



THE JOURNEYS THAT WE ARE INTEGRAL TO,
OR PLAY JUST A SMALL ROLE IN,
ARE AS VARIED, DIVERSE, AND INSPIRING
AS THE WORLD ITSELF. WHAT A FULFILLING
THING IT IS TO HELP SOMEONE ALONG
ON THEIR LIFE PATH...



RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION
ANNUAL REPORT

THE JOURNEYS

WELCOME

AND THANK YOU!

JUNE 6, 2024



Dear Friends, Supporters, Partners, and Alumni of RVCC,

An annual report and the end of the academic year provide a moment to reflect on the role and impact of Raritan Valley Community College. Seeing the institution through its students and witnessing their enthusiasm and passion is a palpable if less celebrated perk of the job. The same could be said of witnessing the commitment of staff and faculty colleagues, always in service to our students.

The journeys that we are integral to, or play just a small role in, are as varied, diverse, and inspiring as the world itself. What a fulfilling thing it is to help someone along on their life path; to teach, to mentor, to offer counsel, to be interested, encouraging, and supportive. Always supportive.

Each new semester brings a fresh group of journeys. Many journeys actually launch at RVCC, when clarity reveals itself, offering the newly transformed student a sense of purpose, direction, and fresh energy. And there are other journeys for which the arriving student already has their destination in mind, and maybe even a plan. Whatever the arc of the journey, this beloved institution and the people behind it, always give students what they need to keep their momentum moving forward, in the direction they choose.

It is fitting that this annual report celebrates just some of the journeys of our students and alumni, along with many of the other successes for which we—students, faculty, staff, alumni, and especially donors—can all be proud.

We hope you too feel pride in this place, the work that it does, and the journeys it stewards. RVCC is more than worthy of it.

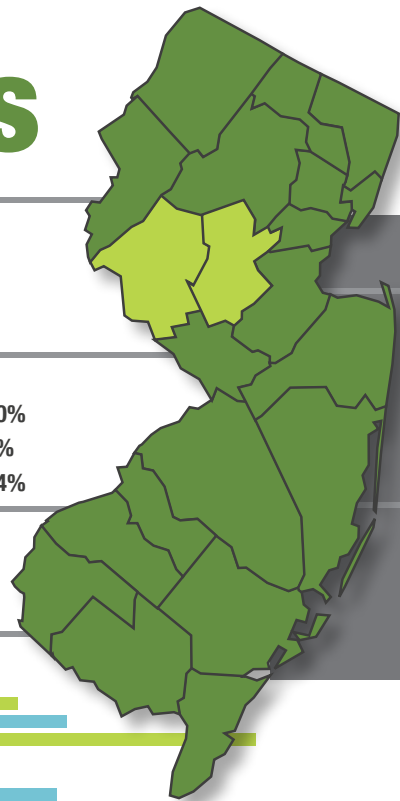
On behalf of the Raritan Valley Community College Board of Trustees, the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors, the RVCC Foundation staff, and the entire RVCC community, thank you for your support and engagement.

Cheers,



Michael J. Marion Chief Development Officer & Executive Director
RVCC Foundation & RVCC Alumni Association 74 Lamington Road, Branchburg, NJ 08876-3315
O: 908-648-8567; C: 973-600-2848
rvccfoundation.org / Instagram@rvccfoundation / LinkedIn:MikeMarion

RVCC Fast Facts



2023

FAST FACTS data from 2023

STUDENT ENROLLMENT

Headcount..... 6,587
 Credit Hours..... 61,792
 Term Full-time Equivalent (FTE)..... 4,036

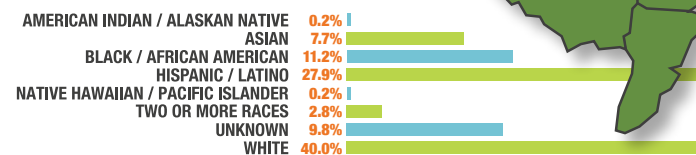
STUDENT STATUS

First Time Student.....22.0%
 New Transfer Student.....4.6%
 Continuing / re-admit / non-degree73.4%

FULL-TIME / PART-TIME STATUS

Full-Time..... 41.7%
 Part-Time..... 58.3%

STUDENT ETHNICITY



TOP TRANSFER DESTINATIONS

Rutgers New Brunswick
 Rutgers Newark
 Kean University
 Montclair State University
 TCNJ The College of New Jersey

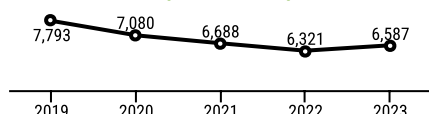
STUDENT RESIDENCE

99% IN STATE
 57% Somerset
 24% Hunterdon

NUMBER OF SECTIONS

Sections Offered.....1,116
 Average Class Size.....17.7

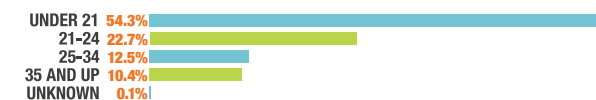
FIVE YEAR TREND (HEADCOUNT)



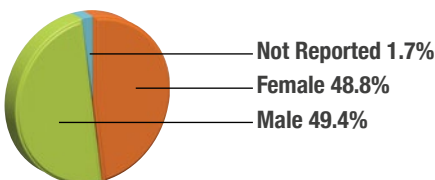
ANNUAL ENROLLMENT 2022-23

Headcount..... 9,275
 Term Full-time Equivalent (FTE)..... 4,283

STUDENT AGE



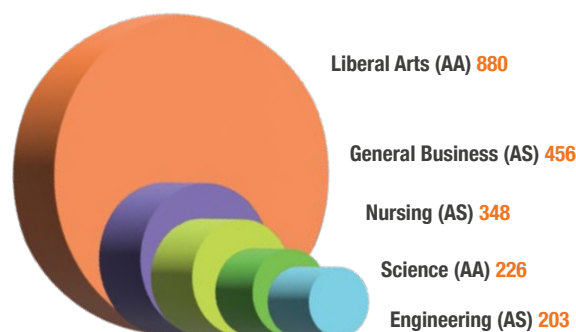
STUDENT GENDER



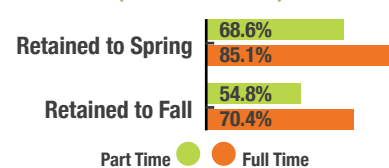
PELL GRANTS (2022-23)



POPULAR MAJORS



RETENTION (Fall 2021 Cohort)

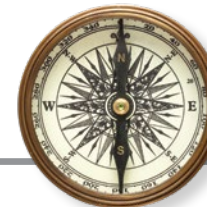


GRADUATES (2021-22)

941 Degrees
 50 Credit Certificates



RVCC Leadership



RVCC Foundation Board Members

Allan Boomer (Chair)
 Elissa Santo (Vice Chair)
 David Bunevich
 Alyssa Darden
 Zachary Cole (RVCC Class of 2024)
 Patrick Delaney
 Sandra Faragalla (RVCC Class of 2024)
 Sean Fleming
 Sebastian Galvez
 Parag S. Jategaonkar
 Jomil London
 Gene McCarthy
 Michael J. McDonough (President, RVCC)
 Raquel Mura
 Jeanne Perantoni
 Steven A. Reichman
 Joel F. Reyes-Guzman
 Michael Schwertfeger
 Dan Van Tran
 John Trojan (Treasurer)
 Gary Woodring (Asst. Treasurer)

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 Peter S. Johnson
 Dr. Richard D. Wellbrock

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RVCC Executive Staff

Michael J. McDonough, President
 Karen H. Bearce, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
 Jason Fredericks, Vice President of Student Affairs
 Michael Marion, Executive Director, RVCC Foundation & RVCC Alumni Association
 Conrad Mercurius, Executive Director of Workforce Development & Career Education
 Robert Pescinski, Executive Director of Technology Services
 John Trojan, Vice President for Finance & Facilities
 Cheryl Wallace, Vice President for Human Resources
 Annette Lacanna, Executive Office Manager & Board of Trustees Secretary

RVCC Foundation Staff

Mike Marion, Executive Director
 Janet Dunne, Development Associate
 Cindy Haddad, Development Assistant

RVCC Foundation Golf Classic Committee

Keith Cahill
 Tom Mitchell
 Brian O'Rourke
 Joseph Pavlow
 Steven A. Reichman
 John Trojan
 Paul Vecchione
 Barry Walker
 Robert P. Wise
 Gary Woodring

CELEBRATING THE JOURNEY:

Congratulations To The Class Of 2024!

RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S 55TH GRADUATING CLASS— SOME 1,100 STUDENTS STRONG—IS READY TO TAKE ON THE WORLD...

SPECIAL THANKS TO THE 2024 COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS:

Michael J. McDonough, President, Raritan Valley Community College; Greetings: Jeff Kuhl, Director, Hunterdon County Board of County Commissioners and Shanel Y. Robinson, Director, Somerset County Board of County Commissioners; Commencement Speaker: Dr. Kareem McKenzie; Presentation of Honorary Degree: Dr. Helena Swanicke, Vice Chair for Somerset County, Raritan Valley Community College Board of Trustees; Introduction of Faculty Speaker: Sandra Faragalla, Class of 2024; Faculty Address: Dr. Ronald Tyson, Associate Professor of English; Introduction of Student Speaker: Dr. Karen Bearce, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs; Class of 2024 Student Speaker: Jordan Barge





THANK YOU



To our generous sponsors and friends of the 19th Annual RVCC Foundation Golf Classic

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United Business Systems

MAGNA CUM LAUDE
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Dancker
eDesign Interactive
New Jersey Risk Managers & Consultants
Pave-Rite, Inc.
Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset
SSP Architects
Van Cleef Engineering Associates, LLC

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C. Lombardi Construction
Gourmet Dining LLC
Interface, Inc.
PepsiCo
PhillyCom, Inc.
Steven A. Reichman
USA Architects
Dan Van Tran
Barry Walker
Gary Woodring

INDIVIDUAL PLAYERS
Hunterdon Health Foundation
Thomas & Elizabeth Mitchell
Don and Penny Pray
TD Bank
Dan Van Tran
TriState Capital Bank
Robert Wise

MUCH GRATITUDE TO
RVCC Golf Committee
Donna Stolzer
Pete Byron
Event Volunteers

19th ANNUAL A Look Back



Over \$135,000 raised at the 19th Annual

The RVCC Foundation raised over \$135,000 at the 19th Annual RVCC Foundation Golf Classic, held June 8, 2023 at the **Stanton Ridge Golf & Country Club** in Whitehouse Station. The annual tourney is the RVCC Foundation's largest in-person fundraising event of the year—and this year's "Golf Classic" attracted some 60 corporate sponsors, including Title Sponsor, **Dancker**. Net proceeds raised from the golf outing and auctions will support student scholarships, RVCC's education programming, and other institutional priorities.

The 19th Annual was another sellout, and included enthusiastic golfers representing a wide range of local businesses from throughout Hunterdon and Somerset counties. The day's festivities were very much student-focused and featured RVCC student greeters **Andrew Brezina** (Class of '24), **Toni Polvere** (Class of '24), **Sandra Faragalla** (Class of '24), and **Kelly Delaney** (Class of '24); the singing of the National Anthem by RVCC Music major

and recent grad, **Victoria Mango** (Class of '23); a pre-tourney Putting Contest featuring RVCC Men's Golf Team member, **Kenny Hunt** (Class of '24); reception music provided by RVCC Music students **Ian Dalida** (Class of '23), **Felipe Primero Guzman Jr.** (Class of '24), and **Nicolas Gallegos** (Class of '24); a 50/50 raffle; and silent and live auctions.

The Golf Classic also featured inspiring remarks about the RVCC Nursing program from the Class of '23's **Elicia Levandoski** and **Janet Nyambura**, Nursing program grads who were two of 10 recipients of full scholarships from the **Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation** (the most generous scholarship gift in the history of the Nursing program), and **Tracey A. Keegan**, a member of the College's Nursing faculty, a family nurse practitioner, and an RVCC Nursing program grad (Class of 1995), who this year established a new Nursing scholarship at RVCC in memory of her sister.



19th ANNUAL A Look Back



A LOOK BACK 20 years of fundraising through the RVCC Foundation Golf Classic and nearly \$2M raised



POINTS OF PRIDE

Celebrating the Reach of RVCC

Raritan Valley Community College:
An educational powerhouse with a proud history of impact!

90+

...number of pathways to upward social mobility through associate degrees, certificates, academic tracks and career training programs offered at RVCC.

94.8 & 88.9

...for Nursing Class of 2023, graduate licensure pass rate for first-time test takers and percentage of Nursing program graduates obtaining a job, respectively.

991

...number of degrees and certificates awarded to matriculating RVCC students in 2023.

100

...percentage of RVCC Automotive Technology degree students who are employed in the automotive field upon graduation.

#1

...for students whose families earn \$30,000 or less per year (more than one-third of all college students), RVCC has the BEST ROI among all of New Jersey's Community Colleges, is in the top 5% of all community colleges nationally, and in the top 16% OF ALL higher ed institutions.

Columbia, Penn, Yale

...as well as Johns Hopkins University, Georgetown University, Smith College, University of Michigan, Berklee College of Music, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and the Cornell University are among the schools to which RVCC Honors College students have matriculated since the Honors College's 2011 opening.

1st

...RVCC became the first carbon-neutral community college in the country in 2017 and the first community college in the country to sign an environmental stewardship agreement with the EPA.

9,275

2022-23 total full and part-time student enrollment.

18

...average class size at RVCC.

\$2,275,000

...total amount in scholarships awarded by the RVCC Foundation to students since 2018.

13

... number of RVCC student athletes earning post-season honors (in addition to the "Coach of the Year" honors for two RVCC Athletics coaches).

22,000

...increase in square footage of RVCC's Workforce Training Center—with the \$8.8 million expansion commencing in summer 2023. Once completed, nearly 66,000 square feet—a 50% increase—will be dedicated to a variety of career training certificate and degree programs.

\$3,020,100

...total positive economic impact to the regional economy delivered through RVCC's operations, employees, and students in the 2019-20 academic year.

100

...percentage of RVCC Automotive Technology degree students who are employed in the automotive field upon graduation.

14.5%

...average annual rate of return for their investment in RVCC that students will realize considering the stream of higher future earnings that will continue to grow throughout their careers.

\$154,355

...RVCC Giving Day 2024 fundraising total.

440,000

...scholarship dollars awarded to students in 2023-24 academic year.

\$3,020,100

...total positive economic impact to the regional economy delivered through RVCC's operations, employees, and students in the 2019-20 academic year.

17%

...share of RVCC's campus energy/electrical supply coming from the College's various solar arrays.

#1

...RVCC ranking among all US community colleges for its sustainability efforts (earning GOLD rating from Association of Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education).

1,000,000

...annual dollar value of cumulative community service hours donated by RVCC students to 250 community partners, schools, and non-profit organizations.

\$252.9M

...in added income to the regional economy delivered in FY 2019-20 by the total RVCC alumni population through collective earnings and increased productivity of the businesses that employ them.

#1

...RVCC's ranking among all NJ Community Colleges, by Intelligent.com.

92

...Percent of 2022-23 graduates who would recommend RVCC to prospective students.

8,214

...recorded visits to the Resource Center & Food Pantry by students, staff and faculty since August of 2023.

\$851,346

...funds raised for RVCC in FY 2022, thanks to the generosity of our donor community.

#RVCCProud

NEWS YOU CAN USE



RVCC FEATURED IN INTERNATIONAL SUSTAINABLE CAMPUS INDEX

Raritan Valley Community College is featured in the 2023 Sustainable Campus Index (SCI), an international publication from the **Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)**. The Sustainable Campus Index recognizes top-performing sustainable colleges and universities overall and in 17 impact areas, evaluated through the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System (STARS).

RVCC is ranked as #1 overall for two-year colleges in the US for its sustainability efforts and has a STARS Gold rating by AASHE.

RVCC ranks extremely high nationally among community colleges in a number of areas, including the #1 school in the country, with a perfect score, for sustainability research (for its Center for Environmental Studies); #1 for academics (for research and learning outcomes); tied for #1 for water use and rainwater management, with perfect scores for both (for River Friendly commitments); #3 two-year institution, with a 97.25% score, for sustainability learning outcomes; #4 for energy; and #4 school for air and climate, due to the College's energy efficiency initiatives and purchasing of carbon offsets and renewable energy credits.

Sustainability is an important part of the campus fabric at RVCC. The College is River Friendly, as well as Bee Campus USA and Monarch Watch certified. RVCC has three solar installations, a new greenhouse, publicly available electric car charging stations, a green roof and a green wall, numerous pollinator gardens, a rain garden, three rainwater harvesting systems, and three buildings built to LEED standards. The College's Strategic Plan formalizes its commitment to sustainability.

RVCC, L'ORÉAL CELEBRATE SUCCESS OF INDUSTRIAL MAINTENANCE PILOT TRAINING PROGRAM

Faced with the impending retirements of essential maintenance technicians and the need to upskill new mechanics and attract new talent, **L'Oréal** reached out to Raritan Valley Community College's Advanced Manufacturing program in spring 2021 for help.

The results of that initial request were marked on August 30, when representatives from L'Oréal and RVCC celebrated the successful training of workers in L'Oréal's Industrial Maintenance Pilot Training Program. The event focused on six L'Oréal mechanics who, as a result of the RVCC partnership, are now



skilled as pre-apprentices. The workers are based at L'Oréal operating companies in Piscataway and Franklin.

The Industrial Maintenance Pilot Training Program was developed by a team of educators and industry experts, who spent several months determining program objectives and establishing curriculum based on industry needs, ensuring that the curriculum was up-to-date with industry standards and technologies. The program required careful coordination between RVCC and L'Oréal Operations in Piscataway and Franklin. The team determined what specific skills and knowledge areas were needed for industrial maintenance in each L'Oréal facility.

The planning team then determined the resources required for the program, including funding, facilities, equipment, and instructional materials. With assistance from the Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board, a government grant was secured to cover tuition costs for the students.

As a result, the six workers successfully completed 250 contact hours of training at RVCC's Workforce Training Center. L'Oréal provided assistance with instructional materials, equipment, and training.

NEW CENTERS OF WORKFORCE INNOVATION IN STATEWIDE PATHWAYS INITIATIVE

The **New Jersey Council of County Colleges** announced the creation of new Centers of Workforce Innovation as part of "Year Two" of the New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities Initiative. The initiative, led by New Jersey's community colleges and the **New Jersey Business and Industry Association**, is a

collaborative effort to align education and training to address the rapidly changing needs of employers to create a highly skilled workforce.

The announcement of the Centers was made at RVCC in October during the kickoff of its Center of Workforce Innovation for Aseptic Processing and Biomanufacturing, in partnership with Middlesex College and Mercer County Community College. The new Centers of Workforce Innovation in "Year Two" are: Health Services: Patient Care; Infrastructure & Energy: Offshore Wind, Electric Vehicles, Construction; Technology and Innovation: Data & Computer Science; and Manufacturing & Supply Chain Management: Manufacturing & Supply Chain Logistics, Aseptic Processing & Biomanufacturing.

Some of the milestones of "Year-One" of the Pathways Initiative include:

- The creation of 10 Centers of Workforce Innovation in four sectors: Health Services, Technology and Innovation, Infrastructure and Energy, and Manufacturing and Supply Chain Management, with NJ's community colleges forming 22 education and training pathways;
- The creation of sustainable partnerships between industry and education, giving employees the skills and training needed by NJ



NEWS YOU CAN USE

- businesses. The result is 1,200+ industry and education partners;
- 20 high schools, 17 community colleges, 9 four-year colleges and universities, 8 labor unions, and 4 professional and community organizations were active participants within the Centers of Workforce Innovation; and
- 43 statewide Industry Collaborative meetings and a statewide Pathways Summit

OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES HELPS REDUCE TEXTBOOK COST FOR MANY RVCC STUDENTS

RVCC continues to help students reduce their educational costs by providing free instructional materials in a growing number of classes. Since 2018, the use of free Open Educational Resources (OER) has saved RVCC students \$3,635,349.59 in textbook costs.

Approximately 80 RVCC faculty members use free online resources in their courses instead of expensive textbooks. These resources can be downloaded, edited, and shared. In addition to the cost savings, students benefit by using course materials that can easily be customized by their professors. The initiative has received financial support through the RVCC Foundation.

When students register for classes they can see if a course has a zero-textbook cost or a low-textbook cost of less than \$45. They can also search for “no cost” and “low-cost” courses as they are building their schedule.

A fully updated Business Law OER textbook, funded by the RVCC Foundation, was set to be used beginning in the Spring 2024 Semester. Professor **Melanie Morris** has written substantial updates to the course’s 12-year-old OER textbook and added new assignments that encourage critical

thinking and application of concepts. The new OER textbook will be shared publicly for adoption by other institutions.

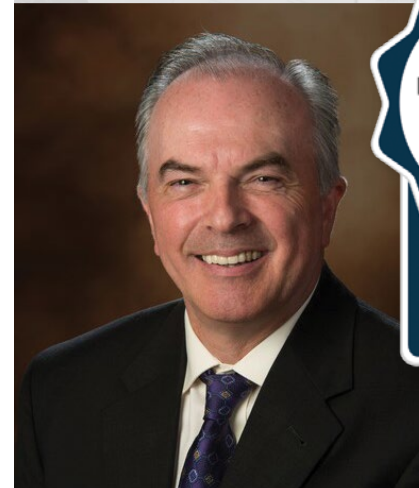
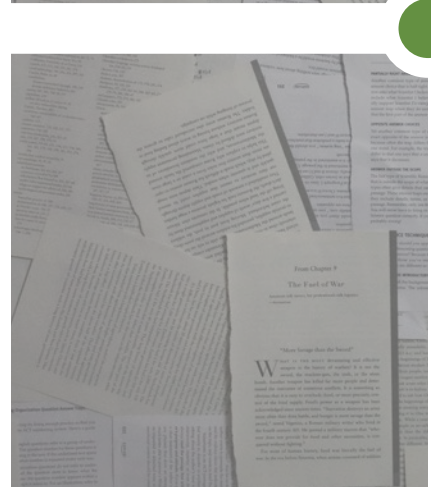
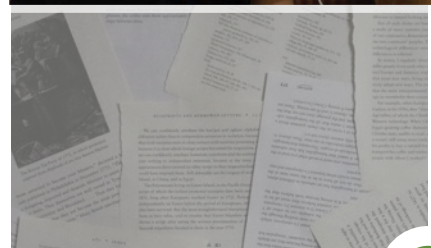
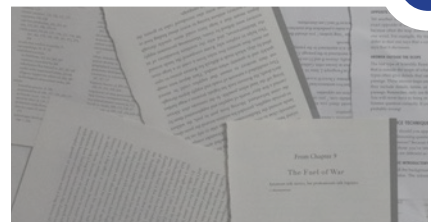
RVCC continues to work toward offering degree pathways with minimal textbook costs. In the College’s Liberal Arts degree, for example, 51 of 60 credits in the program can now be taken as zero-cost courses, which is 85 percent of the program.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATION HONORS RVCC PRESIDENT, NAMES HIM TO COUNCIL

RVCC President **Michael J. McDonough** has been recognized nationally as the “Standout President” by the 2023 **ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge**. He is one of two recipients in the country honored as a Standout President or Chancellor of a college or university.

