

Notes from the Valley...

...an update from the RVCC Foundation and RVCC Alumni Association

Fall 2023



LIONS MAKE A SPLASH!!

Members of the RVCC Women's Volleyball Team, along with Coach Phil Herro, take the plunge in the RVCC pool after clinching the 2023 East B Division III District Championship. The win gave the Lady Lions a birth in the national tournament in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Pictured in frame (left to right): Skylee Ohler, Kelly Delaney, Rachel Hatto, Sona Petrusova (on shoulders), Alanna Da Cunha, Danna Gaitan, Anniyah Cox, Reagan Mooney, Coach Phil Herro; (not in photo: Zakhye Nelson, Ava Acevedo, Marianna Gonzalez, Madison Cobb, and Ariele Acevedo).

LIFE ON CAMPUS



A vibrant campus, full parking lots, the energy of students, the colors of autumn. Every fall, the promise of a new academic year reveals itself—in all things big and small—on the campus of Raritan Valley Community College.



RVCC PROUD

ALIVE WITH ART

The arts are very much alive on the campus of Raritan Valley Community College. Music, theatre arts, dance, graphic and interactive design, and visual arts are among the degree programs offered through **RVCC Arts & Design** department.

And as part of the Fall 2023 Art Faculty Exhibition at the **RVCC Art Gallery**, the work of our visual art and design faculty artists was on display, across various disciplines including: drawing, video, painting, ceramics, printmaking, interior design, photography and mixed media.

It's also worth noting that the RVCC Art Gallery is an inviting space for showcasing the vibrant creative talents of our faculty, students, and guest artists. Special shout-out to Associate Professor **Darren McManus**, for his leadership as co-chair of the RVCC Arts & Design department and for bringing the RVCC Art Gallery to life as its director.



Top: RVCC Art Gallery Left: Art By Hee Jung Kim Right: Art By Jeff Mason

NUMBER SEVEN

Kicking off the 7th year of the **Sanofi Corporate Mentor Program** at Raritan Valley Community College, with a new cohort of students, at October's "opening ceremony." It is an impressive, vibrant group of 14, the largest cohort in more than five years.

Huge props to **Sanofi** and the leadership of **Diana Blankman Roberts** and **Sharon Katz** for sustaining this exceptional partnership, and for securing both Sanofi mentors—another amazing group this year—and the needed funding.

And a resounding "Standing O" for RVCC's **Alicia Hermo-Weaver**, for having the vision to start this collaboration and the perseverance to keep it rolling year-after-year. Alicia and her talented team (**Michelle Amparbin** and **Nazneen Merchant**) have much to be proud of—and all of it to the benefit of Raritan Valley Community College students.



Pictured Above: RVCC mentee class for 2023-24



TENACIOUS AND TRAILBLAZING

“Equity for All” was the theme for September’s 2023 Annual Awards Dinner of the **American Association of University Women (AAUW)** Somerset Hills Branch.

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

The RVCC Foundation has been a proud beneficiary of scholarship support from the AAUW’s Somerset Hills Branch for many of those years—and another generous contribution was presented at this year’s dinner. The 2023-24 academic year RVCC scholarship recipients, **Ximena Payer** and **Maria Radwanski**, could not embody the Branch’s mission more perfectly.



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



The respective journeys of Ximena and Maria are nothing short of amazing, having persevered through a myriad of life’s challenges. But there’s a beautiful silver lining. Says Maria, “I am happy that my daughter has been a witness to all my struggles and my success so that she may be encouraged herself to pursue her dreams without any tantalizing fear.” Adds Ximena, “My goal is to accomplish my parents’ American Dream, so that my kids can witness how hard work and dedication will always pay off.”

We are grateful for the AAUW Somerset Hills Branch, its leadership, including co-president **Rebecca Hughes**, and funds chair, **Arlene Inglis**, for their commitment and generous support of RVCC students, like the tenacious and trailblazing Ximena and Maria.

Left: Maria Radwanski offering her thanks. **Right:** Ximena Payer and Maria Radwanski.

RVCC PROUD

2023-24 SGA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Great turnout to kick-off the academic year at September's Student Government Association (SGA) General Assembly. Thanks **Garret Gerow** (president) and **Nick Gallo** (vice president) for providing the RVCC Foundation a few minutes to discuss the fundraising landscape at RVCC and the opportunities in the 2023-24 academic year.



DR. PAUL HIRSCH HONORED

There's new signage decorating the former "Community Room" and executive offices at RVCC. The space is now called "**The Dr. Paul J. Hirsch Board Room and Executive Offices**," so named in recognition of Dr. Hirsch's unprecedented service to the College—over 36 years—in leadership and critical positions of governance. He has also been the driving force and supporter of "**The Morris and Dorothy Hirsch Research Library of The Holocaust, Genocide and Racism**," named for his beloved parents, and rededicated in November, 2020.



NETWORKING!

November brought another brilliant collaboration, this one between **Alicia Hermo-Weaver** (Manager, RVCC's Office of Career Success & Experiential Learning) and **Chris Edwards** (President and CEO of the **Somerset County Business Partnership**), and benefiting some 25 RVCC students. The networking event featured businesses from around Somerset County who came to campus to interview and provide feedback, coaching and possible opportunities to aspiring RVCC students. Special thanks to all of the participating companies, all of which are part of the SCBP network—and to Alicia and Chris for making it happen!



Right: Alicia Hermo-Weaver and Chris Edwards

GENEROSITY AND GRATITUDE

The RVCC Foundation has nearly completed its scholarship awarding process for the 2023-24 academic year, with some \$370,000 granted to 175 students—all thanks to the generosity of the RVCC donor community.

