

FALL 2015

# Invention

THE MAGAZINE OF THOMAS EDISON STATE COLLEGE

## CAUSE & EFFECT

GREG MORRISSEY '13

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Photo credit: Robert Kim

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*Invention* is published quarterly and is produced by the Office of Communications at Thomas Edison State College.

**DR. GEORGE A. PRUITT**  
President

**JOE GUZZARDO**  
Editor

**JEFF LUSHBAUGH**  
Graphic Design and Layout

**KRISTEN LACAILLADE  
KELLY SACCOMANNO  
LINDA SOLTIS**  
Contributing Editors

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## *Dear Alumni, Students and Friends,*

Apple co-founder Steve Jobs said, "If today were the last day of your life, would you want to do what you are about to do today?"

The graduates featured in this issue of *Invention*, who share their stories of transformation and making their own breaks, bring this idea to life.

We are honored to tell you the story of Gregory Morrissey '13, a senior manager at McKesson Corporation. Morrissey describes how important it was for him to finish his bachelor's degree in order to advance professionally. He discusses how using several methods of earning credit offered by Thomas Edison State College enabled him to complete his degree in a year, land a new position at one of the oldest and largest healthcare services companies in the country and pursue a Master of Business Administration degree at the University of North Carolina.

Also in this issue, we are pleased to introduce you to Janice Kovach '01, who currently serves as mayor of Clinton, N.J. She tells us how the College helped her finish a business degree as a single parent, set an example for her daughter and prepare for professional growth. Her career includes leadership in public service and serving as an advocate for women.

We also meet Dr. Thomas Page '94, '00, an author, instructional designer and college educator. He shares how both our undergraduate and graduate programs have helped him earn the credentials needed to nurture talents in others.

Lastly, we are excited to share photos and news from our 21st annual Thomas C. Streckewald Memorial Golf Classic, which took place at TPC Jasna Polana in Princeton, N.J., in July. This year, the event raised a record \$71,000 for the Thomas Edison State College Foundation to support the mission of our great institution. Special thanks go out to all of our sponsors and supporters of this extraordinary event, and to the Foundation, which does an outstanding job planning the tournament every year.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Invention*.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George A. Pruitt". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a light-colored background.

Dr. George A. Pruitt  
President

## College Named to *U.S. Veterans Magazine's* 'Best of the Best' List

Thomas Edison State College was recently named to *U.S. Veterans Magazine's* 'Best of the Best' list, in recognition for being named as a 'Top Veteran-Friendly School' by the publication.

*U.S. Veterans Magazine* polls hundreds of Fortune 1000 companies to determine its 'Best of the Best' selections. The list also included categories such as Veteran-Friendly Companies, Top Government and Law Enforcement Agencies and Top Veteran-Friendly Franchises.



"In recognizing companies and schools for their achievements in recruiting and employing veterans, we hope to not only shed light on their efforts but also spread the word among veterans about the companies and schools that value them," said Mona Lisa Faris-Placey, president and founder of *U.S. Veterans Magazine*. "*U.S. Veterans Magazine* and all of the recognized awardees share the same goal of honoring and supporting our veterans. Working together, we can help veterans reach great heights and receive the opportunities they so richly deserve."

## Arthur Brooks Praises College in New Book

Dr. Arthur C. Brooks '94, president of the American Enterprise Institute, recently released his new book, *The Conservative Heart*, which relates his experience as a speaker at Thomas Edison State College's 2013 Commencement.

Brooks writes that his participation in the ceremony taught his son, Carlos, who also attended the event, valuable lessons that are important for the country.

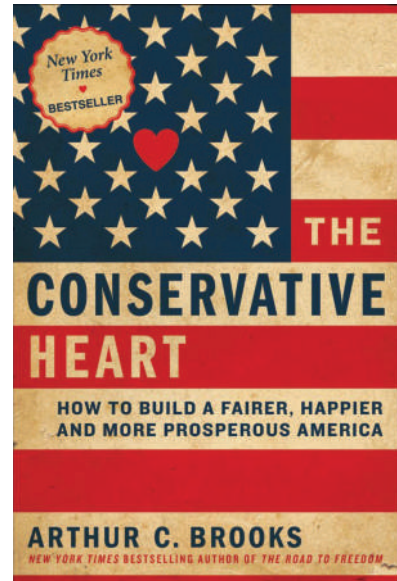
"These people — my fellow Edison graduates — taught Carlos a more succinct lesson than I could ever hope to. These people, whom I had never met, were the embodiment of the values my wife, Ester, and I have tried to impart," he writes in *The Conservative Heart*. "They refused to take their environment as a given. There was no privilege or elitism. There was just hope, hard work, earned success — and fierce dedication to building their own lives in their own way. We need to empower many more to share in that success. We need to help more Americans find affordable and

meaningful ways to sharpen their talents and build better lives."

