

SUNY Broome student wins Vanguard Award for his work in Early Childhood education

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At a table in the Windsor Middle School library, Joseph Seidel helped a group of seventh-graders explore their options during the American Revolution: stay loyal, negotiate with the king, or rebel?

The December visit – which taught students the process of public deliberation as a method of exploring history – is one of many Seidel has made into local classrooms. This semester, he’s working on public deliberation with Windsor fourth-graders, helping them identify and ultimately solve problems in their community. Last year, he did the same with Johnson City second-graders, ultimately helping them create a recycling fair and a book on happiness.

Education is a passion for Seidel, a non-traditional student who enrolled in SUNY Broome after serving in the Army’s Aviation Unit in Afghanistan. He recently won a Vanguard Award. Administered by the New York State Nontraditional Employment & Training (NET) Project, a program of the University at Albany’s Center for Women in Government and Civil Society, the award honors students enrolled in programs that prepare them for careers nontraditional for their gender.

“I think the world needs to be educated, especially now with the rise of technology. We don’t give kids books; we give them iPads,” he said.

The Early Education major was among eight students across the state to receive the award. He was nominated by Laura Knochen-Davis, Technical Career Coach of the Perkins Career & Technical Education Program at SUNY Broome. In addition to internship, Seidel has served on various community boards and early childhood education-focused committees, is president of the Broome Educators of Children Association and has given more than 100 hours in community service by facilitating public deliberations in schools.

“If we’re going to change the level of discourse around important issues in our society, working with our youth to help them process difficult political challenges holds great promise for the future of the nation. Joseph’s work stands out as a model for all early childhood educators,” SUNY Broome President Kevin E. Drumm said. “If we think our political issues are tough today, think of what the colonists had to consider in planning a rebellion—or not! If our children can work through such a grave issue as whether to start a revolution against the mother country, many other challenging issues could be tackled the same way and we are proud of Joseph for bringing this fruitful process to his students. Washington might take notice.”

The Vanguard Award recipients were slated to be the guests of the Center for Women in Government & Civil Society during a dinner and awards ceremony on March 27.

“What everyone enjoys most about working with Joseph is that he is very conscientious about the impact he can make as a male in his field of study,” Knochen-Davis said. “He is very aware that his strong stature and exuberance is an advantage in Early Childhood Education.”



Contributing to the Community

A native of Binghamton, Seidel moved to Charlotte, North Carolina, and ended up graduating from high school there before joining the Army. When he was in Afghanistan, he realized that he wanted to take a different course with his life and began to take steps to leave the military and return to school.

“It’s hard for a lot of people to leave the Army; it’s a security blanket,” he explained. “I wanted to leave something that’s comfortable to fulfill a dream.”

He found that SUNY Broome offered the program he wanted and returned to the Binghamton area, using the GI Bill to further his education.

Seidel originally intended to graduate in the Fall semester and attend a four-year school in Colorado. Plans changed, however, after he tried to take the Psychology of Early Childhood Development online. It didn’t fit his learning style, so he decided to re-take the course in a classroom format the following semester. He was glad he did, he said.

In addition to the psychology course, he is taking an entrepreneurship course with Knochen-Davis, Kady Perry’s Producing Public Murals and a community internship with Professor Doug Garnar.

“There’s a business idea I want to do that involves children, art and community,” he explained. “The stars aligned.”

Seidel also fell in love with the Binghamton area, and decided to apply to Binghamton University instead of

heading out west.

“Home is where the heart is. I like to think I’m a person who can contribute to the community. I feel Binghamton is on the way up,” he said.

Outside of the classroom, Seidel is heavily involved in the arts, as well as recreational basketball leagues and the Greater Binghamton Flag Football League. He’s also an avid outdoorsman and you can find him hiking in the Adirondacks or the Poconos.

“There’s no doubt in my mind that I want to work with children, the community and the arts,” he said.

SUNY Broome student Joseph Seidel listens as a Windsor Middle School student makes a point during a deliberation.

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