

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

# Empire State College

ALUMNI AND STUDENT NEWS

## To Protect and Serve: Our Men and Women in Uniform



Tuskegee Airmen making history

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Tuskegee Airman, 1945, reproduced from the collections of the Library of Congress.

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**NEW**  
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Inside back cover



# Serving People in Uniform

By Jim Savitt

**T**he next time you pull over to yield to a police car or fire truck, remember that the driver might just be a fellow Empire State College student or alumnus. Empire State College, and the Center for Distance Learning in particular, has a long and productive history of serving our men and women in uniform by providing educational opportunities that they cannot get anywhere else. Police officers and firefighters work rotating shifts, making it very difficult to commit to classroom sessions at a fixed time every week. Our military students challenge us in a different way; they get posted to a different base from time to time, or perhaps a different country, or maybe even to a war zone. It is no small comfort for them to be able to create some semblance of normalcy in daily affairs, and the opportunity to attend class – at a distance, but connected and engaged – contributes to that normalcy.

## The Empire State College Experience

Empire State College works hard to provide the educational experience that our students want and need. The college's continual innovations – both technologically and educationally – and its flexibility and orientation towards working adults, help to ensure that we can offer our students a nearly seamless learning environment no matter the circumstances of their important and very difficult jobs. We might even say that the distribution of our students around the globe may offer some advantages to learning. In jargon terms, we may talk about “asynchronous learning,” meaning that discussions and other learning activities do not take place simultaneously for all class members. Alternatively, we could be thinking that asynchronous learning provides opportunities for “reflective learning time,” and is an inherent part of the design of our courses and programs.

## What Do They Study, and Why?

You may be wondering what programs Empire State College can offer to our firefighters, our police officers, or our military personnel. Everything! Empire State College's full panoply of offerings is available to all. While criminal justice, emergency management and fire services administration are quite popular among our uniformed students, there are soldiers concentrating in historical studies, police officers pursuing degrees in literature, and firefighters concentrating in management studies. Along with pursuing studies across the range of Empire State College's offerings, our students have a variety of reasons for seeking degrees. The world is very complex today, and police officers, firefighters and military personnel need sophisticated training and education to be able to address complex issues in their respective fields. Most urban police and fire departments require at least an associate degree for entry, and look for a bachelor's degree for promotion into management ranks. Similarly, the military expects that its soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen and women will be furthering their formal education in order to advance. The Navy has even instituted a rule that will require sailors to have an associate degree for promotion to the higher enlisted ranks, starting in 2011. And the bachelor's degree has long been the basis for entry or promotion into the commissioned officers' ranks, with battlefield commissions increasingly rare. There are other reasons for degree studies as well. Tuition assistance makes studies attractive financially. There also is the desire to plan ahead. For those on a career path, all three professions offer the possibility of retirement at a relatively young age, and degree studies can open up myriad options for a post-military, or post-policing, or post-firefighting career. While many people will retire and stay in a similar line of work,

*(continued on page 11)*

# Flying High: A Tuskegee Airman Gets His Due

by Hope Ferguson



CWO Abercrombie on active duty, 1966

*Now in their 80s and 90s, these men once had bucked stereotypes that said blacks could not, or would not, fight bravely for their country.*

On March 29, 2007, George Abercrombie '74, was among approximately 300 surviving members of the Tuskegee Airmen, a pioneering group of African-American pilots, officers and military support staff, who gathered in the Capitol rotunda to receive Congress's highest honor: The Congressional Gold Medal. There were photo ops. There was speech-making by the likes of President George W. Bush, Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and former Secretary of State Colin Powell. There was handshaking with members of Congress, including Rep. Charles Rangel (D-Harlem) who sponsored the House bill that brought the honor; there was a band, singers and a color guard. Afterwards, to cap it off, there was a sit-down dinner across the street from the Capitol in the Library of Congress.

Although the airmen were deeply appreciative of the honor, many observers thought it was long overdue. After all, it was these men, numbering nearly 1,000 pilots and thousands more trained officers and enlisted men at their peak, who are credited with paving the way for the integration of the U.S. Armed Forces after WWII, and making the U.S. military, arguably, the most successfully integrated workplace in the United States today.

Now in their 80s and 90s, these men bucked stereotypes that said blacks could not, or would not, fly an airplane and fight bravely for their country. They flew over 15,000 missions in Europe, escorting bombers 200 times in the European theater, losing only a tiny fraction of those they were assigned to protect. The legend was that they had never lost a plane to enemy fire. In truth, they lost very few.

Yet, even as they battled fascism in Europe, they had to cope with segregation on the homefront and racism in the ranks.

## One Airman's Story

For Abercrombie, a retired IBM executive, now living in Florida, it all started near Selma, Alabama, where he was born in 1922 during the Jim Crow period following Reconstruction. His father, disliking farming, moved the family of eight children to a town on the outskirts of Birmingham, where he labored in the coal mines. In time, the family moved into Birmingham proper, where Abercrombie lived until he was drafted into the Armed Forces at age 20. In those days, he explained during an interview, even blacks drafted into the military were assigned the most menial of tasks, like cleaning up after other soldiers at the various military posts.

"The military was completely segregated; most of the black troops were used as service troops. Service troops were assigned to pick up garbage for the whole contingent. Sometimes, if you had some smarts, you became a cook. Most of the officers were white, and treated you as inferiors – at that time just a step above slavery."

*(continued on page 4)*



George Abercrombie and his wife, Edele Maria, at the Capitol in March of this year.



Abercrombie (front and center) at the Congressional ceremony honoring all of the Tuskegee Airmen.

# Flying High

(continued from page 2)

He never gave college a thought. “Even if you had a bachelor’s degree,” he observes, “you were lucky to get a job as an elevator operator.”

Abercrombie was sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, where he was processed and received his uniform, then to Kearns, Utah for three months of basic training, where he and the other southerners were amazed by the 10-feet of snow on the ground – and it was spring!

“At Ft. Benning, we segregated draftees were formed in a single line for an inspection of the mouth. The white civilian doctors used one spatula on the tongue for approximately every 10 to 12 draftees,” he recalls with disgust.

He came north for the first time after being stationed at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, near Asbury Park, in 1943, where he completed a radio maintenance course. From there, he and other soldiers would venture to New York City. “When I got up to Harlem, I thought I was in heaven. They had all these clubs, like the Renaissance – we used to call it the Reni – and the Savoy Ballroom ... I’m telling you, in Birmingham, we’d wait until Count Basie, Duke Ellington and Jimmie Lunceford, one of my favorites, would tour on the Chit’lin Circuit, crossing down through the south doing one-nighters, so we got to see one every two to three months. Here in New York, bands were playing every night. I had on my uniform, and attracted lots of girls; I was dancing with everyone. I used to lose 10 pounds every night!”

Abercrombie scored “fairly high” on an IQ test, so he was deemed a suitable candidate to learn radio and radar maintenance – a new technology at the time. He remembers being sent to Hobe Sounds, Florida (Camp Murphy) for training in a national park replete with coral snakes. “We slept under mosquito netting every night. It was a miserable setting,” he recalls. There was one perk, however. Barbers on the base refused to cut “Negro” hair, so he would be given a pass to West Palm Beach or Miami to get his hair cut, at the same time getting a nice relief outing from the base. Abercrombie was transferred to the Tuskegee Army Air Field in late 1943.



The Tuskegee Airmen proved to be some of the finest pilots in the war.

## Life at Tuskegee

In response to a lawsuit brought by Civil Rights groups, the Armed Forces implemented a training program for black pilots at a number of locations, including the Tuskegee Institute, founded by educator Booker T. Washington in the 1800s. Under the auspices of the U.S. Army Air Corps, (the U.S. Air Force was not yet in existence as a separate entity), The Tuskegee site became Ground Zero to gauge what black pilots were able to do for the war effort. Abercrombie was put in charge of maintaining the flying records of the students, logging in their air time and making charts for various types of flying: acrobatics, cross-country, instrument flying, and flying in formation. Occasionally, he flew with the

instructors to his hometown, and once to New York City. During a rainstorm over North Carolina, the plane flew so low over the tobacco fields, “I could almost count the leaves. It was a harrowing experience, even though the pilot was an expert, who’d just returned from the European theater.”

In time, some of the older men took him under their wings. “A couple of pilots took interest in this 21-year-old southern kid,” he says. “I thought I knew everything, but in reality I didn’t know a thing.” One of the instructors, a black man in charge of education, invited the young man over to read from the extensive library on post. Up until that time, “I didn’t have a book because my family could afford books. He would invite me

(continued on page 8)



The Congressional Gold Medal awarded for the men’s outstanding service.



Carol Conry

LAW AND JUSTICE

# Pioneering Police Officer

by Marie Morrison '06

Carol Conry '91 is Brooklyn-born and bred, with the trace of a Brooklyn accent to prove it. Raised with a sister and two brothers, one of whom was a police officer, she was well acquainted with the famous NYPD.

However, going into police work was not her original intent; she had hoped to work with young people, perhaps in teaching. But her father's death while she was in high school cancelled any plans of going on to college full time. Instead, at her brother's suggestion, and in order to work with troubled youths, she decided to apply to the Policewomen's Bureau, which was a separate division within the New York City Police Department. At that time, the Policewomen's Bureau mostly dealt with such issues as juvenile delinquent cases and sex crimes; the women officers did not do routine uniform patrol.