Dr. McDonough also has been named to the Presidents’ Council of the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge in 2024. In that role, Dr. McDonough joins a group of 13 college and university presidents across the country charged with supporting senior leaders in higher education to foster nonpartisan democratic engagement on their campuses.

The ALL IN Awards highlight exemplary leadership in helping advance undergraduate student democratic engagement, including nonpartisan civic learning,



political engagement, and voter participation, while advancing the work of ALL IN on campus. The awards recognized the schools’ efforts for the 2022 elections.

As part of RVCC’s voter engagement work, and with President McDonough’s leadership and support, the College’s first-ever poll worker project was developed during the November 2022 general election. The project, which focused on giving students academic credit while also being paid as poll workers, was enabled through the College’s nationally recognized Service Learning Program. More than 50 RVCC students served as poll workers in Somerset and Hunterdon counties as part of this initial offering.

“I am honored to serve on the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge Presidents’ Council. It’s important to encourage students to be active members of the electoral process. At RVCC, we are dedicated to educating our students not only in the classroom, but also preparing them for a lifetime of good citizenship as engaged members in their communities,” said Dr. McDonough.

Additionally, the poll worker project captured the attention of the **Don and Penny Pray**, whose gift of support through the RVCC Foundation covered the participating students’ training that is required before becoming a poll worker.

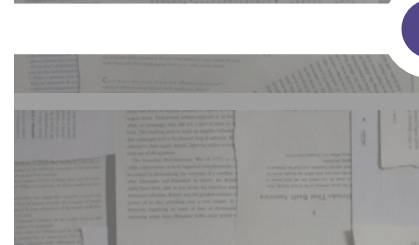
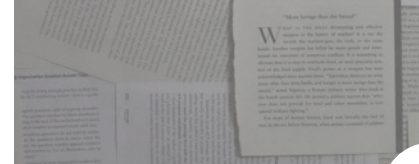
RVCC GRADUATE SELECTED AS ONE OF 2023’S TOP 10 CNN HEROES

RVCC graduate **Osei Boateng** of Somerset was selected as one of 2023’s top 10 CNN Heroes for his international humanitarian service. Boateng, a native of Ghana, is the founder and Chief Executive Officer of **OKB Hope Foundation**.

OKB Hope Foundation is a non-profit organization committed to bringing healthcare to the doorsteps of rural and underserved communities in Ghana using a mobile medical unit. The unit is equipped with medical equipment and supplies, medications, two traveling doctors, a nurse, and a lab technician. Since the organization’s inception, it has provided direct medical care to over 4,000 individuals across 52 rural communities. Additionally, through its mental health initiative, the organization has provided mental health support and resources to over 3,000 high school students across six high schools in Ghana.

Boateng is a healthcare professional with more than five years of experience in hospital administration and operations. He has worked at New York Presbyterian Hospital and for the Henry Ford Health System.

He graduated from RVCC in 2016 with an Associate Degree in Science and Mathematics – Pre-Medical Professional. He then transferred to Cornell University, where he received a Bachelor of Science in Human Biology and Society, with minors in Business and Gerontology, and a Master’s Degree in Healthcare Administration. Boateng is currently working on a Master of Business Creation from The University of Utah.



SERVICE LEARNING PROGRAM SELECTED FOR NEWMAN CIVIC FELLOWSHIP CAMPUS INNOVATION COHORT

RVCC is one of six teams comprising seven U.S. colleges and universities across the country—and the only community college—to be selected by **Compact Campus** to participate in the first Newman Civic Fellowship Innovation Cohort.

The program, which aims to help enhance the organization’s Newman Civic Fellowship program and promote student civic development, is supported through a partnership with **Lumina Foundation**. Campus Compact is a national coalition of colleges

and universities dedicated to pursuing the public purposes of higher education.

RVCC will join in implementing the program with six other institutions across the country, including Colorado College, Spelman College, University of North Florida, University of Wisconsin-Green Bay, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and Worcester State University.

The new project is being coordinated through the College’s nationally recognized Service Learning Program, which enables students to use community service as part of their academic coursework and to receive credit.

Each college team will lead individual work on its campus, pursuing strategic goals in such areas

as: improving access for historically underrepresented students, developing student professional development opportunities, improving mentoring processes, and generally raising awareness of the Newman Civic Fellowship and the impact of student changemakers in local communities. In addition, all grantees will participate as a member of a nationwide cohort that will collaborate to deepen student civic leadership development across higher education. The RVCC student selected for the Newman Civic Fellowship program will be provided with additional funding from the new **Pray Family Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement** at RVCC.



9TH ANNUAL NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK CELEBRATED

RVCC joined the U.S. Department of Labor in celebrating the 9th Annual National Apprenticeship Week in November. This year the theme for the week was “Skills for Life.”

A Registered Apprenticeship is an industry-driven, high-quality career pathway where employers can develop and prepare their future workforce, and individuals can obtain paid work experience, receive progressive wage increases, classroom instruction, and a transferrable, nationally recognized credential. Registered Apprenticeships are industry-vetted and approved and validated by the U.S. Department of Labor or a State Apprenticeship Agency.

As part of the celebration, RVCC held a special Apprenticeship Day Event for high school students enrolled in the College’s Advanced Manufacturing program. Event participants included enrolled students from Manville and Franklin High Schools, two apprentices from Triad Tool and Triad Tool managers.

The event presentation focused on the Principles of Apprenticeship and



then offered perspectives from each Apprentice. The Triad Tool Apprentices described their daily work activities and answered questions from the high school students. The Apprentices reinforced the importance of a strong work ethic, hands-on learning, and the concept of continuous learning.

Representatives from the featured employer, Triad Tool, spoke about the value Apprentices bring to their organization. This includes producing quality workmanship, reducing turnover, and developing a workforce with industry-valued skills.

The program was interactive and students were able to speak directly to the employer, as well as their Apprentices. Interested students also participated in an informal roundtable discussion with a Triad Tool senior manager, who shared work/life experiences in manufacturing.

STUDENTS IN HONORS COLLEGE PRESENT INDEPENDENT STUDY CAPSTONE PROJECTS

Fourteen students from Raritan Valley Community College’s Honors College presented their independent Capstone Research Course projects during the December and May symposiums at the College. The students who presented were **Grace Pfitzner, Sarah Haas, Rebecca Farmer, Dylan Abry, Akasha Raddalgoda, Ezizhan Shirbayev, Benton Hellwig, Muhammed Catovic,**

Karla Guevara Duarte, Ahmad Insanally, Jayden Manasse, Anneliese Johnson, Damian Juth, and Naryssa Harris. As always, the Honors Capstone presentations featured a range of research interests and topics, from “The Impact of Fostering a Rescue Dog and the Effect It Has on Long-Term Home Placement Success Rates” to “The Linguistic Divide Between First Responders and Spanish-Speaking People in Somerset County” to “American Sports: The Culture Surrounding High School Sporting Events” to “The Science of Music: A Spectrum of Emotion and Memory” and “Construction and Optimization of a Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) Device”, to name a few.



The Capstone Research Course is designed to guide sophomore Honors College students from all disciplines through the stages of researching and writing a major research paper or project, or developing an artistic pursuit. The students are mentored by faculty members and present their work at the end of the semester.

Launched in 2011, RVCC’s Honors College serves highly qualified high school graduates who are entering college for the first time. Honors College students benefit from being in small classes with similarly academically motivated students. Students in the program are taught by a select group of faculty. The Honors College features a cohort-based program with smaller, seminar-style courses that have an interdisciplinary focus and afford students the opportunity to develop a close working relationship with their professors.

FIRST RECIPIENTS OF “THE ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP” NAMED

Robert “Bobby” Kopac of Edison Township and **Rebecca “Becky” Charles-Estain** of Iselin are the first recipients of “The Achievement Scholarship” at RVCC.

The \$500 scholarship is the first ever awarded to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities enrolled in **The Achievement Center (TAC) at RVCC**. A unique collaboration between RVCC and The Arc of Somerset County, The Achievement Center provides a certificate-based, post-secondary program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. The

program enables students to continue academic study, experience college life, and gain important skills for entering the workforce.

“The Achievement Scholarship” was created and crowd-funded with donations from the College community raised at last December’s holiday “solstice” party, and then matched by the RVCC Foundation and RVCC President **Michael McDonough**. The scholarship recipients are chosen by the performance of each student, both inside and outside the classroom.

Robert Kopac, a graduate of Edison High School, was admitted to The Achievement Center in fall 2019 and completed the program in June 2022. He is one of the first students to graduate from the Center in three years. Bobby also has learned to travel independently using the bus and other forms of transportation. He is a member of TAC Alumni Committee and is the Committee’s Secretary. This semester, he took his first RVCC class, Introduction to Weight Training.

Rebecca Charles-Estain, a graduate of the RISE Program at Woodbridge High School, was admitted to The Achievement Center in fall 2020 and completed the program in June 2023. She is also a member of TAC Alumni Committee and has learned to travel independently using Uber/Lyft. This semester, she took her first RVCC class, Interpersonal Communication, and she plans to take two RVCC classes in the Spring 2024 Semester.

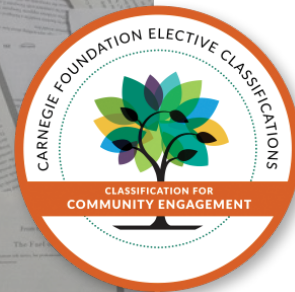
The Achievement Center originated approximately seven years ago, starting with two students and two classes. Today, TAC has 130 students and offers 40 classes. Since the program’s inception, 25 students have graduated from the Center and this June, 12 students—the largest graduating class—are expected to complete their studies. In addition, seven TAC students have gone on to graduate with degrees or certifications from RVCC.

In 2022, RVCC received a \$100,000 Signature Grant—The Achievement Center’s largest gift—from The Provident Bank Foundation to expand STEM-related curriculum at the Center.



RVCC RECOGNIZED BY CARNEGIE FOUNDATION FOR SERVICE LEARNING, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

The Pray Family Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement at Raritan Valley Community College has earned national recognition from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.



RVCC is one of 40 U.S. colleges and universities to receive the 2024 Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, an elective designation that indicates institutional commitment to community engagement. The announcement was made by the American Council on Education (ACE) and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

This important classification is awarded following a process of self-study by each institution, which is then assessed by a national review committee. RVCC is one of only three community colleges, and the only college in New Jersey, receiving this classification in 2024.

RVCC first received the Community Engagement Classification in 2008 and was reclassified in 2015. In order to receive the 2024 classification, the College had to demonstrate that its service learning and community engagement initiatives had grown and improved since the last classification.

RVCC students now serve more than 250 organizations in Somerset and Hunterdon Counties. Participation in service learning is tied to academic coursework and organized service through various community engagement activities.



The Carnegie Foundation’s classification follows a recent exceptional financial donation from Don and Penny Pray through the RVCC Foundation that will benefit students in their efforts to give back to the local community. The couple’s five-year commitment of \$150,000 is being used to create greater recognition and exposure for the achievements and impact of students participating in programs offered through The Pray Family Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement.

OPHTHALMIC SCIENCE STUDENT NAMED TRANSITIONS® STUDENT AMBASSADOR

Raritan Valley Community College Ophthalmic Science student **Aimee Domnizky** of Howell has been named a 2024 Transitions® Student Ambassador.



During the one-year role, Transitions® Student Ambassadors learn about new technologies being developed by the contact lens company; participate in professional development at the Transitions® Academy in Orlando, FL; and network with students, opticians and optometrists, Transitions® teams, and other industry professionals.

Domnizky, a first-year student at RVCC, is pursuing an Ophthalmic Science (Opticianry), Associate of Applied Science Degree. She was one of only two New Jersey students who recently participated in the Transitions® Academy in Orlando. The three-day event, held February 11-13, was attended by 10 optometry and optician students from the United States and Canada. In addition to her studies at RVCC, Domnizky has worked at a private optometry practice in Howell for close to 15 years.

NEWS YOU CAN USE

ENVIRONMENTAL CLUB MEMBERS LEAD CARBON REMOVALS PURCHASE AT RVCC

RVCC students spearheaded the efforts for the College's first carbon removals purchase. Carbon removal refers to the process of eliminating carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and storing it, which is done to counteract greenhouse gas emissions. Like carbon offsets, carbon removals are sold by the ton of carbon dioxide removed.

The carbon removals purchase covers just over 1% of RVCC's emissions from on-campus fossil fuel use in fiscal year 2023. Combining it with the College's past purchase of carbon credits for the remaining 99%, along with renewable energy credits for 100% of purchased electricity, makes the College slightly carbon negative for energy use for the first time.

RVCC is the first institution to work with Second Nature, a national nonprofit working to accelerate climate action in higher education, to buy vetted carbon removals. The College used Second Nature's online dashboard, which was created in partnership with Patch. Students in the College's Environmental Club utilized the dashboard to research carbon removal options. The club members collectively decided to buy a mix of highly durable removals from CO₂-capturing concrete, as well as nature-based removals from US pastureland

regenerative agriculture and reforestation of a severely burned Montana forest.

Second Nature has partnered with Patch to help colleges and universities learn about high-quality offsets and removals projects on an accessible, transparent platform.

The College's Environmental Sustainability Committee sponsored the project with funds from a book donation bin that were matched by the Facilities department. The RVCC Foundation also provided College Community Fund Grant support, which was matched by a generous donor.

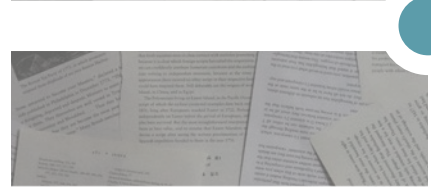
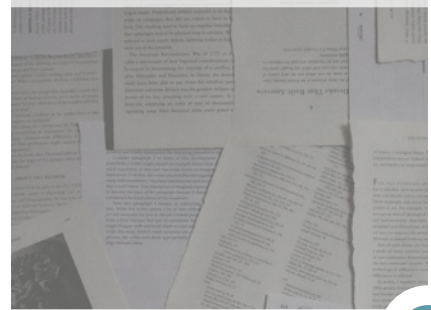
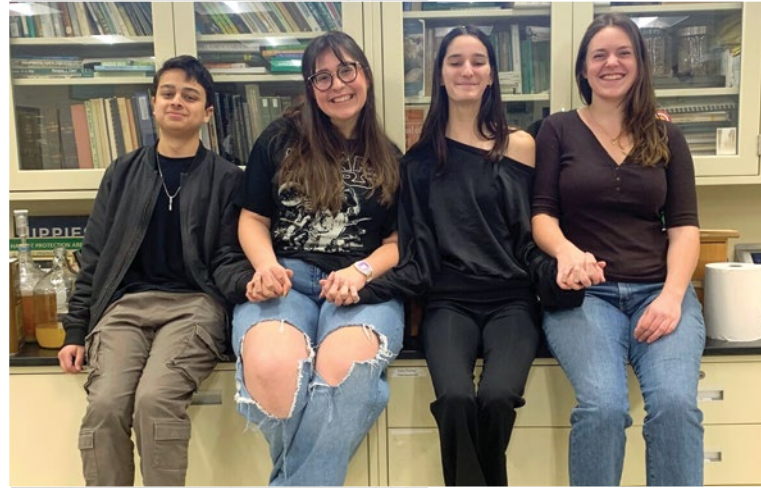
STUDENTS PARTICIPATE IN SUPPLY CHAIN SCHOLARSHIP CONTEST

Students in RVCC's Department of Business & Public Service Supply Chain Management program participated in a Scholarship Contest this year that offered them the opportunity to learn firsthand what it's like to work in the supply chain industry.

ABCO Systems, a material handling integrator company, created the contest with **Capacity LLC**, a third-party logistics company. The initiative, supported by the **Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals**, was designed to empower the next generation of supply chain professionals by providing students with real-world project experience and the opportunity to win a scholarship.

The contest, which was launched last May, concluded with an awards ceremony in January. The \$2,000 scholarship was awarded to **Maira Mendonca** of Pittstown for the "Best Material Handling Solution." A native of Brazil, Mendonca is a student in the College's Associate of Applied Science, Business Management – Supply Chain Option program.

Open to RVCC students interested in material handling, logistics, and



supply chain management, the Scholarship Contest invited participants to improve efficiency in business-to-business warehouse operations for one of Capacity LLC's NJ facilities. The project offered students a hands-on opportunity to apply theoretical concepts to real-life industry problems, proposing practical solutions for operational optimization.

The students visited Capacity LLC's facility, where they witnessed material handling, automation, and storage processes; interacted with industry professionals; and proposed innovative solutions using cutting-edge technologies.

The students who participated in the Scholarship Contest were awarded service learning credit through The Pray Family Center for Service Learning and Community Engagement at RVCC.

RVCC HOSTS SITE FOR 2024 GLOBAL GAME JAM

RVCC hosted a site for the 2024 Global Game Jam, held January 22-28. The global event drew over 35,000 participants worldwide from more than 800 virtual and in-person sites in over 100 countries. This year also marked the first time that games were created on all seven continents, thanks to the efforts of a research team stationed in Antarctica.

Twenty jammers returned to the RVCC West building for the first on-site event since 2019. The group included veteran game developers, RVCC alumni, and current game development and game art students.

In total, the RVCC jammers built six games using the event's theme, "Make Me Laugh." The games feature a stealthy heist of rubber chickens; medieval jesters vying for the king's favor; and a stand-up comic keeping a crowd in stitches, when the real purpose is funding the comic's vacation.

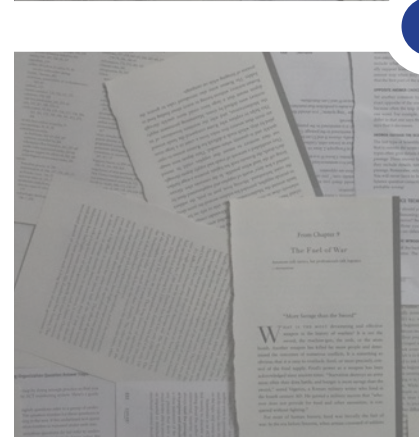
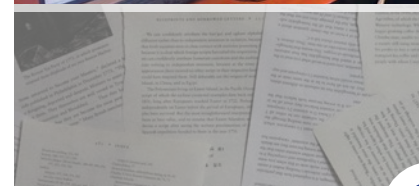
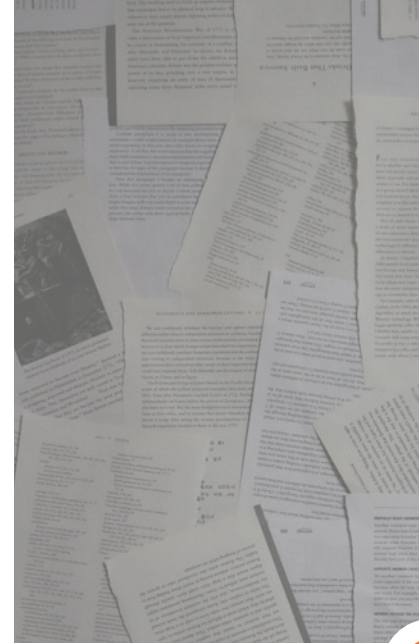
The RVCC game lab has been upgraded to support the latest production pipelines in generating real-time computer graphics for a variety of technologies. Students in the College's Game Art and Game Development programs work with Unity

and the Unreal engine on NVIDIA RTX GPUs in Alienware desktop computers featuring eight core processors. Projects can be deployed to desktop, console, mobile devices, or a number of VR/AR headsets, including the Meta Quest 2, and Microsoft HoloLens 2.

RVCC RECEIVES NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR NONPARTISAN CIVIC ACTION PLAN

RVCC is being recognized nationally for its civic engagement efforts as a recipient of the 2024 Highly Established Action Plan Seal. The College is being honored for its work—through **The Pray Family Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement** at RVCC—for the development of a campus Civic Action Plan for the 2024 election cycle.

RVCC is one of 93 campuses that has earned this recognition for the current election cycle by the national organization, ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge. The seal recognizes higher education institutions with strong action plans to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement by promoting civic learning, political engagement, and college student voter participation.



NEWS YOU CAN USE



RVCC is the only college in New Jersey and one of only six community colleges nationally receiving the prestigious award.

RVCC's Action Plan focused on strategies that engage students, faculty, administrators, community nonprofit partners, and local election officials in intentional ways to increase nonpartisan democratic engagement and college student voting. Through curricular and co-curricular activities inside and outside the classroom, the plan encourages and supports students to be voters by offering voter registration campaigns, training and serving as poll workers, presenting at workshops, sharing election information, and social media messaging.

ALL IN provides a confidential score and feedback that help campuses celebrate and strengthen their action plans. The Highly Established Action Plan Seal recognizes campuses that score at least 31.5 out of 36 possible points on the Strengthening American Democracy rubric.



RVCC TO RECEIVE SAPLING FROM ORIGINAL TREE MENTIONED IN ANNE FRANK'S DIARY

RVCC is one of six new recipients that will receive saplings grown from the horse chestnut tree that towered behind Anne Frank's Secret Annex in Amsterdam. The announcement was made recently by **Anne Frank Center USA**.

In addition to RVCC, the other new recipients of tree saplings include: Anne Frank LA, Los Angeles, CA; College of Saint Mary, Omaha, Nebraska; Community Day School, Pittsburgh, PA; Gratz College, Melrose Park, PA; and Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center, White Plains, NY.

Anne Frank Center USA will plant saplings at key locations for each recipient in the spring of 2024. The planting at RVCC, which is being supported through the College's Institute of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, is scheduled for June.

RVCC first applied to participate in the sampling project in May 2020, inspired by the memory of Margit Feldman, a survivor of the Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps and a co-founder of the Institute of Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Remarkably, Feldman was born on the same date as Anne Frank: June 12, 1929. Feldman passed away in April 2020, and both she and Anne were an inspiration to many.

The Sapling Project began in 2009 with the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam's efforts to preserve the original chestnut tree by gathering and germinating chestnuts and donating the saplings to organizations dedicated to Anne Frank's memory. Over the last 10 years, Anne Frank Center USA has awarded saplings to sites across the United States, including the U.S. Capitol, the United Nations Headquarters, and others.



NEWS YOU CAN USE EXTRA

THE ARTS AT RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

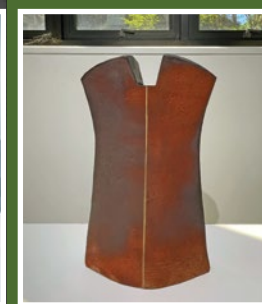
The arts are thriving on the campus of Raritan Valley Community College. Music, theatre arts, dance, graphic and interactive design, and visual arts are among the degree programs offered through the College's Arts & Design Department.

