



### Meet Jennifer Shotwell, the 2004-2005 alumni scholarship recipient

Jennifer Shotwell, the recipient of the 2004-2005 alumni scholarship, dreams to be a Juvenile Delinquent Counselor for teens ages 12-17. She believes that teens are in dire need of guidance and assistance during their impressionable and vulnerable teenage years. After graduating from MCC with an associate degree, Jennifer plans to double major in Psychology and Criminal Justice at ASU. She asserts "I would love to work in high schools and detention centers to help teens reach their desired goals and dreams."

Alleviating some of the pressures of monetary debt, this scholarship will allow Jennifer to concentrate on her schooling. She stated, "I believe that with the help of this scholarship, I can promote the importance of education to teens and to me that would be the best gift I could give them." After her career blossoms, Jennifer would like to give back to MCC by making monetary donations and volunteering her time.

### Outstanding alumni honored

**Congratulations to Dr. Michael Ropacki and Mr. Anthony Occhiuzzi, winners of the MCC alumni association's annual Alumni Achievement Award!**

#### Michael Ropacki, 1991

Michael enrolled at Mesa Community College in 1989 and served as a founding member and vice president of Psi Beta, MCC's club for psychology students. Michael completed his doctoral training in Clinical Psychology with a specialization in Neuropsychology. Following his internship/residency, he completed two postdoctoral fellowships.

Since 2002 Michael has been an Assistant Clinical Professor of Neurology at Loma Linda University School of Medicine in California. He also works as a Clinical Scientist-Medical Science Liaison for Johnson & Johnson. In addition to his full-time work, Michael remains active in research. He publishes in scholarly journals, presents at national and international meetings, serves as a board member on professional committees, and edits a scholarly peer reviewed journal.

Dr. Ropacki has been a keynote speaker for Psi Beta at MCC and has been invited as a guest speaker in April for the college's popular Psychology Evening Lecture Series. Dr. Ann Ewing, Psychology faculty member at MCC, states, "We are very proud of Michael. He is one of our most outstanding stars who started in the Psychology Department, and he remains loyal to MCC and Psi Beta."



#### Anthony Occhiuzzi, 1968

Since graduating from MCC in 1968, Tony Occhiuzzi has devoted his life to the world of education. He received his B.A. and M.A. from Arizona State University and completed an additional sixty hours of graduate work from Northern Arizona University and the University of Arizona.

Tony has continuously taught secondary education since 1971. He has been a high school science teacher for the past 22 years at Tempe High School, in addition to being an adjunct instructor in the evening at MCC. Tony was the 1985 Arizona Science Teachers Association president, the 1988-89 recipient of the Arizona Science High School Teacher of the Year award, and just received the 2005 Outstanding Earth Science Teacher award from the National Geology Teachers Association, Southwest section. Besides teaching, Tony has served as an educational consultant and advisor for APS, SRP, NASA, National Geographical Society, and the Arizona Mining Association.

As a coach and student council advisor, Tony has devoted endless hours to his community. Tony's wife Diana (MCC class of 1969) states, "Tony is truly an example of everything that is right with MCC to build a wonderful and exciting future."



*An invitation*  
**Annual Alumni Social Hour**  
 Looking for an opportunity to network, reconnect with old friends, and make new ones? Join us at the alumni association's annual social hour sponsored by the Alumni Board.

Tuesday, April 26, 2005  
 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM  
 MCC Southern and Dobson campus  
 Kirk Student Center, Kiva room

Please RSVP to Jennifer LaForge  
 at 480-461-7794 or  
 jenner@mail.mc.maricopa.edu

### Shape the future

Are you interested in connecting with other alumni and our alma mater? Volunteer to serve on the association's board of directors. Board members shape our association's future and identify opportunities for MCC alumni to get involved. Nominations are being accepted through March 25, 2005. Visit [www.mc.maricopa.edu/alumni](http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/alumni) and click on Alumni Board to complete your interest form or call the Alumni Office at 480-461-7794 to have a form sent to you.

