

Summer 2014

Welcome to Your New School

When fire destroyed an elementary school in Edison, the teachers, staff and students found a temporary home at MCC.

See page 10.

Lynda Zapoticzny, principal of James Monroe Elementary School, hugs a student on the first day back.

Photo by Rob Rivera



CAMPUS NEWS

MCC Named in Top 150 Community Colleges in Nation

The Aspen Institute, an educational and policy studies organization based in Washington, DC., has named Middlesex County College as one of the top 150 community colleges in the nation.

The Aspen Institute identified the top 150 community colleges through an assessment of institutional

performance, improvement, and equity on student retention and completion measures. MCC was selected from more than 1,000 community colleges in the United States that serve almost half of all undergraduates in the nation.

“Community colleges have tremendous power to change lives, and their success will increasingly define our nation’s economic strength and the potential for social mobility for every American,” said Josh Wyner, executive director of the Aspen Institute College Excellence Program. “This competition is designed to spotlight the excellent work being done in the most effective community colleges, those that best help students obtain meaningful, high-quality education and training for competitive-wage jobs after college. We hope it will raise the bar and provide a roadmap for community colleges nationwide.”

The only other New Jersey community college to make the list is Ocean County College.

The 150 are located in 37 states across the nation; they represent urban, rural and suburban markets; and they encompass large and small community colleges – from Miami Dade College in Florida serving over 100,000 students to Carver Career Center in West Virginia with fewer than 500. A full list of the 150 community colleges is available at www.AspenPrize.org.



Students from Professor Claire Condie’s classes recently volunteered to clean the Laurence Harbor Waterfront Park. The program was organized by Clean Ocean Action, a nonprofit dedicated to improving the quality of marine waters off the New Jersey and New York coasts. Here, Ryan Fredericks, an earth science major, does his part.



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From left: College President Joann La Perla-Morales, Mat Spano '88, Donna Marie Gardner '00, and Ronald Goldfarb, interim vice president for academic and student affairs.

Outstanding Profs Receive Excellence Awards in Teaching, Scholarship

Two outstanding professors at MCC were recently honored: Mathew Spano, professor of English, was selected as the 2014 Faculty Scholar; and Donna Marie Gardner, of the Natural Sciences Department, received the 2014 Excellence in Teaching Award.

Coincidentally, both are graduates of Middlesex County College. Dr. Spano received his Associates degree in 1988 and Dr. Gardner in 2000.

Dr. Spano is an expert on the life and work of Carl Jung, the noted psychotherapist and author of "The Red Book."

"Dr. Spano's students are extremely fortunate to have a professor who is so deeply committed to scholarship within his discipline," said Christine Harrington, director of the College's Center for the Enrichment of Learning

and Teaching (CELT) and the chairperson of the selection committee. "His impressive work on Carl Jung has gained national attention. Mat is an inspiration to all of us at MCC."

Dr. Gardner is a superb teacher who motivates her students.

"Donna Marie Gardner's discipline and pedagogical expertise translates into high-level learning in her classroom," Dr. Harrington said. "She brings her passion for biology and learning into her classroom each day. Donna Marie's innovative approaches assist her students with gaining a deep understanding of biology. As her positive attitude and endless energy are contagious, we are very fortunate to have Donna Marie as a colleague."

Student Newspaper Wins Awards in Collegiate Contest

Quo Vadis, the MCC student newspaper, recently won second place in the General Excellence category at the New Jersey Collegiate Press Association.

The contest honors student newspapers from two-and four-year colleges and universities in the state. In addition, seven staff members were cited for excellence in specific areas.

"I'm really thrilled with the awards," said Melissa Edwards, the advisor. "I'm very happy for all of the writers, photographers and editors, but I am most impressed with the overall excellence award. It reflects

their hard work and dedication."

Kim Silva, the editor-in-chief, took second place in News Writing; Ben Rodger was awarded first place in Sports Writing; Sourav Chatterjee and Rob Rivera won third place for Photography. Quo Vadis' website, administered by Katherine Rivera, took first place in that category.

The publication also won first place in Layout and Design, and cited Mr. Chatterjee, Mr. Rodger, Julia Farawell and Collin Kahn for their efforts.



The Coolest Students on Campus!

Students in the Garde Manger class displayed their artistic side as they learned the fundamentals of ice carving. In this course, taught by Chef Walter Leffler, the students used chain saws to mold blocks of ice and then chisels to create the details. The class is part of the Culinary Arts degree and certificate program. Here, Helen Martinez shapes her block of ice.

Americorps Program Helps Parents and Kids

Sara Spatz, director of the Parent-Child Home Program run by the United Way of Central Jersey, had a problem. The State of New Jersey had awarded a grant to hire 12 Americorps members to work with Middlesex County families. They would act as a role model for parents and interact with the children, age 16 months to 3 years old.

Many of the families spoke only Spanish.

“We had a difficult time recruiting because the Americorps members had to be bilingual,” Ms. Spatz said.

So she turned to MCC President Joann La Perla-Morales, who is a board member of the United Way.

Charlotte Quigley, manager of career services, posted notices on the student portal, CampusCruiser. Four students have applied; two are now working and two are being considered.

The two currently in the program are Lia Molina and Tania Mora. They each work with 10 families, visiting twice a week for a half-hour, becoming a big sister to the kids and a role model for the parents.

“I love it, every day is different,” says Ms. Molina. “We model good parenting practices for the adults and bring toys and games to the kids and play with them. It’s rewarding and fun.”

Ms. Mora says she sees growth and development in the children.

“I see every day how they are learning – counting,

identifying colors and shapes, and how their language skills increase with each visit. It’s wonderful to see.”

Ms. Spatz was very pleased the College stepped up to assist.

“I’m very grateful,” she said. “The College has been a big help. The majority of the responses have come from MCC.”



Lia Molina, left, and Tania Mora.

Pink Night

"Pink Night," a program in which the Middlesex County College and Ocean County College basketball teams supported Breast Cancer Awareness, was held at Middlesex in February. The men's and women's teams from both schools wore special warm-up t-shirts and members of the Middlesex softball squad held a bake sale and collected donations for cancer research. The program was part of "Pink Zone," a national effort to raise awareness and funds, organized by the Women's Basketball Coaches Association. Before the women's game, MCC President Joann La Perla-Morales officiated at a ceremonial tipoff. She is flanked by MCC guard Jennifer Shereyka, left, and Ocean County College's Charli Topinka. Behind them are, from left, Marla Brinson, MCC's dean of student affairs; MCC Head Coach Michel Powell; and Ocean Head Coach Dana Kovich. The Middlesex women won the contest 87-82. The men's teams played later and MCC won that one 81-79.



