THANK YOU FOR A SUCCESSFUL SPRING!
Welcome to the Spring 2016 newsletter of the Westchester Community College Mount Vernon Extension Center. This issue highlights new initiatives and community collaborations, and also celebrates our extraordinary students. Our first featured student in this issue is Chante Thomas, who won the Cambridge Scholarship to study literature at Cambridge University this summer, and is an inspiring poet, writer, and student role model. Our second featured student is Zionia Francis: artist, entrepreneur, and winner of the first MYB $$$eed Tank Competition for her handbag business, Indie Inc.

Also in the spotlight is the Mount Vernon Activities Club (MVAC), the new student-led club at Mount Vernon. Don’t miss the feature on Inesa Ziu, a Westchester Community College graduate who now works as a math tutor in the Mount Vernon Academic Support Center. Also included in this issue is a feature on our recent visits from local middle schools. Finally, read about the Ladies First in STEM luncheon, a program of the Mount Vernon Youth Bureau hosted by Westchester Community College Mount Vernon.

Thank you for your readership and enjoy this issue!
INTRODUCING MVAC:  
THE MOUNT VERNON ACTIVITIES CLUB

When students are not in class, there is plenty to do at the Mount Vernon Extension Center. Students have access to tutoring and workshops at the Mount Vernon Academic Support Center, which is open six days a week. They can work on assignments in the open computer lab or relax in the student lounge. Now, students can do even more. The Mount Vernon Activities Club (MVAC) is the first student-led organization at the center, and coordinates events for students. MVAC is officially recognized by the Student Government Association, and is the second off-campus student activities club at Westchester Community College. Mariah Wallace, president of MVAC, explains, “MVAC is important because it gives students the opportunity to get to know each other outside of class, and to engage with their school in a new way. You get to know what your school is all about—and make it about what you love.”

During the holiday season, MVAC sponsored MVAC Gives Back, a food and clothing drive that donated goods to the Sacred Heart Food Pantry. This semester, MVAC hosted a variety of dynamic events, providing students with fun and educational opportunities. The flagship event was a Black Lives Matter forum, co-moderated by Professor Donnie Smith, Director of the Black & Hispanic Male Initiative, and Professor Glenetta Phillips, Secretary of the Black History Month Committee. Students engaged in dialogue surrounding issues of race and justice.

MVAC also invited Professor Gelaine Williams, Coordinator of Career Services, to facilitate a resume-writing workshop. Students received guidance in crafting resumes that attract attention from prospective employers. We are eagerly awaiting Professor Williams’ return in the fall for an interview skills workshop.

MVAC student leaders and active members attended the Student Leader Recognition Dinner hosted at the DoubleTree Hotel in Tarrytown on Friday, April 15th. Students celebrated the many distinguished award winners, enjoyed a formal dinner, and danced the night away with other members of the college community.

Finally, MVAC celebrated the end of the semester with a talent show and pizza party, providing students at the Mount Vernon Extension Center with an opportunity to showcase their talents in the performing arts. The audience enjoyed voice performances, spoken word, rap, poetry and more. Stay tuned to learn about what MVAC has planned for the fall.

DID YOU KNOW THAT AT MOUNT VERNON ... ?

- Academic counseling is available 5-7pm, Monday through Thursday (plus Financial Aid on Tuesday).
- Students can get discounted parking passes through an agreement with the City of Mount Vernon.
- Our Academic Support Center is open six days a week.
- Extended time testing is offered every Thursday.
- Students can get their new student ID cards printed free of charge.
- The Mount Vernon Activities Club brings fun and educational events to students.
- New students can complete the placement exam on site.

Left to right: MVAC Vice President Jaylene Flores, Professor Glenetta Phillips, MVAC President Mariah Wallace and Professor Donnie Simmons

Left to right: Co-Advisor Janna Gullery, MVAC President Mariah Wallace, Co-Advisor Peter Ogwal (back), Malissa Pascual Vega, MVAC Vice President Jaylene Flores, and Melissa Platt
Mount Vernon is a city of entrepreneurs, including many of our students. Meet Zionia Francis, exemplary student and winner of the first MYB $Seed Tank Competition held in January. The competition represents a collaboration between local business leaders and Chambers of Commerce together with the Westchester Community College Mount Vernon Extension Center and the Gateway 2 Entrepreneurship. Open to residents of Mount Vernon, Yonkers and the Bronx, it awards up to $10,000 to the entrepreneur who demonstrates how the investment will help to scale the business. Zionia won for her handbag business, Indie Inc.

A fashion merchandising major, Zionia launched her business in 2014 after she made herself a handbag modeled after one she saw in a store. After posting on social media, followers starting asking her, "How can I buy one?" She later participated in a craft fair and quickly sold out of her products. "The rest," she says, "is history in progress."

