

“

RVCC'S AMBITIONS WILL BE SUSTAINED BY OUR EVER-EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS. THESE CRITICAL COLLABORATIONS HELP US TO ATTRACT NEW SUPPORTERS, IMAGINE NEW PROGRAMS, GENERATE NEW REVENUE, AND SECURE NEW CAREERS FOR OUR STUDENTS.

Michael J. McDonough
President, Raritan Valley Community College

2023



RARITAN VALLEY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FOUNDATION
Annual Report

Campus colors, spring 2023



WELCOME

AND THANK YOU!

JUNE 8, 2023

Dear Friends, Supporters & Partners of RVCC,

Welcome to our largest in-person fundraising event of the year, and thank you all for joining us in support of Raritan Valley Community College.

By virtue of your participation in the “19th Annual” today, we count you among our partners and that’s not something we take lightly. The truth is, partners, partnerships, and an engaged community are becoming increasingly important to the future of RVCC. Which is all the more reason to thank you for showing up: with your game, your financial resources, and with your friends and work colleagues.

We hope that long after today’s tourney is over, you’ll continue to carry your partner status forward. The RVCC Foundation exists to engage, promote and fundraise in support of the priorities of Raritan Valley Community College and the students in its care. This important work cannot have too many partners.

Another theme that we hope you’ll see—and maybe feel—both on the golf course today and perusing these pages, is that of pride. There is much to be proud of when you consider the vitality and impact of Raritan Valley Community College. You don’t have to be a student or a member of the faculty or staff or an alum or long-time donor to be bullish about this institution and its importance to the region it calls home. “RVCC Proud” is more than a catch phrase or a social media tag. In a world desperate for more positivity, RVCC Proud is a declaration.

In fact, being RVCC Proud is the minimum expectation for every partner. We hope you too feel pride in this place, and the people who make it thrive, the students it enriches, and the community it serves. RVCC is more than worthy of it.

On behalf of the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors, the RVCC Foundation staff, and the entire RVCC community, thank you for being among the engaged, supportive, and proud.

With gratitude,

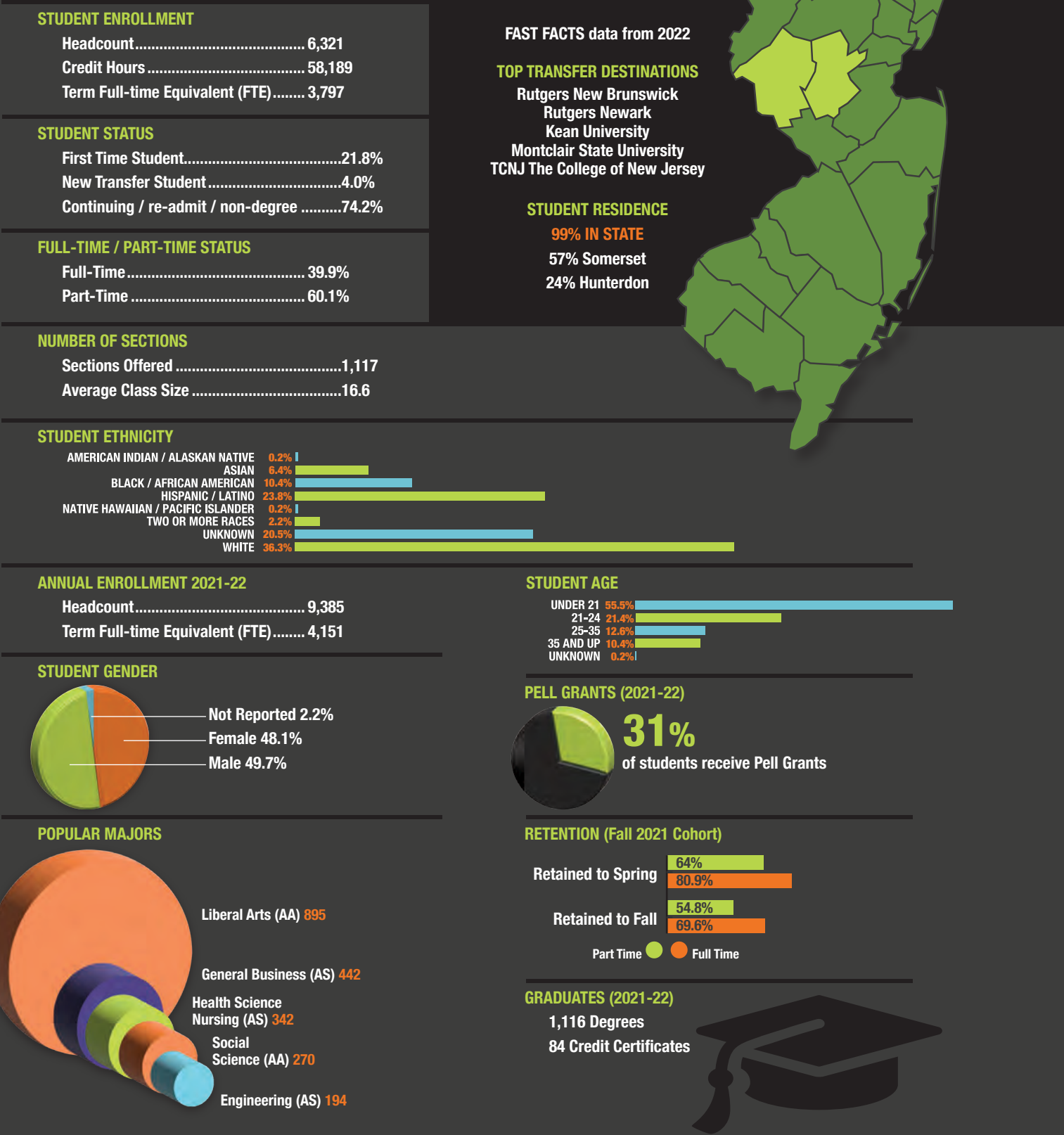


Jimena Torres, Class of 2023,
with dad, mom and little sis

#RVCCPROUD

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



THANK YOU



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

EVENT SPONSORS

- TITLE SPONSOR**
Dancker
- LINKS SPONSOR**
MetroTek Electrical Services Company
- BREAKFAST SPONSORS**
ANS Consultants Inc.
LJS Electrical
- BALL MARKER SPONSOR**
Schilke Construction Co.
- GOLF BALL SPONSOR**
TD Bank
- GOLF CART SPONSORS**
FAST – Fire and Security Technologies
Fulton Financial Advisors
PKF O'Connor Davies
Titan Engineers, PC
United Business Systems
- BEVERAGE CART SPONSOR**
eDesign Interactive
- BAGPIPER SPONSORS**
KSI Consulting Engineers, LLC
L.B. Electric Supply Co., Inc.
- DRIVING RANGE SPONSORS**
FAST – Fire and Security Technologies
Integrated Systems & Services, Inc.
MKSD Architects
- TEE SIGN SPONSORS**
Architectural Preservation Studio, DPC
Bridgeway Senior Healthcare
Celldex Therapeutics
New Energy Concepts, LLC
Suplee, Clooney & Company

GOLFERS

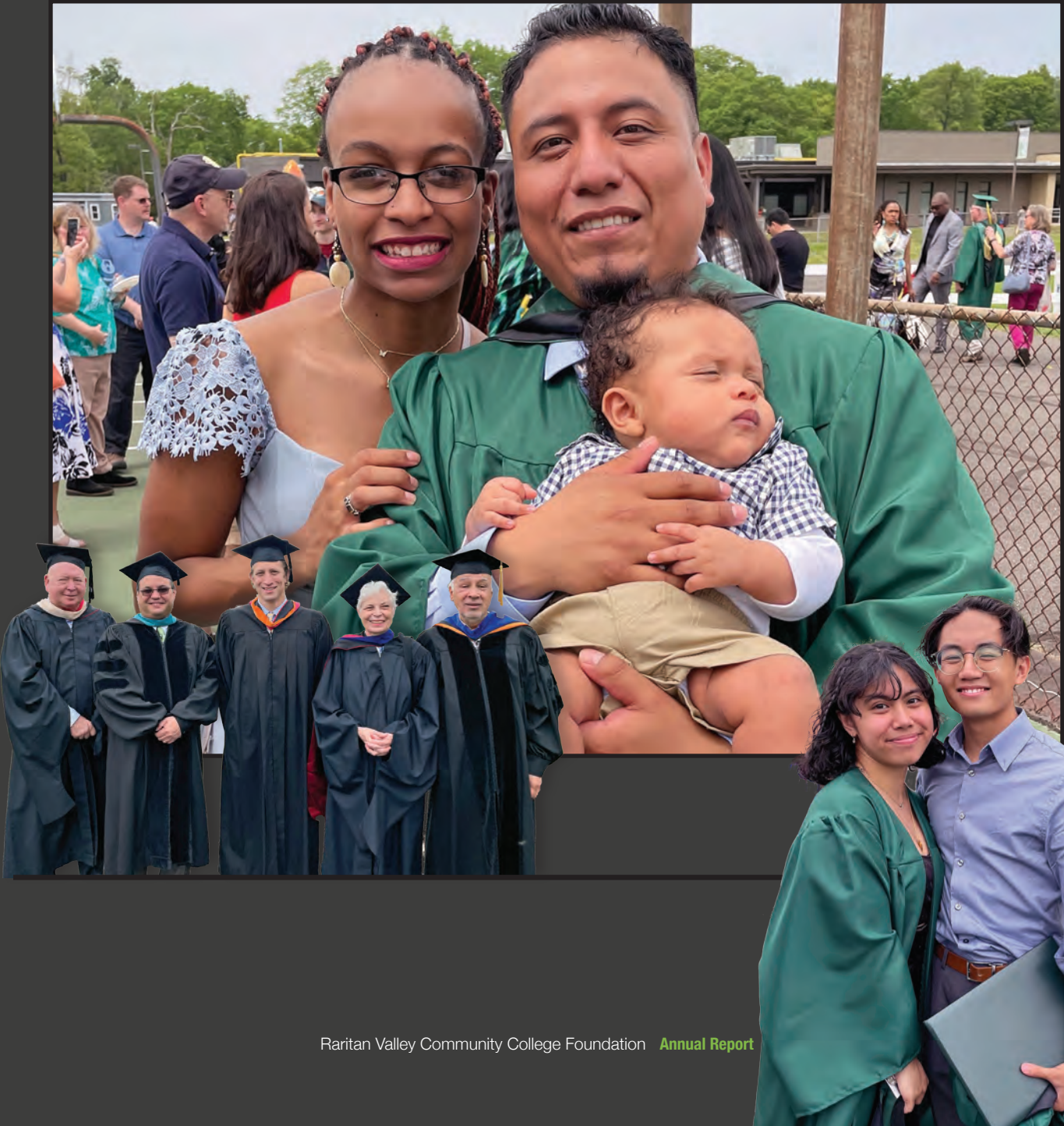
- SUMMA CUM LAUDE**
Bohler
DiFrancesco, Bateman, Kunzman, Davis, Lehrer & Flaum, P.C.
PepsiCo
Provident Bank
United Business Systems
- MAGNA CUM LAUDE**
Follett Higher Education Group
New Jersey Risk Managers & Consultants, LLC
Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset
SSP Architects
Trane
Van Cleef Engineering Associates, LLC
- CUM LAUDE**
Bedrock Concrete Corp.
C. Lombardi Construction
Gourmet Dining LLC
GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc.
Hiland Construction Services
Interface, Inc.
Thomas & Elizabeth Mitchell
Pave-Rite, Inc.
PhillyCom, Inc.
UniTemp Mechanical Degrees LLC
USA Architects
Gary Woodring
- INDIVIDUAL PLAYERS**
Norris McLaughlin, P.A.
Steven A. Reichman
Dan Van Tran
TriState Capital Bank
Trophy Point, LLC
Barry Walker
- MUCH GRATITUDE TO**
RVCC Golf Committee
Donna Stolzer
Event Volunteers

MILESTONES Reached:



Celebrating the RVCC Graduating Class of 2023!

Another year, and a class full of milestones; some 1,017 total grads, ranging in age from 17 to 65. Congratulations to the 54th graduating class of Raritan Valley Community College.







Author and brother, John, at Huron Hills Golf Course

THE PERFECT NUMBER: 9

BY W.O. MARION



My home course, the very public Huron Hills Golf Course, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, is not Trump National or Hamilton Farm – which is exactly why I like it so much. It is, perhaps, the absolute *opposite* of those two upscale courses and their ilk. No long, winding, dramatically-landscaped entrance. No manned security shack with barrier gate to keep out ne’er-do-wells. No Taj Mahal of a clubhouse. And no fussy, self-important members strutting about. None of that. Just a short asphalt driveway with one speed bump and a parking lot for perhaps 40 cars that’s a couple dozen steps from the 300-square-foot “pro shop” that sells bottled water, pretzels, and peanuts and caters to your basic duffers and hacks, guys like me.

In keeping with this palpable lack of ostentation, the green fees are also quite modest, my favorite being the “9 for \$9 before 9” special for walkers. (Will \$9 even get you a bag of tees in Bedminster?)

Not only do I love playing just nine bucks to play golf, I also love playing just nine holes. For me, nine is the perfect number, especially the par 32 back nine at Huron Hills. With four par 3s and no hole longer than 385 yards, numbers 10 through 18 on paper must appear as a bunny hill might to a skilled downhill skier...until you get out there and see the layout for yourself. (Note: When a buddy of mine, Jerseyite Rich Szigety, was in town a few years ago, I took him over for a round. The second hole we played, number 11, a 151-yard par 3, is now known as “Szigety Corner” in honor of the 10 he compiled there while swatting his ball from one sand trap to the other and then back and then back *again*. Knowing how cocksure he was about playing this modest little podunk muni course, I derived great satisfaction watching his struggles – and admittedly, felt for him (a little): I’ve been there on that hole.

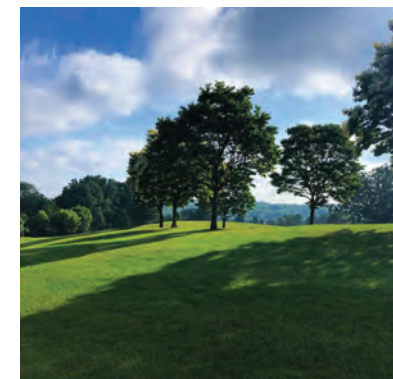
Nope. Don’t be fooled: The back nine is 2200 yards of rolling hills, ever-present danger in the form of tree-lined fairways, and those strategically-placed sand traps on five of the nine holes. It’s also the half of the course where you have magnificent elevated views of the Huron River Valley.

Since I’m an early riser, getting to Huron Hills – just six miles from my house – before 9 am is never a problem. It’s getting there before the staff has arrived that’s more of an issue. But it’s an informal operation, owned and operated by the City of Ann Arbor, and you can pay your \$9 after your round, no problem.

To beat the crowd, the heat, and the maintenance crew, I often tee off right at sunrise. That way I have the place to all to myself and can proceed at my own pace, hitting an extra ball here or there, stopping to watch a hawk soar overhead, and soaking in the manicured greenery that surrounds me as I make my way from hole to hole.

When I’ve finished my nine holes, I really do feel as though I’ve just played a full round of golf. I have no desire to continue on and in no way do I feel shortchanged. I’ve been challenged – okay, sometimes *humbled* – by each hole, I’ve been invigorated by the exercise, and since I can finish up in about an hour and 15 or 20 minutes (the scorecard gives you two hours), I have ample time—essentially a full day—and ample energy left for other endeavors.

I’m not sure why the Scots settled on 18 holes at St. Andrews two-and-a-half centuries ago; it could just as easily have been 12 or 15. Besides, what do the Scots know? They eat *haggis*! Nope, for me, nine works best. And “9 for \$9 before 9”? Just perfect.



18th Annual A LOOK BACK

Over \$127,000 raised at 18th Annual RVCC Foundation Golf Classic

The Classic is the non-profit’s largest in-person fundraising event of the year, and the 18th Annual, held on June 20, 2022 at Copper Hill Country Club in Ringoes, New Jersey, attracted some 55 corporate sponsors, including Title Sponsor, **Structural Concepts, Inc.** Net proceeds raised from the golf outing and auctions support student scholarships, RVCC’s education programming and other institutional priorities.



Some 126 enthusiastic golfers—many from local businesses—participated in last year’s event, which featured a 50/50 raffle, wine cork pull, a silent auction and a live auction. The highlights of the day included a “first ever” singing of the National Anthem by RVCC student and music major **Victoria Mango** (Class of ’23), remarks from **Rebecca Purnell**, Student Commencement Speaker from the RVCC Class of ’22, and **Malachi White**, student athlete from the RVCC Men’s Basketball team and a member of RVCC Class of ’23. Purnell and White both shared their experiences at the College and described how RVCC transformed their journeys and helped them to succeed and flourish.

On course fun included a special basketball “shootout” fundraiser—also a first for the event—hosted by the RVCC Athletics coaches and staff.



In Memorium

Lee Sokloski
(May 26, 1943 – August 2, 2022)

“Lee and I had a very special connection as we worked in the same industries. We have been on the RVCC golf committee for 18 years and we have co-chaired together for the last 6 years. Lee has been a great friend and a wonderful supporter of the college. His steady guidance of the committee has resulted in a truly spectacular event. I admired Lee for his endearing commitment to family and community. We will miss him very much.”



