Communitas

MVCC Faculty/Staff Newsletter

Week of May 28, 2012

Kidz n Coaches foundation for Ph.D.

Professor Jim Smrtic has been spearheading the Kidz n Coaches program at MVCC for more than 28 years, leaving a positive impact on the hundreds of children the program has benefitted. It is only fitting the program is beginning to receive national and international interest.

Christopher Kazanjian, a native of New Hartford and former student of Smrtic's, has been researching for the past three years the topic of what makes youth programs successful as part of his Ph.D. dissertation. Interested in international studies, his research has included youth programs from across the United State and Europe.

"It is almost unheard of for a program such as Kidz n Coaches to continue for so long. This is a unique situation and I have had several inquiries from across the country and Germany as to why it works," said Kazanjian.

Kazanjian attended MVCC before transferring to the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) in 2002 to complete his Bachelor of Science in Psychology and Master of Science in Education. His Ph.D., work through New Mexico State University, is based on his interests in international education and displaced youths.

"The success of this program is more than the dedication and passion of Mr. Smrtic. He has found a formula which works and has continued to do so over the years," said Kazanjian. "The problem with other programs lis they are designed to serve a single sliver of the community and as demographics change, the youth programs fail to change. Thus they fail in the long run."

Kazanjian, who is 28 and currently teaching at a community college in El Paso, Texas, is using this theory of connecting children with a group of college-aged adults as mentors as the basis of his dissertation. "Utica has a very diverse population with the influx of refugees and immigration. Mr. Smrtic has been able to navigate the Kidz n Coaches program through those changing demographics."

Since 1983, Kidz n Coaches has been focusing on working with under-served children from the Culver Avenue apartment complex and is run in conjunction with the Utica Municipal Housing Authority.

"I wanted to establish some kind of group which helped local little kids to do things that they wouldn't have the opportunity to do. Kidz n Coaches is a group activity, so the kids form relationships and there is backup if someone doesn't show," said Smrtic.

Kidz n Coaches connects a group of 20 MVCC students who volunteer to spend time and take part in activities with 20 children ranging in ages of 5 to 11 years old. Each semester, there are four events hosted by Kidz n Coaches ranging from a picnic on the campus, a pool party, a Christmas party and usually one day trip to events around the area.

The success of this program is in the outcome for MVCC's students, says Smrtic, who has students returning for the events even after graduating from MVCC. There have been many of his students who have gone on to get involved in youth programs in their own communities.

WORKING ON Ph.D. - Christopher Kazanjian stands with MVCC Professor Jim Smrtic during the annual spring picnic for the Kidz n Coaches program. Kazanjian is working on his Ph.D. dissertation on youth programs with MVCC's being at the heart of his research.

"It is a wonderful thing when you are able to pay it forward. I see some of the children who were in the program coming to MVCC for their education," said Smrtic.

Kazanjian will be defending his dissertation this fall.

HITTING THE HIGHWAY - The MV Black Hawks headed out a couple weekends ago for their first-ever "ROAD TRIP!" A small, but committed group (Dominick Nicotera and John Bullis) hit the Adirondacks for an outstanding day of worship in the Church of St. Asphalt.

MVCC recognize colleagues who are retiring

The Board of Trustees hosted a reception May 21 for members of the MVCC community who are retiring this spring and summer after many years of service.

The reception was held in the third floor lobby of Payne Hall with many former MVCC employees returning to reconnect with colleagues. Sodexo presented an exceptional spread of the finest foods.

"This is a distinguished group of people who have played significant roles in MVCC's service to our students and community," said MVCC President Randall J. VanWagoner.

As of the Monday, May 21, the following MVCC employees were retiring before the end of this fiscal year: Pat Bennett, Celia Domser, Patty Fox, Nancy Gerzonich, Lynn Igoe, Larry Migliori, Kathy Partridge, Frank Przybycien, Beverly Quist, Gary Rogowski, Sam Russo, Dick Suhr, and Don Willner.

Retirees have been asked about their experiences; below are some of their responses.

