



# Changes Underway in Urban Horticulture and Agribusiness

Summer breezes are blowing through the Urban Horticulture and Agribusiness Program at Mesa Community College, bringing new plans and exciting changes. Program Director Peter Conden is collaborating with community volunteers, MCC departments and students in an effort to place even more of an emphasis on environmental, social and economic sustainability.

Conden said his plans are the first step toward a shift from the agribusiness focus of several years ago to a more "small farm" and sustainable food production approach.

"The community college reflects the community," Conden said. "Agribusiness is shrinking, but interest in small farms of up to 20 acres is exploding. We want to begin to develop a program to teach people how to start and open a small urban farm."

Several projects are already in the works, including:

- **GREENHOUSE:** Twelve new growing tables are being built in collaboration with the Welding Department as part of a refurbishing of the greenhouse. The area will provide students with an area to propagate plants and observe growth.
- **DEMO GARDEN:** The area between the welding building and the greenhouse will become a Demo Garden. MCC adjunct faculty in the horticulture department will work with local suppliers to create a showcase of sustainable landscaping.
- **URBAN FARM:** A one-acre plot just south of the community garden area that is currently unused will be plowed and planted with organic crops this semester.

The Urban Farm project is especially exciting to Conden.

"I really want to use this land," Conden said. "I want it to be useful and productive. We will work with community volunteers to get it started and then tie it into service learning for students."

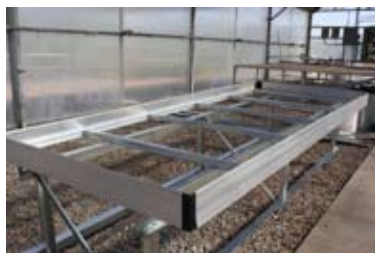
Food produced by several of the plots in the community garden is already donated by student groups to local food banks such as Agape Community Services.

Conden said the goal of the Horticulture Program has always been to share resources and open up the college to the community. The 40 plots in the community garden are thriving and several workshops on gardening have been held, with more on the way in the fall.

Also in the works is a possible campus composting program to recycle green waste.


Conden said the planned changes and shift toward educating more people about sustainable food production meshes with much of what is already happening in many departments on campus.

**"If everyone focuses on sustainability, we could have a huge impact," Conden said.**




Alumni Relations  
1833 West Southern Ave.  
Mesa, AZ 85202


Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Phoenix, AZ  
Permit No. 662




Find MCC on Facebook at  
[www.facebook.com/mesacc](http://www.facebook.com/mesacc)



Follow MCC at  
[www.twitter.com/mesacc](http://www.twitter.com/mesacc)



View videos at  
[www.youtube.com/mesacc](http://www.youtube.com/mesacc)



**EXCITING START, EXTRAORDINARY RETURN**  
Alumni & Friends is published by the Office of Institutional Advancement (IA) for the alumni of Mesa Community College.  
**Editor** Marcy Snitzer  
**Phone** 480.461.7792  
**Email** [marcy.snitzer@mesacc.edu](mailto:marcy.snitzer@mesacc.edu)

## MCC STUDENT RECEIVES \$80,000 SCHOLARSHIP

Nikelle Mackey, a Mesa Community College Art student, was recently awarded the Presidential Scholarship at Ringling College of Art and Design in Sarasota, FL. She was ranked in the top one percent and selected out of 1,400 total applicants.

The Presidential Scholarship, the highest award given at Ringling College, will provide Nikelle with a total of \$80,000 based on a four year degree plan. The scholarship will cover two-thirds of the cost of her education.

*"Words can't describe it. I never thought I would get accepted or be awarded this type of scholarship," commented Nikelle.*

Beginning in the fourth grade, Nikelle was homeschooled until she graduated high school. She began taking classes at MCC in 2008, participating in early college courses while home schooling. She recalls her first class at MCC was a Japanese language course. She also took classes at Central Arizona College while in high school.

Nikelle stated, "The early college courses and home schooling were grueling but it prepared me for the expectations placed on college students and made it an easier transition for me."

While at MCC, she has not only excelled as an art student but



was also involved as a Phi Theta Kappa member and served as a past Vice President of Service. In addition, she dedicates numerous hours volunteering time in her community.

Nikelle already has an Associate of Arts degree, which she earned in May 2011 from MCC. She graduated this spring, with an Associate of Applied Science in Digital Arts with Distinction and Certificate of Completion in Digital Illustration.

She states, "I am looking forward to starting a new chapter in my life. MCC has given me the boost needed and laid out opportunities for me. Now I can move forward. Without MCC, I couldn't have gotten this far. I will be sad to leave one of the best art programs and its teachers here, but I want to make them proud."

