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**SPECIAL ISSUE**

# Now

FEATURING:

ARTIST STEVE WANDS '03  
**WRECK'S HAVOC**  
ON THE CONVENTIONAL!  
SEE PAGE 10



**COLLEGE CENTER**  
IS IN FLAMES! IS  
THERE NO STOPPING  
PLASMAGORE?!

**FALL  
2013!**

# CAMPUS NEWS

## MCC Again Named Military-Friendly School

Victory Media, the premier media entity for military personnel transitioning into civilian life, has named Middlesex County College to the coveted Military Friendly Schools® list for the second consecutive year. The list honors the top 20 percent of colleges, universities and trade schools that are doing the most to embrace America's military service members, veterans and spouses and ensure their success on campus.

"Inclusion on the 2014 list of Military Friendly Schools shows Middlesex County College's commitment to providing a supportive environment for military students," said Sean Collins, vice president at Victory Media and a nine-year Navy veteran. "The need for education is growing and our mission is to provide the military community with transparent, world-class resources to assist in their search for schools."

The Military Friendly Schools website, [www.military-friendlyschools.com](http://www.military-friendlyschools.com), also features interactive and search tools to help military students find the best school to suit their unique needs and preferences.

David Brimmer, director of MCC's Center for Veterans Services, said inclusion on the list is an honor.

"Our center is committed to providing student veterans with all the tools they need to succeed at MCC," he said. "Our purpose is to help our military-affiliated students feel welcome on campus, to make sure they have access to



David Brimmer (left), director of the Center for Veterans Services, works with Dennis Penny, MCC student and Navy veteran.

the educational benefits to which they are entitled, and to make their college experience rewarding and productive. We offer various methods of support to student veterans, current service members and dependents alike. And the center is a place where our military-affiliated students can relax between classes and socialize with each other."



### Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders

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Jasmine Lytle signs the pledge as Phi Theta Kappa Co-President Yana Burlachka encourages her.

## C4: Motivating Students to Get That Degree

A student-led, student-run effort to encourage Middlesex County College students to complete their education started this fall. It is being led by the MCC chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, the international honor society for two-year colleges.

“Statistics show the surest way to land a job in the field you want is to finish college and earn a degree or certificate,” said Ron Rubanick, co-president of PTK. We hope this effort will motivate students to graduate from Middlesex and then, if they choose, transfer as a junior and complete a Bachelor’s Degree.”

Those who sign the pledge and then graduate from MCC will be honored with the Community College Completion Challenge logo in the Commencement program.

In addition, administrators, faculty and staff have also been asked to sign the completion pledge, committing themselves to do whatever they can to facilitate completion of student credentials.

Learn more at [www.cccompletioncorps.org](http://www.cccompletioncorps.org).

At a White House Summit, President Obama called for community colleges to produce an additional five million degrees and certificates in the next 10 years, part of a goal to restore the United States as the world’s leader in college graduates. The U.S. is now ranked 16th among industrialized countries in the percentage of citizens holding higher education credentials.

On average, students who complete their degrees or certificates will earn an average of \$500,000 more over the course of their careers than their peers who did not.

In addition, individuals with credentials are less likely to become unemployed than their co-workers who did not earn credentials.

“We’re trying to motivate students to graduate,” said Yana Burlachka, PTK co-president. “Don’t drop out. Don’t leave early. Get that degree.”



### Seeing With Photography

An exhibit of photographs taken by blind and visually impaired artists opened at the College with a reception for the artists. The exhibit, called “The Mind’s Eye: Selected Works from The Seeing With Photography Collective,” is amazing in its detail and composition. At the reception, MCC student Maria Sciortino talks with photographer John Gardner and Mark Andres, director of the program.

MCC was presented with a Hurricane Sandy Relief Award at the Edison Chamber of Commerce Gala in June. Shortly after the hurricane struck, the Physical Education Center was turned into a medical facility to house vulnerable people who needed more care than a regular shelter could provide. More than 70 people from the College community came out to help the patients. Volunteers included students from Democracy House, the service-learning program; students from the radiography program; and students and faculty from the nursing program. From left: nursing student Lynn Cassino; Nancy Berger, director of the Nursing department; Pam Hicks, nursing faculty member; Raychelle Grooms, nursing student; and College President Joann La Perla-Morales.



## Alumnus named an Outstanding Senior at NJIT

Keith Davis, who graduated in 2011 from Middlesex County College, was named the 2013 Outstanding Senior in the Department of Engineering Technology at the Newark College of Engineering, which is a division of the New Jersey Institute of Technology. The two schools have a strong transfer agreement and he went to NJIT after graduating with high honors from Middlesex.

Mr. Davis came to Middlesex as an adult student following work as a machine operator for a concrete preparation service and an asbestos abatement company. His work with the former got him interested in engineering and construction.

“I had a very good experience at MCC,” he said. “The professors were knowledgeable and approachable, and it prepared me very well for NJIT. I made lots of friends, some of whom transferred with me to NJIT.”

Mr. Davis now works as an estimator for a company

that does site work and paving. He anticipates taking the exam to become a Certified Professional Engineer.

Thomas Sabol, chair of the Department of Engineering Technologies, said the relationship between Middlesex and NJIT makes transferring easy.

“We’re very proud of Keith,” Professor Sabol said. “He was an outstanding student at MCC and it is great to see he has continued his excellent work at NJIT.”

Mr. Davis is the fourth Middlesex graduate in six years to earn Senior of the Year honors from NJIT. Owen Fitzgerald ’06 received this award in 2008; Walter Vittitoe ’09 won it in 2011; and Tia Montalto ’10 in 2012.



Keith Davis '11



Nicole Kazar

Camp Middlesex ended a triumphant season as hundreds of kids had a great time during the summer. The programs included science, sports, crafts, plus, of course, the famous theatre camp.

# Erin Medlicott: Cosmic Yearnings and Earthly Adventures

By Kim Silva

Maybe Erin Medlicott was inspired by Frank Sinatra's song "Fly Me to the Moon" as a little girl, because she was only 30 college credits shy of potentially being accepted as one of NASA's first female astronauts. Instead she stayed earthbound and turned the writing skills she learned at MCC into a successful career as a published author and political journalist, eventually becoming the online communications manager for then-Sen. Joe Biden's presidential campaign in 2007. With her photographic memory and sharp mind, either field would have suited her.

