

Dr. Ron E. Proffitt Named VHCC President

Dr. Ron E. Proffitt will become the next president of Virginia Highlands Community College on July 1, replacing retiring president F. David Wilkin.

A southwest Virginia native, Dr. Proffitt currently serves as vice president of instruction and student development at Wytheville Community College and was dean of the math, science and health technology division at Southwest Virginia Community College from 2000-2007. Prior to that, he held several positions within the allied health profession and served as program director and instructor of radiologic technology at SWCC.

"We considered three outstanding and well-qualified candidates," said VHCC Board Chair Laura Lee. "We're delighted that Dr. Proffitt has accepted the position. He will do an excellent job moving Virginia Highlands to the next level."

Proffitt holds a doctorate from East Tennessee State University, a master's degree from Virginia Tech, a bachelor's degree from Bluefield State College and a diploma in radiography from Holston Valley Community Hospital. He graduated from Tazewell High School.

He will become the fifth president of Virginia Highlands Community College when Dr. Wilkin retires on June 30. Dr. Wilkin has served as president at VHCC since 1995

"I'm extremely excited about making the move to Virginia Highlands Community College," said Proffitt. "I'm looking forward to getting involved in the college community and helping to move the college forward."





Legend has it that Daniel Boone's hunting dogs were attacked by wolves just a few miles from the Virginia Highlands campus, giving the town of Abingdon it's former name of Wolf Hills. That tidbit of history was so intriguing to VHCC students and employees that they chose Wolves as the new campus mascot and then adopted a logo designed by VHCC Webmaster Nikelle Hagy.

To celebrate the new identity, the Snack Bar has been renamed Wolves' Den and the logo will soon be showing up on t-shirts and other college merchandise.



Gary Lilly ('89)

love affair with a classic car motivated Gary Lilly to keep his job at a local grocery store after high school and make his first foray into college at Virginia Highlands. While enrolled, he learned just how much he loved learning and began making plans for a bright future in education.

Last year, after a career that has included a half dozen positions as a public school educator, Gary was named Director of Bristol Tennessee City Schools. He has learned a great deal since he stepped into the leadership position, he said, but much of his expertise was derived from those who mentored him as a young VHCC student in the late 80s.

"All these years later, I still fondly recall classes taught by David Collins, Ben Jennings, Van Keyser, Charles Locke, Klell Napps, Doug Ogle and many others. Their passion for teaching and obvious dedication to students was a primary motivator in my decision to become an educator."

Gary characterized himself as a "decent" student while at Abingdon High, but admits he hadn't really considered what he would do with his life. VHCC was close to home, affordable, and had a good reputation in the community, he said. He arranged his schedule so he could keep his part-time job and the car he loved, and began taking classes.

"The value of VHCC's program was undeniable," he said. "While friends who were attending some larger four-year institutions talked about being in classes with stadium seating, my professors spoke to me by name and seemed truly interested in my progress."

Following his graduation from VHCC in 1989, Gary transferred to Emory & Henry College, where he completed a bachelor's degree. He later earned both master's and doctorate degrees from East Tennessee State University. While continuing his own education, he also contributed to the education of thousands of Bristol Tennessee youngsters, quickly moving up the ranks from classroom teacher to curriculum specialist, technology director, elementary principal, and transportation/attendance director.

"I sometimes joke that I have trouble holding a job,' he said.

In addition to his busy job with Bristol Tennessee City Schools, much of which has recently been spent developing a strategic plan that will guide the system for the next five years, Gary enjoys spending time with family. He and his wife Tracy, a veterinarian, have two children.

"Like most families, we stay on the run, constantly juggling the demands of work, after-school activities, and other life obligations," he said. "Whenever possible, we try to enjoy some downtime by riding bikes, exploring distant destinations, or just relaxing at home."

And although it's been more than 20 years since he last attended a community college, he remains a great proponent of the the opportunities they offer.

"Considering today's job market, there is no question that job candidates with post-secondary education have an advantage when competing for available positions," he said. "For many students, enrollment at a community college can be a great step after high school toward finding a rewarding and satisfying career."

he brick buildings of VHCC once seemed like "the castle on the hill" to Alma Rowland, who showed up one day in 1974 with no idea how to enroll or what classes she wanted to take. The kindness she discovered that day literally changed her life.

"I was in the hallway and I heard a door open, so I pretended to be reading a bulletin board," she recalled. "(Associate Professor) David Collins came over and asked if I needed help. He held my hand through the whole process."

A native Texan, Alma met her husband while he was serving in the U.S. Military. The two married, then moved back to his native Smyth County. She was working as a medical secretary at the time, but one day decided that she needed a change.