And the **RVCC Art Gallery** provides a perfect venue for showcasing work—of students, faculty, and guest artists. Among the new exhibits in the Gallery this year were the *2023 Art Faculty Exhibition* (fall, 2023), which featured the work of RVCC's visual art and design faculty artists, across various disciplines including: drawing, video, painting, ceramics, printmaking, interior design, photography and mixed media.

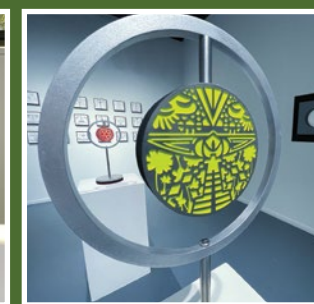
TODD LAMBRIX
(FROM "ORDINARY AWE")
"Always the Victim"
porcelain, anthracite coal
and hair scrunchies



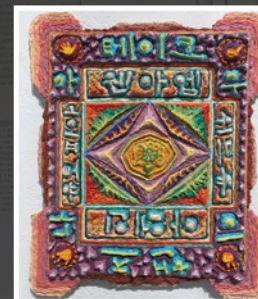
JOHN REINKING
(FROM "FACULTY EXHIBITION")
"Tunic Vessel"
woodfired stoneware



DARREN McMANUS
(FROM "ORDINARY AWE")
"Scrying for Meaning #10"
laser cut and fabricated aluminum,
wood, mirror, vinyl and paint



TODD LAMBRIX
(FROM "ORDINARY AWE")
"Porcus I" edition of 20
silicone, glass,
and wood



JI YONG KIM
(FROM "FACULTY EXHIBITION")
"Take My Hands Now
(BTS-Euphoria)"
oil on canvas



SARAH ROCHE
(FROM "FACULTY EXHIBITION")
"Icarus"
oil, acrylic, and charcoal
on canvas



ANA ROLIM
"Unicap Icam Pavilion"
Architecture print
(documentation of project)



DOT PAOLO
"Food Fair"
Photo of dolls
archival digital print



DARREN MCMANUS, Director of the RVCC Art Gallery.

Early in the spring semester, the Gallery hosted a two-person exhibition—"Ordinary Awe"—featuring the work of RVCC Arts & Design faculty members **Todd Lambrix** and **Darren McManus**, and represented new, experimental paths for both artists. Despite the title, this exhibit was no "ordinary" awe.

It's also worth noting that the RVCC Art Gallery is a unique space, offering a quiet respite and a contemporary vibe—a perfect place for showcasing the vibrant creative talents of our faculty and students.

Special shoutout to Associate Professor Darren McManus, for his leadership as co-chair of the Arts & Design Department and for bringing the RVCC Art Gallery to life as its director.

NEWS YOU CAN USE EXTRA

PRIVATE. PUBLIC. INDUSTRY. HIGHER EDUCATION. A COMPANY AND A COLLEGE.

A collaboration and a celebration. Most importantly: a partnership establishing a new academic track and pathway for student success—with grads “job ready” to serve the local economy and beyond.

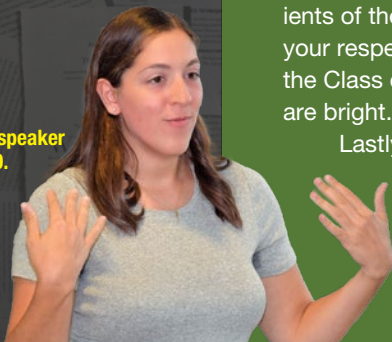
At a special ceremony at the College last November, both congratulations and deep gratitude were extended to the Labcorp team, especially **Bill Haas, Mary Williamson, Elise Wagner, Matt Christianson, and Jesse Greenberg**, for their collaboration, partnership, and generous support behind the launch of the new Medical Laboratory Technology degree program at RVCC.

Huge thanks to RVCC’s **Sarah Imbriglio** and **Siddra Dar** for bringing the new Associate of Applied Science in Medical Laboratory Technology program to life.

And to **Laura Bacino, Essa Conteh, and Qumying Zhao**—inaugural recipients of the *Labcorp Medical Laboratory Technology Scholarship* at RVCC—your respective journeys have been nothing short of amazing. Now, as part of the Class of 2024 and soon to be equipped with a new AAS degree, your futures are bright.

Lastly, very special thanks to our honored guests who attended the celebration: **Senator Andrew Zwicker**, NJ Council of County Colleges President **Aaron Fichtner**, Somerset County Commissioners **Melonie Marano** and **Doug Singleterry**, RVCC Trustee **James Von Schilling**, Somerset County Business Partnership President **Chris Edwards**, and the families of our student scholarship recipients.

RVCC student speaker
LAURA BACINO.



SENATOR ZWICKER, PRESIDENT MCDONOUGH,
TRUSTEE VON SHILLING, COMMISSIONER MARANO.



SARAH IMBRIGLIO, BILL HAAS, MARY WILLIAMSON,
ELISE WAGNER, SIDDRA DAR.



QUMYING ZHAO, RVCC'S MIKE MARION,
and ESSA CONTEH.



New Labcorp branding at the new MLT Lab at RVCC.

NEWS YOU CAN USE EXTRA

THE GAMERS, ONE AND ALL.

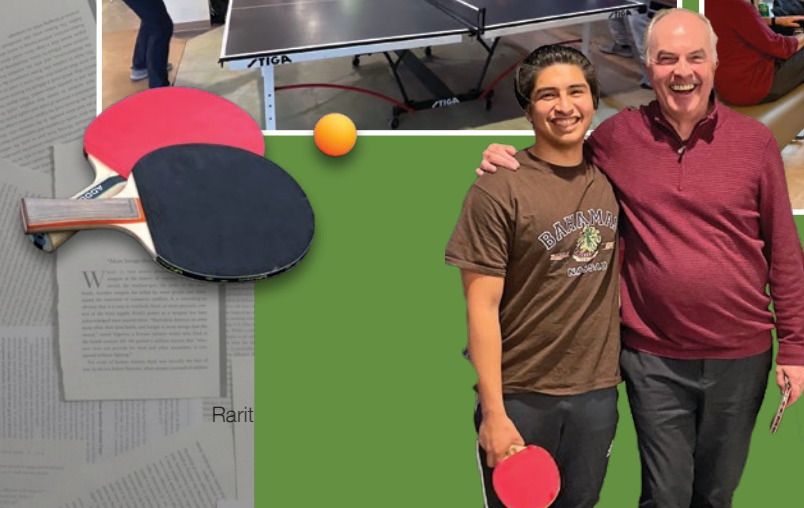
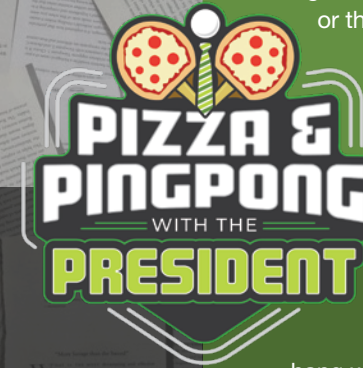
Safe to say that this year’s “Ping Pong and Pizza with the President” series at Raritan Valley Community College was a ‘smashing’ success.

Said **Ryan Brito**, an accomplished ping ponger and 2nd-year student majoring in Business: “This really is awesome!” Ryan wasn’t referring to the pizza, or the ping pong. He was referring to the “Pizza and Ping Pong with THE PRESIDENT.” As experiences go in the journey of a young student—the first in his family to attend college—connecting with the President, across the table and shoulder-to-shoulder, was just exceptional.

Thanks to Ryan and the other Raritan Valley Community College students who participated, thanks to the RVCC Office of Student Life (and Director **Fran Boshell**) and the RVCC **Student Government Association**.

Of course, special thanks are due to President **Michael McDonough**: for your accessibility, your competitive spirit, your “player” status, and for just being present—including at the post-match hang with students (some ping-pongers, some not). And of course, thanks for bringing your “A” game.

[#bestofnewjersey](#) [#community](#) [#leadership](#) [#rvccproud](#)



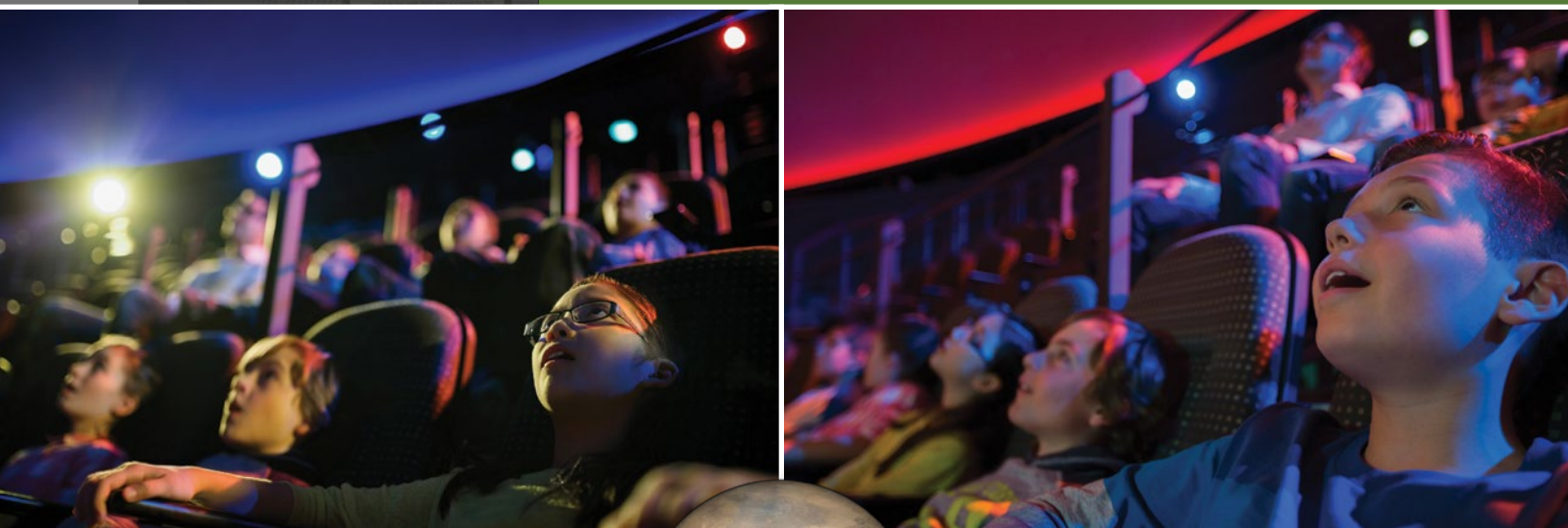
STARS ARE RISING:
A MULTI-YEAR FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN IN SUPPORT OF THE PLANETARIUM AT RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

A gem on the RVCC campus but in need of a major upgrade, the Planetarium's 20,000+ annual visitors—most whom come from local schools and summer camps—stand to benefit from the STARS ARE RISING effort.

For many of these young guests, the Planetarium is their first real immersion into the magic of science. Our goal is to equip the facility with the latest technology for sound and projection, add new show content, and enhance the lobby area so that we can continue to inspire these future “space explorers” and scientists—as well as all other visitors. In fact, the STARS ARE RISING campaign is seeking to provide the funds necessary to transform the guest experience.

And we hope you'll help.

We invite you to find out more or be a star now and make a gift of support at www.raritanval.edu/starsarising



TENACIOUS and Trailblazing

“MY GOAL IS TO ACCOMPLISH MY PARENTS' AMERICAN DREAM, SO THAT MY KIDS CAN WITNESS HOW HARD WORK AND DEDICATION WILL ALWAYS PAY OFF.”
Ximena Payer

“Equity for All” was the theme for last October’s Annual Awards Dinner of the **American Association of University Women (AAUW)** Somerset Hills Branch.

The Branch’s credo says it all: “We are tenacious and trailblazing—advocating for women and girls since 1881 and into the future!” That “advocating” includes scholarship support, as it has since 1998, for “mature women who are returning to school to pursue a career or obtain a degree.”

Raritan Valley Community College has been a proud beneficiary of scholarship support from the AAUW’s Somerset Hills Branch for many of those years—and another generous contribution was presented at this year’s dinner.

The 2023-24 academic year scholarship recipients, **Ximena Payer** and **Maria Salazar-Cortes**, could not embody the Branch’s mission more perfectly.

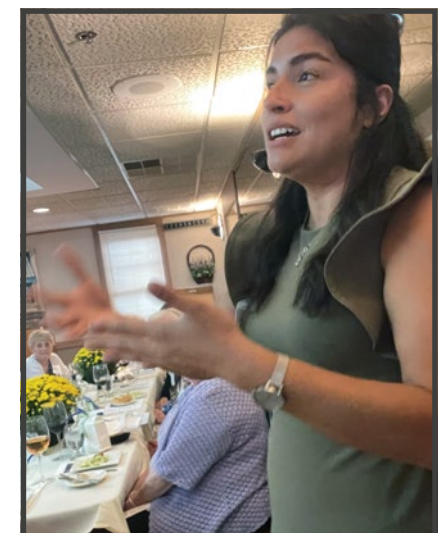
Ximena was born in Peru and is a single mother of two, pursuing a Business Administration degree at RVCC and will graduate next May. Maria, a Paralegal Studies major, was born in Costa Rica and aspires to become a lawyer. She, too, is a single parent and part of RVCC’s Class of 2024. Both of these young women are holding down fulltime jobs, while raising their children and getting ever closer to attaining their degrees.

The respective journeys of Ximena and Maria are nothing short of amazing, having persevered through a myriad of life’s challenges. But there’s



a beautiful silver lining. Says Maria, “I am happy that my daughter has been a witness to all my struggles and my success so that she may be encouraged herself to pursue her dreams without any tantalizing fear.” Adds Ximena, “My goal is to accomplish my parents’ American Dream, so that my kids can witness how hard work and dedication will always pay off.”

Huge credit to the AAUW Somerset Hills Branch, its co-presidents **Rebecca Hughes** and **Bonnie Gould**, its funds chair, **Arlene Inglis**, and board member **Teri Passarello**, for their leadership and scholarship support of RVCC students. The tenacious and trailblazing impact their efforts was clearly on display in Ximena and Maria.





THE JOURNEYS

CELEBRATING THE JOURNEYS OF A FEW OF OUR STUDENTS AND ALUMNI FOR WHOM OUR FACULTY, STAFF, AND DONORS PLAYED A SUPPORTING ROLE AND CAN FEEL RVCC PROUD.

The Ngambwira Family



The Fab Five



Jennifer Grippo-Kady



Osei Boateng

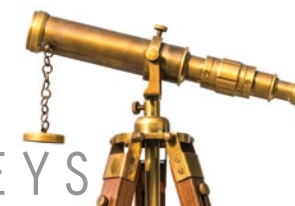


Laura Turlybekova



Joel Reyes-Guzman

LAURA Turlybekova



THE JOURNEYS



Kazakhstan. Also, I attained a Bachelor's degree in Tourism and Hospitality from Turan University there.

DESCRIBE A KEY CHALLENGE YOU'VE FACED AND OVERCOME IN YOUR LIFE'S JOURNEY.

Over my life, I have faced many different challenges and these three are the biggest ones.

One of the biggest challenges in my life was the time when I came to the US at the age of nineteen to complete a 12-month hospitality internship at the Hilton Marco Island Hotel in Florida. This was my second visit to the US but I still wasn't able to speak the language freely. Many interns came from different European countries like Switzerland, Germany, and the UK and had great expertise in hospitality making it a very competitive environment to succeed. I was overwhelmed, but I decided to learn from the best of them at work and study English outside of work. After three or four months of hard work and dedication, I felt comfortable and was happy with my progress and results at work.

The second biggest challenge was at the time when I worked as a Brand Executive in the BAT company in Kazakhstan and was transferred as an expat to Caucasus to develop two major brands in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia. I happily accepted the offer assuming that since those countries also used to be a part of the Soviet Union it would be easier for me to adapt. I was ready for a challenge. However, almost instantly and then throughout the entire year of the assignment, I had been experiencing a culture shock and difficulties adapting to a new environment. Since I was responsible for the brand development across three markets it took me a while to learn the differences between each market and finally adapt myself and my work to each of them.

Finally, I think by far the biggest challenge of my life was the time when I was studying at RVCC while pregnant with my first son and then taking care of him at the same time. I joined in January 2017 and I still remember how just a few days after my final exam for the Drawing class I gave birth to my son.

Before that, I had recently immigrated from

WHERE WERE YOU BORN AND RAISED?

I was born and raised in Almaty, Kazakhstan which is located in Central Asia.

WHAT YEARS DID YOU ATTEND RVCC AND WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE FROM RVCC?

In January 2017 I started my journey at RVCC pursuing a Graphic Design degree and graduated in May 2020 (Dean's List).

WHERE ARE YOU CURRENTLY LIVING?

I live in Fanwood, New Jersey with my family.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION OR POSITION?

Currently I am taking care of my little one-year-old son and planning to get back to the workspace next year. Before that, I worked as a Graphic Design Coordinator in the Communication Team of the United Nations Global Compact in NYC.

WHAT IS THE NAME OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AND WHAT ARE THE POST-RVCC INSTITUTIONS YOU ATTENDED AND WHAT ARE THE DEGREES YOU ATTAINED?

I attended a regular post-Soviet Union school in Almaty,



LAURA Turlybekova



Kazakhstan to the US after meeting my husband who was a widower with two daughters, five and six years-old. In Kazakhstan, I had a successful career in brand marketing in the two biggest multinational companies, but when I moved to the US, I suddenly became a mom to these girls and my son. It all happened around the same year I enrolled at RVCC. Being a recent immigrant, full-time student and a mom to three kids including a baby and then a toddler was very hard. I loved most of my art classes and professors and I truly believe that is what kept me going. I used to study and work on my projects at night when all the kids were asleep, get up early in the morning to make lunch for my baby son, drop the girls at school first, and then take my little one with me to the RVCC Children's Campus (childcare) for the time while I attended classes. I am passionate about art whether it is drawing, painting, designing on paper or computer, or dancing—at that time it was very therapeutic for me. Discovering my talents and the creative side of me with the help and guidance of my professors gave me the strength to overcome the challenges and even get on the Dean's list over the years.

DESCRIBE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT JOB OR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE OR SUCCESS.

As a Country Manager of Moët-Hennessy brands in Kazakhstan, I managed Hennessy, Glenmorangie, Moët & Chandon, Veuve Clicquot, Belvedere, and Cloudy Bay brands with a budget of over eur 1.5 million through the two main distributors. I built strong relationships with both companies which helped us deliver great results in sales and create impactful brand presence across the market. I managed the brand strategy and execution of the Moët-Hennessy brands and at the same time, I ran the operational part of the business where I prepared and submitted brand operating plans for all brands, managed and analyzed A&P budget, tracked shipments and invoices with Maisons in France and delivered ad-hoc regional reports, sales and competition analysis.

Also, after graduating from RVCC, I worked very hard on building my network to find my first job in the US. Thanks to that I was able to land and successfully deliver a freelance project with the UN Global Compact. A few months later the Senior Brand Designer reached out and asked if I would like to apply for the graphic design position. I went through three stages of the interview and was offered a job on the Communication team. It was a terrific experience. I worked on the brand and design projects and materials for major events like United Nations

General Assembly, Leaders Summit, Private Sector Forums, Annual Reports, monthly newsletter, etc.

One of the proudest moments during my work was the time when my artwork which was created in collaboration with the Senior Brand Designer was placed on a giant video screen outside the Javits Center in Manhattan. At that time, I was pregnant with my second son and I was very happy that I was still healthy and strong enough to deliver on this project.

DESCRIBE THE ROLE RVCC PLAYED IN YOUR JOURNEY AND HOW IT IMPACTED YOUR TRAJECTORY.

The role of RVCC was crucial not only in my career and in building knowledge and expertise, it helped me shape my personality, discover so many of my talents, and see the sides of me that I thought I never had.

Thanks to some professors I felt seen and recognized and that gave me confidence in pursuing my career in a new field for me. I am very thankful to Professor **Darren McManus** who taught me the foundations of graphic design, typography, and visual communication through a variety of classes and projects that pushed me to think and create original and boldly. Professor **Chris Koep** helped me unleash my talent in drawing on the first day and supported me throughout each class, he was very caring, especially knowing that I was pregnant. I will remember his kindness and talent forever.

Professor **Kathy Schulz** taught us how to paint; I loved her classes for the atmosphere that she created with her kindness, great sense of humor, and ease. One day she brought a hot chili that she cooked for the entire class, we had so much fun!

Finally, Professor **Ji Yong Kim** taught me how to enjoy drawing and painting and use it as an excellent tool for meditation and relaxation. He is very patient with students and finds a way to connect with every student.





OSEI Boateng



THE JOURNEYS



WHAT IS THE NAME OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AND WHAT ARE THE POST-RVCC INSTITUTIONS YOU ATTENDED AND WHAT ARE THE DEGREES YOU ATTAINED?

I attended Kumasi Anglican Senior High School, Ghana. After RVCC, I went on to Cornell University and received a BS, Human Biology Health and Society, with minors in Business and Gerontology; I also attained a Masters in Healthcare Administration from Cornell and a Masters in Business Creation from the University of Utah.

DESCRIBE A KEY CHALLENGE YOU'VE FACED AND OVERCOME IN YOUR LIFE'S JOURNEY.

Establishing my non-profit was no small feat, especially given the limited funding available. Operating the organization amidst financial constraints presented numerous challenges that I had to confront head-on. To overcome this obstacle, I took on multiple jobs concurrently to ensure the organization's financial stability. This period taught me crucial lessons in patience, determination, and self-discipline, which have been pivotal in driving the growth and expansion of my non-profit.

WHERE WERE YOU BORN AND RAISED?

I was born and raised in Kumasi, Ghana.

WHAT YEARS DID YOU ATTEND RVCC AND WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE FROM RVCC?

I attended RVCC from August 2014 – May 2016, and attained an Associate Degree in Pre-medical.

WHERE ARE YOU CURRENTLY LIVING?

I currently live in New Jersey but I split my time between Ghana and New Jersey

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION OR POSITION?

I am CEO of OKB Hope Foundation and Onehealth+.



DESCRIBE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT JOB OR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE OR SUCCESS.

My most significant professional experience centers around my dedication to providing quality and timely healthcare to rural and underserved communities. Through our initiatives, we've had the privilege of offering free healthcare services, including personalized consultations, diagnostic services, and medications, to over 6000 individuals spanning across 55 rural communities. This endeavor represents not only a substantial accomplishment but also a deeply fulfilling opportunity to make a tangible difference in the lives of those who need it most.

ANY PUBLIC AWARDS OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS YOU'D LIKE SHARE?

2023 CNN Hero; 2023 Youth Global Changer; 2024 Griot

Hero; 100 Most Impactful; 2023 Change Makers In Africa (Humanitarian Awards Global); 30 Nonprofit Leaders Who Will Impact the World in 2024.

DESCRIBE THE ROLE RVCC PLAYED IN YOUR JOURNEY AND HOW IT IMPACTED YOUR TRAJECTORY.