## Equality Granted

By the time Carol Conry was hired in 1973, however, the federal government had enacted Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, which addressed job and pay equality. In compliance with the Act, the NYPD eliminated the Policewomen's Bureau and made the required change to a standardized title of "police officer" – men and women were now equal and on patrol, shoulder to shoulder.

Conry then "hit the street" and learned very quickly that the reality of policing was a bit different from the theory of studying it in the Academy. "I was sent to a high-crime area where most of the calls that we responded to were for real; e.g., 'man with a gun,' 'man with a knife.' The precinct had no women's locker rooms or bathrooms, and had 400 male officers." Her training officer was a male who was knowledgeable and well respected by his fellow officers. Once he let the other male officers know that Conry was capable of

doing the job, she was accepted by most of her male peers. "Surely, there were some male officers who, no matter what good you did, would not accept a female police officer."

From uniformed patrol, Conry went on to a more challenging assignment – narcotics. "This also was rather dangerous, but when you are young, you think you are invincible," she says.

Another "challenging" assignment almost killed her. While posing as an elderly woman with the Senior Citizens Robbery Unit, Conry was mugged almost daily in an area with a high rate of robberies of the elderly. During an operation one hot summer afternoon, she was followed by three men to the outer lobby of an apartment building. One of the men remained outside as the lookout, while the other two rang bells to gain access to the inner lobby. When someone buzzed, they dragged Conry into the inner lobby and the door locked behind them, cutting off access to her backup team. One mugger began choking her into unconsciousness, while the other searched for her money. When the muggers ripped open her jacket, they saw her gun and police shield. One of them grabbed Conry's weapon and pointed it at her stomach – Conry thought that was the end of her short life. Luckily, during the violent struggle, she had been able to signal her backup team to request assistance. As she neared unconsciousness, she heard a shot and the men threw her down on the marble lobby floor and began racing up the stairs. The shot she heard had been from the backup team who had shot open the locked lobby door. When the muggers reached the roof, they found that their only means of getting away was by the fire escape, which turned out to put them right into the hands of Conry's backup team.

As if that wasn't excitement enough, Conry went on to the Brooklyn District Attorney Squad, first as a detective and then as a detective sergeant, conducting investiga-

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# The “Green Jail” Commander

by Marie Morrison '06

**B**ert A. Wilkinson '04, of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office, Santa Rita Jail in California may be in charge of the only jail in the country whose prisoners are served their meals by robots! And not only meals, but clean laundry and supplies, too. Well, not exactly robots – rather a robotic system called AGVS or Automated Guided Vehicle System. It's the first of its kind in a correctional facility that also happens to be a “mega-jail,” ranking as the third largest facility in California and the fifth largest in the nation.

Expanding on Santa Rita Jail's uniqueness, Captain Wilkinson, an Empire State College graduate with a degree in business management, explains: “The facility's robotic system uses a central kitchen for Santa Rita's 4,000 prisoners and a rail delivery system that delivers 15,000 meals a day to 25 drop-off points around the huge facility. The food is prepared, put on trays and loaded onto insulated carts three times a day. The carts are then picked up by the robotic unit that is guided by sensors located in the concrete roadways and tunnels throughout the facility. The system can be programmed to take the carts to certain drop-off points where the food is removed and distributed directly to the inmates.”

The Santa Rita Jail (SRJ) is laid out in a decentralized “campus” style. Its 850,000 square feet of building space is divided into three sections: 18 self-contained housing units, a core building and a service building which has the laundry, commissary, warehouse and kitchen for inmate meals. From air photos, it looks like a spaceship, but its goal is providing the safest, most efficient and most effective handling of inmates possible.

Not only is the Santa Rita Jail known worldwide for its robotic services, but also for installing one of the most energy-efficient systems in use in the country today, making it, according to a segment on NBC's “Today Show,” one of



Captain Bert Wilkinson

the “greenest” jails in the United States. The facility is under the jurisdiction of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office and Alameda County Sheriff Greg Ahern.

According to Captain Wilkinson, “A large rooftop solar power system converts enough electricity to power nearly one-half of the facility's electrical needs during daylight hours. Our hydrogen fuel cell plant transforms hydrogen from natural gas into electricity and water and produces one-megawatt of power with no greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. Power from this unit, along with the solar power, has reduced SRJ's power purchases as much as 80 percent during the peak-demand summer months.”

Captain Bert A. Wilkinson, commanding officer of the Santa Rita Jail, has been in law enforcement for 36 years. Married and the father of five children, he also has three grandchildren. His wife Vickie is a deputy sheriff and so is one of his daughters. “I guess we are a law enforcement family,” he says.

A native Californian, Wilkinson chose the college's Center for Distance Learning over any of the other alternative educational programs in California because, he says, “I found SUNY Empire State College to be the best program in the nation when all factors were considered.”

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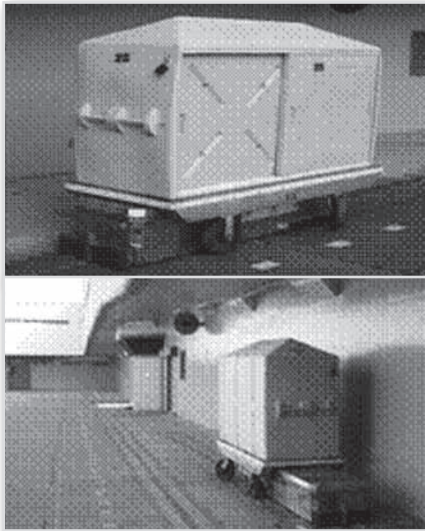
# Green Jail

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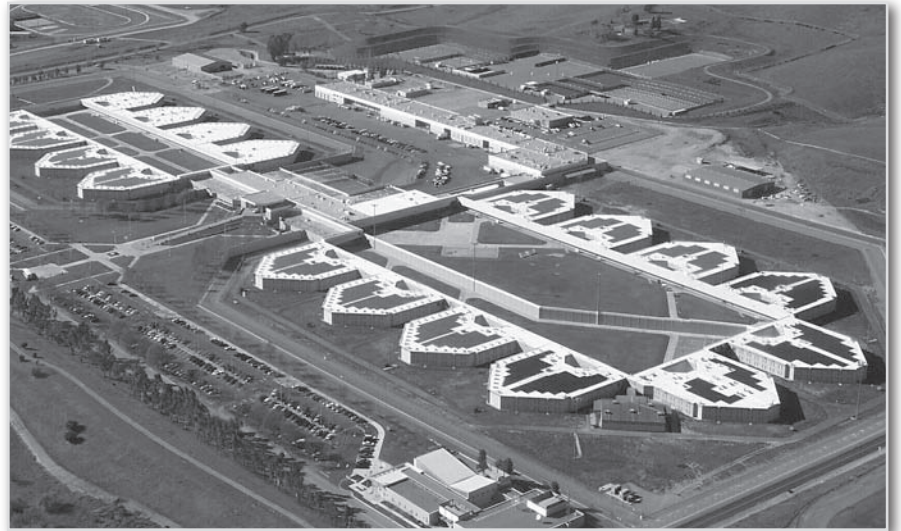
Of his experience at Empire State College, Wilkinson observes: “Work and personal commitments forced me to set aside my efforts to complete my college education at California State University, Hayward. I found I had no time to commute to the university, to stand in line to register for classes, and to go to the bookstore to purchase textbooks. When I was enrolled, I could not consult with my instructors during their scheduled office hours. Distance learning opportunities, at that time, were few and far between and Internet classes were nonexistent.



Solar panels demonstrate their ability to provide a major source of alternative energy.



The robots look like miniature box cars.



The facility's design provides the safest, most efficient and most effective handling of inmates possible.

“I never abandoned my personal goal of earning my university degree. In early 2000, I began to research available options to achieve my goal. I needed a level of flexibility that traditional educational programs did not provide. I also needed quality in the level of instruction provided and I wanted assurance that I was in a well-recognized and accredited program. I wanted to feel that, upon completion of the program, I had earned my degree. After nearly six months of research, I was convinced that Empire State College offered the best program in the nation. After completing the program, I still believe that.

“The program is definitely for those individuals that are self-motivated. The

courses are well designed and access to the educational staff by phone or e-mail works very well. I appreciated the detailed written assessments on each assignment and the narrative evaluation at the end of each class. The emphasis on individual degree planning enhances the educational experience by requiring some organized thinking as to the purpose and objective for seeking higher education. I remain extremely grateful for the ongoing assistance of my mentor, Leonard Gaines, during the degree planning process. He was one of those that visited me on the West Coast.”

The Alameda County Sheriff's Office employs over 1,500 sworn and professional staff and is recognized as a

regional leader in homeland security, law enforcement and corrections. It has attained what is referred to as the Triple Crown of accreditation awarded by the National Sheriffs Association. Only a handful of agencies nationwide have ever gained this level of recognition. The jail is accredited by the American Correctional Association, making it the only county facility in California to hold this prestigious award.