One of the best parts of the process is when grateful student recipients drop by the RVCC Foundation offices to express their gratitude. This is not a requirement. Many students don't take the time, and we understand this.

So we're giving a special shout-out to **Evelyn De Leon** (RVCC Class of 2024), who came by with a handwritten note for her scholarship benefactor, Mr. **Joel Reyes-Guzman**, a Long Beach, California-based Systems Engineer at **Boeing**, and an RVCC alumnus and Honors College grad (Class of 2014). Joel's commitment to the community—specifically Bound Brook, NJ, including Bound Brook High School grads who matriculate into RVCC, is nothing short of exceptional. So too is the corporate match he has “engineered” from his employer.



Evelyn, in the Nursing program at RVCC, and Joel, a rising star on Boeing's Airline Support Engineering team, are now forever connected by generosity and gratitude.

Left: Evelyn De Leon, RVCC Class of 2024

Right: RVCC Honors students at the fall “kickoff” event.

HONORS AT RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Now in its 13th year and boasting the largest in-coming class in program history, the Honors College at RVCC has become a “launch pad” says **Greg DeSanctis**, Director of the Honors College. “We're grateful that more and more high school students see the value of our program and where it can take them.”

While these enterprising 1st-year RVCC students (a few of whom featured in the accompanying photo) are just starting their higher education journeys, it won't be long before they're punching their tickets to some of the best four-year institutions in the country. But first, an enriching two-year experience as part of an Honors community, with plenty of opportunities to shine.



We celebrate the newest members of the RVCC Honors College “Class of 2025” and we congratulate them for choosing to grow, excel, and inspire at Raritan Valley Community College.

RVCC PROUD

CENTO AMICI

RVCC scholarship recipients **Selena Clayton**, **Avery Lachini**, and **Jordan Barge** (Business Administration, Cosmetology, and Criminal Justice majors respectively, and each with a unique story of perseverance and success) were “in the house” at **Cento Amici’s** 35th Annual Dinner & Auction at the Stone House at Stirling Ridge in Warren, NJ. Cento Amici is a longstanding benefactor to RVCC, providing scholarship support to RVCC students. Congratulations to the organization’s newest honorary members and keynoters **CNBC’s Becky Quick** and **Bank of America’s Keith Banks**, and to all of the student recipients present at the October event. Special thanks as well to hosts **Robert Zito** and Colonel **Jack Jacobs**.

Our RVCC student recipients felt both honored—and affirmed—to be seated at table #1, with RVCC President **Michael McDonough** and our generous Cento Amici host, **David Nader**. Bravo to all!

Top: Cento Amici guests: RVCC’s Mike McDonough, Selena Clayton, Jordan Barge, Avery Lachini, and Cento Amici’s David Nader
Center: CNBC’s Becky Quick and RVCC’s Selena Clayton



STUDENT LEADERS

Now in its fourth year, the RVCC Foundation’s “Emerging Class” provides leadership opportunities—including seats on the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors—for both current students and early-career alumni. Congratulations to **Zachary Cole** (RVCC Business & Management, Class of 2024) and **Sandra Faragalla** (RVCC Communication & Media Studies, Class of 2024), who were selected as the RVCC Foundation’s 2023-24 Student Representatives. Both Zach and Sandra have been actively engaged on the Board, including on several of the Board’s subcommittees and taskforces.

Right: Zach Cole and Sandra Faragalla



ROBESON ON DISPLAY

With financial support of the RVCC Foundation's **College Community Fund Grant** program, the RVCC Art Gallery hosted, "Stitching Time: The Social Justice Collaboration Quilts Project" exhibit, which was presented by RVCC's **Paul Robeson Institute for Ethics, Leadership, and Social Justice**. "Stitching Time" is a unique collaboration between incarcerated and free quilters that was inspired 10 years ago from a casual phone conversation between two longtime pen pals: **Maureen Kelleher** (free) and **Kenya Baleech Alkebu** (a "lifer" in Angola Prison who has been incarcerated for over 43 years).

Special thanks to **Rhonda Stewart**, program specialist at the Paul Robeson Institute, for having the vision to bring these 27 powerful works and audio narrations to the RVCC campus.



Pictured: Rhonda Stewart and "James Baldwin Quote #1" by Maureen Kelleher



REPORTING FOR DUTY

The **Annual Report of the RVCC Foundation** has a little something for everyone: students, faculty, staff, alumni, partners and RVCC donors—even advertisers (the publication does "double-duty" as the program journal for our largest in-person fundraiser of the year, the RVCC Foundation Golf Classic, and everyone attending the annual event receives a printed copy of the Annual Report in their gift bag). But you don't have to be a golfer or even be affiliated with Raritan Valley Community College to find a little something for yourself. So, go ahead, just click on the "Annual Report" cover at raritanval.edu/RVCCFoundation and give it a go. And thanks from all of us at the RVCC Foundation!

RVCC PROUD

RVCC STUDENT ATHLETES MAKE THEIR MARK

There's been plenty of hard work and success so far in the 2023-24 academic year by the student athletes of RVCC. Here's a quick recap:

MEN'S SOCCER: The team finished as **Region XIX** finalist with a 9-3-4 record! While the Lions playoff run ended too soon, with a loss to #7 ranked **Camden County College** in the Regional Championship, they brought plenty of joy to their loyal fans this season!



Starting 11 of the 2023 Men's Soccer Team

WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL: The 29-5 **East District B Champion** Lady Lions punched their ticket to the NJCAA Division III National Championship Tournament in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Though the team ultimately lost to #2 overall seed **Owens Community College** (from Toledo, OH), they had another epic season!! Congrats to entire Women's Volleyball squad and thanks for all the GREAT you brought to the 2023 season!



