Notes from the Valley

Historic



November 2026 | **SPECIAL EDITION** from the RVCC Foundation

GIFT OF A LIFETIME

$24,000,000

An Extraordinary Life, and an Extraordinary Gift to Raritan Valley Community College



THE COLLEGE RECEIVES UNPRECEDENTED $24 MILLION DONATION FROM THE ESTATE OF DR. CARLYLE G. CALDWELL — THE LARGEST PRIVATE GIFT TO A COMMUNITY COLLEGE IN NEW JERSEY HISTORY

Raritan Valley Community College has received an historic, $24 million gift from the Estate of Dr. Carlyle "Corky" Gordon Caldwell that will inspire a re-imagining of science education at the College. As the largest private gift to a community college in the State's history, it stands as a testament to the College's reputation as a center of academic excellence in the local community and beyond.

"We are beyond grateful for this incredible gift from Dr. Caldwell, which will transform the lives of thousands of students and help spark their passion for scientific innovation and discovery," said RVCC President Michael J. McDonough. "This momentous contribution to RVCC will provide educational opportunities to countless students interested in studying science, providing the foundation for future inventors, scientists, researchers, educators, and others who will continue their academic journey or enter the local workforce as well-trained employees."

A significant portion of the gift will be used to set up an endowed scholarship fund, that will provide annual scholarships—in perpetuity—to support students studying "chemistry, the sciences, and mathematics" at RVCC, bolstering the College's reputation as the place to begin the study of science for area high school graduates. "This fund is a game-changer," said Mike Marion, Executive Director of the RVCC Foundation and Alumni Association. "The support it brings to science education is unprecedented on the New Jersey community college landscape."

"This is an amazing development," added Dan Van Tran, Chair of the RVCC Foundation Board of Directors. "We can hope that it will inspire other, similarly generous gifts to the state's most under-resourced—but invaluable—segment of higher education, New Jersey's community colleges."

Dr. Caldwell, a former resident of Bedminster, was a chemist, inventor, and longtime New Jersey business leader who spent close to five decades as a researcher, executive, and later president, CEO, and Chairman of the Board at National Starch & Chemical Corporation. He also was named the inventor or co-inventor of 14 patents focusing on starch and its uses in paper, food, medication, adhesives, textiles, and in other industries.

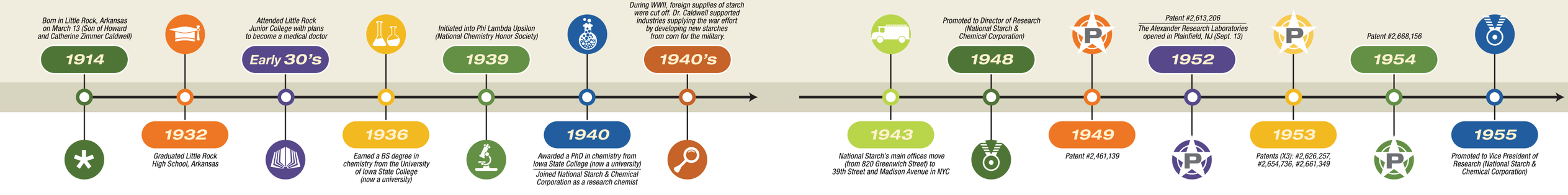
Dr. Caldwell passed away in 2017 at the age of 103. His late wife, Mary, who was raised in Somerville, died in 2025 at the age of 95.

"Just as Dr. Caldwell envisioned, through his inventions, the endless possibilities of starch and how its many uses could benefit people's lives, this gift will provide students with a world of opportunities that come from experiencing an RVCC education," said Dr. Sarah Imbriglio, RVCC Dean of STEM. "We are excited to begin this new chapter of redefining the possibilities of science education at Raritan Valley Community College."

