

JANUARY 2024 | ISSUE 14



## Happy New Year!

As we step into a new year, it brings with it a sense of hope, renewal, and exciting opportunities for Schenectady County Connects.

Reflecting on the achievements of the past year, we can take pride in the strides we've made in empowering individuals, fostering professional growth and contributing to the broader success of our community. Together, we have built a foundation that positions us for even greater accomplishments in the months ahead.

In 2024 we hope to continue to expand our reach and recognizes the strength of our diverse and talented workforce. None of this would be possible without our dedicated staff (who you'll get to meet on page 2) - their enthusiasm for empowering clients to achieve their potential is unmatched. We are thankful to the community for the opportunity to serve you and meet your employment and training needs.

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# Meet the Team at

# C SCHENECTADY COUNTY NNECTS

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We'd love to put some faces to names and give you a glimpse into where each of us began our own career journeys into workforce development:



**Jennifer Bargy**

I got in the door at the early age of 14 as a cashier at a convenience store. I was happy to start working and earning a paycheck.



**Dominga Barros**

My first job between ages 15-16 years was restaurant. I was the cake baker and cashier at my parents' friends restaurant. I was paid \$5 per cake in cash. I was rich!



**Valerie Beck**

I was 16, worked at Thom McAnn shoe store and was paid minimum wage + commission. I assisted customers by measuring feet, running the register and selling additional items for commission sales.



**Sara Canfield**

I was a summer sub at Schenectady ARC's Maple Ridge day program doing activities including horticulture, cooking and outings with adults with intellectual disabilities. Minimum wage was \$5.25 so I thought I was rocking it making \$6 per hour.



**Daniel Desbiens**

I worked in 2 different pizzarias while in college as a delivery driver, front counter, fry cook, and anything else the owners needed. I always smelled like a deep fryer and it helped me gain patience and people skills.



**Marisa DiPrimio**

My first job was working in an insurance office that my mother worked in. I worked the summers of when I was 15 and 16 and did filing and work around the office.



**Lorena Flores**

I worked at McDonalds as a cashier. I didn't love or hate it but I had a connection there. The staff were really nice but I ended up leaving for a job my sister got me at Walmart which was closer to home.



**Bailey Gardiner**

My first job was at an ice cream shop. I worked there for a decade during the summers in high school and while finishing college. It was a great intro to customer service.



**Stephanie Grafton**

I worked at a daycare center starting at age 12. I started in the baby room, then the toddler room and became the Head Teacher of the day campers. The job made me realize I didn't want any children and here I am 3 wonderful kids later - life is funny sometimes!



**Emily Hough**

My most unique job was being an English Teacher/Teacher Trainer with Peace Corps Indonesia. It truly was "the toughest job you'll ever love!"



**Lamesha Pettway**

At 18, I worked in a stockroom as a ticket associate at Lazarus Children's Clothing Store in NYC across from the famous Apollo theater. After 4 months, I was promoted to Stockroom Assistant Manager.



**Nicole Pitsas**

For my first job, I joined my family's business making sandwiches at 15 years old. It was a fun way for me to enter the workforce while being surrounded by my family and close friends.



**Emily Ritter**

My first job was at Pizza Buono working the front counter. It's a small, family-owned business so I saw firsthand what it took to operate a business. I worked there through school and still sometimes lend a hand!



**Sorange Rodriguez**

I worked as a nanny to a child with autism when little was known about this diagnosis. The job had it's perks including traveling to London and Paris; I had lunch in the Eiffel Tower experiencing the most amazing view!



**Danielle Sangiovanni**

My first job was at Maple Ski Ridge sitting at the top of the mountain making sure people got off the chairlift at the top. One of the perks was skiing and snowboarding for free during the season.



**Erin Sena**

I refereed youth soccer games on Saturdays when I was 14 years old. I made \$10 per game and worked 3 games per week. \$30 a week seemed like a lot of money at 14!