In his 2013 speech at Commencement, Brooks spoke about the importance of earned success and the impact Thomas Edison State College had in his life.

"Without this college, I would not have gotten a PhD. Without this college, I would not have taught at Syracuse. I would not be the president of an institution in Washington. Obviously, I would not be standing here talking to you today. This made the American dream real for me," he told graduates and guests in his speech.

Brooks, who earned his Bachelor of Arts degree in economics from the College in 1994, received an honorary degree at the 2013 Commencement. His columns have appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* and *The New York Times*. Brooks has also written *Who Really Cares: The Surprising Truth About Compassionate Conservatism* (2006); *Gross National Happiness: Why Happiness Matters for America* — And



*How We Can Get More of It* (2008); *The Battle: How the Fight Between Free Enterprise and Big Government Will Shape America's Future* (2010); and *The New York Times* best-seller, *The Road to Freedom: How to Win the Fight for Free Enterprise* (2012).

## Survey Says: We Recommend Thomas Edison State College

Is a college degree still worth it? According to a large majority of Thomas Edison State College graduates surveyed, the answer is yes.

The College's overall rating and recommendation rates have remained consistently high in graduate surveys over the past several years. The FY 2014 Graduate Survey sees that trend continue, with 94 percent of respondents giving the College an overall rating of "Good" or "Excellent."

"Over the past several years, the College has continued to receive high marks from graduates," said Dr. Deborah Duffy, senior research analyst with the College's Division of Planning and Research, which administers the surveys. "For the past five years, 97 percent of graduates surveyed indicated that they have or would recommend the College to others. This percentage alone speaks to the work the College continues to do to assure that student needs are being met."

For the FY 2014 Graduate Survey, a total of 3,149 undergraduates who received their degrees between July 2013 and June 2014 were invited to participate in the survey, to which 386 responded, yielding a 12 percent response rate.

"Our primary goal when putting surveys together is assuring that we are asking questions that result in actionable information as well as help us measure how well we have met graduates' needs," Duffy said. "We appreciate those who take the time to complete these surveys. The feedback that we receive provides invaluable information to the College as it seeks to provide a quality experience for current and future students."

The College also launched a Five-Year-Out Graduate Survey in FY 2014, inviting 1,899 graduates who received their degrees between July 2008 and June 2009 to participate, of which 125 responded yielding a 7 percent response rate.

"When we conduct the Five-Year-Out Graduate Survey, we want to know the impact the College has had after graduates complete their degree, if they continue their education, if they are working or if have changed fields," said Duffy. "For many graduates, their long-term professional or educational objectives may not materialize within one year. Findings from this survey tell us that graduates believe their studies at Thomas Edison State College have been helpful in achieving their objectives over time."



### Highlights from FY 2014 Graduate Survey:

- ▶ Recent graduates expressed the greatest satisfaction with the College's degree programs and requirements, particularly with respect to flexibility and the ease of transferring credit or earning credit for prior learning, all of which were rated as "Good" or "Excellent" overall by more than 90 percent of graduates surveyed. Likewise, more than 90 percent of the graduates surveyed rated their overall satisfaction with the College's online courses as "Good" or "Excellent."
- ▶ Recent graduates identified some areas they felt could be improved, including the College's website, the timeliness of responses to their requests for help or information, mentor responsiveness and timeliness of providing feedback, and the College's affordability and availability of financial aid.

### Highlights from FY 2014 Five-Year-Out Graduate Survey:

- ▶ 94 percent of five-year-out graduates reported that the education they received at TESC was worth their investment in cost and time and 96 percent would recommend TESC to others.
- ▶ Nearly nine out of 10 five-year-out graduates indicated that their TESC degree had a positive impact on their careers.
- ▶ 36 percent of graduates surveyed reported they have earned or are working toward a graduate or professional degree since completing their TESC undergraduate degree.
- ▶ Similar to recent graduates, 97 percent of five-year-out graduates gave TESC an overall rating of "Good" or "Excellent."

## Second Program Earns ABET Accreditation

The Thomas Edison State College bachelor's degree in Electronics Systems Engineering Technology was recently awarded initial accreditation by the Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission of ABET. This accreditation status is retroactive to October 2013.

"We are thrilled that our Electronics Systems Engineering Technology program has earned this important distinction," said William J. Seaton, provost and vice president of Thomas Edison State College. "This international

accreditation confirms that our program meets the rigorous benchmarks set forth by the Engineering Technology Accreditation Commission of ABET and will benefit adult learners who are interested in professional advancement."



**Engineering  
Technology  
Accreditation  
Commission**

The bachelor's degree in Electronics Systems Engineering Technology is designed for technologists employed in various phases of the electronics industry, including computer hardware, avionics, instrumentation and control, and communications.

It is the second program offered under the Bachelor of Science in Applied Science and Technology to earn ABET accreditation. The College's Nuclear Energy Engineering Technology program earned ABET accreditation in 2012.

