



Plugged **in**

FACULTY & STAFF NEWSLETTER



CELEBRATED OPERA STAR
INSPIRES STUDENT SUCCESS

PARAMEDIC PLEDGED TO
HONOR PUBLIC TRUST

ELEVEN RECEIVE AWARDS
FOR FACULTY EXCELLENCE

UGLY SWEATERS TAKE THE
CAKE AT HOLIDAY BAKE-OFF

WINTER 2016

VOLUME VIII



AC Cares' 86 Days of Caring Gets Under Way

"The purpose of life is not to be happy. It is to be useful, to be honorable, to be compassionate, to have it make some difference that you have lived and lived well." – Ralph Waldo Emerson

By Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart
Amarillo College President


Emerson understood that the impact of serving others not only improves their lives, but your own life as well. And in acknowledgment of the 86 years Amarillo College has served this community, we began on Feb. 11 the AC Cares' 86 Days of Caring. During these days, we will care for our students, our community and each other in new, fun and unique ways.

In 1929, Amarillo College opened its doors as the first junior college in Texas. Established in a community with a city population slightly over 43,000, AC offered its first academic courses to – and you simply can't make this up – 86 students. Today, AC educates more than 10,000 students in a community with a population near 200,000. Eighty-six years after its debut, AC continues to provide extraordinary educational opportunities to our students along with a strong commitment to excellence – to our students, our community and each other.

In celebration of AC's founding, the AC Cares' 86 Days of Caring project was conceived to promote random acts of kindness in honor of our exceptional AC Family and our outstanding AC students. Individuals and/or departments

can sign up, and many have, for 86 Days of Caring activities, including serving students and staff/faculty coffee at your campus; stocking tutoring centers on all campuses with pencils, candy or snacks; leaving \$1 taped to a vending machine for a student to have a coke on you; sending encouraging notes to our fellow AC Family members; and, handing out snacks to students in AC student common areas on all campuses.

During our spring General Assembly, I received over 100 great ideas on ways the AC Family can care for our students and for each other. Ideas such as cleaning off the windshield on the car next to yours on icy cold days; creating a coupon corner for students, staff and faculty to either drop off or take coupons; and, Adopt a Student and their Family Christmas Tree. These ideas and many others will become reality as we focus on caring for our students and caring for each other over the next 86 days, the upcoming months and the forthcoming year.


Together we will make a difference in the lives of those around us and, therefore, make our own lives truly *lived* and *lived well*. 



WOW! – It's Wascally Wolverines by a Snout

Even though President Lowery-Hart said all three finalists would see their proposals enacted, only one of the three teams on display at General Assembly could claim the \$10,000 grand prize in the WOW Team Challenge. That honor, of course, went to the Wascally Wolverines. Their project, *Lil' Badgers: School for our Pre-Schoolers*, will provide a learning environment for AC students' preschoolers, ages 4 – 6, for \$10 a day. They generously assure that the prize money will support scholarships for their project.

Placing second were the W.I.F.F.Y Weasels. Their project, *Wowber Student Transportation*, will create a carpooling system for students.

Third place went to the Ballzy Badger-Buddies for their project *Making Scholarships Available*, a process to greatly hasten the dispensation of scholarship funds to student balances. 



The Wascally Wolverines, posing with the president, are, standing from left, Joshua Blashill, Maggie Thetford, Char Modersitzki, Tiffany Oneal, Trent Oneal, Jacque McGlohon, Edward Dumas, and Toni Van Dyke. Kneeling: Craig Clifton (captain) and Tricia McGuire.



AC's First Lady of Opera Casts Spotlight on Student Success

Score one for dramatic irony, with a bit of a twist.

Celebrated soprano Mary Jane Johnson has basked in the adulation of discerning operagoers on five continents. She has shared the stage with some of her craft's preeminent practitioners, even the incomparable Luciano Pavarotti. Yet it is with metronomic regularity that she finds herself mentoring AC students who are not fully attuned to the grand scale of her global celebrity.

