

NCCC ALUMNI  
ASSOCIATION  
FALL 2017



A Magazine for Niagara County Community College Alumni

INSIDE: Gail Tylec '80 | Will Petersen '15 | Sean Jamieson '09 | Connie Brown '76



# All in the Family

## Gail Tylec '80

Former NBA player and Coach Pat Riley once said, "There are only two options regarding commitment. You're either in or you're out. There is so no such thing as life in-between." After my interview with NCCC Alum Gail Tylec, these words could not ring more true.



As an NCCC professor, Coordinator of the Physical Education Studies, and chair of multiple committees and programs, Gail has dedicated her life to giving back to the place where she got her start.

Gail graduated from NCCC in 1980 where she received her degree in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Physical Education. She continued on to Cortland where she earned her Bachelor's in Physical Education/Teacher Education with a concentration in Athletic Training. She then received her Master's from UB in Education.

While listening to Gail speak about her background, I felt that her true passion remained with NCCC. I asked Gail why after attending two other institutions did you feel such a connection to NCCC. She said, "NCCC really helped me the most. It was the faculty members who took it upon themselves to provide me with additional one-on-one attention even after I graduated. It made such a huge difference in my

academic career. I was successful because of the strong basis that they provided me throughout their courses and because they expressed such a caring interest in seeing me flourish."

It was because of moments such as those that Gail always knew that she wanted to come back to NCCC and teach to provide future students with the same opportunities for success. Gail has taken that one step further though and served as the Vice-President of the NCCC Faculty Senate, Chair of the Science, Health, and Mathematics Division, Chair of the College Curriculum Committee, and a state-wide representative on numerous SUNY and NYS Education Department committees.

"I also try to bring real life experiences to my students by helping them get out of the classroom and learn the importance of community outreach, volunteering, and leadership," she said. "It's about the experience and what you're going to gain from it. So many times

students come in and say “ok what do I need to do to get an A” and they miss the point of experiencing all of the opportunities for leadership we provide them with.” For example, Gail brings her students to the Girl in Sports Day sponsored by Mary Wilson. It features over 200 girls 12 and under from inner city schools to enrich their lives with sports. “It changes every student’s life when they see what these kids go through, that this is the only day in their lives that they’re exposed to sports, and how thankful and grateful they are.” Being able to provide that profound experience to my students is truly empowering.”

For all of her hard work and dedication inside and outside of the classroom, Gail has been honored with numerous awards. She is the recipient of the NCCC 2015-16 Carol Jamieson Award for college service, the 2011 NCCC Athletic Hall of Fame, the 2007-2008 Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Professional Service, and the NCCC Distinguished Alumni Award in 1992.

However, it’s not the awards and recognition that she’s after. “Awards are great,” she says, “but what matters is the fulfillment and reward you receive seeing a student succeed and knowing that you made the difference and empowered them to continue on. My wish is that after students graduate and become alumni that they give back to NCCC; the place that provided them with the foundation to become successful in the future.”



Gail Tylec along with her students volunteering at Girl in Sports Day.

### **Jenna Smith '06**

Jenna Smith, previous NCCC Foundation employee, was named one of this year’s 30 under 30 recipients. She is currently the Coordinator of Assessment and Marketing at the University at Buffalo Career Services. She graduated from NCCC with her Associate’s in Communications and Media Arts. She went on to receive her Bachelor’s degree in Public Communication and her Master’s in Creative Studies from SUNY Buffalo State. Well done Jenna!



### **Corey McGowan '10**

In 2010, Corey received his Associate’s degree from NCCC in Business Administration. Corey went on to receive his Bachelor’s in Business Management and Marketing from Buffalo State in 2012. He is now the President of Corey McGowan Productions. You rock Corey!

### **Caitlyn Hochreiter**

Caitlyn attended NCCC for Liberal Arts & Sciences: Math & Science and went on to Buffalo State College where she received her Bachelor’s in Health Care Administration and her Master’s in Economics and Finance. She now works as an Analytics Consultant at BlueCross BlueShield of Western New York. Congrats Caitlyn!

