

at Macomb

News for and about Macomb Community College's alumni and friends

Alumnus gets presidential treatment

Joe Iezzi got more than he expected out of the associate degree in climate control technology he earned from Macomb in December. While he was grateful it led to his new job as a maintenance mechanic with Henry Ford Health System, the White House invitation to introduce President Barack Obama when he visited the college July 14 was the thrill of a lifetime.

"I got to meet (Obama) before he came on stage. He told me to tell my son Alex (a marine) that he was proud of him," said the former laid-off steel worker who attended Macomb through the state's No Worker Left Behind initiative. "It was a fantastic experience."

The White House chose the recent Macomb graduate because he epitomized the success stories so often associated with community colleges, just as his alma mater, according to the president, epitomized the nation's hope for a promising future.

"Community colleges are undervalued as assets in our country," said Obama, who had chosen Macomb as the place to unveil his American Graduation Initiative. "Not only is that not right, it's not smart."

The initiative would provide billions in grants and loans to community colleges over the next 10 years to renovate and expand classroom space, increase online programs, enhance basic skills education and improve degree-completion rates.

"By 2020," promised Obama, "this nation will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world. We used to have that. We're going to have it again."

For Iezzi, 54, the thrill of meeting and introducing the president he helped vote into office ranked slightly lower on the experience ladder than getting married and having children. And, it came very close to not happening.

"I almost didn't take the call," he admitted, "because the number came up 'unavailable.'"



President Barack Obama visited Macomb on July 14 to announce his American Graduation Initiative, which could provide billions in grants and loans to the nation's 1,195 community colleges to strengthen and expand their programs and improve degree-completion rates. Alumnus Joe Iezzi, right, was invited by the White House to introduce the president.

College rolls out welcome mat for veterans

Because of its successful efforts in recruiting and retraining military personnel and veterans, Macomb was named to the 2010 military friendly list of schools in *G.I. Jobs* magazine in the spring.

The list of the top 15 percent military friendly schools was compiled by the magazine following its polling of 7,000 state universities, private colleges, community colleges and trade schools.

"Veterans can now enroll in any school, provided they're academically qualified, so schools are clamoring for them like never before," said Rich McCormack, *G.I. Jobs'*

publisher. "Veterans need a trusted friend to help them decide where to get educated. The Military Friendly Schools list is that trusted friend."

Of the 20 Michigan colleges and university on the list, Macomb was the only community college in southeastern Michigan. Other military friendly schools in Michigan included Central Michigan University, Ferris State University, Grand Rapids Community College, Lansing Community College, Lawrence Technological University and Baker College Online.

Presidential Scholarship promotes “changing lives”

New Macomb President Jim Jacobs wanted his formal installation to focus not on pomp and circumstance, but on the importance of education. So, he kicked off his inauguration day with a special breakfast event, with proceeds used to establish a scholarship for students who may not qualify for funding based on typical financial aid guidelines.

“I wasn’t home when the letter came,” said Macomb student Osama Masri, who is paying for college himself and plans to transfer to Wayne State University. “My mother called me with the news. I am very happy to receive this award. It gives me a push to finish my degree in electrical engineering.”

“Macomb is focused on creating opportunities and changing lives,” said Jacobs. “The Macomb Presidential Scholarship is a perfect way to put those ideals into action.”

Ten students received awards, with most recipients receiving \$1,000, divided over two semesters.

While the initial funds generated by the inaugural breakfast have been depleted, subsequent donations are rebuilding the fund for future recipients. Recently, a group of Macomb students raised \$510 for the scholarship through a service learning project. The students compiled a “perpetual calendar” with inspirational sayings and sold them for \$10 each. There are also plans to make the breakfast event an annual fundraiser for the scholarship fund.

Applicants for the scholarship must have completed a minimum of 12 credit hours at Macomb, be enrolled in at least six credit hours and have a grade point average of at least 2.0. The award is for tuition, fees, books and other educational expenses. For more information about the scholarship, or to make a donation, call the Macomb Foundation at 586.445.7302.

Earn a communications degree at Macomb’s UC

Rochester College has added a new bachelor’s degree program to its offerings at the Macomb University Center (UC) on Center Campus.

Students completing their media and communication arts studies at Macomb can transfer into Rochester’s bachelor of science degree program in mass communications. For more information, call Rochester College at 586.263.6288

DOE grant drives Macomb’s hybrid vehicle curriculum

As soon as Macomb Community College received news in August that it was awarded a \$500,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) for Advanced Electric Drive Vehicle Education programs, plans began for developing curriculum that will provide greater career opportunities for students.

