

## Great Expectations Gets Coach

Foster care students at Virginia Highlands Community College now are receiving the individualized support and assistance of a dedicated Great Expectations Coach as they transition into higher education, thanks to a \$150,000 gift received Wednesday.

The anonymous donation was presented to the VHCC Educational Foundation by Dr. Glenn DuBois, chancellor of Virginia's Community Colleges, and Mr. Ron Tillet of the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education (VFCCE). The gift was earmarked for VHCC and came as a result of the VFCCE's Great Expectations campaign, a statewide effort to raise \$10 million to assist foster teens as they pursue a community college education.

"Nationwide, young people in foster care often struggle as they finish high school and transition into college, the workplace, and independent living," said VHCC Vice President David Matlock, who leads the VHCC Educational Foundation. "This generous gift will help us to reverse this trend by providing one-on-one support for foster care youth in our region as they apply, enroll, and succeed as VHCC students."

Virginia has the nation's highest percentage of teens aging out of the foster care system without a permanent home. Without family support, many of them are unable to obtain meaningful employment or higher education. In fact, research indicates these young people are twice as likely to end up homeless or in prison as in a college classroom.

To assist these students, VHCC has hired Tony Fuller, a VHCC graduate who recently earned a bachelor's degree from UVa-Wise, to serve as Great Expectations Coach. In his new position, Fuller will help foster care students complete forms and applications, choose a career and a program of study, enroll in classes, register for tutoring and other specialized services, and become successful college students.

Additionally, the College has appointed a Great Expectations Citizens Advisory Committee that includes a wide range of community members and campus leaders who understand the unique issues facing foster care students. The committee will help make important decisions about the program.

VHCC is now one of eight Virginia community colleges with Great Expectations programs. The name, Great Expectations, was taken from the Charles Dickens novel about an orphan who abandons his humble beginnings to begin a new life as a gentleman.

"When it comes to the opportunities of a college education, our foster care youth have been too often forgotten. Only about two-percent of them now graduate from college. That's simply not enough. Great Expectations is our effort to change that. Though it's a new initiative we are already seeing some great results and we are excited about continuing that success," said Laurens Sartoris, chair of the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education.

Virginia First Lady Anne Holton serves as honorary chair of the Great Expectations Campaign, which publicly launched in September and already has raised more than \$3 million.

## Dr. Wilkin Announces June 2010 Retirement

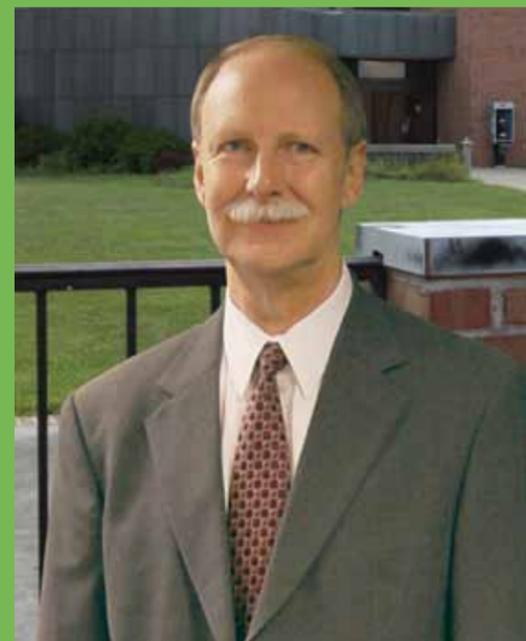
Dr. F. David Wilkin, president of Virginia Highlands Community College, has announced plans to retire from the position he has held since 1995, effective June 30, 2010.

"Being President of Virginia Highlands Community College is exciting and enormously gratifying," he said. "Serving such wonderful students and working with dedicated faculty, staff and Board members has been the best possible experience. The College also enjoys steadfast and effective support from our localities and elected officials. Indeed, some days I feel like I want to be president forever, but other days I look at the calendar and note that I'll soon be 65. It's time."

Dr. Wilkin is the fourth and longest serving president of VHCC and one of the senior presidents within the Virginia Community College System (VCCS). He came to VHCC following 12 years as chief officer of the Marshall University Community and Technical College in West Virginia.

During his tenure, VHCC experienced enrollment growth; established and enhanced services such as Dual Enrollment with high schools, the Arts Array cultural series, and the Center for Business and Industry; added three new campus buildings; and further developed the VHCC Educational Foundation to generate additional private support for the College. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) twice reaffirmed VHCC's accreditation during Dr. Wilkin's presidency, with an extremely positive review in 2008. Despite difficult budget years, the College has always had a balanced budget, never had a layoff, and never had a significant audit issue.

In addition, the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center and the Mount Rogers Regional Adult Education Program have been incorporated into the campus and much work has been done to prepare for the upcoming Heartwood Artisan Gateway. The College also has partnered with community organizations like the William King Regional Arts Center, Barter Theatre, Coomes Recreational Center,



and the Washington County Adult Skill Center to stretch budget resources and better serve the region.

"Dr. Wilkin has performed excellent work throughout his presidency to ensure that the educational, cultural, and workforce training needs of our community were always met with affordable programs of the highest quality," said Laura L. Lee, chair of the VHCC Board. "Although we will miss his down-to-earth leadership style and budget savvy, we join him in celebrating this major milestone and wish him many years of health and happiness."

Over the years, Dr. Wilkin has been an active participant in community organizations including the Abingdon Rotary Club, the TN/VA Chamber Coalition, and the Smyth County, Washington County and Bristol Regional chambers of commerce.