Raised in Old Bridge and calling herself a "total Jersey girl," Ms. Medlicott's initial goals were to land on the moon, not land a story. She went to work right after high school, but when a good friend suggested she take some classes at Middlesex, Ms. Medlicott enrolled and was immediately enthralled with the late English Professor Jim Gallagher's classes. It was there that she wrote her first feature story. "He got me really excited about college," she said. Professor Gallagher then gave the story to English Professor Santi Buscemi, who entered it in a writing contest sponsored by his alma mater, St. Bonaventure University. Ms. Medlicott won first place. She then transferred to Rutgers-Newark on a full scholarship in the journalism program, with a political science minor, and during the summers interned at CBS News. This fast-paced, kinetic environment fit Ms. Medlicott's personality: with intelligence, high energy and intuition, she was a natural.

This is where Ms. Medlicott started to mingle with the important political figures of the day. She covered the Democratic National Convention in 1976 and 1980, where she met Gov. Jimmy Carter and the late Sen. Ted Kennedy. She soon settled at CBS' "Eye On" division where she worked as a researcher and wrote on-air pieces.

Ms. Medlicott still maintained her fascination with space, and she earned a geology degree in 1980 while still working at CBS. "I always had an interest in space," she said, and in 1979 applied to NASA to be a mission specialist. "Women belong in space just as much as men."

She would love to travel on a commercial space flight, but the fare is \$250,000. So for now she is very proud of the astronomy badge she earned in Girl Scouts and her memories of a teary Walter Cronkite broadcasting Neil Armstrong's first steps on the moon.

Being a child of the '60s, "someone was always blasting off – it was always on TV," Ms. Medlicott said. She also wrote a book, "Return to the Moon," which is a compilation of essays written by space experts.

Ms. Medlicott continued to work in the journalism industry for several years, and in 2005 decided to get involved with the current vice president's campaign for president. "I love Joe Biden to death," she said. She just emailed his Political Action Committee one day and with her journalism experience, volunteered to post information on his website. At an early fundraiser in New York City, Ms. Medlicott approached his table, sat next to him, and boldly

placed her business card right in his jacket pocket. She whispered to him that she truly wanted to help get him elected.

When the candidates went to Des Moines, Iowa, she took a leave of absence from her job and became the online communications manager, and she posted political blogs on the Huffington Post. After he ended his pursuit for the presidency and was elected vice president, Ms. Medlicott was offered a position in the Washington, D.C. press office but declined. She still keeps in touch with the Biden family.

So, what is next for Ms. Medlicott? She wonders if humans will live on Mars, if the moon will be mined for minerals, and about the prospect of the space program as a private enterprise. Although she never drove a lunar buggy or floated through space, her travels here on Earth gave her adventures most individuals will never experience.

She credits the education she received at MCC with being the catalyst for her journey. At any place she has worked, Ms. Medlicott said she has been called the best copy editor and attributes that skill to her English professors at Middlesex.



Erin Medlicott



Twenty-one educators from the Chongming region of Shanghai in China visited MCC in July to learn about the higher education system in the United States. The group heard from Terri Orosz, assistant dean of arts and sciences, and then toured the biotechnology and nursing labs. The group also visited educational institutions in Boston, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. during the 10-day tour. At left, Nancy Berger, director of the joint MCC-Raritan Bay Medical Center Nursing Program, demonstrates the simulated patient that students use to practice working with expectant mothers. From left: Professor Berger, Pan Qun, a teacher in the Shanghai Chongming Beibao Primary School, and Tao Li, a teacher in the Shanghai Chongming Yucai Primary School.

## Dental Hygiene Program Re-Accredited by Commission

The Dental Hygiene Program at Middlesex County College has been granted a renewal of accreditation by the American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation. The Commission is a specialized accrediting body recognized by the United States Department of Education.

“We’re all very proud of this achievement,” said Claire Pean, chair of the Dental Auxiliaries Department at MCC. “This was a strenuous process and we worked very hard on it. I think it shows the high quality of our program. The commission looked at all aspects of our program and approved. We are very pleased. We have wonderful faculty who prepare our students very well. Our graduates score extremely well on their national exams, and many go on for advanced degrees. Our students provide a variety of oral health services in the clinic including oral prophylaxis, x-rays, dental sealants, and oral hygiene instruction. We have many community outreach programs including Give

Kids a Smile Day, when children can come in for dental work free of charge.”

Middlesex has been granted the accreditation status of “approval without reporting requirements,” which means the Commission had no questions or reservations about approving the program. This is the highest rating a program may obtain. The next site visit will be in 2019.

## Notables

Diane Gruskowski, assistant in the Department of Hospitality, Culinary Arts, and Dietetics, received a joint resolution from the New Jersey Assembly and Senate to commemorate the 10th anniversary of Danielle’s Law, named for her daughter.

Danielle’s Law requires that direct support staff in a facility for the developmentally disabled and traumatic brain injured dial 911 in a life-threatening emergency.

The resolution was presented by Assemblymen Joseph Cryan and Upendra Chivukula during Disabilities Awareness Day in North Brunswick.



The Child Care Center ended the summer with a special day of fun in August. The children enjoyed face painting, crafts, pony rides and a petting zoo featuring ducks, a chicken, a donkey and goats. Here, Jacob Badilla makes a new friend.

# Lt. Bob Wetzel '83

**An Incredible Story of Humanity,  
Resilience, Hope & Courage**

**(And of meeting the man who saved  
his life 22 years ago.)**

By Chuck O'Donnell '91

**T**he ovation started slowly, began to build, then exploded into a wave of emotion rushing across the Quad.

Lt. Bob Wetzel had been home for only a few months when he was invited to be the guest of honor at the Middlesex County College Commencement ceremony in 1991.

The Navy pilot and his navigator, Jeff Zaun, were taken prisoner in the hours-old Desert Storm in January after their A6 Intruder was struck by a surface-to-air missile, forcing them to eject near the H3 Airfield in southwestern Iraq.

For the next 45 days, food was scarce, hope was scarcer and the specter of death was constant. He was interrogated for hours on end and sometimes beaten with a leather strap. He even had a cigarette extinguished on his hand.

After Iraq surrendered and they were released, America welcomed Lt. Wetzel and Lt. Zaun home with open arms. Lt. Wetzel met with then-Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, threw out the first pitch before a Mets game, and served as the grand marshal at the annual Veterans Day parade in his hometown of Metuchen.

And then there was this ovation. It was a heartfelt expression of gratitude and a spontaneous celebration of his safe return echoing off College Center, the Library, Chambers Hall and all the surrounding buildings.