Of course this has cost the professor of music and voice-artist in residence not a single wink of sleep.

"So what if they don't know my life story?" Mary Jane offers with a forthright shrug. "I don't dwell on all the stuff I've done in the past, so why should they?"

"A lot of them come into the program with some inkling of my reputation, but some don't have the faintest idea, which is fine. It's my job to get our students ready to attend four-year schools of their choice. It's my credibility as a teacher," she says, "not my reputation as a singer that's going to help get them there"

Mary Jane at first blush is a West Texas drawler with effervescence to spare, homegrown traits the Pampa native comes by honestly. But a closer look easily reveals a depth that even her most unaware students swiftly glean: their teacher possesses world-class singing talent, a wealth of unpretentious savior-faire, and an inextinguishable fire to teach students well.

If she comes off as a demanding taskmaster at times, it is never with any lack of affection.

"She's hard on them, no doubt," Dr. Steve Weber, chairman of the Music



Mary Jane Johnson leads an Italian diction class under the sun.

Department, said. "But Mary Jane Johnson is a phenomenal teacher, one of the finest voice teachers I've ever known. She makes a huge difference in the lives of her students.

"She has a bigger-than-life personality," he said. "She is fun and dramatic and a joy to be around. She pushes her students hard for a reason: she is passionate about seeing them succeed."

Mary Jane requires that her students dress up for lessons, to look and feel the part of the professionals they hope to become. When financial constraints impede compliance, she is not averse to taking them shopping or even to her own home to dig through closets there for suitable attire.

When a student misses class, Mary Jane is quick to the phone to find out why, and she says faculty in the Music Department have embraced this philosophy since she came on board full time in 2000, predating the No-Excuses practice by a decade at least.

When a student demonstrates

exceptional talent, Mary Jane makes other calls, to colleagues at some of the best baccalaureate music programs in the land.

"Because of the experiences I've had and who I know, I can sometimes match our students with the best teachers in the country, where they will fit best," Mary Jane said. "I'll call universities that require a certain vocal level and tell them I have a student that will interest them. They usually say, 'if they're your student, send them.' They respect my singing, but it's my teaching they trust."

Most voice students are not destined to perform on the utopian stages Mary Jane has graced – from Milan's Teatro alla Scala to the Metropolitan Opera in New York – but each aspiring vocalist she mentors gets equal treatment, her foremost effort, and success comes in many forms.

"The world of singing is so fickle, so unsure, and chances are they are not going to become professional singers," Mary Jane says. "They must have something to fall back on. They have to make a living.

Continued on next page



"My biggest joy is to see how far a student comes, whether it's in theory, sight reading, singing in languages, whatever. I let them know that my first degree was at Texas Tech in music education, and that all the credits they earn at AC are transferable. I'm extremely proud that AC products are packing the teaching ranks in Amarillo schools."

Mary Jane still performs some, and she conducts clinics and workshops at major universities and schools of music across the country. Yet it is her own base of operations she likes to tout. "AC," she says, "is like a small conservatory, with faculty as excellent as you will find anywhere."

Coincidentally, Mary Jane and Steve Weber had the same voice teacher while pursuing their respective graduate degrees – Dr. Jerry Doan – she at West Texas State; he at Arizona State. Steve, as AC choral director, says being on the "same page" with the voice professor is both rare and beneficial.

"We not only like working together, we have the same philosophy of how the voice works," Steve said. "We are never in conflict. We support each other, and that enhances our overall program by putting students first. It is my great honor to say we're colleagues in the truest sense."

