

## VHCC Offering NCCER Certification

Students who complete the Electricity or Air Conditioning, Refrigeration & Heating programs at Virginia Highlands Community College now have the opportunity to earn National Center of Construction Education and Research (NCCER) certification, a portable credential that is widely recognized throughout the construction industry.

Additionally, The Center for Business & Industry at VHCC is in the process of becoming an accredited training facility, which means it will be able to record NCCER certification information in a national registry. The registry is often used by those in the construction trades to find skilled employees who meet industry standards.

"We learned about NCCER certification from the Shaw Power Group, the construction firm that is building Dominion's coal-fired power plant in Wise County," said Melinda Leland, Dean of the Center for Business & Industry. "Our research indicated there are many benefits to this program. Not only will it give our graduates a competitive edge in the workforce, but we believe it could position Southwest Virginia as a target location for manufacturers."

VHCC faculty members Mike Belcher, Ronnie Frye and Jim Kroll recently completed the NCCER training program and are in the process of incorporating the standards into the Electricity and Air Conditioning, Refrigeration & Heating programs. Both Frye and Kroll also completed the NCCER curriculum entitled "Your Role in a Green Environment" and hope to offer that course later this summer.

NCCER is a not-for-profit education foundation created to develop industry-driven standardized craft training programs. Additional information about the organization is available at [www.nccer.org](http://www.nccer.org).

VHCC is now enrolling students in the Electricity and Air Conditioning programs. Fall Semester Classes begin Aug. 24. For additional information about these programs, please contact the Division of Science and Engineering Technologies at (276) 739-2433.



## Music Makers

Students enrolled in this year's Upward Bound summer program are learning to make music - first by building their own electric guitars and then learning to write songs and play their customized instruments.

Musician Gil Braswell is instructing the summer program, which began with students painting their guitars then learning to wire them for sound. Lessons on creative writing, song writing, and the history of electric instruments will also be included before students learn to play a few cords on the guitars they have created.

Look for these budding musicians on campus through July 16.



## What's Your Sign?

When it's quiet inside Kim Owens' classroom, that's an indication that students are communicating.

Kim teaches American Sign Language, an intricate series of hand signs and other motions to communicate with the hearing impaired. Because ASL is quickly becoming accepted as a foreign language by many colleges and universities, she opened her classroom to high school students this summer for a brief course to introduce them to the basics.

Students enrolled played word games, learned the proper expressions to communicate their message and learned to fingerspell. Many said they would like to continue learning through the adult program offered on the VHCC campus through the Center for Business & Industry.

A beginning course, ASL-101, is offered Monday nights this fall from 6-8:45 p.m.

