



Foundation

# 2021 YEAR-END SUMMARY & ALUMNI NEWS

CREATING STUDENT OPPORTUNITY

REVITALIZING OUR ECONOMY

BREAKING BARRIERS

EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE



75<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
EDITION

**MOHAWK VALLEY  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

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February 1, 2022

Greetings from the MVCC Foundation!

As an alumnus, employee, supporter, Board member, or friend, you know the impact MVCC has made on the community and its constituents over the last 75 years. Since its humble beginnings in 1946, when it was established on an experimental basis to serve the educational needs of soldiers returning from WWII, MVCC has stayed true to its roots, offering career, transfer, and transitional educational programs for personal and cultural enrichment while serving the ever-changing educational needs of local industry.

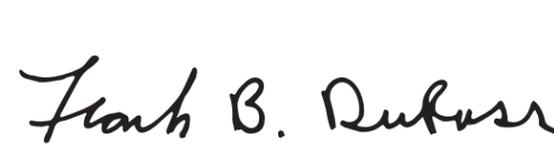
Today, the College is proud of its numerous accomplishments:

- 46,000 alumni;
- Six academic schools;
- 90+ degree programs;
- 170+ transfer agreements;
- 18 intercollegiate sports;
- Two campuses;
- 391 full-time employees;
- 100 part-time employees and adjunct faculty members; and
- More than 150 community events hosted each year;

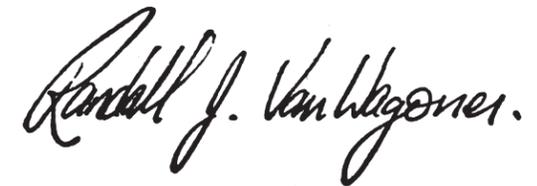
all while boasting one of the lowest community college tuitions in New York State.

Whether you have attended, worked, donated, or volunteered your time to make MVCC a better place, you are a part of the College's rich history and proud tradition of technical and trade education that has continued to serve the Mohawk Valley. Thank you for your continued support in helping us, as the community's college, further our vision of serving every student every day.

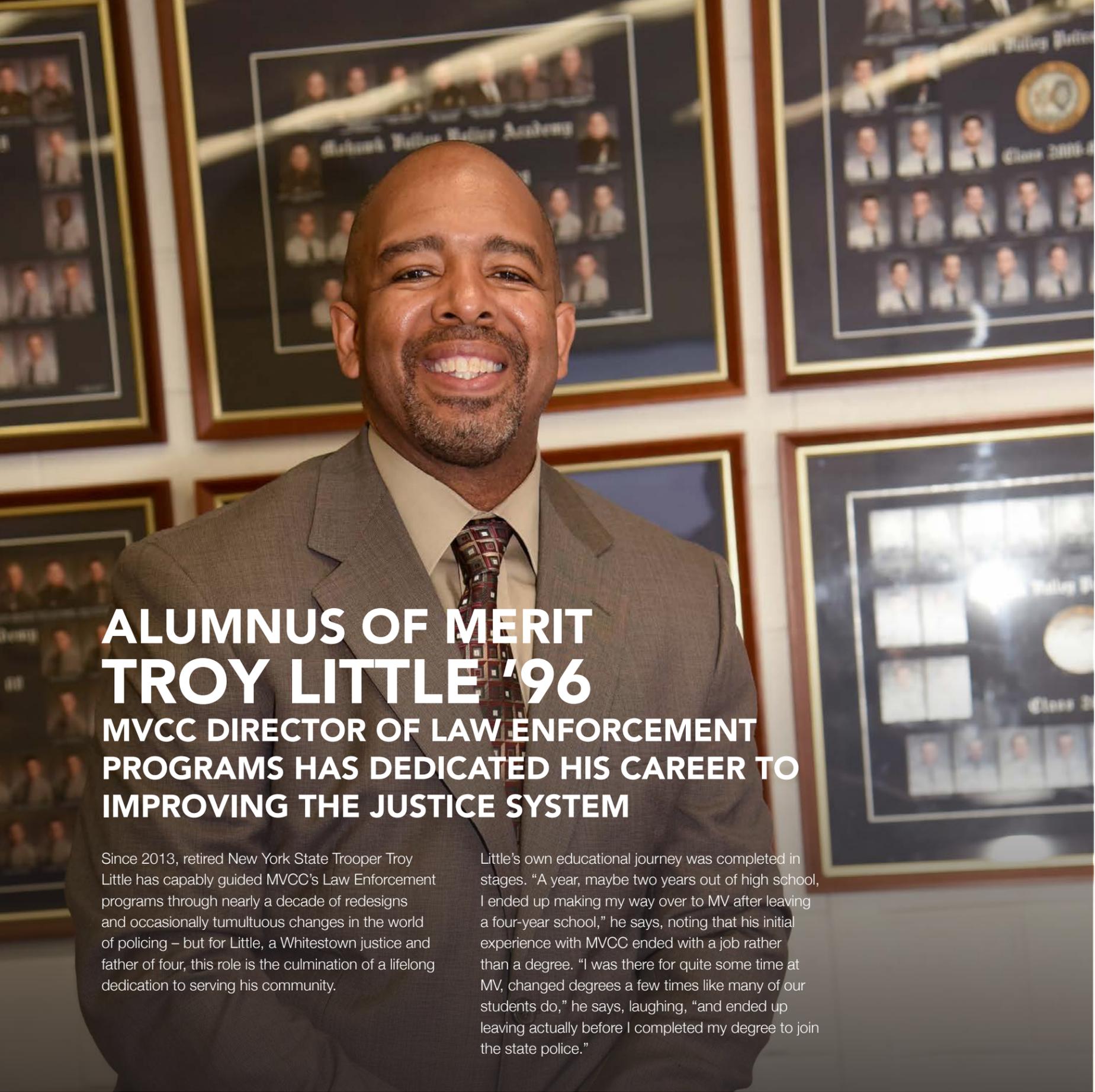
Sincerely,



 Frank B. DuRoss  
 Vice President for Community Development, MVCC  
 Executive Director, MVCC Foundation, Inc.