Celia A. Domser

Name: Celia A. Domser

Number of Years at MVCC: I started as an adjunct in 1976 while working as a Clinical Chemist at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Utica, New York. I started full time teaching in the Laboratory Technology program (now the Chemical Technology program) in December of 1977.

Title: Director of STEM P-20 Arc and Professor of Chemistry

Courses taught: Over the years I have taught Essentials of Chemistry 091 and 092, Chemistry 101, Physical Science, Chemistry 131 College chemistry, General Chemistry 141 and General Chemistry 142.

Other Offices: My first 22 years were spent as a Chemistry faculty member, after which I became the Department Head of Engineering, Computer and Physical Sciences. The last four years, I have taught Chemistry and worked as the STEM P-20 Arc Director. This job allowed me to continue two things I love, working with students and spreading the good word about our STEM programs to others both inside and outside the College.

Fondest Memories: My fondest memories will be of the students and the staff here at MVCC. After working with and traveling to many of the Community Colleges in New York State, one thing always rang true. Other Community Colleges may have had more funding, more space et., but none of them could ever compare to MVCC. We always did so much with little and that is because the faculty and staff here made things happen for the students. I will most especially remember the great mentors I had in the Engineering, Computer and Physical Sciences. Without them, I would never have been able to do the things I have done.

Will Miss Most: My MVCC family.

Plans for Retirement: I am in the process of building a family retreat in a very beautiful northern community. I hope to invite many of you for a visit when it is completed. Spending more time with my family and friends, traveling, volunteering and even some teaching along the way, are also high on my list.

Don Willner

Name: Don Willner

Number of Years at MVCC: 43 years

Title: Dean of the Center for Mathematics, Engineering, Physical Science, and Applied Technology

Courses Taught/Offices Worked in: All mathematics courses, Department of Mathematics, Department Head Mathematics, Dean of the STEM Center

Fondest memories of MVCC: To numerous to mention one

Will Miss Most: The people

Plans for Retirement: Woodworking, fishing, travel

Patty Fox

Name: Patty Fox

Number of Years at MVCC: 18.5

Title: Director of Strategic Initiatives

Offices Worked In: VPI (now VPLAA), HR, President's, temporarily in BISS, LAHS

Fondest Memories of MVCC: Working with colleagues, in almost any situation, especially when wonderful things were accomplished (NEO, Employee Enrichment, Employee Recognition, etc)

Will Miss Most: The people!

Plans for Retirement: Travelling, more volunteer work, gardening, hiking, kayaking, skiing (anything outdoors!)

Frank E. Przybycien

Name: Frank E. Przybycien

Number of Years at MVCC: 45 years at MVCC, starting in the Fall 1967

Title: Professor, Director of Community Restoration Initiatives 2009 - 2012; Professor, Department Head, Engineering Technology and Trades Department 1991-2009; Taught all courses in the Civil Engineering Technology Program, some in the Mechanical Engineering Technology and Engineering Science Programs, and MA 105

Fondest Memoryies of MVCC: Seeing how the College has grown and expanded and how it has expanded its courses and services to serve our region....in 1967, all college faculty, programs, and college departments were in the Academic Building....the President's Office was on the first floor in the front right corner of the building, the Business Office was located where the Media Center is now located, the Library was on the first floor in the right back corner, the Machine Shop was located along the hallway on the North side of AB, and all faculty office (except Technology) were located in one room on the second floor front of AB....it was President Payne's last academic year as President and Payne Hall was constructed two years later....and today we have two campuses, an Aviation Training Center, a new Education Center and many other off-campus locations to offer our region the skillsets needed for a 21st Century workforce.

Will Miss Most: Working with all the people at MVCC on a daily basis and the students....and witnessing how our students develop their skillsets obtained at MVCC into successful careers.

Plans for Retirement: Write another book, work with some regional partnerships and neighborhood organizations that I have been working with in the past and enjoy Saranac Thursdays.

Samuel L. Russo, Jr.