**Prizes! Prizes! Prizes!**  
 Complete your alumni survey online by April 25 and be entered to win our prize drawing. To complete your survey, visit our website at [www.mc.maricopa.edu/alumni](http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/alumni) and click on Survey.

Surveys must be completed by April 25 to be entered into drawing. One entry per person. Alumni status will be confirmed to determine eligibility for prizes.



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# Alumni & Friends

SPRING 2005

## Celebrating 40 years

Year 2005 is a time of celebration for Mesa Community College. It marks the college's 40-year history as a provider of excellence in education. In the spring and fall issues of *Alumni & Friends*, we are proud to highlight some of the college's most memorable milestones. In this issue we present the first 20 years.

### The beginning

While 1965 is the official date of MCC's genesis, Mesa's premier higher education facility actually began in 1963 as an extension of Phoenix College. Most of the classes were housed in a building at Main and Extension streets, known today as the Landmark Restaurant. MCC Alumni Board member Evelyn Plantillas attended classes at this site and still visits the Landmark occasionally for dinner. "The room where the salad bar is ..." she said, "that's where I had English class."



Only 330 students enrolled in the fall semester of 1963, but even when the college was just beginning, MCC offered a wide range of opportunities for students. Yearbooks from the 1960s describe college clubs, musical and theatrical performances, athletic programs, and a student newspaper. Evelyn toured with the MCC choir, joined an organization called Women's Government, and even took an archery class in a vacant lot across the street from the Landmark.



After Evelyn's first year in college, she transferred to the newly constructed MCC campus at Southern and Dobson. She remembers her first impression of the new site. "Why would they build a campus way out here? They're not going to get anybody to come!" Today more than 27,000 students are enrolled at MCC's two campuses and extended sites and the Southern and Dobson campus is surrounded by a prosperous and growing community.

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2004 was a memorable year for Mesa Community College. The year began with a visit from President George W. Bush to our Southern and Dobson campus. In November, we were gratified

with the overwhelming approval of the Maricopa County Community College District bond request.

Between these two milestone events, there were many other highlights: We held our first International Film Festival, the Veteran's Section of the Rose Garden was dedicated, and MCC signed a memorandum of understanding with the City of Mesa to establish an MCC Downtown campus.

2005 will be equally memorable. For the past two years, MCC has been engaged in a comprehensive self-study in preparation for a visit in March from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, our national accreditation agency. This happens every 10 years. MCC is a great institution and we are optimistic that this will be a very good visit.

As a result of the bond election, MCC has \$111 million for new buildings, renovations, and other capital improvements. We will begin this spring prioritizing projects based on our college master plan. Most likely, we will begin with the math-science cluster at Southern and Dobson and the completion of the first circle of buildings at our Red Mountain campus. Our District will be issuing bonds on a staggered basis. We are pleased that MCC's projects are a first priority. We will keep you updated on our progress.

MCC celebrates its 40th birthday this year. We hope you will join us as we salute 40 years of growing with our community. We could not have accomplished so much in these last four decades without the support and ongoing commitment of our alumni and friends.

We look forward to – and we will need – your continued involvement as we prepare for a projected enrollment of 50,000 students within the next decade.