 Randall J. VanWagoner, Ph.D.  
 President, MVCC



# ALUMNUS OF MERIT TROY LITTLE '96

## MVCC DIRECTOR OF LAW ENFORCEMENT PROGRAMS HAS DEDICATED HIS CAREER TO IMPROVING THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Since 2013, retired New York State Trooper Troy Little has capably guided MVCC's Law Enforcement programs through nearly a decade of redesigns and occasionally tumultuous changes in the world of policing – but for Little, a Whitestown justice and father of four, this role is the culmination of a lifelong dedication to serving his community.

Little's own educational journey was completed in stages. "A year, maybe two years out of high school, I ended up making my way over to MV after leaving a four-year school," he says, noting that his initial experience with MVCC ended with a job rather than a degree. "I was there for quite some time at MV, changed degrees a few times like many of our students do," he says, laughing, "and ended up leaving actually before I completed my degree to join the state police."

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**"The biggest thing I try to do with students that I take pride in is just teaching them to actually be learners."**

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Little later returned as an adult student to complete his degree at MVCC – and then forged ahead to complete his bachelor's and master's degrees before tackling his current work as a doctoral candidate, all while serving the community full-time in a job he loved. "It was a very rewarding career for me," he says of his time as a state trooper. "It gives you the opportunity to deal with people, help people. You build great relationships."

Seeing MVCC's 2013 job opening for the law enforcement program was the catalyst that led to his retirement from the state police. "I really had no intentions on retiring – and then the opportunity came, my current job. It felt good," he says, "the right thing." As Little stepped into a new role overseeing MVCC's intensive police trainings, he immediately began to draw on his experience to strengthen the program. Noticing that the fitness test posed a challenge, he focused on enhancing the training regimen, dramatically improving success rates. Little also was the driving force in developing regular assessments and adding training exercises to take the program beyond classroom theory and into everyday practical application.

In Little's philosophy of teaching, everything comes down to the individual. "The biggest thing I try to do with students that I take pride in is just teaching them to actually be learners," he says. Little developed extracurricular supports – tutoring, library visits, and

soft skills like time management and teamwork – to help students control their own success. "They become successful in the classroom, they're successful in my class," he says, "so to me it's telling me that the things I'm showing them and instilling in them are working."

Serving as a Whitestown Justice was a natural next step for Little. His motivation? "Wanting to help people where I can help people," he says. "Especially within the last year, we've seen some – a lot – of highlights of shortcomings we have in our criminal justice system, so I've wanted to get involved in that and see what change I could bring." First elected in 2019, this role gives Little another opportunity to support the justice system. "It's a very small part, being a town justice," he says, "but it impacts lives in the community. It gives me just that ability to help and try to bring some equity to the system that might not be all that equitable."





As the national environment of policing has come under scrutiny in the past year, Little's proactive work in MVCC's law enforcement programs has put the College at the head of the class. "We were a little bit ahead of the curve with dealing with some of the issues when it comes to equity, racial justice, and diversity," he says, "because that's just part of what's key to me." As the events of the past year forced policing upheavals across the nation, Little says mass curricular changes were quickly mandated by the state. "Luckily it wasn't new to us. I was moving forward that way anyway."

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**"I've got 22 years as state trooper and I'm very proud of that career."**

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When asked about his most rewarding achievements, Little immediately circled back to his service with the state police. "I've got 22 years as a state trooper and I'm very proud of that career," he says. "It's a very meaningful part of my life. And now to come into academia, on the criminal justice side I have a lot of students — over half of them — that have aspirations to be police officers."

"That is by far the most rewarding thing for me," he says, "these young kids and they're coming in right from high school or soon thereafter, and they're looking at me with the glow in their eyes saying 'I want to one day be a trooper.' And I know the challenge to get there, but once they get there it's just so rewarding."

Little credits his attendance at MVCC as the springboard that gave him a chance. "When I came out of high school, I spun wheels," he says, mentioning his initial enrollment. "I did very well the second time through, and I was able to carry that confidence and everything that I learned into my bachelor's and then into my master's and now into my Ph.D." Today, Little references his own story to motivate recruits. "What I tell my students a lot of times is it's a fresh start," he says seriously. "Don't worry about how you did at high school, or how you perceive yourself or have been perceived as a learner. It's a fresh start, and from here you can go anywhere."



## TARYN RACKMYER '19: FROM SUNY TO THE STATE SENATE

It's been a whirlwind of a year for Taryn Rackmyer '19. She spent most of 2021 finishing up her master's degree while serving as the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fellow at SUNY System Administration — a full-time position in which she worked on system-wide policies and initiatives and collaborated with chief diversity officers at all 64 campuses to help SUNY continue its mission of accessible higher education in New York State.

And in late November 2021, Rackmyer accepted another exciting position — Budget Analyst for the New York State Senate.

"The applied learning experiences I participated in at MVCC gave me the tools and connections to launch a successful early career that followed me to Albany," she says. "My experiences at MVCC helped me branch out of my comfort zone and gain confidence in my leadership capabilities. And the supportive environment meant I never felt alone or uncertain about how to progress."

Rackmyer earned two associate degrees from MVCC — Public Policy in December 2018 and Accounting in May 2019. She then transferred to the University at Albany Rockefeller College of Public Affairs & Policy, where she earned a bachelor's degree in public policy (December 2020) and a master's degree in political science, law, and politics (December 2021).

Compassion and a passion for learning is what steered Rackmyer toward the field of public policy. "Growing up, I was unaware of privilege. I hadn't yet seen the ways in which injustice and inequality are ingrained in the social institutions we rely on, or how they prevent countless families from meeting their basic needs," she says. "The resulting shift in my perception of American life drove me to dedicate my life and career to addressing the suffering I saw."

Like many students, Rackmyer was looking for an affordable education. As a high school senior, she learned her achievements had earned a full-tuition Wilcox Exceptional Student Scholarship to MVCC. While making her college decision, she leaned on older sibling Amanda, a 2014 graduate of MVCC, who helped her become familiar with the opportunities offered by the College.

Once enrolled, Rackmyer found MVCC offered much more than affordability. "I was given the opportunity to work with a diverse body of students whose backgrounds and perspectives opened my eyes to the world outside my own." She became deeply involved in campus life, joining clubs, serving on the executive boards for both MVCC Student Congress and SUNY Student Assembly, and working in various college offices.