Captain Wilkinson is justly proud of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office and the Santa Rita Jail, with its numerous awards and accreditations. “It's just part of our culture that we strive for excellence,” he says. And, it seems, part of his personal culture, too. ○

# Flying High

(continued from page 4)

over to read Shakespeare, military books, etc. He saw me as a rough diamond. I had some smarts but I was a little rough: I was one of the boys!" At that time, he never dreamed he would eventually attend college, thanks to the GI bill.

The white locals in the surrounding community were not exactly thrilled by the program that trained young black men to fly and use weaponry. There was "fear that we would break out and start a revolution at the base," he chuckled. "Get Jim Crow!"

In fact, there had been a serious protest at Freeman Field in Indiana in 1945 when black pilots were told to agree to a "whites only" officer's club. As recalled in an article by Brenda Payton, whose father was among the protesters, her father "told his superior officer that if he couldn't enjoy the privileges of being an officer, then he shouldn't be one."

In an act presaging the civil disobedience of the 50s and 60s, a group of pilots entered the whites only officers club. The group was arrested for disobeying a direct order not to enter by a superior officer, an offense punishable by death in time of war, Payton writes. Although the charges were later dropped, a reprimand stayed in one airman's files until 1995.

Although nothing so dramatic happened at Abercrombie's base, the previous two white commandants had sided with the local population, and been replaced by a more liberal commander.

There was time for social life as well. Women's colleges in the area, such as Spelman and Atlanta University, chartered buses to bring in girls to stay in a special guesthouse near the base. "They would come to our dances in their finery – and boy did they look good," recalls Abercrombie. Every town had a USO, complete with chaperones, and all of the local girls felt obliged to do their duty for the troops. "And I made every scene," says Abercrombie. "In those days they called us jitterbugs – I could really cut a rug."

Although a lot of marriages arose from that tense time, marriage came later for Abercrombie, who opted for a career in the military after his discharge in 1946. While stationed in Germany in 1954, he married Edele Maria, a "fraulein" in Heidelberg. They have two children, a

daughter, Gabriele, who was joined by a son, Jules, in 1956. He and his wife also have a granddaughter, Nicole.

Because of his desk job at Tuskegee, Abercrombie was able to attend a large Baptist church, where he had formerly been an usher. "I used to hold down the large women shouters – they used to wave me around like a flag," he jokes. The congregation liked to show their respect to servicemen and would have them come to the pulpit "to say a few words." Because he wasn't deployed, "I spoke every weekend," he laughs.

*"Most thought it was something that was overdue. We figured, well ... if attitudes were the same as they were back in those days, we'd never get it; but attitudes had changed."*

Abercrombie was stationed in Germany several times (to the delight of his wife). Racial tensions were always high, though; overseas units were segregated, and if soldiers of either race were caught in the wrong environment, they could find themselves severely beaten. (It went both ways, explained Abercrombie.) Some Germans proved susceptible to racist myths spread by the white GIs as well. When a black soldier was dining with some German friends at their home, a young German boy tried to light a match below his nostrils. Fortunately, no harm was done, but the boy explained he had been informed by white soldiers that if he lit a fire in a black man's nostrils, a tail would appear.

Despite the racism, Abercrombie was able to climb the military ladder to technical sergeant, and from 1954 to 1960, taught electronics/communications in the Army's signal school. He had taken classes here and there since matriculating at Howard University in 1947, and graduating from the RCA Institute of Technology, with a certificate in 1950. After working for a brief time as an engineer for the Signal Corps engineering lab, in 1951, he was recalled to active duty with his unit, the National Broadcasting Company Reserve Unit. After his training, mostly at the Pentagon, the unit was transferred

to Mannheim, Germany to participate in radio broadcast and leaflet drops – psychological warfare. After being promoted to chief warrant officer and serving in Korea and Germany, Abercrombie retired from the military in May, 1968. He later took on a second career as an engineer at IBM, where he was eventually promoted to management. During this time, he enrolled in Empire State College to complete the degree he had started so many years earlier.

"I had put all the credits together and a certificate of graduation (from RCA). It was just a prestigious thing for me." His mentor saw that he had enough credits for a degree, and helped him supplement his prior credits through several learning contracts in business. In 1974, as one of the college's earliest graduates, Abercrombie received a degree in business, management and economics from the Metropolitan Center. Abercrombie also did 12 credits toward an M.B.A. at St. John's University.

## Making History

Congressman Charles Rangel last year introduced a resolution in the House to bestow the Congressional Gold Medal on the airmen. The measure was also introduced in the Senate by Michigan Senator Carl Levin, and was later signed by President George W. Bush. The medal would be given to the men as a group and housed in the Smithsonian Institute. Originally, each man was to purchase his own replica for \$40, but after the ceremony, there was a surprise. "We were to go out the elevator and go across the street to the Library of Congress for dinner. As we exited the rotunda, and walked down the hall, the military had set up a table and they had all these medals." Turns out a generous donor didn't think the men should have to pay, and had purchased them all as gifts to the airmen.

Of the honor, Abercrombie notes, "Most thought it was something that was overdue. We figured, well if attitudes were the same as they were back in those days, we'd never get it; but attitudes had changed."

At the time, the young men did not so much focus on their role in history, as they did proving to Congress, lawmakers and generals that "Blacks could fly and fly well, and fight well in a plane. Our attitude was, hey we did it. We never thought about how our experience would influence future." ○

# Briefs

by Marie Morrison '06

## Colonel Bart R. Johnson, State Field Commander

In 2003, as a result of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the New York State Police established the Office of Counter Terrorism and selected Bart R. Johnson '04 to head it, promoting him to the rank of lieutenant colonel. Now a full colonel, he is deputy superintendent in charge of field command and oversees all field operations, including not only the Office of Counter Terrorism, but the Bureau of Criminal Investigation, the Uniform Force and the associated special details of those units.

A 23-year veteran of the New York State Police, with over 30 years experience in law enforcement, Colonel Johnson also is an Empire State College graduate with a degree in business, management and economics from the Northeast Center. He especially remembers Al Lawrence '76, who was his mentor and was very supportive of him during his time at the college.

Colonel Johnson began his career as a police officer in the City of Peekskill,

New York, in 1977. In 1983, he entered the State Police Academy and rose through the ranks to investigator and senior investigator, during which time he participated in a number of complex and high-level criminal investigations. He was later assigned to the NYS Police Special Investigations Unit in White Plains as a lieutenant, where he was involved in working on organized crime activities, narcotics, and the extensive use of electronic and physical surveillance.

In 1997, he was promoted to major, serving as troop commander of Troop G in Loudonville and responsible for law enforcement operations in the 10-county region of the Capital District. Three years later, he was promoted to staff inspector and placed in charge of Statewide Narcotics Operations for the State Police. Continuing his upward advance, he became lieutenant colonel and, this year, was promoted to colonel.

Johnson also has received many awards and serves on several committees, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police Committee on Terrorism. He also is the chair of the Criminal



Colonel Bart Johnson

Intelligence Coordinating Council, which deals in intelligence initiatives at the national level.

He is married to Maryann, his wife of over 29 years, and has three grown children.

Throughout his career, Colonel Johnson says he has seen the best and worst in people. "The best are those dedicated and law enforcement professionals who have made a difference in law enforcement and the worst are those who prey on society and communities and rip apart the fabric of our country."

## Bill O'Connor, Officer and Educator

From policeman walking the beat in Harlem to tutor in emergency management at Empire State College, Bill O'Connor '01 has made a lot of stops – but steady progress – along the way.

A Queens, New York, native now living in Suffern with his wife Maura and three sons, O'Connor joined the NYPD in 1986. He became a sergeant in 1992 and a lieutenant in 1999, working in the South Bronx and in the Housing Bureau and Organized Crime units.

In 1994, he began his studies at Empire State College's Hudson Valley Center. "I went on and off over the years (working full time, having kids, and working a second job to pay the bills slowed me down)". He graduated in 2001, earning a degree in public safety administration. His mentor was Miriam



Bill O'Connor

Tatzel, "the most patient and encouraging individual," he says.

In 2003, realizing he was going to retire in a few years, O'Connor went to Marist College and earned his master's degree in public administration. Contacting Bob Fruchter, one of his former professors at Empire State College, he mentioned he would like to teach. Professor Fruchter put him

in touch with Al Lawrence '76, assistant professor at the college, and he is now one of the newer adjuncts for the college's Center for Distance Learning, teaching Introduction to Emergency Management. "I'm looking forward to teaching several other courses," he says.

Last year, O'Connor was on the "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" TV show. "While my studies at Empire State College have helped me tremendously, that day it was a little lacking ... I did win \$50,000, however, and that's not too bad. The question I lost on was – 'What type of dog was Toto from the Wizard of Oz?' I did not have a clue. Toto is a Cairn terrier and my kids never miss an opportunity to remind me of missing the answer, especially when I'm questioning them about something they got wrong."

It's obvious Bill O'Connor hasn't gotten much wrong in his life and career, even if he doesn't know his dogs as well as his academics.

# Briefs

(continued)

## José Garcia, Parole Officer

José Garcia '05 became a parole officer via a long and circuitous route that began in the Bronx where he was raised by immigrant parents from Puerto Rico. His mother's illness forced him to put his studies on hold at the Inter-America University of Puerto Rico and at City College a year later. Instead, he went looking for work.

