

Bysiewicz talks kindergarten, teens entering workforce programs at Bristol schools

Published: Tuesday, 6 July 2021 14:02

@brianjohnsonBP

BRISTOL – Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz paid a visit to a pair of Bristol schools Wednesday to speak to city and educational leaders about programs being offered for the district’s preschool students in preparation for kindergarten and teens preparing to enter the workforce.

At Mountain View Elementary School, the “Little Explorers” program is offered for children ages 3 to 5 as a means to enhance and expand summer learning. The program is offered as a partnership between the Board of Education and the Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Development Department.

Through the “Little Explorers” program, Bysiewicz explained, local children will have the opportunity to take field trips to museums, Mystic Aquarium and other educational and historic sites. Lamont’s administration has directed American Rescue Plan funding, she said, to these places so families can visit them for free this year.

“During the pandemic, a lot of these places initially saw a huge drop in visitors,” Bysiewicz said. “In addition to the economic development opportunities this partnership presents, it will also help kids to get back engaged with learning. It will also provide the social opportunities that so many kids have missed out on.”

Bysiewicz added that early childhood readiness programs help provide children with the schools they need to be more successful once they enter kindergarten. Mayor Ellen Zoppo-Sassu said Bristol’s school readiness programs are among the best in the state and have hundreds of children signed up.

“Parents are getting back to work and they know that our Board of Education and Parks Department offer access to quality programs for their kids,” she said.

Joshua Medeiros, superintendent of Parks, Recreation, Youth and Community Development, said he is glad to see these programs back “running at full capacity” this year. He thanked Lamont and Bysiewicz for funding transportation to and from these programs as well as before and after care for kids.

Superintendent of Schools Catherine Carbone said she is excited for the opportunities this partnership will provide for the district’s “youngest scholars and citizens.”

At Bristol Eastern High School, Bysiewicz learned about partnerships between United Way of West Central Connecticut, Tunxis Community College to provide work experience for local teens, ages 14 to 18. After some instruction about job skills, the teens will also get a chance to work at job sites and earn paychecks and school credit through their efforts this summer. These programs are supported with Elementary and



Brian Johnson Staff Lt. Gov. Susan Bysiewicz visits Mountain View Elementary School to speak to city leaders about the "Little Explorers" program.

Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSR) funds as well as funding from The Main Street Community Foundation.

“These programs will help to prepare kids for their career path,” Bysiewicz said.

Susan Sadecki, president and CEO of the Main Street Community Foundation, said the foundation has, for many years, supported workforce development thanks to the support of donors.

“We’re over the moon with this partnership and we can’t wait to see the outcome,” she said.

Donna Osuch, president and CPO of United Way of West Central Connecticut, said there are 38 students ages 14 to 15 involved in the program based at Bristol Eastern. Students that are 16 to 17 will go out into the community, working at sites including ShopRite, Bristol Health, the Boys & Girls Club of Bristol, Bakery on Maple and Family Roots Produce Market.

“They will have an opportunity to learn a lot about their career paths,” she said.

Bysiewicz participated in a Zoom call to talk to students at Tunxis about a nursing program being offered there. She then spoke to local teens Jamar Rodriguez, Omar Segura, Alexis Martinez and Sophia Stewart, who will be doing work to assist the custodial team at Bristol Eastern this summer.

“This is my first job,” Segura said. “I will be helping out to get the school ready to open for the fall.”

Brian M. Johnson can be reached at 860-973-1806 or bjohnson@bristolpress.com.