"Most of our students don't realize the extent of Mary Jane's extraordinary professional career when they begin private lessons with her. She's a big-time somebody. They have the opportunity to work with someone who has done it all, performed in the great opera houses of the world. You can't place a value on the sort of experience and success our students are exposed to through Mary Jane – it's simply immeasurable." **AC**



Noteworthy

White Named Executive VP and General Counsel



Mark White knows the value of a dollar, something he proved a while back by choosing affordable AC as his first stepping stone to a degree in law. That worked out pretty well. Now the 1977 AC graduate is charged with raising dollars for his alma mater. The the Board of Regents in January appointed White to a new post: executive vice president and general counsel.

White has served since 2009 on the AC Foundation Board of Directors. And through his longtime membership in Amarillo law firm Sprouse Shrader Smith, he has served as AC's chief legal counsel the past four years. So by joining the AC administration in a dual capacity, White will contribute both philanthropic and legal services – far more than Regents first envisioned the new post would entail – at considerable savings to AC.

"I look forward to devoting all my energy to the College's mission of ensuring student success," White said.

Regents Vote to Snuff Out Smoking on AC Campuses

Regents voted in January to institute a smoking ban on all AC properties, with the exception of East Campus housing, beginning Aug. 1. The Board's action was in response to a proposal initiated by the Student Government Association.

The policy states: Smoking of any tobacco products and the use of electronic or vapor smoking devices are prohibited on all Amarillo College property and in buildings and facilities on all campuses and locations, including parking areas, green spaces, and walkways. The use of tobacco products which are smokeless and vaporless is prohibited inside any College building. This policy does not apply to East Campus Housing. Effective August 1, 2016.

Eric Wallace, director of the Criminal Justice Program, wants it known that free smoking-cessation classes are available for the AC Family and students through Tobacco Free Amarillo. Check out the calendar at tobaccofreeamarillo.com.

ADN Program Receives Notice of Full Approval

An October assertion by the Texas Board of Nursing has come to fruition. A letter received from the board on Feb. 1 confirms the Associate Degree Nursing Program's return to the foremost approval status granted in Texas – Full Approval.

And thanks to the 94.78-percent pass rate among AC graduates on the national licensure exam on their initial attempt, the Program garnered a board commendation as well.

AC, therefore, has officially reclaimed its traditional standing among the upper echelon of ADN programs statewide. **AC**



I am a Paramedic Striving to Fulfill My Obligations to the Public Trust



By Paul Whitfield
Associate Professor, EMSP Program

At any moment, on any day, someone might be faced with the most terrifying, desperate, helpless feeling of their life. They witness a small child being struck by a car. They discover a parent lying on the kitchen floor in some variable state of consciousness. They feel acute chest pain, dizziness and shortness of breath with an implosive, morbid sense of impending doom. They do the only thing they know to do – they call 9-1-1.

Imagine the dire chaos and suffering one might witness in a hospital emergency department. Doctors are expediently yet methodically practicing the art and science of emergency medicine: placing central intravenous lines, relieving the tension of a collapsed lung, intervening to alleviate the manifestation of Acute Coronary Syndrome. Emergency nurses are working at an unrelenting pace to monitor the patient's condition and carry out doctor's orders. Phlebotomists are drawing blood for stat lab work. Radiographers are feverishly taking X-rays. Everyone there has a job to do and they execute their tasks with precision, their sole focus to give this acutely ill or injured person a second chance at life.

Now imagine the aforementioned scenarios but in a street, residence, or other location 15 miles removed from


a climate-controlled hospital. There are no electrically elevated, tilting and rotating treatment beds. There are no bright lights to be pulled from above to illuminate the work area. The only equipment available to assist me is in the ambulance I rode to the scene, and the only additional personnel is my partner. I am a paramedic.

Though fully capable and licensed to work in a hospital environment such as an emergency department or critical care unit, most licensed paramedics work in the pre-hospital environment. We staff ground ambulances, helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft. The expected outcome of my performance is nothing less than that performed by my colleagues in the emergency department. The differences, though, are many. When something unanticipated happens or something goes wrong, there is no one but my partner to help. I cannot push a code button and summon a team of specially trained personnel for stat assistance. I cannot call to the room next door and summon a doctor or nearby colleague. It is just my partner and me ... no one else.