“The curriculum will focus on electric and plug-in vehicle technology for the auto program, and the electrical machines and batteries and electrical infrastructure for the batteries and plug-in vehicles for our mechatronics program,” explained William Stark, director of the college’s Center for Alternative Fuels.

Plans include adding to and modifying the automotive program’s alternative fuels certificate and offering a certificate in electric vehicle technology through the mechatronics program, along with using \$150,000 of the grant to purchase equipment for both programs’ technology labs. Curriculum changes also will be reflected in both associate degree programs.

The grant is a portion of \$5 million Wayne State University (WSU) received from a total \$2.4 billion in Recovery Act funding from the DOE. NextEnergy, a nonprofit business incubator and renewable energy promoter and close WSU affiliate, is also a partner in the grant.

“The WSU affiliation is important, because they will be creating a bachelor’s degree program in electric vehicle technology and a master’s degree program in electric vehicle engineering,” Stark said. “Our program will prepare students to enter into WSU’s electric vehicle technology program.”

Beginning fall 2010, the new courses in both the automotive technology and mechatronics programs will be offered both on-campus and online. The labs, however, will require onsite participation.

Help for older, unemployed workers

Macomb is working with the Macomb-St. Clair Michigan Works office to make sure a \$979,400 grant provided by the U.S. Department of Labor retrains as many unemployed workers over the age of 55 as possible.

The grant, received by the Macomb/St. Clair Workforce Development Board, was one of 10 awarded by the labor department as part of its High Growth Job Training Initiative. It will be used to establish a system that helps older workers take advantage of the local services available to them including skill assessment, career exploration, vocational/basic skills training and job search. As part of that system, Macomb is enhancing its Credit for Prior Learning program so that older workers have more opportunities to obtain credit for prior experience.

“We are looking forward to helping workers with a significant amount of career experience leverage their relevant skills and knowledge by creating a pathway that recognizes this experience and builds upon it,” said Jim Jacobs, Macomb president.

Yes! I would like to support the Macomb Foundation.

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It's all about the players for honored baseball coach

Henry Washington, Macomb's head baseball and basketball coach, was presented with the "Play Baseball Detroit-Champions Award" by the Detroit Tigers in front of a crowd of more than 35,000 at Comerica Park on Aug. 19.



Henry Washington, Macomb's head baseball and basketball coach, was honored at a Detroit Tigers' game on Aug. 19 for his contributions to the sport as a player, coach and advocate.

The award recognized Washington's longtime dedication to the sport of baseball as a player, coach and advocate. A former college baseball player who also played minor league with the Tigers, Washington has coached for Macomb for 17 years. Before that, he also coached at Southeastern High School in Detroit, was an area scout for the Toronto Blue Jays and volunteered for various youth baseball initiatives with the Tigers' organization. This summer, Washington brought college athletics staff and student athletes to serve as instructors at the Willie Horton Batting for Kids Camp at Comerica Park.

"Coaching and teaching has been my lifelong passion; now I want to teach coaches," offers Washington of his next contribution to the sport. "I truly feel my experience will help many who aspire to work with our youth."

Unbeknown to Washington, in the ballpark the evening he was honored was Jim Jacobs, college president.

"My wife Gabriella and I just happened to be at the game and had the privilege of watching Henry receive an ovation from 35,000 Tigers' fans," said Jacobs. "It was well deserved and a proud moment not only for Henry, but for all of us here at Macomb as well. His dedication to student athletes is inspiring."

Meet Michigan's community college alumna of the year

Chief Judge Linda Davis of the 41 B District Court in Mt. Clemens credits Macomb for instilling in her "a love of learning and a passion for reading" that has taken her through two rewarding careers in education and law. Combined with her service to the community, those successes have now earned her the title of 2009 Michigan Community College Association (MCCA) Alumna of the year.

Davis, a former teacher and counselor with Center Line Public Schools, was appointed to the bench by Governor John Engler in 2000 and has served as chief judge since 2002. Her community service has included membership on the governing boards of several local nonprofit organizations, founding of the Macomb County Child Advocacy Committee and opening of the Care House shelter in Mt. Clemens for victims of domestic violence, volunteering with Habitat for Humanity, founding chapters of Families Anonymous in Macomb County and South Africa, which she recently visited on a medical mission, and instituting the Court to Classroom program "Critical Choices."