RVCC played a pivotal role in my journey, providing invaluable support that paved the way for my academic success. As an immigrant to the US, adjusting to a new culture and educational system presented significant challenges for me. However, RVCC stepped in with open arms, offering me a generous scholarship that eased the financial burden of pursuing my education. This allowed me to focus on my studies without the stress of financial constraints.

Moreover, the guidance and support I received from



key individuals at RVCC were instrumental in shaping my trajectory. **Donyea Collins**, the EOF director, and **Kiswah Khan** provided invaluable career advice and support, helping me navigate the complexities of higher education as an immigrant student. Their unwavering belief in my potential fueled my determination to succeed.

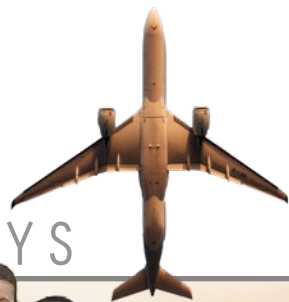
I also found inspiration and support from dedicated professors like **Sarah Imbriglio**, the Dean of STEM

and Health Sciences. Her commitment to ensuring that every student understood the material thoroughly was truly remarkable. Her mentorship and encouragement empowered me to push beyond my limits and strive for excellence.

Overall, the nurturing environment and unwavering support I received from RVCC equipped me with the tools and confidence to pursue my academic dreams. It was through their guidance and assistance that I was able to secure a full-tuition scholarship to study at Cornell University, a testament to the profound impact RVCC had on my journey.



THE Fab Five



THE JOURNEYS



A LONG ROAD FOR THIS "FAB FIVE"

Some 18,477 miles. Imagine traveling that distance right out of the equivalent of high school, to pursue your dreams and follow your passion. In a completely different country, and not necessarily in that country's finest moment. No parents, grandparents, siblings with you—you're flying solo.

Five young women did just that, traveling those combined miles to attend Raritan Valley Community College, as the next step in their respective journeys. **Lu, Judith, Vega, Freya, Julia**—from Spain, Spain, Spain, Germany, and Spain respectively. Clearly, these women are adventurous, strong, driven, and worthy of applause on this **International Women's Day**. It should be no surprise that sports—specifically basketball in the Caitlin Clark era—was foremost in their decisions to come to **Branchburg, New Jersey**, home to **RVCC** and the accomplished **RVCC** Lions.

"I chose to study in the United States because everyone understands how the life of a student-athlete works and how many hours a sport can take away from school," says Lu. "The sports culture in America is amazing and, in my opinion, it's part of what makes it a great country."

"Lu" is **Lucia Noin**, from **Santander, Spain**, a 2nd-year Business major at **RVCC**. She's also a star student-athlete, earning National Junior College Athletic Association (NJCAA) ALL-AMERICAN honors in addition to her FIRST TEAM, All-Region recognition for the **RVCC** Lions, who finished the season at 22-8 overall, 8-2 in NJCAA Region 19 play, and 5-1 in the **Garden State Athletic Conference**. The Lions' season ended with a Semi-Final round loss in the Region XIX Tournament.

Freya Rauschenfels, a 1st-year student from **Hanover, Germany**, agrees. "In Germany, you are not able to play basketball for a school—sports and education are separated." Freya, also a Business major, says, "sports is an important part of my life; I need it, just like I need air or water."

Adds Lu, "Today, thanks to basketball, I am living an experience that has changed my life in all aspects. This sport is very important to me and I could not imagine how my life would look without it."

Judith Vila, from **Barcelona, Spain** and a 1st-year Business major at **RVCC**, agrees with her teammates: "I am the person I am today thanks to basketball. Sports shape you as an athlete and as a person." She has been playing the game since age 4 and has a brother, Marc, who plays Division I soccer at University of Evansville (Indiana).

THE Fab Five



"From a very young age, sports have instilled in me many of my principles and values. I am a disciplined, empathetic, persistent and hardworking person, thanks to the challenges that basketball has given me," adds Judith.

RVCC's "Fab Five", a reference to the 1991 University of Michigan Men's basketball team (considered one of the greatest recruiting classes of all time), share an apartment in Branchburg. "In the beginning, it was pretty hard—all of my roommates speak Spanish and everything was just new for me," says Freya. "The food, the way of life, the public transport system, the language and the people. But I adapted and it's pretty cool." Pretty cool indeed.

What does Freya miss from native Germany? In short, public transportation. "The mobility you have in Germany is so different; we're not so dependent on the car. Instead, we use bikes, busses, subways and trains—and not just in big cities," says Freya.

For **Vega Gil**, a 2nd-year Health Science major who is studying to become a nurse, proximity to New York City was important in her decision to come to **RVCC**. Vega, an All-Region FIRST TEAM selection this year, is from **Pamplona, Spain** and having easy access to so large a cultural center was a difference-maker: "It is vibrant and diverse and so full of energy." Adds **Julia Fontanillo**, from Valladolid, Spain and a Business major who earned SECOND TEAM All-Region honors as a freshman this year, "It was New York City and Coach Phil."

Coach Phil is Women's Basketball Head Coach **Phil Herro**, now in his 10th year at Raritan Valley Community College. He hails from Columbus, Ohio and is a two-time Garden State Athletic Conference Coach of the Year of **RVCC** Women's Volleyball team.

"We've been very fortunate the last few years to recruit high level basketball players, high academic students, and most importantly, high character individuals to

help us represent **RVCC**," notes the coach. "Not only has this group been a wonderful influence on our team and our **RVCC** community, I'm confident they'll continue to have positive impact in the world well after they've left **RVCC**."

All five of these international student-athletes praised their coach and his role in helping them with their journey.

"I really like that the school is close to New York but the reason I chose **RVCC** was Coach Phil," says Freya. "He just made me feel safe making a big decision like this."

Lu agrees: "Honestly, the reason I chose **RVCC** was Coach Phil. Talking to him and seeing his approach to the season was what made me want to come here."

To Judith, it was the coach but also the campus diversity. "I really liked Coach Phil as a coach, and I found his future plans with the basketball team very interesting," she notes. "But

it was also crucial for me to know that there were international students at **RVCC**. Diversity is such a powerful thing, and being part of it and adding to it, is personally gratifying."

"As people around the world unite to honor women's achievements and rally for women's equality on this International Women's Day, we celebrate five young women and the journeys that brought them to Raritan Valley Community College," says **RVCC** President, **Michael McDonough**. "And we thank them for enriching our Women's Basketball team, our campus, and our campus culture."



(L-to-R): **LUCIA NOIN**, Santander, Spain; **JUDITH VILA**, Barcelona, Spain; **VEGA GIL**, Pamplona Spain; **FREYA RAUSCHENFELS**, Hanover, Germany; **JULIA FONTANILLO**, Valladolid, Spain
#internationalwomensday #thejourney

#RVCCPROUD



Right after a sunrise hot air balloon safari in the Serengeti.



JOEL Reyes-Guzman



THE JOURNEYS



With his Boeing product in Nairobi, Kenya.

WHAT IS THE NAME OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AND WHAT ARE THE POST-RVCC INSTITUTIONS YOU ATTENDED AND WHAT ARE THE DEGREES YOU ATTAINED?

I graduated Bound Brook High School. I also earned a Bachelor of Science, Mechanical Engineering, from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. In addition, I've earned a Certificate, Additive Manufacturing for Innovative Design and Production from MIT; a Certificate, Power Presenter from Loyola Marymount University; Certification, Registered Scrum Master and Registered Product Owner, both from Scrum Inc. via Saint Louis University; Certification—all online. I am also currently enrolled in Portuguese for Communication at the University of California, San Diego Extended Studies (also online).

DESCRIBE A KEY CHALLENGE YOU'VE FACED AND OVERCOME IN YOUR LIFE'S JOURNEY.

TBD, most likely not having the systems I needed and the challenges in having to manifest and create them for myself. Systems include people, places, and principles.

DESCRIBE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT JOB OR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE OR SUCCESS.

It's most likely my current one but I often attribute my career success to my job being a Boeing mechanic on the factory floor - quality and safety are everything! Learning from the ground up always provides the deepest perspective.

ANY PUBLIC AWARDS OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

RVCC 2021-22 Distinguished Alumni Award.

DESCRIBE THE ROLE RVCC PLAYED IN YOUR JOURNEY AND HOW IT IMPACTED YOUR TRAJECTORY.

RVCC is the home that continues to serve and inspire me. My time there was such a foundational piece to my journey and to what I've achieved. That's why I remain involved—even from afar.

My ability to 'pay it forward'—yes, I know, cliché, but no less true—through the scholarship I've established

WHERE WERE YOU BORN AND RAISED?

Born in Somerville, NJ, and raised in Bound Brook, NJ.

WHAT YEARS DID YOU ATTEND RVCC AND WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE FROM RVCC?

Fall 2012 through Fall 2014 (3 Fall + 2 Spring + 2 Summer Semesters); graduated Fall of 2014 from RVCC, with an Associate of Science, Mathematics from the Honors College, and an Associate of Science, Engineering Science.

WHERE ARE YOU CURRENTLY LIVING?

Los Angeles, California.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION OR POSITION?

Airline Support Engineer with The Boeing Company. It's funny: my mom is from Oaxaca, Mexico, and she was always enamored by the few airplanes that would fly-over. She claims her admiration was so strong that it manifested into my career and she swears she's clairvoyant. LOL. Who knows? But clearly, my mom has been an important influence for me, given her journey and what it has enabled for me.

JOEL Reyes-Guzman



PHOTO LEFT (L-to-R): Randy Jimenez (a 2021 recipient of the Joel F. Reyes-Guzman Scholarship at RVCC), Jorge Moran-Nestor (RVCC grad and Senior Analytical Chemist, beneficiary of the RVCC Foundation and RVCC benefactor George Case and best friend of Joel from middle school), George Case, and Joel Reyes-Guzman. **PHOTO RIGHT:** With Regional Vice President, Richard Muehlenbeck, at a technical and safety conference Joel set up for some of Boeing's African airline customers, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

at RVCC could not be more gratifying. If I can help one student each year—whether it's financial support, mentorship or some combination of the two—I am both serving and being fulfilled by the community so near to my heart. Speaking of near to my heart, few things have given me greater joy than providing the gift of a new home to my mom. She deserves that and so much more for her constant encouragement and support.

I've always been struck by this quote: "how you do anything is how you do everything." I'm not sure who said it, but it resonates for me and it's always in my frame of reference, that soft light on the horizon.

NO PLACE LIKE HOME (Photo right)

The day that Joel handed his mom, Antelma "Telma" Guzman (an immigrant from Oaxaca, Mexico in search of a better future) the keys to her new home—accomplishing his biggest goal in life. Adds Joel, "The start of this successful goal is traced back to my time at RVCC. The RVCC Foundation...was my RVCC foundation. It provided me a stable ground to focus on my educational, career, and personal goals in life. The ongoing relationships and mentorship that started in the halls of campus continue to serve me well today. The people I connected with at RVCC care about people, their people—YOU—before you arrive, and stay invested in your success even after departing the 'Lion's Den.' Financially, yes, community college—specifically Raritan Valley—makes so much sense for most people. Holistically, I believe it makes sense for everyone. I entered RVCC to learn and went forth to serve. My



desire to serve was only embraced and amplified with RVCC; I am now part of the RVCC Foundation board, I've established my own scholarship, and I'm taking care of my family. These are some of the reasons I try to stay engaged with the RVCC, even if I'm now based thousands of miles away. RVCC makes it easy to be impactful in your own life, and to help others."



THE Muthumbi Family



THE JOURNEYS



PHOTO (L-to-R): Mike, daughter Mercy, and Janet

JANET NYAMBURA, MICHAEL M. MUTHUMBI AND MERCY M. MUTHUMBI.

Our journey began in Kenya, where Mike and I grew up. We both came from humble backgrounds and fought to raise our young family once our children were born. I was a stay-at-home mother, while Mike worked in an entry-level position to support the family. Despite this, our desire to succeed was greater than the obstacles we faced. When the chance to immigrate to America arose, we recognized it as our moment to shine and seized it.

Coming to America presented its own unique challenges. Our careers acquired in Kenya were obsolete; available jobs paid the minimum wage, and language was a challenge. With a desire to start new careers, we enrolled in school for nursing. Mike and I struggled going through nursing school, caring for our family, and trying to assimilate all at the same time. Earning the minimum wage did not stop us from pursuing our educational goals. We frequently juggled between family, friends, and daycare services as we maneuvered between work and school schedules. The sacrifice was so real!

Ultimately, we both graduated in 2020 with our diplomas. Mike graduated from RVCC with an associate degree

in nursing, while I graduated with an LPN from Middlesex County Magnet Schools (formerly Middlesex County Vocational and Technical Schools). I would later join RVCC, where I graduated in 2023 with an associate degree in nursing. Mike went on to pursue a BSN at William Paterson University and will graduate in May 2024. My ultimate educational goal is to achieve a doctorate degree in nursing.

Nursing has provided us an opportunity to make a positive difference in people's lives every day. Being able to provide comfort, care, and support to patients and their families during their most vulnerable moments is incredibly rewarding. The constant opportunities for learning and growth within the nursing profession keep me motivated and passionate about what I do. Fair compensation for our skills and dedication has allowed us to support our family comfortably while pursuing a career that we're both passionate about.

Raritan Valley Community College has played an important role in our family's journey. The Registered Nurse program at Raritan Valley Community College offered a combination of rigorous academic coursework and extensive hands-on clinical experience. The program's emphasis on real-world application truly prepared me and my husband for the challenges and responsibilities of nursing practice. The supportive faculty and hands-on clinical experiences helped us build my confidence and competence as a nurse, making it a highly valuable educational experience.

Receiving the Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation (SHCHF) nursing scholarship was incredibly meaningful, as it provided financial support and recognition for my dedication to the nursing profession. It affirmed my commitment to excellence in nursing and alleviated some of the financial burden associated with pursuing my education, allowing me to focus more fully on my studies and clinical experiences.

This has been a journey of hard work, patience, and a lot of sacrifice for my family. We are grateful for what we have achieved and look forward to better days ahead.



MS Walk with husband Jay and son, Mason



JENNIFER Grippo-Kady



THE JOURNEYS

WHERE WERE YOU BORN AND RAISED?

Born in Lakewood, NJ – raised in Franklin Township, Somerset County NJ.

WHAT YEARS DID YOU ATTEND RVCC AND WHAT YEAR DID YOU GRADUATE FROM RVCC?

Attended RVCC 1999 – 2001, graduating in 2001.

WHERE ARE YOU CURRENTLY LIVING?

Middlesex, NJ.

WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT OCCUPATION OR POSITION?

Advertising Account Executive with Effectv, a Comcast company. I work with local and regional businesses on advertising solutions which find and target audiences wherever they watch premium television content.

WHAT IS THE NAME OF YOUR HIGH SCHOOL AND WHAT ARE THE POST-RVCC INSTITUTIONS YOU ATTENDED AND WHAT ARE THE DEGREES YOU ATTAINED?

I attended Franklin High School. After RV I went on to Rowan University to earn a BA in Communications Radio/TV/Film Studies. I took a year off in between RV and Rowan, “A Gap Year”, to travel the country and live with friends in the mountains of Southern California. When I returned to New Jersey I was ready to focus on my BA and graduated from Rowan University Magna cum laude.

DESCRIBE A KEY CHALLENGE YOU’VE FACED AND OVERCOME IN YOUR LIFE’S JOURNEY.

I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis when I was 28 years old. I was overwhelmed and scared at first but decided I was not going to let it slow me down or bring me down. For the past 11 years I’ve been taking part in the annual Walk MS event raising awareness and money to Fight MS. My team has raised over \$45,000 in total. MS will not stop me or my drive to be happy and successful.



At home with Jay and Mason

DESCRIBE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT JOB OR PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE OR SUCCESS.

Being a full-time working mother and wife managing a progressive auto immune disease.

ANY PUBLIC AWARDS OR ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS YOU’D LIKE TO SHARE?

I’m a four-time President’s Club winner at Effectv, a Comcast company.

DESCRIBE THE ROLE RVCC PLAYED IN YOUR JOURNEY AND HOW IT IMPACTED YOUR TRAJECTORY.

I had a story not unlike many students in high school. I was not ready for the abrupt beginning to college prep and planning that usually starts late Sophomore year. It all felt too accelerated for me and I wasn’t ready for many reasons. Luckily, my father worked in education and understood the traditional way college is approached was not for everyone. And he understood the value in a Community College like RV. My dad was the driving force in my starting at RVCC and I am so grateful for it as it was the best move for me and what I needed at the time.

It was early on at my time at RVCC that I learned how fun and impactful college can be. My interpersonal communication course with Professor **Mark Bezanson** made a lasting impression on me. I have the fondest memories of that time in my life and that course as it might have impacted the way I communicate with others indefinitely. Professor Bezanson was real, approachable, and made me realize communication is something with which I will never struggle. He made me love and appreciate something that comes very natural to me and is in fact a skill we can study and hone.



IT'S A WRAP RVCC Giving Day 2024

EVENT RAISES \$154,355 FOR STUDENTS, ATHLETIC TEAMS, CENTERS, AND CRITICAL PROGRAMS.

\$154,355

GRATEFUL.

BE ALL IN

GENEROSITY WINS!

1 DAY 1 COMMUNITY

50,000 REASONS WHY!

YOU DID IT!



RVCC. “The exceptional generosity of Jim and Jill Gibson and The Caruso Family Foundation in providing the \$50,000 match challenge helped to transform our Giving Day fundraising.”

“We’re believers in Raritan Valley Community College and its impact and we’re delighted by the results of Giving Day 2024,” said Jim Gibson. “And we’re happy to have played a role in this exceptional outcome.”

“The Caruso Family Foundation was honored to lend our support to RVCC’s Giving Day. The positive impact RVCC has on the lives of its students and our community is immeasurable and instrumental,” said a Foundation spokesperson.

With the return of a \$50,000 “match challenge,” Raritan Valley Community College had a rousing “Giving Day” on March 21, raising \$154,355 for student clubs and athletic teams, as well as a range of centers, institutes, and critical institutional programs at the College. The 8th annual event was organized by the RVCC Foundation.

The day’s success was also thanks to the “match challenge” from two generous benefactors, **Jim and Jill Gibson** of Basking Ridge and **The Caruso Family Foundation**—whose combined gifts provided \$50,000 in matching funds to support RVCC Giving Day 2024.

“We are grateful to have such caring supporters of RVCC,” said **Michael J. McDonough**, President,



The \$154,355 raised was the second-highest RVCC Giving Day fundraising total ever, second only to last year’s record-setting amount of \$164,585 result. In addition, student clubs and teams accounted for 21% of all Giving Day funds raised.

RVCC Giving Day 2024 donors were invited to select from a wide range of College programs, student clubs, RVCC Athletic teams, and other initiatives they wished to support, including the Student Resource Center and Food Pantry, The Pray Family Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement at RVCC, Honors College, and Workforce Training Center, as well as a range of scholarship offerings. Donors also had the opportunity to “write in” additional giving preferences.

This year’s winners of the “**Patrick J. Fittipaldi Impact Award**”—which celebrates student success in support of RVCC Giving Day—were the Men’s Basketball team for the most funds raised (\$7,695) and the Women’s Basketball team for the most \$50+ donations (17).

“This is the one day of the year when we ask the collective community to come together in a single, 24-hour period and rally in support of the College,” said Mike Marion, Executive Director, RVCC Foundation and RVCC Alumni Association. “And when that community responds, it is an amazing thing to witness,” added Marion.

“RVCC Giving Day is integral to the College’s culture of service, philanthropy, and difference-making,” Marion

continued. “We cannot be more appreciative of Jim and Jill Gibson and The Caruso Family Foundation, for their generosity, for their inspiration, and for modeling the behavior and values we seek to instill in our students. That may be their ultimate gift.”



RV Families

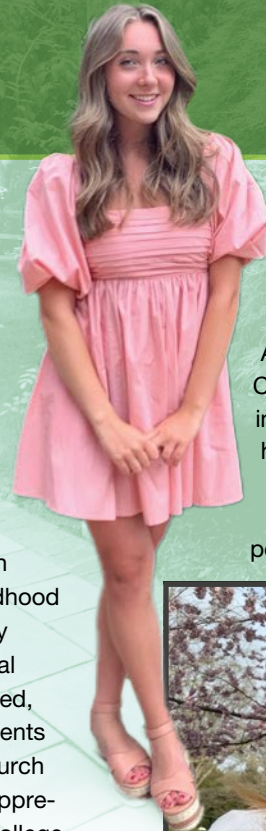
Raritan Valley Community College has rich history that spans some 56 years. Central to the College's storyline and to the community in which it exists are families, Raritan Valley families. Each year, as part of our Annual Report, we're proud to introduce you to some of our "RV Families" – families that have multiple members educated, trained, or otherwise involved at Raritan Valley Community College. Families are at the heart of RVCC, which has a rich legacy of encouraging, empowering, supporting, transforming, or simply extending the journeys of its students...

THE VATH FAMILY

Bernadette Vath is a 1981 graduate of what was then "Somerset County College" (now Raritan Valley Community College); daughter, **Jacquelynn (Vath) Miscichowski**, is a 1995 grad of RVCC; and **Grace Pfitzner**, who is Bernadette's granddaughter, graduated last month (May, 2024) and was part of the RVCC Honors College.

Bernadette, who resides with husband Fred in Spring Lake, NJ received her degree in Early Childhood Education, and is now retired from the New Jersey public schools after playing a variety of educational roles during her professional journey. Though retired, Bernadette is teaching religion to third-grade students as a part-time volunteer at St. Mark's Catholic Church in Sea Girt, NJ. Looking back on what she most appreciated about her education at Somerset County College, Bernadette notes, "it was my instructor in a theater/acting course." She adds, "When I taught preschool, I acted as 'mommy.' In grammar school, I became the 'teacher-in-charge.' And in a special alternative high school program, I acted as a 'police officer.' Thank you RVCC!"

Daughter Jacquelynn is married, living in Glassboro, NJ and currently working as a paraprofessional at Archbishop Damion School, a school for children with various special



needs in Westville, NJ. Says Jacquelynn, "I appreciated all my professors but especially those who taught my art history courses." A Liberal Arts degree holder from RVCC, she credits the College for her passion for art. "Taking these courses inspired my profound enthusiasm for art and art history still to this day," says Jacquelynn. "When I visited The Louve in Paris and the Philadelphia Art Museum I became most excited when I saw—in person—the art works that I had studied at RVCC."



For Grace, who has her Associate's in Business Administration, the next educational step in her journey is to transfer to a four-year university to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Business, with a concentration in Human Resources. What does Grace most appreciate about RVCC? "I most valued being a part of Raritan Valley's Honors College, as it provided me many competitive opportunities as a student, while also welcoming me to a community of passionate and supportive individuals."

She adds, "I was so grateful to have created lasting friendships with several of my peers through the Honors College, and was so appreciative of the unconditional support I received from my advisor, **Greg DeSanctis**—an absolutely wonderful advisor."

