

10 Years of Improving Public Health p.15 / A Life-Changing Act of Kindness p.18

# MONTCLAIR

Fall/Winter 2021



FOR THE  
GREATER  
GOOD

A conversation on  
leadership and public service  
with President Jonathan Koppell



# THE BIG PICTURE







This fall marked a fully in-person return to classes, bringing life – and skateboarders and RipStik riders like **Orlaigh Humphries**, a sophomore from Marlboro, New Jersey – back to campus. While Montclair State kept campus open in 2020 with a handful of classes in tents, labs, theaters and the parking deck, campus feels full of energy again, and University Photographer Mike Peters has been there to document it all. To see more photos, turn to page 14.



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# FROM THE PRESIDENT



Hello from Montclair!

What a thrill to join this wonderful university. In the three months since starting as president, I have been so impressed with our students, faculty and staff, and the many alumni I've met. One thing this diverse group of people has in common is a strong connection and deep sense of pride in our university. It's part of the

great foundation that former President Susan Cole built over her 23 years here. I am so grateful to have joined this community.

As you know from reading this magazine through the years, public service is in Montclair's DNA – from its inception as a leading teacher's college through its evolution into a national doctoral research institution. As you will read in the Q&A in this issue, this profile was a powerful lure. I am passionate about capturing the full potential of Montclair State University to be an engine for positive social transformation. We will build on our relationships with surrounding communities and across the state, working with community partners to come up with solutions to the challenges we face. With your support of our students, our programs and initiatives, we can have an even greater impact as we emerge as New Jersey's premier public service university.

I am enjoying meeting our alumni, and I hope to connect with as many graduates as possible as we share this journey together. In that spirit, know that we are back and fully in-person this year, with appropriate safety measures, of course, and we look forward to welcoming you back to campus. Come see us.

Upward!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Koppell".

Jonathan Koppell

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Enjoy the magazine? Have a story idea for us? We want to hear from you.

Email us at [editor@montclair.edu](mailto:editor@montclair.edu). (We reserve the right to edit letters.)



**Montclair – A Trusted Source in News**



Reporters increasingly turn to Montclair when they need experts to comment on important topics in the news. The University's professors have been quoted in the nation's leading newspapers and network news channels at a record

pace over the last year. Here are just a few of many examples:

- CBS News featured Counseling and Psychological Services Director **Jaclyn Friedman-Lombardo** in a story that showed Montclair as an example of how institutions can support student mental health needs during the pandemic.
- Public Health Professor **Stephanie Silvera**, an epidemiologist, has become

one of the most trusted voices in the region regarding COVID-19 and quoted more than 250 times, including in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Star-Ledger*, *Newsday* and WNYC-FM.

- Anthropology Assistant Professor **Cortni Borgerson** appeared on National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*, CBS New York and elsewhere last spring when the Brood X cicadas emerged, explaining that these bugs are edible (and sharing her recipes!). Her commentary also appeared on the Fox News and NBC News websites.

The screenshot shows a tweet from user @bisabutler, who is following The New York Times Magazine. The tweet includes a link to the magazine cover featuring a quilted portrait of Questlove. The text of the tweet reads: "I'm thrilled to announce that my quilted portrait of Ahmir Thompson otherwise known as Questlove is on the cover of the famed New York Times Magazine culture issue! Congratulations to the incredible writer Jazmine Hughes @jazzlooon on your feature article! Thank you @questlove for allowing me to create your portrait. Thank you Annie Jen @annie76828, Jake Silverstein and the whole team at". The tweet has been liked by doulamommakimcollins and 28,873 others.

Congratulations to Bisa Butler '05 MAT, whose quilted portrait of the musician and filmmaker Questlove was on the cover of *The New York Times Magazine* in October. The original artwork was made of cotton, silk, lace, velvet, glass seed and bugle beads. Butler says Questlove's *Summer of Soul* documentary influenced her choice of fabric colors.

- Justice Studies Associate Professor **Jason Williams** has become a go-to source for journalists seeking to understand issues surrounding social justice protests, police reforms and the Black Lives Matter movement. He's been quoted in *USA Today*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution* and many other media outlets.





Vice President Kamala Harris presides over a roundtable discussion at the Ben Samuels Children's Center.

## VICE PRESIDENT IN THE HOUSE!

Vice President Kamala Harris visited classrooms at the Ben Samuels Children's Center on the Montclair State University campus on October 8 to highlight the importance of federal funding for child care.

Harris, accompanied by Governor Phil Murphy and Congresswoman Mikie Sherrill (NJ-11), spent time with preschoolers and held a roundtable discussion with educators as part of their midday visit, which was open only to the media, including the University's student media organizations.



Student journalists, from left, Bernice Ndegwa '23, Yazemin Yilmaz '24 and Samantha Nungesser '22 covered Harris' visit.

Student journalists Bernice Ndegwa '23, Samantha Nungesser '22 and Yazemin Yilmaz '24 from the News Lab, WMSC and *The Montclarion*, respectively, had the opportunity to sit in and record the roundtable discussion. "It was insanely exciting, insanely nerve wracking," Ndegwa said. "I think 'insane' encompasses all the emotions the three of us were feeling when the vice president walked in."

Ndegwa, a junior Journalism major from South Plainfield, New Jersey, closed her segment on a special edition of the Montclair News Lab by reflecting on the event. "As a woman of color, it meant so much to me to experience this with an all-female production team and be part of a history-making event on campus," Ndegwa said. "My lifelong dream is to be a White House correspondent, and I feel like this experience brought me one step closer."

In her remarks, Harris said the nation is strongest when everyone has the opportunity for meaningful work, to parent their children, "and to participate not only in their community, but in our economy to pursue whatever may be their passions and their dreams." Accessible and affordable child care, she said, makes that possible. ■



## Fighting Human Trafficking



The University launched the Global Center on Human Trafficking this fall, creating one of the few comprehensive university-based efforts devoted to ending the hidden crime of human trafficking in New Jersey and around the world.

The Center is a multidisciplinary effort focused on developing innovative solutions to the global problem and has grown into a worldwide initiative working together with survivors to transform the response to human trafficking.

“By most indicators, more people are being trafficked and fewer traffickers are being punished. I’m excited about the transformative power of the survivor involvement that is at the heart of the Global Center on Human Trafficking,” explains Center Director Ali Boak, an anti-trafficking expert with more than 20 years’ experience in the field.

While very few reliable statistics exist about the prevalence of human trafficking in New Jersey, a team of professors and staff from Montclair State are conducting a study, “Understanding Human Trafficking: An Analysis of Data Collection,” to identify the methods of data reporting and develop a model that addresses current systemic shortcomings. ■



The University welcomed 3,619 first-year students to campus for the fall 2021 semester, making it the largest incoming class in the University’s history and 14% larger than the previous record.

After being one of the few New Jersey universities to welcome some students back to live and learn on campus in 2020, the institution’s ability to provide a safe, affordable and high-quality educational experience had

students from all over the world taking notice. Members of the Class of 2025 represent 32 states and 11 countries. “Students and their parents are now more aware than ever of the value and return on investment we provide,” says Vice President for Enrollment Management Wendy Lin-Cook. “And, with new educational programs – such as our pre-med, pre-law and 4+1 MBA programs – students have even more opportunities here.” ■



Volunteers work at the Montclair Community Farm on 9/11 Day of Service.

## 20 YEARS LATER: 9/11 DAY OF SERVICE

The Montclair State community gathered in volunteerism to mark September 11 as a National Day of Service and Remembrance.

Through the efforts of the Center for Community Engagement and the Volunteer Center, an average of 350 students, faculty, alumni, AmeriCorps members and local community members have served each year on campus and in the surrounding community, contributing more than 10,000 volunteer hours. On the 20th anniversary of the attacks of September 11, 2001, this year’s Day of Service took on special significance.

“This is the University’s 12th Annual 9/11 National Day of Service and many of our students, especially freshmen and sophomores, were not even alive on that tragic day and many were only a couple of years old,” said Center for Community Engagement Director Bryan Murdock. “Providing students an opportunity to serve our communities on this Day of Remembrance helps reinforce the historic meaning of this day and the tremendous sacrifice made by first responders and the importance that public service plays in our country.” ■



## Students and Alumni Star in *The College Tour*



**Nikki-James Soto of Parsippany, New Jersey, films her segment for *The College Tour*.**

In October, the cameras were focused on Montclair students and alumni who shared their stories about campus life, academics, internships, public service and more for *The College Tour*, a Prime Video series. Montclair will be part of Season 4 on Amazon's free streaming service, IMDb TV, on *The College Tour's* app and website. It will also run on Roku, Apple TV, LG Smart TV, Samsung Smart TV, Sony, Philips Smart TV, Amazon FireTV and Android TV.

Hosted by *Amazing Race* winner Alex Boylan, *The College Tour* helps prospective students around the country (and the world) travel virtually across America for an inside look at colleges and universities.

"We are excited to be able to introduce a wider audience to Montclair State University on the huge platforms of Prime Video and *The College Tour*, greatly increasing Montclair's presence in the college selection process," says Vice President for Communications and Marketing Joseph Brennan. The hour-long episode will begin streaming in April 2022. ■



## TECH ART EXHIBIT

The University Galleries held its first in-person exhibition in nearly two years, launching this fall *Tech/Know/Future/From Slang to Structure*. The art, which explores the issues of identity, history and abstraction, was installed around campus and in gallery settings.

The exhibition, curated by Tom Leeser, director of the Art and Technology program and the Center for Integrated Media at CalArts, brings together a group of 11 diverse cross-disciplinary artists to present a critical response to technological systems within art, placing the viewer at the intersection

of the past, present and future. The artists use their creative practices to establish new relationships between technology, knowledge and time through augmented reality, artificial intelligence, sound, video, textiles and works on paper.

The exhibition draws inspiration from the essay "Iconic Treatise Gothic Futurism" by the late writer, artist and musician Rammellzee, and Franco Berardi's book *After the Future*.

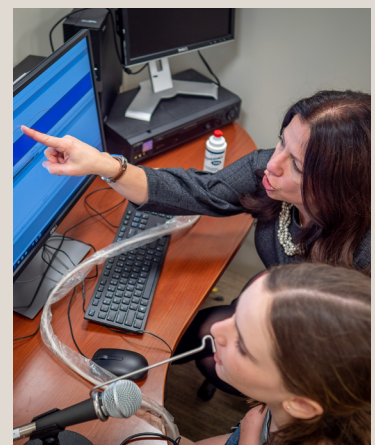
The show is part of University Galleries Director Megan Austin's vision to revamp the Galleries programming to focus on exhibiting new and timely work made by contemporary artists who comment on the current state of social, political and visual culture. ■

## DELIVERING SPEECH THERAPY VIA TELEHEALTH

Telehealth has become a normal part of health care during the pandemic, and Elaine Hitchcock, associate professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders, is researching the delivery of speech therapy via telehealth with a \$435,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health.

"This research will meet a public health need by evaluating the efficacy of speech intervention supplemented with real-time visual-acoustic biofeedback when delivered using remote technologies," says Hitchcock. "It will also develop an online battery to assess perception of targeted speech sounds and test the effects of online auditory-perceptual training for children who present with speech production errors and atypical auditory perception."

The current award will support an ongoing collaboration in this research domain with New York University and Syracuse University to advance both the understanding of speech production as well as the remediation of residual speech errors in school-aged children. ■



**Elaine Hitchcock works with a student.**





Students, staff and faculty came together on September 30 to support each other and acknowledge the toll COVID-19 has taken on the community and the world. Because the pandemic has touched the lives of all – whether they have lost loved ones, been ill themselves, or suffered from the stress

and isolation of living through this time – the campus community created a luminaria display of words of remembrance, healing and hope in an effort to support one another.

The ceremony was held at the Amphitheater and included singing and spoken words of encouragement, as lights flickered in bags that created a wall of remembrance. Vice President for Student Development and Campus Life Dawn Soufleris spoke of COVID-19's disruption to everyone's lives and the losses experienced – loved ones,

cherished friends, coworkers – as well as other losses: “a job, the closure of a favorite restaurant, the ability to do something we love to do.”

The University community continues to work together and is looking toward a brighter future, she said. “While we are not fully done with this pandemic, little by little we move closer to gaining back our lives, our community, our ability to be together and our opportunity to cherish what we have.” ■

## Orchestra Rocks ESPN Football

In a unique mashup, the Montclair State University Symphony Orchestra performed in a teaser for *Monday Night Football* on ESPN. Titled “Legends,” the piece juxtaposed the orchestra playing a classical piece with footage of some of football's greatest players just prior to the Pittsburgh Steelers/Chicago Bears game, then cut to today's generation of football players and shots of the orchestra playing its rendition of “Legend” by The Score.