Officer Garcia was encouraged to seek his bachelor's degree by his supervisor at the NYS Office of Child and Family Services where he was employed as an aide working with youths who had been sentenced for at-risk behavior. With his Spanish background he also was able to act as an interpreter.

He decided to enroll in Empire State College "because of the flexibility in schedules and because the labor union,

CSEA, gave out vouchers for employees wanting to pursue a degree." Initially he was mentored by Maureen Martin-Ryan at the Johnstown Unit, but in the summer of 2002 he transferred to the Ithaca Unit. While at Lansing Residential Center there, he noticed that several promotional exams were coming up, such as youth division counselor, which required a bachelor's degree.

"I had a very influential mentor in James Nichols who basically guided me in every aspect in my pursuit of a degree and after I graduated in 2005. Professor Nichols was very knowledgeable of the criminal justice field and was encouraging me to use my bilingual skill and [pursue] careers in police, corrections, social work, etc."

While studying at Empire State College, he learned of an opening at the NYS Department of Corrections, and in March 2005, he got his bachelor's degree in community and human services and immediately was hired as a correction counselor at Auburn Correctional Facility.

He also had the opportunity to act as interpreter for the NYS Division of Parole, and he decided to take the parole



José Garcia

officer exam. He was accepted to Basic Academy Training for the NYS Division of Parole.

"I was very excited to once again begin a new career that was unique among [the] law enforcement community. I was going to use a social science approach in conjunction with that of a law enforcement officer. In a nutshell my degree from Empire State College advanced me immediately and I am thankful to Professor Nichols and Professor Martin-Ryan."

Officer Garcia is married to Tina Garcia and they have two children, Isaiah José and Myiah Gabrielle.

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## Edward Yagger, Officer and Author

Soldier, corrections officer, co-founder of an investigative firm and budding author, Edward Yagger '98 hasn't let any grass grow under his feet. The only child of a Hungarian immigrant mother living in Buffalo, New York, he went to parochial schools and then into the Army Reserves. Afterward, he attended Erie Community College, working two part-time jobs while serving as president of the student government.

He graduated with an associate degree in criminal justice and then attended the training academy of the NYS Department of Correctional Services, later serving at Sing-Sing, Fishkill and, finally, Albion Correctional Facility. He then decided to attend Empire State College's Niagara Frontier Center.

"My experience while studying at Empire State College left me in



Edward Yagger

amazement at what I was able to learn and achieve. My future was wide open."

Early in 2002, he and Ronald Coleman '00, a fellow Empire State College graduate, started a private investigating firm (see Coleman article, next page).

Yagger joined the NYS Division of Parole in 2006. "I graduated near the top of the class. Actually, in second place

(if it weren't for my Glock jamming during a shoot-off for first place). During the graduation ceremony, my weapons instructor, along with my recruit class presented me a small case with the bullet in it, with a little handwritten note that stated 'The one that got away.'"

Yagger credits his wife Diane and four daughters with his successes. "Pursuing my professional career would not have been possible without the loving support of my family," he says.

Now at the Gowanda Correctional Facility, Yagger's future goals include going back to Empire State College for his master's degree. "I also am currently writing a book on my experiences while being a correctional officer in the New York State Department of Correctional Services. The name of the book is *Doing Time, the Thin Blue Line*." He expects it to be available in 2009 - 2010.

## Ronald Coleman, Private Eye

Ronald Coleman '00 isn't your standard-issue, tough-talking, private investigator a la Mickey Spillane. For one thing, he's an Empire State College graduate holding a degree in community and human services with a concentration in criminal justice.

Instead, private eyes today are information specialists, working for businesses, individuals, attorneys, insurance agencies and specialized industries, like casinos. He says, "A good investigator knows how to obtain, cross-reference and link information from various sources, such as witnesses, examination of records, research in public records and field investigations, which can include surveillance." Many, however, work frequently with law enforcement and regulatory agencies, performing such functions as national security background checks and record searches. At times, they also are called upon to testify under oath in court.

Most private investigators, Coleman says, unlike the Mickey Spillane heroes, don't carry a gun, but can if they obtain the necessary permit. He says his work usually isn't dangerous, but it depends on the kind of investigation being conducted. Some individuals, he states, who may "experience consequences" might not take too kindly to what he is uncovering, such as a worker collecting worker's compensation – while still working! He notes, "The investigator's experience and ability are vital not only to the success of the investigation but also to his or her personal safety."

Coleman also is the co-founder and CEO of Empire Protective Services,



Ronald Coleman

Inc., of Buffalo, New York, a private investigative agency that specializes in missing persons, background and fraud investigations. He came to his current calling after starting as a New York state correctional officer in 1990, going on to an appointment as an internal affairs investigator to the department's Inspector General's Office in 1998. In 2002, he earned his private investigator's license and founded Empire Protective Services with Edward Yagger, who also is an Empire State College graduate. In 2005, Coleman became a certified fraud examiner.

Private Eye Coleman especially credits his educational experiences at Empire State College, along with his Inspector General's Office experience, as providing him with the "courage and tools necessary to become an entrepreneur."

Coleman is happily married to a Buffalo public school teacher and has a daughter and three grandchildren, as well as a black Irish lab named Shawnee. His career goals are to continue to help businesses and individuals detect and prevent fraud. "I consider fraud to be a very serious crime that affects the very fabric of our society," he says.

To the Editor:

I read, with great interest, your latest thematic issue. I graduated in 2000 from Empire State College, with a B.S. in writing and design of gastronomical literature. Where, but at Empire State College, could I have done that? I knew I wanted to write about food, but had no idea how to deal with the research, and professional aspects of the writing life. Fortunately, Steve Lewis became my mentor. He's not only bright and witty, but he's one of the most supportive people I've ever met.

My first book, *The Resource Guide for Food Writers* (Routledge, 1999), grew out of an assignment in my first course (on research techniques). It was published before I even graduated! My latest book, *The Herbalist in the Kitchen* (University of Illinois Press, 2007), has just been published this month.

Buy the way, as soon as I graduated I began teaching food writing and food and culture at Empire State College – and have many Culinary Institute of America (CIA) faculty and staff members as students.

Gary Allen '00

## Serving People in Uniform

*(continued from page 1)*

others will welcome the chance to do something entirely different. Empire State College's educational planning approach to degree studies helps students to make choices and decisions that enable them to plan for current and subsequent careers.

### Dedicated Learning

While Empire State College's flexibility in program offerings and creativity in the delivery of those programs is unmatched anywhere, it is the opportunity to learn that makes the program outstanding. Our military personnel, police officers and firefighters are extremely dedicated, not only to their jobs, but also to the opportunities to learn. They are very focused on their objectives, consistent with the dedication they exhibit. One of the most satisfying things that we do as teachers is to channel that dedication and focus towards recognition of the learning opportunities available to students. As faculty members, we know that we have been successful when students make the transition from "I need credits ..." to "I want to learn ..."

### One More Thought

The flip side of the opportunities for those in the uniformed services is the chance for their spouses to pursue their studies as well. In fact, it has sometimes been the case at Empire State College that a family member's pursuit of a degree motivates the other family member to do the same. We might even say that studying at Empire State College can be a real family affair.

*Jim Savitt is area coordinator for emergency management and emergency services with the Center for Distance Learning.*



Alfredo Fuentes

FIRE SERVICES

# Proud to Be An American

by Hope Ferguson

September 11, 2001 was a day that changed America forever. It was also a day that changed Capt. Alfredo Fuentes's life irrevocably, as well. A veteran firefighter who was in charge of the FDNY's Marine Operations, Fuentes, '01, was helping to evacuate people from the north tower, when the building collapsed around him. Shielding himself with his hands, he miraculously escaped with his life when some steel girders fell in an archway around him, rather than crushing him. But health concerns dogged him following 9/11. He'd been in a coma, broken several bones, fractured his skull, had his left lung collapse and both lungs burned.

He's since had several surgeries on his lungs. Because of his lingering health problems, in February 2003, he was forced to retire from the FDNY. "I can drive and walk around, I'm pretty good, and happy with what I have achieved," he said of his health during a recent phone conversation.

But Fuentes struggled with survivor guilt as well. He says he didn't understand why, at 51, his life was spared, while many of the younger firefighters – his "brothers" – perished that day.

"Because of what I saw, I decided to re-invent myself to assist in the goal of fighting against terrorism," he says. He founded the Patriot Group, with a number of other volunteers. The 501(C)3 group provides training and practical

assistance to first responders across the nation. For example, the group donated a 23-foot fireboat to the city of Memphis. "The mission is to assist first responders and to support them in any way we can."

Fuentes was no stranger to disaster that September morning. He also had been the search team manager for New York Task Force No. 1 following the Oklahoma City bombings. After seeing how the lives of his team were often imperiled by unstable debris, he invented an instrument that is able to monitor building stability via a telescope that feeds real-time video to a computer, and is able to determine changes in the building structure. He received a U.S. patent on the invention. "It was a scary situation, and I started thinking – what can we do to protect our people?"

Fuentes runs a consulting business and has consulted for FEMA. He has enrolled in the master's program in homeland security leadership at the University of Connecticut, and has authored a book, *American by Choice* (Fire Dreams Publishing, 2004). The Ecuador-born Fuentes immigrated to the United States with his family at age seven. The book, he said, grew out of his survivor guilt, when a counselor recommended he pen his thoughts as a form of therapy. It details his immigration experience, talks about what it means to be an American, touches on 9/11 of course, and is now used in a number of schools. The letters

he gets from school children that have read the book touch him greatly, he said.