THE RASARE-WERE FAMILY

This RV family is currently two (George and Norah), but soon will be three when son Rooney arrives on the RVCC Campus this fall. **George Rasare**, father, graduated with his Associate degree in Human Services- Pre-Social Work as part of the RVCC Class of 2016. He continued his educational journey at Rutgers University, earning a Bachelor of Science in Public Policy Major (and Minor in Labor Studies) as part of Class of 2020, and is currently on track to earn his Masters in Human Services from Bellevue University/NE (anticipating June 2024 graduation). George's long-term goal is to work in and promote community development and public policy.

Says George, "RVCC gave me the essential education foundation for easy navigation to a bachelor's degree. I gained cultural and educational insights from students from different backgrounds from class discussions and projects. RVCC also offered me service-learning opportunities, which impacted my community engagement and interpersonal communications."

Norah Were, spouse to George and mom to Rooney, graduated from RVCC as part of the Class of 2022. She earned an Associate degree in Business Administration and is now finishing her Bachelor's in Accounting and Finance from Rutgers University as part of the Class of 2024. Norah's life goal is to help individuals better manage and protect

their finances by offering the best financial advice possible and assisting in the development of long-term plan.

On her experience at RVCC, Norah valued a range of attributes she ascribes to the College. "As an immigrant and a non-traditional student, RVCC gave me an opportunity to broaden my knowledge, develop critical thinking skills and engage with diverse cultures from different backgrounds," she says. "The college's small class sizes allowed for more individualized attention, increased participation and better teacher- student relationships."

"All of which," she continues, "made me feel more comfortable participating in class discussion and improved my ability to learn. RVCC's in-person tutoring sessions provided me with additional



learning materials and skills to manage my homework easily. Graduating from RVCC gave me a solid foundation and a step up towards my future career aspirations! I will forever remain grateful."

Son **Rooney Rasare** graduated last month from Hill-sborough High School and is a rising freshman at RVCC, where he will be welcomed this fall. He is the inaugural recipient of the *Pray Family - Paul Robeson Youth Achievement Award* (and the \$2,000 that comes with it), and plans to study Mechanical Engineering. His goal: Gain knowledge and skills, explore future careers, and absorb all relevant experiences that will serve me better well beyond college.

RVCC Alumni Association



The RVCC Alumni Association was “reborn” in 2022 as an opportunity to engage, inform, and connect with our more than 18,000 active alumni. We seek to further strengthen alumni bonds with this great institution while we celebrate the incredibly diverse community that is RVCC! Each year on these pages of the RVCC Foundation Annual Report, we’ll feature our Distinguished Alumni and highlight some of our alumni events on campus over the past 12 months. But if you peruse this Annual Report thoughtfully, you’ll see that RVCC alumni are everywhere. Enjoy!

2023-24 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD HONOREES

Congratulations to RVCC’s Distinguished Alumni Awards honorees for the 2023-24 Academic Year



SONIA BHALA
(ATTENDED 2012-13):

Sonia, an RVCC alumna, graduated from Lafayette College before pursuing her medical studies at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School. As a medical student specializing in obstetrics and gynecology, Sonia’s future OB/GYN residency is underway. Her remarkable achievements include receiving dual distinctions at RWJMS for her research with the National Institute of Health and her innovative Electronic Medical Record add-on, PicClinic. With a nine-year tenure at NIH, Sonia contributed significantly to understanding telomere

biology disorders, meningiomas, and cardiofaciocutaneous syndrome, resulting in peer-reviewed publications and national conference presentations. She’s been honored with awards like the 2019 Team Telomere Executive Director’s Choice Award and the 2020 National Numeracy Network’s Steen Award for her publication. Sonia is also a published poet and a grant recipient from the National Cancer Institute. Beyond her work, she’s engaged with the Monmouth Medical Title X Family Planning Center, leading workshops for underprivileged women in Long Branch. At RVCC, Sonia held roles as a Student Ambassador and President of the Psychology Club.

OSEI K. BOATENG
(CLASS OF 2016):

Osei, a 2016 Pre-Med graduate from RVCC, earned his Human Biology & Society degree from Cornell University with minors in Business and Gerontology. He later attained a master’s in Healthcare Administration from Cornell. As CEO of the OKB Hope Foundation, he’s dedicated to delivering healthcare



to remote Ghanaian communities. His foundation operates a mobile health van, bringing medical aid and professionals directly to underserved areas, impacting over 5,000 individuals across 50 communities. Osei champions mental health support for 2,000+ high school students and created the Experience Ghana program, hosting US students for volunteering and internships in Ghana. His work earned recognition from Engaged Cornell, Echoing Green, Global Solutions Initiative, and CNN (he’s currently a Top 10 CNN “Hero of the Year” finalist). Osei’s community service extends from post-Hurricane

Maria relief efforts in Puerto Rico to contributions at hospitals like New York-Presbyterian and Henry Ford Health System. At RVCC, he was an Educational Opportunity Fund leader and a math tutor.



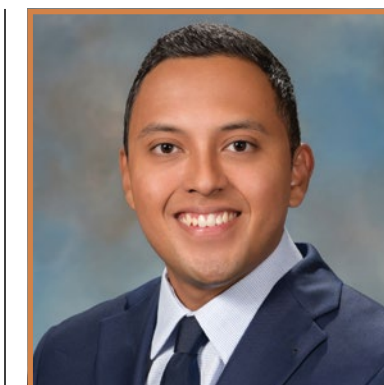
NICOLE DEROSA
(CLASS OF 2006):

Nicole, an RVCC graduate in General Business, earned both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in accounting from Fairleigh Dickinson. With 15 years as a CPA, she’s received accolades including the NJCPA 30 Under 30 and the 2019 NJCPA Ovation Award for Women to Watch. Recognized thrice in NJBIZ’s Power 50 in Accounting, she also serves on NJCPA’s Board of Trustees. Nicole recently achieved partner status in Wiss & Company’s Tax division. Beyond her profession, she’s a licensed Zumba instructor who provided free virtual sessions during Covid to foster community. Engaged in community service, she’s involved with the St. Jude Run/Walk Jersey Shore and volunteers at the Somerset Regional Animal Shelter. Nicole maintains her connection with RVCC, participating as a panelist for Business Career Night and instructing Tax Accounting for Individuals for four years.



JOE FORTE
(RVCC CLASS OF 2011):

Joe, an RVCC Social Science graduate, completed a bachelor’s at Rider University and pursued multiple master’s degrees, including in Public Administration, International Affairs, and certificates in Strategic Communications, Diversity and Inclusion. Currently Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief Diversity Officer at the New Jersey Department of State, Joe oversees various departments, leveraging his state government experience from roles at the Department of Labor, Civil Service Commission, and under Governor Phil Murphy. A published author and recognized figure in LGBTQ+ advocacy, he’s been acknowledged by Roi-NJ.com and received accolades like Business Equality Magazine’s 40 under 40. Engaged in community service, Joe chairs the Lawrence Township DEI Committee, leads the PSHRA-NJ chapter, and actively participates in alumni boards and political caucuses. His RVCC involvement included leadership roles in SGA, LGBTQ Pride Alliance, and Relay for Life. Joe remains connected to the campus, attending events with his family and supporting the theater community.



SEBASTIAN GALVEZ
(RVCC CLASS OF 2020)

A 2022 Somerset County Business Partnership’s “Top 40 Under 40” honoree, Sebastian, an RVCC and Montclair State University graduate, has excelled in his seven-year tenure at J&J, now serving as a Manager in Capacity Management for J&J’s Innovative Medicine sector. He’s earned over 20 “Encore/Inspire” awards within J&J, recognized for his professional and philanthropic contributions. Sebastian’s impact extends to the Hispanic & Latino Employee Resource Group at J&J, where he received the Rising Hispanic Star award. His leadership extends beyond J&J, evident in his participation in the Leadership Pipeline Program by the Hispanic Association on Corporate Responsibility. Engaged in community service, he serves on the United Way of Northern NJ’s Equity and Innovation Committee and the Advisory Board for The Salvation Army of Morristown, where his initiatives have led to significant contributions, making him the youngest member on the NJ State Advisory Board for The Salvation Army. Additionally, Sebastian has served on the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors since 2019.

LOOK FOR MORE INFORMATION ON OUR DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI HONOREES ON THE RVCC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PAGE OF THE RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE WEBSITE.

RVCC Alumni Association



COMMON GROUND AT THE 3RD ANNUAL OPPORTUNITY SUMMIT FOR RVCC ALUMNI.

Art and science came together on February 21 at the 3rd Annual “Opportunity Summit” for alumni of Raritan Valley Community College. The event attracted a great group of RVCC grads and an excellent discussion was led by Assistant Professor and muralist extraordinaire, **Ji Yong Kim** (RVCC Arts & Design) and Executive Director of the RVCC Workforce Training Center and innovator in the Advanced Manufacturing space, **Conrad Mercurius**.



(L-to-R): Kira Edgar, RVCC Class of '21; Sarah Switlyk, RVCC Class of '22; Professor Ji Yong Kim; Sarah Lopez, RVCC Class of '23; Elisa Gislao, RVCC Class of '22; Gulmira Aliyeva (guest); Laura Turlybekova, RVCC Class of '19]]

Ji Yong and Conrad have each created a number of exceptional partnerships in the public and private sectors that share a consistent theme: putting Raritan Valley Community College students in great positions to grow, flourish, and succeed in their journeys. That is their common ground.



Conrad Mercurius discussing the Workforce Training Center

DOWN ON THE FARM

Great celebration with **RVCC Alumni Association** members and friends to kick off the arrival of summer! The Farmhouse at 74 Lamington Road (official home of the RVCC Foundation and RVCC Alumni Association) offered a relaxed outdoor setting, great food and drink, and even some special smoke imported from the Canadian wildfires! Other than the smoke, this event has burned its way onto the calendar as our official “annual” toast of the summer and welcome back to campus event!!



A PODCAST from RVCC



(CO-HOSTED BY RVCC PRESIDENT MIKE MCDONOUGH AND RVCC FOUNDATION & RVCC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MIKE MARION)

With a spirited president, a chief development officer accomplice, and lots for worthy topics to explore, it was only a matter of time before this “channel” got opened.



Episode 4 brought student introductions into the series; RVCC students Bryan Auccapina-Aliaga and Ricardo Ramirez, with producer Matt Sheehan (in the middle).



For Episode 5, RVCC student and bass-guitarist Tyler Bason added an iconic riff for his intro (with producer Matt Sheehan).



For Episode 6, RVCC student Alexis Bara, a pre-med major, agrees the state's calculations are all wrong! And she knows something about math!

YOUR LISTENING GUIDE FOR THE FIRST SIX EPISODES

E6: DO THE MATH, IT DOESN'T ADD UP.

With a looming state budget cut to the community college sector, the inequity in the economics of higher education is explored, as is the accompanying philanthropic challenge. Here's the net, net: the math really doesn't add up!

Introduced by RVCC student Alexis Bara

E5: IT'S ONLY ROCK AND ROLL BUT I LIKE IT.

Recorded at various times in the last few weeks (including the intro today) with more than a few references to RVCC GIVING DAY (March 21!) added for good measure, episode 5 strays from the RVCC 'tried and true' content for a little reminiscing about the “formative years,” and some early rock and roll performances, consumed live, including in venues that no longer exist, like the “Corn Exchange” in Preston, England.

Introduced by RVCC student Tyler Bason

E4: LIVING THE COLLEGE LIFE.

This episode presents the most up-to-date take on the prospect of residential housing coming to RVCC—from someone who would know: RVCC President Michael McDonough. There's even a tasty snack break—another first for 1st and 10.

Introduced by RVCC students

Bryan Auccapina-Aliaga and Ricardo Ramirez

E3: THE ACHIEVEMENT CENTER AT RVCC—WHY IT MATTERS.

Recorded in December just before the holiday break, this episode explores “The Achievement Center AT Raritan Valley Community College” and describes an inspiring partnership with the Arc of Somerset County that provides an authentic college experience for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities (and it says a lot about the College's unwavering commitment to equity and open access).

E2: WORKFORCE TRAINING: BASIC DEMAND AND SUPPLY.

We're discussing workforce training—its growth in importance as well as the latest developments at RVCC, including the 22,000 square foot expansion of the physical footprint of the Workforce Training Center!

E1: WHAT'S IN A NAME.

We're discussing the meaning behind the “1st & 10” name, but more importantly, the decision by some community colleges to remove the word “community” from their names—something not in the cards for RVCC!

Note: the 1st & 10 Playlist can be accessed at www.raritanval.edu/1st-and-10-podcast-playlist



SMALL BALL and the \$54 Billion Budget

WITH THE “NATIONAL PASTIME” IN FULL SWING, “SMALL BALL” IS A TIMELY REFERENCE. FOR THE NON-BASEBALL FAN, SMALL BALL IS A TEAM’S ABILITY TO “MANUFACTURE” RUNS (AND VICTORIES) WITHOUT THE LUXURY OF HAVING HIGHLY PAID, HOMERUN-HITTING SUPERSTARS. IN SHORT, IT’S MAXIMIZING THE LIMITED RESOURCES YOU HAVE TO CREATE SUCCESS AND WINS.



Small ball is also a relevant analogy for community colleges—an astoundingly under-resourced sector of higher education, that still manages to scratch out “wins” (and student success) without the benefit of the star-power funding for which it is worthy.

Think about this: community colleges serve more than 40% of New Jersey’s college-going public (literally educating 230,000+ students of all ages and backgrounds) but do so with less than 10% of the State’s operating aid to higher ed. That is next level small ball.

But if that inequity weren’t bad enough, it could soon get worse. The Governor’s proposed \$54 billion 2025 budget for NJ includes a \$20 million cut to community colleges (including some \$900,000 to Raritan Valley Community College). The truth is, that’s well beyond “belt-tightening”, as described by the Governor. It’s more like, “we

The screenshot shows the NJBIA logo and a headline: "A Funding Issue for NJ Community Colleges". Below the headline, it says "Published March 22 - Updated 9 hours ago" and includes social media share icons for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Email. At the bottom of the article preview, there is an image of graduates in caps and gowns.

Note: at the time of production of this annual report, the cut described below was still being contested by students, faculty, friends and leadership of the NJ Council of County Colleges.

need your belt back." "It will force colleges to make difficult and disastrous decisions, including possibly raising tuition and cutting services and programs," said NJ Council of County Colleges President **Aaron Fichtner**. RVCC President **Mike**

McDonough concurs. "The proposed cut in operating aid of \$20 million—a 12% reduction—will force colleges to make difficult choices, including considering: increases in tuition costs to students; reductions to academic and workforce programs; and reductions in student supports and services.

There has been plenty written—and debated—about the proposed cut. But the facts are startling: In FY2024, **New Jersey ranked 46th among the 47 states** with

NJ's COMMUNITY COLLEGES NEED MORE RESOURCES NOT \$20M IN BUDGET CUTS. TAKE ACTION CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS.

HELP US RESTORE \$20M IN BUDGET CUTS TO NJ'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES. TAKE ACTION CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS.

community colleges in terms of state support per full-time student. State investment in FY2024 totaled \$2,506 per fulltime student—71% below the national median of \$8,555. If the proposed budget is enacted, state operating aid to community colleges will be below the level of funding provided in FY2002 (\$149 million in 2025 vs \$156 million in FY2002). That’s right, 2002—literally decades ago!

Even for the most accomplished at small ball, the cut would be a punishing blow. Yet it may present a teachable moment for New Jersey: a chance to weigh in, be heard,

NJ's COMMUNITY COLLEGES RANK AMONG LOWEST IN NATION FOR STATE FUNDING EVEN BEFORE \$20M REDUCTION. TAKE ACTION CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS.

TESTIFY AND FIGHT \$20M IN BUDGET CUTS TO NJ'S 18 COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

CBS NEW YORK EDUCATION OFFICIALS CONCERNED FUNDING FOR NJ COMMUNITY COLLEGES COULD BE CUT. "At a time when we believe that we need to invest in Community Colleges, we're now seeing a really disturbing reduction in the governor's proposed budget," **Aaron Fichtner**, President, New Jersey Council of County Colleges.

and not let the moment pass, uncontested.

While there has been plenty of coverage and much to read about this proposed cut, we need everyone to do more than just read about it. In fact, do what a small baller would do: scratch out a response and make something happen. Get in touch with your state legislator. Stand up and be counted by expressing your concern, if not your outrage.

New Jersey's 18 community colleges—including RVCC—are counting on you.

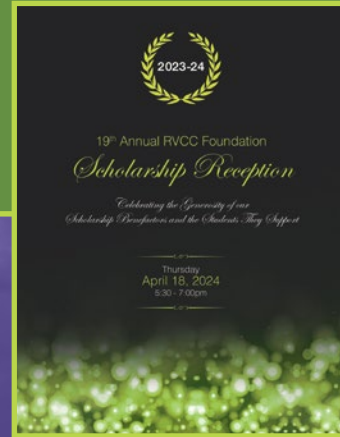


IN SUPPORT Of Our Students

**GLOBAL.
LOCAL.
DIVERSE.
GENEROUS.**

Some 130 scholarship benefactors, student beneficiaries and their families, distinguished alumni, Board of Trustees, and the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors were present for the 19th Annual RVCC Foundation Scholarship Reception.

For your inspiring remarks and for making us all RVCC PROUD, our deep gratitude to Osei Kwadwo Boateng (Class of 2016), Laura Bacino (Class of 2025), Maria Salazar-Cortes (Class of 2025), David Nader, and Raritan Valley Community College President Michael McDonough.



IN SUPPORT Of Our Students

\$440,000 IN TOTAL SCHOLARSHIPS; 9% INCREASE OVER 2022

237 STUDENT RECIPIENTS

\$2,715,000 IN TOTAL SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS SINCE 2018

New Scholarships for the 2024-25 Academic year

STEM

ITSERVE ALLIANCE SCHOLARSHIP-IFLOWSOFT SOLUTIONS INC.

ITSERVE ALLIANCE SCHOLARSHIP-SMART IT FRAME

These scholarships are awarded to RVCC students in good standing and majoring in science, technology, engineering, and math, and computer science. Students must be fulltime (12 hours)—or take a minimum of 6 hours if working 20+ hours a week; Must demonstrate some financial need; preference given to female students (though not a requirement) and funds can be used to offset tuition and fees.

SUZANNE MACAOAY MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

This scholarship is awarded to a student also majoring in the STEM disciplines, with preference for students focused on environmental studies. Students must be enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours (be less if a student is working 20+ hours a week). This is a year-long commitment but students are required to be in good standing to retain the scholarship; preference but not a requirement to support students from Somerset or Hunterdon Counties.

GENERAL

THE LATINO LEGACY SCHOLARSHIP AT RVCC

This scholarship is available to only Hispanic or Latino students (1st or 2nd year) who are enrolled in a minimum of 6 credit hours, and who reside in either Somerset or Hunterdon Counties. To be considered, student must be majoring in Business Administration, Business Management, General Business, Information Technol-

ogy, Computer Science, or Data Science. Support is conditional on student remaining in good academic standing for both semesters; Scholarship is available to all students (U.S. citizens, international students, or undocumented students who do not qualify for financial aid). U.S. citizens applying do need to be financial aid eligible.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

TELUGUPEOPLE FOUNDATION: THE ULAVAPALLI FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP

TELUGUPEOPLE FOUNDATION: THE KOMATREDDY FAMILY SCHOLARSHIP

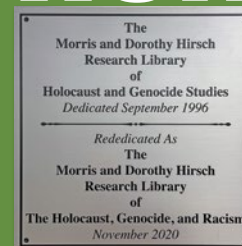
Open to RVCC student applicants majoring in computer science or related disciplines; can be either 1st or 2nd year students and must be enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours (can be less hours if a student is also working 20+ hours week); Must be a U.S. citizen or permanent U.S. resident.

NURSING OR EDUCATION

TELUGUPEOPLE FOUNDATION: YARLAGADDA NARENDRA PRASAD MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP

RVCC student applicants can be either 1st or 2nd year students majoring in either Nursing or Education. Students must be in good standing and enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours; can be less credit hours if a student is also working 20+ hours a week or is a 2nd year Nursing student with clinical rotations. Must be a U.S. citizen or permanent U.S. resident.

HONORING A Legacy



Friends, family and special guests gathered in December to celebrate **Dr. Paul J. Hirsch**, whose 36-year legacy of leadership at Raritan Valley Community College puts him in a class of his own. The celebration included the renaming of the Community Room as the ‘Dr. Paul J. Hirsch Board Room.’

As RVCC President **Michael McDonough** noted, the renaming “recognizes Trustee Emeritus Hirsch’s enduring legacy as one of RVCC’s most eloquent and accomplished

Racism at Raritan Valley Community College.

Named for his beloved parents, Dr. Hirsch’s vision was to build a research library and provide a wealth of content on the “Holocaust, Genocide, and Racism” as an educational resource for students and the greater RVCC community.

With the generous support of Dr. Hirsch—a retired orthopaedic surgeon and a former clinical professor of orthopaedics at Seton Hall School of Graduate Medical Education—and others, the research Library’s book collection



(Left) Morris and Dorothy on their wedding day (June 16, 1935, Brooklyn, NY).

(Far Left) RVCC President Michael McDonough with Dr. Paul J. Hirsch at dedication of the “Dr. Paul J. Hirsch Board Room”.

(Bottom Left) Imagery from The Morris and Dorothy Hirsch Library of the Holocaust, Genocide and Racism. Morris and Dorothy on their wedding day (June 16, 1935, Brooklyn, NY).



champions. Paul has been a compassionate advocate for the College and our students.”

Dr. Hirsch’s distinguished public service includes his longstanding role as a member of the RVCC Board of Trustees, where he served in numerous leadership roles, including as chair of the Board from 2013-2015 and from 2008-2011. Dr. Hirsch also served on the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors.

But perhaps the most remarkable part of Dr. Hirsch’s legacy is his 27-year commitment to The Morris and Dorothy Hirsch Library of the Holocaust, Genocide and

has grown from 170 titles in 1997 to well over 1,300 titles today. Over the years, thousands of the Library’s books have been circulated to students, faculty, K-12 teachers, and the community-at-large. The Library also features a video collection and other reference materials for research and study as well as an area for classroom instruction.

“It’s vitally important to keep the past alive and learn about it—even when some of that knowledge is difficult to absorb,” said Jeremy Hirsch, the honoree’s son, in a 2021 interview. “It’s important because it helps us to make a better future for ourselves and for our children.”

With that kind of enduring impact, it’s hard to imagine anyone more worthy of celebrating—or more worthy of our gratitude—than Dr. Paul J. Hirsch.

100+



The 2023-23 RVCC Athletics teams collectively cleared the 100-win mark and saw several significant successes for Lions' teams and the individual student athletes. RVCC Athletics had 13 students on four teams—Volleyball, Men's and Women's Basketball teams, and Men's Soccer—earn individual recognition for their outstanding performances during the 2023-24 seasons. In addition, Coach Phil Herro was awarded "Coach of the Year" for both Women's Volleyball and Women's Basketball, and Coach Kevin Ryan took home "Coach of the Year" honors for Men's Basketball.

