

# connections





## **Cheyenne Culture Celebration**

Tara Redflower Beckman performs a Fancy Shawl Dance during the Cheyenne culture celebration staged by the Long Island Center at Bethpage State Park. The event was organized by Long Island Center faculty members Cliff and KD Eaglefeathers, who are the co-principal investigators on a National Science Foundation grant to document Northern Cheyenne sacred language.



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On the cover: Brothers Shlomo Adam and A. Daniel Roth share an Empire State College legacy.

PHOTO: MARTY HEITNER

## Connections

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE MAGAZINE

VOLUME 37 • NUMBER 1 • FALL 2011

Produced by the **Office of Communications**

Managing Editor – **Mary Caroline Powers**

Editor – **Maureen Winney**

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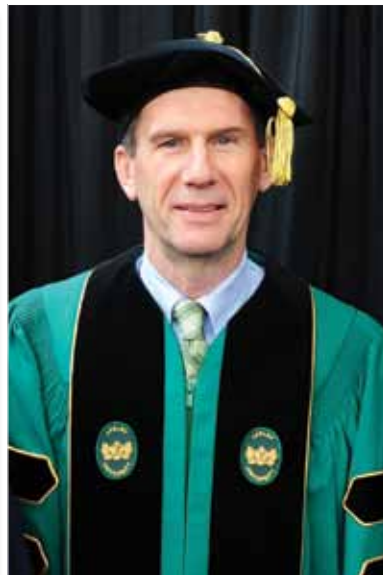
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Production – **SUNY Empire State College Print Shop**

# Plugged In



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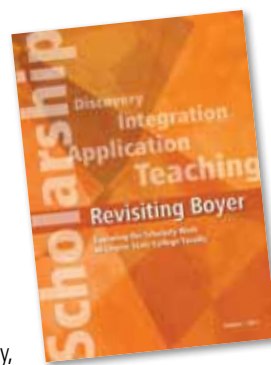
Three honorary degrees were conferred by the State University of New York and SUNY Empire State College at three spring 2011 graduation ceremonies. Recipients, from left, were Sir John Daniel, an internationally recognized authority on distance education technology; Dr. Joseph Moore, Empire State College's second president and current president of Lesley University in Cambridge, Mass.; and Dr. Shirley Robinson Pippins, the first female and African-American president of Suffolk County Community College, Long Island, and the retiring senior vice president for programs and services at the American Council on Education.



PHOTO: KIRK STARCZEWSKI

## College Opens New Location in Troy

On May 11, the college opened its 35th location in Troy, N.Y., in the historic Rice Building, located at 216 River St. A reception to mark the occasion drew several elected officials from the City of Troy, Rensselaer County and the State Assembly and Senate, as well as current students and alumni, and college faculty and staff. The Troy Unit is under the umbrella of the college's Northeast Center in Latham, which also counts locations in Glens Falls, Johnstown, Plattsburgh, Saratoga Springs, Schenectady and at the Empire State Plaza in Albany.



## Faculty Scholarship

A new college publication debuted this year titled "Revisiting Boyer:

Exploring the Scholarly Work of Empire State College Faculty," a collection of essays by 26 college faculty members about their research and its relationship to Ernest L. Boyer's definition of scholarship. Boyer is credited with envisioning and then creating Empire State College when he served as SUNY's chancellor 40 years ago.



**Excellence Honored** Five SUNY Empire State College students received the Chancellor's Award for Student Excellence this year. Selections are made after a rigorous multistep selection process that evaluates the integration of a student's academic performance with activities such as community service, leadership, athletics and high achievement in a career or the creative or performing arts.



**Solomon Blaylock** earned an associate degree in history from the college's Genesee Valley Center in Rochester, where he graduated with a GPA of 3.98. He now is pursuing a bachelor's degree in art history and religious studies at the college. He is planning to go on for a master's degree and a Ph.D., so he can teach at the college level. A musician and songwriter, Blaylock founded The Lobster Quadrille, a musical performance group inspired largely by the work of author Flannery O'Connor. The band performs mostly in the Northeast and has released four albums to date. He also is the founder of The Gentlemen's Society, a group dedicated to presentation and discussion of philosophical and academic topics. Blaylock is active in the Rochester community as a volunteer music jurist and a representative of the Buddhist community to the hospital.



**Nechama Horowitz** graduated in 2010 from Empire State College with a Bachelor of Arts in creative writing and a 3.93 GPA. She studied with the Brooklyn Unit of the college's Metropolitan Center. For more than 10 years, the Brooklyn resident has been an active volunteer in her community helping widowed mothers, working with disadvantaged children, mentoring young people, providing emotional support for the elderly and assisting people of all ages to preserve and understand their Jewish heritage. Most recently, Horowitz established a small business to use her skills in creative nonfiction to help individuals in her community organize and tell their stories in first-person narratives ranging from articles to books.



**Humberto Restrepo** completed a Bachelor of Science in Labor Studies in May 2011 at the college's Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies with a 3.90 GPA. The 13th of 18 children in a Columbian family, Restrepo was determined to be the first to get a college degree. He tried college but instead decided to follow his brother into the trades, starting as an apprentice electrician with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 3 in 1986. He rose through the ranks to his current position as the union's full-time political affairs liaison. He's been president of the Santiago Iglesias Educational Society, which upgrades electrical systems and infrastructure of churches and organizations in Harlem and the South Bronx, and, at the invitation of the New York City Mayor's Office, he serves on Green Light New York, which promotes energy-efficient lighting in the city.

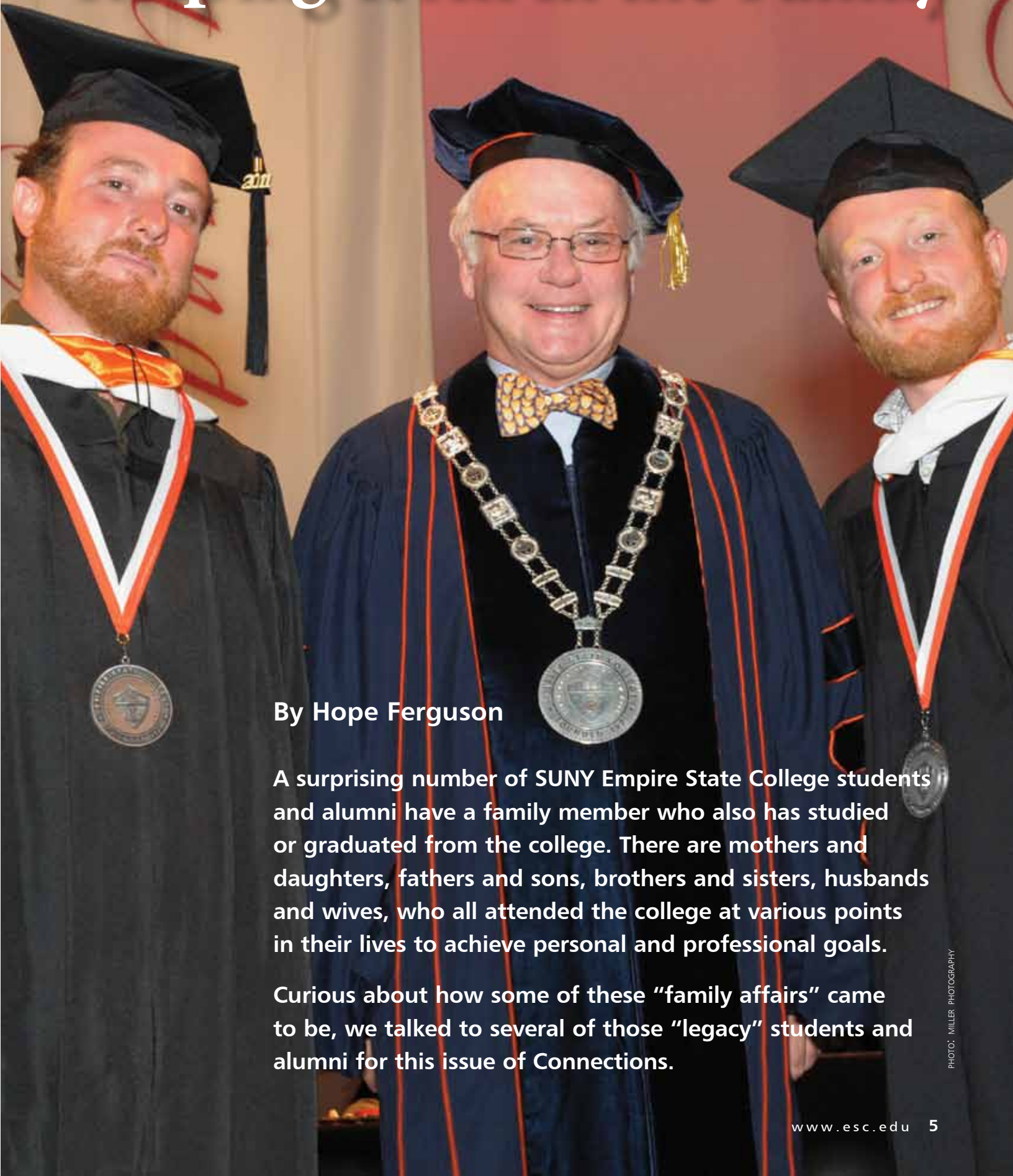


**Zuzana Štepanovská** earned a Bachelor of Science in international and European economic relations in June 2010 with a GPA of 3.75 through the college's international program in Prague, the Czech Republic, one of the eight international programs the college offers at locations around the world. When Štepanovská met the professors and delved into the quality of the academic programs, she knew the college could fulfill her dream of a university degree. A former Vice Miss Czech Republic and Czech representative for the Miss Earth contest, she has capitalized on her public relations skills to organize charity events to benefit Bangladeshi children, Czech orphanages and pediatric hospitals in Tblisi, Georgia. Now residing in Rome, Italy, she is studying for her master's degree in European studies.



**Brian F. Zeidner** graduated in February 2011 with a Bachelor of Science in Business, Management and Economics and earned a GPA of 3.98 through the college's Center for Distance Learning. He served two tours in the United States Air Force and now resides on a small beef farm in Sugar Run, Pa. He is a member of his local school board, the board of an industry and education consortium and is active in mentoring youth through a local weekly youth outreach ministry. A past board director for the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, he teaches the Hazardous Occupations Safety Training in Agriculture course through the Bradford County Penn State Cooperative Extension office and works with the county Conservation District providing community training on energy conservation. He also is the member-services director for Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative.