ESPN came to campus in large part because of Montclair's reputation as “East Coast Hollywood.” The College of the Arts, through its Department of Broadcast and Media Operations, provides location services and production services to the film and television industry.

ESPN's *Monday Night Football* has millions of viewers depending on the game – with some recent games seeing upwards of 14 million viewers, the Steelers-Bears matchup promised to be a heavily watched game.

Nathaniel Williams, a senior Music Education major from Newark, New Jersey, was among the students spotlighted when the commercial ran on Nov. 8. Shown joyfully playing his electric violin, Williams says, “Even for a minute-long pregame commercial, it's an awesome moment that I'll never forget.” ■



Nathaniel Williams performs.

## WYNTON MARSALIS JAZZES UP CALI IMMERSIVE RESIDENCIES

Jazz and classical music legend Wynton Marsalis provided the pinnacle to the new **Cali Immersive Residency Program**, a reimagined professional residency program of 10 rotating ensembles and solo artists at the John J. Cali School of Music, when he came to campus for a three-day series of master classes and events in November.

Marsalis, an internationally acclaimed musician, composer, bandleader and educator, worked with Montclair State students on improvisation, composition and instrumental techniques.

Marsalis headlined events including a brass master class, a discussion on composition and arranging, a master class for all students, and a “Behind the Scenes with Wynton” Cali Conversation with Cali School Director Anthony Mazzocchi.

“While dreaming up the idea of our Cali Immersive Residency Program, I thought about musicians around the world who are the embodiment of ‘citizen artists’ – people who utilize every ounce of their being and every talent they have to touch lives and educate through their art,” says Mazzocchi. “Wynton Marsalis was one of the first who came to mind.”



It's been an exciting season for the Cali School, welcoming the **Harlem Quartet** as its new quartet-in-residence, introducing composer-in-residence **Jessie Montgomery**, and inaugurating the new weekly residency program, which has included other luminaries such as the choral octet **VOCES8**; the charismatic “classical-meets-rock-star-duo” **Peter Dugan and Charles Yang**; electro-acoustic violist **Trevor New**; composer and soprano **Kamala Sankaram**; **JACK Quartet**; and the phenomenal **Kronos Quartet**.

“It's a complete reimagination of what artistic residency means,” says Mazzocchi – one that is designed to tear down silos and provide innovative learning opportunities. ■





Prudence Jones, Bruce Springsteen superfan

## The Boss Is Back

The Boss is back on the playlist at Montclair State, where the music, art and life of the superstar was explored in a class this past summer taught by Classics and Humanities professor – and mega fan – Prudence Jones.

Jones has contributed to the scholarly research on the 72-year-old New Jersey rocker, applying her academic expertise of “more ancient stuff” to interpret American pop culture and how Bruce Springsteen’s work reflects the American experience in the late 20th and early 21st centuries.

“My specialization and background is Latin poetry, particularly the Augustan poets,” Jones says. “There’s a fair amount of love poetry, so analyzing lyrics, analyzing poetry, it’s not that big of a jump for me.”

All of which made Jones particularly qualified to weigh in with a scholarly take on last summer’s debate over the lyrics to Springsteen’s “Thunder Road.” When the Boss ushered in the return to live theater with *Springsteen on Broadway*, fans took to Twitter arguing about the words “sways” versus “waves” from the opening line, “A screen door slams, Mary’s dress sways” ... or to some ears ... “Mary’s dress waves.”

Thanks to *The New Yorker*, fans got their answer on what Mary’s dress is doing (it’s “sways,” according to Springsteen’s manager and producer Jon Landau). But a close reading of liner notes by Jones led her to a different conclusion.

“My opinion is that Bruce has performed it both ways and thus there is no 100% accurate answer,” Jones says, pointing to the times when Springsteen used “waves” and times he used “sways.” “I think that the answer truly is that it is both and which one we get depends on how Bruce recreates the song in each performance.” ■

## RED HAWKS HELP CDC IMPROVE MASK WEARING

Last spring, students at Montclair, along with several other universities, participated in a mask mitigation study directed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

“The feedback from this study can be used to create proper messaging for the future to promote healthy behaviors,” says Stefanie LoBue, a Master of Public Health (MPH) student, and one of 13 Red Hawks who volunteered as observers for an eight-week period, collecting data at 10 sites throughout campus, with each student recording observations for an hour each week.



The goal was to log 400 observations weekly and submit that data to a CDC-managed database. The CDC shared the information back with participating universities so that the information could inform decisions in real time.

“This study was important because college campuses are prime for the transmission of COVID and it was important to understand how seriously and consistently college students were wearing masks,” says Breon Boseman-Sims ’21 MPH. “It was good to get a sense of how students were wearing masks, and if they were wearing them correctly.”

Assistant Director of Health Promotion Marie Cascarano was the study’s Principal Investigator and of the 13 student volunteer observers, nine were undergraduate students who also worked as Community Health Ambassadors supporting public health initiatives related to the University’s COVID-19 Plan. ■





## Cole Hall Earns Gold LEED Certification

The University continues to be a leading campus in sustainability, with the newly renovated, expanded Susan A. Cole Hall achieving Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Gold status through the U.S. Green Building Council.

Cole Hall joins the Center for Environmental and Life Sciences, which was certified in 2017, as one of two buildings on campus to receive the LEED Gold designation.

The Green Building Council's LEED program rates projects based on a set of prerequisites that address sustainability issues. Projects receive one of four LEED rating levels: Certified, Silver, Gold or Platinum.

Other buildings on campus with LEED status include the School of Communication and Media, certified LEED Silver in 2018; the Feliciano School of Business, certified in 2020; and University Hall, certified in 2008.

"There are only nine LEED Gold buildings at colleges and universities in New Jersey," says Shawn Connolly, vice president for University Facilities. "We are very excited to have the distinction of owning two of those now with the addition of Susan A. Cole Hall to our existing inventory of LEED buildings." ■

## GHETTO FILM PROGRAM BRINGS STUDENTS TO SUMMER INTENSIVE

Talented and aspiring teen filmmakers from Los Angeles and New York City spent part of their summer at Montclair State University, learning about college life and honing their storytelling skills with the University's School of Communication and Media faculty and student leaders during intensive filmmaking workshops.

As part of an ongoing partnership with the Ghetto Film School, an award-winning nonprofit with locations in New York City, Los Angeles and London, the 2021 Summer Residency program offered two one-week sessions that provided a diverse group of high schoolers with aspirations to work in film or television the opportunity to learn more about directing while also offering them the chance to experience what it's like to be a residential student on Montclair State's scenic campus.

School of Communication and Media Director Keith Strudler says the Summer Residency program is "an example of the potential of education to be transformative to individuals while also achieving broader, societal goals."

"The work being done by talented professionals both at Montclair State and Ghetto Film School has made this program the success that it is," says Strudler. "It's not only ensuring this group of talented, diverse, aspiring storytellers continue their journeys, but it also helps the future of film and television to become a brighter, better version of itself." ■



Father and daughter graduates, Lavone and Tiiera Broxton '21

## Families Graduate Together

It's not easy to work a full-time job, raise a family and go to school, but Lavone Broxton, associate director of Postal Services, motivated by his wife and daughters, finally earned his undergraduate degree. His walk across the 2021 Commencement stage was made even sweeter as he shared graduation day with his daughter, Tiiera Broxton.

Lavone and Tiiera Broxton earned degrees in Sociology, and now their home in Newark, New Jersey, is brimming with Red

Hawk pride: Lavone's spouse and Tiiera's mother, Rhonda Robinson-Broxton, earned two graduate degrees from Montclair State: a Master of Arts in Teaching in 2013 and a Master of Education in 2019.

Graduation week was also especially busy for Jennifer Infante and her children Fabiana Caballero and Jorge Caballero, who each earned a degree from Montclair State.

Initially their graduation dates didn't quite match up, but with encouragement and perseverance throughout the pandemic, Fabiana and Jorge earned degrees in Business and Justice Studies, respectively.

Jennifer Infante, who earned her bachelor's degree in 2015 and teaches high school Spanish in Scotch Plains, New Jersey, finished her Master of Arts in Spanish. "We worked very hard to make it happen," Infante says. "It was such an exciting week." ■



# SNAPSHOTS







## Assistant Provost Daniel Jean Knows What it Takes to Make First-Gen Students' Dreams Come True

When Daniel “Danny” Jean was suspended for fighting during high school, his mother picked him up and noted, pointedly, that she never had to visit school for his four older siblings. The shame Jean felt at disappointing his mom became the impetus of his transformation from troubled teen with a 1.9 GPA to college student who would one day earn a doctorate.

“That was one of those signature moments that got me back on track,” recalls Jean.

Jean knows the power of keeping students on track. He was the executive director of the Educational Opportunity Fund (EOF) program at Montclair State before becoming assistant provost for Special Programs, EOF and Academic Success in July 2020. In the newly created role, Jean oversees the Future College Graduate Academy, which provides a unified enrollment and graduation strategy for highly motivated, low-income, first-generation cohorts. Among the programs is a grant-funded partnership with the Newark Board of Education to enroll 300 of the city’s high school juniors and seniors in Montclair State courses to improve college preparedness and empower the whole family to foster a college-going culture.

“This is creating a direct pathway for 300 Newark scholars to become Red Hawks,” says Jean, noting the program includes acceptance to the University.

Jean relates well to the vulnerable students he serves. His parents emigrated from Haiti with no formal education. His father was a preacher who died when Jean was 13, and his mom took cleaning jobs to support the family. Living in Newark, the Jeans moved 12 times and at one point were homeless. After losing his dad, Jean’s grades plummeted.

A Ramapo College recruiter told Jean he’d never get into college. Jean was offended and applied anyway. Two weeks later he was accepted as an EOF Scholar, and Jean

realized the recruiter, Thelman Newman, was practicing a tough-love tactic.

Jean recalls feeling imposter syndrome at college, where he was sometimes the only Black man in the classroom. “I went from one of the largest urban centers to passing horse farms on the way to college. It was a culture shock,” says Jean, whose involvement with EOF helped him adjust. “When you’re first generation, you’re first generation everything.”

Jean earned his master’s in Counseling in 2000 from Montclair State, and a doctorate in Higher Education Administration in 2010 from Seton Hall University. Jean found the doctoral experience could be challenging in nonacademic ways, so he created a network to support aspiring doctoral candidates. The Facebook group, called PhiniseD/FinishEdD, has more than 22,000 members, a majority of whom are Black and brown. “I know how important it is to feel valued, connected and seen,” says Jean. “It’s ballooned into something I never could have imagined.”

Jean is also an author, consultant and motivational speaker who receives graduation photos from students he’s never met, with notes about how he inspired them.

But the EOF program holds a special place in his heart. Jean explains the program’s motto is “EOF for Life” to encourage former students to give back to the network with their time, talents and resources. EOF’s goal is that children of its participants will not be eligible for EOF, as proof of their parents’ success. Jean and his wife, also an EOF alum, have two sons, 11 and 13, who will not be EOF-eligible.

And his mom, Marie, now 81, can see how far her son has come since that high school suspension years ago. “I believe I’ve done everything I can to make her proud,” Jean says, “and will continue to do so.” ■

—Sharon Waters



# CAMPUS COMES ALIVE!



Fall 2021 brought more students, faculty and staff back to campus with a fully in-person return that made everything feel more normal. Vaccinations and testing (and wearing masks indoors) meant COVID-19 cases decreased in the fall, and a sense of working together for the greater good brought with it a sense of contentedness and a desire for fun. (See The Big Picture, page 1). *Photos by Mike Peters*





*10 Years*  
OF WORKING TO IMPROVE  
**PUBLIC  
HEALTH**

By Marilyn Joyce Lehren

For the last decade, alumni of the Master of Public Health program have tackled some of the country's most significant public health issues and been on the front lines of the pandemic.



In the 10 years since the University graduated its first class of students in the Master of Public Health (MPH) program, alumni have confronted some of the country's most significant public health issues of the past decade, enduring challenges like migrant health, emerging infectious diseases, domestic violence, hunger, HIV and mental health.

The coronavirus pandemic has spotlighted the response of these alumni like never before, including their work with epidemiological modeling, infection control, education and vaccination.

"When I reflect on it now, it was an incredible experience," says Tosan O. Boyo '11 MPH, who served as the deputy commander of the COVID-19 Operations Center in San Francisco during the height of the pandemic. "I saw the best of humanity. I saw the worst of humanity. I found out what I was made of. I found out what I can do. I found out what can break me."

