

Students Preparing to Visit State Legislators

Eight VHCC students have been chosen to represent the College in Richmond as part of the VCCS initiative known as "Every Day is Community College Day."

The first of two trips is planned for Feb. 3-4 with students Dana Dotson, Phillip Blevins, Nick Booher, and Kimberly Furgerson participating. Each of the students were recommend by a faculty and staff member for their ability to represent the College in Richmond and to gain personally from the experience. VHCC President David Wilkin will accompany the students and will attend a VCCS Legislative Reception the evening of Feb. 3.

While in Richmond, students will meet with officials from the VCCS for an overview of the legislative process and its impact on Virginia's community colleges. Following that session, individual meetings are scheduled with Sen. William Wampler, Sen. Phillip Puckett, Del. Terry Kilgore, Del. Joe Johnson, and Del. Bill Carrico. During these sessions, students will learn about the issues facing the state and share their personal stories with lawmakers representing the VHCC service region.

Before returning to campus, students will attend a session of the state House of Delegates, where they will be introduced by Del. Johnson.

A similar trip is planned on Feb. 18-19 and will include Vice President David Matlock and students Stacy Blevins, Trey Johnson, and Darren Miller. A firm commitment from the final student is pending.

Every Day is Community College Day began more than five years ago to involve students in the legislative process and to increase awareness of community college programs and services among lawmakers. Each day that the legislature is in session, students from a Virginia community college are in Richmond.

VCCS officials this year are stressing the critical role that community colleges play in providing accessible, affordable higher education programs that are preparing a new generation for the workforce.

The latest legislative news impacting the VCCS is available online at <http://vahighered.com>.

Dr. King's Dream is 'Humanitarian Issue'

The dream envisioned by the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. has not been completely fulfilled and, until it is, everyone - regardless of race - is at risk of discrimination, said Dr. Aris Winger.

"It's not about Black people, ...," he said. "It's an issue of people seeing each other as human beings. It's a humanitarian issue."

Dr. Winger's comments came during the recent VHCC Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration, an event held on what would have been the slain civil rights leader's 80th birthday. Although the world is a better place because of the Rev. King's work, Winger said, "his dream has not been completely fulfilled."

"I can take you to a place in this country in which you yourself would be intimidated, would be harassed, would be mistreated, would be discriminated against," he said. "We need to continue the dream that Dr. King had in mind because it has not been completely fulfilled."

An assistant professor of mathematics at Emory & Henry College, Dr. Winger serves as co-host of WHEC radio's "The Flagship," a show that explores racial discrimination and other social issues.

He said he was reminded of the prejudice that still exists in America while interviewing the leader of the Klu Klux Klan for his show and again on a more personal basis when he and a friend, also a black man, stopped at a convenience store for directions. The two white clerks became visibly nervous, he said, and one whispered to the other, "Don't worry, they're not going to rob us."

This type of discrimination requires all of us to stand against it, Dr. Winger said, offering a quote from Dr. King: "A man can't ride your back unless it's bent."

When racially divisive comments are made or jokes are told that further discrimination, each of us should take a stand and let it be known that we don't approve, Dr. Winger said.

"Who is going to stand up straight and who is going to let it slide?" he asked. "It can be very difficult, but that is the battle we have to fight. ... Sometimes it's just a subtle joke here or a comment



there, but it's damaging"

Dr. Winger holds a Ph.D. in mathematics from Carnegie-Mellon University and is particularly interested in the mathematics of social justice.

As he continues to fight the battle, Dr. Winger said he works hard to see the humanity in other people. He offered a story about his friend, Eric, as an example.

The two are different in many ways, he said, noting that Eric is white and a Republican, he doesn't believe in global warming, he is a talented artist, and he prefers the Microsoft Zune as a method of storing his favorite songs.

In contrast, Dr. Winger said he is a black Democrat who is concerned about global warming, enjoys mathematics, and loves his Apple Ipod.

Despite their differences, he and Eric both appreciate how lucky they are to be Americans, respect each others skills and talents, feel the heat when the sun is shining, and "we both know how to get down to some good music."

And, more importantly, Dr. Winger said, "we are both well aware that the love that comes from friendship never has and never will have anything to do with color."

Software Engineering Agreement Signed

A transfer agreement that VHCC President David Wilkin termed "the icing on the cake" for students interested in pursuing a four-year software engineering degree has been signed by officials from the University of Virginia at Wise and the region's community colleges.

Through existing Guaranteed Admission Agreements (GAA), community college graduates have numerous opportunities to transfer earned credits to a senior institution and complete a bachelor's degree, Wilkin said. The newest agreement goes one step further, paving the way for students to earn the credentials needed to land jobs in the region's emerging technology field, he said.

Students at VHCC, Southwest Virginia Community College (SWCC) and Mountain Empire Community College (MECC) now can complete two-year computer science programs before transferring to the UVa-Wise software engineering program. The State Council of Higher Education approved the program, which received financial support from private donors, the

Appalachian Regional Commission, the Virginia Tobacco Commission, the Wise County Board of Supervisors, Northrop Grumman and the Virginia Coalfield Economic Development Authority.-

Dr. Wilkin joined SWCC President Mark Estep, MECC President Terry Suarez, and David Prior, chancellor of UVA-Wise, in signing the agreement. Local legislators also were on-hand, noting that the new program will further enhance the educational opportunities available for the region's students.

