



IMPACT REPORT 2023



WIRED FOR SUCCESS

Seong Kim '23 is on a path to prosper in the fast-paced world of software engineering.



Make a gift
that keeps
on giving.

A planned gift can create a positive difference in the lives of NCC students for generations to come.

When you include Northampton Community College in your estate plan through a planned gift, your generosity makes it possible for students from all walks of life to secure an excellent education that is accessible and affordable. No matter how you choose to make a planned gift, (bequest, life insurance, annuity, unused retirement assets) you can be sure that your donation will make a difference in the lives of future students.

To learn more about planned giving, please contact Denise Smith in NCC's advancement office at dsmith4@northampton.edu or 610-861-5449. She'll be happy to answer any questions you have and help you create a gift plan that meets your needs.



CHANGING LIVES

ONE STUDENT AT A TIME

Each year, Northampton Community College impacts the lives of nearly 30,000 students through programs, classes, initiatives, and experiences that challenge them to be the very best versions of themselves. Our students are transformed as they acquire the skills, knowledge, know-how and confidence to thrive and succeed.

They leave our campuses prepared to make an impact in the world and a difference in their communities. Their achievements inspire us all. This report includes profiles of a number of students and graduates whose lives have been forever changed by their NCC experience. Enjoy reading their stories!



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President's Message

NCC is thriving. Our campus community is strong and so is our unwavering passion to help our students succeed. That's what I have grown to love about this place during the nearly 7 1/2 years that I've been here, even more so during the last year that I have been serving as president of the college.

For me, NCC is so much more than a place where I come to work each day. It's intertwined with my life...most of my highs and lows each day are comingled with our students at our locations in Bethlehem, South Bethlehem (where our Fowler Center is located,) and at our Monroe Campus in Tannersville.

They say home is where the heart is...well guess what, NCC is my home and NCC is where my heart is! I could not be prouder of this college, our faculty and staff members as well as students.

I run into our graduates and students doing great things all the time...at a local restaurant, at the hospital or at one of our area businesses. They are everywhere, making a difference in people's lives!

Many of them come from disadvantaged backgrounds or are first-generation college students who have relied on scholarships funded through the generosity of others to help support their college journey. In fact, each year we provide nearly 1,000 scholarships to students in need so that an NCC education can be affordable to everyone.

I was moved recently when I received a note from a student who had taken a new job after completing one of our workforce training programs. She said she just wanted to thank us for the opportunity to take classes at NCC and to "help me grow in life."

I think that says it all. That's the business we are in...helping people grow in their lives. To succeed. To thrive. I have to say it's a pretty good business to be in and I am grateful every day for all the friends, supporters, colleagues and co-workers who make it all possible!



Dr. David A. Ruth, Ph.D



Dr. Ruth with students at the Fowler Family Southside Center.



Summer Theater Shines

Summer theater at NCC once again shined with captivating productions of classics including “The Prom,” “South Pacific,” “Madagascar,” and “All Shook Up.” Performances featured NCC students, high school and college students from the region and professional actors. The summer theater series was made possible through the contributions of The Julius and Katheryn Hommer Foundation and The Jeff Hunter Charitable Trust, whose support helped showcase the exceptional talents of NCC’s theater program.

Zen Zones Coming

To support mental health and wellness, the college is opening “Zen Zones” at its Bethlehem, Monroe, and Fowler campuses to help students decompress and take time for self-care. The low-sensory zones will offer spaces that are free from distractions to allow individuals to regroup, practice guided breathing, mindfulness in the moment, and learn skills about coping with the stresses of college and personal life. The new Zen Zones are planned to open later this year. The Zen Zones are being made possible thanks to the support of Preventive Measures, a mental and home health leader serving the Lehigh Valley and Pocono regions.



Coca-Cola Scholars

Two of NCC’s top Monroe students, fine art major Elina Braverman and biological science major Andrew Schlager, were selected as 2023 Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholars this fall. Each received a \$1,000 scholarship. A panel of independent judges selected this year’s recipients from nearly 1,100 applicants. Coca-Cola Leaders of Promise Scholars are selected based on outstanding academic achievement and demonstrated leadership potential.

Businesses Fund Dual Enrollment Scholarships

Pennsylvania’s well-established Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program offers businesses an incredible opportunity to direct a portion of their state tax dollars to educational improvement organizations like NCC. NCC uses the funds to support scholarships that area high school students can use to participate in dual enrollment classes.

Thanks to multiple companies providing educational improvement tax credit funding, last year NCC awarded over 170 scholarships to dual enrolled students. Companies that participated in the EITC program benefitting NCC last year include Alvin H. Butz Inc., American Bank, Embassy Bank, First Keystone Community Bank, Fulton Bank, Lackawanna Casualty Company, Mortgage America, Inc., PPL Corporation and Truist.

