

## EHT High School program held up by county as one of its best

Written by Laura Stetser

Thursday, December 13, 2012 12:00 am

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EGG HARBOR TOWNSHIP – Within the walls of Egg Harbor Township High School, the students and staff have always known that the Eagle Enterprises programs are a successful model for career readiness training for special education students.

But this month, district officials learned the program is now also being held up by Atlantic County as one of its finest and it has been nominated for consideration as one of the state's most innovative programs. Eagle Enterprises is comprised of six different real world settings in which special education students can learn and practice real life skills. Students can enter the program as freshmen and matriculate through each different learning environment as their individualized education plan calls for. They are the Eagle Greenery floral shop, the Eagle's Nest School Store, the Eagle Eatery bagel shop, the Eagle Boutique thrift store, a copy center and an apartment built inside a classroom for independent living skills to be taught.

Director of Special Services Carol Cannerelli said the programs have been beneficial to the students well beyond leading to securing jobs after graduation. "It's had an impact on the staff and the general population of students as well."

"The Eagle Enterprises are such an asset," said Principal Terry Charlton during the Board of Education meeting Tuesday, Dec. 11, where the program's staff and students were honored for its success. He said the district nominated Eagle Enterprises as well as its Medical Science Academy for consideration. While both here were applauded at the county, Eagle Enterprises was their top pick from all of the other county school district submissions as the one to move forward.

"All roads in our school lead back to Eagle Enterprises and there are such positive people that work in it. Its effects are much more complex than simply buying a bagel or getting a cup of coffee. It lends itself to productivity and positivity in our school environment and this honor is

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well deserved.”

The Eagle Greenery floral shop, which was the first component started in 1991, produces “florist quality” arrangements, according to teacher Lori Butrus, who runs the shop. She thanked the current board and former members for their support through the years. “Thank you for believing in our program. We are unique to Atlantic County and we have lots of poinsettias for sale if you need some,” she said in a sales pitch. The Eagle Greenery sells to the community and takes special orders for community events.

The Eagle’s Nest school store enables students to learn on a continuum, starting from an employee position where they stock and ring up clients and concluding their year as owners, learning the financials involved in budgeting and ordering supplies, according to its teacher Darcy Brown.

While this year’s totals are not yet available, last year the Eagle Eatery was a busy place. It prepared and sold an average of 130 to 150 bagels per day, according to Sean Coyle. The students take orders, communicate with those who are cooking and do the cooking themselves, he said.

The Eagle Boutique began as a way to offer students clothes for gym class if they forgot their own at home but has grown into something much larger, according to teacher Debra Caprioli.

“I have the best job in the world,” she said, modeling one of the garments. “I know there is a stigma that sometimes goes along with a thrift store, but this stuff is nice and it’s completely free to students. The Boutique staff stocks the shelves, organizes the clothes and helps prepare them for display. ” She said there are formal gowns and dress shoes available as well as gym shorts and sneakers. They often donate to Goodwill Industries and other charities. “We have been fortunate to help a lot of people and help the students learn and grow.”

Teacher Ray Leak runs the newest component, the copy center, through which he has taught the students how to prioritize the tasks of fulfilling the teachers copy requests as well as how to organize delivery and pick up systems. “It can be stressful for them, but that’s a good skill to develop,” he said, adding the students practice social skills as well.

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The living skills learned in the apartment range from how to plan a shopping trip on a budget to cooking and doing laundry, paraprofessional Julie Funk said. “I know the students aren’t doing these things at home- sorry parents- but they are doing them at school.”

Superintendent Scott McCartney told the board members that the evening’s quick look into what goes on in Eagle Enterprises shows why the program was nominated by the county.

“We are committed to providing for the needs of every child that walks out those doors,” he said.

