

BUSINESS**High school hospitality program inspired by the old Canoe Place Inn**

The program, funded by a grant from the Workforce Development Institute, will spend time exploring history, including the lore of Canoe Place Inn, pictured here in 2014. Photo Credit: Randee Daddona

By Victor Ocasio

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High school students out east could soon be on their way to careers in hospitality thanks to a new educational program being rolled out in Hampton Bays this fall.

The Hampton Bays School District, in partnership with St. Joseph's College, has received a \$10,000 grant from the Workforce Development Institute for the creation of a hospitality program designed to provide training to high school students for potential careers in hospitality and tourism.

The training class, Introduction to Hospitality and Tourism, is already being taught by certified high school teachers at Hampton Bays High School, with seven students enrolled, said Lars Clemensen, superintendent of the school district and vice president of the Hampton Bays Chamber of Commerce.

"The interesting part of our program is that a two-to-three-week component of the semester-long program will include history related directly to the Canoe Place Inn and Hamptons tourism," Clemensen said. The course, which was launched at the start of the school year and can also be taken for college credit for a fee, is expected to pick up more students as time goes on, he said.

"We want our kids to be able to compete for jobs, particularly higher-level jobs, in the industry," Clemensen said.

A large part of the program's creation comes from ongoing conversations with industrial and residential developer Rechler Equity Partners of Plainview, which is renovating the Canoe Place Inn near the high school.

Mitchell Rechler, co-managing partner of the developer, said the inn hopes to establish internship programs and other learning opportunities for program students once the property is operational during the first quarter of 2021.

The developer and the district are working to create a "true farm system of sorts where young people are going to be able to learn firsthand the hospitality business," Rechler said. "Those people ultimately will come back and work for us as full-time employees. That helps us as well as the community at large."

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The inn, on the west side of the Shinnecock Canal, was once a destination lodging for historic figures such as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and actress Lucille Ball. The original building burned down in 1921 and was rebuilt the following year. Over the decades it housed nightclubs but stood vacant in recent years.

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