

Extreme therapy

Physical therapy assistant grads learned from amputees

It would be one of the final class projects for a group of graduating physical therapy assistant (PTA) students, and the banter made it easy to forget the serious business at hand.

"Extreme Jim," called out Karen Mazur, one of the four graduating students who organized the service learning project, of which the therapy session was part of, to Jim Wazny, who lost his leg in a motocross accident, "what does your wife think of all the risks you take?"

"I have gotten a little banged up, haven't I?" smiled Wazny, who broke his arm in a snowboard competition in February after taking bronze and silver, respectively, in the sport in the last two ESPN Winter X Games, from which he gets his nickname.

The students were guiding Wazny through a series of exercises that are part of the "Training for Life" program developed and coordinated by Wright & Filippis, a medical equipment company. And it's hard to say who gained the most from it.

"It's taken away my apprehension of working with amputees," said Barb Gignac, one of the student organizers. "Now I'm very comfortable. And, I better understand the depression that may follow an injury—any injury."

Mazur, Gignac, Kelly Schmitz and Matt Marchetti, all second-year PTA students, had met with Brad Shebib, a training specialist with Wright & Filippis for six sessions on Fridays during the winter semester, learning how to help new amputees adapt to their prosthetic limbs and veterans like Wazny practice "fitness for life." The four then brought back what they learned to the rest of their PTA class who, in turn, volunteered their time to conduct therapy sessions for amputees as part of Wright & Filippis' training program.

"I had a friend whose leg was amputated below the knee, and I didn't know what I could do to help him," related Schmitz. "Not anymore."



Macomb PTA students who graduated this year (from left to right in blue shirts): Kelly Schmitz, Matt Marchetti, Barb Gignac and Karen Mazur strike a pose during a physical therapy session with Jim Wazny, who lost his leg in a motocross accident. Macomb students volunteered to work with amputees as part of "Training for Life," a program developed and coordinated by Wright & Filippis.

Renas' third turn as coach of the year



Kim Renas, Macomb's head indoor track and cross country coach, was named National Junior College Athletic Association Coach of the Year for 2011.

Kim Renas, Macomb's head indoor track and cross country coach, women's and men's teams, was named National Junior College Athletic Association Coach of the Year for 2011, following the national indoor track meet held in Texas in March. But what really made the day for him was how well the lady Monarchs played.

"This one was exciting because going into the meet, the team was doing pretty well," relates Renas. "But they were up against athletes of international caliber, and they ran as well as anyone. Taking fourth place in the nationals is pretty significant."

During his 29-year coaching career at Macomb, Renas has been named coach of the year two other times—1983 and 1995. The student athletes he has coached have won eight individual national championships and five team national championships, with nearly 70 named All-Americans.

"It's a team award," says Renas, of the coach-of-the-year honors. "I couldn't do it without everyone involved in our program—the student athletes, my co-coach Das Campbell and all the support from the school."

Respiratory therapy grads give scholarship fund room to breathe

At an establishment whose name once would have evoked images of a smoke-filled room in a game that is often associated with the same, a group of graduating respiratory therapy students raised the funds they needed to endow a scholarship that honors one of their own.

Bobbie Martini was a respiratory therapy student who died of cancer seven years ago, at which time faculty established a scholarship in her honor. The opportunity, however, was running out to raise it to an endowed status, ensuring that the interest earned on the principal would continue to provide scholarships to respiratory therapy students year after year. That's when the Class of 2011 stepped in.

They negotiated with Snooker's Pool and Pub in Utica to hold a three-day poker tournament in its popular charity poker room in April. Amidst preparing for exams and polishing their resumes, the students, along with faculty, volunteered for one or more of the six shifts during the fundraiser, which ran from 11:30 a.m. to 2 a.m. each day. By the time the last card was played, more than the

\$7,000 needed to cover the cost of endowing the Bobbi Martini Memorial Respiratory Therapy Scholarship was raised.

"We wanted to leave behind some kind of legacy," said Scott Cox, who graduated from the program in May and is credited by his classmates as the mastermind and chief organizer behind the successful fundraiser. "Now," said Cox, "the Class of 2011 will always be associated with this scholarship."