Her husband had attended VHCC and she had visited the campus once before, so she decided to begin at VHCC and eventually transfer to Virginia Tech.

"What I remember is that the learning that took place in

the classroom changed me," she said. "I'm talking about classes like history and literature and English and math. The relationships I built with faculty were just the icing on the cake, but the real cake happened in the classroom. ... By the time I transferred to Tech, I was a different person already."

Working full time and carrying a full course load was not easy, she said, remembering that she often completed her homework in bed. She created a makeshift laptop and remained focus on her goal.

"I screwed the legs off a coffee table and used it so I could put my typewriter on the bed," she said. "I would either be doing papers or doing my work up in the night. And I remember sometimes scooting that down and taking a nap and, if I woke up, I would pick up where I left off."

She graduated from VHCC and then transferred to Virginia Tech, where she earned degrees in both English and Spanish. She completed a student teaching assignment and then was offered a contract to teach in Pulaski County schools.

"I wanted to teach more than a language – I wanted to share a culture," she said "That's not what they wanted. And I discovered that I didn't want to be a classroom disciplinarian. I really wanted something different."

Something different came her way in 1977 when Wytheville Community College hired her as a counselor for the Educational Talent Search program. Although she worked for WCC, she was given an office on the VHCC campus and was responsible for serving students in the VHCC service region.

"I kind of found my place in the sun working with students," she said.

She returned to Virginia Tech to earn a counseling degree and then landed a part-time job at VHCC working with the Job Training Partnership Act. In subsequent years, she worked as a counselor for Project Excel and then as a counselor for the Division of Business, Humanities & Social Sciences while teaching classes in Psychology and Human Services on an adjunct basis. In July 2004 she was asked to fill in as acting Dean of the Division of Business, Humanities & Social Sciences and was offered the job on a permanent basis two years later.

"I came up here and I loved it," she said. "It's a squeeze job. You are squeezed between the administration and the academic needs of the institution - both students and faculty. I work well under that kind of pressure."

Looking back on her VHCC career, Alma marvels at all the turns her life has taken since the day she showed up on campus to enroll. The shy young woman she was back then would never have believed that she would become a valued member of the College's administration with a multitude of responsibilities that keep things running smoothly on a daily basis.

"I love this College because it has been a part of all

my adult life," she said. "I came to school as a student. I work here, my husband came to school here, my children came to school here. There isn't any part of my life that this College hasn't touched. I do hope that aside from my work, there will be a time when I can give back to the College in a different way – at least a little portion of what it's given me."

Asked what accomplishments she is most proud of, she is quick to point out that many people share the credit for the items on top of her list.

"I'm particularly proud of our Philosophy Statement. It's nothing I did, but I was a part of it. I use that statement in my communication with faculty repeatedly. I'm proud of it because I think it says something about who we are."

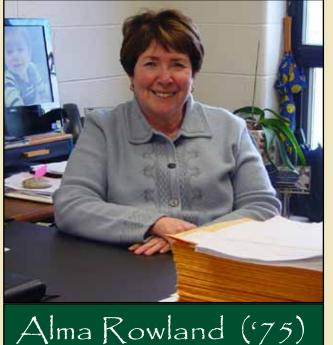
She is proud of the jobs that students have gotten as a result of the Fast Track programs, fastpaced instruction in highly technical computer fields. And she is proud of a change in class scheduling that

has allowed students additional flexibility when enrolling in classes.

"I think the most important thing to me that I have done that I can walk away with is that I have an open door with division faculty," she said. "I talk to them. I feel like they can talk to me. On a day to day basis, that means more to me than anything else."

And she is proud that she has developed a reputation for helping students who take their educations seriously and are willing to make the effort it takes to be successful. In many ways, her own experiences have helped her understand what it means to be a commuting student with work and family responsibilities, she said.

"So when students complain, I like to teach them a lesson about how complaining keeps us from obtaining a goal because it keeps us focused on the negative," she said. "I tell students that anything is possible, but you just have to spend every waking moment working toward the goal. You just have to put the typewriter at the end of the bed."





Artist Sarah Easterling chose the name "I Know Why Wolves Cry" and selected colors to illustrate how wolves, which were once prevalent in Abingdon, disappeared from the area. The orange side represents the fire that destroyed the wolf's den and pack; the blue represents rain that washed away the den; and the black and gray represent the ashes left behind. These elements and man's use of the land caused the wolves to disappear from the region. Today, the wolf stands alone and mourns what is lost.

Ms. Easterling was a student at Abingdon High School in 2009 when she painted the wolf as part of Advance Abingdon, a community organization led by Gary Kimbrell. She enrolled at VHCC in Fall 2009 and was a student here when Mr. Kimbrell and his brother, Thomas, purchased and donated the wolf to VHCC in memory of their father.