"I think one of the things that stuck with me the most from MVCC was the importance and value of compassion," she says. "Leadership isn't just about efficiency — it's also about the compassion and kindness you show, and that is something I feel I wouldn't fully understand to this level without my time at MVCC."



# ANNUAL FUND TOTALS REACH NEARLY \$43,000

The 2020-21 MVCC Annual Fund campaign proved to be very successful, with our alumni again coming through for us in another difficult year. This year's Annual Fund mailings raised nearly \$43,000 from 412 donors.

In the last year, the generosity of our alums has helped the MVCC Foundation:



## SCHOLARSHIPS



### MVCC FOUNDATION AWARDS \$358,061 IN SCHOLARSHIPS IN 2020-21

In the 2020-21 academic year, the Foundation's scholarship committee (supported by subcommittees of faculty and staff) reviewed hundreds of applications and awarded 377 scholarships totaling \$358,061 to 200 students in a wide range of academic programs.

For the second year in a row, to accommodate COVID restrictions, the Foundation put together an online ceremony to honor this year's winners, donors, and announce its newly added scholarships for 2021-22. A text and/or email was sent to winners and donors, and the video made its debut in late June. The video is still viewable on MVCC's YouTube page: [youtube.com/wearemvcc](https://youtube.com/wearemvcc).

**The Foundation looks forward to returning to a traditional in-person dinner and ceremony in the spring of 2022!**

#### NEW SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE IN 2021-22

Thanks to the generous support of our emeritus faculty members and donors, the Foundation has added three new scholarships that will be available to students in the 2021-22 academic year. They include:

#### The James C. Sheaffer Memorial Science Scholarship

Professor James C. Sheaffer was a professor at MVCC for 33 years, sharing his love of chemistry while teaching many chemistry-related courses to science, nursing, and criminal justice students. After the passing of Professor Bauer, Professor Sheaffer continued the tradition of his "Magic of Chemistry" presentation at the College's annual Open Houses and occasionally at local elementary schools. The James C. Sheaffer Memorial Science Scholarship was established in his memory by his family.

#### The Tuthill Scholarship in Respiratory Care

William and Karin Tuthill established the Tuthill Scholarship in Respiratory Care in March 2021. As the Tuthills watched the events of the COVID-19 pandemic unfold, they wanted to help the future generation of first responders and front-line healthcare workers with their education. This scholarship is for returning adult students majoring in the Respiratory Care program with a passion for this field and who demonstrate a caring heart.

#### The Fiore-Schaffer Scholarship

James Fiore is a retired MVCC professor who worked at MVCC for over 40 years, sharing his love of science with his students. Both he and his wife, Karen Schaffer, have a passion for science and a love of endurance sports. Both are firm believers in the dictum of a sound mind in a sound body and encourage students along the same path. Upon Professor Fiore's retirement, both he and his wife established this scholarship as a way to give back to students pursuing a career in engineering or computer science.

**We would like to thank these wonderful donors for choosing MVCC as the recipient of their philanthropy.**



**Create three new scholarships that benefit MVCC students**

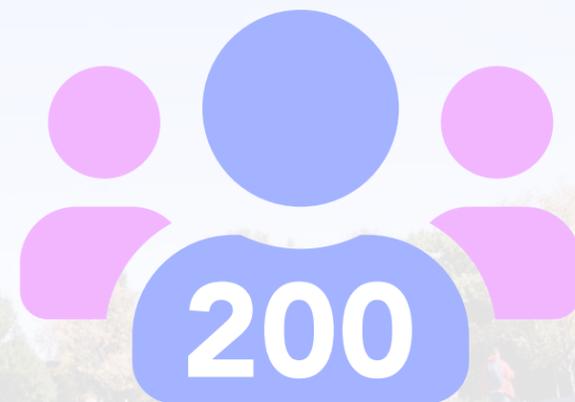
We are continually working to better our database, so we can communicate with you about the latest news and information about MVCC and our alumni. We also enjoy hearing from you! If we don't have your mobile phone number or your email address, please feel free to reach out to us with your updated contact information:

**315-792-5555 or [alumni@mvcc.edu](mailto:alumni@mvcc.edu)**



**Assist 30 students with \$12,709.96 in Emergency Relief and MVCC Cares funding**

**Award 377 individual scholarships to 200 students totaling \$358,061 in support**



## ALUMNI CLASS NOTES

### 1950s

**Elaine Jessup Owen '58** has been a retail merchandiser for Hallmark for 16 1/2 years after retiring from the University of South Florida. Elaine has three adult children, four granddaughters, two great-granddaughters, and one great-grandson. "I still have great memories of MVTI/MVCC — some of the best years of my life."

### 1970s

**David Mathis '70**, MVCC Trustee, Immediate Past Chair of the Association of Community College Trustees, and current ACCT Board of Directors Executive Committee Chair, presided over the first all-virtual Community College National Legislative Summit of the ACCT and personally introduced Dr. Jill Biden as a speaker.

**Clifford Costello '75** is still working with no retirement plans in sight. He is a software development and cybersecurity project manager, working at General Dynamics Information Technology (division of General Dynamics) in Albany, N.Y., supporting the New York State Medicaid systems. He spent 26 years with CSC as a business architect and project and program management consultant, traveling and living all around the country, enjoying life, playing with his collector cars and boating on Lake George. "Life is good, and MVCC was the best thing ever for me in terms of education."

### 1980s

**Darlene Mack-Brown '88**, MVCC Alumni Association Vice President, has been named the new community engagement director at Mohawk Valley Community Action Agency, Inc. Mack-Brown has been active with the anti-poverty agency for many years, serving as the board chair from 2010-13.

### 1990s

**Dr. Shannon Babbie '93** has been appointed superintendent of schools at Morris Central School. His new role began on July 1, 2021.

### 2000s

**Officer Jimmy Dongsavanh '07**, Criminal Justice, was featured earlier this year in the Utica Observer-Dispatch as a member of the City's Community Outreach Team. The Police Department's Outreach Team is dedicated to fostering community relations and understanding. This role, he states, is built on cooperation, trust, and forming relationships.