Notables

Evelyn Rosa, director of the New Brunswick Center, was the recipient of the 2014 Patricia C. Donohue Leadership Award presented by the Mercer County Community College chapter of the American Association for Women in Community Colleges. The award was presented in May.



The MCC step team, called Exitium, won first place at the fourth annual "Step or Die" competition at Temple University in Philadelphia in April. The team, which was established in 2013, bested step teams from New York, Philadelphia and Toronto.

"Two students, Aliyah Knighton and Charles Jones, founded Exitium in the fall of 2013 as a means of expressing excellence through the African art of stepping," said Lori Johnson, the advisor. "With a purpose to educate, entertain and excel, Exitium has gained much recognition on campus." Clockwise from lower left: Briana Willis, Imani Wheeler, Cristian Gonzalez, Charles Jones, Mohammad Paracha, Shanice Soley Nelson, Aliyah Knighton, Jasmine Beaufort. Photo by Rob Rivera.

Mary-Pat Maciolek, chairperson of the Hotel, Culinary Arts, and Dietetics Department, recently received the Outstanding Dietetics Educator Award, given by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, the world's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. She received the award in recognition of achievements as an educator, teacher, mentor and leader in dietetics education. It was presented at the Nutrition and Dietetic Educators and Practitioners Area Seven meeting in Boston on April 3.

She served as the New Jersey Dietetic Association president and treasurer and she is currently in her second term in the academy's House of Delegates representing New Jersey. She has been chairperson of the Middlesex department since 2006.

Santi Buscemi, professor of English, recently published an article on how his research into Luigi Capuana's "The Marquis of Roccaverdina" led to a meeting with Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia. The article, in the Times of Sicily, can be found on www.timesofsicily.com/meeting-antonin-scalia/.

Professor Buscemi mailed the justice a copy of his Capuana translation of "Sicilian Tales," a book of fairy tales. Justice Scalia replied that he knew Capuana well: his father had done his dissertation on the writer. He let Professor Buscemi borrow it, and when it came time for it to be returned, they agreed to meet. Professor Buscemi and his wife Elaine traveled to Washington last year. They had a wonderful visit.

"His voice projected a warmth that immediately put us at our ease," Professor Buscemi wrote. "I felt as if I were sitting on my best friend's back porch, sipping a glass of good Sicilian wine."



The Cat in the Hat Turns 50, and Kids Are Ready to Party!

Area children enjoyed a birthday party to celebrate Dr. Seuss' "Cat in the Hat," which is now 50 years old. The event, organized by the Middlesex County College Bookstore and the MCC chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the honor society, included coloring, cake, and stories from the Cat himself. It was part of Read Across America, a national effort to encourage reading by young children. From left: The Cat in the Hat, Ron Rubanick, co-president of PTK; Thing 1, otherwise known as Nicole Kazar, PTK co-president; Stephanie Osinski-Rea; and Connor Rea.

PTK Chapter, Officers and MCC President Win Awards

The MCC chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges, was recently recognized at the organization's regional and national conventions.

At the regional convention, Middlesex was named a Five-Star Chapter for the first time since 2009, and it also received a Hall of Gold Chapter Award, which recognizes a Five-Star Chapter that had a membership increase of 5 percent or more over the previous year.

In addition, several individual members received awards. Former Co-President Yana Burlachka, who graduated in January, and Co-President Ronald Rubanick won Hall of Honor Chapter Officer Awards. Mr. Rubanick also won a Distinguished Chapter Officer Award and Christopher Witte received a Hall of Honor Chapter Member award.

At the national convention in Orlando, dubbed "NerdNation," College President Joann La Perla-Morales was presented the 2014 Shirley B. Gordon Award of Distinction.

Twelve other community college presidents and one provost also received the award.

They were selected based on their outstanding efforts toward promoting the goals of Phi Theta Kappa. The award is named for the late Dr. Shirley B. Gordon, Phi

MCC Named a 5-Star Chapter

Theta Kappa's longest serving Board of Directors chair and president emerita of Highline Community College in Des Moines, Washington.

Dr. La Perla-Morales credited the students for the organization's success.

"I'm honored to receive this award and I want to thank the leadership and members of PTK for all they have done to make this chapter so vibrant," she said. "In a short amount of time, they have improved from a two-star chapter to a five-star chapter, the highest level possible."

Ronald Rubanick, co-president of the MCC chapter, received a Distinguished Officer Award at the convention.

Mr. Rubanick was one of 30 chapter officers selected from among 450 applications.

"I'm very happy to receive this award, but I really think it belongs to the entire MCC chapter," he said. "We've made great strides as an organization and I'm proud of its success."

Chapter advisor Kathleen Pearle, who is also chair of the Department of History and Social Science, was very pleased with the results.

"This is a tribute to the entire chapter," Dr. Pearle said. "It's a terrific group of students with wonderful leaders. They've shown their mettle, and I'm very proud of them and their accomplishments."

Bright Smiles; Healthy Kids

The MCC dental clinic was the home of bright smiles in February as about 50 children from all over the area visited for free dental care during “Give Kids a Smile Day,” a national effort to ensure children have access to quality dental care. Local dentists, hygienists, and MCC dental students and alumnae volunteered their time and talents as they treated kids who received an exam, cleaning, fluoride treatments, sealants, as well as education on how to brush and floss. The service was the equivalent of \$43,000 worth of dentistry.



In photo at left, Jennifer Diakunczak, left, and the Tooth Fairy, otherwise known as Christine Etter, teach Aman Mitra the proper way to brush. Above, Kay Lim, a 2012 MCC graduate, cleans the teeth of Issac Wu.

Importance of Oceanography

Students in the Essentials of Oceanography course taught by Dr. Claire Condie participated in a four-hour boat trip offered by the Wetlands Institute in April. Three marine biologists from the institute gave them a hands-on experience. Students baited crab traps, participated in a discussion about the importance of the horseshoe crab, and heard a review of the crab's anatomy and their history that dates back 65 million years. They also learned how to release 300 feet of line to set a trawl net behind the ship. They were also able to touch and identify species such as sea stars, echinoderms and whelks. From left: Irene Howard, Thi Quan Pham, Ashley Flournoy, and Kaitlin Gannon, environmental educator with the Wetlands Institute.