2023-24 RVCC Lions Highlights

Woman's Volleyball

The Raritan Valley Community College Women's Volleyball Team had a stellar season, finishing with a 29-6 record and winning the Garden State Athletic Conference Championship for the sixth year in a row.

- 29-6 OVERALL RECORD
- NATIONAL JUNIOR COLLEGE ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION (NJCAA) DISTRICT B CHAMPION
- GARDEN STATE ATHLETIC CONFERENCE (GSAC) CHAMPIONSHIP
- COMPETED IN THE NJCAA NATIONAL TOURNAMENT IN CEDAR RAPIDS, IA
- FIVE POST-SEASON AWARD HONOREES:

KELLY DELANEY (1ST TEAM ALL GSAC, 1ST TEAM ALL REGION, HONORABLE MENTION ALL-AMERICAN)
MADISON COBB (1ST TEAM ALL GSAC, 1ST TEAM ALL REGION),
SONA PETRUSOVA (1ST TEAM ALL GSAC, 2ND TEAM ALL REGION)
REAGAN MOONEY (2ND TEAM ALL GSAC, 2ND TEAM ALL REGION)
PHIL HERRO (GSAC COACH OF THE YEAR)



Men's Soccer

- 9-4-4 OVERALL RECORD
- NJCAA EAST DISTRICT A FINALIST
- FOUR POST-SEASON AWARD HONOREES:

JAKUB PASZYCK (1ST TEAM ALL GSAC, 1ST TEAM ALL REGION)
WOOD JERRY JEUNE (2ND TEAM ALL GSAC, 2ND TEAM ALL REGION)
GERMAN BURSET ROMERO (2ND TEAM ALL GSAC, 2ND TEAM ALL REGION)
CAIO MARTINS SANCHEZ (3RD TEAM ALL GSAC, 3RD TEAM ALL REGION)



Men's Basketball

Named Region XIX Champions for the second consecutive year, the RVCC Men's Basketball team reached the NJCAA East District A Finals, where it lost to Monroe College. The team was led by Kevin Ryan, who was honored by being named Region XIX Coach of the Year. The memorable season ended with a 24-7 record.

- 24-7 OVERALL RECORD
- REGION XIX CHAMPIONS
- THREE POST-SEASON AWARD HONOREES:

DAMON STRAND (1ST TEAM ALL GSAC, 1ST TEAM ALL REGION, REGION XIX PLAYER OF THE YEAR, 2ND TEAM ALL-AMERICAN)
TIM GODWIN (2ND TEAM ALL GSAC, 2ND TEAM ALL REGION)
KEVIN RYAN (REGION XIX COACH OF THE YEAR)



Women's Basketball

Finishing the year with a 22-8 record overall—going 8-2 for NJCAA Region XIX games and 5-1 in the Garden State Athletic Conference the RVCC Women's Basketball team was guided along the way by Coach Phil Herro. The Lady Lions made it to the Semi-Final round of the NJCAA Region XIX Tournament, where their season ended with a loss.

- 22-8 OVERALL RECORD
- GSAC CO-CHAMPIONS
- FOUR POST-SEASON AWARD HONOREES:

LUCIA NOIN (1ST TEAM ALL GSAC, 1ST TEAM ALL REGION, 2ND TEAM ALL-AMERICAN)
VEGA GIL (1ST TEAM ALL GSAC, 1ST TEAM ALL REGION)
JULIA FONTANILLO (2ND TEAM ALL GSAC, 2ND TEAM ALL REGION)
PHIL HERRO (GSAC CO-COACH OF THE YEAR)



Softball

- 3-21 Overall Record (season in progress as of publication)

Baseball

- 16-18 Overall Record (season in progress as of publication)



WHAT Is Great?

Great is being part of an inclusive educational community committed to removing barriers to access—including for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Great is being part of an inclusive educational community committed to removing barriers to access—including for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Great is having an onramp to experience college and develop skills to earn a living and a fulfilling life. Great is having supportive faculty, staff and student mentors committed to your success.

Great is being affirmed and rewarded for excellence with **“The Achievement Scholarship”**—the first ever awarded to students with intellectual and developmental disabilities enrolled in **The Achievement Center (TAC)** at Raritan Valley Community College.

Great is being **Rebecca (“Becky”) Charles-Estain** and **Robert (“Bobby”) Kopac**, the inaugural recipients of The Achievement Scholarship. Great is being a student at Raritan Valley Community College—regardless of your background or the journey that led you here.

Great is being seen, valued, celebrated, and saluted for the success you’ve achieved.

Great is having the vision to see an opportunity where others can’t get past the problem. The Achievement Center (TAC) at Raritan Valley Community College—which serves students with intellectual and developmental disabilities—is a textbook example: a parent’s voice is heard by RVCC president, **Michael McDonough**, who then defies convention and related institutional obstacles

to remove one of higher education’s last barriers to truly open access.

Great is finding collaborators and partners, both within the RVCC community, and across the geography served by the College. While it began with the ARC OF SOMERSET COUNTY (and Arc of Hunterdon County), it also spread to local companies and workforce training partners, and most recently, the BRIDGEWATER-RARITAN REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Great is growing awareness and engagement with potential funders, like **Samantha Plotino**, who leads **The Provident Bank Foundation**, which last year awarded TAC at Raritan Valley Community College its largest gift ever to expand STEM-related curriculum. Or like **Linda Wellbrock**, who leads corporate social responsibility for Fiserv, and who brought in President Michael McDonough for a “fireside chat” to share TAC’s amazing story with some of New Jersey’s community-based education leaders who share a commitment to removing barriers to full inclusion that still exist in the K-12 world.

Great is having results that speak volumes about the opportunity you originally envisioned, as president Michael McDonough had: from two students and two classes seven years ago, to over 130 students and 40 classes today. In addition, there have been 19 graduates from TAC, which is planning for its largest single graduating class in June 2024: 12 students. In addition, seven TAC students have gone on to graduate with degrees or

certifications at Raritan Valley Community College.

Great is having dedicated, caring leaders and instructors, like **Bob Hulit**, **Sandee Miller**, **Christopher Corvino**, and **Lauren Frary**, who are champions every day for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

All of this against a classic New Jersey paradox: the state’s K-12 system is seen as the best in the country, but according to the 43rd Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of Individuals with Disabilities Educa-

tion Act, New Jersey is the worst state in the country for including students with disabilities in general education classes.

Which makes the great going on at Raritan Valley Community College all the more noteworthy.

Indeed, great is doing everything in your power to make this particular group of students feel seen, valued, celebrated, and saluted for the success they’ve achieved.



Above Left: Michael McDonough, President, Raritan Valley Community College; Linda Wellbrock, Vice President, Community Relations and Strategic Partnerships, Fiserv; Michelle Milentijevic, Vice President, Talent Acquisition, Fiserv; Tom Bergeron, Editor-in-Chief, ROI-NJ.

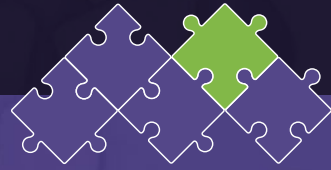


Above Right: Michael McDonough and Bob Hulit, Director Post-Secondary Programming The Achievement Center at RVCC;



Above: RVCC’s Michael McDonough and Fiserv’s Linda Wellbrock

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS



Last year's RVCC Foundation Annual Report profiled a series of relationships between Raritan Valley Community College and companies of all sizes. It was a classic collection of 'public-private' partnerships—from a local restaurant to a global pharmaceutical company. The goal in featuring these partnerships was to reinforce just how easy—and important—it is for organizations of all sizes to engage with community colleges in general, and RVCC specifically.

That engagement has never been more important, or timelier. Proposed cuts in the New Jersey's funding of its 18 community colleges presents a huge challenge to a sector already appreciably under resourced. Partners, collaborators, advocates, and champions will find an open door at RVCC. In this edition of "Partners & Partnerships," we profile five organizations, including a high school, a community center, a philanthropic entity, and two businesses—one of which is family owned. As you'll see, small is beautiful. Even in partners.

PARTNERS

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

ABCO SYSTEMS AND THE COUNCIL OF SUPPLY CHAIN MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

Sometimes partnerships with Raritan Valley Community College involve the partners of partners, as in the case of **ABCO Systems** and **Council of Supply Chain Management Professionals (CSCMP)**. Last fall provides an excellent example.

awarded to the one who provided the best solution.

Says **Tom Hoff**, Vice President, Sales, at ABCO, "We really wanted to tap into RVCC students and excite them about the opportunities that exist in logistics and supply chain management. We knew that they would embrace the opportunity and they did!"

ABCO Systems, which was estab-



KEITH SPERO (RVCC Professor of Supply Chain), **Nicholas Klacik** (CSCMP NY/NJ Chapter), **TOM HOFF** (ABCO Systems), **MAIRA MENDONCA** (RVCC Supply Chain student), **MATT O'NEIL** (ABCO Systems), and **HONG LIN** (Capacity LLC)



ABCO Systems and the CSCMP collaborated on a scholarship competition with RVCC's Department of Business and Public Service, challenging business students to come up with a material handling "solution" for one of ABCO's clients. The goal was to provide students with an opportunity to take what they've learned in the classroom right into the "real world." At stake for the RVCC student "competitors" was a \$2,000 scholarship

lished in 1972, is a material handling systems integrator with headquarters located in New Jersey. The company specializes in designing and implementing innovative solutions for a wide range of industries, including distribution centers, e-commerce, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing. Among their specialties are Warehouse Automation and Robotics, Conveyors & Sorters, Storage Solutions, Goh Systems, Warehouse Design & Permit

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS



MATT O'NEIL (ABCO Systems), TOM HOFF (ABCO Systems), NICHOLAS KLACIK (CSCMP NY/NJ Chapter)



MAIRA MENDONCA

Facilitation, as well as installation, maintenance and servicing.

Adds Tom Hoff, "We take great pride in our exceptional team of professionals who are at the heart of our success. We're a great employer and a potential great fit for eager RVCC grads ready to make their mark."

According to **Nicholas Klacik**, President, CSCMP-NY/NJ Roundtable, partnering with ABCO and RVCC was a no-brainer. "This was a great opportunity for us to support

an important initiative with a valued supply chain partner in ABCO and a valued educational partner in RVCC," he notes. "RVCC and its students lived up to the challenge and delivered as we had hoped they would."

CSCMP was founded in 1963 and is headquartered in Lombard, Illinois, with over 8,500 members representing nearly all industry sectors, government, and academia from 67 countries. CSCMP is also the world's leading supply chain source for supply chain information and the preeminent hub for networking, education and mentoring of supply chain students. The NY/NJ chapter of CSCMP is home to supply chain management thought leaders who are encouraging, promoting, and disseminating leading edge strategies, products and services.

"We're proud of the relationships we've built with ABCO and CSCMP," adds **Keith Spero**, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Supply Chain Management at RVCC. "And we hope to build on the success of the scholarship competition and grow the opportunities for our students so that they can get as much practical experience as possible. It is absolutely a win-win, for students and partners alike."



HUNTERDON CENTRAL REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Hunterdon Central Regional High School District serves four K-8 sending districts and the five municipalities of Delaware Township, East Amwell Township, Flemington Borough, Raritan Township and Readington Township. The district educates some 2,700 students in grades 9-12. It has over 500 employees and a 75-acre campus in Flemington, the heart of Hunterdon County.

Hunterdon Central High School is an innovative educational community dedicated to the intellectual, social, and emotional safety and growth of all students. At the center of its mission is "fostering curiosity and promoting wellness." Like Raritan Valley Community College, Hunterdon Central "aspires to create powerful learning experiences and establish strong partnerships."

One such partnership is with RVCC, which last fall welcomed some 70 graduates of Hunterdon Central High School who chose the College as the next step in their educational journeys.

In fact, Hunterdon Central partners with RVCC in a variety of capacities, most notably through its concurrent enrollment programs, which allow high school students to earn college credit while taking courses at the high school. Hunterdon Central offers 13 concurrent enrollment courses. Students can also take courses on the RVCC campus- face-to-face or online through the Early College Credits Program. The College's data suggests that students with prior early postsec-

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS



RVCC's SHAY WADHER and Hunterdon Central's JESSICA CANGELOSI-HADE at Hunterdon Central High School.

CONCURRENT ENROLLMENT is an opportunity for students to begin to explore and then forge a pathway in an area of passion. Having a connection with a postsecondary institution while in high school allows a student to see and get a taste of what the next steps could be in their journey. For many students, this helps them further develop a particular area of interest or passion, and supports them in developing possible pathways or credentials to their eventual career. Importantly, it also allows students to see postsecondary education as a real possibility in their future. Each of these benefits is valuable for our students and our greater school community.

ondary experience who matriculate to RVCC have higher GPAs, graduation rates, and retention rates compared to students with no prior early postsecondary experience.

"Our district has long partnered with RVCC in concurrent enrollment programs," notes **Jessica Cangelosi-Hade**, Assistant Superintendent for

Curriculum and Human Resources. "Originally, this was a push from the Department of Education, but all stakeholders soon realized the value added beyond the college courses and credits that students could experience in high school."

She adds, "Our concurrent enrollment programs continue to expand in thoughtful and intentional ways, aligning college credits with specific programs or pathways, so students can begin to see a clearer potential pipeline for them through the concurrent enrollment program."

Overall concurrent enrollment data at RVCC suggests a five-year 31% growth rate across all high school partners, with nearly 900 students participating in a concurrent enrollment program and earning credit RVCC credits.

According to **Shay Wadher**, Director of K-12 Partnerships, part of RVCC's Division of Academic Support and Education Partnerships, concurrent enrollment offerings are a critical part of the College's strategic plan. "We are introducing and helping prepare high school students for the myriad of pathways that await after high school and we're seeking to make the transition as seamless as possible from high school to the next



PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

RVCC is always willing to work together in the best interest of students, including in the critical need of increasing access. They are looking for course alignment to specific degree or credential programs, and they are eager to find additional opportunities for students beyond college credits. RVCC serves the whole child—we have offered sessions with the College’s Admission Office as well as Financial Aid. Our students have had the chance to hear from current students and professors. Our students have attended events as well as specially-designed tours at RVCC. This takes a collective commitment to the greater mission of educating and supporting our students in the community.

JESSICA CANGELOSI-HADE, *Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Human Resources.*



part of a student’s journey.”

Hunterdon Central also partners with RVCC’s Workforce Training Center on programming for students in Advanced Manufacturing, recently offering an opportunity to students for a 3D Printing Boot Camp, which included students’ ability to earn an OSHA certification. In addition, the two partners have collaborated to design programs for “at-risk” youth to support them in developing critical college readiness skills.

“We continue to explore new opportunities for all students beyond the more traditionally-offered Honors and Advanced Placement classes. This has been a source of pride for our district, as it is critical for each student

to realize their potential and have support in their journey to achieving that potential and beyond,” says Jessica.

Adds Dr. Karen Bearce, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, RVCC’s partnership with Hunterdon Central, as well as with all of its sending districts are critical. “Ultimately, it’s all about successful outcomes for our students. All of our high school partners, Shay’s team, our faculty—we all want the same thing: the growth and success of the students we support.”

“RVCC has a critical role in our community to serve each student, and that work is dynamic in a constantly-changing world,” says Jessica

Cangelosi-Hade. “To build a pipeline and a stronger community, it is essential for RVCC to help to bridge the gap between high school and higher education, and from higher education to the workforce. RVCC is an important part of the village that helps to educate and support our children, who are the future of the community.”



PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

L&Z TOOL & ENGINEERING

L&Z Tool & Engineering has 30 employees and a foothold—and scores of happy customers—in a diverse range of industries, including military, automotive, pet products, pool products & accessories, medical, power tools, toys, appliances, food service, product display, cosmetics,

Thomas La Marca (President), and sons Luke La Marca (Vice President of Technical Operations), Lance La Marca (Vice President), and TJ La Marca (Vice President of Finance), is 100% committed to satisfying its customers. Says Tom La Marca, “We proudly stand by our quality policy, that L&Z will exceed customer expectations through well-trained and dedicated personnel, teamwork,



FAMILY AFFAIR: THOMAS LA MARCA and sons LANCE, TJ, AND LUKE.



RVCC Foundation Board member DAVID BUNEVICH and L&Z’s THOMAS LA MARCA.



and rubber molding.

A family-owned business, L&Z produces every plastic mold, die, and tool on-site at its facility in Watchung, New Jersey. As an ISO-9001-2015 registered company, the firm uses the finest American made materials which conform to the strictest international quality standards. L&Z has developed a long-standing reputation for producing superior products on time—and at competitive prices.

The company, which is led by

technology, pride, high standards and continuous improvement.”

As a value-added service, L&Z can also provide engineering and manufacture of new production worthy tools, along with providing changes, repairs, modifications or refurbishment of existing products according to the most exacting specifications.

Luke La Marca, who has worked the most closely with Raritan Valley Community College, offered this perspective on why the RVCC - L&Z

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

After receiving the grant last year for the Advanced Hard Milling machine, L&Z was contracted by another New Jersey-based company asking us to provide a service they currently outsourced outside of New Jersey. “By having this high-tech machine at our facility, we were awarded new business, which was manufactured on this new equipment, and additional orders are underway for more work to flow through this advanced piece of machinery,” says **Luke La Marca**. “That’s a win for everyone—including New Jersey.”



ZACHARY COHEN and the new Milling machine he operates.

our back yard—the Advanced Manufacturing program at Raritan Valley Community College.”

RVCC’s commitment to the shared goals of the partnership quickly became evident. Say’s Tom, “Conrad was a key contributor in helping us through a grant process which ultimately led to L&Z getting a new high-end Milling machine.”

In addition to the advice and counsel on the grant, last year L&Z hired **Zachary Cohen**, who came to RVCC as a freshman in high school, graduated early, earned 10 industry certifications at RVCC, and then was onboarded at L&Z in his senior year. Zack, who is pursuing his Associates Degree in Mechanical Engineering Technology, was hired by L&Z to operate the new high-tech Milling machine. “Through the combined efforts of one of our current employees and Zach from RVCC, new business is being created and a stronger workforce is being built for New Jersey,” says Luke. “In the past these component parts would have been manufactured elsewhere.”

What has been the best part of having a partnership with RVCC? “The collaborative efforts to help fill our talent needs, educating people in our trade, and helping improve the skill level of our existing employees,” says Luke. He adds, “RVCC is a vital and responsive asset for improving opportunities for all. It is a true gem—filled with professionals eager to serve and improve our shared community.”

For RVCC’s Conrad Mercurius, the power of the partnership is the shared goals. “In today’s rapidly evolving economic landscape, the importance of synergistic relationships between the public and private sectors cannot be overstated, especially in critical areas like manufacturing. Such partnerships are pivotal in driving innovation, expanding job opportunities, and ensuring the sustainable development of local industries. A standout example of this dynamic is the partnership between L&Z Manufacturing and Raritan Valley Community College.”



relationship works: “It’s a partnership through which both organizations prosper by sharing experience and knowledge.”

The company was first introduced to RVCC through long-time friend of Tom’s, **David Bunevich**, who is a generous supporter of the College and is a member of the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors. Through initial conversations and a meeting with **Conrad Mercurius**, Executive Director, RVCC Workforce Training, and **Mike Marion**, Executive Director, RVCC Foundation, the family described the challenges of trying to find experienced help within commuting distance of L&Z’s facility. Says Luke, “It was soon clear that a potential solution was right in

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS



THE MARTIN LUTHER KING YOUTH CENTER

The **Martin Luther King Youth Center** (MLK Center) is a longstanding partner of Raritan Valley Community College, most directly through the College’s Service Learning Program (now called, “The Pray Family Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement at RVCC”). This should be no surprise given the MLK Center’s mission is centered around youth development, education, community service, various activities that support the well-being and growth of low-income families the Somerset County.

In fact, the Bridgewater-based Center, which has 14 employees who are fully involved in conducting various programs, services, and administrative functions, couldn’t be a better fit for RVCC, according to **Lori Moog**,

Director of The Pray Family Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement at RVCC. “We have had fruitful and enduring relationship for over 25 years with the MLK Center,” says Lori. “And they have been one of our best community partners; and with 250 community partners, that’s saying something.”

The initial engagement with RVCC was driven by the need for support at the MLK Youth Center, particularly in areas such as homework assistance and peer mentorship for children. This collaboration was initiated to provide additional resources and guidance to help the youth at the MLK Youth Center succeed. The collaboration involves providing homework help, organizing creative activities, fostering peer relationships, encouraging community service, and supporting those in need.

The children at the MLK Youth Center have experienced significant benefits from the partnership with RVCC, including improved academic performance through homework help,

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS



"VOLUNTEERING IS THE ULTIMATE EXPRESSION OF HUMAN CONNECTION, WHERE THE ACT OF GIVING CREATES A RIPPLE EFFECT OF KINDNESS THAT TRANSCENDS BOUNDARIES AND UNITES COMMUNITIES."

This quote highlights the significance of the partnership between RVCC and the Martin Luther King Youth Center in supporting low-income families and promoting education and social justice. It emphasizes the value derived from the relationship, showcasing a dedication to community empowerment and equal access to opportunities for all individuals.

the development of peer friendships, opportunities for community engagement and giving back, as well as mentorship and support from college students.

"The RVCC partnership has helped us to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the children that attend our program," says **Ranji Chopra**, Executive Director of the MLK Youth Center. "With the service learning student volunteers from RVCC, we have and are achieving far more than we ever could alone. Our homework assistance and reading programs are a vital part of our offering and it's the RVCC student volunteers' commitment that has helped us achieve our mission."

According to Ranji, the most

rewarding aspect of the partnership with RVCC is the dedication and commitment shown by the college students who volunteer their time to support the children at the MLK Center. Their willingness to help and contribute to the success of the youth demonstrates a strong sense of community and support.

"RVCC plays a crucial role in the local community by offering educational support and resources to youth at the MLK Center and beyond," says Ranji. "Through initiatives such as tutoring in math, reading and STEM programs, RVCC service learning students help the MLK Center students learn and excel academically, fostering a culture of learning and personal



growth among our young people."

Lori Moog is quick to point out, "It is a mutually rewarding experience that strengthens bonds and builds community. Our student volunteers love the experience of helping out at the MLK Youth Center."

Adds Ranji, "The partnership between RVCC and the Martin Luther King Youth Center to serve low-income families exemplifies our shared values in education, community empowerment, and social justice. This collaboration embodies our belief in the transformative power of education and the importance of providing opportunities for all individuals to thrive and succeed, regardless of their background or circumstances.

"Through this partnership, we are able to make a meaningful impact in the lives of those we serve, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society for future generations," says Ranji.



PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

THE SOMERSET HILLS COMMUNITY HEALTH FOUNDATION

The Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation (SHCHF) is a donor-advised fund at the Community Foundation of New Jersey (CFNJ). The Foundation was created from funds



Jim Helpinstill (Treasurer), **Marie Sperber** (Secretary), **Kathy Cummins**, **Susan Lichtenberger**, **Kevin Maloney**, **Peter Mercer**, **Tim Mulder**, **Charles Reid**, and **Nina Vitale**.

The Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation seeks to fund projects that:

- Enable access to health care (and provide resources for restoration and maintenance of health—physical, mental & social wellbeing).
- Foster independent living at an appropriate level based on the individual's health situation (and support programs promoting health and wellness).
- Support healthcare worker availability and employment (and promote education and training programs and support programs for workers entering into home care, with assistance for educational costs, child care, transportation, and general living expense).

SHCHF has partnered with Raritan Valley Community College over the past two years to fund the *Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation Scholarship* at RVCC. In May 2022 and June 2023, SHCHF provided grant funding to RVCC to support the college's nursing program. Funds were used to help with tuition for RN students with financial need. Included in this support were ten \$7,500 scholarships to second-year nursing students in both the Class of 2023 and 2024.

"The continued support of the Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation will have a transformational impact on our Nursing students," said **Dr. Michael McDonough**, President, Raritan Valley Community College. "We are grateful for the leadership and commitment of the Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation."

"RVCC provides affordable and excellent education programs to



ANA IRAHETA, 2023-24 recipient of the SHCHF Scholarship at RVCC, with daughters **OCEANA** and **OCTAVIA**

raised by the Visiting Nurse Association of Somerset Hills, a provider of home and community-based healthcare services. SHCHF is committed to promoting healthy individuals and communities in Morris and Somerset counties. To that end, the Foundation exclusively funds programs that serve Morris and Somerset counties.

SHCHF is a volunteer Board. There are currently 11 Board Members: **Lesley Hetherington** (Chair), **Myra McGinley** (Vice-Chair),

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

“At the heart of the SHCHF’s mission is the desire to promote education and support healthcare worker availability. By providing a scholarship for the two-year RN program at RVCC, we empower students to embark on a rewarding career path without the heavy financial burden. Everyone at SHCHF looks forward to witnessing the positive impact it has on aspiring nursing professionals in Somerset County.”

LESLEY HETHERINGTON *Chair, Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation*



SERINA SCHROEDER, KIMBERLY FARKAS, KIMBERLY FARKAS, AZALEA HOLLY, 2023-24 recipients of the SHCHF Scholarship at RVCC

students from our local communities,” notes Board Vice-Chair, **Myra McGinley**. “We are excited to partner with RVCC to support scholarships to local residents to aid them in their pursuit of nursing careers. Our hope is that once scholarship recipients graduate, these future registered nurses will become available to work in our communities.”

BECOMING ENGAGED AT RVCC

SHCHF first became involved with RVCC, knowing they have an excellent nursing program and a priority of the Board is to increase the number of nurses in our area. One of the



VANESSA WILKERSON, LARISSA OSUCH, JULIA VERANO 2023-24 recipients of the SHCHF Scholarship at RVCC

board’s biggest concerns is the critical shortage of nurses; RVCC, with its robust nursing program, aligned with the SHCHF mission and geographic focus.

The SHCHF-RVCC partnership allows students who might not otherwise afford nursing tuition to attend RVCC with generous support from SHCHF.

“I wouldn’t be here without this incredible support. It has truly been life changing for me,” said **Elicia Levandoski**, a Class of ’23 grad of the RVCC Nursing program and one

of 10 inaugural recipients of last year’s historic gift from the SHCHF.

Added **Janet Nyambura**, also a Class of ’23 RVCC Nursing grad and also one of last year’s 10 recipients, “The impact this gift had on me personally cannot be overstated. But it was also transformative to my family. I will always be grateful to have benefited from such generosity.”



Join us for an unforgettable evening of baseball, community, and celebration at the ballpark!

Be a part of RVCC history at "The Big Picture" event – the LARGEST group photo ever taken of the RVCC community.

Gather pre-game on the field for this monumental moment, captured from above by a drone piloted by one of RVCC's own students. Bring your smiles and your **Raritan Valley Community College** pride as we make history together!



PACK THE PARK! MONDAY, JULY 1ST, 2024

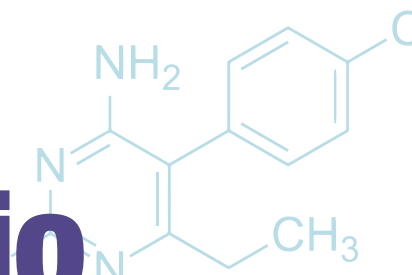
GATES OPEN AT 6:00 | ON FIELD PHOTO AT 6:15 | GAME AT 7:05





A CONVERSATION WITH

SARAH Imbriglio



DEAN OF THE DIVISION OF STEM AND HEALTH SCIENCES

Dr. Sarah Imbriglio has called Raritan Valley Community College her home since 2004 when she joined the Science & Engineering Department as a chemistry professor. Dr. Imbriglio taught courses in general and organic chemistry, with an emphasis on incorporating the principles of green chemistry and sustainability into the laboratory curriculum. As a faculty member, she supervised numerous student research projects and started the Science and Engineering department's annual student poster session to provide students with an opportunity to present their independent work to the College community.

A California native, Dr. Imbriglio earned a BS degree with highest honors in Chemistry from **UC Berkeley**, and a PhD in Organic Chemistry from **UC Irvine**. Before coming to RVCC, Dr. Imbriglio spent two years teaching undergraduate organic chemistry courses at **MIT**, during which time she also created the Digital Lab Techniques Manual, a popular online resource still available through the MIT Open Courseware platform.

In her role as dean, Dr. Imbriglio supervises the faculty and curricula in numerous areas, including science, engineering, mathematics, computer science, automotive technology, nursing, and allied health. She has leveraged industry and academic partnerships to

build career pathways for students in high-demand areas. The **Medical Laboratory Technology** program that she designed with local industry partner, **LabCorp**, will graduate its first cohort of students this summer, and the College's new **Mechanical Engineering Technology** program grants college credit for industry certifications earned as part of the College's high school Advanced Manufacturing program while also aligning seamlessly with **New Jersey Institute of Technology's Engineering Technology** BS program.

Dr. Imbriglio is involved in numerous projects through the **New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities** initiative, including projects in the Centers for Workforce Innovation in Cybersecurity, Cloud Computing, Electric Vehicles, and Aseptic Processing & Biomanufacturing. Through this work the College is striving to build robust talent pipelines that will keep local industries competitive on a global scale. Dr. Imbriglio also helped to create, and continues to support, the **RVCC Center for Environmental Studies** which has connected with numerous townships, park systems, and non-profit organizations to engage students in water quality, land management, and conservation efforts across the state.

Q California is a progressive state, but how was the experience of being a rising and rare female scientist in the UC system?

A I had an incredible academic experience at both Berkeley and Irvine. My professors and TAs were outstanding, and I had wonderfully supportive research advisors and labmates. It is interesting that, in all of my years of post-secondary education, only two of my science professors were women. There were very few successful female role models in chemistry. One of the things that I love about the STEM programs at RVCC is how many talented women we have in the classroom. Our female students can truly see themselves represented in male-dominated fields like chemistry, computer science, engineering, and even automotive technology.

Q What drew you to the sciences—and specifically organic chemistry?

A I always enjoyed math and science classes in high school, so I continued taking core science classes in college even though I didn't really know what I wanted to do. Nothing clicked in my first year, but my mind was completely blown when I took my first organic chemistry class as a sophomore. Organic chemistry is a unique mixture of logic and creativity that has so many interesting applications. Learning organic chemistry is almost like learning the grammatical rules and vocabulary of a new language and then being set free to think and write creatively in that language. And of course, I've always loved the organic lab. It's endlessly exciting to be able to manipulate compounds on a molecular level and probe their

SARAH Imbriglio

DEAN OF THE DIVISION OF STEM AND HEALTH SCIENCES

structure and reactivity. As a professor, my goal was always to share that excitement and wonder with my students.

Q As a California native, you've done a bit of a 'reverse migration' going from west to east; what drove that decision and how was that transition?

A That is true! When I first left California for the east coast, I fully expected to be back home in the bay area within a few years. After completing a post-doc in Boston while I was at MIT, my husband accepted his first job as a medicinal chemist at Merck in Rahway, and I came to RVCC. Given that New Jersey has long been a hub for the pharmaceutical industry, it wasn't surprising that two chemists came to New Jersey. What did surprise me was that we stayed. My friends and family spent years asking when we were going to move back. There are things about California that I miss to this day – the natural beauty of the state, the coastal California weather, the Mexican food (sigh...) – but we have put down deep roots in New Jersey. Our kids are Jersey natives and wouldn't have it any other way!

Q Clearly, you've been a pioneer in so many respects, but creating a Digital Lab Techniques Manual at MIT? That had to be somewhat breakthrough at the time, right?

A Yes, the Digital Lab Techniques Manual (DLTM) was a pretty "out there" idea at the time. This was long before smartphones or video-sharing platforms, so it took a lot of effort just to figure out the technical details in terms of filming, editing, and streaming the videos. I originally created the DLTM for the lab classes at MIT, but with its availability on the MIT Open Courseware platform and YouTube, the videos have been viewed by people around the world. I created the videos after just one year of fulltime teaching, so it's hard not to look back more than 20 years later and cringe a little. My kids think they're hilarious!

Q How are you managing given all of the roles you play (Dean, Mom, etc.)

A It takes a lot of advanced planning (and caffeine) to juggle my responsibilities at home and work. With two busy kids and a dog, my days start before dawn and typically end long after I should be in bed. My goal is always to use my time at work as productively as possible so that I can keep some separation between work and home, but I often find myself working on my laptop in the car at soccer practice and answering emails while I'm in line at the grocery store. As crazy as it is, it's never boring, and I know I'll miss the chaos someday when my kids go off to college.

The Imbriglio family: JASON, AMALIE, JACKSON, SARAH



I saw firsthand the importance of the college in the community and the impact it had on students in Sonoma County. Community colleges provide resources and opportunities that can dramatically change the trajectory of a person's life, and the best part about leading the sciences at RVCC is knowing that we are providing the highest quality education at the lowest cost. We prepare our students to be successful anywhere they want to go, whether it's transferring to a four-year school or entering the workforce.

Q You've been on an exceptional journey and you're now in your 20th year at RVCC. How does it feel?

A It's hard to believe that it's been 20 years – the time has flown by. I've been fortunate to be able to continue to grow and evolve in my role at the college, from a faculty member to a department chair to a dean. I've learned so much along the way, and I continue to be challenged and excited by the work that I get to do.

Q What drew you to the community college sector, and what's the best part about leading the sciences here?

A I was fortunate to be exposed to a community college early on. My mom worked for many years at Santa Rosa Junior College, and I saw firsthand the importance of the college in the community and the impact it had on students in Sonoma County. Community colleges provide resources and opportunities that can dramatically change the trajectory of a person's life, and the best part about leading the sciences at RVCC is knowing that we are providing the highest quality education at the lowest cost. We prepare our students to be successful anywhere they want to go, whether it's transferring to a four-year school or entering the workforce.

Q What do you most appreciate about your Raritan Valley Community College experience?

A I appreciate the people more than anything else. I am privileged to work with people from across the College who consistently go the extra mile for our students, and I am inspired every day by the passion, creativity, and commitment that my colleagues bring to their work.

Q We've heard your responsibilities may be shifting at RVCC; can you describe the changes and how you feel about it?

A When I first transitioned into the dean role, I was overseeing the College's STEM division. The addition of the Health Science Education department and the Evelyn S. Field Library to my portfolio in the second year was

unexpected and came with a very steep learning curve. Externally accredited healthcare programs like Nursing, Medical Assistant, and Occupational Therapy Assistant involve a whole new level of complexity in terms of clinical affiliations and placements, strict curricular requirements, and national certification exams, and keeping those programs operating during a global pandemic was one of the greatest challenges I have faced as an academic administrator. The College is in the process of hiring two new academic deans and creating smaller and more focused academic divisions; I will be back in my home turf overseeing the STEM division. The transition will be bittersweet. I'm excited to have more time and energy to focus on programming and innovations in STEM, but I will certainly miss working with the extraordinary faculty and staff in the health sciences and the library.

Q Don't know if you heard, but Osei Boateng, RVCC Class of 2016 and newest member of RVCC's Distinguished Alumni, has gone on to earn his Master's in Public Health from Cornell and has launched a non-profit which provides healthcare to remote parts of his home country of Ghana. He spoke in April at the 19th Annual RVCC Foundation Scholarship Reception, and his remarks included thanking "Dr. Sarah Imbriglio and Mr. Collins Donyea, who believed in me and invested in my success." How does that make you feel?

A I am so incredibly proud of Osei, but not at all surprised that he has been so successful and is doing such meaningful work. His goal, even when he was a student at RVCC, was to help bring healthcare to those who couldn't afford it. He is truly a student that I will never forget. Not only was he brilliant academically, but he always exuded warmth and positivity in a way that brightened the entire classroom.

Q What's been the biggest surprise about life in New Jersey?

A The biggest surprise was how different New Jersey is from the reputation it has outside of the state. It has so

A CONVERSATION WITH

SARAH Imbriglio

DEAN OF THE DIVISION OF STEM AND HEALTH SCIENCES



With the inaugural student recipients of the Labcorp Medical Laboratory Technology Scholarship at RVCC recipients: **ESSA CONTEH, LAURA BACINO, and QUMYING ZHAO**

much to offer in terms of geographic and cultural diversity, recreation and entertainment, and proximity to major metropolitan areas. I've loved seeing my west coast family reluctantly visit at first and then fall in love with the state once they've spent time here.

Q Are you a Jersey Shore fan or do you long for the great Pacific?

A The Pacific will always be my favorite ocean, especially the beautiful and rugged Sonoma coast where I grew up. Spending time at the shore is a completely different experience and is one of my favorite things to do in New Jersey. The water is warm and swimmable, which I love as a mom, and it's nice to have so many amenities at the beach. Our favorite Jersey beach is Avon by the Sea, in no small part because of the delicious cheese fries at the snack bar.

Q Soccer mom, Lacrosse mom, Softball mom, or Baseball mom?

A 100% Soccer Mom. Both of my kids play soccer at a fairly competitive level, so I spend all of my "free" time at the soccer field – or driving them to and from.

Q Favorite guilty pleasure - food obsession?

A Chocolate-covered gummy bears are my favorite food, hands down. I discovered them when I worked at a candy store in college and developed a life-long addiction.

Q Favorite series you've streamed in the last 6 months?

A I just finished rewatching Seinfeld from start to finish for the first time since I watched the original run on TV. Such a classic. As for new series, I'm anxiously awaiting the third season of The Bear – definitely one of my favorite new shows in the last couple of year.

Q Yankees or Mets?

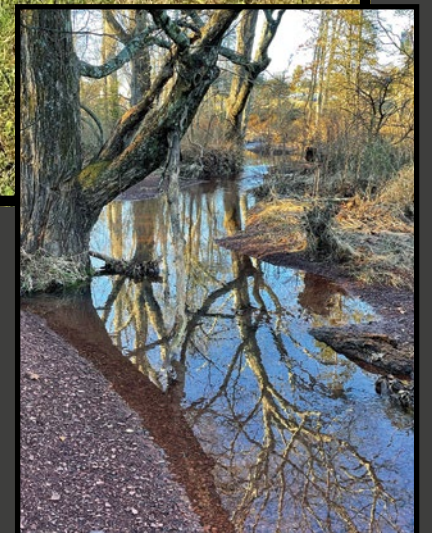
A We're a Red Sox family. My husband grew up near Boston, so we support all of the Boston teams even though we live in enemy territory. These days we're more likely to be watching soccer, whether it's the Premier League or NCAA college games.

Q What are you reading for pleasure these days? Do you have a favorite book?

A I'm constantly reading fiction, but I gave up on trying to pick a favorite book years ago. I just finished The Covenant of Water by Abraham Verghese which I really enjoyed. It's a beautifully written multi-generational story about a family in India.

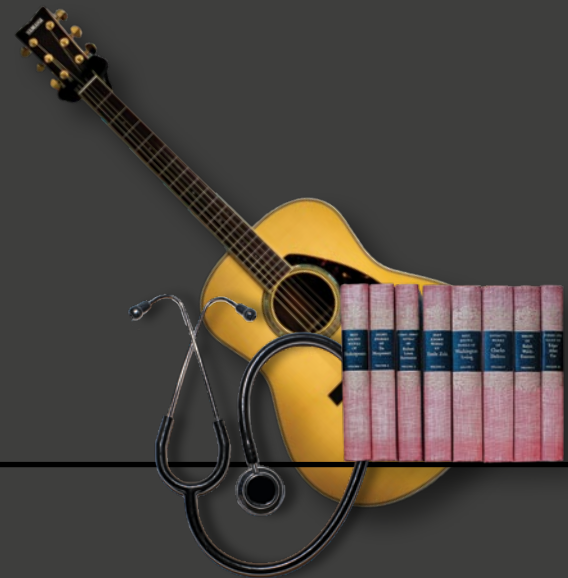


The Trail At RVCC



Stay tuned, coming in 2025...

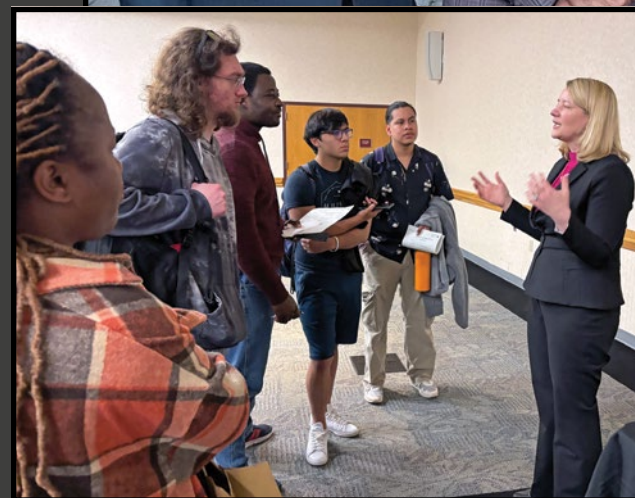
A VIBRANT Tapestry



The vibrant tapestry which is Raritan Valley Community College

From a Nota Bene Awards Ceremony that honored 22 students for their work in vocal performances, videos, essays, short stories, slide shows, and a sensory wall; to RVCC's Phi Theta Kappa chapter once again garnering national and international recognition; to another inspiring year for the Sanofi US Corporate Mentor Program—now up to 77 student mentees since inception in 2017; to picking up shovel and rake to give your field of dreams a little TLC; to a compelling performance of “Letters from Anne and Martin”—hosted by RVCC’s Institute of Holocaust and Genocide Studies; to attracting one of the more active and engaged Student Government Associations in the College’s history; to donors hosting our students at galas in extraordinary venues; to celebrating the “Divine Nine” in African American culture; to representing the RVCC Honors College with exceptional Capstone presentations; to coming out to support your fellow

athletes as you wait for your season to begin; to the Board of Trustees touring the campus to soak up some of what makes this institution great; to rolling up your staff sleeves to help with student events; to honoring the cultural significance and unifying ethos of the Kente stole—a beautiful tradition at RVCC; to networking with students after an RVCC-hosted Technology and Innovation Conference; to celebrating the culminating event for RVCC Nursing students; to chilling at the RVCC Resource Center and Food Pantry; to a leadership team willing to not take itself too seriously. There is simply no way to capture the fullness of this institution, this campus and its students, faculty, staff, and supporters. No way to convey the depth of its collective impact and life-changing role. But we have photographs and the thousands of words represented in each image.





ART & DESIGN

ARTS & DESIGN AT RVCC IS A CREATIVE, CHALLENGING, AND EXCITING DEPARTMENT IN WHICH TO STUDY THE ARTS. STUDENTS MAJORING IN EITHER VISUAL ART OR GRAPHIC & INTERACTIVE DESIGN ENTER THEIR RESPECTIVE DISCIPLINE WITH RAW TALENT AND AN EAGERNESS TO LEARN. DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF THEIR JOURNEY, THEY COMPLETE RIGOROUS STUDIO COURSES FOCUSED ON LEARNING THE ESSENTIAL FUNDAMENTALS AND BOLSTERING THEIR SKILLSET, AND THEN SPEND THE SECOND YEAR DEVELOPING A MASTERY OF DISCIPLINE-SPECIFIC SKILLS WHILE DISCOVERING THEIR PERSONAL, CREATIVE VOICE. WITH THESE NEWLY ACQUIRED ASSETS, RVCC VISUAL ART AND GRAPHIC & INTERACTIVE DESIGN MAJORS GRADUATE BURSTING WITH TALENT, OWNING IMPRESSIVE PORTFOLIOS, AND READY FOR ANY OPPORTUNITY THAT PRESENTS ITSELF. IN FACT, RVCC AFA DEGREE RECIPIENTS HAVE TRANSFERRED TO SOME OF THE COUNTRY'S

TOP VISUAL ART AND GRAPHIC DESIGN PROGRAMS SUCH AS KEAN UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF VISUAL ARTS, MASON GROSS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS, AND SCHOOL OF THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO, WHILE OTHERS GO ON TO FIND EMPLOYMENT IN TALENT-BASED INDUSTRIES. RVCC'S PRIME LOCATION JUST AN HOUR OUTSIDE BOTH NEW YORK CITY AND PHILADELPHIA BENEFITS ARTS & DESIGN AS THE DEPARTMENT ATTRACTS TALENTED TEACHING ARTISTS WITH COVETED EXPERIENCE AND RECOGNITION IN THEIR RESPECTIVE FIELDS. WE HOPE YOU ENJOY THE SELECTION OF RVCC STUDENT WORK FEATURED ON THESE PAGES. TO SEE MORE OF OUR AMAZING STUDENT WORK, VISIT THE INSTAGRAM FEED OF RVCC ART GALLERY @RVCC_ART_GALLERY.