Scott Cox, who graduated from Macomb in May, organized a charity poker tournament this spring that raised enough to endow a scholarship for respiratory therapy students.

More options for earning advanced degrees

The Macomb University Center, located on Macomb's Center Campus, has added several new programs to its roster, providing those with associate and bachelor's degrees more options to advance their education close to home.

The Macomb University Center provides degree-completion programs offered in partnership with other colleges and universities.

New programs by partner are:

Wayne State University

- Bachelor Arts/Science in Elementary Education with a major in Special Education; concentration in Cognitive Impairment
- Master of Education in Special Education—Cognitive Impairment
- Education Specialist Certificate in Special Education with a concentration in Autism Spectrum Disorder

Madonna University

- Bachelor of Paralegal Studies

University of Detroit Mercy

- Bachelor of Science in Addiction Studies

Central Michigan University

- Master of Arts in Education with a concentration in Guidance and Development
- Specialist in Education in General Education Administration with a concentration in administrative leadership
- Doctor of Education with a concentration in Higher Education Leadership (Fall 2013)

Other partners are Ferris State University, Michigan State University, Oakland University, Rochester College and Walsh College.

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Time for Big Ben this March?



Phil Barrons, humanities professor, will lead his annual spring break trip to London in March, and alumni, as always, are invited.

This year's trip will be from March 2 to March 10 at a cost per person of \$1,750. The price includes airfare, accommodations at a centrally located London hotel, breakfast, transfers to and from the airport, a guided bus tour of London and a daytrip to one of England's other historically rich sites such as Cambridge, Oxford or Bath.

Contact Barrons at 586.445.7018 or call 586.445.7354 and request to be placed on his mailing list.

Alumnus champion of evolving mechatronics field

Michael Alston began tinkering with electronics when he was just a kid, and after earning an associate degree in it from Schoolcraft College, he put his talent and skills to good use in a promising career. After the layoff notice came in his longtime automotive-related job, however, the father of four no longer felt like a contender, and that's when wife, Maquita, rallied loudly in his corner.

"It's kind of like a Rocky story," Alston says. "She went out and found Macomb's program for me. She said, 'mechatronics, Mike, that's for you.'"

Mechatronics integrates mechanics, electronics and computer technologies to accommodate the development and design of technologically advanced products and processes. Mechatronics engineers and technicians can be found in automotive and medical manufacturing, transportation, construction, communications and the film industry to name a few. Macomb introduced its mechatronics program in 2009, and for Alston it couldn't have come at a better time.

Whiz kid in mechatronics

"When I was laid off from BASF (The Chemical Company)," where he had worked for 13 years, "I vowed I would never let it happen to me again," relates Alston. "So I aggressively attacked (Macomb's mechatronics) program and treated it like a 40- to 50-hour a week job. I whizzed through the program."

Not only did Alston whiz through Macomb's mechatronics program, becoming one of its first graduates, he did it while simultaneously earning a bachelor's degree in the same from Sienna Heights University. That led to a brief job with an aerospace firm before landing his current paint process engineer position with Volkswagen, working on the launch of the company's new-

est Passat. The downside? The job required Alston and his family, which also includes Mackenzi, 13, Maci, 12, (who likes to tinker with electronics just like her dad) Madison, 10, and Mikel, 7, as well as Maquita, to move to Chattanooga, Tenn.

"We do love the southern lifestyle; it's a lot more easygoing and a tad slower," relates Alston. "We got tired of the Michigan winters, and we like the lower cost of living here. But, we miss our family and friends. We were both born and raised in Michigan. And, we miss our old neighborhood in Canton."

It helped that Maquita, a special education teacher, easily found work, and the view from their new home is of the Appalachian Mountains. And now that he is employed and not whizzing through two degree programs, he has a little more time to workout, play music and program songs on his music software. But, Alston confesses, he also dedicates some of his leisure time to reading instruction booklets for robotics programs to keep his skills in shape. And, his horizon never lacks a new aspiration.

A contender again

"The next step is to jump into management at VW," says Alston. "I am learning German right now so that should help my marketability."

Still, he credits Maquita and Macomb's mechatronics program for providing his "Rocky Story" with its happy ending.