### 2010s

**Don Simpson '13** shares messages of hope and faith in his first book, "Show and Tell; Sharing Christ Always and Everywhere."

**David Clayton '14** has been selected as the new head coach for the Fulton-Montgomery Community College men's and women's soccer programs.

**Inesha Briggs '19** was recruited to the position of community, equity, and inclusion engagement coordinator for the HomeOwnership Center - UNHS. In this position, Briggs will be responsible for providing leadership in the creation, development, and performance of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within the communities that HOC serves.

**Victoria Ogradnik '19** has been hired by Masonic Medical Research Institute as a new accounts payable specialist.



Inesha Briggs '19

### 2020s

**Justin Medina '20** is working full-time as a function test specialist for Kawasaki Rail Car after successfully completing MVCC's Electrical Service Technician degree program.

**Danni Thorn '21**, Nursing, has been hired by Nascentia Health in Syracuse as an RN case manager, providing in-home skilled nursing care for clients throughout Central New York. Thorn also holds a bachelor's degree in sociology from Ashford University and is an Army veteran actively involved with the VFW auxiliary, Coast Guard Auxiliary, and the American Legion. She previously worked as a home health aide with Nascentia for more than four years.

**Caitlin Andrejova '20, '21**, Holland Patent, received an honorable mention in the SUNY Exhibition Series this past June for her digital painting, "Man with Earring." Andrejova earned an associate degree in Fine Arts in December 2020 and another associate degree in Graphic Communication: Illustration in May 2021 both from MVCC.



## Alumni shine at 2021 Boilermaker

It was a great year for MVCC's Alumni at this year's Boilermaker 15K, held on October 10!

In a Boilermaker year like no other, MVCC alum Hermin Garic '13 won the 15K Wheelchair Division in 35 minutes and 35 seconds — his best time in his 17 years competing. He is the first Utica native to win the division.

Former cross country speedster Savannah Boucher '12 won the 15K Female Division. Boucher is the first American to win the division since 1989 and finished the race in 56 minutes and 22 seconds.

Finally, Ryan McGrogan '06 created the 2021 Boilermaker logo! McGrogan is owner of local graphic design firm McGrogan Design. In addition to creating logos for the Boilermaker 15K, he and his wife, Megan, completed projects for the Greater Utica Chamber of Commerce, Utica Coffee Roasting Company, the United Way of the Mohawk Valley, and MVCC's Ted Moore Run/Walk.



Photos and logo courtesy of the Boilermaker Road Race.

### Send us your news!

MVCC wants to hear from you! Alumni may submit Class Notes for future issues to [alumni@mvcc.edu](mailto:alumni@mvcc.edu) with "Class Notes" in the subject line. Please include your name, graduation year, and your major, as well as some information about your accomplishments. Also, please remember to keep your contact information updated so that we may stay connected.



## MVCC HALL OF FAME CLASS OF 2021

Seven esteemed individuals were selected for induction into the MVCC Hall of Fame as part of the class of 2021.

The Hall of Fame recognizes those who have embraced our community, modeled the way, inspired confidence, and encouraged excellence at MVCC. Selections are also chosen based on business or professional achievements or awards, leadership service to the local community, personal achievements, leadership support and involvement at MVCC, significant contributions to MVCC athletics, and any other appropriate qualifications.

**For full bios, visit [halloffame.mvcc.edu](http://halloffame.mvcc.edu)**

### THIS YEAR'S INDUCTEES ARE:



#### **David R. Katz III**

Professor Emeritus David R. Katz III began his career at MVCC in 1981, serving 32 years as Professor of Political Science and History before moving into the role of Executive Director of Organizational Development, which he

held until his retirement in 2019.

As a faculty member, Katz taught widely diverse audiences, including traditional students, returning adults, and inmates in local correctional facilities. His role leading organizational development built on those classroom skills of effective communication and relationship-building to coordinate and oversee the College's employee recognition program and professional development programs. He also was a key player in developing and guiding regional collaborations.

Katz also coached MVCC basketball teams, leading them to regional and national levels of success; served as Vice President of MVCC Auxiliary Services Corporation; was the Coordinator for MVCC's College Program at Mid-State Correctional Facility; mentored and trained high school teachers within the MVCC Dual Credit program as a liaison; and was an active member of the MVCC Speaker's Bureau. He chaired

the Political Outreach Committee of the MVCC Professional Association, chaired the College Senate for several years, and was a member of multiple College Senate committees. He also served as a member of the Institutional Effectiveness and Learning Assessment workgroup for the College's 2008 Self Study Accreditation report.

Katz's leadership and exceptional performance were recognized with numerous awards, including the MVCC Excellence in Teaching Award; the MVCC Who Made a Difference Award; multiple regional and national Coach of the Year Awards; the MVCC Excellence in Faculty Service Award; the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Faculty Service; the NYS Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation & Dance Award for Dance Teacher of the Year; and the North American Council for Staff, Program and Organizational Development's Exemplar Award. Since his retirement in 2019, Katz has continued serving the national higher education community as a sought-after consultant and speaker.

Throughout his long and distinguished career, Katz's contributions made him a valued mentor and role model. From the basketball court to the classroom to the professional development seminars he presents, his work continues to shape higher education professionals. Katz's greatest influence remains the lives of the students he passionately mentored and served during his 38 years at the College.



#### **Donald Kelly**

Professor Emeritus Donald Kelly served MVCC for more than 18 years. Kelly also served as Associate Dean of the Center of Life and Health Sciences from 2009 to 2011. Since his retirement in 2018, he continues to

commit his time and expertise as an adjunct instructor.

As a faculty member, Kelly was instrumental in developing a cohesive department. He dedicated extraordinary effort to mentor new faculty and served as a role model for student engagement and the cultivation of a positive learning environment within highly challenging courses. He was actively involved with multiple College committees and initiatives including service on the Strategic Planning Committee, the Honors Workgroup, as Chair of the Facilities Committee, Faculty Caucus, as Chair of the College Senate for four years (which included significant recommendations like making campus facilities tobacco-free), and through involvement with the SUNY Faculty Council of Community Colleges. His efforts were honored with the MVCC Excellence in Teaching Award in 2012 and the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2013.