### **Lauren Masset**

Lauren attended NCCC for Humanities & Social Sciences before receiving her Bachelor’s in Human Services from Empire State College in 2015. She is now working for the Town of West Seneca Youth and Recreation as the Director of Youth and Recreation. Way to go Lauren!

### **Megan McNally**

Megan attended NCCC for Culinary Arts before she went on to receive her Bachelor’s degree in Environmental Policy from Columbia University in 2010. She is now the Co-Founder and Executive Director of The Foundry. Keep up the great work Megan!

### **Dario Gray**

Dario attended NCCC for Human Services and is now the Founder/Creative Director for D. Gray & Associates, LLC. Great job Dario!

### **We’d Love to Hear From You!**

*Life takes us all on different paths – tell us where life has taken you. Share updates about your career, retirement, marriage, children, or any of your accomplishments with your former classmates and campus community. Sharing your news is easy with our online form! Visit [niagaracc.suny.edu/alumni/updateinfo.php](http://niagaracc.suny.edu/alumni/updateinfo.php) to complete yours today.*

# Class Notes

See what our Alumni have been up to!

## Will Petersen '15

Will Petersen earned his degree from the Niagara Falls Culinary Institute in 2015. After some time away from the stove and from Buffalo, he has returned home to take on his first head chef position at Jill Gedra Dorster's Lait Cru Brasserie.



## Paul Harrigan '94

After 4-years of military service, Paul Harrigan attended NCCC where he received his Associate's degree in Humanities and Social Science in 1994. It was the encouragement from his professors that motivated him to continue on and receive his Bachelor's at Niagara University for Psychology, his Master's from Columbia University in Counseling, and finally his Doctorate from the University of Miami. Now, he is a team leader at the Buffalo Veterans Center where he provides nonmedical counseling and assistance to veterans and their family members.

## Doug Adamson '84

Doug Adamson's company, The Porter Center, was chosen as Ransomville's Business of the Year. There they recycle bottles and cans while repairing computers. Adamson tries to live by the mantra: "reclaim, recycle, refurbish, and reuse." He graduated from NCCC in 1984 with his Associate's degree in Humanities and Social Science.

## **Holly Ann Makai '15**

Niagara Hospice nurse Holly Ann Makai, RN, has received Certified Hospice and Palliative Nurse status. Makai graduated from NCCC in 2015 for Nursing and obtained her New York State license as a Registered Nurse that same year.

## **Daniel Dorociak '92**

After graduating from NCCC in 1992 with a Fine Arts degree, Daniel Dorociak continued on to receive his Bachelor's in Design from SUNY Buffalo State. He is now an artist/designer at Doro Studios. His fondest memory of NCCC is the amazing guidance that the professors provided him with.

## **Donald Silveri '68**

Don Silveri, 1968 Humanities and Social Science graduate, was inducted into the New York State Basketball Hall of Fame this past March. While attending NCCC, he played baseball and basketball. He then went on to coach at Villa Maria, ECC, Buffalo State, and Daemen College.

## **Daniel Grace '81**

After graduating from NCCC in 1981 with a degree in Mechanical Engineering Technology, Dan Grace went on to receive his Bachelor's and Master's in Aeronautics from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. In 1986, he began flying U.S. Army helicopters and fixed wing aircrafts for 14 years. Now, Dan is the Vice President of Defense Sales at Beechcraft Defense Company. He is currently residing in Kansas with his wife and 3 daughters.

## **Cathy Ball '10**

Cathy Ball received her degree in Horticulture from NCCC in 2010. She is now following one of her dreams of owning a restaurant. The Slippery Skillet, located on Robinson Rd, opened in March and features different homemade items.

## **Michael Wasik '94**

In 1994 Michael Wasik attended NCCC for Humanities and Social Science and later Buffalo State College, where he majored in Criminal Justice. After spending two decades serving and protecting the community, Wasik retired from the Lockport Police Department.

## **Debbie Bambrick '94**

DeHoff Realtors welcomed 1994 NCCC graduate Debbie Bambrick to its team. After attending NCCC where she earned her degree in Radiologic Technology, Bambrick went on to receive her Bachelor's in Vocational Education from Buffalo State and her Master's in Computer Information Systems from the University of Phoenix. She has over 20 years of experience in project management and consulting, and over 10 years of experience in customer service.