-Tom Mitchell
(Somerset County College/RVCC, Class of 1971),
Co-Chair, Golf Committee, RVCC Foundation Golf Classic

Raymond L. Hughes Jr.
(June 15, 1964 – April 10, 2023)

Raymond L. Hughes II, President, New Jersey Risk Managers and Consultants, Inc., and President, Hughes-Plumer & Associates was a long-time supporter of RVCC. His generosity was celebrated at the College’s 50th Anniversary Gala (in 2018), when he was one of four distinguished honorees recognized for leadership in the community.

His company, New Jersey Risk Managers & Consultants, has been a longstanding sponsor of the annual player gift at the RVCC Foundation Golf Classic.

Said RVCC President Michael McDonough: “Ray was such an exemplary leader and engaged community citizen: he was committed, generous, and humble. I was honored to know him and the RVCC community is deeply saddened by his passing.”





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.

93 and 94

...for the Nursing Class of 2022, graduate licensure pass rate based for first-time test takers, and percentage of RVCC Nursing program graduates obtaining a job, respectively.

9,385

2021-22 total full and part-time student enrollment.

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.

17

...average class size at RVCC.

100

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

\$2,275,000

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

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.

17%

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

#1

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

95

...Percent of 2021-22 graduates would recommend RVCC to prospective students.

#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

... RVCC's Men's Soccer team had a stellar season, winning the Region 19 Championship and finishing up 9th in the country after the 2022 National Tournament. It was an impressive season for the predominantly freshmen Lions team, which had not won the Region championship or gone to the National Tournament since 2000.

\$163,830

...RVCC Giving Day 2023 fundraising total, the most successful Giving Day in the College's history.

#1

...for the first time in its history, RVCC has earned a STARS Gold rating by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education—and now ranks as #1 overall for all two-year colleges in the US for its sustainability efforts. This is the eighth year in a row that RVCC has been recognized nationally for its sustainability efforts and RVCC also ranked #1 school in the country, with a perfect score, for sustainability research (for RVCC Center for Environmental Studies)!

\$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.

1,088

...number of degrees and certificates awarded to matriculating RVCC students in 2022.

404,848

...scholarship dollars awarded to RVCC students in FY22.

6,066

...visits recorded by the Resource Center in the 2022-23 academic year by RVCC students and their families.

1,000,000

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

\$851,346

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

#RVCCProud

NEWS You Can Use

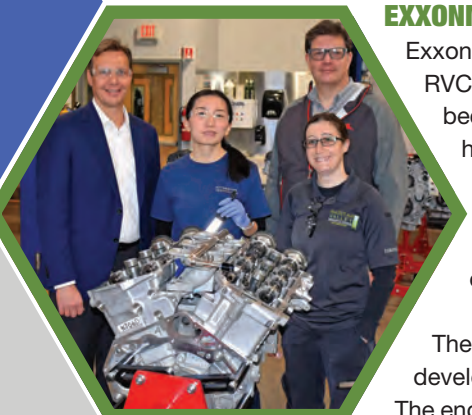


NATIONAL GROUP RANKS RVCC AS #1 TWO-YEAR COLLEGE FOR SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

For the first time in its history, RVCC has earned a STARS Gold rating by the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE). RVCC now ranks as #1 overall for two-year colleges in the US for its sustainability efforts. STARS, the Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System, measures and encourages sustainability in all aspects of higher education. This is the eighth year in a row that RVCC has been recognized nationally for its sustainability efforts by AASHE.

The College also 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; #3 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.

RVCC clearly takes sustainability very seriously. Since 2005, and despite the addition of several new buildings, the College has reduced greenhouse gas emissions from energy by 53%, achieving NJ's goal to reduce emissions 50% by 2030. RVCC has a cogeneration plant and three solar arrays; upgraded boilers, lighting, and HVAC equipment; and uses an energy control system and occupancy sensors.



EXXONMOBIL DONATION ENHANCES EDUCATION, TRAINING

ExxonMobil's Technology Center in Clinton has donated 17 gasoline test engines to RVCC's Automotive Technology program, which educates and trains students to become qualified automotive technicians. The donation will help enrich students' hands-on experience as they learn to troubleshoot engine computer systems, repair engines, and perform basic engine maintenance. Prior to ExxonMobil's donation, the College's Automotive Technology program did not possess any two of the same engines, making teaching and student collaboration during tasks like disassembling and evaluating the internal components of engines, challenging.

The 17, General Motors, V6 gasoline engines ExxonMobil donated were used to develop the latest formulations of Mobil 1 lubricants at ExxonMobil's engine test facility. The engines reached the 1,000 hours runtime limit set by the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), and while no longer appropriate for the specific tests required by ExxonMobil, the engines are suitable for other applications.

The College's Automotive Technology program curriculum includes engine overhaul, where students completely tear down an engine and reassemble it. This coursework helps students to better understand engine operation and identify its components, while offering them a

sense of accomplishment in having rebuilt an engine.

"Our donation to RVCC ensures these test engines have a second life, while improving the quality of training for students," said Paul Rubas, ExxonMobil Advanced Engineering associate. "We wanted to do our part to make a beneficial impact and support our next generation of automotive engineers and technicians."



NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR INNOVATION IN MANUFACTURING BIOPHARMACEUTICALS (NIIMBL) AWARD

RVCC has been awarded a \$75,000 grant from the National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals (NIIMBL) to create a weeklong summer immersion program in June focusing on exploring careers in the biopharmaceutical manufacturing industry. The residential 2023 NIIMBL Summer eXperience program, which will serve African-American/Black, Latinx, and Native American college students, is designed to build self-confidence in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) education; motivate students to pursue careers in biomanufacturing or the life sciences; and provide networking opportunities with industry professionals. There is no cost to participate in the program, and room and board are provided. Accepted participants also will be awarded a \$500 stipend.

Through a series of industry tours, networking events, and one-on-one coaching sessions, students will foster a professional mind-set, build confidence in understanding how to navigate corporate culture, and enhance clarity and confidence in defining their career and educational goals. In addition, Windy Paz-Amor, RVCC's Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), will conduct workshops designed to engage and enlighten students about DEI issues.

The mission of the NIIMBL eXperience program is to provide students from diverse backgrounds access to corporate exposure, professional branding, and personal development, empowering them to feel confident and motivated to achieve their academic and professional aspirations. To create a future pipeline of skilled biomanufacturing technicians, increased access and support is required to recruit, motivate, and educate under-represented populations. RVCC joins Albany College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (ACPHS) in New York and BioKansas in the Kansas/Missouri Region as one of only three locations in the country to be funded for the NIIMBL eXperience.

RVCC CELEBRATES 8TH ANNUAL NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK

RVCC joined the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development in celebrating the 8th Annual National Apprenticeship Week in November. As part of the celebration, the College offered a special day of programming for high school students that focused on RVCC's Automotive, HVAC, and Healthcare apprentice programs.

The day also featured a separate Advanced Manufacturing event that included presenting certification awards to six Machinist apprentices who completed the 8,000-hour Journeyman requirements. A classrooms tour; a high school project presentation; and a collaborative, interactive panel discussion featuring members of the Advanced Manufacturing Advisory Board also were highlights of the event, which was held at the College's Workforce Training Center.



NEWS You Can Use

Those attending the event included apprentice employers, prospective employers and prospective apprentices, and educators. The program offered participants the opportunity to learn about pathways for apprenticeship success and the positive impact these programs can bring to communities and families. Separate Healthcare programming also provided information about Pharmacy Technician and Phlebotomy apprenticeship training.

The event was part of a nationwide celebration showcasing the impact Registered Apprenticeship programs have in building the American workforce. It also highlighted the successes and value of Registered Apprenticeships for re-building the economy; advancing racial and gender equity; building a pipeline for good, quality jobs; and supporting underserved communities.

WORKFORCE TRAINING CENTER TO EXPAND

The Workforce Training Center at Raritan Valley Community College is expanding. This unique asset and fast track to employment, retraining, and career growth is set for growth, with construction to begin in 2023.

RVCC has secured \$8.8 million in state and county funding — including some \$3 million allocated by the Somerset County Board of Commissioners from American Rescue Plan funds—which will increase the facility’s footprint by some 22,000 square feet, to allow for new Clean Room manufacturing, chip and fusion technology and training programs, as well as expansion of Advanced Manufacturing and Automotive Technology spaces.

“Somerset County’s support for RVCC’s students and the Workforce Training Center is extraordinary, and we are excited to align these efforts with the county’s economic development vision,” said college President **Michael J. McDonough**. “Your generosity will allow us to build a best-in-class center for biomanufacturing right here at RVCC to support the growing need for aseptic manufacturing vital to vaccine, medicine, and medical device development.”

Also expected to expand is the scholarship support—secured by the RVCC Foundation from donors interested in helping students who are seeking to begin or enhance their career journeys at RVCC’s Workforce Training Center. The current structure is already home to a range of technical tracks, including Automotive Technology, Cosmetology, Esthetics (skincare), Environmental Control Technology (including residential and commercial HVAC), and Commercial Energy Management.

RVCC RECOGNIZED NATIONALLY BY “ALL IN CAMPUS DEMOCRACY CHALLENGE” FOR STUDENT VOTING ENGAGEMENT

Raritan Valley Community College has been recognized by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge (ALL IN) as one of the 2022 ALL IN Most Engaged Campuses for College Student Voting. The ALL IN Most Engaged Campuses for College Student Voting recognizes



colleges and universities for making intentional efforts to increase student voter participation.

RVCC joins a group of 394 colleges and universities across the country—and is one of only two New Jersey community colleges—being recognized by ALL IN for completing the following actions: Participating in the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge; sharing 2020 National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement (NSLVE) Reports with campus voting data with ALL IN; developing and submitting a 2022 democratic engagement action plan with ALL IN; and having a current signatory to ALL IN’s Higher Education Presidents’ Commitment to Full Student Voter Participation.

This is not the first time RVCC has been recognized for student voter engagement. A recent report from the Institute for Democracy & Higher Education (IDHE), creators of the National Study of Learning, Voting, and Engagement, also highlighted RVCC’s student voting increase of 16.6 percent from 2016 to 2020.

FEDERAL GRANT ASSISTS STUDENT PARENTS WITH CHILDCARE EXPENSES

A US Department of Education grant is offering assistance with childcare expenses for parents enrolled at Raritan Valley Community College. The “Child Care Access Means Parents in School” (CCAMPIS) grant, which totals approximately \$80,000, offers support to student parents to help them remain in college in order to achieve their educational goals.



Student parents face a unique set of obstacles as they juggle the demands of parenting while also taking classes and working. The grant helps alleviate some of that stress by helping to pay for childcare at the Children’s Campus Preschool and Childcare Center at RVCC while students are enrolled at the College.

In addition, a CCAMPIS Coordinator connects student parents to academic and emotional support to help them be successful in college. The CCAMPIS program aligns well with RVCC’S efforts to close the equity gap that persists with underserved populations by eliminating barriers to student success both in and out of the classroom.

STUDENTS RECEIVE SIGNIFICANT COST SAVINGS BY USING FREE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

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 \$3,076,844.19 in textbook costs. Approximately 75 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.

RVCC CELEBRATES ROLE AS LEAD COLLEGE IN ADVANCED MANUFACTURING CENTER OF WORKFORCE INNOVATION

RVCC hosted the New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities – Manufacturing & Supply Chain Management Collaborative Meeting in September, celebrating RVCC’s—and all of NJ’s community colleges’—commitment to workforce training. The New Jersey Pathways to Career Opportunities initiative was established by the New Jersey Community College



NEWS You Can Use

Consortium for Workforce and Economic Development and the New Jersey Business and Industry Association to better align education to in-demand careers that provide pathways for individuals, economic mobility, and economic growth for the State of New Jersey. The Manufacturing and Supply Chain Collaborative is one of four such Collaboratives as part of the Pathways project, which also includes Collaboratives focusing on Health Services, Technology and Innovation, and Infrastructure and Energy. RVCC is acting as the lead community college for the new Center of Workforce Innovation for Advanced Manufacturing. RVCC is also a community partner for the Center of Workforce Innovation for Cybersecurity.

NEW PROVOST AND VICE PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS NAMED

Dr. Karen H. Bearce was named the new Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at RVCC last August, bringing with her more than two decades of achievement in higher education, both as an academic leader and accomplished faculty member.



Most recently, Dr. Bearce served as Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs at nationally recognized Northampton Community College in Bethlehem, PA, where she was responsible for the institution's four academic schools and entire college academic portfolio at multiple campuses. Prior to that, she was NCC's Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, a role she began in 2016, where she earned a reputation as a visionary collaborator and strategic innovator whose cross-functional leadership led to the establishment of the college's flourishing Guided Pathways program. Her success managing educational support services, online learning, dual enrollment, and educational partnerships became hallmarks of her tenure.

But it was Dr. Bearce's love of psychology and passion for learning that first led her to the college classroom where she excelled as a faculty member, initially as a part-time lecturer at Rutgers University and then as an Assistant Professor at Seton Hall University.

Inspired by the mission of community colleges to place student success and college access above all else, she left the four-year sector to join Mercer County Community College, where she taught psychology as a tenured Professor and eventually was named Acting Dean of Institutional Effectiveness. Dr. Bearce earned a B.A. in Psychology from the University of New Hampshire, an M.S. in Psychology and Ph.D. in Psychology from Rutgers University.

RVCC TO LAUNCH NEW ADULT LEARNERS' COLLEGE

Raritan Valley Community College will launch a new Adult Learners' College this fall to help older students fulfill their personal or career goals. The Adult Learners' College is geared for students age 25 and older who are looking to begin or complete their college degree, explore a new career path, gain additional training, get a promotion at work, be the first member of their family to attend college, or improve their English. Special support services will be offered to help students complete their education.

In addition, 7-week semesters will be offered for some programs, providing adult students with a more convenient academic schedule to help them balance work, school, and family obligations.

Adult students may enroll in workforce, certificate, or degree programs at RVCC. Some of the College's programs that may be of interest to adult students include: English as a

Second Language; Phlebotomy Assistant Certificate; OSHA 10 Card; Welding Certificate; National Institute for Metalworking Skills (NIMS) Certificate; Principles of Municipal Court Administration; Allied Health Certificate; Medical Assistant Certificate; Paralegal Certificate; and Supply Chain Management Certificate. RVCC also offers a number of online degree and certificate programs, which offer a more flexible schedule for adult students.

COSMETOLOGY STUDENTS WIN NATIONAL HAIR COLOR COMPETITION

Students in RVCC's Cosmetology program have won the "Trade Secrets of a Hair Color Expert Theory Contest." The hair color competition, designed specifically for students, is presented by Product Club and Burmax. The RVCC students, Jacqueline Siguencia, Morgan Weaver, Melanie Ibarra, Hannah Burd, Layani Brown, Octavia Williams and Brianna Murray, were required to formulate hair color for three different outcomes based on the competition's provided guidelines. Working on mannequins, they then had to style the hair and describe the steps they took to achieve the desired results.



Twenty-five cosmetology schools throughout the United States entered submissions for the competition. For their prize, the RVCC students received an advanced color class with world renowned hair color educator David Velasco, author of the "Trade Secrets of a Hair Color Expert" education series, and Adrienne Rogers, Artistic Director for Product Club and owner of Hush Salon in Philadelphia.

HONORS COLLEGE CAPSTONE PROJECTS

Always one of the highlights of the academic year are the "Capstone Presentations" by students who are in the RVCC Honors College. And 2022-23 didn't disappoint, with some 17 individuals presenting as the fall and spring semesters wrapped up.

The topics covered quite a swath of science and art, from *The Impact on the Consumer Due to the Transition of Linear Scheduled Television to On-demand Streaming* to *The Post-Antibiotic Era: An Exploration of Antibiotics to Solar Reflectors and Solar Concentrators* to *Behind the Scenes of a Serial Killer* to *The Electrifying World of Neurons* (and so many more!).

The Honors College students who shared their Capstone projects include **Natalie Greene, Emily Norgard, Paola Ayala Zelaya, Jordan Barge, Daisy Cifuentes, Luke Cosentino, Sabrina Fallas** (in photo), **Naomi Gallic, Ali Hameed, Alexandra Hernandez, Hailey Kovacs, Sydney Lehrer, Karely Lopez, Oliver McDonough, Daniela Ovelar, Jacob Shum** and **Jared Smith**.



The Capstone project offers Honors College students the opportunity to demonstrate significant intellectual, analytical, or creative ability by completing a semester-length research paper or project. 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.

NEWS You Can Use

AUTOMOTIVE PROGRAM COORDINATOR RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD

Sara Heller of Rockaway, Coordinator of Raritan Valley Community College's Automotive Technology program, was recently honored with a national achievement award as the CCAR/Electude/ASE *Instructor of the Year*. Heller was among 52 automotive professionals recognized on November 17 at the Fall Board of Governors meeting of the **National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE)**, held at the San Diego Marriott Mission Valley in San Diego, CA. CCAR is the Coordinating Committee for Automotive Repair.



#RVCCProud

The ASE annual awards spotlight top scorers on the ASE Certification tests from among the ranks of the approximately quarter million ASE Certified professionals nationwide. **Charlie Ayers**, President of CCAR; **Matt Bishop**, Business Development Manager, Electude; **Brad Pellman**, Chair of the ASE Board of Directors; and **Timothy Zilke**, ASE President and CEO, presented the award to Heller.