In addition to his contributions as a faculty member, Kelly was active in a variety of professional capacities for the Human Anatomy and Physiology Society, including service on the Steering Committee, the Foundation Oversight Committee, the Nominating Committee, and the Animal Use Committee where he helped to develop the Society's position on the ethical use of animals in teaching and research. He was elected as the Society President in 2011 and won the President's Medal in 2015. He also was heavily involved in his community.

Throughout his tenure at MVCC, Kelly played a pivotal role in enriching the department he served. His contributions have been invaluable to the growth of the College.



#### **Dr. James Gifford**

Professor Emeritus James Gifford's career at MVCC spanned more than 36 years and he continues to serve as an adjunct and supports the next generation of MVCC Theater students through a scholarship in his name.

Gifford taught a variety of courses ranging from developmental writing to American Literature, Film, and Theater, as well as special topics in the Humanities. Gifford was among the earliest to incorporate computers in his teaching, pioneering the way for his colleagues. He played an invaluable role in the development of the College's Theater program, served as an in-house consultant during the design of the Michael I. Schafer Theater, and directed an extensive list of student productions and plays at the College and served on numerous College committees.

Gifford's dissertation won honors at Syracuse University, where he completed his Ph.D. in 1994. His outstanding efforts were recognized by the MVCC Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities in 2004 and the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities. He was the founding advisor of the LGBTQ club, author of several books and articles in the area of gay studies, and has presented several papers. He also was an advocate for the designation of American Sign Language as a foreign language course and the need for an African-American Literature course.

Gifford also has been involved in the local drama community and was married on the Schafer Theater stage to Paul Stern, which he says was his best theatrical experience yet. He also became an Adirondack 46er at the age of 73.

Gifford played a key role in the development of new programs and diversification of offerings at MVCC. His service has made invaluable contributions to the College's growth, quality, and reputation for excellence.

**Nancy Pattarini, Ph.D. '75**

Dr. Nancy Pattarini '75 serves as a shining example of the power of an MVCC education. She sought out MVCC and chose the Advertising Design and Production program. Since then, she has built a career as

President and CEO of a global communications firm, The Paige Group.

Pattarini, who also served as a Resident Assistant during her student days at MVCC, shared her journey and advice to MVCC students on several occasions, inspiring them to make the most of their own time.

Pattarini began her career in non-profit public relations before moving to corporate communications for a worldwide computer manufacturing firm. She joined The Paige Group in 1986 as director of account services, became a partner in the firm in 1990, and was appointed CEO in 2003. In this role, she leads the firm's planning and business development efforts and works directly with key accounts. The agency specializes in developing unified communications and marketing initiatives for a broad range of clients in the Mohawk Valley and around the world.

Pattarini specializes in marketing strategies that are highly integrated with organizational communications. Her longtime philosophy is that successful brands emanate from more engaged employees and by promoting an environment of creativity. With more than 30 years of experience in counseling and facilitation, her proactive, collaborative leadership approach has helped build relationships among management teams, employees, communities, and government.

In addition to her associate degree from MVCC, Pattarini holds a Ph.D. from Nova Southeastern University in conflict resolution studies, a master's degree in communications management from Syracuse University, and a bachelor's degree in public relations from Utica College.

**James Smrtic**

Professor Emeritus James D. Smrtic retired from MVCC after 37 years of teaching psychology courses. According to his colleagues, Smrtic was a model colleague whose counsel on important committees

was universally respected and carefully considered, especially on the Faculty Promotions Committee.

Among Smrtic's most transformative and lasting accomplishments was the creation of an afterschool program called Kidz N' Coaches. This program uses undergraduate volunteer coaches from MVCC who plan and carry out prosocial group activities for emerging children. This program engages children from Municipal Public Housing, many of whom are from immigrant and refugee families. The program aids children in their social and emotional development and has been serving the community for more than 30 years. The program has continued after Smrtic's retirement under two faculty members.

Smrtic was an inspirational professor who always encouraged his students to reach for their dreams. Specifically, he encouraged a former Introduction to Psychology student, Christopher Kazanjian, to follow in his footsteps. Kazanjian, inspired by Smrtic's passion for psychology, became a college professor and earned his doctorate with a dissertation focusing on the Kidz N' Coaches program. Kazanjian felt so strongly about the importance of the program that he went on to create a branch at his own college, El Paso Community College, which has now been running for five years.

Smrtic was awarded the SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching and published the textbook *Abnormal Psychology: Classic Perspectives (The Text/Anthology)*. He earned both a bachelor's and master's degree in educational psychology from SUNY Albany where, during his master's program, he studied under Dr. Abraham Luchins, the leading figure in humanistic psychology and group therapy.

**Herbert C. Thorpe**

Counselor Emeritus Herbert C. Thorpe served as a part-time counselor at MVCC from 1984 until 1997. Before joining MVCC, he used his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from New York University to

work as a radar systems engineer at Brooklyn Navy Yard from 1955 to 1959. In 1959, Thorpe moved to Rome and served as a radar research engineer at Rome Air Development Center at Griffiss Air Force Base until his retirement in 1982.

Thorpe served in the Civilian Conservation Corps program in camps at Van Etten, Empeyville, N.Y., and Beltsville, Md. He enlisted in the Army Reserves in October 1942 and trained at Signal Corps School in Troy before beginning active-duty military basic training in June 1943 at Fort Dix, N.J., and then at Kearns Field, Utah. Thorpe applied to Aviation Cadet School in December 1943 and received orders to travel from Salt Lake City, Utah. He was later transferred to Basic Training Flight School at Tuskegee Army Airfield. He was selected for multi-engine training and transferred to Gunnery School at Tyndall Field, Fla., and then to Bombardier/Navigator School at Midland Army Airfield, Texas, where he was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant as a navigator/bombardier. He returned to Tuskegee and began Advanced Flight Training and earned B-25 (twin-engine) pilot's wings in October 1945. He remained at Tuskegee and left service in August 1946.