To mark the 10-year milestone of the MPH program at Montclair State, Boyo and other alumni from the first graduating class shared their experiences in this extraordinary time in public health.



Guerline Pierre '11 MPH  
in a blueberry field

### Lending a Hand to Migrant Workers

As a seasonal migrant education recruiter, **Guerline Pierre '11 MPH** visits Gloucester County blueberry farms from May to August to enroll children of the laborers in summer school and provide families access to health care and social services. She has focused on maternal and child health and public health on a grassroots level. With the pandemic, she recognized that the needs within the tightly packed farm camps were even greater than usual.

"The families live in these large bunkers, and it's a community, a small little community where they cook, eat, work and everyone is close," Pierre says.

She founded LAMP (Latin Americans for Medical Progress) and mobilized volunteers to assist the migrant workers. "We were able to raise a decent amount of funds to distribute PPE, masks and hand sanitizers to the various farm camps." The group educated families on the importance of social distancing, wearing masks and also provided a list of community resources in both Spanish and Haitian-Creole.

She also spent the summer encouraging the farm workers to get vaccinated and providing translation of education materials and information so they would know where to get tested and vaccinated.



Christopher Hellwig '11 MPH

### Looking at the Big Picture

"We're looking at the big picture to make effective decisions," says **Christopher Hellwig '11 MPH**, health officer in New Jersey for the Hamilton Township Division of Health.

Hamilton, a municipality in Mercer County, has nine long-term care facilities, an acute care hospital and numerous state and federal buildings, so his pandemic work included everything

from contact tracing to ensuring that businesses and restaurants understood the safety rules.

As an early provider of vaccinations, Hellwig tailored outreach for the most vulnerable populations to ensure they safely received the vaccination close to home.

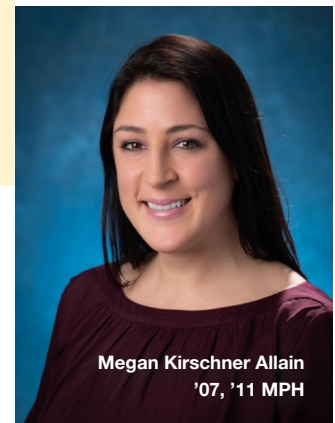
"Public health is public for a reason, because it's not just one-on-one, it takes everyone," he says.

### Finding Ways to Distribute Food

Community outreach has guided **Megan Kirschner Allain '07, '11 MPH** ever since she traveled to Nicaragua a decade ago to develop and implement an HIV/STD prevention program in an impoverished neighborhood.

With an even greater need for food assistance during the pandemic, she responded by helping provide groceries and meals to those in need in Gloucester, Salem and Cumberland counties as part of her role as director of Community Benefits and Outreach for the Inspira Health Network.

"For a while, that was what I was doing, fielding questions about food pantry locations or getting data from the food bank about food they had and where it could be distributed. I was making those connections and connecting those dots."



Megan Kirschner Allain  
'07, '11 MPH





## Researching Rise in Domestic Violence

**Donna Meeker-O'Rourke '11 MPH**, newly named program specialist for the Global Center on Human Trafficking at Montclair State, has begun her PhD in the Family Science and Human Development program with a research focus on domestic violence, which has been on the rise during the pandemic.

She's followed a nontraditional path, discovering by chance as an undergraduate in anthropology, the study of epidemiology and the control of diseases. It was a subject she taught and the focus of several research projects after earning her MPH. Her background in public health segued to health and fitness as she became a personal trainer.

"I created a community and my vision was to empower people to become their best selves." Certified as a mind, body, health coach, she provided sessions for people who suffered from PTSD, specifically military, first responders and police officers.

The business folded just as the pandemic hit and she returned to Montclair State for work, volunteering in efforts to check in with students. "I spent many nights just calling students to make sure they were OK and checking to see if they needed any resources."

## Someone to Turn to for Advice

"I am definitely the COVID girl," says **Dawn Snyder '06, '11 MPH**. "I get text messages at ridiculous hours of the night and the day saying 'my so-and-so tested positive, my so-and-so has symptoms. We have a fever. Can you test me? What should I do? What should I drink? How should I act?'" And then the people who do test positive, I follow up with them weekly. 'How are you doing? Do you need a retest? Follow CDC guidelines, stay home, stay hydrated, do what you have to do. Stay away from your family,' which is hard. It's a really hard time."



Snyder earned her undergraduate degree in Health Education/Community Health Services, her MPH in Community Health Education and served as an adjunct professor in Public Health at Montclair before moving to Florida to join Broward House, a nonprofit that serves people with chronic health challenges. As a prevention manager, she counsels clients about at-risk behaviors, mental health and substance abuse, and testing of hepatitis C, HIV and STDs.

"I was heavily engrossed in that world, and then COVID hit," she says. She was deployed with the National Guard because her experience testing HIV antibodies and antigens was needed to help set up the first drive-through antibody testing site in the state of Florida. And in February, she started a new job as director of field operations for COVID-19 testing with Florida-based Synergy Diagnostics.

## 'The Infrastructure of Humanity'

In California, **Tosan O. Boyo '11 MPH**, was asked to step out of his role in hospital operations to manage the COVID-19 Operations Center for the city and county of San Francisco. The Bay Area was the first place in the nation to pass a shelter-in-place law to address the coronavirus pandemic.

He expected it to be a short-term role away from his work as chief operating officer at Zuckerberg San Francisco General. The plan was to help build the operational infrastructure. "I'm going to coach the team, map out the workflows, create processes, what are our goals and all that stuff. And then in my first week, there was this Grand Princess cruise ship on its way to America that essentially had a COVID outbreak. My two-week assignment turned into an eight-month assignment."

In his new role as senior vice president of hospital operations at John Muir Health, a hospital network based in Walnut Creek, California, he oversees the daily operations for three hospitals, leads vaccination campaigns and develops behavioral health strategies.

"Public health really is the infrastructure of humanity," he says. "Once you remove that infrastructure, everything collapses. I don't know if a lot of people have seen it that way until the pandemic. Public health was just something that happened where people made sure your restaurant stayed open or people who did some obscure administrative work in hospitals and boards with diseases. But people who work at public health, we're the ones that keep the skeleton strong. We're the ones that keep the bones from being brittle. We're the ones that make sure you can continue to stand straight and walk and be stable." ■





# A life-changing ACT OF KINDNESS

By Laura Griffin

## FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, one student's small gesture changed the course of a classmate's life

It was a trending question on TikTok this past summer: “What’s one small, unimportant decision that changed the whole trajectory of your life?”

And Amy Elizabeth Policelli '09 had quite the answer.

Fifteen years ago, as a freshman at Montclair State, Policelli wanted to take American Sign Language but, she says, it was well known at that time that seniors and athletes had first dibs on the course. While talking to one of her classmates, a softball player, about it, the player “offered to sign up for the class and then drop it so I could get her spot.”

As it turned out, the class had such an impact on Policelli that she minored in ASL

and later went back to school to become an interpreter. She worked as an interpreter and now teaches ASL to middle schoolers.

But there’s more: “I have a 5-year-old son who is nonverbal who has a genetic disorder,” she told TikTokers. “And I am able to provide him with language to communicate, all thanks to that softball player.”

In fact, Policelli’s son, who speaks just a handful of words, has learned 150-200 signs in the last year and a half – greatly reducing his frustration levels.

“This one small act of kindness changed my whole life, and I had no idea who this person was who helped put me on the right path in life,” she says.

TikTokers were touched by the story, and since she couldn’t remember the player’s name, they went to work, making the video go viral, and within a day, put Policelli in touch with former Montclair State pitcher Leigh Ann Murduca '09, '11 MA.

“I was honestly shocked, and I’m not going to lie, I definitely cried a bit,” says Murduca about hearing the story. “I am just so happy for her. It’s crazy how a small favor I did such a long time ago had such a butterfly effect.”

In September, Policelli and Murduca reunited on the Montclair State campus – the first time they’d seen each other since Murduca held a spot in the class for Policelli 15 years ago. They both had gone on to become teachers and mothers. (Murduca, who also ended up





After her TikTok video went viral, Amy Policelli (second from left) met on campus with former classmate Leigh Ann Murduca for the first time in 15 years.

taking ASL at Montclair, teaches high school math and has a 2-year-old son.)

“As a mother, I see how important it is to be able to communicate with my son, and be there for him when he needs me,” Murduca says. “I get chills thinking about how this story played out, and I’m so happy that Amy

is able to communicate and be literally the perfect mom for her son.”

Since the TikTok was posted, it has been viewed 5.8 million times, received 1.3 million likes and Policelli’s number of followers has grown to more than 105,000. She has spent lots of time responding to the more than

8,200 comments she received – as well as comments on follow-up videos – making it possibly another seemingly small decision that may have changed her life.

“Everyone has been so positive and so supportive,” she says. “It’s been such an amazing experience.” ■

Amy Policelli (center) and Leigh Ann Murduca communicate with Policelli’s son using sign language during a visit at Montclair State.







# Inclusion FOR ALL

By Marilyn Joyce Lehren

Wendy and Andrew Lacey with their children, from left, Derek, Evelyn, Abigail and Paige, share a commitment to strengthen inclusion in the community.

University's partnership with Montclair family leads to expansion of inclusive educational opportunities for students with disabilities on campus

When Wendy Lacey opened Cornerstone Montclair in 2017 to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to be active in their community alongside their peers, its location across from the Buzz Aldrin Middle School was by design. On Friday afternoons, "500 students would stream out and many would come buy penny candy at The General Store," she says.

It's not that those pennies added up to profits. It was all about changing perceptions, Wendy Lacey says. "Those middle schoolers come in and see people of all different abilities working here."

That message, strengthening the idea of opportunity and inclusion in the community, is at the heart of Cornerstone, and now, thanks to a

generous grant from the Lacey Family Inclusive Education Fund, has led to a partnership with Montclair State University to expand the educational opportunities for students with disabilities on the Montclair State campus.

The family donated \$250,000 to the University's Increasing Access to College (IAC) project to establish the University's first comprehensive transition program and college certificate for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities.

The project was started six years ago by professors Jessica Bacon and Susan Baglieri, project coordinators and faculty members in the Department of Teaching and Learning. The idea was to promote the inclusion of people with



disabilities in all aspects of college life, partnering them with students studying for their teaching certification and those performing services through the Center for Community Engagement.

“What sets our work apart from other universities is the level and focus on inclusivity and inclusion,” Bacon says. While other postsecondary programs for students with intellectual disabilities provide peer support models, they’re not all fully integrated into the systems of campus.

“We’ve worked hard to have that kind of vision of inclusion be our core value and our core focus.”

### Lacey Family Inclusive Education Fund

As strong advocates for inclusive education for children with special needs, Wendy and Andrew Lacey and their four children – Paige, Evelyn, Abigail and Derek – are active in the Montclair community.

Their family business, Cornerstone Montclair, is both a philosophy and a physical space. At its core the mission of Cornerstone Montclair is about people of all abilities contributing to and feeling welcome in their community. It’s a multipurpose building that has a lot of activities for everyone, but goes out of its way to make sure everyone includes people with disabilities.

“It does not surprise me that the Lacey family has committed to a transformational gift that will impact the future of inclusive education at Montclair State. To the inclusive community, they are an inspiration,” says Yanira Amadeo, director of Development for the College of Education and Human Services.

“We have put time and effort and work into thinking about inclusion outside of the school system and the challenges of transitioning into local communities,” says



**Left:** Volunteers and students in the IAC project play a lively game of Uno. **Bottom:** Strong bonds form between all the students. Shown taking a selfie are Kat Gilvey and Rami Alzubi.



Wendy Lacey, who is also a member of the advisory board to the College of Education and Human Services. “It has a lot to do with Evelyn [a high school junior with Down syndrome] and what we hope happens in her life. Our eyes have been opened to the value that people with disabilities add to their community and to what’s important in helping them to have a fulfilling life.”

Evelyn Lacey has benefitted by learning with her peer group in the public school where her siblings attend. As a preschooler, she

attended the Ben Samuels Children’s Center at Montclair State, which provides inclusive early childhood education.

“As she has grown into a lovely young woman, we have become more involved in disability rights and the disability awareness community,” Wendy Lacey says. “It becomes painfully clear that even if you have great success in an inclusive education setting, once you hit the age of 21 and you age out of that structured environment, for many people, it’s like falling off a cliff. It’s very difficult to find your way in life without the





same kind of support you got when you were in school.”

### Increasing Access to College Project

“The project is consistent with Montclair State’s commitment to equity, social justice and inclusion,” says Tamara Lucas, former dean of the College of Education and Human Services who supported the program from its inception.