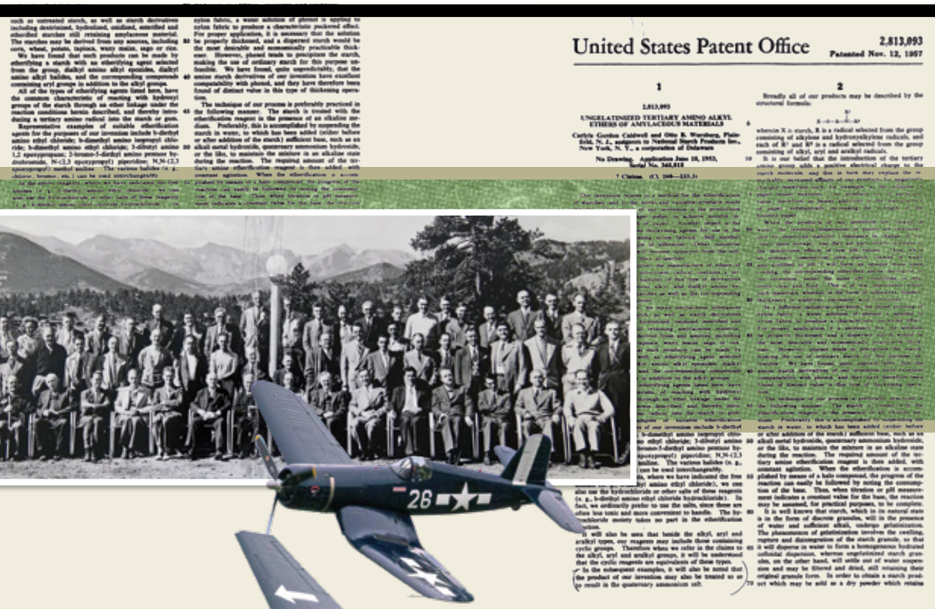
Dr. Caldwell, who received both his Bachelor of Science and PhD in Chemistry from Iowa State University, appreciated the value of higher education. And he recognized the impact of a community college education through personal experience: His own post-secondary education began at a two-year college in Arkansas—Little Rock Junior College. He also understood the need to "give back," because he had experienced support from several mentors during his college years, including while at Little Rock Junior College. During a 2000 interview with the Chemical Heritage Foundation, Dr. Caldwell reflected about that period in his life: "Well, looking back on it all, so many people were eager to help me that I can't help but believe that they thought I had some sort of capabilities. It never occurred to me then, but for the last few years I've thought about it quite often. A lot of these people went out of their way to give me a boost. It was really very wonderful, and I've appreciated it very much."

"Corky Caldwell never forgot his roots. Having begun his educational success by attending Little Rock Junior College, he believed in the value of community college as a launching place for the hopes and dreams of a young person interested in math and science," said Donna Lazartic, a friend of the Caldwells and executor of the Estate.

Timeline of Dr. Carlyle "Corky" Caldwell's Life and Career Milestones







"I ask myself, how can anyone having some grasp of the picture I have pointed out not have a sense of onrushing events, a curiosity and excitement as to what's going to happen next, a desire to be a part of it and to understand that one is going to have to prepare one's self to be ready to take advantage of the opportunities that are inevitably coming." **Dr. Caldwell**

"Corky was aware of the founding and growth of Raritan Valley Community College and admired the stellar reputation of the College, its staff, and graduates. And I'm sure he thought it fitting that his long, fruitful life would come full circle—starting and ending with community college," Lazartic continued.

Dr. Caldwell began his tenure at National Starch and Chemical Corporation in 1940 as a Research Chemist, then was named Director of Research, and eventually Vice President of Research in 1955. He was elected to the corporation's Board of Directors in 1962, and later took on such leadership roles as Executive Vice President, President, Chief Executive Officer, and Chairman of the Executive Committee before retiring in 1989.

He received many honors and accolades during his lifetime, including the Claude Hudson Award and the Heroes of Chemistry Award from the American Chemical Society; the Alsberg-French-Schoch Memorial Award from the American Association of Cereal Chemists; and the Science and Technology Medal from the Research and Development Council of New Jersey. He also was named to the Honor Roll of the New Jersey Institute of Chemists and was a member of the New Jersey Inventors Hall of Fame.

In addition to his many tributes for scientific innovation and discovery, Dr. Caldwell understood the importance of civic engagement and he was recognized for his efforts. He was a member of the Board of Directors of the Somerset County Chamber of Commerce and was named Outstanding Citizen of the Year by the organization in 1990. A former Chairman of Somerset County United Way, he had a board room named in his honor and was presented with the 2003 Engelhard Lifetime Achievement Award.

