‘Celebrating Excellence’ Event Honors Alumni, Faculty/Staff

Alamance Community College alumni, faculty, staff, and students were honored by the College on May 29 at the 2014 Celebrating Excellence Awards, hosted by the ACC Board of Trustees and the ACC Foundation Board of Directors. The annual event, held at Alamance Country Club, honors those who have achieved distinction through hard work and dedication.

Among those who spoke at the event were Dr. Algie Gatewood, ACC president; Dr. Gene Couch, Executive Vice President; Charles R. Harris, President of the ACC Foundation Board of Directors and retired President of Twin Lakes Community; Carolyn Rhode, Vice President of Institutional Advancement and Executive Director of the ACC Foundation; and Scott Williams, Partner-Gilliam, Coble & Moser LLP.

2014 Distinguished Alumna

Marti Asher of Burlington graduated from ACC with a 4.0 GPA in Accounting after her youngest child started elementary school. She previously earned a B.S. in Industrial Management from Purdue University and began her career with Gilliam Coble & Moser, LLP in 1997 as a part-time bookkeeper. Today she works at Gilliam Coble and Moser as an audit manager and is a vital member of the leadership team. She is a member of ACC’s accounting advisory board. Marti is an officer and board member with CrossRoads Sexual Assault Response and Resource Center, the United Way of Alamance County Finance Committee and several other organizations.

Asher was presented with the Presidential Medallion, designed by Jesse Vaughn, retired Mechanical Drafting Technology instructor. A new medallion is crafted each year by Computer-Integrated Machining department. Made of brass, the medallion features the college seal and a blue ribbon.

Inspiration Award Recipient

Sonya DeLong Lynn of Graham graduated from ACC in Early Childhood Education in July 2013. She wrote a business plan, secured a

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loan and opened her own business as a result of the training she received at ACC. Today she is the owner of Sonya’s Kidz Depot and Child Care Center in Graham, a Four-Star Center with 40 children enrolled. She is an avid supporter of Toys for Tots, is a member of the Alamance Partnership for Children Board of Directors, and sponsors a girls’ Little League softball team. She also puts on her jogging shoes for many charitable causes.

The Inspiration Award is given to an alumna whose life serves as an inspiration to others.

Other nominees for the Distinguished Alumni Award were:
- Barry Joyce, retired insurance executive
- Sam Hargrave, Hollywood stuntman
- Mark D. McIntyre, Sr., retired superintendent of Life Safety at UNC-CH
- Sarah “Blythe” Terwilliger Jackson, patrol officer with City of Mebane

Also recognized were:
- John Neathery, Sociology instructor, as the College’s Excellence in Teaching winner
- Tabithe Fisher, Nursing instructor, as Adjunct Faculty Member of the Year
- Erin Flowers, Coordinator of Testing, as Staff Member of the Year
- Emma Marie Alston, Academic & Career Readiness instructor, as Continuing Education Instructor of the Year

Carrie Parker of Mebane graduates this spring from the Associate Degree Nursing program. The Mebane resident completed the Associate in Arts degree with High Honors in May 2012 at ACC before enrolling in the nursing program. She has carried a 3.9 GPA this semester. Through her past work as Spanish Club president and student ambassador, Carrie has learned to try new things and be a leader and positive example for others. She plans to pursue a Master’s of Science in Nursing and become a nurse practitioner. “Alamance Community College has had a tremendous impact upon my life,” she says. “The faculty, students and sheer love resonating from everyone has helped me to blossom into a successful woman who will continue to journey forward after college. Through ACC, I learned that everything is possible... If I can dream it, then I can do it.”
ACC’s Career and College Promise Gives High School Students Headstart

For the past couple of years, Alamance Community College and the Alamance-Burlington School System (ABSS) have partnered in the state-funded Career and College Promise (CCP) program, which lets qualifying high school students earn college and high school credits at the same time for free. Tuition is waived by the state and students are responsible only for textbook costs.

According to Kent Byrd, Executive Director of Secondary School Leadership at ABSS, 380 high school students took CCP courses this year with 323 taking two or more classes. Some, like Rachel Daughtry at Williams High School, are completing a full 64 credit hours of college classes.