To learn more, visit [www.tesc.edu/ast](http://www.tesc.edu/ast).

## Watson Institute Executive Director Appointed to NJCCN Board

Barbara George Johnson, executive director of The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy at Thomas Edison State College, was recently appointed by New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie as a board member to the New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing (NJCCN).

"It is with great honor that I accept my appointment to the NJCCN board," said George Johnson. "The College has continually dedicated itself to providing adult learners with access to high-quality nursing education, and the NJCCN has played a crucial role in creating a central repository for education practice, research related to the nursing workforce and creating a positive overall image for the nursing field."

The New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing works on behalf of nurses to provide evidence-based recommendations regarding the

nursing workforce and its impact on patient care. The Center is guided by its 17-member board and looks to ensure that competent, future-oriented, diverse nursing providers are available in abundance and prepared to meet the demands of the ever evolving healthcare system in New Jersey.

Established by legislation on Dec. 12, 2002, the NJCCN aims to be the dominant voice on nursing workforce solutions for New Jersey citizens.

George Johnson has more than 20 years' experience in the healthcare arena, having spent many years working in healthcare when she resolved to concentrate on maternal and child health issues. She currently serves as the advisory chair for the New Jersey Partnership for Healthy Kids; board member on the Trenton Health Team Community Advisory Board; committee member on the



*Barbara George Johnson,  
executive director of The John S.  
Watson Institute for Public Policy*

Newark Workforce Investment Board, Business Development Subcommittee; planning and advocacy committee member on the "Ready to Run®," Center for American Women in Politics, New Brunswick, N.J.; and as an advisory board member for City National Bank.

## College Partners with Utilities Telecom Council to Develop Cybersecurity Certificate Focusing on Utilities

Thomas Edison State College has created an online graduate certificate in cybersecurity with a focus on utility environments that is designed to help close a growing cybersecurity skills gap and meet workplace shortages, specifically in utilities.



Recent surveys underscore the skills gap and workplace shortages in cybersecurity in the U.S. and around the world.

The 2015 Global Information Security Workforce Study, an international survey of nearly 14,000 information

security professionals published by ISC2, estimates the shortfall in the global information security workforce to reach 1.5 million by 2020.

In addition, 86 percent of respondents to the ISACA's 2015 Global Cybersecurity Status Report, which surveyed more than 3,400 ISACA members, identified a cybersecurity skills gap, and 92 percent of respondents planning to hire more cybersecurity professionals said they expect to have difficulty finding skilled candidates

"What makes this program unique is that it blends both information technology (IT) and operational technology (OT) and focuses specifically on critical infrastructure companies, including those focused on energy, water, gas and transportation," said Dr. John O. Aje, dean of the School of Applied Science and Technology at Thomas Edison State College. "Our goal is to help the utility industry meet workplace shortages of cybersecurity experts and provide a convenient option for IT professionals interested in shifting into the cybersecurity space in utilities."

The College's new cybersecurity certificate was created with UTC and top cybersecurity professionals working for utilities today. The program's online courses enable working professionals to complete the certificate in less than a year without sacrificing their careers or personal responsibilities. The 15 credits earned with the certificate can be applied to the College's Master of Science in Applied Science degree program, which is also offered completely online.

The College has also established a corporate partnership with UTC to help member utilities maximize their tuition assistance programs and benefit from a specialized service model.

To learn more about the program, visit [www.tesc.edu/ast](http://www.tesc.edu/ast).

The 15-credit Graduate Certificate in Cybersecurity – Critical Infrastructure was developed in collaboration with the Utilities Telecom Council (UTC), a global trade association representing utilities and critical infrastructure companies in the electric, gas and water industries. The program is designed to help utility employees advance as cybersecurity professionals and to prepare information technology (IT) professionals to transition into the utility industry as a cybersecurity professional.

"To provide electricity, water, gas and other essential services, utilities run a variety of specialized systems and networks. A compromise of these networks may cause kinetic, real-world impacts," said Nadya Bartol, cybersecurity strategist and vice president of Industry Affairs at UTC. "We are facing a serious shortage of cybersecurity practitioners that understand how to secure these networks. This new program is built around the needs of working adults and will help us equip existing utility personnel as well as individuals with IT experience in other industries with the knowledge and skills needed to become cybersecurity professionals to begin mitigating this shortage."



## The Nicholson Foundation Supports the Watson Institute's Cultural Competency Program for a Second Year

The Nicholson Foundation has awarded the Thomas Edison State College Foundation a \$166,723 grant to support the second year expansion of the New Jersey Cultural Competency and English Language Learners (ELL) Summer Institute and Mentoring Program into communities in the northern New Jersey region.