Taking fashion classes on the main campus and business classes at Mount Vernon has been valuable for her growth as both a student and an entrepreneur. "Business and marketing classes at Mount Vernon have taught me how to be a businesswoman, have a business mindset, and market my products successfully," she says. She learned about the competition when her Business Organization and Management instructor, Professor Michael Altamirano, invited his class to attend the press conference at the Mount Vernon Extension Center covering the launch of the competition. "I knew as soon as I learned about the competition that I would apply," Zionia remembers.

Zonia reflects on growing up in Mount Vernon, where entrepreneurs thrive. "So many talented people come from Mount Vernon, but many don’t pursue those talents. I want to set an example for other entrepreneurs, and show them that success is possible." The Mount Vernon Extension Center is a resource not only for students, but also for the larger community. "Although [the center] is small compared to the main campus," Zionia states, "there are so many resources in an intimate setting. Students receive so much individualized attention from faculty, staff, tutors, and counselors."

In May, Indie Inc. will launch the Summer 2016 handbag collection as well as the website. Way to go Zionia!

**FROM STUDENT TO TUTOR:**

**INESA ZIU**

It was with both excitement and trepidation that Inesa, at the age of 19, left Albania to come to the US. Unsure of what to study and where to begin her studies, Inesa’s uncle suggested Westchester Community College for a first class education. Influenced by her mother’s natural “genius” ability in math, Inesa chose to major in Liberal Arts and Science/Mathematics and Science, which led to an opportunity to tutor math on the main campus. While tutoring, she met a lot of students with similar backgrounds and made friends. Tutoring gave her hands-on exposure to the teaching profession and she loved it.

After graduating from Westchester Community College with a 3.96 GPA, Inesa graduated from SUNY Binghamton with a Bachelor’s Degree in Mathematics. Upon her return to Westchester, the Mount Vernon Academic Support Center was lucky to hire Inesa. Although she has tutored in many settings, Inesa especially loves tutoring students at Westchester Community College. She is motivated by their life stories and the struggles that many students overcome. According to Inesa, “everyone is family at the MVASC – tutors and students. There is so much love and everyone cares about each other.”

But this isn’t the end of Inesa’s story. In 2015, Inesa was granted U.S. citizenship and began her Master’s Degree program in Mathematical Education at Hunter College. Her dream is to become a high school math teacher and an adjunct math professor at Westchester Community College. For those of us who know Inesa, there is no doubt that with her intellect and kind spirit, her dreams will surely come true!
STUDENT WRITER WINS SCHOLARSHIP ...and gets published!

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... As a student who returned to her studies later in life, Chante struggled to find her voice. She found that Westchester Community College Mount Vernon was a launching pad not just for her education, but also for her personal growth and confidence. “If it weren’t for the Mount Vernon Extension Center, I never would have started school,” she writes. She credits both her professors and tutors for inspiring and challenging her to build her confidence and find her voice.

In the fall of 2015, Prof. Kristin Prevallet invited local Mount Vernon poet James “jaFa” Fair to deliver a guest lecture during her Creative Writing course. Chante later submitted both her own original poem as well as a collaborative poem written by the class to the Mount Vernon Inquirer – and both were published in the December 2015 issue!

Prof. Prevallet also encouraged Chante to apply for the Cambridge scholarship. Chante tells us, “Our professors want us to succeed, and are so excited and willing to help students with special projects.” She remembers that Professor Prevallet told her, “Don’t ever feel like you don’t belong, because you belong here.” Chante knows that she will belong in Cambridge, too. We are so proud of Chante, and wish her safe travels on her adventure!

“*If it weren’t for the Mount Vernon Extension Center, I never would have started school.*”

LADIES FIRST IN STEM

In April, the Mount Vernon Extension Center hosted the *Ladies First in STEM* luncheon, a program of the Mount Vernon Youth Bureau. In attendance were 75 high school students, who enjoyed a panel presentation of successful women who work in STEM industries followed by a formal lunch. This event exposed high school students not only to the many opportunities in STEM fields, but also to the diversity of programs offered at Westchester Community College. One of the impressive panelists was a proud Westchester Community College graduate, and encouraged attendees to consider the college as the first step in their educational journeys. We look forward to seeing all that the future ladies in STEM will achieve, and hope they come back to speak to future high school students when they find professional success!

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**DESIGNED FOR STUDENT SUCCESS**

Our caring instructors, flexible schedules and small classes are designed to help students succeed. We offer:

→ Academic support and tutoring
→ Special workshops
→ Academic counseling
→ Financial aid counseling
→ Computer lab
→ Student lounge
→ ESL classes
→ Student activities
→ Placement testing
→ Student ID cards

**ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE**

Know someone interested in ESL? Send them to Mount Vernon!

Levels 1-6 are offered with flexible schedules. Students can complete the registration process, take the placement test, and even get their student ID all at our convenient downtown location.

**REGISTER NOW FOR CLASSES AT MOUNT VERNON!**

Summer session 1
starts May 23

Summer session 2
starts June 27

ESL summer classes
start May 5

Fall classes
start September 9

[www.sunywcc.edu/summer](http://www.sunywcc.edu/summer)