"Macomb's program is unique and specialized. It puts you right in the mode of an engineer," says Alston, who was invited back to Macomb last spring to address the college's manufacturing technology advisory board on the merits of mechatronics and how it was his comeback career



Michael Alston was one of the first graduates of Macomb's mechatronics program. He returned this spring to address the college's manufacturing technology advisory board about how the skills he acquired at Macomb helped him build a successful second career.

after electronics. "And I appreciated the flexibility of the professors because I was on a tight schedule, so they allowed me to be very aggressive with my studies and lab responsibilities."

In the fall, Alston will begin teaching mechatronics at the Volkswagen Academy, a specialty for which he has now become not only one of its success stories but also one of its most ardent champions.

"It opened my eyes," says Alston, "to the future of manufacturing."

Homeland Security: New degree reflects current realities

A new homeland security program, offering both associate degree and certificate options, is set to debut at Macomb in the fall semester.

An offshoot of a Transportation Safety Administration training program developed last year by Macomb's Public Service Institute for employees of Detroit Metropolitan Airport, the program has been designed to upgrade the skills of those already working in private or homeland security, prepare others for entry into the field and provide a base of knowledge for those who intend to transfer into a bachelor's degree program in a related area.

Building on Macomb's current law enforcement curriculum, the new homeland security (HLND) courses include introduction to homeland security, intelligence analysis and security management, transportation and border security, and introduction to emergency management.

"We developed this program in response to the current employment outlook for police officers and firefighters in Michigan," said Mike Metz, director of Macomb's Public Service Institute. "Local units of government are cutting their public safety budgets, but the U.S. Department of Homeland Security is still hiring qualified individuals."

Belief in community inspires alumna both personally and professionally

The concept of community is something Macomb alumna Margaret Farenger takes to heart. Her association with a community college is a source of great pride, and she incorporates her belief in the strength of community as the new executive director of Oakland County's Alliance of Coalitions for Healthy Communities (ACHC).

A bit of a free spirit, Farenger, who lives in Chesterfield Township, took a wandering path to earning her advanced education. A 1989 graduate of Holy Cross High School in Marine City, Farenger enrolled that fall at Macomb, but the curiosity of earning a paycheck and "finding out what it was like to live on my own" superseded the desire to attend college. She moved around a bit, took miscellaneous jobs, started a family, and eventually returned to college.

"I always knew college was what I wanted. It was important to me to get a college degree," said Farenger. "It probably would have been more preferable to take more credits at a time, but I don't regret living life."

A non-traditional student

"Living life" involved juggling family—sons, Dylan and Daniel—with the demands of school. Sometimes that meant enrolling full time, sometimes part time, and sometimes it meant bypass-



Alumna Margaret Farenger believes that the "community" in Macomb Community College is an asset to the area.

ing a semester completely. In 1994, Farenger earned her associate degree in general studies from Macomb and transferred to Wayne State University, where in 2005, she earned a bachelor of art degree in psychology.

"Logistically, it's harder to go to school when you have children, but I think it made me more serious about school and gave me added purpose. I always appreciated that Macomb's faculty tuned-in to where I was as a non-traditional student," said Farenger. "Macomb is a place where you feel comfortable as a non-traditional student."

As a person who makes volunteerism a constant in her life, Farenger said she also appreciated Macomb for the diversity of its student population.

"I like the setting," she said. "Macomb has diversity, not only in race, but in age and people coming from different walks of life. Macomb is a source of strength for this community."

A dedicated professional

Appreciating that strong sense of community is one of the attributes Farenger takes into her profession. ACHC works with 14 community coalitions that focus on community building to prevent substance abuse and addiction, Farenger explained.

"We are addressing health issues at a community level and are coordinating our efforts to be involved before substance abuse and addiction become an issue," she said. "We don't want to wait until treatment is needed. One way to do this is to have a strong community."

Farenger added Certified Prevention Specialist to her credentials in 2007. She maintains, though, that her experiences as a Macomb student have had the greatest impact on her as a professional.

"I find that the qualities that get you through community college are the same ones that led to a lot of success in my professional career," Farenger said.

For Farenger, the fact that she took a wandering path towards her advanced degrees resulted in one of the most memorable times of her life.

