

PAnorama

MVCC Professional Association Newsletter • Volume X • No. 1 • September 2008

30 Years of Memories and Best Practices Celebrated at Community College Conference By Dayton Elseth



2008 Community College Conference attendees (clockwise from top right) Lew Kahler, Bill Perrotti, Ellis Gage Searles, Marie Czarniecki, David Katz, Alison Doughtie, and Sandy Cummings. Not pictured: Dayton Elseth and Lee Streicher. Photo by Kevin Peterman, Suffolk CC Faculty Association.

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I recently had the pleasure of accompanying several fellow MVCC Professional Association members to the 30th Annual NYSUT Community College Conference at the Gideon Putnam Resort in Saratoga Springs, New York. The theme for this year's conference was "Celebrating 30 Years of Solidarity (and Best Practices!)," and, to be honest, the conference workshops and

speeches adhered to that theme quite well.

At each dinner, during each conversation, and at many of the workshops, there was a lot of reflection, reflection on how far organized labor has come in the last thirty years. Each speaker mentioned the progress that community college faculty and staff have made as a result of

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Community College Conference

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organized labor fighting on their behalf, and they discussed the need to continue uniting professionals in a common cause so that the progress that has been made won't be lost.

However, not every trip down memory lane was of the overly serious variety. On Friday evening, Ellen Schuler Mauk, the Conference Chair and President of the Suffolk CC Faculty Association, compared news events and prices of goods in 1979 to those of today. Many of the headlines in 1979 were eerily similar to what we see today. Also, on Saturday, a slide show was presented of pictures taken during the different community college conferences over the past thirty years.

The workshops had much less to do with reflection and more to do with continuing the best practices in the union and at the workplace. The first workshop that I attended was called

“Academic Freedom: Rights and Responsibilities.” The presenters at this workshop discussed, from a case-by-case basis, the truths and myths about faculty rights and responsibilities as they pertain to academic freedom.

The second workshop I attended was titled “Perspectives on Contract Administration: Union Decision-Making.” This workshop explored several different situations that often escalate to a grievance, such as frequently absent faculty, issues with misconduct, faculty removal because of erratic behavior, etc.

The last workshop I attended was “Bringing Colleagues

Together: A Mediation Simulation.” Instead of bringing a problem regarding a staff or faculty member to grievances, often times an issue can be resolved through mediation, and this workshop dealt with that process.

After the workshops were completed, and while every conference attendee was enjoying a pleasant dinner on Saturday evening, I started to assess my experience at the conference. If I could say that I took anything out of this year's Community College Conference, it is this: All union members have a responsibility to their profession and to each other. It is that responsibility to each other that brings about solidarity in the union.

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Union Moments

My Union Moment

*Editor's note: First-time participants at the Community College Conference are often asked to speak about their "union moment," a time when they realized the importance of the union in their lives. Here you will find the "union moments" for two PA members, Sandy Cummings and Dayton Elseth. Do you remember **your** moment? If so, please send it to Alison Doughtie (adoughtie@mvcc.edu) for consideration for the next issue of PANorama.*



My Union Moment has been ongoing. When I started my job in 2004, I had a supervisor

who was a very strong union advocate and very involved in the PA. He encouraged me to get involved and introduced me to the leaders of the union. I

quickly became a member of the Grievance Committee and an Area Representative. Last fall, the union gave me the opportunity to participate in a six-week training class to become a Union/Community Counselor and this past summer, the PA was a tremendous resource and advocate for me as changes occurred in my job. Most recently, I attended the NYSUT Community Col-

lege Conference in Saratoga Springs, NY. At this conference, I was able to participate in sessions dealing with electronic communications, campus safety, and mobilizing union members for the November election. I'm continually made aware of the benefits and support that the PA offers and am very grateful that we have such a strong union here on campus.

I'm continually made aware of the benefits and support that the PA offers and am very grateful that we have such a strong union here on campus. —Sandy Cummings

...it is the Professional Association that protects new working professionals such as myself....

—Dayton Elseth



My union moment came when I was having a drink at a local

bar with the 1st Vice President of the Mohawk Valley Community College Professional Association, Lew Kahler. I told him about the trouble I was having finding employment after I obtained my bachelor's degree. It

was made clear to me by every employer in my hometown of Fargo that I was unqualified for decent employment. Nearly everyone gave me two reasons: 1) I didn't have enough experience, and 2) I didn't have enough education. I was told that degrees are a dime a dozen and jobs are hard to come by. It was then that my standards were lowered, considerably. Because of these lowered standards, I was willing to work for "peanuts" after I obtained my master's degree two years later.

I told Professor Kahler that I, as well as many other "starving," unemployed graduates, would have taken a teaching job for much less money than MVCC was willing to pay me and without benefits. He then told me that the union was responsible for my good salary and benefits, and it is the Professional Association that protects new working professionals such as myself, who would settle for less. It was then that I truly understood the importance of the union.

