



Sun photo By Peter Blas

**Rocky Point High School students** at the career day brunch at East Wind Wednesday. Author John Westermann was one of the panelists.

# Take this job and love it

## *Rocky Point students receive career advice at brunch*

By Grant Parpan

WADING RIVER—One point was repeated unanimously among the speakers at Rocky Point High School's third annual "Road to Success" career brunch at East Wind Wednesday.

It was a simple, yet important piece of advice: "Whatever you choose to do for a career, make sure it's something you have fun doing."

That pearl of wisdom is something each of the 12 speakers, whose careers span a variety of fields, from public relations to law enforcement, can relate to. Not only did they all admit to truly liking what they're doing, but many of them had previously dabbled in fields they found they didn't particularly care for.

"The most important thing is to choose something you'll have fun with," said Jessica Savage, a 2000 Rocky Point graduate now working as a senior account executive at Greenstone/Fontana, a full-service advertising and marketing agency.

She should know. Initially a computer science major at University of Scranton, she changed her focus to major in communications. Originally she thought she'd get into journalism, but then ended up in advertising, where she now feels she truly belongs.

It's a path many of the 81 students in attendance Wednesday will most likely travel in their professional lives. Their teacher and Career Advisory Partnership chairperson Susan Wilson estimated 90 percent of the students do not know what they want to do for a living.

"The other 10 percent may know," she added.

Still, if they listened to the panel, they

know they're not alone and it's not too late to succeed.

"Don't panic," said police officer Jack Brehm.

He also took a long path to where he is now. Previously a career military man, serving in the U.S. Air Force as a pararescue jumper, the Rocky Point resident even published a book about his experience as the pararescue jumpers' supervisor coordinating the group's efforts the night of the "Perfect Storm." He now works for the Suffolk County Police Department's marine division on Fire Island.

"I've fudged my way through life and made a living doing something I enjoy doing," Mr. Brehm said.

"I stand before you with a check coming in every week and I assure you it's not from [feeling as if I'm actually] working."

After introducing themselves to those in attendance, each of the speakers took turns talking one-on-one with the students at each table.

Some brought examples of their life's work, others gave computer presentations.

When asked what the most gruesome injury he ever saw was, Stony Brook University athletic trainer and assistant professor Xristos Gaglias lunged for his computer. After one click of the mouse, a photo of a wide receiver with his ankle broken and snapped back popped up on the screen.

"Eeeww," the students all moaned.

The idea for the brunch was originally developed in 2004 to help expose students to what careers are out there for them to choose. About 60 students

attended the first year.

This year was the first in which the brunch was fully funded by sponsor donations.

The workshops held throughout the school year by the Career Advisory Partnership are also growing. The school held just two workshops in 2004-05. That number grew to eight this school year.

"We've had wonderful feedback from the students," Ms. Wilson said. "The biggest complaint we get is that the kids wish they had more time with the speakers."

Senior Kaitlin Sidorsky, who has attended all three brunches, said she has al-

ways known she wanted to be an attorney. A lawyer who attended the 2005 brunch suggested to her that she pursue a career in international or governmental law. She said Wednesday that's exactly what she plans on doing when she graduates from Bryant College in Rhode Island, where she has enrolled for next semester.

This year she had the opportunity to speak with panelist Annmarie Johannesen, a 1983 Rocky Point graduate and partner in a law firm with her husband, Richard.

"She helped a lot with discussing the whole process of law school," Kaitlin said. "She also gave me tips for being both a mother and a lawyer, because I eventually want to start a family ... way, way down the road."

Seven of the 12 speakers are graduates of Rocky Point High School. They include Michael Conte, Class of 1982

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Susan Wilson

# Careers...

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and CEO of Syntax Communication; Dr. Carolyn Hembury-Reynen, Class of 1984 and a local chiropractor; Joseph Tapler, Class of 1985 and an assistant principal at Rocky Point Middle School; Anthony Grisafi, Class of 1996 and an employee of an architectural firm in New York City; Anthony Figliola, Class of 1999 and the economic development manager for the Town of Brookhaven; Ms. Savage and Ms. Johannesen.

Also speaking Wednesday were Howard Gimple, a former school board member and a writer of varying backgrounds, who currently works for Stony Brook University; John Westermann, a retired police officer, who has published three novels and currently works as a sportswriter for Times Beacon Record Newspapers; and James Ganetis, chairperson for the division of diagnostic and therapeutic sciences at Stony Brook University.