Fuentes graduated from Empire State College's Long Island Center with a degree in community and human services. His mentor was Barbara Kantz. He at first wondered why he was bothering to get a degree, since it wasn't necessary for his job, but his wife told him, "Al, just stick it out." He is happy he did, as it has proved invaluable to the work he now does, and was a prerequisite for his master's degree. "I never thought it would be so important. I thank God Empire State College gave me the flexibility to work college into my busy schedule."

Reflecting on the post-9/11 environment, Fuentes says, "The world has changed. It's getting smaller, globally speaking. There are so many cultures and religions. We, as Americans, have to be proud of ourselves, but also embrace different cultures and different religions, and take part in the foreign policy of our country, and never forget sacrifices of our first responders and soldiers. Americans come in different colors, shapes, we speak different languages – that's what makes us so unique. I know we're not perfect, but we can all partake of, and be part of, the process to steer it in a right direction." Then, he added, "I don't think you can find a prouder American than me."

# Briefs

by Ashley Farrell



Henry Butts

## Henry Butts, Watertown, Wisconsin Fire Chief

Entering the Explorer Scout Program when he was 16 years old allowed Henry Butts '95 to see what being a firefighter was really like. He decided that this was what he wanted to do with his life and signed up three years later.

Butts is the fire chief of the Watertown, Wisconsin Fire Department where he's held that post for the last nine years. He made the decision to go north, from his prior post at the Orange County, Florida Fire Department.

As do so many others, he realized he needed to have his degree in order to apply for promotions within the department. Empire State College came to him via a co-worker (also an adjunct faculty member) and he decided to enroll in the Center for Distance Learning. Pleased that he went back to school, Butts said, "This experience has prepared me well for where I wanted to go in my career."



Paul Antonellis

## Paul Antonellis, From Firefighting to Teaching

Professor, curriculum developer, fire chief and author are just some of the titles which apply to Paul Antonellis '00, '03. While he was a line fireman, he earned his bachelor's degree from the Center for Distance Learning. He eventually became the fire chief with the Salisbury, Massachusetts department and continued on to earn his master's degree in labor and policy studies.

He retired from the fire service, but that has not stopped his passion for the industry. He is an adjunct professor at Empire State College, Anna Maria College, Southern New Hampshire University and the University of Maryland. He further develops core curriculum for the college's online fire service administration program.

Antonellis' academic career continues to be busy and he has published more than 25 articles in numerous trade journals and has written two books. His latest is called *Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Firefighters: The Calls That Stick with You* (Chevron Publishing Corp.).



Warren Abriel

## Warren Abriel, Carrying on the Family Tradition

When Warren Abriel '85, entered into the fire service industry, not only was he starting his lifelong career, but he also was continuing on with family tradition. Abriel is the fourth generation from his family to work at the Albany Fire Department. According to Abriel, a member of his family has been working for the fire department since 1867.

Abriel is one of the deputy chiefs, in charge of such things as the payroll, disciplinary action, coordinating the physicals for the firefighters, etc. He started working for the Albany Fire Department in 1972, after his service with the U.S. Navy came to an end, and he has worked his way up since then.

When Abriel started reading some trade journals, he realized that in order to gain job opportunities, he was going to need a degree. He earned his associate degree, and then he noticed how the journals were now saying that bachelor's degrees were needed to be able to attain a higher position. Abriel ended up earning a bachelor's degree as well as a master's.

"Going back to school helped me to gain knowledge that I'm able to use when it comes to my job."

### Tell us your story!

We are seeking contributions for future issues of the magazine. Are you in:  
the environment, the arts, science, math or technology?

If you are, please contact Hope Ferguson, editor, at [Hope.Ferguson@esc.edu](mailto:Hope.Ferguson@esc.edu).

## Joseph Klucznik, Chief of East Providence Fire Department

From volunteer firefighter to becoming the chief of East Providence Fire Department, Joseph Klucznik '03, has come quite a long way in his 24-year career.

When he first started out with the department, Klucznik was finishing up his associate degree. Over time, he went back to school to earn a bachelor's degree in fire service administration to help him advance his career.

Klucznik had originally gone to school to become a journalist, but then switched over to pre-med. "I realized that the biggest impact on helping those in need and actually 'saving lives' was done in the street, before a person was even brought to an emergency room facility," he observed. "So, I decided to get my Emergency Medical Technician's license, and worked as an EMT. I realized that in order to properly use that skill, I must become a member of a fire department. It took six years for that dream to be realized, but in March of 1987, I was hired by my hometown department, the East Providence (RI) Fire Department."

He has worked for the East Providence Fire Department for 19 years. During that time he rose to the ranks of captain and now to chief. "As an instructor along with being a firefighter, I've always been an advocate of education. In this field, I truly believe that if a person stops attempting to learn, he or she becomes dangerous. And that is just unacceptable. I believe in leading by example. So, if I serve as a teacher, I must show that I also am willing to learn, to stay current and on top of things," Klucznik says.



Lou Nigro

## Lou Nigro, Firefighter to Homeland Security

Lou Nigro '06 is a supervisory criminal investigator within Immigration and Customs Enforcement for the Department of Homeland Security.

He enrolled in Empire State College for a couple of reasons, he said. "The primary reason was to satisfy myself and finish something I had started a long time ago. I also wanted to show my sons that I could finish school while working full time." Another factor was that many of the people that Nigro knows have four-year degrees, and he wanted to be on an equal level with his peers. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in emergency management.

Nigro liked the fact that the fire service program at Empire State College worked well with his background and his previous education. He was able to make his degree program into a more personal experience that tied in with the goals he wanted to achieve.

Nigro has worked for the federal government for the last 20 years as a law enforcement officer. Before moving to the government, Nigro was a firefighter at the Rural/Metro Fire Department in Tucson, Arizona. He was also a volunteer firefighter in Long Island and Fairfax, Vermont. Nigro has 13 years worth of experience in the fire service industry.

## Pioneering Officer

(continued from page 5)

tions of organized crime families. "We were assigned to many long-term, in-depth investigations of crime families, which included gambling, narcotics and homicide cases." Shades of "The Sopranos."

In 1992, she was chosen by the NYPD to attend the FBI National Academy, 168<sup>th</sup> Session. Conry says, "It was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience for me to spend three months with 250 other mid- and upper-level law enforcement managers from around the world." Conry's recent Empire State College experience greatly helped her with her studies at the FBI National Academy. She says the session was similar to going to Harvard and taking courses in administration, organization and psychological profiling with people who were slated to be future leaders in law enforcement management.

After 23 years with the NYPD, Conry decided to begin a second career in the Tampa Bay area, since she already had a condo in Clearwater, Florida. Coincidentally, her roommate at the FBI National Academy, who was from Florida, suggested she subscribe to a Florida law enforcement magazine. In it, Conry found an ad for a Medicaid Fraud Control Unit investigator position in the Tampa office of the Florida Attorney General, and applied. She was contacted, flew down for an interview, and was offered the position. She retired from the NYPD in 1995, and began her new career in Tampa, Florida, where she started as a senior investigator, investigating Medicaid provider fraud. "Millions of dollars in fraudulent claims for medical equipment led to numerous convictions in Florida alone, although Medicaid fraud is not unique to Florida," she says. Investigations of Medicare and Medicaid fraud in patient care, medications and provider services, as well as equipment, are being pursued across the country.

During her employment with the Florida Attorney General's Office, Conry has been promoted to lieutenant and then captain – no surprise for this former NYPD officer. She feels fortunate indeed to have been able to achieve the goals she set for herself – and then some. It must be that well-known fighting Brooklyn spirit. ○



# College News

## Three New Deans Appointed



Dr. Gerry Lorentz

### Northeast Center

Dr. Gerry Lorentz, Ph.D., has been appointed as dean of the Northeast Center. Previous to his appointment, he was associate dean for humanities, business and social sciences, and dean of the division of liberal arts at Massachusetts Bay Community College. He previously served as director of the African AIDS Initiative at the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute at Harvard University, and as staff archeologist for a consulting firm in Ontario. He has presented on academic leadership and building a learning culture, and is active in a number of professional organizations. Dr. Lorentz holds a B.A. in history and archeology, an M.A. in early modern British history from Wilfred Laurier University in Ontario, Canada, and a Ph.D. in early modern British and European history from the University of Toronto. Joyce Elliott, provost and vice president for academic affairs at the college, said, "Lorentz's academic and professional background, experience in a multi-campus institution serving a diverse student body, and leadership on teaching and learning issues will serve the center and college well in the coming years."



Tuesday L. Cooper

### Long Island Center

Tuesday La'Nette Cooper, J.D., Ed.D, has been appointed dean of the Long Island Center. She comes to the college from Eastern Connecticut State University where she served as associate dean in the School of Education and Professional Studies and the Graduate Division. She was a faculty chairperson and assistant professor at Springfield College in Springfield, Massachusetts as well as coordinator of criminal justice/instructor; project staff and adjunct faculty. Cooper also has served as a staff attorney and law fellow at Western Massachusetts Legal Services and the Civic League of Greater New Brunswick. She has written and presented extensively on diversity issues and holds membership in a number of professional organizations, including the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education Special Study Group – Deans of Color, and the Association for the Study of Higher Education. She holds a Doctorate of Education in Higher Education Administration from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst; a Juris Doctor from Western New England College and a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Rutgers College.