VISUAL ARTS

BONNIE HUNHOLZ
MAJOR: VISUAL ART
RVCC CLASS OF 2025
★★★★★
"SELF PORTRAIT"
WATERCOLOR ON PAPER
CLASS: FIGURE DRAWING 1
SEMESTER/YEAR: SPRING 2024
INSTRUCTOR: SARAH ROCHE



VISUAL ARTS

MADISON ADAMS
MAJOR: VISUAL ART
RVCC CLASS OF 2025
★★★★★
"POP ART SELF-PORTRAIT"
ACRYLIC ON BRISTOL BOARD
CLASS: COLOR THEORY
SEMESTER/YEAR: FALL 2023
INSTRUCTOR: SHY RAGUSO



VISUAL ARTS

DEMETRIOS GIANAKIS
MAJOR: GRAPHIC & INTERACTIVE DESIGN
RVCC CLASS OF 2024
★★★★★
"SELF-PORTRAIT"
GRAPHITE AND COLORED PENCIL ON PAPER
CLASS: DRAWING 2
SEMESTER/YEAR: SPRING 2024
INSTRUCTOR: HEEJUNG KIM



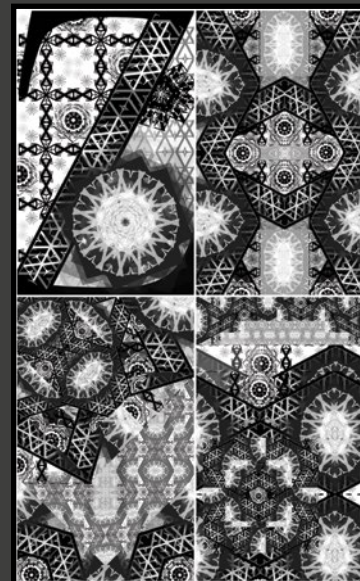
VISUAL ARTS

ELIZABETH MATHES
MAJOR: VISUAL ART
RVCC CLASS OF 2024
★★★★★
"N. 3RD ST."
WATERCOLOR ON PAPER
CLASS: WATERCOLOR 1
SEMESTER/YEAR: FALL 2023
INSTRUCTOR: HEEJUNG KIM



GRAPHIC and INTERACTIVE DESIGN

JACQUELINE SHOTYK
MAJOR: GRAPHIC & INTERACTIVE DESIGN
RVCC CLASS OF 2024
★★★★★
"HITHER PAGE BOOK COVER"
ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR & PHOTOSHOP
CLASS: VISUAL DESIGN 2
SEMESTER/YEAR: SPRING 2023
INSTRUCTOR: DARREN MCMANUS



GRAPHIC and INTERACTIVE DESIGN

STEPHANIE VILLANUEVA
MAJOR: GRAPHIC & INTERACTIVE DESIGN
RVCC CLASS OF 2024
★★★★★
"BODONI CAPITAL Z COMPOSITIONS"
ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR
CLASS: TYPOGRAPHY
SEMESTER/YEAR: SPRING 2024
INSTRUCTOR: DARREN MCMANUS



GRAPHIC and INTERACTIVE DESIGN

STEPH STOKES
MAJOR: GRAPHIC & INTERACTIVE DESIGN
RVCC CLASS OF 2024
★★★★★
"SKATOBER BRANDING MATERIALS"
ADOBE ILLUSTRATOR & PHOTOSHOP
CLASS: VISUAL DESIGN 2
SEMESTER/YEAR: FALL 2023
INSTRUCTOR: DARREN MCMANUS



GRAPHIC and INTERACTIVE DESIGN

PETER TRINIDAD
MAJOR: GRAPHIC & INTERACTIVE DESIGN
RVCC CLASS OF 2024
★★★★★
"HISTORY OF SWISS DESIGN"
ADOBE INDESIGN & PHOTOSHOP
CLASS: VISUAL DESIGN 1
SEMESTER/YEAR: FALL 2023
INSTRUCTOR: DARREN MCMANUS

A MAJOR GIFT For Service Learning at RVCC

Thanks to the generosity of Don and Penny Pray, a nationally recognized program is set to soar even higher.

The couple's recent \$150,000 commitment—the largest ever for RVCC's service learning program—provides greater recognition and exposure for the achievements and impact of RVCC students involved in service to the community...



In appreciation of the couple's gift, a special dedication of "The Pray Family Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement" was held last month for students, faculty, and members of the Pray family.

"The Service Learning Program aligns perfectly with our philanthropic interests and passions," says Don Pray. "Helping develop leadership skills in students, and having them experience and appreciate 'giving back' and the impact they can have—for the greater good—has never been more important."

Adds Penny Pray, "We're honored to support the work being done at RVCC. The College is doing some exceptional things to impact the journeys of its students, and service learning is just one example. It truly is 'the best community college in New Jersey.'"

The Prays' gift will benefit the College in a number of ways by providing \$25,000 annually for scholarships and program support including:

- Establishing the new The Pray Family Service Learning and Civic Engagement Scholarship, awarded to RVCC-committed high school seniors exhibiting exceptional service to the community, at \$2,000 per person, given in conjunction with the Paul



The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

The Pray Family Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement has earned national recognition from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. RVCC is one of only three community colleges in the nation—and the only college in New Jersey—to receive this distinction in 2024.



Robeson Youth Achievement Awards;

- Creating new student awards at \$500 each per semester (total \$4,000), to recognize excellence in the academic program areas of education, nursing, health science, and environmental science;
- Increasing funding for the four current student service awards to \$1,000 each;
- Providing 20 stipends to expand training and encourage participation

for student poll workers at elections; and

- Supporting professional development and dissemination of best practices at national conferences associated with the work of The Pray Family Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement at RVCC.

Service learning and civic engagement at RVCC involves more than 1,000 students serving 250 community organizations in Somerset and Hunterdon counties through various community engagement experiences. By providing their time, talent and energy, students are helping the organizations meet their goals and donating the economic equivalent of \$1,000,000 via community service hours to local organizations.

"The generosity of the Pray family will have a transformative impact on the work we are doing," added Lori Moog, Director of Service Learning and Community Outreach. "In addition to stimulating new collaborations both inside and outside of RVCC, it also signals to our students that their service is seen, valued, and celebrated."

Inaugural Student Award Celebration Of The Pray Family Center For Service Learning and Civic Engagement CELEBRATING RVCC STUDENT AWARD WINNERS

NATIONAL AWARD

Campus Compact Newman Civic Fellowship
Recipient: **Kambiz Roghanchi**, Class of 2025;
Future Plans: Brown University, Social Work

INSTITUTIONAL AWARDS

The Pray Family Center for Service Learning & Civic Engagement Paul Robeson Youth Achievement Award
Recipient: **Rooney Rasare**, Hillsborough High School; Future Plans: Raritan Valley Community College, Fall 2024

The Pray Family Center Service Learning Leadership Award
Recipient: **Nicholas Gallo**, Class of 2024;
Future Plans: Rutgers New Brunswick, Urban Planning and Design

The Pray Family Center Nonprofit Civic Engagement Award

Recipient: **Damian Peter Juth**, Class of 2024;
Future Plans: Princeton University, Mathematics

The Pray Family Center Student Ambassador Award

Recipient: **Archita Gupta**; Class Year Spring 2025; Future Plans: Transfer to four-year school, Film and Communications

THE PRAY FAMILY CENTER SERVICE LEARNING ACADEMIC PROGRAM AWARDS

Recipient: **Merub Ahmad**, Class of 2025
Foundations of Education
Nominated by Dr. Kathryn Suk

Recipient: **Zizi Reyes**, Class of 2025;
Future Plans: Kean University, Education
Early Childhood Education Program
Nominated by Professor Kimberly Maitland

Recipient: **Dylan Arby**, Class of 2024;
Future Plans: Georgia Institute of Technology, Computational Media
Nominated by Dr. Izabela Zieba, Assistant Professor

Recipient: **Jessica Korbobo**
Environmental Science and Sustainability
Nominated by Dr. Emilie Stander

Recipient: **Nancy Gallego**, Class of 2024;
Future Plans: Begin Career as Medical Assistant
Medical Assisting Program
Nominated by Janette Rodriguez, Assistant Professor of Health Science

Recipient: **Morgan Harfenist**, Class of 2026;
Future Plans: Occupational Therapy Assistant working in pediatrics, Occupational Therapy Assistant Program
Nominated by Dr. Beau Younker

TRENDS IN NURSING

Recipients: **Hana Affouf, Jeremy Llaguno, Nelson Rivera-Contreras, Michele Tokar**
Nominated by Dr. Maria Molle

PRESIDENTS VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD RECIPIENTS AND LEVELS:

Bronze: **Nahary Boraei, Catherine Bryan, Isabella Dorsogna, Sarah Haas, Edward Morales, Kiara Pereira, Melissa Armata-Quiroz, Emily Rosalli, Lila Seroy, Nicholas Hendrik B. Tadena, Elena Waddleton**

Silver: **Buddy "Jason" Deitz, Garret Gerow, Damaris Ramos Pineda, Jack Ryan**

Gold: **Dylan Abry, Rachel Clerkin, Sandra Faragalla, Nicholas Gallo, Michael Enzo Gaspar, Ahmad Insanally, Damian Juth, Kambiz Roghanchi, Joshua Rutka**

"TO HAVE THE AFFIRMATION AND SUPPORT OF DON AND PENNY PRAY MEANS A GREAT DEAL TO US. THEY ARE THOUGHTFUL, ASTUTE, WELL-RESEARCHED PHILANTHROPISTS, AND THEIR COMMITMENT TO RVCC IS A TRUE MARK OF DISTINCTION. WE ARE HONORED."

Mike Marion, Executive Director of the RVCC Foundation and Alumni Association.

'Tis The Season

The stars were out in December at the *Annual Winter's Eve Celebration* on the campus of Raritan Valley Community College. Festive, fun, and generous—the event's Scholarship Tree generated \$1,900, which was matched by President Michael McDonough, the RVCC Foundation, and an anonymous RVCC staffer. In total, some \$7,600 was raised in scholarship support for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities enrolled at *The Achievement Center at Raritan Valley Community College*.

It was philanthropy at its best: inspiring, inclusive, impactful. Special thanks to the RVCC faculty, staff, and Board of Trustees for celebrating the season with generosity and for honoring students with intellectual and developmental disabilities who stand to benefit from it.



ABOUT THE RVCC Foundation



MISSION

Expand the network of influence behind Raritan Valley Community College, deepen the bonds with our current supporters, and inspire new partners to invest in our students, our faculty, our staff, and our signature strategic priorities.

Our team leads the cultivation of existing philanthropic relationships, and identifies, activates, and grows new relationships, all to increase overall engagement with, and support of, Raritan Valley Community College. *RVCC students are at the heart of everything we do.* The RVCC Foundation also oversees the RVCC Alumni Association and all related engagement with the more

than 20,000 active alumni of the College. We invite residents of Somerset and Hunterdon Counties—and beyond—to learn more and to join our efforts on behalf of the best community college of New Jersey: Raritan Valley Community College. Find out more at rvccfoundation.org.

RVCC FOUNDATION STAFF

MIKE MARION: Executive Director & Chief Development Officer

(michael.marion@raritanval.edu)

O: 908-648-8567; C: 973-600-2848

Mike joined RVCC in April of 2018, after 11 years at Rutgers University Foundation, where he served as Associate Vice President. Prior to coming to higher education, Mike had a distinguished career in the advertising, marketing, sponsorship management, and event marketing industries, including 17 years at AT&T, where his passion for philanthropy began. He has an MBA from the University of South Carolina and a BS from Eastern Michigan University.

JANET DUNNE: Development Associate

(janet.dunne@raritanval.edu) O: 908-648-8355

Janet has been with the RVCC Foundation since 2014. Her main responsibilities include special events, managing the financial and fiscal reporting processes, and maintaining the day-to-day operations of the Foundation. Prior to joining RVCC, Janet worked at a consulting firm in Washington D.C. She has a BS from West Chester University.

CINDY HADDAD: Development Assistant

(cindy.haddad@raritanval.edu) O: 908-648-8412

Cindy is the part-time Development Assistant and has been with the Foundation since May 2021 and assists with fundraising events, data entry, scholarships, and any other day-to-day needs. Previously, Cindy worked as an Executive Assistant for BOC Gases for 10 years. She was also a Board Member of the St. Ann School Home School Association.

Visit us: RVCC Foundation,

74 Lamington Road, Branchburg, NJ 08876-3315

Mail us: RVCC Foundation,

118 Lamington Road, Branchburg, NJ 08876-3315

RVCC Foundation's federal tax number: 23-7138731

MIKE, CINDY and JANET taking in the solar eclipse



ABOUT THE RVCC Foundation



IN OTHER RVCC FOUNDATION NEWS...

TRANSITIONS

Stacey Kimmins, a previous chair and longstanding member of the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors, Erika Tooman, also a veteran member of the Board, and Rich Berliner, have decided to step away from their leadership capacity at the RVCC Foundation Board. Stacey, Erika, and Rich served with passion and generosity and will be missed.

Joining the board during the 2023-24 academic year are Raquel Mura, Sean Fleming, and Michael Schwertfeger.

Raquel, who is chairing the Board's Committee on Trusteeship, is Vice President and Head of R&D Global Operations North America at Sanofi. Raquel is a passionate advocate for gender equity and other diversity, equity, and inclusion issues, both at Sanofi and within the life sciences community at large. Sean is Vice President of Customer Engagement for Zendrive, a leading driving behavior software analytics company. He is responsible for all touchpoints to Zendrive's customers, and leads a global team of presales engineers, solution architects, professional services, and customer success and support. Michael is Chief Financial Officer of J.G. Petrucci Company, Inc., a real estate development company, and manages a staff of seven in two states.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION AND GIVING

RVCC Foundation board member, Dan Van Tran was a panelist at the 2nd Annual *Technology & Innovation Conference* in April on the RVCC campus. Dan's topic: "The Commercial Adoption of Artificial Intelligence." In addition to his speaking role, Dan also was available for students in the post-event networking session. Dan also directed his Giving Day 2024 love to four student organizations, including \$1,000 to the AI student club (unprecedented gift for that club—and for any student club!) with another \$1,000 split between the Astronomy Club and the Society of Women Engineers (and \$250 to Women's Volleyball). The three clubs then invited Dan to

come speak with them (which he did, sharing three hours of this time with this technology-focused group of students!). Speaking of Giving Day, board member Gary Woodring (and wife Lisa), put their 'match within the match' back in play this year, committing \$2,500 to match the first \$250 of fundraising for each of the eight teams under the RVCC Athletics banner. Gary was also a frequent fan at the Men's and Women's Basketball games.

DISTINGUISHED

Board member Sebastian Galvez was named one of five "Distinguished Alumni" of Raritan Valley Community College and the RVCC Alumni Association. Sebastian's many accomplishments are profiled in the RVCC Alumni Association section of this Annual Report. Congratulations Sebastian!



SANDRA FARAGALLA and ZACHARY COLE

THE JOURNEY CONTINUES

Our two student reps on the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors are graduating on May 11 as part of the Class of 2024! Sandra Faragalla and Zach Cole, who are also among an elite group of mentees in the Sanofi U.S. Corporate Mentor program, will be missed but we're confident they'll be staying in touch as newly minted members of the RVCC Alumni Association. Happy Trails to Sandra and Zach, and continued best of luck!!



DAN VAN TRAN with RVCC student ALEX EICKT, at the 2nd Annual Technology & Innovation Conference

ABOUT THE RVCC Foundation



RVCC Foundation Topline Summary of Giving

FISCAL YEAR 2023 (July 1, 2022–June 30, 2023)

IN OTHER RVCC FOUNDATION NEWS...

Annual photo of the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors taken at their April meeting “down on The Farm” (aka, 74 Lamington Road, home of the RVCC Foundation).



Spring on The Farm (74 Lamington Road)

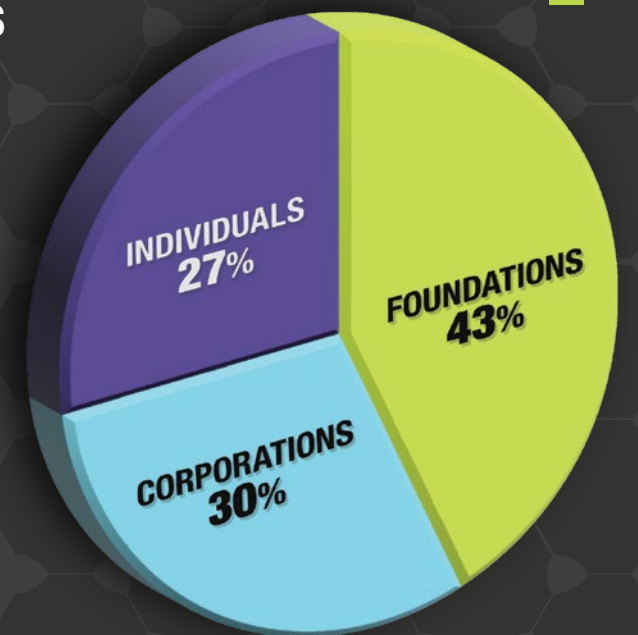
HEAR THE LION ROAR:
Scholarships. Partnerships. Leadership.
At the RVCC Foundation.



Total Funds Raised: \$958,564

Total Gifts: 2,049
Total Donors: 830

Source of Gifts by Segment



TOP 10 MOST GENEROUS SUPPORTERS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023

(Institutions and Individuals \$10,000 and above)

- The Provident Bank Foundation \$100,000
- Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation (via Community Foundation of New Jersey) \$90,000
- The Frank S. and Patricia F. Russo Family Fund (via Ayco Charitable Foundation) \$78,000
- Sanofi US Services Inc. \$75,000
- Francis & Rosalind Cuss Foundation, Inc. \$50,000
- ERS Charitable Fund, Inc. \$30,000
- Janssen Pharmaceuticals \$20,000
- Anonymous \$20,000
- Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital – Somerset \$17,800
- Healthcare Quality Strategies Foundation \$15,000

THE LAST WORD

Jordan Barge

RVCC CLASS OF 2024



Each year THE LAST WORD features the remarks of the student commencement speaker at THE RVCC Graduation Ceremony.

JORDAN BARGE completed an Associate of Science in Criminal Justice from RVCC in December, graduating Summa Cum Laude as a member of the Honors College. She is receiving the Academic Award for Criminal Justice. She now attends John Jay College of Criminal Justice, where she is studying International Criminal Justice.

While at RVCC, Barge, an EOF student and Student Ambassador, served as President of the Criminal Justice Club and Vice President of Leadership and Service for the Orgullo Latino Club. She received the Cento Amici and Raritan Promise scholarships, as well as the President's Volunteer Gold Service Award and the annual Service Learning Leadership Award.

Barge has interned for the Somerset County Prosecutor's Office (Sex Crimes Unit), the Somerset County Sheriff's Office, NJ Courts (Criminal Division), and the RVCC Achievement Center. This summer, she will be attending the Monmouth County Police Academy and serving as a Special Law Enforcement Officer Class 1.

Good morning everyone, I am so happy to see proud families, friends, and mentors in the crowd for the exceptional graduating class of 2024! First and foremost, congratulations! Today is a celebration of our hard work, and the countless hours we have invested in reaching this significant milestone. Before we begin, I would like all the graduates to take a moment to locate their loved ones in the crowd and say thank you! We all know we did not get here alone. I know I owe a debt of gratitude to my spouse Cesar and his family the Gallardos family, and my siblings, who supported me every step of the way. I also want to acknowledge the EOF, the Honors College, the Service Learning, and Criminal Justice programs as well as the administrative office where I worked. Their unwavering support has been instrumental in my journey, and I am forever grateful. Let's give the graduates and our supporters a round of applause.

Writing this speech, I reflected on my journey, it was rough and some days I looked it. My first semester here was in the Spring of 2022. I took a gap semester to save up for a car. I had a beat-up Honda that anyone could hear from a mile away. Beginning my college experience to say I was terrified is an understatement; I am the first in my family to go to college, I didn't have much support or guidance and worked full time. It felt like I was being thrown into the deep end of a pool and not knowing how to swim. My college experience has taught me that I may have not known how to

swim when I dove in, but if I have a dream, drive, a passion and a purpose, I can learn how to stay afloat.

I came to college with a purpose and that purpose was to use my lived experiences to help people to be "the change you want to see in the world." Growing up I wasn't sure if I was going to get a college education because I grew up in poverty. I wish I could tell you an inspirational story about a family who came to the States from Central America for a better life but that was not the case. I knew I wanted to get a college education even if I didn't have the same support the other kids had. I knew it when I was homeless. I was working for the possibility for me and my siblings to get out of that situation but it was hard. In those times I was exhausted and I wanted to give up but no matter how hard I tried, something in me wouldn't let me. Growing up, social services and law enforcement were in and out of my life. And because of this many people ASSUMED what my life would be. And because of this I internalized it and didn't visualize that I could be anything more than a statistic. But I knew if I could be a good leader, I could inspire others in situations similar to my past.

And I did that and more. I believe my degree will enable me to change the system that affected me and my loved ones. However, among the chaos and uncertainty, I realized that my journey wasn't just about getting a degree—it was about using my voice to advocate for change. And let me tell you, there's nothing more empowering than knowing you

THE LAST WORD

Jordan Barge



have the power to make a difference. And, YOU have the power to make a difference!

My time in college has been a journey filled with meaningful opportunities to make a difference, even before earning my degree. It allowed me to believe in the profound impact I have on others. Without RVCC I wouldn't have the support and the opportunities that I have today. I would not have accomplished as much as I did and will continue to do. I know now our efforts and struggles mean something. To everyone, the American Dream looks different and if we share those dreams, we will see we all have something in common and that is not monetary goals but making that dream in our heads the ones that kept us going during those difficult times, making that dream our reality.

One of my mentors who works at both RVCC and a four-year university said people might assume students at four-year universities, with their broader resources and opportunities, would be energetic toward their future, but it's often the students at community colleges who show greater resilience and energy toward their futures. The ones who take advantage of opportunities. I believe that is because we've learned to thrive in challenging situations and stay focused on moving forward. And that will separate you from the rest. This resilience is often rooted in our upbringing and the experiences of those who came before us. Some of us have grown up watching our loved ones work hard days and nights just to give us the opportunity to get an education that they were not as fortunate to get.

My journey is a testament to the resilience and determination of community college students. Despite the odds, we've thrived, seizing every opportunity to better ourselves and our communities. Our dreams may look different, but they unite us in our pursuit of a brighter future.

So, I applaud you for exploring the unknown and imagining what seemed to be the unimaginable. I know



it's scary but a lesson my mentor taught me is...if you are scared you are growing, kind of like a mental puberty. Life is unpredictable, trying to control life is like trying to navigate the course of a river. No matter how meticulously we plan life, just like the unpredictable currents, it will inevitably chart its own course. Embracing the natural flow, and learning to navigate the currents, allows us to thrive through anything life throws at us. And if there is anything I want you to leave here today with is do something you wouldn't normally do, take risks and

I promise you something good will always come of it even if it is not the outcome you expected. Don't be afraid to fall on your face.

You matter and you have a purpose. For everyone that is different and is discovered at different times in our lives. So don't compare yourself. Focus on your path. Have fun celebrating even the small accomplishments. Because when you add up all those small accomplishments you get a fulfilled dream and I never want any of you to stop striving for those dreams. My whole life I was judged based on where I came from and not for who I was and as much as it was devastating, I would not take back those experiences because they shaped me into the resilient individual I am today. Don't let anyone tell you what your future looks like. Your story may not have such a happy beginning but that does not make you who you are. It is the rest of your story, who you choose to be.

As one of my favorite actors Robin Williams once said, it's time for your next adventure no matter what anyone tells you, words and ideas can change the world. Class of 2024, we've come a long way, but the journey is far from over. No matter the profession you all pursue, I am so excited to see what positive impact you will have on the world. Congratulations, class of 2024! **Thank you.**





RARITAN
VALLEY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FOUNDATION