"One of the proudest moments of my life was my WSU commencement," Farenger shared. "I treasure that memory especially because my children were there."

Macomb selected to compete for Aspen Prize: Recognizing excellence and innovation in education

Macomb has accepted an invitation to join 119 other community colleges in the country in applying for the \$1 million Aspen Institute Prize, established to recognize and encourage excellence in students' learning outcomes, timely completion rates and success in the workplace.

"To achieve excellent student outcomes, we need to highlight our country's success stories and learn from them so that we can keep reaching higher," said Josh Wyner, director of the Aspen Institute's College Excellence Program. "As a country, now more than ever, we need all community colleges to graduate more students with the knowledge and degrees they need to be successful in the workforce."

Based in Washington, D.C., Colorado and Maryland, the Aspen Institute has a twofold mission: fostering value-based leadership and proving a neutral venue for discussing and acting on critical issues. Its college excellence program focuses on identifying and replicating practices that significantly improve college student outcomes. Funded by the Joyce Foundation, the Lumina Foundation for Education, the Bank of America Charitable Foundation and the JPMorgan Chase Foundation, the Aspen Prize will be awarded in December following a site visit to those 10 community colleges selected as finalists following review of their application materials.

"This is a nice recognition of Macomb's continued focus on student success, both in the classroom and in the workplace," said Jim Jacobs, college president. "This initiative also shines a bright light on the important work of community colleges by showcasing their best practices and providing an avenue for them to share with each other what is working."

Mentoring allows alumnus to “pay it forward”

Volunteering as a mentor for Macomb students is definitely a case of “pay it forward” for Macomb alumnus Derrin Leppek. The former automotive assembly line worker, who took advantage of his company’s tuition reimbursement program to earn his education, credits his network of four mentors for helping him make the transition from classroom to the business office.

“I wouldn’t be doing what I’m doing now if I had not been mentored while I attended college,” said Leppek, who earned an associate degree from Macomb, a bachelor’s degree from Oakland University and a MBA from Wayne State University. “The mentoring helped me bounce ideas off professionals.”

The mentoring Leppek provides Macomb students mirrors the work he does professionally for TechTown, a business incubator for new small businesses.

While at work, Leppek is a sounding board for entrepreneurs, offering insight into a business proposition’s viability. While mentoring students, Leppek hopes to offer advice, instill confidence and provide a network for students.

“I think it’s important to have someone to bounce ideas off of, especially during the early stages of education,” says Leppek. “I know it helped me, and I hope to help others.”

Macomb’s mentoring program is open to anyone who is a professional and who is willing to devote individual attention to a student mentee. Typically, a mentor has experience in a specific career field and can help a mentee learn about and understand the transition to the work world upon the completion of an academic goal. Anyone interested in becoming a Macomb mentor can contact Career Services at 586.445.7321 or go online to careerservices@macomb.edu.



Alumni notes

Daniel Wiegand, 1967, earned a bachelor of arts degree from Michigan State University and a juris doctor degree from the Detroit College of Law. He has held legal positions in private practice as well as with Wayne County Corporation Counsel, USF&G Insurance Company, Ford Motor Company and Gulf & Western Manufacturing Company. He is currently employed as litigation unit manager for Frankenmuth Mutual Insurance Company. Wiegand lives in Frankenmuth with his wife, Kathy, who he met at Macomb. The couple has three grown children and five grandchildren. His book, “Confessions of a Born Again Catholic,” was recently published.

Brian Klaus, 2010, has opened up the Bake Crazy Bake Shop in Port Sanilac, which specializes in everything from donuts to wedding cakes, and he credits what he learned as a student in Macomb’s culinary arts program for making it happen.

“Chef Schneider, Chef Wolf, Chef Faloppa, Chef O’Farrell, Chef Beaubien and Chef Lowry, all of whom I have had, were wonderful and have helped me to develop my bakery. I am proud to have completed the course at Macomb and will always display my degree in the bake shop.”—Brian Klaus

Holly (MacLeod) Kaster, 1992, worked at Megatech Engineering for 11 years after earning degrees in general studies, business management and auto body design from Macomb. For the past seven years, she has been one of the owners and operators of Cropping Daze Retreat, a bed and breakfast that caters to scrapbookers, in Chesaning.