Nikelle will begin classes this fall at Ringling College of Art and Design, majoring in Business Art and Design. The College is well known for its connections to DreamWorks, Disney, Pixar, MTV, and others.

Nikelle hopes to one day start her own business working with talented artists, providing opportunities to help them advance while promoting art and design.

# Alumni & Friends

A Publication for the Mesa Community College Alumni Association

## MCC HELPED STUDENT FIND HIS FOCUS

In 2000, Mzenje Banda made a decision that changed the course of his life. Banda, born and raised in Zambia, had lost his job and was worried about what to do next.

"In Zambia, things are so hard," Banda said. "There's a high unemployment rate and it's difficult to find work. I had a wife and two children to support."

So Banda made the decision to travel to the United States to improve life for his family. He came alone, choosing to live in Mesa because he had a sister there. He enrolled in classes at MCC and found work as a student worker in the Public Safety Department, working with college safety officer Lynn Bray.

Banda said he had little trouble adjusting to his classes at MCC.

"I thought school was very easy, because everyone had textbooks," Banda said. "In Zambia, there's only one textbook for the whole class and you have to take turns."

At first, he had no clear idea of what career field he wanted to pursue, but with help from an academic advisor at MCC, he found focus and direction, choosing electrical engineering for his degree path. He did well academically and even won an "Emerging Writers" award.

Banda graduated from MCC in 2001 and planned to transfer to Arizona State University to complete his bachelor's degree in engineering. First, though, he wanted to return to Zambia to bring his wife and children to join him in the U.S. But money was short. Bray stepped up to help his fellow co-worker.



"Lynn Bray helped me a lot," Banda said. "He gave me work at his house. I painted his house and installed carpet so I could earn money for the trip."

Soon Banda had earned enough for the trip and brought his family back to live in the U.S. When Bray and his wife, Sherrie, picked the family up from the

airport, the family's only belongings fit into six suitcases.

Once again, Lynn and Sherrie helped out.

"They are very nice people," Banda said. "They let us stay with them until we were able to get an apartment. They also helped us get everything we needed for an apartment. It would have been very difficult without their help."

Banda was able to graduate from ASU with an engineering degree.

**"Getting a degree was a very big achievement for me," Banda said.**

Today Banda works as an engineer for General Dynamics. His son, Manny, is attending ASU on a scholarship. His daughter, Alice, attends MCC and his wife, Hilda, plans to attend MCC as well.

When he steps on to the MCC campus, Banda said memories come flooding back.

**"I have very good memories of MCC," Banda said. "It's a very special place to me. MCC helped shape my life. I would recommend it to anyone because it's a very good institution."**

## Summer 2012

President's Message .....	<b>Page 2</b>	MCC Street Team .....	<b>Page 4</b>
"Unconditional" .....	<b>Page 2</b>	Urban Horticulture .....	<b>Page 5</b>
Program Awards .....	<b>Page 3</b>	Scholarship Recipient .....	<b>Page 6</b>
Outstanding Faculty and Staff.....	<b>Page 3</b>		







## President's Message

July 1st, the Maricopa Community College District will embark on a year-long celebration in recognition of the District's 50th anniversary. At Mesa Community College, we are excited and energized to be a part of this celebration. MCC is one of the oldest colleges in our District. Our doors opened 47 years ago.

Throughout the celebratory year, we will host events and activities at our main campus at Southern and Dobson, at our Downtown Center and at our Red Mountain Campus. Our activities will begin this Fall. While this may seem like a long time away, I'd like to highlight some of the wonderful opportunities that I hope you will take time to enjoy.

At MCC's Downtown Center, you will be invited to tour the Virtual Incident Command Center, a state-of-the-art facility that provides true-to-life incident command training in preparation for natural and man-made disasters.

At MCC's Red Mountain Campus, "Celebrate 50 - Celebrate Life" will provide free health screenings and chair massages.

MCC and the Mesa East Valley Rose Society will dedicate the 2012 Rose Show to the Maricopa County Community College District's 50th anniversary.

Early 2013, MCC's Southern and Dobson Campus will host the "Open House that Opens Doors," a great way to meet faculty and tour the campus. And, our Red Mountain Campus will host a "Meet and Greet the Animals of the Sonoran Desert."

As MCC participates in this amazing celebration of five decades of excellence in education, we know we have reached this milestone because of the hard work and commitment of our employees as well as the determination and hard work of our students.

At the end of each year, we honor and recognize the outstanding achievements and accomplishments of employees and students. MCC's award recipients are acknowledged throughout this issue. My congratulations and heartfelt thanks to all of them.

