STUDENTS SUPPORT ALUMNI ACTIVITIES AND THANK ALUMNI TRAILBLAZERS
The Alumni Office met with two student leaders, Olivia and Matthew, in order to listen to their experiences as current students and soon-to-be alumni.

ANNUAL FUND LETTER
When you donate to the NCCC Annual Fund, your money goes straight to where it’s needed most.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT
Benjamin Berghorn ‘96, reflects on how his time at NCCC has led him to success in music performance.

TOUCHING LIVES, BUILDING FUTURES: THE NCCC CAPITAL CAMPAIGN
The NCCC Foundation is embarking on a large capital campaign in support of a new Learning Commons.

ALL IN THE FAMILY
Colleen Mary Johnson delivers the same excellent instruction to her students that she received when attending NCCC in ’96.

CLASS NOTES
Exciting professional and personal updates from fellow NCCC Alumni.
This past year, I had the opportunity to shake hands with many of our NCCC Alumni. After exchanging our “hellos” the next topic immediately jumped to the appreciation each person showed for our College. With excitement, they exclaim their alumni status and usually follow it with “the faculty was amazing,” “I learned what I wanted to do with my life at NCCC,” “I had an amazing experience at N-Trip” and “That’s where I came out of my shell!” The sentiments never grow old and each story acts as a unique building block, developing the overall history of Niagara County Community College.

Our Alumni Association boasts 50 years of graduates totaling over 38,000 members. We are so thankful for the support that many of you have shown through donating to the Annual Fund, participating in the NCCC Alumni 5K Run/Walk, attending the Foundation Scholarship Gala, coming to alumni social gatherings, and volunteering at our campuses throughout the past year. You truly make our College an integral part of the community.

For those of you looking to get more involved, we welcome you to our family of graduates. You can play an important role in helping us spread our alumni pride and continue the growth of our College for future generations of learners. Our Alumni Association strives to unify our alumni and recognize their impacts throughout Western New York and beyond. We also raise funds for NCCC scholarships with the help of graduates who have trailblazed the way for new students. Are you ready to get involved and spread your Thunderwolf pride? Please consider the following ways to reconnect:

• Update your contact information with us by emailing alumni@niagaracc.suny.edu or by filling out our update form at: www.niagaracc.suny.edu/alumni-info/

• Tear off the donation form on page (4) and mail a contribution to our Annual Fund which supports alumni activities and student scholarships. You can also easily donate through our secure website at: www.niagaracc.suny.edu/annualfund/

• Stop by our Alumni Office in room A-161 at our Sanborn Campus to pick up your official alumni identification card. This provides you access to the library and computer labs, discounts on campus theatre and art exhibits, and employment related services. You can also pay $25 for an Annual Alumni Fitness Membership which would grant you access to NCCC’s workout room, community workout classes, pool, and racquetball courts!

• Join us at the NCCC Alumni 5K Run/Walk on Friday, May 1, 2015 as a participant, volunteer, or just as a guest. We will have food, beverages, music, and a party-like atmosphere for all who join. Food and beverages can be purchased for a nominal price if you are not an official volunteer or participant in the 5K Run. See page (6) for more info!

We look forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,
Denyel Koury ’07
Alumni Specialist
Students Support Alumni Activities and Thank Alumni Trailblazers

The NCCC Student Senate has been a proud supporter of Alumni activities for many years, their largest contribution each year is a sponsorship of the Annual Alumni 5K Run/Walk. These students not only allocate money to help put on our largest alumni fundraiser of the year, but they also donate their time to volunteer for the race or become participants themselves.

The Alumni Office was lucky enough to meet with two student leaders, Olivia Spitzer and Matthew Melcher, to listen to their experiences as current students and soon-to-be alumni. These two students collaborate, create, and lead several student organizations. Our first student, Olivia, is a Distinguished Student Scholar, Student Trustee, Student Programming Board President, and Student Ambassador. Her classmate, Matt, also serves NCCC through many activities and leadership roles including President of Student Senate, coordinator for S.I.M.P.L.E. Leadership, and as a Student Ambassador.

