

# **New Bedford Public Schools observes National School Counseling Week**

National School Counseling Week 2022, "School Counseling: Better Together," sponsored by the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), being observed from Feb. 7–11, 2022, to focus public attention on the unique contribution of school counselors within U.S. school systems and how students are different as a result of what school counselors do. National School Counseling Week highlights the tremendous impact school counselors can have in helping students achieve school success and plan for a career.

Bob Mota, New Bedford Public Schools Manager of Student Services states, "In today's pandemic wearied world, next to parents and guardians, school counselors are some of the most important people impacting students' personal, educational, social, and emotional health. They change lives every single day! Taking on roles from counselor to mentor, counselors are being asked to fulfill various needs in the educational and emotional lives of our students and their families. With the growing concerns of our society's youth mental health crisis, school counselors remain the daily front line workers of our schools; supporting our children and helping to ensure a safe learning environment and school community."

School counselors are actively engaged in helping students examine their abilities, strengths, interests and talents; for working in a partnership with parents as they encounter the challenges of raising children in today's world. Kathleen Mackenzie, Supervisor of Clinical and Behavioral Services states, "New Bedford Public Schools is fortunate to have a group of counselors who are willing to go above and beyond for the students and families in our district. Counselors work to

find positive ways to enhance students' academic, career and social/emotional development, and work with teachers and other educators to provide an educational system where students can realize their potential."

School counselors are certified, experienced educators with a master's degree in school counseling. The combination of their training and experience makes them an integral part of the total educational program. More than 100,000 school counselors nationwide will be participating in the week's observances. For more information about the NBHS Guidance Department: go to [nbhs.newbedfordschools.org](http://nbhs.newbedfordschools.org), select Departments/Programs and select Guidance.

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## **Southcoast Health to offer Free, Online Osteoporosis Seminar on Wednesday Dec. 15th.**

**Southcoast Health's** free online Osteoporosis and Bone Health Seminar is your opportunity to learn about osteoporosis testing, treatments, and the steps you can take now for better bone health.

Join them on **Wednesday, December 15th at 4:30pm**, and learn more and have your questions answered with Southcoast Health's Joan Wildenhain, NPC – right from the comfort of your own home!

Register today by clicking the link below:  
<https://www.southcoast.org/med-talk-registration-form/>

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Southcoast Health is a not-for-profit, community-based health system serving throughout southeastern MA and RI. Their system includes three hospitals – Charlton Memorial, St. Luke's and Tobey.

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# **New Bedford High School Drama Club presents – The Skin of Our Teeth**

By Brooklin Henriksen, NBHS Class of 2022

The first weekend in December, New Bedford High School Drama Club proudly presents Thornton Wilder's *The Skin of Our Teeth* to in-person audiences in the NBHS Bronspiegel Auditorium. *The Skin of Our Teeth* chronicles a suburban family facing disaster in the fictional town of Excelsior, New Jersey. Mr. and Mrs. Antrobus have two children, Henry and Gladys, whom along with their household help, Sabina, assists in caring for them. The play is set in three acts. In the first act, an ice age is coming to threaten mankind. Everyone in the world is begging the Antrobus' to let them into the house to save them from freezing outside. Even a mammoth and a dinosaur are pleading to be let in. Act two includes Mr. Antrobus being elected president of all humans, but Sabina impedes his progress with a devious plan. Throughout the commotion, a sudden change in weather occurs which leads to a great flood, a nod to the tale of Noah's Ark. The third and final act takes place after a devastating war. George and Henry Antrobus fought on opposing sides and must come to terms with their differences. Each act of the play leaves the family and the audience wondering "What

is next for civilization?"

This year the drama club has many new and passionate members and the directors felt it was important to be able to showcase everybody's talents. Sarah Cadieux-Pacheco, Co-Director, says of her choice and experience with this show: "For our first in-person production since December 2019, we wanted to choose a play that had room to showcase a flexible number of students. The Skin of Our Teeth was suggested to me by a friend, and it has proven to be a great choice. We've been able to be flexible with casting and still safely prepare to put on the type of traditional full-scale production our school community has come to expect. The show itself is an American theatre classic and a bit avant-garde, but it's very clever and very relevant for today! We've had a lot of fun working on this show and we can't wait to share it with in-person audiences."

Aydan Sullo, Senior and Drama Club President, will be playing Mr. George Antrobus. He shares that "Throughout this process, The Skin of Our Teeth has begun to symbolize an objective comment on the cyclical behavior of humanity, generation after generation. Its multifaceted content, in tandem with the unique double narrative, challenges the audience to look beyond the surface. In exploring the flaws and fortunes of society, the characters come to realize that acknowledging past mistakes becomes essential towards achieving peace and enlightenment in the future. I strongly encourage all to support our eager, dedicated and excited cast!"

