

Students Maturing Is Best Part of Job

BOCES program coordinator wins state group's award

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Editorial assistant Brenda Duncan recently interviewed Joanne Saya, the New Ventures program coordinator for Madison-Oneida BOCES. She recently won a Work-Based Learning Coordinator of the Year Award, sponsored by the Work Experience Coordinators Association of New York State. Name: Joanne Saya

Age: 46

Where do you live? Brewerton

Why do you live in Central New York? I grew up in Central New York. I'm the youngest of eight, so all my family is here. I went to college in Central New York and just sort of stayed.

Do you have a family? My husband, Steve, and my son, Evan.

Educational background: I received my bachelor's and my master's in education both from SUNY Oswego.

Occupation: New Ventures program coordinator for Madison-Oneida BOCES, in Verona. I'm also have cooperative work study certification in addition to my teaching certification and that's to coordinate internships for all of the career and technical programs here at BOCES.

How long have you worked there? 14 years

How did you feel when you found out that you had won the award? Surprised and shocked, to say the least. I had no idea. I was down there for an annual conference with one of my colleagues. They do that part every year where they have different types of awards. They were going through and saying different names and . . . they got to the Outstanding Work-Based Learning Coordinator and they said Madison-Oneida BOCES and they said my name and I said, "Did they just say my name?" It totally took me by surprise.

Did someone nominate you for the award? Yes, my colleague who I went down to the conference with, Chris Regner. She nominated me.

What do you think makes you so successful in your job? Probably because I love what I do. I truly feel gratified by what I do.

What do you like best about your job? Working with the students and seeing them mature and grow from September to June. I work with seniors only, and it's a very transitional time for them. They're getting ready for college. All of my students go on to college from here and being a part of that process with them going through the college preparation and then the college acceptance. For me, the best part is when they come back and visit. They either come and see me here, or they send me e-mails, they call me and keep in touch through their college career, and let me know how glad they were they were in this program and how much it helped them. That's the best part of my job.

What is the most challenging aspect? Juggling the New Ventures program, the Professional Horizons program and the senior internships. I sort of have three major areas of responsibility and making sure that I'm doing all of them to the best of my ability is probably the most challenging.

In my spare time, I spend time with family. My son is very involved in sports, so I'm either at a soccer game or a basketball game. I'm pretty active. I run, I roller blade, we kayak.

What I like best about my community: I like the area that I'm in because I'm very close to Oneida Lake. We've made some very good friends. We have good neighbors. The school district has been an excellent experience for my son. He's in middle school now.

Can you describe your personality? I'm trying to think of how my husband usually changes all of my negative attributes to positive ones such as instead of stubborn he says determined. You could probably say stubborn, dedicated, positive. I really always try to pull something positive out of every situation, and I try to pass it on to my students to have a positive attitude.

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