"When we pull together, good things happen," said state Sen. Phillip Puckett.

"This is a step that will bring opportunities that you and I can hardly imagine today. ...When you invest in young people, you see great reward and great opportunities that come to all of us."

Del. Bud Phillips agreed.

"In order to compete in the world economy, we have to be able to change and embrace new technology," he said. "Our colleges are second to none in giving a world-class education to our students."



VHCC News is produced each month by Anne Dunham of the Office of Institutional Advancement. If you would like to suggest information for the newsletter, please send your ideas to adunham@vhcc.edu or contact her by phone at 276-739-2456. VHCC is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Institution.

Virginia Highlands
Community College
www.vhcc.edu
or call
276-739-2400

Para la ayuda en español, llama por favor
(276) 739-2436

Regional Art Donated to Keyser-Aday Theatre Effort



Abingdon native Ollie Cox donated a piece that he painted on Einstein's birthday, which will be hung in the science wing of the ISC. The photo at left is of "Gladiators," a Chavatel painting that dates back to the 1960s.

About \$30,000 worth of appraised art - including a number of pieces by the late George Chavatel of Abingdon - has been donated to the VHCC Educational Foundation as part of the effort announced last year to establish the Keyser-Aday Theatre at VHCC.

The fundraising committee established a goal of raising \$90,000, which could include up to \$40,000 worth of art and the balance in cash. Upon reaching the goal, the committee agreed to name the VHCC Theatre in honor of Van Keyser and Gary Aday, the two instructors who built the theatre program. The cash will be invested in an endowment, with the interest used to support art programs on campus and to provide scholarships for students pursuing careers in the arts. The donated artwork will be displayed throughout campus and will be available for viewing by the entire community.

Several pieces of Chavatel's early artwork were donated to VHCC by the late artist's wife, Barbara. In addition, the College now owns works by John F. Sauers, Landon Woody, Bari Ballou, and Clayton Proctor. Ollie Cox, an Abingdon native who recently returned to the area after a successful career as a Hollywood jewelry designer, recently donated a painting that includes his trademark "cosmic people" and, as is typical of Cox's work, was painted on a found object.

For information about donating to the VHCC Educational Foundation, contact David Matlock at dmatlock@vhcc.edu.



The VHCC Student Government Association has teamed up with Locks of Love, a non-profit organization that provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children suffering from long-term medical hair loss. Those interested in donating to this worthy cause are invited to have their hair cut and styled for free by a stylist from Flipped Out Salon, who will be on campus Feb. 10 from 1-3 p.m. Email kmorton@vhcc.edu for more information.



The College Democrats and Young Republicans of VHCC provided soft drinks and cake to those who gathered in LRC-605 on Tuesday, Jan. 20, to observe the swearing in and comments of U.S. President Barack Obama.

The event provided an opportunity for the campus community to witness history in the making as record crowds traveled to the nation's capital to see the country's first African-American president take the oath of office. The event was viewed by students, faculty, and staff.

The inaugural ceremonies were the culmination of more than a year of activities that included a debate, voter registration efforts, and a campus-wide Rock the Vote event designed to encourage participation in the political process.

Online Training Courses Available

The Commonwealth of Virginia Knowledge Center (CoVKC) has been established to provide a variety of training and developmental opportunities for state employees to promote professional and personal growth. The Knowledge Center offers a variety of short online courses that are available for free to state employees.

A first-time user will be provided detailed instructions for registering in the Knowledge Center and may also take a tour of the site.

To learn more about accessing this free, up-to-date training from your desk, please go to www.dhrm.virginia.gov and click on Knowledge Center.



Did you know that before he was busy breathing new life into the VHCC Educational Foundation, David Matlock was busy "Staying Alive" with his high school basketball team and winning trophies for his performance on the court. At some point in the 1970s, John Travolta borrowed his suit and hair and made a million!

Have a bit of news to share? Pending nuptials, a baby on the way, a winning lottery ticket or a dream vacation? Feel free to include a photo and email adunham@vhcc.edu

Financial Aid Workshops Planned *College-bound students, parents invited*

VHCC will host a series of on-campus workshops in February to assist college-bound students and their parents in applying for federal financial aid.

"We're going to provide a comprehensive overview of the financial aid process and review the application deadlines," said Karen Cheers, acting director of Admissions, Records and Financial Aid. "We're also inviting families to bring their 2008 tax returns if they are interested in completing and submitting their application during the workshop. Our Financial Aid staff will be available to answer questions and provide guidance."

Those who have not yet completed their tax returns can use the information

provided during the workshops to complete and submit their application at a later date, Cheers added.

The same information will be presented at each workshop, so participants should attend only one workshop. Sessions are planned for:

- Saturday, Feb. 7, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Thursday, Feb. 12, from 6-8 p.m.
- Monday, Feb. 23, from 6-8 p.m.

No registration is required, and pizza and soft drinks will be served at each workshop.

For additional information, contact Angie Camper in the VHCC Financial Aid Office at 276-739-2555 or acamper@vhcc.edu.