowski, Yasmin Obeidallah, Amy Polanco, and Andrea Posada as Witnesses.

# CULINARY ARTS STUDENTS PREPARE OUT-OF-THIS-WORLD RECIPE FOR ASTRONAUTS



A skilled team of students from the School of Culinary Arts researched, developed, and prepared a stellar dish, as they recently competed in the first phase of the NASA HUNCH Culinary Challenge. The annual competition encourages teams of high school students to design meals for astronauts to enjoy while aboard the International Space Station (ISS). In 2016, the PCTI team took home the gold with a tasty Red Pepper Puree Risotto entrée, which was later launched into space to be enjoyed by NASA astronauts.

This year's contest challenged students to create a comfort food that met the standards provided by NASA HUNCH officials and the Johnson Food Lab Scientists. In creating a recipe, the team tried a new twist on risotto. "The selection this year is Butternut Squash Risotto. It is an Italian comfort food, which incorporates butternut squash and

candied pecans to yield both flavor and nutritional value," said Schools to Careers Coordinator Christopher Santhouse.

Local restaurateurs volunteered to evaluate the entrée at the event on PCTI's campus. Electronic rubrics were completed and submitted directly to NASA. Once the scores from each participating high school are tallied, the top ten finalists will compete nationally in April.

PCTI would like to thank the chefs from the following local restaurants and catering services for serving as judges at the February taste test: Barrow House, Bella Vida Pastry Shop, Cedar Crest Assisted Living, Chef Jesse Concepts, Lunello's, Mike's Pasta Shop, Nicholas Market, Rare Steakhouse, and Upper Montclair Country Club.

## HOSA TEAM MAKES ITS MARK IN COMPETITION AND IN CARING

With the challenge of a shortened lead time of four weeks, 90 members of the Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) team gave it their all to prepare for the HOSA Northern Regional Competition. The event was held virtually in January, and their hard work paid off. Winners were announced at an awards ceremony broadcast live through YouTube, and an incredible 16 Bulldogs 'placed' in various categories. The team's top 8 competitors, who placed 1st - 5th in their specialties, will continue to represent PCTVS at the state level at the end of March.

"This year has been challenging due to restrictions, but our members persevered. They picked up materials and attended multiple study sessions, some over winter break. My co-advisors and I are incredibly proud!" said Advisor Karen Brawley.

The following students will be advancing to the state competition in these categories: Home Health Aide - Isabella Arias, Mariselle Morillo, Esteban Ocana; Nurse Assisting - Anna McDermott; Biomedical Science - Raneem Ahmad, Andrea Vizcarra; Medical

Spelling - Madiha Kahn; Cultural Diversities and Disparities in Healthcare - Caroline Cipriano.

Despite the busy preparation for the competition, the HOSA team made time to give back to the community. In an initiative called 'Cards for Caregivers,' students created virtual cards to send to local healthcare workers. The cards expressed encouragement and gratitude, as the caregivers stay on the frontlines of the pandemic and continue to help keep our communities safe.

Kudos to the HOSA team and to their advisors Ms. Bastante, Ms. Brawley, Ms. DeVore, and Ms. Ponticello for your success in both endeavors!



## Theatre Arts Student Charity Wilder Takes the Virtual Stage



Charity Wilder, a senior in the School of Performing Arts and President of the Thespian Honor Society, earned 2nd place honors in the New Jersey Governor's Award Competition for Theatre Arts this winter. The annual event is sponsored by the Speech and Theatre Association of New Jersey, with hundreds of schools competing. Charity took the stage in the virtual contest in the category 'Contrasting Monologues.' Her outstanding video performance was submitted in December, and judging was completed in January.

**Well done, Charity! You are a true star!**



# CELEBRATE TODAY, OWN TOMORROW!

It is no secret that PCTVS offers a myriad of opportunities to prepare students for today's global society. While the impact of providing students with a competitive, professional edge is visible on a daily basis, February is an extremely special month on campus! Each winter, the unparalleled PCTVS experience is highlighted, as Career and Technical Education Month (CTE Month) is celebrated.