"Based on the accomplishments of the Cultural Competency and English Language Learners Institute in its expansion to Northern New Jersey, we are pleased to continue our partnership for a second year. We know that a new group of early childhood educators as well as the children and families that they service will greatly benefit from the Institute's expertise and compassion," said Charles Venti, executive director, The Nicholson Foundation. The grant will be used to continue work on growing the program in communities and schools primarily in the cities of Paterson, Montclair and Newark, N.J., within community provider settings as well as the Paterson School District.

The program is evidence based with an eight year track record of changing the way teachers' think and how they implement strategies to link culture and language. The Institute offers a three-day intensive learning institute and a nine-month mentoring program to early childhood teachers working with diverse children (0-8 years old) and their families to help them gain the tools they need to become more culturally responsive. The program helps educators examine their own biases and imparts teaching strategies for



*(from left) Barbara George Johnson, executive director, The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy; Ana Berdecia, program director and senior fellow, The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy; Kay Hendon, senior early childhood program officer, The Nicholson Foundation; and Charles Venti, executive director, The Nicholson Foundation.*

engaging diverse learners through discussions, simulations and the integration of culture and language into the curriculum as well as greater parent engagement.

At the end of its first year in North Jersey, the program noted exponential growth in three main areas: classroom design, teaching rhythm and temperament, and instructional practices.

"It is very rewarding to receive the acknowledgement from The Nicholson Foundation that our ELL Program model works and is worthy to receive a second year of funding to expand into other early childhood classrooms that need this type of learning and mentoring in North Jersey. We have seen the success of the program last year and we expect that with this ninth cohort we will get equally successful results," said

Ana I. Berdecia, program director and senior fellow at The John S. Watson Institute for Public Policy's Center for the Positive Development of Urban Children.

The program assists in the transformation of early childhood teachers' thinking and practice about how to harbor a culturally competent classroom that supports first and second language adoption. Since its inception in 2007, the program has successfully trained and mentored more than 190 early childhood educators from 79 classrooms across the state. With this year's new cohort, the program's alumni increased to 228 educators from 97 classrooms.

This year's institute ran from Aug. 12-14 at the New Jersey Community Development Rogers Building in Paterson, N.J.



## Streckewald Memorial Golf Classic Raises More Than \$71,000

Nearly 150 golfers and guests helped the Thomas Edison State College Foundation raise more than \$71,000 at the 21st annual Thomas C. Streckewald Memorial Golf Classic, which took place at TPC Jasna Polana in Princeton, N.J., on July 13.

"Once again, the Foundation saw yet another successful Golf Classic. The golfers enjoyed a beautiful day and generously provided support for the College in memory of our beloved colleague, Tom Streckewald. Our committee and staff always focus on creating a memorable day for our golfers, and this year's event was perhaps the best yet," said John Thurber, vice president of Public Affairs at Thomas Edison State College.

This year's tournament raised the most money in the event's 21-year history. The tournament's winning foursome included Bruce Post, Chuck Scholer, Robert Crawford and Matt Balitsaris.

### TOURNAMENT SPONSORS INCLUDED:

Bank of America Merrill Lynch and Sparta Systems (Eagle Sponsors); Lear and Pannepacker, LLP (Golf Cart Sponsor); UBS Bank USA (Flag Sponsor); The Bank of Princeton, Children's Specialized Hospital, Joseph Jingoli & Son, Inc., NJM Insurance Group, The North Highland Company (Corporate Sponsors); Bunker Hill Consultation Center (Boxed Lunch Sponsor); Capital Health (Reception Sponsor); Nexus Properties, Inc. (Hole-In-One Sponsor); Gitterman Wealth Management, Iron Workers Local 68, PNC Bank, Spencer Ryan LLC, St. Francis Medical Center (Deuce Sponsors); AFT Local 4277, Jim and Nancy Carnes, Carpenters Local 254, CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, Digital Dog Direct, Hoisington Engineers, KPMG, MDAdvantage Insurance Company of NJ, New Jersey State Library, Office Furniture Partnership, Packet Media Group, Plumbers & Pipefitters Local Union #9, Rider University Athletics, Royal Bank America, Stark & Stark, Zeldis Research Associates, Inc. (Tee Sponsors); and Lee J. Bellamino and Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital (Friends).



1. Golfers from Sparta Systems pose for their group shot before heading out on hole 1; 2. Golfers warming up on the driving range; 3. The Streckewald Family: Kevin, Cathie and Dan; 4. The first place foursome after receiving their prizes from Foundation Board Chair Dr. Michael Toscani. (from left) Bruce Post, Chuck Scholer, Michael Toscani, Robert Crawford and Matt Balitsaris; 5. Golfers enjoy cocktail hour after coming in off the course

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GREG MORRISSEY '13



## *The catalyst for Greg Morrissey was a conversation with his children.*

"I was trying to tell my daughter and son how important college was for them, mainly because I had not attended," he recalled. "And my daughter was smart enough — at 9 years old — to tell me that I did not have a degree, so why should she. I realized that I had to walk the walk, and that was my real inspiration for finishing my degree."

business. I was almost resigned to stop looking. However, after my daughter challenged me, I started thinking about college."