Performances in the NBHS Bronspiegel Auditorium begin at 8:00 p.m. on Friday, December 3 and Saturday, December 4 with a matinee performance at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, December 5. Tickets are \$10 for students/seniors and \$12 for adults, but to limit large groups in the lobby should be purchased ahead of time online at <https://our.show/skinofourteethnbhs>. The Skin of Our Teeth by Thornton Wilder is presented with permission from Concord Theatricals. As per current health

mandates, patrons must remain masked at all times when in the school building.

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## **New Bedford Police Department presents “Let Me Introduce Myself” safety program**

The New Bedford police department is announcing a new program which is intended to make their response to intellectually disabled or emotionally disturbed people safer for everyone involved.

Chief Paul Oliveira credits the “Use of force” commission which was formed to review policies within the department in the fall of last year. One concern they brought to our attention was the police response to people having a condition or disability that might prevent them from responding appropriately to commands. When police are unfamiliar with the limitations or specific needs of a person, they might mistake their failure to follow directions as an implicit threat. This creates a dangerous situation which nobody wants to have imposed upon them.

It is estimated that 1 in 4 fatal law enforcement encounters involve a subject who suffers from a serious mental illness (Fuller, et al. 2016). The New Bedford police department currently utilizes mental-health clinicians who are often deployed into the field along with police officers to respond to calls involving the mentally ill or emotionally disturbed. This new program augments our efforts to lower the risk of having to using force on a person who may be better handled with more innovative tactics.

Sgt. Samuel Ortega of the department's 'Community Crisis Intervention Team' took the concerns of the "Use of Force" commission and spearheaded an effort to make a change. The end result has manifested in what's become the "Let Me Introduce Myself" program. How does it work? Citizens notify our department of a person of concern. This can be someone who is unable to follow basic commands, is prone to getting lost, may have an increased fear of police or authority figures, unable to communicate their own needs, might have an aversion to being touched by strangers, etc. A form is accessible through the department's website. On this form, you can provide information regarding your person of concern including their address, the name they answer to, diagnosis, emergency contacts, verbal or non-verbal, etc.

When the form is received, the information on it will be put into "caution" notes for the individual listed and the address where they reside. In the event that the police respond to a situation involving the person or address, officers can be better prepared to meet their individual needs or limitations.

"No police officer wants to use force on anyone they encounter but using force on someone and later finding out that they were unable to comply with you is especially heart-breaking. In our roles as guardians to the community, we want to resolve as many situations as we can in the most peaceful manner possible. Filling out this form will help us to get the critical information that we need in order to do just that. If you'd like to bring a person of concern to our stations to meet our officers so that we can get to know one another before a crisis happens, I encourage that also and we will accommodate," said Chief Paul Oliveira.

Mayor John Mitchell stated, "This program is directly in line with our emphasis on community policing. With a better understanding of the physical and mental health conditions of individuals they encounter, police can tailor their responses

to allow those individuals to get the help they need while ensuring public safety,” Mayor Jon Mitchell said. “I applaud Chief Oliveira and the Police Department for taking this inclusive, personal approach to policing and emergency response.”

If you would like to make us aware of a person we should know about, access the form at [www.newbedfordpolice.com](http://www.newbedfordpolice.com). Under “Resources”. Scroll down to “Forms” and find the “Let Me Introduce Myself Disability”. Once filled out, you can upload and e-mail it to [Samuel.ortega@newbedfordpd.com](mailto:Samuel.ortega@newbedfordpd.com). You may also deliver it in hand to either the NBPD headquarters at 871 Rockdale Ave., or the South-end Public Safety Complex located at 912 Brock Ave. in an envelope marked for Sgt. Samuel Ortega.

*1.) Fuller, Doris & Lamb, H. & Biasotti, Michael & Snook, John. (2016). Overlooked in the Undercounted: The Role of Mental Illness in Fatal Law Enforcement Encounters. 10.13140/RG.2.1.1655.9128.*

For more on this program, please click <https://youtu.be/IiiJhNFNbro>

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## **New Bedford Public Schools closed October 27, 2021**

Due to current weather conditions causing widespread power outages and downed power lines, all New Bedford Public Schools and administrative offices will be closed on Wednesday, October 27, 2021:

- NO in-person classes

- NO distance learning/remote sessions occurring
- NO virtual meetings
- NO after-school activities

Superintendent Thomas Anderson stated, “We are using our “traditional” snow day model and there will be NO in-person classes and NO distance learning/remote sessions occurring. This full cancellation is out of concern for the safety of both our students and our staff who must drive in these conditions.”