Last year, more than 1,000 students were dual enrolled at NCC from high schools around the region.



ON-CAMPUS LIVING

600

NCC is the only community college in the state offering on campus housing, with space for nearly 600 students.



Community Cruiser Hits the Road

Heads are turning across the region thanks to the new NCC Community Cruiser that made its maiden appearance at Musikfest in August with rave reviews! Supported by the NCC Foundation, the 35-foot recently refurbished RV sports a bold, vibrant design that features students and graduates. It's the latest creation by NCC alum and associate creative director Luis Vazquez whose compelling large format designs have become his trademark. The hard-to-miss vehicle is the latest effort to promote the college through its visibility and participation in community events. Look for the NCC Community Cruiser at an event near you!

Hip Hop Legend Coming to NCC

Chuck D., front man of the popular hip hop band Public Enemy, will be the keynote speaker for NCC's 2024 Annual Humanities Lecture. The event is free and open to the public and will be held April 16, 2024, at 7 p.m., in the college's Spartan Center. More information and details on how to reserve tickets will be available at Northampton.edu in the spring.

\$3.5 MILLION

NCC has been awarded and is currently managing more than \$3.5 million in state and federal grants in 2023 to fund workforce development and community education programs in support of regional businesses and area residents. The grants are being administered by NCC's Community Education Division which is the Lehigh Valley's largest provider of workforce and leadership training.



Lidia Headlines Gala

Emmy award-winning public television host, bestselling cookbook author, and accomplished restaurateur Lidia Bastianich headlined this year's NCC Food & Wine Gala held at the Wind Creek Resort in Bethlehem. As NCC's largest fundraising event of the year, the gala was focused on helping more students achieve their college dreams, with all proceeds from the event used to fund scholarships. This year's event raised more than \$180,000 moving the total raised through Food & Wine events supporting NCC scholarships and academic programs to nearly \$2.5 million!

“The world’s problems could be solved with education, and it starts with people who care and want to give back.”

LIDIA BASTIANICH

Featured Chef, 2023 NCC Food & Wine Gala

All Smiles With Capital Blue

Ensuring that NCC's dental hygiene students have state-of-the-industry equipment to learn with is essential to help them acquire the skills they will need to succeed. That ultimately translates into improved patient care and safety. Thanks to the support from Capital Blue Cross, NCC now features the very latest tools for its students to train on. This includes state-of-the-art X-ray units, X-ray manikins and dental curing lights. This new equipment replicates equipment that students will find in dental offices they will work in.

Laros Foundation Support

NCC's much heralded dental program, based in the Fowler Center in Southside Bethlehem, received a grant from the Laros Foundation to support upgrades to dental stations and enable program expansion. The dental assistant training program was able to triple the number of students served and a new Expanded Functions Dental Assistant program was launched. The Laros Foundation's support is allowing the college to educate more assistants and hygienists to perform advanced duties.





Spartan Pride

NCC athletics shined during the '22-'23 year, with all eight of the college's sports teams posting winning records. Spartan teams finished the year with a combined overall record of 151-49-2 including a 46-3-1 record vs. two-year colleges in Pennsylvania. But academically they did even better! A record 21 student-athletes received All-Academic Team honors from the NJCAA for their academic accomplishments during the 2022-23 academic year, earning at least a 3.60 GPA with a couple athletes earning perfect 4.0 GPAs!

The 2023 men's soccer team is off to a great start, picking up where they left off from their impressive 2022 season.

PNC Summer Institute

Economically disadvantaged students from Bethlehem's Liberty and Freedom High Schools were offered a life-changing opportunity thanks to the PNC Summer Career Institute at NCC. The program enabled 28 students of color from lower income backgrounds to explore academic and career options, gain financial literacy skills and build their confidence. As a four-day residential college experience, the program equipped students with tools to excel in life, fostering academic and professional success, thanks to a unique partnership between the PNC Foundation and NCC.



A Helping Hand From HNL

Fifteen large boxes of back-to-school supplies and food, aimed at providing essentials to NCC students as they started the new academic year, were donated thanks to a unique program with HNL Lab Medicine. Generated through a drop-off campaign at HNL lab locations, donated items were distributed at the college's Bethlehem, Monroe and Fowler food pantries. The partnership with HNL is dedicated to creating a better future for all students regardless of their life circumstances.

STUDENT SUCCESS

96%

of recent NCC graduates are employed or are continuing their education.



Here Comes The Gov!

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro paid a special visit to NCC in July. Gov. Shapiro stopped by to check out the college's popular Horizons for Youth program and had a chance to meet with program participants as well as NCC President Dave Ruth.



