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NRHS Forensic Science Students' Evidence-Collecting Skills Get Put to the Test

NEW ROCHELLE, N.Y. (May 29, 2019) – Students in New Rochelle High School's forensic science classes took their final exams at Nature Study Woods Wednesday. Teams of students descended upon the mock crime scenes, working together in groups of four to six to collect evidence correctly to ensure its purity. The goal was to follow an investigative process and do things the right way, not necessarily to solve the crime.

More than 180 students from seven classes discovered blood spatter, bullet casings and tire tracks. They analyzed torn clothing, body positioning and shoeprints. The eight homicide scenes each had unique challenges.

Three of the forensic science classes are college-level, providing students with four college credits from Syracuse University upon completion.

"I wasn't expecting the course to be processing crime scenes," said junior Katherine Burr. "I was expecting more investigation – how to solve a crime. ... But this course assured me that I want to take care of people. It was a lot of fun!" Burr wants to become a flight nurse, transporting patients during crises back to the hospital by helicopter.

Burr was the evidence technician as part of her four-member team. Her team also included a forensics administrator, an investigator and a photographer. They probed a scene in which a body had been stuffed into a drainage pipe. They looked at evidence that included a bullet casing, footprints in the mud, a notebook stuck in a log and sunglasses in a tree.

"The students have been preparing all year for this final demonstration of understanding and application of forensic science skills in this real world setting," said teacher Scott Rubins, who

coordinates the exam along with teacher Peggy Younger. “I am so thankful for the help of the New Rochelle Police Department, our class alumni and everyone in the community who helped put this together. These students are thinking through and processing these detailed crime scenes and are interacting with real police officers. All of our students can take these methodical and observational experiences with them in their futures, whether or not they pursue forensic science as a career.”

“The collaboration among the School District, the Police Department and the community is what makes this such a successful event every year,” Interim Superintendent Dr. Magda Parvey said. “Our students benefit so greatly from this partnership and we are very thankful for these relationships the District has with the community to create authentic experiences.”

Caleb Evans, a junior, was surprised at how quickly the time went by for his team during the 55-minute exam. Forensic scientists typically have much more time to process a crime scene. But he likes forensics because it is a hands-on science class and he thinks his team did well. “We had very little time to process it but we really tried our best to package up what evidence we could in that time.”

Maddie Fraioli took the class in her junior year at NRHS in 2013 and is a 2018 graduate of the University of New Haven with a bachelor of science in Forensic Science and a concentration in Chemistry. She has come back the past six years to help Rubins create the crime scenes and she now manages the entire setup. “I really enjoy it. I like the lab end of it but I really love the crime scene part as it incorporates everything you learn.”

“The course is all about teaching them to think and to process the information,” Rubins said. “The forensics is the icing on the cake.”

About the City School District of New Rochelle

With nearly 11,000 students in 10 schools, the City School District of New Rochelle, through an active partnership amongst community, parents, staff and students, provides a high-quality and challenging education for every child, in a safe, nurturing environment that embraces rich diversity and drives success.