At Williams, Rachel doubled up on her courses during her freshman year—courses like math and history—already thinking about the possibility of graduating early. But she was torn about that because she wanted to stay with her friends at the same class level. Then she heard about a program at Alamance Community College called Career and College Promise.

“My dad and I learned about it on the ACC website,” says Rachel. “It said I could get a jump start on college education by earning most of my freshman and sophomore college credits at ACC while I was still in high school. This really appealed to me because it means I can concentrate on the two majors I hope to combine—psychology and theater—much earlier in my life than I normally would have.”

Rachel’s desire to make a career in the theater has been built upon her experience performing with Burlington’s Gallery Players, Teen to Teen, Mebane Theatre Company, and Playmakers in Chapel Hill over the past ten years—more than 50 productions in all.

Now that Rachel is almost finished with the CCP program and her high school curriculum, she can begin to anticipate her new university career. But it has been challenging this year. She usually started off each school day at Williams with one class before she traveled to the campus of Alamance Community College. At ACC this semester, Rachel took a sociology class, statistics, elementary Spanish, and an online biology class and lab. This follows full loads each semester since her junior year.

“I was exposed to lots of different styles of teaching at ACC,” she says. “I think that will prepare me very well for the university next fall.”

Each day after her classes at ACC, Rachel returned to her high school around 2:00 p.m. where she participated in a school a capella group.

When Rachel graduates this summer from both high school and ACC, she will receive from the college a full associate’s degree and 64 credit hours that will transfer to UNC Wilmington where she has already been accepted. She enters that university as a junior right out of high school this fall.

Campus Tours for Prospective Students

Know someone interested in attending ACC? Local high-school students or anyone interested in going to Alamance Community College can take a campus tour. The college holds regular tours the first and third Mondays of each month at 3 p.m. It is a good way to get familiar with the academic programs and student services at the college.

Tours begin at the receptionist desk at the Main Building on the Carrington-Scott Campus in Graham. To schedule a tour at another time, fill out the online form at www.alamancecc.edu/admissions-site/campus-tours-visits.

Rachel Daughtry with math instructor Bob Davis.
It was three years ago when Evelyn Rivera decided to enroll at Alamance Community College. She was a Burlington Cummings High School senior graduating in the top ten of her class with honors. Evelyn’s dream since she was a young teen had been to attend UNC Chapel Hill and its nursing school. Despite being accepted to several large universities, including UNC Chapel Hill, her family’s finances did not provide the means for her to attend.

“They say that when life shuts doors on you, God finds a way to open the perfect one,” says Evelyn. “My high school guidance counselor told me about ACC, about the UNC transfer program they offer, and how I could get my associate’s degree and transfer at a fraction of the tuition price. She also helped me with the process of being awarded an ACC Foundation Academic Excellence Scholarship, which I am very grateful to have received. Choosing to be a student at ACC was the perfect choice for me.”

As a first-generation Hispanic American, Evelyn Rivera is the first member of her family to attend and graduate high school, and to attend college. Her parents came to the U.S. about 25 years ago from El Salvador, a poor Central American country, looking for a better future. Evelyn was born a few years later in Long Island, NY, where she and her family lived for the next 13 years.

“Life there was not the easiest,” says Evelyn. “I remember living in houses where an entire family would live in one room, so a house would consist of about five families. Growing up was difficult, especially starting school without knowing English and not having anyone to help with my homework because no one in my family knew English.”

In August 2001, Evelyn and her family that now included younger siblings moved to Burlington, NC to seek better opportunities than the expensive and difficult life in New York. The Rivera family found North Carolina better in many ways, not the least of which was a milder climate and a lower cost of living. The family slowly found a more prosperous life here.

Evelyn was a good student and in high school received top grades. But when her college acceptance letters began to arrive, she realized her dream to further her education seemed doomed because of the family’s limited financial resources. Not knowing anyone who had attended college, she was ignorant about scholarship opportunities until too late to apply. She believed her dream of becoming a midwife nurse was doomed to failure simply because she could not afford college.