And what continued throughout his long life was a love and passion for science. As he stated in a 1989 speech to the New Jersey Inventors Hall of Fame: "The main thing that has to be conveyed is the fascination of seeking new knowledge and the unparalleled thrill and excitement of making a new discovery. Involvement in it becomes so complete that all waking hours and many sleeping ones get chewed up. Problems of self and other concerns fade away. It is a state of happiness surpassing all others. And this can happen in teams as well since, after all, teams are made up of individuals."

Added Marion, "Dr. Caldwell lived an extraordinary life devoted to science and discovery. And because of his incredible generosity, many future scientists and inventors will be given the opportunity to begin a similar journey at Raritan Valley Community College."

THE WAR YEARS

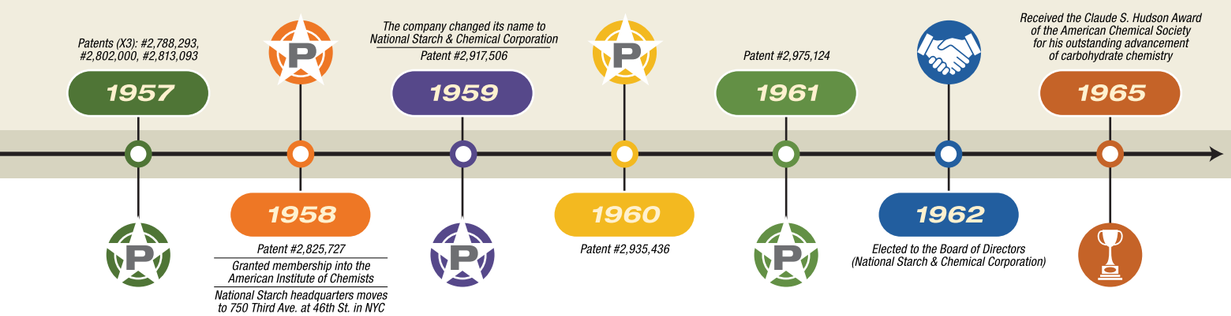
As WWII expanded in Europe and Asia during the early 1940's, National Starch—and its R & D program—would eventually be pulled into the conflict. Corky Caldwell was one of just a handful of PhD students recently hired in 1939 who were not drafted, allowing him to focus his attention on the laboratory.

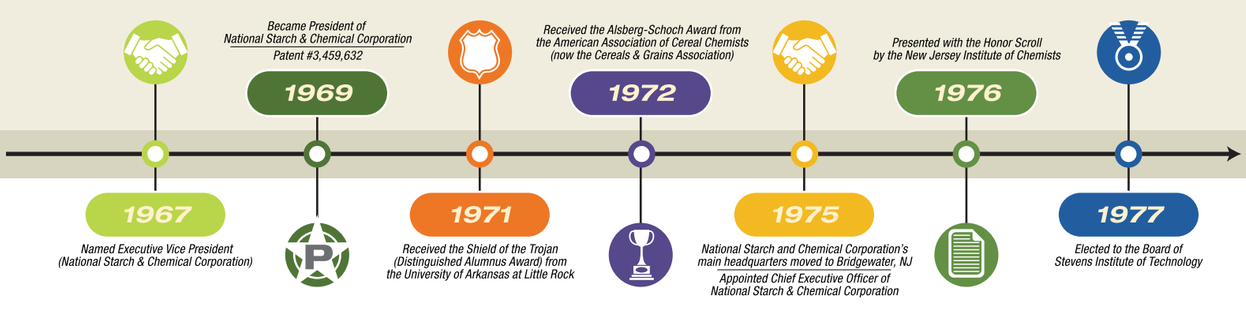
Rising tariffs and combat operations during World War II disrupted trade routes from Southeast Asia, limiting the availability of tapioca and sago imports. Innovation was required to find an alternative source of starch for industrial processing to meet the military's needs. Dr. Caldwell, who conducted research into waxy corn as a graduate student at Iowa State University, brought his expertise to National Starch to lead these efforts.

The urgency of the war required rapid development of alternatives to tapioca, and in 1943, new products were being introduced as replacements for tapioca-based starch in textile, paper, adhesive, and most substantially, food applications.

For its effort to produce material that supported the United States' military during World War II, National Starch was among 5% of eligible companies to earn the Army-Navy "E" Award (also called the Army-Navy Production Award).