**Kiara Shelley**

My first job was with SJTA summer program at Camp Lovejoy. I started as a Counselor in Training working with the 8 year olds. I continued to move up in the Boys and Girls Club as a result of this experience.



**Adam Slagle**

An unusual experience from when I worked as a wrap-around behavioral therapist with children was I once helped a client catch a catfish and store it in their bathtub in hopes of grilling it for the 4th of July.



**Marlo Valachovic**

My first job at the age of 14 was at Perrino's Restaurant as a busser. I worked every Sunday night and walked out with cash - I thought I was "living the life!"

# United Community

The Mohonasen School District has a cohort of students who came to our area from a variety of different countries. Lorena Flores and Marlo Valachovic pioneered a group called United Community for these students - it mirrors another offering at Mohonasen, Job Club, but focuses on skill building for youth who are not quite work-ready.

These youth have been learning about local resources, team building, communication, goal-setting and vision boarding while providing peer support as they navigate the challenges of integrating into a new community.

For Thanksgiving and the Holiday Season - the group got to build rapport and let loose while learning about how these holidays are celebrated in our area including enjoying a turkey dinner from Gershon's Deli and testing their artistic and architectural skills with a gingerbread house competition!



## Steps to Success

Latasia was a participant in the Job Readiness Training class at Schenectady County Connects and had been receiving Public Assistance for decades. She was nervous her first day of the program as she had not been employed in many years but feared the cliff effect of leaving the security of Public Assistance to transition into self-sustainability. An active participant, Latasia found value in learning about social media, job applications, resumes, and interviewing and found direction from her career assessment. At the conclusion of the course, Latasia was confident and eager to begin working toward obtaining employment.

As someone with limited work history, Latasia engaged in the Community Work Experience Program through Schenectady County Connects at the Cornell Cooperative Extension Greenhouse. She routinely arrived early and found gardening and harvesting enjoyable and Latasia's supervisor could see her confidence growing like the plants she was tending. Latasia built a great relationship with her supervisor based on the skills she developed and was able to use him as a reference for her job search.

After tailoring her resume, attending job fairs and working with her employment counselor to find positions she was interested in, Latasia found gainful, full-time employment at Rivers Casino where she earns more than \$20 per hour and is truly enjoying her job!



# 2024 Labor Law Updates

## NYS MINIMUM WAGE

- \$15.00 per hour in 2024

## PAID FAMILY LEAVE

- Employees taking Paid Family Leave receive 67% of their average weekly wage up to a maximum weekly benefit of \$1,151.16
- The definition of “family members” now includes siblings (biological, adopted, step-, and half-siblings)

## SOCIAL MEDIA DISCLOSURE ACT

- Effective March 12, 2024
- NYS employers cannot request, require or coerce any employee or applicant to disclose any personal account username, password, or other authentication information or to access a personal account in the employer’s presence

## CLEAN SLATE ACT (CSA)

- Effective by November 2024, the CSA seals certain criminal records for people with eligible misdemeanors 3 years after incarceration and eligible felonies 8 years after incarceration

## *In Memoriam*

Remembering some of our amazing workforce development colleagues who passed away in 2023...

### MELINDA MACK - NYATEP



Eloquent, passionate, insightful, sometimes controversial and always present, Melinda was someone we were so fortunate to have as a role model and advocate for New York State workforce development initiatives.

### RYAN VAN AMBURGH - CAREER JAM



Ryan’s innovative belief that youth need exposure to a vast variety of career opportunities led to our transformative partnership and is something that we hope to continue in Schenectady’s schools.

### LARISSA GODBOLT - DEPT. OF LABOR



Larissa was a Labor Services Representative in the Schenectady Career Center who had an infectious laugh and always brought positivity to the office.

## CONTACT INFORMATION



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Please call or e-mail us if you'd like to make an appointment to meet with our staff



@SchenectadyCountyConnects