

# PA Panorama

MVCC Professional Association Newsletter • Volume IX • No. 3 • January 2008

## PA January Luncheon Celebrates Achievements

Dmitry Shtarnov, Sandy Cummings, Sue Bice, Bill McGowan, Ron Rhodes, Rick Stempien, Jean Wagoner...

These are some of the individuals recognized at this year's January luncheon. As usual, the January luncheon provided the opportunity to congratulate retirees and the PA Scholarship winner (please see pp. 4-5 for pictures), but it also gave us the chance to celebrate the achievements of the whole, of our Professional Association.

To that end, President Searles presented us with a synopsis of this year's PA activities. Here is what she reported:

The Association can look back on 2007 and see much to be



*Members enjoying the festivities.*

proud of. Together, we've done a great deal.

### **We've been recognized and honored.**

- Twice this year, union colleagues invited the PA to statewide and national conferences to share our successful experiences.

- For the second time, the PA received the NYSUT Local Community Service Award.

- Our newsletter and website won prizes, as they've done every year.

- The PA continued to be an award-winning VOTE-COPE local, the only upstate community college to do so.

- And the Association got more "ink" in union publications: *New York Teacher*, *AFT OnCampus*, and *NYSUT Insider*.

### **We've participated.**

- PA members attended local, statewide, and national conferences this year: AFT Higher Ed Issues Conference, NYSUT Higher Education Council, the Cornell Leadership Institute, the Regional Leadership conference, the Community College conference, and conferences on Health and Safety, Union Finances, and Member Benefits.

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# A Year in the Life of the PA

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- The PA continued to be a part of the NYSUT Local Presidents' Council and the Central New York Labor Council.

## We've taken care of each other.

- Because of skillful negotiations and diligent grievance work, the contract continued to protect our rights.

- As always, careful research supported the efforts of these important PA committees.

- This year, the PA Benefits Fund trustees updated the Q & A booklet, assisted with claims, refined its database and notification systems, and managed our vision care and insurance coverage. What's more, they've been researching new benefits to add to the Fund in 2008.

- As in the past, our retirees have been thanked for their faithful membership.

- On more than one occasion this year, colleagues in need were given as much sick time as they could have.

- Members who were ill or grieving were supported in writing and in person.

- Promotions and achievements were recognized the same way.

## We've reached out.

- Politically, the Association continued to be active.

- Locally, we conducted our fourth very successful endorsements process. As a result, we expressed support for 11 Oneida County candidates, 10 of whom won election. At numerous meetings and fundraisers, we were listening, learning, and advocating for our issues.

- At the state level, we lobbied with our NYSUT higher ed and K-12 colleagues.

- Contributions to VOTE COPE, in support of our political outreach efforts, kept growing.

- Community Outreach remained a priority this year.

- Hundreds of students in our campus community received pens in the Student Service Center and key-ring keepsakes at graduation.

- One special student was

honored with a scholarship.

- Worthy causes were supported by participation and donations: the Ted Moore Run/Walk, Strides against Breast Cancer, United Way, Thea Bowman House, and others. Hungry members of our community received two truckloads of food.

## We've enjoyed each other's company.

- Each semester ended with a relaxing, enjoyable social.

- New members were welcomed with food, information, and good conversation.

- Playing PA "Jeopardy," we had fun learning about our union at Summer Institute. Members found out that even studying defensive driving can be more enjoyable when the PA sponsors the class.

## We've kept current.

- Prize-winning communications—even a newly-designed *PAnorama* masthead—kept us entertained and informed.

- Accurate, clear minutes were sent out after every meeting.

- Photo directories and PA calendars were published both in print and online.

- Colorful, stylish bulletin boards were freshened every month.

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## Grievance Committee

# Grievance Committee “Goes Deep”

By Dawson McDermott

As a result of some really great work by our team at Alexandria Bay last year, there is some important information for bargaining unit members to be made aware of. Members of the Grievance Committee are now more a part of the grievance process.

Traditionally, when bargaining unit members had an issue, they would bring it to the Grievance chair for discussion. From there, time permitting, issues could be brought to the committee. This time pressure posed some problems. Schedules to meet with the committee as a whole are extremely difficult to arrange and the sensitivity to the timeliness issue has to be upheld. Normally, this fell upon the Grievance chairperson at that time to present any issues to the College.