Following World War II, Corky Caldwell's pioneering work was recognized industry-wide and he emerged as a future leader of the company, where he would eventually serve his entire 49-year career.









CHANGING LIVES, INSPIRING DREAMS

"The history of science in the last 50 years tells us that the rate of advance in science and technology is accelerating and that the advances in the next 50 years will dwarf the last 50 by many times. Already we see the signs – the unravelling of the chemistry of the brain and personality, new sources of energy, immunology, recombinant genetic research, miniaturization of the computer and exponential increases in speed." **Dr. Caldwell**

HISTORIC GIFT WILL SUPPORT ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP FUND AND BUILDING FUND FOR NEW SCIENCE FACILITY

The historic, $24 million gift to Raritan Valley Community College from the Estate of Dr. Carlyle G. Caldwell will redefine what's possible for science education at RVCC.

SCHOLARSHIPS AT RVCC

A significant portion of the gift will be used to set up an endowed scholarship fund, from which support—in perpetuity—will be directed to students studying the sciences at Raritan Valley Community College.

To recognize Dr. Caldwell's extraordinary generosity and career in the sciences, RVCC plans to establish the **"Dr. Carlyle G. Caldwell Science Endowed Scholarship Fund"** that will generate hundreds of annual scholarships, in perpetuity. The funds will support various types of scholarships, including Caldwell Science Awards for High School Students, geared to students participating in dual-enrollment science courses at RVCC, such as Early College students and those enrolled in Academy programs with area high schools.

In addition, the College plans to establish the "Dr. Carlyle G. Caldwell Science Scholarship at RVCC," which will support scholarships for students enrolled full-time (24 credits a year) in science programs, as well as partial scholarships for students enrolled part-time (12 credits a year) in science programs. This signature scholarship could dramatically increase the number of students enrolling in a broad array of science offerings at RVCC.

In keeping with Dr. Caldwell's original intent to support the study of "chemistry, science, and mathematics," RVCC will delineate "science" to include core Life Sciences, Physics, Engineering, Environmental Science, Data and Computer Science, and Information Technology, as well as disciplines fundamental to Health Science instruction at RVCC, such as Nursing, Occupational Therapy, Ophthalmic and Exercise Science, Biotechnology, Aseptic Processing, Medical Laboratory Technology, and Phlebotomy.

NEW SCIENCE BUILDING

With the growing need for modernized, expanded science facilities on campus to meet the expectations of students and local industry, as well as the increasing demand for healthcare education, RVCC plans to direct a portion of the Caldwell gift to go toward a building fund for a future "Caldwell Center for the Sciences" at the College.

This state-of-the-art, teaching and learning facility would provide the additional space needed to expand RVCC's science footprint. The Caldwell Center also will offer students and faculty innovative and dynamic interdisciplinary science spaces and facilities that accommodate side-by-side faculty and student work, emphasizing experiential learning, community partnerships, and interdisciplinary connections.

The building would foster close student and faculty interactions across all disciplines, reducing boundaries and preparing a new generation of RVCC graduates for the future of science and a science-impacted workforce. The new building will be home to classrooms, labs, and informal learning spaces dedicated to basic and applied science teaching, learning, and research.



1978 — *Unilever acquires National Starch, with Corky Caldwell being appointed Chairman of the Board and CEO*

1984 — *Chairman of the Executive Committee (National Starch & Chemical Corporation) Iowa State University announced the establishment of the Carlyle G. Caldwell Chair in Chemistry in recognition of his outstanding professional accomplishments*

1985 — *Received the Distinguished Achievement Citation (Iowa State University's premier alumni award)*

1986 — *Received the New Jersey Science/Technology Medal by the Research and Development Council of New Jersey*

1987 — *Received the Distinguished Citizen Award by the Watchung Area Council, Boy Scouts of America*

1989 — *Retired from National Starch & Chemical Corporation after 49 years with the company*
Carlyle Caldwell and Mary Angelakos marry in Piscataway, NJ on Sept. 2
Named "Outstanding Citizen of the Year" by the Greater Somerset County Chamber of Commerce