"Sara, who is an Instructor/Coordinator of Automotive Technology at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg, is one of the outstanding ASE Certified professionals recognized annually by different segments of the automotive service and repair industry. Each of these elite technicians is presented with an industry-specific award recognizing their achievement," said Timothy Zilke, ASE President and CEO.

Heller, an ASE Certified automotive technician who has experience working in the automotive field, is currently in her fourth year at RVCC. She previously served as the instructor/coordinator for Middlesex County College (now known as Middlesex College) and also was an automotive teacher at numerous high schools throughout New York state. Heller received a Bachelor's Degree in Philosophy from Queens College and a Master's Degree in Special Education from Cappella University. She also holds various licenses and certifications in the automotive field.

"ASE has honored extraordinary industry professionals from across the nation for more than 40 years," Zilke continued. "This is made possible by the support of our many award sponsors, whose ranks include some of the best-known names in the industry. We are proud to partner with CCAR and Electude to recognize Sara's commitment to excellence in providing the very best in automotive service and repair. This dedication is reflected in the talented professionals we recognize each year and Sara represents the best of the best."

Thirty-three companies sponsored the individual technician recognition awards in the Auto, Truck, Collision, Parts and Service categories, along with awards for instructors. In addition to looking for top scores on ASE tests, award sponsors examine on-the-job excellence, community service, and other factors when selecting honorees.

RVCC: "Opportunity In Every Moment"



RV FAMILIES

Raritan Valley Community College has vibrant history that spans some 54 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...

#RVCCPROUD

THE GALLIC FAMILY (SIBLINGS, COUSIN, UNCLE)

For cousins *Naomi Gallic* and *Jonny Touhill, Jr.*, the path to RVCC was well worn. Naomi’s two brothers, *Sebastian* and *Emmett*, both graduated from the RVCC Honors College (in 2017 and 2020, respectively) and Uncle *Francis Gallic* graduated in 2001. All hail from Warren, NJ.

“There was never really a doubt about starting my higher ed journey at RVCC,” says Jonny Touhill, Jr., “You just can’t beat the math—not only the affordability, but also the access to faculty and staff that RVCC’s size offers.”

Jonny, who graduates next year, and Naomi, who graduated last month from the RVCC Honors College, have both blazed their own trails at RVCC. Jonny is pursuing a business degree, while Naomi completed the Pre-Medicine & Pre-Pharmacy track, earning an Associate’s Degree in Science and Math.

“I’ve enjoyed my time at RVCC and I’m grateful for the education I’ve received,” says Naomi. “And I especially loved the small class sizes and the interaction with my professors that it provided.”

Her brother Emmett, who has put his business degree to use as a Blockchain Analyst at Startup, adds: “our past and current experiences at RVCC have allowed us to develop our education meaningfully, while also being fiscally responsible.”

Says brother Sebastian, who’s in financial industry as an Analyst at M3 Partners, “through RVCC, our family was able to lay the foundation for our current and future accomplishments within the Medical, Tech, Manufacturing, and Financial Services industries.” He adds, “we are proud of being current students and alumni and we look to supporting those who choose RVCC as their pathway toward success.”

Francis Gallic, COO and Co-Founder of Helix Wireless, appreciates the judgement of his niece and nephews. “I’m proud of them. They’ve always made good decisions and they’ll get a lifetime of benefit from that.” He adds, “and it started with choosing RVCC after high school; something I have benefitted from as well.”



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:
Jonny Touhill Jr., Emmett Gallic,
Francis Gallic, Naomi Gallic,
Sebastian Gallic

THE WEINGART & BARNICKEL FAMILIES (GRANDMOTHER, MOM, DAUGHTER)

This is the trifecta of multigenerational RV family stories—three women, all trailblazers, each from a different era, and each making their own mark.

The matriarch is *Mary Weingart*, who graduated in 1984—from what was then called, “Somerset County College (“SCC”, the forebearer to Raritan Valley Community College); Mary majored in Liberal Arts, unlike her daughter, *Joan Barnickel*, who also graduated in 1984, but with an Associate’s Degree in Computer Science. That’s right, mother-daughter shared the same institution, at the same time, and covered the arts and sciences for good measure! And let’s not forget



Jennifer Barnickel

granddaughter (to Mary) and daughter (to Joan), *Jennifer Barnickel*, who, some 39 years after her grandmother and mother passed through SCC/RVCC, is making her own mark—having just graduated from the RVCC Honors College with an Associate’s in Liberal Arts (like her grandmother), with plans to transfer this fall to the University of Central Florida to study English.

Okay, back to the first two parts of this trifecta, both of whom are originally from Annandale. Prior to her 1984 graduation, Mary (grandmother) had to put her higher education plans on hold for many years to raise a family. After Somerset County College (aka, RVCC), she resumed her journey and graduated from Trenton State College (now TCNJ) in 1987 with a degree in Liberal Arts. Mary would go on to Hahnemann University, becoming a licensed Art Therapist and eventually working in that capacity at Warminster General Hospital. Today, she is enjoying retirement in Wilmington, North Carolina. Says



LEFT TO RIGHT:
Mary Weingart
and Joan Barnickel

Mary, “I credit my time at SCC/RVCC with helping me to gain the confidence I needed to go back to school for a bachelor’s degree.”

Daughter Joan put her Computer Science degree (from SCC/RVCC) to work at both Advanced Mobile Phone Service and AT&T Bell Laboratories—while taking night classes at Rutgers University. That’s no small feat in its own right, but then she transferred as a fulltime student to Trenton State College (now TCNJ) and went on to graduate summa cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Mathematics (in 1989). Joan also managed a taekwondo studio and is currently an IBO of PURE health-based products. What does she most appreciate about SCC/RVCC: “It was just the right fit, and it allowed me to work while attending night classes, providing a springboard to my four-year degree.”

Says granddaughter and daughter, Jennifer, who now resides in Flemington: “RVCC has provided me with a wonderful opportunity to receive a quality education at a fraction of the cost of most universities. As a participant in the Honors College, I’ve met many like-minded friends, traveled with the College, and I have been prepared for future success through a variety of rigorous and engaging courses.” Thinking about her grandmother and mom, she adds, “and I’ve had some pretty good role models!”

RVCC Giving Day 2023 Sets New Giving Day Fundraising Record

Inspired by the return of a \$50,000 “Match Challenge,” Raritan Valley Community College had a record-setting “Giving Day” on March 23 and raised **\$163,830** for student clubs and athletic teams, as well as a range of centers, institutes and critical institutional programs. The RVCC Giving Day 2023 fundraising total was 21% greater than last year’s record tally.



LIVING COLOR: Bold graphics streamed into various social media channels helped get the word out, both inside and outside of RVCC.



RVCC students led the charge raising a total of \$30,500, a whopping 36% increase in funds raised over last year’s effort. Twenty-nine clubs and athletic teams participated in RVCC Giving Day 2023, a 21% increase over 2022.

“It is so heartening to see the community—especially the students—respond so positively to the match challenge,” said **Frank Russo**, who, along with his wife **Patricia**, are the benefactors behind the “Match Challenge.” This is the second year the Russos have

provided the match, which was clearly a difference-maker again this year. “We were confident the broader RVCC community would rise to the challenge and we’re so pleased with the results.” The longtime Far Hills residents also support the *Frank S. and Patricia F. Russo*

Scholarship at RVCC, which is now in its fifth year. “We are grateful for how the Russos have inspired our community through their generosity,” said **Michael J. McDonough**, President, Raritan Valley Community College. “We could not be more honored by their support.”

Added **Allan Boomer**, Chair of the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors, “Having the match challenge provided again by the Russos was a gamechanger. Their generosity fueled this incredibly successful campaign, and we’re deeply grateful.”

This year’s winners of the “*Patrick J. Fittipaldi Impact Award*”—which celebrates student success in support of RVCC Giving Day—went to the RVCC Men’s Basketball team for most dollars raised (\$7,216) and the Open Mic Club for attracting the most donors (64). Both groups



SELFIES & PARTNERS: On site “buzz” was helped by our “selfie station,” a popular stop for students and staff, as was day-of streaming from campus by Suzanne Leger, Marketing Associate of the Somerset County Business Partnership.



receive \$1,000 awards from the RVCC Foundation for their efforts. “The match challenge made Giving Day super exciting,” said **Damian Juth**, president of the Open Mic Club. “Knowing that every dollar we raised would be rewarded just elevated everyone’s game!” In addition to student clubs and athletic teams, this year’s RVCC Giving Day campaign featured nine areas of interest for donors, including the RVCC Resource Center and Food Pantry, the Servicing Learning Program, Honors College, the Workforce Training Center, and the Planetarium. “Thanks to the generosity and leadership of Frank and Pat Russo, we’ve again reached heights that were previously unimaginable for Giving Day,” said **Mike Marion**, Executive Director of the RVCC Foundation. “The word ‘epic’ gets tossed around a lot, but there isn’t a more apt way to describe the generosity of the Russos.”



RVCC ATHLETICS: Champions of the Valley

Hail to the victors and thanks to the coaches and student athletes of RVCC for their outstanding 2022-23 seasons.

ALL-AMERICANS 2022-23

EDDIE DAVIS

The accolades continue to pour in for Eddie, who was named 3rd Team All-American and Region Player-of-the-Year, as he helped lead Lions Men's Basketball team to back-to-back 20-win seasons, two Garden State Athletic Conference (GSAC) championships, and the first Region XIX title in school history!

OLIVIA SIMS

Had an incredible two years as the Middle Blocker on the RVCC Women's Volleyball team, and led the team to 52-10 two-year record, including two GSAC Championships and a Region XIX Championship in 2021. Olivia was named 1st Team All-Region twice, GSAC Player-of-the-Year for last season, and was named 2nd Team All-American!

OMAR SEOUDY

Recognized for an outstanding first year on the RVCC Men's Soccer team, Omar tallied 15 goals and 8 assists this past fall, leading the team to a Region XIX Championship. Omar was named 2nd Team All-American and also earned a spot on the All-Tournament Team at the 2022 New Jersey Collegiate Athletic Association (NJCAA) National Championship tournament!



MEN'S SOCCER TEAM FINISHES 2022 SEASON RANKED #9 IN THE US

RVCC's Men's Soccer team had a stellar season, winning the Region XIX Championship and finishing 9th in the country after the 2022 National Tournament. It was an impressive season for the predominantly freshmen Lions team, which had not won the Region championship or gone to the National Tournament in 22 years.

The Lions left their opponents scoreless in eight out of 14 games and were ranked as the 5th best defense in the nation, demonstrating hard work, grit, and determination. All-American Omar Seoudy and Donte East, Region XIX's leading scorers, were ranked in 8th and 9th respectively in scoring nationally. Sophomore Donte East, 2nd Team All-Region, added another individual accolade to his record, picking up "Offensive Player of the Year." Goal Keeper Kevin Perez was named "Defensive Player of the Year," as he produced two stunning saves in the Region XIX Championship final. Coach Mike Mohr and Head Coach Mark Malchow were both honored as "Coach of the Year" for their hard work and determination in preparing the team for the season.



MEN'S BASKETBALL CLINCHES FIRST EVER REGION XIX CHAMPIONSHIP

With a decisive win over Lackawanna College, the Lions clinched the team's first-ever Region XIX Championship (along with back-to-back 20-win seasons)! Congrats as well to "Coach of the Year" Kevin Ryan, his assistant coaches, Marvin Crawford and Brandon Summers, their families and the RVCC fan base for bringing the noise to RVCC Gym this season!



WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL FINISHES WITH 16-0 CONFERENCE RECORD

Congratulations as well to the RVCC Women's Volleyball team and to Head Coach Phil Herro for clinching the Garden State Athletic Conference Championship with a perfect 16-0 conference record. While the Lions lost a heartbreaker to Northampton in the Region XIX District Championship game, they have so much to be proud of—including a 28-5 overall record and a season rich with highlights.

OTHER STUDENT ATHLETES OF NOTE

KEVIN PEREZ

Men's Soccer (post high school, Kevin spent nine years as a sailor in US Navy prior to enrolling at RVCC).

IZABELA BAR

Women's Volleyball (1st Team All-GSAC and All-Region XIX Fall '22, 2nd Team All-GSAC and All-Region XIX Fall '21, 3.63 cum GPA in Nursing and Augie Eosso Legacy Scholarship Recipient 2022-2023).

ELI BEREZNY

Baseball (will be named All-Region this year, 3.37 GPA and will attend TCNJ in the fall of 2023).

MALACHI WHITE

Men's Basketball (Team Captain, 3.22 GPA and attending Hampton University in the fall of 2023).

SEAN RYAN

Men's Basketball (3.95 GPA, will attend the University of North Carolina or University of Virginia in the fall of 2023).

GREAT and FUN:

Just a few members of the irrepressible, star-studded 2022 Garden State Athletic Conference Division III CHAMPION RVCC Women's Volleyball Team (and quite possibly the most "famous" women on the RVCC campus!).



COACHES, CAPTAINS & CHAMPIONS

When dedication, hard work, and perseverance are rewarded.

When teammates pick each other up.

When players and coaches commit to each other and to the journey.

When sacrifices are made, promises are kept, and goals are attained.

When the common good is the only good that matters.

When the ultimate prize isn't in the triumph, but in the lifelong bonds it inspires.



2022-23 Garden State Athletic Conference Coach-of-the-Year **Kevin Ryan** and Men's Basketball Team Captain, #11 **Malachi White**, savor the team's first-ever **NJCAA Region XIX Championship Title**.



2021 & 2022 Garden State Athletic Conference Coach of the Year **Phil Herro** and Team Captain **Olivia Sims**, Volleyball middle blocker, GSAC Player-of-the-Year, two-time 1st Team All-Region, and 2nd Team All-American and 2021 & 2022 **NJCAA Region XIX Champion**.



2022 Garden State Athletic Conference Men's Soccer Coach-of-the-Year **Mark Malchow** and Assistant Coach **Michael Mohr** enjoying a post-**NJCAA Region XIX Championship** moment.

IN THE HOUSE:

Some members of the RVCC Baseball team bringing their game to RVCC gym to root on Men's Basketball team as it clinched its first-ever Region XIX Championship.



THE TIES THAT BIND

Says Coach Malchow: "I happily gave this award to Coach Mike, the true Men's Soccer Coach-of-the-Year. He is an inspiration to our student athletes and, as a former student athlete and RVCC grad, he embodies the opportunity RVCC represents. He also selflessly gave up personal vacation time so as not to miss our games."

"Coach Phil reached out to me in High School and said, 'hey come play softball here at RVCC, and while you're at, play volleyball too.' That was such a blessing for me. It was the best decision I could have ever made. Coach Phil has honestly changed my life. He's the best person ever."
-Olivia Sims

#RVCCPROUD

A RIVER Runs Near It

The Raritan River—which meanders through the “valley” for which RVCC is named—passes within shouting distance of the Raritan Valley Community College campus.

Some 70 miles long, with well over one million people living in its basin, the Raritan River is formed by the merging of the “North Branch” and “South Branch” in Branchburg. The Raritan River Basin covers over 1,100 square miles of New Jersey, crossing seven counties on its way east to Raritan Bay and the Atlantic Ocean. Well over 500,000 people work in the Basin, and millions drink

College as a “River-Friendly Business,” celebrating the College’s efforts to promote clean water and a healthy ecosystem in New Jersey’s Raritan River Basin. It’s well-deserved recognition and a worthy distinction for an institution so committed to environmental sustainability, research, and education.

WATER QUALITY RESEARCH @ RVCC

The Water Quality Lab at the RVCC Center for Environmental Studies conducted four research projects related to water quality monitoring during 2022. These include

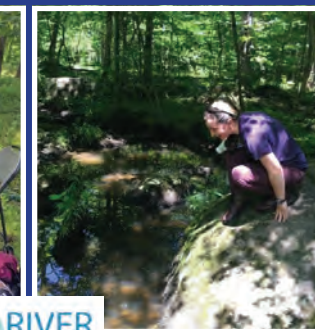


The kind of work that my water quality interns are doing is not typically available to young people until they are juniors or seniors in college or already have a bachelor’s degree. These kinds of experiences have tremendous impact on early college students, and it’s all been made possible by the generosity of caring donors, especially Jim and Jill Gibson.

Associate Professor Emilie Stander

Water quality intern Maria Scarpantonio samples a stream in the Sourland region.

Water quality interns Maria Scarpantonio and Isabella Cano sort macroinvertebrates during a stream assessment with two staff members from the Sourland Conservancy.



Water quality interns Kiara Bonzano, Maria Scarpantonio, and Isabella Cano analyzing stream samples for nitrate and ammonium concentrations on the Lachat flow injection analyzer in the RVCC Water Quality Lab.

its waters or use it for recreation.

Sadly, the Raritan has also experienced toxic dumping from industrial facilities for over 100 years. The water quality and stream health in the watershed has also been impacted by contaminated sites, sewage treatment systems, and decades of suburban and commercial development.

How fitting then that RVCC has established the Center for Environmental Studies, which is led by co-directors, Professors **Jay Kelly** and **Emilie Stander**. Among the Center’s far-ranging assets is the Water Quality Laboratory, which serves as a platform to train students and interns in conducting industry-standard water quality tests to facilitate collaborative research with local watershed associations and other environmental organizations. The water quality data collected by RVCC students and interns is used to document trends in nutrient and bacteria concentrations in local streams and reservoirs over time and identify possible sources of water quality problems at the watershed scale.