## **Robert Johnson '79**

Executive Producer and NCCC Alum Robert Tim Johnson featured a film at the 2017 Sundance Film Festival titled "Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked The World". Johnson graduated from NCCC in 1979 with his degree in Communications and Media Arts.

## **Cheryl Quarantello '79**

Cheryl Quarantello was named Director of Health Information Management at Memorial Hospital. She graduated from NCCC in 1979 with her degree in Humanities and Social Science before continuing on to Daemen College where she received her Bachelor's in Medial Record Administration. She is also an adjunct instructor of Health Information Technology at Trocaire College and a member of the American Health Information Management Association.

## **Robert Holmes '06**

In 2006, Robert Holmes received his degree from NCCC in Criminal Justice. Afterwards, the Lockport Police Department welcomed Officer Holmes to their ranks.

## **Holly Dawson '92**

Holly Dawson was chosen as the Instructor of the Semester at the Albion Campus Center where she is a History teacher. She earned her degree from NCCC in Humanities and Social Science in 1992. She also attended the University at Buffalo and Canisius College. Her students were quoted as saying that, "she challenges us to seek out the truth and to not be afraid to ask questions."

# Alumni Spotlight

Featured Alumni Accomplishments

## Sean Jamieson '09

After graduating from NCCC in 2009 with an Associate's degree in Biology, Sean Jamieson went on to Canisius College where he was drafted by the Oakland Athletics in 2011. He is one of only four NCCC alums to be drafted into Major League Baseball.

Originally from Simcoe, Ontario, I asked Sean what made him want to come to NCCC. "A month before my semester began at McMaster University, Coach Matt Clingersmith called and asked me to come out for a visit," he said. "Before that, I had decided to stop playing baseball since I didn't receive any significant scholarship offers from Division I/II schools in the United States. My visit to NCCC made me want to continue chasing my dream."

Throughout his baseball career, Sean was traded to the Arizona Diamondbacks, rehabbed his way back from an almost career-ending injury, and has been named Mid-Season All-Star three times between 2011-2014. He then played for the Reno Aces from the Mobile BayBears before retiring in June 2017.

When asked what advice he had for our younger draftee, Christian Lindsay-Young, and any other

student athletes, Sean had this to say: "Stay confident and work hard. Being a college athlete is as hard as you make it to be. You can complain to your coaches and teachers, make excuses, and be an average player or you can work your tail off in the classroom, kill it at practice, and be exceptional on and off the field. Don't take any plays off and give it 100% all the time."



***"Don't take any plays off and give it 100% all the time."***



*Connie Brown, left, with former United Way and CEO Carol Houwaart-Diez, right, as Brown is appointed interim President.*

### Connie Brown '76

Connie Brown, Liberal Arts and Social Sciences 1976 alumna, began her career at NCCC with a tale frequently told. "I had taken a psychology course in high school that I really liked, but after I graduated I wasn't exactly sure on what I wanted to do. I thought the next step would be for me to try and feel things out with a few more classes at NCCC. I ended up loving it so much that I stayed the full two years, received my Associate's degree, and even participated in the graduation ceremony. Now, I encourage people to attend NCCC because it was such a major stepping stone for me. NCCC really helped to give me a clearer vision of what I wanted to do."

After graduating from NCCC, Connie went on to Buffalo State to receive her Bachelor's degree in Psychology and her Master's in Counseling and Human Services from the University at Buffalo. "I thought I wanted to work with college students as a counselor, but when I graduated I couldn't find a job right away. I saw in the newspaper that they were looking to hire at a Community Vocational Rehabilitation Center which is part of Niagara Cerebral Palsy. I worked my way through

**"NCCC really helped to give me a clearer vision of what I wanted to do."**

their office in various positions before being offered the chance to work for Opportunities Unlimited as a Director of their Day Treatment Program."