Both Olivia and Matt credit NCCC with helping them excel in areas of academics, leadership, professionalism, and relationships with their peers. The two, along with the rest of their club members, have actively spread positive school spirit and made it possible for all types of students to get together to have fun. They find that everyone, from Freshmen right out of high school to non-traditional students will join in. Commuters and students who live on campus will find themselves at the same events, creating friendships that grow outside of the classroom.

Student Senate offers the College community various social and cultural events along with awareness campaigns. They shed light on real issues like bullying, binge drinking, safe sex, and social equality. Those who participate in Student Senate also receive a dose of real-life college administration and obtain experience through running official meetings, reporting, writing minutes, coordinating with faculty and staff, and working with program budgets. They also lend a hand to more light-hearted activities where students can come together to enjoy a fun activity. That’s where the Student Programming Board can step in and offer activities such as indoor pool parties, dances, hosting comedians, sporting events, and exciting end of the year activities such as food truck rodeos and bon fires!

Olivia and Matt, along with the rest of their respective clubs, credit the students who have attended NCCC before them as trailblazers. “Former students have created the opportunities we have today. If it wasn’t for our alumni, especially our past Student Senate leaders, we wouldn’t have the resources we have now. The Student Entertainment Lounge, Student Senate meeting room, and the donations of individuals who still contribute to campus are appreciated. They have made it a better school for us and we are very thankful,” says Matt.

Olivia agrees, “It makes me feel good to hear stories about people who went to school here. I like to meet alumni, especially at the Gala and the 5K, and see them come back. Even outside of school, I hear people say they are a member of the Alumni Association and we instantly connect over NCCC.”

As the 2015 Commencement approaches, we know that all of our Sophomores will begin to miss the special niches they have created here at NCCC. Thinking about his time as a student, Matt says “I want to say thank you to NCCC and the faculty, administration, and anyone who has ever connected with me. They have helped me more than they will ever know. They are the reason I got involved.”

If you were a student leader while you attended NCCC, please contact us! We would like to hear your success stories! Email us at alumni@niagaracc.suny.edu.
When you donate to the NCCC Annual Fund, your money goes straight to where it’s needed most!

Your generous gifts have supported scholarships which have helped students pay for tuition, purchase textbooks, and buy much needed school supplies for special labs and classes.

You have directly aided young adults who are fresh out of high school and may be experiencing independence for the very first time. You have supported single mothers furthering their education. You have assisted non-traditional students returning to school in search for better jobs and opportunities.

You have helped our graduates reconnect at our alumni events. Because of you, new businesses, new friendships, and new community events have been formed!

Above all, your Annual Fund gift has taught our current students about the philanthropic gestures of our alumni. You have made yourself an example of how to pay it forward. When students receive scholarship funds from alumni donors, they know the community is investing in their future and they don’t take it for granted. They work harder, perform greater, and become thirsty for success.

We thank you for considering a gift to the most exciting and rewarding Annual Fund which NCCC has ever seen…and there’s nothing generic about that.

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**NCCC Alumni Donation Form**

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| I would like to make a tax deductible donation in the amount of: |
| $1,000 Patron | $500 Blue & Gold Club | $250 Thunderwolves Club | $100 Friend | Other |

**METHOD OF PAYMENT**

- Enclosed is a check made payable to the NCCC Foundation
- ☐ Discover ☐ Master Card ☐ Visa

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Please detach form and mail to **NCCC Foundation, 3111 Saunders Settlement Rd, Sanborn, NY 14132**. If you would like to make a contribution over the phone or in person, please call (716)614-5910. Please call for more information about memorial contributions, legacy giving, naming opportunities, or creating or contributing to a scholarship.
Professional trumpet player and teacher, Yale graduate, Guest Principal Trumpet with the Beijing Symphony Orchestra, and a recent recipient of a Doctoral degree in music performance. Cue the music! We have a sweet-sounding NCCC Alumni story which we have to share.