Adult Evening Classes scheduled for Wednesday, October 27 are not cancelled.

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## **Massachusetts State Police make special visit to Mattapoissett's Old Rochester Regional High School**

“On Thursday, September 30, 2021 Trooper Matthew Holden from the Troop D Community Action Team, Troop D Community Liaison Trooper Jessie Barbosa and Troop H Community Liaison Trooper Aaron Richardson, met at Old Rochester Regional High School in Mattapoissett to spend the afternoon with the Life Skills classroom.

Trooper Barbosa coordinated with the State Police Air Wing, Mattapoissett PD, and the comfort dog sections from both Middlesex DA's office's and Babson College. This was a special day for the students of the Life Skills classrooms of both the high school and middle school levels.

Troopers handed out MSP t-shirts, medals and campaign covers to the students, and fielded numerous questions that the students had prepared. The highlight of the afternoon was a visit from Air 3 and the flight crew, Trooper's Malm and Dinjian."

**All photos by the Massachusetts State Police:**



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## **UMass Law student receives scholarship from Hispanic New Bedford Police Officers**

A UMass Law student has received a scholarship from the "Hispanic Police Officers of New Bedford" organization.

Judith Patricia Cruz Caballero, JD candidate, 22, a native of Bolivia, was named the second recipient to have ever received the 5-year scholarship which is presented to Hispanic UMass Law students who are also residents of Bristol County and have demonstrated a financial need. Nineteen New Bedford police officers donated.

"Being in law enforcement and members of the Hispanic community, we know firsthand the value of having strong legal representation in the criminal justice system," said Sgt.

Samuel Ortega of the New Bedford Police Department who also serves as the police department's outreach coordinator.

Caballero plans to become an attorney focusing on either criminal or immigration law following graduation. She is currently the vice president for UMass Law's "Latinx American Law Student Association." In addition, she continues to serve the community and develop her legal skills as an intern for the MA Department of Children and Families in Boston.

Caballero is also an intake member for the "Telephone to Access Justice Center for the Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid", which is the second-largest legal aid provider in the country, and the largest provider in Texas. Of her work for these organizations, Caballero stated that it has allowed her to help community members who have a difficult time obtaining access to justice.

"As an intake worker, I help low-income individuals by guiding them through the process of obtaining legal aid through TRLA or by providing other resources that can help them obtain legal guidance," she said.

"The scholarship is important to me because of the current economic situation of my family due to Covid," added Cruz Caballero. "As a Latina law student, it's motivational to know that other Hispanics are committed to protecting our community and enforcing our laws. The more we support diversity in our

institutions, the better off our society will be in the future.”

In addition to supporting law students financially, the New Bedford Police Department offers mentoring and networking opportunities to scholarship recipients throughout the many agencies that comprise the criminal justice system.

“I am grateful to the officers for their service to our community and contributions to my education. I hope that, moving forward, I will make them proud,” Cruz Caballero added.

For further information on the “Hispanic Police Officers of New Bedford” organization, please contact; Samuel.ortega@newbedfordpd.com.

Credit: Debra Hazian for original story appearing on the UMass Law website:  
<https://www.umassd.edu/law/features/hispanic-police-officers-of-new-bedford-scholarship.html>.



*UMass Law photo.*

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# Massachusetts Schools Report 1,230 COVID-19 Cases Over Three Days

Katie Lannan

State House News Service

School districts reported more than 1,200 student cases of COVID-19 and 190 cases among staff members this week, the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education said in its first case report of the new school year. The department said the 1,230 student cases represent 0.13 percent of the estimated 920,000 students enrolled in K-12 schools. The 190 cases among around 140,000 staff members work out to a similar percentage, 0.14 percent.

After a 2019-2020 school year marked by periods of remote instruction, districts across Massachusetts are now back to full-time in-person learning. Teachers and students age 12 and up are able to get vaccinated against COVID-19, but there's still no clear timeline on when younger kids will be eligible for vaccines. Elementary and Secondary Education Commissioner Jeff Riley has mandated universal mask-wearing in schools until at least Oct. 1. Springfield reported the most student cases, with 70, followed by Wachusett's 40. Of the 400 districts, 160 reported no COVID-19 cases in students. Boston, Worcester and Springfield logged the highest number of staff cases, with eight each.

This week's total 1,420 school cases represent cases reported to DESE from Monday through Wednesday this week, and the department said future reports will cover a weekly time frame

of Thursday through Wednesday.