2023 Women's Volleyball Team

NEW ON THE DIAMOND

The softball and baseball programs are under new leadership. This fall, **Dan Mondelli** (2nd year) and **David Roman** (1st year) are working to get the baseball and softball teams ready to take the field in the spring. Both teams are excited for the 2024 season to commence in early March.



Baseball Coach Dan Mondelli



Softball Coach David Roman

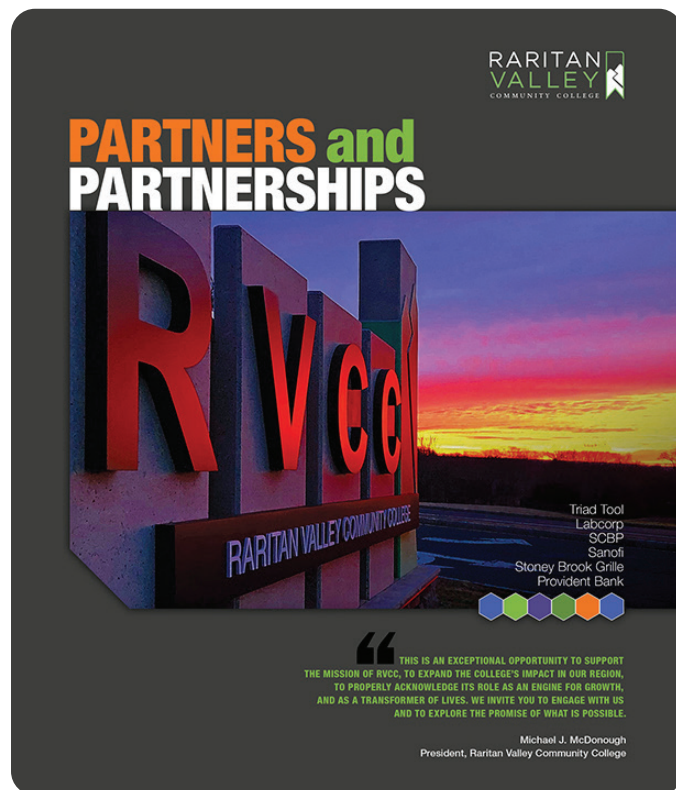


PARTNERS AND PARTNERSHIPS

We've been busy celebrating some of our best RVCC partner relationships—entities committed to the success of Raritan Valley Community College, our mission, and our students.

“Partners and Partnerships” presents profiles of six organizations and their connections to RVCC. It's meant to showcase the inherent value in collaborating with RVCC while presenting a range of “partnership” examples for organizations to learn from and emulate.

For a look at six exceptional partners—**Sanofi, The Provident Bank Foundation, Stoney Brook Grille, Somerset County Business Partnership, Triad Tool, and Labcorp**—and their connections to Raritan Valley Community College, please click on the “Partners and Partnerships” banner at raritanval.edu/RVCCFoundation.



A FLOURISH IN MANVILLE



Score another success in the community at large for the RVCC Arts & Design program, including faculty, students, and **Manville ABIS Middle School** students. This community initiative and vibrant result it produced was recently completed by talented RVCC student **Rachel Floden**. It all began in August when **Alexis Gonzalez**, the founder and co-chair of **At Reach - a Somerset Community Action Program Initiative**, and **Ji Yong Kim**, Assistant Professor, RVCC Arts & Design, partnered to organize a 12-class mural painting experience for Manville ABIS Middle School students to participate in from September through November. Some 20 students helped bring the mural art to life for Manville Township's community swimming pool shed. Rachel worked tirelessly with Manville students to come up with a design and was the main artist guiding the process from start to finish. The project was supported by **Somerset Community Action Program**, the **Somerset County Youth Services Commission**, and **Manville Parks & Recreation**. Congrats to all involved and special thanks to Alexis Gonzalez and Ji Yong Kim for conceiving this public service project, and to teaching artists, **Sarah Anunciacao**, Rachel Floden and **Meredith Kane**. And of course, the students of Manville ABIS Middle School!

RVCC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

2023-24 DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD HONOREES

We are pleased to announce the recipients of this year's RVCC Distinguished Alumni Awards:



Osei K. Boateng (*Class of 2016*)

Osei, a 2016 Pre-Med graduate from RVCC, earned his Human Biology & Society degree from **Cornell University** with minors in Business and Gerontology. He later attained a master's in Healthcare Administration from Cornell. As CEO of the **OKB Hope Foundation**, he's dedicated to delivering healthcare to remote Ghanaian communities. His foundation operates a mobile health van, bringing medical aid and professionals directly to underserved areas, impacting over 5,000 individuals across 50 communities. Osei champions mental health support for 2,000+ high school students and created the Experience Ghana program, hosting US students for volunteering and internships in **Ghana**. His work earned recognition from Engaged Cornell, Echoing Green, Global Solutions Initiative, and CNN (he's currently a Top 10 CNN "Hero of the Year" finalist). Osei's community service extends from post-

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



Sebastian Galvez (*RVCC Class of 2020*)

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

have led to significant contributions, making him the youngest member on the NJ State Advisory Board for **The Salvation Army**. Additionally, Sebastian has served on the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors since 2019.