Fittingly, the New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA) has re-certified Raritan Valley Community

continuations of two existing projects: 1) an ongoing partnership with Raritan Headwaters (RHA) to monitor water quality in thirteen streams in the headwaters region of the Raritan River Basin, and 2) ongoing monitoring of algal toxins associated with harmful algal blooms in Spruce Run Reservoir and several downstream locations. In addition, two new research projects were initiated: one with the Sourland Conservancy to monitor water quality in streams draining intact forest vs. post-agricultural forest in the Sourlands region, and another to monitor water quality in streams and seeps at Beaverdam Brook in East Brunswick.

Anyone interested in learning more about the Water Quality Lab is encouraged to contact, **Dr. Emilie Stander**, Associate Professor, Environmental Science, and Co-Director, RVCC Center for Environmental Studies, at Emilie.Stander@raritanval.edu.

#RVCCPROUD

RVCC Alumni Association



The RVCC Alumni Association was “rebirthed” in 2022 as an opportunity to engage, inform, and connect with our more than 17,000 active alumni. Our aim is to further strengthen alumni bonds with their college while embracing the incredibly diverse community that is RVCC!

Raritan Valley Community College has a rich, unique story to tell, one best told by those who’ve made it what it is today—our alumni. We’re pleased that our alumni appreciate being connected to RVCC and that connection will only get stronger as our college continues to evolve and grow. Over the past year, this mission to reconnect graduates with RVCC has led to several networking and information gathering events, both on-campus and virtual, as well as providing alumni the chance to serve as panelists, sharing their RVCC journey with both current and future students. It is evident that our alumni want to give back, particularly as mentors and advocates, to help students find their path and develop their own RVCC story. And we welcome that engagement!



2nd Annual “#RVCCPROUD Opportunity Summit” for the RVCC Alumni Association brought alums back to campus to converse with RVCC President Mike McDonough and Provost Karen Bearce. Some 11 different companies and organizations were represented among the alums, which spanned some 30 years of graduating classes.



GIVING DAY GIVING

Our RVCC Giving Day 2023 record results of nearly \$164,000 raised included gifts from some 52 members of the RVCC alumni population! Congrats to all who supported this annual event and a special shoutout to our generous RVCC alumni!

ATTENTION RVCC ALUMNI

Over 170,000 students attend a New Jersey community college – or 42.7% of the state’s total college student population. Here’s the sobering punchline: while community colleges educate over 42% of the college students in New Jersey, they receive only 8.9% of the state’s higher education funding. It’s time our state legislators hear from us!!!

#RVCCPROUD

Other Distinguished Alums...

2022-23 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENTS

Jamal Kassim (RVCC Class of 2011):

As a first-generation college graduate who was raised by single mother, Jamal overcame all obstacles he faced, and now enjoys a flourishing career in the education sector. His Associate of Arts Degree in Communication Studies at RVCC has served Jamal well, having gone on



to get both a Bachelor’s degree (Communications and Human Resources) and a Master’s degree (Labor Relations) from Rutgers University (with a perfect 4.0 GPA in his Master’s work). Jamal brought his expertise back to RVCC in 2016, finishing his tenure as Transfer Articulation and Graduate Associate (he is currently

Assistant Registrar at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School at Rutgers University). While at RVCC, Jamal was credited with improving the graduation application process and increasing graduation participation among graduates. He also helped revive Black Student Alliance (BSA) and served as its faculty advisor. He was also “all in” for the RVCC Foundation “Giving Day” and helped elevate the BSA’s fundraising results. He also volunteers as an Assistant Football Coach for Somerville Branchburg United.



RVCC MEN'S SOCCER TEAM REUNION

Last August brought LIONS past and present back to campus as the RVCC Men’s Soccer Team had its own alumni reunion on the campus of Raritan Valley Community College. The 2nd Annual RVCC Men’s Soccer Team Alumni Game featured some 35 players: the WHITE-jersey’d alumni squad squaring off against the BLACK-jersey’d 2022 RVCC Men’s team.

Congrats to **Mark Malchow**, head coach of RVCC Men’s Soccer (as well as an RVCC alum and former RVCC

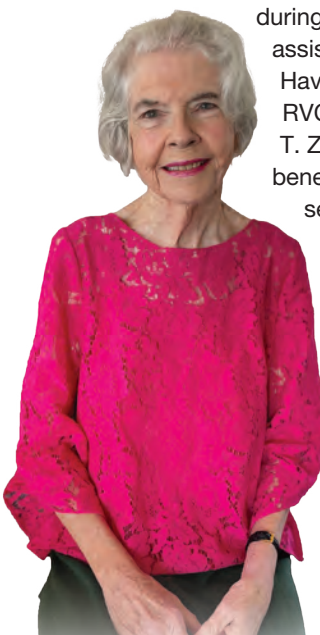
RVCC Alumni Association



Elisabeth McConville (RVCC Class of 1995 & 2004):

With three degrees (Paralegal, Humanities, and English) from RVCC—all with high honors (the latter two, “Cum Laude”)—it is clear that few grads have gotten more from the College than Elisabeth. And few have given more: RVCC has benefitted significantly from her philanthropy, the seeds of which may have been planted

during her years of working as the personal assistant to Doris Duke (yes, that Duke!). Having established a scholarship at RVCC in memory of her sister, the Mary T. Zanetti Scholarship at RVCC has benefitted some 23 students. Elisabeth served on the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors from 2010-2018. She has also been honored as “Lady Commander in The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem” (also called Order of the Holy Sepulchre)—this is a Roman Catholic order of knighthood under the protection of the Holy See. Elisabeth also received the Courier News “Star Award” for her work with the Bridgewater Police Crisis Intervention Team.



Robert Nichols (RVCC Class of 2001):

An RVCC Associate in Liberal Arts degree holder, this 12-time inductee of the United States Martial Arts Hall of Fame (inductions include “School of the Year,” “Instructor of the Year,” “International Instructor of the Year,” and “Man of the Year”) has led one of the largest Martial Arts schools in NJ from 2001 through the present. The Union, NJ facility serves inner-city areas such as Newark and Elizabeth, with a program focused on personal development, leadership training, and community involvement. To date over 450 individuals have earned their black belts at Mr. Nichols’ facility, as well as over 250 individuals participating in Leadership certification. He has also volunteered as an Anti-Bullying Coordinator for 12 public schools from 2004 to 2019, and served on the board of Martial Arts with Hearts Charity Foundation. His first book, “*Earn a Black Belt in... An Average Guys Guide to Life*” quickly became an AMAZON #1 Best Seller. Robert is also a 12-time US Commerce Award Winner for Best Business.



MAKING NEWS...

JENNA DOUGLAS (RVCC Class of 2017)

Jenna Douglas was recently selected as a Fulbright Scholar. Jenna will spend the 2023-24 academic year serving as an English Teaching Assistant in La Rioja, Spain.

While at RVCC, Jenna was a member of the Honors College, Phi Theta Kappa, and received an Associate Degree in Liberal Arts-Social Science, with summa cum laude honors. She then transferred to Georgetown University, where she earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Psychology in 2019.

At RVCC, Jenna served as a student ambassador, and traveled to Nepal to participate in the Asha service project as a member of Rotaract. At Georgetown, Jenna continued her leadership and service as a peer mentor to students in the DC community, leader of an Alternative Break Program, and authored a thesis to understand the complexities of the juvenile education system. After graduating, Jenna served as an education public policy intern, before taking a full-time role with Aspen Institute’s Education & Society program. She currently works as a



Strategy & Analytics Consultant for Deloitte Consulting, in its Higher Education practice.

The Fulbright Program, the flagship international academic exchange program sponsored by the U.S. government, has fostered mutual understanding between the United States and other countries since 1946. Each year, the U.S. Congress appropriates funds to the U.S. Department of State to sponsor the Fulbright Program.

The program provides awards to approximately 8,000 students, scholars, teachers, artists, and professionals each year from the United States and 160 countries.

Fulbright alumni from the United States and around the world have gone on to achieve distinction in government, science, the arts, business, philanthropy, and education. Among the ranks of Fulbright alumni are 62 Nobel Prize recipients, 78 MacArthur Foundation Fellows, 89 Pulitzer Prize winners, and 41 current or former heads of state or government.



CONGRATULATIONS JOE!

Joe Forte (RVCC Class of 2011)

The New Jersey Pride Chamber of Commerce (NJPC) held its 1st Annual Gala and Awards Dinner in Montclair, recognizing the accomplishments of LGBTQ+ business owners and allied advocates. The December event also celebrated a spectacular year of growth for the Chamber and honored several distinguished leaders and advocates in the LGBTQ community.

Joe was among the honorees—which included some of the tri-state area’s most influential LGBTQ community members—and was recognized for his community advocacy.

Joe has been working in state government for over a decade. Currently, Joe works at the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DOL). In his role, he assists with Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action, Ethics, and Diversity initiatives. Before joining Labor, he led outreach for the Office of Diversity Programs for the New Jersey Civil Service Commission (CSC), where Joe developed outreach initiatives to increase diversity within the state government by hosting regional job fairs and speaking with hundreds of community organizations, high schools, and college students each year.

Alejandro Flores (RVCC Class of 2005)

As US Brand Manager at Baron Philippe de Rothschild, Alejandro Flores served as an informative and fun tour guide on evening last fall at a wonderful wine-pairing event hosted at the home of **Steve and Betsy Knapp**, long-time supporters of RVCC. Collaborating with the Knapps on the evening’s itinerary was RVCC Foundation board member, **Stacey Kimmins**. Alejandro, who has a Management Science/International Business degree from Kean University and an MBA from Grand Canyon State University, has been in the wine business for nearly 15 years. He also has an Advance Certificate, Level 3, in Wine & Spirits from the International Wine Center.

STAY IN TOUCH AND GET INVOLVED

Greg DeSanctis

Director of Honors Programs & Alumni Outreach
greg.desanctis@raritanval.edu

Mike Marion

Executive Director, RVCC Foundation & RVCC Alumni Association
michael.marion@raritanval.edu



IN FRAME:
Betsy and Steve Knapp with Alejandro Flores



“WHAT ONCE WAS...”

SPRING 2023 PORTFOLIO DEVELOPMENT CLASS EXHIBITION SHOWCASE

Portfolio Development is the capstone course for our AFA degree students within the Arts & Design department. Comprised of a mixture of fine art and graphic design majors, the class concludes with an exhibition conceived and organized by the students. The spring 2023 Portfolio Development class titled their exhibition “*What Once Was...*” We’re proud to showcase the work of six students from Professor Darren McManus’s spring 2023 class.

RVCC Division of Liberal & Fine Arts



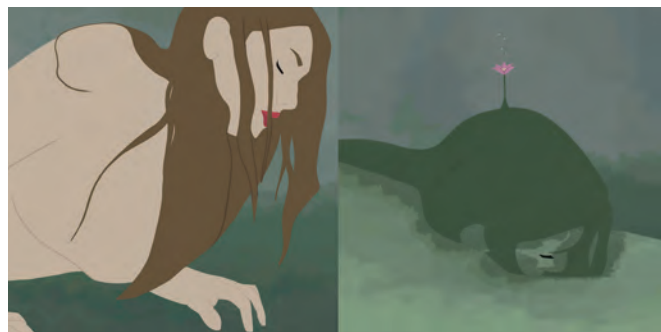
Liv Vitale
Broken Beyond Return
Adobe Illustrator, 24 x 30 inches, 2023

For my piece in the “What Once Was...” exhibition, I wanted to create something that visually captures my nostalgia for rock n’ roll music. I’m fascinated how this genre and the artists within it transformed music (and the world itself) at the end of the 20th century. “Broken Beyond Return” not only represents my personal love for and connection to rock n’ roll music but also the explosive impact that rock n’ roll had on our society - a power that may never be experienced again.



Matthew Redzinski
This Can't Be Happening
digital painting, 13 x 19 inches, 2023

I’ve become more philosophical about my life recently and I’ve been wondering if I’ll come to regret the way I’ve chosen to live my life. To combat these feelings, I’ve been focusing on the positives while enjoying the mysterious gift of life itself. “This Can’t Be Happening” reflects my deepest fear of becoming a regretful, sad old man with so much to do, but no time left to do it.



Ashlin Murphy
Back to the Earth
Procreate animation, 13.5 x 24 inches, 2023

This piece represents death, but in a more peaceful, less jarring way. I have a hard time grasping the idea of death, but I believe that when we do pass, our bodies and soul return to the Earth. This animation portrays this concept and shows our connection to nature - making death seem less terrifying and just a part of life’s natural cycle.



Annabella Garlinger
Self Pity
oil on canvas, 71 x 51 inches, 2023

In my piece for “What Once Was...” I wanted to depict a somber scene suggesting intense feelings of self pity. By using the famous composition found in the Pietà of the Virgin Mary holding onto a dead Jesus, I wanted to invoke a maternal feeling of compassion. By replacing both of the iconic religious figures with myself, I’ve created a sense of idealizing or even selfishly reminiscing on a specific past period of suffering.



Charlotte Goff
Childhood Mementos
oil on board, 29 x 22 inches, 2023

“What Once Was...” instantly conjures up memories from when I was a child and possessed a carefree spirit. For my piece, “Childhood Mementos,” I selected sentimental objects from my childhood as my subject matter and memorialized them through paint. In doing so, I’ve symbolically captured part of my essence from a time in my life that I hold so dearly.



Anjelica Alpizar
The Universe Will Destroy Your Nostalgia
Adobe Illustrator / 20 x 12 inches, 2023

I wanted my piece for “What Once Was...” to not be a straightforward depiction of my own memory. I instead chose to focus on how nostalgia can sometimes paralyze a person from moving forward in their own life, whether intentional or not. Case in point, I have memories that I deeply cherish, but I also wish at times, that these memories would surface with less frequency. I created this piece to show that there is a beauty in things coming to an end.

ART WORKS

We celebrate the far-ranging creative talents of the Arts & Design Department in the Liberal Arts Division at RVCC, and recognize both faculty and students with a special RVCC Proud shoutout...

JI YONG KIM

Born and raised in South Korea, the works of Professor **Ji Yong Kim** are often inspired by his experience in Myanmar where he spent his adolescent years. His recent art explores the intersections between traditional images of Buddhist art and images from contemporary popular culture.

Ji Yong's creativity is getting attention. His "Ripples of Peace and Calm" was the winning proposal design for an open call for the Union Square asphalt mural. The project was organized by the Union Square Partnership, and supported by the *Artevention* program of NYC Department of Transportation. The design and planning process took 3-4 months, and the entire mural was sketched and painted in 4 days, with over 120 volunteer painters participating in the process.

Ji Yong also tapped into the RVCC Foundation's "College Community Grant" process to create murals to bring a more welcoming, vibrant feel to the College's Resource Center & Food Pantry space.

And at the North American headquarters of **Signify**, a world leader in lighting, in nearby Bridgewater, NJ, Ji Yong's presence can also be seen, but this time through the art of his students.

"Our new office is designed to tell the story of our company, our lighting innovations and our culture," said **Cathy Cubberly**, Head of HR, Americas, Signify. "When we reached out to RVCC, we were seeking ideas to bring to life the spirit of our 'Brighter Lives, Better World' sustainability program."

Wall 3 of Signify Mural



ART WORKS

"Ripples of Peace and Calm" in Union Square, NYC



Student Mural Artists

Enter Ji Yong and six of his Arts & Design students: **Christina (Zanara) Dean, Ryin Galaini, Israel Garcia, Sarah Lopez, Delia Mchendry** and **Lindsey Scheire**. "Their murals have complemented our space," added Ms. Cubberly. "Our employees and customers can come together and be inspired—by art from local artists—to unlock the extraordinary potential of light."

This is a classic win, win, win story: for NYC, for the RVCC community (including our good neighbor Signify), and for our RVCC Arts & Design students.

JUST ANNOUNCED:

Professor **Kim** has also been selected as one of the ten artists to paint a mural for the NYC Public Hospital system. He has been assigned to paint a mural for the East Harlem Carter Hospital; the funding for the project

has been provided by a grant from the **Laurie M. Tisch Illumination Grant**. The artists will design their murals after hosting design meetings with patients, staff, and neighborhood residents. The Community Mural Project is thought to be the largest public hospital public art project since the WPA-commissioned works of the 1930s. The goals of the project are to create art that enhances the hospital environment, inspires creativity, promotes wellness, celebrates the arts, and engages all. Notably, Professor Kim's wife, **Yukiko Izumi**, has been selected to create a mural for Metropolitan Hospital in Manhattan.

LORETTA DI BIANCA FOIS

RVCC Professor of Dance **Loretta Di Bianca Fois**, is among 96 artists selected for a 2023 *Individual Artist Fellowship* from the **New Jersey State Council on the Arts**. Professor Fois was chosen from 635 eligible applicants in seven artistic disciplines. It is the third time she is being recognized by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Professor Fois also received Choreography Fellowship Awards in 2017 and 2011.

The Fellowships are competitive awards to New Jersey artists and are determined by an independent peer panel assessment of work samples. The process is anonymous and focuses solely on artistic quality. The New Jersey State Council on the Arts is a division of the NJ Department of State and a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts.