Thorpe was one of the military's first Black pilots. He was presented the Congressional Gold Medal for his service during World War II, was chosen as the 2012 recipient of the Rome Historical Society's Medal of 1777, and was the first recipient of the New York State Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Award.

Thorpe is very active in the local community and he and his late wife, Jessie, hosted Fresh Air Fund children for many years. For six years, they also sheltered at-risk youth through the Oneida County Runaway and Homeless Youth Program.

**Francis A. Wilcox**

Francis A. Wilcox was an electrical engineer and decorated U.S. Army veteran who named the Mohawk Valley Community College Foundation in his will. His generous gift of \$3 million has created more

opportunities for local students and allowed MVCC to continue its mission of providing accessible, high-quality education to all students.

Of the \$3 million Wilcox donated, \$2.5 million was allocated for the Wilcox Memorial Endowed Fund. This fund supports two full-tuition scholarship funds: The Presidential Scholarship and Exceptional Student Scholarship. These merit-based awards benefit more than 70 high school graduates each year and are renewable for four semesters at MVCC. The remaining \$500,000 was split: \$250,000 was used to establish the new Francis A. Wilcox Memorial Adult Student Scholarship, with the remaining \$250,000 used to create the Wilcox Family Fund, which is used for MVCC's areas of greatest need to help the College maintain its dynamism and impact in the face of swiftly evolving societal, technological, and academic needs.

Wilcox was born in Utica and attended Blessed Sacrament School. He graduated from St. Francis De Sales High School, then earned a bachelor's degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, and a master's degree from Cornell University. Serving in the U.S. Army Signal Corps in India during World War II, Wilcox was the recipient of the Good Conduct Medal, the Meritorious Unit Award, and the World War II Victory Medal. After his service, he worked as an electrical engineer with General Electric in both Utica and Syracuse.

In retirement, Wilcox volunteered at the Utica Public Library and the Oneida County Historical Society, helping individuals from all corners of the United States research genealogy.

# MVCC CELEBRATES 75 YEARS OF STUDENT SUCCESS



October 2021 marked the start of Mohawk Valley Community College's 75th year of transforming lives through learning.

MVCC opened in October 1946 as the New York State Institute of Applied Arts & Sciences in Utica, one of five post-secondary institutions established to train and educate veterans returning from World War II. Then located in the Country Day School on Genesee Street in New Hartford (the present site of the Wedgewood Apartments), the Institute had its first day of classes on October 15, 1946, with 11 faculty members and 53 students — all enrolled in Retail Business Management.



Since its early days, the College has built and adapted its programs to fit the needs of area industries, helping to develop the regional workforce and allowing students to have a significant and immediate impact on the Mohawk Valley. As regional industry continued to evolve, so did the College's catalog of instructional programs, which required new facilities for a growing student body and eventually a name change to Mohawk Valley Community College (1963) to reflect this shift in emphasis. The Utica Campus on Sherman Drive opened in 1960, and the present Rome Campus opened in 1974 in a portion of the former Oneida County Hospital on Floyd Avenue. Both campuses

have seen tremendous growth, including extensive renovations and new facilities to provide state-of-the-art learning spaces for a vast array of programs that include everything from fine arts and hospitality to healthcare, business, and STEM.

MVCC has evolved to become New York State's first community college, the largest college between Syracuse and Albany, and the region's primary provider of college education and non-credit training. Throughout its 75th year, MVCC will highlight its growth and impact and recognize the service and contributions of its alumni, faculty, and staff, with some exciting events and activities.



"The pandemic hasn't limited our creativity in celebrating 75 years of MVCC serving the residents and employers in the region to help foster community, growth, and prosperity in Oneida County."

— MVCC President  
Dr. Randall J. VanWagoner



# THE COLLEGE'S 75<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



**Commemorative Plaque Dedication:** A special commemorative plaque has been placed in the Main Quad at MVCC's Utica Campus.

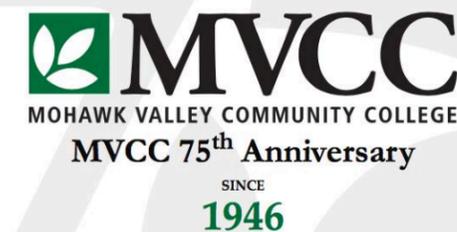


**MVCC Time Capsule:** Put together by MVCC's Institutional Advancement Office, the time capsule will be on display at MVCC's Utica Campus until it is opened in October 2046 for the College's 100th anniversary.

**Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony:** This year, seven new members were inducted into the MVCC Hall of Fame, bringing the total number of inductees to 75.



**75 Interviews:** MVCC President Randall VanWagoner recorded 75 interviews with MVCC employees and retirees sharing their insights on the College's history and role in the community.



**75th Anniversary webpage:** A special webpage highlighting 75 years of student success. It includes an illustrated timeline of the College's history, alumni profiles, and the 75 interviews mentioned on the previous page. [mvcc.edu/75](http://mvcc.edu/75).



**Student Selfie Contest:** MVCC students were invited to take selfies with the 75th anniversary logo. The contest winner was Sacha Mayo, an Electrical Engineering Technology major, pictured on right.



**Alumni Essay Contest:** Alumni were invited to submit memories, images, and memorabilia expressing how MVCC has impacted their lives. The contest winner was Sharon M. Kaelin '92, who shared her experience as an adult learner. To read her story, visit [mvcc.edu/alumni-donors/stories](http://mvcc.edu/alumni-donors/stories)



**Special fundraising campaign:** The MVCC Foundation is hoping to raise \$75,000 through a series of 75th anniversary-themed fundraising initiatives. You may participate in this effort by visiting [mvcc.edu/donate](http://mvcc.edu/donate).

For more information about Mohawk Valley Community College and its 75th anniversary, visit [mvcc.edu/75](http://mvcc.edu/75).