Nicole DeRosa (*Class of 2006*)

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

RVCC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION



Joe Forte (*RVCC Class of 2011*)

Joe, an RVCC Social Science graduate, completed a bachelor's at **Rider University** and pursued multiple master's degrees, including in Public Administration, International Affairs, and certificates in Strategic Communications, Diversity and Inclusion. Currently Deputy Chief of Staff and Chief Diversity Officer at the **New Jersey Department of State**, Joe oversees various departments, leveraging his state government experience from roles at the Department of Labor, Civil Service Commission, and under Governor **Phil Murphy**. A published author and recognized figure in LGBTQ+ advocacy, he's been acknowledged by Roi-NJ.com and received accolades like Business Equality Magazine's 40 under 40. Engaged in community service, Joe chairs the **Lawrence Township DEI Committee**, leads the PSHRA-NJ chapter, and actively participates in alumni

boards and political caucuses. His RVCC involvement included leadership roles in SGA, LGBTQ Pride Alliance, and Relay for Life. Joe remains connected to the campus, attending events with his family and supporting the theater community.



Sonia Bhala (*Attended 2012-13*)

Sonia, an RVCC alumna, graduated from **Lafayette College** before pursuing her medical studies at **Robert Wood Johnson Medical School**. As a medical student specializing in obstetrics and gynecology, Sonia's future OB/GYN residency is underway. Her remarkable achievements include receiving dual distinctions at RWJMS for her research with the **National Institute of Health** and her innovative Electronic Medical Record add-on, PicClinic. With a nine-year tenure at NIH, Sonia contributed significantly to understanding telomere biology disorders, meningiomas, and cardiofaciocutaneous syndrome, resulting in peer-reviewed publications and national conference presentations. She's been honored with awards like the 2019 Team Telomere Executive Director's Choice Award and the 2020 National Numeracy Network's Steen Award for her publication. Sonia is also

a published poet and a grant recipient from the **National Cancer Institute**. Beyond her work, she's engaged with the **Monmouth Medical Title X Family Planning Center**, leading workshops for underprivileged women in Long Branch. At RVCC, Sonia held roles as a Student Ambassador and President of the Psychology Club.



Look for more information on our Distinguished Alumni honorees in the social media streams of Raritan Valley Community College and the RVCC Foundation, and in the Annual Report of the RVCC Foundation (published in June, 2024).

RVCC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

ALUMNI PROPS

A big congrats to **Liam Boyle** (RVCC Class of 2023), the recipient of this year's **M. Holland Scholarship** from the **Plastics Pioneers Association (PPA)**.

The PPA has awarded 125 scholarships to support students looking to enter the plastics industry, with 90% of graduated scholarship recipients now employed in plastics-related positions.

Liam was also one of 60 high-achieving community college students selected from across the country to receive the highly competitive **Jack Kent Cooke Foundation's** Undergraduate Transfer Scholarship. The award provides as much as \$55,000 a year to complete a bachelor's degree. Boyle is continuing his studies in Mechanical Engineering at **Princeton University**.

A member of the RVCC Honors College and the **Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society**, Liam received the Academic Award for Engineering Science. While at RVCC, he served as co-president of the Engineering Club and participated in a service learning project with the Authentic Engineering Experience. He also was awarded the President's Volunteer Service Award–Gold Level.



Pictured: Liam Boyle

THE POWER OF NURSING GRADS

At the reception for the *19th Annual RVCC Foundation Golf Classic*, three inspiring women delivered a compelling message on behalf of the Nursing program at Raritan Valley Community College and the difference scholarship support has made in their lives: **Elicia Levandoski** and **Janet Nyambura**—both Class of '23 RVCC Nursing grads and two of 10 recipients of full scholarships from the **Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation** (the most generous scholarship gift in the history of the Nursing program)—and **Tracey A. Keegan**, a member of the RVCC Nursing faculty, a family nurse practitioner, and RVCC Nursing program grad (Class of 1995), who recently established a new Nursing scholarship in memory of her sister, that will keep RVCC Nursing students enriched and supported as they train to enter the Nursing profession.



Pictured: Elicia Levandoski, Janet Nyambura, Tracey Keegan

Huge thanks to these outstanding representatives of the RVCC Nursing program. Of special note, immediately following the remarks of Elicia, Janet and Tracey, an impromptu “auction” raised \$4,000 for the *Emerging Heroes Nursing Scholarship* at Raritan Valley Community College!

FROM THE HEART

HALLOWEEN TRADITION AT RVCC



It's one thing to GO to a parade. It's quite another to BE the parade—on the campus of Raritan Valley Community College. So, we applaud this tradition, this annual procession from the **Children's Campus** to the **Christine Todd Whitman Science Center**, featuring the youngest members of the RVCC campus. We also celebrate these little parade stars and budding engineers, artists, nurses, marketers, technicians, musicians, scientists, writers, technologists, politicians, doctors, teachers, philanthropists, and entrepreneurs—and future students at Raritan Valley Community College.

A STORY ARC



The Steven A. Cox Charity Classic was once the largest single-day amateur charity golf event in the country. It once hosted nearly 700 golfers simultaneously at seven different golf courses. Now, in year 34, it's a more intimate reunion among friends (okay, "old friends")—three of whom were there from day one (circa 1990). But what is now small still has enough heart to fund a scholarship at RVCC.

Anna Quezada, a single mom with two children and dreams of becoming an orthopedic surgeon, is the 2023-24 recipient of the "**Steven A. Cox Scholarship at RVCC**" (funded by proceeds from the 34th Annual Steven A. Cox Charity Classic, held on October 9 at **Beaver Brook Country Club** in Hunterdon County). Says Anna: "It is wonderful that the legacy created in honor of Steven A. Cox continues to contribute to the development of research and support of young people." She adds: "Your belief in my potential means a great deal to me, and I will work hard to justify the confidence you have shown in me." *Enough heart indeed.*

TAKING THINGS INTO THEIR OWN HANDS!

