

Empire State College

ALUMNI AND STUDENT NEWS

VOLUME 32 • NUMBER 1 • FALL 2006

**Transformations:
Lives Changed by
Experience, Education
and Grit**



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Empire State College Alumni and Student News
is published by the Office of College Relations at
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One Union Avenue
Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-4391
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Transformation

By Reed Coughlan, faculty mentor, Central New York Center
 Roselynn Dow, mentor, Utica Unit
 Theresa Checkosky Maher '97, '00

Those of us who have been with Empire State College for any length of time begin to see certain themes recur over and over in the lives of our students. For example, it is especially apparent that coming to college later in life seems to have a particularly transformative effect on adult learners.

This is evident from conversations at our All College Conferences, where once a year, faculty and staff from across the state gather to share experiences, best practices and informally trade stories. Over the years, a favorite theme has been “changing lives” because the satisfaction derived from helping students to transform their lives is at the heart of what we love about mentoring.

Here’s a concrete example. Several years ago, Reed Coughlan, mentor at the Central New York Center, was privileged to “see” transformation happen to two special students who had come to the college as Bosnian immigrants. He notes:

The young mother of two had just 9 credits completed toward an associate degree when she enrolled with us. At the time she had been employed as a clerk in a manufacturing concern. She completed her A.S. and her B.S. with the college and then went on to finish two master’s degrees. She is now an ESL teacher in a local middle school.

Her husband had been employed as an interpreter at the local refugee center when he began his studies with the college. After earning 9 credits at a community college, he came to the college and completed an A.S. and B.S. degree and later an M.B.A. from SUNY/Utica-Rome. He now works as an international marketing representative.

While their outward transformations can be easily tracked in terms of acquisition of academic degrees and professional expertise, their more subtle growth in terms of personal and emotional maturity, as well as in critical analysis, helped them become adept at viewing and understanding the complex world in which they lived, worked, traveled and raised their family. Their changes in perspective and attitudes were facilitated through the individualized instruction, group studies and mentor/student discussions throughout their enrollments at Empire State College. They were no longer confused and traumatized war victims. While students at the college, they had examined their viewpoints, had assessed their goals, and drawn their plans for a fulfilling future.

We constantly strive to refine our philosophy and develop mentoring methods and attitudes which encourage and facilitate transformation in the academic and professional lives of our students.

Sometimes the transformation is highly visible, demonstrated through changes in students’ perspectives, attitudes and skills. Other transformations may be much more subtle, and still other transformations, nonetheless important, will be known only to the students themselves.

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Curtis Griffin

From Police Officer to International Lawyer

Curtis Griffin '01, '02, a former police and FBI officer in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, was eligible for retirement from the force at the relatively tender

age of 41. So he decided he wanted a second career, which is actually the career he hoped for when he first attended college more than 20 years ago. Now in his third year of law school, specializing in international law, he spent two weeks last summer in Holland and two weeks in Germany furthering his education. While there, Griffin's group toured the Peace Palace at the Hague where the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the International Criminal Court and the International Court of Justice are located. Each week, he studied a different course in international law, including the law of armed conflict (otherwise known as the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols). He met a number of major players in international law, such as Judge Navanethem (Navi) Pillay, a South-African woman, who was the chief attorney for Nelson Mandela and Judge Thomas Buergenthal, the American judge on the International Court of Justice, also known as the World Court. Buergenthal is a Holocaust survivor who grew up in America, attended New York University, became an attorney with expertise in international law, served as a judge on the Inter-American Court of Justice and was later appointed to his present position.

Empire interviewed Griffin via e-mail during his stay in Holland.

Q. How many years were you on the police force in St. Thomas?

A. I spent 20 years of employment with the police department. For the first seven, I was in the patrol division (10 months spent undercover); then the rest was with the investigative division (the last 10 was with an FBI Safe Streets task force where I was federally deputized). I also am an FBI National Academy graduate.

Q. What did you do for the FBI while an officer?

A. I was a special federal officer conducting joint federal investigations into crimes like bank robbery, car jacking, murder, public corruption, drug-related homicides, etc.

Q. What made you decide to go to law school?

A. When I first went to college I was 18 years old. I was very much interested in pre-law. I took some courses, but music was my first love. I returned to the Virgin Islands where I played music professionally, and eventually joined the police department (My mother had enlightened me that there were no benefits in a life of music, such as health insurance, retirement, etc). As a detective, I had to work closely with the prosecutors on cases. I decided that since I was going to retire at age 41, I'd be too young to stop working, and I might as well use all the experience I had gained towards a new career. Ironically, my life has come full circle. I'm right back where I wanted to be when I first went to college in 1981.

Q. You said that Empire State College helped you achieve goals you hadn't anticipated. How did the college help you in this way?

A. Well, Empire State College's way of having you write essays about your educational goals gives you a chance to really think about why you are taking particular courses and how they will help you achieve your goal. This caused me to concentrate in public policy rather than criminal justice as I had originally planned. Law is about policy. See what I'm getting at? Law is about solving public problems. If two people have a contract dispute they seek redress from our law system. Society is plagued with crime issues. Laws are created to address those issues. So law and public policy have a symbiotic relationship.

Q. What do you intend to do upon the completion of your law degree?

A. I recently went to Europe for a summer abroad program in international law. I have developed a fondness for this area of law. There is a lot to be done in our world in areas such as human rights, and especially now in these times, with humanitarian issues. I am contemplating the idea of spending at least a year in that arena. I do plan to return to the Virgin Islands at some point, if not before I pursue the international area, because there are a lot of problems there and I feel compelled to get involved, either in the criminal or administrative area, but definitely in an educational capacity. ○

Rita Georges

... and Still She Rises

Armed with a degree in international studies, she rises above the war that shaped her childhood to set her sights on law school



As a young girl growing up in war-ravaged Lebanon, Rita Georges dreamed of going to law school. “I’ve always loved reading,” Georges says. “I like to write. And I saw what was going on during the [Lebanese] Civil War, and all the injustice ...”

Georges grew up as one of six siblings, the daughter of a grocery store owner in Beirut. Born in 1970, nearly her entire early life was spent under the shadow of the Civil War, which began in 1975 and lasted until 1990.

She remembers living with constant fear and uncertainty – never knowing when fighting would spill into her neighborhood or if family members would be felled by violence. “You went to bed at night thinking you weren’t going to make it to the next day, or coming home and thinking someone you loved wouldn’t be there. Our house got hit five times. We think back and laugh about how frightened we were – especially my sister. She was very sensitive.”

Her law school dream was deferred – she discontinued two years of pre-law studies after she met her husband Michael in a neighboring village (“it was destiny”), and had a whirlwind courtship before immigrating to the Caribbean in 1991 and then to the U.S. to be with him and start a family.

“The fact that I am multicultural will be a big help, because the Middle East will be a hot spot for a long time to come,” explains Georges, a tall, slender woman with thick black hair that falls below her shoulders, and large expressive eyes. She speaks three languages – French, Arabic and English, and is learning Spanish.

Then, she added with a hint of mischievousness, “and, on a casual level, I always had a very sharp tongue!”

As of last summer, Georges had just one paper on Canadian immigration law to finish

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... and Still She Rises

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writing (her mentor, Dean Nan DiBello, told her to really take her time and spend the whole summer on it) before earning her Bachelor of Arts degree in international studies.

Before her first child was born, Georges, who by then was living in Williamsville, a suburb of Buffalo, and working as a hairdresser in the beauty salon she and her husband own, looked into the University at Buffalo (UB). But with a husband, a job and a baby on the way, it was too much of a commitment. She looked into going to college again two-and-a-half years ago, again at UB. This time she spoke with an Empire State College graduate who was an admissions advisor, and who told her that she'd be better off going to Empire State College.