Highmark Helps Emergency Med Tech Program

Thanks to the support of the Highmark Foundation, NCC is well prepared to train students to address the growing demand for emergency medical professionals. The Highmark Foundation funding allowed NCC to obtain training manikins used for a variety of life saving practices and learning experiences.

Their support also funded badly needed supplies including gloves, testing kits and masks. The Highmark Foundation support has allowed NCC to acquire state-of-the-industry equipment to improve learning outcomes for students pursuing certification as emergency medical technicians and emergency medical responders.

A HEART TO HELP

BY SUSAN SHELLY

Life's struggles can take their toll on even the best of us. They've doubled down on our young students who increasingly wrestle with mental health issues that were unthinkable even five years ago.

Driven by social unrest, political upheaval, post COVID anxiety and a frenetic pace of life, more than 48% of the nation's young adults have reported experiencing mental health symptoms.


Nineteen-year-old NCC student Bronwyn Pacchioli knows it all first hand. "I had to deal with a lot of depression when I was in high school, and I wish I would have had someone to really talk to, someone who would have listened to me," she said.

"I want to become that person I wish I'd had, for someone else."

Motivated by her own struggles, Pacchioli is on a path to pursuing a career in psychology so that she can help individuals overcome their challenges and follow her heart to support others.

"I just know there's a real need for people to work in the field of mental health, and I'd like to be someone who fills that need," Pacchioli said. She plans to graduate from NCC in spring 2024 and then continue her education at a four-year college with a focus on behavioral health. Eventually she plans to earn a master's degree and work either in a hospital setting or establish her own practice.

Pacchioli started classes at NCC after graduating from Catasauqua High School in 2022, and was a bit anxious at first. But she soon felt welcomed and found the atmosphere on NCC's campus to be a huge relief. "NCC is an example of how a place should be."

"I believe I'll be fully prepared for wherever I end up next," she said. "My professors have been amazing, and I've learned so much from them. I'm really proud of how much I've advanced academically and I've been grateful for the support I've gotten at NCC." 

"I just know there's a real need for people to work in the field of mental health, and I'd like to be someone who fills that need."

BRONWYN PACCHIOLI



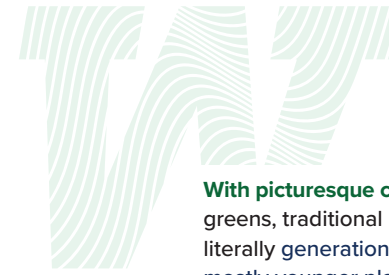
New Course

With support from Amy '09 and Michael Klotz, disc golf is taking NCC by storm.



on Campus

BY MITCHELL MOLL



With picturesque courses and carefully manicured greens, traditional golf has attracted enthusiasts for literally generations. However, a growing number of mostly younger players have begun eschewing the long-playing times, expensive equipment and pricey fees for a newer version that seems more in tune with the times...disc golf!

And thanks to Amy and Michael Klotz, it's a sport that now has a growing following at NCC, attracted by a brand-new disc golf course on campus made possible through their generosity.

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Amy and Michael Klotz caught the disc golf bug years ago.

"My husband played ultimate Frisbee competitively in college and then 'retired' into disc golf," Amy said. So great is their connection to the sport that their family even built their house in walking distance to a disc golf course where they take their boys, Jake, 5, and Elliott, 8.

Amy herself is no stranger to NCC. In fact, she has had a lifetime affiliation with the college that began years ago when she was an energetic young Horizons for Youth program participant, something in which her children have followed suit. Once she aged out of the Horizons program, Amy became a program counselor.

So when it was time to begin her college studies, NCC was a natural starting point. "I feel at home at the college. It's such a good community here, and when I was studying here, it was a safe place for me to explore and not go into crazy debt.

"NCC was truly a transformative experience for me," she says. Her affinity for the college led her to become an adjunct accounting professor as well as a generous benefactor through her family's support of the disc golf course.

CHARTING A NEW COURSE


The snazzy new NCC Disc Golf Course debuted on the Bethlehem campus last summer. With nine holes, it is open to the public, accessible at any time and is located adjacent to the East 40 community garden. Rounds can be completed in as little as an hour and there's no cost to play.

"We saw the value of bringing disc golf to the college for a number of reasons," said Amy. "Individuals from the college and community members can get together for something fun and active on campus with the benefit of being outdoors. And because it's affordable and easy to play, anyone can get involved."

"NCC was truly a transformative experience for me."

AMY KLOTZ '09

The Klotz family's appreciation to NCC and their belief in the importance of community engagement played a crucial role in bringing disc golf to the campus.