A performing artist, choreographer, and teacher

ART WORKS



who works with movement, music and language, Professor Fois is Director of Dance at Raritan Valley Community College. She served on the Dance NJ board

for over 20 years and was an artist-in-residence for the New Jersey Department of Education. She has also served on the Writing Team for the revision of the NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards in Dance, and sat on the NJ Arts Education SEL Task Force, which was the first in the nation to provide educators with a Social and Emotional Framework tied to Arts Education. In addition to her artistic work, Professor Fois leads Creative Arts Memory Cafes for the Alzheimer's Association and sings with the Umoja Imani Songsters and Caritas Chamber Chorale.

JOHN SICHEL



Composer and Professor of Music at Raritan Valley Community College, Dr. John Sichel, was named *Artist-in-Residence* at Capulin Volcano National Monument

in New Mexico. Dr. Sichel was in residence at the park for three weeks in late fall. His residency included collecting creative material and sketching ideas for a composition to premiere at RVCC and be recorded by the College's Music faculty. The resulting recording will be made available to Capulin Volcano National Monument for use in its educational outreach and publicity material.

Dr. Sichel has been a part of RVCC's full-time faculty since 2008 and currently serves as co-chair of the College's Arts & Design department. He previously served as a member of the adjunct faculty for 10 years. Dr. Sichel has been the recipient of grants, awards and fellowships from The Composers Guild of New Jersey, Raritan Valley Community College and the New Jersey

State Council on the Arts, and his music has been performed in several countries on four continents. He is a composer participant in this year's Source Song Festival in Minneapolis, Minnesota.



DENNIS RUSSO

The work of Professor Dennis Russo was featured last month as part of the 75th Anniversary of the Actors Studio of New York City. The anniversary

celebration featured a range of programming, all open to the public, and a scene from Russo's play, "Midnight and Sky", was performed as part *In Process*, an open rehearsal of work in the advanced development phase.

Russo, who has an MFA from The New School for Drama, has been teaching at RVCC for 22 years, 19 years as a full-time faculty member. He is a two-time semifinalist for the Eugene O'Neill Playwrights Conference and a two-time Fellowship recipient for Playwriting from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts. Winner of the New Jersey Playwriting Competition (William Paterson University), he is a member of the Actors Studio and the Playwrights/Directors Unit at the Actors Studio. His plays have been produced throughout New York and New Jersey, as well as through on-demand digital platforms.

Earlier this spring, Russo also directed an RVCC student theatre production of Qui Nguyen's "She Kills Monsters: Young Adventurers Edition" at RVCC's Welpo Theatre.

Professor Dennis Russo with students in his "Acting Fundamentals" class



NUMBER ONE

Behind every great institution is great leadership. This is certainly true at Raritan Valley Community College.



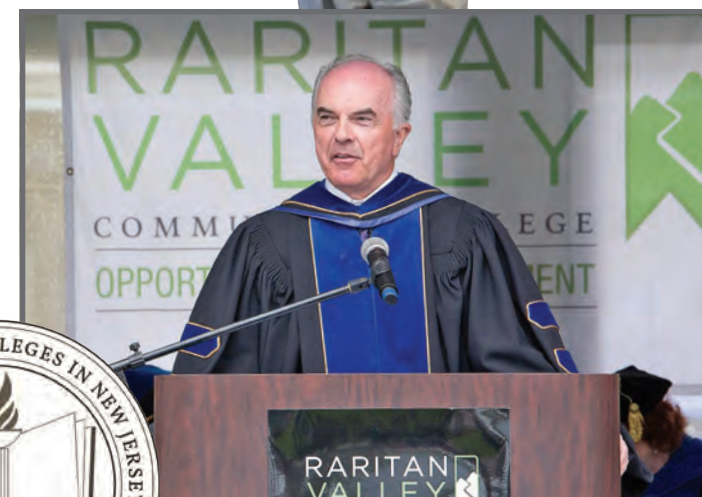
For the third year in a row, RVCC President **Michael McDonough** has been recognized among the "ROI Influencers: Higher Education 2022" as "one of the Top 25 most influential presidents in New Jersey."

And on the national stage, the president last fall served as a panelist for a discussion of "Early College Exposure and Education Models" at the Workforce Development Institute of the *American Association of Community Colleges*. He was part of a New Jersey contingent, joining **New Jersey Council of County Colleges** president **Aaron Fichtner**, addressing community college leaders, industry representatives, government and philanthropic representatives, and associated partners from across the nation.

And the institution that President McDonough leads was recently named the **#1 Community College** in New Jersey for 2023 and the "Intelligent Pick" by **Intelligent.com**. Raritan Valley Community College earned its Intelligent Pick status with a score of 97.92, through a unique methodology that ranks each institution across a range of categories, including tuition costs, admission, retention and graduation rates, faculty, reputation, and the resources provided for online students.

This rating is no surprise. RVCC emerged from the pandemic with renewed energy. The parking lots are full again, the campus is vibrant. It's a fun place; students, faculty and staff are focused and engaged. Indeed, the RVCC community has much to be grateful for—and that gratitude extends to its leader, who is always out front, in the middle, and behind the institution.

#leadership #bestofnewjersey #rvccproud



RVCC

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

The world and all of its inhabitants have never been more interdependent and that’s no surprise: we face big challenges and bigger opportunities, that are best met and seized by collaborating, sharing resources, networks, and human capital. Across the higher education landscape, and particularly within the community college sector, the need for partnerships and shared responsibility has never been more striking. In New Jersey, 42.7% of the higher education student population is enrolled in community colleges. But New Jersey community colleges receive only 8.9% of the state’s public higher ed funding, and less than 4% of higher ed funding from private philanthropic sources.

Within this stark context, we are celebrating some of RVCC’s partners and partnerships, which represent a range of sizes, industries, and missions. Each of our featured partners is to be commended, for they have each discovered that community colleges truly are “America’s best kept secret.” For RVCC, these partners provide a compelling blueprint for engaging with others in pursuit of collaboration and resource and the transformative impact they enable.

Triad Tool
Labcorp
SCBP
Sanofi
Stoney Brook Grille
Provident Bank



PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

TRIAD TOOL & DIE CO.

Located a mere 2.8 miles from the RVCC campus, it’s no wonder a partnership has emerged between College and company—especially a company that’s a multigenerational family business, with a genuine family “feel,” which traces back to 1933, the year the business was established.

But this partnership is based on so much more than proximity, family,

perfect advertisement for the quality of the program at RVCC.”

The company, whose primary markets are the Military and Commercial Aerospace segments, serves the entire country with its 60 employees. In addition to Mr. Carden, Triad’s leadership team includes **Eric Wichelhaus** (President), **Jim Wichelhaus** (Vice President), **Margaret Hurley** (Secretary/Treasurer), and **George Romanella** (Director of Operations). From top-to-bottom, it is a company whose commitment to quality, total customer satisfaction, and continual improvement is unwavering.

Triad first became engaged with RVCC when an article about trade programs at community colleges was passed onto George Romanella. George immediately recognized how beneficial a relationship with RVCC—the local community college—could be to Triad. He reached out to **Conrad Mercurius**, Coordinator of Advanced Manufacturing program at RVCC. As it turns out, this was the beginning of what is shaping up to be a long and fruitful relationship.

The beauty of the Triad-RVCC partnership is that it has allowed the company to not only hire RVCC grads with bright futures, but to also assist the Advanced Manufacturing program in the development of its curriculum.



FAMILY AFFAIR:
Company leaders and RVCC grads
now part of the Triad family.

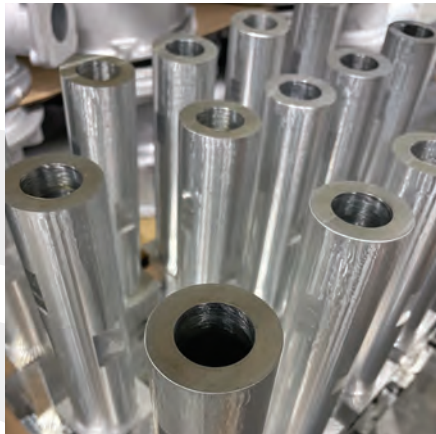
and history. In fact, the bond between RVCC and Triad is all about the future. In the last few years, Triad has hired eight talented grads from RVCC’s Advanced Manufacturing program, all of whom continue to work at company, building on their foundational education from the College. Says **Fred Carden**, Engineering Lead for the company, with 40 years of service, “Triad considers these employees to be a great asset and the



PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS



NINETY YEARS: Precision machining at its finest, a few of the products of Trial Tool & Die Co.



Both Mr. Carden and Mr. Romanella serve as Advisory Board Members for the Advanced Manufacturing program, offering their significant expertise to RVCC.

In addition, Triad is currently sponsoring two employees as students in the Advanced Manufacturing program at RVCC. Adds Jim Wichelhaus, “Triad has always had an apprenticeship program. Our partnership with RVCC allows us to continue that legacy.” Carden and Romanella have both expressed that the best part of having a relationship with RVCC is the satisfaction they get from seeing the RVCC program grow and improve. At this point in their careers, they are pleased to have a role in supporting machining and tool makers who are choosing to go into the trade.

As a lifelong tradesman himself, Romanella notes, “People have expressed the opinion that the trades as career opportunities were disappearing. The RVCC program and programs like it give us a glimmer of hope for the future of manufacturing in New Jersey and the United States.”



LABCORP

“The Labcorp-Raritan Valley Community College partnership is an excellent example of what is possible when the corporate community invites us in to assist with their talent pipeline challenges or other areas of need for which natural synergy exists with RVCC,” says RVCC President, Michael McDonough. “In fact, this is one of the unique roles community colleges play: helping to drive local and regional impact while demonstrating the value in public-private partnerships.”

It started with students—specifically students in RVCC’s “Authentic Engineering Experience” class who were working on a project at the Labcorp Raritan facility, which is headquarters for the company’s Northeast Division, the largest laboratory by footprint across the enterprise. As it turns out, the students were not only great problem-solvers, they also brought a youthful energy into the facility, which led to a discussion about other ways the College could assist Labcorp.

What was looming, in the not-too-distant future, was a talent pipeline challenge that companies across the country are facing: the “aging out” of an appreciable portion of the employee population and a critical need to fill the pipeline with the next generation of workers.

For Labcorp, a critical need was growing the talent pool of Medical Laboratory Technicians—a need that Raritan Valley Community College was uniquely suited to assist with. Flash

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS



Labcorp is a leading global life sciences company that provides vital information to help doctors, hospitals, pharmaceutical companies, researchers, and patients make clear and confident decisions. Through its unparalleled diagnostics and drug development capabilities, the company provides insights and accelerates innovations to improve health and improve lives. Labcorp has over 80,000 employees serving clients in more than 100 countries.



IMMERSION DAY: For students in the inaugural class of the Medical Laboratory Technology AAS degree program at Raritan Valley Community College, a two+ hour tour of Labcorp’s stunning facility, included stops at accessioning (a.k.a., the specimen receiving space), propel serum splitting automation, chemistry, hematology, urinalysis, specialty immunoassay, molecular and microbiology.



forward through months of dialogue between Labcorp and RVCC, leading to the completion of program design, curriculum development, licensing approval, staffing, and program promotion—all supporting the launch of the College’s new **Associate of Applied Science Degree in Medical Laboratory Technology**.

The company’s commitment to the partnership with RVCC is multifaceted and includes direct support to students through the *Labcorp MLT Scholarship* at RVCC. MLT students will also have the opportunity to complete their clinical rotations a few miles away from the RVCC campus at the Labcorp Raritan regional laboratory.

“Labcorp is proud to partner with RVCC to support their new Medical Laboratory Technology program,” says

Dr. **Mary Williamson**, PhD, Vice President, Laboratory Operations. “Once enrolled in this program, students will have the opportunity to train with our team of incredible laboratory professionals during their clinical rotations, and upon completion, explore the many opportunities for qualified can-



PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

didates to join our team of over 1,000 laboratory personnel at Labcorp's Raritan laboratory.”

Says **Bill Haas**, Labcorp Senior Vice President, Northeastern US & Canada, “Every day Medical Laboratory Technicians are helping healthcare providers treat millions of patients by giving them accurate results so they can make clear, confident decisions. Our partnership with RVCC’s new Medical Laboratory Technology program will ensure a consistent flow of qualified candidates to continue the essential work performed every day at Labcorp.”

INAUGURAL: Incoming MLT program students gather with staff from Labcorp and RVCC.



BUILDING PARTNERSHIP: Quality time at Labcorp to discuss the formal launch of the Medical Laboratory Technology Associate of Applied Science Degree program at Raritan Valley Community College. With the MLT program launch imminent, the Labcorp-RVCC partnership is focused on promotion to both current and future RVCC students whose interests might align with the promising careers that await at Labcorp and other firms in this sector.

In frame, with (left to right): Mike Marion (Chief Development Officer, RVCC Foundation) Bill Haas (Senior Vice President, Northeast Operations, Labcorp), Siddra Dar (Director, Medical Laboratory Technician Program at RVCC), Sarah Imbriglio (Dean, STEM and Health Sciences, RVCC), Elise Wagner (Vice President, Laboratory Operations, Labcorp), Mary Williamson, PhD (Vice President, Lab Operations, Northeast and North Central Divisions), Matt Christianson (Associate Vice President, Marketing and Commercial Strategy, Labcorp), Jesse Greenberg (Talent Acquisition Manager, Labcorp), and Inieka Stafford (Director of Health & Technology, RVCC)



PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

SOMERSET COUNTY BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP

The mission of the Somerset County Business Partnership (SCBP) is to lead the business community to a prosperous and sustainable future; its effectiveness is the result of a partnership among Somerset County’s major employers, small and medium-sized business, nonprofit organizations, Somerset County Board of County Commissioners, and the 21 local municipalities. The organization is small (6 employees) but has a wide reach, serving Somerset County with a membership that boasts some 800 companies and organizations.

Says **Chris Edwards**, President & CEO, who has been at the SCBP for over a decade, “The number one issue that comes up with mid and large-sized employers in the area is talent. Whether is attracting or retaining talent, RVCC plays a pivotal role in the number one asset any of these businesses need.” He adds, “Our job



START YOUR ENGINES: Employers and RVCC students engage in an “Employer Speed Networking” organized by the SCBP in collaboration with the College and held at the RVCC Event Center.

at the SCBP is to make the business community aware of the services that RVCC provides and help their students get in front of those employers.”

Edwards is most proud of the collaboration agreement that RVCC and the SCBP forged in January, 2022 that connects students with employers through a variety of events and programs. In November of the same year, the first ever “Employer Speed Networking” event was held that matched some 25 employers with 25 students looking for mentorship in Somerset County. Notes Edwards, “I think what

In preparation for the Employer Speed Networking event, RVCC Office of Career Success & Experiential Learning helped me create a successful elevator pitch, and coached me on my resume and how to network. And the Employer Speed Networking event helped me land an internship at RRBB, an accounting firm in Somerset. I can say I am confident in my abilities to speak with an employer and get future internships or jobs!

Cesar Vicuna (RVCC Class of 2023; attending Rutgers Business School in Fall 2023)



PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

we did in 2022 is the catalyst for even stronger programs moving forward.”

According to Edwards, his SCBP mentors—past President **Mike Kerwin** and County Economic Development Officer **John Maddocks**—were big advocates for RVCC. Edwards adds, “Both of them were always adamant that RVCC have a seat at the table when we engage the business community about their needs.”

Edwards added that the best part of having a partnership with RVCC is that it is reciprocal: both entities see the value they can offer each other. “At most companies we tend to have

one or two contacts,” says Edwards. “At RVCC, we probably have 15-20 people who have been involved in the organization, and it starts at the very top with President **Mike McDonough** and his involvement on our Executive Board.”

Mr. Edwards is bullish on the College and says RVCC’s importance to the business community cannot be overstated. “There are so many areas that RVCC impacts currently and could impact going forward,” he says. “And I’ve always appreciated how the leadership at RVCC has been very intentional about their involvement in the community. RVCC not only has to help young adults get ready to join the business community, but also help the business community train their current employees for highly skilled and ever-evolving positions.”



PROMOTIONAL MUSCLE: For the last two years, the SCBP served as a significant “amplifier” of the RVCC Giving Day message. In 2022, their “Coffee with Dan” series (hosted by then Director of Business Services, Dan Fahrer) featured a 45-minute interview with Mike Marion (Executive Director of RVCC Foundation) from “Bliss Coffee Lounge” that highlighted both the College’s successes and the upcoming Giving Day event. For RVCC Giving Day 2023, SCBP marketing associate Suzanne Leger came to campus on Giving Day and created innovative promotional messaging that was posted into both the SCBP and RVCC Foundation’s social media streams.

Suzanne Leger (3rd from left) with RVCC Foundation’s Cindy Haddad, Janet Dunne, and Mike Marion



SANOFI

Sanofi is an innovative Paris-based, global healthcare company, driven by one purpose: improving people’s lives. The company has 100,000+ employees spread across some 100 countries, including 13,000 in the U.S., with flagship offices in Bridgewater (NJ) and Cambridge, Massachusetts. The company is dedicated to transforming the practice of medicine “by working to turn the impossible into the possible.” Sanofi provides potentially life-changing treatment options and life-saving vaccine protection to millions of people around the world, while putting sustainability and social responsibility at the center of the company’s ambitions.

Over the years, the company has become one of the top corporate supporters of Raritan Valley Community College, primarily through the Sanofi US Corporate Mentor Program at RVCC, Sanofi Galileo Scholarships (which provide greater access to STEM education), and during COVID-19, the RVCC Science Education Institute’s work developing virtual science instruction for school districts across the state.