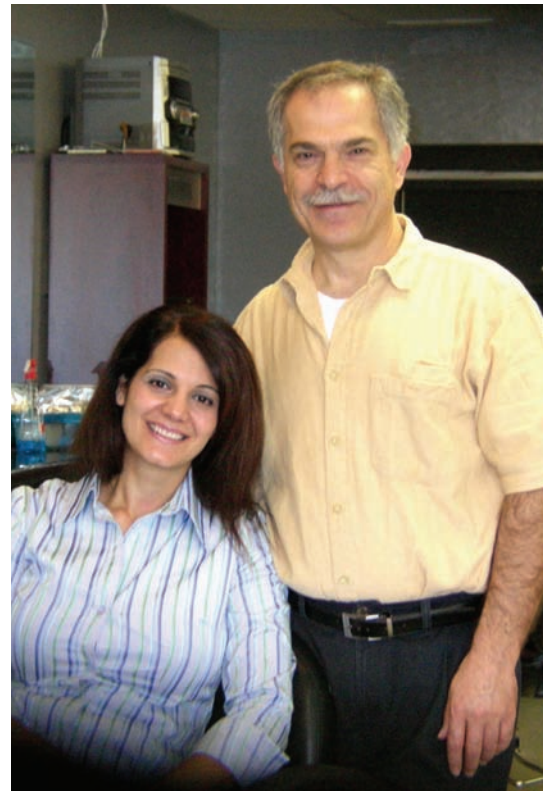
Her immediate plans are to look into a master's degree in liberal studies with a concentration in international business from Empire State College, before taking the LSATs and applying to law school at the University at Buffalo.

The stress on Georges's family has been great with the recent war in Lebanon, set off by the capture of two Israeli soldiers by Hezbollah in July.

Bordered by both Syria and Israel, Lebanon has always been somewhat of a political football, Georges said, often getting caught in the crossfire of other

people's disputes. Cosmopolitan and Western-influenced, the country had been majority Christian, with the ancient Maronite Christians being the dominant sect. Then, came pressure from an influx of Palestinians, stirring inter-religious strife and political unrest. By the 1980s, much of the country, and its capital, Beirut, previously known as the Paris of the Middle East for its beautiful architecture and café culture, lay in ruins. Beirut had just been rebuilt, and tourists, and commerce were just rebounding (Empire State College moved one of its programs back to Lebanon just two years ago from Cyprus) when the latest hostilities broke out between Israel and Hezbollah.

"I think my parent's phone bill was a thousand dollars last month," Georges says. Many members of the large, close-knit clan still live in Lebanon, although only one of her siblings – a fashion designer to Saudi royalty – remains to oversee his thriving business. Her other siblings, three brothers and one younger sister, are all in the United States. All have done well, with a doctor,



Georges and husband Michael

engineer, hair stylist and student (her sister) among the siblings.

There is a thriving Lebanese community in the Buffalo area, Georges explained, drawn originally by economic promise, including the good-paying jobs of Bethlehem Steel, whose reputation had reached across the globe to the Middle East. Members of the community often flowed back and forth from this

country to the land of their ancestors. For example, her husband Michael's grandfather was born in the United States but went back to Lebanon to marry, and ended up dying there when Michael's mother was three. Also, many of the young men would return to their homeland periodically to work the family land. Nowadays, a good number tend to be entrepreneurial, like her cousin Charbel, 25, a graduate of University at Buffalo, who, with his family, owns two UPS franchises.

Indeed, for Georges, the hardest thing about coming to this country was the



Georges (center) with (l-r) her mother-in-law, daughter and sister

limited number of family members here at that time. Her parents had not yet arrived in the early '90s, and were not there for the birth of her older children, sons Raymond, 14, and Joey, 12. "I had never left my family; because of the war, I never traveled anywhere. By nature, I am very attached to family. But there was nobody here. My mother-in-law wasn't here yet, neither was my mother. You kind of get homesick. Then, once Raymond was born, I got busier and it kind of filled that void." Georges's father immigrated to the Buffalo area 10 years ago, with her mother following five years later.

Her husband's father had arrived in 1966, just before the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War. He established the hair salon, now located in Lancaster, a suburb of Buffalo. "We didn't make that much money," he explained, but they were independent, and today the salon draws from a cross-section of clients in Buffalo. While Michael, Georges's

husband, cuts, Georges colors and works with chemicals – perms and relaxers – and they also employ a woman who does manicures and pedicures.

The importance of family is evident on this summer evening. Georges has prepared a feast of Kibbe, a Middle Eastern dish consisting of ground beef, cracked wheat and pine nuts; chicken and rice; tabouli salad; hummus and five different desserts, including a flavorful rice pudding. Twelve family members gathered to laugh, talk and eat, including Mary, a cousin from Australia who Georges met for the first time the day before, who is celebrating her first wedding anniversary, and her husband (out at a shooting range with Georges's husband and two boys). Around the table are her in-laws; Aunt Madeleine, married to an uncle who emigrated in 1975; cousins Charbel and Rosemary, 24; Georges's sister, daughter, Sarah, 10; her mother and their guest.

Georges views getting her M.A.L.S. as a stepping stone to law school. "The only reason I went into hairdressing was to help my husband. We needed, at that time, to really pull together as a family. I did that, but never thought it to be my life. I could not see myself in 10 years being a hairdresser, although I love the people."

Of her time at Empire State College, Georges said: "Nan DiBello was a big help. At times she was very supportive, at other times she knew when to be tough. She could be soft, gentle, encouraging; she knew how hard it was after 15 years of being away from school, going into a totally different system – academics, writing (which we are still working on). She was a reinforcing force."

Going back to school has made Georges hold even more firmly to her dreams. "When you do something and you are so at peace, so happy, that is how you know you are doing what you want to do." ○

Transformation

(continued from page 1)

Theresa Checkosky Maher '97, '00, an Empire State College alumna, explains her transformational experience.

Educational planning for me was an opportunity to examine my life from a perspective I never knew existed. It wasn't just a matter of deciding what I wanted to be when I grew up and then planning a degree program. It was an opportunity to separate different parts of my being and analyze where I had been, who I had become and determine how I could use this knowledge to figure out what path I not only wanted to follow, but that which would be best for me on numerous levels.

I was blessed with not only a very involved, motivating mentor, but also a lot of nurturing and support from other faculty with whom I worked during that time. With their help, I think I found what rang true for me and eventually, eased into a direction that I never would have found if I had just signed up for a program somewhere and took the studies they told me I should take.

Maybe not all students have the same feelings or expectations about their educational planning as I did, but the potential is there to do great, great things if it is used correctly and implemented with the right enthusiasm and guidance.

So what are the implications of student transformation for the college as a whole, and for mentors, specifically? The college mission should be reinforced as being a student-centered institution so that it may continue to offer students the unique and astounding opportunity to mold an academic and professional life that answers their individual goals.

The college community as a whole must strive to learn from the collective transformations of the student body and should continue to seek alternative definitions of change and transformation. We as mentors should continue to encourage this wonderful phenomenon of transformation with our students and continue to be professionally and personally delighted about both the visible, articulated changes as well as the subtle changes evident in our students.

In this issue, you will read more about how some of our students' lives were validated, enhanced, and, yes, transformed in some way, by the time they spent examining their previous life experience for college credit, and exploring new and varied subjects 10, 20 even 60 years after they graduated from high school. ○

Artist Pat Zukas Joins the Peace Corps



Pat Zukas's 19-year-old son had just left home, and she wasn't involved in a relationship. "I was free as a bird," she says. After a long career as an artist and yoga teacher, master gardener and whole-foods chef, Zukas has decided to fulfill a lifelong dream: joining the Peace Corps. "I am 58 years old, my body and mind are in marvelous shape, and this is a good time to move," she said.

Zukas '77 earned her associate degree from a junior college in retail management. She was one of the first Empire State College students to earn an interdisciplinary degree in the fine arts from the Long Island Center. She also earned an M.F.A. in painting from the Maryland Institute of Art, Mount Royal School of Painting. Reached in August at the apartment she shared with a friend — she hadn't been able to rent it yet — she was in the process of packing up her belongings, putting some in storage and leaving others where they were. She explained, "I wanted to be in the Peace Corp since I was 20, but I had dropped out of college, and at that time, you had to be a college graduate.

"Many people are content to set up their lives to be simple and pleasant," she said. "I didn't want to do that. I wanted a challenge to keep my life open and to walk the edge of the known."

Answering an ad in the Seattle paper for Peace Corps volunteers, she followed

up by attending an informational meeting and put in her application. After a lot of physical and emotional screening, she spent the next year wondering if she would be accepted and where she might be sent. "The whole thing is kind of a mystery. The application is really involved, and asks for details from childhood on, what you've done; how you've lived."

