



Staff Newsletter of Thomas Edison State College • August 2009



Dr. Ray Young

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- Dr. Ray Young, Vice Provost and Dean of Learner Services

## Telecommuting a Success

THOMAS EDISON STATE COLLEGE'S NEW PROGRAM  
FOSTERS IMPROVED MORALE AND INCREASED EFFICIENCY

Telecommuting has been used in the corporate and private sectors for years. Now, it has come to Thomas Edison State College, and with much success.

**Dr. Ray Young**, vice provost and dean of Learner Services, initiated a Telecommuting Pilot Program, from October 2007 to April 2008, as a means to improve morale, recognize performance and increase efficiency. On July 1, 2009, the evaluation section of the Office of the Registrar permanently adopted the Telecommuting Program.

The initial Telecommuting Pilot Program included three evaluators who had achieved a productivity level of 10 percent beyond their weekly goal for a three-month time frame. They were offered the chance to work from home and became eligible for up to three telecommuting days each week, including Monday, Thursday and Friday. Tuesdays and Wednesdays everyone is required at the office to allow for regular meetings and training. A quality assurance component was added to the program to ensure the standards for comprehensive evaluations would not be negatively affected. This was done by randomly checking no less than 5 percent of each participant's files.

"Now that I have a flexible approach to my working hours, I have found my own personal daily

rhythm," said Office of Learner Services Representative **Doray Burns**. "This enables me to stop and start at peak productive hours — morning, noon, night and weekends. Allowing an independent work style signals that my managers have trust and confidence in my ability to be 'self motivated' enough to get my job done in a timely manner without compromising accuracy."

The Telecommuting Pilot Program was extended once for a period of six-months and this provided the opportunity for additional evaluators to be considered for the program. Six additional evaluators were deemed qualified. They, like the initial group, began telecommuting one day each week. At the end of the first month their work was assessed and those that qualified were allowed to add a second day each week. After another month without any problems each could add another day. Those not quite ready for additional days were held at one or two per week until they were ready to advance. Eventually all participating evaluators were advanced to the maximum of three days per week.

Although the volunteering evaluators may be completing the majority of the work off-site, it is their responsibility to provide themselves with the proper technology to make the program successful. Generally, this only

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## Telecommuting a success (continued from page 1)

requires high-speed Internet access and a reliable personal computer. Using these tools, they remotely access their computer at work, thus gaining access to all the files and documents required to complete their assigned evaluations. No additional compensation was provided, and other than technical support and administrative monitoring, the College has no additional costs resulting from this program.

"The flexibility of the telecommuting program is unparalleled," said Learner Services Representative **Rob Devine**. "It provides the luxury to work in the comfortable and quiet environment of your home, which significantly increases productivity. I have embraced the ability to work at my peak times, which are not always the same from one day to the next. By doing so, it ensures that my focus remains sharp, and that I am always working in an effective and efficient manner. This directly benefits our students by delivering a quality product."

The extended and expanded pilot program officially concluded in March 2009. By that time all but two of the College's evaluators had qualified to participate. Approval was given to continue the program until the final report and its evaluation and recommendations had been considered by the President's Council.

Young's assessment of telecommuting, contained in the final report, was that it has proved to be a huge success. "Those employees in the program are happy, those that are not, are working hard to qualify. Evaluator productivity is up for both groups and for the work unit as a whole. Wait-time for both initial and update evaluations are down and employee morale is high. Most importantly, the quality of the evaluations we produce in such great quantity is measurably improved," he reported.

## Focus On: Kathleen Melilli

In the short year that **Kathleen Melilli** has been with the College, transformative things have taken place for the institution. It takes about two minutes with Melilli to realize that this may be no mere coincidence.

"I was attracted to the position at Thomas Edison State College because of the diverse responsibilities and academic environment," noted Melilli, executive assistant to the vice president and provost.

"I attended Rutgers University and Fairleigh Dickinson University at night [earning a BS in management and an MBA, respectively] while working full time, and really enjoyed the experience. I always knew the next phase of my career would involve education. I just never realized how closely my new employer's mission would match my own academic path. I have a special affinity for the adult student because I was one myself."