The wolf is now on permanent display in the VHCC Library.

BECOME A MENTOR

Now that you have your career on track, VHCC's Office of Career Development invites you to share your expertise with students and guide them through the career search process.

Becoming a Mentor offers many benefits and is an opportunity to truly make a difference. Participants can:

- Help others develop interpersonal and professional skills
- Meet new people and potentially discover a valuable hire/referral
- Make a positive impact and contribute to the career growth of others.

To get started, simply send your name, email address, preferred contact method, and information about your education and professional experiences to Michael G. McBride, Career Planning Specialist, at mmcbride@vhcc.edu. Tell Michael you want to be a mentor, and he'll be in touch!

Intramural BASKETBALL

VHCC entered the realm of competitive sports during the 2009-2010 basketball season, competing against well-established community college teams from throughout Southwest Virginia. The team finished with a record of 0-6, but generated an enormous amount of school spirit - proving that success can't always be measured by wins and losses.

The VHCC Wolves were led by Coach Jason Matlock and included players Hunter Gillespie, Rakeem Jamal Maxwell, William Cannon, Josh Adams, Justin Lowe, Drew Carter, Brandon Hess, Josh Landis (pictured at right), Bryan Dalia, James Mungin, Zach Blevins, Drew Wilson, Travis Ferguson, Tyron Johnson, Marcus Montgomery, Joe Bias, and Curtis Williams.

Students enrolled in at least 6 credit hours are eligible to participate in intramural sports.





Tina Chapman Heninger

Tina began taking classes at VHCC in 1989, but left before completing a degree to get married and have her first child. She returned a few semester later and was able to balance her new family responsibilities with school by taking evening courses. Tina earned an associate's degree in Computer information Systems and a certificate in Career Studies in 1995. Today Tina works as an Administrative Assistant at Smyth County Career and Technical Center, and she and her husband of 17 years have two children.

Olivia Dawn Scalf

After graduating from VHCC in Spring 2002 with an associate's degree in Human Services, Olivia continued her education - ultimately earning a master's degree in Counseling from Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. She currently works for All Church Home for Children and Families. In this position, she works closely with families to reduce the risk of abuse and neglect while preserving the family unit. She also enjoys running, reading, watching old movies, outdoor activities and spending time with her nephew.

Jane Rhea Boyd

Following a 29-year career in a public library, Jane enrolled in VHCC's Human Services program. She completed an internship at Russell County Sheriff's Office as part of the program, and soon landed a full-time job in the department's Domestic Violence Unit. She later completed 18 weeks of basic law enforcement training at the Southwest Virginia Criminal Justice Academy in Bristol to become a certified School Resources Officer. "Transitioning from books to bullets wasn't easy, but thanks to my opportunities at VHCC and SVHEC, the journey has been a delightful one," she said.

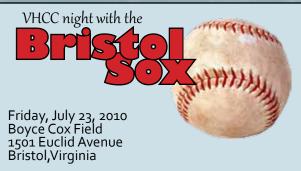
Thomas Wayne Denton

Thomas earned an associates degree in Education - Specialization in Art in Spring 2009 and is now enrolled at Virginia Intermont. He participated last year in an Advance Abingdon project to design and paint wolves that were used to decorate the town and later auctioned to raise money for downtown revitalization efforts. The wolf painted by Thomas was entitled "Nature," and it garnered \$850 at auction.

Congratulate the newest members of the VHCC Alumni Association by attending a graduation party on campus on Thursday, May 13 at 5:30 p.m. This year's celebration will feature live music from Retroville, food and fun. It's a great opportunity to return to campus and catch up with old friends. Plan also to attend Commencement 2010, beginning at 6:30 p.m. the following evening, May 14, at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center.







Enjoy snacks and reconnect with old friends from VHCC, then stay to see the Bristol White Sox take on the Pulaski Mariners during this event planned specifically with VHCC friends and alumni in mind. VHCC's new president, Dr. Ron Proffitt, will throw out the first pitch. Please call 276-739-2456 for information about receiving free tickets to this family event.

Virginia Highlands Community College Dedicated to Students. Committed to Excellence.

Dedicated to Students. Committed to Excellence. P.O. Box 828 • Abingdon, VA, 24212 (276) 739-2400 • www.vhcc.edu

To update your alumni profile, please logon to www.vhcc.edu/alumni and go to the Alumni Directory on the left side of the page. Providing your email address will ensure you receive the latest updates about campus news and events. You also may contact Anne Dunham, coordinator of Public Relations, Marketing and Alumni Development, at 276.739.2456 or adunham@vhcc.edu.