

## **MVCC site of Mandate Relief hearing**

As school districts, towns, cities and counties face tightening budgets, MVCC's Utica Campus was the stage for stakeholders to voice their concerns to state officials on Friday.

In town for the Mandate Relief Council hearings in Room 225 of the Information Technology Building were New York State Lt. Gov. Robert Duffy along with 10 members of Gov. Andrew Cuomo's administration and the New York State Legislature. The panel is hosting these gatherings to hear input regarding the governor's proposals to ease local burdens for expensive healthcare, retirement and special education programs.

Oneida County Executive Anthony
Picente pushed for reform of Medicaid
and reduction of mandates. Picente
pointed out that since 2007, mandated
costs have risen from 83 percent of the
county budget to 92 percent. He called for
more local control over the administration
of entitlement programs. "I do not want
my county government to become nothing
more than a check-writing agency to fund
mandated social services programs," said
Picente.



**SEEKING HELP** – Utica Mayor Robert Palmieri (above) reads a prepared statement on the financial problems the city if facing due to New York State's unfunded mandates. The mayor was presenting to the Mandate Relief Council, which was chaired by Lt. Gov. Robert Duffy. Duffy (right) responds to Mayor Palmieri during the question and answer portion of the hearings.

With Oneida County's budget facing challenges, MVCC is similarly meeting with fiscal headwinds. President Randall J. VanWagoner, Ph.D., has been addressing the issue with Campus Conversations in order to seek out ways to balance next year's MVCC budget in light of anticipated level state and county sponsorship, and demographic-driven enrollment declines.

The first speaker of the day was Utica Mayor Robert Palmieri who relayed the message that unfunded mandates - items which the state requires the city to offer but are not paid for by the state – have become more troubling in recent years as budgets and aid have been slashed by the state. The City of Utica is facing a financial crisis with Palmieri proposing a budget that raises taxes 18 percent and cuts police, fire and other city departments.

Palmieri would like the state to require public employees and retirees contribute more to their own healthcare and pension systems. Currently NYS employees pay 12 percent of individual coverage and 27 percent for family coverage.

Duffy acknowledged the tough situations local governments are facing and that "We can't keep kicking the can down the road. This problem will not go away." Duffy encouraged the public to get involved and suggested visiting www.nygetinvolved.org to learn more on how the public can help.



#### **Used business attire sought**

The Center for Social Sciences, Business and Information Sciences is seeking business attire donations which can be given to students when they are preparing for job interviews.

With the help of Phi Beta Lambda and the Criminal Justice Club, BISS will be creating a "store" for students in April. Students will be able to shop (for free) for the perfect suit for an upcoming job interview or career.

"Many of our students do not have the resources to buy quality business attire," said Natalie A. Carraway, Assistant Dean.

Bring the items to either Bailey Curtis or Carraway (PH 349) by March 23.

# Local illustrator talks to students about his work

Students learned about the challenges of the world of freelance illustration on Monday as the College hosted graphic designer, cartoonist and illustrator John Collins for a lecture

which was part of the opening of his exhibition in the Small Works Gallery.

Collins works out of his studio Hands Up Studios since 2003 and has experience in illustrating online comic strips, children's books and company logo designs.

"Working in cartooning and illustration, you have to do it for the love of the art," told a group of 30 students in attendance. "You are not going to get rich doing this kind of work, but it is a career you will enjoy. You have to find that niche which you can make your own."

One design which has caught on for Collins is his "Every Hour with Jesus is Happy Hour." It features a figure of a bearded man holding forth a chalice bubbling over what appears to be a beer. This design caught on for a t-shirt item.

Collins, who graduated from MVCC

in 2006 as a returning adult student, discussed how he got



RagBoy and Hands McGee vs. the Chupacabra (11x14 Pen & Ink)



Fantasy Heroes 1 (14x11 Pen & Ink)



Lash Lightning 1 (11x14 Pen & Ink)

his beginning and has worked to expand his clientele. "This is a tough industry to get into because there are so many illustrators out there who are very talented. You just have to stick with what you believe," added Collins.

Collins' exhibit will be on display through April 5 in the Small Works Gallery on the second floor of the Information Technology Building. The exhibit is sponsored by the MVCC Gallery Committee and MVCC Cultural Series.





**TASTY COMPETITION** – Students from MVCC's Hospitality Program's Banquet and Catering class had an opportunity to meet Food Network TV star Chef Anne Burrell at the "Iron Fork Syracuse Competition," which was sponsored by the American Culinary Federation. MVCC students had the opportunity to assist the competitors during the competition. From left are Kristen Pratt, Kristen Konight, Burrell, Jeff Mastrogiovanni, Richard Conway and Marissa Mundrick.