"Their family's involvement illustrates the impact of giving back to your community," said Sharon Beales, vice president of Institutional Advancement. "We're so very grateful for their vision that brought disc golf to our campus as well as their ongoing support of the college." 



Amy and Michael Klotz with sons Jake and Elliott (standing).

Totally Czeched Out


BY MIA ROSSI-MARINO

NCC Art Professor Carol Heft is heading to the Czech Republic as a Fulbright Specialist to share her art education know-how.

When it comes to mastering the creative process, Carol Heft is queen. In fact, she's so adept at it, she actively teaches drawing, painting and art history not only as an adjunct instructor at NCC, but also at St. Joseph's University in Brooklyn, N.Y., and Muhlenberg College in Allentown.

So, it was no surprise that in July she was named as a recipient of a prestigious Fulbright Specialist grant to run a series of workshops at Palacky University in Olomouc, Czech Republic to train Czech locals in art and art education this November. The Fulbright Specialist program provides opportunities for U.S. academics and established professionals to engage in two to six week, project-based exchanges at host institutions across the globe.

"Program participants will be shown examples and be given technical information about various ways to create images," said Heft. "They'll learn about their individual styles and the correlations between how they approach other academic or vocational tasks and making art."

This isn't Heft's first trip abroad to share her skills. She has extensive experience working as a teaching artist and professor, with time spent with students from Europe, Africa, South America and Asia. A graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, she also holds a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling that has allowed her to use her art education background as a facet of counseling for individuals with developmental disabilities as well as substance abuse and psychiatric disorders. 



This isn't Heft's first trip abroad to share her skills. She has extensive experience working as a teaching artist and professor, having spent time with students from Europe, Africa, South America and Asia.

LEFT & BELOW: Carol Heft in the studio at NCC.





WIRED

FOR SUCCESS

Seong Kim '23 is on a path to prosper in the fast-paced world of software engineering and computer programming.

BY MEGAN REED

Seong Kim might be one in a million. So impressive are his credentials, it's hard to believe he's only 21 years old.

Consider this, by the time he graduated from NCC last May, the list of accolades he accumulated barely fit on a page, including being named a 2023 Coca-Cola Academic Team Gold Scholar and to the All-PA State Academic Team. He also received the 2022 SSAC Best Engineer Award, the Quetcy Dueno Leadership Award, Guistwhite Scholarship Award and Oberndorf Lifeline to Completion Scholarship Award.

Those were just the openers!

Kim also earned an internship through a software fellowship program offered at Nexon, a multi-billion-dollar video game developer. In addition, he held a hybrid internship/research position as a Samsung Project Scholar, serving as a project lead.

He fielded acceptance letters and scholarship offers to some of the most prestigious colleges in the nation including the University of California, Berkeley, Columbia University and the University of Michigan.

Twelve years under his father's tutelage, working on computers and honing his software engineering skills no doubt helped his cause. But he always seemed to have an innate sense of purpose that led him to succeed and overcome obstacles including dealing with ADHD, Tourette's Syndrome and a natural shyness.

That drive most likely came from his North Korean father's motivation and a Japanese mother's determination that have influenced him in so many ways.

Most important, it enabled him to face challenges with the same grit his parents embraced, something that eventually led him to NCC.


The Monroe-based general studies and computer science major, with a passion for technology and a knack for video gaming, graduated with big plans for his future. But sometimes you have to put even the best laid plans aside when new opportunities come knocking.

And so it was with Kim when a unique proposition emerged over the summer: the chance to pursue a once-in-a-lifetime role as an International Officer for Phi Theta Kappa (PTK), the global honors society.

It's a role that so well aligned with Kim's advocacy for education, and a chance to champion open educational resources to empower students, that he opted to put his college plans on hold for a year to pursue the PTK position. The pause, he believes, will offer a transformative sabbatical, dedicated to uplifting students world-wide.

Kim says his NCC experience has played a big role in his progress, and not just academically. The college helped him find his voice and become part of a community where everything clicked, and he felt he belonged.

"My experience at NCC has been nothing short of incredible, providing me with exposure to diverse perspectives and opportunities for personal exploration and self-discovery," said Kim.

"The campus and the people that I met exceeded my expectations. There were times that I forgot that I was attending a 2-year institution, rather than a 4-year university." 

"IT'S BEEN A TRUE BLESSING BEING A STUDENT HERE AT NCC, AND AN EXPERIENCE THAT I WILL NEVER FORGET FOR YEARS DOWN THE ROAD."

SEONG KIM '23

Overcoming unthinkable odds has been a compelling chapter in Kaitlyn Seawood's success story. The following is an excerpt from remarks she delivered as the student speaker at the 2023 NCC spring commencement ceremony.