# MVCC NEWS AND EVENTS

## Wolfspeed Donates Lumber to MVCC Foundation

Wolfspeed donated 5,000 sheets of plywood to the MVCC Foundation. The plywood has been repurposed from the construction of the Wolfspeed semiconductor fabrication facility in Marcy. The MVCC Foundation has close connections to Wolfspeed, partnering with the company last year on its transformative workforce development initiative by planning and installing a semiconductor manufacturing automation lab at the MVCC Center located in Bagg's Square

"Wolfspeed knows the MVCC Foundation is deeply connected within the local community and therefore



saw an opportunity to assist local non-profits and fire departments by repurposing lumber used from its ongoing construction project," said Frank DuRoss, vice president for community development and executive director of the MVCC Foundation. "The Foundation has helped several local organizations with this donation, including: the ARC, Herkimer BOCES, Munson Williams Proctor Arts Institute and the Village of Oriskany Falls. More plywood is still available to eligible not-for-profit organizations," he added.

If you know an organization interested in gently used plywood, please contact the MVCC Foundation at 315-792-5555.



## Week of Giving Raises Funds for C3

For the second year in a row, the MVCC Foundation raised funds through its "Give MVCC Some Love" Week of Giving, held in the days preceding Valentine's Day. This initiative raised \$13,359 from 159 donors, and, as in previous years, the funds were primarily donated to MVCC's College-Community-Connection (C3) program.

C3 helps MVCC fulfill its mission to provide accessible college education by addressing barriers that keep students from achieving academic goals, through various resources including an on-campus food pantry and referrals to community services.

While the program has been partially funded through the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, the College is moving toward self-sufficiency, and the donations will help further the goal of continuing the program's positive impact.

The C3 program was created as a pilot-project in 2016, with the goal of providing students with an on-campus support center to offer solutions to non-academic issues that could prevent them from completing their degree. Services have included support with food insecurity, housing, and other basic needs; child and elder care; transportation and bus passes; counseling and legal services; school supplies; and healthcare.

Since the COVID pandemic began, many students have requested and received access to technology, hotspots, and laptops to help them complete their schoolwork in an online format.



## Tea Leaf Touring And Consulting

Tea Leaf Touring and Consulting (TLTC) was expanded over the last year to provide all-encompassing consulting services. Its highest profile project to-date was creating virtual event spaces for the SUNY Guided Pathways Student Success Center Virtual Series. Hopefully, social distancing restrictions will be lifted in 2022 and TLTC will be able to begin booking in-person engagements. TLTC is currently working with GP Entertainment to help co-broker speaking engagements. For more information on TLTC, please visit [tealeaftouring.com](http://tealeaftouring.com).



## Tea Leaf Manufacturing

Despite the pandemic, Tea Leaf Manufacturing (TLM) has returned a very profitable year. In 2021, TLM worked hard to increase its customer base and as a result, established partnership agreements with Wolfspeed and Indium for product design and consultation. Additionally, a website outlining all the services provided by TLM launched last spring. Companies, entrepreneurs, and others looking for assistance with 3D printing or any project design may contact TLM at [tealeaf@mvcc.edu](mailto:tealeaf@mvcc.edu) or [mvcc.edu/tlm](http://mvcc.edu/tlm).



### Testimonial about Tea Leaf Manufacturing:

"We've printed dozens of parts with James and the team at Tea Leaf Manufacturing. They were happy to lend insightful comments regarding our 3D models and suggestions as to how we can improve or correct mistakes with different file types or media due to the lack of our printing experience. Always very prompt in their communications and delivered our pieces ahead of schedule. The 3D printed parts were very well printed with great precision. We are looking forward to placing our next order with them!"

Jacob Rasmussen, CEO  
Casestry LLC



# EDUCATOR AND AWARD-WINNING POET KOFI ANTWI '10

Kofi Antwi '10 is a writer, poet, and educator who teaches English in the Syracuse School District and at Utica College. In July 2020, his debut poetry book, "Tidal Wave," was published by Kattywompus Press, sparking a flurry of reading events for his poems, many of which are inspired by his Ghanaian heritage, his experiences growing up in Brooklyn and Staten Island, Black identity, and hope.

After graduating from MVCC, Antwi earned a bachelor's degree in sociology from Utica College and a master of fine arts degree from The Writer's Foundry at St. Joseph's College in Brooklyn.



## 5 Questions with an Alum: Kofi Antwi '10

**Q:** What do you enjoy most about your career or your current position?

**A:** The opportunity to share life experiences, literature, art, and creative writing with my students adds fulfillment to my career. Working with students who live in the inner city is a constant reminder that my role as an educator is vital in their progression as young adults.

**Q:** What have been the biggest challenges in your life/career?

**A:** At the start of the pandemic, I took a leave of absence. It was a daunting transition because of the familiarity I grew accustomed to over the years. In the fall I started teaching again — at Utica College and the Syracuse School district, and I am a director of an after-school program in Syracuse.

**Q:** How did you become interested in writing?

**A:** I think I've always wanted to become a storyteller of some sort, and writing has afforded me an unexpected opportunity — to learn from my students.

**Q:** How did you find your way to MVCC?

**A:** A guidance counselor at Ralph McKee High School was professionally invested in seeing students from the inner city, like myself, venture outside of New York City.

**Q:** In what ways has your MVCC experience had an impact on you?

**A:** While at MVCC, I was able to build relationships with local community members, families, and professors.

## EVENTS

### 24th Annual Ted Moore Run/Walk Breaks Record!

Thanks to our dedicated runners, walkers, and long-time supporters, the 24th Annual Ted Moore Run/Walk was a tremendous success! This year, we had nearly 200 participants representing 18 different states. As a result, we raised more than \$9,000 for the Ted Moore scholarship. This is a new record!

The pandemic made for a challenging two years, but we persevered and feel we have succeeded in creating a new platform for out-of-town folks to participate in the event in honor of late Mathematics Professor Ted Moore, and reinforces the dangers of drinking and driving. Although the Foundation plans to hold the event in person in 2022, we also plan to also keep the virtual aspect of the race.

So, whether you participate virtually or in-person, we ask that you save the date for the 25th Annual Ted Moore Run/Walk. Stay tuned for the date.





### Golf Tournament Raises More Than \$23,000

Despite the fear that the event would be cancelled due to a 90% chance of thunderstorms in the forecast, the Foundation's 35th Annual Golf Tournament went on as planned, with only a few modifications.