# Wellness Activities At the Jorgensen Center

Wednesday (2/29): Yoga with Jeri, 12:30 p.m. (JC 119) Thursday (3/1): Commit to Get Fit with Kyle\*, 12:30 p.m.

(Fitness Center)

Thursday (3/1): Zumba with Andi, 7 p.m. (JC 202) Friday: (3/2): Bootcamp with David, 1 p.m. (JC 115) Monday (3/5): Fitness Frenzy with Andrea, 12:30 p.m.

(Field House)

Tuesday (3/6): Commit to Get Fit with Kyle\*, 12:30 p.m.

(Fitness Center)

Tuesday (3/6): Kickboxing with Valerie, 6 p.m. (JC 202)

#### Things to keep an eye out for:

- A "Commit to Get Fit" program out on the Rome campus on Wednesdays after spring break.
  - A "Biggest Loser" contest after spring break
- The March calendar of programs will be released this week, but if you want a sneak preview, check out the large calendar outside of the Field House!

\* To get into a "Commit to Get Fit" conversation with Kyle Robinson, NSCA-CPT, email kwrightrobinson@gmail.com. These sessions are capped at five people.

For information on these and other wellness activities, contact Andrea Roberts at aroberts@mvcc.edu or extension 5811.

### **Correction**

An individual pictured with last week's Communitas story on SUNY Showcase was incorrectly identified. The person pictured is Katelyn Hughes, a graduate of MVCC's Respiratory Tech Program who has been working full-time at St. Elizabeth's Medical Center for five years.

## Dr. Emdin lectures on power of science in the urban community

Christopher Emdin, Ph.D., will be the keynote speaker for two lectures on Friday, March 2, in Room 116 of the Alumni College Center as part of the celebration for Black History Month.

Emdin's lectures will be titled "The Power of Science Within the Urban Community" and he will be discussing how to get students of color more engaged in mathematics and sciences, along with how he engages the hip-hop generation in science and technology. Sponsored by the Office of Civic Responsibility and CSTEP, Emdin's lectures will be held at 1 p.m. and 6 p.m. with both sessions being open to the public, students and faculty. DGV credit will be granted.



Dr. Christopher Emdin

Emdin is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Mathematics, Science and Technology at Teachers College, Columbia University. He also also serves as Director of Secondary School Initiatives at the Urban Science Education Center.

His research focuses on issues of race, class, and diversity in urban science classrooms, the use of new theoretical frameworks to transform education, and urban school reform. Dr. Emdin is author of the book, "Urban Science Education for the Hip-Hop Generation," and also a columnist for the Huffington Post, where he writes the "Emdin 5" series.

He holds a Ph.D. in Urban Education with a concentration in Mathematics, Science and Technology, master's degrees in Natural Sciences and Education Administration, and bachelor's degrees in Physical Anthropology, Biology, and Chemistry. Dr. Emdin was recently awarded the "Best Paper for Innovation in Teaching" by the Association for Science Teacher Education (ASTE) and was named "Groundbreaking Educator" by Arrive Magazine. He was also awarded the Phi Delta Kappa (PDK) Outstanding Dissertation and Emerging Leader Awards.



**MVCC PRIDE -** Terry Walters and Karen Dean were both presented the Pride of the Hawk Award by MVCC President Randall J. VanWagoner, Ph.D., during the monthly Senate meeting. Both women were honored for their dedication and hard work behind the scenes to make the College successful.

# Walters, Dean honored with Pride of the Hawk

When it comes to keeping the mission of the College moving forward and on course, there are many individuals who operate behind the scenes. Two of these individuals were recognized earlier this month for keeping the MVCC machine well-oiled and moving from their posts in the Department of Office Services.

Terry Walters, Mailroom Clerk in Office Services, and Karen Dean, Senior Administration Assistant in Office Services, were both presented the Pride of the Hawk Award during the monthly Senate Meeting and praised for their work.

"They have not only been consistently friendly, but they have been generous with their time and understanding when I have had to send materials of various sorts overseas," said Sandra Engel, Ph.D. "If they say they' are going to do something, it DOES get done."

## Scot Connor stands out among peers

What makes a teacher stand out among peers? It is putting students first? Going that extra mile to make sure students understand the materials being covered? Understanding that all students are not created equal? It is this and much more which Scot Connor exhibits every day in the classroom.

Connor, who is an Assistant Professor of Art, has been recognized this month for his outstanding teaching efforts by being presented the Heart of the Hawk Award.

"Not only is he a great teacher because of his commitment to teaching, but because of the comfortable atmosphere he brings with him when he walks in the room," said Kelly Bracken, who graduated in May 2011 from the Digital Animation program and is now attending RIT. "It is because of him that I was able to succeed at MVCC and transfer into RIT's School of Film and Animation. ... Scot Connor is without a doubt the best teacher I have ever had."