Name: Samuel L. Russo, Jr.
Number of Years at MVCC: Nearly 24 years
Title: Grants Director
Courses Taught/Offices Worked In: Taught adjunct in 1983 – State and Local Government as well as American Government. Since 1988, I have reported directly to the President's Office, the Vice-President for Instruction, CCED or the Associate Vice-President and Rome Campus Dean.
Fondest Memoryies of MVCC: The many close friendships made with our faculty, staff and students as well as the many monetary contributions made to our College Foundation and Child Care Center from the philanthropy of my wife Janice, myself as well as my late beloved parents Eleanor and Samuel L. Russo, Sr.
Will Miss Most: The many grant collaborations, in numerous academic areas, economic and community development concentrations formed with numerous higher education institutions and all government levels throughout New York State, the United States and with our area and local school districts.
Plans for Retirement: Continue working, spending time with my large family, and serving the needs of all people as well as my beloved and beautiful Mohawk Valley Region of New York State.

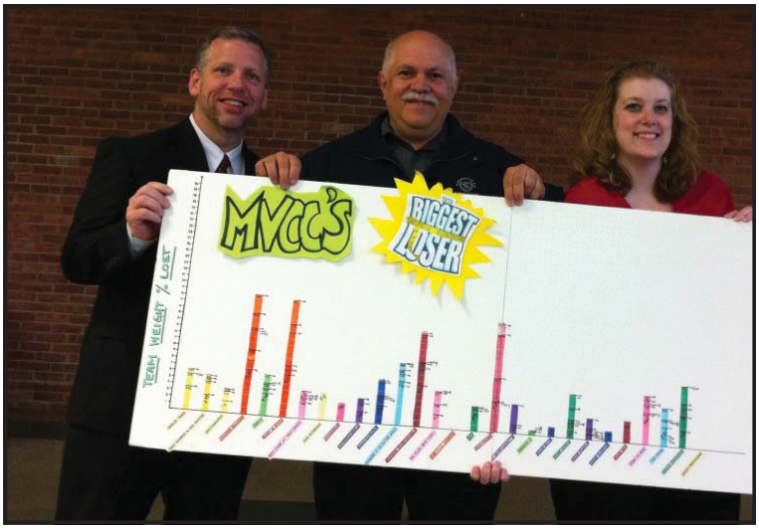
Larry Migliori

Name: Larry Migliori
Number of Years at MVCC: 25
Title: Director of Art Infusion, former Art Department head, Assoc. Professor of Art and Photography
Courses Taught/Offices Worked In: Have always taught art courses thru (originally) the Advertising Design and Production Department, then Art Department, now Center for Arts and Humanities. I have taught many classes including: Photography 1, Advanced Darkroom, College Seminar, Topics in Art History, History of Photography. Drawing, Design 1, Art Sources, Creative Sources, Color Photography, Cartooning. Now I am primarily assigned to Photography 1, Color Photo and Cartooning.
Fondest Memories of MVCC: I'm not quite sure, but there are several.
Will Miss Most: And this is from the point of view as having spent nearly half of my career in public school: Some great classes, superb colleagues and significant successes of many, many students
Plans for Retirement: To continue to learn, to extend my skills, to examine a number of humanitarian endeavors, and many more things.

W. Richard Suhr

Name: W. Richard Suhr
Number of Years at MVCC: 14 years
Title: Director, Corporate Non-Credit Education
Office Worked in: Center for Corporate and Community Education
Fondest Memories of MVCC: First: Working with the people in the CCED.
Second: Working with all the businesses over these past 14 years to satisfy their training needs.
Third: To see us grow as a department in both Community and Corporate Education
Fourth: To have had an opportunity of a lifetime.
Will Miss Most: Always the people
Plans for Retirement: Spend more time with my wife, grandchildren, doing things around the house and enjoying my retirement.

FIRSTHAND EXPERIEBNCE - Students from MVCC's Airframe and Powerplant Technology program were given a lecture by the Flight Engineer of the National Science Foundation's C-130 ski-equipped aircraft which is stationed in Scotia, N.Y., which is just outside of Albany. There are 15 of these aircraft stationed there. The students learned the details on operating this aircraft on the polar ice caps. This aircraft flew into the Oneida County International Airport in Rome for the lesson at MVCC's Training Center.



