Sponsor-A-Scholar Spotlight, Supporting LGBTQ Youth, & More!
March 2019

Marcy Stengel, Executive Director of Capital Region Sponsor-A-Scholar

Sponsor-A-Scholar is a college access and success program that works in the public high schools in Albany, Schenectady, and Troy. Students attend weekly homework sessions which provide them with tutoring and peer support. Students begin as tenth graders and are enrolled in the program until they complete college.

With their new cohort model, students build strong bonds with their peers and tutors, which provides a sense of accountability and community. As part of the program, it is encouraged that Scholars enroll in academically rigorous coursework, and then Sponsor-A-Scholar offers them the consistent support through weekly tutoring to ensure that they can excel in those classes. As a result of this, Scholars often graduate from high school with more than 12, and sometimes as much as 30 college credits. In addition, students also take part in college visits, career exploration activities, and other experiences.

We spoke to Marcy Stengel, the new Executive Director of Capital Region Sponsor-A-Scholar. Marcy has been with Sponsor-A-Scholar for about two months, and she says she is loving it! Marcy’s professional career has always been in the non-profit arena working with various populations, but her “passion has always been on youth-focused organizations.” She added, “There are so many challenges that today's young people face, which makes the need for support, care, and resources so vital.”

We asked Marcy more about the specific programs at Sponsor-A-Scholar. She told us, “One of the most important aspects of our program is mentoring. When each Scholar enters the program, they get matched with a local, college-educated adult who volunteers to serve as a mentor.” Marcy stated further that they follow “nationally-accepted best practices to recruit, screen, train, and support every mentor.” Mentors work with their Scholars from 10th grade through
their first year of college as part of their long-term investment in the students. Mentors spend at least four hours with their mentee each month providing them with another layer of support. Marcy explained, "Our mentors are there to support the Scholar in whatever way they need. Some need help with the college process, some need advice on the many challenges that they face on a daily basis, but mostly it’s having another person in their corner rooting for them to excel."

Sponsor-A-Scholar serves primarily low income, B-average students who want to go to college. Marcy informed us that "many of them are first-generation-to-college students and in some households, English is their second language." Through Sponsor-A-Scholar, staff are able to provide Scholars "with access to afterschool homework help and tutors, specialized workshops, and long-term support to help them graduate from college and reach their goals." These expanded learning opportunities give Scholars a chance to excel in areas where they may not have had an opportunity to do so otherwise.

When asked what her favorite part of her job is, Marcy responded, "My favorite part of this job is knowing that we are making a difference in the lives of our Scholars by providing opportunities, experiences, and critical support. We can see their successes in all that they do, but especially when they return as alumni and talk about how Sponsor-A-Scholar helped them to see their own potential and plan the path that is right for them." She added, "It’s even better when an alumnus gets involved as a mentor or in some other way because they know first-hand the value of the program and want to be able to give back in a meaningful way."

**Four Things to Remember About Supporting LGBTQ Youth**

Want to learn more about how to be supportive and inclusive of LGBTQ youth? Eileen Wise, a youth development specialist at Penn State Better Kid Care and primary author of the PYD series, shares four things to keep in mind.

1. **Know basic facts about gender and sexual orientation.**
   Even if you’re a sensitive and caring youth development professional, there may be some things you don’t know about the LGBTQ—gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning—community. For example: What is the difference between gender identity and gender expression? Is using the word "queer" a sign of being well-informed or is it an insult to an individual who is LGBTQ? Why is it important to be able to talk about gender in a "non-binary" way?

   We know that a small but significant number of children in our care will grow up to become gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning—about 5 percent of children, according to statistics. For any group of children of about 20 or more, there will be at least one child developing as a sexual minority. Like all children, they need our respect, understanding, and support.

   The National AfterSchool Association (NAA) Code of Ethics calls on all youth development professionals to support all types of diverse youth, including LGBTQ youth.

   To be truly supportive, youth development professionals need to learn the basic facts about diversity in gender and sexual orientation. A new online learning module titled “Supporting LGBTQ Youth” is available to support this need. The book *The ABC’s of LGBT+* is another helpful resource.

2. **Realize how important you are.**
   Children as young as 5 years old may begin to feel uncomfortable about their identity as a male or female, and it’s common for children to become aware of their sexual orientation as they enter puberty. What this means is that some children may experience feelings of being different from the norm in their gender and sexual orientation throughout their elementary years. Minority youth are listening and watching our expressions, dress, and body language. They are "reading" us all the time, because we are trusted role models and respected authority figures.

   Afterschool and out-of-school programs can provide a safe haven for gender and sexual orientation minority youth when they implement these elements:
   - Create a welcoming atmosphere.
   - Establish behavior guidelines.
- Promote inclusion.
- Call out discriminatory speech and actions.
- Apply consequences consistently.

When you recognize your authority and take charge of the out-of-school program space, you are giving gender and sexual orientation minority youth the room to feel safe, accepted, and able to explore their identities.

Click here for the full article from the National AfterSchool Association.