That is, until she learned about Alamance Community College and its low tuition and transfer program.

Evelyn says ACC became her “home away from home” over the past two years, helping her navigate through her family’s additional financial difficulties when her injured father could not work. Evelyn received a work study job in the college’s Human Resources department and worked retail on weekends. Her ACC supervisor nominated her for the Student Ambassador program and she served in that capacity this year. She also was a nominee for the NC Community College System Academic Excellence Award. She earned the Spanish Interpreter/Translator Certificate, was named to the National Spanish Honor Society, and was invited to join Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society where she served as Vice President of Fellowship.

With her ACC graduation on the horizon last fall, Evelyn applied to UNC Chapel Hill’s nursing program in December—her only application—and found out she was accepted in March 2014. Because her family falls under the 200% poverty line, she qualifies to attend UNC through the Carolina Covenant program, which provides grants, scholarships, and a work-study job to help low-income students graduate debt-free. Evelyn has already begun her studies in UNC Chapel Hill’s Bachelor of Nursing program for the summer term.

“Alamance Community College has been the biggest blessing of my life,” says Evelyn, whose younger brother plans to enroll at ACC this fall. “My dream to go to a university is coming true and better yet, I am going debt-free.

Evelyn’s career goal is now on track to earn her bachelor’s degree and become a midwife nurse so she can travel to developing countries to help expectant mothers deliver healthy babies.

“I know it’s not an easy career, or the shortest or the cheapest. But I know that it is the field where I belong and, with the help of God, I know I will make that come true. I believe that God placed me at ACC’s open door so I could accomplish the American Dream.”
ACC Student Heads to France in Horticulture Exchange Program

Ruth Morgan of Mebane may seem like an unusual prospect to be enrolled in ACC’s Horticulture Technology program. After all, she has a Bachelor of Fine Arts in textile design from the University of Georgia and has 40 years’ design experience at places like Fieldcrest Cannon, Kaiser-Roth, Jefferies Socks, and Acme-McCrary.

But when the textile industry began its downward spiral due to the economy, Ruth began to look for other career options despite her many years in the field. That’s when she tested the waters by taking some graphic design classes at ACC while still employed at Acme-McCrary in Asheboro. She heard that the college’s graphic design students had partnered with Horticulture to promote its new sustainable and renewable energy approach by creating kiosk directional signs. When Ruth’s cousin visited from Charleston, SC, they took the opportunity to tour the Horticulture program, mainly to see the graphic design angle.

“My cousin asked me why I didn’t enroll in the Horticulture program,” says Ruth. “She reminded me that I had always loved gardening—my cousin does landscape design—and I suddenly realized that yes, I could do a different kind of design work in a horticulture career.”

Ruth told herself she couldn’t just quit her job at Acme-McCrary. But the desire to find a more sustainable and creative career outweighed her fears, and Ruth enrolled in Horticulture Technology in fall 2013. She left her job in Asheboro but the company has kept her on doing contract work.

“I know I’ll still need to work for years to come but horticulture, especially landscape design, is something that I can do no matter how old I get. I worked lots of extra hours while in textile design, and a career in horticulture will offer me a creative, but less intense work life. I hope to start my own business after I graduate.”

Ruth’s growth from textile design to horticulture skills has been acknowledged this spring with the awarding of an overseas internship to France. Last January, Ruth was in Charleston for a family reunion and, while there, toured Magnolia Plantation and Gardens where she learned about an annual internship exchange program that facility has with the French Heritage Society.

“I was only five days away from the deadline but I applied anyway,” says Ruth. “Before I knew it I was selected for an interview in February and was surprised to learn I was chosen. Getting this internship was vindication that I made the right life choice. Things are falling into place. Who knew six months ago that I would be going to France?”

Ruth has since learned that some French proficiency is required for the internship, so she was tutored intensively in French for six weeks this spring. In mid-May, she went to Quebec for some serious French immersion.