# Keeping It All in the Family



**By Hope Ferguson**

A surprising number of SUNY Empire State College students and alumni have a family member who also has studied or graduated from the college. There are mothers and daughters, fathers and sons, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, who all attended the college at various points in their lives to achieve personal and professional goals.

Curious about how some of these “family affairs” came to be, we talked to several of those “legacy” students and alumni for this issue of Connections.

PHOTO: MILLER PHOTOGRAPHY



PHOTOS: MARTY HEITNER

Brothers A. Daniel, left, and Shlomo Adam Roth were awarded degrees from the School for Graduate Studies in June. Adam works at Camp Shomria in the Catskills with youngsters, pictured above and at right, who are learning about sustainable agriculture.

### A. Daniel Roth '11 and Shlomo Adam Roth '11

Brothers A. Daniel Roth '11 and Shlomo Adam Roth '11, who are 30 and 33 years old respectively, have a lot in common besides their family ties. They both belong to, and grew up in, the Jewish youth movement Hashomer Hatzair (The Young Guard), which was instrumental in the founding of the Kibbutz movement, and behind one of

the mass immigration movements that led to the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. The organization believed that Jewish youth could be liberated through aliyah (immigration to Palestine) and living communally.

The two young men attended summer camp in Perth, Ontario, and later spent time at Camp Shomria in Liberty, N.Y., breathing in the social-justice ideals of the movement.

"We went to summer camps, weekly meetings, as did many of our friends," Daniel says. Their parents also had found themselves involved in similar movements when they were young. The bi-national brothers (father is from Montreal, mother from Queens) eventually relocated to New York City from Canada.

Adam moved in 2005 to take a job at the New York office of Hashomer Hatzair. Daniel joined him in the city two years later with his commune of six.

Adam, who graduated from the University of Toronto, was looking to deepen his understanding of the mission of the movement, which now embraces such ideals as sustainable agriculture and reconciliation between young Jewish and Palestinian Israelis.

Daniel had studied English literature, political science and Jewish studies at the University of Toronto, and was interested in going for a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies to explore similar topics further.

It was at this point that the young men came in contact with Empire State College mentor Efrat Levy, who is the chairwoman of the board of directors for the U.S. chapter of what Daniel refers to as "the movement."

Levy convinced Adam that Empire State College had the right combination of depth and flexibility he was seeking.

He started by taking a few courses. After Daniel had been in New York City for a year, he became interested as well.

"I had learned a lot in undergraduate school, but I was looking to hone that more and really be able to explore the world through education. Had Empire not been there, I am not sure I would've pursued a master's degree," he says.

"Efrat put me in touch with Elana Michelson," Daniel explains. One day, Michelson, a mentor in the School for Graduate Studies, met him for coffee. He explained to her that his goal was to learn more about the topics that he had studied in college. In addition, "I wanted to refine my skills, understand the world in a different way, read and write more, all with support, and, importantly, criticism.

"One of the things we've been doing in the last five or 10 years is building the Hashomer Hatzair life movement – a group of people living in a commune, involved in various activist ventures,



exploring and looking for ways to live our lives in the context of this movement – instead of going on to something else. What Empire offered was the ability, with a mentor and various professors, to learn about these different things I want to do in the world. My mentor would tell me what needed to be done in order for me to do that.”

In the summer of 2011, Adam was working as the director of the eco program at Camp Shomria, overseeing the young people at the camp, an assortment of 80 chickens and six goats, and a half-acre garden of organically grown vegetables and spices. He says he and the campers were learning together how to do sustainable agriculture in the context of a small summer camp.

“Farming should be demystified. We want to reintroduce the concept that food is a central part of people’s lives. We encourage the children to make healthy choices and to learn vegetables can be delicious,” says Adam, who earned his Master of Arts in Liberal Studies with a concentration in sustainability and community development.

Other parts of the mission are learning about “the liberation of peoples, ecology, and democracy and social justice. Food is just the nexus,” Adam adds.

Eric Zencey, a renowned environmental writer and Empire State College professor, served as Adam’s mentor, while Alan Mandell, a thinker on the topic of mentoring and ways of interacting in the context of various communities, was Daniel’s mentor.

Camp Shomria seeks to implement the ideals of the movement in practical and life-changing ways. One program, “Through Others’ Eyes,” brings Arab and Jewish Israeli young people together to interact, and to begin to see the world from the others’ viewpoint. After the main camping session is over in August, the camp opens its doors to inner-city youth from around New York to introduce

them to a more bucolic way of life. The camp in Perth, Ontario, runs similar eco programming, and also is hosting a group of Arab and Jewish Israeli youth in its “Heart to Heart” program.

“For both of us, the initial attraction to Empire State College was the unique model based on building deep relationships. That really made the difference to both of us in pursuing our master’s degrees,” says Daniel.

### **Ronald Heath ’02 and Justin Heath ’04**

Both Ronald Heath ’02 and Justin Heath ’04, found SUNY Empire State College fit their particular needs, even though their individual stories are very different. Ron, a talented artist, started his college career at the traditional age of 18. Originally from Lake Placid, he had gone briefly to North Country Community College, and then he and a friend were accepted by Miami Dade Junior College. They headed south and, on the way, their car was broken into and everything they had in it was stolen. The two were forced to look for work. Ron wound up parking cars in a wealthy Palm Beach neighborhood instead of enrolling in college.

“Parking cars wasn’t a lifelong dream,” says Ron, so he and his friend both applied for work at an ad agency.



**Justin Heath, left, is joined by his father, Ronald Heath ’02, at his 2004 graduation ceremony.**

PHOTO PROVIDED

Based on his portfolio, Ron was hired immediately. His friend later also landed a job at another design firm.

While in Florida, Ron got married. When wife Patty became pregnant (with Justin) and the economy took a nosedive, the couple headed to Syracuse where Patty had been born and had family.

“We decided to come back so I could look for work. It was very difficult. I worked for a time at a small agency. Then another fellow and I quit our jobs and decided to start our own graphic design firm, even though my son was a year and a half old, I was building our house and was making only \$125 per week. I quit to make \$25 a week,” he recalls with a laugh.

The agency was going OK when the partners lost a big account, causing the company to fail. They started it up again and it was a success for decades. Ron left in 2000 to start another company, while retaining his ownership in the agency. Eventually, his partner closed down the ad agency and went on to other things.

“I continued to read and expand my knowledge of marketing and branding, and developed a huge library about the industry – the science of it all,” says Ron

Yet, something intangible was missing. One day, while consulting with a client on a private jet, Ron says, “a terrific feeling of fear came over me. I had 20-some years of reading and studying, but I did not have a piece of paper that said I had a degree. I had this extreme fear – they’re going to ask, ‘Well, what are your credentials?’”

His son, Justin, had studied two years at Elmira College, been injured playing sports and transferred to SUNY Oswego.

“He went from a little place to a big, extremely on-your-own-school, and dropped out,” says Ron.

So, father and son, neither of whom had completed his college degree, decided to investigate an information session at SUNY Empire State College.

At the time, Ron was involved with two businesses, both as a manager and a partner: IceBuilders, now one of the largest builders of ice rinks in the U.S., and SportsBuilders, a specialty athletic surfaces company that installed state-of-the-art athletic flooring at the new Binghamton University field house.

Later, he was vice president of sales and marketing at Coyne Textile Services for five years – and, incidentally, this was the company that owned the jet he was traveling on when he had his epiphany about needing a degree. It also turned out to be a nonissue for owner Tommy Coyne, who trusted Ron’s instincts and professionalism, degree or no.

“It took me two years taking as many courses as I could during that time to earn a Bachelor of Science in Business, Management and Economics,” says Ron. “I had one of the heaviest loads my professor had ever seen.” Now 56 years old, he is managing the sales and marketing of yet another company, Benefit Consulting Group.

He has completed a little more than half of an MBA program at Empire State College simply for personal satisfaction, he says, but is taking a hiatus because of his work load and some medical issues his wife is facing.

Justin Heath, on the other hand, now 35, has continued his quest for his master’s degree, after earning a B.A. in 2004.

After working at his father’s ad agency in public relations and also in the ice-rink business, Justin decided to earn his bachelor’s degree with a concentration in educational studies. He now works at the Seneca Data Human Resources Group, a privately held and fast-growing company of 500 employees.

Justin remembers being uncertain during his undergraduate years at Elmira and Oswego about what he really wanted to do. He thought he wanted to teach – “I like teaching” – but he ended up leaving school for work.

“It wasn’t anything I should have left school for. I knew once I was out working, I wasn’t making it without a degree, without that accomplishment,” he says.

He remembers going to the information session with his father. “He said he’d look into it with me. So we went down to the info session and I liked the learning style, which was important to me, because I had been out so long,” Justin says. I was able to keep working and earned my Bachelor of Arts degree in 2004.”

Being married to his wife, Jennifer, who works full time in the health insurance field, and having two young children, a 6-year-old son and a 4-year-old daughter, meant that flexible study on the graduate level was the only way Justin would be able to earn his advanced degree.

“The master’s degree is challenging,” he says. “The first couple of terms were much easier when I just had my son. Then my daughter got here, and it’s definitely much harder.”

For Ron Heath, who is soon to complete his second term on the Alumni Federation Board for the college, the capstone of the intertwining pursuits of degrees by father and son is indisputable.

“They allowed me to be on the stage when my son graduated,” Ron says with pride.

## **Brenda ’00 and Paul Breslin ’99**

Love, work and degrees were all in the mix for Brenda and Paul Breslin, who met when they both were working at the New York State Education Department in the Information Technology Division. Brenda attended SUNY Cobleskill right after high school, earning an Associate in Applied Science degree in data processing. She accepted a position at SED taking night classes “here and there,” she recalls. After a few years, she took a leave of absence and enrolled in the Rochester Institute of Technology, planning to complete her Bachelor of Science degree and then look for work elsewhere.

Fate had different plans. She ended up back in the Capital District where she had met Paul. They began dating after working a few years together in the same department, and then got engaged and later married. But she had managed to earn 30 credits from RIT before stopping. She began taking night classes again, but fate again interrupted her plans when their daughters joined the family in 1988 and 1989.

“One Sunday, when the kids were 9 and 10, I saw a flier for SUNY Empire State College’s FORUM Management Program,” Brenda recalls. The speaker at the open house she attended was Alan Belasen, current chairman of the college’s MBA program. “I talked to him a lot about where I was. I told him that I had 120 credits, but wanted to get a degree.”