The challenge for Morrissey was finding a program that fit his busy lifestyle, which included working and traveling sometimes 20 hours a day. He said

offered the job with McKesson. Now, I'm managing one of the largest federal contracts with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs."

It's a long way from the southern California town of San Dimas, where Morrissey grew up. Due to family issues, he was forced to leave high school

*"As soon as I got my degree — literally, the day I finished the requirements — I had an interview with a Fortune 14 company called McKesson and that was the tipping point between my experience, having a degree and getting the job."*

> Greg Morrissey, ASBA '13, BSBA '13

For Morrissey, earning his degree had an immediate impact. At the time, he had been working at a construction company for about 20 years, where he was hired to install restroom fixtures and worked his way up to a management position. However, Morrissey reached his ceiling at the small, family-owned company.

"I was ready to move on and found that the lack of a degree was hindering my ability to get in the door at some companies," he said. "The HR filters screened you out if you didn't have a degree or know someone in the

completing his degree directly enhanced his employability, especially at larger corporations.

"As soon as I got my degree — literally, the day I finished the requirements — I had an interview with a Fortune 14 company called McKesson and that was the tipping point between my experience, having a degree and getting the job," said Morrissey, who completed both his Associate in Science in Business Administration and Bachelor of Science in Business Administration degrees in 2013. "If I could not have provided those credentials, I would not have been

when he was 16, but quickly passed a general education development (GED) exam while working full time at a fast food restaurant.

Morrissey remained in the food services industry before joining the construction company. Over the next several years, life happened — including marriage and children. Once he decided to finish his education, Morrissey began his research and discovered that he was a good candidate for credit-by-exam programs, such as the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP®).



"I liked the testing option because I had already learned a lot of the material the hard way," said Morrissey. "Testing gave me the option to prove that I knew the material. In addition, the flexibility to learn new subjects at my own pace and then test my knowledge was critical to getting my degree accomplished in such a short time."

Morrissey, who earned an Arnold Fletcher Award for the variety of credit earning options he utilized, took CLEP® and DSST® exams as well as courses evaluated by the American Council on Education's College Credit Recommendation Service to earn more than 90 credits. He also transferred courses he completed at Riverside City College in California and completed online courses at Thomas Edison State College.

"I was able to complete all 120 credits and earn my bachelor's degree in less than a year. I was obsessed with getting out of the situation I was in and put in the long hours to make that happen," said Morrissey. "I think Thomas Edison has such a diverse program, where you can learn by testing out and studying on your own. They also have great online courses. Dr. John Mellon was one of my mentors and was very good at helping me bring all of my knowledge together. These were fantastic courses that gave me the flexibility I needed to continue working and earn my degree."

At McKesson, one of the oldest and largest healthcare services companies in the U.S., Morrissey has begun to play a larger role, specifically with helping the company expand the scope of its contract compliance department. Since graduating, he completed a master certificate in government contracting from Villanova University and enrolled in the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program in finance and entrepreneurship at the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School.

"My journey has taken a very alternative path, but I wouldn't change it for anything," he said. "TESC was a valuable part of the process. Without their programs, I don't know how I would have made it."



*Greg Morrissey with his wife, Nicole, and their two children, Destiny Mariah and Breck Aaron.*

When asked what type of advice he would offer fellow working adults considering a return to college, Morrissey challenged people to see their own potential.

"You have to set a goal and determine the steps to achieve that goal," he said. "I was busy working 20 hours a day. I have a child with special needs. I had income challenges like the rest of us. For me, it was just a matter of carving out one or two hours a day. Study and make time for yourself because you are worth it."

Morrissey currently lives in Flower Mound, Texas, with his wife, Nicole, and their two children, Destiny Mariah and Breck Aaron.

*Advocate,  
mayor,  
mother and  
wife;*

***Janice***

***Kovach '01***

*does not back  
down from a  
challenge.*



Photo credit: Robert Kim

In the small town of Clinton, N.J., you'll find a quaint and bustling Main Street, the picturesque Historic Red Mill and Janice Kovach '01.

Now in her fourth year serving as mayor, Kovach has worked to leave a positive and lasting impression. "This is a community that you don't find everywhere. If Clinton were to lose the town center charm we have, we would just become another commuter hub; a place people come to sleep after work, but not a place to live and enjoy," she said.

Not only has Kovach made an impact on her town, but her own journey has fueled her steadfast fight for women's rights, combating domestic abuse, promoting gender equality and advocating for women in politics.

Kovach was first introduced to the world of politics while attending Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. As a student working for a state Senate re-election campaign, she instantly gravitated toward a career in public service. Her ambitions, however, would have to wait. Though she had amassed almost three years of undergraduate work at Rutgers, Kovach, now a single parent, found it difficult to pull together the funds to complete her degree and pursue her passion for public service. Later, while working in the banking industry, she heard about Thomas Edison State College (TESC) during a manager's presentation and became inspired to finish what she had started.