While two students from ACC’s Horticulture Technology program have the French intern at Magnolia Plantation in Charleston, Ruth is doing the same for all of June at Jardin Botanique du Château de Vauxville in the North near Cherbourg, not far from the English Channel. She will spend July at Parc du Château de La Bourdaisière near Tours, a kitchen garden at a hotel.

“It’s going to be fascinating to learn about the French way of gardening,” she says. About ACC’s Ruth Morgan, Magnolia Plantation and Garden’s executive director Tom Johnson said: “She has a proven track record as a focused and hardworking student who will get the most of her experience.”

Ruth will return to ACC this fall to continue her studies.

$9,000 UW Grant Will Help Students Pay GED Exam Fees

The United Way of Alamance County has awarded a $9,000 grant to help local residents with fees associated with the GED exam at Alamance Community College.

State test fees for the GED (General Educational Development) are now $20 per test, or $80 for the battery of four tests. The money will be used for three main purposes:

- To pay for GED test fees for qualified students—those who are enrolled in ACC’s program; those who indicate readiness for the GED on pre-tests; and those who have financial need.
- To assist GED & Adult High School students who are experiencing a particular financial hardship with transportation or other needs to enable them to complete their program.
- A small amount of the funds will be used to support ACC’s annual Community Resource Fair held at the Dillingham Center to help connect students with agencies in the community that can provide them with needed resources, such as food, health screenings, childcare, and job opportunities.

Claire Dixon, Director of ACC’s Academic and Career Readiness department, said the grant is allocated for fiscal year 2014-15. “Between the test fees and the other assistance, we should be able to help close to 100 individual students overall, not to mention the hundreds of GED, ABE, AHS and ESL students who attend our resource fair each year,” said Dixon. [With the acquisition of this grant], this is a great time for students to come to ACC to complete their high school equivalency.”

“We sincerely appreciate everything you [in ACC’s Academic and Career Readiness department] do for the residents of Alamance County,” said Heidi Norwick, Director of Community Impact, United Way of Alamance County.
Blakey Hall of Elon Makes Donation to ACC Foundation Scholarship

Blakey Hall Retirement Community has given a $1,500 donation to the Alamance Community College Foundation toward tuition assistance for Nursing Assistant students. The award provides two scholarships for $300 each in the fall, two scholarships for $300 each in the spring, and one scholarship for $300 in the summer term.

Presenting the check for $1,500 to the Foundation was John Ketcham, owner of Blakey Hall Retirement Community, located in Elon, NC.

The intent of the fund is to provide tuition assistance to students entering the Nursing Assistant program who have enrolled in the college directly from high school. Mr. Ketcham said that recent high school graduates entering college need additional financial assistance. However, the stipulation allows Nursing Assistant department head to make recommendations to the ACC Scholarship Committee based on need and commitment to the profession.

The mission of Blakey Hall Retirement Community is to provide the best quality of life possible for residents in a safe, caring and homelike setting.
ACC Vice President To Lead Virginia Community College

Dr. Gene Couch, Executive Vice President at Alamance Community College, has accepted a position with the Virginia Community College System as the President of Virginia Highlands Community College in Abingdon in southwest Virginia.

His new assignment begins on July 1. Couch has served in his current position at ACC since June 2011. “I’m a product of Virginia’s Community Colleges—and I hope that students see that as proof that they can stay near and go far,” said Couch, a native of the southwest Virginia area. “Virginia Highlands has a rich history of service to southwest Virginia, and I am looking forward to joining the team. I recognize the trust shared with me to become an outstanding leader and member of the VHCC Community.”

One of Dr. Couch’s top priorities while at Alamance Community College was his role in spearheading the two-year-long preparation for reaffirmation of accreditation with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). This required compiling data to validate ACC’s commitment to good practices and culminated in 2013 with a site visit by a SACS committee. An integral piece of this accreditation process included the development of a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) that focused on student writing.

“I have thoroughly enjoyed working with my friend and colleague Dr. Gene Couch over the past few months,” said ACC President Dr. Algie Gatewood. “In particular, he has proven his value in working with me on the college’s strategic plan, and was invaluable in our recent SACS reaffirmation of accreditation process. He has made my first seven months at ACC run smoothly. I know Gene will carry the commitment he has shown here at ACC to his new role at Virginia Highlands Community College, and I wish him the best.”