Sincerely,

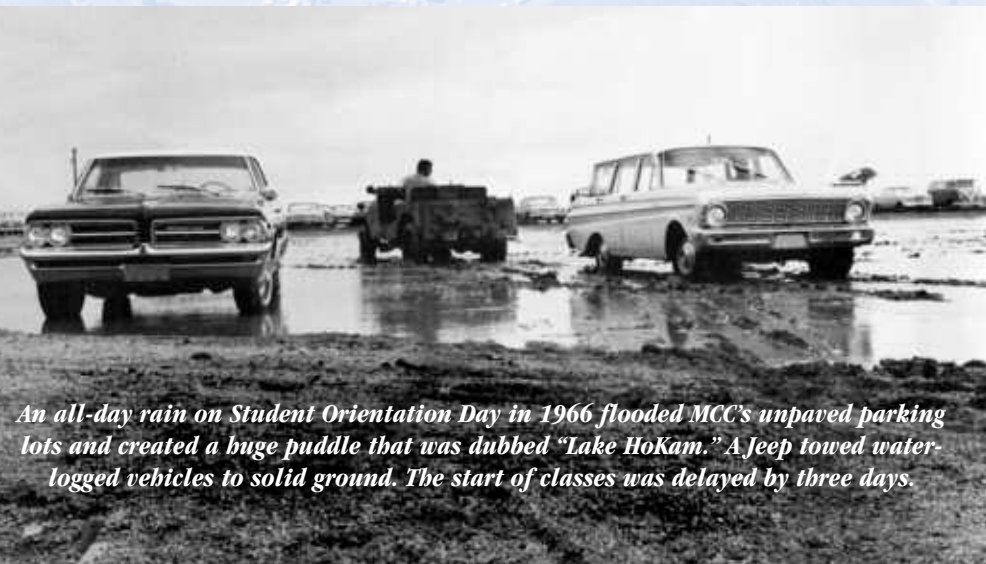
Larry K. Christiansen

### A College Grows (1965-1985)

- MCC's initial curriculum included practical nursing, a clerical program, electronics, and drafting technology; in 1970 laboratory process technology and manufacturing process technology were added.
- Maricopa's district governing board officially named Mesa Community College; land was purchased for a new campus and construction began in September 1965.
- MCC opened its new site at Southern and Dobson in the 1966 fall semester, and in 1967 the district governing board approved six new buildings: a gymnasium, plus buildings for technology, business education, classrooms, physical science, and library.
- In 1968 the library and classrooms were completed, and a successful bond election funded the music building.
- In 1969 the football stadium was dedicated; the gymnasium and buildings for technology, social science, business education, and faculty offices were completed.
- Student enrollment grew from 1,369 in 1965 to 4,424 daytime and 2,905 nighttime students by 1970.



MCC's football stadium was dedicated in 1969.



An all-day rain on Student Orientation Day in 1966 flooded MCC's unpaved parking lots and created a huge puddle that was dubbed "Lake HoKam." A Jeep towed water-logged vehicles to solid ground. The start of classes was delayed by three days.



Construction of the Theatre Outback began in 1976

- MCC opened more new buildings: Nursing (1974), Liberal Arts (1976), and the Health Improvement Center (1982). A weight room was added to the Health Improvement Center in 1983.
- In 1984, MCC opened the Technology building, which included labs for agriculture, electronics, and automotive classes, with areas for drafting and home economics.
- By 1985, the 1971 student enrollment of 4,475 daytime and 3,132 nighttime students more than doubled.

### List of firsts

#### 1965

- First graduating class of 27 students
- First mascot for athletic teams, the Hokam (changed in 1974 to the Thunderbird)
- First yearbook, the *Jacali*
- First administrators: John Riggs (Executive Dean of MCC), Keith Breon (Dean of Admissions), Jinnett Kirk (Dean of Students), and Theo Heap (Associate Dean of Students)
- First play, *The Night is My Enemy*, performed in Mesa's Irving School auditorium
- First production by the Stagedoor Players, *Teahouse of the August Moon*, performed at the Mezona

#### 1966

- First softball coach; first golf match
- First annual Fine Arts Week; first student literary magazine, *Potpourri* (changed to *Ocotillo* in 1967)
- First baccalaureate service (a religious service before graduation)
- First 16 graduates in the Practical Nursing program

#### 1967

- First speech team competes in its first tournament
- First graduating class (148 students) from MCC's new campus
- First baseball program

#### 1978

- First annual Disabled Students Sports Fair
- First MCC season for Music, Dance and Theater programs



MCC's first mascot was the Hokam (pictured left)

- MCC Presidents**  
 1963-1974 – John Riggs  
 1974-1978 – Helena Howe  
 1978-1984 – Theo Heap  
 1984-1988 – Wallace Simpson  
 1988-present – Larry Christiansen

Also in 1966, MCC replaced the Phoenix College tradition of Bear Day at Encanto Park with its own annual HoKam Day at Rendezvous Park. Classes competed in swimming, shuffleboard, football, horseshoes, badminton, croquet, softball, and volleyball as they picnicked in the park.