Looking out from the stage at all the MCC graduates and their friends and family as they cheered for him is something he'll never forget.

Not even 22 years later.

"I only remember a handful of things from that day," said Lt. Wetzel, a 1983 graduate. "I remember meeting the president of MCC (Flora Mancuso-Edwards). Then I remember they asked me to say a few words. I think I wished the graduates good luck and continued success.

Something short like that.

"I was floored by the standing ovation. I was not used to that at all.

It was all these kids cheering for me and it was really, really overwhelming. I was not expecting it at all."

Summoning uncommon strength and perseverance in the face of adversity was one lesson Lt. Wetzel started to learn during his time at MCC.

He was one of nine children, and his dad helped him pay for his tuition as best he could. Young

Bob would have to work hard to earn the rest.

So he took classes part time, worked odd jobs and squirreled away as much money as he could. At one point, he was loading trucks at UPS at night, going to classes during the day.

The dollars and the credits slowly piled up, and after five years at MCC, he earned his degree in Mechanical Engineering Technology after taking one final course in the spring of 1983 to fulfill his physical education requirement.

Back then, he had his heart set on becoming a construction engineer or a civil engineer. He says his pro-



*Continued on page 8*

fessors were engaging and his classes were fascinating, especially metallurgy.

“We would test the strength and qualities of different materials,” he said. “They had this textile machine and you would put a piece of metal in and test it till it cracked. Then you analyze it, take it apart and stain it and see how the materials were broken.”

In 1985, with a Bachelor’s Degree in Mechanical Engineering Technology from the New Jersey Institute of Technology in hand, he decided to pursue his other dream: Joining the Navy and becoming a pilot.

That dream, however, didn’t include being blasted from the sky and taken prisoner. While Lt. Wetzel was held captive half a world away, his family faced its own torment. While videos of Lt. Zaun and other POWs were broadcast on network TV, the video of Lt. Wetzel taken by his captors was not released for whatever reason.

The family supported each other, prayed every day and clung to the hope he was still alive, but the Navy had no choice but to officially list him as missing in action.

Jacqui, who had their wedding invitations drawn up and ready to mail out, says she eventually went back to work, trying in vain “to get my mind off the whole situation,

even for a little while.”

While Bob and Jacqui eventually got married and moved to Colorado where they are raising three children, it wasn’t until recently that Lt. Wetzel was able to find closure on that chapter in his life.

No, it wasn’t until he and Lt. Zaun were reunited with Layth Muneer, the Iraqi commander of the H3 Airfield, that he was able to finally thank the man who had saved his life.

Lt. Wetzel says after they ejected from the fiery jet, they tried to crawl to safety and wait to be rescued. Instead, they were soon surrounded by a mob of Iraqi soldiers from the airfield, who began to shoot their guns into the sky in celebration of their good fortune. They took turns kicking and stomp-

*“I thought, ‘This is it. They’re going to kill us.’ I remember they kept ordering me to put my hands in the air, and I kept trying to tell them that I couldn’t. I had broken both my arms when we ejected from the jet.”*

ing Lt. Wetzel and Lt. Zaun.

“I thought, ‘This is it. They’re going to kill us,’” said Lt. Wetzel. “I remember they kept ordering me to put my hands in the air, and I kept trying to tell them that I couldn’t. I had broken both my arms when we ejected from the jet.”

That’s when a voice emerged from the darkness and assured Lt. Wetzel, “It’s OK. Don’t worry. You’re going to be OK.”

In that instant, Cmdr. Muneer decided he would show compassion to the American aviators, even if they were the enemy. He almost single-handedly kept the mob back and saw to it that Lt. Wetzel was transported to a hospital.

Even at the hospital, Cmdr. Muneer was their guardian angel. While Lt. Wetzel was peacefully resting after surgery on his arms, a tug of war for his life was being waged bedside. Cmdr. Muneer would not relent. Not when officials demanded to take them away. Not even when the cousin of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein insisted he take them. Not when it was suggested that his military career – or worse – could be at jeopardy if he didn’t hand over the prisoners.

Cmdr. Muneer had his personal driver take Lt. Wetzel and Lt. Zaun to the Iraqi Air Force Headquarters in Baghdad, where they would presumably be treated more humanely.

Despite Cmdr. Muneer’s best efforts, Lt. Wetzel and Lt. Zaun fell into the clutches of torturers. But Lt. Wetzel says he was lucky. He said it could have been much worse, but he thinks they took it easy on him because he was already badly injured.



From left: Bob Wetzel, Layth Muneer and Jeff Zaun. They met at a restaurant outside Washington.



So, after 22 years, the three of them were reunited at a restaurant near Washington. Cmdr. Muneer dubbed it “The Great Meeting.” Even Rodrigo Cruze, a friend of Cmdr. Muneer who had located Lt. Wetzel and Lt. Zaun, attended.

I thanked him for saving my life,” said Lt. Wetzel. “He saved our lives by keeping the mob back in the desert. I don’t know what would have happened if he was not there. I felt like he was instrumental for keeping us safe and for saving us.”

Lt. Zaun said it was a festive night, a celebration of life. They were like old pals catching up, laughing the night away. For instance, when Cmdr. Muneer finally told Lt. Zaun and Lt. Wetzel what kind of missile had hit their jet

(a Roland surface-to-air missile, most likely heat-seeking), Lt. Wetzel turned to his navigator and said, “I told you! I told you!”

Then Cmdr. Muneer joked, “Well, Jeff, if you had deployed the flares, it wouldn’t have hit you!”

In laymen’s terms, the missile would have been attracted to heat of the flares, not the body of the jet.

The fact that they could now make light of the whole incident was proof that those wounds had healed, said Lt. Wetzel.

“As far as each one of us surviving and coming back home safely and the three of us being still alive, still having fun and having a good life in the United States – that was the best part of the reunion,” Cmdr. Muneer said.

## One photo, two heroes

I found this photo of Navy Lt. Bob Wetzel among the many my dad took the day I graduated from Middlesex County College in 1991. Lt. Wetzel was a guest of honor at the Commencement ceremonies, having just returned home after surviving 45 days as a prisoner of war after his jet was shot down by a surface-to-air missile over southwest Iraq.

My dad, Charles Sr., rarely spoke about his own time in the military, but it wasn’t because he wasn’t proud of the six years he spent in the Army.

And he rarely mentioned the Purple Heart he was awarded after being struck by a bullet in his right hand while serving in the Korean War.