In its final report from last school year, the department tallied 53 student cases and five staff cases the week of June 10 through June 16. The department said it expects to report pooled testing results from schools “in the coming weeks,” and that more than 2,200 public and private Massachusetts schools, more than twice last year’s number, are participating in the state’s COVID-19 testing programs, “either rapid testing, pooled testing, test and stay, or a combination of all three.”

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## **New Bedford Public Schools to offer in-school COVID testing**

New Bedford Public Schools is implementing in-school symptomatic testing for COVID-19 on a voluntary basis for students and staff. In a letter sent September 15 to NBPS parents and guardians, Wanda Nunes, NBPS Supervisor of School Nurses, detailed the testing option, which requires completion of a parental consent form. Describing the program as “an extra layer of protection to prevent the spread of COVID-19,” Ms. Nunes noted the ease of the new rapid antigen test. “It is a quick, nasal swab collected under the supervision of a school nurse or trained health provider. Unlike COVID-19 tests of the past, it is not uncomfortable and easy for students to do themselves.”

Tests will be administered conditionally under two categories: “Test and Stay” and “Symptomatic Testing.”

**Test and Stay:** Students and staff who are deemed close contacts due to exposure to a COVID positive individual while in school will have the opportunity to be tested using a rapid

antigen test and remain in school with a negative result. The close contact will be tested for the next 5 to 7 days to ensure they remain negative. During this time, students will come to school via their normal mode of transportation (bus, walk, drop-off, drive, etc.). A parent will not need to remain at the school until the test result; they will be called to pick up their child in the event of a positive result.

**Symptomatic Testing:** Students and staff who present with mild COVID-19 symptoms during the school day, will have the opportunity to be tested using a rapid antigen test and remain in school with a negative result.

Karen Treadup, NBPS Deputy Superintendent stated, "This in-school testing option will help us to decrease the amount of lost learning time by students due to quarantining. This school year, the state has directed a full return to in-person learning, so it is critical to do everything possible to enable students to be at school. This program will greatly reduce the need to quarantine and miss school."

Parental consent forms are online at [www.newbedfordschools.org](http://www.newbedfordschools.org) and available in different languages.

If a student does not have consent, they cannot be tested and would be required to follow the DESE/DPH COVID protocols for symptomatic individuals.

Symptomatic Testing is used when a student shows symptoms of COVID-19 during school. Students should not come to school if they feel sick while at home.

Ms. Nunes added "Although vaccinated students are much less likely to spread or contract the virus, we must create an inclusive environment for vaccinated and unvaccinated students and encourage all students to participate in this program."

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# Brockton School Teacher Surprised with Random Act of Kindness

Denise Gurley, a 4th Grade teacher at Gilmore Elementary School in Brockton posted about a recent experience at a Dollar Tree in a local community group. After seeing her post we reached out and asked her if it was OK to share it with our readers. This is what she posted and she also sent along some additional information:

“Thursday night, I went to the Dollar Tree around the corner from our house on Winthrop street to restock my prize box for my classroom. I frequent this Dollar Tree and people are always able to tell that I’m a teacher by my purchases lol, and most of the cashiers know me on a first name basis!

“When I got the register, I started putting the 75+ items I had gotten for prizes onto the conveyor belt, and the cashier told me that earlier in the day there was a customer in the store talking about me. I was confused, and she said that the woman described me as the “young brunette teacher always buying stuff for her students”. I giggled and didn’t think much of it. Then the cashier said that the woman purchased a \$25 gift card and asked the cashier to hold it for me for the next time I came in.”

“I WAS FLOORED! I thought she was joking! The two ladies behind me in line, who I had apologized to multiple times for having so many items and that they got stuck behind me, were so kind and sweet in saying how much I deserved the gift card! Love the decent people out there that keep my belief strong

that the world isn't all bad. ? Thank you SO much to that generous customer, you are incredible. ??”

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In our follow up conversation Denise made the following statement, which we are including in full.

“Let me preface that my school/district does provide teachers with supplies. Buying things for my kids is something I enjoy because it makes them happy and feel special. So buying prizes for our prize box is something I really love to do because they work hard to earn incentives and their hard work makes my job easier and enjoyable! This is my 11th year teaching, and I have spent tens of thousands of dollars on my classroom and my students, but I choose to because it makes them happy and makes me happy. My biggest addiction is buying books lol I have over 2,000 books in my classroom library that I've built over the last ten years haha. But I don't regret a single cent spent!” “I am so incredibly grateful for the kindness shown to me by a complete stranger, it really gives me hope.”

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We'll simply say this; great job Denise, thank you for all that you do, and we know lots of other dedicated teachers who are following in your footsteps! Here is a photo of Mrs. Gurley's classroom.