Benjamin Berghorn attended NCCC from 1994 through 1996 and describes his instructors as “Helpful, understanding, and supportive.” He explains, “My professors at NCCC always had an open door policy when it came to my questions and needs during my education there.” While at NCCC, his academic, cultural, and musical foundations began to unfold and Ben realized his musical pursuits were just in their infancy.

After graduating from NCCC in 1996, Ben went on to attend SUNY Fredonia as a Music Education and Music performance major. Ben graduated in December 1999 yet continued his studies with BPO trumpet player Phil Christner. After a few years of working, performing with local groups, and teaching private lessons, Ben was accepted to the School of Music at Yale University. While at Yale, he “Was exposed to a new world altogether with amazing performers and people from all over the world.” One of Ben’s favorite memories at Yale was when he had the opportunity to participate in a centennial celebration of composer William Walton’s music with the school orchestra under the baton of Guest Conductor, Andrew Litton.

At Yale, Ben also had the opportunity to work as a librarian at the acclaimed Tanglewood Music Center. This prestigious organization, associated with the Boston Symphony Orchestra, is known for its annual summer music academies which showcase emerging professional musicians through performances, classes, and workshop concerts. Along with his work duties, Ben had the unique opportunity to fill in for a Tanglewood fellow who was unable to play a concert. The concert happened to be the Leonard Bernstein Memorial concert under Mr. James Conlan and featured violin soloist Mr. Joshua Bell.

After receiving his Master’s in Music from Yale in 2004, Ben became a staff member of The Florida Orchestra, played trumpet with local groups in Florida, and even attended a Brass retreat in Kalavrata, Greece. While overseas, he was inspired to continue his education in music. Shortly thereafter, Ben was accepted into the Doctor of Musical Arts program in the College of Music at Michigan State University (MSU).
May 13, 2015
Visit www.niagaracc.suny.edu/distalumni to nominate a deserving NCCC graduate for the NCCC Alumni Award. Due date for nomination shown above.

June 22, 2015
Roy E. Sommer Golf Scramble at Tan Tara Golf Course. Alumni and general public are welcome!

September 2015
Sign up to volunteer for the NCCC Foundation Gala or call to reserve your seats!

October 17, 2015
Please join us at the NCCC Foundation Scholarship Gala at the Niagara Falls Culinary Institute.

Since recently completing his Doctoral studies at MSU, Ben continues to reside in Lansing where he teaches trumpet lessons and occasionally performs with the Lansing and Jackson Symphonies. He also holds an adjunct faculty position at Lansing Community College. Ben says, “Being a professional musician and teacher is an ongoing process. The profession is always evolving and there’s a lot to learn in order to maintain a high standard.”

Ben’s accomplishments outside of the classroom are just as rewarding. In 2011, he had the honor of being named as a Guest Principal with The Beijing Symphony Orchestra in Beijing, China. “While there, I had the opportunity to perform both Traditional Chinese and Western music programs for a variety of audiences in some of the finest halls of Beijing, including The National Centre for the Performing Arts (The Egg), The Forbidden City Concert Hall in Tiananmen Square, Beijing Concert Hall and The Hall of the Great People, which is equivalent to our US Congress. Performing with the Beijing Symphony Orchestra was a wonderful opportunity from a performing standpoint, and also from a cultural and educational perspective.”

Other highlights of Ben’s career include meeting many acclaimed musicians such as composer John Williams, jazz musician and educator Wynton Marsalis, and performing with the esteemed Spanish tenor and conductor Placido Domingo with The Beijing Symphony. Above all, Ben describes his most rewarding moments through his teaching. “I have had very helpful and patient teachers. I’ve always felt that I needed to repay the favor. It’s great to see when students understand, see them engaged, and progress.”

Amidst his travels, academic accomplishments, and world experiences, Ben remains humble and advises, “Don’t forget who you are and where you came from. I try to stay in contact with my former teachers and peers. It’s important to remember who has helped you along the way.”

We are proud to call Benjamin Berghorn a NCCC alumnus and we were thankful to have him share his story.

Do you have a success story which you would like featured in your NCCC Alumni magazine? If so, share your updates with us by emailing alumni@niagaracc.suny.edu. We look forward to hearing from you!
The NCCC Foundation is embarking on a large capital campaign in support of a new Learning Commons.