“We are interested in opening up all the resources the campus has to offer to as many people in the community as possible,” Baglieri says. “For us, we see it very much as broadening how our campus is engaged with our whole community. We believe our students benefit from having increased disability diversity on campus.”

That’s been the experience of Allyn Lilien ’21, a future teacher on the five-year track to earn her bachelor’s degree and Master of Arts in Teaching with teacher certifications in Math and Teacher of Students with Disabilities.

As a peer volunteer, Lilien has helped students with disabilities navigate the academic and social aspects of campus life. “One of the biggest aspects of the IAC is to create an environment where people with and without disabilities are meeting each other and learning about each other,” she says.

“We have a lot of confidence,” adds Wendy Lacey, “that this gift is going to help take IAC to the next level.” ■



**Top:** Volunteer Amber Francy mentors Leone Desrosiers, who is attending Montclair State as part of the Increasing Access to College project. **Bottom:** Professors Jessica Bacon (second row, third from right) and Susan Baglieri (front row, third from left) developed the IAC project to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of college life.





# ACCOLADES

**Best  
Colleges for  
Your Money**

*Money magazine*

**Top  
Public  
Schools**

*U.S. News &  
World Report*

**Top  
Business  
Schools**

*Princeton Review*

**Top 25**

LGBTQ  
Friendly Colleges  
*College  
Consensus*

**Top Producer  
Minority  
Degrees**

*Diverse: Issues  
in Higher Education*

**Best College  
for Drama  
and Theatre  
Arts in NJ**

*College Factual*

**Best  
Education  
Schools**

*U.S. News &  
World Report*

**Top 500**

*U.S. College  
Rankings  
Wall Street Journal/  
Times Higher  
Education*

**Top  
Performers  
on Social  
Mobility**

*U.S. News &  
World Report*

**Best Bang  
for Your  
Buck**

*Washington Monthly  
College Guide*



# FOR THE GREATER GOOD

A conversation on leadership and public service with President Jonathan Koppell

In his first few months as Montclair State University's ninth president, Jonathan Koppell's calendar has been so full with meetings and events on campus and the surrounding communities, that he makes sure to schedule time into each day to talk with students, faculty and staff. Those connections are important to him, so no matter what else is in store for the day, he makes a point to get out on campus.

"The great thing about being president of the University is it's totally normal for me to ask people what they're doing," he says.


In those conversations, he learns about faculty research and student aspirations and what they see as goals for themselves and the University.

In an interview with *Montclair* magazine, Koppell discussed his goals and his desire to make Montclair State University the premier public service university in New Jersey.

"We have this strong base to work from, but we are going to make public service a signature hallmark of the Montclair education," Koppell says.







**“The point is that there’s no  
limit to what’s possible.”**

President Koppell talks with Bonner Leader Keiva-Nevaeh Edghill in the campus community garden in November. The garden’s harvests go to the Red Hawk Pantry to help combat hunger on campus.



Montclair's mission to provide an inclusive and equitable top-quality education to a population as diverse as New Jersey's attracted the 51-year-old Koppell, the former dean of the Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions at Arizona State University, and a nationally regarded scholar of policy, organization and management.

Koppell's upbringing as the son of a New York politician and a New Jersey college professor instilled a strong sense of responsibility to contribute to society and the greater good. He earned degrees from Harvard and the University of California, Berkeley and taught at Yale before moving to Arizona State and becoming dean in 2011. He advocates for diversity, inclusion and equity and is determined to inspire and prepare a new generation of students to go out and meet, reach and shape the world in ways that matter.

**“But what I’m excited about cultivating even more is research that combines empirical hypothesis-driven study with engagement in the community, organized around our shared pressing challenges.”**

“This generation is more focused on making the world a better place. We would be asleep at the switch if we weren't doing everything in our power to support students and prepare them to engage in public service, but doing so in a way that's efficacious and meaningful,” he says.

Below are excerpts from his conversation with *Montclair* magazine.

**Q. As you meet people on campus, you ask, “Why Montclair? Why did you choose to come here to study, to work here?” So ... why Montclair?**

**A.** I'm here because Montclair State University represents the kind of university that I believe is the model of what a public research university ought to be in the 21st century and has the potential to lead and shine in that regard.

Montclair has never wavered in its commitment to excellence from its origins. It wasn't just a Normal school. It was considered the best Normal school, a model emulated across the country and an innovative pioneer that was driving the field.

There was never a sense at Montclair that there was a contradiction between being a university that serves the people and a university that achieves at the highest level. But beyond that, what I saw was the potential to build upon a foundation of activity in the community and with the community to advance on the most pressing issues that we face as a society.

My vision of what a public university is in the 21st century takes that existing activity and ratchets it up considerably. We treat serving the community not as a positive thing that the university does when convenient, but as a core part of our mission and a dimension upon which we judge our own success.

**Q. How did your upbringing influence your path?**

**A.** The prepackaged answer is my father [G. Oliver Koppell] was in politics and my mother [Kathleen Sunshine, PhD] was a college professor. Being an incredibly uncreative person, I simply averaged them and became a political science professor. Truthfully, it had a huge influence on who I am.



Koppell has quickly become known for taking selfies with students, faculty, staff and at gatherings, which often turn up on his Twitter @JonathanKoppell.



The most profound impact was that it seemed to me if you weren't doing something that was going to have significance in the world, something that was intended to alter the trajectory in a positive way for the lives of the people around you, then what exactly were you doing?

**Q. Your grandmothers also were very involved in public service. How did they influence you?**

**A.** My father's mother [Gabrielle Kaufmann] had a remarkable life. When she was a young woman, she was involved in an extraordinary effort to get young German, Jewish children to safety, escorting a group of children without their parents, to the United States. She later founded a preschool and was very involved in the community.

My mother's mother [Elsie Kopstein Sunshine] was a teacher who worked as a special ed teacher in a public school in New York City. Even though I was pretty little at the time of her retirement party, I remember the way people spoke about her and talked about her impact on their lives and her impact on the school.

I don't think it's a coincidence that I ended up where I am, the combination of nurture and nature puts me where I'm sitting today. I'm very much a product of my lineage.

**Q. What is your vision for University research benefiting communities?**

**A.** I don't want to sell short what most people would call basic research or things that are more theoretical. Those efforts set the stage for major advances. We have this remarkable COVID-19 vaccine that's based on 20 years of focused laboratory research. We wouldn't be where we are today without that foundational work.

But what I'm excited about further cultivating at Montclair is research that combines empirical hypothesis-driven



**Koppell meets with researchers at the Sokol Institute for Pharmaceutical Life Sciences. He says the transdisciplinary research and business partnerships make its graduate and postdoctoral programs innovative.**

study with engagement in the community, organized around our shared pressing challenges.

And I want to be clear, we're not starting from scratch. [See sidebar, page 29.]

The point is that there's no limit to what's possible. It has to be rooted in partnership and collaboration among equals. This is not about universities walking into communities and saying, "This is what we are going to do." It has to be that the university is a trusted partner in the community and the relationship is that of co-principal investigators working together to solve a problem that's defined collectively.

You can do that and generate high-quality, impactful research in the process. You can bring resources to bear on the most challenging problems that we face. When a university researcher gets external grant

money, the dollars that are brought in to support that kind of research also support engagement and activity in the community. It's a double win. If you really do it right, you're simultaneously creating learning opportunities for your students. I want Montclair State University to be known for research excellence, yes, but excellence that drives us toward a better future.

**Q. We know downtime is rare, but when you're not running the state's second largest university, what do you like to do for fun?**

**A.** I became an enthusiastic mountain biker in Arizona. I still have to figure out the mountain biking scene in New Jersey. I'm looking forward to the winter season because skiing is a favorite recreational activity for me and my kids. The bickering usually stops when we're skiing!

**"I want Montclair State University to be known for research excellence, yes, but excellence that drives us toward a better future."**



**Q. How do you think being the parent of teenagers helps you in your role as a college president?**

**A.** Having kids helps you appreciate how different their worldview is. It's a reminder that they've come of age and gained consciousness in a time that's quite different from my own. It's one of the reasons it's important to have interaction with students on campus because you get to understand their experience, and their perspective – what enters into their consciousness is not necessarily what enters into mine.



**Warming up on his first day on the job, Koppell shoots hoops with his son in the Panzer Gym.**

**Q. What is your favorite part of the job?**

**A.** The great thing about being president of the University is it's totally normal for me to ask people what they're doing.

I love talking to students about what they want to do. Not necessarily when they grow up, but even what they want to do next week or what they want to do in the semester or why they like this class or don't like this class.

When it comes to faculty research, I'm an equal opportunity enthusiast. I could happily

engage with somebody who's working in physics versus somebody putting on a play versus somebody trying to understand some new form of business enterprise or who's researching enzymes. I'm happy to sit there and nerd out on it and learn.

I also have enjoyed hearing from alumni about their pride and passion for the University. There are a lot of people who were touched by their time here and have a strong connection to it.

**Q. What role do alumni play in your vision for the University?**

**A.** The whole idea we're trying to build around is that Montclair State University is a community. Alumni are clearly a really important part of that community but we can amplify that feeling by giving them more ways to engage with current students, faculty and staff.

It really is a privilege to join the passionate alumni and donors who clearly feel a deep connection with the University. So many people who went here feel like it was the foundation for everything they were able

to do. It is really quite moving and always reminds me how important this work is.

**Q. You took on this job in the middle of a pandemic. What additional challenges – or opportunities – does that create for you?**

**A.** The challenge is that we as a population are exhausted. We're tired of talking about it and thinking about it and having the coronavirus being omnipresent in our lives. That has consequences. Even here in New Jersey, at Montclair State University, where we've done a really good job of managing our response to the pandemic. Continued success requires vigilance and energy and we're all a bit worn out.

Still my goal was to up our game: to extend the vaccine mandate to the full campus community, and to be vigorous about our masking and the utilization of Hawk Check. That required a boost of the energy and the commitment which we've seen and our results are fantastic. We're well over 90% vaccinated.

continued on page 30



**Koppell gives a welcome address at the opening of the University's Global Center on Human Trafficking, dedicated to developing solutions to a global problem.**



# Building on a Foundation of Public Service

President Jonathan Koppell intends to make public service a “signature hallmark” of a Montclair State University education. The idea is to take his experiences as dean of the Watts College of Public Service and Community Solutions at Arizona State University to amplify the commitment already in place at Montclair to serve and engage communities beyond campus.

His goal is for Montclair to be the premier public service university in New Jersey, where students have an opportunity to build a four-year public service training program into their college experience. By taking the helm, Koppell joined an institution with a strong foundation that will enable it to reach that goal.

For years, Montclair has worked with communities in need and with the state to improve lives and serve the public, from creating programs in urban settings to invest in K-12 education and diversify the teacher pipeline, to serving as the state’s clearinghouse for autism services for children and families, to coming up with sustainability solutions to challenges incurred through climate change.

Here are just a few of the many ways the University has partnered with communities to serve the public and improve lives:

## **CENTER FOR AUTISM AND EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTAL HEALTH**

In its nine years, the Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health at Montclair State has offered professional development, education, clinical services, community programs and research opportunities in the areas of autism, infant and child development and early childhood mental health in New Jersey. The Center also serves as a clearinghouse, coordinating autism research and treatment projects throughout New Jersey. Its multidisciplinary services include a clinic for families from pregnancy to age 12; an infant mental health curriculum and school-based, early childhood mental health promotion program.

## **THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Each year the Center for Community Engagement leads more than 1,000 students in partnership with 200+ community partners to seek solutions to issues of public concern. It also coordinates AmeriCorps volunteers, Bonner Leaders and a host of public service and initiatives, including a University-assisted, full-service Community School Initiative in Orange, New Jersey, that – with the support of grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education – has made a difference in the lives of public school students and their families at two underserved schools for the last several years.

## **URBAN TEACHER RESIDENCY**

In partnership with the Newark Board of Education and Orange Public Schools, Montclair has created the Urban Teacher Residency to improve student achievement by applying rigorous, research-based teacher preparation to the needs of the districts. Just one of the programs in the schools, the Urban Teacher Residency is designed to recruit talented individuals – especially people of color and individuals from other occupations – into the teaching force; provide critical professional development to improve the quality of both new and prospective teachers; increase teacher retention rates; and ultimately improve student achievement.

## **P-CASA, PROJECT COPE IN PATERSON**

The Paterson Coalition Against Substance Abuse – aka P-CASA – works to eliminate alcohol, tobacco and drug use among the city’s young people through outreach, education, community empowerment and collaboration with the help of Montclair faculty; a 10-year federal Drug Free Communities grant; and strong partnerships with the city of Paterson, civic associations, faith-based organizations, parent groups, schools, social service agencies, law enforcement and media.