As it turned out, Belasen became Brenda’s mentor, as she pursued her degree in business management. “He



PHOTO PROVIDED

**Paul and Brenda Breslin, husband and wife, both hold degrees from Empire State College.**

encouraged me to take International Business, although I didn't think I'd have any reason to use it. I can't think of how many times I have referenced that course with my international staff," she says. "I also took a marketing class from which I used an assignment as a writing sample to apply for a job."

She recalls the rigor of "Management 360" a skills-assessment course that allowed her to enhance skills that she needed.

Like many Empire State College students, Brenda faced the challenge of working full time, being in school full time and being a full-time parent. She still managed to make it to most of her children's extracurricular activities. "So, the soccer coach knew the classes I was taking. I think I missed two soccer games in that whole time.

"I also met wonderful people, and we worked on group projects over the phone. That's why FORUM worked for me. I could do it entirely as my schedule dictated. You do have to have a lot of self-discipline, though."

Now director of the Bureau of Computer Systems Development, she manages large systems development for the New York State Health Department.

Brenda's husband, Paul, earned his Master of Arts in business policy from Empire State College. He spent most of his career at the New York State Education Department in information technology. A 1969 graduate of SUNY Albany in business and marketing, he started his career working on room-size mainframe computers "and I grew up with the industry, working with the first IBM microcomputers – or personal computers – in the 1980s." He recalls the old IBM 1401s, and notes with amusement, "There's more power in your watch today than in those computers. They filled a room but only had 16 megabytes of memory."

Paul started out with the New York Army National Guard as a medic, and then switched to computers in 1977 as a result of his civilian job. After he graduated, he got a job offer from IBM. He turned it down to work for Oscar Mayer, which had promised "more money and a car."

When they wanted him to move for a promotion, he decided to stay in the area. He looked around to see who the biggest employers in the area were and determined that the State of New York would be a fine place to work. He started

with the New York State Education Department's Division of Data Processing, where he began as a trainee in 1973, retiring from the same division in 2002 as chief of technical services. During his tenure, he supervised several areas.

"We met at the Education Department," he says, recalling how he and Brenda connected. "She started in 1980. I actually interviewed her. I was filling in for an employee who was sick that day." He says he doesn't remember the actual interview, but learned he had conducted it when he viewed some paperwork years later. "After a couple of years, we started dating, and then we got married 27 years ago."

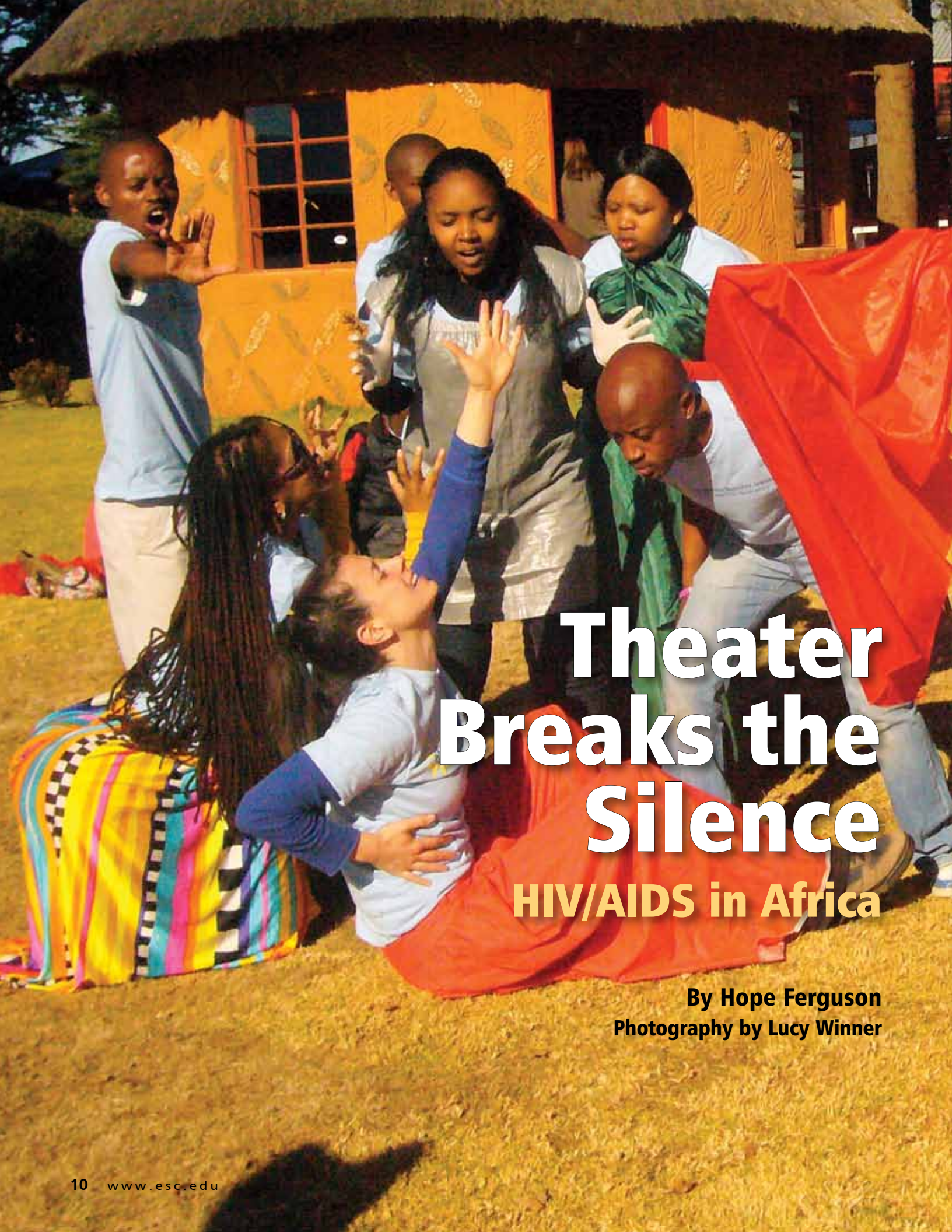
Paul at first thought that for his state career, he didn't really need a master's degree, but on further reflection, he notes it probably helped him be considered for promotions at the education department. "Since most of my policy papers related to information technology issues, it gave me the confidence and recent knowledge to perform well in interviews and be selected."

And sometime in the future, he says, he may want to put that degree to good use doing consulting. Meantime, he's content to volunteer for the Red Cross emergency preparedness program, for his church and at Fort Ticonderoga.

All these students and alumni have different stories and different educational journeys, but their outcomes are similar. They discovered the satisfaction of pursuing higher education, despite competing life obligations.

Do you have a sibling, spouse or parent who also went to Empire State College? Tell your story at [www.esc.edu/Alumni](http://www.esc.edu/Alumni).

Next issue we'll explore the amazing story of five siblings and their educational journeys at Empire State College. Stay tuned! ■



# Theater Breaks the Silence

**HIV/AIDS in Africa**

**By Hope Ferguson  
Photography by Lucy Winner**



**W**hat started as a relatively small theater project in Lesotho, Southern Africa, aimed at sparking dialogue about HIV/AIDS in rural communities there, has the potential to reach an estimated 2 million people in Ghana.

In 2006, SUNY Empire State College theater professor Lucy Winner, a mentor at the Metropolitan Center, and Katt Lissard, who was then a part-time instructor at Empire State College, worked with students and faculty from the University of Sunderland U.K., The University of Witswatersrand, South Africa, and the National University of Lesotho to develop the first Winter/Summer Institute. The collaborative theater troupe also included members of the local population, all coming together to “make theater” designed to challenge stigmas and stimulate dialogue among both participants and the villagers who would come to see the show.

Photo: Rehearsing nightmare scene in Maleala, as the Bird of Death (HIV/AIDS) looms close.



From "Would You Still Love Me if You Knew?" this scene about human trafficking is titled, "The Girls are Disappearing from the Village, and Nobody's Talking About It."

Village girl recognizes her plight.

Winter/Summer Institute has held three residencies in Lesotho, the most recent this past summer. (A group left from Empire State College in late June, returning early in July). In between trips to Africa, residencies also are held at the Metropolitan Center, in which students pass on what they learn to other students. The W/SI uses improvisation and scene building, presentations and discussion, community interaction and collaboration, and performance and feedback as its tools to engage actors and audience.

Lissard, a Fulbright Fellow in Lesotho in 2005, is W/SI's artistic director, and a professor at Goddard College in Vermont. Winner is education director of W/SI.

This year, five students and three W/SI alumnae traveled with Winner and Lissard to Lesotho. They, along with 15 other students, three interns, and eight faculty members and presenters, spent the entire residency working in the rural mountain community of the Malealea Valley.

The impact of the spread of HIV/AIDS on Lesotho and Southern Africa has been severe. Lesotho has the third highest infection rate in the world with roughly one quarter of the population infected. The disease disproportionately affects young women between the ages of 18 and 24. There is often great secrecy and silence surrounding the disease because of the attendant stigma and cultural taboos. In a number of communities, HIV/AIDS patients sometimes are ostracized by family members and the community, shunned or even physically ejected from their homes.

Helen Epstein is a New York-based writer whose book, "The Invisible Cure: Why We Are Losing the Fight Against AIDS in Africa," explores reasons why the virus seems to have become intractable on the continent. She met with Empire State College and W/SI participants prior to their departure for the residency in 2008. Her conversation with them is featured in the W/SI video, "The Contamination

Waltz." In it she explains that multiple concurrent partnerships are considered one of the chief networks of transmission of the virus: "People may not realize that even though they've been faithful to their one or two or possibly three partners, people they know well and trust the most, they are all part of a gigantic sexual network that puts everyone at risk of HIV, even though no one is being particularly, quote, unquote, promiscuous."

Or, as Dr. Molotsi Monyamane, a presenter at the 2008 institute, put it – giving a comic twist to the deadly network: "What? You don't trust me? But it's just you and me and my wife and your husband."

"The thing about this kind of work is we don't go in there with a message," Winner says of the W/SI. "We work together with students, community participants and local experts to uncover issues connected to the pandemic. All of us bring resources and information, as well as our own lived experiences,



**The Trafficker, Money and Secrets.**

which we use as part of our exploration. I guess I would say that one of the goals of our work is to create an opportunity for people to talk about things they normally wouldn't talk about, or talk differently about those things. Because of the interactive mode, people tend to uncover connections, which a 'safe-sex campaign' might not."