Pride & Joy

MCC Grads
Celebrate
Achievements

A total of 1,486 degrees and certificates were awarded by Middlesex County College Monday, May 19 at the 47th annual Commencement exercises witnessed by approximately 3500 guests. The event was held in the Expo Center in the Raritan Center.

Valedictorian Stephanie Assad delivered the class welcome, sharing her experiences and aspirations. Ms. Assad is graduating with a Nursing Degree.

To read more about Commencement, view photos and the video, visit middlesexcc.edu/commencement

“Some of us had more challenges to overcome than others, like raising a family or learning the English language – all while attending classes, writing papers, and obsessively checking for grades,” she said. “Whatever our story is, we all have one thing in common: we have worked hard to be where we are today. While we had support along the way, we are all graduating because of the work we put into our education. Whether you decide to continue your studies or jump into your career, remember that it was your hard work and dedication that brought you here today. Never forget the people who encouraged you throughout your journey, and strive to be that helpful for someone else.”

Approximately 670 members of the Class of 2014 participated in the exercises, representing the 352 graduates of August 2013, 363 of January 2014 and 729 of May 2014. Participants included several students who fulfilled the requirements for more than one degree or

certificate during this academic year.

Dr. Ronald C. Goldfarb, interim vice president for academic and student affairs, presided. Greetings were delivered by Dr. Joann La Perla-Morales, College president; Dorothy K. Power, chairman of the Board of Trustees; and Ronald G. Rios, Freeholder director.

Dr. Martin N. Pearlman, professor emeritus of History and Social Science, led the academic procession as grand marshal.

Earlier in May, the College held an honors convocation for students with the highest academic achievement in each program. MCC also presented the Chambers Awards to graduates with a 4.0 grade point average, and the nine individuals were recognized during Commencement. They included Ms. Assad, Jessica L. Raub, the salutatorian, and Kimberly Flynn, Evelyn Fuyertes, Louis J. Liang, Lauren N. Madden, Megan E. Moast, Tara L. O’Day and Kendra L. Thatcher.



Valedictorian Stephanie Assad addressed the class of 2014.



Friends Forever:

Elementary School Now Part of MCC Family

MIDDLESEX
COUNTY COLLEGE



JAMES MONROE SCHOOL

*I*t was a cool Saturday evening in March when a carelessly discarded cigarette caused the destruction of James Monroe Elementary School in Edison. Fire engulfed the building, creating a six-alarm inferno.

Even before the embers had cooled, school officials were asking the question: where can we hold classes now? They didn't want to divide the school up. The kids wanted to stay with their friends and teachers.

The next day, Middlesex County College President Joann La Perla-Morales called Edison Superintendent Richard O'Malley to ask if the College could help in any way.

Space, he said. The school needed classroom space.

So Dr. La Perla-Morales spoke with Donald Drost '79, the MCC executive director of facilities management, and they felt that two vacant buildings might suffice.

So that afternoon, Lynda Zapoticzny, Monroe's principal, visited the campus and toured South I and South II. The buildings had housed Financial Aid, Scholarships, Educational Opportunity Fund, Minority Student Affairs, and Health and Safety offices, some classrooms and a machine shop, but all had been relocated. The buildings were slated to be demolished to make way for a state-of-the-art science building, which is scheduled to open in 2016.

Mrs. Zapoticzny thought the two buildings would make a wonderful temporary home for James Monroe. Now all it would take is a monumental effort to get the buildings ready.

* * *

They started at 4 a.m., cleaning, ripping out partitions, replacing tile, restoring electricity and water, reinstalling bathroom fixtures, and many other tasks. It was a herculean effort, but in about 36 hours, the MCC facilities staff had created a school. The James Monroe sign, which hadn't burned, was transported to MCC and installed.

"As a community college, this is what we do – assist the community in times of need," Mr. Drost said.

Middlesex County Freeholder Director Ronald Rios thanked the College for its efforts.

"I cannot praise enough the good will and hard work of County College President Joann La Perla-Morales and her entire staff, who are working tirelessly to transform the space for the youngsters," he said. "Time and again, Middlesex County College takes a leadership role in the community, and for that we are grateful."

Classes at Monroe had been canceled on March 24th and 25th. Wednesday, March 26 would be the first day at the new site. Television news vans – most broadcasting live – dotted the parking lot next to the buildings since before dawn. The Monroe kids came in borrowed buses, hugged Mrs. Zapoticzny and walked through a gauntlet of MCC students waving a banner welcoming them and offering high fives. They entered the Physical Education Center where they were assigned classes; South I and II did not have enough rooms so some of the classes had to double up. Trailers would come a few weeks later.

Fifth grader Marisa Tufaro was excited about her first day at college. "I walked in the gym and I'm like 'This is three times the size of my gym!'" she said. "And I'm like 'holy cow, we could have a party in here!'"

Schools in Edison sent encouraging signs that were plastered all over the building and donations poured in: gift cards, supplies, and packages created by students in other schools.

The Monroe school play had been "Aladdin" and, ironically, the theme for the year was "A Whole New

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At left, students from other schools in the district created encouraging posters that decorated the walls of the new school building. Above, MCC students welcome the James Monroe children on their first day back.

Photos by Rob Rivera



There are pre-existing links between James Monroe Elementary School and the College. MCC staff members' children attend Monroe; one alumna teaches there; and one current student works there as well. From left: Monroe teacher and MCC alumna Stephanie Bussiere '10; James Tutalo, Monroe student with his mother Mary '94, assistant director of the College Bookstore; Brianne Skrifoff, Monroe lunch aide and MCC student; Monroe Principal Lynda Zapoticzny; and Lauren Palladino '90, assistant director of purchasing at MCC with her two children, Monroe students Gina and Mark.

Friends Forever: MCC Linked to James Monroe School

Continued from page 10

World,” a song from the play. When the Broadway cast heard about this, they decided to help. Disney teaching artists visited the school in early May, teaching dance moves and music, and then members of the cast performed at a program in June. The kids enjoyed field day at MetLife Stadium, home of the Jets and Giants. In addition, Theaterworks performed “The Life and Times of Junie B.” Touring theater professional Michael Taubenslag, who directs the summer theater camp at the College, offered “Beauty and the Beast.”

One of the students, Gabby Martini, won a contest on what the U.S. flag means to her sponsored by Quick Check/PNC Bank; she won a trip on a balloon at the New Jersey Festival of Ballooning this summer.