What changes are there? Bargaining unit members now have an opportunity to bring their issues to more than just one—now they can turn to any of the committee members. Why? One of the lessons this union has learned is that it needs to be “deep” and cannot rely upon just one person to handle the load, so to speak. This depth helps with the “if the chairperson is not available, who do I turn to?” kind of issues.

The Grievance Committee is composed of four members and the chairperson. If bargaining unit members have a question as to whether they have a possible

grievance, they can now go to any one of the committee members, who will complete a questionnaire to take down information regarding the situation. Then the committee member who conducted the interview will bring this to the committee and/or chairperson for discussion as to what could possibly happen.

Literally, the committee members are the point of contact regarding contractual issues. In the past, bargaining unit members normally came to the chair of the committee. Now the committee is asking that you come to any one of the members when you feel you may have an issue.

This procedure has many benefits. First, the obvious is that there is more than one person to turn to when there may be an issue; the bench becomes “deep.” Second, it allows committee members to be more active. As the chairperson, I hope to be able to bring along the committee member who conducted the interview through the grievance processes that occur with the College so there is a better understanding. Finally, with the questionnaire form, there will be improved documentation of grievances.

As the chairperson for the Grievance Committee, I am very excited by this new change, and I ask you all to take advantage of it. Your committee members are pictured here, along with their contact information:

*Sandy Cummings,  
Student Activities Office,  
scummings@mvcc.edu,  
ext. 5392*



*Sam Drogo,  
Life Sciences,  
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*Tom Schink,  
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*Dawson McDermott,  
Grievance Committee Chair,  
Advisement,  
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## Internal Communications

# **The Value of a Community College**

By Dmitry Shtarnov, 2007-2008 PA Scholarship Winner

Mohawk Valley Community College has been a life saver for me. As someone new to this country, trying to raise a family while attending college, I have gained substantial advantages from MVCC.

I knew virtually no English before arriving in the United States in July, 2004. I was fortunate in receiving excellent help in learning it so that I could matriculate in 2006, but after just two years of social English, it was a challenge having to deal with English at the academic level. My experience has been consistent in finding that the faculty is oriented to and experienced in making modifications so as to move me forward, rather than holding me back. My initial testing allowed me to skip the first three ESL levels, saving me time and money. In my first semester, I was already involved in working on courses toward my major.

As a "local" institution, Mohawk Valley Community College provides convenient access for people living in the Utica/Rome area. If I had to travel longer distances, that fact alone could have prevented me from enjoying the benefits of MVCC. As a family man, sometimes I have to go back and forth to the College more than once during the course of the day. A nearby college facilitates my participation in not only the academic work but also in valuable sports and social activities.



*PA Scholarship winner Dmitry Shtarnov surrounded by his mentor, Bob Schaffer, and wife, Oxana Shtarnova.*

Looking to the future, as I have one semester left to complete, it is satisfying knowing that my MVCC credits can be readily transferred to Utica College, to SUNY IT, to Syracuse University, as well as other four-year institutions.

As a newcomer to the States, the counseling services have been invaluable. Knowing where to go and what to do to get started took a big load off my mind. Receiving practical advice on what courses to take and how to schedule them saved me a great deal of time. When I wasn't sure of my major, I found there was flexibility that allowed me to experiment with a major in another area.

Spending several hours a day in a stimulating environment is an exciting thing. Cultural events such as movies, theater, and music enrich my life and give me new things to take home to my

family. Meeting people who are interested in ideas and desirous of improving their lives is a major advantage of college-level experiences.

The community college is designed to meet a variety of needs for students who are looking to initiate their college experience and to be stimulated toward going even further academically. Whether a person is looking for practical training (nursing, construction, etc.) or a start toward a four-year degree, the community college can be of great service. A Russian friend completed the two-year program in heating and air conditioning. He found a fine opportunity in Syracuse, receiving a company car to facilitate his traveling back and forth to Utica, and earns \$25 an hour with overtime also available. This is a success story from a very happy MVCC graduate.