CUTTING THE FAT - Steve Frisbee, Dan Harter and Patti Antanavige hold the sign which track the team weight loss for the Biggest Loser Contest. All three members of the contest ended the 46-day activity with positive results.

Biggest Loser Contest helps MVCC shed 303 lbs.

With the success of the Biggest Loser Contest this spring, it is entering its third week for the summer session.

For the spring competition, top three individuals were Alicia Kratz with 14.84 percent loss of body weight lost, Janet Visalli with 12.3 percent loss of body weight and Jon Meeter with 12.05 percent loss of body weight.

For the team competition, the top teams were Calorie Killers (Patti Antanavige - Janet Visalli) with 18.6 percent loss of body weight, Hart & Soul (Dan Harter - Steve Frisbee) with 18.1 percent loss of body weight, and Sar-Leesh (Sara Spellicy - Alicia Kratz) with 16.91 percent loss of body weight.

When the contest began on March 19, there were 56 contestants. After 46 days, the field dropped to 35 contestants with a combined loss of weight totaling 303.3 pounds. That averages out to 8.67 pounds a person, or MVCC lost 6.59 pounds a day, according to Andrea L. Roberts, Fitness Center and Wellness Coordinator.

TOP NEW MEMBER - Michael Henningsen, MVCC's Coordinator of Transfer Services, was presented the New Professional Award during the annual New York State Transfer and Articulation Association Conference. Other award winners seen here are: Gloria Battaglia, Onondaga Community College, NYSTAA Emeritus Award; Lia Hallett, University at Buffalo, Distinguished Service Award; and Chris Kull, Monroe Community College, Distinguished Service Award.

Henningsen recognized with state level award

In the short time Michael Henningsen has been at the College, his work has been highly recognized on the local level. That has expanded as he was honored on the state level in Albany for his work helping students continue their education.

Henningsen, who is Coordinator of Transfer Services at MVCC, was presented the New Professional Award at the annual New York State Transfer and Articulation Association (NYSTAA) held at the Desmond Hotel and Conference Center in Albany, May 22-24. The New Professional Award was established to recognize the service of new members to NYSTAA.

"This was a very nice honor and I was excited to receive it," said Henningsen. "Besides being the New Professional award recipient, I was also elected to the NYSTAA Executive Board as a Two-Year Representative."

This award recognizes the enthusiasm of new members to become involved with the organization and promotes continued service. The NYSTAA is an organization formed to help promote the ease of transfer and to encourage professional development of its members.

Membership is open to professionals involved with the transfer process who work for any Middle States accredited higher education institution within New York State. Associate membership is available to individuals working for accredited institutions of higher education outside New York State.

Student places in Top 10 in national video contest

MVCC student Samuel K. Steffen of Holland Patent recently placed in the top 10 in the national Get Connected and Win Video Contest hosted by McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

Steffen, a second-year accounting major at MVCC, placed in the fourth- through tenth-place category of the contest, winning an iPad. More than 100 students from across the country submitted videos about how McGraw-Hill Connect and digital learning has helped to improve their education. Winners were selected based on creativity, originality, theme communication, and the number of public votes received online. Steffen's video illustrated how the Connect Economics online program is a benefit to students in courses such as microeconomics, which he completed this spring at MVCC.

The top three winners received $5,000, $2,000 and $1,000 scholarships respectively, and their winning videos will be featured on several McGraw-Hill websites and social media channels. Winners in fourth through 10th place received an iPad, and winners 11 through 20 received an iPod Touch. To see the all the winning videos, visit the Get Connected and Win website (http://getconnectedandwin.com) and YouTube.

"It is so inspiring to see students use McGraw-Hill Connect in such a creative, unique way and participate in a contest that showcases how they learn differently," said Brian Kibby, president of McGraw-Hill Higher Education. "We thank all those who participated and offer congratulations to all of our winners, and are so inspired by seeing these students engaged in their own learning and we're seeing great results."

Nursing Pinning Ceremony