Dad never talked about it, so I’m left to only imagine the agony he was in, the blood he was losing, the panic he felt as the wound was treated by a doctor. I wonder if it occurred to him that if an infection had set in, he could have easily lost his whole hand. I’m sure by today’s standards, medical care in the field on Sept. 12, 1950 was primitive.

So they took him back and got ready to load him onto a helicopter that would take him to the hospital. The race against time was on.

That’s when someone came over and said that a tank had just been hit and that the men inside were in bad shape. My dad insisted that those men be taken to the hospital first, that he would wait for the helicopter to come back for him.

By the time he arrived at a hospital in Japan, gangrene had set in. It looked grim. Although he was left with a big scar above his palm and limited flexibility in a few of his fingers, the doctors saved his hand.

Dad passed away almost three years ago after spending the final two years of his life at the New Jersey Veterans Memorial Home in Edison where he was well-cared for. He suffered from dementia in his later years. On his bad days, he wouldn’t recognize me. But he was treated with dignity befitting an old sergeant at the home, and when he passed



away, he was at peace, surrounded by his family.

Funny thing, he never told me the story about the helicopter. He told it to my mom once decades earlier. It crossed her mind after he passed. But that was my dad’s way – he never wanted to be the center of attention or needed a pat on the back. He was humble. He was silently and devoutly dutiful, whether it was an act of heroism on the battlefield or putting his son through college on a clerk’s salary.

I have no doubt my dad wanted to take this picture of Mr. Wetzel because he felt an unspoken bond with him. They knew what it was like to sacrifice their blood, sweat and tears – but mostly their blood – for their country. They knew what it was like to choke back fear and charge into harm’s way, to find themselves in the enemy’s crosshairs, to crumple to the ground on foreign soil.

Just one hero taking the photo of another hero on a hot spring day 22 years ago.



Charles O'Donnell Sr.

Chuck O'Donnell

# ARTIST STEVE WANDS '03 WRECKS HAVOC ON THE CONVENTIONAL!

By Chuck O'Donnell '91

# T

he summer afternoons of Steve Wands' childhood were often spent lost in the pages of comic books.

There were laser guns and sky scraper-sized robots.

There were mustache-twirling menaces and monsters run amok.

There were muscle-bound marvels swooping in at the end to save the world time and again.

It was an innocent time when his imagination soared and he could dream of some day making up his own caped supermen with their own heroic stories.

But it's not a place that Mr. Wands '03 gets to revisit these days.

That's because he's been a professional comic book creator for about six years and spends most every day in a full sprint trying to keep pace on a hamster wheel of deadlines.

While he enjoys writing, illustrating and coloring, he has rapidly become one of the comic book industry's most talented and prolific letterers – the guy entrusted to marry the writer's script to the artist's pencils without interfering with the reader's experience.

Working for DC, DC-imprint Vertigo, BOOM!, Random House and other comic book publishers, he's created the word balloons coming from Superman's mouth, the thought balloons popping up from Scooby-Doo's head and the sound effects echoing across a dark alley as Batman takes down another Gotham goon.

As he's launched Green Lantern toward distant worlds and the Flash dashing across the globe, his life's journey has taken him back to those long-ago days of his youth spent scouring the local deli's spinner rack looking for the latest issues of the Justice League or Fantastic Four.

"It's come full circle and I never knew if I would get here or not," Mr. Wands said. "To be cheesy, it's a dream come true.

"I'm still a fan of comics. They're still great. It's escapist entertainment. It's a way to be somewhere else, thinking about something, engaged in a story."

It's a journey, he says, that wouldn't have been possible



Steve Wands

if not for his stop at Middlesex County College.

Like many students who arrive at MCC, Mr. Wands found himself at a crossroads. He looked into his soul and realized the thing that made him truly happy was creating comic books. He set his sights on The Kubert School in Morris County. There are few institutions in the world like it – a three-year accredited school dedicated to churning out some of the industry's most brilliant artists such as Alex Maleev, Rags Morales and Tom Mandrake.

But to get his foot in the door at the Kubert School, Mr. Wands knew he was going to have to knuckle down on his studies at MCC. So, he made a pact with his friend, Mike Fiorentino. He would get his act together, improve his grades and graduate from MCC, then the two of them would enroll at the Kubert School.

They carpooled to the Kubert School every day for three years, but Mr. Wands and Mr. Fiorentino stuck it out and graduated.

In the end, the good guys won the day ... just like in the comics.

“I think Steve’s best character trait is the fact that he just goes for it,” Mr. Fiorentino said. “He’s wanted to be involved in this field and he just made up his mind that he was going to do it, and he did.”

**A**

s Mr. Wands sits at his computers in his home office in Old Bridge to work on another comic, he finds himself harkening to the lessons learned at MCC.

There was a life drawing class where the instructor, Peter Arakawa, would go from desk to desk, forcing Mr. Wands and the other students to examine their drawings more closely than they ever had before.

There was a typography class where guest logo designers visited and taught him to look at the letters and their forms as pieces of art.

And there was a photography class that brought everything into, ahem, focus.

“I learned a lot about composition and layout, how you sort of sit yourself back and kind of capture the picture, make sure you have it balanced, make sure it’s a well-composed shot,” Mr. Wands said. “And using that in comic books is a perfect match. You think of a panel as a photograph.”



There’s a division of labor among the men and women who create comic books. Those who write, draw and ink are the stars. Their names get top-billing on the covers. Colorists have a smaller, but appreciative fan base. Unfortunately, letterers are often the unsung heroes in the process.

The scripts are written, the pages are drawn, inked and colored and it all gets handed over to the letterer, leaving Mr. Wands and his peers to figure out where each word balloon or thought bubble should go.

“You can’t cover anything important with a word balloon,” he said. “You have to make sure you know what’s important to the story. You have to understand the story. You have to understand what the art is trying to show, where it’s trying to go and not get in the way of that.”

Whether he’s working on a trippy kids book where one of the characters is a super-stretchy dog (“Adventure Time”) or a dystopian sci-fi Western starring a cybernetically-enhanced primate (“Six-Gun Gorilla”) or a blood-splattered murder-mystery (“The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo”), Mr. Wands knows he plays a vital role in the making of each comic – and making each comic great.

“The thing that separates Steve from the pack is that he is a very capable artist in his own right, which makes him an editor’s best friend (and weapon),” said BOOM! editor Eric Harburn. “Steve is the last member of the creative team that touches a book before it’s sent to the printer, so if any last minute adjustments are needed – a page border is broken, there is a small coloring error in need of touching up, the KRSHHH of a car collision needs a bit more oomph – Steve is there to take care of business and make sure I don’t have an ulcer before I’m 35.”