Prior to coming to the College, Melilli spent a number of years in project management, human resources management, corporate security and global sales; eventually landing leadership roles in operations, quality management, policy, compliance and marketing along the way. Most recently, she served as program coordinator of Graduate Education Offsite Programs at the College of Saint Elizabeth in Convent Station, N.J.

It was an impressive prologue that served Melilli well when she was thrust into decisive projects soon after her arrival. Projects such as editing the 2010 *College Catalog* and *Registration Bulletin* gave Melilli the opportunity to cultivate a number of working relationships, while taking part in the important online transition of the College's flagship publications.

"Kathy has an intuitive understanding of the College and its mission," noted Provost **Bill Seaton**. "She 'got it' very quickly and possesses superior

organizational skills. Kathy's professionalism has had an impact across the division; and, during a time of continued growth under trying economic circumstances, has made a significant contribution to improving Academic Affairs. I think I can speak for the entire senior staff in saying how fortunate we feel to have her as a colleague."



Kathleen Melilli

Melilli spends much of her day working closely with the College's leadership team and is heavily involved in the development and documentation of academic policies and procedures. "I also coordinate and respond to student appeals, serve as secretary for the College's Academic Council, ensure that Academic Affairs' project dates and deadlines are met, assist with projects such as the College's *Annual Report*, program and strategy reviews, track budgets and participate in the College's Middle States Commission on Higher Education Self-Study. I embrace the unpredictability of my workday and very much enjoy working with staff from an array of departments who are passionate about the College's mission."

The Hillsborough, N.J., resident is the oldest of five and is quick to credit her strength, values and success to her parents. "I have nine nieces and one nephew and my family is very close," she said. "The love of my life is my fiancé, John. A long time animal lover, I currently have two cats – Juliet and Midnight. Without a doubt, the animals in my life have always ruled the roost!"

Melilli is a member of Beta Gamma Sigma National Honor Society for Business and Alpha Sigma Lambda, Beta Zeta Chapter at Rutgers University and is the past president of that chapter. In her spare time, Melilli loves to golf and recently took up piano lessons. She is also an avid reader with a bent toward mystery, crime and spy novels. She also loves to cook and is always looking for the next great recipe to try out on friends and family.

## National Institute Marks 21st Year

The National Institute on the Assessment of Learning 2009: *The Next Generation* was held in Princeton, N.J., June 10 - 12, marking its 21st year. The Institute covered a number of topics in the assessment of adult learning. Forty-five colleges, 21 states and three countries were represented.



The National Institute presented the first Lifetime Achievement Award this year to Morris Keeton, who is the founding father of Prior Learning Assessment. Keeton's son Gary Keeton accepted the award on behalf of his father. **Dr. George A. Pruitt** made the presentation.

National Institute Director **Dan Negrón** noted, "I attribute the success of this year's Institute to the richness of the presentations and the presenters' blending of scholarly research with practice."

## Congratulations

**Estelle Wells** (formerly Reeves), administrative assistant in the Heavin School of Arts and Sciences, received her Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology this past March from Thomas Edison State College and celebrated her nuptials to Printess Wells on Father's Day.

**Beth (Dey) MacKinnon**, director of Special Events and the Annual Fund in the Office of Development, and her husband, David, welcomed a son, Jacob Thomas MacKinnon, on June 14, 2009. Jacob Thomas weighed 6 pounds, 5 ounces, and was 20 inches long.

## Staff Activities



**Susan C. Cobb**, PhD, RN, program advisor, School of Nursing, has been notified that her article entitled "Social Presence and Online Learning: A Current View from a Research Perspective" has been accepted for publication in the November 2009 issue of *The Journal of Interactive Online Learning*. The journal is an online publication of the Virtual Center for Online Learning Research, and a collaborative effort of The University of Alabama, The University of Idaho, Miami University and the University of Texas at Tyler.

**Dr. Joseph Santora**, dean, School of Business and Management, published a research brief of the article "The Role of Culture as Driver of Quality Management and Performance: Infrastructure Versus Core Quality Practices," which appeared in the May 2009 issue of the *Academy of Management Perspectives*. Santora also received notification that his co-authored paper with James C. Sarros, professor of Management at Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, "The transformational-transactional leadership model in practice," was the top 10 downloaded article in the 30 years history of the *Emerald Literati Network's Leadership and Organization Development Journal*.