**New York's ONLY Statewide Afterschool and Summer Learning Conference!**
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- 30 Minute Speed Sessions
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**Scholarships**
Scholarship funding to participate in this training may be available through the Educational Incentive Program (EIP). For more information or to apply for a scholarship, please visit [www.ecetp.pdp.albany.edu](http://www.ecetp.pdp.albany.edu). You may also contact EIP at eip@albany.edu or 800-295-9616. If you have received an EIP scholarship, please sign it and mail it to the Network along with your registration.

**Other Ways to Register**
To register via check or eip, email erin@networkforyouthsuccess.org.
Upcoming Events

3/15-3/18: National AfterSchool Association Convention, New York, NY
Join our community for four days of networking, learning, and inspiration. For more information, follow this link. If you are attending, join the Network for Youth Success for a New York State Meet-Up with networking and raffle prizes on Friday, March 15th at 8:30pm. Advance registration is required.

3/16: Terra Science and Engineering Fair, Syracuse, NY
Whether you want to explore Cassini’s adventures around Saturn, test water quality in a local creek, or design an app to prep for your next exam, the Terra Northeast Regional Science & Engineering Fair (TNRSEF) enables you to ask questions and find answers! Students in grades 6-12 can come to SUNY Geneseo in March to celebrate all s/he has learned and perhaps even earn an award. More information can be found here.

3/18: Multiplying Good with Students In Action, New York, NY
Currently active in 13 communities across the U.S., Students In Action (SIA) is a unique youth volunteer leadership training and recognition program that supports, trains, and empowers today’s youth to be leaders, problem solvers, entrepreneurs, and impactful global citizens. Register here!

3/28: Hidden Biases — Is this a Concern for Youth Work Professionals? Webinar
What are hidden biases? According to the researchers who developed Harvard’s Implicit Association Test, they are bits of knowledge about social groups that we have stored in our brains because we encounter them many times in our cultural environment. These hidden biases influence how we interact with members of particular social groups such as youth, people living with disabilities, or ethnic/racial groups. And we are oblivious to their influence! This webinar will take a closer look at the research done on first impressions: What is going on in our minds? How does this affect our work with young people? And what can we do to become aware of our blind spots? Register here!

4/4-4/6: NYAEYC Annual Conference, Verona, NY
This conference will host two full days of workshops, exhibitors, and keynote speakers for early care professionals. Visit their website for more information and how to register.

4/13: Long Island School Age Child Care Conference, Melville, NY
This professional development opportunity includes a selection of diverse presenters who will share their expertise of tools and strategies to establish and support social and emotional development in school age children. Keynote speaker Justin Shaifer, kicks off the day with a dive into the 'culturally responsive STEM curriculum.' The conference will be open to 150 registered child care providers who will receive 6 hours of OCFS training for attending. Click here more information and how to register.

5/10-5/11: Network for Youth Success Annual Conference, Saratoga Springs, NY
Back by popular demand for one more year in Saratoga Springs! The New York State Network for Youth Success is holding its Annual Conference May 10 & 11! Come attend New York's only statewide
conference for Afterschool, Summer, and Expanded Learning Professionals. This conference brings together over 200 professionals to participate in two full days of workshops on topics ranging from SEL to Leadership. Follow this link to register today!

6/1: Smart Coos’ National Bilingual Bee & Biliteracy Competition, Brooklyn, NY
Early bird registration is now open for Smart Coos’ First Annual National Bilingual Bee & Biliteracy Competition. This event aims to bring 250+ bilingual student participants, ages 6-15, together. The competition will assess children’s proficiency in English along with one of these languages: Mandarin Chinese, French, Spanish, or Haitian Creole. If there are students who would like to participate or educators who would like to volunteer/judge, please email Mirta at mirta@smartcoos.com

6/12 & 6/19: Building Your Bounce Professional Development Learning Series Webinar
This two part train-the-trainer webinar experience provides participants with a copy of the Building Your Bounce Professional Development Learning Series, a three-part digital training tool that includes recorded videos that cover topics including, "Examining Our Own Risk and Protective Factors," "What Resilience Means to Me," and "Introduction to the Devereux Adult Resilience Survey - 23 Questions That Can Change the Way You Look at Life." Trainers and coaches will learn to use this innovative, digital tool to promote adult wellness in a variety of settings, including staff meetings, in-service trainings and parent workshops. Join Nefertiti and learn how you can create an overall culture of resilience. Register here. (Registration closes June 5).

8/4-8/10: Mindfulness Training for Educators, Lake Placid, NY
This weeklong program set in the idyllic environment of a lakeside retreat in the Adirondacks explores teaching for the 21st century. Participants will learn mindfulness practices, meditation, the neuroscience of learning, the nature of mind, and how to cultivate their inner resources. Each day will include experiential learning, as well as a cognitive element – and afternoons will be free to enjoy the many outdoor activities available to us, or to simply relax and read a book. Learn how mindfulness might benefit you in your role as an educator, and re-connect with the ideals that brought you into this field from the start! Click here for more information and how to register.

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