I never imagined graduating high school, let alone anything further. I didn't take my education seriously and didn't think I had any noticeable skills or talents that could be applied to a career. I had numerous hardships, including mental health issues such as depression and anxiety throughout most of my life.

My parents divorced when I was young, leading my dad to take custody of me and my siblings and we moved in with my Nannie. Every day was a new hurdle, but we just learned to roll with the punches.

Fast forward to 2020, the hardest year of all our lives. I was working full-time after graduating high school just to help my dad with bills and to pay my own way. I wasn't focused on a career or my future; I was just taking time to decompress after 13 years of schooling.

Unfortunately, the year before, in October 2019, my dad was diagnosed with cancer, and everything shifted gears. I eventually started taking him to his appointments and treatments. In March 2020, my Nannie passed away, devastating us all. And then, on May 18, two days after my 19th birthday, we said goodbye to my dad.

That was three years ago. To think of where I was then, compared to right now is unbelievable. This time three years ago I realized that we only get so much time on earth, so we have to make something of it.

I spoke to different friends, some of whom have also lost a parent, about support that colleges give, especially one like NCC. There was so much positive feedback about NCC that I figured I might as well give it a try. Little did I know that it would be the best decision I could have made for myself.

At NCC, I eventually made some friends who then encouraged me to join Phi Theta Kappa (PTK) and I was welcomed into the Monroe campus chapter with open arms. I found numerous opportunities to expand different skills I didn't realize I even had. Most notably, I learned how to be a leader and to effectively work on a team.

My amazing advisors, Belinda and Fran, saw the potential I had and knew I would make a strong president for our chapter. This encouragement allowed me to grow even more as a student and an individual and strive for other leadership opportunities.

After spending my first year at NCC majoring in general studies, I was encouraged to enroll in an elective class that sparked my interest. I had come to learn how well of a writer I was, but I knew I needed a stronger foundation to build from. I decided to enroll into the intro to Journalism & Society course, which fueled my newly discovered appreciation and respect for the industry.



The Write Stuff

By Kaitlyn Seawood '23

While at NCC, Kaitlyn was the recipient of the Ruth and Roger Dunning Scholarship, the Commuter Transfer Scholarship Endowment, the Monroe County Scholarship Endowment and the NCC Trustee Leadership Award. She currently attends Rider University with the full-ride Transfer Trustee Scholarship where she is pursuing her passion for journalism and serves as the social media editor on the college's newspaper.

“
We all have something to offer this world, so go out there and make every day worth something.

KAITLYN SEAWOOD '23

I was urged to join The Commuter, the student newspaper, as it would help me continue to work on my journalistic skills and to gain experience that's expected in the field. My professors and Commuter advisors saw my growth as a staff writer and encouraged me to accept an editor's position. After serving as deputy editor and subsequently editor-in-chief, I knew I found the career I was meant for.

Last summer, while attending PTK's summer institute at Rider University in New Jersey, I was exposed to opportunities that members and community college transfers could take advantage of at Rider. I also discovered how successful their student newspaper was and how great their journalism programs were.

I suddenly became fully invested in Rider; I started familiarizing myself with everything and all things Rider. I was quickly welcomed like I once was at NCC. Everything about Rider reminds me of NCC; a small tight-knit community, supporting each other and encouraging student success inside and outside the college.

Without all the support I received at NCC, I wouldn't have the privilege of attending Rider on a full-ride scholarship.

We all have something to offer this world, so go out there and make every day worth something. A significant portion of our lives will be occupied with our work, and the only way to genuinely be fulfilled is by doing what you think is great work. And the only way to do great work is to genuinely love it. 📖



Edmonds' NCC education was made possible thanks to the Evelyn Darragh and Dr. Jack Eli Cole Scholarship and the Brian D. Perin Endowed Scholarship.

EMPOWERED BY EDUCATION

A SONOGRAPHY SUCCESS STORY

BY DAVE BLOCK

When Dana Edmonds '24 had her first ultrasound while pregnant with her daughter, the technology fascinated her. It eventually sparked a deep interest in sonography, something that several years later would offer her a life-changing path to a new career.

"I just remember it being the most interesting thing I had ever seen," she recalls of her first ultrasound. "At that point in my life, though, I wasn't ready. I needed to do some growing up."

After moving away from the area, Edmonds discovered that Northampton Community College offered a diagnostic medical sonography degree. A single mother, she returned to Bethlehem and enrolled in the program's OB-GYN track, taking classes during the week and waitressing on weekends.

The two-year program combines classroom lectures with hands-on experience at hospitals and outpatient centers. When she first began her courses, Edmonds said that an ultrasound technician would perform patient scanning with students observing until they had a few minutes afterward for practice.

As she developed in her education, her technical skills expanded until she could do most exams on her own from start to finish, with an ultrasound technician on hand to check her work.