Mr. Wands might be working on his own ulcer these days. He and his wife, Carmela, are busy raising newborn Ethan and 4-year-old Jacob. Plus, he is an accomplished novelist. He’s the author of the “Stay Dead” series of short stories, collections and novels. Many of his titles have hit Amazon’s 100-best selling lists for their respective categories.

And he hopes to revisit those dreams of his youth and self-publish comics starring characters he’s imagined. He’s got a few ideas kicking around in his head. He says it would be a refreshing departure from all the lettering work he does.

“You should never be too satisfied,” Mr. Wands said. “You need to change it up and not get too comfortable with what you’re doing. You should always be looking to see what’s next.”

Steve Wands has helped create comic books starring everyone from Garfield to Green Lantern, Scooby-Doo to Superman. Image courtesy of DC Comics.

# FOUNDATION REPORT

## Update on Recent Gifts

The MCC Foundation is grateful to loyal and generous donors for their renewed commitment to MCC students.

The **Southpole Foundation** has provided a generous gift of \$14,000 for scholarships in 2013-2014. Since 2007, The Southpole Foundation (formerly the Khym Foundation) has supported MCC students, and its generosity continues to have a profound impact in helping recipients achieve their educational and career goals. Southpole Foundation Scholarship recipients must have full-time enrollment status, maintain a 3.0 GPA, and have demonstrated financial need.

The **Women's Rehabilitation Group of New Jersey** provided a generous gift of \$7,500 in scholarship support for 2013-2014. This support is designated for full-time female students of Asian Indian origin who maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA and have financial need but may not be eligible for financial aid. The Middlesex County College Foundation is grateful to the WRGNJ for its dedication to helping ease the financial burdens of recipients who seek to better their lives and that of their families through education.

Trustees of the **Robert Sydney Needham Foundation**, managed through Wells Fargo Wealth Management, have graciously provided a gift of \$5,000 to support the Robert Sydney Needham Memorial Scholarship for a deserving MCC student in 2013-2014. The recipient must be a full-time second-year student with great financial need, a minimum 3.0 GPA, and be actively involved in community service or campus leadership. This scholarship is the highest single award provided to one MCC student.

The **Affinity Federal Credit Union Foundation** provided support of \$2,500 for the Affinity Federal Credit Union Foundation Annual Scholarship for a deserving, qualified MCC student in 2013-2014. Support for scholarships from AFCU continues its commitment to the success of MCC students, which, in turn, helps to strengthen and enhance local communities.

**Metuchen Savings Bank** renewed its support of \$3,500 that will continue to provide a scholarship for a qualified MCC student in 2013-2014. For many MCC students, the key to accessibility is the financial assistance

students receive through scholarship support. The Foundation thanks Metuchen Savings Bank for its continued commitment to the success of MCC students.

Members of the **Highland Park Masonic Lodge #240** generously established a scholarship to honor the memory of one of its members, J. Craig Putnal. Lodge members provided support of \$2,000 to offer the J. Craig Putnal Memorial Masonic Annual Scholarship during the 2013-2014 academic year. This scholarship will assist a deserving MCC student who has entered MCC directly from high school and who qualifies for financial aid.

Alumna Betty Whalen, MPA, Class of 1987, generously donated \$1,500 for the **Betty Whalen Health Technologies Annual Scholarship**. This scholarship supports a deserving Hispanic female student enrolled in Health Technologies in 2013-2014, with financial need but who is ineligible for federally funded financial aid.

Students with a desire to achieve an engineering degree are eligible for a generous **GMB North America Inc. Scholarship** in the amount of \$1,500. This support allows the recipient to focus on his or her studies.

### Join Us!

Middlesex County College,  
the MCC Foundation  
and the Alumni Association  
invite you to the

44th Annual Scholarship Gala  
6 p.m., Saturday, March 1, 2014  
The Imperia, Somerset, NJ



David Brogan

Honorees:

David H. Brogan '93  
New Jersey Council of County Colleges

Contact 732-906-2564 or email [foundation@middlesexcc.edu](mailto:foundation@middlesexcc.edu)

# Corporate Partnerships Enhance Foundation Mission

The MCC Foundation is proud of its partnerships with corporate neighbors who join in assisting the growing number of students in need of support. These partnerships help provide funding for scholarships, financial aid and educational resources. Corporate partners are recognized at Foundation events, in printed materials and at [www.mcc-foundation.org](http://www.mcc-foundation.org).

## 2013-2014 Mission Partners include:

*Corporate Mission Partner (\$10,000 level)*

**Johnson & Johnson**

**The Provident Bank Foundation**

*Associate Mission Partner (\$2,500 level)*

**Stewart Business Systems, Inc.**

Join us as a corporate partner! Contact 732-906-2564 or email: [foundation@middlesexcc.edu](mailto:foundation@middlesexcc.edu).

## Help Us Help Our Students!

Please support the Annual Fund

Your donation to the Annual Fund helps the MCC Foundation fulfill its mission to provide scholarships for MCC students. Gifts of all sizes really do make a difference! Please make your gift online at [www.mcc-foundation.org](http://www.mcc-foundation.org) or call 732-906-2564.

Thank you!

# Foundation Chair Presented L'Hommedieu Award

Brian Daugherty was presented the L'Hommedieu award during the Fall Convocation at Middlesex County College in August. The L'Hommedieu award is the highest honor given by the College. It is awarded annually to a person who embodies the citizenship, leadership and humanity of Paige D. L'Hommedieu, the founding board chair of the College.

A strong supporter of Middlesex County College, its Foundation, and its mission of providing a high-quality, affordable education, Mr. Daugherty joined the Foundation Board in 1990 and has guided its finances and investments. He has been the president of the Foundation for five years and was instrumental in its reorganization in 2010.

"Brian was pivotal for the Foundation and the College," said Thomas Tighe, vice chairman of the College Board of Trustees. "As chairman, he realized the Foundation needed to be reorganized to make sure it remained on solid ground. We couldn't have had a better chairman."

Mr. Daugherty, who spent his career in the banking industry, has also served on the Foundation's Finance Committee and was treasurer.

"I am pleased and honored to receive this award," Mr. Daugherty said. "But the honor needs to be shared with all of the great people I have had the opportunity to work with, both at the MCC Foundation and the College. Why is the Foundation important to me? At each of our board meetings, we hear from a student who we have helped. Their stories, invariably, say that without the assistance

from the Foundation they would not have been able to pursue their college education. This is what the Foundation is all about: helping students achieve their goals."