## New and Familiar Faces at January Luncheon



*Retirees Gene Militello (top) and John Snyder beam at the camera.*



*Newly retired (from top left) Bill McGowan, Ron Rhodes, Sue Bice, and Jean Wagner received plaques recognizing their service to the PA.*



*Retiree Kathy Bernstein meets new member Dayton Elseth.*



*New member Michelle Stanton gets caught with a smile.*



*1st VP Bill Perrotti presents new members Jaime Cuda and Maria Roche-Dean with information-packed PA binders.*



*Robert Huyck, Kyle Lince, and Jack Susenburger waiting for the festivities to begin.*

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# CNY Labor Agency and NYSUT Host Union/Community Counselor Training

By Sandy Cummings



The Central New York Labor Agency and NYSUT recently gave me the opportunity to participate in their annual

Union/Community Counselor Training.

From September 18<sup>th</sup> through November 13<sup>th</sup>, I attended weekly sessions/lectures on a large range of topics such as:

- Child Care, WIC
- Consumer Credit Counseling

- Substance Abuse & Rehabilitation
- Aid for Senior Citizens
- Health Care
- Home Energy Assistance, Food Stamps, Public Assistance
- Local Counseling Services
- Red Cross, Heart Association, Cancer Society, United Way, Hospice
- Social Security, Social Services, VESID, Medicaid
- Youth & Teen Services
- Techniques for Constructive Intervention

Sometimes when there is a problem in a person's life they

don't know where to turn for help, which can escalate the situation into a crisis. With the training that I received I can possibly prevent a difficult situation from occurring by offering information and referral to agencies/counselors in our local community.

If you, someone you know, or a student needs any type of assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail at [scummings@mvcc.edu](mailto:scummings@mvcc.edu), by telephone at 792-5392 or stop by my office in ACC 208. All information will be kept strictly confidential.



*President Searles presents plaque and letter of appreciation to Sandy Cummings.*

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## Cummings Recognized as AFL-CIO Union Counselor

President Searles presented Sandy Cummings with a plaque she received upon completing union/community counselor training. The plaque reads:

AFL-CIO Department of Community Services  
Certifies That  
Sandra Cummings  
has successfully completed the required training  
and is now recognized as an  
AFL-CIO Union Counselor



## PA Year in Review

Continued from page 2

- Elections brought new members into every PA committee.
- Our budget was always balanced and our bills paid.
- Numerous Board of Elections' reports were done, each one detailed and timely.
- Audit materials were prepared so that the committee could begin its work.

### Finally, we've thought about the future of our organization.

- Another generation of PA leaders has begun learning more about the workings of the Association. Workshops, training, and simulations are planned for the year ahead so that interested members can find out about some of the more technical aspects of union work, especially in negotiations and grievance.

Yes, it's been another good year for the Professional Association.

And we have many members to thank for it. Naming every individual would not be possible, but I hope each one knows how grateful we are for these efforts—not only today, but all through the year.

Most especially, I'd like to acknowledge the constant help and support of the PA reps, PA committee members, and the members of the PA Executive Board.

## PA Participates in 2007 Community College Conference



*(From left) Mallory Anyango, a participant from Onondaga CC, Ellis Gage Searles, Anne Ichihana, Rich Pucine, Lew Kahler, and Marie Czarnecki participate in the contract exchange.*

“Sharing our strengths, strengthening our locals” was this year’s theme for the annual Community College Conference, held at The Otesaga in Cooperstown November 9-11.

We were indeed strengthened. Of course, the delicious and plentiful meals gave us sustenance, but we also gained useful information and the inspiration that comes from collegial collaboration. With presentations on topics such as managing union finances, distance education, building union awareness and social values, compliance issues, Taylor Law, and the ever-popular contract exchange, PA attendees Mallory Anyango, Marie Czarnecki, Alison Doughtie, Steve Getchell, Anne Ichihana, Lew Kahler, Lorie Phillips, Rich Pucine, and Ellis Gage Searles collected tips, strategies, and data that will certainly

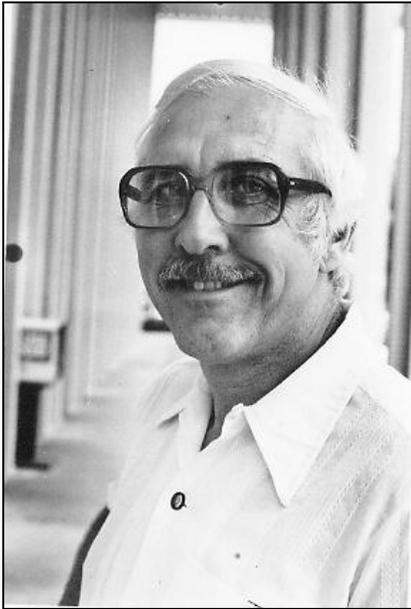
strengthen the PA’s future activities on and off campus.

