



Renewed Hope

Children who failed to thrive in traditional schools find a clear path forward at **New Hope Academy.**

Perhaps the most validating endorsement of **New Hope Academy** comes not from its students, but from their parents.

“You gave me back my child,” is what we hear all the time,” says Kathy Rosso-Gana, founder and head of school at the academy, a nontraditional private school with campuses in Yardley and Doylestown for students, grades six through 12. Parents say such things because their children failed to thrive in a traditional school system but found a clear path forward at New Hope Academy.

“Parents tell us their child never liked going to school, but now looks forward to it,” she adds. “Before their child enrolled here, parents worried they might never graduate. Some of the issues the children have before coming here can take a family to chaos. The children just needed to find the right path.”

For many parents and students, New Hope Academy can be described as not just the right path but also the miracle path. Since its founding in 2000, the academy has specialized in motivating and educating school-phobic students, at-risk teens, gifted students, those with individualized education plans who require additional help, and students who feel they just do not “fit” at their school. By the time they receive their graduation diploma, 90 percent head off to either a four- or two-year college.

“With our small student-to-teacher ratio—we have 150 students and 55 instructors, not including 14 administrators—we teach them how to thrive,” Rosso-Gana says. “We show kids respect, and little by little they show it back. Some come in but are plagued by issues that paralyze them, such as anxiety, depression, and school-avoidance disorder. We focus on issues that have prevented students from learning.

“Our motto is ‘Head and heart before the brain,’” she continues. “Whenever there’s a problem, I need to coach the teacher, tell them they have to go back and revisit the relationship with the student. There has to be trust. A student must feel a teacher is there for them. We also have a saying: fun, fair, but firm. Kids know they need to be challenged.”

Rosso-Gana planted the seeds of New Hope Academy decades ago, when she was a secondary English teacher in Bucks County. She saw certain kids “falling through the cracks,” so she pledged to do something about it.

“With 30 kids in a class in public school, it’s hard to give the style of learning we at New Hope Academy provide,” she says. “I was very aware even then, as a young teacher, to develop relationships with the kids. Once you do that, the kids are in a different mindset. If not, most of them who get to us feel that they’re not smart. When a student tells me they don’t like being in school, I tell them they’re not in school but in a place of learning. We get them to trust us and be willing to open their minds to learning.”

In addition to New Hope Academy, Rosso-Gana runs a tutoring studio through her organization, Motivational Educational Training Company (METC). For 40 years, she has provided the community with one-on-one attention for clients in grade school through high school. Hailing from surrounding schools in both Pennsylvania and New Jersey, students can receive help in any subject, as well as test prep, homework coaching, motivational and test-taking strategies, and any other academic need. As Rosso-Gana says, “I built my reputation through METC’s Tutoring Studio.”

As director of pupil services at New Hope Academy, Tiffany Trunell ensures that the needs of all students are being met, not only academically but also socially.

“With a lot of our students, academics is the least of their issues,” Trunell says. “The kids are here for a reason; they’ve all had a



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—Kathy Rosso-Gana, New Hope Academy

different journey. When we see the progress they make as a whole student, it means everything. It changes our world.”

David Kennedy, the director of New Hope Academy’s Yardley campus, believes positioning students for success on a daily basis ties back to issues of supervision and prevention.

“We take the right approach and avoid a lot of problems,” he says. “Plus, we form stronger working relationships with the students. We’re all familiar with the No Child Left Behind movement, but Kathy has been doing that for a long time. The kids who come here are the ones who were left behind.”

Kennedy notes the principal reason students thrive at New Hope Academy is the leadership, vision, and caring of Rosso-Gana. He describes her as “a real educator who understands the needs of the students and teachers and cares about their futures.”

Whether she’s providing the vision and drive at New Hope Academy, or appearing Saturdays on WPHT-1210 AM on *The Edu-*



ational Hour, with host Dom Giordano, or writing, speaking, teaching, or consulting about education, Kathy Rosso-Gana has a singular mission: to help each student be the best he or she can be.

“We do a lot to give the students joy,” Rosso-Gana says. “Giving them joy has to be like giving them food and shelter. We give them that.”

And, more than anything, she gives them hope. ■

→ New Hope Academy

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