In its returning year, with a smaller field required due to COVID restrictions, the event raised more than \$23,000 for MVCC's areas of greatest need. This fund was designed to maintain MVCC's impact in the face of swiftly evolving societal, technological, and academic needs. The fund's flexibility enables rapid response to shifting community needs and the ability to pursue unprecedented opportunities, ultimately funding a stronger, more supportive, and academically outstanding experience for all who interact with MVCC.

Thanks to all of our loyal sponsors and supporters who braved uncertain conditions to make this event a huge success!

#### Save the date for 2022!

The 36th Annual MVCC Foundation Golf Tournament has been scheduled for Monday, June 20, 2022, at Valley View Golf & Country Club.

### 2021 MVCC Foundation Golf Tournament Sponsors

#### Gold Sponsors:

- Michael Briggs '63
- Strategic Financial Services

#### Silver Sponsors:

- Scalzo, Zogby and Wittig, Inc.
- The Pepsi Bottling Group, Inc.
- The Griffith Earl Savery Group
- Adirondack Financial Services

#### Bronze Sponsors:

- American Dining Creations
- Indium Corporation
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- Indium Corp.
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- Auxilliary Services Corp.
- Saunders Kahler, L.L.P. Attorneys at Law

#### Tee & Green Packages:

- Association of Mohawk Valley Administrators
- PJ Green, Inc.

#### Local Company and Individual Foursomes:

- D'Arcangelo & Co.
- Judge Anthony J. Garramone
- L.B. Security & Investigations
- MVCC Professional Association
- MVCC Cultural Series
- NBT Bank
- Robert Lalonde '74
- MVCC Cultural Series
- NBT Bank
- Robert Lalonde '74



## MVCC BOARDS

### MVCC BOARD OF TRUSTEES

**Anthony J. Colón, Chair**  
Oneida County Appointment, 2008

**Dr. Frank Dubeck, Jr., Vice Chair**  
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**Camille T. Kahler**  
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Governor Appointment, 2021

**Fabiha Khan**  
Student Trustee

### MVCC FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Dr. Randall J. VanWagoner,**  
President

#### Officers

**Stephen Zogby,** President  
**Stephen Coupe,** Vice President  
**Lori Kaplan Felice,** Secretary  
**Mike Parsons,** Treasurer

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**Joanne Donaruma-Wade**  
**Sheila K. Gilroy**  
**Charles Green**  
**Rick Short**  
**Rosemary Talarico**

#### MVCC Board of Trustee

**Appointees**  
**Camille Kahler**  
**Wendy Waters**

#### MVCC Alumni Association

**Appointee**  
**Darlene Mack-Brown**

#### Additional Board Members

**Frank B. DuRoss,** Vice President for Community Development and Executive Director of MVCC Foundation

**Tom Squires,** Vice President for Administrative Services

**Fabiha Khan,** Student Trustee

### MVCC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Retail Business Management

Vice President

**Darlene Mack-Brown '88**  
Health Information Technology

Secretary

**Paula Fontaine '71**  
Secretarial Science

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**ABOUT THE MVCC FOUNDATION**

MVCC Foundation, Inc. is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit corporation that relies on the generosity of its alumni and donors to provide support and opportunities to the College and its students. Every dollar raised can make a difference, and there are many ways you can give and have a positive impact on our students and community.

**Online:** MVCCFoundation.org

**By Mail:** Checks can be made payable to MVCC Foundation, Inc. and mailed to the attention of the Foundation at:

1101 Sherman Drive, Utica, N.Y. 13501

**By Phone:** 315-792-5555 (Office hours are Monday-Friday 8:30 a.m–4:30 p.m.)

**By Text Message:** The MVCC Foundation has the ability to communicate with alumni and donors via text message. Please contact our office to update your mobile phone number.

**Establish a Named Scholarship**

With a minimum contribution of \$10,000, an annual scholarship may be established. Pledge commitments can be paid over time.

**Underwrite an Annual Event**

Whether it's the Ted Moore Run/Walk, our annual scholarship dinner, or the MVCC Foundation Golf Tournament, there are a number of opportunities to highlight your business or organization and support MVCC in creative ways.

**Make a Contribution to Honor a Loved One**

Celebrate a special occasion or remember a loved one by honoring them with a gift to the MVCC Foundation.

**Consider Gift Planning**

Please remember MVCC in your estate plan or by making a gift that makes payments back to you before benefitting MVCC. For additional information, contact Executive Director Deanna Ferro-Aurience at 315-792-5555 or dferro-aurience@mvcc.edu.

**Gifts In-Kind**

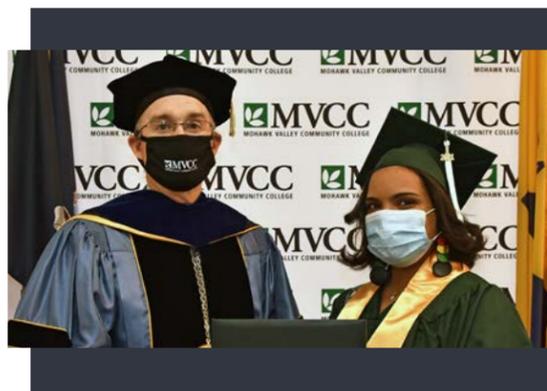
Gifts in-kind are a form of giving in which, instead of giving money to buy goods and services, those products or services are themselves given. In the past, MVCC has received gifts in-kind that include airplanes, office furnishings, and equipment.

**Matching Gifts**

You may be able to double or even triple the impact of your gift if you or your spouse's employer participates in a Corporate

Matching Gifts program. Simply speak with your human resources or personnel office about obtaining a gift match form and include the completed form with your contribution.

**Don't forget to follow MVCC on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn for the latest College news and alumni information!**



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Frank B. DuRoss has retired from his position as Executive Director of the MVCC Foundation as of January 10, 2022. Frank has been the fearless leader of the Foundation since 2011 and will continue to serve the College as a special advisor to President VanWagoner in matters of community development. He has left the Foundation in capable hands as Deanna Ferro-Aurience has been selected as the Foundation's next Executive Director. We thank Frank for his hard work and dedication over the last several years, as he has bettered our College and community by raising millions of dollars and creating numerous scholarships that have helped our students obtain an affordable, high-quality education.



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