Meanwhile, absorbing the copious information from lectures and completing work outside class pushed her to work harder than ever before. Edmonds credits her teachers with enabling her to succeed.

"The instructors are all amazing," she explains. "They're so knowledgeable. They are absolutely fantastic. There were times when I questioned myself, whether this was the right choice for me, and I wanted so badly to give up. But I had them rooting for me, saying, 'What can I do to help? How can I make this better for you?'"

"They weren't just there to teach the material and go home. They were really there to advocate for us and make sure we had everything we needed to be successful."

Edmonds graduated in August and was thrilled to start a full-time job in maternal fetal medicine at Lehigh Valley Health Network in September.

Pivotal to her success at NCC was receiving the Evelyn Darragh and Dr. Jack Eli Cole Scholarship and the Brian D. Perin Endowed Scholarship. "It was a game changer for me," says Edmonds. "It meant working a few less hours each week.

"That had a huge impact, and I'm so grateful." 

Edmonds graduated in August and was thrilled to start a full-time job in maternal fetal medicine at Lehigh Valley Health Network in September.




The Beauty of Bequests

When it comes to showing how generosity can bring positive change to a community and inspire others to transform their lives through education, Paul and Harriett Mack wrote the book, or should we say printed it.

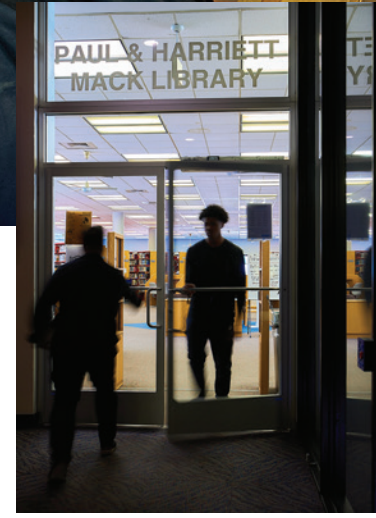
BY MITCHELL MOLL

The late, former president of the well-known Mack Printing Company and his loving wife created a legacy of philanthropy at NCC that resonates to this very day. Thanks to the Mack's generosity which included a large bequest, the Mack Family Scholarship Endowment was formed and has impacted the lives of more than 100 students since its creation. Contributions from the Macks also funded major improvements and expansion to the NCC's Bethlehem campus library which now proudly bears their name. None of this was a surprise to anyone who knew them, for the Macks were long time contributors to the college. In fact, Paul served as chairman of the NCC Foundation Board and was an active supporter of the college until his passing in 2021, with Harriett preceding him in death in 2020. The scholarship endowment and library enhancements made possible through their planned gifts have supported both full and part-time students, something that underscored the Macks' dedication to fostering educational opportunities and

commitment to change the lives of all students. Thanks to their foresight through planned giving, today their memories live on through each Mack Family Scholarship recipient and every student who passes through the doors of the Mack Library!

Is a planned gift right for you? When you include Northampton Community College in your estate plan, your generosity makes it possible for students from all walks of life to secure an excellent education that is accessible and affordable. Your planned gift can include a bequest, which is a gift of personal property or other assets that you leave to NCC in your will or estate plan. 

If you would like to speak to a planned giving expert from NCC to help you decide if a bequest or planned gift is a good fit for you, please contact Denise Smith at dsmith4@northampton.edu.



EMBRACING A Brighter Future

Ruth Velarde '23 persevered to overcome incredible odds to complete her NCC education and stay on track to succeed.

BY DAVE BLOCK



Ruth Velarde knows about strife, conflict and overcoming challenges. It seems like they have been part of her life since her early years, growing up in politically torn Peru.

When the Sendero Luminoso, an infamous Peruvian guerrilla group, made it unsafe to stay there any longer, Velarde's parents sent her to live with a sister in New York. Little did she know that a gauntlet of difficulties awaited her.

Velarde eventually settled in New Jersey, married and started a family. She took English classes at night but her husband soon became resentful of her time away from home.

With her passion for education undaunted, Velarde spoke to a local community college counselor about enrolling. Although the counselor presented her with a number of roadblocks, she remained undeterred and began taking classes without the counselor's knowledge or support.

However, arthritis struck Velarde so severely that she couldn't crack open her textbooks, and she dropped out of college. But her problems didn't stop with her studies. Her husband soon became violent, something that was so extreme it led to divorce.

Eventually, she remarried and had a son with her second husband, but her bad luck in marriage persisted. Her husband began drinking and using drugs. Things got so bad that he threatened to kill Velarde, her children, and himself.

One day, as her husband slept, Velarde escaped with her family. In search of a better life, she moved to Easton, Pa., and filed for divorce from her abusive husband.