The resolution of a patient's condition is up to us alone to stabilize or improve. We are responsible for dealing with any type of acute illness or injury one might find in an emergency department. Be

it trauma, an acute cardiac patient, a patient suffering an acute diabetic crisis, a broken bone, a dislocated joint, a collapsed lung ... the list of maladies is virtually endless. Whether this patient lives or dies frequently depends on the care given by licensed paramedics prior to delivery to the hospital emergency department.

I am not an "ambulance driver," I am a paramedic. I am a medical practitioner of the often forgotten third emergency service. I work in the same environment as my brothers and sisters in law enforcement or the fire service; our professions are indeed symbiotic. In order to practice I am required to have a college degree and graduate from a program that is nationally accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs. I am required to hold a National Registry attained by passing a national, standardized examination of didactic knowledge and psychomotor skills. I am required to attain and maintain a license issued by the Texas Department of State Health Services. I must regularly meet extensive, stringent continuing education requirements.

I work long shifts in all weather conditions, day or night. I am away from my family for long periods of time. I work in an incredibly stressful and often dangerous environment that regularly tests my courage, as well as my physical and emotional limits. I am a paramedic striving to fulfill my obligations to the public trust. 



Note: Paul Whitfield began his professional career as a firefighter with the city of Amarillo Fire Department while also working for Amarillo Medical Services, the 9-1-1 ambulance service. He holds an associate degree in emergency medical services professions from Amarillo College and two degrees from WTAMU: a bachelor's degree in biology and a master's degree in health education and wellness program development.



FACULTY AND STAFF ACCOLADES

Caring Heart Award Goes to Officer Loya



Officer **Carlos Loya** of the AC Police Department was the recipient on Dec. 10 of a Caring Heart Award, which is bestowed only occasionally by the Nursing Division. The award was conceived in 1998 by retired professor Pat Murray to recognize individuals in the community who personify the essence of nursing practice – caring, compassion and service. Loya was singled out as “a consummate professional, fine gentleman, kind person and gentle spirit who is also dedicated to keeping students and staff safe on the West Campus.” The presentation was made at the nurse pinning ceremony, where he was accompanied by his wife Melody.

Also ...

AC President **Russell Lowery-Hart** was appointed last fall to the National Advisory Board for Texas Tech’s College of Media and Communication. He attended his first meeting on Nov. 13, 2015. The board is charged with promoting the recognition, welfare and progress of the College of Media and Communication in all its aspects.

Upon the recommendation of the Rank and Tenure Committee, three members of the faculty on Jan. 26 were approved for tenure — effective Sept. 1, 2016 — by the Board of Regents. They are:

- **Victoria Taylor-Gore**, assistant professor, visual arts and design
- **René West**, assistant professor, visual arts and design
- **Kerrie Young**, instructor, associate degree nursing

Employment Milestones

The following faculty and staff have qualified for length-of-service pins since the Fall *Plugged In*:

CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES

JANUARY

Rebecca Archer, 15 years
Mark Prescott, 15
Maria Hernandez, 5
Chelsea Munkres, 5
Debbie Luckey, 5

FEBRUARY

Clifton Fletcher, 15 years
Freddie Ochoa, 15
Jennifer Ashcraft, 10
Kenneth Heider, 5

ADMINISTRATORS

JANUARY

Cara Crowley, 10 years
Lynne Groom, 10 years
MJ Coats, 5



Creative Minds to Focus on Spain's Golden Age

The Creative Mind Humanities Lecture Series is back for its 33rd year, and this time the focus is The Golden Age of Spain.