Davis, who was honored by the MCCA at a dinner in Traverse City this summer, previously received the Woman of Distinction Award from the Girl Scouts, Macomb County Otsikita Council, Inc., and was named a Most Distinguished Graduate by Center Line High School.

"My experience with a community college was the beginning of a new life for me," said Davis, who attended Macomb in the early 1970s. "Without Macomb, I probably would not have had the opportunity to go to college. It was a bridge to the future for me."



Macomb alumna Linda Davis, chief judge of 41 B District Court in Mt. Clemens, was named Michigan's community college alumna of the year for 2009.

Grant provides free training to family caregivers



Instructor Vickie Andrews (far left) shows students Zahia Kassab (left) and Linda France how to move a bedridden person at the first free Art of Caregiving workshop for family caregivers.

Macomb is one of 15 colleges in the country to receive a \$20,000 grant from the International Longevity Center, with support from MetLife Foundation, to enhance or introduce training programs for both paid and family caregivers.

The grants are part of the Caregiving Project for Older Americans, a partnership of the longevity center and the Schmieding Center for Senior Health and Education, which is a satellite of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences. The grant initiative was developed in response to a growing need for well-trained caregivers across the country.

According to Michelle Valin, program coordinator with Macomb's Center for Continuing Education, Macomb will use the \$20,000 to provide free caregiver training to community residents who are responsible for the care of loved ones. With participants referred by the Macomb County Department of Senior Citizens Services, the Art of Caregiving Workshop, which incorporates curriculum from continuing education's Eldercare Specialist Program, is being held first at South Campus with plans to take it to health fairs and flu clinics throughout the year.

"We hope to educate hundreds of family caregivers at these events," says Valin.

Diagnosis turns alumna into activist

Kathleen Gerus-Darbison has received a \$60,000 grant for a pet project and has been profiled in newspapers more than once. The Macomb alumna met President Bill Clinton, served on an advisory board in Washington, D.C., been interviewed by Bill Bonds and received the Detroit Free Press' Michiganian of the Year award in 1994. But she would have traded it all in to not have to learn the other, more hideous meaning for the word "cocktail."

"You are taking four classes of drugs," Gerus-Darbison relates. "You don't feel well. You don't have any energy. And, if the new drugs don't work, you start losing hope. I have been on my deathbed a few times."

Fears about the future

Gerus-Darbison contracted AIDS from her first husband, Michael Gerus, a hemophiliac who she met while both were students at Wayne State University. The couple married in 1983, two years before a blood test lessened the disease's significant toll on the hemophiliac community, whose blood treatments expose them to as many as 5,000 individual donors at a time. The test arrived a little too late for the Geruses, however, and their diagnosis was delivered in 1985 by the Center for Disease Control after it conducted a national transfusion safety study.

"They told us we were both infected with HIV," recalls Gerus-Darbison. "It was a dark time in my life. And, back then, you didn't tell anybody, not even family."

The next five years would drag slowly on as the couple waited to see if their baby girl, Stephanie, born in 1984, would be infected as well.

"I asked (the doctors) if she should live with someone else? Could I hold her? Could I kiss her? But they assured us (HIV) could only be transmitted through blood," relates Gerus-Darbison. "Still, I moved her toothbrush to another part of the bathroom."

Starting to live again

Stephanie, now a college student in Florida, was given the all clear about the same time that her mother graduated from Macomb, after first starting there in the late 1970s.

"Macomb was an eye-opening experience for me," says Gerus-Darbison. "I discovered how much bigger the world really was." But nothing could prepare her for what lay ahead. Michael was diagnosed with AIDS in 1992 and died that same year. By then, her husband weighed 85 pounds, and Gerus-Darbison still tears up talking about it. After her own AIDS diagnosis came the year after Michael's death, Gerus-Darbison moved in with her parents as she anticipated the war each new course of drugs would wage



Kathy Gerus-Darbison with her "Stitches: A Doll Project" at the Women Making Change Conference held in London, Ontario, in 2008. The dolls give a voice to women who, like Gerus-Darbison, have been infected by HIV or have AIDS.

with her body, and what she feared would be the inevitable outcome.

"When I realized that I wasn't going to be dead," relates Gerus-Darbison, "I started living again."