1991 — *Inducted into the New Jersey Inventors Hall of Fame*

2003 — *Received the Engelhard Lifetime Achievement Award*

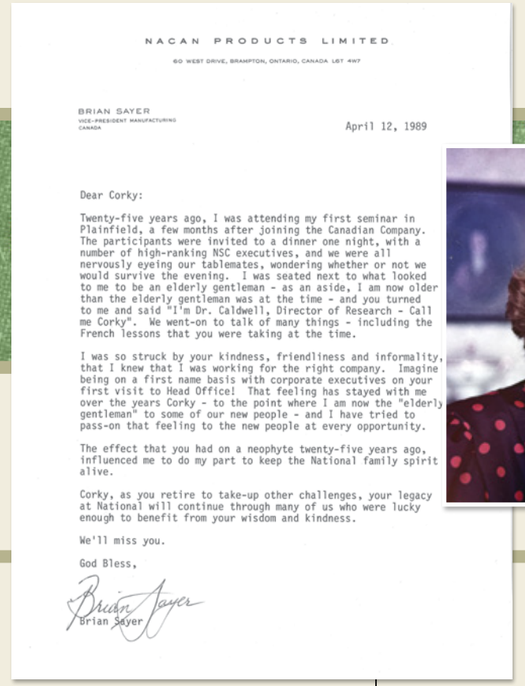
2017 — *Died at age 103 in Bedminster, New Jersey on October 7*

2025 — *Dr. Caldwell's wife, Mary Angelakos, passes away*

Following the passing of Dr. Caldwell's wife, Mary Angelakos, the Caldwell Estate left – $24 Million to Raritan Valley Community College, the largest gift to a community college in New Jersey's history.







NACAN PRODUCTS LIMITED

60 WEST DRIVE, BRAMPTON, ONTARIO, CANADA L6T 4W7

BRIAN SAYER
VICE-PRESIDENT MANUFACTURING
CANADA

April 12, 1989

Dear Corky:

Twenty-five years ago, I was attending my first seminar in Plainfield, a few months after joining the Canadian Company. The participants were invited to a dinner one night, with a number of high-ranking NSC executives, and we were all nervously eyeing our tablemates, wondering whether or not we would survive the evening. I was seated next to what looked to me to be an elderly gentleman - as an aside, I am now older than the elderly gentleman was at the time - and you turned to me and said "I'm Dr. Caldwell, Director of Research - Call me Corky". We went-on to talk of many things - including the French lessons that you were taking at the time.

I was so struck by your kindness, friendliness and informality, that I knew that I was working for the right company. Imagine being on a first name basis with corporate executives on your first visit to Head Office! That feeling has stayed with me over the years Corky - to the point where I am now the "elderly gentleman" to some of our new people - and I have tried to pass-on that feeling to the new people at every opportunity.

The effect that you had on a neophyte twenty-five years ago, influenced me to do my part to keep the National family spirit alive.

Corky, as you retire to take-up other challenges, your legacy at National will continue through many of us who were lucky enough to benefit from your wisdom and kindness.

We'll miss you.

God Bless,

Brian Sayer

Brian Sayer



GOLF WITH CORKY

Even as a busy executive running a growing company, Corky Caldwell was able to devote time to some of his interests, including golf. As a regular on the links, Corky relished golfing with friends and business partners. One of his colleagues fondly recalled a hole-in-one that Corky had in an outing while business-merger negotiations were ongoing. The colleague jokingly reminded Corky that he could have "blackmailed" him for a raise because his hole-in-one happened during a work day.

However, it was not always smooth sailing on the golf course for Corky Caldwell. During one tournament, while waiting to tee off at the first hole, another player had an errant swing and the golf ball traveled offline towards Corky, hitting him directly in the mouth. Those around him were convinced he would need dental surgery. After seeking medical attention, he received some "patching" and continued participating in the tournament, to the surprise of many.

During the months leading up to his May 22, 1989 retirement party, many colleagues, former colleagues, friends, business partners, and well-wishers reached out to share some thoughts with Corky. He received dozens of letters, of which many referenced his love of golf. Some encouraged him to enjoy more time on the golf course during retirement and others invited him to play a round when he was in their respective locales. One even complimented his "fast back swing," and another suggested he keep enjoying the game "even if your handicap remains the same."

Dr. Caldwell was also a long-time member of Raritan Valley County Club. It is conceivable that he first learned about Raritan Valley Community College—located just a couple of miles west—during a round on the golf course or over a meal in the dining room.