Member Services

New Member Profile: Annie Dousharm

By George Searles

The P.A. welcomes Annie Dousharm, a new instructor in the Health Services Department.

Annie is teaching College Seminar, Introduction to Nursing, and Pharmacotherapeutics while running the nursing and computer labs on the Rome campus and teaching in the Certified Nursing Assistant program.

An MVCC alumna, she earned her bachelor's and master's degrees at SUNY Institute of Technology. As her former MV English teacher puts it, Annie was "the kind of student every

instructor loves to find on a roster—the returning adult who by excellent performance sets a high standard for younger classmates while mentoring them and providing a model of commitment and responsibility."

Before joining our faculty, Annie worked as a medical assistant at Slocum Dickson. Raised in the hamlet of Northwood near Hinckley Lake, she has since lived in Holland Patent. She and her husband, a plumbing and heating contractor, have two adult sons.



For recreation, Annie enjoys skiing and a wide range of water sports. She's a member of Women on Water (WOW), a kayaking club. She's also an avid reader and always looks forward to her book group's meetings.

Benefits Fund

MVCC PA Benefits Trust Fund and YOU!

By Paul Halko



Did you know that the MVCC Professional Association has

a Benefits Trust Fund?

Have you signed up for these **FREE BENEFITS?**

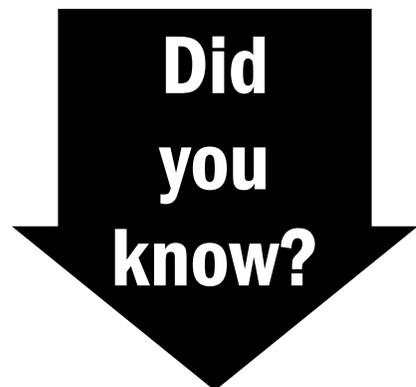
Do you know what we offer?

Your MVCCPA Benefits Trust Fund offers an Individual and Family Vision Plan through Davis Vision plus Assist America and Health Advocate. And for the PA member only, a \$50,000 Term Life Insurance Policy, Accidental Death and

Dismemberment, and Long Term Disability.

All you have to do is go to the MVCCPA Web Site www.mvccpa.org and click on the Benefits Button, scroll down to Davis Vision and Unum Provident, follow the instructions, and fill out the registration forms.

If you have any questions, you may call a trustee: Chair Paul Halko at ext. 5588, Ellis Searles ext. 5528, Sam Drogo ext. 5377, Julie Dewan ext. 5716, or Ron Miller ext. 5464.



State law says you can take up to four hours of paid leave for breast cancer and prostate screenings.

Two recent court decisions confirmed it was wrong for employers to force workers to use their sick or personal leave to undergo screenings.

Unions successfully won the restoration of the employees' sick leave.

From August 28, 2008 NYSUT Leader

Community Outreach

Hope Starts with Team MVCC

By Deanna Ferro

This year, hundreds of thousands of people will hear the words, "You have breast cancer," and there's a good chance that some of them will be people we know and love.

The MVCC Professional Association has chosen to fight back against this disease and invite you to make a difference by participating in the *Making Strides Against Breast Cancer* event taking place on Sunday, October 19, 2008.

Making Strides is more than just the name of a walk; it describes the amazing progress we can make if we work together as a union, a college, and a community to

defeat the disease.

**Making Strides
Against Breast Cancer
Sunday, October 19, 2008
SUNY
Institute of Technology
Utica, NY
10:00 a.m.**

Professional Association members are asked to join **Team MVCC** and walk to experience an incredible day of inspiration and meaning, and to provide hope for all people facing breast cancer.

Those interested have the option of signing up to participate in the walk, or simply making a donation toward our **MVCC Team Goal of \$2,500**. Please visit our **Team**



MVCC page to register and/or donate: www.cancer.org/stridesonline

Making Strides Against Breast Cancer will begin at 10:00am on Sunday, October 19, 2008, on the campus of SUNY Institute of Technology. Participants will have the option of walking 1 mile, 2.5 miles, or 5 miles the day of the event.

Information regarding when and where **Team MVCC** will meet the morning of the walk will be distributed to all participants prior to the event. For additional information please contact Deanna L. Ferro at 731-5797 or at dferro@mvcc.edu

Hope starts with one walker and one dollar at a time. Hope starts with Team MVCC. And hope can start with you.

PA Political Outreach Chair Interviewed on Keeler Show

David Katz's voice was heard on the Bill Keeler Show on September 3. Here is the editor's interview of the interview.

I hear you were on the Bill Keeler radio show! How did that happen? Were you stopped on the street?