**Todd Siben**, senior program advisor, Office of Advisement, attended 2009 International Maritime eLearning Symposium in Easton, Md., at the Calhoun MEBA Engineering School in July and did a presentation, "Serving the Adult Collegian in the Applied Science and Technology Degree" after which he fielded questions.

**Linda Vasbinder**, assistant to the president, Office of the President; **Charlene Martucci**, fiscal administrator, Office of the Controller; **Carla-Maria Ratico**, Learner Services representative/academic evaluator; and **Karen L. Bitner**, administrative assistant, John S. Watson School of Public Service and Continuing Studies, attended the New Jersey Governor's Conference for Women, May 12, in Atlantic City.



Linda Vasbinder, Charlene Martucci, Carla-Maria Ratico and Karen L. Bitner

Leadership Trenton alumna **Cathy Punchello-Cobos**, senior associate registrar and director of Academic Records (LT '08), and **Linda Rosner**, Learner Support representative, Office of Admissions (LT '09), spearheaded a drive to support the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen (T.A.S.K.). Through the generosity of Thomas Edison State College administration and staff, the supplies drive resulted in more than 60 individual and 10 family bags, which were delivered to T.A.S.K. for distribution to those in need.

## College Salutes and Honors New Jersey National Guard

The New Jersey National Guard had a Welcome Home Ceremony on June 12 for 2,800 soldiers returning from Iraq. The ceremony, which took place in front of the New Jersey State House, was followed by a parade that marched to the Sovereign Bank Arena. An estimated 15,000 people lined the street waving American flags and cheering the troops, including Thomas Edison State College staff. To honor the men and women of the N.J. National Guard, the College draped a banner over its entrance in support.



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## New Staff



**Robertson Bamfo** has been appointed senior research analyst in the Division of Planning and Research. Bamfo is located on the 4th floor of the Kelsey Building and may be reached at extension 2028.



**Jeff Lushbaugh** has been appointed director of Website & Multimedia Production in the Office of Communications. Lushbaugh is located on the 5th floor of the Kelsey Building and may be reached at extension 2055.



**Kelli Parlante-Givas** has been appointed associate director of Military & Veteran Education. Parlante-Givas is located on the 2nd floor of the Academic Center and may be reached at extension 2127.



**Lisa Whitfield-Harris** has been appointed diversity coordinator in the School of Nursing. Whitfield-Harris is located on the 3rd floor of the Townhouses and may be reached at extension 3267.

## College Summer Cooler



**Olga Napoleon and Charlotte MacCulloch** enjoy a cool treat at the ice cream social.

## Brightest Light



**Kaiser Bemah**, clerk typist, Office of Learner Services, was honored as the "Brightest Lights" employee of the month in July.

Bemah was recognized by the committee recently with the acknowledgment that his "pleasant attitude and willingness to go above and beyond the duties of his job, make him a Bright Light at Thomas Edison State College."

## Staff Celebrates the Summer in Style at Rosedale Park



More than 260 staff, family and friends attended the 2009 College Picnic at Rosedale Park in Hopewell Township, which featured a MoonWalk event and face painting, an exciting softball game and the popular "Years-of-Service" Auction.

One of the highlights of this year's event was the presentation of a farewell plaque to **Gregg Dye**, assistant director of Academic Advising, who will be retiring from the College later this year. In honor of his last year of grilling burgers and dogs for the summer event, Dye received recognition from the Picnic Committee. A plaque, which was created and presented by 'grill team' member **Todd Siben**, noted, "In Honor of Your Flippin' Service - 2009."

Many thanks go out to the College Picnic Committee **Nancy Broglie, Rob Burton, Jeff Clark, Jim Chianese, Gregg Dye, Lisa Fiorello, Mary Hack, Judy Lucas, Debbie Lutz, Melissa Maszczak, Dosiree Mims, Olga Napoleon, Noreen O'Donnell, Carla-Maria Ratico, Todd Siben, Linda Soltis (chair), Terry Thornton, Frank Tulli, Melissa VanAken, Li-yun Young, Estelle Wells and Denise Weber.**



*Capital Campus* is produced by the Office of Communications at Thomas Edison State College. To submit a story idea for the newsletter or for more information, please contact Linda Soltis at extension 2065.