Raquel Mura, Head of R&D North America Global Operations and a board member of the RVCC Foundation, appreciates the value the Raritan Valley Community College and its offering of affordable, high-quality

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS



“Growing up I was never given much help or guidance when trying to piece together my future, so I became reluctant to ask for help. After entering the Sanofi Mentorship Program that all quickly changed. After just a few short minutes of conversation with my mentor, I could tell that they genuinely cared about me and wanted to benefit my future. I would not be the person I am today without this program.”

Luke Ingenito (RVCC Class of 2020; Rutgers Engineering School, Class of 2023)



FUTURES AT WORK: Last fall, mentors and mentees of the Sanofi Corporate Mentor Program at Raritan Valley Community College kicked off a nine-month long schedule of interactive and face-to-face sessions that are all about “futures.”

Renewed with another \$50,000 award from Sanofi for the 2023-24 Academic Year, this program continues to provide the rarest of things: exceptional opportunities for select RVCC students to accelerate their growth and professional development.

Amazing to think of the number of futures that have been encouraged, enriched and empowered through the magic of these mentor-mentee relationships. It’s well beyond the paid internships and employment at Sanofi that many mentees have benefitted from; in fact, the multiplier effect of this partnership exceeds our ability to fully measure it. How do you capture a mentee “paying it forward” somewhere ahead in their journey?

Raquel Mura, Head of R&D North America Global Operations



education to its students. “Supporting an institution that can make a difference in the lives of so many students who may not otherwise have had an opportunity to pursue higher education is inspiring,” she notes.

One of the most impactful programs Sanofi works with RVCC on is the Corporate Mentorship Program. With its sixth year just completed, the program has provided some 65 RVCC students scholarship support and an opportunity to receive personalized career coaching from Sanofi employees throughout the course of an entire school year. “Watching mentees grow and reach heights they never thought

were possible is inspiring,” says **Diana Blankman**, Head of U.S. Corporate Social Responsibility. “But this program is just as rewarding to Sanofi employees as it is for the students.” This year, as part of a grant awarded to RVCC from *The National Institute for Innovation in Manufacturing Biopharmaceuticals* intended to make under-represented minorities aware of the opportunities within the pharmaceutical industry, Mura agreed to partner with the College to host students during a half day event at the Bridgewater campus, allowing them the opportunity to network with industry professionals and get a first-hand look

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS



into the work that Sanofi is doing “to chase the miracles of science.” “Diversity, equity and inclusion in STEM is a matter very close to my heart,” says Mura. “And it is personally rewarding to interact with the students and help them better understand what their careers could look like in the STEM field.”

Mura adds, “It is truly a privilege for a company such as Sanofi to be able to help students, especially those coming from underrepresented backgrounds, as they navigate their career paths, and for us to help nourish the next generation of scientists and professionals in the STEM field.”



RVCC, with its strong reputation and high-quality educational offerings, plays a very important role in our community by helping provide a pipeline of talent in STEM disciplines, and by providing workforce training and career tracks. This positively impacts the lives of students and local companies that can tap into high-caliber talent and grow. When local communities prosper, society gains. Sanofi US is proud to be a partner of RVCC. We recognize the value of RVCC, and we appreciate its role in the community in which our employees live and work.

*Diana Blankman,
Head of U.S. Corporate
Social Responsibility*

STONEY BROOK GRILLE

He is a constant presence—whether seated in a booth having a business meeting, mingling with customers at their tables, or just making the rounds from kitchen to back office to the bar, and all points in between. In fact, **Simos Kontos**, owner of the Stoney Brook Grille, is present at his beloved restaurant some 100 hours a week. “I am here because I care about our customers,” says Simos, “and I want to be sure they’re taken care of.” So do his daughters, **Ioanna** and **Katina**, both of whom have been students at RVCC and now help run the business, which opened in 2009.

As suggested in the restaurant’s moto, “where neighbors wine and dine,” Stoney Brook Grille has become a local “go to” place: a popular Branchburg establishment, located less than a mile from the campus of Raritan Valley Community College. In fact, the college’s employees often lunch there or gather to celebrate

anniversaries or other team-related milestones.

That proximity and his daughters’ connection to RVCC inspired a promotional relationship, which now spans four years, and centers on the college’s annual “Giving Day” campaign. “We approached several local businesses about becoming involved with our Giving Day efforts, but no one responded as enthusiastically as Simos,” notes **Janet Dunne**, Development Associate of the RVCC Foundation.



PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

DRIVING FORCE: **Simos Kontos**



From an initial conversation about a partnership sprang on-premise RVCC Giving Day promotional displays, discounts at the restaurant for Giving Day “donors”, as well as other prizes and cash donations to help the cause. Mr. Kontos, who attended Stevens Institute of Technology and worked for AT&T for 22 years before entering the restaurant industry, appreciates the value of education and the impact of RVCC. “I love the college,” he notes. “It is a wonderful and an important part of our community and I’m happy to help it in any way I can.”



FAMILY AFFAIR: **Daughters Ioanna and Katina**

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

THE PROVIDENT BANK FOUNDATION

Samantha Plotino, Executive Director of The Provident Bank Foundation, describes her team as “small but mighty.” That description feels particularly apt given her three-person staff (Samantha, along with **Kristy Koos**, Associate Program Director and **Donna Abbott**, Foundation Associate) which—backed by their “mission driven” board of directors—awarded Raritan Valley Community College a \$100,000 “Signature Grant” as part of the 2022-23 award cycle. It was the Foundation’s first Signature Grant award in Somerset County and the largest gift ever to RVCC from The Provident Bank Foundation.

The Provident Bank Foundation is committed to strengthening and sustaining its relationship with communities in Provident Bank’s marketplace—this includes 14 counties in New Jersey, three counties in eastern Pennsylvania, and Queens County, New York. Though the Foundation’s office is in Woodbridge, NJ, the small and mighty team is often on the road, meeting community partners where they are. The Provident Bank Foundation’s mission is centered on enhancing quality of life across its geographic footprint and does so by investing in 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations focused on community enrichment, education, and health, as well as youth and families.

The Foundation’s relationship with RVCC began nearly 10 years ago, mostly with small grants and sponsorships, including of the RVCC Foundation Golf Classic. “But I personally began my relationship with the RVCC Foundation in the summer of 2021,” says Plotino. “I was invited by Mike

Marion, Chief Development Officer & Executive Director, RVCC Foundation, to come to the college for a tour and have a conversation about what RVCC was currently engaged in and where they hoped to take the College in the future.”

“Right off the bat I could tell that the College had a vested interest in improving quality of life for its students and opening doors to new and exciting opportunities,” added Plotino. “And that meshed well with our funding goals at The Provident Bank Foundation.”

According to Plotino, The Achievement Center at RVCC was unlike any other program, as it focused on the educational advancement, profes-



sional development, and economic self-sufficiency of young adults with special needs and different abilities.

“The Achievement Center’s partnership with The Arc of Somerset County only serves to strengthen what RVCC can offer its students through this innovative program,” says Plotino. “In our short time working together on this initiative, our staff and Board have been incredibly impressed by RVCC’s genuine investment in the students served by The Achievement Center.”

“RVCC is a cornerstone of higher

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

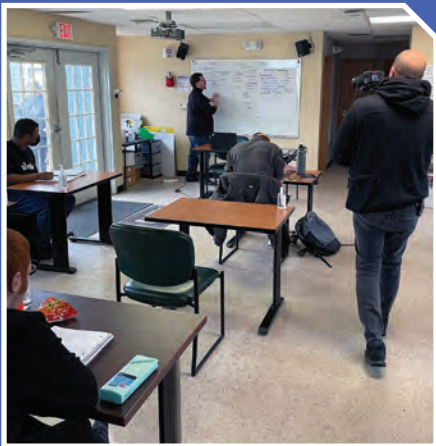
education in New Jersey,” says Plotino. “As a funder, what I appreciate most about RVCC is the College leadership’s transparency and their willingness to dream big alongside us. They view The Provident Bank Foundation as a partner in attaining their goals and in shaping a better future for their diverse student body.”



A perspective from THE PROVIDENT BANK extended team:

“Upon arriving at the Raritan Valley Community College for the first time, I was amazed by the campus. Not only for its sheer scale but also for its stunning setting. Nestled beautifully within open and expansive green spaces, it had the feel of a modern university with the facilities to match. Seeing really is believing, it’s so much more than “just” a community college campus. What moved me even beyond the impressive grounds, was the impactful nature of the work of The Achievement Center. I had the pleasure of observing a class in session and yet again I was moved. Captivated by the style of teaching showcased by the instructor, Bob Hulit; lessons were delivered with real-world practicality, care, and enthusiasm. There’s a warmth that embraces you the moment you walk in and a connection between the staff and the students that’s truly tangible. We can ALL learn something from the approach The Achievement Center takes to teaching, learning, and skills development that will live on for a lifetime.”

Matthew May, Creative Director, Believeco



MAKING HISTORY

MAKING HISTORY

An extraordinary ‘Giving Tuesday’ visit to campus by The Provident Bank Foundation, whose leader, **Samantha Plotino**, brought a creative team from Toronto-based Brightworks Interactive Marketing (now called Believeco) to film the work of The Achievement Center at Raritan Valley Community College.

As one of three of the Foundation’s “Signature Grant” recipients, the \$100,000 investment in The Achievement Center recognizes the unique collaboration between the Arc of Somerset County and RVCC, which provides a college experience and pathway to employment for those with intellectual and development disabilities. In short, brilliant.

While on campus, Samantha also lent her voice to RVCC Foundation’s FUTURES campaign, filming her part at the RVCC Foundation’s historic offices (circa 1743), which were transformed into a “pop-up” production set. It, too, was brilliant.

PARTNERS and PARTNERSHIPS

RVCC RECEIVES \$100,000 SIGNATURE GRANT FROM THE PROVIDENT BANK FOUNDATION

Raritan Valley Community College is the recipient of a \$100,000 Signature Grant from **The Provident Bank Foundation** (PBF) for the 2022-23 academic year. The generous gift, in the Education funding priority area, is the Foundation's first Signature Grant awardee in Somerset County and one of three statewide.

RVCC was selected for the work of **"The Achievement Center"** (TAC)—a unique collaboration between the College and the Arc of Somerset County. The Center provides a certificate-based, post-secondary program for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities so that they can continue academic study, experience college life, and gain important skills for entering the workforce.

"The collaboration between Raritan Valley Community College and the Arc of Somerset County is inspiring," said **Samantha Plotino**, Executive Director, The Provident Bank Foundation. "And their collective impact is so evident in the students whose lives are enriched through the work of The Achievement Center."

The multi-year award will support the expansion of the courses offered at TAC, specifically in the STEM disciplines, and allow the TAC model to be amplified more broadly across the state.

"We applaud both the vision and the generosity of The Provident Bank Foundation," said RVCC President **Michael McDonough**. "Their commitment to the students served by The Achievement Center at RVCC is unprecedented."

"We're honored by the endorsement by The Provident Bank Foundation and excited by the impact this support will enable," said **Christopher Corvino**, Executive Director, the Arc of Somerset County. "The growth of our program is the best evidence of our value to the communities we serve."

"This a wonderful example of what is possible when important work gets noticed and appropriately valued," said **Mike Marion**, Executive Director, RVCC Foundation. "It's also a wonderful example of incredible generosity and the leadership of The Provident Bank Foundation."



BIG CHECK: (L-to-R): Mike Marion, Executive Director and Chief Development Officer, RVCC Foundation; Samantha Plotino, Executive Director, The Provident Bank Foundation; Christopher Corvino, Executive Director, the Arc of Somerset County; Michael McDonough, President, Raritan Valley Community College

\$100,000



We are proud to support RVCC Foundation

Creating meaningful environments that connect people, place, and technology.

dancker
dancker.com

WIN.WIN.

INTRODUCING AN RVCC FOUNDATION SUPPORT PROGRAM — EXCLUSIVELY FROM YOUR ROUTE 22 KIA EXPERTS.

We believe that everyone can excel,
given an educational foundation.
That's why Bridgewater Kia has set
out to support the RVCC Foundation
General Scholarship Fund.

Scan the QR code to learn more —
and get a **\$750 RVCC BONUS CASH
CERTIFICATE** toward a new Kia
for you*. PLUS, for each vehicle sold,
the RVCC Foundation
will receive a **\$250
DONATION**. Together,
hard work gets rewarded.



*See dealer for complete details;
some restrictions may apply.

© 2023, Bridgewater Kia.



Bridgewater Kia

DRIVING CONFIDENCE.
ADDING VALUE.
WARRANTY FOR LIFE:
"\$750 FOR YOU."



EXCLUSIVELY FROM
BRIDGEWATER KIA —
A \$3000 ADDED VALUE!

Bridgewater Kia
300 Finderne Avenue
Bridgewater, NJ 08807
Visit [BridgewaterKia.com](https://www.BridgewaterKia.com)
Call 732.469.4500



**United Business Systems
Is Proud To Support The
19th Annual RVCC
Foundation Golf Outing**



— PROUD — SUPPORTERS

WE ARE PROUD TO SUPPORT
RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY
COLLEGE FOUNDATION



Provident.Bank | MEMBER
FDIC



This isn't just insurance. It's NJM.

NJM Insurance Group
is proud to support

**Raritan Valley
Community College Foundation's
19th Annual Golf Classic**

njm.com | 1-800-232-6600

NJM Insurance
Group

EST. 1913

AUTO | HOME | RENTERS | BUSINESS

BOHLER IS PROUD TO SUPPORT

**Raritan Valley
Community College
Foundation**

Inspiring excellence in education, creating
opportunity, and transforming student lives

BOHLER //
BOHLERENGINEERING.COM

***Proud Supporters
of the
19th Annual
RVCC Foundation
GOLF CLASSIC***

MetroTek
ELECTRICAL SERVICES
www.MetroElectrical.com



COMMERCIAL ROOFING SYSTEMS:
New Roofs • Roof Replacement • Retrofitting
Preventative Maintenance • Service • Emergency Repair

Fully insured and bonded commercial roofing contractor.

5 Smalley Avenue, Middlesex, NJ 08846

732-424-9498 Michael Petrik: Estimator

MikeP@Badgerroofing.com

www.badgerroofing.com

THAT'S WHAT I LIKE®



pepsi.

**RARITAN
VALLEY**
COMMUNITY COLLEGE

OFFICIAL PARTNER OF
**RARITAN VALLEY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

© 2022. PEPSI and the Pepsi Globe are registered trademarks of PepsiCo, Inc.



Our firm is proud to support the

THE RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE FOUNDATION

**DiFRANCESCO BATEMAN KUNZMAN
DAVIS LEHRER & FLAUM, P.C.**
Attorneys at Law

15 Mountain Boulevard, Warren, NJ 07059

T: (908) 757-7800 F: (908) 757-8039

E-Mail: DBC@newjerseylaw.net

Website: www.newjerseylaw.net

THE COMPLETE TENT & EVENT RENTAL SOURCE



LIFE IS ABOUT CHOICES.
WE OFFER SO MANY.

adamsrental.com

Van Cleef

ENGINEERING WITH FOCUS



Offering Higher Education Services Since 1972

Athletic Field Design	Facility Engineering
◆	◆
Capital Improvements	Utility Engineering
◆	◆
School Master Planning	Land Surveying
◆	◆
Synthetic Field Design	Water/Wastewater Engineering

With 10 Offices Servicing the Mid-Atlantic Region
1128 Route 31, Lebanon, NJ 08833
(908) 735-9500 • www.vancleefengineering.com



**Enduring Architectural Solutions.
Exceptional Experience.**

You deserve to work, learn, and play in spaces that
empower you, strengthen your community, and
benefit the planet.

We Will Get You There



SSP Architects, 50 Division Street, Suite 503, Somerville, NJ 908-725-7800 www.SSParchitects.com

NAM•IT

ENGRAVING

Interior & Exterior Signage • Awards

email: Namitengraving.com
namitengraving.com

(732) 679-0849

**Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital Somerset
proudly supports Raritan Valley Community College
Foundation's 19th Annual Golf Classic**

**Robert Wood Johnson
University Hospital
Somerset**

**RWJBarnabas
HEALTH**
Let's be healthy together.

rwjbh.org/somerset

**New Jersey Risk Managers & Consultants proudly supports
Raritan Valley Community College Foundation.**

Congratulations on your 19th Annual Golf Classic!

**We recognize the outstanding efforts and achievements of
the Foundation and wish you much continued success in
all your endeavors.**

**New Jersey Risk Managers & Consultants, LLC
20 West End Avenue
Somerville, New Jersey 08876
908.231.8770**



eDesign Interactive

We. Do. Web.
edesigninteractive.com

163 Madison Ave. Suite 220-5, Morristown, NJ 07960

USA Architects believes
students deserve to
BE HEARD, BE SEEN,
and **BELONG.**

We are a proud sponsor for
RVCC Foundation's 19th
Annual Golf Classic to
help students receive the
scholarships they deserve.

USA

Architects

usaarchitects.com



Trane is proud to support the

**Raritan Valley
Community College Foundation**

We are dedicated to building sustainable
futures.

Trane
trane.com/commercial
michael.sebastiano@trane.com

© 2021 Trane. All Rights Reserved. All trademarks referenced are the trademarks of their respective owners.