This year, Winner and the others were pleased to discover that the village drama group, started as a result of the original program in 2006, was still going strong and eager to continue the work with W/SI; many of its members are adults who are parents or grandparents. During the work, the villagers expressed concerns about how to reach young people, in particular the countless number of young people left orphaned by HIV/AIDS. Winner says it will probably take the work of other young people to reach these orphans. At the end of this year's residency, the director and staff of the Malealea Development Trust, the

community development organization that works closely with the Malealea community, including the drama group, asked to meet with W/SI. They explored next steps and talked about ways to sustain the work, including ways of working more directly with the orphan community, and perhaps developing a second drama group with them.

Winner describes this year's piece, "Would You Still Love Me if You Knew?" as "incredibly moving, often very funny, and always intense." It was performed at the village community health center, and then W/SI members worked with the village partners to add scenes based on their own experiences. The final performance, presented at a valleywide festival, combined the original play with the new scenes created by the village drama group. The festival performance was attended by the principal regional chief, as well as the vice chancellor of the National University, and a delegation of 15 from the U.S. Embassy, a three-hour

drive away. The title of the piece took on special meaning for student Anna Guttormsgaard. She befriended a village woman, a widow who said her husband had died of tuberculosis after working in South Africa's mines. Guttormsgaard was moved by their conversations, and particularly by the woman's independent spirit. She remembers thinking that there was truly hope that the pandemic would end, if more women were like this one.

It was only later that Guttormsgaard learned that her friend was HIV positive, and that her husband had died of AIDS. The woman was taking antiretrovirals, and had regained her health.

It was from this experience that Guttormsgaard came to understand better the lingering stigma and shame felt by men and women infected with HIV, but also that, "You do not learn without sharing with those you want to learn from ... As I revealed vulnerabilities in my life, so did she ... and so the flow continued. She may not have told me that she was

HIV positive or that her husband died of AIDS, but I felt that I learned things about her that were much more important than that. I learned about her strength and her power – and I learned about her capacity for change.”

Winter/Summer Institute posts videos, news, photos and other materials on its website, [www.maketheatre.org](http://www.maketheatre.org). It describes its mission as seeking to address the pandemic by examining the ways in which complex social issues impact the spread of the virus. It was through the website that Ebenezer Koomson, the Ghanaian HIV/AIDS coordinator, made contact with W/SI, emailing to ask whether any training was available in W/SI’s theater-making method. Thus began a correspondence that resulted in the Winter/Summer Institute shipping him most of its materials, including multiple DVDs of its two performances, “Make Theatre/Make a Difference” and “The Contamination Waltz.”

More than 20,000 children have tested positive for the virus that causes AIDS in Ghana alone, Koomson says. Also troubling is the high mortality rate among victims, which is more than 17,000 annually, due to the shortage of antiretroviral drugs. He told GEO.tv in Ghana that life expectancy can improve “with just a little care from friends and relatives.”



**Ebenezer Koomson, MPH, regional HIV/AIDS coordinator, Ghana Health Service, at a Family Planning Clinic.**

**HIV/AIDS doctor’s forbidden fantasies conflict with his desire to be a community role model.**



**Rousing rendition of “Lebonenyana Laka,” a Sesotho adaptation of “This Little Light of Mine,” lends a hopeful note to the music finale at the festival performance.**



By means of partnerships with educational institutions, churches, AIDS programs, hospitals and social groups, the Ghana Health Service intends to reach out to communities in Ghana similarly affected by HIV/AIDS using the materials developed by W/SI. Koomson already has made wide use of “The Contamination Waltz” in Ghana’s battle against the virus.

“We never have any idea what’s going to happen and what effect we’ll have,” Winner explains. “While we are there, there is always a chance that a ripple will start somewhere, and that, as it spreads, something wonderful and totally unexpected will happen.”

One of those unexpected ripples from W/SI’s 2008 residency in Lesotho was the 2011 email correspondence with Koomson. After hearing, on March 30, that W/SI had just sent off 40 copies of “The Contamination Waltz” and the “Make Theatre/Make a Difference” DVDs, along with W/SI brochures, articles and music CDs, Koomson wrote back the same day: “We have already started celebrating!” ■

**Winter/Summer Institute 2011 Empire State College Participants**

- Students:** Nancy Herard-Marshall, Anna Guttormsgaard, Canedy Knowles, Margarita Ramos, Earlecia Gibb
- Alumni:** Deanna Bergdorf, intern; Jussara Santos Raxlen, Melissa Shetler, facilitators





PHOTO: MICHAEL OKONIEWSKI

# A Deep Green Dream

John Ford found a way to realize his vision of blending business with sustainability at SUNY Empire State College.

By Helen Susan Edelman

Leaving behind his motorcycle and an unfinished degree in computer science begun at SUNY Potsdam, John Ford '11 fled chilly Syracuse, N.Y., in 1986 for the West Coast, chasing a deep-green dream of saving the world through the environmental movement. He came down to earth in South Lake Tahoe, Calif. There he bartended, hiked the Sierra Nevada, visited California's scenic parks and cities, and stumbled upon the counterculture bible of the '70s: "The Next Whole Earth Catalog." Edited by Stewart Brand, it was a massive compendium of products for sale in every category related to creating a sustainable lifestyle.

The encounter spurred him to explore issues surrounding sustainability and global stewardship through writings by Buckminster Fuller, James Lovelock and Rachel Carson and other environmentally oriented publications such as “Earthfirst!” and “The Whole Earth Review.” He also monitored the activities of the World Watch Institute.

“There was a time when I held business and environmental sustainability as mutually exclusive concepts,” says Ford, the first graduate of SUNY Empire State College to have earned a Bachelor of Science degree with a concentration in business and sustainability, a program launched at the Central New York Center.

His journey to that degree was circuitous. “I had a son – aptly named Forrest – and my priorities shifted. Suspending my crusade, I bought a car, traded my environmental book collection to a like-minded individual for forgiveness of owed utility bills, and set off for adventures in parenthood.” (There since have been two daughters, Madeline and Savannah.)

The route circled back to Syracuse. Ford spent four years in the hospitality industry and then seven in an auto-parts manufacturing plant, New Venture Gear, Inc., a holding company of Chrysler Corp., where he did everything from metal lathing and assembly to conducting inventory and training. When NVG was sold to a Canadian auto parts company, Ford had to decide whether to transfer to another plant, accept significantly reduced wages or take a buyout. He chose the buyout and later became eligible for the federal Trade Adjustment Assistance Program, which provides resources for U.S. workers who lose their jobs as a result of foreign trade to obtain the skills and education necessary to become re-employed.

“As part of the application process, I had to justify my chosen pursuit economically,” Ford says. “I imagined myself as a corporate-responsibility or sustainability manager for a company committed to environmentally sensitive practices, an emerging career I believe will

be at the core of viability in the American economy and hopefully provide some financial security for my loved ones.”

Headlines about jobs disappearing and the economy going belly-up “prove that bad news sells,” Ford says, “but sustainability is a hopeful story of rebirth and opportunity, a lens through which we can envision systems that better our world so we don’t leave future generations a legacy of shameful environmental degradation. ‘Environmental economics,’ ‘industrial ecology’ and ‘sustainability management’ – words that once stood in opposition to each other as oxymoronic – have combined to become tools and solutions to address the pressing problems facing our society.”

As he considered his options, including enrolling at SUNY Empire State College, curiosity and research led Ford to seek guidance from people in the Syracuse region with perspective on how sustainability intersects with the business community.

The local leaders he talked to identified barriers to sustainability such as lagging financial and marketing shrewdness, funding challenges, lack of clarity about the definitions of “green management” and “sustainable practices,” needs for communication and planning, and cumbersome regulatory and policy practices.

“The conversations deepened my resolve to study business and environmental topics,” he says. “It became apparent that a Bachelor of Science degree is the minimum education necessary to enter and be effective in this newly developing field of sustainability management. Then I set out to determine whether Empire State College could accommodate my particular interest.”

The timing was fortuitous. Dialogues with Central New York Center Dean Nikki Shrimpton, Recruitment Specialist Debbie McEligot and Faculty Chairwoman Dr. Julie Gedro convinced Ford that he could be confident that his intended path of study could be accomplished in the new business and sustainability program. “It appeared

I would be afforded the unique opportunity to design an individualized track that aligns my personal interest with marketable business-management training, integrating traditional business curricula with topics such as ecology, social responsibility and whole-system planning,” he says.

Seventy transcript credits transferred from SUNY Potsdam and two credits by evaluation were granted for his experience acquired in manufacturing, allowing Ford to enter the program as an advanced student.

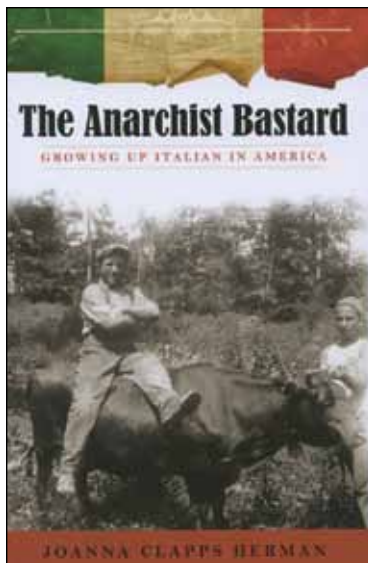
As he had hoped and predicted, Ford has found a niche in the marketplace for his intellectual and philosophical approach buttressed by new skills and long experience. Currently, he is working on two projects related to sustainability: He is writing a resource guide for the Green Core Company Project, a green-business certification program for small-to-medium sized businesses willing to embrace sustainability, which features links, explanations of concepts, tool descriptions and general information to shepherd businesses through the process of becoming green; and he is involved in various projects at ProTerra Lighting U.S. Inc., a Canadian company that has headquartered its U.S. expansion effort in Syracuse. ProTerra engineers and manufactures energy-efficient (LED) lighting solutions for the commercial and industrial sectors. His job is to map the regulatory landscape, research local opportunities and outline incentive programs for potential clients.

Ford views Empire State College as compatible with his values because it fosters low-carbon, distance-study options and, like other sustainable movements, “enhances the environment on which it depends.”