Giving it her all

She went back to school and earned a bachelor's degree in psychology from Wayne State University. With the deputy director of the MIDWEST Aids Prevention Project, she launched "Stitches: A Doll Project," which gives a voice to women and girls affected by HIV or AIDS through the creation of dolls that visually tell their stories. This year, the 10-year-old project, which includes dolls from as far away as India, received a \$60,000 grant from the Johnson & Johnson Society allowing Gerus-Darbison to buy more supplies and take the project on the road. She also tutors psychology and special needs students at Macomb's Center Campus and, after earning a master's degree in sociology from the University of Windsor, began teaching at Oakland Community College this fall.

But of all her brave acts and outstanding accomplishments, it's her marriage to Bill Darbison, an older brother's best friend who she had known since she was a child, which truly sustains her. The two began corresponding via e-mail after Michael died, with Darbison ultimately relocating to Michigan from Calgary, Canada, to be near her.

"When you have someone in life that loves you for who you are...", says Gerus-Darbison, "well, that's just the best."

Alumni notes

Tom Bills, 1972, earned a bachelor's degree from Oakland University and a master's of fine arts degree from Yale University and has been professor of fine art at the University of California since 2001. A sculptor whose work has been exhibited at galleries in New York, Germany, Michigan and Massachusetts, Bills most recent show was this fall at the Phyllis Stigliano Gallery in New York. *New Steel Sculpture*, Tom Bills, consisted of eight wall-hung flame carved sculptures and was characteristic of his work with industrial materials.

Michael Sheppard, 1980, has taught television repair for continuing education departments in the Hazel Park and Mount Clemens school districts as well as Wayne County Community College. He owned Sheppard Electronics in Madison Heights and Troy before consolidating those two stores into Northern Television in Royal Oak after purchasing it in 1993.

"I must say that what I learned from Macomb College has been of great benefit, not just the electronics but the overall learning experience."
—Michael Sheppard, owner of Northern Television in Royal Oak

Alessandro Fragnoli, 2006, earned a bachelor's degree with a major in social studies and a minor in history for secondary education from Wayne State University. He works at Powers Distributing in Lake Orion and is a 7th grade basketball coach in Utica Community Schools.

Charles Dewandeler, no date given, hosted a free preview of his film, "Parody Movie," this fall at Wayne State's Marvin I. Danto Engineering Development Center. Dewandeler, who lives in Los Angeles, shot the film in Detroit.

Ronald McClow, no date given, has been promoted to Informational Systems Specialist III by Soil and Materials Engineers, Inc., in Plymouth, where he has worked for six years.

Macomb alumnus follows his dreams

You learn quickly that when you're in the Antarctica don't go outside without goggles and look directly into the wind. Your eyes will freeze shut.

That's just one of life's lessons Macomb alumnus Paul Daniels learned during one of three stints living and working on the coldest, windiest continent on earth. He also learned to make life's choices carefully and not regret his decisions.

"People told me I was crazy when I decided to quit my job of 14 years," said Daniels, then 32. "But I always wanted to travel. I wasn't married. I didn't have any kids. I sold almost everything I owned and headed for Africa. There are tradeoffs for my decision, but I don't regret it."

Not your average vacation

The trip to Africa was different than the trips he had taken previously to the former Soviet Union, Vietnam (pre-normalization) and India. Those were vacations with planned tours and accommodations. In Africa, Daniels camped across 23 countries, hitchhiking almost 5,000 miles—including those logged on cargo planes. He tells of a gorilla playfully pounding on his leg in Zaire and riding the Zambezi River rapids on a surfboard.

Of course it wasn't all idyllic. Daniels, a St. Clair Shores native, notes he was attacked by bandits while hitchhiking through Mozambique and endured several hospitalizations with bouts of dengue-fever and typhus. His traveling bug, however, was never affected.

"I want to go to every place on earth," Daniels said. "The more remote, the more enticing it is."

Adventures in Antarctica

In 1999, at age 40, Daniels learned about opportunities in Antarctica. Thanks to his Macomb degree in climate control and his years of experience as a licensed heating and cooling specialist, Daniels qualified for one of the most in-demand jobs at the U.S. Antarctic Research Station—McMurdo. He sent an application, and 30 days later, was stepping off a plane in Antarctica where he would winterover ("locked in" throughout the winter) for the next 8½ months.

While Daniels admitted that the darkness and bouts of insomnia were difficult, he said the hardest part about being isolated for a long period in a cold climate is dealing with the other people and how they were reacting to the conditions.

Daniels returned to Antarctica two years later, this time to the South Pole for a 10-month winterover.