"At the time, I was a single parent trying to figure out how to finish my degree," she said. "I was introduced to the College and its programs during a presentation at a former employer, NatWest, and realized that it would be possible to complete my degree," said Kovach. "I knew, while listening to the presentation, that TESC was my answer and began pursuing my degree options that week," she said.

## Standing Strong

It would take Kovach another six years to complete her degree, but in 2001 she concluded her educational journey by completing her bachelor's degree.

Her motivation for finishing was two-fold. Naturally, she wanted to advance her career and by completing her degree she would satisfy this element of occupational growth. The other, however, was to keep a promise she made to herself; a promise to set a

obtain their feedback regarding how I handled situations or what they may have done differently. Not only was I earning a degree, I was also gaining valuable knowledge and an unbiased sounding board," she said.

In 2003, Kovach left the business sector and successfully ran for local council. Later, her involvement in politics would include a run for the New Jersey State Assembly in 2005. "While I lost the race, I

Simply put, Kovach isn't done breaking down walls and speaking on behalf of women who find it hard to speak for themselves.

"I can't tell you why I do what I do; I just know that it feels right. I love public speaking, I love to engage people in conversations and I love to talk about topics that make people uncomfortable. But, like Joan Rivers, I'm just talking about what everyone else is thinking, but is too politically correct to voice. I'm not worried about being politically correct; I am worried that if I don't speak up nothing will change and more will suffer. For me that is my belief in all that I do — regardless of the role — as the mayor, mom, wife, public speaker, advocate and, hopefully soon, author," said Kovach.

*"I was introduced to the College and its programs during a presentation...and realized that it would be possible to complete my degree."*

> Janice Kovach, BSBA '01

positive example for her daughter. "I wanted her to grow up knowing that following through and finishing an education is important. She needed to see that if she wanted to be offered opportunities in life, that quality education is a requirement," Kovach said.

While Kovach owns up to the fact that she loathes both homework and tests, she found that so much of the course work she completed at the College could be applied immediately to the work she was doing in the corporate world. Her business classes allowed her to obtain outside opinions from her mentors regarding day-to-day decisions that went beyond simply assignments.

"The mentors brought with them an extensive business background. They understood what I dealt with each day and allowed me to share scenarios that would occur at work so that I could

did have the opportunity to go to Trenton as part of the administration. In 2006, I was appointed director of the New Jersey Division on Women. I served as the director until October 2010, and it was during this time that I realized my true passion was advocating on behalf of women, training women to advocate for themselves and creating opportunities for women to move beyond an unhealthy life cycle," said Kovach.

Kovach advocates on behalf of women to help pull them out of cycles that can cause them to tumble into a downward spiral. "As a survivor of domestic violence, I share my experience with others in the hopes that I can help them in some small way. While my abuse was not physical, it was emotional in my first marriage and it had a significant impact on me. I have learned from it and have become the person I am because of it," she said.

Kovach resides in Clinton with her husband, Stephen, and three children, Taylor, 25, Zachary, 13, and Hunter, 12. Follow Kovach on Twitter @janicekovach and read the many articles she shares about women in politics, government, business and academia.



Janice Kovach, BSBA '01 at the College's 42nd Annual Commencement on Sept. 20, 2014.

## Janice Kovach, BSBA '01



# Life Coach

*A Journey that Began with a Postcard*



# Alumni Profile

To say that Dr. Thomas Page is motivated would be an understatement. Page is a college professor, music teacher, counselor, mentor, community activist and author, and it all began with inspiration from his parents and a mail-in postcard.

"I have always had a place in my heart to help people," said Page. "I would watch my mother as she took people in, despite my father's and siblings' reservations. My mother didn't care and always made sure whenever anyone walked into our home, they were fed and had a place to rest."

After his father died in 2000 and his mother in 2009, Page made it his mission to go 'above and beyond' and continue their legacy of helping others.

"My parents were great listeners. I would watch as family and friends would seek my parents' counsel. They didn't have to say much; they would just listen. Sometimes, that's all a person needs — to have someone simply listen to them. I always found them to be a blessing for so many and I wanted to do that."

The aspiration to help others inspired Page to address a need close to home.

Page had a vision to provide a venue for the children and adolescents who were growing up, like he did, with talent but no avenue to nurture that gift. His vision would be realized in a performing arts center he would help build for his community. But first, he said he would need a college degree.

"Even though I had been given musical talents and the gift to teach music to others, I didn't have the degree I needed to make things happen," explained Page, who couldn't attend a traditional college because he was working full time. "Organizations and donors were not taking me seriously. If I was going to receive the funding needed for my performing arts center, I had to do

something in the way of turning my rejections into possibilities."