## CTE MONTH STUDENT HIGHLIGHT!



VICTORIA MISTRETTA



DUA A RAZA



KAYLEE GARCIA



YARITZA LOPEZ



IBRAHIM ESBEITAN

### Social Media Engagement

Given the challenges of hybrid learning, PCTVS quickly adapted this year by utilizing its social media platforms in order to tell its CTE story digitally. Embracing the theme of 'CELEBRATE TODAY, OWN TOMORROW,' posts on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter showcased how current students and alumni have been made college and career-ready through CTE.

### Celebrating Today

Victoria Mistretta, a junior Biomedical student of DCL STEM Academy, was featured for her role as a research team member of the Cognitive Neuroimaging Lab at Montclair State University, where she is studying the effects of racism on the area of the brain that regulates social interaction. Also from STEM Biomedical, Duaa Raza was highlighted for her win in the Reno Microsoft DigiGirlz competition and for her role as a founding member of the STEM EXPO Planning Committee.

PCTI Academy of Finance students Kaylee Garcia and Yaritza Lopez were recognized for their outstanding achievement of being selected to work as tellers at the school branch of Columbia Bank. Ibrahim Esbeitan, a Manufacturing student in the School

of Applied Engineering, was also proudly showcased on social media. He is advancing his CAD/CAM/CNC skills and plans on attending college to further his studies of manufacturing and engineering.

### Owning Tomorrow

Alumni from various academies also shared their success stories, making clear that the CTE provided by PCTVS will undoubtedly help students to 'own tomorrow.'

Class of 2020 Academy of Information Technology graduate Michaela Schwab landed her first professional job at the startup company iCamp, where she instructs young adults in Scratch, 3D modeling, Game Design, and Animation. She is also continuing her studies at Rutgers University where she is double majoring in Astrophysics and English Literature.

Anthony Habeck, also from the Class of 2020, learned as much as he could about manual and CNC machining as a student of the School of Applied Engineering. His co-op experience has led him to a position as a full-time Tool and Die apprentice with Carl-Stahl Sava Industries. The company is not only sponsoring Anthony in the apprenticeship, but they plan to help cover his tuition for college.



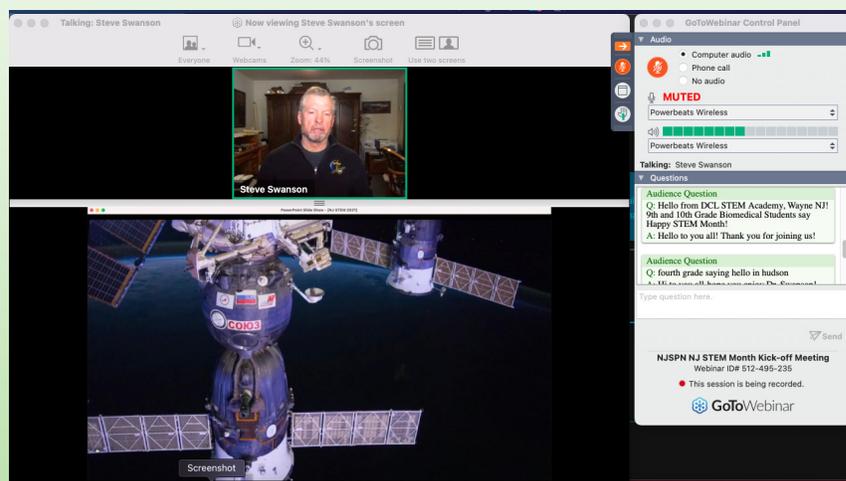
# THE SCOOP ON STEM



With some out-of-the-box thinking and careful planning, the Diana C. Lobosco (DCL) STEM Academy planned a robust schedule of events and activities in February and March to celebrate both CTE Month and STEM Month, engage families, and make learning meaningful and fun!