“We are going to survive and we’re going to be better for this whole experience,” Mrs. Zapoticzny said. “Watching our children get off the buses and seeing their excitement made me realize that it really doesn’t matter where we are. I am so thankful for Middlesex County College. They have gone above and beyond. They have made us feel welcome. This is now the start of James Monroe, Chapter 2.”

Many of the students wrote thank you notes to Dr. La Perla-Morales as they were leaving.

“This year has been a rough year by losing James Monroe,” wrote Ryan. “You changed all that. If it wasn’t for MCC we would have had a different future.”

Arin said, “Thank you for making us comfortable and caring about us. We will always remember Middlesex County College and James Monroe Elementary School.”

The community rallied behind James Monroe. When the cast of Broadway's "Aladdin" heard that the school had burned, they were sympathetic. When they heard that the school had performed "Aladdin" and that its theme this year was "A Whole New World," one of the pieces from the musical, they knew they had to act. So in May, six Disney teaching artists put on an acting/singing/dancing seminar for the kids. The teaching artists worked with small groups of students developing their creative expression. Below, Kiara Danielle Brown leads the student-actors. In June, three members of the cast of "Aladdin" visited the school. They answered questions from the children and then led the students in singing "A Whole New World."



The MCC Dance Ensemble held a bake sale during its Spring Concerts in April and raised \$200, which was donated to the Monroe School. On ground, from left: Nikola Palivoda (backbend), Amanda Guerra (split), Melissa Langholff (split); Michael Korner (backbend). Standing, Aimee Mitacchione, professor of dance and the Ensemble director, is presenting the check to Lynda Zapotczyny, Monroe's principal. Standing behind them are, from left: Jennifer McCue, Michael Lemaine, Lauren Braconi, Charles Jones and Corinne Hughes.



Grant from Willard T.C. Johnson Foundation Renews Vets Center

The Willard T.C. Johnson Foundation has renewed a grant to fund the Middlesex County College Center for Veterans Services for three more years. The foundation originally funded the center in 2011.

“Military veterans face numerous challenges when they re-integrate into civilian life,” said Dave Brimmer, the Center’s director. “We’re there to help so they can access the benefits they have earned: educational, financial, mental health and medical.”

The three-year grant from the Willard T.C. Johnson Foundation is for \$450,000.

Lauren Howard, Foundation program officer, said the center’s success over the past three years is a major factor in its continued funding.

“The Center for Veterans Services is a welcoming place for all military-affiliated students,” she said. “Dave and his staff have done an excellent job in creating the center and making sure it serves student-vets adequately. We are proud to be able to support our military veterans as they transition to the next phase of their lives.”

The Center for Veterans Services has helped solve

more than 5600 concerns for nearly 500 students since its inception.

One is Bill Traeger, an Army veteran who served from 1984 to 1988. He started at MCC in 1990 but left after two years. He enrolled again in the spring of 2013 and graduated in May.

“If it wasn’t for the Center for Veterans Services, I don’t know if I would have stuck it out,” he said. “It’s a supportive mechanism.”

In just three years after being established thanks to the first Johnson Foundation grant, the center helped MCC be named as “military-friendly” by two national media companies. The College was named to Victory Media’s list two years in a row, and Military Advanced Education awarded Middlesex County College the designation of a Top Military-Friendly College in its 2014 guide.

Mr. Brimmer said the focus of the center is on assisting with the transition from the military back to civilian life through college, and making sure military-affiliated students use the educational benefits to which they are entitled effectively, both at Middlesex and at a four-year school after graduation.

He added that the center serves as a liaison between veterans and College departments, as well as a place for veterans to relax between classes.

“We are the hub for veterans on campus,” he said. “We can address all of their questions in one place and that is important.”

College President Joann La Perla-Morales said she is grateful to the Foundation for supporting the center.

“Veterans are an important part of the fabric of Middlesex County College,” she said. “We have always welcomed and supported them. I am so thankful that the Willard T.C. Johnson Foundation has renewed the support. It will help make veterans’ experiences at MCC richer and more rewarding.”

David Brimmer, right, the director of the MCC Center for Veterans Services, accepts a plaque from Curt Coy, the undersecretary for economic opportunity of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The center was lauded for its efforts in helping military veterans and their dependents complete their educational goals. The citation also noted Mr. Brimmer’s role in recognizing the one millionth recipient of the Post 9/11 GI Bill, Steven Ferraro, a Middlesex student. The two of them traveled to Washington, DC in November and met with Dr. Jill Biden, the second lady of the United States, as well as executives from the VA. Mr. Coy traveled to New Jersey in January to meet with representatives of the Rutgers University Office of Veterans Services and Mr. Brimmer.



ALUMNI ACTIVITIES

MCC 'STAR' Named Alumna of the Year

Lacey Plichta, a 2006 graduate of MCC, was named the 2014 Alumna of the Year for Contributions to the College, its Alumni Association or its Foundation. The award was presented during Celebration Day, an annual event that also honors College employees reaching milestone service anniversaries and three Outstanding Service to the College award winners.

Ms. Plichta was a member of the first class of New Jersey STARS, which is a scholarship program for high-achieving high school students who attend their community college.

She graduated with honors from MCC and Rutgers, where she went for her bachelor's and master's degrees. She is now teaching in the Princeton school system. She also owns her own business, Lacey's Gourmet Cupcakes.

She has been involved with the Alumni Association since graduation and is now treasurer.

Her engagement with MCC began in the fall of 2004, when she arrived on campus. She was one of 22 STARS students, recipients of a scholarship for those who graduated in the top of their high school class. She became outspoken in her support of STARS and community colleges. She presented an award to then-



Lacey Plichta is flanked by Veronica Clinton, director of development and alumni relations (left), and Middlesex County College President Joann La Perla-Morales.



Three Students Awarded Scholarships

From left, Sydney Gable, Jillian Baumann and Cara Saso were awarded scholarships from the MCC Alumni Association. Each was for \$500. All three are exceptional students. Ms. Saso, a Liberal Arts major, received the scholarship for dependents of MCC alumni. Her mother, Charlene, is a 1978 graduate. The others received the Association's award for academic excellence. Ms. Gable is a biology major who plans to go on to medical school to become a neurologist. Ms. Baumann is a Liberal Arts major who has volunteered extensively in her community. "We're proud to support these excellent students as they pursue their dreams," said Alumni President Dorothy Bitetto. "We're thrilled to be able to contribute to their success."

Governor Jim McGreevey, spoke to local newspapers and television stations, and appeared at a press conference for STARS II, which provides a scholarship to a four-year school for STARS I graduates. She testified before the Assembly Higher Education Committee in support of legislation that eased the transfer process for community college students. She was also an officer of the Middlesex chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges.