That turning point came when Page checked his mailbox one morning and found a magazine with an advertisement for Thomas Edison State College and a mail-in postcard. "I mailed it in, applied and the rest is history."

Page earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from Thomas Edison State College in 1994 and received his Master of Science in Management degree from the College in 2000. He continued on to earn a Doctor of Philosophy from Capella University in 2008.

Now, a professional in the field of human services, specializing in counseling studies, Page noted that he continues to study the behavior of children, adolescents and young adults.

"In my human services-based work with this population, I wanted to discern why things seem to have taken a turn for the worse," he said. "It became clear that if we don't come back to the basics of 'family' and 'spirituality,' the streets will take over our children, and parents will be left with the shame and guilt because of familial practices that we chose to neglect and overlook.

"Specifically, by identifying with spirituality rather than illegal activities, young men from at-risk populations can optimize their core beliefs and become more spiritually satiated adults. This belief in the power of turning back to the strong foundation of spirituality is what led me to write my book, *When Love Is Not Enough: Bringing Spirituality and Coping Back to Families and Homes*, which calls for a return to spirituality as the center of the household."

Page knows full well how a strong foundation and caring mentors can make a difference. He reflected on some of the 'life coaches' who, in addition to his parents, helped shaped his character.

One mentor, a high school teacher, nurtured his love of music; another, a 6th grade teacher, demonstrated a love for teaching that fueled his desire to become an educator. "And, being that my mother and father never received the education they yearned for, I had to make sure that their dreams and hopes for my and my siblings' education weren't in vain. I have always enjoyed learning and education was, is and will always be my life."

That education has resulted in a career that has spanned numerous endeavors.

In addition to his book, Page has written several columns for various newspapers and journals dealing with life coaching and coping strategies. He is a sought after lecturer for his skills as an inspirational speaker in the field of mental and spiritual health. Page has appeared as a guest host on online blog talk shows and had his own segment on *Everyday Living with Rick & Veronica* entitled "Ask Dr. Page." He worked at the Passaic County Sheriff's Office as a counselor for 13 years and served a five-year term as a member of the Middle States Accreditation Focus Board and Liberal Arts Degree Board at Thomas Edison State College. Page is currently an instructional designer/technologist and teaches at Hudson County Community College, Essex County College, Passaic County Community College and Capella University.

"Thomas Edison State College enhanced my career in leaps and bounds," Page enthused. "When I received my BA in music, I became a music teacher. When I received my master's degree, I finally fulfilled a longtime desire to become a professor in the humanities area, teaching psychology, music and counseling courses. Today I teach at four different colleges and it all began with a postcard and the initiative to mail it — that changed my life."

## Dr. Thomas Page, AA '94, BA '94, MSM '00

## David Ayala BA '12

David Ayala has retired from the U.S. Army in San Antonio, Texas, as a chief warrant officer 3 after more than 24 years of service. Ayala originally enlisted into the Arizona Army National Guard as a motor transport operator in 1991, while still in high school. After completing basic and Advanced Individual Training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., Ayala enlisted for active duty. Since then, his deployments have included Colombia; Honduras and Guantanamo with the Joint Task Force; Philippines with the Special Operations Task Force; and Afghanistan with a Combined Joint Interagency Task Force (CJIATF).



## Sarah Kay Bierle BA '13

Sarah Kay Bierle published her first historical fiction novel, *Blue, Gray & Crimson: A Story of Civilian Courage at Gettysburg*. The book is intended to educate and inspire young readers and their families as it brings the American Civil War to life. In preparation for writing the book, Bierle spent eight months studying Gettysburg civilians, the town and countryside, the battle, specific military units, the care of the wounded, the aftermath of the battle, the building of the National Cemetery and the events surrounding Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. *Blue, Gray & Crimson: A Story of Civilian Courage at Gettysburg* is available online at the author's website, [Gazette665.com](http://Gazette665.com), [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) or Barnes & Noble.

## Anmarie Chelius BSBA '03

Anmarie Chelius was recently named the postsecondary 2015 CAFÉ/Sysco Corporation Educator of the Year. Chelius works as a chef educator at the Academy of Culinary Arts at Atlantic Cape Community College where she has taught baking and pastry classes for almost 20 years. She is also actively involved in First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move!* campaign, an initiative to combat childhood obesity. Chelius presents healthy cooking demos and lectures to the Communateen Club, a 4-H club that she co-leads. She is also a member of Ocean City's mayor's Advisory Council on Physical Fitness & Sports, which promotes health and wellness activities.



## Wayne Diana ASPSS '05

Wayne Diana was inducted into the 2015 South Plainfield High School Hall of Fame in June 2015. Diana retired as a lieutenant from the South Plainfield Police Department in early 2015.

## Bob Habib AA '07, BA '09, MALS '11

Bob Habib has been named director of Admissions at Regent University in Virginia, overseeing all traditional graduate programs. He is also a second year student in the Doctor of Strategic Leadership (DSL) program at Regent.