Mr. Daugherty has always been a staunch supporter of the Foundation and its mission. In addition to his extensive service, he and the banks he has represented over the years have been regular supporters of the Foundation's Annual Scholarship Gala and Golf Classic, as well as the Foundation's historic Community Investment Campaign.



From left: College President Joann La Perla-Morales, Brian Daugherty, and Dorothy K. Power, chairman of the Board of Trustees.

# ALUMNI ACTIVITIES

## AlumNotes

**Roberto E. Bahruth '70** is a Ph.D. and professor of bilingual education and a Foundation scholar at Boise State University. In 1990 he co-authored "Community Colleges—Profiles in Success: Reflections on the Community College Experience" published by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges.

**Gerald Smith '72** earned a B.A. from Rutgers in 1976 and an M.Ed. from The College of New Jersey in 1983. After retiring, he has served as an adjunct English professor at MCC. The MCC library recently accepted Gerald's award-winning young adult novel "Captive Angel" into its collection. Gerald is married and has a 20-year-old daughter who has taken classes at MCC.

**Gregory A. Chasar '72** is retired from a career in business and government. He has four sons and one daughter ranging in age from 22 to 31, all living in Mercer County, NJ.

**Mark Dzuban '72** is CEO of the cable industry's applied science organization, Society of Cable Telecommunications Engineers. Mark is a resident of Elverson, PA. "MCC has been a significant part of my career," he writes.

**Thomas Bagala '75** is controller for Nova Petroleum & Chemicals in Fishkill, NY. He graduated from Rider University in 1977 and in 1983 earned an MBA from Drexel University. Tom has three children, a daughter age 16, and twins, a boy and girl, aged 11. He has been living in Fairfield County, CT for the last 16 years. Tom enjoys his family, traveling and he still roots for the Mets!

**Jack Oujo '78** continued his education at Seton Hall University earning a B.S. in 1980, and a Master's at Fairleigh Dickinson University in 1993. He is the owner of Jack Oujo CPA, Inc. in Wall, NJ.

**Joseph Kozacko '80** has lived in Cape Coral, FL since 1997 with his wife and two daughters, Sara and Vanessa, ages 6 and 10. He is employed by the Lee County government as an engineer technician. Joseph enjoys the weather and activities in SW Florida.

**Pat Robba '82** is a senior project coordinator at Bristol-Myers Squibb Company.

**Suzanne Goggin '83** has been employed at Johnson & Johnson for 31 years. She is a senior executive assistant to the chief quality officer and vice president of quality and compliance for Johnson & Johnson Consumer Products. Suzanne has two sons, a junior at Rider University and a freshman at North Brunswick Township High School. She enjoys working out and baking and is looking forward to traveling once she retires.

**William Perry Morgan '84** is a theatre instructor at Greensboro College, Greensboro, NC, and is director of the Musical Theatre program. Founder of the Annual Perry Awards for the New Jersey theatre community, the gala event attracts hundreds of people each year. Prior to joining Greensboro College, Perry taught



advanced acting, playwriting and directing at Northwestern State University in Louisiana. He holds a B.F.A. and an M.S. from Long Island University, and an M.F.A. from Naropa University. Perry has served as company composer for Cara Gargano and Dancers and Pyramid Productions, winning two Grammy Award nominations for his work with the latter group. Perry is married to Jo Hall, actress and assistant professor of Theatre at Greensboro College.

**William M. Swiernik '84** graduated in 1987 from the Landscape Architecture program at the State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF)

in Syracuse, NY. He married a classmate from SUNY and they have raised two sons. "Although my time at MCC was short, the courses I took and the guidance and encouragement I received from my professors prepared me well for transferring to SUNY ESF," he writes.

**Sherri Bierman '85** got her first full-time position at Wakefern Food Corporation in 1986 and is still there 27 years later – "It's a great company!" she writes. She was first hired as a secretary, promoted to expeditor, junior accountant, and roll-out coordinator, and is currently a supervisor in the Finance Division with 14 people reporting to her. Sherri resides in East Brunswick and has three children, Robert, 21, Joseph, 17 and Nicholas 7.

**Tony K. Wei '86** earned his B.S. degree from NJIT in 1988. Since 1989, Tony has worked as an engineer for the U.S. Army at Picatinny Arsenal. In 1996 he earned his Master's in Technology Management from Stevens Institute of Technology. Tony lives in Piscataway with his wife, son and their dog. He enjoys mountain biking, skiing, camping and traveling.

**Emil Petardi '87** transferred from MCC to Rutgers University and graduated with a B.S. in Accounting. Emil formed his own CPA practice in Edison. "Thanks for the chance to show what I can do," he writes.

**Betty Whalen '87** was elected to a three-year term on the Franklin Township Board of Education in November 2012. The board comprises nine members who are responsible for overseeing a \$130 million budget and instruction for 8,000 students.

**John F. Falzarano '91** is employed as an HVAC technician at Ortho Clinical Diagnostics in Raritan. He has two children in college. One son, a New York City police officer, is also a graduate of MCC. John enjoys golf, motorcycles, and spending time with his family.

**Kamran Moid '93** graduated from the Medical Laboratory Technology Program and now lives in Houston, TX, working for the past 11 years at Kindred Medical Center. He is happily married and has two boys in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Kamran's wife works as a phlebotomist at Methodist Hospital in West Houston. Kamran is also a veteran of the U.S. Army, serving at Fort Campbell Kentucky as a unit supply clerk.

**Roger Doss '95** earned a Bachelor's at Rutgers/NJIT (joint degree) in Computer Science in 1998. In 2001, he completed his Master's in Computer Science at NJIT. Ten years later, Roger earned his Ph.D. in Applied Computer Science at North-central University. Roger works as a software engineer, and would eventually like to teach. "I learned a great deal at MCC, which was the start of my college career," he writes.

**Janet Neiss '96** graduated from the Office Administration Department with Honors. She taught Special Education K-12 and is now retired and living in Florida. Janet enjoys reading, movies, travel and snow-birding from Connecticut to Florida.

**Debbie Weis '96** is a retired RN, widowed with five adult children and 13 grandchildren. Debbie's children all have college degrees and three have their Master's. Though her husband died young, she managed to put them through school. Debbie's son, Charlie, graduated from Notre Dame and was head football coach there for five years and is now coach at the University of Kansas. Debbie's daughter, Karen, is a physical therapist for Cape May County. Debbie is looking forward to a cruise to Hawaii in October.

