Allendale Columbia students get out of the classroom

Seeing the world and how science is applied among school’s specialties

By VELVET SPICER

The eastern monarch butterfly needs help.

Populations of the migratory, brilliantly colored insect have declined so sharply over the last couple of decades that they are being considered for endangered status. Some students in Rochester have fought to understand and change that.

“The monarch butterfly population here in Rochester is drastically going down. We’ve had kids who were working on that. And working…Continued on page 28

Vacations on the lake are his specialty

By KEVIN OKLOBZIJA

Growing up in Rochester, Brian Zerges saw firsthand the benefits of owning lakefront property.

His parents bought two cottages on Keuka Lake near Branchport. The family vacationed in one and rented out the other to pay for them, he said.

Today Zerges is making someone else’s vacation his vocation. As the owner and CEO of Finger Lakes Premier Properties, Zerges oversees the renting of a mini-village of vacation homes from the Livonia/Lakeville area to Ithaca.

Finger Lakes Premier Properties, or FLPP, is the longstanding descendant of Rental Plus and is celebrating its 25th anniversary. The Penn Yan-based firm recently moved into a new headquarters in Horizon Business Park, and it also has a satellite office in Canandaigua.

“We run the business like a fine hotel,” said Zerges, 56, who lives in Canandaigua.

Or 285 mini-hotels, since that’s how many different properties are available from FLPP on seven area lakes: Canandaigua, Conesus, Hononegah, Keuka, Seneca, Cayuga and Owasco. While Zerges owns a few properties, nearly all are privately owned and contract with FLPP for rental services.

The company provides a variety of year-round rental packages, with three- and four-night stays probably as popular as week-long getaways. There also are long-term packages that carry a 12-month lease. The vacation stays vary in price, from $100 a night during off-peak months to $2,000 a night in the peak months of July and August.

“We have everything from the basic cottage to luxury homes,” said Zerges, 56, who lives in Canandaigua.

Business starts revving up in May and…Continued on page 3

Leadership, planning crucial for managing your team through a crisis

By KEVIN OKLOBZIJA

Let’s say you’re the CEO or president of your firm, and lately all you’ve been doing is smiling.

Business is strong, the forecast for the future shows nothing but growth and employee morale is sky high.

It’s as though pushing the Easy button to the future shows nothing but growth and employee morale is sky high.

And then, without warning, you wake up to a company in crisis.

The security of your IT system has been breached via the hacking of a third-party vendor. Or torrential rain causes a flood that turns the first floor of your business into an aquarium. Or an employee’s insensitive post on social media creates an instantaneous firestorm of backlash toward your firm.

Now what?

First off, maintain composure. A crisis can be frightening, but if there’s ever a time your company needs level-headed and poised guidance, it’s during a stare-down with calamity.

“It takes a lot to be the person to stand up there in crisis,” said Shawn Baker, president of Cochran, Cochran & Yale, a leadership advisory services firm in Rochester. “These individuals remain calm. If people see you panic, they’re going to panic.”

An initial damage assessment is critical because you need to address your staff and/or the public sooner rather than later. You quite likely won’t have all the facts or details immediately, but you need to have a general understanding of the situation from someone who has seen…Continued on page 9

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Report: Stored energy sector ready to grow

By DIANA LOUISE CARTER

Jobs in the stored energy field could grow eight-fold in New York by the year 2030, according to a report issued this week.

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with people on the outside on why that’s happening, what can be done about it,” said Mick Gee, Allendale Columbia School’s head of school.

That’s pretty cool. Even cooler though, the students—who studied the phenomenon two years ago as part of a mini real-world contest that drew 9,000 entries—were in third grade at the time. They won the contest.

“They’re being environmental scientists,” Gee said.

It’s one example of how at Allendale Columbia learning relies heavily on doing and experiencing, rather than memorizing. “You don’t just read a book in order to ace the next test. It’s a systematic approach that helps build leaders. “Instead of learning about another country, kids travel to that country. They’re working with kids from overseas. They develop global empathy, because it’s hard to do that unless you put yourself in someone else’s shoes,” Gee said. “They’re authentic experiences. The kids are being the real thing. They’re being real scientists and real engineers and not just learning about what science and engineering are.”

The independent college-preparatory school in June completed a three-year strategic plan and a fundraising campaign that together raised $4.8 million, Smith said more than expected. All of the funds went directly to students and to programs that encourage those hands-on experiences.

An important component of the school’s strategic plan was to develop three centers within AC that would allow students to do a deep dive into particular topics of study.

“The idea was these centers are based on three areas of skills and experience that kids are going to need to go into this rapidly changing world,” Gee explained. “We take the best of what we’ve been doing in the past, but we recognize kids need new experiences to move them forward.”

The campaign helped fund Allendale Columbia’s Center for Global Engagement, Center for Entrepreneurship and Invent Center for STEM and Innovation.

“We feel good about the fact that (donated funds) went directly to students and programs. It didn’t go into bricks and mortar. It didn’t go into endowment this time,” Gee said. “People who gave to the campaign saw the best of what we’ve been doing in the changing world,” Gee explained. “We take a deep dive into particular topics of study. Some of these programs, like strategic plan and a fundraising campaign that together raised $4.8 million, Smith said more than expected. All of the funds went directly to students and to programs that encourage those hands-on experiences.

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