TRANE
TECHNOLOGIES

**LJS Electric Proudly Supports Education &
Raritan Valley Community College Foundation**
Electrical Contracting • HVAC Repair & Replacement
Lighting Upgrades & Installations



ljselectric.com

THE GOLDEN LION BOOKSTORE HAS EVERYTHING YOU NEED!

RaritanValShop.com

Raritan Valley CC | (908) 231-8808



SCAN TO SHOP

GZA is proud to support
Raritan Valley Community College



Known for excellence.
Built on trust.



www.gza.com

Good Luck to all Golfers

A N S

1-800-545-ATUL

Architect. Mentor. Beekeeper.
Tailored financial advice for a

LIFE WELL PLANNED.



While you may not be running an architectural firm, tending hives of honeybees and mentoring a teenager – your life is just as unique. Backed by sophisticated resources, a Raymond James financial advisor can help you plan for what's important to you. That's **LIFE WELL PLANNED.**

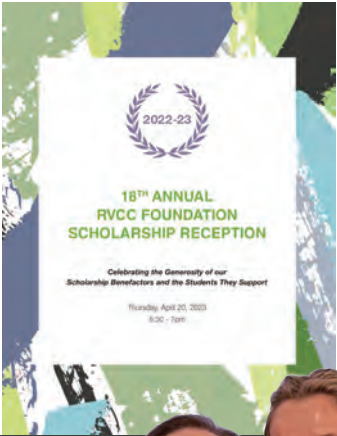
Robert Milligan Jr., CFP®, CIMA®, AIF®
Managing Partner, 1792 Wealth Advisors
Branch Manager, RJFS
360 Mount Kemble Ave
Morristown, NJ 07960-6834
B 973.866.5270 // D 973.866.5260
robert.milligan@1792wealthadvisors.com
<https://www.raymondjames.com/1792wealthadvisors>



Securities offered through Raymond James Financial Services, Inc., member FINRA/SIPC.
Investment advisory services offered through Raymond James Financial Services Advisors, Inc. 1792 is not a registered broker/dealer and is independent of Raymond James Financial Services.

IN SUPPORT of Our Students

Images from the 18th Annual RVCC Foundation Scholarship Reception



IN SUPPORT of Our Students

\$404,848 SCHOLARSHIP DOLLARS AWARDED IN FY22 TO 278 STUDENT RECIPIENTS

\$404,848

NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

MELANIE MARIE PIWOSKI NURSING SCHOLARSHIP AT RVCC

I am a graduate of Raritan Valley Community College's Nursing Program. Today, I am a Nurse Practitioner and part of the nursing faculty at RVCC. To come full circle brings me so much pride in all I have accomplished and grateful to all who believed in me. During my training, I lost my sister Melanie to mental illness. In my practice,



MELANIE MARIE PIWOSKI
1963–1996

I find I use her story not only to educate others on mental illness, but to remember that people should not be judged but treated with compassion, especially when they are lost.

Teaching nursing students is incredible. I have met so many interesting people with their own stories, who are struggling to make it through. I felt motivated to do something to make a change. I had a nursing instructor who refused to let me give up, and for that I am so very grateful. I try to follow the compassion of that instructor, to teach others how to practice compassion. The nurse who took care of my sister, treated my family and my sister with such love and respect at our worst time without judgement. We need more nurses like her and I want to give someone the chance by offering some assistance to make life a little easier.

I treat all people with respect and compassion regardless of their situation. Raritan Valley Community College gave me the opportunity to give back to those who got me here, to those who provided our family with peace knowing that my sister was cared for compassionately, and now a chance to help a true angel get her wings with education by establishing for the 2023-24 Academic year, the *Melanie Marie Piwoski Nursing Scholarship* at RVCC. My heart is bursting.

Tracey A. Keegan FNP-BC
Nursing Instructor, Health Science Education
Raritan Valley Community College
RVCC Class of 1995

FRIENDS OF RVCC SCHOLARSHIP

The inaugural *Friends of RVCC Scholarship* was awarded this year and the group of RVCC alumni who are behind it are not only friends themselves, but they believe in the power of education and appreciate the impact RVCC has had in their respective journeys.

"We are proud," says Kate Roskova (RVCC Class of 2013). "A few of my college friends and I all benefitted from generosity of others when we were students at Raritan Valley Community College. Now—10 years later—we're paying it forward as scholarship donors through the RVCC Foundation."

#rvccalumni #rvccproud



AT THE MET: "Friends of RVCC Scholarship" benefactors and RVCC alumni reconnecting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art: KATERINA ROSKOVA (Class of 2013), PAUL CORDOVA-WONG (Class of 2014), VALENTINA CORDOVA-WONG (Class of 2014), DAVID LAMBROPOULOS (Class of 2013), SHASHAV DESAI (Class of 2013), OSAGE AFE (Class of 2012), BRITTANY (did not attend RVCC), SHEKHAR GURNANI (Class of 2013); Not in the picture (but also benefactors): CHRISTOPHER SANCHEZ (Class of 2014) and KEVIN TURNBULL (Class of 2013)

IN SUPPORT of Our Students

NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

THE ACHIEVEMENT SCHOLARSHIP AT RVCC

A Holiday Solstice Celebration at Raritan Valley Community College and a “first ever” gift. Thanks to the generosity of the extended RVCC family and matched by President Michael McDonough and the RVCC Foundation, \$3500 was raised to establish a new scholarship benefiting students with intellectual and developmental disabilities enrolled at The Achievement Center at RVCC. Gold and Silver stars shined brightly on the scholarship tree just prior to the holiday break with special thanks extended to all those who purchased them. It may have been the shortest day of the year, but it yielded one big impact through “The Achievement Scholarship at RVCC.”



Images from December's Holiday Solstice Celebration at Raritan Valley Community College

#RVCCPROUD



IN SUPPORT of Our Students

NEW SCHOLARSHIPS

THE ROSALIND CUSS NURSING EXCELLENCE AWARD

Established this year by the **Francis and Rosalind Cuss Foundation** as part of a \$50,000 pledge to create an endowed fund at RVCC, the *Rosalind Cuss Nursing Excellence Award* is given to a graduating Nursing student who exhibits “enthusiasm for achieving patient-focused clinical excellence, a mastery of nursing studies, and a strong commitment to pursuing a career in the Nursing profession.” The inaugural recipient, selected by Nursing faculty, was **Deysi Robles**, who was honored May 11 at “The Pinning Ceremony,” presented by the Graduating Nursing Class of 2023. Deysi’s own journey is nothing

IT’S A FAMILY AFFAIR: Dr. Francis Cuss, wife Rosalind Cuss, and daughter Sarah Cuss with the inaugural recipient of the *Rosalind Cuss Nursing Excellence Award*, Deysi Robles, Nursing Class of 2023.



short of compelling and a testament to perseverance, which inspires her passion “to make a difference in people’s lives.” But what makes the *Rosalind Cuss Nursing Excellence Award* so exceptional is its roots in family—and in RVCC. Both daughters of **Francis and Rosalind Cuss** (dad and mom are a medical doctor and nurse respectively), attended RVCC and daughter **Sarah Cuss** graduated with an associate of applied science degree

in Nursing from RVCC. She then went on to get her BSN and MSN degrees and is now part of the Nursing faculty at RVCC. Could there be a more perfect story arc? It’s no surprise that the award is named for Rosalind, whose distinguished career as a nurse began at the Middlesex Hospital, London, UK, and continued in the community specializing in infant wellness. Rosalind’s time working on a medical ward at the Middlesex Hospital was particularly notable because that was where she and Francis first met. As for The Pinning Ceremony at RVCC, says Francis, “Just a big thank you. It was a wonderful event. Ros and I had a ball and were thrilled with the choice of our first awardee. What an inspiration Deysi is!”



INAUGURAL RECIPIENTS: SARAH CAPUTO, AVERY SCHAEFER, TARA MAHER, JANET NYAMBURA, and ELICIA LEVANDOSKI—all members of RVCC’s Nursing Class of 2023 and all recipients of the largest scholarship gift in the history of the RVCC Nursing program—gather before the annual Pinning Ceremony. The record gift of \$100,000, from the SOMERSET HILLS COMMUNITY HEALTH FOUNDATION, provided 10 full scholarships for RVCC Nursing students as well as fee offsets to some 138 1st and 2nd year Nursing students for their Virtual Electronic Simulation lab packages. Says Elicia Levandoski, “I wouldn’t be here without this incredible support. It has been life changing.”

HONORING Service To Others

Building on its mission and purpose, RVCC has cultivated a climate in which the College – its faculty, staff, and foremost, its students – as well as our surrounding communities, value service learning and civic engagement. This year, with the added generosity of RVCC donors **Don and Penny Pray**, the students who served with particular distinction will also receive a stipend in recognition of their great work...

One of RVCC’s hallmark programs for the past 27 years is its Service Learning Program, which enables students to use community service as part of the classroom experience and receive academic credit for that service. Through curricular service learning, students address many critical issues of public concern including hunger, homelessness, literacy, environment, disabilities, domestic violence, substance abuse, child care, health, nutrition, animal welfare, and legal aid and law, to name a few.

Students in the Service Learning Program at RVCC serve more than 250 community organizations in Somerset and Hunterdon counties. They include a range of entities—schools, non-profits, businesses, and social service agencies, and government offices. Over the years, thousands of RVCC students have given time and added value at pre-schools, grade schools, high schools, after-school programs, nursing homes, adult day care centers, assisted living facilities, animal shelters, museums, environmental centers, farms, court houses, probation departments, youth correctional facilities, municipal township departments, youth programs, homeless shelters, and domestic violence safe houses. Students engage in important community issues while helping a wide range of populations—from struggling single parents to the elderly to at risk children and animals; from the economically marginalized, to immigrants and the

incarcerated, from the disabled to the homeless. Annually, RVCC students contribute some 45,000 hours of service. Conservatively, this donation translates to the economic equivalent of \$1,000,000 to organizations in the two counties served by the Raritan Valley Community College, and in the process, bolsters RVCC’s reputation as a critical—and reliable—partner in central New Jersey.

1,000,000
annual \$ value of
community service hours
donated by RVCC students
to local organizations

**RVCC STUDENT NAMED AS
NEWMAN CIVIC FELLOW**
Sydney Lehrer, a second-year Liberal Arts major, has been selected as a **Newman Civic Fellow** by **Campus Compact** for the 2023-2024 academic year. Lehrer joins more than 157 students from across the US and Mexico selected for this honor, which recognizes their commitment to finding solutions facing communities locally, nationally, and internationally. Notably, RVCC is one of only six community colleges (out of 154 colleges and universities) in the US, and the only New Jersey community college, to be honored with a fellow (and only one other NJ four-year institution was recognized).

A dedicated student leader, Lehrer has been volunteering at Safe Harbor Child Access Centers since 2020. The organization provides court-ordered, supervised parenting and therapeutic time; monitored custodial exchanges; and programs for children who are healing from trauma. At Safe Harbor she has



Sydney Lehrer

created a free program offering English classes to its Spanish-speaking population and a multiweek lesson plan focusing on basic English grammar and proper pronunciation. In summer 2022, Lehrer volunteered for a month in Oaxaca, Mexico at three hospitals hosting vaccination clinics.

12 RVCC STUDENTS RECEIVE PRESIDENT’S VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

Each year, many RVCC students go above and beyond in their service to the community and the campus through curricular service learning and co-curricular community engagement activities.

In celebration of April’s Global Volunteer Month and in recognition of their extraordinary service totaling more than 4,000 hours to the local community and the College, 12 RVCC students received the **President’s Volunteer Service Award–Gold Level**. The following students all volunteered over 300 hours during the 2022-2023 academic year: **Evren Yucekus-Kissane, Jared Smith, Jordan Barge, Damian Juth, Sydney Lehrer, Liam Boyle, Kyle Hammermueller, Kasen Groth, Josephine Tracey, Daniela Ovelar, Antonette Juliane Almendras, and Sandra Faragalla**.

The President’s Volunteer Service Award is a civic award bestowed by the President of the United States. It is a premier volunteer award, encouraging citizens to live a life of service through presidential gratitude and national recognition, honoring them for looking around, being inspired, and taking positive action that changes the world.



CRIMINAL JUSTICE STUDENT RECEIVES SERVICE LEARNING LEADERSHIP AWARD

Jordan Barge of Somerville has been named the recipient of the *2022–2023 Raritan Valley Community College Service Learning Leadership Award*. Barge is a student in the College’s Criminal Justice program. The annual award honors students for their outstanding leadership and personal development attained through

their service learning project and reflection activity. An active and engaged leader committed to creating positive social change, Barge uses her leadership role to share her experience as a first-generation Hispanic student. She has proven her dedication and passion to service with many different activities. Her participation in the Service Learning Program through two criminal justice classes enabled her to volunteer at the RVCC Achievement Center, mentoring students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. She has also volunteered with the Somerset County Prosecutor’s Office and Somerset County Sherriff’s Office, helping staff with daily activities, and the Somerset County Board of Elections, serving as a poll worker. Barge also received the Raritan Promise Scholarship from the RVCC Foundation.



Jordan Barge

NONPROFIT CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AWARD

Sandra Faragalla of Neshanic Station has been named the recipient of the Raritan Valley Community College Nonprofit Civic Engagement Award for the 2022-2023 academic year. This recognition is intended to enhance the learning experience and community involvement of Service Learning Program students who have actively participated in community engagement activities as part of their academic classes.

A first-generation college student, Faragalla is a second-year Communications Studies major at RVCC. During the fall 2022 and spring 2023 semesters, she has been deeply involved in volunteering with several afterschool programs, camps, and community events for local nonprofits as part of her Event Planning and Management course. Applying her academic skills as an event planner through her service, Faragalla has organized group games, play sessions, holiday parties, and fundraising events and also mentored children and teens.

Faragalla recently received the Axel Velden Memorial Scholarship at RVCC from the RVCC Foundation, which will help with continuing her studies at the College.



Sandra Faragalla

RVCC Foundation Topline Summary of Giving

Fiscal Year 2022 (July 1, 2021–June 30, 2022)

STUDENT HONORED NATIONALLY AS PART OF ALL IN STUDENT VOTING HONOR ROLL

RVCC student **Steven Reffler** of Green Brook Township is one of 175 college students being recognized nationally for their nonpartisan democratic engagement work in 2022.

Reffler, a Business Administration major, is being honored by the ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge (ALL IN) as part of the 2023 ALL IN Student Voting Honor Roll. The ALL IN Student Voting Honor Roll awards college students doing outstanding work to advance nonpartisan democratic engagement at participating campuses. Reffler joins a group of 175 students recognized for their voter registration, education, and



Steven Reffler

turnout efforts ahead of last year's historic midterm elections. The 2022 midterm elections saw one of the highest youth turnout rates for a midterm election in the past 40 years — an estimated 23 percent of young people ages 18-29 turned out to vote.

At RVCC, Reffler is Chairman of RVotesMatter (ALL IN CHALLENGE), leading the efforts to provide non-partisan political education to the student body. This includes organizing various events and engaging in event-planning to encourage political involvement and promote active participation in the democratic process. In addition, he assists students in registering to vote, recognizing the importance of exercising their right to vote and having their voices heard.

Reffler also serves as SGA Vice President of Finance and Co-Chairs Soles4Souls, a charity shoe drive that benefits those in need in developing countries. After graduating from RVCC in May, he plans to transfer to The College of New Jersey, where he intends to major in Accounting and minor in Information Systems & Technology.

RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRENDS IN NURSING SERVICE LEARNING AWARD

The inaugural Raritan Valley Community College *Trends in Nursing Service Learning Award* recognizes students from the class for excellence demonstrated through their service learning project. The award focuses on groups that worked together to create a well-researched, nursing project and effectively disseminated findings to their peers and the community.

Daytime class project, *Food Insecurity: Commodity or Right and are Children the Key*, was selected from 10 groups. **Students Giovanna Gattuso, Jennifer Colline, Tara Maher, Heidi Green and Maria Calazans**, created grow kits for 70 elementary school children, performed a short skit about healthy food choices and provided community resources. They helped the children plant herbs and other produce which will remain in their classrooms to cultivate and enjoy. The grow kits included information for parents, i.e., recipes, an 18 question food insecurity tool and locations where to find food pantries and local farms. The principal is considering the project for inclusion in the curriculum as a way to tackle food insecurity and address obesity.



Evening class project, *Improving Medication Tracking for Seniors* was selected from five groups. Students **Winmyria Roberts, Paige Greenfield, Amanda Hernandez and Deysi Robles** created a wallet size medication card to assist seniors in managing their own medications, reduce the risk of adverse effects as well as promote judicious and effective medication especially for populations that may not have technological competency. The students presented the cards to a local senior center and members took extra copies home to share with friends and family. The senior center is keeping the cards for future members. The students also reached out to various community centers in nearby counties to collaborate and introduce the future use of the cards.