No, the radio show called the college and eventually, the call made it to the Social Sciences Department. It was soon after Palin was announced as the Republican vice presidential nominee, and they were looking for someone with a political science background to talk



about the presidential election. I didn't have anything to prevent me from going, so I agreed. The interview was held outside of APAC on Genesee St. during their employee appreciation day. Keeler had a

promo for the interview announcing me as a professor of political science from MVCC.

What did Bill Keeler ask you? Did you know the questions beforehand?

The questioning was off the cuff. One of first the questions was whether I think Palin's nomination will give Republicans an advantage and if I think that Hillary supporters will back Palin. The only thing Clinton and Palin have in common is gender. People supported Hillary because of the posi-

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In Memoriam: Emanuel Mussman

By James Gifford



Emanuel Mussman

When first I came to MVCC in the fall of 1972, fresh out of graduate school, Manny Mussman was one of the first people I met in the (then) English Department. Although I wasn't exactly sure what kind of student I would meet in a community college setting, Manny was exactly the kind of teacher I

was used to in graduate school: it made for quite a contrast.

He was impeccable in suit and tie, a trim figure, a nice looking face with glasses that couldn't veil eyes that always looked directly at you, an bemused smile on his face. Always friendly, always a gentleman, always giving the air of an educated, kindly, involved and yet also removed and woefully amused observer of the world--that was Manny.

At department meetings his gentle demeanor would occasionally break into that of a passionate and disputatious partisan, with two physical changes. His face would turn a bright red, and one hand (usually with a pen in it)

would fly up and down as he'd make his points. (These points, by the way, were always for the preservation of high academic standards and the refusal to entertain the idea that the present-day demanded anything less.) After the meetings, it was as though invisible academic robes had once again enveloped him, and his gentle mien sat on him as unperturbed as ever.

When he retired in the late 80s I hated to see him go. He was one of the few remnants of an academic environment that I knew and loved and did not want to see disappear. His retirement put me into his old office, Payne Hall 318, where I have dwelled ever since, and always hoped that part of the academic model I knew and so admired would somehow rub off on me.

In Memoriam: Frank Tobiasz

By George Searles

By now we've all heard about the tragic death of Professor Emeritus Frank Tobiasz, killed in a boating accident on Oneida Lake in late August.

Frank joined the Engineering faculty in 1966 after an earlier career at General Electric. With a bachelor's degree from R.P.I. and a master's from Penn State, Frank was an outstanding teacher who was active on the College Senate and various other committees, serving the college well for many years. He retired in 2003.

But all this has been said already, first in Professor Przybycien's September 2 e-mail and

also in the *Observer-Dispatch* obituary. So my purpose here is not to applaud Frank's many professional accomplishments. Instead, I wish to salute his memory on a more personal level.

Impossible to dislike, Frank was warm, genuine, and engaging without ever seeming self-important. He was physically strong, and he loved to eat. Though unassuming, he was very smart and politically sophisticated. Bottom line? He was the kind of all-around "good guy" nobody would ever be able to say anything bad about!



Frank Tobiasz receiving a PA plaque in 2003.

I last saw him at the North Utica Lowe's, and we chatted awhile. I'll miss him. Everyone who knew him will. A whole lot.

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<p>Workshops include Defensive Driving, Identity Theft, and Unraveling the Mysteries of Credit and Credit Reports. Workshops are scheduled by your local president, chapter leader, retiree council leader or retiree chapter leader.</p>	

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Katz on Keeler

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tions she's taken on issues. She just happens to be a woman who took those positions. Based on that, it would be a betrayal for anyone who voted for Hillary to vote now for Palin because they're so opposite on the issues.

Keeler also asked if I thought race was a factor in the election. Of course, I hope race isn't a factor, but I'm not naïve enough to think it wouldn't be an issue for, hopefully, a very small minority of voters. Clearly, of the two candidates, Obama's background, his upbringing, and his priorities leave him far more in touch with the vast majority of working Americans.

We also talked about how the emphasis on electoral politics as sport sells the "sizzle and not the steak." It tends to trivialize and belittle the process and makes it tabloid-esque. What we end up seeing are extreme caricatures on positions as each side pursues the win. The real politics happens after the election! We act like the election is an end in and of itself.

Keeler ended the interview by saying, "Still, we're the best country in the world, right?" I think we're a country with a lot of power and with that power comes responsibility. I fear that we use the power internationally to serve self interest rather than for the mutual benefit and betterment of the entire international community and the values we profess. We need to do better.



Disaster Relief Still Necessary

The AFT's Disaster Relief Fund is looking for contributions both from individual members and affiliates. Contributions to the fund, which are tax deductible, can be sent to:

AFT Disaster Relief Fund
555 New Jersey Ave. N.W.
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Attn: Connie Cordovilla
Checks should be made out to the AFT Disaster Relief Fund.

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