CELEBRATING STUDENT SUCCESS IN MOUNT VERNON

Thank you for reading the fall 2019 issue of the Mount Vernon Extension Center newsletter. This issue celebrates student engagement in both academics and leadership as well as community outreach. The Mount Vernon Extension Center hosted a specialized information session for employees of the Mount Vernon City School District who may be interested in obtaining workforce credentials or degrees. The center collaborated with partner community organizations to host an Entrepreneurship Resource Information Session and also supplied information for the reentry population looking to pursue higher education at the Reentry Resource Fair. Students engage in their college experience inside and outside of the classroom, and often through events like Common Read Book Discussion and Title IX and Dine. Paula Dornburgh hosted the Endowed Chair Lecture featuring renowned author Krystal A. Sital. Finally, this issue celebrates the accomplishments of an extraordinary student leader and future nurse, Luigi Pagan.

We wish you a happy holiday season from the Mount Vernon Extension Center. Don’t forget to register for spring classes!

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: LUIGI PAGAN

Student, scholarship recipient, tutor, Kathryn Davis scholar, and future nurse. Meet Luigi Pagan, a student who is unstoppable in his success. Learn how he does it and what advice he has for other students.

Like many students, Luigi came to WCC in his mid-20s after several twists and turns in his life. Initially he did not plan to attend college, and later ended up in debt at a for-profit institution. He worked many hours but knew college was the key to a better job in the healthcare industry, and he first visited WCC two full years before he registered for classes. “I felt so overwhelmed and defeated before I started,” he remembers, “but by the time I actually applied, I knew nothing could stop me. I got serious and never looked back.”

Luigi started slow, focusing on academics and maintaining his job. He took most of his classes in Mount Vernon as it was very convenient. “I’m so grateful I started in Mount Vernon,” he reflects, “because it was such a friendly, comfortable environment. People always greeted me when I walked in, and I always felt supported and welcomed.” He enjoyed stopping by the front desk and the Mount Vernon Academic Support Center, he remembers. Soon, he was involved beyond classes. He joined the Mount Vernon Activities Club, where he met other students of all different ages and backgrounds.

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Westchester Community College
State University of New York
ENDOWED CHAIR PRESENTS AUTHOR KRYS TAL A. SITAL

An audience filled with students, faculty and staff were enraptured by author Krystal A. Sital’s reading from her book *Secrets We Kept: Three Women of Trinidad*. Ms. Sital visited the Mount Vernon Extension Center on October 23 as the guest speaker for the Alan & Jacqueline Stuart Endowed Chair in Developmental Studies, hosted annually by Paula Dornburgh, Director of the Mount Vernon Academic Support Center. She shared that she was born in Trinidad, emigrated to America in 1999, and lived as an undocumented immigrant for over 10 years before gaining legal status in America. She shared this to remind people of our common humanity.

Although always an avid reader, it wasn’t until experiencing a college writing class that Ms. Sital was turned onto writing. Ms. Sital planned to write her story as fiction but one of her professors, a memoir scholar, encouraged her to write her story as non-fiction, explaining how capturing the truth of this generational story will keep it alive forever.

Reading in both standard English dialect and the lyrical patois of her mother and grandmother, Ms. Sital shared the generational story of her family. With honesty and bravery, she told of the love she holds for her mother and grandmother while exposing the violent episodes in her family’s past inflicted by the family patriarch, her grandfather. However, not all of her story is a tale of suffering. Ms. Sital had the audience laughing as she read from the chapter titled “Wooing” where her mother tried to stave off the advances of the young, attractive policeman who eventually became Ms. Sital’s father.

Special thanks goes to Mount Vernon Extension Center History Professor, William Bishop, who recommended the book and encouraged his students to attend. A true student advocate! For days afterwards, students expressed how much they enjoyed the visit and how they are approaching their writing from a new perspective after hearing about Ms. Sital’s writing process.

If you would like to hear the full discussion, please check out the link on the Mount Vernon Academic Support Center webpage.

WCC ATTENDS REENTRY RESOURCE FAIR

The Westchester Community College Mount Vernon Extension Center is an active member of the Mount Vernon Reentry Coalition, which brings together nonprofit organizations, government agencies and concerned citizens to provide support for the formerly incarcerated and their families as they transition back into the world of work. The Mount Vernon Extension Center participated in the annual *Reentry Resource Fair*, which invites the reentry population and their families to learn about support resources for employment, housing, education, healthcare, and more. Held at Grace Baptist Church every year, the college is pleased to provide information and support to prospective students looking to continue their education and enjoyed this year’s event with a packed house. We are proud to be a member of the Mount Vernon Reentry Coalition and look forward to assisting attendees as they continue to seek help with submitting applications and preparing for college.
MOUNT VERNON FEATURES
TITLE IX & DINE

Do you understand your rights under Title IX? This is the question we asked students during Title IX & Dine, a luncheon event held at the Mount Vernon Extension Center on October 29. Graciously presented by Adam Frank, Associate Dean of Student Life and Interim Title IX Coordinator, this event provided education on Title IX, the federal statute that protects against discrimination on the basis of sex. As members of the college community, it is important that students, faculty and staff understand their rights with regard to instances of sexual violence, assault, harassment, stalking, domestic/dating violence, and any other form of sexual misconduct. Students enjoyed meeting Dean Adam Frank and learning about Title IX, his role at the college, and the Student Bill of Rights. This event was presented in honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. We thank Dean Frank for his willingness to share with our students.