Through Opportunities Unlimited, Connie was promoted from Director, to Vice President, and finally to Executive Director during her 13 years there. "Isn't that crazy," she asked. "I fell into a field that I actually love. Not many people can say that, but I love my job and I still do."

In July 2016, Connie was named the Interim President of United Way of Greater Niagara; a company that invests in education, health, and income programs that look to not only improve, but also strengthen the Niagara community. In December 2016 she was named the permanent President.

Through her years of experience, Connie passes on her wisdom to future NCCC alumni; "At 18 you don't always know what you want to do and college can be intimidating for students coming right out of high school. NCCC helps build a bridge for that through their supportive teachers and departments. NCCC really helped to start my career."

# What's Next?

## 2015-2017 Distinguished Student Scholarship Graduates



### Natalie Pilski

Personal Training

#### Future Plans:

Natalie is continuing her studies at ECC in their dental hygiene program

#### What the DSS Award Means to Her:

The DSS Scholarship means a lot to me. This scholarship is more than assistance with my education; it gives me the ability to experience a lifetime of giving and I thank the DSS committee for that! Because of this award, I will be leaving not only with many memories, but also as a certified personal trainer.



### Christian Milleville

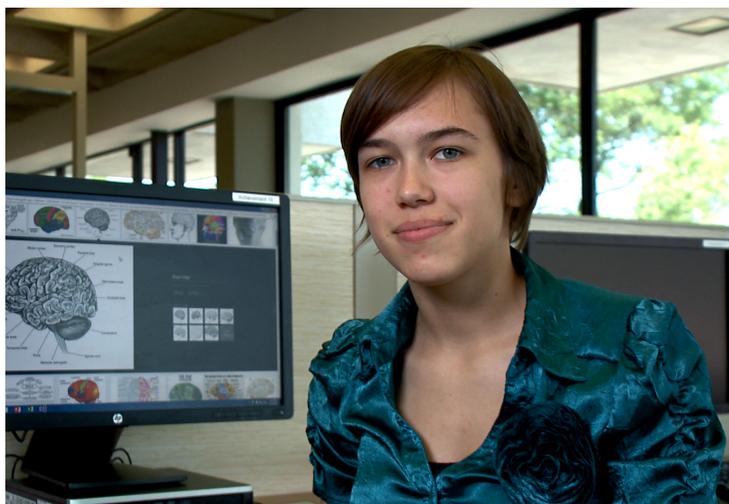
Computer Science

#### Future Plans:

Christian plans on transferring to UB to continue his education and would like to thank NCCC as a great place to start.

#### What the DSS Award Means to Him:

The DSS Scholarship provided me with the means to not overload my work schedule and helped me to focus more on schoolwork to further my career. I'm very humbled that the board members saw enough potential in me that they felt I deserved this amazing scholarship.



### Natalie Hilt

Humanities & Social Science

#### Future Plans:

Natalie plans on transferring to SUNY Geneseo where she will continue to work on her degree in Psychology.

#### What the DSS Award Means to Her:

The DSS Scholarship is an amazing gift as well as it is an accomplishment for myself. It's something that has provided me with a jumpstart to my college education, and I couldn't be more grateful to receive this incredible financial support.

# What's Next?

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## Andrew Teixeira

Accounting

### Future Plans:

Andrew plans on transferring to the University at Buffalo to further his education in the accounting field. He would like to first obtain his Bachelor's degree and then his Master's.

### What the DSS Award Means to Him:

The DSS Scholarship is more than an award to me. It's become a unique part of my life and education, giving me opportunities to work to my full potential. Through the DSS scholarship, I have been able to meet many new people and accomplish new goals I never imagined possible.

## Did you know?

Being an NCCC Alum means that your future family members could qualify for a scholarship if they choose to attend NCCC! Learn about all of the scholarships we have to offer and the many benefits you receive just for graduating!