Faculty experts from Miami of Ohio, Texas A&M and Johns Hopkins will serve as guest lecturers. The daytime lectures are at 12:30 p.m. in the Concert Hall Theater, and the evening lectures are at 7:30 p.m. in the Bud Joyner Auditorium, Downtown Campus. Here's what's in store:

Feb. 18

Dr. Andrew Casper, Miami of Ohio

Day: El Greco Before Spain

Evening: El Greco and Cultural Identity

Feb. 25

Dr. Hilaire Kallendorf, Texas A&M

Day: Cervantes, Philosopher

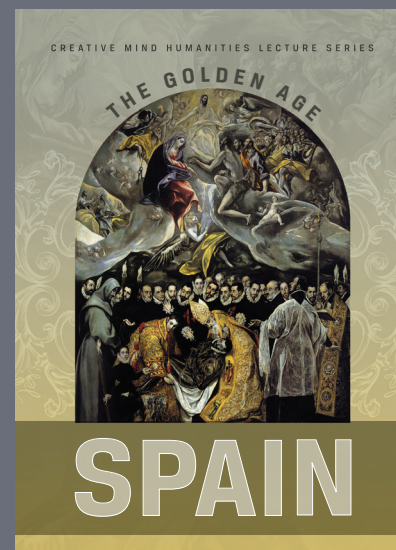
Evening: The Paradox of Marginal Autobiography

March 3

Dr. Richard Kagan, Johns Hopkins

Day: The Spanish Craze: America & Texas Discover the Arts & Cultures of the Hispanic World

Evening: The Cult of El Greco: Critics, Collectors & Connoisseurs





The Good, the Plaid and the Ugly

Atrocious holiday garb and tantalizing pastries were equally conspicuous at the holiday bake-off and ugly Christmas sweater extravaganza Dec. 10 within the first-floor confines of halls Byrd and Parcells. But the real wow came at the end, when the finalists were announced in the WOW Team Challenge – three teams that got their just desserts.



Brian Frank



Connie DeJesus



Jenna Welch



Jordan Herrera and Ruth De Anda



Karen Welch



Toni Gray



Eleven Receive Faculty Excellence Awards

Presentation of the Faculty Excellence Awards helped kick off the Spring Semester. The Awards were announced Jan. 29 by Dr. Deborah Vess at the Faculty Meeting in the Concert Hall Theater. The awards are designed to recognize faculty innovation and commitment to student success.

The awards and winners are:

Excellence for Backwards Design – Debby Hall, assistant professor of associate degree nursing

For creating a pilot project called “Technology in Nursing Education” to remove the digital divide and increase the equity of digital resources for students. She obtained funding to purchase Windows-8 tablets, e-books and adaptive quizzing for NCLEX-RN preparation for 60 students.

Excellence for Communication and Workforce Innovation, Wade Olsen, assistant professor of emergency medical services

For development of effective career-cluster curricula, effective partnerships with industry/government and community engagement, including his appointment to the Governor’s EMS and Trauma Advisory Board.

Excellence for Curricular Innovation, Dr. Alan Kee, chair and professor of psychology

For new course development, assessment of student-learning outcomes, cross-curricular initiatives and innovative work to improve developmental adult-education programs.

Excellence for Part-Time Instruction (2 winners) – Dino Ferraresi, instructor of mathematics; Charles Munger, instructor of biology

For effective use of instructional strategies, student engagement, increases in student-success rates, innovative content delivery, and important program contributions.

Excellence for Learner-Centered Pedagogy (2 winners) – LaVon Barrett, professor of vocational nursing; Karen White, assistant professor of mathematics

For effective use of cooperative and/or collaborative, experiential, active, interdisciplinary, problem-based, and technology-enhanced learning; and creative approaches to undergraduate research. LaVon obtained a grant to provide students with iPads. That and other strategies helped lift LVN licensure pass rates from 81.25 percent in 2012 to 96.36 percent in 2014. Karen, by linking her developmental math course with a section of FYS, helped students bond in natural study groups and led to increased persistence.