Through “education, engagement, observation, partnerships and compassion, we are headed for a more just and graceful world,” Ford reflects. “One thing that has become clear to me is that there is more than enough work for everyone in our transitioning economy.” ■

# Portfolio

## BOOKS

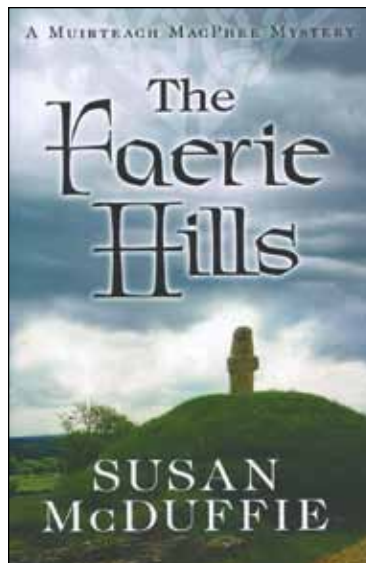


### Memories of Italian-American Childhood

**Joanna Clapps Herman '73**  
**Metropolitan Center**

Praise has poured in for Joanna Clapps Herman's memoir of her Italian-American childhood, "The Anarchist Bastard" (SUNY Press). She details a world that seemed lost "in the 15th century," although she was born in 1944. She describes "values closer to Homer's Greece than Anglo-American New England, where the ethic of hospitality was, and still is, more middle Eastern and North African than Anglo-American ..." Clapps Herman teaches creative writing in the MAW program at Manhattanville College and at the Center for Worker Education at City College. Author Maria Laurino calls Clapps Herman "a gifted storyteller [who] mixes humor and sadness, anger and tenderness, extracting wisdom from every ounce of pain ... along the way, the reader inhales the rich aroma of simmering espresso and savors the sweet pasticceria ... "

## BOOKS



### Drawn to Mystery of the "Faerie Hills"

**Susan McDuffie '74**  
**Genesee Valley Center**

Susan McDuffie, whose Scottish ancestry goes back to the Isle of Colonsay in the Outer Hebrides, was drawn to Celtic lore as a child hearing tales of changelings and "faeries." When she finally traveled to her ancestral land, hitchhiking the length of the Outer Hebrides, her imagination fell captive to those "faerie tales" that permeated the atmosphere. In this first of what will be a series, her hero, Muirteach MacPhee, searches for a lost boy who locals believe was abducted by "faeries" but who he suspects may actually be the victim of greed for the mysterious nugget of gold he'd found before his disappearance. Mary Reed, co-author of the Lord Chamberlin novels, writes that McDuffie's book "beautifully evokes the sights, tastes and aromas of life, death and romance in the windswept Hebrides of 1373 ... in a plot as "intricate as a Celtic knot."

## BOOKS



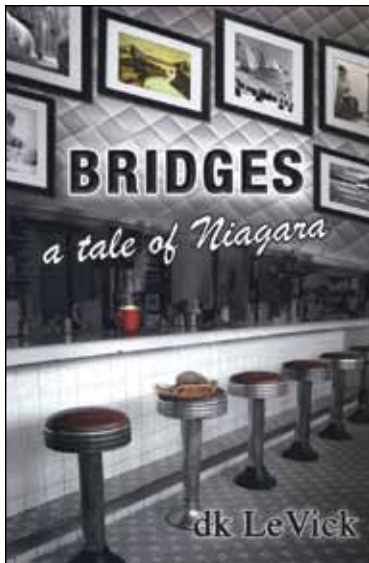
### As Its CEO, Your Body is Your Business

**Viki Goldberg '75**  
**Metropolitan Center**

What would happen if you treated your body as if it was a company and you were the CEO? That's the clever premise of a book written by Empire State College alumna Viki Goldberg. A registered nurse for 40 years and recipient of a National Institute of Health Grant, Goldberg teamed up with massage therapist Wendy Schweifler to help people learn how to be healthy, wealthy and wise. The authors show the "correlation between your body, your eating and your money." Goldberg and Schweifler noted that their patients and clients sometimes seemed clueless about the effect food and food additives have on the human body. "We invest in our bodies every day with our money and what we eat," says Goldberg. "As our body's CEO, it is our responsibility to ensure the most profitable return on investment." For more, go to [www.bodenomics.com](http://www.bodenomics.com).

# Portfolio

## BOOKS

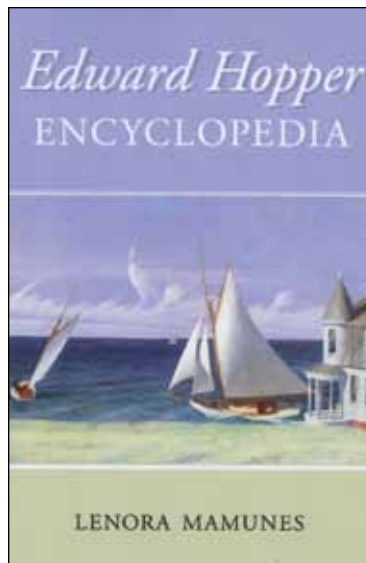


### Multileveled Bridges of Niagara

**Duane LeVick '91, '92  
Niagara Frontier Center**

"Bridges: A Tale of Niagara" (Langden Street Press) is a multileveled story. On one level it's about five bored teenagers who decide to test the Niagara Falls gorge on a lark. On another, it's a window into the history of the falls, seen through the lens of a hermit looking for life's deepest answers, a runaway slave girl swept to Canada by Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman and a British drummer boy who comes face to face with an Iroquois brave at the "Devil's Hole" massacre. Duane (D.K.) LeVick's characters venture into the gorge to walk on the ice-bridge and have their picture taken to hang on Old Gordy's "wall of pictures." "Their exhilaration swiftly turns to despair as they learn that getting down into the gorge in winter is one thing – getting out is something totally different," LeVick writes. For more, go to [www.bridgesataleofniagara.com](http://www.bridgesataleofniagara.com).

## BOOKS

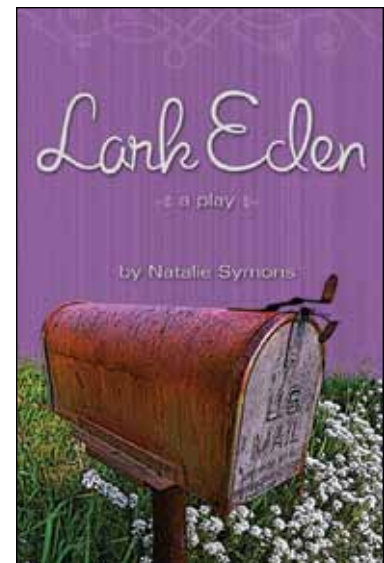


### Alumna Catalogs Hopper's Work

**Lenora Mamunes '93  
Hudson Valley Center**

Fans of the 20th century realist painter Edward Hopper (1882-1967) will appreciate this treasure from Hudson Valley Center alumna and artist Lenora Mamunes. In the Edward Hopper Encyclopedia (McFarland), Mamunes, who studied at the Art Students League in New York City, offers 350 cross-referenced entries to Hopper's life and work, featuring some of his most notable and well-known paintings. Other entries explore the milieu in which Hopper lived and painted, one of which Mamunes knows well as she serves on the board of the Edward Hopper House, the artist's restored childhood home in Nyack, N.Y., which was built in 1858. According to the publisher, the work is ideal for use in schools, museums and galleries, as well as for Edward Hopper fans.

## PLAYS



### Pros Stage Alumna's First Play

**Natalie Symons '11  
Niagara Frontier Center**

"Lark Eden," by Natalie Symons, was staged at Theater Schmeater in Seattle in April. The play traces the friendship of three southern women, beginning in the Depression and continuing through the early years of the new century. One reviewer wrote, "The play explodes with raw emotion. It is deeply moving and surprisingly hilarious . . . voices weave in and out as characters read letters written to one another through the years." Symons, who earned her B.S. in Interdisciplinary Studies, credits two of her mentors, Susan Forbes and Carole Southwood, for helping to birth the play. She describes it as "a wistful, sad piece," and an online reviewer warned: "Bring a box of Kleenex." Recalling opening night in Seattle, she says, "It was incredible. There wasn't a dry eye in the house."

# PROFILE

## Dan Nyaronga, Ph.D.

By Karen Nearney

**Hometown:** Musoma, Tanzania

**Education:** Bachelor's in community development from Daystar University, Nairobi; Master of Science and Ph.D. in human development with an emphasis in psychology from Iowa State University.

**Why psychology:** His planned undergraduate business degree was sidetracked by a psychology elective. "Psychology is the backbone of a lot of issues we discuss in our daily lives. ... It's not something I leave in the classroom. I live with it every day. I interact with students, colleagues and friends. Psychology helps me understand their behavior and mental processes, and why they do what they do." He opted instead for a community development degree, which combined psychology, sociology and social work.

**What he teaches:** Joined SUNY Empire State College in 2009 and teaches Introduction to Psychology, Abnormal Psychology, Adolescent Development, Research Methods, Family Intervention, Lifespan Development, Cultural Diversity, Introduction to Human Services and Kiswahili.

**On education:** "Education in Tanzania is a rare opportunity for a lot of us. Not just because someone is coming from a poor family. The structure and the system do not give a lot of people a chance." He came to the U.S. in December 1999 at his father's urging to further his education.

**Current research:** Tapping into Empire State College's more than 1,000 enrolled student veterans, he's examining the mental and physical health of veterans and their spouses before, during and after deployment.

**Work in Africa:** He's part of the Tanzania Education Project, spearheaded by University at Buffalo faculty to provide girls greater access to education by building a school in Kitenga, a village in Tanzania. "If you educate a woman, you educate a village. That is what Africans believe. Educate her and give her the tools she needs, let her know her rights, empower her, and all the other women in the village will benefit."

**First-hand observations:** Teaching stages of development is "more of a theoretical thing." But watching his 1-year-old son, Alex, develop brings greater appreciation for blossoming intelligence. "It's such a joy to watch kids grow. My son amazes me with new things every day."

# Alumni and Student COMMUNITY

## Center for Distance Learning

**Tammy Allen '98**, CEO of Advantage Mentor Group, was accepted for membership in the Consulting Alliance, an association of the Capital Region's leading independent consultants focused on professional learning and business development. She earned her B.S. in Community and Human Services from the college.

**Robin Birdsong '09** (CDL) and her mother, **Michelle Birdsong '07** (Metro) have co-written the children's book, "Sneasy the Greasy Babysits Abigail." Robin is now in graduate school at Goddard College and presented a paper at a prestigious forum in Italy. In addition to her writing, Michelle is a coping coach. Her company is called Mainstreaming the Marginalized.

**Lisa Brescia '08** has joined the cast of "Mamma Mia!" playing Donna Sheridan, the mother of the bride. The show is at the Winter Garden Theatre on Broadway in New York City.

**Frank Cereo '08** has become a prolific sci-fi writer. A 1983 graduate of Cayuga County Community College, he is working on his fifth book, "The Mission of No Return."