BACK TO SCHOOL FOR MOUNT VERNON CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT
EMPLOYEES

The Mount Vernon City School District is one of the largest employers in the City of Mount Vernon, and many of its dedicated employees could benefit from a college education. On October 29, the Mount Vernon Extension Center hosted a college information session just for them. Many MVCSD employees are civil servants with union benefits who may qualify for financial aid or free tuition under the New York State Excelsior Program. Assistant Director Janna Gullery presented to attendees, reviewing the admissions process, academic and workforce program options, paying for college, and why WCC is the right choice for adult students looking to move forward in their careers. Special thanks goes to Marci Tiggs, Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources at the Mount Vernon City School District for turning this idea into a reality. Attendees had many questions and many will return for additional support submitting applications, completing their financial aid applications, and preparing to attend college. We look forward to seeing you in the spring!

COMMON READ BOOK DISCUSSION

On October 30, Paula Dornburgh, Director of the Mount Vernon Academic Support Center, hosted a book discussion on the this year’s common read selection, Under the Same Sky: From Starvation in North Korea to Salvation in America by Joseph Kim. This is a compelling, heart-breaking yet hopeful story on the will to survive while enduring the horrors of starvation, violence, loss and betrayal. After reading passages from Joseph Kim’s memoir, the student participants engaged in some lively conversations about growing up in a totalitarian state, suffering, endurance, empathy and redemption. What a terrific hour spent with our impressive students!

WCC students pose with copies of this year's common read selection, Under the Same Sky: From Starvation in North Korea to Salvation in America

DID YOU KNOW? RESOURCES IN MOUNT VERNON

Learn about resources and services available to our current students right here in Mount Vernon.

- **Academic Support Center:** Open six days a week and providing free tutoring in a variety of subjects.
- **Academic Counseling:** Helping students choose classes and stay on track toward graduation.
- **Clubs & Programming:** Providing opportunities for leadership, multicultural events, community building, and more.
- **Financial Aid Counseling:** Helping students complete the FAFSA and process financial aid.
- **Personal Counseling:** Providing free mental health counseling for students in distress.
- **Student Support Services:** Assisting students experiencing financial hardship, food insecurity, and more.
ATTEND OUR SPRING 2020 OPEN HOUSE!
Tuesday, January 7th  5:30 - 7:30 PM
Learn about admissions, financial aid, and more. Get your questions answered!
SPRING CLASSES BEGIN JANUARY 27

(CONTINUED) STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: LUIGI PAGAN

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“Through MVAC, we were able to provide opportunities for students right here in Mount Vernon to socialize, build leadership skills, grab food between classes, work on their resumes, express themselves creatively, and build friendships. MVAC has been such a valuable addition to my academics – and plus, it looks great on my resume!” he tells us. In addition, he was encouraged to apply for a scholarship, and finally did after months of consideration. “I never thought that at age 26, I would be eligible for a scholarship at all, let alone one that would pay for my entire tuition for a year in the nursing program. But receiving a scholarship from the WCC Foundation affirmed I was on the right path and inspired me to do even better.” It allowed him to work a few less hours per week which helped him focus on academics and spend more time at the Academic Support Center. “Everyone should apply for a scholarship. I'll say it again,” he says, “everyone should apply for a scholarship!”

Recently, Luigi entered the prestigious nursing program at WCC and is already taking a full course load combined with intensive clinical experiences – all while maintaining a demanding job. We asked what advice he would give to other students interested in nursing and healthcare programs. He told us, “Make sure you are well informed about prerequisites, check in regularly with your academic counselor to make sure you are on track (you can do so right in Mount Vernon), and never be afraid to ask questions! Advocate for yourself – it’s your education. If you don’t understand something, ask again.” Luigi was also hired to tutor anatomy and physiology at the Mount Vernon Academic Support Center, and finds it rewarding to help other students academically.

What’s next for Luigi after graduation? He plans to continue his education and pursue his bachelor’s degree, and hopes to eventually obtain his doctorate degree. For now, his long-term goal is to become a certified registered nurse anesthesiologist. Luigi’s parting advice to future students is to start with a conversation and learn how WCC can be right for you. He encourages students to move at their own pace, but never to stop moving. “WCC gives so much and is so affordable, and I’ve received nothing but support from WCC. I’ll forever be grateful for my experience here. Go Vikings!”

NEW! ESL ACCELERATED ENGLISH IMMERSION COURSES!
Call or visit for more information.
Se habla español / Falamos portugues.

WCC HOSTS ENTREPRENEURSHIP RESOURCE INFO SESSION

Mount Vernon has often been hailed as a city of entrepreneurs. Situated in such a community, an idea was born: a collaborative event celebrating entrepreneurship and providing educational, financial and peer resources to small business owners and aspiring entrepreneurs. On October 9, the Mount Vernon Extension Center held an inaugural Entrepreneurship Resource Info Session, which was co-sponsored by the Westchester Community College Gateway 2 Entrepreneurship, Community Capital New York and the Mount Vernon Downtown Merchants Association. Attendees filled the room with energy and drive, representing current small business owners, college students, aspiring entrepreneurs and service providers. Collaborators presented information about the many services they provide, including classes and programs aimed at helping entrepreneurs to launch and grow businesses, financing options for startups often overlooked by traditional bank loans, and peer support resources in a city that celebrates entrepreneurship. The evening was a resounding success and we look forward to continued work with our entrepreneur community.

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