Have a safe and wonderful summer. I look forward to seeing you at our Fall events.

Shouan Pan, Ph.D.  
MCC President

## PROGRAM AWARDS



### Women's Basketball

MCC coaches and players performed tremendously in the national spotlight as Mesa's Lady T'Birds took a 5th-place finish after winning three of four games in a national tournament at Illinois Central College in Peoria, Illinois.

Mesa was honored with the Team Sportsmanship Award by the awards committee, a testament to the camaraderie and familial atmosphere exhibited throughout the season by Coach Kori Stephenson and her staff and players.



### President's Community Service Honor Roll

For the sixth year in a row, Mesa Community College was named to the President's Community Service Honor Roll by the Corporation for National and Community Service and the U.S. Department of Education. The award honors the nation's leading colleges and universities, students, and faculty members, and staff for their commitment to bettering their communities through community service and service learning. The Honor Roll recognizes 642 colleges and universities for exemplary, innovative, and effective community service programs.



### Design Awards

The Honors Program direct mail campaign brought home a Paragon Award through the National Council for Marketing and Public Relations. The NCMPR Paragon Awards is the only national competition of its kind that exclusively honors excellence among marketing and PR professionals at two-year colleges.

MCC's 2011-2012 high school recruitment brochure received a silver Davey Award. Known as the largest and most prestigious awards competition exclusively for the "Davids" of creativity, the annual International Davey Awards honors the achievements of the "Creative Davids" who derive their strength from big ideas, rather than stratospheric budgets.\*

\*Sources: <http://www.ncmpr.org/paragon> and <http://www.daveyawards.com/awards/>

## Outstanding Faculty and Staff



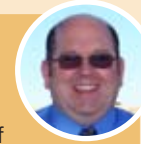
Phebe Blitz received the **Mentor of the Year Award** by Phillips Sonicare and *Registered Dental Hygienists Magazine*. The award recognizes her service to the dental hygiene field as a hygienist, educator, writer, speaker and consultant.



Sue McAleavey, MCC faculty emeritus, was recently honored with a **Lifetime Achievement Award** from the National Association of Social Workers, Arizona Chapter.



Loretta Damon, program advisor in MCC's American Indian Center, was awarded the **Native American Woman of the Year** award at the Native American Recognition Days Awards Banquet.



Duane Oakes received the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society's **Continued Excellence Award**. Oakes is the faculty director of MCC's Center for Service Learning and advisor for PTK.



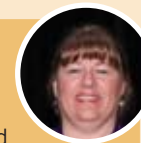
Brian Dille was named **Professor of the Year** by the Mesa Chamber of Commerce during the 100th Annual Leadership Awards Ceremony. Dille is a Political Science professor at MCC.



Shouan Pan was honored with Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society's **Shirley B. Gordon Award of Distinction for College Presidents**.



Kevin Dressler, MCC Co-director of the Theatre Outback and Theatre Faculty member, participated in a staged reading of *The Taming of the Shrew* with Academy Award Winning Actor Kevin Kline.



Karin Sherril was inducted into the **Academy of Nursing Education**. The National League for Nursing established the Academy of Nursing Education to foster excellence in nursing education.



Juanita Tarango was honored with the **Public Service Award** at Valle del Sol's Hispanic Leadership Institute.



There's a new effort taking place that helps spread the good news about Mesa Community College. Headed up by employees Jake Boyles and Lora Lassitter, the MCC Street Team promotes awareness of the college's programs and services at local community events and activities. The team is a group of students and alumni

said. "So I share with them my story. I was a 35-year-old high school drop out with no GED. Now I have a GED, and I am about a year away from graduating with my AAS in Electronics. If I can do it, anyone can."

## mcc team hits the streets

who champion MCC and serve as good-will ambassadors for the college while interacting with current and prospective students.

"We go to concerts, sporting events and community-sponsored events like **First Fridays**," said Lora. "We have fun giveaways and interact with the crowds. If people are interested, then we talk about what MCC has to offer."

Lora said the response has been excellent so far.

"We've had 3 events and about 20 people have shown some interest," Lora said. "We have them fill out cards that indicate their interests and then we pass that information on to recruitment and they do follow-up mail and calls. Then we'll track these potential students to see if they become actual students."

Lora said the best thing about the team is that members get to give back to the community and relate their personal experiences.

"It's fun to interact with the people, attend the activities and share what we do at MCC," Lora said. Lora, who was an MCC student from 1992-95, had an excellent experience at MCC, and she shares that experience with others at the events.