Until the last moment, she had no idea where she'd be going. Even after being told that she would be assigned to a project in Morocco that would draw on her skills as an artisan, she was told not to hang her hat on it. She spent a long time determining what type of clothing to bring along ("should I bring a down jacket?") not wanting to go over her allotment of three suitcases and one backpack.

"That's what I am fretting over today," she explained. "How am I going to put it all down to two to three bags?" She thought she might be placed with a health care project, given her background as a chef and in therapeutic arts. But she submitted her art resume as well, and soon she was nominated to take part in the Morocco project, helping local artisans upgrade their marketable crafts so that they can sell their goods in the global marketplace. She will go in for three months of intensive training, including language training, from early morning until the evening.

Zukas, when asked if she had any trepidation, especially about going to a Muslim country in the light of current world events, replied quickly, "No, no. The war isn't happening there. It can only help to learn about the culture. Fear is what creates problems in the world — fear of other countries, fear of the unknown. What you focus on you get. I don't focus on war and negative things you see in the media."

She said her friends and family, including parents now in their 80s, are very excited about her adventure. When she was younger, she said, her parents tended to be very fearful when their daughter took off on her own; "but now they are so much more accepting," she said, imagining them saying, "well, she's going to do it anyway, so why argue?"

Zukas says that not only does she have no real fear, but rather is "very excited. I have no doubts. I want to go. I see this as the sustenance for continued spiritual and emotional growth, and this is what I value most. It is the only way I can affect others in a positive way. I only hope I can give those I come in contact with as much as I receive. I want to be as receptive as possible."

Then, reflecting on the contents of the apartment that she had to leave behind, she added: "And if something happens to all my stuff, then that'll be what happens." ○



Guest Essay

Activist, Student – and Senior Citizen

By Marie Morrison '06

Why would a 75-year-old woman want to go to college? What's the point? Did I want a better job? Was I looking for a promotion? Hardly. I was in a comfortable retirement, in reasonably good health and frequently traveling with my husband. What would a college degree do for me now?

In one way, the answer was “nothing,” since I had accomplished most of what I had set out to do with my life. In another way, it was “everything,” because I had missed many opportunities I was qualified for because of lack of a degree, and now, even at this late date, I still wanted the belated academic stamp of approval for my accomplishments.

My husband has a master's degree from Columbia, and we have a daughter who is a tenured professor and associate dean at the University of Washington, three other children with degrees from New York colleges, and a granddaughter who is a recent graduate of Swarthmore. And here I was, low man on the college totem pole.

Why hadn't I gone on to college at the usual age? Well, life got in the way. As a Depression child (and a member of Tom Brokaw's Greatest Generation), I had started work early to help my mother raise five of us by herself. I was a sales clerk, typist, dental assistant – all before I graduated high school. With no possibility of college in sight, after graduation I found employment near my home at The American Geographical Society of New York City, where I learned to multi-task in a small office devoted to the study of glaciers, and where I learned to proofread and edit those study reports for publication, and even went on a short expedition to Alaska to see glaciers firsthand one exciting summer. I also met my geographer husband there.

When he made a career move to Washington, D.C., to be part of President John F. Kennedy's “New Frontier,” I took a job as an editorial assistant on a proposed geography of New England being funded by the National Geographic

Society and the Association of American Geographers, an invaluable learning experience in a prestigious environment.

After we returned to New York, in yet another career move, I found myself with four children living in a new bedroom suburb totally devoid of any cultural or intellectual stimulation. Not even a library – that most basic of institutions. That wouldn't do. So, along with several others, I began a campaign to start a library in our new community of Clifton Park. The campaign was so successful that I won a national award from the American Library Association for my public relations efforts and was elected president of our library. And today, the library is a \$16 million cultural facility serving the towns of Clifton Park and Halfmoon within the Southern Adirondack Library system.

I also became the co-chair of the 1976 Bicentennial Committee for our town and in conjunction with my co-chair, designed, edited and published the history of Clifton Park, called *Crossroads and Canals*, still in print. I wrote nationally published freelance travel articles and I even worked for the local newspaper on occasion. My motto was “Better to wear away than rust away.”

All of this was credit worthy, I discovered with the help of Dr. MaryNell Morgan, my ever-supportive mentor and cheerleader, but it was my work with the New York State Legislature that she felt clearly pointed the way to a Bachelor of Science degree with a concentration in political science. What great learning had taken place in those years! I wrote essays about “the legislative process,” “how a bill becomes a law,” “the structure of New York state and local governments,” “managing a political campaign,” and interviews with six female legislators for a final course titled “Women, Power and Politics,” in which I examined the differences in the makeup and accomplishments of the New York State Legislature since women had begun to get elected in greater numbers. I taped and transcribed the interviews and it was the capstone of my portfolio.

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Scott Hommes Receives Excelsior Award



Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward presents Hommes with the Excelsior Award. Fiancé Jessie Benway looks on.

Scott Hommes, 32, had an active, all-American youth: he played three sports, held an after-school job, had a girlfriend, and went on to play soccer for Mohawk Community College, and later for Clinton Community College. It was on his way home from soccer practice one evening that his entire life changed. The vehicle in which he was riding was involved in a terrible automobile accident, leaving the young man paralyzed from the neck down.

Instead of bemoaning his fate, Hommes '03, then 19, and coming off of four months of hospitalization, began rehabilitation, traveling to Florida to take part in the Miami Project to Cure Paralysis, a research project founded by NFL Hall of Famer Nick Buoniconti (formerly of the Miami Dolphins), who started the center after his son Marc suffered a spinal cord injury. After completing his treatment, Hommes moved back home, but soon realized that his road to recovery would be long and hard.

Between “a surgery here and a surgery there,” Hommes decided to pursue his education, and enrolled in Empire State College, earning his associate degree in interdisciplinary studies. Because of his injuries, his studies posed a challenge – he had to have someone turn pages for him, so it was, “very time consuming.” Nonetheless, he was able to excel in his school work. Darrell Leavitt, his faculty mentor from the Plattsburgh Unit, had this to say about Hommes: “Scott is clearly one of the best students whom I have had the opportunity to work with in my decades of work at Empire State College. He is very highly motivated, has a very sharp intellect, and is not afraid of controversy ... all qualities that I value in students.”

Hommes graduated in 2003, and has started work on his bachelor's degree. He is mum about his future plans, but is clear that they are ambitious and may fall in the realm of social work or politics.

In the meantime, though, in order to prove himself capable of employment, he took the unusual step of opening a fine dining restaurant on the shores of Lake Champlain, which became a favorite of Gov. George Pataki and his wife Libby when they were in the area. “I got a little place right in the marina,” Hommes said. “I wanted to go to work and needed to get my name out there.” He thought that having been owner/manager of viable businesses would help open doors for him in terms of employment, and it did. He ran the restaurant for two years, beginning in 2004.

Working with a VESID job placement counselor, he located a job that he thought was “a pretty good fit,” as an employment counselor at the North Country Center for Independence. “I sat at home waiting for the call, and I got the call in March of 2006.”

He was grateful for the opportunity to work year round and to have a regular paycheck. Because his office is one stop on the way to getting food stamps, he believes many people just come to fulfill their obligation to the Department of Social Services. However, “when you get those one to two people who really need the services to make their lives better and then give them a lift up, [it makes it all worthwhile.] It's a great line of work to be in because you can go home and sleep with a good conscience.”

Along the way, Hommes also got engaged, and he and his fiancé, Jessie Benway, a social worker, are planning to build their own home.

For all of his accomplishments, he was still taken by surprise when Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward awarded him the Excelsior Award for overcoming his personal challenges. Hommes traveled to Albany to accept the honor. Assemblywoman Sayward told the *Press-Republican* that Hommes never let his injury stand in the way of his active life, and that he has continued to be involved in community events and local festivities.