**Matthew Wernock '96** has worked at Ronald McDonald Camp since 1994. "As a child I was diagnosed with Acute Lymphatic Leukemia and am now cancer free," he writes. "I have shared by giving back to these kids with cancer and am living life to the fullest every day!"

**George Murray '96** is a lifelong resident of Milltown and works as a regional reliability engineer. George earned his A.A.S. degree and a certificate in heating ventilation, air conditioning and mechanical engineering, both from MCC. He is the owner of LG&R landscaping. He and his wife, Louise, have two young children. As a councilman, George was re-elected to a second term, and has chaired the Parks and Rec-

reation, Public Safety and Finance committees. He has also served as a member of the Utilities and Environmental Health committees.

**Brian Cole '05** is an independent photographer and the publisher of "In The Spotlight" magazine. The latest issue "Africa to America: a Tribute to Black Music" is available for purchase. Brian is always looking for artists, writers and graphic designers.

**Christine Quinones '10** says "Upon graduating from the Nursing Program at MCC, I earned a Bachelor's degree and am currently five classes away from earning an M.S.N. in Nursing Education. I am now working my dream job in NICU at Saint Peter's University Hospital. Someday, I hope to teach at MCC!"

**Samantha E. Popp '10** has accepted a position with Weidel Realtors in Bridgewater, NJ. Previously she had a career in social work, advocating for individuals with developmental disabilities.

**Kina Weaver '10** graduated from the Education Practitioner program and is currently enrolled in Drexel University's online degree program. Kina is majoring in Elementary Education PK-4 and expects to complete her B.S. in Elementary Education in 2016.

**Kaitlyn Wait Dorn '11** says, "I am now married to a U.S. sailor and live in San Diego, CA. At Middlesex, I played soccer in 2009 and 2010 for the Colts. This year I will be attending San Diego University to earn my Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Justice."

**Michael Wulster '11** graduated with an A.A.S. in Radiologic Science and earned Radiologic Technician certification. Michael is employed at Partnership Health Center in Toms River. "All thanks to Middlesex," he writes.

**Lakhwinderpal (Paul) Singh '11** will start classes in January at Thomas Edison State College to complete a Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration. Paul has been an MCC work-study student in various departments and is currently working in the Scholarships Office. "Middlesex gave me the foundation I needed to progress academically as well as professionally," he writes.

**Arisha Anam '12** is studying at Kean University to earn a Bachelor's degree in Business Management. "It was a perfect start—I really had a good experience studying at MCC," Arisha says.

**Dee Gillet '12** relocated to Florida and obtained her RN license, beginning her new career with Florida Hospital Memorial Medical Center as a critical care RN. In January, she will be taking courses toward her B.S.N. degree with Nova Southeastern University in Orlando. Dee just purchased her new home in the Daytona Beach area. After over 20 years in the business world, returning to college to pursue a nursing career brought challenges beyond her expectations. "The help, support and guidance I received, and the friendliness of everyone at MCC, including administrators, staff, professors, volunteers and fellow students made the transition effortless."

**Darren Tyson '12** is currently a New York City police officer.

**Cheryl Mulliken '13** is transitioning out of catering to a position at Rutgers in order to complete her degree as a Registered Dietitian. Cheryl is also a tour guide at The Grounds for Sculpture, a volunteer for the Rutgers SNAP program and a member of NCAAD—all possible because of what she gained from her time at MCC. "When I registered at MCC in 2010, I couldn't possibly have known the value of my two years there," she says.

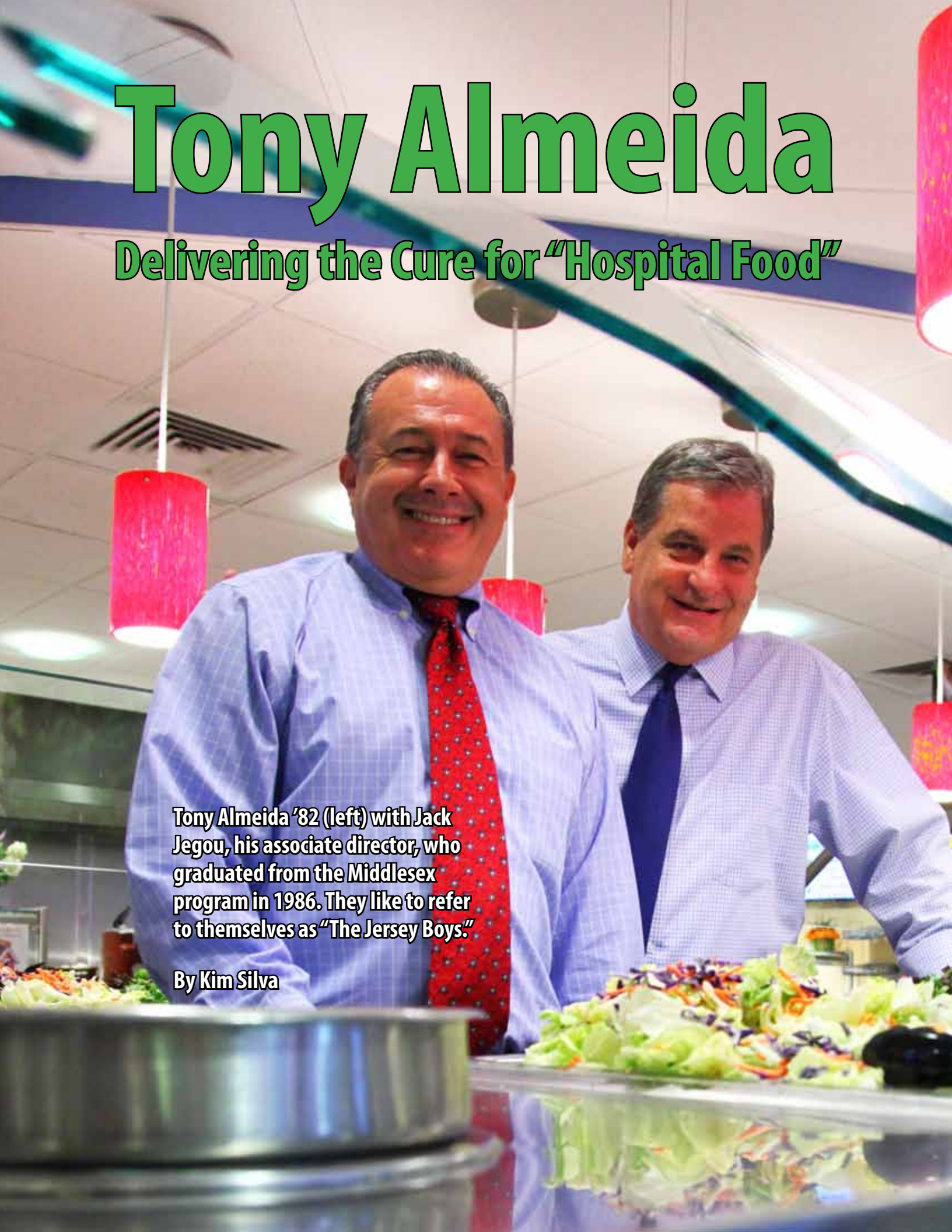
**Tom Scharpling** is a radio host, comedian, television writer, producer and music video director, best known for hosting the weekly call-in comedy program "The Best Show on WFMU" and also for serving as writer/executive producer for the TV show "Monk." He has written for several other shows and has directed a number of music videos. Tom is currently living in Woodbridge, NJ with his wife and fellow WFMU DJ, Terre T.