Total Funds Raised: \$851,346

Total Gifts: 2,078
Total Donors: 779

Top 10 Most Generous Supporters for Fiscal Year 2022

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

Somerset Hill Community Health Foundation
(via Community Foundation of New Jersey): \$100,000

The Frank S. and Patricia F. Russo Family Fund
(via Ayco Charitable Foundation): \$78,000

Sanofi US Services Inc.: \$75,000

Various Donors (via Vanguard Charitable): \$25,632

ERS Charitable Fund, Inc.: \$25,500

The Robert Sydney Needham Foundation: \$20,000

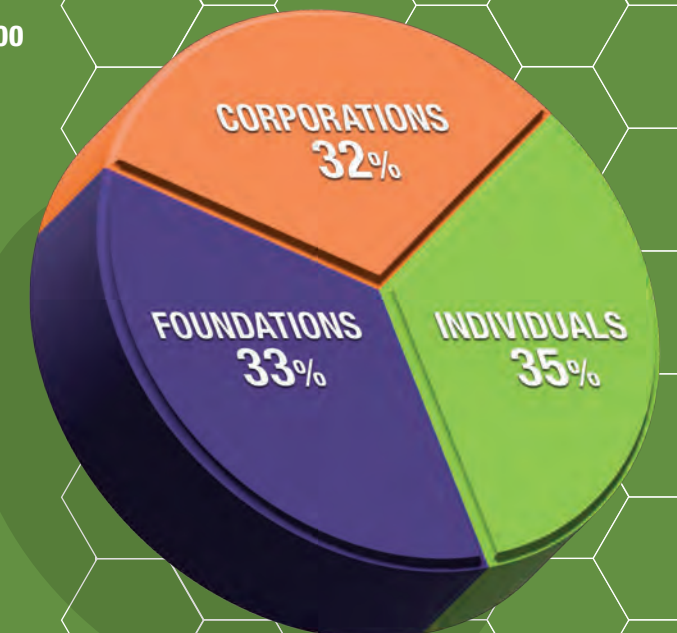
Janssen Pharmaceuticals: \$20,000

Anonymous: \$20,000

Robert Harris and Susan Primmer: \$18,000

Healthcare Quality Strategies Foundation: \$15,000

Source of funds



FUTURES

A CAMPAIGN FOR THE STUDENTS OF RVCC

The 2023-24 Academic Year marked the launch of FUTURES, on-going fundraising campaign in support of the students of Raritan Valley Community College. The FUTURES initiative features RVCC students, faculty, staff, alumni, and donors—in their own words—and captured by first-year film student **Luis Cruz-Duarte**. The campaign is an acknowledgment that many of our donors to RVCC haven't been to campus in a long time and likely haven't had much interaction with our students, faculty or staff, all of whom are vital to what makes the College so exceptional. Our short FUTURES videos bring the voices of our RVCC community to the community beyond our campus. The campaign supports the following four student-centric areas:



SCHOLARSHIP: Replenishes the general scholarship fund as well as targeted scholarships; helps to relieve the financial challenge of attending college and provides affirmation to worthy students selected for a scholarship.



LEADERSHIP: Brings additional resources to offset membership fees allowing a more diverse range of RVCC students to join select national leadership organizations and also rewards initiative and leadership traits in our students.

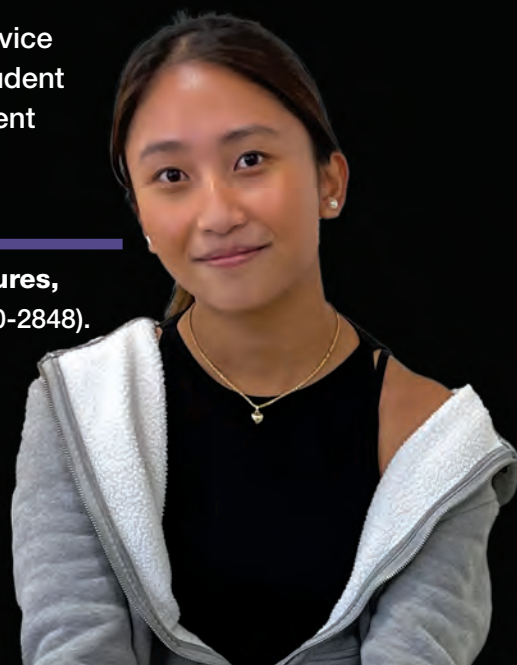


STEWARDSHIP: Supports students whose journeys have been impacted by unanticipated disruptions and emergencies, including but not limited to food insecurity, housing issues, and mental health concerns.

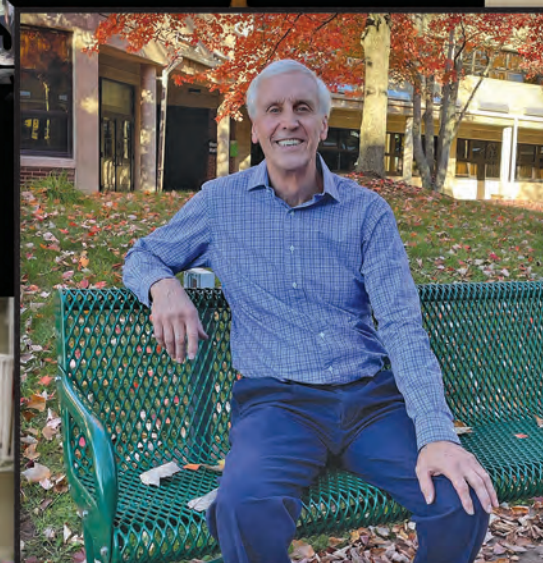


CITIZENSHIP: Helps expand our model RVCC Service Learning Program, to bring a greater number of student volunteer opportunities as well recognition of student excellence in community service.

To learn more or to make a donation, please visit raritanval.edu/futures, or contact Mike Marion (michael.marion@raritanval.edu, or @ 973-600-2848).



FUTURES



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 17,000 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 www.rvccfoundation.org.



Cindy Haddad, Mike Marion, Janet Dunne

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

ABOUT THE RVCC Foundation



Dan Van Tran

IN OTHER RVCC FOUNDATION NEWS...

TRANSITIONS:

Congratulations to **Allan Boomer**, Managing Partner and Chief Investment Officer of Momentum Advisors, who was affirmed as the new Chair of the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors. Allan most recently served as Vice Chair. Ascending into the Vice Chair position is **Elissa Santo**, Vice President at Atlantic Precision Technology. As we congratulate both Allan and Elissa, we extend our deepest gratitude to **Stacey Kimmins**, for her leadership and three-year reign as Chair.



Tony Cava and Patrick Delaney

Congratulations and best wishes to Mr. **Tony Cava**, who has retired both from RWJ Barnabas Hospital – Somerset, where he served as its chief executive—and the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors. Tony's service and commitment to the College's Nursing students is in a class of its own. Replacing Tony at the hospital—and on the board—is his long-time #2, **Patrick Delaney**. Patrick has been at RWJUH Somerset since March of 2015 and previously held leadership positions at Bayshore Community Hospital and Riverview Medical Center. He has Bachelor of Arts in criminal justice and an MBA from Monmouth University.

Also new to the RVCC Foundation Board is **Dan Van Tran**, who—like Patrick—was affirmed by the Board in January. Dan is Chief Technology Officer at Collectors, an innovative company that's shaking up the collectables industry. Dan has been on a remarkable life journey and offers a unique set of skills and interests that promise to be of enormous value to RVCC and its students (including in the gaming space). He has a degree in software engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic and extensive experience in the world of startups.

Also joining RVCC Foundation Board, as part of its "Emerging Class," is **Paul Stramaglia**. A 2013 grad of RVCC, Paul transferred to Rutgers Business School where he graduated in 2015 with a degree in Finance. He also went on to complete his MBA at the Harvard Business School in May, 2020, and along the way took on roles at Prudential Financial and MetLife's Leadership Development Program. Paul is currently Strategy & Operations Program Manager at Google.

In other transitions: After more than 15 years on the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors, high praise and thanks to **Andrew Borkin**, who has decided to step down and unwind toward fulltime retirement. Andy has been a fixture in the fundraising activities for RVCC and was the longest tenured board member. He will be missed by his Board colleagues, particularly his colleagues on the Committee on Trusteeship. The same can be said of **Vince Cirianni**, who also announced his retirement recently, to devote more time to his business, family, and other service interests, of which there are many. We applaud the years of service and commitment of Andy and Vince, and wish them both rich and healthy next chapters.

ABOUT THE RVCC Foundation



CATCHING SOLAR:
RVCC Foundation Board of Directors at their April meeting at 74 Lamington Road.



WORDS & DEEDS: For the last two years, RVCC Foundation Board member **Gary Woodring** (pictured here with Men's Basketball coaches, L-to-R, **Marvin Crawford**, **Kevin Ryan** and **Brandon Summers**) has used his Giving Day generosity to “challenge” the teams of RVCC Athletics to “up their fundraising game.” His \$2,000 provides a \$250 match to any of the 8 RVCC Athletics teams for the first \$250 they raise. His support of RVCC student athletes also extends beyond his (and wife, **Lisa's**) philanthropy—he also shows up as fan for several games each year.



STELLAR GROUP: We applaud the RVCC Foundation student Board of Directors representatives of this year's “Emerging Class” as they've been engaged, resourceful, and always ready to help. **Paige Greenfield** and **Jimena Torres**, served with distinction and will be missed (though, as newly-minted members of the RVCC Alumni Association, they'll still be part of the Raritan Valley Community College family!). Paige, a grad of RVCC's nursing program, is looking at an emergency room opportunity at RWJU Hospital Somerset. Jimena has been accepted into the Engineering program at Rutgers University. We can't wish enough great things for these two talented and inspiring young leaders! First-year RVCC Film student **Luis Cruz-Duarte** has earned his own high marks—not as a student rep on the Board, but as storyteller. Luis has distinguished himself with his ability to capture the “voices” of RVCC students, faculty, and staff and then edit them into short, impactful vignettes as part of the RVCC Foundation's **FUTURES** campaign. Luis was honored at the Board's April 28 meeting as the Inaugural *RVCC Foundation Fellow*, for dedicated service and commitment to the mission of the RVCC Foundation. Congratulations Luis!!

Paige Greenfield, Jimena Torres, Luis Cruz-Duarte.



#rvccproud #gratitude #74lamingtonroad

WITH Gratitude



ON THE EVE OF THE 2023 RVCC COMMENCEMENT CEREMONY, A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT MIKE MCDONOUGH...

DEAR RVCC COLLEAGUES:

Tomorrow, we celebrate the inspiring successes of our students. Commencement exercises likely date from the middle of the twelfth century, the ritual becoming standardized by the 1850s. The event is both a rite of passage – acknowledging the completion of a “step” in the life of a student – and an institutional celebration of achievement. Rituals remain vital elements in our life, punctuating the ordinary and highlighting the extraordinary.

So today, let me thank each of you for the contributions you have made that make tomorrow possible. Whatever your title, whatever your role at RVCC, you have helped our students realize their dreams. Never underestimate your ability to change a life, to nurture a dream, or to support a dramatic life transformation.

At this time of year, I am always reminded of Dr. Freeman Hrabowski III's unflinching reminder that our students are first and foremost “in our care.” The care that you show our students, the care that you demonstrate each and every day, is exemplary. Your care defines this institution. We are an institution not of buildings or programs, not of interventions or outcomes – but a college of people – dedicated, caring, compassionate people.

It will always be both an honor and a rare privilege to be the president of such a college, and to call each of you “colleague.”

And for me, this year exceeds all others. My son will graduate from RVCC tomorrow and so, so many of you

have advised him, mentored him, and taught him. You have helped him find his voice, find his passion; you have given him confidence; you have challenged him; and you have applauded his success. You have convinced him that he can shape his future, that he can be a force that matters. He will leave this college and this state later this summer, but he will take the people of RVCC with him – and that will make all the difference.

On behalf of my son and on behalf of all the other remarkable graduates that will walk across that stage – thank you.

And as always, thank you Mr. Ogden.

*Cheers,
Mike*



Oliver McDonough, with dad and Professor Darleen Fiorelli, Faculty Advisor for Oliver's Honors Capstone Presentation.

THE LAST WORD

SARAH LOPEZ

RVCC Class of 2023

EACH YEAR THE LAST WORD FEATURES THE REMARKS OF THE STUDENT COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER AT THE RVCC GRADUATION CEREMONY.

Sarah Lopez, a Visual Arts major graduating Summa Cum Laude, has excelled in academics and has been an active member of the College community. In addition to being named to the President's List, she is a recipient of the Chris Koep Memorial Scholarship, the Student Involvement Grant, and the Academic Awards for Excellence in Visual Arts and Service Learning.

Lopez has worked to promote creativity in the RVCC community. She co-founded the Zine Club, Spark'D, and has served as the club's President for the past four semesters, producing full-color publications that feature artwork and writing by creative-minded students. Lopez also has been involved with numerous mural painting projects on and off campus, including a mural designed and painted independently for RVCC's Arts Building. This fall, she plans to transfer to Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, where she will continue to develop her skills in painting and graphic design.

Hi everyone. Wow, we are all definitely here today, aren't we? This is real. Well, good for us! We did it!

I've been told that it's not usually an art student who makes the big commencement speech. We tend to be a bit introverted, I suppose. When word got around in the Arts Building that I would be the student speaker, I had other students say things to me like, 'why the heck would you do that?' And, 'I would be so terrified!' Which makes me feel just great. In all honesty, I've never done anything like this before, and I have to admit, this is a bit scary. Here's the thing, though: I'd like to share my story.

Attending RVCC was not my first experience as a college student. I attended college for the first time some years ago. I must also make it known that I am a survivor of domestic violence, and at that point in my life, home was not a safe place. My living situation made it incredibly difficult to focus on my education and so, in my third year of college, I had to drop out.

It would be a long time before I returned to continue my education at RVCC. During this time, I moved to a new state where I knew almost no one. This was a decision I had to make for my own safety, even though it meant starting over from square one. It was not easy, but I have come really far, and I'm proud of that. When a little something called the Covid-19 Pandemic began—I'm not sure if you all have heard of it—I had some time to



stop and think about where I wanted my life to go. I thought, why don't I give this another shot? What have I got to lose? So I enrolled at RVCC. I wasn't sure what to expect, but I made a promise to myself that I'd give a hundred percent in everything I did here and see what would come of it.

The time I spent at RVCC has been invaluable to my personal and professional growth. As an art student, I have worked on several murals both on and off campus, including a two-block-long sidewalk mural in Union Square in New York City. I have also received

several awards and commendations for my work, and I have served as the head of the Zine Club for the last four semesters, where I learned to make and distribute a publication that offers a platform to artists and creators around campus. As a student here, I even learned to code and design webpages. Yes, really! I am immensely proud of all the work I have done as an RVCC student.

I feel very fortunate to have met and worked with so many of the exceptional instructors in the Arts and Design department. They have a wealth of knowledge and experience and go above and beyond to help students take their work and career in a meaningful direction.

I have to shout out Darren McManus, whose classes can be intense but by the end of it, you'll learn to eat, sleep, and breathe graphic design. There's also Ji Yong Kim, who goes out of his way to help students

THE LAST WORD

SARAH LOPEZ

RVCC Class of 2023



Sarah with Professors Darren McManus and Ji Yong Kim, both of whom she thanked in her Commencement remarks.

network and gain practical experience. I wouldn't have discovered mural painting without his encouragement. There are so many others that I could name, but unfortunately, I don't have the time. Without their support, I wouldn't have been able to accomplish as much as I did.

So, it means a lot to be here today. To say that the road has been bumpy would be an understatement, but I'm here. I've been able to accomplish a lot at RVCC, but make no mistake: I had help.

I've found that there are two popular strains of thought competing in our culture. One asserts that a person must persevere and lift themselves up through hardship. The other insists that by lifting up others, we lift up ourselves. Considering all that I've been through, I am of the thought that a strong support system can mean the difference between success and failure.

I'd like to take a moment to thank my incredible partner, Eric, along with my friends and family. I hope everyone here today has people they can count on. No one should have to be alone. No one should be expected to accomplish everything by themselves.

I also wouldn't be here without the New Jersey Community College Opportunity Grant. I wouldn't have been able to afford returning to college without it. Programs like these are vital, they are necessary, and they are life changing. And I am proud to stand here today and say that it's given me a second chance.

I believe every person can achieve greatness, but sometimes there are obstacles that can prevent

Sarah Lopez: "GREENHOUSE" Watercolor, Spring 2022



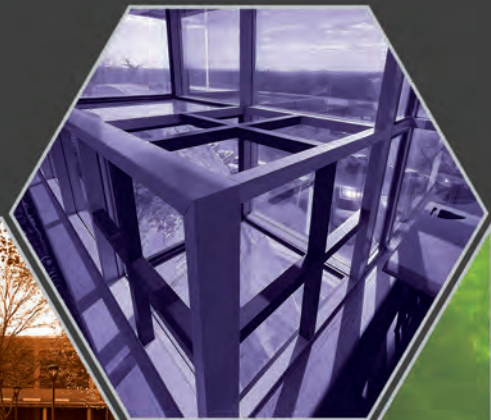
Sarah Lopez: "BOG" Watercolor, Spring 2022

someone from reaching their true potential. Sometimes terrible things happen that are completely out of your control. Life is unpredictable. Plans get derailed.

I encourage everyone to be open to giving and receiving help. Approach other people with an open mind and with a strong sense of empathy. There's a lot more we can do to combat adversity together, than if we stay in our own bubble. Take every opportunity to see and acknowledge those our society has made invisible. Think of what could be done to improve your entire community—the quality of life for every single person, every single race, age, sexuality, gender, class, and background—and move towards that.

Finally, I would like to tell you all something I wish I had known years ago. Sometimes, the plans you have for your life may change drastically, and that's okay. There is no cookie cutter model for success. There is no formula for the perfect life. It will be hard to find your way—I won't lie. It will take time, but you will find it. You will get through, and you will be okay.

Thank you.



RARITAN
VALLEY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FOUNDATION

