Communitas

MVCC Faculty/Staff Newsletter

Week of September 26, 2011

PRESTO - Magician Brennan P. performs a magic trick for children in the Kidz n' Coaches program last week outside of the Jorgensen Athletic and Events Center. Last week's annual Fall Picnic celebrated Kidz n' Coaches' 28th year.

Kidz n' Coaches brings magic

It was a day of magic and laughter last week when the College's Kidz n' Coaches program hosted its annual fall picnic outside of the Jorgensen Center. To entertain the 15 children in attendance, Professor Jim Smrtic brought in magician Brennan P.

"This is great entertainment for the kids," said Smrtic. "It is not every day the children get this kind of exposure and it brings them immense joy as you can see from their laughter."

This is the 28th year for the Kidz n' Coaches program which matches a group of MVCC students with children from the neighboring Culver Avenue apartment complex. The program runs in conjunction with the Utica Municipal Housing Authority.

Typically, there are about 20 MVCC students who volunteer to spend time and take part in activities with 20 children ranging in age from 5 to 11 years old. Each semester, there are four events hosted by Kidz n' Coaches such as a picnic on the campus, a pool party, a Christmas party and day trips to attractions around the area.

The fall picnic's performer, Brennan Pimpinella, is an MVCC alumnus.

"The purpose for the program is for concerned college students to have social interaction with the kids," said Smrtic.

Since the founding of this program, Smrtic estimates the Kidz n' Coaches program has helped more than 1,000 MVCC students and as many local children. The program is funded through MVCC's Student Congress.

66 inducted into PTK

MVCC inducted 66 new members to the Lambda Beta Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa last week during a ceremony in the IT Theater. On hand for the event were family and friends of those being inducted, and also dozens of faculty and staff who came out to celebrate the academic accomplishments of these students.

"By accepting the invitation to join Phi Theta Kappa, you have taken the most important step. Where you take it from here is up to you," Stephen Frisbee, Director of College Libraries and Chapter Advisor, told those being inducted. "Through chapter, regional, and national activities, you are afforded many opportunities to explore and develop the hallmarks – leadership, fellowship, scholarship, and service – for both personal and professional growth."

He went on to talk about some of the individual accomplishments of other PTK members like Steven Riggall, who was selected as a National Community College Aerospace Scholar, a highly competitive NASA program; and Chase Cahoon and Matthew Perritano, who were named MVCC's first-ever recipients of the Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholarship.

MVCC's Lambda Beta Chapter has accomplished the highest level of Pinnacle Awards through an increase in membership of over 25 percent from last year.

See Page 4 for List of PTK Inductees

DEVELOPING THE ROAD MAP – More than 70 employees from Student Affairs and related offices met September 9 with Vice President of Student Affairs Stephanie Reynolds. During their retreat, employees mapped ways to deliver services to students within the college's broader mission and vision. To support this effort, Student Affairs has adopted a new divisional mission statement: Student Affairs strives to create a welcoming and supportive environment that fosters student engagement to promote learning, personal growth and student success. The division's new vision: To inspire students to meet the challenges of learning and succeeding in an ever-changing global community.

Honoring Employees for Years of Service

When it comes to helping students, Sandy Cummings has always been right on the front line offering her assistance. Sandy's efforts and dedication were recently recognized as she was honored for 25 years of service to MVCC and its students. Sandy is the Coordinator of Student Activities. On hand for the presentation were Stephanie Reynolds, Susan Johnston, Kim Overrocker, Christy Stephenson, Pat Bennett, Michelle Collea and MVCC President Randall J. VanWagoner, Ph.D. ▶

Tuition reimbursement program helps volunteer firefighters pursue an education

MVCC continues to help those who give so much of themselves to the community with the creation of a scholarship program designed to help volunteer firefighters. In conjunction with the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY), community colleges across the state will offer tuition reimbursement for current or future volunteer firefighters.

"We secured a federal grant to fund a multi-pronged statewide effort, which starts with FASNY Higher Education Learning Plan (HELP) to be followed by an aggressive statewide recruitment and retention program," said FASNY President David Jacobowitz, during a Sept. 20 announcement in the lobby of the Information Technology Building.

FASNY will provide 100 percent tuition reimbursement for volunteer firefighters who achieve a 4.0 GPA. The reimbursement rate is 85 percent for 3.0 GPA and 75 percent for a 2.0 GPA.

"Here in Oneida County, 18 percent of the population over 25 have completed a bachelor's degree. That is 10 percent behind the state average which is why MVCC supports creative, strong partnerships like this," said MVCC President Randall J. VanWagoner, Ph.D.

According to Jacobowitz, it is difficult for many young people to pay for a college education during the current economic crisis. As many volunteer fire departments are seeing a decline in membership, this program is an ideal recruiting tool. "The ranks of volunteer firefighters have been declining in recent years," said Jacobowitz, a decline from 130,000 to the current 88,000 volunteers. "Participants in the program would be eligible to have up to 100 percent of tuition reimbursed, $2,000 per semester on average."