Even after graduation from MCC, she continued to speak with legislators and the public about the benefits of community colleges.

"My experiences at Middlesex have been nothing but wonderful," Ms. Plichta said as she accepted the award. "I had excellent professors who inspired my creativity and 'outside the box' thinking. I'll never forget creating the 3D cell model comparing how a cell operates to how a high school operates in Professor Donna Marie Gardner's biology class. Also, writing my first children's book "Sarah's Magical Snow Day" in Professor Shirley Wachtel's children's literature class. My students love listening to the story and are fascinated that I wrote and illustrated the book! Middlesex played a large role in helping me become the strong, confident, and inspirational educator I am today."

At the ceremony, Marilyn Rabinowitz received the award for Outstanding Service to the College for Adjunct Faculty, Dennis Stempinski for Staff and Tom Peterson for Administrators.

A Different Path Than Planned

By Samantha Popp '10

As a friend congratulated me for listing my first house for sale, I realized it had been six months since I left my job in social work to pursue a career as a real estate agent. Before I could thank him, he interrupted me by saying, “But I still think you should be doing something with your degree.” What does it even mean to “use your degree?”

Like most students, I spent my time at Middlesex County College wondering about the kind of job I would get after graduation. I’ve always felt that my passion for serving others would guide my future, which led me to pursue a degree in psychology and ultimately land a job managing residences for adults with developmental disabilities. When I set out to earn my degree, group homes were exactly the kind of place I pictured myself working; I felt that I was making use of my degree by helping others in need. Well aware that many people in the field “burn out,” meaning they are unable to continue working due to overwhelming job stress, I realized I was starting to fall victim to that. Although I loved my job, I found difficulty coping with the huge amount of stress and wondered if it was possible to earn a living and still be happy. Deciding to act on a pipe dream, I enrolled in real estate school hoping that selling houses could give me a mental break from my day job.

Selling houses was certainly not what I thought my degree prepared me for, but I soon discovered the same emotional reward working in real estate that I did in social work. In fact, I loved it so much that I decided to quit my job at the group home and devote all of my time to a real estate career. My education prepared me for a lifetime of serving others and there are countless ways to accomplish that goal. Instead of counseling families, I learned how to help them move into the homes of their dreams. Using your degree is more about employing the enormous skill

set gathered during your college education and less about finding a job in the exact field you studied. It’s the qualities that don’t appear on transcripts but are learned along the way, like genuine care for others, effective communication, and active listening, that make us good at our jobs, no matter what the job is.

My Liberal Arts degree helped to develop those skills and has prepared me for any path I choose to follow.

Using your degree is more about employing the enormous skill set gathered during your college education and less about finding a job in the exact field you studied.

While I always felt like a natural leader and communicator, I honed those talents in classroom presentations, on-campus leadership positions, and writing research papers at MCC. These are the very same qualities I call upon to ensure that I am a successful agent. My job duties include everything from managing transactions

that span several months to speaking with everyone from millionaires to college students looking for housing. Learning happens in much more than just the classroom, so my degree represents only a fraction of my abilities.

My friend’s comment truly confused me; how was I not making use of my college education? There’s not a day that I don’t draw on my experiences leading student groups, juggling 18 credits and a part-time job, and maintaining a flawless GPA to help me be an effective realtor. I may not work in the field of developmental disabilities anymore, but I never feel as if earning my degree in psychology was in vain. The best part is that I am still doing what I set out to do; waking up every day with the intention to affect positive change in the lives of other people.





The MCC Alumni Association raised \$3,320 for its scholarship fund during An Evening of Good Taste for the Educated Palate, a restaurant food tasting in April. Around 20 restaurants served samples of their best dishes. From left, Wai Chan and Mary Lynch are served by Matt Martinko of Bonefish Grill.



Marisol Conde-Hernandez, a 2008 graduate, was presented the Recent Alumna of the Year Award at the Alumni Association's annual dinner meeting in June. The award recognizes the accomplishments of someone who graduated within the past 10 years. Ms. Conde-Hernandez graduated from Middlesex with highest honors and from Rutgers summa cum laude. She is now at Rutgers University School of Law and expects to graduate in 2017. From left: Evelyn Rosa, director of the New Brunswick Center, who nominated her for the award; Ms. Conde-Hernandez; Dorothy Bitetto, president of the MCC Alumni Association; and Joann La Perla-Morales, president of Middlesex County College.

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Kelli Wilkins' Novels: Equal Parts Adventure and Amore

By Chuck O'Donnell '91

In a world that increasingly confuses love with the clicking of a like button, in a time when we are becoming proficient in sharing sweet nothings in 140 characters or less, it would seem romance is going the way of the Elizabethan sonnet.

Before you concede that it can only be found at speed dating meetups or on matchmaking sites, take heart. There's a place where matters of the heart still matter.

The pages of Kelli A. Wilkins' historical romance novels are imbued with equal parts adventure and amore.

In her two most recent books, "Wilderness Bride" and "Dangerous Indenture," the damsels are independent women who dare to make a break for freedom. While on the run, they are still on the lookout for their Prince Charmings and, gulp, true love.

"Everyone seems to be busy updating their status and recording moments instead of being present and living them," Ms. Wilkins said. "Not everyone in the real world ends up in a perfect relationship or finds the right one, but there is one universal truth to a romance novel, and that is readers are guaranteed happy-ever-after – or at least happy for now – endings.

"People read romances for different reasons: for great storylines, to live vicariously through the characters they care about, and to know that whatever obstacles these lovers face, they'll overcome them together."

In "Wilderness Bride," published by Amber Quill Press, Kathleen Stanton flees her pampered life in Kingston, N.Y., and ends up stranded in a small town in the Michigan Territory. She impersonates a handsome stranger's mail-order bride and begins living a lie with her quote-unquote husband. Can this temporary arrangement lead to something more – and survive brutal townspeople and harsh living conditions?

"Dangerous Indenture," published by Medallion Press, is the story of Shauna Farrow, a woman who has escaped her past in Ireland only to become an indentured servant to a wealthy man in the Pennsylvania Colony. What happens when she feels herself falling for her master's roguish son, Ashton?

Ms. Wilkins says she fell in love with writing while pursuing her Commercial Writer's Certificate. Concocting horror stories had been a hobby since she was in elementary school. But one day, the MCC Continuing Education bulletin arrived in the mail, offering a class in novel writing. She enjoyed it so much, she signed up for other writing classes. She ended up receiving her certificate in 2005.