Denyel Koury from the Alumni Office sat down with Touching Lives, Building Futures Chair and Foundation Board of Director, Peter I. Certo ’73 of Certo Brothers Distributing Co., to learn more about the campaign and the great opportunities it will bring students.

Denyel Koury (DK): What is NCCC’s Touching Lives Building Futures Capital Campaign?
Peter Certo (PC): The Learning Commons will transform the conventional Lewis Library and current study methods by fusing traditional resources with dynamic educational techniques.
**DK:** What will the Learning Commons provide students?

**PC:** It will provide modern tools and integrated work environments that cater to multiple learning styles and group-focused work. It will be a place for faculty to collaborate and help students while incorporating state-of-the-art technology. This will support NCCC’s overarching goals to improve student success and graduation rates.

**DK:** It sounds like this space will allow students to work more directly with instructors. What other plans are in the making to better enhance learning and teaching styles?

**PC:** The Learning Commons will be a place to utilize more resources for both faculty and students. The plans right now include upgrading twelve classrooms to meet modern standards, expanding and integrating academic support services in order to help more students, and providing shared development space for over 600 faculty members.

**DK:** What will the Learning Commons look like?

**PC:** You can expect lots of upgrades and revitalization. The courtyard between the Lewis Library and E-Building will be enclosed and will feature a beautiful atrium. The outdoor decks surrounding the second floor will also be enclosed to provide direct year-round access and energy efficient windows will be installed.

**DK:** Are there any other major improvements we can expect with this project?

**PC:** Yes, students can also expect a relocation and expansion of the Dolce Valvo Art Center to accommodate larger exhibits. The Child Development Center will also be expanded in order to enroll more children. The Tim Horton’s kiosk would also be relocated, making food and beverages convenient for students if they know they have a long afternoon of studying ahead of them.

**DK:** Why should someone donate to the Capital Campaign?

**PC:** The Learning Commons will be a creative and inspiring space to learn, teach, and share ideas. It will supply traditional and new resources for students who need extra help and students looking to utilize new tools and methods. Anyone who supports this campaign will be investing in students learning about the world, about themselves, and about the path they will create.

Students will discover what they are good at, what they don’t like, and what school they want to attend after they graduate. They will make the choice to graduate, they will land great jobs, they will become contributing members of society— all because of this new hub, new home called the Learning Commons. When you have 1,000 students graduating each year, those 1,000 people add building blocks to our community. They enhance it, they boost the economy, they create businesses, become teachers, nurses, engineers, and will add to the growth of Western New York. By donating to the Touching Lives, Building Futures Campaign, you truly are allowing the Learning Commons vision to become a reality, inspiring students with your investment and building the future of our graduates and community.

**DK:** Will donors be recognized?

**PC:** Donors will be listed in our College/Foundation Annual Report. Specific gift amounts are not included; however, names will be listed in giving ranges. Named endowment funds and named gifts provide perpetual recognition opportunities.

**DK:** How can someone make a gift to the capital campaign?

**PC:** Gifts can be made by mailing in the donation form on page (4). Remember, all gifts to the Foundation are considered tax deductible.

If you would like to talk about making a multi-year pledge, bequest, or another special donation, please contact the Foundation Director, Deb Brewer at 716-614-5911. She will be happy to talk about custom giving opportunities.
When you first meet Colleen, the first thing you will notice is a big smile and radiating positivity. Met with a serious desire to always improve, Colleen exudes a healthy balance of optimism and getting down to work. Her educational quest to align her intrinsic values with a career began at NCCC. As a student, she was highly involved with activities including Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, Student Senate, and was President of the Human Services Association. She graduated in 1996 with High Distinction, the President’s Medallion, and an Associate’s degree in Human Services and Early Childhood Development. She says that compared to when she was a student, “NCCC is a similar environment of support, now with the administration looking toward the bigger picture of being a competitive community college within the SUNY system. We are innovative, creative, and selective of programming, standards, and policy that leads towards student success both personally and professionally.”