Carl Vanidour, 2003, attended Eastern Michigan University before joining Re-Creation, a traveling singing and dancing group that entertains at Veteran’s Affairs medical centers and state veteran homes throughout the country, as well as at schools, fairs, banquets and other events. Vanidour is a sound technician, assistant choreographer and vocal coach with the group, as well as singing high tenor.

Mary DeRidder, 2009, is working at William Beaumont Hospital after completing her nursing degree at the age of 60.

News about alumni

Send us a note, and let us know what you’ve been doing since you graduated from Macomb. Please include the year you graduated (or last year attended), advanced degrees earned, job history since leaving Macomb and any other items of professional or personal interest.

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Ice art earns Macomb national attention

It might be hard to believe looking at photos of *Horsin' Around*, which won fourth place, abstract category, in the BP World Ice Art Championship held in Fairbanks, Alaska, in February, but those who passed by as it was being carved initially dismissed the Macomb team's entry as strictly amateur.

"We had pieces of ice scattered here and there, and even on the second day, people were walking by shaking their heads and asking 'what are they doing here?'" relates Jeff Wolf, Macomb culinary professor. "But, by the beginning of the third day, they were dropping their jaws."

It was the first time Macomb competed in the Alaskan competition, the largest and most widely followed, by media and ice carving fans alike, in the world, with 70 teams from 17 countries competing this year. Wolf's teammate was Sean Ess, a Macomb culinary student, whose strengths as a carver Wolf worked into his design for *Horsin' Around*. Still, his choice of a teammate contributed to some of those doubtful glances in Alaska.

"This competition is for professionals, and only one other team included a student—from a college in Oregon," notes Wolf. "We were truly the underdogs. But I knew Sean's abilities were strong, and I knew we would work well together."

And work they did, logging in 46 hours over the course of the 60-hour competition with temperatures, at times, reaching 20 degrees below zero to carve *Horsin' Around* out of a 7,200-pound block of ice.

"Macomb had a great presence there," says Wolf, who already has ideas for the design of his next World Ice Art Championship entry with a working title of *Joy of Music*.



Sean Ess (left), Macomb culinary student, and Jeff Wolf, Macomb culinary professor, with *Horsin' Around*, which took fourth place in the World Ice Art Championship.

Macomb named model of efficiency

Macomb was one of 12 colleges and universities named a Model of Efficiency for Spring 2011 by *University Business Magazine*. Macomb was recognized for initiating a paperless, electronic system for 12,000 students receiving financial aid that allows them to purchase textbooks against their accounts.

More than 100 staff hours per semester have been freed up with the new system, which was the result of a collaboration between the college's business and financial aid offices. Previously, the

business office had to input paper receipts for purchases from the bookstore against each student's account as well as generate and distribute 5,000 checks on average each semester, and arrange for stop payments and reissuing of checks that were lost, stolen or never cashed.

Students now have immediate access to funds for books before the start of classes, no longer having to wait for the processing and mailing of checks.

Harvesting Michigan's rich food heritage

Just as tomatoes and green beans give way to apples and acorn squash, the Lorenzo Cultural Center on Macomb's Center Campus will turn its attention to Michigan's bountiful harvest this fall and all that is associated with it.



Encompassing exhibits, speakers, cooking and gardening demonstrations, and children's activities, *Michigan's Harvest: Food, Farming and Community* will open on Sept. 24 and continue to offer a variety of free programming (excluding select speakers) until the weekend before Thanksgiving.

Look for presentations on cultural trends and traditions, urban and organic gardening, restaurants and tourism, regional foods, Michigan farms, the food industry, healthy eating, food banks and farmers' markets.

For the complete program series, visit LorenzoCulturalCenter.www.edu in early September.

The magic of animals

The children of some Macomb alumni saw firsthand how energetic a sloth can be at the hands of Mark Rosenthal following his *Animal Magic* show at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts on Feb. 26. Alumni of the college's veterinary technician program and their families who attended the show were invited to a post-show meet-and-greet reception with Rosenthal and some of his animals, during which he answered questions and signed autographs. The event benefited Macomb's Veterinary Technician Program Scholarship Fund.



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