"Fall Ball" (Baseball and Softball) for the Lions is more about tuning up for the real seasons, which begins next March. But the Baseball team did squeeze in plenty of practice, as well as limited schedule of scrimmages, including against Division III foe Fairleigh Dickinson. Speaking of March, Assistant Coach **Justin Kessler** mentioned how well the team did in last year's RVCC Giving Day and how great an opportunity it is to support the needs of RVCC Athletics. We agree 100% on that, and hope the team once again goes "all in" for **GIVING DAY 2024!** Speaking of going all in, there are few things these gamers won't do to succeed, including taking things—shovels, rakes, hoes—into their own hands (literally) to get the muddy diamond ready for practice! Gotta love it! We are proud supporters of **RVCC Athletics** and all of the student athletes of Raritan Valley Community College!



Top Left: Stars for a day **Bottom Left:** Participants gather at #34
Bottom Right: Putting a shine on the diamond

FROM THE HEART

A REMEMBRANCE

Thank you for sharing this with us! I'd never seen the plaque myself, but I love hearing about RVCC history and all the people who made it special.

-Rachel Greenwood (RVCC Class of 2022)

If you're walking too fast across the Raritan Valley Community College campus, you might miss a small plaque at the base of a tree on the lawn of center campus. It honors **Georgi "Ginger" Siefring**. Ginger was a department "assistant" at Raritan Valley Community College who passed in June of 2019. With two engineering degrees (University of Notre Dame and Lehigh University) and a 25-year career as an engineer at AT&T, she was undoubtedly the most over-qualified department assistant ever.

But Ginger adored her post-AT&T job at Raritan Valley Community College and she was adored right back by her Health Science Education colleagues, and so many others in the RVCC community. It is fitting that Ginger is remembered on the campus green, across from the **Christine Todd Whitman Science Center**. Fitting because that's the STEM part of campus. Fitting because she is worth remembering.



THE HILLS ARE ALIVE

RVCC's Nursing program was overjoyed by the continued generosity of the **Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation**, which has once again provided full scholarships to 10 RVCC Class of 2024 Nursing students (**Serina Schroeder, Amy Dalonzo, Maria Desousa, Kimberly Farkas, Azalea Holly, Ana Iraheta, Larissa Osuch, Vanessa Wilkerson, Emyelle Arcosa, and Julia Verano**), as well as other support to offset program-related expenses for students who did not receive one of the Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation scholarships.



Pictured: Vanessa Wilkerson, Larissa Osuch, Julia Verano



Pictured: Ana Iraheta, with daughters Oceana and Octavia

It's impossible to express enough gratitude to this organization for their commitment to RVCC Nursing students. Given how important a role nurses play in this country (and around the world) and given the current nursing talent crisis that exists, our deepest thanks to the Somerset Hills Community Health Foundation for recognizing and supporting the RVCC Nursing program, which each year delivers a new wave of committed, skilled, compassionate, high-energy nursing grads. The impact of their giving is profound, even life-changing.

The Nursing program is rigorous—and challenging; so too is trying to assemble all of the scholarships recipients for a single group photo. But for now, we'll take four-out-of-ten—Vanessa, Larissa, Julia, and Ana (plus two special additions and future Nursing students named Oceana and Octavia). To all of RVCC's Nursing students: best of luck as you persist and get ever-closer to your goal of becoming a Nursing grad from Raritan Valley Community College.

NEWSFRONT

BREAKING IT DOWN

Wayne Moschella, Automotive Skills Lab Coordinator at Raritan Valley Community College, along with students **Robert Volpone** and **Luke Yaros**, participants in the now completed “AUTC-221- Engine Systems & Emission Control II” course in the Automotive Technology program, at the RVCC Workforce Training Center. This year, the six-day engine lab was vastly improved thanks to eight engines—among a total of 23—donated by **ExxonMobil**. Featured in this post is the last of the eight engines that were disassembled (in two classes) down to the last component, with critical clearance measurements taken, and then reassembled per the Original Manufacturer (General Motors) specs.

Special thanks to **Paul Rubas**, ExxonMobil Advanced Engineering associate, for facilitating this contribution! Says Paul, “Our donation to RVCC ensures these test engines have a second life, while improving the quality of training for students.”

Indeed, both goals accomplished!



Robert Volpone, Wayne Moshella, Luke Yaros

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

There’s plenty of earth being moved on the campus of Raritan Valley Community College—all in preparation for a 50% increase in the footprint of the **RVCC Workforce Training Center**.

Thanks to generous state and county funds—including over \$3 million in support from the **Somerset County Board of Commissioners**, some 8,000 yards of dirt is giving way to a 22,000 square foot expansion.

The added capacity will allow for expansion of the Automotive Technology and Advanced Manufacturing programs, while introducing new space for a best-in-class Clean Room for aseptic manufacturing, and chip and fusion technology, to serve the training needs of the biomanufacturing industry.

More on this developing story as it progresses toward a late 2024 opening.



Ready to build

NEWSFRONT

FISERV VISIT

This fall, members of the RVCC leadership team were invited to the Berkeley Heights location of **Fiserv's** Strategic Center of Excellence for Technology and Product Innovation. This global powerhouse in financial services technology is growing rapidly and presents huge opportunities for ambitious local talent—including both current RVCC students and grads.

It was a promising first meeting with Fiserv's Chief Human Resources Officer **Jennifer Manchester** and **Michelle Milentijevic**, Vice President, Talent Acquisition, all set in motion by **Linda Wellbrock**, Vice President, Community Relations and Strategic Partnerships.