Even though some of the disabled people he serves every day can't seem to summon the initiative that Hommes has shown, he said he would be the last to judge. “My family is the cornerstone of everything I do, especially my father (Essex County Sheriff Henry Hommes), and my fiancé; without a doubt I wouldn't be where I am without them,” he said. “Maybe these other people don't have the support system that I do, to give them a little extra push they need to want more for themselves. That being said, this drive is mine. I'm not the kind of guy, before or after the accident, to sit around and wait for things to come to me. I've never had the attitude of 'look at me, look at what I am doing, and you should be doing more.' I'd prefer to think of myself as a lead-by-example kind of guy.” ○

One Empire State College Graduate + Another Empire State College Graduate = Happily Ever After

It was 2003, and the war in Iraq had not yet begun. Dr. David Drier '82, a chiropractor who does independent medical exams for insurance agencies, was chatting with a patient, Dair Melendez '99, about the impending crisis and other current affairs.

Their conversation was so stimulating and the connection seemed so intriguing, that Drier was not willing to let it end. With a room full of clients waiting to be seen, he knew he had to say goodbye. But he was determined to follow up with a phone call to Melendez's home that evening.

"She sounded a bit confused at first," conceded Dr. Drier, who had not hesitated a moment before calling. He had noted that she had not worn a wedding band. "I said, what's the worst that can happen? She'll tell me she's involved, or married, and I would say 'no offense.'"

"I thought maybe I had forgotten my license or something," recalled Melendez. "We had had such an enjoyable conversation." But, still, she hadn't expected the phone call. "I said, that's pretty bold! The fact that he had taken such a risk ... well, I decided to also take a risk. And I was flattered."

Because Dr. Drier did the exams for other doctors who referred their patients to him on behalf of no-fault and worker's compensation insurers, he did not consider Melendez to be one of his own patients, and had earlier looked into the protocol for just such a case. He was told that there was no ethical problem in dating another doctor's patient referred for an independent examination.

Melendez had broken up from a serious relationship some time before, and she says her dating skills were rusty. But her then-15-year-old daughter chided her: "Mom, you work crazy hours – you need to get a life!"

Melendez was sometimes putting in 16-hour days as a case manager for Children and Family Services. She conceded her daughter was right. After a two-hour conversation with Drier, they decided to meet again.

She met Dr. Drier at a restaurant called the Cement Factory, where she was greeted by a waiter who inquired, "Are you the lady here for the gentleman with the bouquet of flowers?"

"It was nonstop talking and when we didn't talk it was very comfortable," said Melendez.

Somewhere about their second date, they began to compare notes on their education, and were stunned to discover that they had both attended Empire State College, albeit at different locations and nearly 20 years apart.

Dr. Drier had attended college as a transfer student when he was the age of traditional college students. He felt he had the discipline to create a structure with which he could finish

his degree and pursue his art. He earned a B.P.S. in fine arts from the Long Island Center. He had attended New York University as an art history major and then transitioned into fine arts at a university without walls affiliated with New York University, then the School for American Crafts at the Rochester Institute of Technology, where he majored in weaving and textiles, and apprenticed with a weaver in Barcelona, while still living at home. During this time, "I found out about Empire State College, that it was like a university without walls,

and it made sense to enroll. The college let me cross register and do things on my own, and get credit for work I had already completed; to create a container of my own."

When he got out of school, he taught for a time, but decided he needed to find a way to make a living while pursuing his art. He looked into physical therapy, where a massage therapist, "who saw the types of books I was reading, thought I'd make an ideal chiropractor." He then switched gears and applied to Logan College of Chiropractic, later expanding into what he terms body works. Although he still was doing his art, his own business and side business of doing independent medical exams began to claim more of his time.

And in walks Dair Melendez, who had attended Empire State College after earning an associate degree and going on for a Bachelor of Science degree in community and human services from the Hudson Valley Center, with a concentration in social work. She now combines her case management skills with grief counseling as the assistant manager of a cemetery.

Melendez and Drier were married in July 2005.

"As another Empire State College grad, Di had some of the qualities that brought me to Empire State College as well," said Drier. "Independent thinking and work habits, a tendency to think outside the box, and a desire to see my work progress at my own speed. Those qualities also have served our relationship well." ○



Dr. David Drier and Dair Melendez-Drier

Guest Essay

(continued from page 7)

Still, there were gaps, particularly in the general education requirements. How could I revive long forgotten Spanish and math and American history? Where would I find humanities or art or community service credits? Well, as it turned out, I had taken watercolor and oil painting classes in my spare time. I also had written the script for a video of Saratoga Springs, where I now live, which is still in use at the visitors center. I had been a community activist as well as serving on various local boards. All these became credits in my portfolio. But my greatest joy was, and is, the book project I initiated to deliver unsold books from the library's second-hand book shop to people who didn't – or couldn't – get to the library. To date, 10 years after I began the project, I've delivered more than 25,000 books to almost 40 community groups, including prisons, senior centers, domestic violence shelters, soup kitchens, halfway houses, veteran's and other hospitals, and community centers. All these added up to credit-worthy learning and Empire State College agreed with me, since I graduated in September 2006.

Well, what comes next? "An advanced degree," my friends all insist. But no, I got what I came for and it's enough. Instead, I would like to write a book on the experiences of my childhood in the deepest Depression days into which I was born. I'd also like to start my own one-woman business in copywriting and editing, and that's a new learning project all its own that I look forward to with both pleasure and trepidation.

My final wish is to pass on to other seniors my belief that keeping one's brain active and learning is not only healthful for the body, but a rich and fruitful journey for the mind. I would like to encourage them to explore for themselves yet another passage in the journey of the Greatest Generation. ○

Faculty Profile

Lorraine Peeler

Niagara Frontier Center

Lorraine Peeler, Ph.D., a faculty mentor at the Niagara Frontier Center, has a special understanding of the adult students she works with at Empire State College.

She was one of them.

Dr. Peeler '88 was working at Cleveland State as an administrative assistant, with a focus on at-risk students, when she met a woman who would become her mentor and who encouraged her to pursue her degree. The woman suggested that Peeler look into alternatives for adult students.

After Peeler moved back to Buffalo and did some research, she chose Empire State College because of its focus on adult learners. Peeler was directing a nonprofit agency at the time, "and I just knew I needed more than what I had."

Jackie Rose, now a colleague at the center, was Peeler's mentor. As a student, Peeler was able to "put together a degree program that was empowering. Many students look at their transcripts and they think all is lost. But Empire State College gives them a sense of hope," Peeler said.

Once a student, Peeler proved to herself that she could learn independently "and that I loved being at home and doing research. These are things that inspired me to go on.

"Something happened to me – an awakening about education, about higher education. I realized that adults like myself really needed another chance, needed encouragement to go forward."

She began her Ph.D. at the University of Buffalo, and saw her career come full circle back to working with older students. "We were one of the first centers to have a multicultural counselor," she explained. The job was 10 hours a week, which fit perfectly into her schedule. She oversaw study and support groups for students, primarily women and students of color, who were called "transitional," i.e., had significant risk



Lorraine Peeler

factors coming into their higher education experience.

"This thing of transformation is powerful," she said. "Students are very fearful, many times they don't think they can make it." After embarking on their studies, Peeler would see them become confident, take leadership roles and advance in their careers. "That's exciting to me."

Peeler's trajectory corresponded with this model. The year after she earned her Ph.D., a position as assistant dean of assessment opened up at the center, and she worked in that capacity for two years. Later, she was hired for a faculty position upon the retirement of one of her colleagues, who encouraged her to apply for the position. She transitioned from administration into her first love: the day-to-day nitty gritty of empowering adult learners to become successful.

Peeler has always been active in her community, primarily in working with agencies providing services to the developmentally disabled, and to those with HIV, particularly African-American women. She also is active in the fight against substance abuse.

She recently had two chapters published in a book, *African American Women's Health and Social Issues* (Praeger, 2006), by her colleague, Empire State College Mentor Catherine Collins. She intends to expand the chapters into a full-length book. A licensed minister who pastors the Covenant Truth Center, she is well known in the community in Western New York. Peeler was recognized with the Altes Award for Community Service for 2005. ○

College News

Thirteen College Faculty and Staff Return Safely from Lebanon

Thirteen faculty and staff from Empire State College who traveled to Lebanon to attend a graduation ceremony for the college's Center for International Programs Lebanon Residency, had to flee the country after fighting broke out between Israel and Hezbollah in July.