## Professional Speakers and Career Exposure

In their scheduled classes, several professional guest speakers were hosted in order to expose students to career opportunities in each of the three programs of study. Presentations included Liberty Science Center: Live from Surgery, Rutgers School of Pharmacy, and John Crombie, Biomedical Engineer and President of Upstart Product Development. A NJSTEM Pathways webinar with Steve Swanson, PhD. allowed students to converse with a retired astronaut. Dr. Swanson shared his academic and professional experience of living and working on the International Space Station. Rutgers School of Engineering also facilitated an interactive, virtual event, which presented students with the latest information on Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Environmentally Sustainable Automotive Design and Manufacturing.



## Upcoming Virtual Family Challenges

DCL STEM students and their families were recently invited to participate in three “Virtual Family Challenges” in March. Each challenge, facilitated by CTE teachers, staff, and students, represents one of the majors offered at the STEM Academy. Participants will be presented with a simple real-world problem or task like coding a dance party, diagnosing and determining treatment for a hypothetical patient, or designing a device from common household materials. After collaboratively developing a solution, groups will present their findings and task results.

## Coming This Spring: EXPO Challenge!

The EXPO Challenge also kicked off this winter through school-wide communication, posters, and the EXPO student website. Students will compete in the challenge by proposing and conducting investigations which use the scientific method or the engineering design process. A virtual event will be held in June, where the winning projects will be announced.

Erik Arquiza, a Class of 2019 Academy of Health and Medical Sciences graduate, is now a valued essential healthcare worker. Erik is a Night Shift Patient Care Assistant at Keck Hospital of University of Southern California, while he also pursues a Bachelor of Science at California State University. While at PCTI, he learned a wide range of skills which helped him attain his CNA and EMT certifications.

Elianni De La Cruz, Class of 2014 Academy of Criminal Justice alum, followed her passion to study law. In honor of CTE Month, she shared a short video message of inspiration and gratitude. Currently an insurance defense attorney, she credits her PCTVS Mock Trial experience for reinforcing her interest in the legal profession.

Thank you Michaela, Anthony, Erik, and Elianni for sharing your empowering success stories and helping to reinforce the importance of CTE! We are proud of your Bulldog history and have no doubt that you will continue to be leaders in your fields!



# ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

## CRIMINAL JUSTICE:

*in their own words*

As we celebrate CTE Month, PCTVS is proud to boast of the accomplishments of two distinguished alumni from the esteemed Academy of Criminal Justice and Public Safety. Juleidy Aquino, Class of 2012 and Jasmine Blesing, Class of 2007 recently shared their valuable insight and inspiration on how the comprehensive education they received at PCTI prepared them for future success in the field!

After high school, Juleidy Aquino earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Social Work and Psychology at Rutgers University and is now making a difference in her community by proudly serving as a Patrol Officer for the Passaic Police Department. Officer Aquino said:



**Juleidy Aquino**

*"The Academy of Criminal Justice was the best choice I could have made when selecting a program. The education I received at PCTI definitely prepared me for the career that I have chosen, providing the tools and instruction I needed in order to build character, strength, and confidence. I learned about crime scene investigations, forensics, court proceedings, police tactics, trials, and so much more. All of the instructors' lessons and guidance have shaped me into the police officer that I am today. I hold PCTI in the highest regard as one of the greatest schools I have ever attended, and I thank my instructors for molding this tiny, shy girl into a crime-fighting police officer."*

Upon graduating from PCTI in 2007, Jasmine Blesing continued her studies to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree from Ramapo College. She was then hired by the Passaic County Sheriff's Office in 2015 and graduated as the Vice President of her Police Academy class in October of the same year. Since then, she has worked in several divisions, including Community Policing and Patrol. Helping to run the Junior Police Academy every summer, where youth get a weeklong look into the life of a police officer, is one of her favorite parts of her work. In December of 2020 PCTVS was thrilled to welcome Officer Blesing back to campus, as she was promoted to School Resource Officer. She says:



**Jasmine Blesing**

*"I credit my desire to continue within the criminal justice field to teachers like Mr. Allen Schwartz and Mr. Joaquin Johnson who made school assignments relate to real life. I always knew I wanted to be in law enforcement, but learning the role of different branches of government and then being able to participate in mock scenarios throughout high school solidified my ambition. I specifically remember meeting New Jersey State Troopers my senior year, and saying to myself, this is what I was born to do. I am elated to be back where I can help students find their passion and pursue their career paths. I want the students to know that our school, our teachers and staff are amazing. PCTVS will always be there to guide you to your dreams."*

Thank you for your service, officers! We wish you continued success in your careers!

## CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH!

In honor of Black History Month, PCTI Vocal Technique students, under the direction of Mr. Martinez, remotely performed a beautiful rendition of 'Steal Away'. Their beautiful harmonies were showcased in a video that was shared with the entire PCTVS community. Additionally, daily quotes and commentaries from notable Black Americans were researched and recorded by sophomore Olivia Gray, a student of the School of Education. These messages were shared with students, faculty, and staff to initiate discussion throughout the month.

Well done and thank you, talented singers, Mr. Martinez, Olivia, and Student Activities Coordinator Tenaya Bascomb!



# AMAZING ATHLETIC ACHIEVEMENTS

## PCTVS TEAMS WITH JETS AND NIKE TO PILOT GIRLS FLAG FOOTBALL



PCTVS is excited to announce it will be one of eight high schools to participate in the pilot season of the New Jersey High School Girls Flag Football League. The new addition to the high school athletics landscape is the result of a collaboration between the New York Jets and Nike. With the inaugural season of the sport scheduled to kick off this spring, the official announcement was made on February 3 in recognition of the 35th annual National Girls & Women in Sports Day.

The two powerhouse sports organizations are supporting PCTVS and the other participating schools in the ambitious endeavor by providing all of the necessary funding, equipment, and uniforms to make the launch of the league a success. The seven-game season is set to culminate with a first

annual Jets x Nike Girls Flag Football Invitational at MetLife Stadium.

Over forty PCTVS students have expressed interest in taking the field, with practices scheduled to begin in April. PCTVS Athletic Director Nic Nese is excited about the possibilities. "The Jets and Nike are really going above and beyond in helping to empower young women athletes through this initiative. We are absolutely thrilled and feel extremely grateful to be one of the schools given this incredible opportunity," he said.

Photo Caption: Jade Ramos-Henkel unboxes her PCTVS Bulldog flag football jersey from the New York Jets and Nike.

## LIVESTREAM A HUGE WIN FOR BULLDOG ATHLETICS

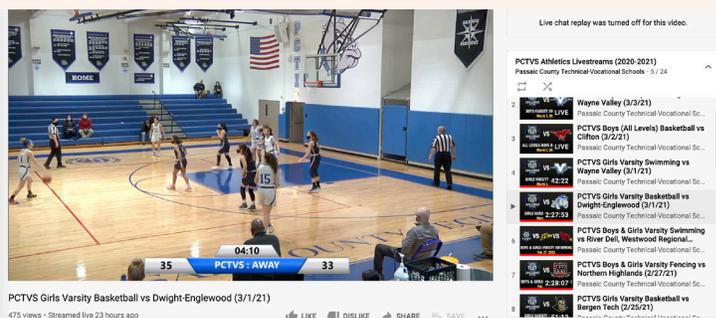
As the result of an outstanding collaboration between the PCTVS Athletics and Communications Departments, enthusiastic families and fans were able to keep the Bulldog spirit alive by tuning into livestreamed home basketball games, fencing matches, and swim meets beginning in January.