"I heard the Pole was three-times as hard as McMurdo, so of course I had to go," Daniels said. There, he worked as a maintenance special-



Macomb alumnus Paul Daniels stands at the U.S. Antarctic Research Station in the South Pole, one of three long-term assignments he spent in Antarctica. Daniels has written a manuscript detailing day-to-day life in the South Pole.

ist, typically spending six hours a day outside, climbing on roofs to check chimney stacks and making sure pipes weren't frozen.

"The cold hurt," Daniels said. "But, your body acclimates, and, after awhile, you don't even zip up your coat when it's -80°."

Wandering the world

Daniels returned again to Antarctica in 2004 when he wintered at the research station in Palmer, making him one of only 38 people who have winterovered at all three American Antarctic stations. Since then, he has backpacked through Australia, worked construction in China and North Africa and, in 2006, worked as a HVAC supervisor for 15 months at the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan. The stress, though, of having machine guns fired at him and rioters sending burning trucks toward the compound convinced Daniels to come home.

Daniels has finished a manuscript, "Emails from the Pole," and a video documentary, "Living in the Shadow of the Moon-Dog," depicting his South Pole experience, which has caught the interest of 20th Century

Fox. He's also keeping a promise to his father to look after his 84-year-old mother.

"I credit my dad, who shared his WWII adventures, for instilling an adventuresome spirit in me," Daniels said. "But, it's been my Macomb education that got me my start in everything I have ever done. I'm still using it."

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.

E-mail to: alumni@macomb.edu

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Library collection grows by 10,000



Cassie Spieles, a collections and resources librarian at Macomb, and Lois Grogen, manager of library technical services, survey the 10,000 books that the college libraries received from the Macomb County Library, which closed last spring. Macomb accepted all of the county library's literature, history, art and music volumes.

Check it out

The recently received donation of 10,000 books means that alumni have that many more reasons to check out their borrowing privileges at Macomb's two libraries.

Macomb alumni may check out up to three books at a time for up to three weeks. And, if alumni can't find the book they want, Macomb's membership in the Michigan eLibrary Catalog (MeLCat) allows them to order it online and pick it up at either the South or Center Campus Library. For more information on MeLCat, go to www.elibrary.mel.org.

Check out Macomb's campuses for things to see and do this winter

There's no reason for getting cabin fever this winter with all that is going on at Macomb Community College. From plays and performances, exhibits and presentations and events at both South and Center Campus libraries, the college offers a wide array of options touching on a vast array of topics.

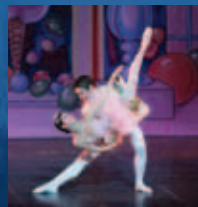
The following is a listing of programs or events sponsored by various college organizations running through early March.

The Lorenzo Cultural Center's next program series opens on Feb. 27 and runs through May 8: *And Still They Prospered: Living Through the Great Depression*. Check the center's website at www.lorenzoculturalcenter.com for more information.

On-campus events commemorating both Martin Luther King Jr. Day and Black History Month include a performance by the Marygrove Dance Ensemble on Feb. 10 at Center Campus and a poetry reading in the South Campus Library. Check the college's website in January for more details.

Nancy Schlichting, president and chief executive officer of the Henry Ford Health System, will discuss her successful career as part of the college's commemoration of Women's History Month in March. Check the college's website in January for more details.

In the midst of its 2009–2010 season, check the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts website at www.MacombCenter.com for ticket prices and full schedule of performances. Some highlights include:



- The Nutcracker with the Macomb Ballet Company on Dec. 4 at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. and Dec. 5 at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.



- Natalie MacMaster: Christmas in Cape Breton on Dec. 13 at 4 p.m.

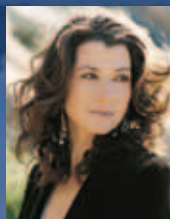
- Moscow Festival Ballet performing Sleeping Beauty on Jan. 9 at 2 p.m.



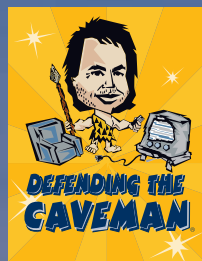
- Menopause the Musical® on Jan. 15 at 3 and 8 p.m. and Jan. 16 at 3 and 8 p.m.



- Amy Grant on Jan. 22 at 8 p.m.



- Camelot on Jan. 30 at 3 and 8 p.m.



- Defending the Caveman on Feb. 27 at 5 and 8 p.m.

- Paula Poundstone on March 13 at 8 p.m.