"What I found to be important was the personal touch that I got at MCC," Lora said. "I took one class and the instructor was a very dynamic history teacher who took a personal interest in me. That inspired me to take another class and another class."

For Street Team Lead Jake Boyles, who returned to MCC at age 35 to change his career, the biggest benefit of the team is the opportunity to interact with the public.

"I have met more people in the past few months who are simply afraid to start college because they think they can't afford it or they think they have been out of school too long to go back," Jake

If you are interested in becoming part of the team or have ideas for events for the Street Team to attend, contact Lora at 480.461.7475.

### MEMBERS TO DATE:

- Jake Boyles, MCC Student and Street Team Lead
- Aaron Carpenter, Alumni Member
- Nedd & Jennica Anderson, Alumni Members
- Aryelle Andreani, MCC Student
- Brandi Adams, MCC Student
- Mackenzie Miller, MCC Student
- Cassandra Montoya, MCC Student

## "UNCONDITIONAL" ALUMNUS DUSTIN LOEHR

Mesa Community College alumnus Dustin Loehr has found a way to incorporate his love of storytelling and tap dancing into a one-man show at the Herberger Theatre Center's Lunch Time Theatre.

The show, "Unconditional," is presented by Class 6 Theatre and explores what it means to be a male dancer and creative thinker in the 21st century. Loehr worked for more than a year creating the show.

"I couple my own personal stories and set it within a framework of epic myths and classic fairytales that everyone can recognize," Loehr said. "I show how the two relate. It's about the universal nature of my experiences and how we all have the same experiences in our own way."

Loehr said the piece is full of tap dancing, making the show unique and not something seen anywhere else.

### Why tap dancing?

"It was an accident," Loehr said. "I've been tap dancing for 21 years, but I always kept my acting and tap dancing separate. Then I went to

audition for a Mesa Storytelling Festival and met Don Doyle, a professor of theatre and storytelling at ASU."

At the time, Loehr had no idea what storytelling was. Doyle asked Loehr to add tap dancing to his story about the time he fell onstage.

"That was the beginning of me putting tap in spoken word form," Loehr said. "Since then, I've been able to perfect it."

In the show, tap is used in many different ways.

"I use it to show the underlying state of mind of characters," Loehr said. "Sometimes it's a rhythmic parody of the story, sometimes it's just dance. I always like to push the boundary of preconceived notions of what tap dancing is."

Loehr said he's not beautiful when he dances, and he's no Fred Astaire.

"I'm more interested in how I sound," he said. "I think of myself as a musician, as opposed to a dancer. I'm a dancing musician. I'm a soloist."

Loehr began his pursuit of performing while attending MCC from 2006-08. He was focused on acting at that time and said he received a well-rounded education in the Theatre Arts Program.

"MCC's program was fantastic," Loehr said. "Everything I learned there I've used in my current career."

At MCC, Loehr was an honors student, won first place in a speech competition and was nominated for an acting part in an MCC production. He graduated with an associate's degree in Theatre Arts, then transferred to ASU and earned an interdisciplinary degree in arts and performing.

In addition to developing his show, Loehr teaches, directs and choreographs. He's acted in a horror movie and can be seen as the lottery dancer in commercials for the Arizona Lottery.

Loehr hopes to perform "Unconditional" at festivals across the country. Loehr is also working to secure a grant for a videographer to document his work and encourage people to broaden their horizons.

"The goal is to challenge the audience by using tap in such a unique way," Loehr said. "Not a confrontational challenge, but I want them to walk away thinking, 'I never thought about tap that way,' or maybe they'll see something that resonates in their own lives. I want them to think, experience live theatre and support the arts and tell their own stories."

"Unconditional" runs from June 18-28 at the Herberger Theatre. To purchase a ticket in advance, call the Box Office at 602.252.8497 or visit: [http://www.herbergertheater.org/lunch\\_time\\_theater](http://www.herbergertheater.org/lunch_time_theater)



## Students Earn National Recognition



Left to Right: James Mabry, Kathleen Stefanik, Alexandra McMullin, Lexi Harvey, Heather Thomas, Shouan Pan, Duane Oakes.

Heather Thomas was selected to travel to NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Ala. to develop a prototype vehicle to roam Mars. Thomas participated in the three-day experience through the National Community College Aerospace Scholars (NCAS) program.

Alexandra McMullin and Kathleen Stefanik were named 2012 Coca-Cola Community College Academic Team Gold Scholars. The Coca-Cola Scholars Foundation sponsors the Coca-Cola Community College Academic Team program by recognizing 50 Gold, 50 Silver and 50 Bronze Scholars, and providing nearly \$187,500 in scholarships annually.