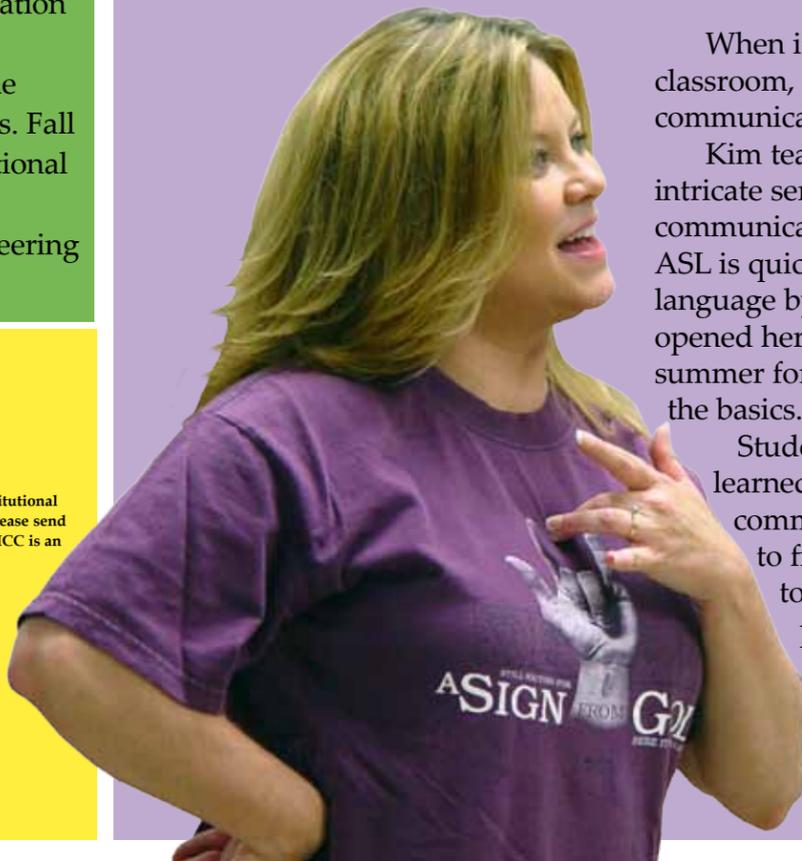


VHCC News is produced each month by Anne Dunham of the Office of Institutional Advancement. If you would like to suggest information for the newsletter, please send your ideas to [adunham@vhcc.edu](mailto:adunham@vhcc.edu) or contact her by phone at 276-739-2456. VHCC is an Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative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

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276-739-2400

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





More than 150 members of the VHCC family - including students, alumni, employees and their family members - gathered at the Saltville Wave Pool on June 26 to ride the mammoth waves and catch up on College news. The event was sponsored by the VHCC Alumni Association in an effort to take College leaders into the community to visit with those who have contributed to VHCC's success. Participants enjoyed door prizes, hot dogs, and a whole lot of fun as the mercury crept beyond the 80 degree mark. The next community event, VHCC

Night with the Bristol White Sox, will be held Friday, July 17, at DeVault Stadium in Bristol. The Appalachian League's Bristol Sox will take on the Bluefield Orioles during the 7 p.m game. Free tickets are available in the Office of Institutional Advancement in the LRC Building and at the Reception Desk in the ADM Building. Gates open at 6 p.m. so come early to enjoy the fun. For more information, call Anne Dunham, coordinator of Alumni Development, at (276) 739-2456.



Photos by Jackie Craft

## Retirement Planning Offered

The Virginia Retirement System offers free local sessions of the Retirement Education Seminars (RES) and Group Counseling Sessions (GCS).

The Retirement Education Seminars provide general retirement information including estate and financial planning.

The Group Counseling Sessions are for VRS members planning to retire within the next five years. Both of these sessions will be offered at VHCC on August 5, 2009. Preregistration is required. For more information and to preregister, go to the VHCC Human Resources web page and click on FYI – Retirement Planning – VRS Retirement Education & Counseling Sessions.



## Hort Grad Weeding, Sprucing Up Campus

After decades in a noisy factory making automotive parts, Donna Stinson is excited to have a job that allows her to enjoy the quiet sounds of nature and feel the summer sun on her face. Even better, she's helping to improve the VHCC campus before she advertises the fact that she recently earned a horticulture degree here.

"I consider the landscaping a lot like personal hygiene," she said. "It's the first thing people see and it makes an impression. When the outside looks nice, people are proud to go to school or to work here."

Donna was a supervisor at Dana when the plant closed, leaving her without a job. The silver lining to that cloud, she said, is that she was offered Trade Act funds to earn a college degree. She first considered radiography, but soon learned she didn't have the pre-requisites for that program. Her second choice was horticulture.

She enjoyed the classes and was preparing to graduate when she met VHCC President David Wilkin at a Phi Theta Kappa induction ceremony. After learning she was a horticulture student, he asked if she might be interested in helping with a summer landscaping project. Donna agreed and has spent several weeks since then pulling weeds, spreading mulch, and cleaning up the landscaping around campus.

The improvements were immediately noticed.

"I really appreciate all the compliments everyone has given me over my work on campus," she said. "I get constant pats on the back every day, even from the students. I have never worked at a job that I got so much positive feed back before, and it feels nice."

Donna has been hired for 10 weeks and then will resume her search for a permanent job. She hopes one day the landscaping job can be a year-round position that will include her current tasks during the summer months and winters spent in the greenhouse.

"We could grow all our own plants and put them out in the spring," she said. "We have a beautiful greenhouse and that would be a great way to really utilize it."

## New Faces at VHCC



**Amber Johnson**  
Assistant to the President

Amber is a graduate of VHCC and Radford University, where she earned a bachelor's degree in Communications. She formerly worked in Disney World's Animal Kingdom and, most recently, as administrative assistant to the Smyth County Administrator and Board of Supervisors.



**William (Bill) Lowe**  
Campus Police Officer

Bill has over 30 years of law enforcement experience. He is a retired Lieutenant from Bristol Virginia Police Department and is very knowledgeable in law enforcement and crime prevention techniques.



**Patricia (Patty) Thompson**  
Emergency Planning Officer

Patty has 30 years of experience as an emergency communications dispatcher and extensive knowledge of emergency procedure and planning.