Robert Clougherty

### Center for Graduate Programs

Dr. Robert Clougherty, Ph.D., has been appointed as dean of the Center for Graduate Programs. Clougherty has been a member of the Tennessee Technological University English faculty since 1994, serving as chair of the graduate program for several years. As the founding director of the Institute for Technological Scholarship, he oversaw the application of technology to teaching, including all online courses, at Tennessee Tech. He also directed the B.S. degree program in web design, as well as the Tennessee Advanced Computing Technologies Institute, which developed new interdepartmental programs related to some aspect of computing. Dr. Clougherty holds a B.A. from Villanova University, an M.A. in English from Texas Woman's University and a Ph.D. in Modern Letters from the University of Tulsa.

He was a Fulbright Scholar in Uppsala, Sweden, is nationally recognized for his work in e-learning and web applications, and has published and presented widely in this area as well as in literature (e.g., Irish poets). His published writings, including original poetry, have been translated into several languages.

## Head of New Nursing Program Named

Dr. Rosann J. Carpenter was named the college's first director of nursing. She previously served as an assistant professor of nursing with the Massachusetts College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Sciences (Boston) and later as course coordinator and theory and clinical instructor at Memorial and Samaritan Hospitals in the Capital District. She had held two clinical nursing positions and has worked as an adjunct professor at Skidmore College. Dr. Carpenter holds B.S. and M.S. degrees in nursing, both with honors, from Adelphi University (Long Island), and recently earned an Ed.D. in applied



Dr. Rosann J. Carpenter

physiology from Teachers College, Columbia University.

The Committee on Undergraduate Studies and Policies (CUSP) and the college Senate approved the B.S. in nursing program design in March. The program proposal was submitted in June for approval by SUNY and the State Education Department. The college plans to admit its first cohort of nursing students in fall 2008.

Over the next few months, Dr. Carpenter will assist in the final development of the nursing program proposal as well as co-chair the faculty search with Center for Distance Learning Dean Meg Benke.

## GIFT GALLERY

Coffee Mug	\$10
Travel Mug	\$8
Baseball Cap (navy or wheat)	\$12
Sweatshirt M, L, XL (black or grey) XXL (black only)	\$35
Shoulder Tote	\$8
Golf Shirt M, L, XL (black or white)	\$22
T-Shirt M, L, XL (black or grey) XXL (black only)	\$18
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Hooded Sweatshirt S, M, L or XL (photo on web site)	\$38
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Crystal Paperweight	\$32
Boston Rocker	\$295
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# Faculty News

## Catherine Collins, Niagara Frontier Center, Mentors in Criminal Justice

Community and human services Mentor Catherine Collins traces her interest in criminal justice to the five years she served on the New York State Commission of Corrections, Medical Review Board in the 1980s. The longtime nurse was charged with working with the commission to investigate all deaths that occurred in the New York state prison system; rendering a decision about whether or not the state had been negligent in cases of accidental deaths. The commission also oversaw other health and social issues.

In the 1970s, Collins was appointed to the commission by then Governor Hugh Carey, and became the first nurse and the first African American to so serve. Since then, the Buffalo native has been director for ambulatory care services at Erie County Medical Center, running 79 clinics, including several for inmates. Eventually, she took part in the transition to onsite health centers within the prison during the 1980s. As a volunteer, she worked to recruit nurses to work in prisons, despite the difficulty of persuading them to work in the facilities.

It was her interest in health in the African-American community that led her to the prison system. She was awarded with the New York State Health Educators award as a result of a program she and 10 other healthcare professionals took into Attica Prison to teach inmates about AIDS and other health issues. Now, the former school and hospital nurse has found a way to contribute academically to her two passions – health and prisons.

After earning her A.A.S. from Trocaire College, as a nurse practitioner (SUNY School of Nursing), Collins went on to earn her B.S. in vocational education at SUNY at Buffalo; her M.S. in allied health, education, evaluation and curriculum development; and her Ed.D. in education administration. She holds a special interest in issues relating to women and women in the criminal justice system. For its 10th anniversary,

she is significantly revising her groundbreaking book, *The Imprisonment of African American Women: Causes, Conditions and Future Implications*, (McFarland Publishing Group) which won the 1997 Outstanding Academic and Scholarly Award from the Library Association. When she started doing research on women in prisons, she found that the national data pool was very slim. So she set about surveying all U.S. prisons where women were held, and her book is now in demand in libraries and colleges. Following a research trip to South Africa, to document the treatment of women in South African prisons, and to compare and contrast it to treatment in this country, she wrote the soon-to-be released *The International Treatment of Women of Color in Criminal Justice* (McFarland Publishing Group). “Even in South Africa, despite its history of Apartheid, they treat their women inmates with more respect than we do here in the U.S.,” she asserts. “No men can work inside the facilities where women live. That’s something we have been wrestling with in this country – the abuse of women inmates by custodial staff.” Collins believes strongly that the unequal power and status balance between inmates and prison guards and other staff sets up ripe conditions for predatory behavior and abuse. “Men should not work in facilities with women who cannot consent – who are totally powerless,” she says with conviction.

Collins also has written a number of health-related titles aimed at African-American women that have been reviewed favorably in local media across the country as well as in *Essence* magazine.

She returned to school for her doctorate, “because I love to learn,” she explains. “I have always been a person who loves education. It’s a lifeline for me. I love learning, and I love educating. That’s my passion.”

She finds time for writing, besides her full student load, by keeping night-owl



Catherine Collins

hours. She says she will be up at “1 or 2 o’clock in the morning; it’s never-ending. I am up all hours. I also spend a lot of time on the weekends [writing and researching]. I go to church early and work the rest of the day.”

She mentors students in African-American history, media and crime, racism and the criminal justice system, women and crime, women’s health issues, stress and health, and international women of color issues.

The most fulfilling thing for Collins is seeing her students succeed. She has many police officers, border patrol agents and parole officers among her students, and loves to hear stories about how they were promoted on their jobs as a result of their studies. One of her police officer students even enrolled in law school after he retired. “He wants to reach back and help, because he understands the problems.”

Another passion that fuels Collins’ life is for secondary education. She serves on the Buffalo school board, and is interested in strengthening the reading and writing curriculum, and keeping kids from dropping out. “Seventy-nine percent of the prison population did not graduate from high school,” she says. Her object, she says, is keeping them in school now, “so they won’t face the criminal justice system later.”

# Alumni News

## Center for Distance Learning

Zachary Chapman '03 and Joseph W. Millard '04 are following very similar career paths. Both hold associate degrees from Jefferson Community College, bachelor's degrees in health services administration from Empire State College, and now they have been awarded master's degrees in health services administration from SUNY Institute of Technology. The two men are employed with Carthage Area Hospital, Chapman as administrator of primary care and Millard as administrator of special services.

Ozan Seybold '98 is learning sign language along with a doctor from a Red Cross clinic to bolster her ability to communicate with patients in need when the doctor opens her clinic later this year.

Brooklynn Welden '06 is completing a master's degree through Norwich University.



Joe Winiarz

Joe Winiarz '05 has been promoted to field auditor for Budget Truck's southeast region. Since graduating, Winiarz and his family have relocated to Jacksonville, Florida, and he is working towards his master's degree at Norwich University.

## Center for Graduate Programs

Judy Eurich '05 is the new director of community relations and graphics at Dutchess Community College, which is the office responsible for all of the college's publications, web content, media advertising, press relations, and a variety of campus and community outreach activities. She most recently worked for Sullivan County Community College, as director of public relations. Having earned a Bachelor

of Arts degree from Fordham University and a Master of Arts degree from the college's Center for Graduate Programs, Eurich also is an adjunct professor who teaches public relations at SUNY New Paltz.

Melissa Fleischmann '03, who also holds degrees from the University of Hawaii and Le Moyne College, has been appointed manager of marketing and promotion with the Sterling Renaissance Festival. She will be in charge of the creation and execution of marketing and promotion plans as well as development of local market relationships, niche promotions and grant opportunities for the Renaissance Performing Artists' Guild. She also is a U.S. Army veteran.

Sharon Henesy '06 has been accepted in the Ph.D. program at Binghamton University.

The Jewish Theological Seminary honored Irene Lustgarten '92, who has been a Hebrew educator and administrator for nearly 30 years, with an honorary degree, doctor of pedagogy, honoris causis. As director of the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York, Lustgarten offers her assistance to Westchester County's 35 Jewish preschools and 50 congregational schools, among others. She is a past president of Westchester Association of Hebrew Schools' Principals Council and is a former board member and conference chair of the Jewish Educators Assembly.

The interests of Jasmine Tang '96 are taking her to China to attend workshops; one geared toward future mandarin teachers and another on Chinese calligraphy.

## Center for International Programs

Ermir Dardha '06 is president of the Tirana, Albania Alumni Association.

Having earned a bachelor's degree in computer science, Moutafi Garyfallia '06 now plans to earn a master's degree in public relations.