The deadline to apply for tuition reimbursement for the fall 2011 semester is October 1.

As part of the program, student volunteers must attend the closest community college or one within a 50-mile radius of their residence. This allows the students to remain in the community in which they volunteer.

"It is critically important for colleges and fire agencies to work hand in hand in New York State, to fulfill the educational and career aspirations of the women and men who work so hard to keep the public safe," said VanWagoner. "We are excited about the new possibilities this program will open up for people who are firefighters, or who are thinking about becoming firefighters."

HELPING LOCAL FIREFIGHTERS - Firemen's Association of the State of New York President David Jacobowitz announced the creation of a new tuition reimbursement program designed to encourage volunteer firefighters to pursue an associate degree.

FASNY HELP complements another program for students who are part of Oneida County Fire Departments. That program, titled FireHawks, is a three-year pilot program offered to students at MVCC.

To be eligible, candidates must be current members of an Oneida County volunteer fire department or join a department prior to filing an application. Students must live in Oneida County and be active in their departments. FireHawks recipients must enroll at least half-time, meet academic standards of progress, and complete their studies within five years.

Peace Officers complete 'boot camp'

Since the College implemented the hiring of peace officers in January, several MVCC officers have completed certification training in which they paralleled much of the training police officers go through.

"The hardest thing about the training was the constant scrutiny we were under by our training instructors," said Chris Katz, who completed his certification in August along with MVCC Peace Officers Michael Polak, and Martin Tracy. They were joined by 19 other peace officers from other colleges and universities from around the state. "While in training, you had to always be on your 'A' game and be sharp. They were constantly testing you."

Katz

Polak

The certification training was held at the Zone 5 Regional Law Enforcement Training Academy in Schenectady and consisted of 336 hours of law enforcement training and tactics, as required by New York State law. The training is based on the curricular requirements for police officers, with modifications in areas such as weapons tactics and supervised on-the-job training.

"It is run in boot-camp style training with eight-hour days, five days a week for 12 weeks. It is an extremely rigorous academy," said Katz. Trainees received instruction and assessment in penal law, criminal procedure law, defensive tactics, narcotics, dangerous drugs, criminal investigation, crime prevention, DWI detection, field sobriety, EMT services and EMT vehicle control. Katz says it was mentally and physically challenging throughout the training.

By state law, community college peace officers have the authority to enforce the laws of New York State. Powers include traffic stops and the issuance of tickets for moving violations; use of physical force in making an arrest or preventing an escape; warrantless arrests; transportation of individuals in mental health crisis who pose a threat to themselves or others; and removal of any firearms discovered on property owned or rented by the College. Much like police, members of campus peace officer forces receive ongoing training throughout the year.

Tracy

"The biggest challenge has been being accepted by the students and having them understand our role. We are not here to ruin their lives and their good times, but we are here for their safety and wellbeing," said Katz. "We use our discretion and work with the students a lot. Instead of arresting and jamming them up, we sent it upstairs to the office of Civic Responsibility. We try to do the best thing for the student."

As MVCC adds to its complement of peace officers, it is recruiting from both outside and within. While Katz and Polak are hires from police agencies in other areas of New York State, Tracy was most recently a Campus Safety Officer at MVCC who chose to apply for a peace officer position and undergo the training. MVCC will eventually transition to an all-peace officer force. "We are here for the students, faculty and staff to provide a safe environment. We have a passion for what we do and care about everyone here on campus," added Katz.

Did you know?

CCED offers a non-credit Pre-Employment Police Training Program for individuals that are interested in becoming Police Officers?

Team MVCC plays role in Crohn's & Colitis campaign

Team MVCC hit another campaign out of the park last week when it chose to help organizers for the "Take Steps to be Heard for Crohn's & Colitis" raise money on campus through a raffle. The grand prize for this raffle was an iPad 2.

Tickets were sold on the Utica Campus at a different location over a five day-period, raising $1,052.

Members of MVCC's staff and faculty volunteered their time to help sell tickets. There are many within the MVCC family who suffer from Crohn's & Colitis. The grand prize winner was Celia Domser.

The 2011 Walk for Crohn's & Colitis will be held Saturday, October 1, at the Masonic Home located at 2150 Bleecker Street. The walk will begin at 3:30 p.m.

AND THE WINNER IS - John Coleman, President of MVCC Student Congress, pulls the winning ticket for the Crohn's & Colitis raffle for an iPad 2. The winning ticket belonged to Celia Domser. The raffle raised $1,052 for the cause.

Sabbatical Leave applications now available

The deadline to submit an application for Sabbatical Leave for 2012-13 is Monday, November 7, 2011, by 4:30 p.m.

Applications are now available in the Office of the Vice President for Learning and Academic Affairs – PH 395. The applications are for faculty, non-teaching professional staff, and administrators.

C.C. leaders vow to make governance work

Submitted by Beverly Quist

Motivated by the current economic crisis and the national rhetoric against public education, governance leaders from community colleges across New York State convened in Utica last week to share ideas for keeping faculty involved in making decisions that affect the academic integrity of their institutions.