## **THE PSEG INSTITUTE FOR SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES**

The PSEG Institute for Sustainability Studies supports transdisciplinary research and community projects that aim to grow more resilient communities

across the globe. Through partnerships with New Jersey-based and multinational corporations and organizations, the PSEG ISS addresses local and global sustainability challenges, including climate change, emissions, energy, clean water, waste, food and food insecurity. It involves students interested in sustainability through its Green Teams

**“It’s that we take responsibility for addressing the needs of the communities. We will be a partner with governments, nonprofits, individuals who are seeking to address the greatest challenges.”**

transdisciplinary internship program in which teams serve corporations, organizations, nonprofits, municipalities and community groups to address sustainability issues identified by host organizations.

## **THE CLEAN ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY ANALYTICS CENTER**

CESAC, a public research and technical assistance center, facilitates research analysis for clean energy development in the state, the country and abroad. It identifies, quantifies and interprets the ramifications of clean energy development and facilitates energy planning, providing support for clean energy policies, technology and practices through research and programs to build a sustainable energy economy.



We've tried to create a sense that we're doing this because we are a community that cares about one another and we are committed to keeping each other healthy. That's how we've tried to restore the energy and enthusiasm to work through this in a positive way.

The return to campus this fall has reminded people of just how valuable it is to be together face-to-face in a learning community. The student leadership has felt a tangible difference. We can see it, just the number of students who are going to events, the way that they are eager to be on campus together is powerful and palpable. That's a strong reminder of what people value.

**Q. How does what we have learned from remote learning translate to your desire to increase the number of online degree programs?**

**A.** The pivot to remote learning opened our eyes to the possibilities of different modalities of learning and the ways in which they are not necessarily second best, but

actually sometimes preferable options to complement the traditional face-to-face model of higher education. It's an incontrovertible truth that such variety is part of the future of education. It needs to be part of this university's future.

We're in a strong position to leapfrog over some other models, which are more static. We can create what we're calling an "Unbound" model of a university, which can blend together different learning models and take advantage of the curriculum that we have in place – while also building new degree programs that reach learners in a totally different way.

**Q. In your opening day speech to faculty, you talked about your optimism even in the face of challenges. What gives you that sense of hope?**

**A.** One is being at a university, surrounded by students who are confident and bold about their ability to go out and fix it. That is the most important antidote to what's going on in the world.

I'm not talking about any one thing. It's everything. The health situation, the politics, the environment, but the students and the younger generation are quite sure that given the chance they can turn it around.

Some people would say, "These kids, they think they know it all. They think when they graduate, they should have a job in the C-suite." Sure, there's a little of that, but I'll take it. If the choice is between the kid who's too sure of herself versus gloom and doom and despair, I will take the over self-confidence and the belief that we can do better. That's encouraging to me.

I also believe that none of the problems that we face are too difficult to solve on a technical level. We know what to do about most of the challenges we face as a society. What we don't know is how to work together across ideological and cultural and political divides to enact those solutions.

So my optimism also comes from the fact that although we have been divided before – we have had these kinds of deep schisms in our society – we've been able to find enough common ground to make progress.

Universities are better positioned to embrace and cultivate optimistic threads than just about any place I know of.

**“It is part of the mindset of this generation that gives me optimism, the degree to which there's an embrace of public service by our students.”**

**Q. Welcoming the largest incoming class ever, you asked students to empower their imaginations – to picture themselves and the world they want to live in 10, 20, 30 years from now. When you empower your imagination, what do you see for Montclair?**



A favorite presidential pastime: talking to students



**A.** It's an important theme that we think of imagination not as something fanciful but essential. Imagination is critical to all advances in society. Without imagination, I don't think it's possible to conceive of progress.

Take a New Jersey example. Thomas Edison had to imagine that you can somehow project sound across a wire into another space or that you can generate and harness electricity. If [James] Watson and [Francis] Crick can't imagine that there's some kind of code embedded within ourselves that translates who we are, how do they discover DNA? Before you had microscopes to see bacteria and germs, people were saying "I don't know what it is but there's gotta be something there."

So they start to imagine. So it goes beyond the great art and fiction that spring from imagination and obviously critical parts of the human experience.

I believe going to college, and being in a university environment, is about cultivating and training your imagination so that it's not just this wild untamed beast running around. You can learn to harness it and direct it and use it to make those leaps of progress.

It's vital to underscore the point that imagination is for everyone. It's as much for the business person who has to conceive of a new product as it is for the composer who's imagining a new sonata.

That applies equally to us who are charged with taking Montclair State University into the 21st century as a public service research university. We will do that by training, educating and cultivating a population that is representative of the state that we serve. That is our mission. And not just to provide an education, but an education of the very highest quality. That is our purpose.

It is also to do research that is fundamentally of public value that empowers us to solve problems that address pressing questions that advance knowledge in pursuit of a better future.



And it's that we take responsibility for addressing the needs of the communities. We will be a partner with governments, nonprofits, individuals who are seeking to address the greatest challenges.

When I imagine what Montclair State University is, I see it as a leader nationally – and beyond – in defining that model.

**Q. Why are you so passionate about public service being a central part of that model?**

**A.** Students today are in many ways more idealistic, more passionate about doing something that matters than previous generations. There's unfair characterization of young people as being selfish and narcissistic because they're staring at their phones. I think the inferences drawn from that are unfair. They are more interested in making a difference than we give them credit for, more enthusiastic and eager. It is part of the mindset of this generation that gives me optimism.

I also talked about their arrogance, which does have an upside, but has some pitfalls too. We would be asleep at the switch if we weren't doing everything in our power to support them and prepare them to engage in public service, but do so in a way that's efficacious and meaningful.



**Top: Koppell working with students and communications staff to film an opening-day address. Bottom: Meeting some of the Student Government Association's executive board at a town hall meeting in August.**

My goal is to have public service become synonymous with Montclair State University. We already have a strong foundation to build upon – with service programs in every college and strong connections to AmeriCorps and other initiatives – but we are going to make this a signature hallmark of a Montclair education. We will play a leading role in a national movement of university support for public service.

**–Excerpted by Laura Griffin and Marilyn Joyce Lehren**



# RED HAWK ZONE



Photos courtesy of the Red Hawk Sports Network

## HAWKS GO LIVE!

Students provide Homecoming play-by-plays and get on-the-fly, real-world, real-time career training

**By Steve Politi**

The scripts were written. The guests were booked. The Red Hawk Sports Network had spent weeks preparing for its first-ever live show at the Montclair State football team’s October 9 Homecoming game, but just minutes before the hosts were ready to greet the viewers, disaster struck.

The batteries on both cameras? Dead.

“It was pretty nuts,” recalls co-host Jon Kociban, a senior from Sayreville. “That’s about as real as it gets.”

“But we didn’t put our heads down or give up,” adds the show’s producer, Alex Grabiec, a senior from Garfield.

“We worked together to figure something out.”

The students found another camera and, on the fly, put together a production that could have passed for a professional pregame show. This, as anyone who has ever worked in broadcasting will tell you, is how it goes with live television. The instances when everything goes off smoothly are rare. The ability to adapt and improvise are just as important as any other skill.

That’s what makes the Red Hawk Sports Network, a joint venture between the Department of Intercollegiate Athletics and the School of Communication and Media, such a valuable experience for any Montclair student interested in a broadcasting career. It is one thing to learn about TV in a classroom. It is another thing entirely to do it in the real world.



The Red Hawk Sports Network is doing it for real. More than a dozen students in a variety of roles, from the on-air co-hosts to the camera operators to the production assistants, participated in the day-long Homecoming broadcast.

“It’s a terrific experience to pull off a live show using nimble equipment and getting students real-life experience,” says Kelly Whiteside, an associate professor of Sports Media and Journalism. “If they were out in the field, they’d be doing everything we did – and that’s one of the wonderful things with our relationship with the Athletics department. They allow us to act like a real network. They treat the students like professionals.”

The live show was an ambitious undertaking. Students borrowed risers from the Theatre department to set up a stage near the football field, ran a 200-foot intranet cable from the field hockey coaches’ office across an outdoor basketball court to guarantee a strong signal and put together a series of prerecorded segments to fill gaps in the broadcast.

Anyone who watched on [montclairathletics.com](http://montclairathletics.com) or the Athletics department’s YouTube channel saw a wide variety of programming. Sure, there were the traditional

pregame, postgame and halftime shows, but also interviews with University President Jonathan Koppell, several of the University’s athletic teams’ coaches and even mascot Rocky the Red Hawk.

“You wouldn’t think it, but Rocky has a way with words,” Kociban cracks. “There’s a lot of personality inside that feathery suit.”

Kociban is a lifelong sports fan who has always known what he wants to do with his life. “I want to be calling Mets games someday,” he says. So when the Red Hawk Sports Network launched in the fall of 2019, he was among the first students to sign up.

That wasn’t an ideal time to begin a sports network. The pandemic forced Montclair State and hundreds of universities around the country to table intercollegiate sports for an entire school year. Somehow, the students produced a weekly sports show without sports in the interim before finally getting their chance to call the action on campus this season.

The network covers all 18 Montclair teams, giving parents who can’t attend in person a way to follow their sons and daughters on the field. But Kociban had several professors and classmates who aren’t connected with the Athletic department tell him that they watched part of the live show, a sign that the students’ efforts are reaching a broader audience.

“The best part is hearing from people that they appreciated the work we put into this,” Grabiec says. “That’s very rewarding.”

Grabiec is targeting a behind-the-scenes job at a sports network when he graduates from Montclair in the spring. Given that there are so many options – all the major professional leagues and most of the Division I college conferences have their own networks – the experience could be a springboard to a successful career.

First, though, he and his colleagues have big plans for the rest of the school year. The Red Hawk Sports Network plans to do another live show at a soccer or basketball game, and this time, those camera batteries will be fully charged and ready for action. ■

**Left: Homecoming broadcast co-hosts (from left) Jonathan Edmond, Jesse Liptzin and Jon Kociban**  
**Bottom: Red Hawk Sports Network personnel in action at Homecoming**





## Sports Briefs

### Red Hawk Open Tees Off for Athletics

The University's 9th Annual Red Hawk Open, held in September at Crestmont Country Club in West Orange, raised \$102,000 in support of the more than 500 student athletes and 18 varsity athletic programs in the Athletics department. Proceeds also will go toward enhancing the Red Hawk Sports Network (see story, page 32) as well as a new Women's Performance Center and upgrades to the Panzer Fitness Center. ■



### Red Hawks Tournament Play



#### MEN'S SOCCER

With a 17-4-1 season, men's soccer made its 20th appearance in the NCAA Division III Soccer Championship tournament, losing 0-2 to Washington College in the second round of the tournament on November 14, 2021. **Shane**

**Keenan** had four saves for the Red

Hawks. In the first round, freshman **Amer Lukovic** scored on a penalty kick in the 51st minute, lifting Montclair past Gordon College, 1-0.

#### WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL

After a 20-11 season record, the Red Hawks women's volleyball team advanced to the championship round in the NJAC Championship Tournament against the Rowan Profs on November 6, 2021, but lost by one point. To get to the championship, the Red Hawks defeated Stockton University 3-0 in the NJAC Women's Semifinals a day earlier, giving head coach **Eddie Stawinski** his 200th career victory.

#### WOMEN'S SOCCER

Women's soccer advanced to play in the NJAC Women's Semifinals, with a 12-5 season record. The Red Hawks lost to the Rowan Profs in the semifinals 0-1. Junior goalie **Haley Martin** had three saves. Montclair outshot Rowan, 16-8, and took all five corner kicks in the match, but did not prevail. ■

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# ALUMNI NEWS



## HOMECOMING 2021 THE BIG RETURN

The campus community welcomed alumni, friends, family and fans to one of the most spirited days of the year – made all the more joyful after a year in which the pandemic forced the party online. It meant the return of the popular Student Talent Showcase, a street fair, food and carnival games and an alumni tailgate (for those 21 years and older) with beer, wine, food and a live band. Among the day's other highlights was a halftime ceremony during the football game against TCNJ honoring the Knute Rockne Championship team, which celebrated their 50th anniversary of that 1970 championship game (a year late, due to COVID-19). ■











Montclair State's Student Government Association is led by its first all-Latinx executive board, from left, Christie Rosales, Guillermo Estrada, Karla Farfan Miguel and Ashon Lanada.