### Local alumnus publishes political cartoons

Mesa Community College (MCC) alumnus Andrew Long was recently featured in a national book of editorial cartooning titled "Attack of the Political Cartoonists: Insights and Assaults from Today's Editorial Pages" by J.P. Trostle. Several of Andrew's cartoons were published in the book put together by the Association of American Editorial Cartoonist (AAEC), the world's largest organization of political cartoonists.

Andrew has always wanted to be a cartoonist, starting early on with a weekly comic strip "Class Act" while attending Mesa High School. After graduating from high school he enrolled in classes at MCC and brought his comic strip with him. "Class Act" became a regular feature in MCC's school newspaper, *The Legend*, during Andrew's first year of school. Andrew was also a photo editor and editor in chief of *The Legend*.

It was while attending MCC that he discovered his love for newspapers. Today Andrew is a visual journalist at the *East Valley Tribune* where he has worked for the past five years. In his spare time he draws cartoons for the *Scottsdale Views* (a free weekly publication distributed to targeted homes and rack locations). Andrew has been an editorial cartoonist for several weekly newspapers in Arizona since 1999. He has drawn for the *Ahwatukee Foothills News*, *Chandler Connection*, *Gilbert Guardian*, and the *South Tempe Voice*.



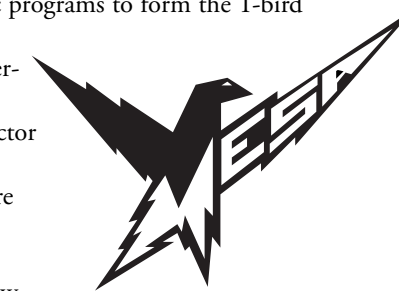
Photo courtesy Andrew T. Sawyer, East Valley Tribune

Andrew is an active member in The Association of American Editorial Cartoonists (AAEC) and The Arizona Press Club. He has also won several awards for his cartooning, including Comic Strip of the Year and a National Pacemaker Award. For more information about Andrew or to view his cartoons, please visit [www.longtoons.com](http://www.longtoons.com) or call him at 480-898-6424.

### Former student athletes unite to establish T-bird alumni association

MCC's athletic program has a proud history replete with championship teams, all-American athletes, and shining stars who have progressed to compete professionally. The college is now seeking to reconnect with alumni of its athletic programs to form the T-bird alumni association.

Inspired by the leadership and insights of retired Athletic Director and faculty member Allen Benedict, a core group of volunteers has established some lofty goals for the new association.



- Establishment of a \$6 million endowment for athletic scholarships
- A golf tournament this spring to create a book fund for student athletes
- The first annual Hall of Fame dinner on August 27, 2005

"We are excited about the association's potential to reconnect athletic alumni for the benefit of the college," Allen stated, "and look forward to eventually moving into other areas of support such as sponsorships to improve athletic facilities on our campuses." Membership applications will be available this spring. Please contact Allen Benedict at 480-461-7545 or [allen.benedict@mccmail.maricopa.edu](mailto:allen.benedict@mccmail.maricopa.edu) for more information.

### Accreditation visit scheduled March 7 - 9

An 11 member team from the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association will visit MCC March 7 – 9. MCC is requesting that its accreditation be continued for the next 10 years. According to Gayla Preisser, coordinator for the accreditation self-study, "Accreditation is important to the college because it ensures the transferability of our courses to other academic institutions and maintains our college's eligibility for federally funded programs, including student financial aid." Accreditation also ensures the quality and integrity of MCC's programs and services. To learn more about the self-study process and accreditation criteria, visit <http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/selfstudy>.