MAN OF THE PEOPLE

Carlyle G. Caldwell held many titles during his 103 years of life. Having earned his PhD in chemistry in 1940, he was known as Dr. Caldwell. As a professional he rose through the ranks of National Starch and held the positions of Director, Vice President, President, CEO, Chairman of the Board, and Chairman of the Executive Committee. His accomplishments were wide and the awards were many. But through it all, Carlyle G. Caldwell insisted that people, regardless of their status, refer to him as "Corky."

This is reflected in the dozens of letters wishing him well upon his retirement and recalling past conversations and meetings. One letter, from Brian Sayer (see opposite page), recalls a random pairing at a work dinner between a junior employee and a rising executive—with Dr. Caldwell's humility and character clearly evident. While acknowledging his title and corporate position, he diffused any pretense by saying, "Call me Corky." Mr. Sayer remembered this moment, which occurred 25 years earlier, with warmth and admiration.

This was not an isolated event, as recounted by all who encountered Corky. Years later, as President of National Starch, Corky recognized a "new face" waiting for the elevator and greeted her with his usual friendly demeanor. The new employee—who had arrived for her first day with the company—was completely surprised a few days later when she learned that the person who greeted her was actually the president of the company. Corky, who valued making genuine connections, did not feel it necessary to remind people of his status.

Another colleague related that the very definition of the word "gentleman" is Corky Caldwell. While he led National Starch to great heights, international recognition, and tremendous wealth, he remained firmly "Corky." Some even found it difficult to refer to someone in his position by a nickname, but it became easier when they realized he was living the values of the company he ran. "People are the most important asset," he once remarked. While someone once described Dr. Caldwell as a "legend in his own time," it is best to simply remember him as Corky.

CORKY AND MARY

Carlyle G. Caldwell married Mary J. Angelakos on September 2, 1989 at St. George Greek Orthodox Church in Piscataway, New Jersey. Dr. Caldwell was recently retired from National Starch & Chemical Corporation, where he worked during his entire 49-year career. Mary was born to a Greek immigrant family in Somerville, New Jersey in 1930, where her family ran a confectionery shop on Main Street. Following her 1948 graduation from Somerville High School, she went onto have a long career working for Rutgers University. They would be married for 28 years until Corky's 2017 passing in Bedminster, New Jersey at age 103. Mary died eight years later in 2025.

NEW JERSEY INVENTORS HALL OF FAME

Although he excelled as a business leader, Corky Caldwell was first and foremost a scientist. Trained as a chemist he went on to be granted 14 patents during his career (including 11 co-patents). His innovations in the field of starch transformed the industry and led to the creation of new products.

In February of 1991 he was recognized for this with his induction into the New Jersey Inventors Hall of Fame. He was nominated to this prestigious organization by National Starch staff member, Ellen T. Dec.

Ellen started her career at National Starch & Chemical Corporation more than two decades earlier as a paralegal and would eventually earn her law degree while attending law school in the evenings. This was a time of stiff, white-collared shirts and male-dominated boardrooms. At one executive meeting with







NEW JERSEY INVENTORS CONGRESS AND HALL OF FAME
Founded in 1987 at New Jersey Institute of Technology
in New Jersey, the Invention State

WHEREAS, it is the Mission of the New Jersey Inventors Congress and Hall of Fame to recognize achievements of inventors who have lived or worked in New Jersey, and

WHEREAS, it is the Mission of the New Jersey Inventors Congress and Hall of Fame to call national attention to New Jersey's preeminent position in scientific research and its status as the "Invention State," and

WHEREAS, it is the considered judgement of the Board of Trustees of the New Jersey Inventors Congress and Hall of Fame that

CARLYLE G. CALDWELL

has made extraordinary contribution to the advancement of knowledge and human welfare,

THEREFORE, be it resolved, that the above named inventor be hereby inducted into the

NEW JERSEY INVENTORS HALL OF FAME.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have affixed my name as Chairman of the Selection Committee, this seventh day of February, 1991.



several representatives from "outside" counsel, Ellen—who would eventually rise to become Vice President of Intellectual Property at National Starch—found herself as the sole female at the table.

During the meeting, an executive from one of the external firms turned to her with a piece of paper and asked her to make a photocopy. Corky Caldwell was at the table and intervened, defiantly suggesting that Ellen would not be the one making the copy. She had earned her place at the table, and on Corky's watch, she would be given all due respect.