## A First for Student Government

### Shared experiences and alumni mentoring inspire the first all-Latinx exec board

As more Latinx students fill leadership positions on campus, nowhere is their rise more striking than how they are reshaping the Student Government Association. The first all-Latinx executive board ever elected oversees a \$1.7 million budget and more than 60 student organizations – and is being mentored by alumni who were once on the SGA themselves.

Not only do they share a Latin American heritage but they are also on track to be the first in their families to graduate. “We noticed during our first interaction that, wow, this is historical,” says Executive President Ashon Lanada, a senior majoring in Business Administration.

They also share a sense of purpose to make a positive impact as the campus readjusts to the COVID-19 pandemic. “There’s so much newness in this year,” Lanada says. “We call it ‘The Revival.’ This is our theme, this is our mantra because we are coming to not just put SGA on a map, but to put student life back into its place.”

Montclair State is the largest Hispanic-Serving Institution in New Jersey – 30% of this year’s freshman class identify as Hispanic – and the University has created an environment where Latinx students feel they belong, thrive and can succeed, says Associate Provost for Hispanic Initiatives and International Programs Katia Paz Goldfarb.

The SGA executive board members say they have been given the training, support and resources – including being mentored by alumni – to be well prepared to shape campus life, and ultimately the world, in ways that matter.

Among the former SGA leaders mentoring the group is George Juzdan ’14, ’21 MBA, manager of corporate accounting at Eisai US, a Japanese pharmaceutical company. They talk regularly.

“It’s been a good experience for me to be able to mentor the students and provide lessons. You don’t really get to see the full picture while going through college or what the results were and what the impact is until after you finished your term,” Juzdan says. “Having that insight and providing it to them has been helpful, I think, in their decision-making.”

Family members and other role models have greatly influenced these student leaders, and Executive Vice President Karla Farfan Miguel, a senior majoring in Justice Studies, says she grew up quickly as the daughter of immigrants from Peru and Mexico.

“I translated every document for my parents. I ordered food. I made phone calls for doctors who didn’t understand Spanish. That brought me up with initiative,” Miguel says. “My parents work incredibly hard, cleaning houses, working in warehouses, cleaning schools after hours. I grew up watching that and understanding that education was my only way out of this lifestyle.”

Both Guillermo Estrada, executive treasurer and a Public Health senior, and Christie Rosales, executive secretary and a senior studying Psychology, say coaches and mentors have been especially important. Estrada, who grew up without a father, says “I think that overcoming that type of adversity is what made me who I am today.”

Rosales credits her sister with helping raise her while her parents worked. “She was the one who took on the heavy burdens. She’s been my inspiration.”

What the executive board is accomplishing together is connecting them to the future, says Miguel. “All of us want to go into our respective fields to create change – change that’s going to last, change that’s going to help our communities reach another level and to be visible.” ■

–Marilyn Joyce Lehren



## New Strategic Communication Center Opens

Homecoming included a ribbon cutting for the Joetta Di Bella and Fred C. Sautter III Center for Strategic Communication. Read our profile of Emmy Award-winning alumna and donor Joetta Di Bella Sautter on page 41. ■



## The President's Club Luncheon

Members of The President's Club, the University's leadership giving society, gathered for a luncheon on Homecoming with volunteer leaders, student leaders and President Jonathan Koppell. "I am pleased we could come together to celebrate our common philanthropic bond to the Red Hawks," says Chairman Jerry Appelstein (seen below between Paul Stahlin '74 and Vice President for Finance and Treasurer Donna McMonagle). "The positive energy in the room was breathtaking." ■



## Celebrate Good Times!

An in-person celebration for the Classes of 1970, 1971 and 1972 is planned for May 2022. Want to participate? Contact Karen Hackett, Office of Annual Giving and Alumni Engagement, at 973-655-4207 or [hackettk@montclair.edu](mailto:hackettk@montclair.edu).

1970  
1971  
1972



## Have You Seen the New Green?

A tribute to alumni that marks the heart of campus, Alumni Green has a new look. The updated area – bounded by Cole Hall, Sprague Library, Moorehead Hall and the Amphitheater – offers all a beautiful space to stroll, sit and enjoy. Originally established in 1996, the Green was a gift from the University's Alumni Association and is funded in part by generous bequests and alumni donations.

Thanks go to all alumni and friends who have generously supported Alumni Green through the years. To learn more, visit [montclair.edu/alumni-green](http://montclair.edu/alumni-green). Gifts to the Alumni Green Fund continue to support plantings throughout campus. To donate, visit [montclair.edu/make-a-gift](http://montclair.edu/make-a-gift) and select "Alumni Green." ■



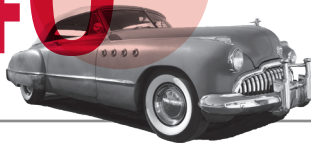
## Supporting Student Success

The newly formed **Black Alumni Advisory Council** affinity group aims to mentor students and celebrate how much more diverse Montclair State has become through the years. "We want to let [students] know that people who look like them succeeded at Montclair State, succeeded in their careers, and are now working to help lift the next generation," says Council Vice President Brenda Coleman-Caldwell '78. For more information, contact Alyssa Zinola, Office of Alumni Engagement, at [zinolaa@montclair.edu](mailto:zinolaa@montclair.edu) or 973-655-5465. ■





# '40s



# '70s

# CLASSTOTES

**Elizabeth Tepper Konviser '46** recently published a memoir about love and determination, *My American Dream: from the Ashes of the Great Depression*, that begins with her father's escape from Russia just prior to WWI and culminates with her graduation from college after WWII.

# '50s



**William Halloran '57** celebrated his 86th birthday in San Diego, Calif., at the 121st U.S. Open golf tournament. He is a retired Navy captain and still enjoys golfing twice a week.

# '60s



**Richard Post '67** is the lead author of the third edition of *Chemistry – A Self-Teaching Guide*, recently published by the Jossey-Bass division of Wiley Publishers with co-authors professors Chad Snyder of Liberty University and the late Clifford C. Houk. Post is an assistant dean emeritus at Ohio University having retired as assistant dean and director of instructional media and technology services. Post thanks the Montclair State chemistry department faculty in the 1960s (Gawley, Becker, Garik, et al.) for their excellent teaching and mentoring.

**Robert Brewer '70** wrote two poems, "Ode to Admiral Zumwalt" and "Regret," that were accepted for publication in *Proud To Be: Writing By American Warriors, Volume 10*, which is due to be released on Veterans Day 2021.



**Diane Wald '70** retired in 2020 from a career in teaching, college administration and animal welfare. She is an award-winning

poet and novelist and has published more than 250 poems in literary magazines since 1966. She received a two-year fellowship in poetry from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown and was awarded the Grolier Poetry Prize, the Denny Award, the Open Voice Award and the Anne Halley Award. She has also published poetry collections including *Lucid Suitcase*, *The Yellow Hotel*, *Wonderbender* and *The Warhol Pillows*. Her novels *Gillyflower* and *My Famous Brain* were published in 2019 and October 2021, respectively.

**Wendy Gillespie '73** was a producer for *Diana: The Musical*, a Broadway musical about the late Princess of Wales. The production was the first major show to announce a 2021 reopening date, and was set to debut on Netflix in October before the curtains rose.



**Lise Greene '74, '81 MA**, who retired after 25 years at Montclair State, recently published a book, *Mor and Me: Life, Language, and Love in Letters from Denmark*. The

book follows her year and a half in Denmark learning the language in order to translate her mother's diaries and letters into English for her family. "Mor" lived through the Nazi occupation of Denmark, worked at the Nuremberg trials after World War II, married an American and raised her children in New Jersey.

**Douglas Rallo '75** is honored to have been named to The Best Lawyers in America 2021. In 2019, he was also recognized by *Chicago Lawyer* magazine as having achieved one of the largest personal injury settlements in Illinois.

**Kathi Fiorino Evans '76** became the owner of and an award-winning wedding and event planner at All the Best Weddings & Celebrations and has worked there for over 15 years.

**Leonard "Len" Harac '76** is the publisher of *Exceptional Parent Magazine*, the nation's oldest publication directed at helping families with special needs members. The publication is free thanks to the generosity of its advertisers and is an excellent resource for families.



**Joe Cosentino '77** published *Drama Pan*, the 12th novel in his successful "Nicky and Noah" mystery series, in May.

**Frank Telewski '77** was the group leader in the Beal seed viability experiment: a 142-year-old attempt to figure out how long seeds can lie dormant in the soil without losing their ability to sprout. News outlets covering the story included NPR and *The New York Times*.

**Jeffrey C. Thomson '77, '79 MA** ranked No. 10 on *NJBIZ*'s "Accounting Power 50" list.

**Regina M. Egea '79** was appointed to the Women's Public Leadership Network inaugural National Advisory Council in March. She is also the president of the Garden State Initiative, an independent research and educational organization dedicated to promoting new investment, innovation and economic growth in New Jersey.





Joetta Di Bella Sautter '69

# ROOM TO EXPLORE

When Joetta Di Bella Sautter '69 and her husband, Chris, returned to Montclair State for her 50th class reunion, they were in awe. "We were so impressed to see the amazing growth of the University, we couldn't believe it," she says.

The two grew up in Montclair and share fond memories of when the "school on the hill" served as their playground. "Chris lived close enough to ride his bike to campus, and we would play in what was then a quarry to climb on the rocks."

As an English major, Joetta fell in love with the school. "The professors in the English department hooked me, especially Dr. Krauss and Mrs. Barrett. I had four happy years at Montclair State."

Deviating from her initial plans to become an English teacher, Joetta instead launched a successful career in television and broadcast

media production that took her from Manhattan to Hollywood. An Emmy Award-winning producer, she received a Los Angeles area Emmy for her work with KTLA Channel 5 and has served on the Television Academy's Diversity Committee and its Foundation's Education Committee. During her career, she also wrote and produced the station's Family Film Festival and a number of Hollywood Christmas and Rose parades. Before retiring, she put her love of history to use as an archivist for the Pasadena Tournament of Roses.

"When I grew up in New Jersey, I didn't know I would get into TV and production," she says. "My parents valued education and gave us the opportunity to explore. . . . It helped me realize that there are many paths in life, and it's good to take chances and be adventurous."

On her reunion visit to campus, Joetta was struck, in particular, by the direction of the School of Communication and Media and by its state-of-the-art building. "I am astounded by the opportunities offered, the quality of the professors and the emphasis on developing skills," she says. "Students are working in the newsroom, shooting newscasts and calling the shots as directors, learning on the same equipment you would see in a professional TV studio."

This "learn by doing" approach that enables students to "get their fingernails dirty" is why Joetta and Chris decided to invest in the School to create opportunities for students. Their generosity was recognized in the naming of the Joetta Di Bella and Fred C. Sautter III Center for Strategic Communication, a collaborative space where generations of students

will gain competitive advantages as they train to become strategic communication practitioners.

"I am grateful to be in a position where we can give back to our roots in Montclair and give students opportunities to get hands-on experience to boost their careers," Joetta says.

She encourages students to explore and take full advantage of everything available at the University. "You don't know what path life will take you on," she says. "You may think your goal is to become a newscaster, but then you get your hands on a camera and realize that your passion is behind the camera."

"I'm just sorry I wasn't able to go to school here now," she says with a laugh. ■

—Laura Iandiorio



# '80s



**Danielle Freda '80** wrote and published a spy thriller novel, *Double Exposure*, in January 2019.

**Michael Price '81** was nominated for two Primetime Emmys: Outstanding Animated Program for "The Dad-Feelings Limited" episode of *The Simpsons*, as well as for Outstanding Short Form Animated Program for *Maggie Simpson In: The Force Awakens From Its Nap*.

**Todd Smith '81** received *NJBIZ* magazine's 2021 Leaders in Finance Award. The Leaders in Finance awards program celebrates New Jersey's financial executives who contribute to the success of their companies as well as their communities.

**James P. Kelly '82** was inducted into the Essex County (N.J.) Football Coaches Hall of Fame in May. He is the head football coach at Caldwell University.



Stephen D'Angelo '83

**Stephen D'Angelo '83** wrote and published, *A Single Day of Peace*, which serves to guide individuals toward a life not only of success, but of fulfillment and balance as well. Over the last few years, he has also done presentations to students on success after graduating, and various other topics.

**Margaret "Marge" Filippelli '83** was included on *NJBIZ*'s "Accounting Power 50" list.

**Robert Pignatello '83** was named Fairleigh Dickinson University's first senior vice president of university operations in April.

**Imelda Muench Puryear (nee Nichter) '83** retired from the Montclair Fire Department in July. She was the first woman to be hired by the fire department in 1996.