The visit included a few special minutes with Fiserv Chairman, President and CEO, **Frank J. Bisignano**, along with a “drop in” from **Palak Shah**, a data analyst at Fiserv (and member of the RVCC Class of 2020).

In short, it was a worthy exploration of the potential for a new partnership benefiting both company and college (and the students in our care). Special thanks to Linda, Jennifer, Michelle—and Frank—for their hospitality and interest in RVCC students.



Top Right: Fiserv Lobby

Right: President **Michael McDonough**, **Mike Marion**, Executive Director, RVCC Foundation and RVCC Alumni Association, **Frank Bisignano** (center), **Jacki Belin**, RVCC Vice President, Strategic Partnerships & Workforce Innovation, and RVCC Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, **Karen Bearce**



1st and 10

The RVCC Foundation has recently launched a new podcast intended to amplify the good works of RVCC but also discuss the challenges and opportunities in the foreground for higher education. Co-hosted by RVCC President, **Mike McDonough** and Chief Development Officer, **Mike Marion**, the podcast's name honors the College's ranking among NJ community colleges (i.e., “1st”) and the goal—in minutes (i.e. “10”)—of each episode. More information coming soon on where to find and listen to “**1st and 10.**”

NEWSFRONT

NUMBER ONE

RVCC has earned special distinction in the 2023 Sustainable Campus Index of the **Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education (AASHE)**—achieving the #1 overall ranking for two-year colleges in the US. Our sustainability work has earned a STARS “Gold” rating.

“We’re honored to be recognized by AASHE as the top community college in the nation for our sustainability efforts,” said **Michael McDonough**, RVCC President. “We have a proven track record in reducing our carbon footprint, and have cut our campus energy emissions by 58% since 2005.”

“All of us at AASHE extend our warmest congratulations to Raritan Valley Community College for their leadership,” said AASHE’s Executive Director, **Meghan Fay Zahniser**. “By fostering sustainable practices and initiatives, RVCC sets an inspiring example for its peers.”

Also important to clinching the #1 ranking was the research program of RVCC’s Center for Environmental Studies. But most critical to attaining the top spot is having leadership commitment to the mission and a cross-disciplinary sustainability team to execute it. Congratulations to RVCC’s Sustainability and Energy Coordinator, **Sue Dorward**, for her diligent efforts in managing this collective work.



Pictured: Members of the campus-wide Environmental Sustainability Committee bask in the glory of RVCC’s #1 national ranking

BOARD OF TRUSTEE TOUR

It was a whirlwind late September visit, but a worthy trek around the campus for members of the RVCC Board of Trustees. Included on the tour were stops at the new enrollment center, a renovated classroom, the renovated spaces in the Arts & Design building, and the Workforce Training Center. Members of the RVCC leadership team played host to Trustees **James Von Shilling**, **Margaret Sullivan**, **Mark Negron**, and Chair, **Caren Bateman**.



Pictured: Advanced Manufacturing stop (l to r): Jonathan Grotz, Luis Freire (both part time faculty), Trustee James Von Shilling, Conrad Mercurius (director, Advanced Manufacturing), Trustee Margaret Sullivan, Trustee Mark Negron (alumni representative), Trustee Chair Caren Bateman, and Jalen Petersen (part time faculty)

PARTNERSHIP CELEBRATED

The new partnership between RVCC and **Labcorp**, which has led to a new degree at the College—the **Associate of Applied Science in Medical Laboratory Technology (MLT)**—was celebrated on September 29 at the **Christine Todd Whitman Science Center** on the RVCC campus.

The new AAS degree and the partnership that brought it to life, was heralded at event, which was attended by leadership from RVCC and Labcorp, as well as Senator **Andrew Zwicker** (D-16). The program also included a tour of the new **Labcorp MLT Laboratory** at RVCC, located on the 2nd floor of Christine Todd Whitman Science Center.

According to **Michael J. McDonough**, president, Raritan Valley Community College, “The new Medical Laboratory Technology Associate of Applied Science Degree program at RVCC represents the very best in public-private partnerships and is a model for others to follow. We are grateful for Labcorp’s commitment to establishing this new academic track and for the ‘workforce-ready’ talent it will produce.”

“Labcorp is proud to partner with RVCC to support their new Medical Laboratory Technology program,” says **Mary Williamson**, Ph.D., vice president, Laboratory Operations, Labcorp’s Northeast and North Central Divisions. “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 candidates to join our team of over 800 laboratory personnel working inside Labcorp’s Raritan laboratory.”



Pictured: Andrew Zwicker, Mike McDonough, James Von Shilling, Melonie Marano

The idea for a partnership between RVCC and Labcorp originated about five years ago when students in the College’s Authentic Engineering program were working on a project at Labcorp’s Raritan facility. Initial conversations identified a need to expand the company’s talent pipeline for medical laboratory technicians, and RVCC collaborated with Labcorp to establish a new educational track at the college.

Planning the new degree was truly a team effort. Labcorp leadership and RVCC faculty and administrators worked together for many months on program design, curriculum development, licensing approval, staffing, and program promotion, all culminating with the launch of the Associate of Applied Science degree in MLT. The program’s first cohort began in summer of 2023.

The company’s commitment to the partnership with RVCC is multifaceted and includes direct support to students through the newly established **Labcorp MLT Scholarship at RVCC**—a full scholarship for three students in the inaugural MLT cohort.

“The Labcorp MLT Scholarship means a lot to me because I had been wondering how to fund my MLT program at RVCC. I was planning to work two jobs to help pay my tuition for the program. I thank God it all worked out for me, and I am grateful for this opportunity,” says **Essa Conteh** of Franklin Township.