Excellence for Data-Driven Approaches – Dr. Lana Jackson, chair and professor of first-year experience

For leadership in establishment of the successful First Year Seminar program, including the training program that has thus far prepared 95 faculty/staff/administrators to teach the class.


Excellence for Professional Development – Dr. Amanda Pendleton, assistant professor of biology

For reviewing all options to improve online testing procedures and recommending digital software called Respondus Monitor, giving AC a valuable proctoring tool and a new level of credibility where accrediting agencies are concerned.



Dr. Alan Kee teaches class in the round.

Excellence for Student Completion (2 winners) – Robert Dillon, instructor of biology; Kim McGowan, instructor of mathematics

Robert has collaborated with online instructors to create digital mandatory tutoring experiences for his online students that Blackboard already supports but that AC had yet to use. This has created a safety net to help identify low-performing students early. Kim organized math faculty and tutors to help mentor prospective nursing students as they prepare to take the HESI exam, a distinct promotion of student engagement and support that exemplifies how teamwork across divisions promotes success and completion. 



Megan Eikner Settling in as Dean of Technical Education



Megan Eikner has been dean of technical education only for about a month and a half, but already she's found her comfort zone.

"I'm loving every minute of it," she said. "The East Campus is fantastic, and so are the hardworking, wonderful people. They are so dedicated to student success. Of course it's been busy out here, lots going on, but I guess I expected that to be the case."

Megan, previously associate dean of continuing education, was named to the

deanship in December and began her new duties on Jan. 4.

She has a passion for developing programs that put people on successful pathways. Among the jobs she held before joining AC's workforce in 2009 was a two-year stint as an urban youth development specialist with Texas Cooperative Extension.

"I'm excited and humbled by this amazing opportunity to contribute to the continued growth of the workforce in our region," Megan said. "I love putting people to work."

Megan in 2013 was among the young business professionals the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce named to its annual list of Top 20 Under 40. Twice in 2015 she was recognized for her volunteer efforts: as Randall County Family and Consumer Service Volunteer Leader of the Year, and as a Distinguished Leader of 4-H, District I. **AC**



Food Pantry's Holiday Giveaway Exceeds Goal

The Food Pantry set out to fill a whopping number of sacks for its annual Thanksgiving Grocery Giveaway – 75 – and backed by an outpouring of AC departmental generosity, the Pantry surpassed its lofty goal. In all, 93 sacks filled with stuffing, corn, pie filling, crust, cranberries, biscuit mix, spuds, etc., were doled out to AC students Nov. 20 in the festive atmosphere of the Byrd/Parcells second-floor lobby.

A pair of local celebs, Andy Justus and Jackie Kingston of the KAMR news team, passed out the loaded sacks. Along with the non-perishable items, each sack contained a \$10 United Supermarket gift card. Appreciation among the student recipients was palpable; thank you notes were received. Food Pantry organizers extend thanks to the AC Family for making it possible. Right back atcha, Food Pantry. **AC**



KAMR news anchors Andy Justus and Jackie Kingston, both at right, helped hand out 93 hefty sacks of food at the Food Pantry Thanksgiving Grocery Giveaway.



Branch Campus Representatives Appointed to Board of Regents

The Amarillo College Board of Regents purposefully expanded both its membership and jurisdictional perspective on Jan. 26 by appointing two non-voting members to represent AC branch campuses in Dumas and Hereford.

The new Regents will serve four-year terms on the Board.

Hereford's Michael Kitten will represent the Mabel McDougal Hinkson Memorial Campus in Hereford, and Michael Running of Dumas will represent the Moore County Campus.

Kitten has served as executive director of the Hereford Economic Development Corporation since 2012.

Running has held the position of chief executive officer for the Dumas Economic Development Corporation since 2008.

Each has served on his respective branch-campus advisory committee, which was among criteria for appointment to the Board; candidates also were asked to submit letters of interest to the Board's Branch Campus Advisory Committee. **AC**