Joe Doumit (ctr.) in Kuwait

Joe Doumit '04 is a training and development manager in the state of Kuwait.



Jean Hachem and fiancée

Jean Hachem '05 is marketing and project coordinator for Mirodec, a decorative glass company in Lebanon. He plans to continue his studies, working toward a Master of Science degree in marketing at American University of Technology, also in Lebanon.



Elie Sfeir

Elie Sfeir '06, who earned a Bachelor of Science degree in hospitality management, is reservation supervisor at the Crowne Plaza, Beirut, Lebanon. Gregory Vardarinos '06, who serves in the United States Air Force, is the recipient of a scholarship to attend the seminar, "Cinematic and Literary Traditions of Liberty," organized by the Institute for Humane Studies at UCLA. His other educational plans include study toward his master's degree in England.

## Central New York Center

**Paula Behm '95** has been named business development specialist at the SUNY Oswego Institute for Professional and Organizational Development in Phoenix, New York. Behm will be working with business, government and nonprofit organizations to help employers identify training needs, develop customized training programs and to promote the institute's professional development courses. Behm, who also holds a master's degree from Le Moyne College, is vice president of membership for the Central New York American Society of Training and Development.

**Andy Cline '05** is a transmissions supervisor with the New York Power Authority.

**Martha Dickson-McMahon '06** has been named Camillus town clerk.

**Tracy Gates '06** has been promoted from controller to vice president and chief financial officer of Schuyler Hospital. She has enrolled with the college's Center for Graduate Programs where she is working toward an M.B.A.

**Catherine A. Hanover '06**, vice president of St. Elizabeth Medical Center, was recognized by Leadership Mohawk Valley for excellence and leadership in the workplace and the community. Hanover has more than 30 years of healthcare experience, the last five of which have been with St. Elizabeth Medical Center. She is a member of the Central New York Health Systems Agency Board of Directors, the Hope House Advisory Committee, the American College of Healthcare Executives and the Genesis Group.

**Michele Leonello '02**, a certified alcoholism and substance abuse counselor with 12 years of experience, has been named program director for G.R.A.C.E. House, a chemical dependency community residence of Unity House of Cayuga County Inc.

**Rosanna M. Moser '82**, SUNY Canton professor of office technology, has received the 2007 distinguished faculty award. She is the department chairwoman of business faculty in the School of Business and Public Service, and also organized Professional Development Week, allowing students to learn how to improve their interview skills, how to properly dress for success and to engage in extracurricular learning. In addition to her bachelor's degree from

Empire State College, Moser holds a master's degree from SUNY Oswego.

**Mari Ellen Ryan '91**, a certified technician in computer software and hardware who specializes in digital photographic and graphic production, has accepted a position of technical engineer II with Cazenovia College. She most recently worked as a technical specialist for Onondaga Community College.

**Dorothy Stacy '93** is the author of *Erie Canal Cousins* (Morris Publishing). Stacy also has started her own publishing company, Blackberry Hill Press.

Possessing 23 years of experience, including work as a critical care nurse in an intensive care unit and as director of the Elmira College's Health Center, **Faith Tarby '89** was keynote speaker at Nathan Littauer Hospital's HealthLink's 11th annual women's wellness conference. She was awarded her diploma in nursing by St. Joseph's Hospital School of Nursing and following graduation from Empire State College, earned her master's in education at Elmira College.

## Genesee Valley Center

**Marjorie Finer '85**, co-owner of the graphic design firm, The Inner Group, Cortlandt; was named to the board of directors of the Women's Enterprise Development Center (WEDC), a women's business center that serves women entrepreneurs. She also is chair of The Alliance of Hudson Valley Women Business Owners, a WEDC affiliate.

## Hudson Valley Center

*Under Orion*, a book of poetry by **Gregg Weatherby '02**, has been released by Pudding House Publications. He has authored a second book of poems that will be released later this year by Finishing Line Press.

## Long Island Center

A 13-year veteran of the South County Library system, **Kathleen Scheibel '98** has been appointed the library director of Brookhaven Library. In addition to other duties, she will oversee the library's current \$200,000 renovation project. Scheibel is working toward a library arts degree through C.W. Post.

*New York and African Tapestries* (Fly By Night Press) is the most recent work of

poetry from **Juanita Torrence-Thompson '83**, publisher and editor of *Mobius, The Poetry Magazine*.

## Metropolitan Center

**Dawoud Bey '90**, who holds a master's degree from Yale University and is a photography professor at Columbia College in Chicago, has a local and national reputation as one of Chicago's best-known art photographers. His most recent project, *Class Pictures*, is being published by Aperture. They also will mount a related traveling exhibition of this project that will tour museums throughout the country. Bey's accomplishments are many and impressive. He is the author of *Dawoud Bey: Portraits, 1975-1995* and his work has been exhibited in places such as: the Art Institute of Chicago, The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Barbican Center and the National Portrait Gallery in London, Atlanta's High Museum of Art and the Whitney Museum of American Art.

**Zazel Chavah '02** is the recipient of the Patient Advocate Scholarship, awarded to individuals who have suffered from a traumatic illness – in Chavah's case, a stroke – and who are leaders in the disability community. The ceremony took place in Washington D.C., where Chavah and others were invited to speak to the Senate, Congress and White House officials about health insurance.

The art of **Richard Garet, '07** was included in the Best of SUNY exhibition at the New York State Museum this past May. He was selected out of a group of five students from the Metropolitan Center who participated in the All SUNY exhibition. Garet also has completed a residency at Frank Lloyd Wright's estate in Taliesan.



**Dina Grossman '84**, pen name **Yaakol Shirim**, is the author of *How We Returned to Egypt*. Born in Moscow, she immigrated to Israel in 1981. She traveled to the U.S., earning a Bachelor of Arts degree from Empire State College and studying with the Graduate Communication Design Program of Pratt Institute before returning to Israel in 1989. Currently, she is a resident of New York.

**Brother André Mathieu '77**, a member of the Roman Catholic religious community, works with the Passionist Spiritual Center in the Bronx, NY. He has earned a Master of Arts degree in pastoral theology from Boston College, a Master of Science degree in gerontology from the College of New Rochelle and is certified in death and dying by the Association for Death Education and Counseling. Brother Mathieu directs retreats and workshops on spirituality, aging, death and dying.

**Irving Laurice Mintz '94** is the president and artistic director of Portals of Wonder, a volunteer-driven, charitable not-for-profit program that brings vaudeville shows to at-risk and homeless youth, the elderly and children with critical illnesses. These shows are funded by donations and performances of the shows. For more information visit [www.PortalsOfWonder.org](http://www.PortalsOfWonder.org).

For the past three years, **Anabel Ressler '04** and her husband have owned Augie's Good to Go Café in Beacon, New York. In addition to being a restaurateur and writer, Ressler is attending graduate school so that she may become a teacher of English language arts for adolescents.



Paul Serrato

*Pianomania* is the latest musical release by **Paul Serrato '95** on his label company, Graffiti Productions. After more than a decade of releasing and distributing his music, he has built a strong and devoted fan base among jazz listeners across the country.

## Niagara Frontier Center

**Donna Kahm '00** has been named chief executive officer of the Southern Tier Health Care System, Inc. She began in 2001 as director of planning and development and became chief operating officer in 2002. Currently, she is pursuing a dual master's degree and Ph.D. in business administration from California Coast University.

**Althea Luehrsen '02** is executive director of the University of Buffalo's School of Management, Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership. Being a mentor with the Buffalo Niagara Partnership Woman to Woman Mentoring Program is but one of her community involvements.

**Michael Meyers '85** was named the director of systems and member services of the credit information division of ABC-Amega Inc., a global commercial receivable management firm that has its headquarters in Buffalo. Previously serving as project specialist, he has more than 30 years of experience with ABC Companies Inc., the parent firm of ABC-Amega.

**Diane Ross '85**, who holds a Master of Science degree from Canisius College and a certificate of human resources management from the Cornell School of Industrial Relations, has been named vocational rehabilitation specialist with NCAComp, an administrator of self-insured workers' compensation and disability programs for both large and small employers in upstate New York.



Kathleen Skipper

**Kathleen Skipper '01** is the author of *A Rose is God's Autograph*, which tells the story of her son Mark's battle with cancer. Now retired, she was an RN and bereavement coordinator with Kaleida Health – Millard Fillmore Suburban Hospital, who in 2001 and 2006 was a NYS Nurse of Distinction nominee.



Richard Taczkowski

**Richard Taczkowski '02**, who earned a master's degree in urban planning from the University of Buffalo in 2006, has accepted the position of land-use training specialist with the Adirondack Park Agency. Taczkowski brings to the position more than 10 years of experience including efforts to return public transit to rural Rt. 62 corridor of Southern Erie County.

## Northeast Center

**Carol Dimopoulos '03** was named outstanding student in the graduate business programs at Sage Graduate School from which she received her M.B.A. She is currently the vice president for International Development at Celtic Tours in Albany.