"I had two fantastic instructors at MCC: Pat Marinelli and John Torre,"

Ms. Wilkins said. "Pat taught a lot of different classes, short story, romance, characterization, etc. John taught copywriting and speculative fiction.

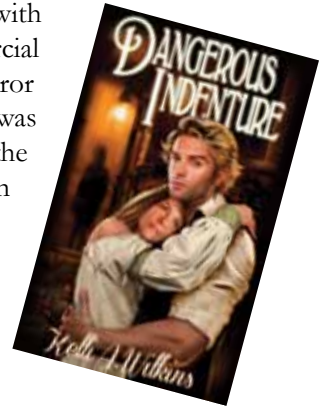
I'm still in touch with both of them today. I bounce questions off them and ask them to read some of my early drafts."

Ms. Wilkins, who lives in Woodbridge with her husband, has published more than 90 short stories, 17 romance novels and four non-fiction books. Her romances span many genres and heat levels. "The Viking's Witch" won a 2013 Gold Independent Publisher Book Award for best romance.

She's heard the so-called intelligentsia try to dismiss romance novels as a bunch of sappy stories about bare-chested lotharios and their pouty-lipped lasses, but Ms. Wilkins is quick to point out that tens of thousands of ardent fans have made this a \$1 billion industry. She knows they have come to expect a compelling story with fully realized characters.

"People read to take a break from their everyday lives and get distracted for a while," Ms. Wilkins said. "They want to get swept up in the lives and adventures of the characters, and that applies to any genre. Romances won't appeal to everyone, but that's OK, they don't have to. If you've never read a romance, don't be shy, give one a try. You might be surprised."

For more information about Kelli A. Wilkins and her books, log on to www.KelliWilkins.com.



AlumNotes

Robert Ring '71 graduated from Rutgers with a B.A. in 1973 and from Rutgers Graduate School of Social Work in 1979. He is director of the Office of Training and Professional Development with the New Jersey Division of Children and Families, in New Brunswick. Robert resides in Edison.

William G. Miller '74 founded Creative Solutions Ink (CSI) in 1995 and has over 38 years of print, graphic and production experience. Prior to founding CSI, he managed print production at Citicorp, and was vice president of sales at Quality Graphics Center and Jersey Printing Associates. He was named the 2014 Printing Intermediary of the Year by the Printing Broker Buyers Association International (PBBA).

Donna M. Kwaitkowski '76 & '12 has been employed at the MCC Blue Colt Bookstore for the past 14 years. She is currently attending Thomas Edison State College for her Bachelor's in Business Administration – Marketing. Married for 33 years, Donna has two children, likes to read and listen to music.

Helen Trippe '76 worked for the federal government for 25 years in several different positions. For the past 10 years Helen has been a substitute teacher for grades K-12. She volunteered with the Red Cross for eight years and has been deployed several times. She has served on the Alumni Board as a trustee for more than 10 years. Helen has four children, eight grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

Timothy Brasko '78 is a stand-up comic. He has performed at Catch a Rising Star in Princeton, The Village Lantern in New York City, and many other locations.

Chris Padovano '78 has been illustrating children's books for authors all over the world, from the USA to Canada, and all the way to Australia. His 75th children's book has just been published and he hopes to have completed 100 illustrated books by the end of the year. Chris has also written and illustrated two of his own children's books, both about Angels, which you can see at angelsihaveknown.com.

Kevin Kasha '81 graduated from The College of New Jersey with a B.S. in Business Administration/Marketing. He was recently promoted to the head of acquisitions at

STARZ, overseeing film, television series, and digital acquisitions for Starz Networks, Starz Worldwide Distribution, Starz Digital Media, and Anchor Bay Entertainment. Kevin acquired the home entertainment and digital rights to AMC's smash hit "The Walking Dead." He resides in Los Angeles with his wife and daughter.

Kevin J. Hoagland '82 graduated from Rider University and was first elected Middlesex County surrogate in 1992. Kevin is the founder and president of the Central Jersey Spinal Cord Association. He was honored in 1997 by the Middlesex County AFL-CIO with the Hubert H. Humphrey Award, the Middlesex County Chamber of Commerce with the 2001 Community Leaders of Distinction award, the Friendly Sons of Saint Patrick of Central Jersey Irishman of the Year in 2000, and the North Brunswick Emerald Society Man of the Year award in 1995.

Joann O'Hara '93 has been working at MCC as alumni relations & marketing services coordinator in the Office of Marketing Communications for more than 20 years, and is secretary to the Alumni Board of Trustees. She is the proud grandmother of four wonderful grandchildren.

Facing Challenges: Grad to Climb Wyoming Mountain

By Tejal Sarbaugh

With the end of the spring semester, students look forward to their summer with plans of vacations. Rob Rivera, a 2014 graduate with highest honors, has something different planned. In August, he will climb a 12,805 foot mountain in Wyoming.

Mr. Rivera served 12 years in the United States Army Reserve and National Guard. In 2009, while stationed at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, he sustained a traumatic back injury during infantry training.

Since the injury, Mr. Rivera has undergone three surgeries, two of which caused further damage to his spine and nerves. In 2010, doctors initially warned him that lifting more than 5 pounds or walking more than 500 feet could be impossible.

"My response? Bring it," he said.

In the end, he hopes to "walk away from this trip with a sense of pride and accomplishment." If anything, he hopes that his journey will serve as an example for others in similar situations.

"I hope that I will inspire others to face their difficult circumstances, knowing that with proper determination and effective planning, you can accomplish any goal, regardless of the obstacles," he said.



Rob Rivera

Douglas Wilson '93 has operated Cutting Board Caterers for the past 25 years. He is also involved in St. George Food Pantry, Helmetta, serving neighbors in need, and has been an MCC Alumni Board trustee for many years.

Brenda Cooney '98 has served as MCC's Student Activities coordinator since 2001. She is a certified event planner, private duty nurse, new grandmother, and she likes reading, dancing, traveling, knitting and photography.

Malissa Myers '99 graduated with an Associates Degree in Fashion Merchandising/Business Management. She received a B.A. in Business Administration/Human Resources Management in 2008. After her daughter was born, she earned a graduate degree in Psychology Leadership Coaching and Development in 2011.

Owen Ambrose '01 earned his Bachelor's Degree in Education from Kean University. He teaches special education science at Montclair High School and was recognized as Montclair's 2014 Teacher of the Year.