We also shared our knowledge and experiences with others. Aside from more casual exchanges at meals, breaks, and evening adventures, the PA was able to present its experiences to other locals. As a “veteran leader,” Ellis Gage Searles was invited to serve as a panelist for “Union Building: Building Strong Locals on Every Campus,” and Alison Doughtie was asked to be a panelist for “Collective Bargaining: Using Community Ties in Contract Campaigns.”

The conference lived up to its promise—the opportunity to learn from and about each other.

## In Memoriam: Ron Zollweg

By George Searles



Ron Zollweg circa 1980.

Longtime PA members will remember Ron Zollweg, who died on January 2 at the age of 73.

Ron joined the MVCC faculty in 1964 and taught English here until his retirement in 1990. He held a B.A. from Alfred University and an M.A. from Syracuse University.

He was an accomplished professional magician, performing under the stage name of Ron Frederick, and authored several books on the subject.

In addition, he was a distance running enthusiast, competing in many races in this area and be-

yond. He was among the first MVCC faculty/staff runners to complete a full marathon (26.2 miles).

Always emphatic in his opinions, Ron was a charter member of "The Gourmands," a raffish contingent of MVCC Humanities profs who for many years met regularly for dinner and obstreperous conversation, terrorizing various local eateries.

He'll be missed by all who knew him.

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### THANK YOU!

The Community Outreach Committee would like to say Thank You to everyone who contributed in any way to our efforts during the past year. To all of the walkers, striders, bowlers, runners, food donators, cooks, communicators, organizers, raffle ticket purchasers, etc., etc., all the best for a great New Year.

Member Services

## New Member Profile: David Yahnke

By George Searles

When David Yahnke describes himself as a "jack of many trades," he's not kidding.

Currently he's MVCC's Placement Testing Specialist. But in the past he's taught here as an adjunct instructor and has held five term appointments: four in the Art Department and one in Student Services.

At various points in his life he has also worked at Jay-K Independent Lumber, C. Weaver Chevrolet, The Village Toy Shop, and the Observer-Dispatch, in addition to his ongoing employment as a freelance illustrator and graphic designer.

An MVCC alumnus with a bachelor's degree from Empire



State College, David is now completing his master's at SUNY Institute of Technology. His thesis explores the dynamics of museum displays and exhibits.

That's familiar turf to him. He's had extensive experience creating such attractions at The Chil-

dren's Museum and elsewhere. Moreover, he designed three signs describing the siege of 1777 at Fort Stanwix, as part of the NYS American Revolutionary Heritage Trail Signage Project; altogether he was involved in the creation of eighteen signs, which are in place at a dozen sites around the state.

An award-winning model building enthusiast, he's had his work featured in Fine Scale Model Building Magazine.

David and his wife, Tracy, live in North Utica with their two children. The couple recently celebrated their seventeenth anniversary.

### OfficeMax Savings!

**In the market for office supplies?**

**Contact Benefits Fund Chair Paul Halko (792-5588) to receive your OfficeMax Retail Connect Card and/or to get the activation code. Stores are located in Rome (5789 Rome Taberg Road) and Syracuse (3471 Erie Blvd. E.), or shop online at [www.OfficeMax.com](http://www.OfficeMax.com)**



### Discounted Defensive Driving

Through an agreement between the PA Education and Training Committee and CCED, PA members can receive a \$5 discount on defensive driving courses at the College. If you are interested, please contact Norma Chrisman at 5398 or [nchrisman@mvcc.edu](mailto:nchrisman@mvcc.edu)

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Member Services

**Season's Eatin', Minglin', and Donatin' at Holiday Social**



*Members celebrated the end of the fall 2007 semester in style. Great music (thanks to MV's own Greg Collins and his band String Bee), wonderful food (cannoli cake!), prizes (congratulations to winners Mary Hartz and Mike Hayes), good deeds (bags and bags of canned goods), and holiday cheer contributed to the festive mood.*



**Don't forget!**  
**Democratic and Republican Primaries**  
**February 5**  
**(See [www.nysut.org](http://www.nysut.org) and [www.aft.org](http://www.aft.org) for endorsements.)**

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