**Richard A. Demarest '84** began training as a medical assistant at the College of Western Idaho upon retiring as the dean of St. Michael's Cathedral in Boise, where he served for more than 20 years. After completing the training, he became a certified medical assistant and has worked at Terry Reilly Health Services in Boise.

**Steven Klein '87** was elected to serve as the second vice chair of the New Jersey Bankers Association.



**Peter W. Franklin '89** and the 1989 lacrosse team held a reunion at Tierney's Tavern in Montclair in July. They celebrated their historic undefeated record (15-0) in 1989 and also mourned the loss of teammate, **Joseph "Joe" Drago '90** and coaches Tim Sullivan and Doug Alsofrom. They are working to get their goalie, **Jon Capristo '90**, inducted into the Hall of Fame since he still holds the NCAA records.

# '90s



**Frank Kaleta '91** became the professional licensing manager for the Delaware State Police. He is also an educational training specialist for Delaware Technical and Community College, instructing private security officers and trainers.

**Sandip Kapadia '92** was appointed chief financial officer of Harmony Biosciences Holdings, Inc. in March.

**Mark Loughlin '93** wrote a fictional darkly comedic scripted podcast, "Dark Air with Terry Carnation," which premiered in April. It stars Rainn Wilson (*The Office*) and explores the on- and off-air life of Terry Carnation – a late-night talk-radio show host who deals with bizarre topics and outrageous callers – and gets caught up in a mystery of his own.

**Milton A. Fuentes '94 MA**, a professor and coordinator of undergraduate advising for psychology at Montclair State, was awarded the 2021 New Jersey Psychological Association Academic & Scientific Affairs' Distinguished Faculty Award at the 2021 NJPA Virtual Fall Conference Award Ceremony.

**Reynaldo Acevedo '95 MEd** was appointed vice principal at Passaic (N.J.) High School.

**LaShanda Gilliam '96, '01 MA** was appointed the new principal of Michelle Obama Elementary School in Newark, N.J.

**Alan Kennedy '98**, a Navy veteran, started a national nonprofit organization, Provisions4Patriots, to call attention to the nationwide issue of homeless veterans and families.

**Stacey Z. Lawrence '99 MAT**, a poetry and creative writing teacher at Columbia High School in Maplewood, N.J., published a book of poetry titled *Fall Risk* with Finishing Line Press about her experiences as a young widow, mother and cancer survivor. South Orange Performing Arts Center hosted her reading and book launch in October.



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PerksConnect is a service providing benefits to alumni, including deals and discounts on travel, insurance, event tickets and more. It is free for all Montclair State graduates. To get started with PerksConnect, just sign in to your exclusive alumni account at [MONTCLAIRconnect](https://montclair.edu/alumni). For more information, visit [montclair.edu/alumni](https://montclair.edu/alumni).

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Valerie Tauriello '04

# ACTION HERO

Valerie Tauriello '04, a health and physical education teacher at Soehl Middle School in Linden, New Jersey, has always been one to put students first.

On September 8 – the first day of school this year – Tauriello employed quick thinking to stop a runaway SUV as it headed for a group of schoolchildren. The father of a student, in his haste to deliver a forgotten tablet, had pulled up in front of the school and hopped out before putting the vehicle into park. Tauriello, who was on drop-off duty, noticed the car starting to roll.

In quick succession, Tauriello called to the father, yelled to the children to get out of the way, and ran to the driver's side door to reach the brake.

"Once I saw that car go up that curb by itself, I didn't even think twice," Tauriello said in a recent interview with her alma mater. "I have to stop this car. When I first tried to get in I couldn't get in, I had to leap in. The car started moving at a faster rate." Tauriello did all of this while wearing a protective boot for an ankle injury.

"I would do anything to protect my students as if they are my own," added Tauriello, who is herself the mother of 7-year-old twins.

"This is every day with Ms. Tauriello, thinking of our students first," explained Soehl Middle School Principal Gwendolyn Long.

Tauriello, who grew up in Newark, earned a degree in Physical Education

and Health K-12 from Montclair. "My time at Montclair State was awesome. I was a part of the softball team. Every day was fun and engaging."

After graduating, she taught for 14 years at what is now Buzz Aldrin Middle School in Montclair while living in Linden and coaching the Linden High School softball team. Then, she got the opportunity to teach at the nearby middle school in Linden.

"This age group, especially the subject that I teach, I felt that I can hopefully inspire them and make a difference in their health choices."

Tauriello has worked "a.m. duty," greeting students each morning outside the school, for the three years she has worked in Linden (the district returned

to in-person instruction for most of the 2020-21 school year). She says that she would like to see some changes to drop-off – both logistically and philosophically.

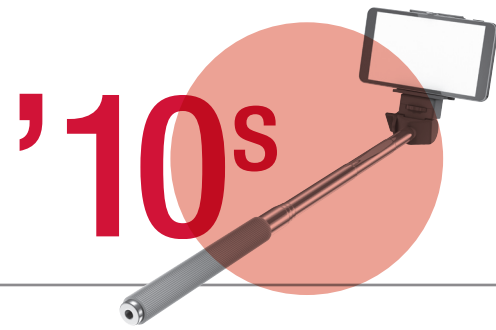
"It's insane out there. People go down one-way streets. They don't stop at stop signs."

Part of the solution is textbook Phys Ed teacher thinking: "My advice would be, if your kid can walk to school, let them walk to school. Get some exercise."

Also, says Tauriello, "That father was so concerned about getting the kid that iPad. Everyone needs to be patient and just relax.... So many things could have gone wrong. But thankfully they went right." ■

—Mary Barr Mann





**Alma Muñiz Morel '00, '02 Cert, '19 PhD** was elected to a three-year term as a Hawthorne (N.J.) Board of Education member in January. She was also hired as the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction for Lyndhurst (N.J.) Public Schools in September.

**Dania Ramirez '00** starred as Aimee in a Netflix original series *Sweet Tooth*. She filmed on location in New Zealand for the show, which was executive produced by Robert Downey Jr.



**Jason J. Velante Sr. '00** hosted the workshop, "Navigating English Language Learners in a New World," at the 2021 NJ

Equity Conference with the NJ Department of Education – with over 800 attendees overall – in August.

**Jennifer Walkup Cerruto '01** released her latest book, *365 Days of Positive Living*, in September. As a positive psychology practitioner and author of fiction and nonfiction, she aims to reach the public with her message of positivity, mindfulness, and the power to change our own lives for the better. In addition, she has previously published books for young adults, and short stories and artwork for readers and viewers of all ages.

**Antonio L. Garcia '01** was appointed principal at Passaic County (N.J.) Technical Institute.

**Maria Apostolova-Mihaylova '02 MBA** was awarded tenure and promoted to associate professor of economics at Centre College.

**Juanita Gaskin '02** published a book of poetry: *Renaissance Dreams – Life's Journey through Poetry*.

**Keisha Hutchinson '02** was named senior vice president and chief risk officer at Signature Bank in New York in June.

**Thomas Pietrykoski '02** became deputy communications director for Sen. Cory Booker's (D-NJ) office.

**Takeem L. Dean '03, '11 MA** was named dean of students at Union County (N.J.) College.

**Peter Cronrath '04 MBA** was granted tenure for his position as an instructor of business at Hudson County (N.J.) Community College in April. He also co-authored a grant to install the Bloomberg Finance Lab at HCCC.

**Rick Smiley '04** was appointed the new business administrator of the Borough of Roselle, N.J.

**Douglas Baldwin '05 MA** was named the New Jersey Library Association's Librarian of the Year. He is the associate director of the Piscataway (N.J.) Public Library.



**Mailissa "Bisa" Yamba Butler '05 MAT** was presented the Artistic Impact Award in June from The Newark Museum

of Art, which recently acquired one of her large quilted pieces titled "The Warmth from Other Sons."

**Marc Friedlander '05 MBA** managed an informative talk on senior living choices in April, as part of Aging in Montclair's monthly Saturday Social series. He is a certified senior advisor (CSA).



**Julia Melchiorre Mills '05** landed her first book deal for her picture book, *I Am Stuck*. Publication

is planned for spring 2023 for the two-book deal, which also will have world rights.

**Angela Pecoraro Garaffa '06** opened her first pizza shop with her husband in Lopatcong Township (N.J.) in February. MAC Pizza & Wings is an up-and-coming pizza chain known for its assortment of gourmet pies and wings.

**Carlethia "Carly" Hamilton '06** joined the Human Resources team at Montclair State University as director of labor relations in March.

**Malachy Orozco '06** and his theater company won the 2018 Oxford Samuel Beckett Theatre Trust Award.

**Michelle Blanchet '08** co-authored a book, *The Startup Teacher Playbook*, last January to empower teachers as changemakers and give them the structure needed to address challenges. After 10 years working with young people, she also founded the Educators' Lab, which supports teacher-driven solutions to educational challenges.

**Karen Horne '08** was a panelist in the discussion "The Tanning of Hollywood: Reimagining Equity and Inclusion as a Pinnacle Measure of Cinematic and Theatrical Excellence," as part of Black Writers Week hosted by RogerEbert.com.

**Kristen Zimmer '08**, a member of the International Women's Writing Guild, published a contemporary lesbian romance novel, *When Sparks Fly*, in April.



**Michael J. Perrotta '09** married Rosie Venezia in the chapel at Seton Hall University in June.

**Frances Aboushi '10, '18 MA** was appointed principal of Bradford Elementary School in Montclair in May.

**Matthew Barbieri '10, '16 MA** partnered with Michael Bergendorff to work for Mountain V Productions, a film and television production company specializing in the creation of high-end, quality content delivered through the collaboration of its founders and college students, many of whom come from Montclair State University. **Kaitlin "Abbey" George '20** also starred in a film currently in development with the company.

**Liana Summey '10, '16 MA** was appointed the new principal of Data Science and Information Technology High School in Newark.

**Mark Comesañes '11 MA** is the first full-time executive director of My Brother's Keeper Newark with Newark Opportunity Youth Network. In his new role, he will lead NOYN's strategic approach to change systems aimed to promote the success of young people in New Jersey.

**Kimya Jackson '11 MED, '12 Cert.** was named the new principal of Redwood Elementary School in West Orange, N.J., in May.

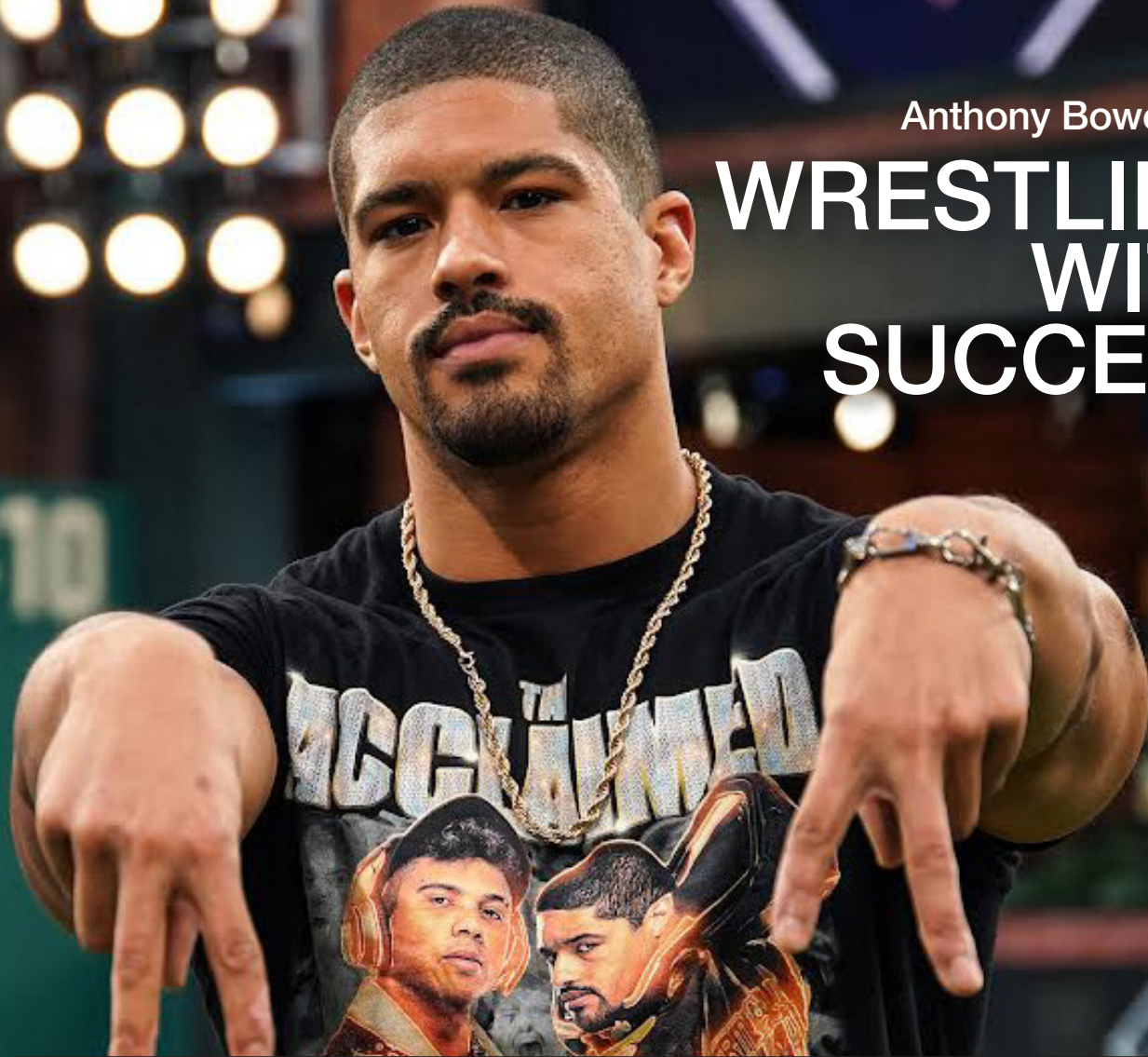
**Michele Fisher '14 MA** was appointed the new principal of Hillsborough (N.J.) High School.