Stephanie Osinski-Rea '06 is working at MCC in the tutoring center and has a 4-year-old son. She is an independent consultant with Tastefully Simple, selling everyday gourmet food.

Marisol Conde-Hernandez '08 is currently attending Rutgers School of Law – Newark, and plans to graduate in 2017. Marisol is the 2014 MCC Recent Alumna of the Year.

Nicholas Kruger '09 is the head coach of the South River High School varsity cross country team, where he consistently leads his team to victory!

Elizabeth Piscetelli '09 graduated from Rutgers in 2011 with a Bachelor's Degree in History. She is now a sponsored obstacle course athlete competing in races all over the country. She also works for Designwrite in Princeton where she does event planning.

Yaira Camicia '10 completed her bachelor's degree in nursing at Thomas Edison State College and now is enrolled in a Master's Degree program in Nursing Education. She works at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital as an Emergency Room Staff RN and is grateful

for her experiences at MCC. "I am very proud to call myself an MCC graduate . . . not only did I receive the structure necessary to continue my studies, but the academic support needed to succeed."

Kayleigh Maklary '10 is employed as a caregiver for the elderly. She is an Army National Guard veteran. She deployed to Iraq in 2008-09, and was recently discharged after 10 years of service. Kayleigh recently graduated with a B.A. in English from The College of New Jersey.

Nadia Koltsoon '11 graduated this year from Arcadia University with a B.A. in Art History and Studio Art-Ceramics. She interned at Arcadia's art gallery and traveled to Perugia, Italy to study art history and archeology. "With the help of my professors in the Art Department at MCC, as well my EOF counselor, I was able to find my own potential."

Paul Lazaro '11 graduated from New Jersey City University in May 2014 with a Bachelor of Science in National Security Studies.

James Evans '11 is currently substitute teaching and does a lot of freelance work.

Michael Hart '12 marched in the New Brunswick/Highland Park Memorial Day Parade as a member of the Knights of Columbus.

Angelica Alvarado-Lazo '13 is a professional translator.

Shanza Arooj '13 works at the Metuchen Board of Education, is a dedicated social worker in Metuchen Township, and is the mother of two girls age 13 and 11 years old. She holds a B.S. from Thomas Edison State College.

Fatima Bahary '13 is a student at Rutgers, New Brunswick School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, studying nutritional science. She is a mother of a 6-year-old boy and plans to pursue a Master's in Education to educate young students about healthy eating habits.

LaTasha T. Horton '13 enjoys media arts, graphic design, photography, theater arts, cooking and more.

Loretta Kesseh '13 is a new aunt.

Ernestina Nyamekye '13 is employed at Saint Peter's University Hospital where she was the recipient of the Daisy Award. She credits the education she received at MCC for making her the nurse she is today.

Ramiro Reynoso '13 is a sales representative for Liberty Mutual Insurance.

In Memoriam

The College mourns the passing of three members of the College community.

Robert G. Roth, professor emeritus, passed away April 20. Dr. Roth, who taught English for over 40 years, was a dedicated teacher who cared deeply about his students and their success. He also served on the Highland Park Board of Education and was involved in several progressive political causes. He is a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and received his doctorate from Rutgers University. He is survived and greatly missed by his wife Susan, his son Brandon, his daughter Yvonne, his stepdaughter Leslie, his grandchildren Taran, Aysia and Tyler, his brother Norman Roth, and his sister Dashka Roth Lehmann.

Debra J. Quilla '87 was an x-ray technician at Staten Island University Hospital, Ocean Breeze. She also acted as an instructor, training students in the field of radiology. Debra took pleasure in spoiling her nieces and nephews. She is survived by her father, Robert Quilla, and two brothers, Frank and Michael Quilla.

Stacy Costa LaRoche attended MCC and was inducted into Upsilon Gamma Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, later elected New England/Middle States vice president. After leaving MCC, she attended Drew University, graduating in 1998 with honors. She will be missed tremendously by her husband, Rick, her two sons, Michael and Andrew Costa, her parents and siblings, as well as all of those whose lives she enriched with her outsized personality and winning smile.

FOUNDATION REPORT

Thanks to MCC Foundation Supporters

The Middlesex County College Foundation is grateful to supporters of new scholarship funds:

The **Foreign Language Scholarship Fund** was established with proceeds from MCC's international education trust fund together with support from Virgil Blanco and faculty and staff of the ESL/Languages and Culture Department. Full-or part-time students taking intermediate or advanced levels of French, Italian, Spanish or German are eligible to apply.

The **Margaret Chang Scholarship** was established with initial funds of \$20,000 provided by the Margaret and Peter Chang Foundation. Beginning in Fall 2014, the Margaret Chang Scholarship will provide three awards of full tuition and fees to qualified MCC students who are graduates of New Brunswick High School.

The **Anjali Ghosh Memorial Scholarship** was established by Professor Phalguni Ghosh in memory of his mother. The Anjali Ghosh Memorial Scholarship will be awarded to full-time or part-time students majoring in the natural sciences.

The **Rosemary Estevez Memorial Scholarship** was established with commitments from Maria Esteves and Donna Frandsen, and is a tribute in memory of Rosemary Esteves, beloved daughter of Maria Esteves.

The **Bryan Breen Memorial Scholarship** is a tribute in memory of Bryan Breen, a Middlesex County College student who passed away August 31, 2012. His dream was to become a teacher and the scholarship will help support students who plan to join the teaching profession.

The **Dr. Francis A. Spano Annual Scholarship** was established by Mathew Spano and members of the Spano family in memory of Dr. Francis Spano, professor and dean, and will be awarded to honors students majoring in natural sciences.

The **Professor Robert Urbanski Annual Scholarship** was established by Dr. Mathew Spano and members of the Urbanski family in memory of Professor Urbanski, and will be awarded to honors students majoring in natural sciences.

Alumnus **Thevan Theivakumar '82** has established an endowed scholarship in his family's name.

The **Walter and Louise Sutcliffe Foundation**, managed by Wells Fargo Wealth Management, has provided a generous gift of \$10,000 for scholarships of \$2,000 each for five qualified students in the MCC Nursing Program during the 2014-2015 academic year. These scholarships offer opportunities for nursing students who have high hopes but who face financial barriers to achieve their academic and career goals.