**Greg Chako '09**, has earned his M.A. in music, jazz arranging, from William Paterson University, Wayne, N.J., and is planning to go on for his doctorate in jazz and contemporary media.

**Jamie Chupka '06** and her mother, **Joyce Chupka '80**, have written a book, "It Went Without Saying," which chronicles Jamie's struggles with drug addiction and her subsequent recovery and the impact on her family. Joyce also holds an MPA from the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. Find the book at <http://itwentwithout Saying.com>.

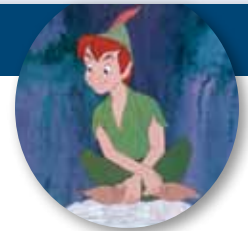
**Beth Reavis '05** was appointed director of the Department of Social Services for Warren County, Va. She was formerly director of social services for the city of Franklin, Va. She brought more than 30 years of experience with the Virginia Department of Social Services to the table. She earned her bachelor's degree from the college in human services administration.

**Scott Skinner '05** was installed as the Watervliet Fire Department chief in June. He is a 1991 graduate of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and 2008 graduate of Marist

College. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in fire administration from Empire State College.

**Brooklynn Welden '06** recently co-presented "The Straight Ally: Calls to Action for Sexual Diversity," at the National Organization for Women Conference in Tampa, Fla. Welden explained that gender may be moved beyond the binary, illustrating this with the Native American Navajo four-genders, feminine woman, masculine man, feminine man and masculine woman. She is an assistant professor of diplomacy and gender studies

## CDL Alum Produces and Directs for Disney



Theater producer, director, educator and entrepreneur **Wilfredo Hernandez Jr. '07** has been selected by Disney Theatrical Productions to produce and direct the first pilot production of "Disney's Peter Pan Jr.," a 60-minute stage adaptation of the classic book by J.M. Barrie.

In addition to his producing and directing work, Hernandez has completed construction of a studio and production complex in central New Jersey. His company, Mecca Entertainment, specializes in creative development, education, production and management. He started work this fall on a master's degree in producing and directing at New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study.

Hernandez has directed more than 35 stage productions, community arts events and educational programs. He has studied creativity and innovation management through the Harvard School of Business in association with the Walt Disney Company. He also is the director of the Hernandez Theater Workshop, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the development of young, emerging artists. Currently based in South Amboy, HTW is actively engaged in the local arts community and has built a national network of supporters. Current projects focus on producing, presenting and supporting works that span the performing, visual and literary arts. Hernandez was awarded an Honorary Proclamation by Mayor John T. O'Leary of South Amboy in recognition of his service to the arts.

"Theater is not a single subject," Hernandez wrote. "It encompasses numerous arts and several subject areas, often all at once, and requires its practitioners to be able not only to practice the art of theatrical production and creation, but also to think deeply and pull from vast stores of knowledge and life experiences in efforts to create a meaningful piece of art."

Hernandez has been participating in theater and the arts since elementary school. In high school he accumulated numerous credits including Sky Masterson in "Guys and Dolls," Tom Sawyer in "Tom n' Huck" and Bobby Child in "Crazy for You." His community-theater credits include "Hello, Dolly!" and "Camelot."

## Thinking Globally, Acting Locally in Lebanon



**Tarek Tawil '03** is thinking globally and acting locally as founder and operations manager of CO2 Neutral, the first Lebanese company to help businesses reduce and offset greenhouse gas emissions through reforestation and other environmental improvement projects in the Middle East.

The organization actively challenges businesses to become carbon neutral. Its website, <http://i-am-co2neutral.com>, states: "Carbon offsetting enables you to take responsibility for the carbon emissions (businesses) create. We use your offsets to sponsor projects ... through reforestation and clean, sustainable development in rural areas."

### Tarek Tawil '03

Tawil is a former marketing and product development officer at Jordan-based Investbank and is the owner and general manager of Tawil Trading and Agriculture, an import/export firm based in Beqaa, Lebanon. He holds a master's degree in environmental management and sustainable development from the Maastricht School of Management, Netherlands, and has an MBA in marketing from the American University College of Science and Technology in Beirut, in addition to his degree with a concentration in management information systems from Empire State College.

"Actually, Empire State College's Center for International Programs has a special place in my heart and memory. It has been the cornerstone of everything I did," Tawil writes.

Tawil began the college's Cyprus Residency Program in 1999 while living and working in Beirut.

"What attracted me to this program was mainly the variety and convenience of the courses, and the fact that I could benefit from an American educational program and a degree from a reputed American university without having to travel to the U.S., because I was committed to stay in Lebanon," Tawil recalled.

"When I established CO2 Neutral ... that was a direct implementation of what I learned at Empire State College: 'Think Global and Act Local.'"

A recent CO2 Neutral reforestation project was undertaken in the village of Qaraoun, in West Bekaa Caza, Lebanon, where 1,600 locally-sourced pine trees were planted on a 9,400-square-meter site. Since the project's inception, an estimated 1,600 tons of carbon dioxide has been sequestered.

at International University of Humanities and Social Sciences, San Jose, Costa Rica. She also is pursuing her doctorate at Nova Southeastern University.

## Center for International Programs

**Ondfej Rak '06** completed his Ph.D. in cultural studies at Charles University in Prague and will be taking a position with Skoda Power as a human resources manager. Skoda Power is a major engineering company with 1,000 employees. Rak also is active in the academic world where he has taught university courses in the psychology of

management and is currently teaching personnel psychology at the University of New York in Prague.

**Jakup Smutny '09**, a graduate of the Prague program with a concentration in international and European economic studies, has returned from a field research semester in Nepal where he was recently published in the prestigious Nepali Times.

**Kristina Zitnanova '09**, a graduate of the Prague program, completed her internship at the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva, and started work on a short-term consultancy assignment in Almaty, Kazakhstan. That was turned into a permanent contract, so she is now a full U.N.

staff member. She organized a conference involving migration in the Central Asian region, which is a high-profile event, and politically sensitive (the region borders Russia and China).

**Blerina Xhelili**, a current Tirana, Albania student, is the winner of the 2011 Gramoz and Ruben Pashko Scholarship, which recognizes superior academic achievement and the promise of engagement in public service in the Republic of Albania.

## Central New York Center

**Joan Cofrancesco '81, '04**, who earned both her bachelor's and master's degrees from the college, has won the Bruce Dearing Poetry Award. Her poetry has appeared in numerous poetry journals: *The Muse: Kallipe*, *Sinister Wisdom*, *The Harvard Gay and Lesbian Review* and *13th Moon*. Her latest book is "Sheep."

**Jeffrey Grimshaw '94**, recently took on two new positions: interim director for the Office of Business and Community Relations at SUNY Oswego and director of the Workforce Development Board of Oswego County.

**Shannon Hourigan '02** was named payroll manager at Le Moyne College. She previously was payroll manager at Staff Leasing in North Syracuse. She earned her bachelor's degree in business administration/accounting from the college.

**Gene Ira Katz '01, M.S., D.A.B.S.** was appointed as adjunct professor at Colorado Tech University. Katz is a board-certified therapist who works with couples, individuals, families and groups on emotional, mental and sexual healing. His website is: [www.FamilyAndSexualityCounseling.com](http://www.FamilyAndSexualityCounseling.com).

**Nancy Premo '09** has joined Green and Seifter, attorneys at law as an office manager. She earned her degree in business administration/human resources management.

**Emad Rahim '02, '03**, assistant professor of entrepreneurship and small business management at Morrisville State College and assistant professor of the Morrisville Venture

Connects Program, received the Certified Manager of the Year Award from the Institute of Certified Professional Managers of James Madison University.

**Nicole Rand**, a current student, was among the recipients of \$17,000 in grants and scholarships at the annual Crystal Award Ceremony. She was one of two women who received The Women in Transition Award. The club seeks to advance the status of women and girls through local service projects and fundraising.

**Kelly Zack-Decker '11** has been appointed as senior assistant to the president and assistant secretary to the board of trustees at Hartwick

## Genesee Valley Center

**Wanda Acevedo**, a student and director of programs, Wilson Commencement Park, was named as one of the Rochester Business Journal's "Forty Under 40."

**Carol Acquilano '97**, a painter, printer and bookbinder, had her work displayed at the grand opening celebration of the new Rosalie "Roz" Steiner Art Gallery at Genesee Community College. The gallery, named in honor of Steiner, who was active at Genesee Community College and the wider community, especially in the area of youth and education, died in 2008.

**Mary Therese Biltucci '99, '11**, a clinical research manager and craniofacial team dental coordinator at the Eastman Institute for Oral Health at the University of Rochester, had an article, "The Challenges of Diversity," published in RDH, the National Magazine for Dental Hygiene Professionals. She earned her bachelor's degree and MALS at the college. Her article was based on her graduate work.

**Glenn Brubaker '04**, who graduated from the Alfred Unit, has been hired as interim director of facilities services at Alfred State University. Prior to this appointment, he served as assistant professor in the Electrician and Computer Technician Department.

**Timothy Cosgriff '96** received the Empire State College Foundation Award for Excellence in Professional Service. As assistant to the dean at the Genesee Valley Center, Cosgriff organizes many of the alumni and student events and activities throughout Rochester. He was noted for his collaboration with other centers, raising the profile of the college in the Rochester community and for his sustainability efforts.

**Sandra Eveland '09** was promoted to the position of regional accounting manager for the Atlantic Region Publishers and Local Bookkeepers, CFO Leadership Team, Fairport office. Since 2006, she has been the local bookkeeper for the Hornell region.

**Terry Fyke** was named Woman to Watch by the Rochester Democrat and Chronicle. In 1995, she opened Terry Fyke Studio of Dance and Arts in Scottsville. The studio offers dance and theater programs for preschool through adult and launches annual performances and workshops in Orlando (Disney World, Universal Studios) and New York City. She also teaches four classes a week at the Wellness Center at the Rochester Institute of Technology.

**Lynn M. Holley '76** was named executive director of the Marco Island Center for the Arts, home of the Art League. She was formerly curator and gallery director at the Bronfman Family Jewish Community Center. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in communications from Empire State College, and a Master of Arts in museum studies from the University of Leicester, England in 2008.

### Pinkerton Shares Gallery Space with Rembrandt and Monet



Our Genesee Valley Center held a very special event at the Memorial Art Gallery where alumni and students were able to exhibit their work on the same halls and walls with Rembrandt and Monet. Shown here is student Mary Pinkerton with her work, "Ballerinas."