Years later when Ellen was preparing Corky's nomination for the New Jersey Inventors Hall of Fame, she needed to include an addendum of 6 pages to detail all of his accomplishments. She never forgot how he stood up for her all those years ago, and remembered how he was always a champion for the people who worked for him.

The 1991 Class of the New Jersey Inventors Hall of Fame was just the third one ever held. There were nine scientists inducted in that class, including a US Presidential Medal winner, the individuals who developed the technology that made the Voyager space probes possible, and the "father of electronic imaging." Among these scientific giants is Corky Caldwell, who quietly took the starch industry to new heights through his innovations and leadership. He accomplished this while garnering the admiration of everyone with whom he came into contact.

Carlyle Caldwell's research into the chemistry of starches resulted in processes for the manufacture of the first commercially useful starch derivatives. By discovering how to modify the native starch molecules and alter the properties of the starch granule to provide a product which would function effectively and economically as a thickener, he laid the foundation for the use of starch in modern-day paper, textile and food industries. His subsequent work, incorporating cationic and/or anionic groups onto the starch molecule, significantly advanced the entire starch industry. Caldwell is the holder of three individual patents and is a co-inventor of 11 other patents.



LEADERSHIP AT RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Zenon Christodoulou (Chair)
Roger Locandro (Vice Chair, Hunterdon)
Helena Swanicke (Vice Chair, Somerset)
Caren P. Bateman, Terence Byrd, Michael Goldberg, Ekram Islam
Roger Jinks, Howard J. Opdyke, Adam Shain
Margaret Wolan Sullivan, Juan Torres, James Von Schilling
Michael Enzo Gaspar (Alumni Representative)
Paul J. Hirsch (Trustee Emeritus)
John L. McGuire (Trustee Emeritus)
Michael J. McDonough (President)

RVCC EXECUTIVE STAFF

Michael J. McDonough, President
Karen H. Bearce, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
Jason Fredericks, Vice President of Student Affairs
Michael Marion, Executive Director of RVCC Foundation
Theresa McAllister, Associate Vice President of Finance
Conrad Mercurius, Vice President of Workforce Development
Cynthia Schaffer, Associate Vice President of Technology Services
Cheryl Wallace, Vice President of Human Resources & Administration

2026-27 RVCC FOUNDATION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dan Van Tran (Chair), *Allan Boomer, David Bunevich, Deirdre Blaus, Michael Bzdak, Sean Fleming, Rebecca Geary, Parag S. Jategaonkar, Theresa McAllister* (Treasurer), *Michael J. McDonough* (President, Raritan Valley Community College), *Sean Murray, Joel F. Reyes-Guzman, Vedha Priya Shivaraman* (Student Representative), *Tammy Stouchko, Michael Schwertfeger, Gary Woodring* (Assistant Treasurer)

RVCC FOUNDATION STAFF

Janet Dunne, Development Associate
Cindy Haddad, Development Specialist
Christopher Spangler, Development & Alumni Engagement Assoc.
Donna Stolzer, Director of Media Relations
Michael Marion, Executive Director, RVCC Foundation

"Notes from the Valley" is an annual publication of the RVCC Foundation for distribution to students, faculty, staff, alumni, donors, and friends of Raritan Valley Community College. This "special edition," along with the **"Call Me Corky"** tribute video, owes a debt of gratitude to Donna Lazartic, Ellen Dec, Cory Snearowski, Chris Spangler, Donna Stolzer, Phil Zusi, and Dennis Russo.

To access the **"Call Me Corky"** video, please visit:
www.raritanval.edu/callmecorky

Thank you for your support of Raritan Valley Community College.

RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE



Through this exceptional generosity, students studying the sciences at Raritan Valley Community College have been emphatically endorsed by one of their own—a former community college student, a budding chemist with big dreams. Dr. Caldwell would go on to become a world-class scientist and proud New Jerseyan, but he realized that sometimes, we all need a little help.

Like students who may be the first in their families to attend college. Or students balancing work, family, and school, just like he did. They may not yet know where science can take them, but they come to RVCC curious. They ask questions. They experiment. They grow.

Sometimes an opportunity is all it takes for an ordinary student to discover something extraordinary within themselves. Corky understood that. In fact, that might be his greatest legacy.

RARITAN VALLEY
COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FOUNDATION