## Stephen Hanson BA '14

Stephen Hanson has been working on screening his short film, *Against Odds*, at local film festivals around the Charleston, W.Va., region, and is beginning production on his next short film. He has worked as a production assistant regionally on multiple productions, and is currently awaiting the premier of the upcoming West Virginia-shot AMC miniseries, *The Making of the Mob: New York*, for which he was the Locations Department coordinator. The first episode of the miniseries premiered in June 2015.



## Tammi Joyner AA '08

Tammi Joyner and her son, Marquel Green, are celebrating their third anniversary at "A Theory of Parenting" on [Blogtalkradio.com](http://Blogtalkradio.com). Joyner has also released a new book, *A Theory of Jewels 3 – Landmarks Series*. The book is filled with a collection of photographs of landmarks throughout both New York and New Jersey, taken by Joyner and her son. The cover of the book celebrates Green's graduation from Neptune High School in Neptune, N.J. The book is available through [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).



## Derek M. Justice BSBA '11

Derek M. Justice was recently named proposal manager and IT director for Systems Resource Management, Inc. of Middletown, R.I. He followed up this career milestone by completing his Master of Science in Leadership at Roger Williams University on May 16, 2015. Justice is a prior Navy submariner, devoted husband to wife Melissa, father of three and resides in Portsmouth, R.I.

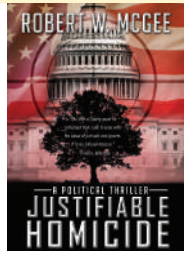
## Zumara Krebs BA '14

Zumara Krebs has created a handbag with a retractable umbrella. After obtaining the provisional patent for her invention and finding a handbag manufacturer, Krebs launched her new company, ZummyGirl. Her desire is that through her company, she can continue to create products that simplify women's lives, while also being socially responsible.



**Dr. Robert W. McGee** AA '80, BA '82, ASM '83, BSBA '83

Robert McGee won three silver medals at the Taekwondo World Championships in Little Rock, Ark., on July 9, at the age of 68. McGee has also written a novel, *Justifiable Homicide: A Political Thriller*, which is an Amazon Best-Seller. His novel is available through Amazon.



**Shawn McInerney** MSM '01

Shawn McInerney has been named president and CEO of Midland Corporation. McInerney brings with him 34 years of experience as a New Jersey state executive working on behalf of individuals with developmental disabilities. He has extensive expertise in oversight and development of community services, case management, employment and day services, and family support services across New Jersey.



**Dalia Mirrione** MAEDL '11

Dalia Mirrione has been named principal of Franklin Elementary School in Summit, N.J. She began her new position effective Aug. 3 having served 17 years in Edison, N.J., public schools. She was most recently principal of Washington Elementary School in Edison, a K-5 school with 620 students. Mirrione began her educational career as a fourth grade teacher in Edison in 1998, then moving onto the role of curriculum resource teacher at the James Madison Intermediate School and the Menlo Park Elementary School, both in Edison.



**Ryan P. Murdock** BSAST '14

Ryan P. Murdock was promoted to radiation safety supervisor at Waste Control Specialist LLC, in Andrews, Texas, in March 2014. Murdock directly supervises employees within the Radiation Safety Department, including hiring and training employees; planning, assigning and directing work; appraising performance; and effectively coordinating with other departments. Murdock is also the president of the West Texas Chapter of Health Physics, and a member of both the Health Physics Society and National Registry of Radiation Protection Technologists.

**Dolores Puterbaugh** AA '88, BA '89

Dolores Puterbaugh, PhD, LMHC, LMFT, NCC, has been in private practice in Largo, Fla., since 1999. Licensed in mental health counseling and marriage and family therapy, she is a psychology and counseling instructor for Troy University (Alabama) and for St. Petersburg College (Florida). Her book, *Toxic Mythology: Breaking Free of Popular Lies and Cultural Poison*, was published in February 2015.

**Susan Snyder** MALS '10

Susan Snyder has joined the team of Virginia Tech Fellows in Roanoke, Va., where she will provide training through Virginia Tech's Center for Organizational and Technological Advancement. Snyder will offer environmental instruction designed for those charged with complying with federal law. Snyder currently serves as president of D'Ardenne Associates and former director of compliance for defense contractor, DRS Technologies.



**Leah (Driggers) Spina** BSBA '08

Leah Spina is launching her first book on Oct. 6, titled, *Stop and Smell Your Children: Laugh and Enjoy the Little Years*. The book aims to help overwhelmed mothers of little ones change their parenting perspective during the "diaper blizzard years" to truly enjoy, and not just endure, their young children. In addition to her book, Spina speaks to mom groups and at conferences. Her book can be found on *Amazon.com* and at *leahspina.com*. Spina and her husband, David, have three children, ages five and younger. The family lives in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, area.



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**Thomas Edison State College**  
**101 W. State St.**  
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