The nationwide search for a new VHCC president will begin this fall and will be led by a committee appointed by Dr. Glenn DuBois, chancellor of the VCCS. The search committee will make its recommendation to Dr. DuBois based upon interviews and input gathered from the VCCS, the VHCC Board, and the campus community.



### First Pitch

Laura Lee, chair of the VHCC Board and a graduate of the Class of 1984, threw out the first pitch during VHCC Night with the Bristol Sox on July 17. The event was sponsored by the VHCC Alumni Association and included a pizza party, prizes, and an opportunity for the campus community to enjoy a night of baseball and catch up with old friends.



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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## Branching Out

The front entrance to the College received a facelift recently, thanks to the hard work of the VHCC Landscape Committee and RSG Landscaping and Lawn Care, Inc. The Lynchburg landscapers used the committee's plan to replace overgrown bushes with carefully selected species that dramatically improve the area. Special thanks to the committee - Sara Combs, Karen Copenhaver, Gary Thomas, David Collins, Kevin Hamed, Tim Carter, Ernest Nunley, and Donna Stinson.



The much-anticipated groundbreaking for Heartwood: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Gateway is set for Thursday, Aug. 6, at 10 a.m. Plans to build the center on the VHCC campus were announced in October, 2005, and much work has been done since then to finalize the particulars. Heartwood will introduce visitors to the rich talents of local artisans and entice them to visit the surrounding communities. Additionally, the center will bring visitors to the VHCC campus and provide an opportunity for our students to gain real-world experience as they complete internships, co-ops, and Work-Study assignments within the center.

## Health Check Set for Aug. 21

The bi-annual CommonHealth Health Check Screening will be held on August 21, 2009.

The screening is free and each participant will receive a free gift from CommonHealth. All results from the screening are strictly confidential and provided only to the individual.

The screening includes blood pressure, total and HDL cholesterol, Body Mass Index (BMI), and a diabetes risk assessment. Immediate results will be confidentially reviewed with each participant by a member of the screening team.

Employees are urged to take advantage of this great FREE medical benefit. Details for scheduling appointments will be provided by email in August. Please contact the Human Resource Office if you have any questions.

Congratulations are in order for two VHCC employees who recently celebrated major milestones.

- Beth Page, coordinator of Upward Bound and Talent Search, recently earned a doctorate degree from East Tennessee State University. Next time you're in the OTC, stop by and have an intellectual conversation with Dr. Page!
- Nikelle King tied the knot to her high school sweetheart on July 11 during a double-ring ceremony in the Model City. Mrs. Hagy has returned from her honeymoon and looking forward to a lifetime of wedded bliss.



## Hǎo jiǔ bú jiàn!

Dr. Paul Conco was among those who recently participated in a trip to China through the International Business and Educational Outreach Program sponsored by the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center. The purpose of the two-week trip was to get participants to think more about global issues, foreign culture and opportunities in international economic development. In addition to VHCC, participating schools from our region included Emory & Henry, UVA-Wise, Wytheville Community College, and King College. Marshall University representatives joined in the adventure.

## Alumni Choir Being Formed Special December Performance Planned

Former members of the Virginia Highlands Community College Choir are invited to join Choir Director Beth Smith for a special performance of Handel's Messiah this December.

Rehearsals for this production, which Smith called "the most ambitious ever attempted by the College choir," will begin in August. Those participating will have the option of rehearsing on Tuesday evenings from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. or on Monday and Wednesday from 1-2:15 p.m. All rehearsals will be held in the Music Studio in the Mechanical Engineering Building on the VHCC campus. Each performer also will be given a CD that can be used to practice at home, Smith said.

"I am excited about seeing many of my former students again as they join current choir members for this elaborate production," Smith said. "I hope to have at least 50 singers, and I'm already looking for a location that can handle the massive audience this production will attract. This is an ambitious endeavor but one that will be a joy for all of us!"

The performance is scheduled for Tuesday, Dec. 8, at 7:30 p.m. The choir will be accompanied by Schery Collins and Ruth Brown on piano and harpsichord, and a string orchestra, trumpet, and oboe.

The first rehearsals are scheduled for Tuesday, Aug. 25, at 5:30 p.m., and Wednesday, Aug. 26, at 1 p.m. Refreshments will be served.

For additional information, please contact Smith at (276) 739-2454 or [bsmith@vhcc.edu](mailto:bsmith@vhcc.edu).

## Nursing Camp Planned for High Schoolers

High school students interested in exploring nursing careers are invited to participate in Nursing Summer Camp, a four-day program that will include a variety of clinical simulations that mirror situations encountered by nurses on a daily basis.

The camp will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on the campus of Virginia Highlands Community College from Monday, Aug. 3, through Thursday, Aug. 6. Participation is limited to 30 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th graders.

According to Gwendolyn Slone, director of the Health Resources and Services Administration's Nursing Workforce Diversity Program, this fast-paced camp allows students to learn more about nursing careers while they handle simulated emergencies. Planned "emergencies" include a pediatric trauma, a birthing simulation, a mock code, an air and ground transport, and a tour of an Advance Cardiac Life Support ambulance.

Each participant also will complete CPR training and certification. Students who complete the camp will receive a \$100 stipend.

To receive additional information or an application for the camp, please contact Melanie Henry at (276) 964-7275 or [melanie.henry@sw.edu](mailto:melanie.henry@sw.edu).