When it comes to helping his students, Connor puts in that extra effort in order for them to be successful. Bracken highlighted Connor's dedication when he remained in the lab until midnight on the final day projects were due, in order to give students every opportunity to complete their work.

"Whenever I had a question about what he had taught us, I had no problem asking him for help. ... He would sit down and go over whatever I was curious about and help me through it. Whenever I needed critique or help on a project, he would take over my computer and talk to me from his desk what he was doing to make it right," added Bracken.

Her experience was not unique as other students voiced fond memories of the same compassion and understanding from Connor, who was recognized during the February College Senate meeting - during which he was assisting students in the lab!

Both were cited for their professional behavior while maintaining a flexible schedule in order to keep their offices productive. In their daily work assignments, Walters and Dean provides an "unappreciated and unrecognized model" of how the College should work and grow together an institution.

"I have given them lots of weirdo opportunities to say no, but they never have, and they have always been on the ball," said Dr. Engel. "As far as I am concerned, they are a hidden model of collaboration and true assets to the College."

Submit information for Communitas to rhaubert@mvcc.edu

### MYCC Faces: Sara Boulanger

Being a worldly person is not the most important job requirement for the College's Coordinator of Services for International Students, but it sure helps. That is why Sara Boulanger has welcomed this position, as she handles all the obstacles international students face.

"I believe it is imperative that the college connect to our students on a human level, so that they may learn and grow academically, vocationally, philosophically and philanthropically. To that end, I believe there is no greater learning experience than the one we have with one another and that is where the international student population plays such a crucial role in our college community," said Boulanger.

She has been in the position for nine months and the international student community has quickly gravitated to her. She has been on the front lines of helping guide international students from A-Z at MVCC. Boulanger is the first contact for these students at MVCC during the admissions process and assists them in all things immigration-related in order to help them get their visas and enter the country safely.

"I am responsible for the marketing and recruitment of prospective international students as well as the support services once they arrive," says Boulanger. "Once they arrive, I serve as their international student advisor, providing advisement on immigration regulations concerning employment, academics, transition and transfer. In addition, I serve as a liaison between the students and the faculty, Residence Life, and all the departments in Student Affairs."

Another large piece of the position is providing the students with activities and outlets in order to help them acclimate to the campus community and American culture more generally. Boulanger has a lot of experience with international students, having been one herself. She studied abroad in Kenya while attending SUNY Cortland, where she earned a bachelor's degree in history. She went on to earn a master's degree in history from Indiana University.

"I believe it is my job to put myself in the students' shoes and remember what it was like to be unfamiliar with cultural norms, language, and expectations. I strive to be the mentor and advisor that I never had while studying



abroad," added Boulanger, who also serves on MVCC's International Initiatives Committee and acts as an advisor to the International Club. She and Sandra Engel, Ph.D., with members of the International Intitiatives Committee, collaborate on the college's emerging plans for international education, which include plans for international students here as well as for MVCC students and faculty to go abroad.

"I hope to see the international population and programs grow on this campus and contribute even more so to our rich, diverse learning environment," says Boulanger.

Some of the honors she has received during her career include the Foreign Language and Area Studies fellowship for studying Swahili.

A resident of Utica, Boulanger enjoys snowboarding, hiking, reading, going to see live music, volunteer work and most of all – yoga. Her volunteer work includes for Hurricane Irene victims, Great American Heart-Run and Walk, the American Cancer Society's Breast Cancer Walk, and with the Utica Rescue Mission.

### International Festival brings cultural spice to campus

Come out and experience the cultural diversity the College has to offer during the 2012 International Festival which will be held Wednesday, February 29, beginning at noon.

This year's event will be held in the lobbies of the Information Technology Building along with exhibits and displays located in Room 225. There will be demonstrations of dance, music and food by cultures from around the world.

The festival will open with introductory remarks at noon by Carolyn West Pace, IIC Chair, and MVCC President Randall VanWagoner, Ph.D., who will introduce the College's special guest, Mr. Pham Thiet Khanh from the Community Colleges of Vietnam.

Other activity times are:

12:20 p.m. - Edelweiss Schuhplattler, German Dancers

12:30-1:00 p.m. - Traditional Irish Music

1:00-1:30 p.m. - Interactive Drumming Circle

2 Pm, World Lecture, Theater, By Matthew Carotenuto, St. Lawrence University, On "Obama & Kenya: Ethnicity and Electoral Politics in Africa."



The 2012 International Festival is organized by the MVCC International Initiatives Committee. There are separate DGV credits available for the festival and lecture.