College. She is a member of the president's cabinet and serves as legislative liaison to community, state and federal agencies. She also is a first-year member of the Otsego County Chamber Board, serving on the education, special projects and scholarship recognition committees. She earned a bachelor's degree in Business, Management and Economics from the college.

**Carol Berry '80**, director of the Dormann Library in Bath, N.Y., was honored by Sen. Tom O'Mara, as part of the New York Senate's Women of Distinction Program. She started her career as the school librarian at Hornell High School and later held several supervisory positions at the Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES Library system. Her photo and bio are on display in a Women of Distinction exhibit in the Capitol building.



## Marriage Leads Alumna on “Road to Damascus”



**Three generations, left to right: granddaughter Sumayia, daughter Susu and grandmother Elaine Imady '81.**

*“Arabs say that from the day of your birth the name of your beloved is engraved on your forehead.”*

So begins **Elaine Imady's** “Road to Damascus,” which follows her courtship and marriage to Mohammed al-Imady, a Syrian student she met at New York University in the '50s.

A series of letters exchanged with her mother between 1960 to 1995, provided Imady '81 with enough raw material to embark on what is her second book, an affectively written memoir about her marriage and the couple's subsequent return to Syria, where she's lived for more than 50 years. The Imadys today have three adult children, and numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren – including one just born in July. It's a large, sprawling family that stretches from Minnesota to Abu Dhabi to Damascus.

Imady describes the courtship, challenges and rewards of her marriage.

The couple had a simple home wedding, with her mother and sisters in attendance, and then they took a harrowing journey on a Greek freighter from New York to Lebanon. There was never any doubt that Mohammed would return to Damascus since his scholarship stipulated

that he serve the Syrian government for eight years. He eventually served 24 years as minister of economy and now heads the commission that oversees the Damascus Stock Exchange.

Imady writes of her joyful introduction to her new husband's family, and how she settled into a totally different culture than she ever could have imagined growing up in suburban New York. She converted to Islam. Her children and grandchildren are observant Muslims also, and her daughters wear the veil.

Imady attended NYU for only three years and her “fondest wish” was to complete her college degree. This became possible during the six years the Imadys were in Kuwait while Mohammed headed the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development. His job gave the Imadys a measure of financial security that made frequent trips to the United States feasible.

It was Margaret Anderson, Imady's friend and head of the Rockland County Guidance Center, who suggested Imady enroll in Empire State College. She was mentored at a distance by Professor Emerita Diana Worby, formerly of the college's Hudson Valley Center, who recalls conducting Imady's “entire bachelor's degree long distance, Kuwait to Rockland County.”

By email, Imady writes, “I am forever grateful for the encouragement I received from Professor Worby and I cherish my degree from Empire State which enabled me to go on to a rewarding career of teaching English in the British Council in Kuwait and the American Language Center in Damascus.”

Today, Imady describes a peaceful and secure life surrounded by her large family. Two granddaughters married within 15 days of one another last summer, and last May she attended the graduation of her oldest grandchild from New York Institute of Technology in Jordan.

Otherwise, she spends her days attending yoga classes twice a week, playing Scrabble, taking Quranic class and volunteering at the American Library. She and Mohammed walk half an hour a day in the park near their home.

Although she only gets back to the states about once a year, she stays in contact with her sisters and family regularly. “We try to Skype about once a week.”

**Jennifer Moraczewski '01**, was promoted to assistant vice president/deposit operations manager at Tioga State Bank. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree from the college.

## The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies

**Steven Culhane**, a student and member of Local 3 electrician's union, who specializes in construction, ran for a seat on the Hicksville School Board.

## Long Island Center

**Richard Henry Becker '09, '10** was installed as a deacon of St. Philip Neri Church, Northport. He is a real estate broker who earned his degree from the Hauppauge Unit. He is pursuing clinical pastoral education for chaplaincy work.

**Gary Bennett '09** ran for a seat in the Massapequa School District. Retired from the Suffolk County Sheriff's Department, he earned his bachelor's degree in social sciences from Empire State College.

**Laurie Coleman '08**, received her Master of Social Work degree from the University of Toronto. Her specialization is working with children and their families. During the last two years, she has worked in child welfare and also counseled undergraduate students at the university. She currently works part time in her husband's private practice.

**Steven Corte '97** ran unopposed for election as a village trustee on the Action Party of Westbury line on the party's record of fiscal responsibility and experience. He was first elected in 2007. He graduated from the college with a bachelor's degree in real estate/finance.

**Marc Herbst '86**, former five-term N.Y.S. assemblyman and director of transportation planning and environmental services for the N.Y.S. Thruway Authority, was installed as pastor of Faith Evangelical Lutheran Church. He earned his Master of Divinity degree from St. Bernard's School of Theology and Ministry, in addition to his Master of Science in transportation planning and engineering

from Polytechnic University. He earned his B.S. in business administration from Empire State College.

**Paula Hinton '84** went on to graduate from Hunter College School of Social Work and is now the clinical director of a transitional housing program with residences in Sullivan, Orange and Nassau counties. This residential program serves adult males who have a history of substance abuse and who may be on parole or probation. She also has a private practice in Nassau County.

**Edward Shevlin '11**, a sanitation worker with New York City's sanitation department, was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to study Irish language. Shevlin, a Queens native, dropped out of high school, earning a high-school equivalency diploma at age 30, according to a feature in the Daily News. He is pursuing his bachelor's degree at the college and hopes to teach history and language upon retirement from the sanitation department.

**Juanita Torrence-Thompson's '83** audiobook, "Poetry Among the Flowers: Queens Meets Asia," was broadcast May 12 on public radio station KSER and then around the U.S. Torrence-Thompson wrote and performed the book, and premiered it at the Queens Botanical Garden in 2005.

## State Legislators Celebrate College's 40th Anniversary



PHOTO: DAVID HEVIAHAN

At the open house for the new Northeast Center unit in Troy held in May, state Sen. Roy McDonald, left, and Assemblyman Ronald Canestrari, right, presented President Alan Davis with a joint proclamation from the State Legislature lauding the college on the occasion of its 40th anniversary.

## Metropolitan Center

**David D. Adedjouma '05** received her MSW from New York University's Silver School. She got into social work unexpectedly with the encouragement of her Empire State College professor. She is employed at HELP/PSI in the Bronx, which provides residential health care for people with both AIDS and chemical addiction.

**Wade Barnes '92**, considered one of the premier drummers, composers and educators, has performed at the Friehofer Jazz Fest in Saratoga Springs, as well as other jazz festivals

around the world. He has an M.A. in music from Vermont College, Norwich University, and earned two Bachelor of Arts degrees – one in music from Empire State College and one in history from Queens College. Barnes is director of The Brooklyn Repertory Ensemble, a 17-member ensemble noted for its unique sound. He also leads two other ensembles, Wade Barnes and the Bottom Line, and Wade Barnes and Unit Structures.

**Michelle Birdsong '07** and her daughter **Robin Birdsong '09** (CDL) have co-written the children's book, "Sneasy the Greasy Babysits Abigail." Robin is now in graduate school at Goddard College and presented a paper at a prestigious forum in Italy. In addition to her writing, Michelle is a coping coach and her company is called Mainstreaming the Marginalized. Michelle also is founder and CEO of Realitees a T-shirt company. She also wrote Abigail and Talk and Share.

**Judy Edward-Greene '08** was the student speaker at her commencement ceremony at CUNY School of Law. While in law school, she was the inaugural Luis DeGraffe Black Law Student Association Memorial Fellow.

**Jill Garland '96** was appointed vice president of development at Nyack Hospital. She has more than 20 years of experience as a fundraising professional. She earned her

## Staten Island Evening at the Beach



PHOTO PROVIDED

As part of the 40th anniversary, our Staten Island Unit chose the beautiful Vanderbilt at South Beach for its celebration. Pictured from left to right are Donna Romani '05, '11, student Mary Castellani and Marilyn Greenberg '10.

Bachelor of Arts degree in theater from the college and has served as an adjunct or lecturer at various schools.

**Deborah Gregory '86** had a trio of her young adult novels that take on the fashion world published in September 2011. "Catwalk" includes three previously published novels – "Catwalk," "Strike a Pose" and "Rip the Runway." The books follow a group of aspiring "fashionistas" at the Fashion Institute of Technology. Gregory, who earned her degree in English and literature from the college, is the award-winning writer of the "wildly successful" tween series and movies, "The Cheetah Girls."

**Sidney Gluck '79**, a China expert, attended the luncheon for Hu Jintao, president of China, in Washington, D.C., while he was there to meet with President Barack Obama.

**Gloria (Grajales) McWilliams '02** won first prize in a barrels-of-fun-making contest at the Coney Island boardwalk. She decorated her barrel in honor of the college.

**David Singer '02**, a graduate of Verizon Corporate College, enrolled in ProSchools to obtain the federally mandated Mortgage Loan Originator requirements and study for the SAFE (Secure and Fair Enforcement) tests for New York, Virginia and the federal government. He also took on a new position in the banking industry as a mortgage loan originator with ICC Mortgage Services.

**Ennis Smith '03** was selected to be an artist-in-residence at the Byrdcliffe Arts Colony in Woodstock, N.Y., this past summer.

## Niagara Frontier Center

**Andrew R. Finson '09** was selected as grand marshal of the 2011 Jamestown Memorial Day Parade by the United Veterans Council of Jamestown. He earned a bachelor's degree in fire service administration from the college. He also is a New York State certified paramedic and 13-year veteran of the Jamestown Fire Department, where he is a lieutenant at Engine Company 5 and is a member of the fire investigation team.

## Code Breaker Heads to Law School



PHOTO PROVIDED

**Heath Hardman '11**

A veteran of multiple combat deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan, former Marine **Heath Hardman '11** of Gloversville is taking on two new challenges this fall; he is studying at Albany Law School while simultaneously launching his first run for elected office, a bid for a council seat from the city's Third Ward.

Hardman grew up in the Pensacola, Fla., area and joined the Marines in 1998, right out of high school. After basic training he moved on to signals analysis, the study of enemy communications. Signals intelligence, or SIGINT, is the military version of the National Security Agency, and some of Hardman's training actually fell under the jurisdiction of the NSA. He studied languages including French, Persian Farsi, Spanish and, as required of all Marines, some Arabic.

Hardman's work with SIGINT ranged from doing sophisticated satellite intelligence analysis stateside to listening in on short-range radio chatter during his deployments in Iraq and Afghanistan. He explains that signals analysis involves intercepting and interpreting enemy communications, almost all of which are now encrypted. Decryption, code-breaking and translation are all part of the SIGINT specialist's job, Hardman says.