In an article in the college's newsletter, President Joseph B. Moore recounted his experience: "My wife, Beth Chiquoine, and I had left the U.S. on July 3 to participate in the college's Center for International Programs graduations in Athens (July 5), Thessaloniki (July 6), Tirana (July 8) and Beirut (July 15). After completing the first three graduations, we flew from Tirana back to Greece on July 9. We had tickets to fly from Athens to Beirut on the evening of July 13 to participate in the Lebanon graduation ceremony on July 15. Late on the day of Wednesday, July 12, we learned that there was significant bombing in southern Lebanon. We were unsure whether we could make the trip to Beirut the next day, and decided we'd wait until morning to see what the situation was. Early Thursday morning, we checked the news and learned that the Beirut airport had just been bombed. We knew our next set of flights would be back to the U.S. and not to Beirut."

However, for the staff members already in Lebanon, the question was whether to continue the graduation celebration. Initially, they said during a news conference held upon their return, they believed that the celebration could go on. But as fighting worsened, they were advised by the U.S. Embassy to leave at their earliest opportunity. With the help of their local partners in Lebanon, 11 of the college employees decided to



(l-r) Betty Lawrence, Dean Kingston Nyamapfene, President Joe Moore and Lisa Johnson appear at press conference.

charter a bus which took them on what Dr. Moore described as "a lengthy and risky," three-day journey, through Syria and ending in Turkey, where they were able to catch a flight to Europe and then back to the U.S. The following day, the U.S. Embassy altered its advisory, and recommended that people stay for the official evacuation, which two members of the college's group decided to do. The earlier trip would soon have been impossible as the road taken by the chartered bus was bombed the following day, Kingston Nyamapfene, dean of the Center for International Programs, told reporters gathered for the press conference.

The two remaining faculty members returned safely to the U.S. July 26 after catching a ship to Cyprus and then a military transport plane to New Jersey.

Although disappointed by the cancellation of the graduation ceremony, Betty Lawrence, professor and academic coordinator of the program, said the students were solely concerned for the safety of the Americans and urged them to leave. She lauded them for their diligence in

continuing with classes even after the bombs began to fall.

With many of the students from the program now scattered around the globe, Dean Nyamapfene says that the program will likely continue with students completing their studies online.

Student and Faculty News

Joe Winkelsas, a student at the Center for Distance Learning, for a few brief shining moments, went from pitching garbage as a sanitation worker in Buffalo, to pitching in the big leagues, where he earned \$14,000 a week for the Milwaukee Brewers as a 32-year-old rookie, according to a feature in the *Buffalo News*. Winkelsas had his first shot in the big leagues when he briefly pitched for the Atlanta Braves in 1999 after three years in the minor leagues with Double-A-Greenville. Winkelsas made seven appearances for the Brewers during the spring season, until an arm and neck injury forced his retirement. Winkelsas's second shot came last autumn where scouts spotted him coaching Niagara University players, and throwing 94 mph fastballs.

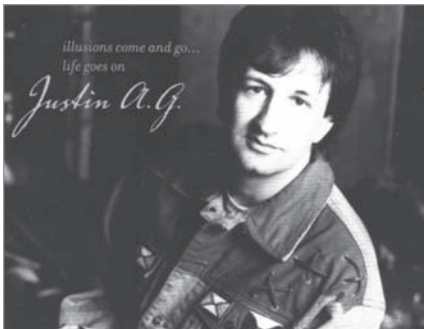
Heidi Lunt Dunkley, a student at the Long Island Center, published an article, "A Degree of Sanity" about returning to school as an adult student, in the August 2006 issue of *LDS Living*. She details her experiences at Empire State College, juggling family and studies. She had completed Mentor Yvonne Murphy's course, Writing for Publication.

Scott Healy, a student in the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies program, won a 2005 Gold MarCom Creative Award for the video he produced for his final project. The title of the video was, "The Propagandizing of the American Mind."

Mariah Huehner, also in the Master of Arts in Liberal Studies, presented a paper

as part of the visual studies panel at the Southern Connecticut State University, Seventh Annual Graduate English Conference. The theme of the panel was Visual Studies: Examining mythologization in comics. The paper was titled *Urban Fairytales* and it concentrated on the use of the original fairytale backstories of iconic characters like Snow White, Prince Charming, Bigby Wolf (*The Big Bad Wolf*) and Jack of the Tales, in the contemporary comic book *Fables*, to evolve and flesh out the characters and create new "fairytales" in the urban setting of modern NYC. Mariah's paper particularly emphasized how the writer made a passive female character like Snow White a more active, whole character that has to rely on her wits as opposed to her beauty.

Mentor Justin Giordano Releases CDs



Justin Giordano, a mentor in the area of business, management and economics at the Metropolitan Center, in Manhattan, also has some expertise in the entertainment and music fields. He offers a number of studies related to the entertainment and music industry, including "The Music Industry" and "Entertainment Law." (He has taught the latter at the law school level.) An attorney with entertainment law expertise and an associate member of the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences, his involvement with music, in various aspects, dates back to his early teens.

Giordano has evolved as a songwriter, singer, recording artist, producer and live performer. His music embraces and combines a number of styles, ranging from rock, pop and country-rock.

In his early years Giordano performed, and fronted as lead singer and guitarist, with

different bands, including FreedRider and The Edge, and as a solo performer under the stage name of Giordano Jordan. Born in Canada, Giordano's early foray in the world of music revolved around the Montreal music scene. He subsequently made several professional recordings, appeared and was interviewed on Canadian television and cable TV, and his music received some limited play on Canadian and American radio. In his mid-20s, he shelved his active pursuit of a full-time career as a performer, realizing that he was "not making the big time yet," he recalls. He thus turned his attention to his other interests, focusing on a career in academe and the law and eventually obtaining his M.B.A. and Juris Doctor degrees.

He nevertheless maintained some ties with the music industry. This led to his partial reinvolvement with music and a number of years later he recorded another CD.

Giordano's various musical projects were recorded at major recording studios in New York, Nashville, Montreal and Toronto, and he worked with many well-respected professionals in the industry. Among them Claude LeMay [Celine Dion's band leader], Clyde Brooks, Chris Leuzinger, Tommy Wells, Bruce Bouton, Marty Williams and a many other outstanding producers, musicians and recording engineers.

Over the past couple of years Giordano, under the name "Justin A.G.," has been revisiting the recording studio, recomposing for release some of the music that he

recorded over the years. This project has yielded two CDs, designed, packaged and printed in New York and New Jersey.

One CD is titled "Illusions Come and Go ... Life Goes On," which was recorded in Nashville, TN, and includes 10 songs. The musical style is mostly in the country-pop/country-rock vein. All songs were written, performed and arranged by Giordano. The CD was produced by Giordano, his brother Vince, and Clyde Brooks.

The other is a CD titled "Here's to You ... Here's to Me." This two-disk CD is a compilation of a number of musical projects and recordings that Giordano made over the years. The CD includes 21 songs incorporating various rock and pop styles ranging from ballads to up-tempo pop to straight out guitar and effects-oriented rock. It features one or more versions of some songs, and a couple of songs from the " ... Life Goes On" CD recorded in a completely different arrangement and musical style. The CD was recorded, mixed, mastered and remastered in Montreal, Toronto and New York. It was produced by Giordano with co-producers Vince Giordano, Claude Le May, Michael "Dee" Graham, Mark Kennedy and Hugh Dixon.

Giordano has continued his songwriting over the years and he's penned over 100 songs. He's currently using some of his free time to work on new song selections and pre-production in contemplation of producing a new CD, which he hopes to complete before year's end. Giordano's web site is: www.Giordanoag.com.

Alumni News

Center for Distance Learning



Andrea Hoffman '06

Andrea Hoffman '06, president of Hoffman Management, Inc., has launched a new division of her company, Diversity Affluence, the authoritative voice of, and advocate for, the affluent ethnic consumer. The division provides expert marketing and business development insight and advice to brands interested in engaging this consumer. She has worked with BMW of North America, Mercedes-Benz USA, Alliance Capital Management, 20th Century Television, the Hispanic Civil Rights Organization – National Council of La Raza, ABC's American-Latino Media Arts Awards and Gibson Musical Instruments, among others.