The Medical Laboratory Technology Lab

“I am incredibly honored to be selected for this scholarship. I worked so hard to be where I am today, and I will continue to work hard to achieve my goals,” adds **Laura Bacino** of Union.



“This scholarship not only helps financially, but more deeply, it is a personal affirmation of my hard work, encouraging me to continue to do my best to achieve my goals and not give up easily. I hope that I can become a valuable member of Labcorp in the future and demonstrate that RVCC and Labcorp are a wonderful team,” says **Qunying Zhao** of Green Brook.

Students enrolled in the MLT program take the required academic courses at RVCC’s Branchburg campus and then complete their clinical rotations at Labcorp’s state-of-the-art regional lab in Raritan. The first cohort of 10 students has already completed its prerequisite courses at RVCC and is now emerged in the program’s core courses and practical experience.

The 68-credit MLT program, which takes two years to complete and includes summer sessions, provides students with the foundation in clinical laboratory sciences required for entry into the healthcare field as a medical laboratory technician. It also prepares students to work effectively as a member of a medical laboratory team. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment in the field is projected to grow 7% from 2021 to 2031.

Congratulations and deep gratitude to the Labcorp team, especially **Bill Haas, Mary Williamson, Elise Wagner, Matt Christianson,** and **Jesse Greenberg**, for your collaboration and generous support.



Huge thanks to RVCC’s **Sarah Imbriglio** and **Siddra Dar** for bringing the new Associate of Applied Science in Medical Laboratory Technology program to life. Lastly, very special thanks to our honored guests who attended the September 29 celebration: Senator **Andrew Zwicker**, NJ Council of County Colleges President **Aaron Fichtner**, Somerset County Commissioners **Melonie Marano** and **Doug Singleterry**, RVCC Trustee **James Von Schilling**, and Somerset County Business Partnership President **Chris Edwards**.



Top Left: Laura Bacino
Top Right: Sarah Imbriglio, Bill Haas, Mary Williamson, Elise Wagner, Siddra Dar
Bottom Right: Qunying Zhao, Mike Marion, Essa Conteh

MAKING HISTORY

The nationally recognized Service Learning Program at RVCC has recently received its largest gift ever, thanks to the generosity of **Don** and **Penny Pray**.

The couple's five-year commitment of \$150,000, directed through the RVCC Foundation, will be used to create greater recognition and exposure for the achievements and impact of students participating in programs offered through service learning. In the Prays' honor, and in recognition of their exceptional generosity, the College's program will be renamed: "**The Pray Family Center for Service Learning and Civic Engagement.**"



Pictured: Celebrating the Pray generosity (l-to-r): Mike McDonough, President; Jason Fredericks, Dean of Student Affairs; Don and Penny Pray; Mike Marion, Executive Director, RVCC Foundation; Lori Moog, Director of Service Learning; Karen Bearce, Provost



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

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

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

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

NEW CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

A new fundraising campaign in support of the **Planetarium at RVCC** seeks to bolster the projection and audio technology to improve the visitor experience.

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

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

And we hope you'll help.



COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DAILY

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES



Amie Gallagher

RISING STAR

As reported in **Community College Daily**, director of the RVCC Planetarium, **Amie Gallagher**, has been honored with the Thomas Fangman Award from the **New Jersey Science Convention**. The award is given to individuals who have had exemplary service to the convention. A member of the **Middle Atlantic Planetarium Society** (MAPS) and the **International Planetarium Society** for more than 30 years, Amie serves as secretary of the society, is a member of the MAPS Education Committee, and has been honored as a MAPS fellow for service to the organization. She also has authored two volumes of a children's encyclopedia on space; has acted as an editorial consultant for various publications for children and adults about space and the solar system; and has co-created educational guides for teachers.

NEWSFRONT

20th ANNUAL

Be sure to mark your calendar: **June 6, 2024** and the **20th Annual RVCC Foundation Golf Classic** at Stanton Ridge Golf & Country Club in Whitehouse Station, NJ. It's a milestone year and we hope you'll be with us as we raise funds for the best community college in New Jersey! If you are interested in sponsorship opportunities, please get in touch with **Janet Dunne** (janet.dunne@raritanval.edu) soon, as we expect another full house for #20.



GIVING DAY 2024

Another BIG day for the RVCC Foundation and Raritan Valley Community College next spring, so please hold **Thursday, MARCH 21** for a 24-hour, 100% online fundraising extravaganza. **RVCC GIVING DAY 2024** promises to be another whopping success—but we're going to need you to be involved! Look for messaging in all of our social media channels in early March as we build momentum and excitement for the BIG DAY!



BUILDING THE NEW COMMUNITY COLLEGE.

Some 25 donors, prospective donors and partners of RVCC were welcomed guests at a special dinner reception that was themed, "**Building the New Community College.**" Headlining the event was RVCC President **Mike McDonough**, who described some pressing challenges for higher education—and community colleges, as well as four critical opportunities. For those who missed this event, we hope to schedule another in Spring of 2024. Among the guests were three RVCC alums: **Palak Shah**, who introduced the president, and **Chris** and **Cristina Vasquez**, husband and wife duo whose journeys overlapped at RVCC.



Bottom Left: Giving Day "selfie" frame

Bottom Right: Chris Vasquez (Class of 2010), Palak Shah (Class of 2020), and Cristina Vasquez (Class of 2011)

THE LAST WORD THE VOICE OF RVCC ALUMNI



With the holiday season upon us, there is no better time to reflect on and express gratitude for my time spent as a student at RVCC. Enrolling here was the best decision I could have made for myself, both financially and professionally. Being a working student, I took advantage of the unique opportunity to receive a quality education while simultaneously gaining valuable work experience. In the classroom, I was challenged by professors in a smaller classroom setting who were well-seasoned in their subject-matters and truly cared about the material they taught, which made learning feel rewarding. When discussions surrounding transferring to a four-year institution were initiated by my guidance counselor, I felt supported and confident that I had all the resources I needed to make a decision about which schools I would apply to. After being accepted into Rutgers Business School, I felt absolutely prepared to take the leap into the next chapter of my education and life.

