

PRESS RELEASE
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Mill Neck Manor Student and Fragrance Designer Have a “Scent-sational” Meeting

“What do you want to be when you grow up?” When young children are asked this question, a majority reply with familiar answers ranging from “firefighter to teacher to pilot.” Sometimes, the responses are a bit more unique. Brianna Li, a 4th grader at Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf, answered, “perfumer.”

In a recent assignment, the children were asked to write about their future job plans. Part of Brianna’s essay reads, “When I grow up I want to become a perfumer. I like to create with chemicals... the perfumes make me feel good and smell perfect. I don’t like (to) smell terrible. I will work in the store... Bath & Body Works. I will set up my perfumes that I made. I will collect the money from the people who buy the perfumes. I will enjoy being a perfumer at the store.”

All the children’s essays were displayed in the school’s hallway, where Mill Neck’s Director of Advancement, Nancy Leghart, happened to see them. When she noticed Brianna’s career dream, an immediate thought came up. She knew the perfect person to contact about visiting the school and meeting Brianna.

Leghart and classroom teacher Lisa Bonacia introduced Victoria Collette to the fourth grade class earlier this month. The children, a bit shy, said hello to Collette, a perfume

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designer, who was clearly delighted to meet the students. Brianna beamed.

Victoria Collette is the founder and perfume designer of Inner Essence Perfumes, launched in 2010. She offers a “Perfume Experience,” providing an interactive opportunity to sample the three scents in her fragrance line. It allows participants to determine which scent appeals most to them. Collette has set up her demonstration a number of times at Mill Neck; specifically at the monthly house tours conducted at the Tudor Revival manor house on the school’s campus.

As Brianna read her essay aloud, Collette thought much of what the little girl wrote reminded her of how she felt when, at eight years old, she experienced a beautiful perfume for the first time. “I was attending my first wedding. With a new dress and hairstyle, I thought I looked beautiful, but still felt shy. My parents gave me my first bottle of perfume. Putting on the fragrance made me believe I could be anything,” she said. Inspired by this memory, Collette created her fragrances to share a similar experience of transformation with other women.

Collette was thrilled when asked to meet with Brianna and share her experience with the young girl. She brought two essential oils (a basis for crafting scents) for Brianna to sample. When presented with the orange blossom essence, the little girl wrinkled her nose; pronouncing it, “too strong.” She gave the rose essence a thumbs-up. Brianna hung onto every word as Collette explained the mechanics of creating perfume. She especially liked when Collette said you keep experimenting with the ingredients until you find a combination that pleases you. Brianna nodded in agreement when Collette advised, “you need to play.”

Brianna was an active participant in the perfume experience, asking many thoughtful questions. Her teacher pointed out that Brianna has an interest in art and design, and this became apparent as several of the young girl’s questions were about the creation of the bottles and packaging of the products.

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As she wrapped up her presentation, Collette presented Brianna and the other girls in the class with samples of the fragrance Brianna liked. She thanked everyone for inviting her, saying, “I loved sharing this with you.” Looking directly at Brianna, she smiled and said, “I might have some competition one day!”

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Brianna was also very interested in the packaging and design of the perfume line.



Of her visit to the Mill Neck classroom, Victoria Collette said, “It was so amazing to meet Brianna. She truly touched my heart.”