J&J Renews Support

Johnson & Johnson, a dedicated and loyal corporate neighbor who continues to understand and support the mission of Middlesex County College and its Foundation, has provided the Foundation with a gift of \$250,000. This gift renews support of the Johnson & Johnson Health Technologies Scholarships for the 2014-2015 academic year. It will also support the 2014 Summer Bridge/New Brunswick Program for New Brunswick high school graduates participating in developmental courses in the summer program as well as supporting these students and programs that will assist them throughout the 2014-2015 academic year.

Corporate Partnerships

Corporate Partnerships Enhance the MCC Foundation Mission. The Middlesex County College Foundation is proud of its Corporate Partner Program developed with corporate neighbors who understand the mission of the Foundation to assist the growing number of students in need of support. Current MCC Foundation partners include:

Corporate Mission Partners

Investors Bank

Johnson & Johnson

The Provident Bank Foundation

Mission Partner

Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital

Associate Mission Partner

Stewart Business Systems, Inc.

A Wonderful Day of Golf and Giving

The MCC Foundation held its 32nd Annual Scholarship Golf Classic at the Metuchen Golf and Country Club in May. Participants enjoyed a leisurely day of golf, raffles, auction prizes, delicious food, and raised \$27,000 to help support student scholarships.



A Wonderful Evening of Music, Fellowship & Fun

The “Sounds of Success” were loud and clear as MCC honored David H. Brogan ‘93, the first vice president of economic development and taxation for the New Jersey Business and Industry Association, and the New Jersey Council of County Colleges at the 44th Annual Scholarship Gala in March. Mr. Brogan was named Alumnus of the Year for Business, Professional and Community Achievement. The Council was recognized for 25 years of service to the community college sector.



At left, David Brogan accepts his award. Photo right, from left: Bakari Lee, chairman of the New Jersey Council of County Colleges; MCC president Joann La Perla-Morales; Lawrence Nespoli, Council president; and Barbara Bernard, second vice chair of the MCC Foundation. Top: Student speaker Amery Thompson with Valerie Latham of Affinity Federal Credit Union and guests.



SPORTS UPDATE

The **baseball** team finished just under .500 and just missed the playoffs. The team was very young; many experienced and talented players are expected to return next season.

The **softball** squad finished 12-10. Kelly Castronuovo, Cassandra Ottens and Elizabeth Gratta made the All-Region and All-Garden State Athletic Conference teams. Ms. Gratta was named to the National Junior College Athletic Conference All-American team.

The **golf** team had a good season. Chris Clementi and Sean Hough qualified for the Regional Tournament.

Track and Field had 18 athletes qualify for the National meet. Chris Revolus won the 10000-meter run and was National champion. Ceelea Graham and Joe McNulty finished second in their events. All three of them were NJCAA All-Americans. The women were runners up in the Region 19 Tournament.



Matt Bouthillette applies the tag.

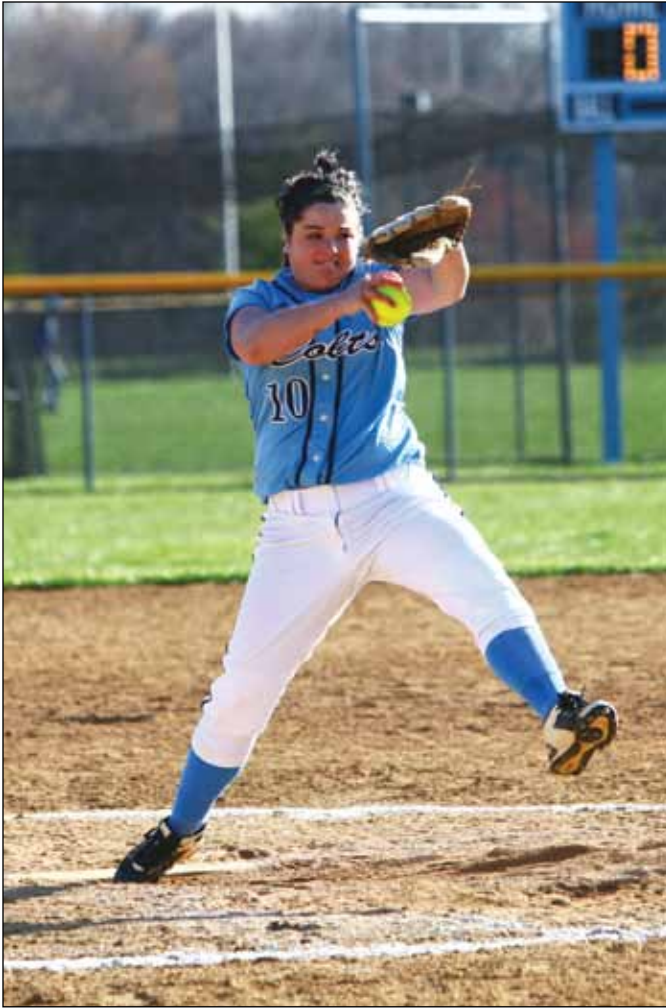


Randy Morla



Packing Up Her Jersey to Send to the Hall of Fame

The basketball jersey of Quorea Pearyer, a freshman guard, will hang for the next year in the Ring of Honor at the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, Tennessee. In his letter requesting the jersey, Josh Sullivan, director of basketball operations and technology for the Hall, said the honor is because of her outstanding play during the 2013-2014 season. "Not only does the Ring of Honor provide a colorful backdrop to the Hall of Fame's many archives, but it is also our way of recognizing some young basketball players for their achievements in the sport," he wrote. "Without a doubt, Quorea Pearyer is definitely a part of an elite group, and a part of history now too." She was named second team All-America by the National Junior College Athletic Association for Division III. She averaged 24 points per game, 11 rebounds, 4 assists and 2.5 steals. The Colts finished the season at 19-9. From left: Carey Monkowski, assistant athletic director; Ms. Pearyer; and Michel Powell, MCC's women's basketball coach.



At left, Liz Gratta fires a fastball. She was named All Region, All Conference and All America. Above, Cassandra Ottens smashes a pitch. She was All Region and All Conference.



The Dance Ensemble presented its 13th annual spring concert entitled "Impedimentum," which is Latin for "Obstacle."

"The dances presented are inspired by the ideas of either being burdened by difficulty or overcoming obstacles, hence the title of our show," said Aimee Mitacchione, artistic director of the ensemble and professor of dance at the College.

"We are modern dance-based, occasionally branching out to other dance genres such as hip-hop, jazz, tap, contemporary and ballet."



Smiling graduates at the May Commencement ceremony included mother and daughter grads Ausilia (right) and Michelle Gurbisz. See page 8 for Commencement details.