

## **Brockport High interns paired with businesses**

### **20 students learn about varied careers**

A window in Brockport has created quite a buzz in Brockport this winter.

“I can’t tell you how many people have come in off the street to tell me ‘I love your window’ or ‘Your window looks great,’ ” said Tamara Barrus, owner of BeBe Mills, a fashion boutique on Main Street. Barrus is pleased to say she can’t take credit for it: the creative and eye-catching couture designs are the works of interns Jayce Durrant and Rowan Hamner.

“People usually assume then that they’re interns from the college,” Barrus said, “but they’re not.” Jayce and Rowan are seniors at Brockport High School and part of the district’s unique, in-house Career Internship Program, which matches high school seniors with professionals in careers they’re interested in. Students must have an 85 average or above, excellent attendance, a reference from an adult and complete an interview.

If selected, they’re matched with a mentor by Suzanne Sodoma, the district’s business and career education department chair and internship program coordinator, and may leave school at 1 p.m. during their senior year for

their internship. “So many people open their doors for these students,” said Sodoma, who is in her fourth year running the program, which started in 2000. It was first coordinated by Nancy Van-Denburg.

This year, 20 students in the program are interning at places including: the Brockport School of Dance, The College at Brockport, Erie Canal Animal Hospital in Spencerport, LaBella Associates in Rochester, Brockport Physical Therapy, Strong West, Dollinger’s Inn and Suites, the Hampton Inn in Sweden, and Tender Loving Family Care in Brockport.

This is Barrus’ first year serving as an internship mentor and she’s enjoyed the experience tremendously.

In addition to teaching Jayce and Rowan how to create window displays, other activities she’s done with them include taking them to a fashion trade show in Syracuse, having them assist with a photo shoot with the jewelry company Believe Bands, sharing her experiences studying at fashion at the Art Institute of Pittsburgh and letting them help in the store with everything from customer service to Small Business Saturday promotion.

“The experience has been amazing,” said Jayce, who learned how to sew clothing via You-Tube videos. “I’ve always been interested in art and fashion, but before I started, I wasn’t sure what I wanted to study in college. Now, I know.”

Jayce has applied to some of the top fashion schools in the country, including the Fashion Institute of Technology in Manhattan — her application essay was about her internship experience at BeBe Mills.

“If someone would have done this for me as a kid, I would have loved it,” Barrus said. “I believe it’s our job as human beings to pay it forward.”

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Some of the Brockport High School seniors in this year’s Career Internship Program.

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Brockport High School seniors Rowan Hamner, left, and Jayce Durrant are pictured at BeBe Mills in Brockport, where they are interns.

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