Colleen went on to receive a Bachelor’s degree in Social Work from Niagara University in 1998 and a Master’s degree in Social Work from the University at Buffalo in 1999. Following her graduation, she was employed at Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center. During her time there, she served as a therapist, crisis counselor, Supervisor of Children’s Outpatient Services, Supervisor of Adult Outpatient Services, and then Administrative Director of Outpatient Behavioral Health Services.

Colleen made her full circle swing back to NCCC by continuing to volunteer and facilitate workshops for Student Life’s Leadership Weekend after she first graduated from our College. Once she earned her Master’s degree, Colleen began to teach as an adjunct professor at the Sanborn Campus. She then had the opportunity to be a counselor within NCCC’s Wellness Center, advisor to the Human Services Association, and advisor to GLASS (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Student Alliance). Recently, she accepted the position as Project Director for NCCC’s Campus Suicide Prevention Program, “Promise for Tomorrow.” In this position it is her responsibility to raise awareness about programs and services available to students which will lead them to success and retention. Colleen also assists students in need with moving forward through various daily struggles that someone may experience.

Colleen explains, “NCCC is an academic environment, but it is one that cares about the needs of students and staff. Promise for Tomorrow reaches out to campus members with wellness programming, direct services, and in-class training which focus on suicide prevention, mental health awareness, and intervention. It is a direct approach model and is now being used with new grantees nation-wide.”

Colleen continues to instruct Human Services classes and says, “In regards to teaching, it is a passion of mine. I love the academic environment and the activity.” Her desire for success is not just hopeful for students but also her colleagues. “We are comprised of administration, directors, staff, faculty, and students. We are a team that strives toward the mutual goal of enabling students to obtain an education. We continue to work together and support one another. That is the greatest part of being at NCCC.”

Outside of her position on campus, Colleen continues to back up her NCCC team by serving as an active member of the NCCC Alumni Committee, NCCC
Alumni 5K Run/Walk Co-Chair, NCCC Foundation Presidential Partner, and alumni event volunteer and participant.

Speaking of activities outside of the classroom, we would be remiss not to mention that Colleen is an avid sailor and currently holds a United States Coast Guard Merchant Mariner’s license as a 50-ton Master Captain. She has held positions as both Captain and Dockmaster in various locations. It’s safe to say when she is not keeping her students afloat, she directs her uplifting energy to her love of sailing.

Colleen continues to give back to NCCC because she believes in the mission of the College. With a smile, she says, “I want to see our mission realized for all those involved. NCCC has been a true stepping stone for all I have set out to accomplish both academically and professionally. My support and energy toward NCCC is a personal way of giving back. NCCC has always been near and dear to my heart.” Colleen also boasts that her family members are also proud NCCC alumni, including her daughters Diana and Pamela and her late mother, Mary Diane.

Colleen’s charisma and positivity significantly add to the success of our College for both students and employees. We are proud to call her a member of our NCCC family.

Do you have personal or professional updates which you would like to share with your classmates?

Simply email your updates to alumni@niagaracc.suny.edu or fill out our easy form online at www.niagaracc.suny.edu/alumni-info/
Alumni Chair, Dr. Martin Drake ’75, along with our mascot “Tripp”, listen as 2013 Distinguished Alumnus Pete Robinson ’91 sings the National Anthem at the 2014 NCCC Alumni 5K.

Tripp celebrates Graduation Day as “soon-to-be-alumni” patiently wait to enter the 50th Annual Commencement Ceremony.

The NCCC Alumni Committee sells flowers at the NCCC Commencement Ceremony.

Participants make the dash for the finish line at the NCCC Alumni 5K Run/Walk. Don’t miss this year’s 5K Run/Walk on May 1, 2015.

NCCC Alumni gather to add donations to the NCCC Annual Fund campus drive.

From left to right Distinguished Alumni, Ron Winter ’74, Chairman of the NCCC Alumni Association Dr. Martin Drake ’75, 2014 Distinguished Alumni Patrick Sorge ’85, and Dr. David Bonnevie ’74 pose for a picture during the 2014 NCCC Foundation Scholarship Gala.