**Daniil "Dan" Krimer '14** became the artistic director of the Kane Repertory Theatre in the Chicago area. He helped produce an online production of Hammaad Chaudry's *Security*, starring Academy Award and three-time Golden Globe nominee Eric Roberts and Harsh J. Gagoomal, in the spring as part of the company's new multiplatform commission.



Anthony Bowens '13

# WRESTLING WITH SUCCESS



Anthony Bowens '13 has come a long way from riding the "hell bus" up and down the East Coast with the rest of the Red Hawk baseball team, while working toward his Broadcasting degree at Montclair State.



"Coach Schoenig didn't like to fly, so I sat through a lot of really long trips with my teammates," he recalls, with more fondness than you'd think. "You know, some of my best memories were from

those rides! I miss that camaraderie to this day."

Playing college baseball had long been a goal of his, but Bowens is a man of many ambitions. Shortly after graduation, a chance meeting with former WWE wrestling star Santino Marella planted the seeds for Bowens' next move: pro wrestling. Marella, he says, saw potential and encouraged him.

Bowens took the plunge, becoming a solo act on the indie wrestling circuit. "I had a lot to learn," he says. "I realized it was more than just staying in shape and learning moves," he says. "I took acting classes and trained in comedy, and acted in commercials, too. I helped create a YouTube channel, *Michael & Anthony*, that now has 185,000 subscribers. All of these things

helped me build my wrestling persona, and my confidence."

While Bowens was developing the persona of a professional wrestling celebrity, he was also building the courage to bring his authentic self into the public eye. Four years ago, Bowens decided to come out as gay. The *Michael & Anthony* channel, which he produces with his boyfriend, Michael Pavano, was becoming increasingly popular, but he was worried about the response he might get from his wrestling peers and fans. But the wrestling community supported him, keeping his career on an upward trajectory.

In 2020, Bowens received his biggest break yet: he and his wrestling partner, Max Caster, signed with All Elite Wrestling (AEW) as the hip-hop wrestling duo, The Acclaimed. By early 2021 the team, which appears weekly on TNT, was the number four ranked team in the company.

With a plate this full, Bowens doesn't have the opportunity to get back to campus much, but when he does, he is impressed. "I helped as a volunteer baseball coach not long ago and visited the new media production studios," he says. "I was super jealous of the cool editing bays that students get to use!"

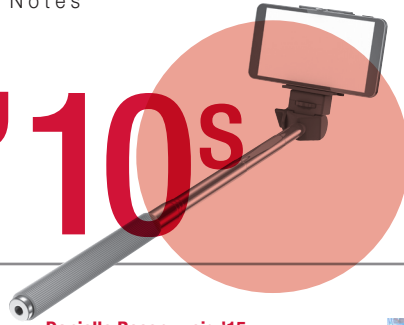
Bowens says Montclair State prepared him for success. "By the time I was working at internships with ESPN New York's *The Michael Kay Show*, I was already comfortable with the studio environment," he says. "When I started the YouTube channel and was filming commercials, I already had the skills to write, edit and produce material. I knew what to look for behind the camera and what to do in front of it."

Bowens' advice for students: "Don't get too far ahead of yourself. Follow your passion and learn something you love." ■

—Michele Hickey



# '10s



**Bonnie S. Molina '14 MA** earned a Doctor of Education degree in K-12 school administration from Seton Hall University in December 2020. She is currently a district program supervisor for Perth Amboy (N.J.) Public Schools.

**David Osmundsen '14** graduated with an MFA in dramatic writing from Arizona State University in the spring.



**Daniel "Dann" Truitt '14, '19 MA** was appointed chief of staff in the University of Pennsylvania's Division of the Vice Provost for Student Engagement in September. In this position, he will exercise a critical leadership role as a senior adviser to the vice provost.

**Susan L. Magaziner '15 Cert., '16 MA** is a civil rights and education advocate and photographer. Her photos, which speak to the triumph and restoration of justice, were selected by the Women's Caucus of Greater Washington D.C. for the curated and juried project "Looking for America," through the Office for Civil Rights, in March. She works with the National Special Education Advocacy Institute, where she assists parents and students who face racism, marginalization and discrimination to find their voice and seek justice and equality.

**Olivia "Olivia Valli" Polci '15** is the co-founder of the podcast "What's Your Backup Plan?" She also made theater history by being the first actor to play their direct relative on stage as Mary Delgado in *Jersey Boys*.

**Danielle Rosenzweig '15** was appointed the new principal of Livingston (N.J.) High School in April.

**Cassandra Calle '16** co-wrote a book, *Microintervention Strategies: What You Can Do to Disarm and Dismantle Individual and Systemic Racism and Bias*. She also was a speaker for an online webinar sponsored by the Multicultural Psychology Scholars Club at Montclair State University in March.

**Matthew W. Hearon '16** joined the Fair Lawn (N.J.) Police Department in July.

**John T. Maggio '17 MA** gave an interview for *Authority* magazine's series, "Telehealth Best Practices; How To Best Care For Your Patients When They Are Not Physically In Front Of You," in May. He is the operations manager of Choicepoint Health.

**Misha Osherovich '17** played a supporting role in the feature film *Freaky*.

**Kamryn Micken-Bennett '18** competed on Season 3 of *Love Island USA*.

**Ashley Jiles '19 MA** was appointed the new principal of Speedway Avenue School in Newark.

**Damien A. Lopez '19** wrote and published *I Am Prince*, an inclusive LGBTQIA+ children's book. He is working toward becoming a career and technical educator for inner city students and hopes to become a trans ambassador and advocate for trans youth.



**Edward "Ed" Mancuso '19** works at one of the country's most historic homes, The Biltmore Estate in North Carolina, where he finds his history degree to be beneficial since there is so much history there that goes back to New York society and The Gilded Age. He is proud to have achieved his goal of getting his bachelor's degree before turning 75 years old.

**Connor J. McCann '19** was sworn in as a firefighter with the Montclair Fire Department in March.

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You can also update your information by calling the Office of Alumni Engagement at 973-655-4141.

# '20s



**Theodore "Ted" Caporino '20** joined the Stafford Township (N.J.) Police Department.

**Kimberly Pane '20** was sworn in to the River Vale (N.J.) Police Department in April.



**Emily Pirrello '20** published her first work as a contributing author to *Once Upon A Dystopia*, a young-adult anthology of twisted fairytales and fractured folklore. Her short story, "Wings," is a retelling of Perrault's "Bluebeard," which she first discovered in her Critical Approaches to English course at Montclair State.

**Kimberly Thomson '20, MPA** became New Jersey Policy Perspective's 2021 Kathleen Crotty Fellow in June.

**Lauren Putty White '20 MFA** co-founded Putty Dance Project with her musician husband, producing socially conscious, critically acclaimed works across the country.



**Makena Wolcott '20** traveled to Alaska in May.

**Lavone Broxton '21** graduated from Montclair State University alongside his daughter, **Tierra Broxton '21** in June. They both graduated with degrees in Sociology. See story, page 11.

**Arye Janoff '21 PhD** received the 2021 Jaia Syvitski Student Modeler Award given by the Community Surface Dynamics Modeling System for his research that couples geomorphology and economics to understand how communities manage their beaches along developed coasts.



# IN MEMORIAM

Phyllis Ring Cohen '46

Ina Pennycook Minor '47

Joan D. West Schiavone '47

Margaret F. Pettingill Thorpe '49

Joseph T. Ferrie '50, '56 MA

Vincent King '50

Eleanor Bill Calvin '51

Evalyn H. Gurney '51

Michael Rabasca '52 MA

Thomas J. Rillo '52

Florence "Flo" Felano '53

Diana Stuhlbach Pardell '54

Joseph "Joe" W. Sommer III '54, '56 MA

Mario Pascale '55

Janet H. Aston Sorensen '55

Marilyn E. Maxcey Brown '56

Kenneth Sorensen '56, '62 MA

James A. Lomauro '57 MA

Edward G. Molina '57, '70 MA

Helena Mokray Reed '58

Ronald J. Frederick '59 MA

Norine Nelthropp Boyd '60

Lela S. Morris '60 MA

Janet L. Alessi '61

Ronald A. Goldblatt '61 MA

Joseph Morella '62

Fedele J. Galioto '63

Glenn A. Ridler '64

Louis Rallo '65

George A. Wilson '65

Margaret E. Farley '67 MA

John LaMarca '68 MA

Thomas V. Rallo '71 MA

Shirley A. Rosen '71

Alana E. Edelmann '73 MA

Elizabeth Meyer Terp '74 MA

Dominick A. Valenti '74

John H. Corbin '75

Harriet M. Hickson '75

Barbara L. Dean '76

Denis Collins '77

Gary Lewis '77, '81 MA

Michael "Mike" J. McCormick '78

Nancy Boockholdt Plylar '80

Joan Barrows '81

Karen Champlin Chiappini '81 MA

Santina F. Kazanfer '90

Alejandro Sant-Marti '00

Ebony A. Brooks '07 MAT

Michael Hofmann '16

Amoya Bennett Brown '17 MA

\*Thomas A. Cassilly III

\*\*Edward D. Bewayo

\*\*Harriet E. Manelis Klein

\*Former Faculty

\*\*Faculty Emeriti



A portrait of Allyson Straker-Banks, a Black woman with curly hair, wearing a white off-the-shoulder top and large white earrings. She is smiling and looking slightly to the right. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with greenery and a white building.

# LASTING LESSONS

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## ALLYSON STRAKER-BANKS

In her 16 years at Montclair, Allyson Straker-Banks held many positions – from associate dean overseeing several areas (New Student Experience, the Center for Advising and Adult Learning, the Educational Opportunity Fund Program and the Center for Academic Development and Assessment) to associate vice president sponsoring the creation of Red Hawk Central, the Center for Leadership and Engagement, the Center for Advising and Student Transitions (the precursor to University College) and, most recently, the redefined Center for Academic Success and Tutoring (CAST). Through it all, Straker-Banks, who retired this past summer, mentored and uplifted everyone in her path. Center for Leadership and Engagement Director Duane Williams says that Straker-Banks was his mentor. “For me, she is almost a mother-like figure. She’s always pushing for young individuals, young males especially in an environment such as higher ed where Black males are not represented as much.” Amery Q. Thompson ’17 was inspired by Straker-Banks to work in Residential Life at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. “She is one of a kind. She takes chances on people.... That’s one of her superpowers – always willing to pour into others effortlessly but in such an intentional way. Now I’m following in her footsteps trying to do that for the next student.” Amanda Idiong, who will graduate in December with a degree in Child Advocacy and a minor in Theatre, met Straker-Banks while working at CAST. “She felt like family to me because my family is in Nigeria. So she was that person who I went to for guidance and advice, career-wise, relationship-wise.” Says Williams: “That is one of her gifts, where she really knows how to empower individuals. That’s her legacy.” ■ *–Mary Barr Mann*

Read more at [montclair.edu/magazine](http://montclair.edu/magazine). Let us know who made a difference during your time at Montclair State at [editor@montclair.edu](mailto:editor@montclair.edu).

*Photo by Mike Peters*



# FIRST GEN. NEXT LEVEL.

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## **ASHON LANADA '22**

SGA President, Resident Assistant, University Fellow,  
Former President – The Brotherhood, La Hermandad

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