It was a fresh start for Velarde who was due for a break. "I have learned to never give up," she said. "That's my biggest accomplishment, not giving up. To keep on going even when the odds seem to go against you."


In the Lehigh Valley, she began treatment for her medical issues and found her way to a popular local college -- none other than Northampton Community College. And there, she says, is where the magic happened.

She applied to NCC, was accepted and even received the Harold A. & Marcia Wagner Scholarship and the Nancy A. Taylor Endowed Scholarship. She thought to herself, "If they believe that I can do it, then I believe I can do it," she says. "That gave me the little push I needed to keep going."

Advisors guided her to an academic path (psychology)...and a future. A tutor taught her how to write effectively. Through a women's and gender studies class, she says, "I stopped being a victim of my past. My past is my experience. I was set free."

Velarde graduated in spring of 2023 and is continuing her studies in social work and psychology at East Stroudsburg University this fall. "I want to specialize in working with older adults and in geriatric psychology," she said.

"I am training as a volunteer for the Crime Victims Council of the Lehigh Valley. My goal is to work with the elderly, but I want to be able to help people at any stage of their life."

Velarde has finally left her painful past behind, and is on track to a much brighter future! 

“If they believe that I can do it, then I believe I can do it.”

RUTH VELARDE '23

WONDERFUL ENCOUNTERS

BY DAVE BLOCK

For one Bethlehem couple, their unexpected interactions with NCC graduates were life changing. Now they're returning the favor.

Few people are grateful for having suffered a broken femur. But when Sharon Yoshida went to the hospital for treatment, a physician discovered an unrelated and more serious condition: her esophagus had a large tear where it connects to her stomach.

She had emergency surgery and spent 17 days in the ICU, nearly dying of sepsis.

During Sharon's time in the hospital and in rehabilitation, her husband, Ron, a former dean and provost at Lehigh University, would by habit ask the medical staff where they received their education.

About half the time, the answer was Northampton Community College.

"They were wonderful — everybody we encountered from the nurse assistants to the occupational therapists and physical therapists," says Sharon. "So many were from Northampton, and all of them were very skilled and caring."


"They were very complimentary about Northampton," adds Ron. "That they received a wonderful education, that the staff was very attentive to their needs. Some of them had gone there for second careers, and they were very positive about their programs and preparation."

"They weren't equivocating; Northampton helped them get where they were."

The Yoshidas were so impressed that they established a scholarship fund at NCC for students considering a career in the medical field. Having both benefitted from scholarships themselves, they wanted to pay it forward.

"I hope this helps students find a pathway for their future, and that they're happy with that path," says Ron. "I hope they have the feeling that they can also give back by helping someone else when that moment comes."

Ron and Sharon met in New York when Sharon was a school psychologist and finishing her Ph.D., and Ron was a professor at Fordham. They moved to Bethlehem when Ron became dean of Lehigh University's College of Education and Sharon took early retirement. After four years as dean, Ron spent four years as provost and then nine years as professor of educational leadership. Having devoted their careers to education, the couple has a deep appreciation for what NCC offers.


"The support for students financially, emotionally and academically is amazing," says Sharon. "Many of them would not be going to college otherwise. This is an institution that helps young people change their lives." 

"I hope this helps students find a pathway for their future, and that they're happy with that path. I hope they have the feeling that they can also give back by helping someone else when that moment comes."

RON YOSHIDA



Sharon and Ron Yoshida discussing the importance of giving back during a recent interview.



“I didn’t enroll in NCC just for the funeral services program, but because NCC is not just a regular community college.”

ALEXIS BROWN '23

HOME

away from home

BY MEGAN REED

Initially attracted to NCC by its much-touted funeral services program, Alexis Brown soon learned that the college had so much more to offer.

Alexis Brown first arrived at NCC’s Bethlehem campus after being lured there by the college’s funeral services program, one of only two in the state and among the very best in the nation. And while the experience led her toward an unwavering commitment to the funeral services profession, it also developed her as a focused, independent young professional with a vision for her future and the drive to make her mark.


Brown, who was a Louise Moore Pine Endowment Scholarship recipient for the 2022-2023 academic year, says her NCC education pushed her academic limits and that she found the funeral services program’s rigorous curriculum challenging but equally rewarding. The program provided her with the hands-on learning she needed through weekly clinical sessions that well equipped her with the training she needed to gain confidence and push ahead.

After graduating in May 2023, she took the national and state board exams for funeral service licensing - and passed! This summer she stepped into the field through a one-year internship at Bachman, Kulik, and Reinsmith Funeral Homes in Allentown, Pa., a pivotal experience that is laying the foundation for her career.