Shannon LeAnn Jordan '01 writes that, "Since graduation I have had the opportunity to advance my career from an entry-level supervisor to that of management, first as a department manager then to a department director ... " Of her position as director of respiratory and cardiopulmonary rehabilitation services at Carroll County Memorial Hospital, Missouri, she says, "From comforting a dying patient to exercising a recovering heart attack patient to purchasing supplies ... you never know what you'll find me doing." She has implemented a smoking cessation program and an asthma education program, expanded the outpatient services to offer a full complement of diagnostic services, and developed a new cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation program. She is a member of the American Association of Respiratory Care, an American Society Relay for Life volunteer, and a Girl Scout leader.

Early in 2006, **Jacqueline Lilley-McCammon '96** was promoted to lieutenant with the Bethlehem Fire Department. She also is an adjunct suppression instructor with the Pennsylvania State Fire Academy, a hazardous materials specialist with FEMA USAR PA TF-1, a member of the International Association of Fire Fighters and treasurer with the Fire Service Women of Pennsylvania.

June Maxam '00 is the publisher of an online daily newspaper, *The North Country Gazette*, Chestertown, New York.

Maria Telesca '02, a disability consultant, advocate, fund raiser and motivational speaker who has skeletal dysplasia, a form of dwarfism, was named Outstanding Fundraising Volunteer of the Year by the Long Island chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Also in recognition of her efforts is Telesca's nomination for the Volvo for Life Award. This award is determined by public vote and if a recipient, Volvo will donate \$50,000 to her favorite charity. For further information visit www.volvoforlifeawards.com and type in Telesca. All the while, Telesca's many endeavors to improve the lives of people with disabilities continue; the most recent being efforts to provide accessible housing and the development of a summer camp, Camp Little People. She will be featured in the upcoming movie, *Fur – The Portrait of Diane Arbus*, starring Nicole Kidman.

Center for Graduate Programs

Paul Conti '05 joined WNYT, Channel 13 in 1978 as an assignment editor, in 1986 became assistant news director and in 1996 took over as news director. His career has recently taken a new direction with the acceptance of a teaching position with the communications department of The College of Saint Rose.

Kathleen Curry '99 is the author of *Retrieving The Spirit*, a book of poems published by FootHills Publishing. In 2002, she survived a pulmonary embolism, heart attack and TIA's from a blood clotting disorder. She writes that her poetry captures " ... the journey of dealing with illness, loss and going on with the

process of life." Curry's life experiences include having taught music and having been a professional string bass player and dramatic soprano soloist who traveled nationally and internationally for 27 years.

Lisa Hilton '04 has been named executive director of the South Bristol Cultural Center and has as her goals for the cultural center to " ... increase the South Bristol Cultural Center's membership, provide even more outreach to local schools, and continue to tailor our programming to our community's needs and interests." She is a past manager with Barnes & Noble and current adjunct English instructor with Finger Lakes Community College.

"Crossing the BLVD: strangers, neighbors, aliens in a new America," a multimedia show by **Warren Lehrer and Judith Sloan '99, '04**, is on exhibit at Purchase College's Neuberger Museum of Art through the new year. The couple interviewed dozens of new immigrants to Queens, their hometown and the most ethnically diverse community in America. Lehrer is quoted as saying, "Our point is not to make a singular point. No one is representative of his culture and his ethnicity. ... people are coming here for the same reasons they always have – a love of freedom, escaping war, chasing a dream."

Earlier this year, **James Philipps '99** accepted the position of media relations manager with the National Association of Counties, Washington, D.C. His recent experience includes having served as senior program supervisor with the Congressional Leadership Program, press secretary for Representative Sherwood Boehlert and press officer for State Attorney General Dennis Vacco. He is a member of the Republican Communications Association.

Center for International Programs

Sadi Shanaah, a 2006 graduate of the Center for International Program's Prague location, plans to earn her master's degree in contemporary European studies at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom.

Central New York Center

Kathy Barany '03, a certified professional in human resources with 20 years of experience, is marking her fifth year as owner of Strategic Management Solutions, a human resource management consulting firm. She writes to her mentor Dick Butler, "I still say that the best thing I ever did for my personal professional development was getting my degree." She continued her education and earned a master's certificate from Cornell's School of Industrial and Labor Relations. Barany is a member of the Central New York chapter of the Society for Human Resources Management, both the Syracuse and Manlius Chambers of Commerce, and serves on the board of directors for Child Care Solutions and the advisory board for BOCES Projects with Industry.

Barbara Bittel '98 earned an M.S. in instructional performance technology from Boise State University and is in-district computer coordinator with the Lyncourt Union Free School District.

Michael James Darrow '01, a graduate of the police academy in St. Petersburg, Florida, who also earned diplomas in interview/interrogation, kinestics interviewing and sex crimes; is a police officer with the Belleair Police Department.

Cynthia DeLap '01 is the employee assistance program coordinator with the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, a member of the National Association of Social Workers and literacy volunteer.



Andrew Hunter

Andrew P. Hunter '78 has retired from "corporate work" and is applying his talent and love of the arts in his business, Thunder Top Studio. Although he works in many mediums, he says, "my forte is pyrography, the advanced execution of

wood burning." In 2005, he took third place in wildlife art at the New York state fair, first place in wood burning from HCCC, and a ribbon of excellence at the Festival of the Arts in Remsen, New York. He is a member of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars and the Elks.

Before coming to Empire State College, **Glen LaComte '98** had begun an engineering program with the University at Buffalo but, is as typical with many adults seeking to further their education, could not continue due to the commitments of marriage and children. At the college, LaComte was tutored by the then dean of engineering at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, a retired engineering faculty member of Syracuse University and a doctoral math student, also from Syracuse University. Upon graduation, LaComte completed the NYS examination process and was awarded professional engineering certification. He has founded his own firm and has several employees.

Congratulations to **Marie Parker '04** as she marks her 50th year in nursing. She enrolled at Mt. Sinai Hospital School of Nursing in 1954 and first worked as an obstetric nurse at Maimonides Hospital. Since then she has been nurse to patients at Mount Sinai, New York City; St. Mary's Hospital, Troy; and Saratoga Hospital, Saratoga Springs. Parker is a member of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society and Reach to Recovery. She is a breast cancer survivor counselor for the American Cancer Society and a volunteer at the Mollie Wilmot Radiation Oncology Center. She tried to retire in 1997 but returned to nursing after only three short months.

Genesee Valley Center

Cynthia Clauss '04 who joined Kodak Company in 1977, has been named manager of internal communications with their Graphic Communications Group (GCG). As such, she will lead the GCG worldwide internal communications function, working closely with GCG worldwide marketing, GCG human resources, as well as Kodak's corporate communications and public affairs departments.

Janet DeVito '98 has joined Baldwin Richardson Foods as receptionist/administrative assistant.

Jack Disraeli '74, a driver and relief counselor (for the disabled) with Lifetime

Assistance, Inc., also is an avid traveler who has visited 76 countries and been a volunteer worker on six Israeli Kibbutzim.

Carol Evans '77, CEO and president of Working Mother Media, is the author of *This is How We Do It, the Working Mothers' Manifesto*.

Buzziwog is the most recent work by **Mary Hubbert Jones '95**, an author and illustrator of children's books who works under the pen name Nanny Elizabeth Stearns.

Donna Thomson '76 has authored *The Vibrant Life: Simple Meditations to Use Your Energy Effectively* (Sentient Publications) in which she shares her three-plus decades of meditation study and practice including 15 years as a student at the Zen Meditation Center. Thomson, who holds an M.S.W., has taught meditation and counseled people not only in the U.S. but also Germany, Switzerland and Luxembourg.

The Harry Van Arsdale Jr. Center for Labor Studies



Patrick Kleeman

As a journeyman electrician with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, **Patrick Kleeman '92**, supervises a crew of up to 50, is a liaison between labor and management, outlines blueprints for installation, and implements project design. An actor and member of the Screen Actors Guild, he has worked in theater, television and film. It is noteworthy that Kleeman, who served with the United States Navy, is a survivor of 9/11.

After earning her degree, **Sandra Maratos '97** became a certified purchasing manager and vice president of Global Procurement. Now retired and living in Arizona, she has traveled extensively and is a member

of the American Legion and the American Association of University Women.