Dr. Couch has worked in higher education for 30 years. Beginning in 1985, he served in various leadership roles at Southwest Community College in Sylva, NC: Vice President for Instruction and Student Services, 2005-2010; Vice President for Instructional Services, 1999-2005; and Chair of the Health Sciences division Program Director for Radiography.

A product of the community college system, Dr. Couch earned an associate’s degree in Radiologic Technology from Tennessee State University. He later earned a bachelor’s degree in Allied Health from Mars Hill College in Mars Hill, NC; a Master of Arts in Educational Administration/Two Year College Education from Western Carolina University; and a doctorate in Educational Leadership from East Tennessee State University.

ACC Names Top NCCCS Executive as Interim VP

Kennon Briggs

Kennon Briggs, a retired executive with the NC Community College System, has been named interim Vice President of Administrative and Fiscal Services at Alamance Community College.

Briggs retired in 2012 from his position as Executive Vice President and Chief of Staff of North Carolina Community College System. His previous position with the NCCCS was as Chief Financial Officer from 1997-2008. Briggs is expected to fulfill the duties of Vice President of Administrative and Fiscal Services at ACC through the next few months until a full-time permanent candidate is hired.

“In the short period that I have been at ACC, I am incredibly impressed with the high level of professional talent that exists among the faculty and staff,” said Briggs. “ACC enjoys an excellent reputation within the North Carolina Community College System for quality instruction and strong student support. I have witnessed that first hand. I am proud to be a part of Dr. Gatewood’s team, if only for a short while.”

Brigg’s fiscal expertise prior to his employment with NCCCS is well known around the state since the 1980s: County Administrator, Jones County, NC, 1981-82; County Manager, Yadkin County, NC, 1982-86; and Senior Budget Analyst for Higher Education, Office of State Budget and Management, 1986-97.

Among his many accolades are the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, among the highest service awards that can be presented by the governor of North Carolina (2012); Barry K. Sanders Award as Outstanding Fiscal Officer in North Carolina State Government (2001); and CCBO Outstanding Community College Business Officer of the Year, Region 11 (1998).

Briggs has a B.A. in Sociology from NC State University; MPA in Urban Management from NC State University; and post graduate study in the School of Government at UNC Chapel Hill.

NEWS ABOUT EMPLOYEES

Several employees received service pins at recent faculty/staff meetings for their years of service to the College.

Sheila Bissette—25 years Secretary, Business and Industry Training
Danny Farrell—25 years Dept. Head, Carpentry
Cathy Jordan—10 years Dept. Head, Child Care Center
Carolyn Rhodes—10 years Lead Teacher, Career Readiness
Susan Norvell—10 years MPA in Urban Management
Linda Orin—5 years Instructor, Cosmetology
A Culinary-specific Job Fair... was organized in May for students in the curriculum by Department Head, Brian Bailey, and Ilona Owens, Director of Career & Counseling. Culinary Arts students had the opportunity to talk with representatives from a variety of food-related businesses interested in hiring, including Chapel Hill Restaurant Group, UNCG Dining Services, and Destination Duke.

Stem Cell Graduation
Students from Western Alamance High and ABSS Middle College graduated last month from ACC’s sixth Biotechnology Stem Cell Pipeline class, earning certificates that will bolster college applications. Bill Woodruff, Department Head, said the program exposes students at an earlier age to career possibilities in cutting-edge frontiers in science and health. They learn about sterile environments, managing cultures, and basic biotechnology equipment. ACC is one of only three educational institutions in the U.S. that received the grant monies to develop this curriculum in 2011. Assisting Woodruff in the instruction was Jean Shearin, retired scientist from GlaxoSmithKline.

Fond Farewell
During a retirement reception for 23-year Early Childhood employee Becky Schoeneck (center), she was joined by fellow retirees English instructor Dr. Marla Dunham (left), and Dr. Laila Moustafa, graphic design instructor, who all leave the College this summer after many years of service to students.