



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Thomas F. O'Mara

O'Mara presents proclamation to local GST BOCES student being honored as a 'Student of the Year' by the New York Association for Continuing/Community Education ~ Statewide association holding 33rd annual forum in late October in Albany

THOMAS F. O'MARA October 13, 2016

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**Elmira, N.Y., October 13**—State Senator Tom O'Mara (R,C-Big Flats) presented an official Legislative Proclamation at his district office in Elmira on Wednesday congratulating Amna Gafsi of Horseheads. Gafsi will be among a group of adult education students from across New York State who will be honored as a "Student of the Year" by the **New York Association for Continuing/Community Education (NYACCE)** at a ceremony in Albany later this month.

Gafsi was nominated for this year's award by Robin DeLong of the **Greater Southern Tier BOCES (GST BOCES)** Adult Education and Training Services. DeLong said she submitted the nomination based upon Gafsi's dedicated participation in both the ESL and GED programs, along with her exemplary work ethic and positive attitude.

"This recognition is a real tribute to Amna's determination, optimism and strength," said O'Mara. "She has recognized the powerful difference that education makes to a fuller, more successful and more hopeful life, and she has pursued the opportunities offered by GST BOCES to the fullest. She's a true inspiration to her classmates and a great source of pride to the administration and staff of the GST BOCES."

DeLong said, "Amna is a true success story and GST BOCES will always support to her continued education and career goals."

The NYACCE is the professional organization representing adult education professionals statewide. As part of the organization's 33rd Annual Student of the Year Awards and Legislative Event in Albany on October 25-26, Gafsi, representing the Greater Southern Tier (GST) BOCES, will receive her "Student of the Year" honor.

To help commemorate the tribute locally, on Wednesday in his Elmira district office O'Mara presented Gafsi with an official Legislative Proclamation which states, in part, "It is the practice of this Legislative Body to commend individuals of outstanding character like Amna

Gafsi -- together with those institutions like GST BOCES committed to their success -- who have shown initiative and commitment toward constantly pursuing higher goals for themselves, and acting as role models of leadership to be emulated by their peers."

Gafsi was born and lived in Tunisia until her last year of high school when, with her new husband, she emigrated to the United States. Knowing very little English, Gafsi relied on her husband's English-speaking ability to help her assimilate into a new culture and meet new people. After her husband learned that the GST BOCES curriculum includes an English as a Second Language (ESL) component, Gafsi enrolled and steadily began to become more and more proficient in English.

She and her husband started a family and Gafsi stopped attending GST BOCES for several years but eventually returned and, in 2013, earned her high school equivalency diploma. She soon applied for a Teacher's Aide position at GST BOCES, acting on her lifelong interest in teaching, was hired and continues to work one-on-one with a kindergarten student while raising her own three children. Her ultimate goal is to someday attend college to become a French instructor.