Hudson Valley Center

Tania Guerrero '00, a writer and artist whose works reflect her African and Taino/Arawak roots, exhibits extensively – one of her most recent exhibits was at the Rockland County legislative offices as part of Black History Month. She is passionate about teaching through cultural arts, specifically about the aboriginal people of Borinken, the Taino people, and the African influences of the island presently known as Puerto Rico.

Having hiked the Appalachian Trail himself, from Georgia to Maine, **Jeffrey Hunter '03** is southeast trail programs director of the Southern Appalachians Initiative, American Hiking Society.

Elizabeth Landsman '96, who continued her studies and earned a master's degree in business administration, with honors, at Walsh College, Michigan, is an analyst with Powertrain Engine Engineering, General Motors. She also volunteers with the Society for Automotive Engineering's A World In Motion program that teaches 9-10 year olds about math and science in the hope of fostering future engineers.



Sheryl Santi Luks

The Rockland Businesswomen's Group has named **Sheryl Santi Luks '94** its Woman of the Year. The owner of Santi Express, a long-distance moving business, she was chosen for her commitment to the community as well as her success as an entrepreneur. Luks, whose original career was in nursing says, "I strongly believe in giving back and getting people involved." She is active with the Hadassah Nurses of the Lower Hudson Valley and serves on the board of advisors of the American Cancer Society in Rockland County, is an alumni board member of Leadership Rockland, and is a member of the Rockland Business

Association and Haverstraw Chamber of Commerce.

Catherine (Cassie) McVety '81 is a self-taught watercolorist who exhibits extensively, primarily in the Hudson Valley area. She recently was honored at the Senate for her watercolor of the Capitol.

Now retired, **Phyllis Steinman Caplan Nesbitt '80** teaches the arts at Brevard Music Center, Brevard Academy; Transylvania Arts Council and Transylvania county schools.

Formerly a nationally ranked runner, **Geraldine Owens '83** is a fitness consultant and trainer at the Lake Mohonk House spa in New Paltz, New York. She is active in her community teaching and motivating others, of all ages, to take up running.

Natalie Carol Barbadoro Pearson '86 is a human rights activist with the Human Rights Commission and member of the City of Quincy Human Rights Commission, Quincy, Massachusetts. She also is a Southern Poverty Law Center Wall of Tolerance honoree, Montgomery, Alabama.

Joanne B. Thomas '06 writes that "In 2001, my dreams were shattered after the World Trade Center bombing and there was no chance of returning to work on Wall Street. I decided to go back to college and that is when I became aware of Empire State College ... " Thomas, who now works at Empire State College in addition to having her own business offering photography services, specialty baskets and event planning; believes that the college gave her "... the choice to choose my future and that, in itself, is a blessing."

Long Island Center

Joseph Barbuto '94 earned an M.B.A. from New York Institute of Technology and is an adjunct professor in the Business Department at Briarcliffe College in addition to being president of Nextwave Solutions, a technology company he founded in 1999.

Congratulations to **Timothy Byrnes '02** on his recent graduation, cum laude, from Touro Law School.

Darryl E. Harris Sr. '92 earned a Master of Music in orchestral conducting from the Cleveland Institute of Music, is a magna cum laude graduate in music education from Case Western Reserve University, and is working toward his Doctor of

Musical Arts at The University of Southern Mississippi where he conducts the Southern Mississippi Symphony Orchestra. Retired from the United States Air Force, Harris has an impressive background in music having conducted the Cleveland Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, the Nassau Symphony Orchestra, The Tacoma Community Orchestra, the Civic Orchestra of Chicago Chamber Orchestra and the United States Air Force Band in Washington, D.C.

Tim Johnson '83, author and assistant professor at Wentworth Institute of Technology, has three books to his credit: *Finding a Job in Tough Times*, *Stud of the Hudson* and *History of Open-Water Swimming*. As a result of his last book, he was an invited speaker at the International Swimming Hall of Fame.

Marilyn Rodriquez-Rivera '06 who works in network security at Suffolk Community College, has been accepted at Long Island University where she will pursue her master's degree in homeland security management.

Ed Stever, who earned his bachelor's degree from the college in 1994 as well as an M.A.L.S. in 2000, appeared in the Clare Rose Playhouse production of *Dead Man Walking*, in which he played the role of the killer, Matt Poncelet. Sister Helen Prejean, on whom the movie is based and author of the book of the same name, saw the performance and commented that it was the best she had seen to date.

Juanita Torrence-Thompson '83 is editor and publisher of *Mobius, The Poetry Magazine*, a nonprofit, international magazine celebrating its 24th anniversary.

Metropolitan Center

Robbin Farrell '96 is a third-grade teacher with Majuro Cooperative School in the Marshall Islands, located in the western Pacific Ocean. She also is a certified yoga teacher and former Peace Corps volunteer.

Ruthanne H. Harrison '85, a licensed massage therapist with Deeper Well Therapeutic Massage, Maine, also is a painter and has exhibited at the Stadler Gallery and the Frank Brockman Gallery. She is a member of the Association of Bodywork and Massage Professionals, the Richmond Community and Economic Development Board, the Artists Registry and the Maine Arts Commission.



Zazel-Chavah O'Garra

A graduate of New York City's High School of Performing Arts, **Zazel-Chavah O'Garra** earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in dance performance from Empire State College in 2002. Her career in the arts has included dance with the Mark Dendy Dance Company and Alvin Ailey II; conducting master classes in modern, jazz and African dance throughout the United States, Europe and in her hometown of Montserrat, West Indies; and performing in stage productions of "The Wiz," "Body and Soul," "The Dark Star from Harlem (The Josephine Baker Story)," "For Colored Girls," and "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope." She has been featured on two covers of *Essence* magazine as well as having done catalog and runway work, and national and regional commercials. In what would prove to be a pivotal year – in early 2001, Zazel began to consider making a change from performance to education. Later that year, having been profoundly affected by the events of 9/11, she knew she wanted to give back. In December 2001, she was diagnosed as having a benign brain tumor, a side effect of which included paralysis. Having recovered, Zazel, now a dance therapist and motivational speaker, is working toward a Master of Social Work degree at Fordham University and teaches creative dance therapy programs for mentally disabled adults and adult jazz dance workshops. Her memberships include the Brain Tumor Foundation, the American Association of People with Disabilities, the National Association of Social Workers and the Patient Advocate Foundation.

Sidney Gluck '79, who celebrated his 90th birthday this past August, has eagerly and enthusiastically shared his vast knowledge of China as part of his efforts to education, enlighten and promote friendship with China. Rave reviews and praise were lavished on Gluck by Bentley College, a recent venue of his lecture. Also, *Two Generations View China: Sidney Gluck and Emily Corbato, Father and Daughter*

Photographers, was exhibited at the Great Neck Arts Center this past fall. For more than 50 years, he has pursued careers in business, education, the arts and public-interest advocacy. He formed Malibu Textiles after WWII and it was then that he developed nylon parachute fabric and fire-retardant wall coverings for battleships. He is considered a specialist in elastic fabrics and created the nylon/antron/spandex used in swimwear. On the education front, Gluck has retired from the social science faculty of the New School for Social Research and also had taught at Parsons School of Design, the Fashion Institute of Technology and the New York School of Interior Design.

Niagara Frontier Center



Linda Amabile

Linda Amabile '05, assistant to the director for disability service and information with the University at Buffalo, is a graduate of a disability advocacy training program and has been elected to the board of directors for Autistic Services. She serves on that organizations Human Rights Committee and also is working to promote studies in autism spectrum disorders at the college.

Susan Chiappone '02 is the new vocational services manager with Southern Tier Environments for Living and as such will oversee workforce, supported employment and placement services programs.

Loretta Wasserstein '05 is working towards her master's degree in liberal studies at the University of Minnesota.

Dennis Wizner '82, who joined First Niagara Bank in 1991, has been promoted to vice president of enterprise systems support and consumer banking. He is a graduate of America's Community Bankers National School of Banking, the Dale Carnegie Institute and Leadership Niagara.

Northeast Center



Penny Loretto

Penny Loretto '93 earned a master's in education from the College of Saint Rose and is an internship coordinator/career counselor with Skidmore College as well as owner of Career Choice, offering individualized career counseling. Her credentials include being a national certified counselor, master career counselor, distance credentialed counselor and licensed mental health counselor. She is a member of the American Counseling Association, the National Career Development Association, the National Employment Counseling Association and a volunteer with the Make a Wish Foundation.