For more information, head to our website: [niagaracc.suny.edu/alumni](http://niagaracc.suny.edu/alumni)

## In Memoriam



Charles (Chuck) Steiner was one of the first NCCC Distinguished Alumni and a pillar of Niagara Falls. He was a 1970 NCCC graduate and for 22-years Chuck was President and CEO of the Niagara Falls Area Chamber of Commerce. Chuck was one of the architects of the highly successful, and much remembered, "Festival of Lights" which attracted tens of thousands to downtown Niagara Falls over 44 days during the holiday season. The event was once named as a Top 100 event in North America by the American Bus Association. For the past 13 years, Chuck was President of the new Capital Region Chamber of Commerce. Under Chuck's leadership the Chamber helped to revitalize Schenectady and the region. We are saddened to report that Chuck passed away on Tuesday, April 18, 2017. Chuck's presence and contributions in both communities will not be forgotten and he will truly be missed. To honor his memory, Chuck's family and friends have endowed the NCCC Charles Steiner Memorial Scholarship. Donations for his scholarship are still being accepted and can be sent to the NCCC Foundation Office at 3111 Saunders Settlement Rd, Sanborn NY. Our heartfelt condolences are with Charles' family and friends.

# Going the Distance

Running to Success!



*Fran Rowe participating in the 2017 NCCC Alumni 5K Run/Walk.*

## 77 Year Old Alumna Goes The Distance

Mickey Rooney and Keenan Wynn sang it best when they told us, “just put one foot in front of the other and soon you’ll be walking ‘cross the floor.” At the age of 50, 1991 NCCC Alum Fran Rowe decided that she would rather try to run across the floor and hasn’t looked back since.

In May of 2017, WGRZ Channel 2’s Heather Ly interviewed Fran about her dedication and perseverance to running. “When I first started, I would pick out something 100 yards away, and I would point to it. I would run, then walk, then gasp for air, and then I’d start up again,” said Rowe.

Throughout that time, Fran kept her “never give up attitude” and participated in her first marathon at the age of 51. She’s now 76 and has completed 4 marathons, 12 half marathons, and tries to participate in at least 40 races per year across Western New York. Over the past years, Fran has participated in the NCCC Alumni 5K Run/Walk 6 times and says it is a great way to see old friends, make new running buddies, and support a great cause. We are thrilled to have her back every year.

## Photos From Our 2017 5K Run/Walk!



Race Chair Marty Drake and runner Sabrina Faso cheering on the other runners with their Orangetheory Fitness gear!



5K Run/Walk Medal Winners



Our Presenting Sponsor Orangetheory Fitness getting the runners checked in! Featured from left to right are Sophie Sorbello, Ashley Schreiber, & Jessica Nowak.

# Highlights

## Alumni Activities and Events



In March 2017, the NCCC Alumni Association hosted a Bites-N-Brews night at New York Beer Project in Lockport, NY. Our alumni enjoyed a tour of the facility, samples of craft beer, delicious food, fun games, and lots of networking!



A few of our Class of 2017 graduates striking a pose at our photo booth during Grad Fair! Congratulations to all those who graduated – you are now a NCCC Alum! Welcome to the NCCC Alumni Association. We look forward to staying connected with you!



In December 2016, the Class of 1966 celebrated their 50th reunion at the Niagara Falls Culinary Institute. These Nabisco Tech graduates were the second graduating class. They and their guests enjoyed a holiday buffet and toured the Culinary Institute which featured WNY's largest man-made gingerbread village.

## NCCC Foundation

Deborah Brewer, Director  
Patricia Klinger  
Allison Korta

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Wayne Barnett '98  
Dan Jackson '99  
Colleen Johnson '96  
Mike LaFever '70  
Samuel Messina '73  
Reid Okoniewski '14  
Christina Cerrone Pecoraro '06  
Derek Pew '17  
Lester Robinson III '87  
Julie Short '87  
James Turner '86  
Ronald Winkley '78 R.  
Ronald Winter, Esq. '74

Interested in giving back to the place where you started? Become an Alumni Committee Member! Submit a letter telling us why you're interested in joining along with a resume or bio highlighting your education, career, and personal achievements. Send it in the mail to the following address or scan it and email it to [alumni@niagaracc.suny.edu](mailto:alumni@niagaracc.suny.edu).

Alumni Development Specialist Room 144  
Niagara Falls Culinary Institute  
28 Old Falls Street  
Niagara Falls, NY 14303

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