A Very Special Place

Beyond awards and a scholarship, NCC offered Brown something more profound—an environment that nurtured her professional aspirations and lasting friendships. The significance of connections with professors and peers was an invaluable asset, one that made a lasting impact.

“NCC felt like a home away from home,” she said.

“I didn’t enroll in NCC just for the funeral services program, but because NCC is not just a regular community college,” said Alexis. “It’s so much more. I made friendships that will last a lifetime. It’s an experience I’ll always remember.” 

Aspiring inventor and entrepreneur Caroline McAleavey was terrified to present her idea of a clean burning, environmentally safe kindling bag.

The NCC student, who is majoring in computer aided design (CAD), was about to speak at NCC's Follett Family Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Aside from the four judges who would critique her presentation, about 100 faculty members from NCC and other colleges and prominent local businesspeople filled the room.

"On a scale of one to 10, my anxiety level was a 15," she said.

It was with an invention in mind that McAleavey enrolled in NCC's Startup Boot Camp last spring, which culminated in the final pitch presentation, showcasing 10 weeks of hard work in bringing her idea to life. The entrepreneurial program, which has been expanded to a 28 week format, provides resources, preparation and mentoring to students interested in developing ideas.

Using the NCC's Fab Lab branding and graphics tools, McAleavey created packaging, a logo, a banner and t-shirts, and she plans to soon develop a website and videos to post on YouTube.

"The Fab Lab is a hidden gem," she said. "It's an amazing resource for NCC students and community members looking to create and learn new skills."

McAleavey's new product is called Eeezlite Kindling Bag, an organic fire starter consisting of a paper container filled with unbleached wax and coconut oil. It contains no plastics or other potentially harmful materials and burns for over 15 minutes. The non-toxic leftover ash is a natural fertilizer.

The idea for her product came from one unfortunate November night in 2022 when McAleavey's neighbor banged on her door, waking her. When she opened the door, she saw that the entire perimeter of her lot was ablaze.

A responding firefighter told her those types of fires are relatively common because the leaves and other flammable materials tend to gather around wood lines at the perimeter of housing lots. Seeing how quickly dried grass and leaves burned gave her the idea for the accelerant bag.

As a long-time designer, McAleavey has ideas for several other products. But she needed to learn how to take them from concepts on paper to physical, three-dimensional objects, which is where her studies at NCC kicked in. Her coursework at NCC has given her the know-how and confidence to continue learning in pursuit of her dreams.

Since the presentation, McAleavey obtained a provisional patent and plans to soon file a utility patent. More importantly, she delivered her first order for Eeezlite Kindling Bag to a campsite in upstate New York earlier this fall! 🏕️

For information on NCC's 28-week Start Up Boot Camp, visit northampton.edu or call 610-332-8661.

"The Fab Lab is a hidden gem. It's an amazing resource..."

CAROLINE MCALEAVEY

A photograph of a woman with blonde hair, wearing a dark jacket and pants, sitting on a black plastic chair next to a campfire. The fire is burning brightly in a metal fire pit, with tall, thin sticks of wood or kindling rising from it. The background is dark, suggesting a nighttime outdoor setting with trees.

FIRED UP

Caroline McAleavey has channeled her love of innovation into a hot new product thanks to her NCC experience.

BY MARY DEHAVEN

MONROE PROUD

CELEBRATING
35 YEARS



On a cool day in fall of 1988, in shared classroom space at the Monroe County Vocational Technical School, NCC history was made.

That's when the college decided to officially begin operations in Monroe County. Offering just nine courses that enrolled 113 students, the decision established what would evolve into a decades-long commitment to provide affordable access to a top-quality college education and personal development opportunities for area residents.

"Our presence in Monroe County is a source of such great pride," said Dr. David A. Ruth, NCC president. "This year, as we celebrate 35 years of serving the Monroe community, we recognize and thank our faculty and staff members, as well as the generous friends and supporters, who contributed to our success.

"They made it possible for us to have a positive impact in the county, expanding our footprint to serve more students and area businesses."

First encouraged by superintendents from the four Monroe school districts to establish a presence in the county to address a lack of accessible, specialized higher education, NCC started small. But interest grew quickly, and the college expanded, offering degree programs and continuing education classes.

Three-and-a-half decades later, having outgrown multiple spaces and opening its impressive Tannersville site in 2014, NCC's Monroe campus has evolved into a jewel of the college. "I think we've accomplished the original mission – today the Monroe campus has become a valued education center in the community and an important resource to help individuals succeed," said Ruth.

"It's also a key part of our institution that simply put, makes us a better college."

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NCC COMMUNITY CRUISER

Acting as a beacon of inspiration at local events and around campus,
NCC's Community Cruiser hits the road.

SEE P. 8 FOR MORE.