Gayle Petrillo '91 continued her studies earning an M.B.A. in healthcare administration from the University of Phoenix and, in June 2006, was named administrator of the pathology department with University Physicians Healthcare. She is a member of the Society for Human Resource Management.



Trudi Roth

Trudi Roth '99 describes herself as a painter, antiques dealer, grandmother and gardener. A member of the Columbia County Council on the Arts and the Columbia Berkshire Crafts Guild, she has exhibited at the North Pointe Gallery and the Country Store Gallery.

(continued on pages 19 and 20)



President Moore welcomes Joanne Thomas '05, '06 to the alumni ranks at the Hudson Valley Center graduation.

BACK TO YOU

Alumni and Student Events Around the College

Have you recently published an article, paper or book? We would love to hear about it for our next issue. Please contact Maureen.Winney@esc.edu.



Vice President Bob Milton greets a new graduate at the Central New York Center graduation in June.



Michael Cowing, a current student at the Metropolitan Center, accepts a community service award for his work as an AIDS educator from Dean Christine Persico.



The Genesee Valley Center's Ellen DiSano '04; Timothy Cosgriff '93; Debra Washington Bell '03, '05; Dean Jonathan Franz and Debbie Oberhofer '05 spearheaded a clothing drive to benefit the Working Woman's Wardrobe at the YWCA in May 2006.



Empire State College joined other campuses for an all SUNY alumni reception in Washington, D.C. From left to right are Richard Pace '77 and Clyde Hairston '94.



Alumni, students, faculty and friends gathered for our annual evening at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center to hear the Philadelphia Orchestra. From left to right are Margaret Conn, Margaret Elbow '74, President Moore and Dick Conn.



One of the most successful alumni events held is our annual "Day at the Races." Close to 200 gathered this past August. From left to right are Joe Hofmann '00 and his daughter Christie Hofmann '05.



Thinking about reinventing yourself? Looking for a new job?

Empire State College has an in-depth career service web site. We have links to Monstertrak as well as to the New York State Job Bank. Just log on to www.esc.edu and click on Alumni.



EMPIRE STATE
COLLEGE

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Creating a Scholarship Fund at Empire State College

Did you know that the majority of the college's working adult students face serious financial challenges when it comes to paying college tuition while also supporting their families? Scholarship support from alumni is a great way to offer others who follow them a wider door for opportunity and it may mean the difference as to whether a student ever earns a degree.

Has the thought that only rich people can create a scholarship fund kept you from considering it? Perhaps you'll discover that with some planning, you could establish a scholarship fund in the name of your family or in the name of someone special to you.

A Scholarship Now

Like many donors, you may find that donating enough cash (\$25,000 is needed to establish a scholarship fund) is not possible. However, you could make cash contributions spread over a five-year period to achieve your goal. Or, you might fund it with publicly traded stock that is highly appreciated in value but low in dividend return. You could gift the stock to the Empire State College Foundation, which can sell the stock without incurring a capital gains tax and provide you with a tax deduction.

A Scholarship Later

While it may not be feasible to start a scholarship now, your estate will likely have enough resources at your death. You could do what many others have done and earmark a portion of your estate for a future scholarship fund.

A Scholarship Now and Later

You may want to start your endowment now, with modest contributions annually, and then add to it later through your will. This way, you could meet the students now who benefit from your generosity each year. The funds from your estate will then endow the scholarship forever.

Do you want to learn more about creating your own scholarship fund at Empire State College and discover additional ways to fund it? Please contact Alta Schallehn, director of gift planning, at 518 587-2100 ext. 2413 or Alta.Schallehn@esc.edu.



David Regan White '05 has accepted the position of director of marketing with First Guarantee Mortgage, a multi-state mortgage broker. In addition, he is the founder of Greenwich Media, a search engine marketing consulting firm that helps small businesses increase traffic to their web sites. White, who served with the United States Army, is a member of the VFW and American Legion as well as the New York Capital Region Chapter of the American Marketing Association and the Greater Greenwich Chamber of Commerce.

Robert Whiteman '91, first grade teacher at Westmere Elementary and the school's gifted and talented enrichment teacher for kindergarten through fifth grade, is the recipient of the National Disney Education Award for outstanding teaching. He is one of only three teachers nationwide to be honored for early childhood education. Whiteman also holds a master's degree in education from the College of Saint Rose.

Verizon Corporate College

Barbara Bethea '97, '99, the first African-American registered poetry therapist in the country, has embarked on a career in private practice as a poetry therapist.

Prague Alumni and Students Honored at Event

This past May, the Tuscan Palace in Prague served as the backdrop for close to 200 alumni, students, faculty and staff who gathered to recognize distinguished alumni and students. The event was co-hosted by Evelyn Wells, the academic director for the Prague program, and the newly formed alumni student association.

"The evening was a grand success," commented Wells. "It was just wonderful

to see the interaction between the students the alumni and their faculty. We also were very pleased to be able to recognize distinguished service and student achievement.

The following people were honored at the reception:

Fourth Year Distinguished Service Award

Petr Stabrawa
Miia Lassila
Ondrej Rak
Anika Popelyova

Alumni Distinguished Service Award

Radjana Orlovskaya
Patricie Aus

Student Achievement Award

Peter Turner
Tomas Kubica
Alexander Raiman
Tomas Valach

Alumni Association Student Service Award

Tomas Kubica
Daniel Krizek

The following month over 100 students graduated from the program.



The Prague Student Council pictured here after one of their meetings. From left to right are Alexander Raiman, Juraj Antal, Rudolfa Kubikova, Zdenek Frank Jurik, Brian Daniel Fritz, Anika Popelyova and Monika Kdanova.



Radjana Orlovskaya (far left), president of the Prague Alumni Student Association, was one of the hosts of the event. Also pictured with Radjana are Tomas Kubica, Normatov Zafar and his guest.



Mentor Silvia Chelala was one of the many faculty in attendance and is shown here with a current student, Miia Lassila.



Former Long Island faculty member and now the director of the program in Prague, Evelyn Wells, poses with one of her students, Petr Stabrawa.

Tell us your story!

We are seeking contributions for future issues of the magazine. Are you in:

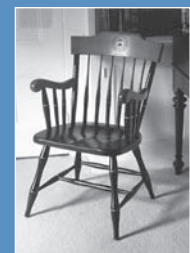
the food industry?
 law enforcement or
 fire services?
 science, mathematics or technology?

If you are, please contact Hope Ferguson, editor, at Hope.Ferguson@esc.edu.

GIFT GALLERY

| | |
|---|-------|
| Coffee Mug | \$10 |
| Travel Mug | \$6 |
| Baseball Cap (navy or wheat) | \$12 |
| Sweatshirt M, L, XL (black or grey) XXL (black only) | \$35 |
| Shoulder Tote | \$6 |
| Golf Shirt M, L, XL (black or white) | \$20 |
| T-Shirt M, L, XL (black or grey) XXL (black only) | \$15 |
| Long Sleeve T-Shirt M, L, XL or XXL (navy) | \$22 |
| Executive Brief Bag | \$20 |
| Crystal Paperweight | \$28 |
| Boston Rocker | \$295 |
| Captain's Chair | \$295 |
| College Ring (visit www.esc.edu for styles and prices) | |

For easy online ordering, go to www.esc.edu and click on Alumni. Prices do not include shipping and handling. For a complete catalog of gifts or information on laminated diplomas and Empire State College rings contact Alumni and Student Relations: 518 587-2100 ext. 2344 or visit www.esc.edu.



YOU ARE IMPORTANT TO US!

Send news of your accomplishments and activities so that we can feature them in future issues of Empire State College Alumni and Student News. If possible include a recent photograph (with your name on the back). Please spell out all organization abbreviations.

Name _____

Address _____

Job title _____

Business name/address _____

Center/Unit attended _____

Year graduated/degrees _____

Current student? _____ Area of study _____

Phone number: Work _____ Home _____

E-mail address _____

Honors and other accomplishments _____

Volunteer/professional organizations _____

Send to: *Empire State College Alumni and Student News*, Office of College Relations, Empire State College,
One Union Avenue, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-4391.



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