## In Memoriam

The College mourns the passing of **Paul A. Bachmann**, adjunct faculty member and the son of Professor Paul Bachmann of the Mathematics Department.

# Tony Almeida

Delivering the Cure for "Hospital Food"

A photograph of two men, Tony Almeida and Jack Jegou, standing in a kitchen. Tony Almeida is on the left, wearing a light blue shirt and a red tie with white polka dots. Jack Jegou is on the right, wearing a light blue shirt and a dark blue tie. They are both smiling. In the foreground, there are several large metal trays filled with fresh salad. The background shows a kitchen with white walls, a ceiling with recessed lights, and a red cylindrical light fixture hanging from the ceiling.

**Tony Almeida '82 (left) with Jack Jegou, his associate director, who graduated from the Middlesex program in 1986. They like to refer to themselves as "The Jersey Boys."**

**By Kim Silva**



**A**s a young boy growing up in Elizabeth, Tony Almeida '82 recalls Saturday mornings with his mother at the outdoor food market. Taking his hand, they would walk together to the vendor selling live chickens.

“Not that one, that one!” she would say, as the butcher took it to be freshly slaughtered. “The smell,” he said. “I remember the smell.” But soon his mother was serving a meal cooked with the best ingredients. She bought organic before organic was a trend.

Mr. Almeida calls his childhood cuisine “wholesome, fresh food.” As immigrants from Portugal, his parents prepared all meals from scratch and the family rarely ate at a restaurant, except on special occasions. “My mother was an awesome cook,” he said. “We cooked seven nights a week and I never had a peanut butter and jelly sandwich in my life.”

With food an integral part of his early life, his first job was at Jerry’s Hot Dogs in Elizabeth when he was 14, where he earned \$1 an hour. After two years, he went to Elizabeth General Hospital, which set the course for his future. He scrubbed industrial-sized pots and pans, delivered trays and mopped floors, never realizing that he eventually would become the award-winning director of food and nutrition at a nationally recognized hospital. He originally planned to be an electrician.

Mr. Almeida enrolled in Middlesex in 1978, and went part-time while he was working. “Middlesex gave me a great foundation,” he said. He studied menu planning and sanitization, and “whatever I learned in school I applied to the job. They have a strong, solid program.” He paused for a moment, as he recalled his instructors who gave him the fundamentals for success.

“Professor Ralph Tellone and Professor Joseph Vastano (who still teach at the College) supported us 1000 percent,” he said.

Mr. Almeida graduated with an Associate’s Degree in Hotel & Restaurant Management in 1982. He was especially proud when he was named the MCC Alumnus of the Year in 2006.

He started at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in 1988 as the assistant director of the cafeteria, and in 1992, he was named to his current position as director of

food service and nutrition. When the concept of “patient room service” was introduced in 2003, he received the full support of the administration to proceed with the program, which is used as a model for other hospitals. He pointed to a glass case that held the business cards of hospital administrators from all over North America, including Canada.

Chicken Marsala. Grilled Salmon. Eggplant Parmigiana. These are not the entrees at a high-priced gourmet restaurant, they are selections on the patient menu created by Executive Chef Timothy Gee and Chef de Cuisine Nick Mercogliano. Mr. Almeida wanted to offer patients meals that were reminiscent of his childhood, yet customized for medical needs and dietary restrictions.

Like all special recipes, there is a secret ingredient that elevates it to perfection: Tony Almeida’s effusive personality. With an abundance of charisma and warmth, he greets everyone by name in the kitchen, the cafeteria or the hallway. He smiles and laughs a lot, and gets genuinely excited when he remembers particular events in his life, as if they happened yesterday.

Mr. Almeida is also responsible for the cafeteria’s upscale menu, used by visitors and employees, and special events catering.

While he acknowledges that “hospital food” brings to mind “green Jello and meatloaf,” that is not the case at RWJUH. With the culinary skills obtained at Middlesex, he has revolutionized a once staid industry into haute cuisine. His mother showed him the value of home cooking, the College gave him the practical expertise, and Mr. Almeida combined both of these to create an innovative program at RWJUH. When he won the 2010 International Silver Plate award for Healthcare, one of the highest awards in the food service industry, it was the highlight of his career.

But probably his most impressive award comes from the patients.

On the day they are being discharged, “they don’t want to leave the hospital until they eat,” he said.

# SPORTS UPDATE



The **men's soccer** team started off very well, winning their Labor Day Tournament. They went on a little losing streak but have found their way back to winning form. Their overall record is 5-8.

The **Women's soccer** program has returned to form this season. Their overall record is 8-5-1. They are on track for a playoff bid in the Region Tournament.

The **volleyball** program has been plagued with injuries this season. A few players have returned and they are hoping to rally for the second half of their season.

**Cross Country** has its largest turnout in a few years. They are doing well and we are hoping for a good showing in the Region Tournament.





Opposite page, clockwise from upper left: Alexis Rambhajan (in white) takes a shot on goal; Daisy Sandoval battles for the ball; Alhaji Sheriff fires a shot; and Omar Mohamed (in white) heads the ball. This page: above, from left: Amelia Ospina, Shannel Zeeman, Bronte Hanntz and Tania Mora look to return a volley; and the cross county team practicing, from left: Joe Skwiat, Chris O'Keefe, Ceelea Graham and Chris Revolus.



# MIDDLESEX COUNTY COLLEGE

## Institutional Advancement

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