Having worked at Columbia-Greene Community College for the past 25 years, most recently as director of academic support services, **Carol Doerfer '88** has been

appointed assistant dean of academic affairs at CGCC. She earned her A.A.S. in business management from Columbia-Greene and following her studies at Empire State College, went on to earn an M.S. in educational administration from the University at Albany. Presently she is enrolled in a doctoral program at Grambling State University. Her many accolades include the President's Award for Excellence in Administration, 1996; SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Professional Services, 1997; Athletic Director's Award, 2007; and the New York College Learning Skills Association's Professional Development Scholarship, 2007.

**Steve Mistretta '99** has been doing volunteer work with Food for Everyone Foundation. One activity of the foundation is conducting gardening demos. More information is available at: [Steve@Foodforeveryone.org](mailto:Steve@Foodforeveryone.org).

**Steve Pennisi '03** has been named director of career services at Mildred Elley. Pennisi will be in charge of placing Mildred Elley graduates in in-field or related field employment positions, as well as building relationships with employers and agencies within the community for training and placement opportunities. Pennisi was recently the employment services director at Career Connections LLC.

**Darius Prince '94** is the author of *What Are You Waiting For*, an inspirational guide available at Barnes & Nobles, Borders as well as online.

**Anthony Servidone '93**, who holds a Master of Arts degree in special education and administration from Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, is a physical education teacher for Columbia High School. Head coach of the wrestling and varsity football teams, in 2004, he was named wrestling Coach of the Year. For the past 12 years he has been an official with the Central District Wrestling Officials Association.

As part of efforts being made to re-establish economic viability and sustainability of the community of Cobleskill, a planning committee has been formed – of which **Cynthia Wilson '91** is a member – to secure that town as the site of the Bioneers Satellite Conference to be held this October. Visit [www.bioneers.org](http://www.bioneers.org) or [www.sustaincobleskill.org](http://www.sustaincobleskill.org) for more information about the conference or Cobleskill, New York.



This past spring, faculty mentor, David Wheeler organized a CDL alumni student art exhibit. From left to right, Dr. Wheeler and artists; Nancy Harple '02, '05; Bonnie Warden '06; and students Aili Macdonald; Deborah Gaida Ostrowski; Jason Zerrillo; Steve Van Avery.

# 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](mailto:Maureen.Winney@esc.edu).



A largely expanded Staten Island Unit celebrated their new space with an alumni student open house. From left to right, current students Afifa Upal and Grace Dominguez were all smiles at the event.



Colleen Hendrick '85 (center) and her African Drum and Dance Group, Mush Mango, performing at the Genesee Valley Center retreat.



# BACK TO YOU

Alumni and Student Events  
Around the College

Alumna Yalin Deng Diao '05, and her husband Wayne, toured the newly renovated Alumni House in Saratoga Springs in June. Yalin and Wayne, who were expecting their first child in September, wanted to see Empire State College's headquarters during a vacation swing north of New York City. From China, Yalin is a graduate of the Metropolitan Center, and works at a law firm as a paralegal on immigration issues, among other things. She met International Student Advisor Melanie Kaiser in person for the first time. (l-r) Melanie Kaiser, Yalin and Wayne.



The historically renovated Alumni House opened in March, 2007.





## Creating An Endowed Scholarship Fund

**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? Fifty-three percent of our students have incomes modest enough to qualify for financial aid. Scholarship support from alumni and friends is a great way to open the door to opportunity for future adult learners.

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

### *An Endowed Scholarship Now*

You may discover that establishing an endowed scholarship (\$25,000 minimum) is not possible right now. However, you could consider spreading your gift 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 give the stock as a gift to the Empire State College Foundation, which can sell the stock without incurring a capital gains tax and provide you with a tax deduction.

### *An Endowed Scholarship Later*

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

### *An Endowed 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 would then endow the scholarship forever.

Do you want to learn more about creating your own endowed scholarship fund at Empire State College, and discover additional ways to fund it? If you would like to talk in confidence, without obligation, please contact Alta Schallehn, director of gift planning, at 518 587-2100 ext. 2413 or [Alta.Schallehn@esc.edu](mailto:Alta.Schallehn@esc.edu).

# Remember the feeling when you graduated from Empire State College?



This is what some recent 2007 graduates have said about their experience:

*“Without Empire State College, my dreams of obtaining my degrees would not have been possible. There are so many people along this journey who helped me ... especially my mentors, who guided me through my undergraduate studies and my M.B.A. professors with their support, flexibility and guidance.”* – Ladean Adamiszyn

*“Earning a college degree ranks as one of my greatest personal achievements. However, I did not accomplish this alone. The support and encouragement of the staff at Empire State College was phenomenal – thank you.”*  
– Cheryl Samborin

*“After I received my degree, I received a promotion within days ... I have come to realize that striving for an education is very important ... Every experience or difficulty along the way has strengthened me as a person, both professionally and personally.”* – Pamila Denny

*“Don’t let outside pressure stop you from obtaining a degree. Be determined and set priorities that are important in your life.”* – Martha Cusack

Please help current Empire State College students achieve their dreams as you have. Support the Empire State College Annual Fund. Please visit [www.esc.edu/giving](http://www.esc.edu/giving) to make your gift online. Or send your gift to Empire State College, Office of Annual Giving, Alumni House, 28 Union Avenue, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866-4390. Call Diane Thompson at 800 847-3000 ext. 2337 for more information.

*Your gift will help dreams come true.*



## EMPIRE STATE COLLEGE

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

*“Perhaps the most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you have to do, when it ought to be done ... ”*

*–Thomas H. Huxley*

## Travel Abroad Program

# Springtime in the Netherlands

awaits you!

May 3 - 10, 2008

Please join us as we tour museums, diamond factories, the Anne Frank House, the Royal Delftware Factory, windmills, the largest flower garden in the world as well as canal rides and a day trip to Amsterdam (on Liberation Day of Holland!) and Bruges, Belgium.

### Our trip includes:

- round trip airfare on Continental's direct flight from Newark to Amsterdam
- six nights accommodation in first class Park Hotel in The Hague, based on double occupancy. All rooms with private facilities
- luggage handling at the hotel (one piece per person, in and out)
- full buffet breakfast daily
- three dinners including a welcome and farewell dinner and an Indonesian rice table
- tour escort throughout the program
- local guide for city tour of Bruges and Amsterdam
- private coach for all transfers, excursions and city tours according to the itinerary
- entrance fees: Keukenhof Gardens, Aalsmeer Flower Auction, Delft Blue Pottery Factory, Peace Palace, boat rides in Bruges and Amsterdam, Gassan Diamond Centre, windmill in Zaanse Schans

All this for \$2,044 per person, double occupancy (not included are departure tax, security fees and surcharges of \$280 – approximate cost – and will be determined at time of ticketing). A single supplement is available.

### Optional

**Delft Blue Pottery Tile Painting Workshop on Day 4.** Royal Delft offers you the opportunity of painting your own tile in the world famous Delft Blue Pottery Factory under the supervision of one of our professional painters. The lecture, painting and showroom tour will take about three hours. Each participant will paint a tile (or Christmas bell). The price is \$75 per person including delivery costs of your tiles to hotel.

### Proposed Itinerary

(For detailed itinerary, go to [www.esc.edu/alumnitravel](http://www.esc.edu/alumnitravel).)

**DAY 1: Newark – Amsterdam:** Depart the states for your overnight flight to Amsterdam. Dinner is served aboard, shortly after take off.

**DAY 2: The Hague** – Arrive at Amsterdam Schiphol airport where you will be welcomed by a tour representative, who will accompany you and your group to The Hague. Enjoy an early morning panoramic tour of The Hague to view some of the historical places. On then, to the hotel, your home for the next six nights. Welcome dinner tonight.

**DAY 3: Amsterdam** – Today is Liberation Day of Holland, celebrating the end of WWII. There are festivals and celebrations all over the country! Today we visit a museum, diamond factory, the Anne Frank House and tour on the canal.

**DAY 4: The Hague and Delft** – Today is a highlight! After breakfast we go on to The Keukenhof Gardens, a 77-acre wooded park with over six million bulbs, it is the largest flower garden in the world! We also will be able to view the new Keukenhof International Floral Exhibition with the theme “China, Olympic Games 2008 Beijing.” We'll venture to the charming city of Delft, a true pearl and home of Delftware, the blue and white ceramics. We will have guided tour at one of the Delftware factories.

**DAY 5: Bruges, Belgium** – Full day tour to Bruges in Belgium. Considered one of Europe's most important landmarks as the city centre has hardly changed since the Middle Ages. In addition to viewing Michelangelo's Madonna and Child; we will have time to visit the many chocolate and lace shops with a talk on how the famous lace of Bruges is made. A boat ride on the lake is included.

**DAY 6: Zaanse Schans** – After breakfast we have a morning tour to the windmills area of Zaanse Schans, a small community north of Amsterdam at the River Zaan.

**DAY 7: The Hague** – Full day at leisure in The Hague for shopping in the antique quarter of The Hague, called Denneweg. Tonight enjoy a farewell dinner.

**DAY 8: Departure** – We travel to the famous Aalsmeer Flower Auction, where flowers and plants are auctioned and packaged for distribution to all corners of the world. Then it's on to Schiphol Airport and check in for our flight back home.

For more information and to make a reservation, please contact  
Celtic Tours at 800 833-4373 ext. 310 or Ellen Ascone at [EllenA@celtictours.com](mailto:EllenA@celtictours.com)

# 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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