With little to no spectators permitted for most of the winter sports season due to state COVID restrictions, Athletic Director Nic Nese knew a solution was in order. "We 100% understand how

tough it is to miss out on watching your kids play," he said. "We didn't want to let that happen."

The response from parents has been extremely positive. "The ability to watch virtually from anywhere - the car, the couch, the office - at any time, has been especially appreciated by families whose work schedules kept them from being able to attend under normal circumstances," Nese added.

THANK YOU TO EVERYONE WHO HELPED TO MAKE THIS HAPPEN!



## Fencing Standouts Frank Gallo and Aydan Robinson Named Athletes of the Month

Congratulations to fencers Frank Gallo and Aydan Robinson for being named February Athletes of the Month. The standout competitors anchored the Fencing Team with their personal wins, leading the team to its best season ever!

Frank Gallo, a senior from PCTI's Academy of Criminal Justice, is a 3-year varsity letter winner and Boys Foil Weapon Captain. He secured an incredible 20 wins in 24 bout experiences this season.

Aydan Robinson's 22 wins in 24 bouts contributed greatly to the Bulldogs' success. Aydan, a senior from PCTI's School of Communication Arts, is a 4-year varsity letter winner and 2-year Girls Sabre Weapon Captain. She has amassed a career record of 79 Sabre wins, earning her a school record.

We are proud of Frank, Ayden, and the entire Bulldogs Fencing Team on their historic 2021 season!



## PCTVS BOARD OF EDUCATION

Michael Coscia / President  
Damaris M. Solomon / Vice President  
Glenn L. Brown / Commissioner  
Kesha Drakeford / Commissioner /  
Interim Executive County Superintendent  
Mae Remer / Board Secretary  
Albert C. Buglione / Board Counsel

## PCTVS ADMINISTRATION

John F. Maiello / Acting Superintendent  
Leonard (Ted) Szczawinski / Assistant Superintendent  
Richard J. Giglio / Business Administrator

## COUNTY OF PASSAIC BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Pasquale "Pat" Lepore / Commissioner Director  
Bruce James / Commissioner Deputy Director  
Assad Akhter / Commissioner  
John W. Bartlett, Esq. / Commissioner  
Theodore "TJ" Best / Commissioner  
Terry Duffy / Commissioner  
Cassandra "Sandi" Lazzara / Commissioner

## PCTVS "TECHLIFE" STAFF

Sandra M. Woods / Director of Communications  
& Special Projects / Editor  
Hayley Romano / Writer  
Kirk Coronacion / Photographer  
Layout, design and printing / PCTI Graphic Arts  
Instructors: Fernando Colón & Luis Colón  
PCTI School of Communication Arts © 2021

## Passaic County Technical-Vocational Schools

Passaic County's National Award-Winning Public High Schools  
for Academics, Careers & Technology  
45 Reinhardt Road, Wayne NJ 07470  
(973) 790-6000 www.pcti.tec.nj.us

Non-Profit  
Organization  
US Postage  
Paid  
Paterson, NJ  
Permit No. 1182

# STUDENTS OF THE MONTH EXEMPLIFY SUCCESS

Throughout the school year, PCTVS proudly awards select senior students the designation of 'Student of the Month.' **These outstanding students are chosen for their impressive academic achievements, robust extracurricular activities, dedication to community service, and strong Bulldog character and pride.** Each one serves as a valuable role model in our school community and exemplifies the best PCTVS has to offer.

The honorees so far this school year, pictured from left to right, include: Shahriyar Ahmed, Academy of Information Technology; Jamie Kivelier, School of Communication Arts; Pauline Kung, School of Criminal Justice; Angelly Pallazhco, School of Business Careers; Gabriella Pimenta Fujikawa, School of Applied Engineering; Michael Saykali, Academy of Health Sciences; Grace Tang, School of Applied Engineering; Cheyenne Williams, School of Performing Arts.

Congratulations and best wishes for continued success!