The conference - "Making Governance Work in Challenging Times" - was sponsored by the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, the community college faculty governance body for SUNY, and held Sept. 23 and 24 at the Hotel Utica.

The "challenging times" referenced in the conference title are largely due to economic factors, explained Steven Richman, co-chair of the Faculty Council Governance Committee and professor of psychology at Nassau CC. The concern is that when funds are scarce, collaborative decision making processes are circumvented by administrators for expediency.

The focus should be on keeping open when decisions have to be expedited, said Tina Good, president of the Faculty Council and professor of English at Suffolk CCC.

The conference drew many presiding officers from faculty governance bodies across the state. Participants discussed tools for relationship building, the differences between unions and governance bodies, and academic freedom.

Governance leaders at SUNY colleges face many of the same challenges, said Eileen Abrahams, vice president of the Faculty Council and professor at Schenectady CCC. Given today's hard economic realities and shrinking budgets, "there is a tendency to increase administrative oversight, often by increasing the size of administrations. That tendency often results in a further tendency to short-circuit consultation with faculty," Abrahams said.

Co-Chair Michael Delaney of Erie CC agreed. "Shared governance is seen as a nuisance and a roadblock to efficient operation," he said. "The business model of higher education has become unquestioned orthodoxy. There is a national rhetoric that is actively hostile to public services of all sorts and that blames public employees for our budgetary problems."

But in difficult economic times, said Richman, "faculty expertise is critical to maintaining the academic integrity of the institution." Good said it is imperative for community college faculty to have these conversations. "Community colleges are in the national rhetoric right now," said Good. "We want to make sure we're having conversations about our missions without having them defined for us by government agencies or philanthropic organizations."

List of MVCC's newest members to Phi Theta Kappa

Name	Field of Study
Collin E. Anderson,	Pre-Radiology
Allison Dyan Barron,	Human Services, Nursing
Paula E. Bochniak,	Accounting
Crystalanne M. Boncella,	LAS: Adolescent English Education
James Brady,	Mechanical Engineering Technology
Lawrence J. Brooks IV,	Nursing
Stephanie L. Burns,	Financial Services/Accounting
Kelsey R. Cacciatori,	Radiologic Technology
Marie Campese,	Radiologic Technology
Adam B. Clements,	Respiratory Care
Janet Coe,	Nutrition & Dietetics
John M. Coleman,	AOS-T Welding
Katherine Coleman,	Chemical Dependency
Mary J. Copeland,	Graphic Design
Sheila A. Corniell,	General Studies
Frank D. Crocilla II,	Business Management
Tracey K. Crouse,	Human Services
Joseph M. Davies,	Criminal Justice
Jodie L. Ellis,	Nursing
Ashley E. Fess,	Graphic Communication: Design
Kathleen M. Freebern,	Criminal Justice
Karen M. Ganci,	Nursing
Charlene A. Hall,	Recreation & Leisure Services
Johan C. Hallstrom,	Health Science/Liberal Arts
Kenneth A. Hartman,	Criminal Justice
Alexander C. Hobaica,	Public Policy
Aleksandra Ignatchuk,	Nursing
Jessica L. Johnson,	Nursing
Brian A. Jweid,	Business Management
Shelby L. King,	General Studies: Mathematics
Brittany M. Kitchen,	Accounting
Justin T. Knaperek,	Computer Science
Rachel L. Korte,	Nursing
Yelizaveta Kot,	Nursing
Mariana L. Kuzmich,	Biology
Zane E. Lawyer,	Math & Science
Shawn Lockwood,	Graphic Design & Arts Technology
Joshua M. Lovett,	Auto CADD
Nicholas Mancari,	Business Administration
Melissa A. Marion,	Nursing
Shannon M. McFarland,	Psychology
Allison P. Meyers,	Psychology

Jennifer J. Munn,	Education
Erika L. Newton,	Early Childhood/Childhood Education
Cristina M. Nudo,	Education
Ethan J. O'Connell,	Computer Information Systems
Jordan Orendorff,	Criminal Justice
Natalya Y. Pilipchuk,	Business- Accounting
Alexander S. Plantz,	Respiratory Care
Andrew S. Platt,	Civil Engineering Technology
Risleigh A. Roche,	Surveying Technology
Robert R. Rogan,	Liberal Arts
Michael W. Rugh,	Mechanical Engineering Technology
Aaron F. Saxer,	Nursing
Timothy C. Scharett,	Criminal Justice
Brian D. Sitcer,	Welding
Christopher A. Sleys,	Computer Science
Matthew Sleys,	Nursing
Paw Ser Soe,	LAS: International Studies
Olga V. Surkova,	Pre-Nursing
Alissa R. VanGorder,	Human Services
Veronica Verenich,	Biology
Margaret G. Visalli,	Culinary Arts: Baking/Pastry Emphasis
Timothy J. Waters,	Criminal Justice
Kelly K. Woodcock,	Pre-Nursing
Amy Woodworth,	General Studies/Liberal Arts