Hardman rose to the rank of staff sergeant overseeing the work of 85 people before leaving the Marines in July 2009 after 11 years of service. Settling in Gloversville, he found himself a single father with sole custody of two school-age children. He enrolled in Empire State College in pursuit of a philosophy degree and studied both online and in study groups.

"Empire State College provided the flexibility for me to get a college education while working around a lot of different schedules," says Hardman. "I could drop the kids off at school, meet with my professors, do my schoolwork and then pick the kids up in the afternoon – without having to get a babysitter!"

"With Empire State College, even though you have a lot of distance learning, you also have a lot of one-on-one interaction. You get everything you need but you get it on your own schedule."

**Frank Trotta**, a current student and publisher of the Fire News, a newspaper/website that has served fire, rescue and EMS workers since 1973, has been appointed to the Stony Brook University Council.

## Northeast Center

**Alice Fulton '78, '94**, a poet and novelist, received an award in literature from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She was among a small cadre of 19 writers who received the 2011 award in literature. The award comes with a \$7,500 cash prize, and honors exceptional accomplishment in any genre.

**Barbara Garro '93, '96** published "From Jesus to Heaven: A Parable of Pilgrimage," (Cambridge Books). The book was published as an e-book, as well as a paperback in 2010. It has received the Bishop's Imprimatur, which means it is suitable for use in Catholic schools and as a teaching aid. Garro spent 10 years writing the 7-step self study.

**Mary Katherine Ibbetson '05** is a blogger for the Times Union, Albany's daily newspaper, writing about running, exercise and surviving cancer. She is the COO for Lavelle & Finn law firm. Her website is [www.marysaysso.com](http://www.marysaysso.com).

**Robin Mosle '78** was appointed as executive vice president for development and leasing by JBG Rosenfeld Retail.

The company is a Chevy Chase, Md. – headquartered shopping center leasing, development and management firm.

**Denise Passero '03, '10** was awarded the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Professional Service. She works at Fulton-Montgomery Community College.

**Victoria Rockell '76** has been named president of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers for the one-year that began June 2011. She is director of investment and development with Air Liquide USA, LLC.

## School for Graduate Studies

**Theresa Brace '10**, who earned her Master of Arts in Labor and Policy Studies, has been promoted to assistant vice president corporate compliance officer at Tompkins Trust Co.

**Cathleen Engle**, a current Master of Arts in Liberal Studies student and EOP counselor at Alfred State College has been honored with a NACADA (National Academic Advising Association) Region 1 Advising Excellence award which was presented to her at its annual conference. Also at the conference, she presented a session called "The Mid-Semester Reality Check – Creating a Plan for Academic Recovery."

**James Froio '98**, who earned his M.A. in social policy from the college, has been named school superintendent for the Jordan-Elbridge (N.Y.) School District. He was formerly principal of the Cicero-North Syracuse High School.

**John Hasselback Jr. '03**, a music teacher in West Seneca Central Schools, was honored as the recipient of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra/Erie County Music Educator's Association Award for Excellence in Music Education. The award was a framed gold baton. Hasselback earned his graduate degree from the college.

**Alan Longman**, a student at the college, and anti-drug abuse activist, ran for a seat on the Rocky Point School District. He is studying for his master's degree in business administration at Empire State College.

## Center for Distance Learning Holds Annual Graduation Mixer



Maho Cavalier '11 and her mother, Noriko Kawabata traveled from Tokyo to attend Maho's graduation from the Center for Distance Learning. They are pictured here with Sir John Daniel, honorary degree recipient, (far left) and President Alan Davis (far right).

**Brian McDowell '97**, a faculty member at Morrisville State College, has received that college's Distinguished Faculty Award. He was recognized during Morrisville's 100th commencement. McDowell, who is assistant

professor of journalism at the college, has worked there for 26 years; formerly in the public relations department, where he served as director. ■

## NY Rangers NHL Hockey Game Draws 100+ Alumni and Students



Hockey fans met for a reception just before going to Madison Square Garden to see the Rangers play Minnesota. More than 100 alumni and students attended the college's first-ever NHL alumni event.



Jude Nordhoff '80

PHOTO: JOHN HUGHES

# Make a Difference

## Join our 40th Anniversary Alumni Challenge

**Increase your gift to the SUNY Empire State College Foundation and receive a free 40th anniversary tote bag.**

"Empire State College changed my life. It provided me with the challenge, tools and support that I needed to achieve my goals. This positive experience empowered me to make other important life-altering choices such as going on to earn a graduate degree in education in the western United States, spending two years as a Peace Corps volunteer in Botswana, Africa, becoming a U.N. electoral supervisor in Bosnia during their first national election, and working at The World Bank in Washington, D.C.

I will be forever grateful."

— Jude Nordhoff '80

**Your support of the foundation assists students with grants, scholarships, funding for new programs and short-term, no-interest loans.**

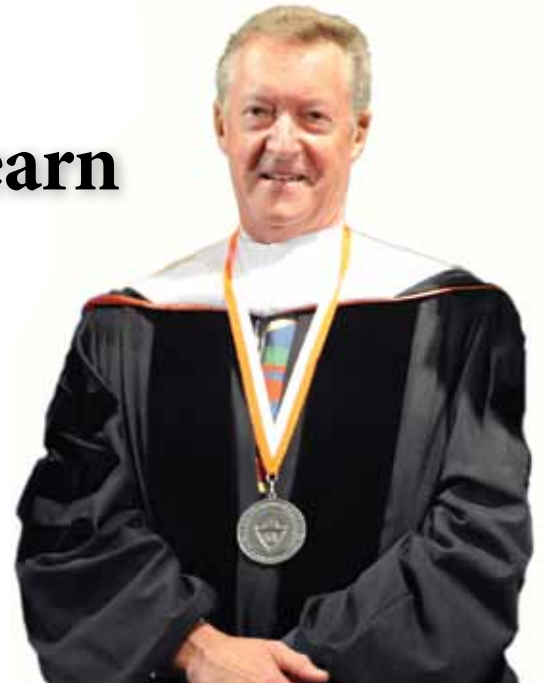
To make a gift and learn how to qualify for your tote bag, go to the Empire State College Foundation website at [www.esc.edu/SupportESC](http://www.esc.edu/SupportESC) or call **800-847-3000, ext. 2773.**



# An “Open” Invitation to Learn

Sir John Daniel is recognized around the globe as an authority on open and distance learning. Serving as the president of the Commonwealth of Learning since 2004, he previously was the assistant director-general for education for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. He was knighted in 1994 by Queen Elizabeth for services to higher education and the leading role he has played internationally for 30 years in the development of distance learning universities.

He agreed to serve as guest commentator for this issue of *Connections* magazine. Sir John presented the Boyer Family Lecture at the All College Conference held in March 2011, and in May was awarded an honorary degree by the college.



The possibilities of opening up universities on new dimensions became clear a decade ago when the Internet burst into the public consciousness in the dot.com frenzy at the turn of the millennium. The good news was that the dot.com frenzy alerted universities to new opportunities – the bad was that some got carried away with ill-fated ventures. Universities such as Columbia, Chicago, the London School of Economics, Oxford, Yale and Stanford thought they could make serious money by offering noncredit courses online. In the event they lost serious money!

Other universities learned the lesson and in the next wave of eExperimentation, led by MIT, universities put materials associated with their credit courses on the Web for free. MIT, for example, lets people look at some of the materials used in their courses, and millions do, but they explicitly do not offer interaction with MIT faculty, still less the possibility of obtaining an MIT credential. But that was the prehistory of the open educational resources movement.

Open Educational Resources are digital teaching, learning and research resources freely available for reuse and widely integrated into open and distance education.

Unquestionably, OERs are now being used. Literally millions of students and informal learners are using the open educational resources put out by MIT, the U.K. Open University and others to find better and clearer teaching than they are getting in the universities where they are registered. The 32 small states of the Commonwealth are working together within a network called the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth to develop open educational resources that they can all adapt and use.

To give examples: the UKOU's OpenLearn site has 11 million users and hundreds of courses can be downloaded as interactive eBooks. Furthermore, with 300,000 downloads per week the UKOU alone accounts for 10 percent of all downloads from iTunesU. And we must not forget the worldwide viewing audience of millions for OU/BBC TV programs. These are all open educational resources.

Martin Bean, the Australian-American who moved from Microsoft HQ to become vice-chancellor of the U.K. Open University last year, argues that the task of universities today is to provide paths or steps from this informal cloud of OER

learning towards formal study for those who wish to take them. Good paths will provide continuity of technology because many millions of people around the world first encounter the Open University through iTunes, its TV broadcasts or the resources on its OpenLearn website. The thousands who then elect to enroll as students will find themselves studying in similar digital environments.

Thanks to Web technologies the dimensions of openness in higher education are now expanding rapidly, but 40 years ago just two institutions, the U.K. Open University and Empire State College, were the prime expressions of openness. The Open University had abolished all academic prerequisites for admission and offered distance learning at scale. Empire State College opened up the curriculum by letting students design their own programs with mentors to help them achieve rigor and balance. Today, these two radically innovative institutions, and many others, understand by using the technology of distance education they can achieve wider access, higher quality and lower cost *all at the same time*. This is a revolution – it has never happened before – and Empire State College is well equipped for this future. ■

**She may never know you, but ...**



**... she'll always  
remember the  
opportunity  
*you* gave her.**

To make a contribution or to learn more about how you can create an endowed scholarship, contact Toby Tobrocke at 800-847-3000, ext. 2793. Or visit us at [www.esc.edu/Scholarship](http://www.esc.edu/Scholarship).

## Travel and Learn Program to Visit Smithsonian



**O**ur successful **Travel and Learn** program is planning domestic travel for you in 2012. We start with a weekend trip to Washington, D.C.

Travelers will enjoy a full day at the Smithsonian museums including a private lecture just for Empire State College. There's also an evening event planned in Alexandria, Va. and a driving tour of D.C. This full weekend includes two nights in Washington with bus transportation from New York City.

We hope you will be able to join us for this springtime visit to our nation's capital. For details, go to [www.esc.edu/AlumniTravel](http://www.esc.edu/AlumniTravel).



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Several tribal leaders of Native American Nations, upper right, joined nearly 150 others participating in the celebration of Cheyenne culture organized by the Long Island Center as one of the college's 40th anniversary year events. Also pictured is Horace Lucas, above, and Grammy award-winning flautist Joseph Firecrow, right, who closed the ceremonies with a flute concert.