

ployee of the year named at TM

By Aimee M. Henderson
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BELCHERTOWN – Each year during Annual Town Meeting special awards are presented to the Employee of the Year, Volunteer of the Year and Citizen of the Year.

This year, the Employee of the Year award was given to Belchertown Police Sgt. Bruce Jenks. During the presentation, Board of Selectman Chairman Ronald Aponte spoke highly of Jenks, especially of his time as interim police chief during the search for a new top cop. He said the police department ran smoothly during the transition period, because of Jenk's leadership.

"I'm honored to receive this award, but I can't take all the credit," said Jenks, adding that having the support of the officers and dispatchers "made it easy."

The Citizen of the Year award was given to Jim Natle. Selectman William Barnett talked of Natle's many years serving on various committees in town, including his current role on the Community Preservation Committee.

"This is totally unexpected," said Natle upon receiving his award, adding that he loves Belchertown and hopes to be here until the day he dies.



Jim Natle accepts the Citizen of the Year award from Selectman Bill Barnett and Town Administrator Gary Brougham.

Finally, this year's recipient of Volunteer of the Year was not an individual, but instead an entire organization. Selectman Nick O'Connor presented the award to Jenny Franz, who accepted the award on behalf of Belchertown

Animal Relief Committee or BARC. The group has successfully fundraised thousands of dollars to put towards the construction of a new animal control facility.

Franz said she was "super honored" for having been chosen.

Belchertown Police Sgt. Bruce Jenks accepts the award for Employee of the Year from Selectman Chairman Ron Aponte.



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Jenny Franz, vice president of Belchertown Animal Relief Committee, accepts the Vol-unteer of the Year award on behalf of the organization.

Students, mentors learn from each other

River East honors teams at breakfast

By Douglas Farmer
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LUDLOW — The internship experience that brought Monson High School student Trevor Hamilton back to Granite Valley Middle School was a very special one to Wendy Rosazza, guidance counselor at the middle school. After all, knowing how introverted he was while a student there, it was exciting to see him help younger kids "break out of their shells" as well.

As part of the student-mentor partnership at GVMS, Hamilton worked with the guidance department and the SOAR program, going on field trips and aiding in a variety of special education settings, also overseen by teacher Colleen O'Grady.

"I knew Trevor was going to have a great work-based learning experience," said Rosazza. "It was so special to see him come back because I knew how much he had struggled. He was able to focus on communication, which is what he wanted."

But O'Grady said Hamilton not only helped in the classroom but took initiative.

"Trevor really took on a leadership role, and the students really look forward to seeing him," she said. "When we've gone on a field trip, the first thing they ask is, 'Is Trevor coming?'"

As for Hamilton himself, he said he was glad he had the real world experience.

"It has been challenging for me to know what path to follow, so it was great that my work-based learning put me in a lot of situations," he said.

Hamilton's story was but one of several highlighted at the River East School-to-Career, Inc. Recognition Program that focused on outstanding student-mentor



Members of the River East Scholarship Committee stand with this year's Career Education Scholarship recipients. Winners included Emma Cyr of Belchertown High; Alyssa Costa of Ludlow High; Tyler Girard of Minnechaug Regional; Gabriell Marquez of Monson High; Austin Coffey-Moore of Palmer High; Allison Renaud of Pathfinder Regional; and Alexis Kularski of Ware High.



Ruth Kampe, a teacher and mentor at Belchertown High, shows a picture of Erin Burns with a student on stage during a variety show.

teams held on Thursday, May 12 at the Ludlow Country Club, River East, headquartered in the Palmer

Public Library, works with local career facilitators to build work-based learning opportunities for students at not only Monson High School, but also Belchertown High School, Minnechaug Regional High School, Ludlow High School, Palmer High School, Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School and Ware High School.

The event was sponsored by Roberts & Sons Printing, Inc. in Palmer.

Stephanie Maher, youth services librarian at the Palmer Public Library and president of the River East Board of Directors, noted that 105 companies and organizations had mentored students during this past academic year.

Other educational settings included the placement of Palmer High student Emily Rice in the special education classroom

of Kate Berthaiume at Old Mill Pond School. Karen Anti, career facilitator in the Palmer Public Schools, said Rice has taken full advantage of the opportunities given to her.

Berthaiume said that it was a pleasure to have Rice as a constant in her classroom.

"The kids all know that Miss Rice will be there," she said. "She's really bonded with them."

Rice said after spending time in the classroom, she knew she wanted to "help kids get to their full potential."

Meanwhile, Nicholas Taylor, a student at Minnechaug, spent time working with Dr. Kelly Galster and Michael Bell, a physician assistant at Baystate Wing Hospital in Palmer, overseen by longtime career facilitator Paula Talmadge.

"Nick had a strong constitution,

I'll give him that," said Bell. "It's good to see kids find out what it's really like. I wish I had an opportunity like this."

And Ruth Kampe, a transition classroom teacher at Belchertown High School said she found the presence of her intern, Belchertown High student Erin Burns to be very beneficial to both herself and her students. Career facilitator Lynn Forgette helped to coordinate her placement.

"I'm best friends with these kids, and they're so happy and that makes me happy," said Burns.

And Kampe related a variety show the school organizes with the Best Buddies program, and Burns had established a special relationship with one non-verbal student that lights up when the two are together.

At Ludlow High School, Career Facilitator Cheryl Patenaude oversaw the placement of student Tyler Tomas with David Vooris of Nasty Habits CrossFit. Patenaude noted that Vooris himself was a graduate of Ludlow High.

"I felt great helping guide another Ludlow High student and mentoring him through everything," said Vooris.

At Pathfinder, Vocational Director Eric Duda explained that interns work 30 hours on alternating weeks and are paid for their time, which he acknowledged was a big commitment for a local employer. Therefore, he credited Wayne Mark of Bertera Chevrolet for his acceptance of student Brandon Kroll.

However, Mark said having Kroll around helped inspire his technicians, and he noted Kroll's constant use of safety glasses and attention to detail served as an example for more experienced employees. Therefore, he planned to offer him a job after graduation.

"I'll definitely accept the job," said Kroll, to chuckles from the