My time at RVCC helped build a strong foundation, and I will forever cherish my experiences here, along with the lifelong friendships and connections I have made. I am proud to be a Golden Lion Alumna!

- Erika K. Leddie

RVCC Class of 2018, Rutgers Business School Class of 2020
Current Position: Operational Risk Analyst at Provident Bank



Attending RVCC has made a huge impact in my life, both personally and in my career advancement. Being a full-time employee, it helps me position myself competitively at work. And as a full-time parent, it gives me the latitude and flexibility to attend class that fits my busy schedule and earn transferable credit toward my bachelor's. Financially, I couldn't have done any better, it was very affordable.

In fact, choosing to attend RVCC was one of the very best choices I ever made for myself. I always felt at home at RVCC and always welcome; that made it such a memorable experience. I am also grateful for my very supportive professors—they were exceptional.

I'm also glad that my sons could witness my journey—whether I'm doing homework late at night or calling a professor for help on the weekend. They saw me putting the work in and I can't wait to see them follow this path.

- Obé Bayard

RVCC Class of 2018, Rutgers Business School Class of 2022
Current Position: Supply Chain Manager at RWJ Barnabas Health

THE LAST WORD THE VOICE OF RVCC ALUMNI



I simply want to say how much I appreciate RVCC and all it does in preparing students, like me, for the future. I know that the foundation I received at RVCC, along with my degree from Rutgers, is how I landed at Fiserv, the leading financial tech company in the country for digital payment solution. I really LOVE my job and the team at Fiserv.

But none of this would have been possible if I hadn't taken the first step in my higher ed journey by attending RVCC. The supportive community that RV provides is unmatched. Not even my 4-year school, with its ample resources, can compare to the care and guidance that RVCC provided.

And while some people may attend RVCC for financial reasons—it is a HUGE savings—or because their GPA didn't get them in their #1 choice, or they simply didn't know what they wanted to do in life, RVCC is also a great choice for high performing students who just want a smaller more inclusive community. I've met some of the most talented individuals here. The grit and determination that I witnessed in my peers during my 2 years at RV was awe-inspiring. RVCC students know what they want and they work hard to get there.

We know that many kids go to college just to “pass” their classes and party a little while they enjoy their first taste of freedom. While I did have plenty of fun at RVCC, the community also empowers students to tap into their potential and make wise choices—choices with the future in mind.

Staff and professors are always encouraging us to think about personal growth and leading a life of curiosity.

But, hey, who doesn't like “best-in-class” education at fraction of the price? With small class sizes and professors who go above and beyond for their students? I truly believe RVCC is a place where one's heart gets attached—a place that no matter how successful you become, you always stay true to yourself and committed to your goals. For me personally, many RVCC staff members remain important in my life. Sort of like a moral compass that I keep coming back to whenever I am in need of a little guidance. RVCC is home, it's community, and it's also an adventure of discovery—of oneself, and of one's aspirations and dreams. And that is why I am so grateful.

- Palak Shah

RVCC Class of 2020

Rutgers Business School Class of 2022

Current Position: Data Analyst at Fiserv

THE LAST WORD THE VOICE OF RVCC ALUMNI



Thank you so much for this opportunity to share my thoughts about this amazing school!

Right after graduating from RVCC this year, I was accepted into George Washington University's "Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing" program! I was also awarded 15 credits towards my master's degree if I decide to attend the nursing practitioner program from the nursing faculty there—and if I agree to work at their university hospital, the George Washington University Hospital.

Having just passed my nursing boards, I feel like I have some great options for my future.

I had been with a specialized outpatient comprehensive care center, working closely with the medical directors to provide care and education to patients with multiple sclerosis and other neurological movement disorders. And while I loved the job, I have recently transitioned to a new position in the top renal transplant and dialysis facility in New Jersey: Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center.

I really owe so much to RVCC—all of the success that has been falling into place after graduating. I truly hope more people come to the school as it has so much to offer. I have been recommending RVCC to any of my colleagues who feel "stuck" in their current jobs and who want to further their growth or who just want to try something new. RVCC is an amazing place to learn not only from amazing professors, but from the amazing people who attend the school as well.

Again, thanks to the entire RVCC community for the support you have provided to me and all of my colleagues who have graduated and are now proud RVCC alumni!

- Heather Pierre RN

RVCC Class of 2023

Current Position: RN at Cooperman Barnabas Medical Center





HOMEFRONT: The RVCC Foundation & RVCC Alumni Association office at 74 Lamington Road has been the site of major construction this fall as the “backyard” landscape has transformed to make room for the Workforce Training Center expansion. While a lot of earth was moved, the team from Pave-Rite (family owned and operated since 1952!) could not have been more efficient or respectful of the hallowed grounds of RVCC.

Photos: active construction site; the little farmhouse (aka, home to the RVCC Foundation & RVCC Alumni Association); staffers Mike, Cindy, and Janet (missing from photo and out recruiting Honors students, Greg)

Notes from the Valley is published by RVCC Foundation to share what inspires us every day: your generosity, your engagement, your commitment. Whether you're a donor, a friend, a student, an alumnus, or a member of the RVCC faculty and staff, you are essential to this exceptional community, which we are honored to support.

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